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 LIETUVA



“LITHUANIA OF THE DEPORTEES”

NATO and the Baltic Region...Remembering the Deportees...Attention, Lithuanian Youth!

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

My children have entered that gloomy state of the "ethnically-challenged" or, as my husband says, stubborn and narrow-minded.

You see, when children cross the threshold into "teenager", they don't get particularly enthusiastic by what seemed exciting when they were kids. For example, when Easter came along, the Easter egg dyeing phase used to last at least two weeks. Every day they would run to the kitchen determined to paint an Easter egg for their aunt or cousin or the 15th one for dad. This year, it was "You've got that under control, mama." Enthusiasm at a severe teen low.

When my eldest started to exhibit the first symptoms of this dreaded disease, I took evasive action. One way that worked was to identify his focus at the time and translate it into Lithuanian. He was into fishing — so I showed him (in a casual way, of course) the Lithuanian names of the fish that most interested him. (The emphasis here is "casual" — and painstakingly so). It worked and he spun out to other categories.

Now, the younger one was a little too quick and intuitive. He watched my techniques from afar and chose interests that seemed untranslatable. For one, his hobby of freestyle biking with a special bmx bicycle is a real tough one. I've been searching high and low for something corresponding to this in Lithuania. The closest I've gotten is the Lithuanian bike club in Klaipėda, which sponsors tours around western Lithuania and ecologically-motivated runs through several Baltic nations. Interesting to the more global-minded person, not the teen with instant gratification in mind. At least he's not dismissed it.

The latest and only triumph I can claim is rock music. It seems that the fact that Lithuania has a Frank Zappa tribute statue scored big. My son said that he wants to take pictures of it from every angle and blow up the best shots into poster-size.

At least we know that the ethnically-challenged can be conquered — granted, devious ways do work the best.

Rasa Ardyš-Juška
Editor

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Lithuanian American News Journal

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The Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival 2000

The Canadian and American Lithuanian Communities and the Lithuanian Folk Dance

Institute are hosting and coordinating this splendid folk dance exhibition in Toronto, Canada at the Hershey Centre on Sunday July 2nd.

More details available in the March 2000 BRIDGES issue and at www.javlb.org.

On the cover:
The illustration comes from the front cover of *Tremtinio Lietuva* (The Lithuania of the Deportees) edited by Juozas Laurušas and illustrated by Romas Orentas in 1990. This poetry collection contains the work of many Siberian deportees' writings — forever memorializing the little-known, tragic historical fact of the June deportations.

Regina Narušis

Why NATO Should Expand Into the Baltic Region

The security of the United States is inseparable from the security of Europe. Admitting Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia to the NATO alliance will bring great stability and security to Europe and thus the security of the United States.

The governments of Lithuania and Slovenia organized a conference of all the nine aspirants to NATO on May 18 and 19, 2000 in Vilnius. Officials and experts from NATO, the member countries, and the aspirants attended the conference. The President of Lithuania, Valdas Adamkus, and NATO Secretary General Lord George Robertson addressed the conference. The purpose of this conference was to address the NATO enlargement process, NATO's role in strengthening the security of Europe and its ability to meet the new challenges.

On the last day, the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the nine aspirants issued a joint statement entitled, "Vilnius Statement". The following is the text of this statement:



VILNIUS STATEMENT

We have gathered today in Vilnius to demonstrate our solidarity and commitment to the creation of Europe whole and free in an alliance including the countries of Europe, the United States and Canada as the foundation for stability and security in the 21st century.

We subscribe to the fundamental and common values of the Euro-Atlantic community, including a belief in individual liberty, the free market and the rule of law. We not only share these values but also consider ourselves to have contributed to their development in Europe over the centuries. Our desire to integrate into the institutions of the Euro-Atlantic community emanates from our readiness to assume our fair share of responsibility for the common defense and to add our voice to the debate on our common future. Having experienced the consequences of political indifference towards the fate of others far too often in our own history, we are committed to defend these values in order to contribute to freedom and peace.

We recognize that security for Europe and North America lies in maintaining a strong transatlantic alliance. Today, we reaffirm our

REGINA NARUŠIS is the President of the National Executive Committee of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

commitment to the completion of the historic project of a Europe whole and free. In this regard, we welcome the contributions of the newest members of the Alliance, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, as an important step in achieving this vision. Their membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has enhanced European stability and contributed significantly to the military strength and political cohesion of NATO.

We are not only prepared for the responsibilities and burdens of NATO membership today, but we are already coordinating our defense structures and policies with the Alliance and contributing to NATO political and military undertakings. Furthermore, we remain committed to practical and political efforts to further improve the specific qualifications of our countries, including implementation of the Membership Action Plan. While each country should be considered on its own merits, we believe that the integration of each democracy will be a success for us all and the integration of all our countries will be a success for Europe and NATO.

We welcome the commitment by NATO Heads of State at the Washington Summit that the transatlantic link remains as important for our future as it has been in the past and that NATO will remain the institution of choice when Europe and the United States decide to act together. The Alliance remains the foundation of the collective defense of its members and must be capable of addressing both current and future threats to our common values through crisis management.

We also welcome the commitment of the European Union to build a Common European Security and Defense Policy that fulfills Europe's aspirations and strengthens the transatlantic link, and we are ready to contribute to those efforts. We recognize that NATO and the European Union are the two central foundations of the Euro-Atlantic community and that we must pursue accession in both institutions if we are to fully reintegrate our democra-

cies into the community we share. We recognize that these aspirations are complementary, and we are committed to pursuing both objectives in parallel.

We are determined to contribute to the efforts of the European Union as well as to NATO missions. The stabilization, reconstruction, and integration of Southeast Europe into the European mainstream are in our common interest. Therefore, we pledge our continued support for the efforts of the international community to restore stability in the Western Balkans.

We are firmly convinced that the integration of our democracies into NATO and the EU will facilitate the creation of a free, prosperous and undivided Europe. Today, we reiterate our common commitment to work together cooperatively to achieve this goal. Our goal will not be reached until each of us, as well as other European democracies sharing the values of the Euro-Atlantic community and able to bear its common responsibilities, has been fully integrated into these institutions. We call upon the member states of NATO to fulfill the promise of the Washington Summit to build a Europe whole and free. We call upon the member states at the next NATO Summit in 2002 to invite our democracies to join NATO.

