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Freedom Defender's Day...Independence Day Celebrations...Eyewitness Accounts

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

Recently, a television mini-series, *Attila the Hun*, was reviewed in our New Jersey Sunday newspaper. Seemed like typical ratings fare. They mentioned that it was filmed entirely in Lithuania. That alone would make me watch it — to see if I get the feeling of Lithuania from the setting shots. But the keywords that made me really pay attention to the review was "the use of the Eurasian plains..." Call the geography teacher!

We know all about the magic of film, but to say Lithuania's geography is comprised of Eurasian plains is really pushing it. Just by moderately glancing at the map, one can see that Lithuania is at least four inches of a ruler away from Asia. Now convert that to real, honest-to-goodness distance — I'd say none of the Baltic countries could fit under the heading of Eurasian countries.

It's bad enough our country is not as well known as say, France or Britain, — or that we're Lutherans on occasion. So now our geographical descriptions will include, "next to the Baltic Sea, farms and woodlands, and rolling Eurasian plains." I suppose that will attract more tourists. That's not a bad payoff.

Wouldn't it be neat, though, if we could have really wild attractions in Lithuania. How about ...

"Visit the primeval forests where you can site the occasional bison or wild boar!"

*"See the fantastic Cathedral treasures — hidden for centuries!
Revealed only after Communist rule
had taken its grip from the country!"*

*"Visit the former KGB's torture chambers and
secret underground rooms!"*

*"For a little romance, see the rendezvous chambers of Vytautas
the Great and his love Birute!"*

Wait a minute, seen those, done those, been there. And it was exciting to boot! In this case, I'll say that the Eurasian plains remark won't take anything away from Lithuania. Sometimes truth is more exciting than fiction.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

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Lent — Days of Reflection

Lent brings a time to review and renew our relationships with God and others, to expect ourselves to reach a little higher, and to dig a little deeper to become fully the people of God.

On Ash Wednesday (this year on February 28th), when our forehead is marked with ashes in the sign of the cross, the priest says, "Remember that you are dust and to dust you return". It inspires us to spend the next six weeks remembering our mortality and the risen life that we have in Jesus.

Let these days of Lent serve us to be set free from sin, to renew our baptism, to enter more fully into communion with the church, with each other, and with God. Let us truly feel that God's love is shown to be stronger than death on the bright Easter Sunday morning.

— Sr. Margarita Bareikaitė

On the cover:
This is an illustration from *Lietuvių Tautiniai Drabužiai (Lithuanian National Costumes)* written by Aldona Stravinskienė, edited by Saulė Semeškevičienė, illustrated by Ona-Danutė Buivydaite. (Vilnius: Viltis pub., 1994).

Edward Baranauskas

The Tenth Anniversary of Freedom Defender's Day

In the early morning of Sunday January 13, 1991, Soviet paratroopers and tanks stormed into crowds of people surrounding the television station and tower in Vilnius, killing fourteen people and seriously injuring three hundred others.

On the day that became known as "Bloody Sunday", then later "Freedom Defender's Day", questions were raised as to who ordered this attack, and why? Mikhail Gorbachev, the president of the now defunct Soviet Union, claimed that his lieutenants acted without his knowledge. However, the true story of the events leading up to this carnage is being today told by his subordinates, and their testimony contradicts Gorbachev's version of events.

To the outside world, he was then the reforming hero.

In the fall of 1989, Gorbachev insisted that what was happening in Eastern Europe, letting the people go, allowing the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, should not happen at home. To maintain the Soviet Union, as he had said, one must fight to the last trench as at Stalingrad.

Lithuania, then part of the Soviet Union, decided to break with Moscow. On March 11, 1990, the democratically elected members of the Lithuanian parliament (then called the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet) unanimously declared the re-establishment of the independent republic of Lithuania, and selected Vytautas Landsbergis as their president.

For months, nationalist feelings had been escalating in Lithuania, and the KGB and the Soviet Army had been trying, unsuccessfully, to suppress it.

Alarmed by the forces he unleashed, Gorbachev decided to change his inner cabinet. In December

1990, he called a meeting and took three hard-liners (those who were instrumental in organizing the failed coup attempt a year later) to join the Defense Minister Dimitri Yazov and the head of the KGB, Vladimir Kryuchkov. The decision was made that something had to be done to stop these undesirable events. Gorbachev instructed them to draw up plans for the introduction of emergency rule with full dictatorial powers if, and when, the situation demanded it. This was done.

Gorbachev called for another meeting on January 12th to discuss the situation in Lithuania. The head of the KGB took part and stated that Yazov was given the command to intervene.

Valery Boldin, chief assistant to Gorbachev, also remembered the details of the meeting. While Gorbachev did not give a written order, he said it in such a way that Yazov and the KGB chief should do everything to eliminate the tension and to destroy the opposition there.

That night, given those explicit orders, paratroopers, tanks, and armored vehicles entered Vilnius. The radio and television center became their first target.

The troops opened fire at the human shield surrounding the tower, and tanks swirled into the crowd, crushing several people as they moved forward. The horror of it all was witnessed by journalists, photographers, and television cameramen. Its ugliness was described in the press and shown on television screens worldwide for all to read and see.

The next day, Gorbachev and his Defense Minister denied responsibility for what happened, claiming that local commanders took this action without their consent. At a press conference in Moscow, Gorbachev went so far as to say that

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Lithuanian mobs shot first, and this provocation forced the military into taking defensive action.

The head of the KGB insists that everything was done, absolutely, with Gorbachev's approval, and condemns him for denying ever giving such an order. How could anyone, he went on to say, intervene without, the president's approval?

