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Change and Reform in Lithuania...New Leadership for the LAC...Children in Focus

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

As of this moment, the United States still doesn't have a newly-elected president. What's more, Lithuania's multi-party system is speedily honing their multitude to only a few parties — the American way. If the U.S. is being used as a role model for this action, I'm not too sure that's a wise move.

The Republicans and Democrats have always succeeded in differentiating themselves from each other in every possible way. This really defined what a Republican stood for and for what a Democrat fought against. Life seemed simpler back... oh just four years ago. Unfortunately, both parties' goals and presentations seemed to melt together. Neither seemed to really stand for or against any concrete issue. No wonder Nader received such attention. And no wonder Floridians still sit and count each punched ballot.

Across the ocean, Lithuanians had at least 16 political parties — representing every viewpoint imaginable. The votes were taken by the most photographed, perhaps more handsome, suave and debonair candidate, regardless of his Communist past. Just as the elections wound down, coalitions sprang up to unify groups of political parties under one title.

All the liberals hopped onto the "New Union" bandwagon. While recently, the Labor and Social Democrats sped to form a Social Democratic coalition with Algirdas Brazauskas in the forefront. The Christian Democrats and other Conservative groups would not be outdone. To the chagrin of several of its members, a merger appears to be forming for them also.

With all these mergers and coalitions, does this mean that like minds are gravitating towards each other? Fiercer representation of the people and their rights are being considered now more than before? Or is it just plain easier to control the Parliament when only a few political parties exist? If Lithuania decides to use the U.S. as a role model, they're really in trouble.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

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BRIDGES Consultants

REGINA NARUŠIS, President,
Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.
JURATĖ BUDRYS, Vice President,
Information Services.

RASA ARDYS-JUŠKA, Editor
RAMAS PLIŪRA, Treasurer, Lithuanian-American Community, Inc., and
Subscriptions Manager.

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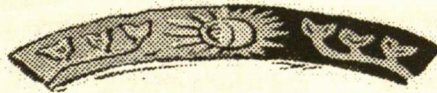
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The Beginning of Long, Winter Nights...

As the days grow shorter and the nights grow longer, people confine their activities to inside their homes. Long ago in Lithuania, get-togethers were held taking turns visiting each other's houses.

Women brought their spinning and knitting; men made ropes, repaired harnesses, whittled pieces of wood into carvings; older people told stories and riddles; while the youngest members sang.

Here are some riddles that may leave you scratching your head!

- Without hands or feet, he climbs toward the sky.
- His head is wooden — his hair is golden.
- Two ends, two rings, a nail in the middle.
- Not a bird, but it has wings — Not a person, but it has a hat.

*Source: Lithuanian Customs and Traditions by Danute Brazytė-Bindokienė
Chicago, IL: Lithuanian World Community, Inc., 1989.*

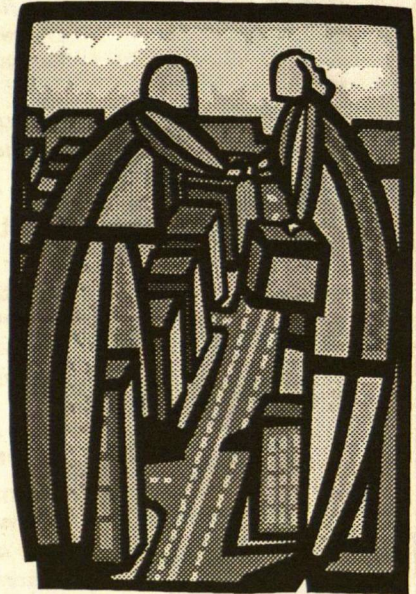
P.S. Give up? Turn to page 20 and read the answers on the bottom of the page!

On the cover:
The Cathedral and the Bell Tower of Vilnius in the winter time.
Photo: Bernard Narušis

Regina Narušis

Hand in Hand Towards Change and Reform

*The impact of
Lithuanian-American
organizations on Lithuania*



To give you a better perspective on our topic, we need to start with where we were ten years ago; how we, the Lithuanian-American Community, became involved; and where we are today.

Ten years ago, Lithuania was, at last, a free nation, with Soviet laws on their books, no constitution that they chose to live under, no independent legal system much less rule of law, no private ownership, and no free market economy.

Fifty years of occupation did tremendous damage to their identities, beings and souls. Religion, Lithuanian language and history, and independent thought were unacceptable. Its people were forced to depend on the State for all of their needs. They had to mistrust each other and did mistrust those that ruled them. The work ethic was severely damaged, as it was communist party loyalty that was a secret to one's success or even advancement. The Lithuanian intelligentsia were deported and most died in Siberia or escaped to the West, mainly the United States.

Under the threat of intimidation by the Russian empire, whose Soviet troops remained in Lithuania a few more years, Lithuania began the rebuilding and reform process.

We, the Lithuanian-American Community, in the late 80's, watched the Iron Curtain begin to crumble. We knew our countrymen, if given the slightest ray of hope, would fight for their freedom. We had anxiously awaited March 11, 1990 — the declaration of the reestablishment of independence and the election of Lithuania's new leader, Professor Landsbergis. Then came Russia's attack on Bloody Sunday, January 15, 1991.

Professor Landsbergis had forewarned us that such an attack was imminent. We procured short wave radios for them so that they could alert the free world when and if such an attack would occur. During the attack, some of our young people were in the Parliament to defend it. Next came the economic blockade; so we sent packages to Lithuania via containers.

In the meantime, we urged our American gov-

REGINA NARUŠIS was recently elected as chairperson of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.'s Board of Directors. She will complete her term as president of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. in December 2000. This speech was given to the Council on Foreign Relations in Chicago on October 20, 2000.

ernment to recognize Lithuania's re-establishment of independence. We brought Professor Landsbergis to the United States to introduce him to the American people as the head of state, a state that now existed. To our disappointment, our United States government failed to recognize Lithuania until September of 1991, while Russia's Yeltsin had done so two months earlier. Eventually, the Russian troops left, and the rebuilding process began.

Specialized Groups Aid Lithuania

Different groups in our community came together to bring aid to Lithuania. Knights of Lithuania established an organization called **Aid to Lithuania**. They dedicated themselves to improve healthcare, and also spiritual renewal, ministering to the body, mind and spirit. Since 1990, they have shipped over 65 million dollars worth of goods to hospitals, clinics, hospices and religious institutions – from mechanical hospital beds, x-ray machines, equipment, computers, and drugs to contents of closed Catholic churches in the United States. It has provided furniture for and helped build a Vilnius Day Care Center and given 26 annual scholarships to seminarians, who are studying at the newly established seminary in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Lithuanian Children's Hope, established in 1991, specializes in orthopedic medical treatment. It works with the Shriner's Hospital in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Tampa. Over 150 children have been treated in the United States. Striving to raise standards for pediatric care, it provided equipment, material and educational support, and established an orthopedic surgical unit in 1995 at Vilnius University Children's Hospital. Periodically, a medical group of specialists from the United States travel to Lithuania to operate and teach new techniques; there have been ten such trips. The group also has brought Lithuanian orthopedic specialists to intern here in the United States. The program has provided over 7 million dollars worth of aid.

