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Lithuania and America...Father Casimir Pugevičius...Lithuanian Youth

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

The sugary, chocolatey smell, pastel colors, and stuffed, fuzzy bunnies of all sizes assail everyone who enters local stores these days. There hasn't been a time that Easter hasn't directly gone hand in hand with Easter bunnies, candy, and brightly-colored baskets. But, was it always that way for Lithuanian children?

Just as Lithuanians have their Father Christmas who visits good little children, they also have a kind, nurturing image for Easter. She is called Vėlykų Senelė or Grandmother Easter. Before Easter, she sits in her humble cottage and decorates her own hens' eggs with traditional designs seen on every folk costume, sash, and woven article. These eggs are margučiai.

She thinks of the children who await her arrival Easter morning and chooses special colorings made from nature's own fruits. Onion skins give an amber shade; beets present blues to a deep reddish purple; and sages color an egg different hues of green.

Early Easter, she places her baskets of margučiai into her horse-drawn cart and sets off for the villages around her. This is very hard work and the morning is short. Her friends from the forest help her by carrying her baskets to the different cottages and farms. Sometimes one or two tumble from the baskets. They nestle among the grasses and children look for them as a special treat.

How can Easter be Easter without the Easter bunny — even in Lithuania? Well, Grandmother Easter's forest helpers are none other than the well-rested, energetic rabbits. They are also the ones who, in their clumsy haste, drop the eggs along the way.

These Easter bunnies are remembered by mothers who prepare for Easter day. They bake cookies in the shape of rabbits and place them alongside the colorful margučiai. Pastries, similar to those we've seen in food stores under the Polish name of chruschiki, are also baked. They are smaller and shaped a little differently. The ends are not squared, but a triangle is cut into the middle at each end. The pastries take on the look of little rabbit ears on both ends, and so are called kiškio ausytės or rabbit ears. They also go by the name of žagarėliai.

The kindly Grandmother Easter and her friends leave behind symbols of renewal and joy as the Easter day ends. We remember them by using the Grandmother's designs in our folk art and the rabbit's thoughtful helpfulness in our actions with each other.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

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The Unbreakable Egg

Easter finds relatives together and the children playing the traditional Easter egg games — egg rolling and egg tapping. Both have the same goal; the strongest egg wins.

There are those occasional cheaters who decide to guarantee the win. They blow out the contents of a raw egg, insert a straw into an end, and use the straw as a funnel for melted sap. When there is enough sap in the egg, the holes are concealed and the egg is colored.

The cheater could probably win a few games before being found out. When the culprit is caught, they are given a hefty punishment — they have to eat their Easter egg, sap and all!

—Source: *Lithuanian Customs and Traditions* by Danute Brazytė-Bindokienė

On the cover:
"Jaunystė" (Youth) by B.
Žilytė (1954).

Vytautas Landsbergis

The Baltic-Atlantic Bridge: Pillars and Challenges

Ten years ago, this week, my country Lithuania voted peacefully to restore democracy and independence, to break away from the Soviet occupation and Communist dictatorship. Like the fall of the Berlin Wall half a year earlier, we became an example for peoples still captive in the long lasting prison of either Soviet or Russian imperialism. Many others also succeeded in their search for freedom; yet many are still struggling to break the yoke of the past.

The anniversary of our peaceful independence provides us an occasion to reflect on our common history and to look at the challenges that lie before us. We must find a way to build on successes of the democratic resistance and the legacy of our freedom fighters; to remember the lessons of the past; and to take great care to avoid the dangers of forgetfulness and wishful thinking that have set the stage for the tragic mistakes of our common Euro-Atlantic history. It is a time of both painful memories and hopes for the future.

Lithuania has spent ten years building a solid foundation changing and improving a culture and mentality which was forced upon our people for 50 years – more than three generations. We have worked hard to develop laws and



governmental structures to institutionalize our long held moral and political values, to build a free market economy, and to retrain and develop a defense force. It was then and is today not only the goal of Lithuania to build a bridge to the West and return to the community of European nations, but we intend that the reintegration of Lithuania into Euro-Atlantic insti-

tutions should serve as an example to others, including Russia.

Building the Pillars

In the past year, there have been important developments in Lithuania's relationship with the Euro-Atlantic community. I want to talk about three of these developments and to discuss their implications for decisions the United States and Lithuania will have to make together about the structures and institutions which support and protect our community of shared values.

First, at the Washington Summit in April 1999, Lithuania was one of the countries the NATO allies agreed to consider for membership at the next NATO Summit. Shortly thereafter, Lithuania prepared and submitted a Membership Action Plan which details the financial and military commitments Lithuania is prepared to make to the Alliance.

VYTAUTAS LANDSBERGIS is the Chairman of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania. This address was delivered during the Atlantic Council of the United States in Washington, D.C. on March 8, 2000.

Rather than wait for an invitation, whose timing we cannot impose, the Lithuanian Parliament has gone ahead and implemented major elements of the plan. By 2002, Lithuania will spend 2% of its Gross Domestic Product on defense, thereby standing with NATO states in her contribution to Euro-Atlantic security and in advancing the objectives of the Defense Capability Initiative. Our commitment to the common defense is not contingent on the actions or in-actions of a bureaucracy in Brussels. Lithuanians have resisted tyranny throughout the 20th century and will remain committed to democracy and freedom in the 21st.

Secondly, in December 1999, the European Union (EU) at the Helsinki Summit invited Lithuania to join the already negotiating group of EU accession candidates. This decision significantly advances the day when Lithuania will be fully integrated into the market mechanisms of Europe. It is with pride of solidarity that I note that Latvia was also invited during this second round of consideration and that the economic progress and market reforms of Estonia have earned its invitation at the first round of accession negotiations. It is not unreasonable to believe that in five to seven years – before the end of this decade – the three Baltic States, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, will be full members of the European Union and fully integrated into its common markets.

Finally, in February, the Lithuanian Parliament passed, and President Adamkus has signed an amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure, which allows the court to try in absentia persons accused of genocide and war crimes. There were individual cases of disability, which prevented the defendant from participating in the trial. We did not want to be caught in an endless procedure. We wanted at

“...democracies in general, and European democracies in particular, have an inherent right to ally with one another in their common defense.”

least a moral conviction. Together with a project of comprehensive education, directed particularly at our youth, about the Holocaust and its tragic consequences, this is an important step in promoting justice in Europe and in ensuring that post-communist Europe is built on a solid moral foundation.

Russia as a Challenge

Before I turn to Russia and the deterioration of our hopes for its democratization, I would like to outline the question that these important developments pose for policy. Some have argued that the integration of Lithuania and the other Baltic States into the market and security institutions of the West should be halted or suspended as a plea or a quid pro quo for Russian good behavior. Presumably, these students of history believe that the idea of democracies trading together and sharing security responsibilities is so provocative and threatening that it will provoke the Russians into a paroxysm of imperialism abroad and despotism at home.

The alternative view and, you may not be surprised to learn, my own is that democracies in general, and European democracies in particular, have an inherent right to ally with one another in their common defense.

The developments I have described confirm that Lithuania is prepared to contribute to the military burdens of the alliance; is already integrating into the market economy described by the European Union; and, because of our history, is deeply committed to the moral values, which serve as the foundation of the Euro-Atlantic community.

I believe that there really is no question for policy. The Europe to which both Lithuanians and Americans are committed is a Europe where markets, morals, and military responsi-

bilities overlap, and become mutually reinforcing and co-extensive with each other.

As for Russia, it is better to realize that despite Mr. Putin's recent words "we have never ever declared any region of the world a zone of our special interest", the realities are quite the opposite. It was proved by communist era as well as by the recent developments in Russia. As you know, Europeans, particularly Central Europeans, since we live closer to Russia, by necessity have greater and more immediate anxieties about setbacks in Russia's winding path towards democracy. The profoundly disturbing reports from Chechnya concern us all, but resonate more deeply in the imagination of Lithuanians due to the recent and still painful memories of Soviet occupation. While resisting their oppression and fighting for their liberty with great losses in the late forties and early fifties, Lithuanians were also called "bandits" by the Soviet machine of war propaganda. The term such as "international terrorism" was not needed as a slogan for such cases at that time.

The Strongest Political Pillar

It is worth reminding those here that the strongest political pillar of restoration of Lithuanian independence ten years ago was the consistent stand of the United States. Your policy of non-recognition of Soviet annexation of Lithuania during the long decades since 1940 proved to be right and an example for other democracies. Even Russia finally and officially condemned that unlawful annexation in the 1991-92 Russian - Lithuanian Treaty.

During this very period, in 1991-1992, there were indications that Russia might embark on the road to democracy by recognizing international norms of be-

havior and by building mutual confidence between nations. Their withdrawal of troops from our soil was an essential step in that direction. And, although other actions by the Russians since, both rhetorical and concrete, have been far less constructive, we have consistently worked to improve our bilateral relationship.

We worked to stabilize Kaliningrad by engaging the region in practical, cooperative projects, regional and cross-border activities, and people to people contacts. We have continued active political dialogue with Russia and are interested in developing mutually beneficial cooperation within the framework of existing institutions. We have presented to the Russian Federation concrete proposals in the sphere of economics and policy; have proposed to strengthen and develop our trade cooperation by lifting artificial barriers; and to build confidence, i.e., by giving back Lithuanian embassy buildings in Paris, still occupied by Russia since the times of Nazi-Soviet cooperation under the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact. We want to cooperate well on an equal footing. But the street must go in two directions.

We now realize, more than ever before, that full independence and security of Lithuania and her Baltic neighbors can only be achieved through complete integration in a much broader Euro-Atlantic region – truly a Europe whole

and free. The only way Russia will overcome its prevailing territorial mentality is to dismiss what some have called its "imperial temptation". We must convince the Russians together that they must replace these temptations with solid, cooperative relations with a complete and coherent Euro-Atlantic community. The predicate for such friendly relations is now (as it was in the past) ties between the Baltic States and

"...we would not like the populist radicalism growing in Russia reminding us of Uncle Joe again. We watch closely the signs and signals in all of Russia's dealings with the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union and we are worried."

