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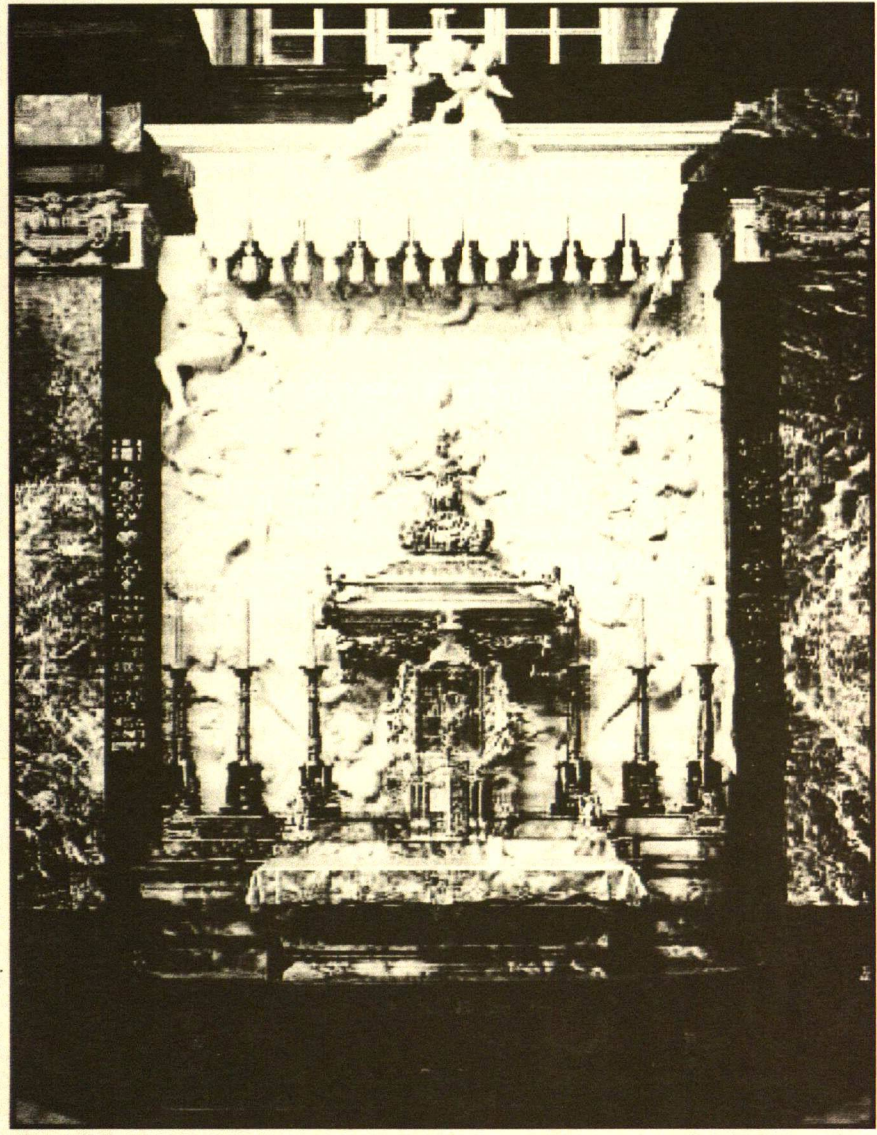
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BRIDGES

• LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL •

Volume 24

Issue 2, March 2000



The U.S. and Lithuania...Caring for Lithuania's Children...Folk Dancing 2000

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

Just recently I listened to a Lithuanian radio program over the web via my computer. Really interesting to be able to be tuned into a Lithuanian community so far away. At one point, the announcer said that they would have a mini-lesson in the Lithuanian language. Sentences were said and repeated. Very nice and useful. But I think they should also teach the "universal" Lithuanian language spoken by everyone from toddler to senior citizen.

This version uses little or "clipped" words, which may mean different phrases. Take for example, "nu" – pronounced...well...sort of like 'look' without the 'l' and the 'k' with an 'n'. This wonderful word has so many meanings with just the right emphasis.

- "Nu!" – Usually stated after someone has said or done something shocking. Here you will have to use your imagination.
- "Nu?" – Without saying, "Hey, what's happening?" or "What's new?", this nifty little word opens up many a discussion.
- "Nu, nu, nu." – Used when chastising a child...or your husband, when he comes home with another power tool that doesn't have a project attached to it yet, but "it will come in really handy, promise".
- "Nuuuu..." – You're in the midst of the best gossip you've heard in months and the only word you can utter in response to these shocking revelations is our quaint little word with a subtle, hushed elongation.

This next little word is fun because it can be used with a touch of drama. "Ai" is pronounced like the letter "I", with emphasis or elongation according to the situation.

- "Ai!" – You've just experienced a paper cut, but want it to be known that extreme blood loss will be imminent if someone doesn't run and find a bandaid.
- "Aaaai." – This rather new interpretation came to us via a 14 year-old, non-talkative Lithuanian girl who was visiting the U.S. for the first time. The only way we knew that she understood our explanations was if she would answer "Aaaai" and nod. We understood that this was the clipped version of "aisku", (another quaint little word carrying loads of inferences) which means "obviously".

Other little words to be used at your discretion include "va!" – "there you go!"; "vot" – an assumed Russian language-influenced alternative for "va"; "še" – "here you are."; "nugi!" – "unbelievable!"; "neva" – "as if..."; "navet" – "as though..."; "nei šis, nei tas" – "neither this, nor that"; "na" – "Why are we all just standing here? Have a seat."; "eik, eik" – "You're pulling my leg."; "nejau" – "You really didn't know?"; and "ach, tu!" – said for mild disgust.

Va! And you thought the Lithuanian language was difficult to learn. Nu, nu, nu.

** Listen to www.thecityradio.com/wjcu to Cleveland's Lithuanian program Sunday from 8:00 to 10:00 A.M.*

Rasa Ardyš-Juška

Editor

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Lithuanian American News Journal

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BRIDGES

- 4** On the Second Anniversary of the U.S. — Baltic (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) Charter Partnership
From the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania
The Charter demonstrates the U.S.'s attention to the Baltic region.
- 6** Linking Russia With New Europe
Vygaudas Usackas
with a foreword by Dr. Vytautas Bieliauskas
Kaliningrad's present status and future analyzed,
- 9** The Ride for Peace... Only the Beginning
The Peaceride Bicyclists
A journey's end spells renewal for a peaceful message.
- 13** Caring for Lithuania's Forgotten Treasure
Jeanne Dorr
A home for needy children.
- 17** Looking Back With Joy
Katie Hoyle and Emilija Sakadolskis
A.P.P.L.E.'s 10th anniversary.
- 20** The Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival — 2000
Jūratė Budrys
A look into what promises to be a memorable dance festival.
- 23** Lituanica 2003
The Flight of Completion
Jay V. Sakas
Darius and Girėnas's flight to be repeated and completed.
- DEPARTMENTS. . .**
- 2** PERSPECTIVES
- 25** CURRENT EVENTS
- News from our readers
 - News from Lithuania
 - A new trivia question

ST. CASIMIR'S PALMS

A traditional Lithuanian folk crafts fair dating back to the beginning of the 17th century takes place every year on March 4th in Lithuanian market places and Lithuanian-American communities.

As the fair was held on St. Casimir's Day on March 4, it's popularly referred to as Kaziuko Mugė or Little Casimir's fair.

Today it is rather more like a festival of folk art and crafts, music and dance attracting people and craftsmen from all over the communities.

In Vilnius, traditional palms made of colorful dried flowers and herbs, which believers take to church on Palm Sunday, are the fair's badge. The Vilnius palms originate from a lily with which traditionally St. Casimir is portrayed.

The son of the king of Poland and the Great Duchy of Lithuania, Casimir, ruled in the 15th century. After his death, he was canonized and designated as a patron saint of Lithuania.



On the cover:
The interior of the chapel of St. Casimir featuring the altar with St. Casimir's coffin
Photo from <http://www.mif.vu.lt/katedros/cs2/casimir.htm>.

From the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania...

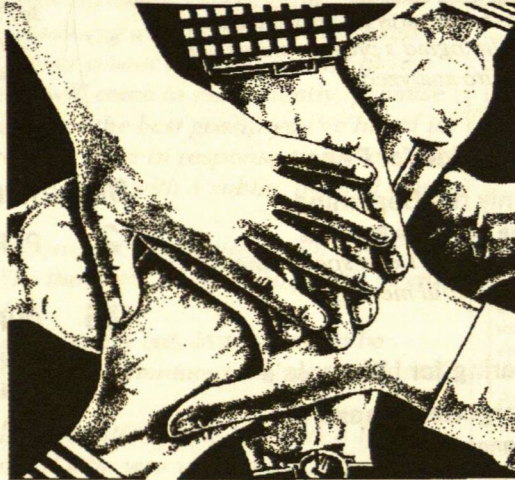
On the Second Anniversary of...

the U.S. - Baltic (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) Charter of Partnership

Two years ago, on January 16, 1998 the Presidents of the United States, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia signed the U.S. - Baltic Partnership Charter, which began a new chapter in the cooperation of Lithuania and the two other Baltic states with the United States of America.

The Charter has reaffirmed the common goal of creating conditions for the integration of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia into European and Trans-Atlantic political, economic, and security institutions, NATO included. The proof of United States's commitment was expressed in the statement made by the U.S. President Bill Clinton at the signing ceremony, saying that "NATO's door is and will remain open for every partner nation, and America is determined to create the conditions under which Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania can one day walk through that door".

The U.S.-Baltic Partnership Charter demonstrates the United States' attention to the Baltic



region, and manifests the vision of indivisible and free Europe. The Charter stresses common will for the enhancement of bilateral relations, the Baltic integration, political stability, democracy, and prosperity.