Orphan Care was established in 1995 on the "foster a child" model. Currently over 1,000 children are receiving such assistance. Funds are also provided to assist large families and give scholarships. \$750,000 has been raised for that effort. ***SOS Lithuania*** raised \$1.5 million in aid to orphans, children's hospitals, nursing homes and hearing impaired children.

In 1990, Lithuanian-Americans established ***Mercy Lift*** to improve the quality of the health care system in Lithuania. They provided 99 million dollars worth of aid to Lithuania. Even though I have not mentioned all the organizations that worked for Lithuania's people, the total amount of aid just from the abovementioned groups, on the average, comes out to be about 15 million dollars worth of humanitarian aid per year.

Rebuilding the nation of Lithuania was, and still continues to be, a major goal. In 1991, the Lithuanian-American Bar Association was formed in the United States. In 1992, they co-sponsored the first World Lithuanian Attorney's Congress. This Congress attracted the attention of judges from the United States and Lithuanian-American judges and attorneys from throughout the world. At this Congress, they debated the then various proposed constitutions. Programs on civil, commerce, and criminal law were discussed and presented, in addition to the need to provide an independent judiciary. Some of the members participated in the drafting process of the constitution that was later adopted. The Lithuanian-American Bar Association, called LABAS, also co-sponsored a second Congress in 1996, where on the agenda were the Practice of Law, International Contract Arbitration, Prosecution of Crimes, Common Problems in the Judiciary, Necessary Legal Reform, Organized Crime and Independent Bar.

Education was the next area. APPLE — American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education — was established in 1990 for the purpose of creating a modern democratic school system. APPLE initiated programs that would shift the emphasis of education away from imposed isolationist and authoritarian models to ones that are cooperative, student and community centered, and that empower Lithuania's educators by putting them in possession of recent, relevant and progressive educational research and practice. It also intervened with students who were at risk.

Since 1991, APPLE has organized and conducted teachers' qualification improvement seminars annually each summer. It has been calculated that over 30% of Lithuania's teachers have participated in these seminars. Over 400 American educators and related professional specialists have been involved in aiding Lithuania's educational reforms. The founder of A.P.P.LE was Vaiva Vebraitė-Gust. She is currently the Vice Minister of

Education in Lithuania.

We, the Lithuania-American Community in the United States, kept alive our ideological youth organizations, to-wit: scouts and what we call "Ateitininkai", which are more religion oriented, yet they each have the motto of God, country and neighbor. We supported the re-opening of these organizations for our young people in Lithuania. We also attempted to revive the sports associations that were neglected during the Soviet occupation.

Higher education has been of great concern to us. Vilnius University, which is one of the oldest universities in central Europe, continued to exist during the Soviet and other occupations. Our Lithuanian-American academia, professors, taught and still do teach at that university. The second largest city in Lithuania, Kaunas, had Vytautas Magnus University, which had operated until the Soviets closed it. In 1992, this university once more opened its doors at the urging of our Lithuanian-American community. One half of the Board of Directors of that university are Lithuanian-Americans. The first two rectors of this university were also Lithuanian-Americans — Avizonis and Vaškėlis. Many of our Lithuanian-Americans teach at that university as well.

We have also sponsored academic symposiums. These symposiums were held here in the United States every two years; however, with the independence of Lithuania, the Lithuanian counterparts in academia have joined these symposiums. The last symposium was in Lithuania. The symposiums allow our academicians to network and share their knowledge.

Lithuanian-Americans also reprinted the best Lithuanian history book for our schools. We also published a book Study and Research Opportunities in the United States. This book, published in 1996, explained America's educational system to the Lithuanians, which was sent to all the institutions of higher learning. We then began to receive students who were well advanced in medicine, law, business and other areas to intern here in the U.S. Our foundations gave aid to Vilnius University, Kaunas and to schools in general. We have sent many containers of books from the United States to libraries and schools on various subjects.

Shortly after independence, we began cultural exchanges. We brought talented Lithuanians to the United States to tour. One must understand that the funds for further cultural development began to be

cut as the country wrestled with lack of funds. Our own talented Lithuanian-American performers and artists toured Lithuania. On March 11th of this year, the Lithuanian-American Community brought to Lithuania over 1,000 pieces of our works of art, which we donated to Lithuania at that 10th Jubilee marking its re-establishment of independence. The exhibit is presently shown in Lithuania and is called "The Return of Lithuania's Art."

Religion has been a concern for our community, since it was so long restricted and even prohibited under the Soviet occupation. Our religious orders here, the Marion, Jesuit, and Franciscan Fathers, and the Sisters of St. Kazimieras and the Immaculate Conception helped rebuild their orders in Lithuania. Bishop Baltakis, who shepherds the Lithuanian-Americans, heads the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Relief Fund. We have published religious books that we have shared with Lithuania. We have a Lithuanian Roman Catholic Charities Organization that was established in 1914 that still continues to give aid. The Knights of Lithuania provides scholarships to seminarians and aid to religious orders. It even provides soup kitchens and lunches for children in Lithuania's Catholic schools.

The Lithuanian-American Community's Economics Council promotes business investments in Lithuania, and sponsors conferences and trade shows. It also works through the Baltic Enterprise Fund to help the middle and small size businesses. You can now begin to find Lithuanian beer called Utena, Lithuanian Vodka, sparkling wine called Alytus, little clay houses, and linen products in U.S. stores.

Dr. Kazickas, a Lithuanian-American, was an advisor to the first prime minister in the area of economics. The last Finance Minister was Vytautas Dudėnas, a Lithuanian-American, was also a member of Parliament. Several of the U.S. Treasury advisors were of Lithuanian descent. Algis Rimas, an economics advisor in the U.S. Embassy, is also a Lithuanian-American. The community helped re-establish professional organizations for such groups as lawyers, dentists, and doctors. America's dentists went to Lithuania to teach new techniques and to bring the new technology to their colleagues. Our Lithuanian-American Doctors Association re-established the Lithuanian Medical Association, which had been disbanded by the Soviets.

Early in the rebuilding process, our American military members formed an association to assist Lithuania in developing a military plan for the formation of a new military. The plan they formulated formed the new Lithuanian military. That plan meets NATO standards. As a result of these joint efforts, the Lithuanian military is one of the best prepared in the region. The head of the Armed Forces is Brigadier General Kronkaitis (retired U.S. Army senior officer), the Vice-Minister of Defense has been Kilikauskas, and the Inspector General, Garsys. They are all Lithuanian-Americans.

The Lithuanian Freedom through Education Fund, established in California, has provided opportunities for Lithuanian military personnel to become familiar with western thought and helped them enter U.S. military academies. There have been several graduates and four more are in attendance, specifically at the U.S. Naval Academy.

Lithuanian-Americans have also been involved in the governance and politics in Lithuania. As it is well known to all of you, the President of Lithuania, Valdas Adamkus is Lithuanian-American. Three of our Community's members hold high positions in three different ministries: Finance, Defense and Education. We have had three members in the Lithuanian Parliament — Seimas. There have been a number of presidential advisors to both the present President and the former president. We, as a community, have provided opportunities for those in politics, governance, and judiciary to visit the United States to study at Georgetown and other universities. They have also been invited to come to the U.S. Treasury, Congress, State Legislature and other governmental institutions and even town meetings.

We support Lithuania's request for U.S. aid. We attempted to evaluate U.S. aid and the affect on the reform process. We strongly support Lithuania's aspirations to join NATO. We see that as a high priority today. The only way to assure peace and stability in Lithuania and the rest of Europe is through Lithuania's NATO admission.