May 19, 2000, Vilnius, Lithuania

For Bulgaria
H.E. Mrs. Nadezhda Mihailova
Minister of Foreign Affairs

For Estonia
H.E. Mr. Toomas Hendrik Iives
Minister of Foreign Affairs

For Latvia
H.E. Mr. Indulis Berzins
Minister of Foreign Affairs

For Lithuania
H.E. Mr. Algirdas Saudargas
Minister of Foreign Affairs

For Romania
H.E. Mr. Petre Roman
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs

For Slovakia
H.E. Mr. Eduard Kukan
Minister of Foreign Affairs

For Slovenia
H.E. Mr. Dimitr Rupel
Minister of Foreign Affairs

For Albania
Mr. Xhufi Pellumb
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs

For Macedonia
Mr. Nikola Dimitrov
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs

This statement is calling on NATO to admit all nine applicants in 2002. The United States government has been holding firm to the "Open Door" policy; however some in the United States and elsewhere fear that here may not be another round of NATO expansion. Lithuania's Deputy Foreign Minister, Vygantas Usackas, characterizes the Vilnius Statement as the "big bang" on the Open Door hoping that this will reactivate the enlargement process.

The United States current involvement in presidential elections has stalled in foreign policy initiatives. Vice-President Gore's reaction to the Vilnius Statement other than welcoming the Statement and congratulating the aspiring nations on their reforms and progress was simply to reiterate his support for the Alliance's Open Door policy.

On the other hand, candidate G. W. Bush wrote in his letter to the President of Lithuania expressing his support of the enlargement process and that it must proceed "to include other nations with democratic values, pluralist political systems, and free market economies."

Bush further stated, "The security of the United States is inseparable from the security of Europe and a strong NATO is the foundation of

peace." He went on to say that it is in America's interest that the new European democracies become fully integrated into the economic, political, and security institutions of the transatlantic community and that "Russia will never be given veto power over enlargement."

The United States must fulfill its and NATO's promise of the Washington Summit to build a Europe whole and free. Europe will not be whole or secure until Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are admitted to NATO.

It will be hard, though wise, to expect that all aspirants will be admitted in 2002; however at least some must be admitted if we wish to be at peace. Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban has said that "without Slovakia, there won't be a second expansion round." It is in Poland's best interest that Lithuanian be the next to be admitted.

Lithuania has met the traditional NATO requirements to be admitted. It borders a NATO country, Poland. It has participated in NATO peacekeeping efforts. It has good relations with its neighbors, including Russia. It is ready to make a contribution to future NATO peacekeeping effort. Though all three of the Baltic nations should be admitted, at the present at least one must be admitted in 2002. Lithuania is the most logical one.

There will be no European, much less Baltic reconciliation with Russia until the Baltic countries feel secure. Russia will only give up its claim to them once Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are admitted to NATO. None of them have ever been or will ever pose a threat to Russia. NATO membership for Lithuanian, Latvia, and Estonia will only force Russia to give up its imperialistic tendencies and concentrate on rebuilding its own country.

Admission for Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia to NATO will create a secure Europe in the northern area. Expansion must proceed by inviting new members in 2002. Those countries that are ready, as Lithuania, *must* be admitted in 2002. ♦

Kazys Saja
 Introduced and translated by Irena Blekys

LITHUANIA'S ANTIGONE

Tulpè Times presented the following article in observance of the June days of mourning, when Lithuanians annually commemorate their nation's holocaust, epitomized in part by the mass deportations that began in June 1941 and continued into the 1950's.

PREFACE
 Kazys Saja presented me a copy of this article during a recent visit to Portland. I want to share it with you in memory of all our brothers and sisters whose lives were destroyed by deportation to Siberia. The first wave in June of 1941 was the flower, the intelligentsia of Lithuania nurtured after independence in 1918.



Dalia Grinkevičiūtė (circa 1950s)

INTRODUCTION
 The following article was written in 1995 by one of Lithuania's foremost writers and playwrights, Kazys Saja. In it, he recalls his meeting with Dalia Grinkevičiūtė and his role in arranging for the publication of Grinkevičiūtė's memoir, **Lithuanians**

Near the Laptev Sea.

When this memoir appeared in 1988 in the Soviet era journal **Pergalė** (Victory), it immediately created a sensation. Political events in Lithuania were beginning to allow more open discussions of certain historical blank spots, one of these

being the Soviet deportations of Lithuanians. Grinkevičiūtė did not live to see an independent Lithuania, but her memoir remains as one of the best examples of the talent and spirit of young Lithuania crushed by persecution during the Soviet occupation.

Dalia was fourteen in 1941, when she was exiled with her mother and her brother to the Arctic Circle. Her father, like many other prominent leaders of Lithuanian society, had already been taken and killed to pave the way for the new Communist society being planned

KAZYS SAJA is a well-known poet, playwright, and author in Lithuania. **IRENA BLEKYS** is a regular contributor to *Tulpè Times* and *Bridges*. This article was previously published in *Tulpè Times*, May 2000, Volume 20, Nr. 2.

for Lithuania.

In the way it deals with exile and moral choice, the story of Dalia's life has many parallels with the ancient Greek story of Antigone. The King of Thebes had forbidden the burial of Antigone's brother who had fallen in battle against the King. Rather than leaving her brother where he was slain, Antigone performed the ritual burial of her dead brother, and in this defiant act against the tyrant, she was destroyed.

Dalia and her mother escaped from exile in Siberia and returned illegally to Lithuania in 1950. Life as a fugitive and non-person in Soviet Lithuania became even more of a challenge after Dalia's mother died and needed a burial place.

With the appearance of this memoir in 1988, many other deportation stories began to appear in print. Dalia Grinkevičiūtė's memoir was reprinted in the collection, **Amžino Įšalo Žemėje** (In the Land of Permanent Frost) and was translated into English for the journal **Lituanus** in 1990. A new translation of her work is being planned.

Kazys Saja's article also points to another issue in Lithuania today, the continued absence of a public accounting and reconciliation about the wrongs committed during the Soviet period by one part of Lithuanian society against another. Collaborators helped implement the sovietization of Lithuania, by sending thousands to exile and certain death. Then, after Stalin's death, when survivors began to return from exile, they were harassed and discriminated against. These ghosts haunt Lithuania as they do other post-Communist societies.

The following article originally appeared in Lithuanian, in **Lietuvos Aidas** (1995.10.07).

LITHUANIA'S ANTIGONE

Some people are like an open fire – a flaming bonfire in the dark drawing in all those who have lost their homes and dear ones – while the rest of us are more like thick-walled clay ovens needing endless supplies of wood for anyone close by to feel the warmth.

Dalia Grinkevičiūtė, whom I want to talk about in these pages, was like a brilliant fir tree grown in sandy Lithuanian soil: on fire while she grew, warming many and healing others with her berries, until after exile and the camps when “our own” practitioners tried to chop out Dalia's roots or to stamp out her last flames.

Many exiles returning to their homeland from Siberia had doors slammed in their faces. Even today there are many living in their homeland who feel ill at ease, so Dalia Grinkevičiūtė did not fare any better near the amber Baltic Sea than she did by the Laptev Sea. Sometimes executioners know how to torture their own more painfully.