The Partnership Commission, created according to the provisions of the Charter, has become an important forum for

bilateral consultations. During the recent two years Lithuania and the United States have held a number of regular consultations on economic and security issues. One of the key goals of the security consultations is the strengthening of Lithuania's national defense and Lithuania's preparation for the membership in the Alliance by creating modern, effective and NATO-compatible armed forces.

During the period of two years the U.S. military experts have prepared a comprehensive study of the Lithuanian armed forces, which serves as the basis of the development strategy of the Lithuanian armed forces. The most vivid

THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA released this statement through the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania, Washington, D.C. Contact person is Rolandas Kacinskas.

examples of the U.S. assistance for the Lithuanian defense system have been the funding of the establishment of the regional airspace control center, assistance in setting up a joint Lithuanian-Polish battalion, handing over to the U.S. excessive armament and military equipment, and the training of Lithuanian officers in the United States. A number of joint military exercises have been held in Lithuania with the participation of the military from the United States and regional neighbors.

We hope that the Lithuanian efforts to enhance its national security, as well as constant U.S. political and practical support, will promote Lithuania for NATO membership in the next stage of the enlargement.

The United States has become an active

economic and political partner in the Baltic region. It is the leader among foreign investors in Lithuania. This provides solid foundation for the economic development of the country and well being of its people. Growing trade turnover between the U.S. and Lithuania, and recent U.S. investment into the Lithuanian energy sector reflect the implementation of the goals of the Charter in practice.

In the spirit of the Charter, Lithuania will continue the preparation for its membership in NATO, active cooperation with the United States, Poland, the Baltic states and other neighboring countries, as well as will encourage mutually beneficial economic relations; thus, ensuring security and stability in the region. ♦

Lithuania's Independence Jubilee marked in Washington

The tenth anniversary of the restoration of Lithuania's independence was commemorated on Capitol Hill this year.

The Congress of the United States congratulated Lithuania on the restoration of its independence by presenting congratulatory resolutions stating that the U.S. never recognized the incorporation of the three Baltic states in the Soviet Union, said the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington.

The resolutions also suggested that the restoration of Lithuania's independence on March 11 1990 assisted the collapse of the Soviet Union.

According to the resolutions, Lithuania has successfully assessed the principles of democracy and free market during the past ten years, as well as ensured human and minority rights

and the superiority of the law, maintained exemplary relations with its neighbors.

In seeking membership in the European Union (EU) and NATO, Lithuania has consecutively pursued the integration policy into the community of free and democratic nations, while its participation in NATO-led peace-keeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo was a considerable contribution to international peace and stability.

The resolution was presented to the House of Representatives by members John Shimkus and Dennis Kucinich, while Senator Richard Durbin proposed the resolution to the Senate.

(Baltic News Service) ♦

Vygaudas Usackas
with a foreword by **Dr. Vytautas Bieliauskas**

Linking Russia with New Europe



The Kaliningrad enclave was established at the end of World War II by the victors at the Potsdam Conference, 1945. This area was Lithuania minor before its conquest by the German Teutonic Order when it came to belong to Germany as a part of the Ostpreussen (East Prussia) territory. Historically, its name was Königsberg. The 1939 census listed 2,488,122 inhabitants -- the majority of whom were Germans. The minorities included about 300,00 Poles and 120,000 Lithuanians.

Having conquered Nazi Germany, the allies excluded the Ostpreussen region from German territory and assigned more than half of it to Poland. The rest of it was given to the Soviet Union, who was to serve as an administrator of the region until a final disposition or this area would be decided some time in the future.

The Soviet Union named this region Kaliningrad and proceeded with total "ethnic cleansing". The German population was completely eliminated: some of them fled to Western Germany; some were transported to Siberia; and many of them were killed. This total "cleansing" was followed by the rapid colonialization by Russians; most of whom were forcibly moved from their homes to this new region. Other new colonists were taken out of Soviet jails and given freedom, if they agreed to settle in the Kaliningrad region. In addition, there was established a strong military contingent whose task was to control the territory and protect the port of Kaliningrad.

Presently 906,000 people live in the Kaliningrad enclave, most of whom (78%) are Russians. There are some Lithuanians who remained, and some Germans returned from Siberia and were allowed to settle there. Factually the Kaliningrad enclave is a new artificial entity, which is struggling for its own identity and its own development. Although Kaliningrad is claimed by Russia, it practically exists isolated from its "motherland", and it is developing its own culture and its own history.

VYGAUDAS USACKAS is deputy foreign minister of Lithuania. *DR. VYTAUTAS BIELIAUSKAS* is vice president and public affairs chairman of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

Over the past decade we have become accustomed to hearing of crises and trouble spots in the post-Cold War Central and Eastern Europe. By contrast, the Baltic Sea region has been marked by economic growth and political stability. But such growth and stability cannot be taken for granted. Extensive multilateral efforts have taken us where we are today, and additional work will be required to fully exploit the Baltic Sea region's cooperative potential. I have in mind our neighbors, the Kaliningrad region of the Russian federation.

Half the size of Maryland and with a population of less than a million, the Kaliningrad region is a Russian enclave located on the Baltic Sea coast, between Lithuania and Poland. From the Cold War era, Kaliningrad has inherited many problems. Its economy is lagging badly behind the general growth of the Baltic Sea region. There are severe social problems, an unstable legal environment, an unattractive investment climate, the inability to pay debts, corruption, crime, smuggling, excessive militarization, and a military complex, which until recently, dominated the region's industry.

Following restoration of the Baltic States' independence, Kaliningrad found itself separated from the rest of Russia. Once Lithuania and Poland join the European Union and Lithuania joins NATO (Poland is already a member), what used to be considered a "garrison" will feel encircled and find itself surrounded by, but not taking part in, the European integration process. This undoubtedly presents a challenge for all concerned: Russia, Lithuania, Poland, the EU, and NATO. If the political, economic, and social situation in Kaliningrad deteriorates further, and solutions for its development are not found, the

area may become a "black hole" and a source of instability for the entire Baltic Sea region.

On the other hand, with additional efforts to guide the region toward European integration, Kaliningrad could become Russia's gate of opportunity for political and economic cooperation with an undivided Europe. From the Lithuanian perspective, the Kaliningrad region offers a unique opportunity for promoting Russia's modernization. It is in our interest to contribute to a smooth development of the region by engaging it in practical, cooperative projects, regional and cross-border activities, and people-to-people contacts. It would also help to mitigate the emerging fears of some Russians that the region might be "closed" or "isolated".

Even in the early aftermath of the Cold War, the United States understood the importance of a regional approach to the Baltic Sea area. The U.S. strategy in the region has been outlined in its Northern European Initiative (NEI), introduced in September 1997. It aims

to help build a stronger, more unified, and more stable region which includes parts of North-western Russia, both economically and socially, through cooperation and cross-border ties. The United States could also encourage American investment in Kaliningrad. That would help ensure that the Baltic Sea region becomes a gathering of prosperous and eventually developing countries. Initiatives to downscale its military forces could also be designed.

For its part, at the height of the 1998 Russian economic crisis, Lithuania provided humanitarian assistance to Kaliningrad's schools, kindergartens, and its hospitals by sending truckloads of medicine and food. Since then, as this year's chair of the Council of the Baltic Sea States -- a unique

KALININGRAD HIGHLIGHTS

- ♦ Immanuel Kant, philosopher, was a professor at the collegium Albertinum (present-day Kaliningrad State University, which opened its doors on August 17, 1544).
- ♦ Kant's grave is located around the back of the Schloss, a 14th century Gothic cathedral.
- ♦ The Amber Museum -- houses the biggest collection of amber with more than 6,000 pieces.
- ♦ The world's biggest amber mine is in Yantarny (formerly Palmnicken), producing 90% of the world's amber. A quarter of the population works in amber quarrying and processing.
- ♦ Principally manufactures ships, machinery, chemicals, paper, and lumber.

— from www.kaliningradinyourpocket.com

regional body comprised of the Nordic and Baltic States (Germany, Poland, and Russia) -- Lithuania has initiated numerous practical, cooperative efforts with Kaliningrad in a number of areas, such as transport and energy, environmental protection education, health care, cross-border cooperation trade and investment, and combating crime. Growing investment in Kaliningrad, including that of Lithuania, has created new employment opportunities for the local population and serves as the best practical example of the modern approach to bilateral cooperation in the region.

Within the European Union's Northern Dimension (ND) framework, the prime ministers of Lithuania and Russia have agreed to prepare a joint proposal for the EU, which would involve Kaliningrad in the ND regional programs.

NATO also has many opportunities at its disposal to contribute to stability here. The alliance could well aid in the conversion of Kaliningrad's military industry, the disposal of chemical weapons, and the development of a civil emergency response plan. Since there are

over 30,000 military personnel in Kaliningrad, more inclusive cooperation with the Russian military is necessary. Indeed, Poland as a new NATO member is already maintaining contacts with the Russian Baltic Fleet based in Kaliningrad; thereby contributing to increased confidence between NATO and Russia in the Baltic area.

Overall, the situation of Kaliningrad should be seen not only as an obstacle but also as an opportunity and an asset. Kaliningrad presents itself as a test of Russia's "Europeanization" vis-a-vis the processes of Euro-Atlantic integration. Conversely, for the Kaliningrad region neighbors, as well as for the transatlantic community as a whole, it is a test of how to create an integrated Europe without creating new lines of division. Continuous attention to the issues concerning Kaliningrad is essential in international efforts to strengthen relationships with Russia and to further development of the Baltic Sea region in this period of transformation. ♦

Lithuanian-Kaliningrad Border Discussed

Representatives of the Kaliningrad region and the Lithuanian state border protection services held a regular meeting on February 25th to look into possibilities of shortening the lines at the border crossing points. However, no essential changes in this sphere can be expected in the immediate future.

A one-day meeting of the Lithuanian border police and the Russian federal border service's Kaliningrad region unit representatives discussed joint actions in the campaign against illegal migration, smuggling, drugs trafficking in addition to the discussion about long lines at the border crossings.