"The only way Russia will overcome its prevailing territorial mentality is to dismiss what some have called its "imperial temptation". We must convince the Russians together that they must replace these temptations with solid, cooperative relations with a complete and coherent Euro-Atlantic community."

America and between the Baltic States and Europe. This is the bridge to true freedom and lasting democracy. It is based on shared values and goals with deep historical roots. The most basic value for both of us is respect for human rights in a secured democracy.

The U.S.-Baltic Charter of 1998 states that one of the basic political goals held in common by the United States and Lithuania is Lithuania's membership in NATO. The Washington summit in 1999 opened the door to the prospect of membership in NATO for all of the Baltic countries. All three of us are currently in accession talks with the EU. All of the major candidates in the U.S. Presidential process have spoken in favor of "the open door policy" and for allowing additional countries to NATO "when they are ready."

We took those words very seriously some years ago and today once again. We have worked hard to get ready, not because these actions will guarantee our membership, but because they are the right things for Lithuania to do. Our actions are premised on what is right for the people of Lithuania, which we believe also coincides with what is in our allies interests. We believe Lithuania and all Baltics are key and strategically important in the next round of NATO enlargement. We believe we

will be ready. We applaud the policy of the United States and the Alliance that will not allow Russia a veto over the democratization of Europe. Once again, we depend on you to provide the forceful leadership necessary on this important issue.

All Europeans, but particularly Central Europeans, have a keen awareness of the shifts and struggles within Russia. We see the Chechnya war as a real, yet anachronistic colonial war, and potential lesson about the new Russia. We wait to see how Russia will respond to President Kuchma's reforms in the Ukraine. We are concerned about developments in Belarus. We see the re-emergence of populist radicalism in Austria as a reminder of the dangers of European history. Similarly, we would not like the populist radicalism growing in Russia reminding us of Uncle Joe again. We watch closely the signs and signals in all of Russia's dealings with the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union and we are worried.

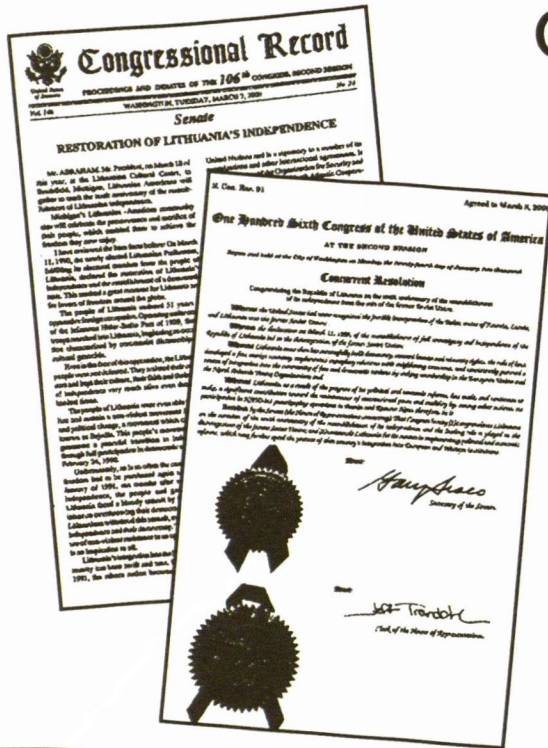
Only through strengthening our bridges with the Atlantic Alliance, both militarily and economically, will we prevent history from repeating itself. Only through these ties will we enable democracy and the values we share to prevail in the new millennium.

Once again, as we have over the last sixty years, we look to the United States to provide the strength and the leadership to both the Alliance and the world to serve as a beacon for the Baltic states, to be our bridge to securing a lasting freedom and democracy. We appreciate all that you have done and continue to depend on you to set the example for the rest of the world.

The last ten years have brought us closer to achieving our goals. Together we have learned many lessons. I am hopeful our future will continue to get brighter and the bridge between the United States and Europe will withstand the challenges of the 21st century. May God bless all of us. ♦

Edited by Rasa Ardys-Juška

The United States Acknowledges Lithuania's Independence Day Celebrations



CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 91 — The 106th Congress, Second Session

Congratulating the Republic of Lithuania on the tenth anniversary of the reestablishment of its independence from the rule of the former Soviet Union.

Whereas the United States had never recognized the forcible incorporation of the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the former Soviet Union;

Whereas the declaration on March 11, 1990, of the reestablishment of full sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Lithuania led to the disintegration of the former Soviet Union;

Whereas Lithuania since then has successfully built democracy, ensured human and minority rights, the rule of law, developed a free market economy, implemented exemplary relations with neighboring countries, and consistently pursued a course of integration into the community of free and democratic nations by seeking membership in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; and

Whereas Lithuania, as a result of the progress of its political and economic reforms, has made, and continues to make, a significant

During the months of February and March Lithuanian-Americans were recipients of federal, state, and city resolutions proclaiming February 16th and March 10th days of Lithuanian Independence commemoration.

Below is the wording of Concurrent Resolution 91 supported by these Senators: Mr. Durdin, Mr. Gorton, Mr. Lott, Mr. Helms, Mr. Campbell, Mrs. Feinstein, Mr. Abraham, Mr. Lieberman, Mr. Grassley, Mr. Smith, Mr. Robb, and Mr. Fitzgerald. The House of Representatives concurred with the Resolution.

RASA ARDYS-JUŠKA is the editor of BRIDGES.

contribution toward the maintenance of international peace and stability by, among other actions, its participation in NATO-led peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Kosovo: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring,) That Congress hereby —

(1) congratulates Lithuania on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the reestablishment of its independence and the leading role it played in the disintegration of the former Soviet Union; and

(2) commends Lithuania for its success in implementing political and economic reforms, which may further speed the process of that country's integration into European and Western institutions. Passed the Senate March 2, 2000.

In addition, Hon. Tom Lantos, of California, spoke before the House of Representatives in "strong" support of this Resolution. Here follows an excerpt from his speech.

"Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. Con Res. 91 congratulating the Republic of Lithuania on the tenth anniversary of the reestablishment of its independence from the rule of the former Soviet Union. It is most appropriate that we are considering this resolution today, Mr. Speaker, because we have with us the most distinguished Speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament, Vytautas Landsbergis, who has played such a pivotal role in the renewal of the independence and sovereignty of Lithuania some ten years ago and who previously served as the President of Lithuania.

Mr. Speaker, I remember meeting with Speaker Landsbergis on a visit to Lithuania over ten years ago as the first stirrings of renewed independence were beginning to quicken life there. On that occasion, Speaker Landsbergis was a prominent musicologist and had not yet begun his political career. We walked to-

gether into one of Vilnius' outstanding Churches in order to get beyond earshot of the Soviet KGB officials who were directed to follow us. As we sat in one of the pews, we discussed his vision of the reestablishment of a sovereign and independent Lithuania. At that time, his vision appeared beyond any hope. Today, Mr. Speaker, we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of Lithuania's independence.

I had the opportunity to visit Lithuania just two months ago, Mr. Speaker, where I again had the opportunity to see the progress that has come after a decade of freedom. Lithuania's extraordinary progress during the past decade should serve as a model for all young democracies. Its leaders and its people have shown a commitment to free markets, civil liberties, and fair and open government as they have worked with such devotion to build their great nation. Lithuania stands today as a respected member of the international community and one of America's strongest allies. It is my sincere hope that, sooner rather than later, Lithuania's extraordinary achievements will be recognized in the form of a well-deserved invitation to join the NATO.

Mr. Speaker, there is one matter of particular importance for which I would like to praise Speaker Landsbergis and the members of the Parliament (*Seimas*). Last month, by a vote of 54 to 6, the *Seimas* adopted amendments to the Lithuanian legal code which permit the conduct of war crimes trials in absentia if the accused is unable to be present for the trial because of medical reasons. This action will enable the Government of Lithuania to seek justice against some of the most notorious perpetrators of atrocities alive today.

This legislation, which was drafted by my friend Dr. Emanuelis Zingeris, the Chairman of the *Seimas*' Human Rights Committee, states that if a person charged with genocide "cannot for reasons of his physical condition, according to the findings of experts, be present at the place of the hearing, the defendant shall be provided technical facilities at the place where he is

staying to directly take part in the hearing by giving evidence to the court, putting questions to other participants of the hearing and taking part in the proceedings." This reform will allow defendants in war crimes the right to participate in their own defense, but it will also permit the victims of these horrendous crimes against humanity to see that justice is done...

...Mr. Speaker, it is in this spirit that I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting S. Con. Res. 91. The accomplishments of the Lithuanian people during the past decade are impressive, but they pale only in comparison to the promise of this great nation in the years to come."

Governor George H. Ryan, Illinois, affixed his signatures on two proclamations urging Lithuania's admission into NATO and acknowledging Lithuania's progress in the last decade, as well. If your state or city performed such a gracious act of proclamation, please let us know. ♦

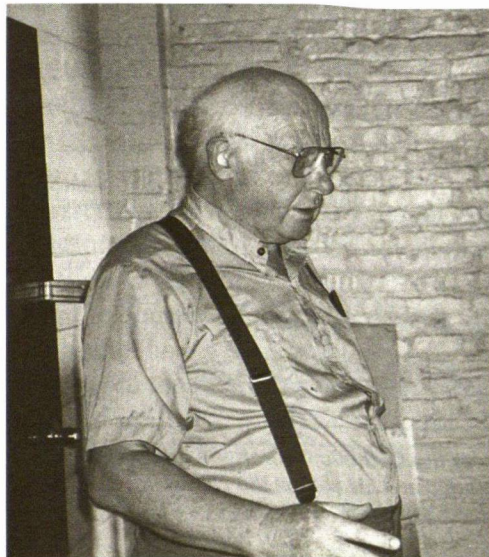


Governor George H. Ryan presents the proclamation for the 10th anniversary of the re-establishment of independence of the Republic of Lithuania to representatives of the Lithuanian World Center and Lithuanian American Community, Inc., Lemont Chapter. The proclamation included the Governor's support of the Admissions of Lithuania to the North Atlantic Treaty Organizations.