She loved the theater. While assigned to practice medicine in Laukuva, she managed to see the most interesting Lithuanian theater productions. She liked some of my plays (**Septynios Ožkėnos** – Seven Goatskins, **Nerimas** – Unease), and I received a number of beautiful encouraging letters from this unknown-to-me doctor.

In 1964 or 1965, while in Vilnius for a physicians' symposium, Dalia paid me a visit. She revealed stories about her family's exile, her dead father, and her mother's longing to die in Lithuania. In 1950, while Stalin's executioners still guarded the empire, she and her mother managed to escape from the farthest north to reach Kaunas. These fugitives remained in hiding until Dalia's mother, Pranė Grinkevičienė, died. The daughter then took apart a chest to nail together a makeshift casket, and she dug out a hole in the basement to bury her mother.

Soon after that she was caught in the claws of the security forces, but they never succeeded in learning the location of her mother's grave.

After serving three years in prison for escaping, Dalia was returned to exile. In Omsk, she completed two classes in the Faculty of Medicine, and finished the remaining course work in Kaunas, once again close to her mother's resting place.

At this point in her story, I made the comparison of Dalia to Antigone. She replied that at the hotel, she had just met a doctor from Moscow who had also dared to confront the tyrants. After Stalin's death, when certain professors and physicians of Jewish ancestry were being blamed for his death, Dalia's hotel roommate was in her final class in medical school. As an honors student and a Komsomol member, she was expected to stand up in front of the meeting as a representative of the student body and demand the death sentence for those accused professors. It turned out that Yelena was one of the last to speak. And when she took the stand, she said, "I don't believe these people are guilty." That same evening she packed her suitcase and left for the North, not waiting for the certain sentence of exile there.

This Yelena was the now world-renowned Yelena Bonner, the soon to be wife and associate of Andrei D. Sacharov. Doctor Dalia maintained a correspondence with them and for this reason her life in the Šilalė region came under attack. Comrade Širvydas, the First Secretary of the Communist Party for the Šilalė region who had pledged to "purify" his region, conveyed a letter to Dalia Grinkevičiūtė, "The regional Communist Party is of the opinion that you need to change your place of residence." Dr. Dalia responded (her words are recorded in her writings saved by the friend who sheltered her, A. Sulskytė): "I walk on Lithuania's



A small group of Lithuanians and a Burajta native work in the woods cutting trees.

Photo from Grinkevičiūtės book.*

ground, on my ancestors' land, not on the Party's land. The land that soaked up my ancestors' blood gives me the right to live here."

In 1974, B. Vitkevičius, the head of security for the Šilalė region, attempted to take away from this doctor, who graduated with honors from the Kaunas Medical Institute, the right to practice medicine. "Perhaps you'll go out of your mind or you will kill yourself. Maybe hopelessness will make you take an illegal step and then – off to jail."

Such a step indeed happened to Dalia, one not easily intimidated; her writings about Lithuanians suffering in exile had reached the West. Security Agent Vitkevičius got promoted and Alšauskas, who still resides in Šilalė, filled his place. Was he the one who took the initiative in 1982 to bring action against Dalia Grinkevičiūtė for "freeloading"?

"Alšauskas has gone beyond the limit of bearable taunts and meaningless torments," wrote the destitute but still undaunted Dalia. "I would like to know whether he's doing this of his own initiative or is this an order from Vilnius." After enduring new interrogations that same year, she wrote, "For 40 years I've waited

for the punishment of the executioners of Trofimovskiy (near the Arctic Circle). Every self-respecting government tries to clean itself of scum, but our executioners have not suffered. Why are they not judged? They receive personal pensions, they are awarded veterans' medals."

Today, these words should be addressed to comrades of Vitkevičius and Alšauskas, who would prefer to be called "excellencies", but who essentially were their partners in crime. And I address these words (in 1995) to President Brazauskas, who wants the people of independent Lithuania to accept as normal that bloodstained word, "collaborator".

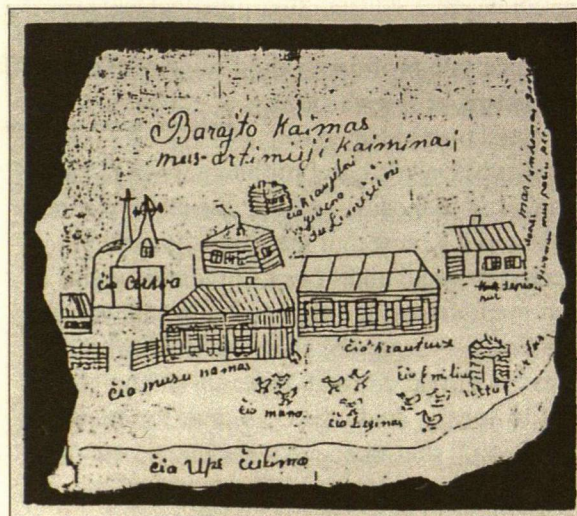
In August of 1987, already severely ill, Dalia Grinkevičiūtė traveled to Vilnius to pass on to me her most precious possession, her manuscript of 47 densely written pages. She had not wanted to use the telephone, so several times she climbed four flights up to our apartment; but we were never there. She then took her manuscript to J. Marcinkevičius. I don't know whether Dalia herself had not resolved to ask this poet to keep her writings safe or whether Marcinkevičius, contenting himself to read only one or other passage from the memoir, returned it. In the end, my wife and I turned up.

Grinkevičiūtė looked very tired. The elbows of her sweater had been carefully mended and she only agreed to partake of some milk and a roll. She warned us not to keep the manuscript at home. We took it soon to our place in the countryside where my wife typed it up. We titled her manuscript, **Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea**.

We learned that fall that Dalia was hospitalized in the Kaunas Oncology Center. On a visit, we took several copies of her manuscript and told her that other copies were already circulating among our friends. This was the last happiness we could give this woman – Lithuania's Antigone – dying of cancer. She already had a stomach ulcer when she returned from exile, but as the director of Laukuva's hospital

she had an annual obligation to supply blood from one hundred donors. How can you persuade others, if you will not set an example?

"It is much easier to breathe with the thought that as much as my strength, my mind and my talents allowed, I could erect at least this memorial for the victims in the North. The world has discovered those thousands of nameless victims lying like brothers in an icy grave. You can't destroy this fact nor erase it. This is history. This is also a monument to my parents." ♦



A map of the small town of Barajta, which was the closest to civilization that Grinkevičiūtė and other deportees found.

Illustration from Grinkevičiūtės book*.

* Illustration and photos from: **Amžino Įšalo Žemėje** by Dalia Grinkevičiūtė (edited by Aldona Žemaitytė) published by Vyturio Leidykla in 1989.

