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# BRIDGES

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*Pres. Adamkus Addresses the Public...Lithuania's Children...Sports Updates...Music*

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

*Mother's Day hasn't been the same since my boys grew out of the "cute, little boy" phase and into the "know-it-all teenager" phase. Oh, don't get me wrong. They still celebrate Mother's Day, and we kiss and hug, and I smile. But, it isn't the same when they ask what I want, and my answer is, instantaneously, peace and quiet, please (as it is for my birthday and Christmas).*

*This year my answer to that question came out to be, surprisingly, "Impatiens, please." I thought they'd be as pleased as I with an answer not having to do with a wanton wish for ear muffs as they strummed their guitars to the full blast of the latest music. But, they were confused and quiet.*

*"Mama, impatience? You've always wanted peace and quiet, now you want impatience? Don't you get that from us all the time?"*

*Well, this seasoned English teacher caught on pretty quickly.*

*"Im-pa-tiens. A shade-loving flower of different hues — to plant in the garden," I said. (At least they learned a new word.)*

*Light bulbs flashed, and all was understood. I received white and pink impatiens and a few laughs about the misunderstanding. I also realized that I didn't want peace and quiet anymore. I wanted their company and a chance to spend some time laughing and talking together.*

*This brought me back to the Mother's Days of my past with my own mother. There came a time during my own teenager years when spending time with my mother wasn't the "I have to be here because she says so and wants it to be so." I began truly enjoying my mother's company and her friendship. The more we shared, the more I understood about her, the person, and, in turn, about myself.*

*My mother and I have been geographically apart for all of my married life. Yet, the time we spend together during holidays, summer vacation, and on the phone makes me yearn for the day when she and my father and my husband and I can spend even more time together.*

*As time goes on, I know that I may become my mother's caretaker. I look forward to it. She has helped me understand myself as a woman and a Lithuanian. She nurtured my soul and my intellect. It has been and continues to be a wonderful journey through life with a wonderful mentor.*

*Happy Mother's Day to Mothers everywhere!*

*Rasa Ardys-Juška*  
Editor

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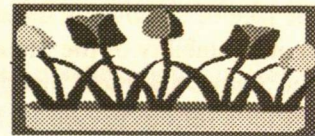
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# BRIDGES

**On the cover:**  
 Aušros Vartal (*The Gates of Dawn*) in Vilnius. The Gates were part of a wall surrounding Vilnius in the 16th century. In the late 18th century, the wall was destroyed, leaving the Gates. It had already become a religious shrine housing a miraculous painting of the Blessed Mary.  
 Photo by Bernard V. Narušis

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*Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania*

# The State of the Republic — and Her Future

*Distinguished Chairman of the Seimas,  
The High Seimas,  
My Dear Fellow Citizens,*

**F**or the second time I address you to share my views on the current situation and the tasks to be fulfilled jointly to our benefit and to the benefit of our children. The year 1999 displayed our accomplishments of the first decade of independence and exposed the complex problems faced by our society and the State.

The Lithuanian economy, even though having suffered huge losses, has passed the test of the Russian crisis. Regrettably, we, the authorities of the State, failed to pass it. Not only did we fail to form a realistic state budget last year but also did not adjust it in time. Only in the face of an obvious threat to financial and economic stability of the State had the majority of the Seimas assumed, though with some delay and after a serious in-house crisis, responsibility for the situation in the country and the Government started to display [a] new way of management.

Last year the international community evaluated the development of our state. At the Washington NATO Summit, the heads of state and government of the Alliance identified Lithuania as an active aspiring country and in-



*The President during Mindaugo  
Coronation Day.*

*Photo: Bernard Narušis*

stilled the hope that Lithuania's membership of NATO may be considered in the year 2002. The Helsinki European Council invited Lithuania to start accession negotiations with the EU. That was an encouraging part of the last year.

It is both a paradox and a law that the signs of crisis have become evident in the tenth year of independence. They show nothing else but the price to be paid for undone reforms.

Today we increasingly feel the negative results of delayed restructuring of energy, industry, and state monopolies, of the failure to introduce effective management in the main walks of public life. Who can tell how much we have lost by feeding the rural residents with empty promises; how many young people have not acquired education and hence [a] profession because of a halting education reform; how

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*VALDAS ADAMKUS is the President of the Republic of Lithuania. This was the Annual Address to the Seimas delivered on April 20th, 2000. The speech can also be read on the web at [www.president.lt](http://www.president.lt), which is maintained by the Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania.*



many people have abandoned the hope of a secure retired life because of protracted restructuring of the social security system?

The past mistakes and the present difficulties make the people doubt the strategic guidelines of Lithuania's development. The present day has opened up an historical possibility for us to overcome the attraction of Soviet time, previous thinking and habits. It calls for responsibility and joint efforts. It calls for new policies.

New policies mean first and foremost new requirements, which we -- the community of citizens -- must set for ourselves. They mean a rational, economically effective, transparent and future-oriented administration of the state. Democratic governance of our common life should be based on personal initiative and responsibility which should form the bedrock of our activity and without which democracy in Lithuania will never be strong and effective. New policies should be based on the unanimous agreement on strategic guidelines of national development and commitment to the key goals of our state.

Indeed, the people want to know now how Euro-Atlantic integration will affect their life and what new challenges they should be prepared for. I think that our public institutions should feel greater responsibility for informing the public about those issues. I also hope that our mass media will perform a more significant role in raising the awareness of the people. Lithuanian politicians and public servants should not be allowed to cover their clumsy decisions with real or imagined requirements of the European Union and to turn the fear of change [for] the people into a European ogre.

Can we afford to manipulate the people's attitude [of] NATO and the European Union? I believe that neither the tragic experiences of Lithuania in the 20th century nor the present reality permits [us] to be naive in talking [about] national security without allies.

The historical duty of all the people of Lithuania is to ensure a secure future of our re-

stored state, to secure a free and democratic life [for] our children and grandchildren. We are well aware that Lithuania is not able to have the army capable to defend the country in the given geopolitical area. But we have a possibility to become a member of the western defense arrangement, NATO, and contribute to the Alliance.

The European Union is no less [an] important guarantee of our progress and future prosperity. Certainly, we may try to eliminate without any support a decades long gap between the West and us. But we should not forget that the Western world is not static and progresses more quickly than we do. Therefore, Lithuania can avoid the fate of a backward province only by catching a high-speed train of Europe and being a fully paid-up passenger on that train.

We should understand that membership [in] the European Union, per se, will not bring us a better life. But it will provide more favorable conditions for building our wellbeing. We cannot pass on responsibility for our future.

Today we should not slow down the pace of Euro-Atlantic integration because of anti-western outbreaks or election tactics of some political parties. I wish to remind that you, distinguished members of the Seimas, can eliminate the remaining legal obstacle to Lithuania's accession to the European Union by amending some provisions of the Constitution of Lithuania.

I think that our policies should be free of outdated prejudice and myth, and should project Lithuania's future on the European cultural and economic level. By no means can we tolerate anti-Semitism and hatred of other cultures and differently thinking people. I am convinced that their manifestation in Kaunas, the former provisional capital, is a passing phenomenon and that our people reject them.

A healthy and dynamic economy of Lithuania and the well being of the Lithuanian people are the prime goals of our State. Today we should build the foundation for a long-term economic growth, which our Government



seems to be committed to. Lithuania has already created a stable business-friendly environment unrestricted by artificial bureaucratic barriers.

I think that the existing taxation system requires essential rather than partial reform. We should harmonize it with the standards applied in the civilized world and accommodate it to the requirements of the economic development.

Restructuring of state monopolies remains one of the prime tasks of the Government. It is most essential to ensure a transparent restructuring process endorsed across the political spectrum and make it clear and easy to understand [for] the people.

It is no less important today to create legal conditions for a more rapid adaptation of our businesses and industries to the changing environment. We should speed up bankruptcy procedures, where they cannot be avoided and restructure dying companies. New policies mean the ability to ensure social and economic cohesion and to attend to the individual needs and the vital interests of the nation.

While in power, both the Democratic Labour Party and the Homeland Union promoted big business and took a hands-off attitude to small and medium sized business. Such a position of the authorities has impeded the emergence of the middle class, which is the bedrock of civil society, and resulted in large-scale social differences.

We should follow the practice of Western and Central European economies and revitalize and expand consulting and information systems for small and medium-sized businesses and establish new business incubators. Besides [that], we should consider more favorable conditions of crediting small business and reduction of bureaucracy that burdens it. Likewise, we should look most seriously at the present product lines selecting those, which will give us a stronger base for effective expansion in the international markets. Today, information technologies are the most rapidly developing global industry and Lithuania must orient its economy towards it.

Lithuanian agriculture needs new policy, just like Lithuania needs a healthy agricultural [basis]. But only raising its competitive ability can ensure its health. The State should undertake, without further delay, a rational approach to differentiated financial support to agriculture and recognize that some aspects of it require social support, whereas others, such as commercial farms, require aid to get them stronger and develop [a] position in the market.

The third and no less important target of rural development is the advancement of small business in rural areas. This task requires a targeted rural development program providing for expert advice and more favorable conditions of crediting. A more intensive land market would also invigorate agriculture, but its development today is impeded by a number of artificial barriers.

In my opinion, a reformed system of education plays the essential role in rural development. We must provide the young people living in rural areas with access to a high standard [of] education; to include new vocational expert training in rural vocational schools; and to open our universities to them. The first steps have been made in this direction.

We need further reforms in the field of education and science. Our task is to ensure wide access to secondary and vocational schools, to colleges and universities, and to provide our young people with such education that would permit them to live and work in [a] contemporary environment.