Pictured left to right: Laima Zavistauskas, Nijolė Nausėdas, Romas Kronas, Governor Ryan, Rasa Leitenantienė and Violeta Karalis.

—Photo from the Office of the Governor of Illinois

*Sister Ona Mikaila
and George P. Matysek, Jr.*



The late Father Pugevičius blesses a container of books to be shipped to Lithuania's schools.

Photo: Albert and Leona Gustaff

On March 4, 2000, the feast of his patron St. Casimir, Father Pugevičius' funeral Mass was celebrated at St. Alphonsus Church in Baltimore, Maryland. He had been baptized in this church nearly 72 years ago, soon after his birthday on April 29, 1928. His parents had belonged to this parish after they immigrated to the United States from Lithuania before World War I. Proud of being a Lithuanian-American, Casimir Pugevičius took pains to learn Lithuanian so that he could speak it as fluently as English.

Many friends came to pay their last respects to a man and a priest they knew as "Father Cas". Four bishops concelebrated the funeral Mass, with the Archbishop of Baltimore, William Cardinal Keeler as main celebrant. Nearly

Remembering Father Casimir Pugevičius: A Champion for Lithuania's Cause

100 priests and seminarians were present. After Mass, the Lithuanians in the congregation sang a traditional Easter song, "Linksma diena mums nušvito" /A joyful day has dawned/: this was at Father Casimir's own request to express his faith and hope in the Resurrection.

His life had been an interesting and active one. After completing his studies at Catholic University and St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, he was ordained a priest in 1953. He then served as assistant pastor in several Baltimore parishes. In the early sixties, he became interested in communications: his goal was to give new life to Catholic broadcasting. He studied radio, television and filmmaking at the Baltimore Community College and the University of New York. He served as director of radio and television broadcasting for the archdiocese of Baltimore from 1965-74; directed the archdiocesan Bureau of [Media] Information from 1967-70; and was president of the Catholic Broadcasters Association in 1970-72. He

*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. **GEORGE P. MATYSEK, JR.** is review staff correspondent with **The Catholic Review**, Baltimore, Maryland. The article appeared in the Volume 64, No. 37, Thursday, December 23, 1999 issue. Thank you to Edward Baranauskas, who submitted it to BRIDGES.*

also founded the Maryland Citizens' Coalition for Cable Communications.

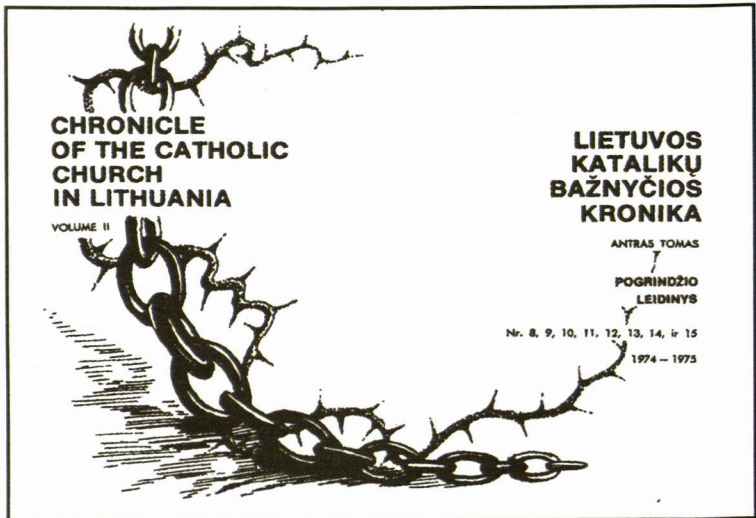
In 1973, he was persuaded by a group of Lithuanian-American leaders to head the newly formed Lithuanian-American Catholic Services to help Lithuanian parishes in their struggle to survive.

After making an information-gathering tour of the Lithuanian Parishes in the U.S., Father Pugevičius left his native Baltimore and settled in Brooklyn, New York. On March 1, 1976 he set up his headquarters in a renovated garage at the back of the Lithuanian Franciscan Monastery and Center in Brooklyn. He also took on the duties of leadership of the relief organization Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid.

To these projects Father Pugevičius brought his enthusiasm for all things Lithuanian and his experience in communications. Along with helping Lithuanian parishes, he saw a need to inform the American hierarchy and the general public about the Soviet repression of religious freedom in Lithuania.

At the Brooklyn Center, with the help of his assistants Marion and Andrew Skabeikis, Gintė Damušytė and others and using newly installed computers, he translated the underground publication, *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* into English (from 1972 to 81) issue by issue, as it was smuggled out of the country to the West. Fr. Pugevičius published 81 issues in booklet form and distributed them widely to the American Bishops, to members of Congress, delegates to the United Nations, and other leaders. Eventually, the Lithuanian Information Center was formed and used as a liaison with various news distribution agencies and human rights organizations.

The Services Center produced over 1,000 radio and TV programs about the plight of the Catholic Church in Lithuania. Among his



Volume 2 of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, which was published by Fr. Pugevičius and his staff at the Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid offices, Brooklyn, New York.

works were film documentaries about the Chapel of Our Lady of Šiluva at the National Shrine in Washington; a docudrama of the Soviet trial of Fr. Šeškevičius in Lithuania; and several programs on Lithuanian religious dissidents and martyrs, especially those sentenced to hard labor in Siberia. The best known of these dissidents was Nijolė Sadūnaitė, who was tried and sentenced to Siberia in 1975. Fr. Pugevičius had a booklet about her published in English and distributed thousands of copies to the American public. He also had her memoirs translated and published in book form as *A Radiance in the Gulag* (Manassas, VA: Trinity Communications, 1987).

After 1989, Fr. Pugevičius and his Center invited several famous dissidents who had served time in Siberia. These were Fr. Alfonsas Svarinskas, Nijolė Sadūnaitė, and the editor of the *Chronicle*, Fr. Sigitas Tamkevičius (now Archbishop of Kaunas), to come to the United States and make a speaking tour of Lithuanian parishes and organizations. These people were warmly welcomed by all the Lithuanian-American communities they visited and also received extensive coverage by both the Lithuanian and the American news media.

By 1990, Religious Aid had gathered and distributed over one million dollars in aid for the Catholic Church in Lithuania. After twenty years of untiring and very productive labors, Father Pugevičius retired from his duties at the Brooklyn Center and returned to Baltimore. He felt that he might still be useful and decided to go to Lithuania after the grateful Lithuanian hierarchy had invited him. Fr. Pugevičius went to help out at a new parish in Vilnius named after Blessed George Matulaitis. He was overjoyed to come back to pastoral work. His failing health, however, prompted a return to Baltimore. In the summer of 1998, walking on

crutches, he attended the Lithuanian priests' retreat in Putnam, CT, which he had helped organize in 1976.

His steadily deteriorating condition did not stop him from officiating at his own brother's funeral in 1999. This brother was disabled and Father Casimir always spoke of him with great warmth and affection.

As we remember Father Casimir Pugevičius for his unflinching optimism, his infectious enthusiasm, his generosity and love of people that made him an unforgettable friend, we also call to mind his faithfulness as a priest who proclaimed the Word at all times. ♦

—Sr. Ona Mikaila

Lithuania Honors Father Casimir Pugevičius

They may have looked like innocent tourists visiting their Lithuanian families back in the dominated that small, central European nation. In reality, they were "secret agents" from the Catholic Church in America who risked imprisonment by smuggling religious books, catechisms and religious articles to a people starved for spiritual nourishment.

And [who were] those 1,000 Lithuanian women who appeared to be little more than teachers and other workers to their neighbors and the ever present KGB? They were underground nuns who smuggled bits of paper out of Lithuania with a Jesuit priest in pieces of candy or tubes of toothpaste, outlining human rights abuses and church persecution for publication in the west.

Father Casimir Pugevičius, a Baltimore priest who grew up in the Lithuanian parish of St Alphonsus in Baltimore, was the man who helped coordinate both of the high-risk cloak and dagger operations when he headed the New York-based Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid for 17 years beginning in 1976.

In honor of his efforts to defend human

rights and restore Lithuanian independence, Father Pugevičius was awarded the Order of the Grand Duke Gediminas — one of the highest honors of the Lithuanian nation — during a Dec. 17 ceremony at the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington, D.C. Ambassador Stasys Sakalauskas, acting on behalf of President Valdas Adamkus, draped the medal around Father Pugevičius' neck

"Our job was to process the information smuggled out about the church and human rights," remembered Father Pugevičius, now in residence at St Vincent de Paul in Baltimore. "They would take the papers to Moscow and get them to foreign correspondents who would send them to us. Then we published what they wrote for the Vatican."

Out of those tiny slips of paper and photographs of Lithuanian resistance documents, Father Pugevičius was able to publish more than 70 volumes of the "Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania". The booklets outlined how the Communists persecuted citizens who attended Mass — ridiculing their children in school or taking away their jobs. They were often read over the radio airwaves on Voice of

America.

"It was a subtle kind of oppression, but it was very real oppression," said Father Pugevičius. "The Communists wanted to fool the west that they weren't persecuting the church. We showed what was really going on."

Although he was not involved in actually going to Lithuania to smuggle information in and out of the country, Father Pugevičius himself was very much at risk for his involvement in the movement. When fanatically committed Communists were quietly assassinating opponents, Father Pugevičius was one of those most in danger. In fact, the priest decided not to visit the Holy Land out of fear that he would be tracked down and "stuck with a poisoned needle on the end of an umbrella".

"I was on their list of bad guys," Father Pugevičius said.

After Communism finally crumbled and Lithuania won its independence in 1991, Father Pugevičius served as a parish priest for several years at St. George Matulaitis in Vilnius.

There, he helped compile and publish a hymnal of traditional and contemporary Lithuanian hymns that is now used all over the country.