Sister Ona Mikaila

Saving Jewish Children

Before World War II, the Jews were the largest ethnic minority in Lithuania numbering about 240,000. After the Germans invaded Russia in 1941, the Soviet occupation of Lithuania was replaced by the army of Nazi Germany. Almost immediately the Einsatz kommandes (special detachments) of the Secret Police (SS) began rounding up Jews from all parts of Lithuania. They were either massacred or sent away to concentration camps.

When they realized what was going on, most Lithuanians were horrified. Many risked their lives and the safety of their families to hide Jewish people on the run. A number took in Jewish children given up by their parents as they were led away to be shot or deported.

One of these brave and generous souls was Mrs. Constance Bražėnas, a widow living in Kaunas. She had four children of her own, as well as aged and ailing relatives to take care of, but she gladly took in two Jewish children, Sarah and Alex. Food was scarce during wartime, but Mrs. Bražėnas gave whatever she could obtain to the children. She would also help "visitors" – Jews trying to get away from the SS – by giving them food and shelter.

Word spread that Mrs. Bražėnas was harboring Jews, and the SS made several raids on her house looking for fugitives. Once, she barely managed to wrap little Sarah in a shawl saying she was sick with diphtheria. Another

time Alex hid in a cubbyhole under the stairs when the SS found him. Mrs. Bražėnas managed to persuade the German officers to leave the boy alone, and they did not realize that he was Jewish. The days and nights full of fear stretched into months and years.

Mrs. Bražėnas' son Mindaugas once rescued Alex from a line of Jews being marched away for deportation. At the end of the war, Alex was reunited with his father and Sarah with her mother. Mrs. Bražėnas also managed to send three of her own children out of the country as the Red army reentered Lithuania.

This good lady's trials were far from over. In 1948, the Soviet police came to her house to arrest her son Mindaugas. When they found out that he had died, they took his mother instead. Constance Bražėnas was exiled to Siberia where she was forced to do heavy physical labour for eight years. Her health rapidly deteriorated and she was allowed to return home as an invalid in 1956.

Her children, living in the West, tried to get their mother out of Soviet Lithuania. One daughter, Dr. Nijolė Paronetto, was living in New York, while her twin sister was in Melbourne, Australia. Nijolė finally succeeded in obtaining an exit visa for her mother, although it took ten years. Finally in 1966, Mrs. Bražėnas joined her daughter and her family in New York. That same year Alex and Sarah came to New York for a moving reunion with

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

their "Aunt Constance". Prematurely aged and in poor health, Mrs. Bražėnas died in 1970.

Fifteen years after her death in 1985, Mrs. Constance Bražėnas was awarded the medal of "The Righteous of the Nations", and a tree was planted in her honor in the Park of the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

To date some 409 Lithuanians have been awarded medals and the title of "The Righteous of the Nations" for rescuing Jewish people. Among them is Jonas Jackevičius, the godson of Blessed George Matulaitis, his sister Magdalena's grandson. Mr. Jackevičius received official acknowledgement for saving five Jews in 1945, three of them children. The award was given in 1975 while Mr. Jackevičius was living in Toronto, Canada. He passed away in 1980.

In April of 1999, President Valdas Adamkus presented Father Jonas Žemaitis with an award for saving 47 Jewish children during the war years. The Lithuanian government sponsors this award, and some 200 Lithuanians have received it.

Father Žemaitis, now in his nineties though still active as a priest, is a Salesian (a religious community founded by St. John Bosco) who was head of the Laura Children's Home located just outside Vilnius. During World War II, this home housed 300 orphans and was staffed by the Salesian sisters. Dr. Grišovičius worked at the home as attending physician. He encouraged Fr. Žemaitis to save Jewish children living in the Jewish ghetto of Vilnius.

Father Jonas would drive his horse-drawn wagon into the city, ostensibly taking three or four orphans for medical treatment. He would drive through the Jewish ghetto and pick up several Jew-



ish children along the way taking them back with him to the Children's Home. These children, aged four to twelve, would mix in with the others in the Home and would thus be protected from the SS police. It was a risky undertaking and eventually someone informed the German authorities.

Several German nurses were sent to the Home to examine the children: they were supposed to check which ones had been circumcised. Fortunately, Father Žemaitis found out in time, and the sisters shepherded the Jewish children out into the nearby woods while other children were sent in to the nurses to be examined. After Father Žemaitis left the Home, the sisters followed his example and managed to save forty more Jewish children from the clutches of the Nazis.

Even after fifty years, not one of these Jewish children, now adults, has ever acknowledged that they were rescued by a Lithuanian priest, Father Jonas Žemaitis. And so he has not been honored as one of "The Righteous of the Nations", although he richly deserves the title.

Michail Ehrenburg, Curator of the National Jewish Museum in Vilnius, says that the museum has documentation on 2,300 Lithuanians who rescued Jews during the Nazi occupation of Lithuania. He admits that this number could easily be tripled and quadrupled.



Danutė Lembertienė
 Introduced by Vitalis Lembertas

Her Last Letter: Ave, Vita!

It has been one year, since March 14th 1999, since my wife, Danutė Lembertienė, passed away. She was born into an earlier generation of Lithuanian immigrants, Antanas and Emilija Daukantas, in 1938 on the Atlantic coast – in the city of Boston, and died on the opposite coast – in Santa Monica, California by the calm waters of the Pacific. Reaching not quite 60 years of age, her life was greatly shortened by an unresponsive illness.

Danutė passionately loved her family and nature, a constant caretaker of birds and animals. She never forgot her Lithuanian heritage – a treasured gift from her parents. Even more, she nurtured it.

Here is a letter Danutė wrote to her friend about her joyous second trip to see her parent's homeland and meet with Lithuania's dear people. She firmly believed that Lithuania, being free and treasuring its inherent character, would soon cast off the remnants of its oppressive past. Her letter reveals thoughts and ideas to help strengthen the bridge between both her homelands – America and Lithuania.

— Vitalis Lembertas

Dear Patricia,

10/7/97

I think I can honestly say that I just came back from the most interesting trip of my life. I just received your note, and so decided I would try to write you about my experiences in as a short text as I can. As you know, that's almost an impossibility! But, here goes.

What we thought would just be a trip to Lithuania to return the ashes of Pranas Lembertas [Danutė's father-in-law] back to his homeland, turned out to be an incredible journey.

The President of the Writer's and Artist's Assoc. decided to make the return of one of Lithuania's poets into a three-week commemoration, the likes of which we had no idea awaited us. In a reception for us, we found ourselves in the midst of all sorts of dignitaries, writers, artists (who performed their art form using Pranas' words), and even the head of the Bank of Lithuania! We were completely taken by surprise to find ourselves on the front page of newspapers and on *PANORAMA*, the European television news station. I was never so tongue-tied in my life! But it worked out, since they all had so much to say to us... somebody had to listen.