Provision of schools with necessary teaching and learning materials still causes serious con-

**“New policies mean the ability to ensure social and economic cohesion and to attend to the individual needs and the vital interests of the nation.”**



cern. Together with private companies, the Ministry of Education and Science endeavors to speed up computerization of our schools. It is the right way. However, I believe that creation of [an] information society is the task of national importance, which requires enhanced attention of the Government and the Seimas. The libraries of Lithuania should also be active stakeholders in this process. Consistent implementation of the library modernization program, which has already been worked out, would assist in transforming them into modern information centers.

I am convinced that strong universities and strong colleges [are] the key to strong [a] Lithuania. But our universities and colleges will grow stronger, provided there is competition, effective management, and curricula oriented to the needs of the people and economy. I believe that the Law on Higher Education, which was passed this year, will help them to acquire new strength.

Another important aspect of our future is the learning society and the system of continuous adult training, which ensures its creation. We have to devise this system now. The changing world requires new cultural, economic and political literacy, and the education network should be designed to satisfy this requirement.

The poverty elimination strategy, which is of utmost importance to the people, is undergoing the last stage of improvement. I fully support the prime target of the strategy to alleviate the burden of poverty by pooling the efforts of the authorities, private business, non-governmental organizations and religious communities.

Inertia of bureaucracy and lack of transparent funding criteria encumbers the health care reform to a large extent. Today we need to switch to a real health insurance. It is necessary to guarantee, by legal instruments, the rights of the people to choose the doctor in any, private or public, health care institution.

In my opinion, new policies mean new effective administration of public affairs based on

the principles of responsibility and transparency. The new effective administration requires reforming the state budget. We must consistently introduce the state budget based on programs and strategic planning and clearly oriented towards the priorities of society development.

The growing public debt shows poor administration of public funds. I think that the time has come for strengthening the independence of the treasury institution, which must operate according to legally established procedures, approved allocations and fixed debt limits rather than satisfying political whims.

I keenly follow the activity of the Sunset Commission. I expect that it will make concrete and resolute decisions, which will reduce the power and the costs of bureaucracy. Public institutions and public companies must have a functioning independent internal audit system. I hope that the Office of the State Control will more thoroughly undertake economic crime prevention and that the Office of the Prosecutor General will not delay investigation of such cases.

Unrestrained corruption translates into a problem of national security. Though somewhat late, we must fight corruption in municipal and highest level public institutions. New policies also face an important task of consistent protection of civil rights and human dignity. The state, which shows no respect to [the] individual, cannot and will not be respected. Our authorities are still insensitive to the restraining of the rights and freedoms of the individual and daily degradation of the people by bureaucracy.

I have always sought allies to implement my program and the project of Lithuania's modernization. I have always sought for [an] agreement across the political spectrum on the issues of vital importance to the nation. I hope that greater progress and success, wider solidarity, and deeper wisdom and greater self-confidence will mark the second decade of our independence. ♦



Jan Nowak

# What NATO can do for Russia

Only one year has passed since three new countries were admitted to NATO: the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. Yet those who oppose any further enlargement of NATO are already seeking to portray the admission of these three countries as a failure.

They point out that their armed forces are underfunded and poorly equipped, and their contribution to the common defense is too small to make any significant difference. The conclusion, which they are actively promoting is that because this first attempt at NATO enlargement has not been a success, any thought of further enlargement should be promptly abandoned.

Everything depends, of course, on how you define success. Supporters of NATO enlargement point out that without the cooperation of Hungary, any peace mission in the Balkans would have been far more difficult and costly. If Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary had not rejected Russia's request to permit a massive airlift of Russian troops over their territories into Pristina, the Kosovar capital, Russia and NATO would have been brought to the brink of a major military confrontation. All three countries were guided by their commitment to NATO, which Bulgaria and Romania are hop-

**"The enlargement of NATO would help the Russians understand that dreams of regaining control over neighboring countries are unrealistic."**

ing to join in the next round of enlargement. Today, two Polish battalions serving in Bosnia and Kosovo are considered model peacekeepers.

As the new secretary general of NATO, Lord George Robertson, told a National Press Club audience in Washington, within 10 days of being admitted to NATO, the new countries were

caught up in NATO's biggest conflict in its 50-year history. It was a "real test by fire — and they stood up robustly to it." He paid warm tribute to the effort, energy and loyalty of NATO's newest members.

It is clear that the prospect of NATO membership has already become an important tool of constructive American influence in this crucial region. It would not serve the interests of the United States to undermine the hopes, or destroy the strongly pro-American orientation of the countries which find themselves between NATO and the present Russian border.

Those who think in purely military terms and argue, for example, that the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania could hardly contribute to NATO's defensive potential, tend to overlook the more vital question: what should be done to turn Russia from an adversary into a fully cooperative partner of the

*JAN NOWAK is a former consultant to the National Security Council on Central and Eastern European Affairs. For 25 years he was director of the Polish Service for Radio Free Europe. Copyright © 2000 News World Communications, Inc. Reprinted with permission of The Washington Times*



European-Atlantic community?

Opponents of NATO enlargement argue that nothing should be done that might create a sense of isolation, or even humiliation, in Moscow. To reject those countries seeking future NATO membership would pave the way, they argue, for a mutually beneficial accommodation and perhaps some "super-agreement" with Russia.

Unfortunately, things are not that simple. Russia's superpower ambitions are not limited to exercising, sometime in the future, greater control over its next-door neighbors. Its avowed primary objective is still to reduce America's global influence as much as possible. As long as Russia's leadership indulges every opportunity to damage U.S. interests abroad, any effort to treat today's Russia as a genuine partner would have to be based on a significant degree of self-deception.

There is an expansionist mentality among Russia's ruling elite, deeply rooted in the country's past, which makes it difficult for them to consider forming a partnership with the West. This almost permanent urge for territorial ex-

pansion has at the same time become a scourge for the Russian people, who continue to live in appalling poverty in a country rich in resources.

A refusal or indefinite postponement of admission to NATO of those countries located in the gray unprotected zone between NATO and Russia would be seen by Moscow as tacit recognition by the West that these countries are within Russia's exclusive sphere of influence. It would be perceived as a triumph and would further encourage the imperialistic elements within the Russian leadership, posing further challenges to the West.

By contrast, the gradual enlargement of NATO would help the Russians to understand that any dreams of regaining control over neighboring countries against their will are unrealistic. It would help Russia's leaders change their present unproductive mindset and finally reconcile themselves to the loss of their empire. And it would hopefully encourage these same leaders to focus their vast resources on internal recovery and raising the desperately low living standards of the majority of the Russian people. ◆

## US official praises forthcoming NATO conference in Vilnius

**A**n official from the U.S. State Department, deputy assistant secretary for European Affairs, Daniel Hamilton, described the conference on NATO issues to be held in Vilnius starting May 19th as an event of great importance. It will demonstrate cooperation among the countries seeking NATO membership.

The chairman of the Lithuanian delegation, Rasa Juknevičienė, said that Hamilton had specifically mentioned the Vilnius conference, saying that the results of the conference would be closely examined by the United States. Juknevičienė quoted Hamilton as saying that the states seeking NATO membership were fully aware of the importance of cooperation, and not competition, on the path to NATO.

The conference's focus, "NATO's role in the changing environment of European security", will be to discuss NATO's ability to face new political challenges, and consolidation of relations between NATO and the European Union, with special emphasis on expanding the capacity of controlling arising crises in Europe.

Lithuania's President, Valdas Adamkus, and NATO Secretary General, Lord George Robertson, will make welcoming speeches and reports will be read by foreign ministers of various countries and high-ranking officials. A joint statement on further expansion of the alliance by foreign ministers of states seeking NATO membership is expected to be made at the conference. *(Baltic New Service)* ◆



Irena Degutienė

# The Status of Charity and Sponsorship for Lithuania

**C**harity and sponsorship, provided by the United States of America, has always been very important for the people of Lithuania. We are especially grateful to the organizations of the Lithuanians in emigration who have never forgotten their Motherland and have always lent their helpful hand in times of trouble.

Currently, people and organizations of foreign countries provide the major part of charity and sponsorship for Lithuania. It shows the friendly attitude of other countries towards Lithuania and their understanding of our problems. We must admit that the fact that the number of foreign donors exceed the number of local donors is determined by economic problems of the country and, partially, by certain shortcomings of laws regulating the provision and acceptance of charity and sponsorship. According to the data of the Department of Statistics at the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, in 1998, 76.6% of all charity and sponsorship provided for Lithuania came from abroad and 23.4% from Lithuanian enterprises and individual persons.

The major part of charity and sponsorship received from foreign countries consists of material values (ca. 91.1% of all charity and sponsorship received from foreign countries). These are mostly medical and orthopedic products, medicines, paints, radio, TV and communications equipment and apparatus, videotapes, soft drinks, used clothes, computers and computer equipment.

Quite often we are asked about the efficiency of the usage of charity and sponsorship for dealing with social, cultural and health issues. While selecting the recipients of charity and sponsorship, for-



eign donors give the priority to those areas of life in society where sponsorship (whether it be providing things or services and training programs) is needed most of all.

If we analyze the distribution of the received charity and sponsorship among institutions, we will notice that institutions of social security and health care prevail: in 1998 they received almost half (48.8%) of all the charity and sponsorship provided for Lithuania. Its smaller part is provided for non-governmental organizations (26.7%), education, culture and sports related institutions (15.3%).

Research data of the Department of Statistics show that positions of foreign and local donors, while selecting the recipients, differ. Foreign donors give their priority to health care and social security institutions as well as non-governmental organizations, and Lithuanian enterprises most often provide their charity and sponsorship for education, culture, and sports related institutions and consider health care and social security institutions as their third priority. Reasons for the said choices may be explained differently. However, one thing is clear, [organizations (companies) would rather advertise themselves by sponsoring sports, culture and performing activities than show that they provide] charity and sponsorship for social care institutions or hospitals.

Currently, we observe the decrease of charity

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*IRENA DEGUTIENĖ is the Minister of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania. This speech was given at the "Gift for Lithuania" Conference in Washington, D.C. in November 1999.*



and sponsorship received from foreign countries. Largest volumes of charity and sponsorship were provided in 1996; afterwards, a continuous decrease was observed.