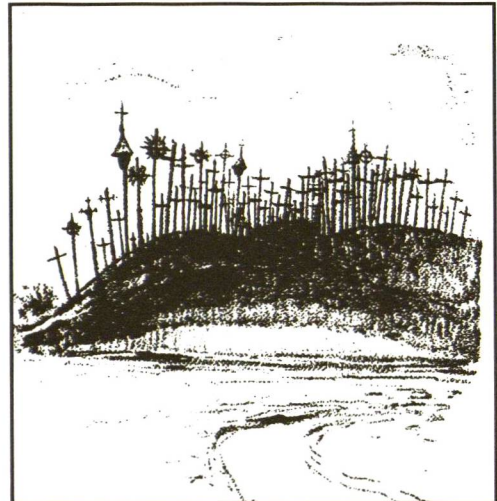
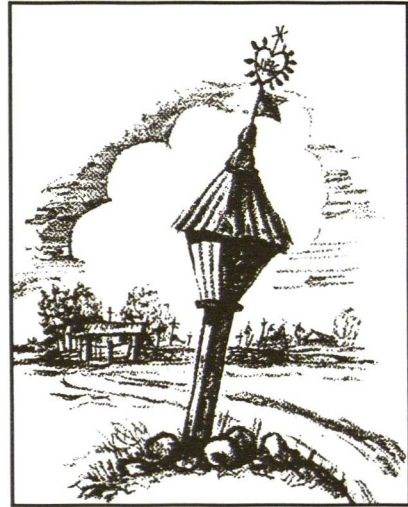
"One of the biggest problems now is that they just got out from under Communism and they're suddenly smacked in the face with western values that aren't all the greatest in the world," Father Pugevičius said, noting that materialism, drug use, and sexual permissiveness seem on the rise in Lithuania. "The church does good work fighting that."

The 71 year-old priest, who returned to Baltimore to battle a malignant brain tumor, said he was honored to be recognized by Lithuania for his work.

"It's a humbling experience to meet people who had been through an era of persecution," he said. "It felt like working with people who came out of the catacombs. They were people who were willing to pay the price for their faith." ♦

—George P. Matysek, Jr.

Illustrations on the right are from the Chronicle. They were used in the 1972-1973 volume, which contained Nrs. 1 to 7. Paulius Jurkus was the illustrator.

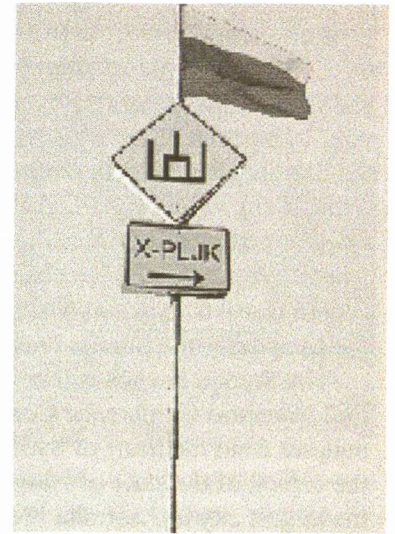


G'Day Martes! It's The Xth World Lithuanian Youth Congress!

The Xth World Lithuanian Youth Congress (Pasaulio Lietuvių Jaunimo Kongresas or PLJK) is organized every three to four years by members of the World Lithuanian Youth Association (Pasaulio Lietuvių Jaunimo Sąjunga or PLJS). The year 2000 Congress is being organized by the Australian Lithuanian Youth Association (Australijos Lietuvių Jaunimo Sąjunga or ALJS) in conjunction with the PLJS. The formal part of the Congress is for all Lithuanians living outside of Lithuania between ages 18 and 35, whilst the Congress Tourist program is offered to all who want to attend.

There will be three parts to the Congress: the Conference (Studijų Dienos), the Camp (the Stovykla), and the Tourist Program (Turistinės Ekskursijos).

At the same time as the Congress is taking place, the Australian Lithuanian Community will be holding its Cultural and Sports Festival. The Cultural and Sports Festivals have programs that are all their own. Congress will blend in daytime formal discussions with as much of the Festival's nighttime program as possible.



The Conference - Studijų Dienos 22nd December 2000 to the 1st January 2001

The Studijų Dienos start on Friday, December 22nd, and finish after the New Year's Eve Ball on Monday, January 1st, 2001. The purpose of the Studijų Dienos is to hold a general meeting of the PLJS; provide discussion forums; and to listen to special presentations on a number of topics based on the Studijų Dienos themes.

The themes are based on the survival of Lithuanian communities abroad and the reform of PLJS and PLJK. Special emphasis will be placed on the conditions and problems of Lithuanians from Eastern Europe because their communities operate under the most adverse conditions and need our help. The Studijų Dienos is the most formal part of the Congress. It is the event where all future policy of PLJS is decided and the PLJS executive is elected.

You must register through your local Lithuanian Youth Association (Lietuvių Jaunimo Sąjunga or LJS) if you want to come to the Studijų Dienos, as the number of places for Atstovai (delegates) is limited by the PLJS constitution. To become an Atstovas, you must be elected by your country's LJS, and the term of

THE AUSTRALIAN LITHUANIAN YOUTH ASSOCIATION is the sponsor of the 2000-2001 World Lithuanian Youth Congress and invites all Lithuanian heritage youth between the ages of 18 and 35 to travel forth to Australia this winter.

your candidacy lasts from this Congress to the next. For further information about the duties and responsibilities of Atstovai, please contact your LJS or the PLJS. It is possible to attend the Studijų Dienos as an unelected observer, without any voting rights. All that are interested in participating are invited to come, whether as Atstovai or as observers. It is expected that Atstovai and observers will attend the camp after the Studijų Dienos.

The Studijų Dienos will be held at the beautiful Namaroo Conference Centre, just thirty minutes from the heart of Sydney. Sydney is the capital of the state of New South Wales and the largest city in Australia. Namaroo is situated on eight hectares of natural bushland and landscaped gardens adjoining the Lane Cove National Park. You can visit the native animal shelter, the visitors' centre, or take a swim in the pool.



Discussion Topics at Studijų Dienos

Topics to be discussed at the Studijų Dienos include:

- A review of the activities of the Lietuvių Jaunimo Sąjungos around the world.
- We hope to examine the different structures of the Associations abroad and form a global picture of Lithuanian life internationally.
- Is there a need for future Congresses and the PLJS?
- The problems of Lithuanian communities in Eastern European countries and what Lithuanian communities in the West can do to help them.
- A discussion of the nexus between Lithuania and the Lithuanian diaspora.
- The PLJS needs to determine a realistic cultural and political action plan in the light of Lithuania's independence.
- The PLJS needs to understand its strengths

and weaknesses as a global organization.

- The PLJS should compare its survival strategies to other successful expatriate cultures such as the Jews and the Irish.
- A discussion of the problems and needs of recent Lithuanian migrants, and how existing Lithuanian communities may help them. How can these migrants assist Lithuanian communities?
- An examination of the role of the Lithuanian language in our communities, including a discussion of the benefits and importance of language in defining our national identity.
- An analysis of possible Lithuanian community activities without the use of the Lithuanian language.
- The election of the next executive board of the PLJS.

Here's a taste of what you'll be doing during Studijų Dienos evenings:

- ◆ Congress Opening Ceremony.
- ◆ Kūčios (Christmas Eve) to be celebrated in a traditional Lithuanian manner.
- ◆ Christmas Day, after Mass, will be spent on the beautiful shores of Bondi beach.
- ◆ The Sydney Harbour Boat cruise will delight you with spectacular views of the world's most famous harbour. Imagine cruising beneath the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Sydney Opera House with Lithuanians from around the world.
- ◆ An International Concert will be held that will showcase the talents of the delegates.
- ◆ To top off the week of events, greet the real new millennium at the biggest New Year's Eve Ball of the Century.

The Camp - Stovykla

2nd January 2001 to the 9th January 2001

Unlike the Studijų Dienos, the Stovykla is a more relaxed and informal affair; the emphasis is on hands-on activities and workshops rather than intellectual discussions. Expect an aver-

age temperature of above 30 degrees celsius (85° F) as you participate in various Lithuanian cultural activities and tours throughout the countryside.

The Stovykla is open to all youth between the ages of 18 to 35 years. There are no restrictions on who can be a Dalyvis (participant). It is possible for a Dalyvis to arrive before the camp, attend the Opening Ceremony, Kūčios, the flight tour (or observe the Studijų Dienos), the New Year's Ball and the Closing Ceremony.

The Stovykla will be held at the most prestigious agricultural College in the Southern Hemisphere — Melbourne University's Dookie College Institute of Land and Food Resources. Dookie College is located in the Goulburn Valley of Victoria, the heart of Victoria's fruit growing region, about 200km north of Melbourne.

Dookie has single bedrooms, a 25 metre outdoor pool, tennis courts, squash courts, a large football field (anyone for a spot of cricket?) and a mob of approximately 100 kangaroos that bound around freely throughout the grounds.

Some of the Stovykla activities include:

- Tips, trips, and traps in the art of Lithuanian cuisine.
- Lessons in basic Lithuanian.
- Making traditional Lithuanian arts and crafts.
- Sports activities.
- Lessons in traditional Lithuanian folk singing and dancing.
- Discussions on how to raise funds in your own community.
- Lobbying techniques.

Some of the tourist activities include tours of the Goulburn Valley region including the local animal sanctuary where you can hand feed



kangaroos and wallabies. Other tours will focus on the history of the Aborigines – Australia's indigenous peoples.