The wake before the funeral was held in a palatial building dating back to the time of the czars and preserved by the communists. I think they used it for themselves. It was attended by President Landsbergis, who is now head of Par-

VITALIS LEMBERTAS contributed this letter in memory of his wife, DANUTĖ LEMBERTIENĖ.



The Presidential Palace in Vilnius.

Photo: Bernard Narušis

liament, and the other heads of Parliament. The entire choir of the cathedral of Vilnius came to sing (for over an hour). Voices like I had never heard before! They should be invited to perform here in America. An opera singer performed for over an hour, also. A lot of Vitali's father's works were sung.

Pranas Lembertas is the only Lithuanian poet [who] has had so much of his work put to music. It seems, because he was also a singer who used to perform in the Vilnius Opera Co., he had a feeling for words and music. We had to sit from 3:30pm to 8:00 P.M. as everyone came and brought flowers, which they laid around the laid out urn and the hand carved oak casket which would hold the urn for burial.

After the funeral, a commemorative service celebrating the 100th year of his birth was held in the same place to which again actors, singers, historians, dignitaries of state, etc. all came to perform, speak, and give tribute. A Lithuanian "country western" couple even came to sing their music put to Pranas' words. They are quite well-known all over Europe, and they really did a beautiful job with Vitali's father's

words. They gave us a tape of their work. The building is breathtaking inside. Supposedly, the stairway is the most beautiful in Lithuania.

The funeral was like nothing I had ever seen. It was a long drive to the town of his birth and the cemetery where his parents are buried. The village streets were lined with people. Caravans of cars and vans from other towns joined the caravan. The Parliament had given us the use of one of their Parliamentary vehicles to ride in with the urn, but we chose to follow behind in our chauffeured BMW. The lead car had an open sunroof, wherein two children dressed in their native costumes stood holding a large picture of Vitali's father as the procession wound through the streets and on to the church and country cemetery.

The people lined the street right up to the church doors. Women were dressed in Lithuanian costumes and men in military uniforms. They represented the "Soldier's Guard", an organization that my father belongs to to this day. Four priests held a High Mass and the Msgr. talked of his years with Pranas Lembertas and their time in the area.

Finally, the most beautiful burial I had ever witnessed in my life! The oak wreath was held by young boys and girls in native costume all around the burial site. The priests blessed and prayed and then the fantastic singing of all the people started. After the casket, now holding the golden urn, was placed into its place, people began to place flowers into the grave and the singing grew louder and more mournful. Two young men began to fill in the grave with its blessed earth as people continued to throw flowers into the grave, and the singing and praying continued. Eulogies were given by all the dignitaries. The soldiers of the old guard sang their hearts out. It was quite something to see and hear. Our funerals in America seem so unfeeling and plastic compared to this.

When the gravesite was filled in, the plot was covered with flowers. We had sent the headstone from the cemetery in Calif. to be placed on the gravesite in Lithuania because of

the beauty of the words that were written on it (his words to the world and his words of love to his wife). We will be making up a large tombstone telling of who this man was for future generations.

After the funeral service there was a reception in the local hall, and then we drove to the homestead where he was born. Some of the Lembertas family still live there. They weren't expecting so many people, but the table was laden with food and drink. The speeches were read, the tears were shed, and then the singing began again. "Tau, Sesute, Puikios Gėlės" rang through the rooftop. It's the song that has become practically Lithuania's national anthem. The little farmhouse was so full of people, I didn't think the floor would hold out. We were squashed in like sardines. I had my video rolling and as I panned up to my left, I caught the president of the writers' guild (who gave the eulogy) toasting down a drink. He noticed my camera and said, "Getting incriminating evidence on me, are you!"

It was such a warm and wonderful time. The 93 year-old mother of Vitali's cousin Vincent still lives there with her daughters and son. How they endure the winters is beyond me.

We had to drive to five different cities and attend five different commemorative services. We were met by the mayors of the cities. Vitalis had the honor to unveil the plaque which was now dedicated to honor the house in which they lived in in Biržai. A commemorative service was held in the Palace of Biržai (a museum therein holds all of his books and memorabilia). One of Lithuania's actresses read Pranas' works. I will never forget that reading. She had a voice like Kathryn Hepburn and read the poems as if I had truly heard them for the first time – memorable.

Vilnius is coming back so wonderfully. The buildings are being restored to their original beauty, and it's beginning to look like Austria . . . and Paris! Sidewalk cafes, restaurants that are unbelievable, everywhere. But what really strikes your eye are the people. They are

so fashionable. Their hairstyles, their cosmopolitanism is fantastic! Everyone walks around on the street talking into a cell phone. I don't know where they get those fabulous clothes. The men look like they stepped out of Armani and all the women, young and old, look like they all stepped out of ELLE. No matter what I put on, I felt like hick. Their taste is so European. Their furniture....well, we couldn't get it, or find anything like it here in the USA. Even the poor people take pride in what they own and wear.

When we landed in Los Angeles, the whole city looked like it was filled with slobs! Even in Germany, you could also see the difference. Lithuania, in a few more years, is really going to be something else. Vilnius is so culturally orientated that every evening, cultural events are going on in all parts of the city. There's a restaurant across from Parliament (named just so) where people of all backgrounds meet...just like they did in Paris. The poets, writers, businessmen, lovers, and the food is great. You can even get English Shepherd's Pie!

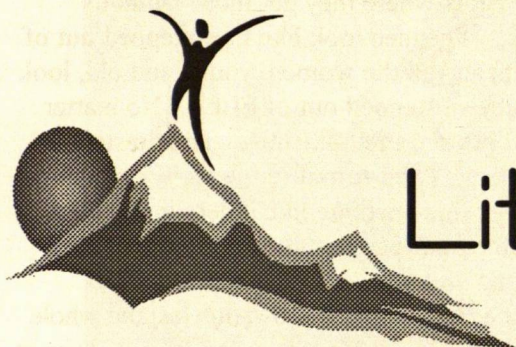
We had an apartment on a boulevard that held a lot of Embassies, so we got to see the twelve presidents [who] came to Lithuania for their international conference. In fact, it was funny to see President Brazauskas caught in traffic – the amount of cars in the city now is overwhelming!

Vitalis did a lot of book signing (his father's biography), and they also wanted my autograph. Something about me being the great, great someone of Simonas Daukantas, Lithuania's first historian. We were presented, by the Notary Assoc. of Lithuania, with a bronze medallion, which was struck with Pranas' likeness to commemorate the 100th year of his birth. - Pranas was a notary in Lithuania (in those days, it was the same as being a lawyer). We also were presented with a collector's item – the smallest book in Lithuania. It's about fingernail size.

As I said, a trip I will never forget!

The still overwhelmed, Damutė

Andrius Čižiūnas



A Call to Lithuanian Youth!