This is caused by the gradually improving situation in the institutions engaged in the said fields. Therefore, the demand for items most often provided as charity and sponsorship decreased. Quality of and access to health care, social, and other services are gradually improving. On the other hand, quite a few bureaucratic obstacles, strict quality control, and legal regulations that are not always clear may sometimes dampen the wish of foreign donors to provide assistance.

The United States of America and Germany are the most active providers of charity and sponsorship to Lithuania; they account for almost 70% of all the charity and sponsorship provided. Presently, sponsorship provided for Lithuania by Finland, Japan and Italy is continuously increasing.

I have already mentioned that the largest share of the charity and sponsorship provided for Lithuania is given to health care. During the first years of Lithuania's independence, health care institutions did not have enough means for the acquisition of the most necessary medicines, disposable medical items, even sheets, sanitary and hygiene items.

The biggest sponsorship for the institutions of the health care system was provided by "Lithuanian Mercy Lift", a Lithuanian organization in Illinois. This organization continues its activities by sending large charity shipments to different health care institutions. Currently, it takes care of an especially urgent problem in Lithuania – treatment and prevention of TB.

"Aid to Lithuania Incorporated", a charity organization of Michigan Lithuanians (*Lietuvos Vyčiai*), also provides charity of a very high quality. This organization has a partnership agreement with the Charity Foundation of France, "Pharmacists Without Borders", and delivers new medicines from French factories. It should be mentioned that delivered medicines have long expiration periods, full annotations, and quality certificates, and most often they are certified by the State Medicines Control Agency of the Republic of Lithuania. This makes the administration of the said medicines much easier.

"Lietuvos Vaikų Globa", from Boston, provides

charity and sponsorship mostly for children hospitals and children (infants) care homes. They receive not only medicines, but also clothes, toys and other items needed by children.

I would like to mention that the provision of charity through the warehouses of the Ministry of Health has quite a few advantages. However, when charity is delivered straight to institutions of individual and public health care, it saves time and money.

If we talk about the system of education and science, foreign donors mostly assist secondary schools of general education, institutions of vocational training, institutions of additional training, institutions of higher learning, and scientific institutes. Cultural centers, libraries, theatres, and music groups receive much less attention from foreigners.

In the field of social security, the major share of the foreign charity and sponsorship is provided for childcare institutions, institutions for mentally disabled people, and care homes for the elderly.

Charity and sponsorship for the said institutions is also provided by Lithuanian NGO's (charity and sponsorship foundations, public organizations, religious organizations) that receive charity and sponsorship from similar organizations or private individuals from abroad. However, the volume of foreign sponsorship provided for Lithuanian NGO's is decreasing.

It is said that after a rather long period of sponsorship, the time came for Lithuanian NGO's to become more independent, and to use and mobilize the potential sponsorship of their members, fellow citizens, and local businesses for projects and initiatives of NGO's. Lithuanian authorities appreciate the useful activities of NGO's and search for ways to support and assist them. The budget is not big enough for the sponsorship of NGO's; therefore, the sponsorship provided for NGO's by foreign donors is extremely necessary.

It is important that provided charity and sponsorship meets the purpose, i.e. meets the demands of the recipients. However, sometimes health care and social care institutions and schools receive items that are not the most necessary for them, or sponsorship is provided for institutions other than those that are in need of sponsorship. This issue should be dealt with by involving municipalities into the coordination of charity and sponsorship provided for the region that they serve. The laws of the Re-



public of Lithuania provide for the responsibility of institutions of self-government for the social condition of the community.

Municipalities should examine the demand of health care, educational, social care and other institutions operating on their territory for the specific sponsorship and provide the information for the potential donors. Municipalities have institutions closest to people that know the problems and that search for ways of dealing with them. Each municipality has separate departments that are in charge of specific fields, i.e. departments of social assistance, health care, education, and children's rights security.

I would like to encourage all organizations and individuals who try to help the people of Lithuania to more actively exchange information with municipalities that serve the territory on which the institutions that they wish to support operate.

Another way would be to select one or two institutions (health care, educational, social care) and to co-operate with them directly, thus avoiding intermediaries and warehouses. In this way, the sponsor could better influence the development of the said institution, use its costly time and accumulated means more efficiently, and could have information about the usage of charity and sponsorship. Such partnerships proved to be efficient in some health care institutions of Žemaitija where German organizations have been providing sponsorship for specific hospitals not only with medicines but also with consultation in the fields of medicine and management for several years already. Some social care institutions also have regular sponsors from abroad that help with the provision of the most necessary social services.

I would like to note that currently the financial situation of the state social care institutions of Lithuania is rather good; however, the situation of social care institutions subordinated to municipalities is different. The situation of children care homes, care homes for the elderly, and schools in rural areas is worse than elsewhere so far. Very often they lack such basic things as kitchen equipment, kitchen utensils, covers, furniture, sheets, domestic electric appliances, and compensatory equipment for the handicapped.

It is obvious that Lithuania still needs sponsorship. Appreciating the charitable activities of for-

eign and local enterprises and individuals, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania improved legislation regulating the provision and acceptance of charity and sponsorship. With this purpose in mind, the commission, formed by the Government, drafted to amend the Charity and Sponsorship Law and the related laws (drafts of amendments and adjustments of Law on Customs Duty Tariffs, Law on Value Added Tax, Law on Income Tax of Natural Persons, Law on Profit Tax of Legal Persons, Tax Administration Law).

Once the Parliament (*Seimas*) adopts the said drafts, NGO's of all types will have equal opportunities to provide and receive sponsorship. Legally provided and useful for the society, objectives will help determine the fields; and organizations engaged in the said fields will be provided with sponsorship. Donation of material values and financial means will become a legal way of providing sponsorship. Charity will be provided for those who need sponsorship most. The responsibility of charity and sponsorship providers will grow, and the provision, acceptance, and usage of charity and sponsorship will be controlled more efficiently. It will be possible to determine the validity of the application of tax privileges. The law will also encourage the provision of charity and sponsorship by making export and import procedures more simplified.

The adoption of the law amendment drafts was delayed due to a long coordination process with different interested institutions. However, I hope that the developed law drafts will soon be discussed in the *Seimas*, and that already this year, Lithuania will have the Charity and Sponsorship Law.

I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to share my thoughts in this Conference. You helped our health care, social security, and education systems survive the difficult times, and now you can help them reach a higher level. We would kindly ask you to provide us not only with material support but also with your good ideas, consulting, and training our specialists. Our common goal is to see Lithuania so strong and so developed that it no longer needs any foreign charity and sponsorship. With your help, this day may come sooner.

All your activities provide the support and joy of life for those who need assistance most. Let me wish you good health, energy, optimism, patience, and success in your life and your work. ♦



Jeanne Dorr

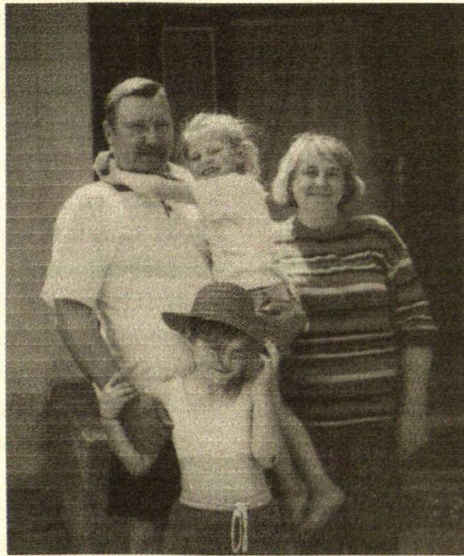
## An Orchard Filled With Children

**T**he primary goal of Lithuanian Orphan Care is to keep families together. However, the world is not a perfect place and we do not always get what we want. Our alternative is to place children in a group home. This is a situation where children live in a house with a mother and a father. We feel having two parents add stability to the lives of the children.

I would like to take you to Šv. Martyno Vaikų Sodė (Saint Martin's Children's Orchard), which is located in the Anykščių area.

The parents to the fourteen children who reside here are Elena and Aleksandras Ilgūnai. From the outside their house appears to be typical Lithuanian farmhouse with a lovely flower garden in the front and along the sides of the house. But the inside is quite another story – as the house comes alive with the activities of children whose ages range from sixteen to eighteen.

The oldest child is learning to be a roofer. Although he is of legal age to leave, this is his home and this is where he's found every weekend. Nine of the children were preparing for their First Communion, and wedding gowns were spread all over the tables. Why wedding gowns? Because a local business, which rented



The Ilgūnai and two of their children.

Photo: Jeanne Dorr

wedding gowns, donated several out of date gowns to the family. The monumental task of taking them apart and altering them to fit her "daughters" fell to Elena, but she didn't mind. Elena would perform this act of love after the day's work was done, the house was silent, and everyone was asleep.

It is a house where the wash is never finished, and the oven is always in use, while the aroma of freshly baked bread permeates the house. There is no need for air fresheners or potpourri in this house; something is al-

ways cooking on the stove or baking in the oven.

The children were waiting for us in the yard and began to greet us before we were out of the car. Regina Švoba, who coordinates the Countryside Children's Fund, is no stranger to the family. After we were warmly greeted by everyone and given a tour of the house, we were offered home made refreshments. The children went about their chores, and Elena graciously shared her many anecdotes with us.

There was the time Tomas was looking at his brother's precious coin collection. Actually, the collection consisted of only three coins, none valuable, but when a child owns nothing else, this means the world to him. Apparently

*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.*



Tomas was testing the coin for durability with his teeth and swallowed it. The whole house was in an uproar until it could be retrieved. Unfortunately, it could only be located by Tomas having a full audience every time he went to the bathroom. But the mission was successful; the missing coin is now back in the collection, and Tomas once again has his privacy in the bathroom.