The deputy chief commissioner of the Lithuanian border police force, Algirdas

Stonkaitis, and the head of the Kaliningrad region unit of the Russian federal border service, Pavel Pavlenko, signed a joint protocol after the meeting, reported a Lithuanian coastal defense border police spokesperson.

The issue of lines at the border crossing points was high on the meeting's agenda due to last year's increase of motor traffic across the Lithuanian-Russian points. Long lines are caused by the so-called "shuttle" cross border trade when large quantities of alcohol, cigarettes, petrol, and other goods are being carried into Lithuania -- because all these goods are cheaper in Kaliningrad. *(Baltic News Service)* ♦

From The Peaceride Bicyclists
 Edited by Rasa Ardys-Juška

The Ride for Peace: Only the beginning...



"With the Peace flag and love in our hearts we reached Hiroshima on the eve of the New Millennium. During the seventeen months of cycling around the world, we visited 45 countries in North and South America, Africa, Europe, and Asia. We made 23,500 km by bike; more than 600 cyclists joined us for shorter or longer distances in different parts of the route. On the road there were thousands of people enthusiastically supporting the ideas of the Peace Ride. It is only the merit of these people that we succeeded in accomplishing the ride and meeting the new era in Japan. Thank you." ... Slawek

An entry in **The Peaceride** web journal highlighted the thoughts of the many **Peaceride** bicyclists as they journeyed around the world for a singular idea – peace. **The Peaceride** concept began in Lithuania; the official start in Seattle, Washington on August 6, 1998; and it ended up with eleven international cyclists in Hiroshima, Japan on December 31st, 1999, in time to meet the millenium.

Only four cyclists began and ended the journey, with like-minded cyclists joining along the way to support these determined individuals. Sigitas Kučas (physicist), Edvardas Žižys (economics professor), Goda Ciplytė (English translator in the Lithuanian Prime Minister's office), of Lithuania, and Slavomir Platek, of Poland, were the original cyclists. Among the

many countries represented during the ride were Russia, Poland, Germany, Turkey, Ghana, Senegal, Croatia, Japan, the United States and Mexico.

In their web page journal, **The Peaceride** was described as "an open grassroots event". "Its purpose was to invite people all over the world to join a group of cyclists who were pedaling around the planet for peace and better understanding." According to the web page, the concept of **The Peaceride** was born in Athens, Greece in 1993, during an impromptu meeting of world cyclists who discussed the different conflicts seen in their travels. Sigitas Kučas and his fellow Lithuanians were the organizers of this daring experiment – "a social experiment to celebrate diversity and honor traditions of peace embedded in many cultures".

THE PEACERIDE web site writers were the bicyclists themselves. The main contributors were Sigitas Kučas, Edvardas Žižys, Goda Ciplytė, and Slavomir Platek.

The hardy riders had been preparing for two years to make this pilgrimage. From Seattle, the riders bicycled down the coast to California, then to Mexico, Central, and South America, crossed from Chile to Argentina. From Buenos Aires, they took a ship to Benin and began a trip northward through West Africa. They crossed over from Morocco to Spain and bicycled northward through Western and Central Europe before turning south again to Greece, Israel and the Middle East. Crossing Pakistan and India, they cycled across Southeast Asia.

Finally, the cyclists took a ship from Shanghai to Nagasaki and Hiroshima – "the sites of the only two atomic holocausts the world has ever known or ever will know, if their urgent message is heard."

Their purpose was to bicycle for peace, to deliver a worldwide message that cultural awareness was the way to unify the world. They ended their journey, but the ride for peace still continues for many nations as the new millennium counts off the days

A Look at their Journal

What experiences can awaken an individ-

ual's mind? During the trip, Sigita Kučas, Goda Ciplytė and the other cyclists were able to stop and write down their journey's experiences for their web page. They also transmitted photos, which were viewed alongside their thoughts. Here follow excerpts from their "dairy".

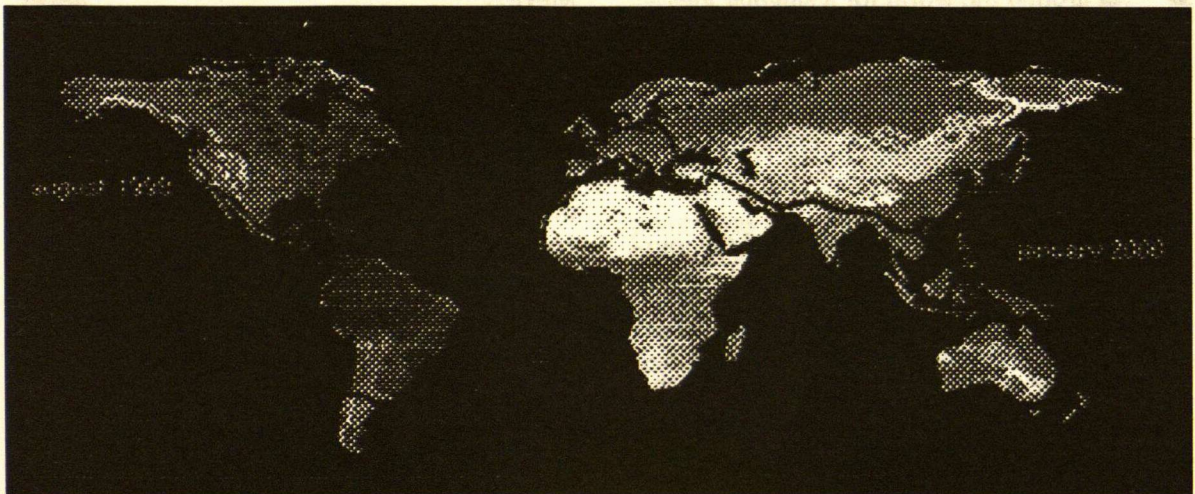
"This trip is really from the heart. Each of us can personally appreciate what peace in the world means to the ordinary person." Sigita Kučas

El Salvador

"The Peaceride met a poor family in El Salvador. The children hardly wear any clothes except for special occasions. The mother is too sick to take care of them. We collected some money and bought the medicine for this woman. Gunter took care to publicize the hard status of the family." Sigita Kučas

Ica, Peru

"Today I am so tired I can not think straight. We are resting today in Ica, Peru. All the way we cycled is in the desert. At first sight more



The route of The Peaceride.

From www.peaceride.org



The "original" foursome: Sigitas Kučas, Edvardas Žižys, Goda Ciplytė, and Slavomir Platek.

From www.peaceride.org

frightening than the one in Sonora, Mexico. In fact it is friendly enough to cycle through, if -- if you have enough water, food or fruits with you.... A house here means life, water, food and sometimes happiness. Coming to a city like Lima means the same only hundred times more of everything." Goda Ciplytė

Gagnoa, Ivory Coast

"I got up and went out just with the clothes I have been "sleeping" -- Peter's T-shirt and a piece of cloth around the hips. I could have stood in the middle of the road for something to happen, I could have knocked on somebody's-who-I-don't-know door, I could have done something beyond my control.

I found myself in hospital - walking and looking for a little better place to sleep. I found a fan and bed too! However, the hospital was overfilled with the sick, no comfort at all. Somebody asked me in French, "White woman, what are you looking for?". I shook my head trying to say "nothing" and turned towards the exit.

I slept only in the morning when it rained again." Goda Ciplytė

Iran Needs Jeanna D'Ark

"It was easy to choose the title for this story, it came up by itself -- in seven days of patience to realize the true reason of disagreement with myself. When I grasped it, I got back my sense

of freedom and independence.

If I could, I would like to be Jeanna D'Ark, but it is only a dream I want to share with you.

If I could, I would address all the women of Iran, who feel the same way I do, would they follow? ...I always feel the pressure of the men, who openly stare at me, the police, who stopped me today saying that my trousers were too short by 10-15 cm, and the women, who swim in the Caspian Sea in the black clothes covering the body from the head to feet!?. And why does the police make trouble, when an elderly couple comes wanting to talk to Sigitas and the woman has to stand back 5 meters behind the husband? What kind of freedom is it, if the police interferes in the conversation, strictly forbidding us to exchange addresses?

The girls run away like frightened hens - sorry, sorry, sorry...What for, is that the freedom you believe in?

We packed our things and moved to another place - it is quiet here, and I feel at peace." Goda Ciplytė in Anzali, Iran

October 27, 1999 Received from India.

We Lost our Friend -- Walter Ramon

"On [the] 25th [of] October all of us, eleven Peace Riders, took a train from New Jalpaiguri to Guwahati. It was around eight o'clock in the morning.

Only three of us could get into the first train, and eight riders were obliged to take the next one. Both trains were overcrowded, and therefore it was difficult to get in and get a seat. Eventually everybody found some place, and Walter sat on the floor next to the open wagon door.

We were tired, as this was the third day we have been travelling in the crowded Indian trains without much sleep. Shortly afterwards everybody fell asleep. Suddenly, a voice woke us up and we understood that somebody had fallen out of the train.

The train stopped. It took us a moment to realize that Walter was not with us. Manuel and Pier jumped out and ran back to look at

what happened, while the train slowly moved backwards.

After running three kilometers back, Manuel found Walter's documents scattered around, and a hundred meters further he found our friend surrounded by the villagers.

From the first sight it was clear that his head was seriously injured. He was unconscious. After some minutes the train arrived and we placed Walter in the train, where we provided first aid.

We arrived to the nearest village - New Coochbihar - by the same train. In the village hospital they gave oxygen and advised us to find transportation to bring him to a more serious hospital in Siliguri, 180 km, as soon as possible. Because of the bad and crowded roads it took us a lot of time - 4 hours - to reach North Bengal Medical College-Hospital. It was too late, and we lost Walter before we reached the hospital.

He closed his eyes at sunset. Beautiful sunset nearby the Himalayas. Five o'clock. He was not alone."