The Congress Committee and Where to Contact us

Petras Šurna – Chair
 Vida Luimaitė – ALJS President
 Linas Šeikys – Vice Chair
 Melisa Savickaitė – Marketing/Public Relations
 Gabrielė Staugaitė – Treasurer
 Martynas Zdanius – Marketing
 Casimir Zdanius – Secretary
 Vytas Brazaitis – Webmaster
 Šarūnas Vaitkus – Jaužinio Editor
 Tanya Cugura – Tourist Program Director
 Lukas Zdanius – Critical Comments
 Jonas Rukšėnas – Special Operations

Contact us at:

Xth World Lithuanian Youth Congress
 13/16 Nicholson Street
 Brunswick East 3057 Australia

-OR-

on the internet at www.rapidnet.net.au/~aljs
 for registration and more detailed information
 on the Congress. ♦



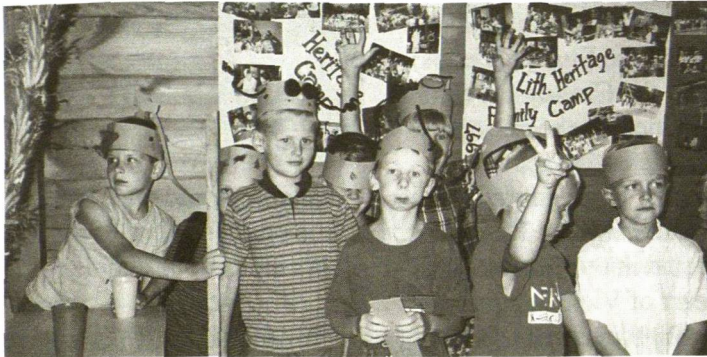
Marcy Couitt

The Special "Stuff" of Camp Neringa

Two years ago, around St Patrick's Day, my daughter came home from kindergarten insisting that she wanted to be Irish. She insisted the Irish people were "special" because they had special music, they had special dances, and a special flower with lucky shamrocks. All this earnestness was coming from my 5 year-old who was growing up in a family that at the very least, incorporated Lithuanian traditions and food on all the major holidays and family birthdays. I was flabbergasted.

Needless to say, we sat down and had a comparison discussion on just how "special" our own Lithuanian heritage and culture was. This discussion also sparked my search to find a way to show my daughter how to better experience her own rich Lithuanian culture. She was growing up surrounded by tidbits of culture without realizing how unique and special it was. This search led me back to Camp Neringa.

I remember attending Camp Neringa's English-speaking Lithuanian Heritage camp every summer when I was growing up. I remember the ride up the mountain for two weeks of sunshine, fresh air, and cabin living. The days were filled with sports, games, songs and skits. Every day had a theme: Friendship, Sports, International, Kūčios (Christmas Eve) in July, Lithuanian history, laužas (bonfire), etc. The day's activities emphasized the theme. Our days were filled with learning Lithuanian folk dances, Lithuanian and American songs, arts and crafts, swim time, a short Lithuanian lan-



guage and history class, snack time, etc. Often, cabin residents had to think of and act out a skit related to that day's theme. Sometimes, there was even some healthy competition between the cabins. When I think of Camp Ner-

inga, I remember feeling how "special" it was to be Lithuanian. The memories still make me smile today.

Well, we went to Camp Neringa's Family Heritage weekend and then my daughter stayed one week at the English Speaking Lithuanian Heritage children's camp. Then, this past summer, she stayed for the full two-week session. It was wonderful to hear my daughter tell me how to say her name in Lithuanian and hear her sing snatches of songs she had learned at camp. It made me smile to think some things at camp had stayed the same. But it was this past September when I knew Camp Neringa had helped me in my goal: when I heard my daughter telling her friends of the "special" camp she went to in Vermont to learn about Lithuanian songs, games, and "stuff".

I encourage your family, children, and grandchildren to experience the "special stuff" Neringa has to offer. The 2000 camp schedule includes a session in English for children 7-16 years old from August 6th to the 19th and a family camp in English for families with young children from June 30th to July 4th. For more information regarding these sessions or sessions in Lithuanian, please contact Dana Grajauskaitė (Camp Director) at 617-923-4583 or neringai@yahoo.com. ♦

MARCY COUITT is a Neringa camper, counselor, and mom. Photo from Dana Grajauskaitė

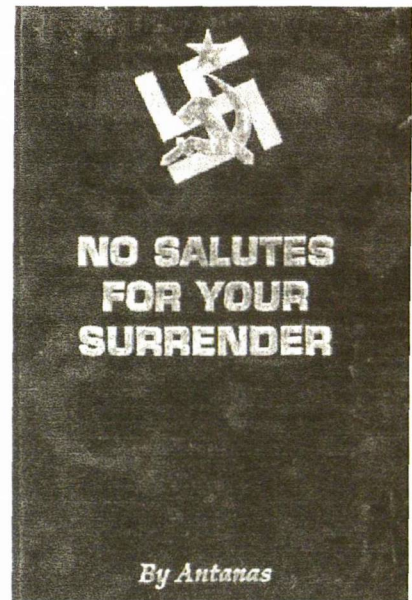
Edited by Rasa Ardys-Juška

"Books to Note"

A new novel has entered our midst, and it is worth the read. Very seldomly do we see new literary works come from Lithuanians in the English language, and more seldomly bearing a glimmer of familiarity with the subject and the country. *No Salutes for Your Surrender* by Antanas freezes the World War II time period to allow its main character to explore and investigate it in the present. Readers will appreciate the sentimentality along with the realism presented so well in the story.

A reviewer on Amazon.com, an internet-based book retailer, commented that "this tale is much more of an enthralling show of how virtuous character can be won through nefarious exploits than it is a mere telling of an old warrior's deepest troubles and darkest secrets. By besieging the protagonist, Vince Oskaunas, throughout his quest to rescue his ailing father with a series of ethical conflicts that challenge conventional perceptions of how integrity is won, Antanas shows us that heroism is not necessarily a result of adherence to admirable duty, but more usually the natural consequence of mixing obstinacy with selfishness. Such is, I suspect, the author's subtle way of suggesting that everyone can be made into a hero in one way or another and here is precisely where his story becomes significant to all." (Dr. Tom Parker from Nova Scotia, Canada)

The author, Antanas, was born (1966) and raised in Edmonton, Alberta. After serving in the Canadian Armed Forces, he traveled exten-



sively throughout North America, then ventured on to Eastern Europe, at the time of Communism's collapse. Here it was that he fell into free-lance journalism. The political upheaval throughout the region provided an excellent opportunity for a career, but he sacrificed it to return home, in 1993, where he immediately began working full-time on his first novel, *No Salutes for Your Surrender*.

The following excerpt from Chapter 11 will give you the mood of this novel, along with the author's use of suspense and story-telling technique.

Chapter 11

He was side-tracked again from fretting when they had crossed back into Lithuania. Isakas, perhaps lulled by the Mercedes' engine, hardly purring enough to interfere with the trio's absolute silence, had become complacent with his gun. Held listlessly in his hand, which was resting on the back of his seat, Vince saw that it might easily be snatched up so he turned it around a bit. But, again and again, the gangster re-tightened his grip on it just as he was on the verge of making the grab.

RASA ARDYS-JUŠKA is the editor of *BRIDGES*. Source for this article is Amazon.com. Excerpt from *No Salutes for Your Surrender* by Antanas. Copyright (C) 1999. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Whether these instances were inadvertent or instinctual, Vince could not tell, but in the acuity of the wonder, minutes could easily have drawn out into centuries, if it was not for the frantic beat of his heart within the temptation. Instead, almost one hundred kilometers had flown by in a very short half-hour, in which Isakas had finally made a guess as to what the American's darting eyes were all about.

With his hand still alongside the headrest, Isakas had tilted the gun up to point it squarely at Vince's ear. Smirking, he stroked the trigger with a finger as he used his thumb to flip a lever. Stealing glimpses through the mirror, Robertus watched the gangster for the flinch before the flash and, while he had tried not to let poor Vince's shorter and sharper breaths interrupt, he prayed that the Mercedes would remain more or less immune to the potholes in the old township back-road. Here again, one would think that time should have been near stilled, but in Vince's mind raced an infinite number of earth-spinning thoughts which were all quite natural to someone just a bump, burp or sinister whim away from his brains, spraying out of his skull like water from a thumbed garden-hose. In the few seconds that Isakas had toyed with him, just before flicking another lever to let the gun's magazine fall out of its grip into his other hand, poor Vince had lived his dear life over several times.

When the gun then fell over his shoulder to slide down his chest and into his lap, Vince was distracted from getting on with his main worries yet again. The nickel-plated canon, an Israeli-made Desert Eagle, reflected too much of the dashboard's orange glow and had balanced too perfectly in his hand to have had any care beyond that of what kind of a gaping pit one could blast out of a head with it; too, and even more impressive, was that Isakas should be so friendly as to trust that his sidelong glances at the fine weapon were to sneak appreciation of it rather than to gauge the best time to snatch it.

It also occurred to him that the golden crew-cut was merely showing off. He had not met a gangster who could contain his pride for the size of his gun — they were always whipping them out to compare, but there was something in Isakas' wide placid smile that told Vince that he was wrong. The grin was just like that of a child innocently trying to con-

nect with another of which he had been made to play with and it, right behind the sharing of his toy, had disarmed him completely, at least for the long while that he had fooled about with the awesome thing.

It was only when he returned the gun that Vince had begun to question the goon's true intentions. Isakas had not said a word up to that point, except to tell Robertus which turns to take, and so the sharing of his toy suddenly seemed to be very curious, to be more of an expression of pity than any valiant try to accomplish the impossible in friendship. An alarming notion, it was. It nudged him onto the idea that perhaps the gangster's silence was born of some underworld decretal, or at least some typical Slavic superstition, against becoming too intimate with one that may sooner than later be disjoined from his soul. So here it was that Vince had finally got on with his worries. He was doomed indeed. Whether he would be made to do a task too hazardous for a clan member as payment for his life saved, just weeks ago, or would be tossed straight into the Baltic Sea to rot with the nuclear submarines for having played a part in the theft of the gold, he was surely taking in his last few breaths just then. One would think that, with this, Vince should have been thrust into a woe so acute that time should easily have stopped cold and, in fact, he nearly was, but he had more than enough regrets to keep his clock wound up tight and running as fast as ever.

The first of those was Andrius, of course. Vince was instantly sure that he was about to beat his father to St. Peter and that, while waiting there, at the gates, for the eternity it would be before the angel could make up his mind, the Old One would show up to condemn him for yet another lie.

"You was make promise! I was wait and wait -- who in hell you are to take back your word?" he would start ranting, and it would go on and on for the eternity that the Old One would surely be made to wait too. Then there were a million other things left undone back home, then there was cousin Robertus dragged down into a grave right alongside him, and solely because of him, but most of all, there was Viktorija... who in the end was quite right to have bitched about the lunacy of all the evil business. If ever there was a highway to hell then Vince had every reason to believe that he was speeding along it and the very fear flared up still more when Robertus was told to turn the car into some bush

that was barely open to a gravel road.



