
BRIDGES

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Lithuania's Armed Forces...A 100-Year Commemoration...Children in Need

Perspectives

We have just witnessed the resignation of Lithuania's second Prime Minister Rolandas Paksas and, now the third Prime Minister's, Andrius Kubilius', oath into office during Valdas Adamkus's term in office. Lithuanian dailies screamed Williams International took unfair advantage of Lithuania. They also pronounced the results of the latest polls showing Americans were not to be trusted. What really are the ramifications of the contract signed between Lithuania and Williams? And why did a sure thing turn out to be a supposedly "ugly American" incident. Or is this what "others" would like us to believe?

When Valdas Adamkus was elected in 1998, Lithuania's people were relieved that a Soviet compatriot wasn't in the office; one who knew the ways of democracy now held the reins. But with the change came ways of thinking and action totally foreign to the new government. Instead of isolationist thinking -- "we know all, we can do all" -- came global, cooperative measures opening Lithuania up to public adoration, commentary, and criticism.

Already in late October, Stratfor.com (an internet-based international news carrier) had started reporting about the events which were unfolding in Lithuania. They had pointed out that "the crux of the dispute is the degree to which Lithuania should sacrifice its economic stability and its relationship with Russia in the hope of gaining admittance into Western economic and defense structures." One issue of great concern for people who want to control their future.

Three viewpoints on this business transaction clash. The transaction becomes more political, rather than economic. For the Lithuanian government, the Williams contract is proof that they prefer the West and its offerings: NATO to Russia's unstable and hostile demands, and a self-sufficient energy source.

For Williams International, it's a business contract with investment in future results of what the refinery can and will produce. It is also an opportunity to help Lithuania become "independent" of Russia's hold on Lithuania's energy sources. Williams can be that key toward self-sufficiency and self-direction.

For Russia and its crumbling economy, the refinery deal is a political issue. In the past, cutting off or continuing oil supply was contingent not on the exchange of monies, but on whether Lithuania submitted to certain governmental changes and/or additions à la the Russian/Soviet way.

It would be wise to be wary of the doomsayers and polltakers. They still harbor sentimental feelings for the "old days" of the Red Guard. It is the Lithuanian people who realize that for change to take place, they must be willing to invest in themselves and their future. They are the true barometers of what Lithuania really wants, and Russia is incapable of getting that for them.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

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**The Awesome Perseverance of Lithuania
for its Freedom...**

It is very hard to conceive how difficult, yet how resolute Lithuania was to gain its independence after the first World War. It was estimated that 12,000 volunteers and an additional 50,000 men served in the Lithuanian armed forces during this time period. Among the volunteers were 100 Lithuanian-Americans who returned to their homeland in its hour of need. By American standards, this army was small and yet it was able to defend itself against three different invading armies. A truly awesome feat!

Today's Lithuanian Armed Forces is featured in the article on page 4.

—Source: *A History of The Lithuanian Military Forces in World War II 1939-1945*
by Henry L. Gaidis. Chicago, IL: Lithuanian Research and Studies Center, Inc.
Vydunas Fund, Inc. 1998.

On the cover:
Lithuania's Armed Forces on
parade.
Photo by Bernard Narušis

From Lithuania...

BRIGADIER GENERAL JONAS KRONKAITIS ON:

Lithuania's Military Defense:

Objectives, Priorities and Accomplishments

Integrating Lithuania's defense establishment into the Euro Atlantic Community was the focus of Brig. Gen. Kronkaitis's presentation to the Baltic Assembly Conference in Vilnius on September 28th, 1999.

The objectives of the Lithuanian National Security Policy are to strengthen democracy, create favorable conditions for economic growth, and to diminish threats to the individual and the state. I do not need to tell you that membership in NATO is the most obvious and realistic route to achieve that objective.

Tragic events preceding World War II reduced Lithuania's population by a third. Even today, there still are people who express surprise that the most brutal acts directed at Lithuania were not during or subsequent to World War II, but preceding it: a consequence of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact.

A hard lesson has been learned. If Lithuania's statehood is threatened again; we will defend ourselves, with or without **the support of our friends**. The key principle of Lithuania's defense policy is the concept of "total and unconditional defense" based on deterrence by non-military and military means. The goal of the defense policy is to prepare the society and the armed forces for general defense and to integrate Lithuania into Western defense struc-

tures.

I will tell you how we are preparing for general defense in a moment, but first I must tell you that in parallel we are proactive in our efforts to integrate into the Western structures. Our military unit participates in Bosnia peacekeeping operations within a Danish force in support of NATO missions there. A medical team, with two military ambulances, participates in humanitarian missions within a Czech hospital in Albania, and just a few days ago we dispatched a ranger platoon to Kosovo to participate in peacekeeping operations within a Polish battalion. We have been very active in the Partnership for Peace Program.

Our shared values of democracy and corresponding hopes for the welfare of our people make it natural that we would seek to integrate into NATO. We believe that membership in NATO is not only the most effective means to safeguard our values, but to prevent conflicts as well because NATO is founded on the principle of collective defense and has developed a capacity for crisis management and peace support operations.

BRIGADIER GENERAL JONAS KRONKAITIS, a Lithuanian American, is currently the Commander of the Lithuanian Armed Forces.

The decision to aim for NATO membership has political advantages for the region and implications for our internal decisions in building our defense capability. First let me mention three important political advantages:

1. The accession of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia to the Alliance will enlarge the area of stability in Europe and will eliminate the gray zone, or a region for temptations, **and it threatens no one.**

2. Integration into NATO helps to guarantee political stability and provides confidence for economic development for young democracies such as Lithuania.

3. Even the anticipation of NATO membership has improved relations among neighbors. For instance: since 1993, significant progress has been made in the Polish-Lithuanian relationship. Poland and Lithuania now view each other as strategic partners, and we have started to forge a long-term relationship by creating a combined Lithuanian-Polish Battalion. Lithuanian and Polish soldiers train together. Only last week we concluded a very successful exercise here in Lithuania in which troops from Poland, Denmark, Rumania, and Germany participated.

A Benefit for NATO

Let me mention a few military benefits Lithuania has to offer to NATO:

1. The country and its military is committed to democratic ideals and determined to defend them. There should be no doubt left in the mind of any potential aggressor that Lithuanians will defend Lithuania.



Brig. Gen. Kronkaitis and his wife in Lithuania.

Photo: Alfredas Pladys

2. An ice-free seaport, a good road network, excellent east-west, north-south highways abound.

3. Strategic air bases -- one of our bases has two runways over 3 km long. It was built for soviet AWACS and their space shuttle. NATO AWACS have already landed there once. There are two other air bases with strategic potential.

4. Lithuania was chosen to build the Regional Air Surveillance Coordination Center. When completed next year, it will have the capability to provide information to other countries as well as the NATO Allied Early Warning System.

The Defense Structure

We are creating an armed force based on a Western model, which can be integrated into NATO and also function independently if we must defend alone. In effect, we have a dual military defense strategy, one of which includes

non-conventional warfare. By law, passed on 5 May 1998, The President and the Minister of Defense, together, constitute the National Command Authority and have the operational control of the armed forces. The parliament exercises control through the budget and the law. The Minister of Defense and his vice ministers by law are civilians, and the Commander of the Armed Forces is subordinate to the Minister.