Sigitas, Goda, Edvardas, Slawek, Manuel, Pier, Carlotta, Ancica, Waldek, Berti

The End of the Peaceride...

China

December 1999

"This is a true testimony of our experience that all that matters first depends not on the instructions or regulations, but on GOODWILL only!

The Peace Ride is entering the last part of the route - arriving to KUNMING on 12 December, we will continue through China pedaling towards SHANGHAI. Christmas will be unusual - on the ferry to Japan! We will arrive to HIROSHIMA in time to meet the New and Peaceful Millennium." Sigitas

Hiroshima

1 January 2000,

"Life that you have lived until now is not all

that you can make." Pier and Carlotta.

"Realize your dreams. You will be happier and you will make others even more happy." Waldek.

"Face the situation as well as you are able to and do not lose the noble spirit with which you were born." Manuel.

"All the time is ours." Goda.

"If you can change yourself, you can change the world." Sigitas.

"When you are developing yourself in understanding life, do it with empathy for others because we all are on the same way." Ancica.

"Let's dream, it's time." Walter, Edvardas, Berti ♦



THE
GREAT
MILLENNIUM
PEACE
RIDE
1998-2000

<http://www.peaceride.org>

GMPP Lithuania Fund

West Europe 97

Jeanne Dorr

Caring for Lithuania's Forgotten Treasure

The late Dr. Albina Prunskis, founder and first president of Lithuanian Orphan Care, was a woman of infinite love and perpetual energy when it came to helping Lithuania's children. Right before I left for Lithuania on my last trip, Dr Prunskis telephoned me with a personal request. She was already in poor health and the sadness in her voice was evident as she told me there would be no more trips to Lithuania for her. Despite her illness, she was worried about the children and the work that still had to be done. She asked me if I could possibly find the time to visit a personal favorite of hers. Of course, there's always time when children are concerned.

Dr. Prunskis asked me to visit *Laikinų Vaikų Globos Namai*, a home for children in Vilnius. Although this particular home is not under the auspices of Lithuanian Orphan Care, it was a project that was near and dear to the heart of Albina Prunskis.

Upon my arrival in Lithuania, I telephoned Laima Makutėnaitė, the director of the home. We set a time to meet, and before long we were standing on the steps of the apartment building in Vilnius where Laima took her children in, many of them off the streets. The building was the standard Soviet-style apartment, drab and gray. As we entered, Laima explained that two

apartments had been empty; one had been a small library. The apartments were filthy and littered with garbage. There was no heat or electricity. Little by little, with the help of friends and back breaking work, the apartments began to resemble a home. When the other dwellers heard this was to become children's home, they became very irate. This was a typical situation of "it's a good idea, but not in my neighborhood". To this day the other residents ignore Laima and the children.

Once the inside was made habitable, Laima turned to the outside. This was a city home and the children would need a place to play outdoors. Unfortunately, the outside was as bad as the inside. Garbage, litter, and broken glass would be all the children would find when they went out. Once again, she begged for soil to be brought to the apartment complex, trees and flowers were planted, and some friends constructed a sandbox from donated wood. On December 19, 1996, the first two orphans arrived.

As we entered the neat and orderly house, I asked Laima to tell me about herself. (I'm always curious about the people who dedicate their lives to helping the children of strangers.) Laima's family was deported to Siberia where they spent eighteen years. During that time their belief in God sustained them day in and

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.

day out. Eighteen years in Siberia could not break her father's spirit or his love for Lithuania. After his release, he was one of the thousands in 1991 guarding the radio building in Vilnius as Soviet soldiers attempted to cut off communications. He was beaten so badly that his face required many stitches. Now I began to understand what moved his daughter to have so much love to give to others.

Laima showed me several picture albums of her children. As we turned the pages, she told me something about each and every child on the page. She was as proud as any parent could be. I began to sense that this house was different than the others I had visited. It certainly was -- the children stayed here for different lengths of time. It could be several hours or several years. Try running a house like this one -- never knowing how many children will be here from one day to the next.

At the time of my visit, there were seven girls and six boys ranging from two to eleven years in age. Laima told me how the police often bring children they find on the streets or in bus stations. This is not a regional house, as the children are from all regions of Lithuania.

Why do they run away? There are as many reasons as there are children. Some have arguments at home and think life on the streets will be easier with no rules to obey. They find out very quickly that they were wrong. Others are fleeing abusive parents; while, their parents abandon some.

I heard a sad story about a child whose mother never recovered from giving birth. As hard as she tried to cope and be a good mother, she just couldn't handle it. She comes to visit her child often, and each time it breaks both their hearts when she has to leave alone. However, most children are there because they have alcoholic parents. As Laima told me, "The bottle is more important to them than the child." She pointed to a picture of a five-year old, who had a rather well to do family. The parents drank it all away until the child did not have a roof over his head.



Two girls abandoned by their family find a loving home at Laima's.

Photo: Jeanne Dorr

Then there was the precious little girl, also five-years old, whose little arm was so badly twisted that when she arrived they thought her arm was useless. It seems that every time her parents drank too much they twisted her arm. This little girl was such a nervous wreck; she jumped at the least little sound. She constantly ducked and covered her face as though waiting to be struck. When I met her later, I saw a beautiful, well-adjusted child. Laima spent many hours massaging her arm and now she is able to use it. However, if you look closely, you can see that it still has a slight twist.

When the children are first brought to Laima's, the first stop is the bathroom. Here they are given a hot bath. For those from the country where there is no indoor plumbing, it is the first time they have ever used a bathtub. Some have to have their heads shaved because of lice; while others have to have their clothing burned. Next they are given a hot meal. There have been children who did not know how to eat with utensils; they would grab their plates and run from the room. Eventually Laima would get them to sit down, while all the time reassuring them that no one would take their food. She would speak to them gently while holding their hands and guiding the food into their mouths with the utensils. It wasn't always easy, and very often it was frus-

trating. Some even ate the Christmas scenes, which were made from dough. Once again they had to be patiently taught that everything they see could not go into their mouths.

For the first few days most children have a look of horror in their eyes. Little by little they begin to smile. Some cover their ears or run from the room when they hear the word, "Mama". Others want to see their mothers, but they don't want to go home; they want their mothers to visit them at Laima's.

The most difficult time of the year at the house is Mother's Day. In Lithuania, the day is not ruined by commercialism. Rather, it is a true holiday to honor mothers. Laima encourages the mothers to visit the children on that day and to spend time with them. The children are so excited and are dressed in their best charity clothes. So many times there are promises by the mothers, often broken when they do not show up. The children wait and wait and look out the windows. But there is no Mama. She broke her promise, and once again the disappointment and frustrations mount.

How much pain of this nature can a small child endure? Some act up, some cry, and have to be comforted. Others sit silently alone and refuse to talk. It is this group which concerns Laima the most. Sometimes she can get them to draw their feelings on a piece of paper, but it is never easy. How do you explain to a child that his mother doesn't want him?



One of Laima's treasures enjoys a chocolate bar.
Photo: Jeanne Dorr

I toured the house, which was neat and attractive, and at the same time had a "lived" in look. There were several small beds in each bedroom and a family sitting room. The children felt very much at home. For many it was a palace compared to where they came from. Each child is encouraged to keep their living space neat and orderly, and yet have an identity of their own. Their artwork hangs on the walls, as do colorful posters.

Laima's typical workday begins around 8 A.M., and if she is lucky, ends at 10 P.M. Two women work at the home and help with cleaning, laundry and cooking. One sleeps in at night.

I couldn't help noticing schedules posted on the walls. Laima explained that she knew exactly when each child was due home from school. For the first two weeks she personally takes each child to school on the trolley. If the older ones have any thoughts of skipping classes, this is quickly erased from their minds as they see Laima conferring with each of their teachers. Because she has had so many children and the teachers know her so well, they are very quick to notify her if there are any problems. They also know she will be stopping in to frequently discuss the children.

This came as a total shock to some of the children who never had a routine. This is the first stability some of them had ever encountered. Their parents really didn't care if they attended school or not. Some didn't go because they didn't have shoes; while, others did not have winter coats. As for an adult checking their progress, this was unheard of to them. The chart states the time school starts and the time it ends. No child should arrive home more than fifteen minutes late. If they are, there's a lot of explaining that must be done.

Laima and the children attend church as a family. She tries to do everything a typical family would do: they enjoy picnics and outings in the summer, as well as sledding in the winter. They learn Lithuanian history. Every January 13 the children are brought to the television

tower in Vilnius where the Lithuanians were killed in 1991.

Money always comes into question on these visits. Although they are associated with Lithuanian Catholic Women, they receive no financial help. She estimates that the government provides 50% of the funding necessary to take care of a child. It is up to her to find the rest of the money. With every organization and group in Lithuania in dire need for money, this is always a constant problem.

I would like to share a story with you about two of the little girls. One came running over to me teary-eyed and with a bright red scratch across the entire bridge of her nose. She was five years old and carrying the weight of the world on her little shoulders. Apparently, she and her best friend had a misunderstanding about whose turn it was to play with a doll. Her friend lost all patience, grabbed the doll, and hit her across the nose. My little friend was completely devastated. I don't know if it was the loss of the doll or the loss of a friend, which was worse.

As we sat on the outside steps, I asked her if perhaps she needed a new best friend. After all, one can not tolerate a best friend hitting her in the nose. She thought about it and nodded her head in agreement, but I could tell she still wasn't quite sure. She looked up at me with the biggest eyes I've ever seen and asked if I would be her new best friend. I told her I was very flattered, but because I lived so far away, I couldn't play with her every day.

She sat with her little hands on her chin thinking it over. Could I at least come on weekends and play with her? I told her I lived too far for weekend play, but this was something she was unable to fathom. How far away could I possibly live that I couldn't come on weekends? Did I live as far as Kaunas?