The Lithuanian-American Community has a continuing influence in Lithuania. In 1995, the Lithuanian American Community and the Republic of Lithuania's Seimas formed a joint commission. It was formed for the purpose of working together.

At present, there have been 10 members, five Lithuanians and five Lithuanian-Americans. Each Lithuanian represents his/her party, usually the leaders of their own parties. The Community's Board of Directors duly elects the five Lithuanian-Americans. The Commission adopted Robert's Rules of Order and the basic procedures of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It works by consensus. The Commission has power to call ministers, ministry personnel, government employees, and other experts to answer their inquiries.

The work in that Commission started in March of 1996. They meet in Vilnius at the Seimas twice a year. The Commission proposes reforms, suggests legislation, and points out problems. It calls and brings in experts from all over the world. The topics heretofore discussed have been national security (NATO), educational reform, cultural expansion, archival material preservation, economics development strategy, development of energy strategy, dual citizenship, genocide research, youth matters, children's affairs, legal ethics, and rule of law. The work continues.

Please do not get the impression that we, the Lithuanian-American Community, did it all. Our other communities in other countries worked beside us, but the Lithuanians themselves accomplished the important reforms, not anyone else; we only gave them support and they welcomed us.

Lithuania has accomplished much in those ten years. She has settled her border disputes and is a good neighbor. Lithuanians have created a democratic state with free elections with respect to human rights. Lithuania is well on its way to a market economy. Investments from the United States keep growing. The largest investor as of late was Williams International in the business of oil refinery. Lithuania created a legal system, which provides for an independent judiciary and is struggling to control crime and corruption, which seems to be harboring at Lithuania's borders. The country established a new military controlled by civil authorities meeting NATO standards. The military has participated in United Nations and NATO peace-keeping operations. Lithuania aspires to join NATO. It has great hopes of being invited in the year 2002. We believe that she is ready. ♦



From the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

LAC Leadership Changes After Elections

The Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. (LAC) brought its Board of Directors together for its XVIIth annual meeting to hold elections of the organization's president and the Board of Directors' Presidium chairperson and members, and to specify the next year's goals. The two-day meeting was held in Hartford, Connecticut on September 31st and October 1st.

The first elections were held on Sept. 31st for the Presidium's positions. Regina Narušis (recently the LAC President) was elected to the chairperson's position, along with Dr. Petras Kisielius, Bronius Juodelis, Gediminas Damašius, Birutė Vilutienė and Birutė Vindašienė (both ladies agreed to share the Presidium's secretarial position).

On Oct. 1st, the LAC's new president was elected for a three-year term without opposition – Algimantas Gečys. The official transfer of duties will occur on December 2nd in Lemont, Illinois.

Mr. Gečys announced the chairs and vice presidents of the various LAC councils and committees. They are as follows in alphabetical order:

- Juozas Ardys – vice-pres. Finances
- Dr. Stasys Bačkaitis – vice-pres. Academics
- Dalia Badarienė – vice-pres. "Third

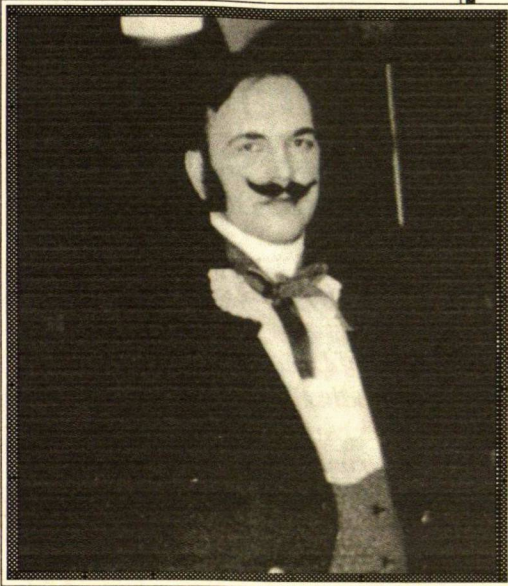
Wave" (Immigrant) Affairs

- Sr. Margarita Bareikaitė – chairperson Religious Affairs
- Teresė Gečienė – secretary and publicity
- Rimas Gedeika – vice-pres. Sports Council
- Birutė Jasaitienė – chairperson Social Affairs Council
- Liūtas K. Jurskis – chairperson Economics
- Dr. Romualdas Kriaučiūnas – vice-pres. Organizational Affairs and LAC's vice-president.
- Ramas Pliūra – LAC's treasurer
- Dalilė Polikaitienė – chairperson Educational Council
- Marija Remienė – chairperson Cultural Affairs Council
- Algirdas J. Rimas – chairperson Public Affairs Council
- Vidmantas Rukšys – vice-pres. Youth Affairs and Computer Information
- Rimantas Stirbys – vice-pres Administration

Mr. Gečys will announce how he and the new LAC Councils will carry out the determined LAC goals accepted during the XVI Board of Directors' meeting in December 2000 in the coming issues of *Bridges*. ♦

THE LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY, INC. (LAC, Inc.) is a nonprofit community-based organization providing educational, cultural, and social services to our membership. Serving the interests of approximately 800,000 Americans of Lithuanian descent, LAC, Inc. is in the forefront of supporting the growth of democratic institutions and economic, as well as social reform in the Republic of Lithuania.

Regina Narušis



Algirdas Mickevičius — circa 1944

A REMARKABLE AND MEMORABLE GIFT

Algirdas Mickevičius died June 20, 2000 at the age of 85. He was buried in his family plot at the Lithuanian National Cemetery in Justice, Illinois. In his Will, he gave his books and 6% of his residual estate to the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. to be used mostly for the purposes of the Waukegan Lake County Chapter. A truly remarkable gift.

Algirdas was born on November 29, 1914 in the United States of Lithuanian parents. He never married. After graduation from Lane Tech, he worked for Proctor and Gamble as a chemist and retired as a senior chemical analyst after 50 years. His only surviving heirs are his cousins. Al was a private, yet independent person. He was devoted to his mother who preceded him in death.

Having grown up in Chicago, he was a die-hard Cubs fan. His great love was singing. He sang with The Lithuanian National Chorus

when he was younger and later joined glee clubs. As every true Lithuanian, he loved Lithuanian prepared dishes, particularly kugelis that his cousin, D'Arej von Schultz, made for him. Above all, he was always proud of being Lithuanian.

In 1990, Algirdas came to live in Libertyville, Lake County, Illinois, the Waukegan Lake County Chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. As his heart and kidneys began to fail, he moved into a nursing home in Libertyville, where he died.

His generosity and kindness will always be remembered by all those who will benefit from his gift. Fifty one percent of his bequest will go to the Endowment Fund of the Community, Inc. that we hope will grow to serve our future generations of Lithuanian-Americans. Income from the fund is to be used exclusively for education of Lithuanian history, songs, music, and for education of the United States Constitution, citizenship and history. May they always sing in Lithuanian for a Lithuanian always has a song in his heart. ♦

REGINA NARUŠIS was recently elected as chairperson of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.'s Board of Directors. She will complete her term as president of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. in December 2000.