To order this book, log onto Amazon.com or send a request to:

Jogaila Publications
#52-21, 10405-Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada T5J 3S2

Ask for *No Salutes For Your Surrender* by Antanas – ISBN# 0-9685373-0-8. Please pay with money orders (no personal checks) to Jogaila Publications. Cost is \$18.45 US or \$23.95 CAN; shipping included. ♦

Leona Gustaff

With a Song in Their Hearts

From the elegant pianissimo beginning of "Vidur Žalios Pievos" to the invitation to the attendees to join the soloists in "Meilės Valsas" at the end, the singers captivated the audience. Bass Vladimiras Prudnikovas and mezzo-soprano Judita Leitaitė finally appeared in Washington, D.C. during their musical tour of the United States.

Prudnikovas, dressed in formal attire, took us all back to Lithuania with simple country folk songs. With clear diction and beautiful resonance, he carried the art to a masterful performance. His unique stage presence, emotional and rollicking portrayal of life in the old country, was delightful. He enamored his audience. Whether he sang in German, French, Italian, or Lithuanian, he filled the room and stirred the audience with his beautiful expressive voice.

Judita Leitaitė performed festive, lighthearted, and deeply profound music. Her lovely long black dress with sequins at the center and large polka dots on the full skirt added to the solemnity of the songs from "Senajo Testamento", composed by Anatolijus Senderovas especially for the artist. She sang the haunting refrains as if she had lived through the sad persecutions and infamies of earlier times. "Carmen" lit up the stage as Bizet's operas were introduced. Leitaitė's well developed voice filled the auditorium with beautiful tones, always on pitch, superb breath control, and tastefully polished stage presence.

Nijolė Ralytė accompanied both artists on the

piano. With a lovely crisp touch, clear interpretations, well detailed phrasing, her performance enhanced the program.

Vladimiras Prudnikovas, Judita Leitaitė, and Nijolė Ralytė are musicians of superb quality. Vladimiras is a very popular voice teacher at the Lithuanian Music Academy – actually, he is the director of the voice program. His repertoire is varied - from Bach to Wagner, opera, requiem masses, oratorios, and concerts.

Judita Leitaitė graduated from the Lithuanian Academy with honors and has studied with the German singer, Elizabeth Schwarzhoff. She has toured the U.S.A. and many nations of Europe. She also sang with the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Jehudi Menuhin.

The caliber of the performances from Lithuania is exciting. The talent and the time and energy given to develop the gift is tremendous. We have every reason to be proud of the sons and daughters of the homeland. These are professional artists, having performed and been welcomed in many parts of the world. Let us invite them back. We must bring our sons, daughters, and friends to hear them.

These eminent soloists were commissioned to perform in the United States by the Lithuanian-American Community's Cultural Council. The Embassy of Lithuania and the Lithuanian-Americans in Washington sponsored the program in the D.C. area. ♦

LEONA GUSTAFF, now retired, is a former teacher of music and director of choirs in the United States of America.

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

Independence Day Celebration in Philadelphia

The Philadelphia Chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community and the Lithuanian Music Hall recently celebrated the 82nd anniversary of Lithuanian independence and the 10th anniversary of the restoration of Lithuanian independence.

On Feb. 20th, a Mass of thanksgiving was celebrated at St. George's Church in Philadelphia. Msgr. Joseph Anderlonis, pastor of St. George's and spiritual advisor to the Knights of Lithuania, celebrated the Mass and gave a very moving homily about the bravery of the Lithuanian people reclaiming their independence. Msgr. Leon Peck also participated in the celebration of the Mass.

Flag bearers of Lithuanian organizations and women in colorful costumes joined in the procession. Students brought traditional Lithuanian gifts of a Lithuanian cross, black bread, amber, and soil from Lithuania to the altar at the offertory from Vincas Krėvė School. Members of the Knights of Lithuania also brought offertory gifts to the altar. The students served as lectors; while, St. George's choir provided the music.

An afternoon program was held at the Lithuanian Music Hall. The American and Lithuanian national anthems were played by the Lithuanian Country Band under the direction of Lynn Cox; after which the invocation was delivered by Msgr. Anderlonis. The guests, who filled the hall to capacity, were greeted by George Karalius, President of the Lithuanian Music Hall, and Vytas Bagdonavičius, President of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community.

A representative of Philadelphia Mayor, John Street, read a greeting from the Mayor and delivered a proclamation signed by Mayor Street. Dr. Oskaras Jusys, Permanent Representative of Lithuania, gave the keynote ad-



dress to the United Nations.

A photo collage entitled; "One Hundred Years in the Life of Lithuanian-Americans in Philadelphia" brought applause from the audience. The multimedia presentation was narrated by Roma Krušinskas and Vytas Bagdonavičius. Dalia Jakas, a representative of the Lithuanian Foundation, presented a foundation award to Vincas Krėvė principal, Danutė Surdėnas.

The Žilvinas dance group and the Children's Folk Dance Group under the direction of Es-tera Washofsky presented a medley of Lithuanian folk songs, folk dances and music. The Philadelphia Kanklės Ensemble was led by Brigita and Joseph Kasinkas. Violeta Razgaitis directed the Children's Choir.

A second photo montage, "1990—2000: Ten Years of Progress By Free Lithuania" was narrated by Dr. Nijolė Zambaitė, Minister Counselor, Embassy of Lithuania.

The finale, which has become a Philadelphia tradition, was the singing of Lietuva Brangi. The choirs, band, and audience participated in the closing song by linking arms. The masters of ceremonies were Irena Mauricienė and Vytas Mašalaitis. Programs and stage design coordinator was Gema Kreivėnas. A reception followed the program. ♦

— Jeanne Dorr

Senator Honored by Lithuania

Senator William V. Roth, Jr. (R-Delaware) received one of the highest recognitions given by the Lithuanian government. Vytautas Landsbergis, Chairman of the Lithuanian Parliament, presented Sen. Roth with the Medal of the Order of the Grand Duke Gedimas on March 9th.

"This is a tremendous honor," Roth said.

"coming from Chairman Landsbergis, whose proclamation of the restoration of Lithuanian independence on March 11, 1990, was one of the most significant milestones in his country's history, makes this recognition especially important."

On February 16th, Lithuanian Independence Day, the Parliament voted to confer this honor on Roth. Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC), Sen. Richard Lugar, and Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) for "services to the cause of promotion of Lithuania in the world and for support to its integration into the global community of nations".

"When I visited Vilnius in 1998, I was moved by the nation's remembrance of its past, its tremendous progress since its independence, and the unlimited optimism towards its future." said Roth. "Lithuania has been a partner and good friend to the United States, and I have long supported Lithuanian efforts to join Western organizations such as NATO and the European Union. I believe these efforts should be recognized, and that Lithuania's candidacy for NATO deserves strong consideration at the 2002 NATO summit -- if not sooner." ♦

New Russian Duma Liaison

Deputy of the Russian State Duma, Alexander Chyuyev, was elected group coordinator for relations with the Lithuanian parliament on April 14th.

Shortly after his appointment, he told BNS that a working schedule would be coordinated with Lithuanian counterparts within the next several weeks.

"We will contact the leaders of the Lithuanian parliament this or next week in order to start exchanging visits in May," said Chyuyev, who has been awarded a medal for his support to Lithuania during the bloody events of January 1991.

He said that one of the main goals of the working group could be the use of the experience of Lithuanian-Russian relations for Russia's ties with the other two Baltic states, Latvia and Estonia.

Chyuyev said that he is acquainted with Lithuanian Parliamentary Chairman Vytautas Landsbergis, a few ministers, and the Christian Democratic and Conservative MPs.

As one of the leaders of the Russian Christian Democratic Party, the Russian deputy assisted in organizing a series of protest rallies in Moscow against the Soviet aggression in the Baltic countries in January 1991.

The Russian Christian Democratic Party is now a part of the pro-governmental Unity movement, and Chyuyev is a member of the Unity faction. ♦

The U.S. Makes Recommendations Regarding NATO Admission

The U.S. believes that Lithuania's NATO aims require wide public support, approval of political parties, stimulation of economic growth, and an increase of defense funds, said the director of the U.S. Department of Defense's European and NATO Division, Joseph Garrett.

He made the statement at an annual meeting of the U.S.-Lithuanian working group in Washington on April 8th.

Garrett and the head of the Lithuanian delegation, Defense Vice-Minister Romas Kilikauskas, noted at their meeting that "realities" have changed since 1997, said the Lithuanian Embassy to the U.S.

The U.S. Senate has demanded from the admini-

stration that the accepting of new members would be justified, and the readiness of candidate-states would be confirmed by facts.

Garrett said that his country sees Lithuania's resolution and progress. The members of the U.S. delegation assured their Lithuanian counterparts that NATO and the U.S. remain loyal to the "open door" policy.

The consultations between Lithuania and the U.S. are held in accordance to the U.S.-Baltic Charter signed in 1998 when the parties agreed on the establishment of bilateral economic and defense-security working groups. ♦

All news from Lithuania - Baltic News Service

Belarusians Fear Occupation

The deployment of a large unit of Russian and Belarusian troops in Belarus will mean the occupation of the country, Belarusian opposition leader Semyon Sharetsky said in a press release on April 13th.

The statement was made in reaction to a proposal made by Belarusian hardline President Alexander Lukashenko to Russia on deployment of a joint 300,000-member unit in Belarus.

"For Belarus, it will mean an occupation of its territory by an enormous army of a foreign country because Belarusian forces are only about 80,000-strong. Therefore, over 200,000 Russian troops will be brought into the country," said the leader of the disbanded Belarusian Supreme Soviet.

"Belarus is already practically governed by an occupation administration, the top posts of which are taken by people from Russia, mainly servicemen

or staff members of special services. They are openly Russifying local people," said Sharetsky.