In order to optimize command and control of combat units, strengthen their combat potential, reduce their response time to contingencies, and improve interoperability with NATO command structures and operational procedures, a Unified Command concept is being adopted. A Territorial Defense Structure was created with three military regions to assure independent capability to accomplish combat assignments. This territorial defense structure provides a good framework for flexible defense. It facilitates the integration of the National Defense Volunteer Force into the overall Military Defense Strategy as a component of a single force. Most importantly, the Regional concept provides for non-conventional warfare through the regional headquarters

Defense Capability

Lithuania has made significant progress in the development of infrastructure by establishing a clear and effective chain of command; formalizing the planning, programming and budgeting process; improving military training; acquiring badly-needed military material; and improving the quality of life for our soldiers and officers.

Training and Doctrine Command

Now, I would like to turn to our efforts at building military capability. Training and education of soldiers and officers to assume their responsibilities are critical components of military preparedness. Therefore, we have established a Training and Doctrine Command which assumed the responsibility of planning, organiz-

ing, and coordinating all aspects of military education and training to assure that rescues [rescue exercises] are most effectively used to produce highly qualified officers and soldiers.

A Basic Training Center has been constructed and became operational this April. Young Lithuanian instructors trained in Western leadership doctrine now train Lithuanian recruits. Officers and noncommissioned officers from United Kingdom have trained 105 instructors in Western doctrine and training techniques. We consider the basic training center a milestone and a turning point in the Lithuanian armed forces since it represents a clear break with the past.

Institution building would be very difficult without the assistance of partner countries. Danish and British officers have been providing training on a continuous basis for our officers in Western leadership principles, and just recently the British assumed major responsibility to assist in training our cadets at the Military Academy. The first class of cadets completed the leadership phase of a course conducted by British officers and NCO's very successfully last fall. It was a turning point in the training of our officers. In one week [first week of October] a second group of first-year classmen will finish the same type of training conducted by the British, and next year our own instructors will take over the job.

We place great emphasis on the education of our officers. We have officers who have graduated from the United States Military Command and General Staff Colleges, and presently we have four cadets in United States military academies. Our officers have graduated from the French, as well as German Command and Staff Colleges. Many of our Navy personnel attend military schools in Sweden and Denmark. Over 500 of our military personnel have attended extended term schools out of country.

Recently, the Baltic Defense College in Tartu, Estonia has started to train our officers for mid-level staff assignments. Not only will it

provide good training, but also it will enhance Baltic interoperability since students and instructors come from Baltic Sea countries. We recognize the importance of the English language for our military and have established ten English language labs throughout the country. All of our Military Academy cadets are required to take English and may take French and German as a second foreign language.

This year, our focus is on the noncommissioned officer (NCO). As any military officer knows, a good NCO corps is the foundation and the glue of a good military force. United States military helped us to establish our Noncommissioned Officer School. It is an excellent school, but we need to do much more than provide good training. We must give the NCOs more authority and responsibility.

Next month [October] I will appoint the Command Sergeant Major of the Armed forces. He, with the help of a Noncommissioned Officer Council, will advise me on matters essential to enhance the respect and authority of this very important segment of our armed forces.

Target Force 2008

As we produce qualified Officers and NCOs, we are increasing the number of conscripts we induct into the armed forces. From 2,300 in 1996, we will grow to 7,700 in the year 2001.

Our ten-year projection of Officers, professional soldiers, and conscripts in our combat units will reach 23,000 by the year 2008. This does not include the National Defense Volunteer force of approximately 15,000 or the active reserve. Conscripts will constitute approximately 48 percent of the force. We need conscripts to build a large active reserve force, which by 2008 will reach 50,000.

The State Defense Council, which is chaired by the President and includes the Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Parliament as members, has made a commitment to a credible defense force by allocating 1.5 percent of the GDP in 1999 to the defense budget. This is to reach the level of 2 percent by year 2001. The parliament, our Seimas, has enacted this commitment for defense into law.

Summary

Lithuania has developed an attainable plan to create a credible defense capability; the plan is resources-supported and it is being implemented. Lithuania is building a defense force to protect Lithuania. Defense of our sovereignty is unconditional. We are building a force that can integrate easily into NATO military structure. When we are accepted into the North Atlantic Defense Alliance, we will do our share and live up to the responsibilities of a member state. In fact, we are helping NATO

NATO's Response to Lithuania's Armed Forces

The chief political committee of NATO affirmed that alliance member states viewed Lithuania as a solid and trustworthy applicant country during a conference with Lithuanian officials in Brussels on November 10th.

The officials of nineteen NATO countries attending the Brussels conference said that the Lithuanian plans for development of armed forces was a model one. Lithuania responded that it would continue to further to its commitments in a NATO bid.

The national delegation produced the updated information on Lithuanian economy, and domestic and foreign policy spelling out Vilnius' position on further enlargement of the alliance and the role of the membership action plan in this process. These issues are listed in the Lithuanian program on NATO integration, which is up for discussion in NATO headquarters. The alliance officers praised the document, which Lithuania was the first to design among candidate states, the foreign ministry reported.

The top official of the Lithuanian group, foreign vice-minister Vygaudas Usackas, declared Lithuania was proceeding with preparations for NATO membership and said he hoped the next summit of alliance would invite a new wave of applicant countries, including Lithuania. ♦

Source: ELTA News Agency

Rasa Ardys-Juška

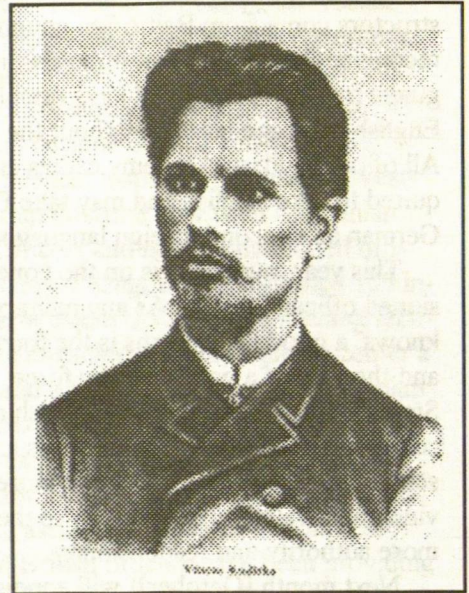
A Tribute to the Voice for Lithuania

For 100 years Lithuanians have expressed their sentiments and heartfelt feelings for their native country every time they sang their nation's anthem. In turn, they also echoed the words that Dr. Vincas Kudirka used to reveal the love he felt for his nation and the desire to win freedom. November 1999 marks the year of the death of Dr. Vincas Kudirka, author and editor, and the first time Lithuania's national anthem was introduced in public as a song.

Kudirka was described as a man of strong wills, a clear mind, and a tender heart. He was born on a farm in Pežeriai, Vilkaviškio Township to an intelligent, disciplinarian father and a quiet, creative mother on December 31st, 1858. In his writings, Kudirka talks of his mother as one who introduced her children to beautiful songs, the art of Easter egg decorating, and folk storytelling. Her artful way of introducing the beauty of Lithuanian culture allowed Vincas to become more attracted and open to learning about Lithuania. But it was not so during Kudirka's student years.