Ramunė Kubilius

UPDATE:

A Child's Gate to Learning is One Year Older and Wiser

In the December 1999 issue of *BRIDGES*, I wrote about the efforts of a small grassroots group called "A Child's Gate to Learning" (*Vaiko vartai į mokslą*). The group, founded in Chicago in 1998, seeks to "help the homeless and disadvantaged children of Lithuania to improve their educational achievement by providing learning and cultural opportunities, social activities, skills, and to integrate them into society as productive members."

"A Child's Gate to Learning" determined that too many children from asocial families were truant. Lithuanian statistics listed numbers in the tens of thousands. Parents with alcoholism and other problems did not provide structured lives or supervision for their children to promote their regular attendance in school. As the well-known model of the Head Start program in the United States has shown, early intervention can change the cycle of poverty by improving literacy and giving the children a chance to live productive, satisfying lives.

The "Child's Gate" group grew to over 70 members and included chapters in Cleveland and Detroit. One of the founding members of the group was Sister Daiva Kuzmickas, a sociology doctoral student doing dissertation research in the Chicago area. She helped the group identify and establish contact with existing after-school centers run in Vilnius, Kazlų Ruda (a village near Marijampolė), and the villages of Rumbonys and Obeliai. These centers were run by members of her order or by priests and teachers whose work was familiar to her through her work as a social worker. Subsequently, Rita Venclovas visited Lithuania and confirmed that these centers were promising in their interest in the group's support. The group immediately began to send school and other supplies, receiving correspondence and updates from the dedicated adults working with the children.

What has been happening since that initial article? Here are just a few of the developments...

Beginning in the summer of 2000, a half dozen volunteers went to Lithuania for stays ranging from several weeks to the stays of two founding members who hope to work in Lithuania until the end of the school year. They came from California, Florida, and the Chicago area. The volunteers worked at centers in Vilnius and helped with projects in preparation for the new school year.

Rita Venclovas had the opportunity to meet several goodhearted Americans who, it is sad to say, were referred to Lithuania from other countries they visited hearing "it's worse in Lithuania than here". This included one couple from the southern U.S. state of Georgia, who have no Lithuanian roots. Their goal is to do good deeds. They donated money first for a washing machine, then for a dryer at one of the centers.

RAMUNĖ KUBILIUS has been participating in "A Child's Gate" group activities for more than a year. She works as an academic medical librarian in Illinois.

This was after learning through an interpreter that the sisters were hand washing the children's meager school clothes, a process that took several days.

The grandfather of one visitor from Washington D.C. had emigrated to the United States in 1902. He himself was a recovering alcoholic, so he knew what havoc that kind of life can wreak on families, especially children. He expressed the willingness to pay for the replacement of the windows in one of the centers, since the poor construction resulted in very drafty conditions in the hall occupied by the children.

"A Child's Gate to Learning" helped pay for school supply-filled knapsacks at all of the Lithuanian centers the group supports to serve as a new school year incentive for the children whose teachers often required hard to afford items on the school supplies lists. The group helped support the hiring of a part-time folk music teacher at one of the after-school centers. It was thought that activities like that may keep the children interested and occupied; they will have the opportunity to play folk instruments and to sing traditional songs as a choir. "A Child's Gate" will help pay for the needed instruments.

One Lithuanian-American couple paid a local restaurant to deliver (until Christmas) prepared food to the center, so that at least once a week the children will have something more substantial to eat than the soup and bread the center is able to afford. The children arrive hungry straight from school and nutritious meals are often not awaiting them at home after the center closes. Future funding may enable a center to buy a small van for transporting the children, especially the young ones, to their homes in the darkness common during winter nights.

One major focus of the group's activities began when Rita and Aldona, two founding members, arrived in Lithuania in late summer. Both are experienced, recently retired grandmothers who have worked with children both professionally and as volunteers in Lithuanian-American organizations. Rita was a long-time high school French teacher.

They visited the various centers, but it had been decided in advance that the L.E.A.P. program (Lithuanian Educational Advancement Pro-

ject) would be initiated only at the centers in Vilnius. The project seeks to: 1) support, expand, and enrich the existing activities of the after school shelters; 2) provide the children with new educational experiences, such as learning English; and 3) provide socialization skills (concepts, such as sharing, friendship, and community) and cultural opportunities.

Their regular e-mails and letters have provided insight into the work involved. Here is a translated and somewhat paraphrased sampling of some of their observations:

"Before we can start our L.E.A.P. program (at the "All Saints" center), we have to set some minimal rules, since the children come and go as they please. It's hard to get them together in a group, because they decide to run outside to smoke. Seven, eight, and nine year-old children smoke. It's almost impossible for us to even try guessing where they get the money for cigarettes...

As for setting of boundaries, when it is time to do homework, everyone should gather and begin working. We help them with homework, everything except Russian language lessons. We bought some notebooks and books, but there always seems to be a need for more...

The children have gotten to know us a bit, but



Children enjoying dress-up and games at the "Good Fairy" lunch (Laumių pietūs) in Lemont, IL probably didn't realize that their parents and grandparents were supporting less fortunate children in Lithuania who can use our helping hand. About 150 persons attended the second annual event.

Photo: R. Kubilius

they still think that we don't understand Russian at all [Rita and Aldona remember some Russian from their childhood years in pre-World War II Lithuania — R. Kubilius], so they swear at us in horrible words...

We treat them with candy, and the children, especially the young ones, can be cajoled into coming closer. We can play games like checkers or board games with some of the children...

However, when one visitor recently came to the center, some of the children behaved wildly (as we all too often see them), they tried pulling off his watch and pulled his nose... He wasn't scared away and still made the donation he had promised...

We want to establish a rule that when they eat — no one runs away from the table, but waits until everyone is finished. Another rule [is] everyone must wash their hands before eating. Some of the children seem not to have seen water since summer if they swam in rivers or lakes. We don't want to overload them with rules, everything comes slowly... We have tried to firmly tell the directors of the center that without such a framework, we cannot do anything further, that we are not here only to pour soup and to wash dishes..."

"At the "Hope's Angels" center, everything is moving along more quickly. We have divided the children up into four groups according to age, and we have played getting acquainted games. I have experienced that the children tell very little [about] themselves. At first, 5 year-old Povilas sat with his 7 year-old sister, Violeta, in the corner behind a post. Now they talk to us and come out to play..."

We will ask a nun, who is a dentist, to come to the center to acquaint the children with oral hygiene. We will distribute toothbrushes so they will be able to experience how to use them...

We have established the theme of cooperation, and everyone knows that we have to work on projects together and sing together. The groups have chosen names for themselves...

We will work at this center two days a week; the other three we will be fighting the good fight with the "All Saints" center's children. We have sought out ways to recharge our energies so that we don't burn out like used up batteries...It is

amazing to us how \$5 can pay for the most beautiful program at the National Symphony Orchestra concert."

These excerpts and the observations expressed should not surprise anyone who has worked with children whose home lives are insecure and asocial, be it in America or any other country of the world.

While it might be said that the interesting and challenging part of the group's work is actually working with the children in Lithuania, group members in the United States have not been idle. One group of young mothers and their children held a garage sale of used toys and other items, and the children sold lemonade. All proceeds were donated to "A Child's Gate".