"What will happen if a 200,000-member Russian army is brought into the Belarusian territory? Can we talk about independence and sovereignty in this case? What will be the fate of Belarusian people?" reads a press release by the Belarusian opposition leader who has been living in Lithuania since the summer of 1999.

Lukashenko's "reckless step", which he says is a response to an allegedly dangerous approach of NATO forces to Belarusian borders, is a "challenge to the peaceful humanity," said Sharetsky.

The Belarusian opposition leader reiterated that all agreements signed by the Lukashenko-led administration after its term in office expired on July 20 last year are void. ♦

New Statistics Show Changes in Lithuania

About 940,000 pensioners were registered in Lithuania as of the end of 1999, which indicates that more than one fourth of Lithuanian population of 3.7 million was of pension age, said Lithuania's Statistics Department.

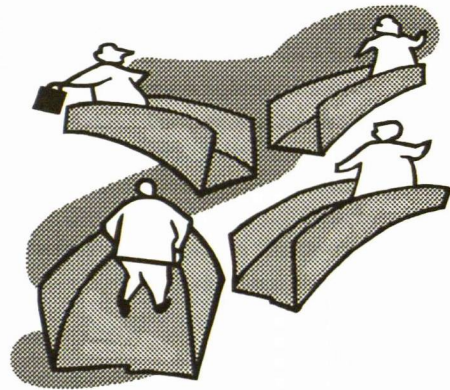
According to the department's Public Relations Division's press release, the Lithuanian population dropped by 48,400 to 3.70 million over the past eight years. The population started to drop in 1992 for the first time after World War II.

The natural increase of the population has been below zero ever since 1994; with the death rate topping the birth rate by about 4,000 on an annual basis.

The number of students started to rise in 1994, after over a decade of decrease, standing at 644,000 in 1994, as compared with 774,000 in 1999.

The employment structure has also been subject to major changes over the past decade. The number of those employed in industry and construction has seen a sharp drop, while more people took situations in the services industry.

The number of people working in the state-owned sector was on the decline as more people transferred to the private sector. About 10 percent of the employed part of the population worked in the



private sector in 1990, as compared with 68 percent in 1998.

According to the Statistics Department, there has also been a slight drop in impoverishment. If 50 percent of average consumer expenses is considered a relative factor of poverty, the poverty level stood at 18 percent in 1996 dropping down to 15.8 percent in 1999.

The portion of a household's food expenditures has been dropping since 1994, with about 39 percent of all consumer expenses going towards food last year. ♦

Lithuania Praised for Deciding to Shut Down Ignalina

Prime ministers of the Baltic Sea states have praised Lithuania at the regional forum for its determination to decommission the Ignalina nuclear power plant and for its initiative on cooperation with the Russian Kaliningrad region.

The forum of prime ministers of the eleven states, members of the Baltic Sea States Council (BSSC), was held at the Danish city of Kolding on April 13th.

The participants of the forum, especially from Scandinavian states, have praised Lithuania's determination to decommission the first power unit at the Ignalina nuclear power plant by 2005, and urged the European Union (EU) and the European Commission to assist Lithuania in carrying out this task.

The Danish Prime Minister, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, said that it was a brave decision to decommission the plant step by step and therefore it deserves to be supported financially.

"You have made the decision not only for your own benefit, but for the benefit of the entire region as well and, therefore, it is our duty to make a contribution towards the solution of the problem," the Danish prime minister said.

The Danish prime minister underscored that the decommissioning of the Ignalina plant should be supported by both the European Commission and by individual EU states.

The Finnish Prime Minister, Paavo Lipponen, said in support of his Danish counterpart, that "Ignalina is our common problem."

Lithuania's initiative on strengthening ties with the Russian Kaliningrad region and involving it in European projects was especially appreciated at the discussion of regional cooperation. A representative from the European Commission described joint Lithuanian-Russian projects involving the EC and EU countries as an "exemplary initiative".

Early in April, it had been noted that the United States would offer financial assistance to Lithuania for the decommissioning of Ignalina, according to U.S. deputy secretary of state for economic, business and agricultural issues, Alan P. Larson. Larson is the head of a U.S. delegation which had attended a session of economic consultations with Lithuania during the first week of April in Vilnius.

The U.S. representatives were briefed on the

progress Lithuania had made in its integration into the European Union (EU) and World Trade Organization. Larson told reporters following the consultations about the obligation made by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to ensure further cooperation with Lithuania and support Lithuania's programs for economic development.

The Baltic state's government confirmed in early March a law on the decommissioning of the first out of two RBMK-type power units by Jan. 1, 2005. The law is still to be endorsed by the parliament.

The costs of the closure of the first reactor are expected to total at about 20 billion litas (USD 5 bln.); however, the expenditures will be distributed over several decades.

The head of the Lithuanian delegation for the U.S. talks, Foreign Vice-Minister Algimantas Rimkūnas, said that the U.S. ranks second in terms of its investments in Lithuania – now amounting to some 276 million US dollars. In terms of mutual trade turnover, the U.S. is Lithuania's tenth partner in foreign trade. ◆

Lithuania's Sea Shore to be Safeguarded

The Lithuanian Seimas [parliament] ratified on April 13th the International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage and the International convention on setting up the International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund.

At present, Lithuania's laws do not regulate issues with regard to taking out compulsory insurance on tanker owner's civil liability and entitlement to claim and receive compensation for pollution damage from international organizations.

After the ratification of the international conventions, in the event of an accident involving pollution damage, Lithuania would be entitled to claim up to 745 million litas [USD 186.25 mln] in compensation for pollution damage on its territory or in its territorial waters from the owner of the vessel, his insurance company, or from the International Oil Pollution Damage Compensation Fund.

The conventions will come into effect in 12 months. ◆

A Little Bit of Sunshine

Sunlight (Saulutė) Orphan Aid for Lithuania helps needy families, disabled children in foster homes, orphanages, and smaller group homes. It also has a sponsor-a-child program, where benefactors can sponsor a particular child for a year, by donating \$20 per month.

Donations of clothing, books, hearing aids, walkers, hygiene products, bed linens, toys, and vitamins are sent to group homes. Typewriters and computers are very useful for the handicapped children. Financial aid is given directly to needy university students, poor families adopting or fostering orphans or abandoned children.

These are difficult times... Indrė Tijunėlis, the chairperson of the endeavor, writes: "We would be extremely grateful if you would support our efforts by making a donation, taking an ad or placing a greeting in our program booklet. For a full page the donation is only \$100, for half a page \$50, and for a quarter page \$25. Donations are tax deductible."

Please make out the check to the SUNLIGHT ORPHAN AID, and forward to 419 Weidner Road, Buffalo Grove, IL 60089. Tax I.D. #36-3003339. Please include a copy of your add or greeting, or your business card may serve as your ad.

Sunlight Orphan Aid for Lithuanian is having its annual benefit concert for the year 2000 on Sunday, May 28, at 3:00 PM in the Lithuanian Youth Center, 5620 S. Claremont, Chicago. Proceeds will benefit needy Lithuanian children regardless of their nationality or religion. For additional information: Indrė Tijunėlis — (847) 541-3702 or 537-7949 or Aušra Saulis - secretary -(708) 425-4266. ♦

— *Almus Šalčius*



Troops Give to Klaipėda Children's Home

Lithuanian and U.S. troops handed a charity gift to two children's homes of Lithuania's port city Klaipėda on April 14th. U.S. Defense Attaché to Denmark and Marine Attaché to Lithuania, Captain Eldon Carl Swanson, and officers of the Lithuanian Navy donated a refrigerator and two TV sets.

The Lithuanian Navy said that a U.S. church participated in the project with Lithuanian and U.S. servicemen. ♦

Learn Lithuanian!

The 15th annual Lithuanian Language Course at Camp Dainava, Manchester, Michigan will take place from August 6th to the 13th, 2000. This intensive course, operating under the auspices of the Educational Council of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. is designed for beginners, intermediate, and advanced students, or those just wishing to refresh their Lithuanian.

The course is taught by experienced instructors in vacation-like surroundings and atmosphere. There are no limitations regarding age or formal education. For more information, please contact Mr. Vytautas Jonaitis, 1546 Quarry N. W., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504; phone 616-458-6378; e-mail: vjonaitis@juno.com. ♦

—*vytautas Jonaitis*

Desperately seeking... Lithuanian Folk Costumes

We are looking to buy or borrow (rent) your currently unused Lithuanian folk costume for our younger generation of dancers. We are looking for costumes of all sizes that were woven in pre-war Lithuania, post war (DP) Germany, Canada, or woven in the USA.

We will take extraordinary care of the costumes and will appreciate them like no one else. If you would like your costume to have a new, loving, and tender home, please contact Rėda Pliura at 262-637-3585 or Violeta Fabionovich at 773-436-1624. Thank you. ♦

R e f l e c t i o n s

Jon and Mary Macarus

A Trial of Faith

What happens when faith takes you and your spouse to Siberia to work as missionaries and you fall in love with a dear, lonely orphan? On top of that, you have to deal with a foreign bureaucracy, which operates with no rhyme, reason, or even heart. This is the story of Jon and Mary Macarus. Jon's father is Lithuanian; while, his mother is of Polish/Lithuanian Jewish descent. Jon and Mary followed their faith in Christ and moved to Siberia to bring the word of the Lord to those bereft of it for many years.

In their letters to their friends, Jon and Mary share their thoughts of their situation and their faith in God.

March 6, 2000

Dear friends and family,

A very dear friend asked me to explain why it was or how I could come, or must come (future tense) to the same conclusion that God is good and just – despite the outcome of our current situation. I thought that was a good question to share and my response goes to all who have been with us in prayer, encouragement, and support.

The current situation still being: whether or not we will have the joy of bringing Sasha home as our son or watching him be sent to another orphanage for another four years with no possibility for adop-

tion. Perhaps even worse, sent back home to his biological parents who have not seen him in over five years, have a known drinking problem, do not have the means to provide the medical and nutritional care for Sasha, and have six other children. It is also a question as to the loving care that his biological parents would provide. As they stated in their last communication to the officials was – they were not in a position to really care and provide for him themselves, but wanted him instead to live four more years in the orphanage and not to be given up for adoption. It is not a prison, but it does not come close to the love, care, and freedom that only a family can provide.