Polish-speaking teachers were the primary educators in Lithuania during this time period. Thus, the more educated, more elite, spoke Polish, rather than the "lowly peasant Lithuanian." Kudirka fell under this spell as well. Kudirka's schooling took him from his father's farm to eventually Warsaw University in 1881.

Unfortunately for him, Kudirka's talents with scriptwriting earned him a trip to jail and blacklisting from any University. He had been asked by friends to copy a banned book. A spy turned the group in even though Kudirka's work had been



purely as a copier rather than as a subversive. After serving several months, he was released. Yet this stay weakened him physically. It was not until 1885, that he had a unique opportunity to "hop" into the passing carriage of Czar Aleksander III with humble appeals, was he allowed to re-enter Warsaw University and graduate as a medical doctor.

Kudirka set up a humble office in Šakiai in 1889. It was here that he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. He had to abandon his medical practice, and physical rest and rehabilitation consumed his days. These were the days, which opened his eyes and heart to his heritage and Lithuania's political condition, and allowed him to produce his best literary works.

From 1889 to 1899, Kudirka worked untiringly as editor of *Varpas (The Bell)*; a liberal leaning literary, political, educational monthly newspaper initiated and published by Warsaw's Lithuanian association "Lietuvos". He had been called the "true soul" of the newspaper. The first publication was in January 1889. Kudirka added his editorials, satire, and poetry to the newspaper, spurring thoughts about nationalism, Russia's treatment of Lithuanians, censorship of Lithuanian books and press, and the risks of following the footsteps of your own op-

RASA ARDYS-JUŠKA is the editor of BRIDGES.

pressors.

How Kudirka's "National Hymn" became Lithuania's National Anthem came about by way of St. Petersburg, Russia -- home not only to Lithuania's oppressors but also to a large number of Lithuanians. Kudirka's poem first appeared in an 1898 edition of *Varpas*. Even though Kudirka had not been trained musically, he had also written the melody for the "Hymn". Its strength and great expression of love for country stood out so prominently that it was included among other choral pieces at a concert under the direction of composer Česlovas Sasnauskas on November 13th, 1899 in St. Petersburg, shortly before Kudirka's death on November 16th. After the performance, intellectuals were already calling the "Hymn" Lithuania's "National Anthem". The "Hymn" was first performed in Vilnius, Lithuania on the eve of the Great Council of Lithuania on December 3rd, 1905. When Lithuania became independent, the "National Hymn" was officially proclaimed the National Anthem in 1919. Later, the title was changed to the first three words of the first verse: "Lietuva, Tėvyne Mūsų" (Lithuania, Our Homeland).

One hundred years later, the Lithuanian-American Community sponsored lecturer dr. Irena Slavinskaitė and actress Virginija Kochanskytė to travel to 12 different chapters and appear at their commemorations to remember Dr. Kudirka's life and death, and contributions to Lithuania. Events began on October 3rd in Chicago, with the last performance on November 7th, 1999 in Detroit.

Reading the Lithuanian National Anthem in its English-language version, the words may not rhyme and the rhythm of the stanzas are lost; yet, one can feel the emotion with which these lines were written by a most worthy, venerable, and dedicated Lithuanian patriot, Dr. Vincas Kudirka.

TAUTOS HIMNAS Žodžiai ir muzika
dr. V. Kudirkos

Lie-tu-va, tė-vy-ne mūsų, tu did-vy-rių žė-me!

Iš pra-ei-ties ta-vo sū-nūs te stip-ry-bę se-mia.

Te-gul ta-vo vai-kai ei-na vien ta-kais do-ry-bės,

te-gul dir-ba ta-vo nau-dai ir žmo-nių ge-ry-bei.

Te-gul sau-lė Lie-tu-voš tam-su-mus pra-sa-lį-na

ir švie-sa, ir tie-sa mūsų žings-nius te-ly-di-

Te-gul mei-lė Lie-tu-voš de-ga mūsų šir-dy-se.

Var-dan tos Lie-tu-voš vie-ny-bė te-žy-di.

*Lithuania, our homeland, land of heroes!
Let your sons draw strength from the past.
Let your children follow only the path of virtue,
Working for the good of their native land and for
all mankind.*

*Let the sun banish all darkness from Lithuania,
With light and truth always guiding our steps.
Let the love of Lithuania burn in our hearts
And for the sake of our country, let unity
blossom.* ◆

Sources:

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"The Lithuanian National Anthem" music sheet from www2.omnitel.net/ramunas/Lietuva.

Jeanne Dorr

...TO FIND GOODNESS IN PEOPLE'S HEARTS

Did you ever meet someone who you couldn't get out of your mind?

Over a period of years I have met countless children and families through Lithuanian Orphan Care, but Jurgita and her grandmother wouldn't leave my mind.

I first met them in 1994 when I traveled with Countryside Children's Fund to Pakruojis. About twenty families were assembled from the town and surrounding villages. They were selected because of their urgent need for assistance. I was just starting to volunteer with Lithuanian Orphan Care, and to be honest I was quite nervous and didn't know what to expect.

As my eyes scanned the assembled group I noticed an elderly woman and a teenage girl, the woman often whispering to the girl. At the end of the session we always have questions and comments from the audience. The elderly woman stood up and said she would like say something to the American lady. I thought she was probably going to tell me to mind my own business and go home. But instead she stood up and congratulated me. I told her I was flattered, but that I was also puzzled. Apparently I was being congratulated because my feet were dirty! I looked, and sure enough they were filthy.

She said she knew I was one of "them" because I wasn't afraid to walk through the Lithuanian fields and the dirt roads. She never

met an American, and all she knew was what she heard or saw in the paper. She saw "important" people from all over the world, all dressed up coming to Lithuania's cities and being photographed handing checks to other "important" people. The grandmother said she never saw these people in the villages, and as far as she knew the villages never saw any benefits from the checks. She was very relieved when I told her that Lithuanian Orphan Care works directly with the people.

We continued with the program, and then the mothers and grandmothers filled out papers so that the children could qualify for Lithuanian Orphan Care sponsors. We moved outside where each family was given a large bag of clothing according to the ages of the children in the family.

It was at this time that Jurgita's grandmother asked if she could speak to me privately. She wanted to apologize for wasting my time; she felt she made a grave mistake by filling out the forms for a sponsor. I asked her if she was in financial need, and at this point she started to cry. She was very much in need, but didn't I understand about Jurgita? She was fifteen years old with the mind of a five-year-old. Who would ever want to support such a child?

Jurgita began to tug at my sweater while hopping from one foot to the other. She asked me if I had a piece of candy for her. Luckily, I

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.

did have some hard candy and that seemed to keep her happy, but I couldn't help noticing how contented a piece of candy made her. She was absolutely beaming because this was a luxury her grandmother could not afford. Her grandmother and I continued our conversation as the tears were streaming down her face. I told her never to underestimate the goodness of the American people. I was determined Jurgita would have her sponsor, and that faith in humanity would be restored to this loving grandmother.