One couple elicited the interest and concern of their non-Lithuanian neighbors who wrote a check for continuing efforts in Lithuania. In June, the group sponsored a successful picnic and lunch that drew quite a crowd of various supporters, including recent immigrants from Lithuania who enjoyed each other's company and the melodies of a Lithuanian musician, while children drew gifts thanks to a raffle. The musician should be commended, since he was willing to slightly lower his fee upon finding out who the recipients of the fund-raiser were.

The group also sponsored a lunch with desserts and children's games for Halloween. This year, the lunch was "good" — called "Good Fairy's Lunch" (Laumių pietūs), as opposed to last year's "Witch's Lunch" (Raganų pietūs).

Group members have donated or sought donations of supplies, games, toys and other items that are expensive to buy in Lithuania. For example, this included Lego's building blocks to promote dexterity and inventiveness, and lice shampoo to combat a problem at one of the centers. The group must send packages through parcel delivery services since the usual humanitarian aid containers sent to Lithuania go only to main delivery points in larger cities and often have restrictions placed on what can be sent and how.

In December, "A Child's Gate" members will be selling tortes and gently worn items "from Grandmother's hope chest" (Iš Močiūtės skrynios) at the annual Christmas bazaar at the



"A Child's Gate" board members Irena Grigaitis and Nijolė Grigaliūnas greet visitors to the "Good Fairy" lunch (Laumių pietūs). Proceeds of the lunch benefited projects underway in Lithuania.

Photo: R. Kubilius

Lithuanian World Center in Lemont, IL. The groups in Detroit and Cleveland have employed their own methods to gather items to send or to raise funds, while a group of women in Indiana turned over their donations to "A Child's Gate" when they determined that the funds they had been sending to a children's center in Lithuania were not being used for the children, but rather for the adults running that center.

Working with "A Child's Gate" is not without its challenges. The group in Chicago has encountered some comments from individuals who ask why the group is focusing on something that the Lithuanian government should be addressing, that efforts are just a "drop in the bucket". Questions are asked as to why the group doesn't focus on work with children ensuring more probable success. Why doesn't the group focus on after-school centers attended only by Lithuanian language speaking children instead of including a center that is attended by children of Russian descent? Criticisms have not dampened the group's enthusiasm. In 1999, many Lithuanian-American groups met at a humanitarian aid conference in Washington D.C. All of the groups' representatives found that they had each selected areas complementing rather than competing with

one another: they support Lithuania's forgotten elderly, the sick, the former partisans, orphans, children from asocial families, schoolteachers and many others.

The spirit of volunteerism is gaining some popularity. In "A Child's Gate" supported centers, it has been gratifying to see that not only hired persons have come to work with the children. Students have come to provide homework assistance. Other adult volunteers have come to share their artistic and other talents by teaching the children crafts and so on. One of the favored quotes "A Child's Gate" unofficially adopted lately is one attributed to Suzanne Lafollette: "What its children become, that will the community become". That philosophy may explain the motivation of the American and local volunteers in Lithuania choosing to work with and for Lithuania's children. These children will hopefully stay in school and become productive members of society if they remember that sometime in their childhood they felt positive adult support.

"A Child's Gate" members and supporters have been lucky in identifying a need in Lithuania that can be addressed by choosing a combination of active involvement, moral or financial support. Another promising direction is being taken at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas where "A Child's Gate" advisor Sister Daiva Kuzmickas is an instructor. Her doctoral studies now completed, the professor is part of faculty curriculum planning committees sketching out possible future multi-disciplinary courses in social politics and philanthropy. These courses are aimed at providing an academic approach for educating and instilling in future students the seed that they can be part of a responsible democratic Lithuanian society that promotes its own citizens to acts of volunteerism and humanitarian aid that benefit all of its citizens.

You too can be a part of this program by donating or requesting information about "A Child's Gate to Learning". Donations are tax deductible. Donations or requests for information can be sent to the current group president,
Mrs. Birutė Pabedinskas,
3939 Saratoga E105
Downers Grove, IL 60515,
or by sending an e-mail to: bp@psych.uic.edu. ♦

Sr. Ona Mikaila

FOLKLORE GALORE

Jonas Balys was the first professional Lithuanian ethnologist and folklorist to study and document Lithuanian folklore. He dedicated most of his long life to the collection, classification, and study of Lithuanian folklore. A modest, soft-spoken man, Dr. Balys, now 91 years old, says that this lifelong interest probably stems from the old songs his mother used to sing at home on the farm.

Lithuanians have tilled the land for hundreds of years and their attachment to the soil is proverbial.

"For us Lithuanians," says Dr. Balys, "the earth is both Mother and Goddess. She is holy, she feeds us and keeps us alive. We return to her in death."

A typical Lithuanian proverb expresses the Lithuanian's attachment to his native soil:

Visur gerai – namie geriausia.

(You can live anywhere – but home is best.)

For a farmer, the greatest calamity is to lose his land.

Nuliūdo, kaip žemę pardavęs.

(He is sad, like one who has sold his land.)

Dr. Jonas Balys' roots lie deep in Lithuanian soil. He was born in Lithuania, near the town of Kupiškis in 1909. This makes him an Aukštaitis or Highlander. As a student at the Panevėžys Teachers' College, two excellent teachers en-



Lithuanian Folklore Readings printed in Tübingen, Germany in 1948.

couraged his interest in folklore. He went on to study ethnology, folklore and the history of religion at the University of Kaunas. For graduate studies he traveled abroad to study at the Universities of Graz, Grenoble, and Vienna, where he wrote his doctoral dissertation on shamanism in Indonesia under Prof. W. Coopers, a known ethnologist and scholar of comparative religion.

Balys's studies fascinated him, and he did post-graduate work at the University of Helsinki

where he produced a study of comparative folklore using folktales about the god of thunder and the devil as found in Baltic and Scandinavian countries. "Perkūnas" of pagan Lithuanian mythology is a powerful deity, while the devil of later Christian folklore is a rather foolish figure.

Dr. Jonas Balys says that folklore reflects the cultural history of a nation. It helps us understand our path through history. This is what he taught his students at the University of Kaunas. When the Lithuanian Folklore Archive was founded in 1935, he was appointed its director. With the help of his students, he collected some 16,000 folktales and anecdotes from all over Lithuania. From 1942 to 1944, he lectured at the University of Vilnius.

In 1944, like many Lithuanians who were

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.

afraid of the communist invasion, Balys and his family fled to Germany. Here he continued his scholarly work at various German universities. Just before World War II, Balys had the good fortune to attend an international folklorist convention held at Edinborough, Scotland where he met the noted American folklorist Professor Stith Thompson. This meeting proved to be very important. After 52 years in the United States, Balys remembers it well: "Important events often overtake us by surprise – luck was with me that day..."

As it turned out, Dr. Balys soon received an invitation from Prof. Thompson to teach at the University of Indiana. After three months in Paris to process the necessary papers, Balys was ready to go overseas. The only problem was money; he could not afford the fare to cross the Atlantic to America. Again, luckily, he met a generous Lithuanian-American by the name of Mr. Bačiūnas who lent him enough money.

The Lithuanian version of Lady Luck is the goddess Laima. In ancient times she was worshipped as the goddess of fate or destiny who accompanies a person from birth to death. The person is blessed with good luck or cursed with bad luck according to her whims. In Lithuanian "laimė" also means happiness. Linden trees were held to be sacred to the Goddess Laima. A feast was held in her honor in July or "Liepa" in Lithuanian, when the lindens bloom.