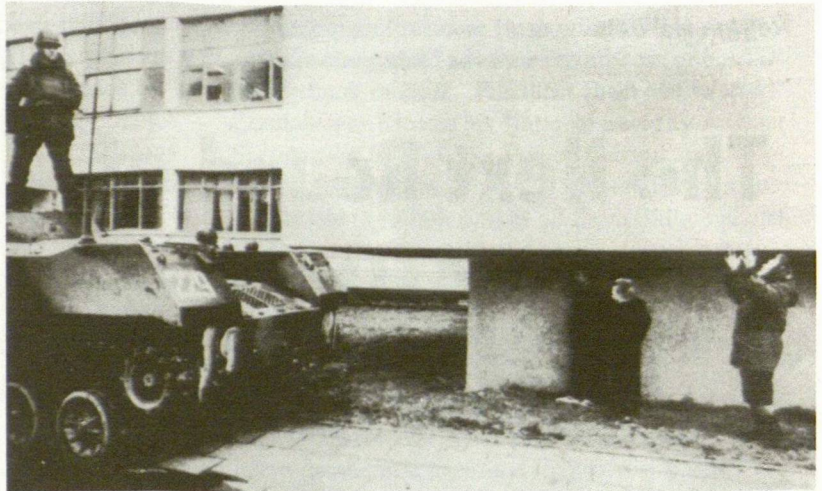
Before the attack on the TV tower began, people started to assemble, en masse, around the parliament building. The crowd numbered, in a matter of hours, several thousand.

The Soviets did not achieve their objective, which was to destroy the opposition. The assault on the parliament never took place. Perhaps the military felt it would be unwise to move against such a sea of humanity, fearing a greater bloodbath than that at the TV tower. No one will ever know.

I visited Lithuania the following year, and talked with my relatives and friends about what took place at the television center. It was not a well-planned operation, we thought, for it came as no surprise. It seemed that just about everyone in Lithuania must have known it was coming; for they came to Vilnius by the bus loads from every corner of Lithuania, without encountering any roadblocks. Some went to join the crowd at the TV tower, while others went to the parliament building.

Gorbachev underestimated the intensity of the Lithuanians to defend their homeland. One of my relatives stood at the parliament in the front row, and the crowd behind them, he thought, must have been at least twenty people deep. He was there, he told me, because he knew he would have to die from something someday, and so he might just as well die defending his homeland.

The tragedy in Vilnius would eventually lead to Gorbachev's downfall six months later, and the breakup of the Soviet Empire. At that time there were two leaders in Moscow. Mikhail Gorbachev was at the Kremlin trying to hold the Soviet Union together. Boris Yeltsin, the president of the Russian republic, emerged as the champion of the de-



A grandmother pleads with a soldier.

Photo: from The Gift of Vilnius, published by The Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

mocratic forces that began to sweep across the Soviet Union. He ruled his constituents from the parliament building that later became known as "The Russian White House". It was here that he climbed to the top of a tank during the attempted coup, telling the Russian people to resist the Stalinists and not to return to the past.

Lithuania is today a free nation. We should all pause for a minute, in silence, to honor and remember those who made the supreme sacrifice that terrible morning at the television tower in Vilnius. They were a special kind of people who had the courage to stand before those tanks with nothing but their bare hands and love in their hearts for their beloved Lithuania.

We should not forget those, also, who braved the freezing cold to form a human shield around the parliament building to protect it from the attack that never came.

Lithuania, indeed, is a land of unsung heroes. Without them, the land they loved so much would never have regained her place in the family of free nations. ♦

Sources of information:

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The Lithuanian Weekly, published in Vilnius, issue January 19, 1991.

Regina Narušis

The Next Round of NATO Enlargement



The next NATO Alliance Summit meeting will occur in 2002. The decision in whether to enlarge NATO in 2002 is expected to be made in December of 2001. The U.S. government will most likely make its decision around Labor Day 2001.

During our presidential elections in 2000, both the Republican and Democrat parties in their respective party platforms supported further NATO enlargement and reassured the American people that Russia will not be given a veto over NATO enlargement. The Democrat Party platform went further and committed to bringing the issue of NATO enlargement before the Alliance in 2002.

On October 31, 2000, then Governor Bush, now President Bush, issued his NATO and NATO Enlargement policy statement, which reads as follows:

“Governor Bush knows that the security of the United States is inseparable from the security of Europe, and that a powerful and cohesive NATO is the foundation of peace. He recognizes that a strong U.S. defense is a prerequisite for ensuring that America’s security commitments are not only made, but also kept. This is why rebuilding America’s armed forces is one of his central campaign themes

It is in this strategic context that Governor Bush believes that the enlargement of NATO to include other nations with democratic values, pluralist political systems and free market economies must

surely continue. Neither geographic nor historical circumstances should dictate the future of a Europe whole and free. Governor Bush will lead our European Allies to advance the process NATO enlargement at the next Alliance Summit in 2002. Russia must never be given a veto over NATO enlargement. As Secretary Cheney has stressed, “One of the most important challenges we face as a nation is how we manage the process of integrating the 150 million Eastern Europeans into the security and economic framework of Europe.” A Bush-Cheney Administration will work to ensure that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe preserve their freedom and independence and advance their economic progress. The U.S. will work with and support these countries as they seek to become members of the European Union.

But the subject of NATO and this Presidential election should also be seen in a larger context. George W. Bush has a history of carrying out his commitments, and will do so as President, including on the important issue of the enlargement of the North Atlantic Alliance.

Governor Bush will be resolute concerning the Russian dimension of NATO enlargement. He would not have entered into a secret deal with Moscow endorsing the sale of sophisticated Russian conventional weapons to Iran. He will not turn a blind eye to the Russian brutality in Chechnya. He will not permit American taxpayer dollars to be stolen or wasted through corruption in Russia. George W. Bush can be entrusted with managing

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the U.S.-Russian relationship in a tough-minded way, including on the issue of NATO enlargement.

Governor Bush's forward-looking approach to NATO enlargement is consistent with the Republican record for a decade. Even in 1990, as Germany was being unified, the Bush Administration opened the way for new ties between the democracies of Central and Eastern Europe and NATO. It ensured that the terms of that agreement enabled U.S. forces to cross Germany to support Poland, in the event Poland became a NATO member. In 1992, at the NATO meeting of Ministers of Oslo, the U.S. made the first suggestion that Poland might become a NATO member. Republicans then pressed an ambivalent Clinton-Gore Administration to include Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary into NATO. This consistent Republican strategic and moral conviction regarding NATO enlargement was then reflected in its Contract with America in 1994 and continuing Republican Congressional pressure on the Clinton-Gore Administration to move ahead to expand the Alliance.