On April 8, 2000, the Lithuanian American Youth Association (LAYA) held its yearly organizational meeting during which many issues important to Lithuanian American youth were discussed, and a new leadership was elected. As the new president of LAYA, I would like to introduce the new LAYA board and myself, mention some of the issues discussed at our conference, and call upon Lithuanian youth to take action.

The newly elected board of the Lithuanian American Youth Association includes: Andrius Čižiūnas – president; Marius Petrušonis – vice president; Pranas Čižiūnas – treasurer; and Juratė Zubinienė – secretary.

Our membership, Americans of Lithuanian descent between the ages of 18 and 35, are a very scattered group among whom there is very little contact. Although many of these members are active in their own local Lithuanian organizations, this situation causes a preponderance of problems. Among these are: Lithuanians in each locality only having knowledge of what local Lithuanian youth is doing, a feeling of powerlessness among Lithuanian youth, and, consequently, a very large group of the Lithuanian-American Community having a very quiet

voice.

Although these are deeply ingrained problems, these can be changed. The Lithuanian American Youth Association will work on making these situations better for the youth, for other members of the community, and for the community as a whole. But to change this situation, we need the help of the community, especially the youth.

With this in mind, we, the LAYA leadership board, call upon, invite, and encourage Lithuanian youth to become more active in their local Lithuanian communities, youth organizations, and their activities. There are many organizations and activities that cater to the needs of Lithuanians. They include: Lithuanian Scouts of America, Ateitininkai, Knights of Lithuania, Lithuanian sports clubs, Lithuanian parishes, Lithuanian dance groups, local Lithuanian Communities, local Lithuanian Youth Associations, and other such organizations. We invite and encourage the Lithuanian youth to join and participate in these organizations' activities.

We invite local and national organizations that cater to Lithuanians, especially to Lithuanian Youth, to contact and become better acquainted and work together with the Lithuanian Youth Association. Our organization's main

ANDRIUS ČIŽIŪNAS is the president of the Lithuanian American Youth Association.

goal is to unify Lithuanian youth, help them to know or get to know the land of our forefathers, and to strengthen their Lithuanian character. We ask Lithuanian organizations to help us in this worthy cause.

We invite Lithuanian youth, who participate in these organizations, to help us spread the word about their activities. Through the use of our web page (www.tamos.net/~javljs), e-mail (javljs@tamos.net), and traditional Lithuanian media (newspapers, radio shows, etc.), we will advertise activities attended by Lithuanian youth. If you know that the youth in your area is taking action, please let us know and we'll advertise it.

The World Lithuanian Youth Congress will take place December-January, 2000-2001 in Australia. This Congress brings together Lithuanian Youth from all over the world. We encourage all to attend. For more information, write to the contacts at the addresses below.

If you are Lithuanian and between the ages of 18 and 35 years old, and you would like fur-

ther information about what Lithuanian Youth is doing locally or nationally, please contact your local Lithuanian Youth Association. In Boston, contact Kazys Adomkaitis (kadomkai@emerald.tufts.edu) or Naida Šnipaitė (snipas@massed.net); in Chicago, contact Juratė Zubinienė (jankauskas@webtv.net); in Cleveland, contact Andris Dunduras (adunduras@hotmail.com); in DC/Baltimore, contact Andrius Čižiūnas (buzzcut@tamos.net); and in LA, contact Povilas Pakuckas (povilas@ucla.edu) or Daina Žemaitaitytė (dabzy@aol.com). If your city is not listed, contact the Lithuanian American Youth Association president, Andrius Čižiūnas at:

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E-mail: javljs@tamos.net

Web site: <http://www.tamos.net/~javljs> ◆



Pictured: Participants in the LAYA Conference (from left to right): representative of the Australian Lithuanian Youth Association, Melisa Savickaitė; LAYA Treasurer, Pranas Čižiūnas (Washington, DC); Aras Mattis (Chicago); LAYA Secretary, Jūratė Zubinienė (Chicago); Chicago Lithuanian Youth Association president, Nida Bichnevičiūtė (Chicago); World Lithuanian Youth Association board member, Marius Vygantas (Chicago); Jūlytė Plačaitė (Chicago); representative of the Australian Lithuanian Youth Association, Linas Šeikis; JAV LJS president, Andrius Čižiūnas (Washington, DC); Kristen Logan (New York); Tomas Matusaitis (Chicago); Canadian Lithuanian Youth Association president Matas Stanevičius; and World Lithuanian Youth Association board member Daina Batraks (Canada).

Photo: Andrius Čižiūnas

Albinas Karnius

The Lithuanian-American Community Election Results

Elections to the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. (LAC) Board of Directors and U.S. delegates to World Lithuanian Community Council (WLCC) was held in LAC chapters throughout the United States on May 13th and 14th and May 20th and 21st. The results of these elections follow.

The Sixteenth Lithuanian-American Community Board of Directors

Boston Region

Čepas, Gintaras
Mickūnas, Česlovas
Veitienė, Irena
Navickienė, Daiva
Buivydas, Romas

Connecticut Region

Grajauskaitė, Danutė
Karosas, Jonas
Stankūnienė, Giedrė
Kogelis, Viktoras

Florida Region

Čyvas, Fr. Matas
Garsys, Algimantas
Kožicienė, Birutė
Augūnienė, Dalia
Savaitienė, Laima
Alternates: Snarskienė, Regina; Vienužienė,
Janina; Aviža, Violeta

Michigan Region

Kamantas, Vytautas
Kamantienė, Gražina
Udrys, Narimantas
Rugienius, Algis
Anužis, Saulius
Urbonas, Jonas

New York Region

Česnavičienė, Ramutė
Šližys, Raimundas
Lukoševičiūtė, Audra
Alternates: Miklas, Kestutis

Ohio Region

Čepulis, Algimantas, MD
Šilkaitis, Raimundas, PhD
Puškorienė, Dalia
Alternates: Ardys, Juozas; Gedrienė, Irena; Balči-
ūnienė, Nijolė; Valaitis, Gintautas; Žibas, Horstas.

Mid-Atlantic Region – Region I

Gečienė, Teresė
Bagdonavičius, Vytautas
Dantienė, Julija
Krušinskienė, Roma
Skučas, Donatas
Gedeika, Rimas
Razgaitis, Kazys
Alternates: Pakštienė, Audronė; Česonis, Kęstutis;
Stirbys, Rimas; Banionytė, Asta.

Mid-Atlantic Region – Region II

Bitėnas, Rimantas
Veblaitis, Julius
Melinis, Valentinas
Alternates: Juškienė, Rasa

Western Region

Vidugiris, Vytautas
Nelsienė, Angelė
Leškys, Gediminas M.
Polikaitis, Antanas
Pupius, Juozas
Milas Giedrė J.

ALBINAS KARNIUS is the president of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.'s Election Commission.