Then there is the youngest in the house, little Juratè. She was slightly bothered that she was the only one too young to go to school. All the children get ready to leave at the same time in the morning. You can imagine what a production this is. Being the one who usually got the most attention, this did not sit well with her.

One day as Elena was washing clothes, she realized she had not seen Juratè for some time. When located, Juratè was wielding the scissors and giving herself a haircut. To Elena's dismay, most of Juratè's beautiful hair was in a heap on the floor. But Juratè couldn't wait to show her the cat's haircut; the cat had even less hair than Juratè.

But life is not all laughter in this house. When the children arrive, they bring no belongings. All they have is their excessive emotional baggage. It takes very special people to care for them. Elena was an engineer and her husband studied farming; they do not have college degrees in psychology. But they do have enough love and patience to raise their children.

Elena told me about all her children, but space does not allow me to tell you all I heard. There was the brother and sister whose mother left them sitting on a bale of hay while she went to town to enjoy herself. The

children sat there many hours, afraid to move, while they shivered and went hungry. It was November and very cold. The mother had a few problems in town and was put in jail, never telling the authorities she had left her children. It was only after a farmer noticed them that they were sent to the children's home. The mother telephones them from time to time and blames all her problems on them. The brother and sister still tend to cling to each other. But they were very adamant about one thing – they did not want to return to their house. They wanted to stay with Aunt Elena.

Kristina's father is an invalid and an alcoholic who was forced to live in a nursing home because he could no longer take care of himself. Her mother had a boyfriend but he's in prison. Before he was imprisoned, Kristina could no longer endure the abuse of her mother's boyfriend; so she ran away from home. She lived in the woods for two days and two nights. On the third day she returned to school where the principal, after hearing her story, drove her directly to the children's home. The young girl's mother telephoned her once in two years.

The older Juratè is terrified of her father. After her mother died of cancer, her father brought home a girlfriend. Both of them are alcoholics. In a fit of drunken rage Juratè's father chained her outside in the snow.

Rasa's mother was dead, and her father abandoned the family. Her older brother tried to raise her but he also had a problem with alcohol. He would lock her in the tiny bathroom for hours, and as an additional punishment for being "stuck" with his little sister, he would pull her hair until she screamed in pain.

Aistè came on her own. There



*The children after their  
First Communion.*

*Photo: Jeanne Dorr*



was no food in the house, and her parents were both alcoholics who fought day and night.

These are but a few cases. The children arrive at St. Martyno's with bad stomachs, kidney, heart and eye problems, bad teeth, and tuberculosis. Some have to be deloused; the only clothing they own has to be burned. They hide food at meals until Elena can persuade them they will never be hungry again. Elena admits there are nights when she doesn't sleep: there are children that have to be held because of their awful nightmares, those who cough much of the night, and those who are afraid to let her out of their sight.

Everyone works both inside and outside. In the outdoors is a farm, which needs constant tending, as well as cows, pigs, chickens, and a horse. There is always work inside. The bedrooms hold three children in each room, and the parents urge them to let their own personalities emerge. A hotel that was ordering new beds donated the children's beds. The older children had posters on their walls; while three of the girls made a very unique curtain as a room divider. They found an old video, which was beyond repair, so they cut it into even strips. Now they have an instant new room divider. The building itself was a kindergarten, which had been abandoned. Elena and her husband bought it and remodeled it – doing almost all the work themselves.

The family is deeply religious and named the home after St. Martin because they were told that legend says that he was a friend of the poor.

Education is equally important because as all parents Elena and her husband want the children well prepared for when they enter the work force. Tomas won every award possible for academic achievement in his school. But for every award Tomas has won, there has been an uphill battle with some of the other children. One little girl came to Elena and should have been in third grade. She never saw or heard of the alphabet. Elena and the family had their work cut out for them.

This is a house that is filled with love. The children are well behaved and have beautiful manners but still enjoy a good time. For entertainment the family enjoys music and gives concerts throughout the local area. While I was there, the local principal stopped by for a visit and to chat with the children. Everyone is pulling for these children, and they are surrounded with love. Now the nightmares have to be wiped away.

The government offers some financial support, but it is never enough. Countryside Children's Fund makes up the difference, and there is a big difference necessary to help a family like this stay together.

BRIDGES readers, I urge you to support Lithuanian Orphan Care. These are the children you are helping today to provide for a better Lithuania tomorrow. Each of the children in this house is fortunate to have a sponsor, but there are so many more on a waiting list. They are waiting for people like you to respond. Would you consider giving one of these children the gift of a better future? The cost to sponsor a child is \$150 a year, but ANY donation is gratefully appreciated.

Many of you are beginning to make vacation plans, but please remember that poverty takes no holiday. The children need you and they need you now! From the bottom of my heart, I thank you, BRIDGES readers, for all you have done and are doing for Lithuania's children.

I would like to thank Elena and Aleksandras for their hospitality and sharing their children with me for an afternoon. My sincerest gratitude goes to the sponsors of these children. Without you, there would be no children's home.

I would like share this quote with you. "The test of a morality of a society is what it does for its children." (*Dietrick Bonhoeffer*) We are all responsible for Lithuania's children.

Please send your tax-exempt checks to:

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



Rimas Gedeika

# Move Over, Žalgiris!

## The Bicyclists are Coming!

**M**ove over, Žalgiris! A new, dynamic, unbelievably fantastic team is about to take your place. It is a team, which over the past two years captured the imagination, the hearts, and souls of all the Lithuanian people including the fanatical basketball fans!

Who is this team? It is the Lithuanian women's bicycle team.

This team amazed the entire world by winning, two years in a row, both the Women's World Road Racing Championship and the Women's Tour de France – the most prestigious multi-day (13-day) race on the racing circle. They did this in 1998 and again in 1999. In addition, in 1998 the team was ranked number two in the world. In 1999, it was ranked number three.

It is amazing that any team could win both of these races two years in a row. What is even more amazing is that such a small team, comprised of four athletes, from such a small country as Lithuania, could not only compete against but also defeat such powerful teams as Germany, France, Italy, Denmark, and Norway.

At this time I would like to introduce to you the

young ladies who have made this team the inspirational crew that it is today.

Diana Ziliūtė is 24 years of age and lives in Panevėžys. In 1994 Diana won the Junior World Road Race Championships. In 1996 she participated in Atlanta's Olympic Games. In 1998, in all six world cup races, Diana was either first or within the top four. As a result, she was ranked number one in the world. During that year she won many other races, but her most notable victories were winning the Women's World Championship and the European Championship. This was the first time that a Lithuanian had won the World Championship.

She also represented Lithuania in the under 23 years-old world championships where she won a gold and silver medal enabling the Lithuanian team to win the championship. Finally, she was named Lithuania's Athlete of the year.

In 1999, she had another fine racing season. She was ranked number three in the world; won the multi-day (13 days) women's Tour de France – becoming only the second Lithuanian to do this; and placed third in the Women's World Championships.



Returning to Lithuania after their triumphant 1999 racing season are, from left: Rasa Mažeikytė, Edita Pučinskaitė, Diana Ziliūtė, and Zita Urbonaitė.

Photo: Alfredas Pliadis

**RIMAS GEDEIKA**, a marathon runner, is a senior product development analyst in an insurance corporation. He is also an avid Lithuanian sports enthusiast.

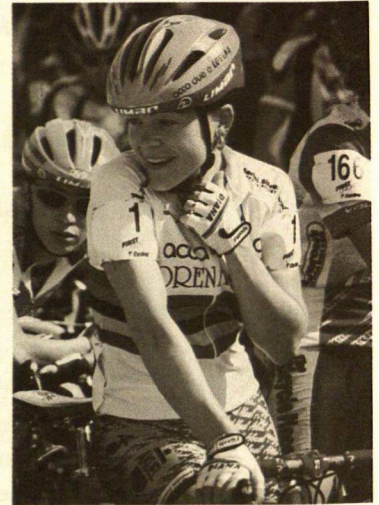




At left, getting ready for the Liberty Classic Race are #4 Rasa Polikevičiūtė and #3 Jolanta Polikevičiūtė.

Wearing the World Championship jersey, which she won in 1998, is Diana Žiliūtė, to the right.

Photo: Rimas Gedeika



Edita Pučinskaitė is 25 years old and lives in Panevėžys. In 1998, she won many races, but her most celebrated victory was winning the Tour de France – becoming the first Lithuanian to win this race.

The year 1999 was a truly remarkable one for Edita. During the month of August she won eight races! However, her single, most notable accomplishment was winning the Women's World Championship (the second Lithuanian to do so), and in the same Championships, winning a bronze medal in the individual time trials. She also took second in the Tour de France Race. She finished this fantastic year by being selected a Lithuanian Athlete of the Year.

Jolanta and Rasa Polokevičiūtės, 30 year-old twin sisters, also live in Panevėžys and have for years been winning individual races. They have also done well in the 1998 Tour de France race: Jolanta was fifth and Rasa was seventh. In that same year's World Championship Race, Rasa finished fourth.

As great as these accomplishments were, their greatest accomplishments did not result in victories for themselves but in victories for their teammates: Žiliūtė in 1998 and Pučinskaitė in 1999.

It is a well-known fact that to win a Group road race, great team effort is required. Both Rasa and Jolanta, for the past two years, have sacrificed their individual aspirations to help their teammates, Diana and Edita, win their respective races. They did this by attacking the course, by breaking away from the pack, by making the competitors work twice as

hard, while Diana and Edita drafted and rested behind them. The twin sisters took turns wearing down the competitors. They maneuvered this way until about 500 meters to the finish line. At that point, the rested Diana and Edita started to sprint, and their worn down competitors could not keep up with them. Thus the Lithuanian victory.

Both Žiliūtė and Pučinskaitė readily admit that without Rasa's and Jolanta's help, they would not have won their respective races. No team had better team players than the Lithuanian team.