The Republican party has long been the advocate of independence for the people of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, even when others despaired of their emergence from foreign rule. Republicans recognize and applaud the tremendous achievements of the people of Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia in reclaiming their freedom and re-joining the Trans-Atlantic community of democracies. In its 2000 platform, the GOP also reaffirmed its traditional ties with and strong support for the courageous Ukrainian and Armenian people who, like the people of the Baltic States, have endured both persecution and tyranny to reassert their ancient nationhood. Republicans also applaud the progress toward peace and democracy in Croatia and Bosnia, and the ray of hope that has now touched Serbia. Republicans look forward to the day when these nations also join a Europe whole and free.

Governor Bush has made his positive position on further NATO enlargement clear. He has stressed that Russia will have no veto over these decisions. The American public, the North Atlantic Alliance, and aspiring new members of NATO can depend on his solemn commitments. In the end, it is a matter of character and a matter of trust."

We expect President Bush will fulfill his campaign promises and advance the process of NATO enlargement in 2002. President Bush has selected Condoleezza Rice as his National Security Advisor. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, during his confirmation hearings, in answer to Senator Jesse Helms, who urged the admission of all three Baltic nations, for the most part reiterated President Bush's campaign statement.

It appears that those who oppose NATO enlargement or wish to postpone it use Russia's objection as the excuse.

The United States has, in every possible way, engaged Russia so as to enable it to transform itself into a democratic, free, and trustworthy partner. Russia was invited to the G-7, APEC, and even afforded a NATO relationship through the Final Act of 1997. Unfortunately, the engagement has been unilateral. Russia, meanwhile, has sought and courted close ties to Iran, Iraq, Libya, and our hostile communist neighbor, China.

Russia has pressed its war against Chechnya and threatened its pro-Western neighbors, particularly, Georgia. It continues to intimidate its neighbors and asserts its intention to treat them as "the near abroad" and part of Russia's sphere of influence. Corruption is rampant. Russia's military simulates combat with American targets and identifies Washington as a possible threat. It has recently conducted military maneuvers in the Baltic Sea and, recently disclosed by our own military but withheld from the American people for six months, has moved battlefield nuclear missiles unto military bases by the Baltic Sea. Such action can only be understood as Russia's attempt to assert military dominance over Central and East Europe and to intimidate its neighbors by implicitly threatening the use of military force.

United States has given Russia moneys for the elimination and safeguarding of mothballed nuclear weapons. Pursuant to our agreement with Russia, Russia in 1991-1992 announced that all tactical nuclear weapons had been removed from Eastern Europe.

Russia has not transformed, much less changed. It is evident that it cannot be trusted. It is threatening American interests, which need to be protected.

NATO should be expanded in 2002 to admit those states that have applied for membership to give them the security they need and deserve. ♦

TO BE EXECUTED

This story is about Dan Miles, an academic prize-winning scholar and track star who is in Northeastern University's Hall of Fame. In the business world, Dan served in various engineering capacities in the construction field and as an executive for an international design-build firm with a satellite office in Boston. During World War II, he was captured by the Japanese and spent over three years in prisoner of war camps in the Philippines.

Dan was born in Norwood, Massachusetts on July 21, 1917. Both of his parents emigrated from Lithuania. His father, Pranas Milas, on arriving at Ellis Island was given the name Frank Miles. His mother, whose maiden name was Paulina Aukštikalnis, died during the influenza epidemic of 1918.

After her death, family friends wanted to adopt Dan and his older brother Andrew, but father Frank was determined to raise his two sons with the help of relatives and housekeepers, while working on construction projects from Maine to the state of Washington. They lived in Anacortes, Washington, where several relatives from Brockton, Massachusetts had earlier taken up residence. There, Dan attended junior high school and the first two years of high school, where he participated in track and field events and won his first team letter. In 1932 he returned to Norwood, where he continued to excel as a high school student and athlete.

College Days

In 1934, despite difficult economic times, Dan had high hopes of seeking a civil engineering degree from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1935, after completing elementary and advanced courses in surveying, he was offered a five-year

academic scholarship at Northeastern University's College of Engineering in Boston. Tuition money was hard to come by in those days, and although it would take an extra year to earn his Bachelor's Degree in Northeastern's Cooperative Work-Study Program, the offer of a full scholarship prevailed. Dan was the recipient of the Desmond Fitzgerald Award given by the Boston Society of Civil Engineers to Northeastern graduates in recognition of academic excellence and extra-curricular engineering achievement. He also captained his track team in 1939 and set a long-standing New England high jump record at 6 feet 5 inches.

The Work Force

Dan's first co-op job while attending Northeastern was with the town of Norwood's Engineering Department. He later was employed by Liberty Mutual's Engineering Department in Boston, where he introduced the Co-op Training Concept. After graduation, with his Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering Degree in hand, Liberty Mutual assigned him to major national defense construction projects in Kentucky, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia. There he served as Resident Construction Safety Engineer.

One Sunday in Roanoke, Virginia, Dan arrived late for Mass at Our Lady of Nazareth Church. There was standing room only in the sanctuary. The ushers suggested that seating might be possible in the choir loft where Dan, as a former member of St. George's Choir in Norwood, went without hesitation. During Mass, Dan couldn't keep his eyes off the young, attractive organist. He just knew she was someone special and wanted to know her better. Of course he joined the choir, and thus began

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the friendship with his future wife, Martha Jean Bruch.

While in Virginia, where he had been assigned to a major national defense project employing over 5,000 construction workers on a seven-day, twenty-four hour day schedule, Dan received a call from Liberty's home office in Boston. The Vice-President and Chief Engineer asked if he would be willing to accept an interesting national defense construction assignment in the Philippines. Although the threat of war seemed imminent, Dan, still single, accepted the minimum of eighteen month's assignment thinking, "What a great experience this would be in helping build up our defenses in that remote part of the world."

En route to the Philippines, Dan reported back to the home office on construction projects not only already underway at Kaneohe, Red Hill, and Pearl Harbor on the Island of Oahu, but also on the construction progress at Midway, Wake and Guam. While at Guam, Dan said Japanese planes were heard flying over the island in the middle of the night. The moon reflected enough light from the shiny metal roofs to allow the Japanese to take photographs at minimum risk. The United States was not at war with Japan at the time. Apologies from Tokyo to Washington D.C. merely stated, "So Sorry, Land Planes (From the Marianas) Lost."