As I glanced out of the corner of my eye, I saw the "former best friend" sitting in the sandbox also looking very sad. I walked my little friend over to the sandbox where we sat down with the "former best friend". We talked about

sharing, hitting, and best friends. Neither spoke to the other but rather to me and through me.

Tears began to dry and long faces turned into smiles. Within a few minutes the two little girls walked off arm in arm with the doll between them. My little friend whispered to her best friend, both nodded their heads in agreement, and then ran back to me pressing the doll into my hands and hugging me. Even five year-olds know the value of a "best friend". They understand that a "best friend" is someone to be treasured and is more important than material goods. How much we can learn from children. They reminded me of a quote I once read; "Children are people under construction".

I would like to thank Laima for being a mother to so many of Lithuania's children and for spending so much time with me. I would also like to thank the organizations I contacted who have sent boxes to the children. But I especially owe a debt of gratitude to the late Dr. Albina Prunskis who urged me to add just one more visit to my list while I was in Lithuania. I'm sure she is looking down from heaven, smiling, and saying, "I told you that you would not be disappointed".

If you are a member of an organization and are looking for a project, this is a very worthwhile endeavor. There is a constant need for clothing, all kinds and all sizes. Sometime during the year a child of that size will appear on the doorstep. So many of the children arrive with only the clothes on their backs and often those clothes have to be burned. Shoes, bedroom slippers, boots, winter jackets are especially needed. Necessary items include toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, soap, and other personal care items. Last year, 93 children passed through the doors of Laikinų Vaikų Namai. If you or your organization can be of assistance, the address is:

Laima Makutėnaitė
Laikinų Vaikų Globos Namai
Žirmūnų 123
2012 Vilnius Lithuania ♦

Katie Hoyle and Emilija Sakadolskis

Looking Back With Joy

"The summer of 2000 will mark A.P.P.L.E.'s 10th anniversary in Lithuania. As we look forward to that event, let's look back at what happened in the years leading up to this occasion."

—Katie Hoyle

Ten years of living in Lithuania for the A.P.P.L.E. (*American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education*) summers was an interesting experience for us all. There were life-style adjustments to be made, new ways of coping with everyday life to be learned. In one location we were complaining about the absence of toilet seats, while in another location, we were actually learning how to use those holes in the floor. As the absence of hot water in the showers came to be expected, we perfected the "Hokey Pokey shower." You know the drill, "You put your right foot in, you take your right foot out..." Surprises appeared in the showers in the shape of mice, frogs and sleeping men.

We spent a lot of time eating. We complained that there wasn't enough food; we complained that there was too much. Notwithstanding, we spent a lot of time eating. There were sausages and potatoes cooked on the campfire around which later we sang. One time there was a scoop of rice for dinner, and more than a few times we ate pancakes. Did you like the strong coffee, or did you do like me and fill your cup half with coffee and half with hot wa-

ter? I never knew I liked cucumbers until I went to Lithuania, and how could you possibly eat cucumbers without tomatoes? And what did you think of the buckwheat? Or fish for breakfast? I'll never forget Phil Taylor's question my first year in Birštonas, "Could we have breakfast for breakfast?"

Everywhere we went there was an ethnographic ensemble treating us to a concert. The Lithuanian heritage — shared by these ensembles made up of young, old and middle-aged — proved rich, time and time again. Will we ever forget the lovely Lithuanian voices that sang their folksongs, continuing verse after verse, sure of all the words? And then they invariably also treated us to their style of dancing first-hand. American men and women were literally pulled from their safe seats and swung around the dance floor as they tried their best to keep up with a polka. Some of us did quite a good job, others did o.k., and a few of us eased toward the door as the audience participation began.

Just when we thought that we had mastered the art of using the Lithuanian phones at the post offices, the new, much easier to use phone

KATIE HOYLE is a co-editor of A.P.P.L.E.'s newsletter, Report to the Corps. EMILIJASAKADOLSKIS is the president of A.P.P.L.E. (American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education). Articles previously published in the January 2000, Vol. 10, No. 1 Report to the Corps.

cards came on the scene, and there were access numbers enabling collect calls. On occasion, when we switched towns, there were telephones in our rooms or daily access to e-mail. Through these experiences we caught a glimpse of what Lithuanians experience daily. Like flowers growing in the cracks of old cement, new technology blooms through staid, Soviet systems. Thankfully, the cracks are continually widening. We've seen many changes in these short ten years of A.P.P.L.E. seminars, these long ten years of Lithuanian freedom.

I won't forget the smile on Palmira's face every time that we entered the dining hall at the Teacher Institute in Vilnius. I won't forget the beauty of the excitement on Anelė's face as she herded us off on yet another tour around Vil-

nius. I won't forget the peace and sweetness on Marytė's face the first time that we talked at length as I stood there amazed at her excellent English. I won't forget the grace and style with which Vilma stood as she translated on many occasions. I won't forget the many "keepers of the keys" in every place where we lived and every place where we taught.

I won't forget the way that we were always showered with gifts. We were given flowers for our desks, our rooms, our hair; amber for our necklines, fingers and wrists; linen for our tables; postcards for our memories; leather-bound books in which to write our impressions; adventures for our journals; smiles for our spirits; and songs for our souls.

I won't forget talent night in Tauragė →

Now is not the time to sit back...

Because the U.S. economy is doing so well, I think that many of us assume that the world around us is doing likewise. Sadly, it's just not true. The positive economic and social trends that Lithuania experienced in the last three or four years have come to an abrupt halt, and things are spiraling downward.

The Russian economy, government instability and mismanagement, corruption and an unwieldy tax system have all had their impact. I just received an e-mail from a friend and colleague who said that this January will probably be the worst in recent memory. Rumor has it that many government employees were forced to take unpaid leave before the end of 1999, and the 2000 education budget will be slashed another 17%. This is in addition to the sizable across-the-board cut that the budget experienced this past year. We also bear the effects of these decisions. The Ministry of Education and Science cut A.P.P.L.E. financing by 25% for the summer of 2000. No ill will should be presumed, considering the Ministry's sad state of financial affairs. Some other foreign assistance programs have been cut entirely.

To add to the mix, many foreign assistance programs are closing up shop in Lithuania. The Soros Foundation is discontinuing most of its programs in Lithuania, and the USAID office is closing in September. There are others as well. It's not because of disputes or disagreements. When these programs were established, there was never any intention to have them last forever. It's just unfortunate that their discontinuation coincides with Lithuania's economic recession.

During our 1999 "Children at Risk" conference, an interesting statistic was put forth. One way of measuring economic conditions is to look at the ratio of the top 10% in comparison with the bottom 10% of a country in terms of the population's finances. In Europe the ratio is about 4:1. Many in the United States decry the difference between the "haves" and the "have-nots" because the ratio here is about 7:1. In Lithuania it's 15:1, with no sizable middle class. The problems that accom-

in 1997 when Gita arranged for the American A.P.P.L.E. group to show our varied heritage and sing our patriotic songs. It started out as a funny kind of thing with the American teachers on stage in crazy costumes. Among others were Ilona Laucius as Ben Franklin and Nyola Romanauskas Vaillancourt as George Washington. True to our American culture, we didn't know enough of the words to sing without the words in front of us. Nevertheless, as we clutched our papers, our voices were strong. When we began "America the Beautiful" (not our last number), the Lithuanians rose to their feet, tears in their eyes, reverence on their faces. There they stood for the longest time, and there we stood, singing in the midst of pure joy.

I could write enough memories to fill this entire newsletter. I haven't mentioned watching John Sullivan do the hula or lounging by the cucumber king's pool. I didn't tell about the fun of playing children's games or the excitement of hearing Lithuanians sing American songs or watching them perform the American square dances that I had taught them. I skipped over the description of the beautiful Lithuanian skies and countryside. I didn't remind you of how often we were feted with wonderful parties.

Maybe it's selfish on my part, but I don't remember so much of what I gave. My fondest memories are of the joy I received. Years of working with A.P.P.L.E. have filled my life with joy, over and over again. ♦

—Katie Hoyle

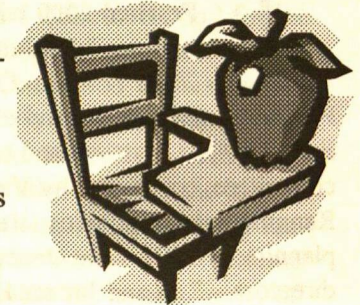
pany economic want are mounting. Teen violence, delinquency and suicides, truancy, child-abuse, nutritional and health deficiencies are all on the rise.

Now is not the time to become complacent. Yet this past summer we collected fewer scholarships for Lithuanian teachers than in previous years. We actually had to dip into our non-scholarship budget to cover the difference. During the past year our members have generated some very innovative and creative proposals. Yet these require much more money if we are to continue striving for higher quality and greater scope.

Lithuania has been asking us for more long-term programs, but we can't make those commitments if we do not have an adequate financial base. We can no longer be content with small donations, although their importance should not be minimized. We all need to go out aggressively and find grant-giving organizations that will fund some of our ambitious ideas.

After ten years we have the expertise; we have the ideas; and we have the human resources to do exceptional things. What we're short on is the financial means. We ask all of our members to take on the responsibility of finding financial support for an organization whose mission is the betterment of the personal and professional lives of students and teachers in Lithuania. There is no other way.

—Emilija Sakadolskis



Interested in contacting A.P.P.L.E.?