"Lithuanians tend to be fatalistic," says Dr. Balys, "believing in a destiny they are powerless to change."

This belief shows up in Lithuanian folklore. Various proverbs express it pithily:

Prieš vėją nepapūsi.

(You cannot blow against the wind.)

Galva sienos nepramuši.

(You cannot break down a wall with your head.)

Kas bus, kas nebus, bet lietuvis nepražus.

(Whatever happens, a Lithuanian survives.)

Despite their tendency toward fatalism, Lithuanians are resilient. They survive in spite of the odds against them.

In 1948, Jonas Balys and his wife sailed across the Atlantic in a military ship once used to

bring U.S. soldiers to Europe. They settled in Bloomington, Indiana, and Balys began to work at the University of Indiana as Prof. S. Thompson's assistant. He lectured on the "Folk Culture of the Baltic People" and on Russian folklore. In 1952 to 1954, he worked for the Arctic Bibliographic Project in Washington D.C. as a research analyst in anthropology. From 1956 to 1981, Dr. Balys was in charge of the Baltic section of the Library of Congress. Even after his retirement in 1981, he continued his scholarly work.

A member of a number of academic societies, he contributed to and edited many professional periodicals and publications. He wrote many books on his own and a goodly number of articles in Lithuanian, English, and German. He traveled around America visiting various places where Lithuanians had settled and with a large tape recorder in tow, collected some 1,000 Lithuanian songs, stories and other bits and pieces of folklore. These recordings were preserved in the Folk Songs Archive in Washington.

In 1994 the Lithuanian government awarded Dr. Jonas Balys the Jonas Basanavičius award for his efforts to preserve Lithuanian culture. His work is well known in Lithuania. In 1999 President Valdas Adamkus presented him with the Order of Gediminas. Presently his work is being published in Lithuania in ten volumes.

The long list of his achievements has not changed his modest manner. Dr. Balys says that our Lithuanian folk culture considers bragging or boasting a shameful thing. A Lithuanian proverb puts down the braggart with biting sarcasm:

Kas pakels šuniui uodegą, jei ne jis pats?

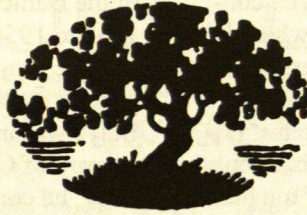
(Who will lift up the dog's tail if not himself?)

Dr. Jonas Balys now lives in Naperville, Illinois and looks back on his long, rich and productive life. "I have nothing to complain of," he says. "My old age is quiet, and I am content. I enjoy reading about what is going on in Lithuania and follow current events with interest. My only regret is that I shall never see my homeland again." ♦

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

A "Lithuanian" Oak Marks Its 400th Year

The Lithuanian Citizens' Society Newsletter, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, announced a surprise "find" which had been discovered on the Lithuanian Country Club grounds in Jefferson Borough – an oak tree which has a trunk circumference of 14 feet 5 inches (173") and an estimated age of 400 years.



The Newsletter reports further... Vytas Miselis, a Society Director, who volunteered to clear a heavy accumulation of vines hanging from trees at the Country Club, was surprised when he cut the growth away from a particularly large tree located about 300 ft. up the road from the caretaker's house and the barn. When Vytas measured it, he found that it was a champion tree. It is located on the left of the road going past the house and barn away from the entrance to the Country Club coming off Coal Valley Rd. It is on the way to the formerly used ballpark.

The height of this tree is about 90 ft., and the crown spread is 76 x 60 ft.

Another large tree, about three quarters of the size as the larger one, is nearby to the right of the road. The smaller tree has been damaged badly by lightning. As Vytas continued to clear the grounds at the Lithuanian Country Club, he found a third huge tree, which had been buried under vines.

Vytas is supplying information to the Pennsylvania Forestry Association, and he has been advised that details on this tree named Lituanica Oak (in Lithuanian--Lituanica Ažuolas) will be printed next year in the association's book "Big Trees". Although it is not the tallest in Pennsylvania, it comes close.

Vytas estimated the age by comparing it with a smaller one he saw in Monroeville, which is labeled as being 300 years old.

The Lituanica Oak is so named in honor of Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas, American-Lithuanian aviators who were housed at the barn near the giant tree at the Lithuanian Country

Club in September, 1932 while they were raising funds for their dangerous airplane trip from the Floyd Bennett Field in New York to Kaunas, Lithuania. They arranged the "Aviation Days" in Pittsburgh with an air show in which they participated.

They later conquered the Atlantic and reached Europe. On July 17, 1933, after 4,000 miles of flight and with only 400 more to go, their plane Lituanica met with disaster and crashed in the Soldin Forest in Germany. Both flyers perished.

The second tree found at the Country Club was named Vilnius Oak and estimated to be 350 years old. The latest find is also estimated to be 350 years old, and it is named Kaunas Oak. These three champion white oak trees, along with other trees on this land, were obscured due to the undergrowth.

- *The Lithuanian Citizens' Society Newsletter, Oct. and Nov. 2000 issues.*

A Holiday Event in Pittsburgh

The University of Pittsburgh Nationality Rooms Holiday Open House will be held Sunday, December 3rd from noon to 4 PM. Admission is free.

The student group "Quo Vadis" will wear national costumes. Ethnic performances will be held in the Commons Room of the Cathedral of Learning and there will be ethnic refreshments and ornaments on sale.

This is a very popular event, which usually attracts over 2,500 visitors. The Lithuanian Room together with others will have a decorated Christmas tree on display. This is a great opportunity to see the University's Lithuanian Room decorated in Christmas splendor.

- *The Lithuanian Citizens' Society Newsletter, Nov. 2000 issue.*

Florida Anniversaries

Palm Beach, Florida Lithuanians have much to celebrate. Several anniversaries coincide during the autumn season with festive celebrations. The Palm Beach Region of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. celebrates its 25th year in activity; Lithuanian Masses held for the community sees its 20th year; and the Palm Beach Lithuanian Bulletin, edited by Vincas Šalčiūnas, will be operating for 15 years. Congratulations to such an active and dedicated Lithuanian-American Community. ♦



Cost of living in Vilnius is Low

Vilnius, Nov 16, BNS – The cost of living in Vilnius, Lithuania's capital city, compared to other cities worldwide, is rather low – Vilnius ranks 121st on the list of 156 most expensive cities in the world announced by the financial daily *Financial Times*.

The cost of living in Riga is higher than that of Vilnius; however, in Tallinn it is lower. Latvia was ranked 101st and Estonia 134th among the other major cities of the world.

Warsaw, the capital of the neighboring country of Poland, occupied 148th place, while St. Petersburg and Moscow, major cities of Russia, occupied 7th and 36th places respectively.

The research agency Inubucom drew up the list of cities published by the *Financial Times*. The research was made on the bases of expenses of families, which have two children of pre-school age. ♦

Women Representatives in Seimas at a Low

Vilnius, Oct 30, BNS - Lithuania has less women in its parliament than the other Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia, and the number was cut in half after the Oct. 8 general elections.

Women make 10.6 percent (15 mandates) in the country's newly elected 141-seat Seimas, as compared with 17.4 percent (24 mandates) in the parliament of 1996-2000.

The European Union (EU) says in its presidency web site that women make 17.8 percent of Estonian parliamentarians and 17 percent of Latvian MPs.