Returning Home with a Mission...

A few weeks after I returned to America, I attended the annual Lithuanian Music Hall picnic in Philadelphia. As I was talking to some friends who were visiting from Virginia, they told me they were interested in sponsoring a child. I very cautiously brought up the subject of Jurgita, telling them I would understand if this were not what they wanted. They looked at me rather blankly as if I had a serious problem.

With the next breath, both husband and wife assured me they would love to have Jurgita as their Orphan Care child. I explained she could never communicate with them. In fact, I had the feeling that maybe the grandmother could not read or write too well. No problem. I was handed a check then and there. In that moment, my own faith was restored in people. I wished that I could tell Jurgita's grandmother that the very first people I approached were delighted to help her raise her beloved granddaughter.

I lost touch with Jurgita, but she was never really out of mind. The sponsors told me that each Christmas they received a card, which Jur-

gita's grandmother sent to Orphan Care. The card was forwarded to the sponsors with words of gratitude from Jurgita and her grandmother.

One day, Jurgita's sponsors telephoned me. They were told that Jurgita reached eighteen and she would be dropped from the Orphan Care program. Was there any way they could continue to sponsor her? Of course, we were delighted with their offer, in spite of the fact that they were already sponsoring a second child.

Renewing Acquaintances...

The following year when they learned I was returning to Lithuania, they asked me if I would take a "little something extra" as a gift to Jurgita's grandmother. They knew the elderly were among the hardest group struggling to survive economically in Lithuania. Things work out strangely, because I had it in the back of my mind to visit Jurgita on this trip. The problem is that our children are scattered all over Lithuania and this was quite far. Now, I had no excuse -- I



Jeanne is flanked by Jurgita on the left and Jurgita's grandmother on the right during her visit.

Photo: Jeanne Dorr

had a reason to visit.

I telephoned the editor of *Valstiečių laikraštis* (newspaper). This is the paper, which sponsors Countryside Children's Fund. I explained the situation and asked him if he could lend me a driver and a car. No problem, he needed a break from his desk and he would drive me. Jonas and Regina Svoba both insist on staying personally involved with each family and the fund sponsors. The families are not file numbers; they are real people. We set a time, and Jonas was there bright and early. As I write in all my articles, it seems that Orphan Care people are the only ones in the entire country who insist on starting the day when the

roosters rise.

It was quite a long ride to Pakruojis, and we made several stops along the way to drop off much needed clothing to several families as well as to a small school. The roads changed from paved to gravel and finally to dirt. Dust and dirt were flying all over making visibility quite difficult. At one point we had to pull off the road and wipe the car windows. As we hit each bump, I could feel the fillings in my teeth rattling.

We almost reached our destination when we encountered a "traffic jam" involving two cars and a couple of horse-drawn wagons. Two teenagers had the misfortune of losing two pigs. Everyone got out to search, and when the pigs were finally located, all involved gave their opinions on how to get the pigs back into the wagon. I didn't offer any words of wisdom, since I didn't consider myself an expert on the subject. In the end, we had two happy teenagers and two very unhappy pigs. The journey came to an end not a moment too soon because my nerves were reaching their breaking point.

Because many villages are very difficult to find, Jonas telephoned the local social worker before we left on our trip for directions to Jurgita's house. We found Jurgita hanging clothes on the line. When she heard the car pull up, she became very excited and ran to meet us. She was wearing her "Sunday" green plaid dress, which had been a gift several years earlier from a charity shipment received by Countryside Children.

Jurgita could barely contain herself as she ran to the car and threw her arms around both of us. As she hugged me, she kept saying, "Teta, teta, (Aunt, aunt,) I'm so glad you came to see us." Jurgita and her grandmother receive very few guests. By now her grandmother came running out of the house with the same warm greeting. Her grandmother aged since the last time I had seen her but she was still a beautiful woman. Her long gray hair was beautifully braided and pinned to the back of her head.

I made a quick assessment of my feet. Good grief, they were dirty again from visiting the other families. Dust and dirt covered the yards where we stopped to deliver packages to needy families along the way. But this time she didn't seem to notice.

The grandmother hoped we weren't angry. She knew the trip was supposed to be a surprise, but the social worker came by to let her know company was coming. I told her that I certainly would want to know if guests were coming to my house. I would definitely need time to blow the dust from under the chairs. She seemed to relax and started to laugh. As far as she knew, this was an ordinary visit to find out if there was anything we could do for her.

She took us inside the one-and-a-half room house. Everything was well worn but spotless. The main room was a combination kitchen and sitting room. The linoleum was so worn and torn that the pattern was barely visible. A small room off the kitchen was the bedroom. A big black stove, the kind I remember from my grandmother's house, dominated the room. There was a small table radio, which was quite old, but there was no television. Like the piece of candy which I gave Jurgita so long ago, the television would have been a luxury, which the grandmother could ill afford. The house had no central heat or indoor plumbing. A small table was set with homemade cheese, homemade black bread, bacon from their own pig, berries, and juice which they made themselves.

We sat and talked while Jurgita sat beaming at us; she was absolutely overjoyed. As I gave her a small bag of candy, I noticed how red, chapped, and work worn were the hands of this nineteen year old. I asked Jurgita's grandmother if her son, Jurgita's father, ever came to visit her. She told me he came when he was not busy: although the social worker had told me earlier that he rarely visits his mother, and that he wants nothing to do with his daughter. I knew Jurgita's mother was dead.

I gave Jurgita's grandmother the envelope,

and even before she opened it she started to cry. How could two strangers so far away care so much about Jurgita and her? When she opened the envelope she held the gift to her heart as tears streamed down her face. She told me she had never seen so much money at one time. Jurgita looked on in awe, asked if she could hold the hundred-dollar bill, and then asked me if I was sure it was real money. Her grandmother warned her several times that she must tell no one of this precious gift. This must be a secret because someone may try to take it from them. Jurgita nodded and promised she wouldn't tell anyone.

Jurgita tried to write her name on a piece of paper so that I could give it to her sponsors, but she just couldn't manage. It was too difficult for her. Jurgita's grandmother told me of her fears for her granddaughter after she died. She was now in her mid-seventies, and we knew this was one story that would not have a happy ending. Jurgita would be placed in an institution: there were no other options.

We took a walk outside and saw where they raised their vegetables. There was a pig, a cow, and chickens wandering around the yard. From the outside we could see the house was badly in need of repairs. The stack of wood for the coming winter was growing higher as grandmother and granddaughter chopped tree limbs every day. The work was endless but so was the love in this house.

For the Coming Holiday Season...

I would like to thank Jurgita's sponsors for being such caring people.

During the approaching seasons of giving, I urge you to open your hearts to families such as this one. The primary goal of Lithuanian Orphan Care is to keep families together. The cost to sponsor a child is \$150 for a year, but ANY donation is greatly appreciated.

There are so many ways you can help. There is the couple in Pennsylvania, who each year hosts a Christmas party and asks their guests to bring a check for Lithuanian Orphan

Care. There are people who ask that their families and friends give to Orphan Care in their name instead of buying them birthday gifts.