If you would like to contact A.P.P.L.E. about sponsoring a teacher in Lithuania and help her professional development at one of the A.P.P.L.E. seminars, write to:

A.P.P.L.E.
P.O. Box 617
Durham, CT 06422

They're on the web at www.applequest.org/index.html. ♦

Jūratė Budrys

THE LITHUANIAN FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL 2000

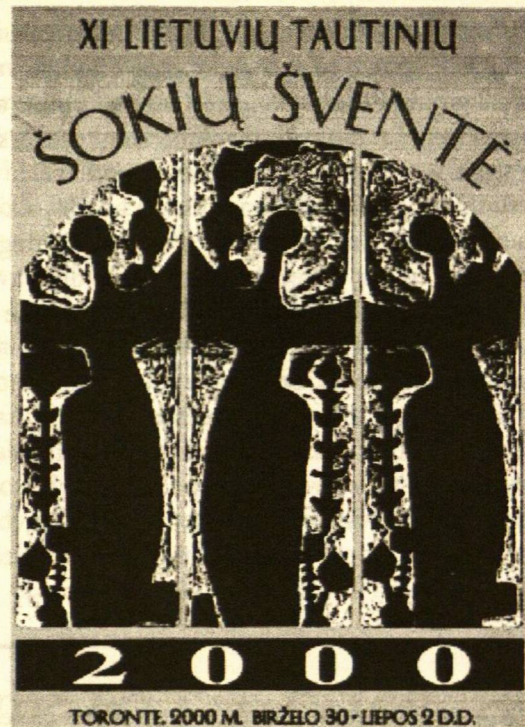
The XI Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival 2000 will take place this summer from June 30th through July 2nd in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Preparations for this grand event began in the Fall of 1998. A strong and talented organizing committee, co-chaired by Vincas Piečaitis and Ramunė Sakalas-Jonaitis, are well into their planning process. The Dance Festival's artistic directors – Rita and Juozas Karasiejus – have designed a varied and colorful program. Nearly 2,000 folk dancers are rehearsing.

The majority of the folk dance groups will be from the United States, with Canada represented as a close second. Lithuanian folk dance groups from Brazil, Argentina, Lithuania and the Lithuanian community from the Suvalkų Trikampis, Poland will also be participating. The president of the Lithuanian Republic has indicated that he too shall be attending.

FESTIVAL EVENTS

As usual, the Festival for program participants begins with two days of rehearsal. Rehearsals will take place at the Hershey Centre (5500 Rose Cherry Place, Mississauga, On-



tario – near Toronto) Friday, June 30th and Saturday, July 1st. Buses will be available to transport the dancers from the Regal Constellation Hotel to the Hershey Centre and back.

The Festival's official opening ceremonies will take place at the Regal Constellation Hotel (900 Dixon Road, Etobicoke, Ontario) on Friday, June 30th evening. Following the opening, a DJ will host the Youth Dance at the hotel. Tickets for this dance are \$8.00 U.S. (\$10.00 Canadian).

Following rehearsals on Saturday, July 1st (Canada Day) evening, there will be a Friendship Dance in the Galaxy Ballroom at the Regal Constellation Hotel. Ticket prices are \$16.00 U.S. (\$20.00 Cdn.). In a nearby hall, various planned activities and games will entertain the Festival's younger participants. Also, during that same evening, a special dinner will be hosted by the organizing committee to acknowledge and recognize the dedication of the participating dancing group teachers.

On Sunday, July 2nd, religious services will

JŪRATĖ BUDRYS is the Vice President of Information Services of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

be held according to the usual schedule at the local Lithuanian parishes. Bishop P. Baltakis, OFM, will say Mass at the Regal Constellation Hotel at 10:00 A.M..

All of the dancers will gather at the Hershey Centre later that Sunday at 1:00 P.M.. Once again, buses will be provided to transport the dancers from the Regal Constellation Hotel to the Hershey Centre and back.

The XI Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival is scheduled to begin at 2:00 P.M. The program that is planned should last for approximately two hours. Ticket prices are \$20.00 US (\$25.00 Cdn.); children (13 and younger) -- \$12.00 US (\$15.00 Cdn.).

Following the Dance Festival, two live bands will entertain guests at the XI Folk Dance Festival Banquet. The Banquet will be held in two Regal Constellation Hotel ballrooms. The Banquet will begin with a cocktail reception at 7:00 P.M., followed by dinner at 8:00 P.M. Ticket prices are \$40.00 US (\$50.00 Cdn.).

TICKET ORDERING PROCEDURES

Space at all of the events is highly limited. Therefore, it is highly recommended that tickets to all Festival events be ordered in advanced. Tickets can be ordered via mail utilizing the Festival Ticket Order Form printed at the end of this article. Order forms can be sent to the U.S. address:

XI Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival
8015 S. Karlov,
Chicago, IL 60652

or to Canada:

XI Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival
2185 Stavebank Rd.
Mississauga, Ontario, L5C 1T3 CANADA.

Tickets can also be ordered by telephone: V. Taseckas (1-905-824-4461; e-mail: vy-tas@home.com) or J. Vingelis (1-416-233-8108). It is important to note that tickets will not be forwarded until full payment has been

received.

Checks for tickets are to be made out to: "*Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival 2000*".

PROGRAM BOOK AND ADVERTISEMENTS

A special Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival 2000 program book, introducing the participating dancing groups along with historical information, will be published. As is the custom, a portion of the program book will be dedicated to paid greetings/advertisements. Paid greetings/advertisement orders and copy will be accepted until the end of March 2000. The costs for paid greetings/advertisements are as follows: \$40.00 US (\$50.00 Cdn.) for business card size; \$80.00 US (\$100.00 Cdn.) for a half page and \$160.00 US (\$200.00 Cdn.) for the full 8.5 x 11 page. Copy, along with the appropriate check, should be sent to: Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival -- 2000, 2185 Stavebank Rd., Mississauga, Ontario L5C 1T3 CANADA.

It is important to take note that the larger part of these program books (and thereby the advertisements) will be seen by U.S. residents. Why? Probably because the large majority of dancers are from the United States.

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

Unfortunately all of the sleeping room at the Regal Constellation have been booked. Special Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival rates have been negotiated from Thursday, June 29th through Monday, July 3rd (approx. \$105-\$144 per room, per night) at the following hotels, which are located in the vicinity of the Regal Constellation: Travelodge (1-416-674-2222), Quality Suites (1-416-674-8442), Novotel Airport (1-416-798-9800), and Carlingview (1-416-675-3303). It is important to mention the Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival when making hotel room reservations in order to receive the discounted prices.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Should questions arise, Organizing Committee representatives can be contacted as follows:

CANADA:

Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival – 2000 Office
2185 Stavebank Road

Mississauga, Ontario L5C 1T3 CANADA

Tel.: 1-905-275-6505/1-905-891-3018

Fax: 1-905-275-6755

E-mail: jonaitis@pathcom.com

UNITED STATES:

Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival -- 2000

8015 S. Karlov

Chicago, IL 60652

Tel.: 1-773-284-6786 (eves 6:00-8:00 CST)

E-mail: ajbudrys@ameritech.net

Complete information, in both Lithuanian and English, is also available on the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. web site, www.lithuanian-american.org or www.javlb.org

ORGANIZERS

The Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival 2000 is hosted by the Canadian and American-Lithuanian Communities. The artistic program is coordinated by the Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute. ◆



LITHUANIAN FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL – 2000 TICKET ORDER FORM

FRIENDSHIP DANCE _____ tickets @ \$16 US = _____

FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL _____ tickets @ \$20 US = _____
 _____ child tickets @ \$12 US = _____

BANQUET _____ tickets @ \$40 JAV = _____

DONATION* _____ = _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Zip Code _____ Telephone _____

* Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Please make checks out and send to: Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival 2000, 8015 S. Karlov, Chicago, IL 60652

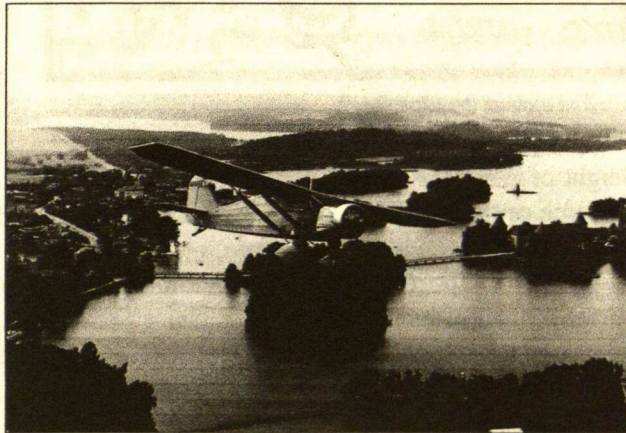
Jay V. Sakas

LITUANICA 2003

The Flight of Completion

A small aircraft drones over the vast darkness below. In front of it, towering columns of billowing clouds can be seen in the momentary flashes of lightening. Inside the aircraft, two men huddle in its tiny cabin, fatigued and staring into the darkness. It has been thirty-seven hours since they lifted their heavily laden aircraft off the tarmac at Bennett field on Long Island, New York.

The year was 1933 and their dream of flying from the United States to Lithuania was nearing completion. Darius and Girėnas were only hours away from the teeming masses of people awaiting their arrival in Kaunas. At 12:36 am, Berlin time, the adventure came to a violent end. Severe weather had moved into central Europe. After 37 hours and 11 minutes in the air, *Lituanica*, flying at low altitude, clipped the tall pine trees around the area of the Soldine forest, on the German/Polish border and crashed. While the reasons for the crash have never fully been determined, speculation is they may have been looking for a place to land --



The Lituanica, as it would have looked flying over Trakai, Lithuania.
—Photo: www.travelnetco.com

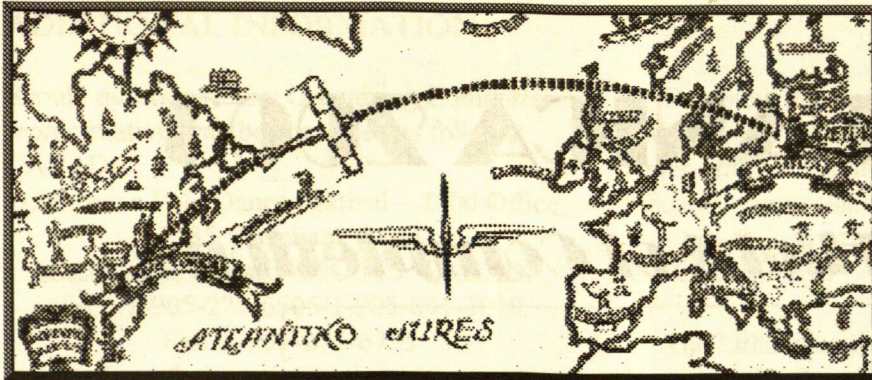
either because they were short of fuel or due to the severe weather before them or both. Their dream came to a tragic end...or has it?