The Philippines

Dan served as Resident Construction Safety Engineer for major defense projects that included housing and hospital facilities, marine docking, seaplane ramps, underground ammunition, torpedo, and fuel storage facilities, and major maintenance and repair shops. Tunneling into the mountains of Bataan, and building roads, bridges, and docking facilities were all on a fast-track schedule racing against the clock of confrontation with the Empire of Japan.

After December 10, 1941, when Sangley Point Naval Air Station, Dan's base of operations, was bombed, the civilian construction forces were placed under the command of the USAFFE (United States Armed Forces of the Far East) with General Douglas MacArthur in charge. Although they were civilians, some were issued side arms and cartridge belts to use should the occasion demand. Contractor's equipment and personnel were commandeered for emergency repairs of roads and airport runways.

Dan recalls hearing a rebroadcast of President Roosevelt stating, while Japanese bombs were dropping all around him, "We are now in the war...". Dan responded, "Brother, you're not kidding!"

At the same time, bombs were dropping on nearby Cavite Navy Yard, Clark Air Base northwest of Manila, Camp John Hay in Baguio, and Nichols Field, Manila's major airport. Anti-aircraft guns were reaching 15,000 feet. Japanese "Sting Ray" bombers remained in tight formation at 20,000 feet.

Dan witnessed the horrors, the bloodshed, and truckloads of dead civilian workers being transported from the Cavite Navy Yard, the result of direct hits on major buildings, repair shops, and ships tied to the main docks. Radio communiqués from General MacArthur's headquarters reported the sighting of 400 Japanese troop ships off the coast of Legaspi, 200 kilometers south of Manila. Although declared an "Open City" for the protection of the civilian population, the Imperial Japanese Air Force was bombing Manila daily. Dan's temporary quarters in the Open City were in constant peril of being hit, as were all other major buildings.

Assuming MacArthur's communiqués were correct, the latest information now placed the advancing Japanese troops 100 kilometers south of Manila. Cliff Ayers, Project Engineer for Bechtel, the major defense contractor in the Philippines, said to Dan, "Let's get out of the City, go to your cottage at Dalhican (near Sangley Point), grab a couple of beers, and return." Pat Cumming, a friend from the Chicago area, reinforced the idea. With Dan driving his company car, loaded with official military insignia and passes to allow entry into secured areas, the threesome started their journey. They had plenty of time to get to Dan's cottage and back, about 30 kilometers away, before encountering any Japanese troops, they thought.

In the middle of the moonlit night, nearly midnight, driving under strict blackout conditions, no headlights, hard to see, they approached the bridge over the Las Pinas River, 15 kilometers south of Manila. As Dan had done many times before, when crossing major bridges guarded by the Filipino Constabulary, he slowed down and yelled out of the open window, "Passe. Contractors," expecting the guards to wave him on. Not this time. A bayonet was suddenly thrust through the open window and pressed against Dan's neck. Screams of

"Halt...Halt...Out...Out!" prompted Cliff who was riding in the back seat to yell, "Holy Jesus...they're Japs! Back up and get the hell outa here." Dan recalls that he was in a state of paralysis; he did not move his head or the car. Otherwise, his head could have been severed from his body.

Advance Japanese troops swarmed over the company car, yanked the doors open, and prodded the three midnight riders out with their bayoneted rifles. "Hands Up...Out...Hands Up...March... Halt...March" were the repeated commands while prodding and pushing them to the far side of the Las Pinas Bridge. At that point, the three captive Americans were pushed down a ten-foot embankment to the mud flat at the tidal river level. Looking up at the underside of the bridge, they could see Japanese soldiers, with their unique spin-type flashlights, stripping and disconnecting wiring from boxes of explosives that had been set in place and made ready to blow up the bridge. These Japanese scouts were part of an advance company sent out to check and make safe all bridges for their following troops.

Although Dan and his buddies were civilians, the Japanese accused them of being demolition experts whose mission was to impede the advancing Imperial Japanese forces by blowing up the Las Pinas bridge. The evidence was damaging. Dan's civilian clothes were close to military style and color. On the windshield of his car were military passes allowing entry into military installations, including Bataan and Corregidor. In the eyes of the Japanese captors, they were as guilty as sin.

While at the mud-flat level of the riverbank, and still in the dark of night, Cliff in a low voice said, "Let's hit the river and swim for it." At that, one of the Japanese troops on the bridge fired blindly down the embankment and shouted, "Silence!" Dan heard Cliff moan and was sure that he had been hit. It wasn't until daybreak that he learned that the bullet grazed his clothing and had scared him, but that he was OK.

They were soon tied tightly with thin, insulated bus wire used to connect the boxes of explosives. Hands were tied behind their backs, legs tied at the knees and ankles, and necks pulled down and wired to the knees, each ending up in an awkward ball. A short time later they were rolled up the embankment and tossed into the back of a Japanese troop-carrying truck, which drove away from Manila to an abandoned filling station. Here they were

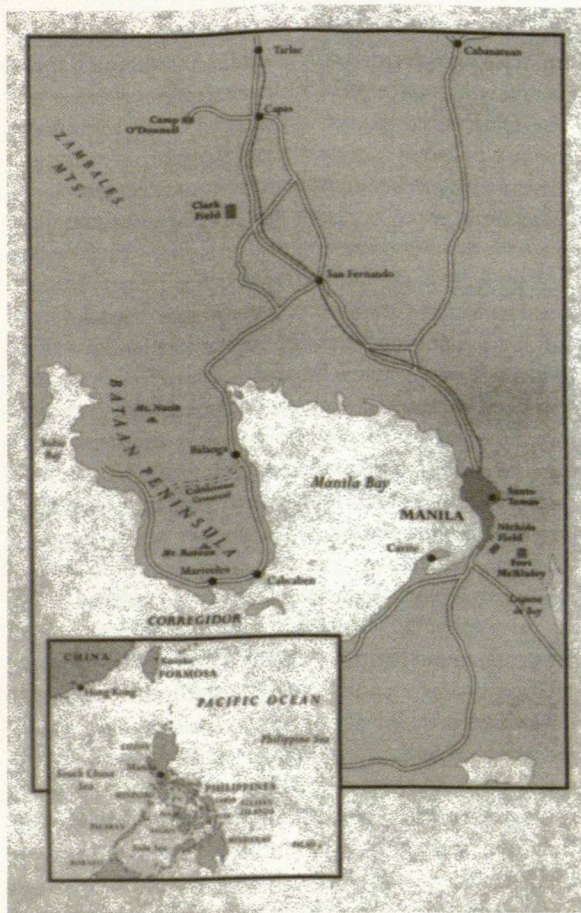
dumped off the tailgate to the paved concrete surface below to await arrival of the main Japanese troops.