There was a couple who was being married for a second time. Each had a house, and they felt they could not possibly use one more gift. So they asked their guests to contribute to Orphan Care. Two gentlemen, one from Washington and one from Colorado, sent checks and heartwarming letters explaining that their late wives both loved children and this was their way of remembering their wives. There are many people who donate to Lithuanian Orphan Care when they lose their loved ones. It is a beautiful way to keep someone's spirit alive by giving the gift of hope to a child in Lithuania.

We are very grateful to all our churches, clubs, and organizations who support our children. I am especially thankful to you, the *BRIDGES* readers, who have to date donated almost \$150,000 to help Lithuania's forgotten children. God bless each and every one of you. It is you, through your generosity, who has helped Orphan Care grow from 60 children to approximately 900 in just five short years. And it is with your continued generosity that we will continue to help each and every child who needs us. Please, let us never have to turn away a child, a mother, or a grandmother because there is no one to help.

I would like to close with a quote from Mother Theresa. "Do not wait for leaders; do it alone, person to person."

Please send your tax-exempt checks to:

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

Sr. Ona Mikaila

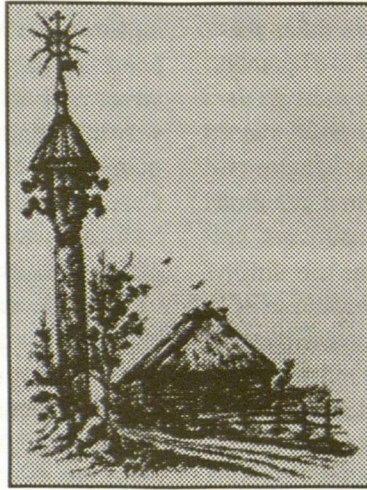
ESTONIAN FOLK ART

One of the most characteristic types of Lithuanian folk art are wood-carvings of religious figures placed in a shrine called a "kopytlė" or miniature chapel. These shrines were set up outdoors near a farmhouse, at a crossroads, or in some significant or favorite spot. They were meant to express a petition for divine protection, to call down blessings for the farmer's family or to give thanks to God. Often they would mark the site of a tragic death or commemorate an important event in the life of the family or country. These shrines were not only decorative but expressed the deep and abiding faith of the people. Everyone respected these wayside shrines and stopped to pray before them.

Wooden shrines and crosses were especially popular in the Lithuanian countryside in the 18th and 19th centuries. Not many of the earlier ones survived; most of those preserved in museums and private collections date from the 19th to the early 20th centuries.

a precious heritage

Early in the 20th century this type of religious folk art was recognized as a unique art



*A miniature chapel stands alongside a farmhouse in Plungė, Lithuania. (circa 1916)***

form. Professor Ignas Končius, the artist Adomas Varnas, and later the ethnographer Balys Buračas were the first to appreciate this folk art and to make an effort to study and preserve it. One of the first collections, with reproductions sketched by the artist A. Zmuidzinaičius, was published in Vilnius in 1912. At this time Ignas Končius began to travel about the countryside of Žemaitija recording and studying all of the various types of shrines and crosses. Much later, when he was living in the United States, he published a book.

Adomas Varnas took pictures of these shrines and crosses and published an album of original photographs in Kaunas in 1920. Balys Buračas who remained in Lithuania made some valuable photographs of the old villages, their folk art, and folk artists.

After World War II, during the communist era, many of these shrines and crosses disappeared. Some fell into ruin, some were destroyed, and some were hidden away and preserved. A number of these original examples of folk art found their way into ethnographic museums and were preserved as the art of the people. In the 1960's, a series of illustrated books on Lithuanian folk art were published in Vil-

*SR. ONA MIKAILA is a writer and editor of **Bendradarbis** and belongs to the order of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a Lithuanian order in Putnam, Connecticut.*

nus. Pictures of wayside shrines and religious sculpture were included.

In present day Lithuania, religious folk art is being revived. A number of professional artists and sculptors produce a kind of stylized folk art, which retains some of the characteristics of the originals. There are also a few amateurs working on their own, much like the folk artists in the old days.

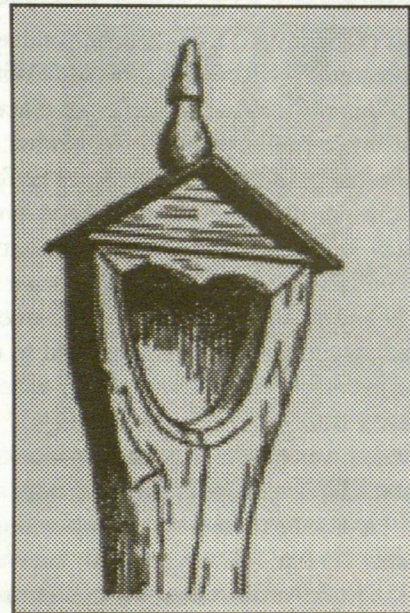
folk artists and their work

The traditional folk artists were often poor farmers who could not make a living from the land. Some carved at home, while others traveled around the countryside taking orders from their neighbors for crosses and religious figures important to each family. These "dievdirbiai" or "godcarvers" were talented craftsmen. Many also did carpentry, building, and other trades, as well as carving religious sculptures, shrines, and crosses. Usually they were poorly educated and many were illiterate. Their work was valued however, and they were respected as craftsmen even though many regarded them as being rather strange.

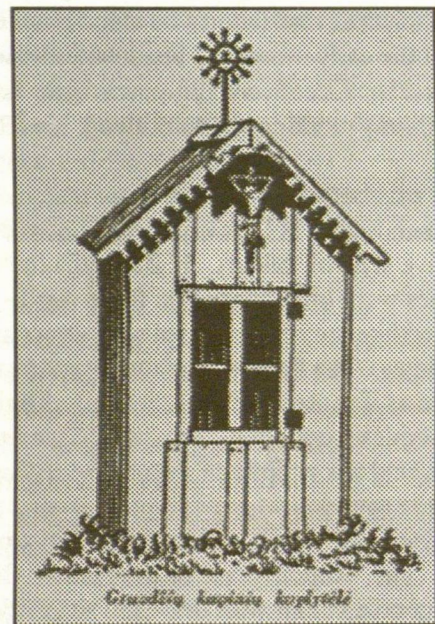
These godcarvers would sell their sculptures at the local fairs or they would set up tables showing their wares in the enclosures around the churches. Before offering his carvings for sale, the folk artist would present his collection to the local pastor for inspection. The pastor would judge whether the figures were truly devotional and worthy of being blessed. If he thought them crude, he would say: "Take that one home and cook your potatoes with it."

Many of these folk artists were real characters with their peculiar eccentricities. Each had his own favorite subjects that he liked to carve. The most popular figures were those of Christ and of the Blessed Mother, and also various saints. A certain folk artist named Skrinskis from Žemaitija would never carve the figures of St. Joseph, St. John or St. George for these were the names of the suitors of a girl whom he loved in his youth.