It was in the early morning hours of July 15, 1933, when the Lithuanian aviators Darius and Girėnas bounced their laden

Bellanca CH 300, christened “*Lituanica*”, into the air. Their adventure to fly from New York to Lithuania had begun. The dream to fly to Lithuania had started a couple of years previously with the purchase of the Bellanca “Pacemaker” by Darius. After Lindbergh’s successful flight across the Atlantic, many attempted to fly the Atlantic for one reason or another. Interestingly, one of the many waiting for Lindbergh’s arrival at Le Bourget was Stepas Darius. Darius’ and Girėnas’ nationalism and love of aviation were the driving forces for the flight.

The Bellanca was purchased in the spring of 1932, and after major modifications to the wings, landing gear, and engine, they were ready to attempt the flight. *Lituanica* was loaded with 779 gals. of fuel and 32 gallons of

*JAY V. SAKAS was born in Lithuania, immigrated to the US, grew up in the Lithuanian community in Rochester N.Y., and resides in Sequim, Washington. Currently, he is a Captain flying 747's for a major airline. The project described is his life-long dream. He can be reached at 360-683-2343 or through the Travelnet Corporation at 800-223-8082 of which he is the vice-president. E-mail him at lituanica@travelnetco.com. This article was previously published in the *Tulpe Times*, Vol. 19, No.4.*



The route of the Lituanica.

oil for a takeoff gross weight of 8,280 lbs. Without permission from some of the countries they were to fly over, the Lituanica precariously lifted off from Floyd Bennett airport on Long Island. Ahead of them lay an estimated 44.5 hours of flying: a great circle distance of approximately 4,400 statute miles.

Lituanica 2003 Project

This project will attempt to finish the dream of Darius and Girėnas. A sister ship (only four serial numbers apart) to the original Lituanica was located and purchased. The plan is to restore the aircraft in the United States to the original Lituanica specifications. When the restoration is complete, in approximately three years and on the 70th anniversary date, the sister ship will be flown to the site of the crash memorial. The data plate from the wreckage of the Lituanica, which is currently on the display in the Kaunas museum, would be transferred to the sister ship at the crash site, documentation completed, and thus, the Lituanica will be reborn.

Recently the FAA (Federal Aviation Agency) awarded the current aircraft the original registration number of the Lituanica, N688E. At the appointed time, the Lituanica will in essence rise from the ashes, like the phoenix, and finish the originally intended flight.

With the completion of the flight, plans are for the airplane to be flown back to the U.S. in

time for the EAA convention at Oshkosh, Wisconsin, completing the circle of their dream. It would spend approximately a year frequenting air shows in the U.S. and Canada, especially to those cities where there is a large Lithuanian contingent. The aircraft would then be

donated to Lithuania and hopefully become an active goodwill ambassador for Lithuanian aviation, commerce, and education.

The funding for this project will come from the Lituanica Foundation, currently in the process of being formed. The foundation will fund the restoration, the flight, and the creation of a special display in Lithuania for the Lituanica, keeping it in flying status and preserving the accomplishments and history of Darius and Girėnas.

As with any project, help in many forms is needed for completion. We will need volunteers for all aspects of this project. Those interested in helping or contributing to this project may get additional information by e-mailing a request in care of the Lituanica Foundation at lituanica@travelnetco.com. Continuing updates can be seen on the web at the following URL: www.travelnetco.com/lituanica. ♦



Darius and Girėnas in front of their Bellanca, the Lituanica.

— All photos and Illustrations: www.travelnetco.com

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

News From Our Readers...

Folk Dancing Dreams

When I return from Lithuania, I want to start my story with, once upon a time.... I ask myself why, and a tumble of impressions comes to mind. I always feel a spiritual beauty. The country has held on to its pagan roots and love of nature. There are many wayside carvings and shrines along the country roads. Some of these spiritual origins have been translated into the Christian religion with the profusion of churches and the Hill of Crosses. The people are beautiful and gentle. I always feel that I am home.

My trip with the dance group Žilvinas, to take part in the international festival, was a privilege. The dances had taken place in the [former] Soviet Union, but now we were invited as part of the group of Lithuanians from all over the world. We came from Canada, United States, Europe, and South America; descendants of the previous generations who fled from political and economical turmoil.

The Festival lasted four days and the theme was based on the holiness of bread. The dances were interpretations of planting, growing, and harvesting. We practiced for months before we left, and several days with all the other Lithuanians for the final pageant.

It was an awesome feeling to enter the stadium with thousands of other dancers. Each group was noted by name. I felt that I was part of an historical event. Our group dances centered on the harvest. We carried sheaves of grain across the field and danced celebrating

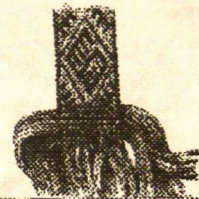
Joanne Antanavage sent Bridges her article about her impressions of her visit to Lithuania when she danced in the Folk Dance Festival, previously published in Vytis Magazine (September/October 1999, p. 19). The article won first prize in the Knights of Lithuania Foundation Essay contest. Joanne lives in Philadelphia and is a member of St. Andrew's church. She grew up in the coal region of Pennsylvania near Shenandoah, where her grandparents had migrated from Lithuania. Joanne has danced with the Žilvinas dance group of Philadelphia, both locally and in international festivals.

the harvest. When the program was finished, all the participating dancers poured into the stadium for the traditional ending, "Suktinis Polka". The young, the old, people from all nations, intertwined to dance. It was a euphoric ending!

I thought that I had enjoyed the very best... The next day we paraded through Vilnius, in our national costumes, with the other 10,000 dancers and singers. We were greeted with such enthusiasm and joy. Lithuanians broke out of the crowd to give us flowers and thank us for coming so far. Every corner we turned, we were cheered. It was so unexpected and overwhelming.

I cried thinking of my grandparents who left during czarist Russia and its harsh conditions. Just maybe they were watching?

I have linked back to the values of my family. They had a deep spiritual life, a sense of right and wrong, honesty, intimacy of relationships, and above all, love. Thinking of this and my experiences that summer, I feel blessed. ♦



Dear Lithuania...

Alexa Elena Kojelis Bertinelli, a 14 year-old from Arizona, is an avid young writer, poet, and one of the editors for her school newspaper. She has won several writing awards for her work. Alexa wrote the following poem after she arrived home from a trip to Lithuania. She and her family visited the Hill of Crosses in Šiauliai and learned of its unique and poignant history.

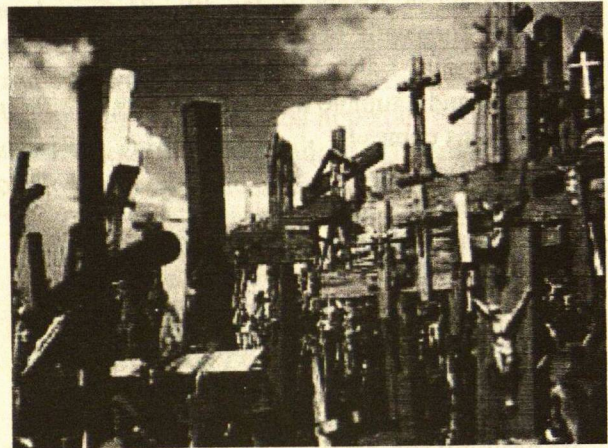
The Hill of Crosses

With fingers frail and thin but strong,
She laid to rest, the cross.
It was made with wood, tied with love,
And stood for him, her loss.

She walked away with backward step,
Careful not to lose sight,
Of the hill drowned with the crosses,
Our hope their only light.

As the night stretches into day,
The ground glistens with dew,
Millions of teardrops that soon fade,
The dark black sky turns blue.

On sun's golden rays our fiend rides,
To turn our dreams to dust,
The crosses are all soon destroyed,
The tears make our hopes rust.



But come the night we meet again,
To create what was gone.
Cross upon cross; heart upon heart,
Our day begins to dawn. ♦



Trivia Question

Vytautas Didysis (the Great), (ca. 1350-1430) Grand Prince of Lithuania (1392-1430) the most famous monarch of early Lithuania, was known by many names.

Question: Of the names listed below, by which was Vytautas Didysis also known?

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| a) Vytaut | f) Wigand |
| b) Vitold | g) Alexander |
| c) Vitovt | h) Witold |
| d) Vidot | i) Vytis |
| e) Wytawdus | |

Answer on page 30

—Ed Shakalis

Lithuania – Initiator of Freedom

During Pres. Valdas Adamkus's address to the Seimas (Parliament) on March 11th, the President said that Lithuania had paved the way to freedom for all Central Europe, when it declared the restoration of its independence from the Soviet Union a decade ago.

"The March 11th Independence Restoration Act has become not only the symbol of the nation's vision and hopes, but also a document, which had been drawn up with almost mathematical precision and which had withstood the test of international law," the Lithuanian president said, addressing the parliament on March 11th.

Adamkus said that political scientists would, in the future, evaluate the March 11th Act in terms of its importance in the country's history, its importance in increasing civic awareness, and its importance to 20th century European history.

According to the president, world historians should have conceded more than once that concepts initially born in the people's popular

movement Sajudis and later given legal status by the Reconstituent Seimas have played a decisive role in the events which had changed the entire Central Europe.

"As early as 1988 certain developments started which Moscow had described, not without annoyance, as a political trans-frontier virus — the 'pribaltiyskaya zaraza' (Baltic plague-*sic*)," Adamkus stated.