At dawn they were partially untied and left in a sitting position for several hours. It was here that stiff paper tags were wired to each of the captives at chest level. An English-speaking Japanese officer translated the Japanese script, which read, "To be executed". Another officer drew his sword and mimicked a beheading. Other Japanese troops aimed their rifles at the prisoners mimicking execution by rifle fire.

The question "Why?" was ignored at first but later explained without interrogation. As expected, Dan and his companions were "captured while racing out of Manila to blow up the Las Pinas Bridge." Denial was interpreted as lying. "Japanese tell truth...Americans lie," was repeated many times, while they wore their tag of destiny. Being tied, untied, retied, and without food or water for nine days while in the custody of the advancing Japanese troops proved to be the most stressful of the total of 1,159 days as a POW.

A few days after being tagged for execution, Dan and his two civilian friends were untied and boarded one of the hundreds of Japanese open-stake body troop trucks that became part of the Victory parade into Manila. The sight of thousands of Japanese civilian adults and children lining the streets, cheering and applauding, and waving their "Fried Egg" flags was amazing to the three captured Americans, still wearing their execution tags, and soon to be retied and put on display at the Japanese Embassy. The first night back in Manila was spent in a seated position with wrists tied by wire behind their backs on the clay surface of the Embassy's tennis court. Hundreds of Manila's Japanese civilians came to look at them, to kick them, to spit at them while noting their execution tags. Parents joined their children in throwing the stone dust topping of the tennis courts in their faces, while celebrating Japanese troops looked on and cheered.

Dan and his two friends were separated and moved to different military interrogation points throughout the city. Still without food or water, Dan remembers being interrogated for the first time at Fort Santiago, an old Spanish fort and dungeons within the walled city section of Manila, called Intramuros. The old Spanish dungeons were being used to hold the enemies of Japan who were facing



Map of Manila with its outlying areas.

execution.

At high tide, the seawater would rise to a foot or more above the dirt floor of the underground cells. Dan recalls clearly the beatings with rifle butts and short hollow bamboo clubs trying to convince him that he really was a demolition expert sent to blow up the Las Pinas Bridge. Nor could he tell them about the source of drinking water on Corregidor. "Japanese tell truth...Americans lie..." came through loud and clear from all the interrogators. "You like Roosevelt?" was an oft-repeated question. Dan's routine answer, which proved most puzzling, was "I never met the man." A "yes" answer resulted in more severe beatings.

From Fort Santiago, Dan was moved to the top floor of Manila's Jai Alai Building where other tagged POW's were being interrogated. It was there that a Japanese officer who spoke excellent English introduced himself as Lieutenant Kanda.

He asked Dan where he was from and what school he attended. Dan replied, "I come from Boston and schooled at MIT and..."

Lt. Kanda said, "Interesting. I went to MIT. What did you study?"

Dan replied, "Civil engineering," and mentioned Professors Breed and Hosmer who authored his elementary and advanced surveying textbooks. Lt. Kanda said he also studied civil engineering and knew of both professors.

Dan was glad that he showed an interest in talking with him and asked, "Why am I going to be killed?"

Lt. Kanda answered, "You lied to Japanese officers at the bridge where three of you were taken prisoner."

"We didn't lie to anyone. No one asked us anything before we were tagged for execution," Dan responded.

Lt. Kanda stated that he had looked at the records, and noted that the three men were military demolition people, that they were caught trying to blow up a bridge.

"No, we are civilians working on construction projects," Dan stressed.

Lt. Kanda said there was no need to lie to him, that it was too late, that he could do nothing about their predicament. Dan pleaded with him to send someone to his temporary apartment in the city, to check his passport, which would prove his civilian status. He gave the Lieutenant exact directions, and where in his apartment the passport could be found.

During this brief dialogue with Lt. Kanda, Dan asked if he remembered a Japanese pole-vaulter by the name of Sue Ohe. "Yes, I knew him very well," said the Lieutenant. Dan said he had competed in the same track meets with him at the Boston Gardens and also at the Madison Square Gardens in New York City. Dan mentioned that Sue Ohe was an excellent athlete, and had an exceptionally high knee lift as he sprinted down the runway toward the crossbar.

The Lieutenant appeared to be listening thoughtfully. Then he said, "He was killed in battle on one of the southern islands."

Dan learned later that it was Lt. Kanda who sent Japanese soldiers to visit his Manila apartment and to locate and check his passport, which confirmed his civilian status. Several days after his encounter with Lt. Kanda, in the dead of night, while lying on

a bare wood floor, Dan was kicked awake and made to stand up. His execution tag was ripped off. Dan could hardly stand after having spent nine days of starvation under Japanese custody. He was pushed and prodded down several stairways to ground level and into a Japanese four-door car. He was driven under guard several kilometers to the front entrance of a large stone building. He was pushed out of the car and dragged into the building lobby area where he lost consciousness.

The next morning, Dan recalls hearing male voices speaking Spanish. Peering out from under a sheet that someone had thrown over him, he saw white-robed men milling about. This was Dan's first glimpse of the Dominican priests who eventually gave up most of their buildings to the Japanese for use as a civilian prisoner of war camp. He was now on the grounds of Santo Tomas University, soon to become the largest civilian POW camp in the Philippines.