Besides having a world class road-racing team, Lithuania also has a great track racer by the name of Rasa Mažeikytė.

In 1999, the 24 year-old Rasa accomplished what no other Lithuanian woman track bicyclist had ever accomplished; she won the European 3k Track Championship and a bronze medal in the women's World Track 3k Championships. She is regarded as one of the favorites to win a medal at this year's Olympic Games.

Presently all five young bicyclists are vigorously partaking in a training program geared to get them to reach their peak performance level for the Olympic Games in Sydney, just six months away.

Of all the Lithuanian teams going to the Olympics, this team is given the best chance of winning several medals, among them a gold medal. When this occurs, the only question we'll be able to ask is "Žalgiris Who?" The Lithuanian women's bicyclists will be the ones to bring home the gold! ♦



## Kasparaitis and Skudra: Names to Remember

One of the most exciting games you can watch is hockey, and despite a poor year, the Penguins are drawing a big sports audience in Pittsburgh and in the National Hockey League. Top players include one Lithuanian and one Latvian: Darius Kasparaitis, defense, and Peter Skudra, goaltender.

Skudra sought out his post here while one of General Manager Craig Patrick's twelve scouts brought Kasparaitis to Pittsburgh.

Kasparaitis, a fan favorite, is one of the top three defense men in the league and he won a two-year, three million-dollar contract in September, 1999.

He is 5' 11", 212 lbs. and was born in Elektrėnai, Lithuania, October 16, 1972. After being with the Russian League and playing in six games for the Russian Olympic Team, he came to the United States and is now reaching for his 500th game, having hit his 400th in 1997.

Mark Madden, of the Post Gazette, called Kasparaitis the lion-hearted Lithuanian. He said, "He is unique. He chatters like a jackhammer and body checks like a wrecking ball. He hits. He hurts. He makes the opposition hear footsteps and make hasty plays. There is not another player exactly like Kasparaitis in the NHL. His skills aren't flashy, but he has solid fundamentals."

Ron Cook, of the Post Gazette, wrote, "Kasparaitis is as fearless as they come. It's

why he has survived for so long in the NHL with a fearless reckless style. It's why he managed to play 48 games with a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee last season."

Kasparaitis recently came from reconstructive knee surgery and a lengthy contract dispute – not to mention a two-game NHL mandated suspension. He says his knee is fine, and he wants more of chance to prove it.

For five years Kasparaitis was with the N.Y. Islanders and came to the Penguins November 17, 1996. He was married in Lithuania, and he and his wife, Irena, have a daughter, Elizabeth. Kasparaitis lives during the 82 game-season in Pittsburgh and the balance of the year on Long Island.

Peter Skudra, single, was signed by the Penguins as a free agent on September 25, 1997. Skudra was born in Riga, Latvia on April 24, 1973 and is 6' 1", weighing 185 lbs. He lives in Pittsburgh year-round. He came to this country in 1994 and spent three years as a free agent in the minor leagues at Greensboro, S.C., and Johnstown and Hamilton, Ontario. In his first season with the Penguins, he was named Penguin's Rookie of The Year.

Despite injuries, which at times gave him intense physical pain in walking, he has carried on. He is quiet, friendly, and reserved. ♦

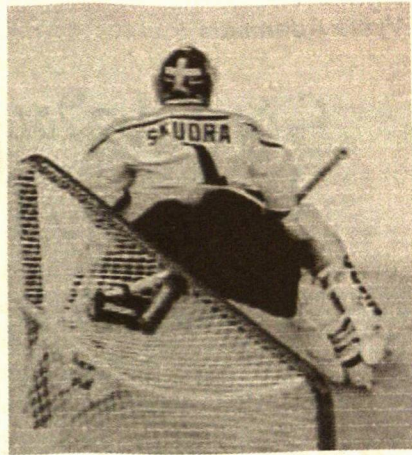
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*THE LITHUANIAN CITIZENS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER published these articles in their February 2000 newsletter. The Skudra/Kasparaitis article is based on information from Dalia Yucius and Ray Palket. Ray Palket edits the newsletter, and it is sponsored by the Lithuanian Citizens' Society in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. They can be contacted at 1725 Jane Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15203 or at <http://www.angelfire.com/pa2/lithcitizenssociety>.*





Darius Kasparaitis



Peter Skudra

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## **Donatas Zavackas is Making His Mark at Pitt**

**A** freshman at the University of Pittsburgh is rapidly making his name one to remember.

Donatas Zavackas, who came to the U.S. from Lithuania a little over two years ago, is showing great promise on the Pitt basketball team. In a recent game with University of Connecticut, ranked the second best basketball team in the nation, he scored 13 points. He spent this past summer playing for the under-20 Lithuanian National team averaging 27 points and 12 rebounds.

This fun-loving 6' 8", 225-lb. athlete is a good shooter, passer, and a very good rebounder. He is getting the best grades of all the team players and speaks excellent English. He gets along well with everyone and lives on campus.

He was born in 1980 in Klaipėda, Lithuania. His parents are Rima and Kazys Zavackas.

Donatas went to St. Benedict's Prep School in Newark, New Jersey his junior year and transferred to St. Vincent-St. Mary High School in Akron, Ohio for his senior year, but was out of basketball action in Akron due to

high school transfer rules. Although, he did work out with the team.

Pitt scouts signed him and offered him a scholarship. Mike Cawood of the Pitt Media Dept. predicted a bright future for him, particularly in 2002 when Pitt's new, \$68 million convocation center opens in the former Pit Stadium location. The new basketball court will provide 12,500 seats and that, together with Pitt's sharing of the new Steeler Stadium, will give Pitt the finest football and basketball facilities in the nation.

Donatas follows in the footsteps of many Lithuanians. The basketball tradition was introduced to Lithuania by Lithuanian-Americans eighty years ago, and Lithuanian basketball players are some of the best in the world. They have won European championships two times.

We're looking forward to hearing a lot about Donatas. ♦



Mark Vytas Adomaitis

# Steel Wolf: Friendly, Lithuanian,

## ...and Rock & Rollers!



From left, guitarist Michael Jaillon, drummer and vocalist Mark Vytas Adomaitis, and on bass guitar Ellis Spanos.

Photo: Mark V. Adomaitis

Taking their name from Lithuanian folklore and then translating it from “geležinis vilkas”, the rock and roll band *Steel Wolf*, comprised of Mark Vytas Adomaitis (drums, vocals), Michael Jaillon (guitar, piano), and Ellis Spanos (bass guitar) play concerts on a regular basis. They highlight songs from their entertaining compact disc, *Boozer Friendly*, which is further filled with Lithuanian trademarks.

Long-time *BRIDGES* readers will recall Joe Kaliff describing *Steel Wolf* as “exuberant”, when he reported on them back in June 1983 (Vol. 7, No. 6). The band was a six-man band at that point, but soon split in half. One half became *The Brothers Kezys Orchestra*, a very popular North-east Lithuanian wedding band. The other half kept the name and began writing original material.

On February 16, 1986, *Steel Wolf* began re-recording a series of well-received demo tapes (one even included a heavy guitar version of the Lithuanian National Anthem!) They performed regularly at Židiny's, the Lithuanian Cultural Center in Brooklyn, to enthusiastic responses but went on hiatus in the late eighties to begin careers and families. In 1995, *Steel Wolf* reformed, began writing, and subsequently recording their latest a sixteen-song compact disc.

The album starts out powerfully. The guitar on the song, “Naktipiečiai” (*Evening Snack*), sounds like thunder. (Perkūnas (*The Thunder God*) would be proud!) It also contains humorous lyrics about the band’s favorite nighttime snack: “Too bad donuts don’t go with sauerkraut! His face is glazed and sticky like glue! In the morning, he’ll have pusryčių (*breakfast*)”.

Other Lithuanian delicacies are sung about in “Night Of 1,000 Koldūnai (*meat dumplings*)”. During this song a female voice (Elizabeth Grad) softly croons, “Where did they come from? Who made them first – those delicious koldūnai?” A scary-sounding electronic voice responds with the “myth”: “Mindaugas prayed to pagan gods living in a tree. A wolf of steel told him to kneel and a recipe”. Then, over stunningly beautiful classical piano music, the instructions for making koldūnai are given in an Orson Welles-type voice over: “With water from the Nemunas, beat together eggs and flour...” *Steel Wolf's* koldūnai recipe challenges my grandmother’s!

The sepia-toned photograph of a young, platinum-haired maiden clothed in a traditional Lithuanian costume serving Karalius Mindaugas champagne with black bread illustrates the cover of their CD. *Steel Wolf* reveals its boozier-friendly lyrics using a bouncing beat that gets everyone on

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**MARK VYTAS ADOMAITIS** is the drummer and vocalist for *Steel Wolf*. To obtain your copy of *Boozer Friendly*, send your name, address and a check for \$7.99 plus \$1.75 for postage & handling, made out to STEEL WOLF to: STEEL WOLF, 3 Elizabeth Street, Floral Park, N.Y. 11001. Visit Steel Wolf on the web: <http://there.is/steelwolf>.



the dance floor. Interestingly, the penalty for overindulgence is acknowledged on "Rosacea Tripwires", a soothing folk song complete with mountain dulcimer expertly strummed by Steve Guglielmo. On "(An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge)", which is based on the classic short story by Ambrose Bierce, *Steel Wolf* let their Lithuanian heritage shine through by utilizing a polka beat during the guitar solo.

All these fine points are what help *Boozier Friendly* sell in Long Island music shops and get airplay on university radio stations such as Hofstra, C.W. Post, Nassau Community, and Stony Brook. They have also been heard on "Laisvės Žiburys", the New York-area Lithuanian radio show. My relatives in Lithuania have even fallen in love with *Steel Wolf*. They greatly appreciate the band's focus on exposing Americans to Lithuanian traditions.