Mid-West Region – Region I

Kisielius, Dr. Petras
 Remienė, Marija
 Polikaitis, Juozas
 Jasaitienė, Birutė
 Daulienė, Salomėja
 Paužuolis, Antanas
 Budrienė, Jūratė
 Vindašienė, Birutė
 Sakalaitė, Aušrelė
 Juodelis, Bronius
 Šakenienė, Rita
 Kirkus, Irena

Mid-West Region – Region II

Vilutienė, Birutė

Mid-West Region – Region III

Damašius, Gediminas
 Narušienė, Regina
 Sužiedelis, Rimas
Alternates: Janušonis, Vytautas; Pliūra, Ramutis.

Mid-West Region – Region IV

Murauskas, Dr. Gediminas
 Antanėlis, Algimantas
Alternates: Kuzminskas, Mindaugas.

Thirty-one delegates were elected to represent the United States and its regions at The World Lithuanian Community Council to be held in Vilnius, Lithuania in August 2000.

Boston Region

Mickūnas, Česlovas
 Veitienė, Irena
Alternates: Navickienė, Daiva

Connecticut Region

Karosienė, Laima
 Kriauciūnas, Dr. Juozas

Florida Region

Kožicienė, Birutė
 Ušackas, Stasys
 Vaškeliienė, Stasė
Alternates: Šležas, Dr. Adolfas

Michigan Region

Kamantas, Vytautas
 Kamantienė, Gražina
 Svera, Jonas
 Rugieniė, Liuda
Alternates: Urbonas, Jonas

New York Region

Adomaitis, Edmundas
 Miklas, Kestutis

Ohio Region

Puškorienė, Dalia
Alternates: Šilkaitis, Raimundas PhD.; Ardys, Juozas; Žibas, Horstas.

Mid-Atlantic Region – Region I

Gečienė, Teresė
 Skučas, Donatas
 Dantienė, Julija
 Pakštienė, Audronė
Alternates: Skučienė, Gina

Mid-Atlantic Region – Region II

No delegates

Western Region

Vidugiris, Vytautas
 Nelsienė, Angelė
 Leškys, Gediminas M.

Mid-West Region – Region I

Kisielius, Dr. Petras
 Jasaitienė, Birutė
 Remienė, Marija
 Polikaitis, Juozas
 Budrienė, Jūratė
 Laukaitis, Kazimieras
 Sakalaitė, Aušrelė

Mid-West Region – Region II

Vilutienė, Birutė

Mid-West Region – Region III

Narušienė, Regina
 Pliūra, Ramutis

Mid-West Region – Region IV

Antanėlis, Algimantas
Alternate: Kuzminskas, Mindaugas ◆

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

U.S. Senate Reminds Russia of Baltic Occupation

The Senate of the United States adopted a resolution on June 16 commending the three Baltic states for their role in the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the 1990-1991 period and the implementation of their political and economic reforms.

The resolution -- initiated by long-time Lithuanian ally Senator Richard Durbin -- was adopted on the 60th anniversary of incorporation of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia into the Soviet Union, and the U.S. started the non-recognition policy of the Soviet takeover.

According to the resolution, the U.S. refused to recognize Soviet sovereignty over the three Baltic states during the 60-year period and supported their aspirations to restore liberty and independence.

The Senate commended Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia for the reestablishment of their independence and the role they played in the disintegration of the former Soviet Union in 1990 and 1991.

The three countries were praised for their success in implementing political and economic reforms, which may further speed the process of their entry into European and Western institutions.

The Senate also expressed support to regional cooperation in Northern Europe among the Baltic and Nordic states and the Russian Federation and called for further cooperation in addressing common environmental, law enforcement, and public health problems, and in promoting civil society and business and trade development.

According to the resolution, the Balts should make similar efforts to promote a peaceful, democratic, prosperous, and secure future for Europe, Russia and the Nordic-Baltic region.

The Senate said in the preamble of the document that the Soviet Union occupied the Baltic countries of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in June 1940 and forcibly incorporated them into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement a week ago about the allegedly voluntary entry of Lithuania into the Soviet bloc in 1940. ♦

An Active Response to Russian Statements Urged

A group of Lithuanian parliament members with different party memberships believe that the country's Foreign Ministry should not keep silent to the political pressure exerted by Russia.

"We think that the Foreign Ministry should not keep silent, but honorably and clearly react to Russia's political pressure on the basis of international law," reads a statement signed by 17 lawmakers of the Baltic state on June 16.

They said that "the tears and blood of victims, and the learned lessons" of the occupation, which took place 60 years ago obligates to do so. The Soviet Union occupied Lithuania on June 15, 1940.

The lawmakers said that the statement issued by Russia a week ago about the legality of the annexation of 1940 is a "political counterfeit" aimed at vindicating the aggression and its consequences.

The MPs also said that the recent statement of the Kremlin about the assistance by Lithuanian experts to Chechen fighters is a lie.

"Our people are not present there, no one invited them to go there, and it is their decision if they are present there on their own free will," reads the statement issued by the group of parliamentarians.

Russian Presidential Adviser on Chechen Issues, Sergey Yastrzhemski, said several days ago that "bandit units in Chechnya" included free lancers from Lithuania.

Lithuanian parliamentarians labeled the statement as "an attempt to shift the criminal activities onto someone else and justify oneself." ♦

Russia's Foreign Policy Becoming Stalinist

The latest statement issued by the Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry is the most threatening event in Lithuanian-Russian relations since the 1991 January Putsch in Vilnius, one of the Conservative party leaders, Rasa Juknevičienė, said.

The Russian Foreign Ministry's June 9th statement maintained that "it is wrong to regard Lithuania's incorporation by the USSR as a unilateral act by the latter," and that assertions about Lithuania's

“occupation” and “annexation” by the Soviet Union effectively means ignoring political, historical, and legal state of affairs.

“It has become clear today that the Russia of (the Russian President, Vladimir) Putin has been resorting to aggressive diplomacy towards its neighbors and will continue to do so,” said Juknevičienė.

Describing the statement’s content, she said that it was “aggressive and offensive not only to hundreds of thousands of people who had suffered from the [Soviet] occupation, but also to all the Lithuanian citizens from various ethnic minorities.”

Juknevičienė said that the Russian Foreign Ministry’s statement “attempts to disclaim” the Agreement on the Basis of Bilateral Relations signed by the chairman of the Lithuanian Supreme Council, Vytautas Landsbergis, and the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin,

in July 1992. Article Three of the agreement says that Russia recognizes that Lithuania was annexed by the USSR.

Juknevičienė added that “Putin’s foreign policy has become identical with Stalin’s foreign policy.” She said she was convinced that like 60 years ago “the way is being paved for turning Lithuania into a satellite country” existing next to Russia.

As proof, Juknevičienė mentioned the especially large staff at the Russian embassy in Vilnius comprising about 100 people. She said that Russia’s embassy in Vilnius was as large as the one in London.