Santo Tomas

The Japanese military were allowing the civilian POW's to jerry-rig this campus mixture of classroom buildings and grounds into a spartan prisoner of war complex with bamboo and nipa palm shacks, soon to be added. The plaque at the entrance to the main building, where Dan was unceremoniously dumped, referred to Santo Tomas as the oldest university under the American flag.

Dan's first meal was a dish of watered down rice porridge called "lugao" in the native Filipino Tagalog dialect. To him that first dish of lugao, later referred to as wallpaper paste, was the finest meal he had ever tasted.

A few days later, Cliff and Pat arrived at Santo Tomas less their execution tags. Several weeks later, Carlos Elido, a Filipino civil engineer Dan had hired to work with him in his Sangley Point office, was able to make indirect contact with him at the Japanese supervised "Package Line." Carlos had put together a package of toilet articles including a stiff paper cylinder of tooth powder, which passed inspection, and was left for Dan to pick up after the camp side of the package line was opened.

Dan scratched his name on the cylinder of tooth powder. On one occasion, he had left it in one of the improvised shower rooms and returned quickly to retrieve it. After a few weeks of frugal use, no more powder came out. He cut open the cylinder and found within it a tight roll of Filipino pesos.

Had the constantly roaming Japanese guards found the tooth powder cylinder with Dan's name on it and further discovered that it contained several hundred Filipino pesos, both Dan and his Filipino friend would have been in deep trouble. Dealing in any currency other than the newly printed Japanese "Mickey Mouse" pesos was cause for beheading or death by a firing squad.

Dan kept busy. At different times he served on the Recreation Committee with British, Australian and American members. He helped organize, with minimum equipment on hand, softball, football and track activities to the delight of the captive spectators. He taught Differential Calculus, Elementary Spanish, and First Aid, and found enough spare time to teach himself Gregg Shorthand, which he continues to use to this day.

Santo Tomas was a family camp from the start, including all ages and nationalities considered to be enemies of Japan. Americans, British, Dutch, and Australians made up the larger percentage of the prison population. Women and children were housed separately. Families were allowed to congregate during daylight hours.

The Japanese censored all incoming mail. The first mail Dan received was over a year old. Over the three years and two months of imprisonment, the Japanese allowed only two mail deliveries. One twenty-five-word postcard, allowed to be written from camp, reached Dan's father in Norwood, Massachusetts after Dan arrived home. If a prisoner did not say his health was excellent and that he was being treated well, his postcard did not leave the camp.

Life in Santo Tomas Prison Camp for the first year and a half, although tightly controlled by the Japanese guards and spartan at best, was bearable. The camp population had reached 3,000 at the time. Eight hundred of the more able-bodied males were transferred by truck and narrow gauge railroad boxcars to the Los Banos Prison Camp in the mountains of Luzon. Dan and Pat were selected to go to Los Banos. Cliff stayed behind.

Los Banos

The Los Banos Prisoner of War Camp was located on the grounds of the College of Agriculture and Forestry of the University of the Philippines, a rural facility at the base of Mount Makiling on the island of Luzon. A double ring of barbed wire encircled the original 25 acres consisting of faculty

housing, scattered cottage-type classrooms, and a gymnasium. The first POWs to arrive moved into the various buildings with the Japanese garrison troops housed adjacent to the main gate. Later, when the camp population swelled to over 2,000, the Japanese brought in Filipino laborers to build long, leaky barracks with bamboo frames, nipa palm roofs, woven split bamboo walls, and dirt floors.

Prisoners who attempted escape were shot and left to die where they fell. Dan's friend, a meteorologist with Pan-American Airways, was shot and killed on the inside set of three barbed wire fences. He had successfully escaped the night before and was shot at dawn the following morning while attempting to re-enter the camp with some fruit he had scrounged from the ground just outside of the camp.

In weeks to come, the POWs set about organizing what was to be their home for the next one year and eight months. For the most part, it could be considered a self-governed prison village. The POWs nominated and elected an Executive Committee to act as liaison with the Japanese Commandant in charge of the Camp. The prisoners developed water and sanitation systems, which Dan helped to design.

Limited vegetable gardens were planted in assigned areas. A fast growing spinach-like vegetable called *talinum* when added to a meager ration of rice comprised the main meal of the day. Prisoners rationed the pitifully scarce food supplied by

the Japanese. A breakfast of watered down lugao had to last until the main meal in the evening. Meat and fish were rarely served, and when added to the diluted vegetable stews, were hardly recognizable. A tiny quarter inch morsel when discovered was sufficient reason to give a rousing cheer.

Dan worked in the Engineering Department of the Volunteer Camp Organization. Responsibilities varied from designing, constructing, and maintaining water, sanitation and drainage systems to plotting and keeping records of burial sites within the camp. Civilian blacksmiths from the Cavite Navy Yard forged handles for the crude wood coffins, helped make metal pots and pans from old rusty corrugated metal panels, and plumbers dismantled old piping holding the fencing around an abandoned tennis court to extend the water distribution system. Dan helped bring in an additional supply of water from a higher elevation mountain stream, using larger diameter bamboo for piping. This work was done under the watchful eyes of armed Japanese guards who also benefited from increasing the camp's water supply.

It wasn't too long before the Japanese cut the daily food rations for the prisoners to a starvation level. Outside the camp within sight distance, were trees bearing mangoes, bananas, coconuts, and other tropical fruits on the abandoned section of the agricultural school grounds. When the prisoners asked if they could go out under Japanese armed escort to pick up the fruit that had fallen to the ground, some in a rotting state, permission was de-