Currently, *Steel Wolf* has gotten their white shirts and "juostelės" (their stage outfits) out of the cleaners and have taken their Lithuanian spirit on the road. One stop this summer will be Camp Neringa in Vermont. Here, they will perform their legendary "all ages" show in which the band edits out all adult themes from their lyrics and includes some of the popular dance numbers they performed in their early days. Also, a full-length video documentary about the band's history is due out this summer. ♦

**Lisa Verrico**  
From *Ramunė Kubilius*

## The Prodigy

"Gintarė is not a woman you would necessarily notice if you passed her in the street. She is of average height, quite good-looking and, today at least, casually dressed in jeans, a jumper and a baseball cap. If she was not in London, but in her native Lithuania, however, the thirty-something singer would stop traffic." Lisa Verrico, of *Scotland on Sunday*, starts her article on Gintarė, a child pianist and teen idol who is starting over in Britain. What follows is an excerpt from Verrico's article.

Although she has spent the last 15 years in the West, back home, Gintarė (pronounced Ginta-ray) is a star of Posh Spice proportions. At the age of 13, she was playing to audiences of up to 100,000, who would flock from as far afield as Finland and Russia to hear her.

Long before Charlotte Church, she was the Pope's child prodigy of choice. When she went out, it was always with two bodyguards in tow.

"I was the biggest pop star my country had ever known," says Gintarė, in an odd, East-meets-West accent. "I still am, even though I haven't been there for years. My records are still played on the radio every day and my albums are always in the charts. In my teens, it was crazy. I got letters from fans saying they would kill themselves if I didn't marry them. It was all so strange."

Now a divorced mother of two living in Oxford, Gintarė is about to relaunch her music career after a break of over ten years. Her new album, *Earthless*, which comes out next month, sees her on the same label as the likes of Supergrass and the Pet Shop Boys and is her first stab at a career in the West. A mix of atmospheric synthesizers, classical composition and Gintarė's gorgeous, haunting vocals, *Earthless* is best described as a cross between Björk, the Cocteau Twins and Tori Amos. Like Air's *Moon Safari*, it sounds like pop from another planet.

"I don't copy anyone," insists Gintarė. "My only influences are classical and those are in the song structures, not the sound. I have two albums I take everywhere with me – Massive Attack's *Mezzanine* and The Prodigy's *The Fat of the Land*. Apart from Craig Armstrong, who I don't call pop, I haven't heard anything else I like for the last two years."

*LISA VERRICO* is a reporter for *Scotsman Publications, Ltd/Scotland on Sunday*. This article appeared in the February 27, 2000 issue, and *RAMUNĖ KUBILIUS* kindly sent it on to *BRIDGES*.



Born in the tiny, Lithuanian coastal town of Tauragė, Gintarė began playing piano when she was just 18 months old. Her parents, Edmund and Nijolė, were both acclaimed classical musicians and conductors who performed all over the world.

Until she was ten, Gintarė, practicing for four hours a day, played only classical music. Then friends at her state school introduced her to rock. "I loved groups like Emerson, Lake and Palmer, ELO and Pink Floyd," she says. "It was pop, but it was also complicated music with some very powerful piano playing. Whenever my parents went out, I would play pop. I have a great memory for music. I can hear anything, then play it back on the piano. When I was five, I heard "Yesterday" by The Beatles on the radio. I remember climbing up onto the table to get closer to that melody. Then I went straight to the piano and played it. I'm not a big Beatles fan, but I'll never forget first hearing that song."

A star pupil at the [children's music] academy, Gintarė was picked to play on national TV when she 12. A year later, she was offered the leading role in a new musical called *Chasing the Fire*. It was an instant hit. Overnight, Gintarė became famous.

"Everyone went crazy for the show," she says. "It was a rock musical and no one had heard anything like it before. People came from other countries just to see it. We recorded an album of the songs and it was a huge hit. I think every home had a copy."

Gintarė's success allowed her to form her own avant-garde pop group. The academy disapproved and expelled her, but by then it hardly mattered. Over the next five years, she released nine albums, all of which topped the charts. None of the songs, however, were her own.

"At the time, Lithuania was under Russian occupation," she says. "It was KGB rules that you

could not record your own music. It was considered too western, too rebellious, especially if you were my age. I had to cover songs by established artists that the government approved of."

Just before she turned 20, Gintarė left Lithuania. Desperate for a normal life, she decided to stop making music. In New York, she met and married a businessman, with whom she had two sons. For seven years, she didn't write or record a note.

"I'd had enough of music," she says. "I wanted to live a bit, to learn languages and see the world. I missed playing and performing, but I didn't miss all the stuff that goes with it, like the mad fans. I had a very happy marriage and two lovely sons. For a while, that was enough."

By the mid-Nineties, however, Gintarė was itching to get back to music. She bought some synthesizers, rented a studio, and started to write her own songs. When her marriage ended, she moved to England from America and began touting her demo tapes around record companies. Finally signed by EMI's Parlophone label, Gintarė wrote and recorded the

twelve tracks on *Earthless* (which was released on Parlophone on March 13<sup>th</sup>) in a matter of months.

"I took classical definitions and turned them into pop," she says. "The songs are just my voice and layers of sound. There are no other musicians. I know I'm not the world's greatest singer, technically-speaking, but I do have an interesting voice."

Gintarė's next step is to put together a band to play *Earthless* live. "I'm definitely a concert person. I want to get up on stage and prove wrong all the people who told me that pop and classical can't mix. I know I can do it. When I was 15, I got my parents to agree that Pink Floyd are as valid as Mozart. Compared to that, this will be easy." ♦





## 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Lithuanian Room at University of Pittsburgh

The dedication of the first two Nationality Rooms to open at the University of Pittsburgh 60 years ago -- the Lithuanian Room and the Polish Room -- was celebrated at the International Cabaret Ball at the University of Pittsburgh on Saturday, May 13<sup>th</sup>.

The Lithuanians and Poles opened the way to the creation of 26 different Nationality Rooms at Pitt, which have drawn worldwide attention for 60 years.

The event was held at the William Pitt Union at the University. Jay McCloskey, of the Lithuanian Room Committee, was the co-chairperson of the event, and Don Mushalsko, for the Polish Room Committee, was chairman.

The Neris Dancers performed a number of Lithuanian dances. Karvzels, a Polish-American dance ensemble, also appeared. In addition to a reception, buffet dinner, and dancing, the cultures of Lithuania and Poland were highlighted. Don Cannon, of KDKA-TV, was the master of ceremonies.

This ball was sponsored by the Nationality Council, the governing body of the Nationality Room Committees which raises funds to provide summer scholarships. This summer, twenty-eight University of Pittsburgh students will study abroad, one will study in Lithuania.

### "Looking Back" by Frank Ziaukas

The Lithuanian Classroom of the University of Pittsburgh was formally opened on October 4, 1940. Honored guests included Miss Marian Bartkus and George Zelinskas, who both served on the Committee for the Lithuanian Classroom at that time.

The Nationality Rooms resulted from the effort to involve Pittsburgh's many nationality groups in the construction of the Cathedral of Learning. The Lithuanian Room Committee was formed in March 1932, when an Executive Committee of eight members was elected, and a General Committee composed of representatives from each local Lithuanian organization was named. Peter Pivaronas was then President and Mrs. Johanna T. Baltrusaitis was the Campaign Manager.

The campaign to raise funds was pushed by the Committee and involved picnics, dances, and card parties held locally; appeals to other Lithuanian communities and organizations around the country in the Lithuanian press and by personal visits; and even visits to Lithuania.

A cooperating committee was formed in Kaunas, which included the President of the Lithuanian Colonists Abroad, the Director of the Čiurlionis Art Gallery, and representatives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the University of Kaunas. Seven artists in Lithuania submitted designs in an open competition with the design of Antanas Gudaitis selected. Coordinating this international effort was the University Advisor to the Nationality Committees, Ruth Crawford Mitchell, and probably the one person most responsible for transforming a marvelous idea into reality.

Finally the room was ready for its dedication. Hundreds of guests filled the great Commons Room, including the guest of honor, Paul Žadeikis, Minister of Lithuania to the United States. A Lithuanian bard sang Lithuanian folk songs accompanying himself on the kanklės, and the children and grandchildren of the Committee members presented Chancel-

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*FRANK ZIAUKAS AND THE LITHUANIAN CITIZENS' SOCIETY NEWSLETTER published this article in their May 2000 newsletter.*



lor Bowman with gifts from the old country – amber, rue, a miniature wayside cross, kanklės, and a Lithuanian primer. And so, the Lithuanian Classroom was presented to the University of Pittsburgh.

The national character of the Lithuanian Room was achieved by the use of Lithuanian folk art. Hand-woven linen in a design known as "The Path of the Birds" was used as a wall covering, held in place by decorative columns of white oak set against black oak. Concerned that the linen may someday need to be replaced, Barbara Bird, accompanied by her son, Leon, traveled to Lithuania in the mid 80s. Fortunately a weaver was found who could replicate the pattern, and after several years, a sufficient amount was transported to Pittsburgh and stored for later use.

The delicate rosettes, which surround the ceiling lights, were adapted in design from the picturesque roadside crosses and shrines characteristic of the Lithuanian landscape. The twelve-inch oak frieze below the ceiling is edged with a wooden scallop patterned after the overlapping roof of a granary. The entrance door of diagonal planks is crowned with decorative cutouts reminiscent of the roof ends of Lithuanian cottages. The light oak frieze above the blackboard is carved with the names of outstanding Lithuanian cultural figures: Donelaitis, Daukantas, Basanavičius, Maironis, Kudirka, and Čiurlionis.

The professor's table and the student furniture are of Lithuanian light oak, but the professor's chair is Lithuanian black oak. The black oak is of very special origin. It has been customary for farmers to select some of the finest oak and sink it in the bed of a pond or river. After a hundred years or so, the permeation of the river bed deposit darkens the white oak to a greenish black. This black oak or bog oak is highly prized for cabinetwork, and is very difficult to acquire.