“According to my reliable sources, about half of them are working in the intelligence services aimed at influencing state politicians, political officials, and looking for contacts with some part of the media,” Juknevičienė said. ♦

Former Soviet Occupants to Receive Bill

After a lengthy discussion, the Lithuanian Seimas [parliament] adopted on June 13 a law on compensation of damage resulting from the occupation by the USSR.

In spite of heated debate, the law was adopted by 68 Seimas members voting in favor, no one voted against and 13 MPs abstained.

The law advises the government to submit a realistic estimate of damage inflicted by the Soviet occupation and to set up a delegation for conducting negotiations with Russia for compensation.

The law stipulates that the delegation should be set up by September 1st, and the deadline for submitting the estimate of damage was set as October 1st.

By November 1st, the government should submit a written estimate to Russian authorities demanding compensation. Following this, the law provides that the government should initiate talks with Russia making sure that Russia compensates for the damage inflicted on Lithuanian people and the state during the fifty-year occupation by the USSR.

The opposition, the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (LDLP), criticized the law, describing it as failing to correspond to Lithuania’s interests.

So far, Lithuania has not made an official estimate of damage inflicted by the Soviet regime in monetary terms. Some unofficial estimates say that the damage caused to Lithuania by fifty years of Soviet occupation may reach hundreds of billions of US dollars.

As Lithuania gained its international recognition at

the beginning of this decade, negotiations were held with Russia on various issues, including the issue of compensation of damage resulting from the Soviet occupation. The talks on this issue had not been successful for Lithuania. ♦

Russian Politician Aghast at Law Calling for Soviet Damages

Chairman of the Russian Federation Council, Yegor Stroyev, said that the Lithuanian law making material claims on Russia for the half-century Soviet rule “stirs up enmity and could lead to isolation of the republic”.

“I cannot understand why Lithuanian deputies indicated such a short period? They should have counted [the damages] since the time of Peter I. The amount would have probably been bigger,” Stroyev said in an interview to a Russian news agency, Interfax, on June 13.

He said that “Lithuania should be reminded of the colossal financial and material contribution the Soviet Union made to its economic development.”

“It is a shame and a sin to raise such issues after all that has been done to the Baltic region,” said Stroyev.

The head of the Federation Council labeled the decision of the Lithuanian parliament’s “deep-rooted nationalism and extremism which [exists]” should not be allowed against [its] neighbor Russia. ♦

Lithuania Forming Air Defense Battalion

The Lithuanian government has conceded a right to the country's Defense Ministry to use land in the northern Šiauliai district to set up an air defense battalion and warehouses for explosives.

The government said at its sitting on June 15 that the ministry can use about 60 hectares of state land in Gudeliai and Maumaičiai villages in the Šiauliai district without a time limit.

Deputy director of the Defense Ministry's Resources and Programs Department, Algirdas Balanda, told BNS that the air defense battalion will be established in refitted and reconstructed buildings formerly used by Soviet troops in the Maumaičiai village. Balanda said that Sweden had agreed to grant some armament to the new battalion.

The Soviet army left several warehouses of explosives in the Gudeliai village. Balanda said that the purpose of the buildings will not be changed, adding that they will be used for storing explosives of the Lithuanian armed forces. ♦

Second Graduating Class from Lithuania's Military Academy

Lithuania's President Valdas Adamkus granted ranks of lieutenants to 93 graduates of the second graduating class of the Lithuanian Military Academy on June 15 by traditionally touching the left shoulder of every graduate with a sword.

In his opening speech, Parliamentary Speaker Vytautas Landsbergis said Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union 60 years ago, adding that not allowing the recurrence of these events is extremely important to the country.

Following a solemn oath to their homeland and its Constitution, the officers marched past the academy building to bid farewell to the academy.

The Lithuanian Military Academy was established in early 1994. It developed from the National Defense School, which was founded in Vilnius in 1992.

The first class of 62 completed a four-year bachelor's program at the academy in 1999. ♦



UPDATES... on previous stories

Update on Honorees

Several United States senators received the Medal of the Order of the Grand Duke Gediminas, one of the highest recognitions given by the Lithuanian government.

On March 9th, Sen. William V. Roth, Jr. (R-DE), Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC), Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN) and Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) received this honor for their work and support on behalf of Lithuania's consideration for NATO admission. ♦

— Edward Baranauskas

Lithuanian women Bicyclists

In last month's issue, Rimas Gedeika informed our readers about the Lithuanian Women's Bicyclist Team. Here's an update.

They had arrived in the United States to participate in the Liberty Classic in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Diana Ziliūtė won second place by being overtaken in the last 100 meters. She is looking great and training – of course for the Olympic games. There were three other Lithuanian bicyclists – the twins Rasa and Jolanda Polikevičiūtės and Zita Urbonaitė.

All four of them also participated in the Hewlett Packard 13-day race in Idaho – which started on June 8th.

By the way, there was a male bicyclist from Lithuania who raced in the Philly race – Remigijus Lieputis. He came in 18th. Not bad also. ♦

— Rimas Gedeika

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**Lithuanian-American
Community, Inc.**

Yes! Please sign me up for the Lithuanian-American Community calling plan. Please check the box next to the plan you want.

PLAN 140 PREPAID CARD Please mail me an order form. Or order by phone or online using your credit card.
 PLAN 142 GLOBENET Please send me information and an order form.

Name _____ Social Security # _____
REQUIRED

Addr _____ City _____ St _____ Zip _____
No PO Boxes

Phone _____ e-mail Addr _____ Org. # 84038(LAC)
Number you will be making calls FROM

Signature _____ Date _____

PLAN 140 NOTE: I hereby authorize RSL COM U.S.A., Inc. (iCRSL USAIS) to act as my agent in all matters relating to Preferred Carrier change(s) for the telephone number(s) listed above. I hereby confirm my decision to change my Preferred Carrier for interstate, interLATA, intrastate and international long distance services from my current telecommunications carriers for such services to RSL USA. I understand that by signing this Letter of Agency I will no longer be serviced by my current carrier for such service. I also understand that my local telephone company may charge me a fee to switch my carrier for that service to RSL USA. I further understand that I may designate only one carrier for each such service for any one telephone number, and therefore I hereby revoke any previous appointments or selections concerning the telephone number(s) listed above. I understand that RSL USA will be the carrier setting my rates for each of the above services. RSL USA may elect to provide service via resale, in which event another carrier's name may appear on my telephone bill. By signing and dating this Letter of Agency, I confirm that I have read and agree to the terms of this Letter of Agency. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age and that I have the proper authority to sign this Letter of Agency.

ATTENTION RSL COM CUSTOMERS: Check here _____ if you are currently an RSL COM customer and we will contact you with alternate low cost plans that will still help support the LAC.

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