But the most significant achievement of the March 11th Act to date is, the president said, that "we cannot describe any of our neighboring states as hostile to us, we do not regard any of our fellow-citizens as different or less worthy, and therefore, less deserving to live a free and just life."

"The first decade of freedom has clearly indicated that to give a meaning to freedom is as difficult as to win it," Adamkus concluded in his address. He wished the Lithuanian people endurance and confidence in their own strength and prudence in using it. (BNS) ♦

March 10th Festive Seimas Session

Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius called for recognizing Parliament Speaker Vytautas Landsbergis as the first head of state after the restoration of Lithuania's independence, as he addressed the Seimas (Parliament) festive session held on March 11th to mark the 10th anniversary of the March 11th Act.

"It would not do justice to forget those who undertook the responsibility of leadership at that time. The then Reconstituent Seimas was the nucleus of the state and its speaker was effectively in charge of the entire state," Kubilius said.

"I think that today we should unequivocally concede that Vytautas Landsbergis was and is the first head of newly-restored state of Lithuania. Therefore, I propose to reinforce this by law in the near future, which would provide for customary state honor and privileges shown to

former heads of state," the prime minister added. This was followed by prolonged thunderous applause.

Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus, signatories to the March 11th Independence Restoration Act Rimvydas Valatka and Algirdas Kumza; former freedom fighter Bronius Zubulis; freedom fighter after the war Ona Trakimienė; and co-worker of the state War Museum in Kaunas Vytautas Andziulis also addressed the Parliament.

The Chairman of Iceland's Alting, Halldor Blondal; the chairman of the Estonian Riigikogu, Toomas Savi; the chairman of the Latvian Saeima, Janis Straume; Marshal of the Polish Sejm, Maciej Plazinski; and foreign ambassadors to Lithuania also were present at this festive Seimas session. (BNS) ♦

Lithuanian Parliament Starts its Last Full Session

The Lithuanian Parliament started its eighth session on March 9th, which Parliamentary Chancellor Jurgis Razma explained would be the last "full" session of this Parliament.

The Parliament's fall session will be shorter due to Parliamentary elections scheduled for the September-October 2000 period.

Commenting on the main remaining tasks of this Parliament, Razma told BNS that they could be conditionally divided into two groups: those "aimed at solving clearly seen problems" and those related with the basics of the country's law-and-order and law enforcement systems.

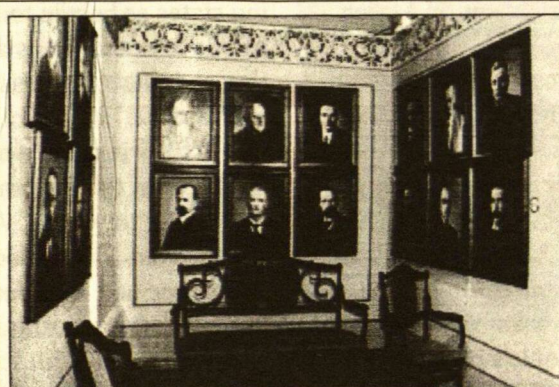
The Parliamentary chancellor said that the first group of laws includes bills on public transportation reductions, electricity, gas, Lithuanian railways, and the decommissioning of the Ignalina nuclear plant's first power unit. He said that the bills are

related with the restructuring and the future of Lithuania's largest companies.

In Razma's words, the problems of industrialists and manufacturers should be solved with the bills on protection measures and compensatory customs, and the new wording of the Bankruptcy Law.

The official also said that the Parliament will also discuss and adopt bills necessary for law enforcement: the Law on Special Investigations Service, the new wording of the Operative Activities Law, the Police Activities Law, and a new Criminal Code. It will also continue the discussion of several volumes of the new Civil Code.

Many laws planned for the spring session are related to Lithuania's commitments to coordinate its legal basis with the Acquis Communautaire. (BNS) ♦



Portraits of the February 16th Independence Declaration signatories are on display in the Parliament.

—ELTA

Russia Urged to Start Dialogue with Chechnya

Lithuania joined the statement expressing concern over the situation in Chechnya and Grozny, which has not improved — passed by the European Union (EU) on March 9th.

The EU voiced hope that the Russian authorities will allow the International Red Cross Committee and other international non-governmental organizations to boost the extents of humanitarian operations.

According to the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry's press release, the final solution of the conflict can only be reached through political dia-

logue between Russia and representatives of Chechnya. The EU once again urged the Russian administration to meet the international commitments.

The Lithuanian parliament adopted several resolutions censuring the Chechen war and joined analogous documents passed by the EU this year and in the end of 1999. (BNS) ♦

Russia Prepares New Propaganda Campaign Against Baltics

“Russia's radical populist politicians continue cherishing hopes of setting up a new Soviet Union, consequently preparing a propaganda campaign against the Baltic states,” the Lithuanian Seimas (Parliament) speaker, Vytautas Landsbergis, said during his address to the Parliament session on March 11th.

“Who can describe Russia's new populist radicalism, which in effect will play a key role in deciding our immediate future? What we have seen so far, in terms of actions, is nothing new: top priority is given to territory inasmuch that life on it is regarded with no consequence, followed by fundamental communist-nationalist trust in coercion,” Landsbergis said.

“Such is yet unchanged Russia's historical political tradition. The desire of these politicians to restore the Soviet Union, should not be seen as unexpected. The Lithuanian New Union (Social Liberals) is working here in Lithuania towards the same goal,” Landsbergis continued.

He said that “here in Lithuania we want to maintain good relations with all our neighbors,

to have common goals, including universal peace, and profit-making business in the country's oil industry. We will have all these on condition that all sides aspire for it.”

However, Landsbergis pointed out, that “we will not agree that only a bigger partner had the right to define whether good relations and good neighborly relations were, in fact, good enough; and if not, then threats will be issued: be good or else!”

The Seimas speaker said that of late it looked like most of the “blame” was being placed on Latvia, and added that Lithuania should not become too complacent on this.

“The Russian foreign affairs minister has sent a letter to his counterparts of all big states in which the people of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are described as fascists and revisionists who seek to change the results of WWII, i.e., the Yalta treaty,” Landsbergis stated.

He compared this with the situation a decade ago and said that the Russian foreign minister's letter “was aimed at paving the way for a large-scale propaganda campaign.” (BNS) ◆

Russia Wants KGB Collaborators to Keep Mum

The Russian Federation's Human Rights Commissioner Oleg Mironov expressed “serious concern” over the “lustration laws” (admitting to previous collaboration with KGB secret services) taking place in Lithuania.

“I believe that the principal regulations of the law on registration, confession, and protection of those who admit their collaboration with the USSR special services contravene the international standards guaranteeing protection of one's honor and reputation, and allowing every citizen to join the state service on common grounds and without any discrimination,” Mironov said in a letter to Lithuanian Parliamentary Ombudsman Leonarda Kuodienė.

Mironov also stated that the law “would without doubt impair the relations between Lithuania

and Russia, and objectively impede further functioning of mutual ties.”

Kuodienė told BNS that she was surprised with the doubt as to the protection of human rights in Lithuania. In her opinion, the enforced law is in line with the European standards of human rights. Kuodienė added that the regulations of the Lithuanian law are milder than those of the analogous laws in force in Germany and Poland.

About 100 people admitted their KGB collaboration during the first month of the voluntary “lustration”, the State Security Department said.

The “lustration” law suggests that names of those who fail to admit their collaboration with the Soviet-era security services may be made public. They can also be restricted from taking certain posts. (BNS) ◆

Lithuania to Host International Anti-Communist Forum

Vilnius, Lithuania is to host an international congress targeted at censuring crimes committed by Communist regimes on June 12th to the 14th.

Organization issues of the upcoming congress were discussed in early March by the joint commission of the Baltic State's Parliament and representatives of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

The commission's leader Liuda Ruginiene said that the main purpose of the forum is censure of the idea of Communism, not specific people.

Participants of the congress are expected to address the parliaments of foreign countries asking to take preventive measures aimed at putting a stop to the spreading of Communist ideologies. The congress is planning to host representatives of 25 states.

Dalia Puškorienė, a representative of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc., said that the Community's council has offered financial assistance to this specific congress. (BNS) ♦

Teaching Material to be Published on Nazi-Soviet Crimes

An International Commission investigating crimes committed by the Nazi and Soviet regimes in Lithuania concluded an agreement signed by the chairman of the Commission, Emanuelis Zingeris, and the Minister of Education and Science, Kornelijus Platelis, in early March.

The agreement stipulates that the Commission and the ministry should cooperate closely in compiling text-books for Lithuanian schools in order to teach about the crimes committed by the Soviet occupation in Lithuania and the Holocaust of Jews under the Nazi regime.

Previous cooperation agreements were signed some time ago with the Lithuanian Research Center of Population Genocide and Resistance, the Lithuanian Academy of Science, and the Defense Ministry.

The Commission is planning to sign cooperation agreements with Lithuania's universities and colleges. (BNS) ♦

Trivia Question Answer

In the book, *Samogitia*, Chas. L. Thourot Pichel, the author, wrote:

"The leaders' names often appeared under an assortment of either pagan or Christian titles. King Vytaut, of Lithuania, is a classic example of being listed by chroniclers under numerous variations of his pagan name, such as: Vytaut, Vitold, Vitovt, Vidot, Wytawdus, etc. The Germans preferred to call him by his baptized name of Wigand, and the Russians preferred to call him by his Christian name of Alexander."

h) Witold. This is the name the Poles preferred to call him.

i) Vytis (Knight). This is the emblem of the Lithuanian State. It is a symbol of Lithuanian

sovereignty from the 14th century onwards, but it may have been used earlier, in the time of King Mindaugas (ca 1236-1263). No, the knight sitting on the horse is not Vytautas the Great. Or is he? What do you think? ♦

—Ed Shakalis



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