Featured is a copy of Petras Rimša's sculpture – "The Lithuanian School of 1861 – 1904" – which depicts a Lithuanian mother at her spinning wheel teaching her child to read. A faithful dog under the bench remains alert for approaching soldiers; for these were the days when it was forbidden to print or possess material in the Lithuanian language printed in Roman type.

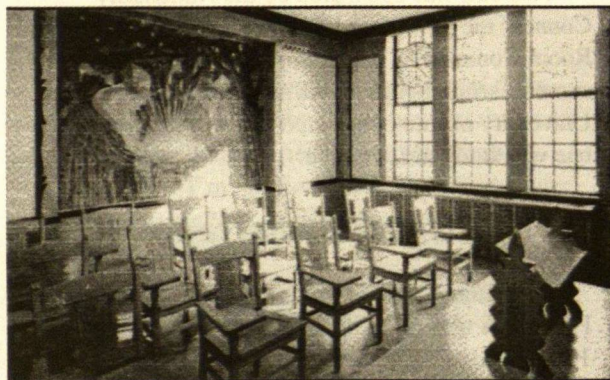
The focal point of the room has to be the enlarged copy of "The Two Kings" by M. K.

Čiurlionis, Lithuania's most famous painter. When the original fresco showed signs of wear and tear in 1968, Leona Orriger Claskey, a local artist, was engaged to replicate the piece on canvas.

Although the Lithuanian Room truly reflects its unique culture, as one of many such nationality rooms, it is part of a greater whole, which symbolizes universal ideals of beauty, truth, and peace. For sixty years, countless visitors have been amazed, delighted and intrigued by their visits to these rooms, including our little corner of Lithuania. Local folks, students from here and abroad, international visitors, such as the Lithuanian debating team and members of Parliament, have visited this room and, hopefully, emerged with a better, richer understanding of what Lithuania is about.

As the Lithuanian Room Committee was responsible for the creation of the Lithuanian Classroom, it is also responsible for its maintenance. In addition, the Committee also participates in the International Exchange Program at the University of Pittsburgh by awarding scholarships for summer study abroad.

John McCloskey is currently Chairman of the Lithuanian Room Committee. Chairpersons in the past have been John Kuncas, Gail Barkus, Vincent Rodgers, Barbara Bird, George Sipp, Robert X. Medonis, Paul Dargis, George Zilinskas, Edward Schultz, and Peter Pivaronas. For more information about the Lithuanian Room Committee and its activities, contact John McCloskey at 724-274-8668 or Patricia Macey at 412-885-0889. ♦



*The Lithuanian Room at the University of Pittsburgh.  
Photo: The Lithuanian Citizens' Society Newsletter.*



*Sister Ona Mikaila*

## LITHUANIAN PILGRIMS IN ROME

Some 20 million pilgrims will be visiting Rome during this Jubilee Year. A small but significant part of these are the 2,000 Lithuanian pilgrims who traveled to the Eternal City at the beginning of March for four days of prayer and celebration. The days of March first to the fourth had been especially designated for Lithuania.

The first Mass of the pilgrimage was celebrated on the afternoon of March 1<sup>st</sup> in Rome's venerable Basilica of St. John Lateran. All seven Lithuanian bishops concelebrated with the main celebrant, Bishop Jonas Boruta, SJ, auxiliary bishop of Vilnius. Many Lithuanian priests also gathered around the altar.

Bishop Boruta spoke to the congregation of about 700 people, saying that we have come to this city of saints and martyrs representing all Lithuanians. We have come with our own problems, with those of our nation and of our Church. Having survived 50 years of religious persecution, today we are here to rekindle our faith and our desire to live according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In the evening all gathered for evening prayer in St. Peter's Square. The Lithuanian pilgrims mingled with the Italians from the archdiocese of Palermo and vespers were conducted both in Italian and Lithuanian. As raindrops started to fall on the praying crowd, many got wet but nobody complained.

Each day the Lithuanian bishops celebrated Mass in various Roman basilicas. The Lithuanian pilgrims toured the city and visited the holy sites. The churches of Rome echoed with

the sounds of sacred music sung by the young people's choir of Vilnius Cathedral and All Saints Church Choir.

The most important day of celebration was March 4<sup>th</sup>: the feast of Lithuania's patron saint, St. Casimir. That morning, the colorful crowd of Lithuanian pilgrims, with President and Mrs. Adamkus at the head, processed through the holy door, opened by Pope John Paul II to begin the Jubilee Year, into St. Peter's Basilica. Archbishop Audrys Bačkis, President of the Lithuanian Jubilee Committee, met them with a group of women dressed in Lithuanian costume.

Before Mass, the pilgrims went down into the basilica's crypt to pay their respects at the tombs of former popes and to visit the various chapels of different nations. They prayed in the Lithuanian chapel of Our Lady of Mercy, designed by the Lithuanian artist Vytautas Jonynas.

When all had gathered in the main basilica at the central altars, all seven Lithuanian bishops and seventy priests concelebrated a solemn Mass for Lithuania – that God would bless her journey through this millennium. The late Father Kazimieras Pugevičius was also remembered on this day of his funeral in Baltimore.

In his homily, the main celebrant, Archbishop Sigitas Tamkevičius of Kaunas, reminded all present of Pope John Paul's visit to Lithuania seven years ago. At that time he had urged Lithuanians to open their doors to Christ.

After Mass, the Lithuanian pilgrims gathered in Paul VI audience hall along with a

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*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.



## C u r r e n t   E v e n t s

group of Italian pilgrims. Pope John Paul II came into the hall with President Adamkus. Archbishop Tamkevičius greeted him in Lithuanian, and the Pope himself spoke to the Lithuanians in Lithuanian and later to the Italians in their own language.

That same day, Vatican Radio broadcast an interview with Archbishop Audrys Bačkis. Before being sent to Lithuania he had worked in Rome at the Vatican's Secretariat of State for many years and was a close personal friend of the Pope. He said: "These special days of celebration here in Rome given to Lithuania are not only an opportunity for us to celebrate the Great Jubilee and the feast of our patron St. Casimir, but also a time to express our gratitude to the Holy Father for his concern for Lithuania by continually remembering her in his words and prayers." ♦

### Lithuanian Parliament Endorses Bill on Compensation for Soviet Rule

The Lithuanian parliament approved a bill, on May 16th, calling on Moscow to compensate Lithuania for five decades of occupation by the Soviet Union.

The initiator of the bill, Parliamentary Chairman Vytautas Landsbergis, said at the plenary sitting that the compensation of losses is based on the international law and the will of Lithuanian people expressed during a referendum in the early 1990s.

According to an explanatory note presented by Landsbergis, Russia vowed upon its accession to the Council of Europe (CE) in 1996 to assist people deported from the occupied Baltic states, or their descendants, to return to their homeland in line with special repatriation and compensation programs.

The draft law suggests that Lithuania's government should establish a special fund that would assist Lithuanians who were exiled during Soviet rule to Siberia.

According to the draft legislation, a possible source of inflow to the fund is tariffs on transits of Russia's military and hazardous cargo through Lithuania.

The bill will now go on discussion at parliamentary committees and will return to the parliament's plenary sitting on June 6. ♦

### Lithuania Adopts EU Integration Program

The Lithuanian governmental European Integration Commission confirmed the National Program for the Adoption of the Acquis for the 2000-2003 period on May 11th.

The program, drafted by the European Committee, is the main instrument to plan and manage the integration into the European Union (EU), said a European Committee spokesman.

The Acquis program is revised on an annual basis in response to the situation and recommendations of the European Commission (EC.) The most recent change is the third wording of the national EU readiness program. According to the program, over 1,500 European legal acts should be transferred to Lithuanian law by Jan. 1, 2004.

The governmental European Integration Commission approved the country's positions in two other negotiating chapters, customers and health protection and fisheries.

Presently, the commission has adopted Lithuania's positions in 11 out of 29 negotiating areas: statistics, small and medium-sized undertakings, education and training, telecommunications and information technologies, culture and audio-visual policy, company law, competition policy, industrial policy, and external relations.

Lithuania opened its EU pre-accession talks in eight negotiating chapters in the beginning of the year. The Baltic state hopes to complete the talks by 2002 and be prepared to take on membership obligations by the year 2004. ♦



## Ignalina's Financial Assistance to be Addressed

Lithuanian Premier Andrius Kubilius and European Commission (EC) member Gunter Verheugen sent out joint invitations on May 11th to heads of financial groups and governments of the European Union members and associated states asking them to attend a donors' conference for the closure of the first power unit of the Ignalina nuclear power plant.

The conference -- coordinated by the Lithuanian government with EC assistance -- will be held in Vilnius on June 21st to the 22nd this year.

The invitation letters were also mailed to the heads of U.S., Canadian, Japanese, Ukrainian, Russian and other governments, said the governmental press service.

Lithuania noted that the country's parliament approved the national energy strategy last year, which served as the basis for the law on decommissioning the first energy block by the year 2005. Lithuania said that this legislation, passed on May 2nd this year, will be useful for Lithuanian people and the rest of Europe.

The closure of the first of Ignalina's two reactors will be a difficult process requiring extensive funding; therefore international financial assistance will be needed, according to the invitations. The two RBMK-type reactors were launched in 1984 and 1987 and are of the same model that exploded in the Chernobyl nuclear plant 14 years ago. They are considered unsafe in spite of a number of Western safety technologies introduced since the start of the last decade.

The preliminary cost of the closure of the nuke's first reactor should total at about 20 billion litas (USD 5 bln.); however, the expenses will be distributed over several decades. The EC allocated 10 million Euros to the decommissioning of the plant last year, and vowed to grant an annual of 20 million Euros during the 2000-2006 period. ♦



## Lithuania's Chechen Allies Urge Stop of Russian Polls

Lithuanian supporters of Chechnya's independence have stressed that the planned Russian elections in the country are illegal, urging the international community to meet lawful leaders of the republic.