For the last five years, Sasha's world consisted of a bedroom, a playroom/eating room, a changing room, a small physical training room — all of these shared with about ten other children at all times, and the court yard to the orphanage, which is surrounded by a fence.

When we began to visit Sasha and take him for walks, all he wanted to do was go for long walks outside the fence and see what the rest of the world was really like. He has a fascination and a curiosity, as well as a fear, for the strange new things he encounters. (He was very frightened by our vacuum cleaner and still is terrified by dogs).

We had everything prepared for him at our home/apartment, and had been over time trying to explain the transition that would take place when he would come home with us for good and live there instead of in the orphanage. That is why when this whole process came to an unexpected halt and, perhaps an irreconcilable position from the biological mother, our hearts felt crushed and a sadness mixed

with depression seemed to flood over us as if a river over ran its banks and the dam burst.

Over the past several weeks we have continued to meet and play with Sasha not knowing the outcome. At times we are "ok" as much as can be expected, and at other times the sadness and depression make it almost impossible to even get off the couch. It is very difficult also in knowing what to say to Sasha, as we still want to gather him in our arms and tell him that things will be ok, and that "when he comes to live with us, we will..."

Even just this past week, for the first time, when Mary was bringing him back to the orphanage after we took him to Raya's to have tea and celebrate her birthday, that he ran back to Mary and gave her a hug and said "I really love you." Before this time, he had responded at times to our verbal expression of our love for him by saying that he loved aunt Galia at the orphanage. His understanding seemed to be that he could only love one person at a time, and of course those child care workers were his whole life and family.

We took him down to the lake front to see snow and ice sculptures, eat cotton candy and carmel popcorn for the first time, play hockey with him (we bought him a mini hockey stick), and have taken him sledding with Mike and Laurel and their children Natasha and Katya. Our hearts and lives are already joined and the thought of losing him at times feels too much to bear...

So how is it then that I can or must come to the conclusion that God is both good and just in the midst of this and regardless of the outcome? It is not an attempt to ignore or repress the pain and sadness, or to come off as some super spiritual Christian. In reality, this has been and continues to be one of the most difficult and sad times of our lives as we wait not knowing the outcome. Like I said, sometimes we have felt we "couldn't punch our way out of a wet paper bag." Yet at the same time, through this process, God is teaching us many things about ourselves, our selfishness, our weaknesses and our strengths, and a lot about Himself.

We are being stretched beyond where we thought possible and the fear is that we will snap as a rubber band that has reached its elastic limit. Perhaps be-

ing stretched is what God is after, or even brittleness if it breaks us from our selfish independence of Him, and the turning from the false idols (all those things which we turn to for satisfaction and fulfillment, which are really temporary and not lasting. Those things we think we must have in order to be happy, significant or fulfilled – all those things that are a poor substitute for God).

In Jeremiah 2, God says "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." They left God and went after things that in the end could never truly satisfy their deep longings and thirst. In addition, our guarantee or promise that God gives us is not that he will give us what we

want or remove our trials and struggles, but that He "causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." (Romans 8: 28)

Our trust, faith and hope is not in the outcome, nor is it in the strength of those things themselves – trust, faith, and hope – for they are nothing in and of themselves. Our hope, trust, and faith is truly dependent upon the object on which they rely. God is trustworthy. He fulfills His promises. He is both loving and just. And Christ Himself says "what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give

him a stone?...How much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him." We are definitely and clearly asking and pleading with God that we will be able to adopt Sasha – not for our sakes alone, but for his and his future. Whether this be through moving in the mother's heart to allow Sasha to be adopted or making a very clear and concise decision by the courts to see that Sasha be in the place where is best for him. (I am not thinking how great and perfect parents we will be and how we deserve this in comparison etc...What we are saying is that we are willing to accept the full responsibility for the love and care of the child. To live with the heartaches and pains as he grows up and experience illnesses and difficulties, and the joy of seeing him develop into a mature person understanding God's love for him.)



Now having said that, it would be very easy to conclude and shout that God is good and just if we have Sasha as our son. If we don't get what we want or pray for can we conclude that God is not good and just? If our Father does not give us what we want, His character hasn't changed any nor His heart and desire for us. I know when I was a child, at times when my parents disciplined me (rare, for I was such a good child...) or did not give me what I wanted, there were times when I got angry and even shouted "I hate you". (My mom, even at times, would tell me that that was ok – it took all the fun and steam out of it somehow).

So the reality of it is, is that our heavenly Father knows what is truly best for us. He loves us and desires to give it to us. If we do not get what we want here, yes we will be heartbroken, saddened, and my guess is, also angry at God. There may even be a time when in my mind or verbally I shake my fist at him and for the moment say, "I hate you". But our Father's continual love and embrace comforts us as we work through our anger and sobbing. If we wrestle through it and choose to not hold on to selfish bitterness, we will experience more deeply our relationship with Him and know truly just how much he cares for us.

There is one other aspect about this situation that helps to bring my eyes upward. That is that in reality, others are experiencing similar suffering, and we could even say more severe suffering, and yet they are still pursuing God and coming to the same conclusion about their heavenly father. Many have lost children or spouses through accident or illness. Many through wars: both of merit and without. Many are wrestling through illnesses now that, save for an intervention by God, will most likely result in death in the near future. One such person is Alina. She is young, mid 20's, beautiful, is married,

and has two children.

Alina, just in this past summer, began to attend some of our studies. Since then she has entered into a relationship with God and is as hungry and excited to learn as much as she can. She helps out even in one of the children's studies with music, and with our larger gathering of folks as well. She regularly attends several studies a week and was even a little disappointed that Mary and Laurel's advanced group, which she just started attending, only meets every other week. You can see in her a joy and love

for God. She also is battling cancer and depending upon its extent, and the care and treatment here, only God knows how long she has.

I thank God for her and also pray for her healing as well. Whether He heals her or not, and whether we get to adopt Sasha or not, we now have the opportunity to know His love and to share that with others, and what a precious opportunity that is.

No, God isn't fair. In fact He gives to us far and beyond what we deserve. In a world separated and alienated from Him, bearing the full consequences and deserving judgement, He offers us individually

a free gift of forgiveness, eternal life, and the opportunity to be his ambassadors and fellow workers in helping reconcile mankind back to Him. And our relationship with Him is not one based upon our performance, but is now one of adoption into His household which we can call out to Him, "Dad". We will know that He loves us in the fullness of that relationship. I may do things that my Father doesn't like, but that will never change the fact that I am his son. I have more than enough. I have more than I deserve. What other conclusion could I come to?

March 16, 2000

Hello everyone,

It's a boy! The court awarded us the right to legally adopt Sasha. We still have to wait 10 days for the actual certificate, and during that time someone



could appeal but it is unlikely. On March 27th, 2000 we will pick up that certificate and bring Sasha home with us as our son.

We wish we could have taken him immediately and put closure to this part of the experience; so we still feel a little amiss, merely because we were ready to break out the cigars and champagne. Yes, it is in the realm of possibilities that the parents could appeal, but it is unlikely that that will happen. None the less, there is a just a slight back of the mind doubt or "what if", but we are going to do some celebrating here tonight. We hope that you join us in sharing our joy.

I cannot thank you all enough for your love, prayers, and support. It was clear that God had been at work. Firstly with the decision of the mother to change her mind about giving him up for adoption. Secondly, by some strange happening, both the mayor's office and the orphanage had not received any official notice about our second court hearing. We found that out when we wanted to make sure all was in order with each of them. So it turned out that it was us who informed them. Everyone was there who needed to be.

Also, we have to say that last night we slept well beyond our imaginations. We were not as nervous today either. We know for certain that that peace and comfort came from God through your prayers.

March 27, 2000

Alexander Jonathan Macarus (aka: Alexander, Alex, Sasha, Sashoola, & AJ) came home today, March 27th, 2000.

We are overwhelmed with joy and with the experiences of life ahead of us. We picked up the decision from the court at 10:30AM and then picked up Mike (fellow teammate and today's videographer) and headed out to the orphanage to bring Sasha home. It was a time for him to say goodbye to some of his care workers and the head doctor/director, and for us to thank them for their help and for taking care of Sasha all of these years. We exchanged some gifts and wished them well, and Sasha said goodbye to the life that he had known over the last five years.

We brought him home and fed him, and then went for a long walk and sledding (since it is still cold here with some snow left). He didn't want to take his afternoon nap, but to walk and play instead.

In fact, he wanted to wash the dishes from lunch. (Just wait till he finds out that it isn't fun anymore when you get older).

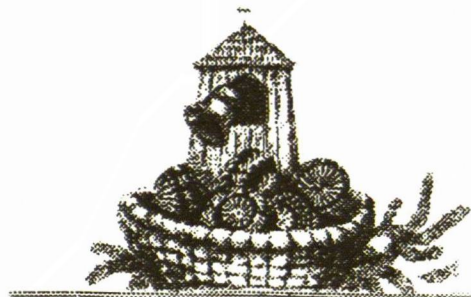
This day will most likely be one of the hardest for him as he might become scared and want to go back to the kids at the orphanage. We hope and pray that he will be comforted by God and understand the transformation that took place today. It will be a time of transition for us as well.

We wanted to thank you all for your encouragement, prayers, and support throughout this part of the journey. It meant a lot to us and made a difference. Now a new journey begins for us. As many of you are already aware of and experienced with children, you can now shake your head and laugh as we begin to learn what that really means.

With all our love and joy, it is time to rejoice and celebrate. Break out the champagne. Pass out the cigars. For today, our joy has been made full. Tomorrow has enough worries of its own. We'll get to them when we need to. Now it is time to celebrate and thank God for working through all of this, and for having been at work clearly over the years in preparing both Sasha and us, and interestingly enough, in providing helpful supportive friends and family for the rest of the journey.

Love & Joy,
Jon, Mary & Sasha

Happy Easter
to all our Readers!



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