An unusually gifted folk artist was Vincas



*A miniature chapel carved into a fir tree limb around the 19th century in the Tolimėnų cemetery. Its height reached three meters.***



*A miniature chapel in the Gruzdių cemetery.***

Svirskis (1835-1916) from central Lithuania. He dedicated his entire life to his art. With no home of his own, he wandered from place to place wherever his services were wanted. He drew his inspiration from the statues he found in churches or illustrated books of the lives of the saints. His own figures took on a baroque style. Self-taught, he developed his own original style and during his lifetime made over two hundred crosses and shrines. He liked to use oak for his work, since it was a hard wood that weathered well.

Svirskis was a true artist and an interesting character. He was a loner who did not talk much. He liked to work by himself with no distractions. As one folk artist put it, his work had a kind of mystique about it... "When I begin to carve a figure, I need peace, total silence—not a sound. Not even a chicken can run across the path when I am working, no one can look at me, because then a fog gets into my head and I cannot do anything. The work comes from inside my head and deep within I have this fear that I won't be able to carve. From the early morning I begin with the word of God because if some ugly word gets into my mouth, my work comes to nothing."

the styles expressed

Each region in Lithuania had its own distinctive style of folk art. In Žemaitija the shrines were often placed on the ground. They looked like miniature houses with doors and windows. The figures inside were solid and realistic as if rooted in the earth. In Aukštaitija the shrines were often on posts or nailed to trees, and the sculptures were more stylized and elongated.

The most popular subject was Christ crucified. The "Rūpintojėlis" or the Pensive Christ sitting on a stump with one hand supporting his head, which is crowned with thorns, was also very much in demand. Blessed Mother Mary was most often depicted as the "Pieta", the Mother of Sorrows with the swords piercing her heart as she holds the dead Christ on her

lap. This figure was often used as a memorial for graves especially to express the sorrow of a mother mourning a dead child. Other figures of Mary with the child Jesus, and Mary, Mother of Mercy were also placed in shrines near the home to bless the farmer's family. Saints Joseph, Anthony, and also the agricultural Saints George and Isidore were popular.



*An example of a carved Lithuanian Pieta.***

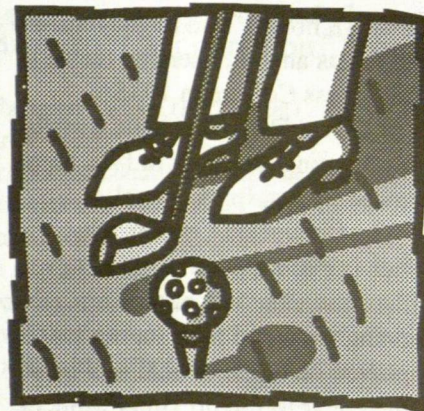
These religious figures were painted in traditional colors. The Blessed Mother and the women saints were often dressed in cloth and decorated with necklaces. In Žemaitija it was customary to tie the figure of the crucified Christ with a sash or ribbon. This might indicate a part of the body where healing was requested or as a thanksgiving decoration for a favor received.

The figures of Christ were often especially poignant. The "Rūpintojėlis", which became a characteristic Lithuanian art form, expressed a deep spirituality peculiar to an oppressed people. Ignas Končius interpreted the figure as saying: "He speaks of hardship. He shows us the failures in our lives. He helps us bear the sorrow in our heart. He lessens our sadness and gentles our tears. Or perhaps people put him up as a witness to sorrow: that hearts would not harden and to remind them of the hard times of life so that in remembering them they would become better..." ♦

*** All illustrations come from the four-volume series entitled, Mūsų Lietuva (Our Lithuania) by Bronius Kviklys. Boston, Mass: Lietuviu Enciklopedijos leidykla: 1964.*

Ed Shakalis

The Lithuanian Open 1999



This year's Lithuanian Open Golf Tournament was played on September 25, 1999 at the Squirrel Run Country Club in West Plymouth, Massachusetts.

It was quite a thrill to see the Lithuanian flag flying as you, the players, approached the club house. Several days before the Open, Dave Moore the golf pro, assuring me that the flag will be properly displayed, said "Don't worry Ed, the yellow stripe will be on top!" He also showed off his hat and divot tool with the Lithuanian Open logo on them. Everybody was a Lithuanian that day.

My son Rick, daughter Dorothy, her husband Graham Beaton and Kestutis Banaitis arrived early to help me to prepare for the 110 players that were to start their rounds of golf at 9 AM sharp. It was a shot gun start, which means that all foursomes start at the same time from different holes in order to finish at the same time for the legendary Lithuanian Open Dinner. The format was Florida Scramble best ball, which gives ample opportunity for all team members to contribute.

This year proceeds of the Lithuanian Open is going to the Lithuanian Children's Relief Inc (a worthwhile charity located in South Boston, Ma.) toward the purchase of a pediatric ventilator for the regional hospital located in the town of Telšiai. This hospital services the entire

northwest region of Lithuania, and although they have medical equipment for adults, they are in dire need of equipment to treat children.

The weather was good with the exception of a brief shower. Most golfers ignored it and embraced the old adage, "It never rains on a golf course."

This year's winners of the Lithuanian Open are:

- 1st place team with a score of 10 under par: Rick Shakalis, Sal Vasapole, Gerry Daly and Paul Oberlander.
- 2nd place team with a score of 9 under par: Jack Basile, Steve Nickerson, Peter Van-Wagenen and Steve Kelley.
- 3rd place team with a score of 8 under par: Tom Stuopis, Leo Bernotas, Arunas Kleinis and Vyto Cepkauskas.
- Longest drive: Gaynor Foster
- Closest to pin: Hole 7-Jim Kraskouskas, Hole 13-Rimas Veitas, Hole 18-Sal Vasapole,
- Ladies only: Hole 17-Mary Knasas

Other notable events of the day: Ramsey Schilling celebrated his 14th birthday at the Open with his brother Jeremy and father Ted Schilling, our "Lithuanian Consigliere" of Cape Cod.

The oldest player participating was Hip Moncevicz, who at 84 recently underwent a heart operation but still played well and com-

ED SHAKALIS is a retired Electrical Engineer, PE and is presently an amateur radio operator with the USA call sign of KD1BJ and Lithuanian call sign LY3CJ. He is also on the Board of the Lithuanian- American Community of Cape Cod.

pleted 18 holes. You might remember him as an All American tackle at Holy Cross College in 1935.

As usual Dick Marsh did a stellar job preparing the food; in fact, some showed up just for the meal.

The Lithuanian Open trophy, which is made from authentic Lithuanian oak, was passed onto the winning team and their names will be engraved on a plaque that will be attached next to the previous winners. They get to hold it for one year only and have to return it for next year's winners.

I am still waiting to hear when a course will be built in Lithuania so we can have a tournament there.

The Lithuanian Open Committee, Rick Shakalis, Kestutis Banaitis and Ed Shakalis, would like to thank all of this year's participants, the hole sponsors, the people who donated to the raffle and the nice people at Squirrel Run. We hope to see you all at the 2000 Open. ♦



The winners of the 1999 "Lithuanian Open": (from left) Gerry Daly, Rick Shakalis, Sal Vasapole, Paul Oberlander.

Photo: Ed Shakalis

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

kūčios celebrated in Lithuanian Communities



Various Lithuanian-American communities will be holding Kūčios (traditional Christmas Eve) dinners or luncheons in their parish or community halls during the month of December.