Up until the Lithuanian general elections, the three Baltic countries were ahead of other EU aspirants in terms of women in their legislative bodies. Women make up 31 percent of the European Parliament. Among the EU member-states, Sweden ranks first with 45.5 percent of women in its parliament, followed by Finland (43.8 percent) and France (43 percent). Greece has the lowest number of women parliamentarians – 6.3 percent. ♦

An MP and Prosecutor Accused of Shooting Cow

Vilnius, Nov 17, BNS - A Lithuanian MP and a prosecutor deny having shot a cow during a recent hare hunt in the northern Pasvalys district.

The *Respublika* daily reported that a member of the oppositional Social Democratic coalition, MP Jonas Budrevičius and Pasvalys prosecutor Algis Vacikauskas participated in a hunt on Nov. 3rd, after which a local woman found her cow gunned down in the location.

Dissection showed that the animal died of internal bleeding caused by a gunshot wound, but Vacikauskas maintained that the hole in the cow's udder did not prove that the animal had been shot. "The hole could have been pierced with a nail," said the prosecutor.

Budrevičius also dismissed the accusations as untrue, adding that he did not fire a single shot during the hunt. ♦

News from Lithuania – The Baltic News Service

Seimas Suggests Sharp Increases in Funding

Vilnius, Nov 13, BNS - The Lithuanian Parliamentary Committee of Education, Science and Culture will propose raising the allocations to the science and education sector in next year's budget.

The committee's chairman, MP Rolandas Pavilionis, told a news conference on Monday that a suggestion would be made to increase science funding from the planned 0.9 percent to 1.5 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) next year, and boost education funding from the 5.1 percent planned by the earlier government to 6.5 percent of the GDP.

Parliamentary committees discussed the budget draft worked out by the earlier Conservative-led government of Andrius Kubilius, and returned it for revision to the new minority Cabinet of Rolandas Paksas.

On the initiative of the oppositional Social Democratic coalition, the committee will also propose to parliament to adopt a law on long-term strategy on science and education funding by common consent, Pavilionis told reporters. The law would stipulate that education expenditure should reach two percent of the GDP in 2002, just like the funding for the defense sector.

Pavilionis said that plans to redirect a part of defense funds to the education sector were high on the agenda of his meeting with Defense Minister Linas Linkevičius, adding that the conversation put him in an "optimistic" frame of mind. Upon learning of these plans, President Adamkus had stated that he disagrees with the defense cuts. There will be further discussions before any real changes do take place.

Even after the education funding is increased, university students might have to pay what Pavilionis said was a low "solidarity" fee. According to Pavilionis, all students would pay 1,000 litas (USD 250) a year, and those having a high grade-point average would have their fee reimbursed by the state. ♦

Lithuania's Vice-Minister Briefs the U.S.

Vilnius, Nov 15, BNS - During his visit in Washington, Lithuanian Foreign Vice-Minister Vygaudas Usackas is presenting Lithuania's aspirations of joining NATO and the country's integration into the European Union (EU).

Speaking to Radio Free Europe reporters on Nov. 14, Usackas stressed that the admission of Eastern and Central European candidate-states into Euro-Atlantic structures is an "historical chance" to create a united and free Europe. According to Usackas, the recent accession of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to NATO is the first step towards a stable and peaceful Euro-Atlantic community.

Touching upon Lithuania's readiness to join the EU, the chief negotiator stressed the country's progress in state modernization, economic liberalization, and integration in world economy during the past decade since it regained its independence from the Soviet Union.

This progress is also acknowledged in the conclusions of the European Commission (EC), which said that Lithuania had a functioning market economy.

"Speaking of Lithuania's merits," Usackas said, "one cannot forget the recent annual calculation of the economic liberty index made by the Wall Street Journal, which noted that the economic leap Lithuania has achieved is the highest since the calculations were started."

"Lithuania is not just a consumer market of 3.7 million people. We see ourselves as a part of a united 450-million European market," he continued.

Usackas said that Lithuania has made progress in its pre-accession talks with the 15-member EU. "We have agreed on seven [out of 29] chapters, negotiations are currently held in another nine areas." He stressed the commitment of the new Lithuanian government to join NATO was demonstrated by the obligation to grant two percent of the gross domestic product to the defense sector in 2002. ♦

Lithuania's Political Parties Debating Changes

Vilnius, Nov 13, BNS - The leaders of the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (LDLP) and the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP), Česlovas Juršėnas and Vytenis Andriukaitis, would like to see the former Lithuanian president, Algirdas Brazauskas, at the helm of the merged party.

The party leaders briefed journalists about the decisions adopted by the coalition council sitting held Nov. 11th weekend and chaired by Algirdas Brazauskas.

The coalition council has decided to propose to the congresses of both parties, as the highest authority, to adopt formal decisions on the merger of both parties and on convening a congress of the new party on January 27th-28th of next year.

It has been proposed that parties should unite on the basis of enjoying equal rights. Juršėnas said that details entailed in merging the two parties had not been discussed. Two task groups will have to be set up to draw up the statute and the program of the new united party by the 1st of December.

The coalition council suggested that the new party should assume the name of the Lithuanian Social Democratic party. Although the leader of the new united party had not been specifically discussed, the leaders of the two parties implied that they would like to see the former Lithuanian president, Algirdas Brazauskas, in this post.

"Algirdas Brazauskas's presence at the joint congress of the LSDP and LDLP and at the helm of [the newly merged party] would be logical," Andriukaitis said.

Juršėnas said that Brazauskas was not only taking a formal part in the work of the coalition council, he was also giving many practical proposals. "He is among us and in some cases ahead of us," Juršėnas said.

Algirdas Brazauskas was Lithuania's president from 1993 to 1998. Currently he is the honorary chairman of the Social Democratic coalition. He personally did not run in the general election although the coalition had regarded him as the prime minister of the coalition's government.

Brazauskas's coalition has 48 seats in the Seimas [parliament], although the Liberal and the Social Liberal coalition formed a larger majority and were given the mandate to form the government.

In the Christian Democratic front, protesting against the likely merger of the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party (LCDP) with other political forces of a similar trend, the chairman of the LCDP, Zigmantas Zinkevičius, has tendered his resignation.

The LCDP and the Conservatives formed a coalition in the previous parliament where the Conservatives had the majority of mandates.

Zinkevičius said he was against the plans announced by the head of the LCDP board, Algirdas Saudargas, to merge with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) headed by Kazys Bobelis.

"Kazys Bobelis is unacceptable to us, the Christian Democrats," Alfonsas Svarinskas, one of the leading members of the party, has said. He accused Bobelis of "helping the chairman of the Soviet collective farms to win the local elections".

The CDU formed a coalition in the run-up to the local government elections last March with the Lithuanian Farmers' Party (LFP). The coalition came out as one of the most successful political forces running in the local elections. However, the leaders of both parties had failed to agree on running jointly in the general elections.

The LCDP is one of the political parties torn by serious internal discord and failures. Last November, after the modern wing of the LCDP lost a long-running internal ideological fight, a group of party members defected from the main party body and founded a Modern Christian Democratic Union.