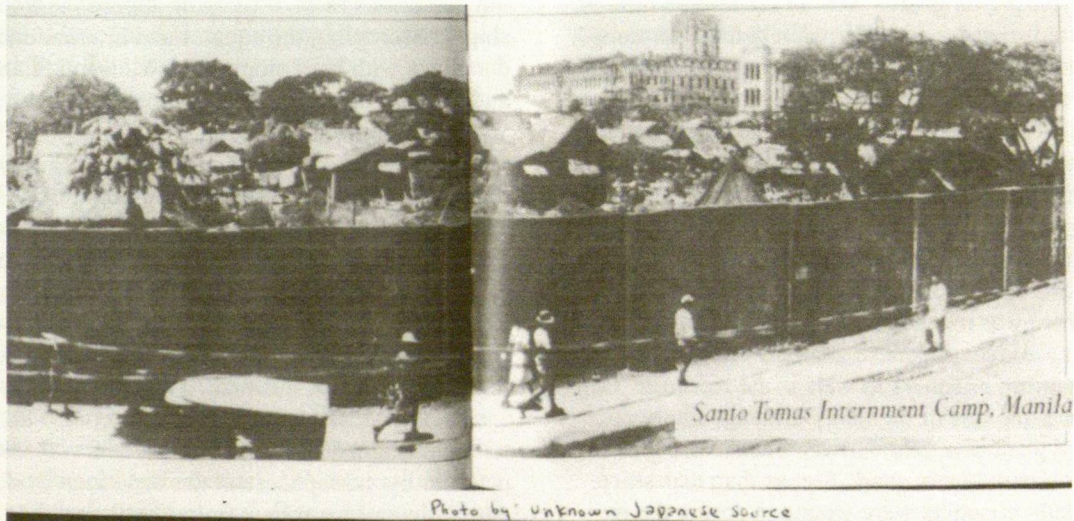


Photo by an unknown Japanese source of the Santo Tomas Internment Camp in Manila.

nied. Better to let the fruit rot on the ground than to give it to the POWs. The Japanese guards were soldiers who had seen rough duty on the front lines and were not about to show any compassion toward enemy prisoners.

Pet dogs, cats, monkeys, or bats, rats, lizards, snakes, or anything that dared crawl inside the camp or fly across, inevitably ended up in the giant stew kettles for the evening meal. Anything to add a little protein or a few extra calories. However, it was not enough, and prisoners died. Dan, as did all prisoners, came down with a severe case of beri beri and common tropical intestinal worms, often more than a foot long. Getting rid of the eggs of the entrenched worms was the worst problem. It took months after Dan got home to get rid of them.

After the third year of imprisonment, there were so many deaths that the camp ran out of wood for makeshift caskets. Gravediggers had little strength left to dig a decent grave. At the end, bodies were placed in shallow trenches and covered with a thin layer of dirt. Dan was beginning to realize that death was near for most of the starving prisoners.

About a month and a half before being rescued, the prisoners saw artillery flashes on the northwestern horizon at night. As days went by, the artillery flashes and aerial activity got closer and closer. The Japanese guards became more hostile as the war intensified. The Japanese had made plans for mass extermination at morning roll call.

The Rescue

February 23, 1945 – 7:00 AM. The off-duty Japanese prison guards were in the middle of their daily calisthenics, near the main gate to the camp, when nine U.S. C-47 low-flying transport planes were sighted. Suddenly, the sky was full of paratroopers from the 11th Airborne Division, targeted to land just outside the main entrance to the camp. Coordinated with these paratroopers were rangers and guerrilla ground forces and 50 or more amphibious tanks (Amtraks) that had crossed a nearby large fresh water lake the night before.

There was much crossfire coupled with aerial activity above. Japanese guards were shooting at the starving prisoners as well as the rescuers. Dan jumped into one of the many drainage ditches that he had planned a year earlier. Thank God that he had insisted they be made deeper than necessary.

Many prisoners were wounded during the rescue. The dry nipa palm and bamboo barracks were

in flames in no time. Prisoners were herded into the amphibious tanks, each holding 30 or more plus the crew. The Amtraks lumbered back to the lake, walled slowly across to waiting U.S. Army trucks, then were driven to a provincial prison nearby. In comparison to the Los Banos prison camp, the Filipino prison, Muntinglupa, turned out to be a palace. The double tier pipe-framed bunks with blanketed bottoms were a luxury for the walking skeletons that first night of freedom.

The Japanese, realizing too late that the rescue of the prisoners from the Los Banos camp had taken place, regrouped their main forces and surrounded the provincial prison. Food and medical supplies for the POWs had to be dropped by parachute, until the Japanese were forced out of the immediate area.

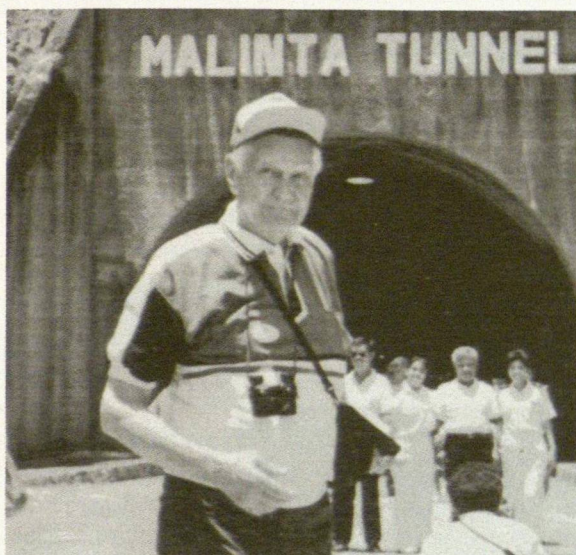
The rescuers knew that because of the terrible physical condition of the POWs, they could not take a heavy turkey dinner. They were given thin porridges and soups for the first few days of their freedom. Followed by more substantial meals, they gained in strength, in weight, and spirit every day. Soon the more able prisoners were trucked to Nichols Airfield in Manila, and then flown to Tacloban on the island of Leyte. After several more days of checking and clearance by Army doctors, they boarded various troop ships at anchor off Tacloban. Dan returned to San Francisco on the U.S. Admiral Capps.

Homeward Bound

The rescued POWs spent 30 days under black-out conditions most of the time aboard the troop ship, crisscrossing the equator and international date lines with brief stops at the Marshall Islands and Hawaii. Dan recalls attending a funeral service aboard ship for one of the POWs who died on his way back home. The solemn burial at sea service brought many tears to the eyes of attending POWs.

After three years and two months as a prisoner of the Japanese, being back in the United States caused a feeling that was hard for Dan to describe. He fell to his knees on the dock at San Francisco and thanked God for returning him safely to his homeland again, a free man.

Dan weighed 180 pounds before he was taken prisoner by the Japanese at the Las Pinas Bridge. At the time of his rescue from Los Banos, he weighed 90 pounds. The Japanese starvation diet



On Dan's journey to revisit Corregidor.

caused a 50 percent weight loss during the more than three years of imprisonment.