For example, the Philadelphia Lithuanian Scouts Association will be sponsoring their Traditional Lithuanian Christmas Eve Dinner to be held at St. Andrew Church Parish Hall on Sunday, December 12, 1999 at 12:00 noon. Look up www.phillylac.org (new web site!) for more information. In addition, Philadelphia's Annual Christmas Concert will be held on Dec. 26th with the St. Mark's Singers performing at St. Andrew Church at 2:00 p.m. Neat stuff!

The LCC Club in Kearny, New Jersey holds "Second Sunday Lunches" every month. December's luncheon, on the 12th, will feature a visiting

Lithuanian priest offering mass in Lithuanian in the LCCC Ballroom. This will be followed by an authentic "Kūčios" meal. Tickets are \$15.00 for adults and children under 12 are half price. For more information, call 201-998-7761 or 973-857-3277.

In the Midwest, the Lithuanian World Center will be the site for a Christmas Fair on December 4th and 5th.

There will be many special events during the Christmas season. Be sure to check out your local Lithuanian-American Community chapters (lists appear on our web site www.javlb.org) for an event nearest you. In addition, last issue's reviewed book, **Lithuanian Customs and Traditions** by Danutė Brazytė-Bindokienė contains many recipes, songs, and details for making this Christmas season quite festive! ♦

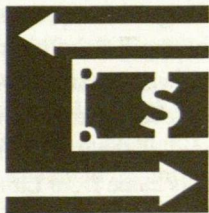
The IMF Meets with Lithuania's Adamkus

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) was encouraged by meetings with government members and president Valdas Adamkus. However, signing new a bilateral deal would be agreed upon only after the final conclusions on Lithuania's next year budget deficit are summarized. This was announced by IMF's representative in Lithuania, Mark Horton, after meeting president Adamkus in early November.

Horton considered the principal issues to be next year's fiscal deficit amount and the Russian ruble deposits restoration scheme. The Fund insists that the fiscal budget deficit should not exceed 2 percent by suspending the restoration of ruble deposits to Lithuanian residents and repaying loans granted by the government to Mažeikių Nafta Co.

Horton also confirmed that Lithuania would feel the consequences of the deals with U.S. Williams International and they would impact signing the IMF deal.

Signing of the memorandum with IMF usually gives bigger guarantees for foreign investors with regard to the stability of the country's economy. Lithuania is seeking to sign a 15-month stand-by agreement to provide the government with a possibility of borrowing up to \$100 million if necessary. ♦



Seimas Demands Peaceful Solution to Chechen Conflict

The Lithuanian Seimas (Parliament) expressed solidarity with the resolution from the Council of Europe's political committee that prompted the Russian authorities to halt war in Chechnya; to refrain from any actions which violate human rights; and to enter into a peaceful dialogue with the Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov elected through democratic polls.

The resolution encouraged both parties of conflict to seek for a peaceful solution. In addition, it bound the national delegation to the CE Parliamentary Assembly to firmly support all efforts. The resolution states that the Russian authorities should condemn the actions of its army against civilians and halt the total destruction of Chechnya.

As a special cause of concern it identified the attempts to wipe out the lawful power institutions of Chechnya and to kindle the chauvinist, extremist and militarist feelings among the Russian population which was taking the country away from the path of a democratic evolution.

The resolution referred to the concern of an increasing number of nations and international bodies over bloodshed in Chechnya, destruction of cities and villages, and the suffering of refugees.

This is a complex problem worth urgent consideration and evaluation at OSCE summit in Istanbul, the resolution said. The document was submitted by the parliamentary group for contacts with Chechnya. It scored the votes of 38 MPs to none against.

Lithuanian leader Valdas Adamkus attended the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) summit held in the Turkish city of Istanbul in early November. ♦

This Month's TRIVIA QUIZ

The Yiddish term "LITVAK" (Lithuanian) is used to define a person of Jewish origin living or descending from the area which was the territory of the Lithuanian state from the 13th to the 18th century.

Jews trace their origins in Lithuania back to the days of Grand Duke Gediminas, who founded the first Lithuanian State in the 14th century. By the late 15th century, there were already thriving communities. In time, Vilnius became known as the

"Jerusalem of Lithuania", a great center of Jewish religious learning.

The trivia question is:

Which country today has the most "LITVAKS"?

- A. Lithuania
- B. Israel
- C. The United States of America
- D. South Africa

See the answer on page 20 ♦

— Ed Shakalis

Lithuanian-American Awarded for Supporting Health Care

President Valdas Adamkus presented the 1st grade medal of Lithuanian Duke Gediminas Order to Lithuanian-American Pranė Šlutienė for her efforts to support Lithuania's health care institutions on November 10th.

Šlutienė works as the vice-president of the U.S.-based Lithuanian Mercy Lift organization which operates from the Chicago/Lemont, Illinois area. Lithuanian Mercy Lift provides every kind of assistance to Lithuania's medical institutions, senior care residences, and handicapped persons. ♦

Sweden Commits Itself to the Baltic States

Sweden committed itself to bankroll the preparations of the Baltic states for European Union (EU) membership and business development with an extra 1 billion crowns, according to Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson.

While in Stockholm during the third week of November, Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius, attended a working lunch held for the Lithuanian delegation. During the luncheon Persson accentuated the commitment of Stockholm to maintain assistance to the Baltic states.

The Lithuanian premier said he welcomed the initiative of the Swedish government to launch the project called "The Baltic States Year". The goals of which were to help the Baltics in preparation for EU entrance; make a better presentation of the nation for the Union; and maintain co-operation between Baltic countries and Sweden for the year 2000.

Persson was thanked for backing Lithuania in the field of foreign policy and implementing certain economic projects. He emphasized the importance of ties among all Baltic Sea states saying that this region was expected to emerge as a most dynamic area in Europe.

During the lunch, the Lithuanian Prime Minister provided a concise report on the national economic situation and future reforms, with a big focus primarily on privatization of the remaining large-scale energy entities. ♦

- Source for News from Lithuania: ELTA

City to Name Street for GM's Zubkus

According to the Lansing State Journal, (Oct. 26, 1999) the city of Lansing, Michigan plans to name a street near a new General Motors Corp. factory after former plant manager Jim Zubkus. He retired in August after a 37-year career with GM.

The article states further that Zubkus was a key player in the company's decision to build the Cadillac factory in Lansing. This is to be GM's first new U.S. assembly factory since Saturn opened in Tennessee in 1990.

The proposed street — Zubkus Way — "seemed like the logical thing to do. Zubkus has been a strong advocate for us from Day One," stated Lansing Mayor David Hollister.

Congratulations to Mr. Jim Zubkus. ♦
- Saulius Anužis

Answer to the TRIVIA QUIZ!

In the article "Lithuanians Jews make a big impact in South Africa" by Ed Stoddard, *Rueters*, June 12, 1998, the author writes:

"Lithuanians dominate the Jewish community in South Africa to an extent seen in no other country, even their former home. We have around 80,000 to 90,000 Jews in South Africa, and about 80 percent of them are of Baltic descent, most of them from Lithuania," said David Saks, an historian and researcher at the Jewish Board of Deputies in Johannesburg. "We probably have the most 'Lithuanian' Jewish community in the world," said Saks, whose own grandparents came from Lithuania. This ratio even exceeds that of Lithuania itself as most of the Baltic state's small Jewish community, now numbering a mere 5,000, comprises immigrants who arrived from different parts of the Soviet Union after World War II."