The head of an international parliamentary group for Chechen problems, Algirdas Endriukaitis, wrote a letter to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) chairwoman Benita Ferrero-Waldner on May 15th, calling the organization to meet the lawfully-elected Chechen leaders in the republic or in a third country.

In December 1999, the then Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin "subjectively and without legal grounds" cancelled the results of the parliamentary and presidential elections of Jan. 27 1997, Endriukaitis said in the letter.

Aslan Maskhadov was lawfully elected the president of Chechnya in the polls of 1997.

According to the statement, the gesture of Putin indicates Russia's turndown of the results of the democratic polls approved by Russia itself and OSCE observers.

The Russian administration plans to hold elections to the Russian State Duma in Chechnya on Aug. 20 this year.

Endriukaitis said in the statement that the holding of the polls in Chechnya is illegal, adding that "no elections are possible under the military regime." In his opinion, "the only way to understanding is negotiations with the lawful leaders of Chechnya."

The leader of the international groups for Chechen problems said that OSCE's refusal to meet Maskhadov or other authorized officials would mean refusal of its course of policy in Chechnya. ♦

*All news from Lithuania  
- Baltic News Service*



## Lithuanian Court Adjourns Hearing Soviet Genocide Case

The court hearing of a criminal case of the former KGB officer, Petras Raslanas, accused of genocide, was adjourned on May 15th for six months by the Šiauliai district court in central Lithuania.

The court had failed to hand in the bill of indictment and the summons to the court to the defendant, as Raslanas currently resides in Russia and could not be reached.

Early in May, the Lithuanian Ministry of Justice received a letter of refusal to render legal assistance in handing the summons to the Šiauliai district court to Raslanas, resident of the Russian town of Balashikha near Moscow.

The Russian Justice Ministry said that Raslanas was unable to come to collect the summons to the court because of his poor health. A certificate of medical examination attached to the letter said to the effect that Raslanas, 84, was seriously handicapped.

Raslanas escaped to Russia almost a decade ago. He is a Russian passport holder.

The latest amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, which had already come into effect, stipulate that a trial in absentia is only possible if the court summons have been officially handed to the defendant.

The former high-ranking Soviet KGB officer, Petras Raslanas, is charged with organizing and supervising the execution of 76 civilians in Rainiai, western Lithuania, in 1941. ♦

## New Platform for the Conservative Party

The Conservative Party's success in the upcoming elections will depend on its ability to present a "particularly bright, unambiguous and resolute program of creating a modern Lithuania," Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius said at the party's forum on May 13th.

Kubilius, a co-leader of the ruling Conservative Party, briefed the participants of the conference on the principles of the "New Wind" platform, which could serve as the basis for the party's program for the parliamentary elections scheduled for this October.

The prime minister read seven keynotes, on which, in his opinion, the party's electoral program should be based:

- digital economy,
- modern and competitive industry,
- energy and infrastructure,
- modern management of state and stability,
- modern security,
- modern conservatism,
- modern relations with other parties.

Kubilius called for sufficient funding of the reinforcement of national security and implementation of NATO obligations. "Good relations with neighboring states should be a priority of foreign policy; however, it should not prevent us or them from choosing a right way of ensuring security," said the prime minister.

In his words, "Russia remains an obscurity, and obscurity does not contribute to the reinforcement of security." Meanwhile, NATO "is clarity-ensuring stability in the entire region," said the premier. ♦

## Conference in Washington Focuses on the Baltics

The 17th Conference on Baltic Studies, sponsored by the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS), will be held at the Georgetown University Intercultural Center (ICC) on the Georgetown campus in Washington, D.C. from June 15th to the 17th.

The Conference's subject will be "Baltic Countries and Their Baltic Neighbors: Redefining Relationships".

Some of the topics for the panels will be:

- ♦ Baltic Entrepreneurs and Managers

- ♦ Democratic Reform.
- ♦ Problems in Interwar History of the Baltic States
- ♦ Baltic Literature
- ♦ The International Effect on Baltic Politics

To receive information about the Conference and AABS, write to AABS Conference, P.O. Box 3444, Merrifield, VA 22116-3444 or e-mail at [AABSconference@aol.com](mailto:AABSconference@aol.com). ♦

— Ramunė Kubilius



## R e f l e c t i o n s

**Deacon Kestutis Kevalas**

# A Beginning

*During the tenth anniversary celebrations of Lithuania's re-established independence, Mass was held at the National Shrine of Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. There, Monsignor George Šarauskas presided, while Deacon Kęstutis Kevalas read the homily. Here, follows an excerpt from the homily.*

**O**ften just before some big event in life, such as a new beginning, there is temptation, trial or discouragement just to forget everything and give up. On the other hand, a beginning is marked with new dedication and energy to live life, the life you always wanted to live, the life, in which you believe. The scene of the temptation is changed immediately into the scene of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus leaves the desert to proclaim the "good news." The news is good because God's "reign" is at hand.

Mark does not tell us immediately just what God's reign involves. Only by following the way of Jesus through the Gospel, hearing his word, and adopting his values, can a person understand more deeply the mystery of God's reign (Mk. 4:10). The beginning of this journey through the Gospel and through Lent calls for *metanoia* — which means a change, a repentance or a second look at life — and belief, an act of trust in the God who guides the unfolding journey.

Today, as Lithuanians, we celebrate the tenth anniversary of our nation's re-establishing its independence. What was February 16 of 1918 in the beginning of century, at the end of the century became March 11 of 1990.

From 1987 to 1990, the events of liberation

were rapidly developing: there was the first meeting in Vilnius, August 23 of '87 for the commemoration of the Molotov-Ribentrop declaration; by June of '88 the movement SAJŪDIS was established; and on the 23rd of August of '89, all Baltic countries formed a joint action of protest against the Soviet occupation.

In that one event two million people stood in a continuous line holding hands. Today we celebrate ten years from the day when Lithuanians made a definite choice. After the long waiting and weakening hopes, there was the decision to leave the "slavery of Egypt" and go to the Promised Land of freedom. The freedom which Lithuanians had experienced for twenty years early in the beginning of the century; now, at the end of the century, [it] was back.

I remember that day. It was a sunny, clear day of early spring. Though the air was cool, the political atmosphere was hot and filled with tension. The Soviet Government in Moscow was working on the development of a new kind of confederation, which all countries of the USSR would be invited to join.

The Seimas in Vilnius needed to make a decision — to trust the "benefits" of the new Soviet Confederation or to proclaim a declaration of independence, which was politically risky and to

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*DEACON KĘSTUTIS KEVALAS has been studying to be a priest in a Baltimore for the last few years. His investiture ceremonies are scheduled for June in Vilnius, Lithuania.*



some extent dangerous. [But it] was the only chance to become what so many people dreamed; those in the wild forest of Siberia and those forced to be refugees overseas. It was Sunday, and the Seimas worked in extraordinary session.

My family and I followed the direct transmission from the Parliament in Vilnius. The anxiety, waiting and also joy marked that day. For me, [at age] 18, that time was similar to the kind of anxiety [felt] when we followed the basketball games between the Lithuanian team and the United Soviet Army teams for gold medals. For the elders, what was happening in Parliament provoked tears of both anxiety and joy. We felt that history stood still that evening.

Not everybody who sat by the TV screens or even not everybody who sat in the Parliament realized that the evening of Sunday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, [would] mark a new era in Lithuanian history. That day was joyful, and at the same time that day was dangerous.

Today we celebrate that day as the day when Lithuania as a nation brought itself into new being. By saying "Yes" to freedom, it opened the doors to a new kind of existence. The choice, that was made that day defined us as a nation and went beyond old limits, making something exist that did not exist [a] long time. That day lead us to miracles and trials.

In one of the meetings of SAJŪDIS, the meetings of hundreds of thousands, the chairman of Seimas, Vytautas Landsbergis, asked the people standing in the crowd as one family: "Will we endure?" And people, with enthusiasm and with one voice, responded "YES." But at that time not everybody realized that [this was to be the] preparation for the desert experience.

The desert is the place where God chose to speak to his elected nation. We were witnesses of his wonderful deeds and graces. I remember when I was looking at the moving trains packed with Soviet military equipment I asked myself, what power moves it from our country, where the only "military equipment" were the words of truth and prayer.

We were not alone. The crowds, guarding the Parliament and praying the Rosary, felt it. But as

our experience shows now, it became also the desert where many became tired and responded with murmurings to their initial ideals. Yes, it was both new enthusiasm and new drama, which continued all these ten years.

Despite all the trials that were endured, Lithuania economically and politically has had enormous progress as it works toward full integration as an independent nation on the world's map. Today, nobody says, will Lithuania become a member of European Union or NATO? Today everybody wonders when it will happen.

The morning of March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1990 was the beginning of a new day not only on a political map of Lithuania, but also a new beginning of self consciousness of its people.

To be independent means always to choose not to be in slavery. In the first and second readings we heard about God's covenant to be with his people. It is also an invitation to us as individuals and as a nation to be with him, not to be in slavery, but to follow the creator and the author of our freedom.

Jesus, before turning to us, before inviting others, fought and overcame himself – the indolence, the immobility, he wants us to overcome. That is what he had learned in the desert, that is what we must learn, too. That is why he came out of it — changed himself — to shout to us: "The time is ripe, the days are fulfilled, I overcame what holds you down, I could do it, you can do it, change and believe this good news."

So, today we came to celebrate the beginning, not the end. Let these past ten years be an introduction to the great future of the Lithuanian nation. Let these years serve as the preparation of the coming decades where [our ancestors', our, and our children's dreams] will be fulfilled. And, I think, the dreams of God for our nation. But most importantly, the will of God for our nation. ◆



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