The LCDP lost half of its seats held at the local government elections, and it failed to take the five-percent hurdle in the general elections. The LCDP has two seats in the parliament, which were won, in single-mandate electoral district. ♦

NATO Parliamentary Assembly Suggests Including Lithuania in 2002

Berlin-Vilnius, Nov 20, BNS - The Political Committee of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly approved a draft resolution suggesting that Lithuania, Slovenia and Slovakia should be invited to the alliance no later than in 2002.

The resolution will be proposed for adoption at the assembly's 46th session scheduled to start in Berlin on Nov. 21st. The bid to invite the three countries to NATO came about on proposal of U.S. Senator William Roth during the debates at the committee. The initial draft of the resolution did not include this stipulation.

Lithuanian MP Rasa Juknevičienė, who was present at the meeting, told BNS that the suggestion to take in Lithuania, Slovenia and Slovakia into the 19-member alliance in 2002 was approved after heated discussions.

The draft resolution also suggests that other democratic countries of Eastern Europe were also invited in NATO in 2002 if they have managed to come up to the alliance's standards.

A document on NATO relations with countries of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council presented to the Political Committee suggests that Lithuania should raise its defense funding to two percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) by 2002. The draft document was prepared after a delegation of the committee's Central and Eastern European Subcommittee visited Lithuania last June.

Director of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry's Information and Culture Department, Petras Zapolskas, told BNS that the ruling by the NATO committee "is an evaluation of Lithuanian foreign policy efforts."

The 2001 spring session will be held in Vilnius on the proposal of Lithuania's former parliamentary chairman Vytautas Landsbergis and the Seimas delegation at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. ◆

Detained Lithuanian Ship Charged with Illegal Fishing in African Waters

Vilnius, Nov 20, BNS - "Rytas", a Lithuanian ship detained in Equatorial Guinea in mid-November, was charged with illegal fishing in Equatorial Guinea's territorial waters.

On Nov. 20th, the Lithuanian embassy in Moscow received a note from the Equatorial Guinea embassy in Moscow in response to Lithuania's demand to release the refrigerated vessel Rytas.

The director of the Lithuanian Foreign Affairs Ministry's information department, Petras Zapolskas, told BNS that the note claims that "Rytas" and some other ships, were involved in illegal fishing in Equatorial Guinea's territorial waters.

The note said that the servicemen managed to detain only the Lithuanian ship because the other ships escaped. The note also said that the ship had been detained in line with the law, and hope was expressed that the owner of the ship would pay the fine. The amount of money to be paid had not been specified.

The Lithuanian Foreign Ministry is maintaining close contacts with Russian, Spanish and French Foreign Ministries and their diplomatic representations in Equatorial Guinea and in neighboring Cameroon in order to resolve the crisis.

The general cargo refrigerated ship "Rytas", sailing under the Lithuanian flag with a cargo of deep-frozen fish and fishmeal worth one million US dollars, was detained in neutral waters on Nov. 10th on its way from Mauritania, West Africa, to Cameroon on the Gulf of Guinea.

The Equatorial Guinean soldiers approached the vessel in a warship and told the "Rytas" crew to anchor at the port of Malabo, the capital and the chief port of Equatorial Guinea on the island of Bioko.

The 39-member crew includes four Russian and one Ukrainian citizen, while others are citizens of Lithuania. The captain of "Rytas" is a Russian citizen. All the crew is on board the ship at present, except for the captain and the chief mechanic.

The company Baltlanta based in Klaipėda, Lithuania's port city, owns the ship. ◆

R e f l e c t i o n s

Sr. Margarita Bareikaitė

Christ, the King

The last November Sunday marks the end of the liturgical cycle for the year. This solemnity of Christ the King was proclaimed by Pius XI in 1925. However, the expression of the regal dignity of Christ is common

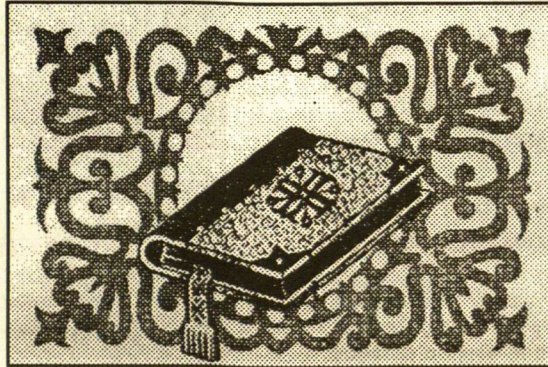
throughout the ancient liturgies of the Church and mentioned almost during every Mass.

As our great millennium Year of Jubilee 2000 is drawing to a close, we focus on the sovereignty of Christ.

Every Sunday of Advent, the Church describes the kingly power of the Messiah who is to come. "He who will save all peoples and nations." This favorite quotation is that in Zacharias 9:9 which announces the coming of the King, who is both just and a savior.

In the first sense His kingdom is made up of the faithful. Christ affirms that He has come into the world of the faithful, showing them the truth about himself. His kingdom is primarily spiritual and concerned with spiritual things. It is true that Christ, our Redeemer, embraces all people.

Pope Leo XIII said, "He includes not only Catholics, not only baptized persons who actively belong to the Church, but also those who have been led astray by error or have been cut off from her by schism, and those who are outside



the Christian faith.

The whole of mankind is subject to the power of Jesus Christ. For all men are under the dominion of Christ."

To realize the magnificent sovereignty of Christ we must first have a true idea of royalty, which does not consist of thrones,

courts, and garments, but of something very different. It is none other than the power to do good for their people. And what greater good is there than salvation? For that reason, on coming into the world and on seeing that the prophets announced His universal kingdom, Christ did not ask His Father for legions of angels, but was content to offer His life for the salvation of all people. He would not permit royal honor to be paid to Him until Palm Sunday; nor did He confess His royal dignity until, at the beginning of His passion, before Pilate. He made a solemn declaration that He is King. Christ, who only revealed himself in figure and parables, confesses openly His royal dignity before a corrupt judge.

We see that what Christ really proposed by coming into this world was to conquer our hearts, the hearts of all people. Invite him into your heart during the close of this liturgical year and the beginning of the next. ♦

SR. MARGARITA BAREIKAITĖ belongs to the Lithuanian order of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Putnam, CT. She is also the Chairperson of the Religious Affairs Council for the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

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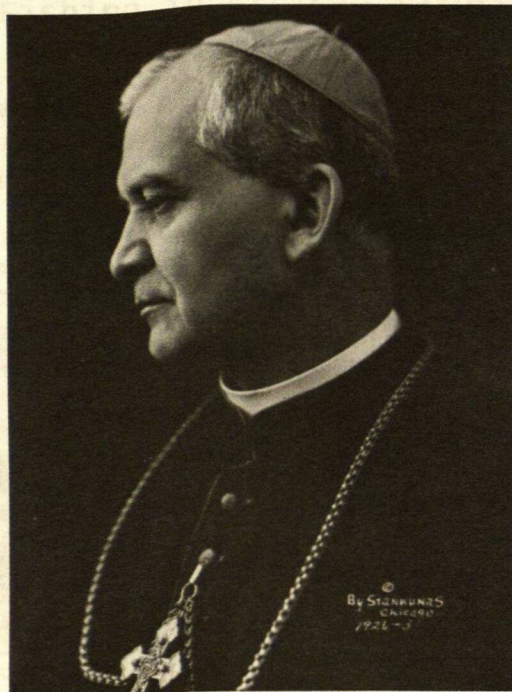
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