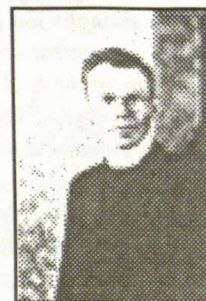
"Back home, Lithuania's small surviving Jewish community continues its diverse tradition of public and private service. Several of its members are prominent businessmen while the one Jewish member of Lithuania's parliament, Emmanuel Zingeris, heads its committee on human rights and minorities," added Stoddard. ♦

- Ed Shakalis

R e f l e c t i o n s

Bernadeta Miliauskaitė-Harris

Rev. Alfonsas Lipniūnas: Bravery in the Midst of Brutality



"Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation." (Mark 16:15)
So Jesus commanded the disciples after His resurrection. The history of the Church is filled with holy men and women who followed Jesus' command often in unfavorable circumstances, many times to the point of death. Among them are many Lithuanian priests who fulfilled their duties in harsh conditions, such as concentration camps. Two such priests were Fr. Alfonsas Lipniūnas (1905 - 1945) and Fr. Stasys Yla (1908 - 1983).

The winter of 1942-43 brought the Nazi occupation to Lithuania, during which the Nazis tried to organize SS Legions in the Baltic States. Lithuanian underground organizations issued orders to the youth not to join. This infuriated the Germans, and they took reprisals against Lithuanian intellectuals by arresting and imprisoning 46 of them in the Stutthof concentration camp. Among them were Fr. Stasys Yla and Fr. Alfonsas Lipniūnas.

Fr. Yla survived and came to the United States, where he served as chaplain to the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Putnam, CT, as well as other American Lithuanian organizations. A stone castle, which he built in honor of King Mindaugas, still stands on the convent grounds. He authored many books including one about his experiences in the concentration camp called *A Priest in Stutthof*, published by Manyland Books in 1971. Fr. Yla died on April 10, 1983 and is buried in Putnam.

Fr. Lipniūnas escaped Stutthof, however he did not live to see the war's end. People remember him as being intelligent, patient, patriotic and caring.

Fr. Lipniūnas was born on March 12, 1905 in the village of Talkoniai. He was ordained in 1930.

After studying in France, he returned to Lithuania where he served as vicar in the Cathedral of Panevėžys. In 1939 he was transferred to Vilnius where he lectured at the Seminary and the Pedagogic Institute. He organized material assistance for families who had suffered under the Soviet and Nazi occupations and encouraged the underground activities of Catholic youth organizations. He was well known for his sermons, which even non-Catholics came to hear. Even though he was short of stature, he possessed the courage of David taking on Goliath. He bravely carried on his priestly duties, even in Stutthof, where he and Fr. Yla secretly ministered to the prisoners by hearing confessions, celebrating the Mass, and giving Holy Communion.

Fr. Yla recalls in his book how he and Fr. Lipniūnas clandestinely celebrated their first Mass:

"On Pentecost morning, June 13th, we arose very early -- just as the first rays of dawn were beginning to tint the sky. We had decided to use the day room of our barrack as a chapel, and had covered its window with blankets for greater security. To make an altar, we stacked one bench on top of another and spread it with a clean white handkerchief. On this improvised altar cloth we placed the wafer, the tumbler of wine, a little saucer, which was to serve as a paten, Father Gajkowski's missal, and the lighted end of a candle....

Then, while the rest of the camp slept, the Holy Sacrifice commenced.

Father Lipniūnas celebrated the Mass in his striped prison uniform, assisted by Dr. Kučas and attorney Kriaučiūnas, who acted as acolytes. I delivered the sermon. Everyone attended....

BERNADETA MILIAUSKAITĖ-HARRIS is a member of the Council of Religious Affairs in the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

The emotional impact was overpowering. A profound silence had enveloped the room, and we felt as though God Himself were with us in this bleak concentration camp: neither barbed wire nor the guns of the S. S. guards could have stopped our Honored Guest. We were almost afraid to breathe, and we remained motionless -- except that here and there a hand was occasionally raised to wipe away tears. Of all my experiences in Stutthof, now dimmed by time and by the desire to forget, this alone has never lost any of its vividness." (Yla 136-37)

As the Russian front approached, the prisoners of Stutthof were evacuated. They were forced to march through the snow in weakened condition. Upon arriving in the town of Puck, they were able to escape due to the chaos of the situation. Fr. Lipniūnas contracted typhus and died on Wednesday of Holy Week, March 28, 1945, seventeen days after his fortieth birthday.

Fr. Yla found these words Fr. Lipniūnas had written in his notebook for a Good Friday sermon: *"Although I suffer and die, I shall rise again. Without death there can be no resurrection, and it is in anticipation of a glorious resurrection that my fatherland is now passing through the throes of death." (Yla 277)*

Fr. Lipniūnas was buried in Puck. In 1989, his remains were returned to the cemetery of his native Talkoniai, Lithuania.

Fr. Yla wrote: *"The death of Father Lipniūnas was a tremendous loss to the Lithuanian Catholic Church. He had been a true Christian and an intellectual of many accomplishments. As a matter of fact, there had been talk of a bishopric before his arrest. To us, his companions in adversity, Father Lipniūnas will remain forever memorable because of his kindness, example, and natural camaraderie." (Yla 279)*

Fr. Lipniūnas' short life can be described by St. Paul's words to Timothy in chapter 6 of his first letter to him in which he urges Timothy "to seek after integrity, piety, faith, love, steadfastness, and a gentle spirit, as well as to fight the good fight of faith." (lines 11-12) The people who still remember Fr. Alfonsas can testify that he truly did. ♦

Sr. Margarita Bareikaitė

What is Christianity?

A renowned historian, Adolph von Harnack, was asked to give a course open to everyone at the University. The title he chose for the course was: "What is Christianity?"

He began by reviewing several approaches to the question. Some students would define Christianity as a set of beliefs, others as a pattern of ethics or behavior. Still others would see it in the way Christians worship -- in other words, their liturgy.

Harnack suggested that the heart of Christianity lies in the person of Jesus and in His message. Jesus preached the coming of God's kingdom: He proclaimed the fatherhood of God and the infinite value of the human soul. When you recognize that God is a loving father, said Harnack, and not a stern judge, then His kingdom is established in our heart. By knowing God as the loving father of everyone, even the most vicious person, then you recognize the infinite value of the human person. Seeing all this you will attempt to live your life under the law of love.

St. Paul tells us that Jesus is the head of His body, the church... "making peace by the blood of the cross" (Col.3: 13-20). Jesus is the heart of Christianity. The Risen Christ has gathered us all around Him and bonded us to Himself as one body of which He is the head. He presents us to His Father as His beloved brothers and sisters. There, He asks the Father to accept us and love us as He does His only Son-Jesus, because the Son of God willingly died for us all. It is a plea that the Father cannot refuse. ♦

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