On arrival in San Francisco, the Red Cross told Dan he had an urgent telephone call from a Martha Jean Bruch in Hollywood. Dan called, and a man answered. Dan introduced himself and asked to speak to Martha Jean. "Oh, yes," the man said, "She is expecting your call." After much catching up over the phone, Martha Jean mentioned that her boss answered the phone, that his name was Captain Ronald Reagan who was in charge of making flight-training films for the U.S. Air Force, and that she was his secretary. Many years later, Martha Jean and Dan were invited guests at President Reagan's Inaugural Ceremony and the many festivities that followed.

After Dan's arrival home in Norwood, Massachusetts, he went through additional medical tests at the Marine Hospital in Brighton. It was here that he finally got rid of the intestinal worms that were common to POWs suffering from nutritional deficiencies over extended periods. One of the examining doctors told Dan that because of his prison ordeal he might have problems fathering children. Dan and Martha Jean were married in 1945. After seven daughters and three sons, Martha Jean thought it might be time to meet that doctor. On one occasion, a friend introduced Dan as the father of ten, prompting the remark, "Wow, you must be either Catholic or careless." Dan answered, "I'm both!"

When asked how he feels about the Japanese, Dan answers that he has experienced a wide spectrum of feelings ranging from the life-sparing curiosity expressed by a Japanese officer to inexcusable and deliberate starvation plans imposed by Japanese prison commandants. Dan has seen how war can make wild animals out of men, and how butchery and savagery involving the enemy, whether civilian or military, becomes commonplace rather than shocking. He has witnessed the extremes of highly propagandized Japanese troops: "Today Manila, tomorrow San Francisco, next day Washington". Japanese maps showed their foot soldiers a warped scale of the Pacific Ocean, no wider than the English Channel.

Yet Dan says he understands the pain and concerns of the average Japanese mother and father of sons and daughters at war, whether on the side of the aggressor or defender. He just doesn't understand why the past continues to be prologue in one form or another.

Philippines Revisited

When Dan revisited Corregidor in 1997, he was amazed at the predominance of Japanese tourists who were there to pay homage to their soldiers who were buried on Topside. The Filipino tour guides pointed out that rather than surrender to the American forces engaged in the recapture of the island fortress, the last Japanese troops on Corregidor sealed themselves in one of the lateral ammunition storage tunnels and committed mass suicide by blowing themselves up.

The simple but beautiful memorial for the Americans who sacrificed their lives in delaying the fall of the Philippines and capture of Corregidor in 1942 was being visited by a conspicuous few Filipino and American tourists.

To this day, Dan's daily prayers include his thanks for bringing him through many of the horrors of war, and his pleadings that there will be sufficient enlightenment worldwide to realize that peace and understanding must prevail over man's inhumanities to fellow man. ♦

Vytautas Švagždys

Assessing Communism's Crimes

A U.S. resident witnessed a Congress whose sole purpose was to finally probe the crimes committed by Communist regimes.

Having been responsible for a campaign of genocide over a period of years, the forces of fascism/nazism encountered defeat in World War II, and eventually declined. Nazi criminals have been tried; those in hiding are still being hunted to this day, as well they should be.

Because communism has lasted so much longer, the scope of crimes against humanity committed by communist regimes is even vaster [sic]. But ironically, the genocide perpetrated under communism and its subsequent impact has not yet been assessed. And, not only are the guilty going unpunished, but also they remain unnamed!

Stephan Courtois, author of *The Black Book of Communism*, correctly asserts that by their very essence communist regimes promulgate terror, starting immediately upon assumption of power.

The same types of crimes identified during the trials at Nuremberg as having been perpetrated by Nazis were also committed by communists wherever the possibility arose. Characteristic of the very nature of communism, those crimes represent its true agenda: all Marxist/Leninist structures,

from Moscow to Phnom Penh, have had but one goal — the merciless destruction of the “enemies of the people.”

Greatest Slaughter in History

The legacy of communist regimes consists of the greatest slaughter of human lives in history. From 1917 to 1989, 100 million people worldwide died at the hands of communists. During the Soviet occupation, Lithuania lost 800,000 residents to incarceration, deportation camps, and exile. About 300,000 people were deported to Siberia. One out of every three arrestees and/or deportees died from torture, starvation, or the harsh climate. Over 30,000 people were killed in Lithuania, while another 440,000 fled the communist terror and sought refuge in the West. The Republic of Lithuania experienced \$100 billion in material losses.

Many statistics on communism came to light during the Former Political Prisoners and Victims of Communism International Congress, held in 1998 in Berlin. Among them was the disturbing fact that economic, social, and ecological repercussions will continue to haunt former communist so-

*VYTAUTAS ŠVAGŽDYS, a Seattle resident, was a former Siberian deportee. He returned to Vilnius in summer 2000 to participate in the first-ever congress convened to identify and probe the crimes perpetrated by communist regimes. His firsthand report incorporates information released in conjunction with the congress. This article first appeared in Seattle's LAC's *Tulpe Times*, December 2000 issue.*

cieties for the next two or three generations at the minimum.

About 250,000 “enemies of the people” were arrested in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). One hundred ninety thousand were deported to various camps in the Soviet Union, and 60,000 of them died because of intolerable conditions.

In 1945 in Croatia, 100,000 people were killed. Similarly, “enemies of the people” were slaughtered in cold blood in Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other countries occupied by the Reds.

Communist regimes were responsible for the deportation and annihilation of entire ethnic groups: Chechens, the Ingush (a people historically related to the Chechens), Crimean Tatars, and others. That the goal was genocide is borne out by the deportation lists, which contain mainly the names of women and children. Deportees also included sick people, pregnant women, even the disabled.

Disturbing Thoughts

Even though democracy has triumphed over communism in many countries, it is disturbing that in recent times former communist stalwarts, emboldened by not having been brought to justice, are again beginning to weasel their way into positions of power. This is a major cause for concern. Will a rejuvenated and reinforced communist movement unleash the tool of terror once again?

The Goals of the Congress

Held in Vilnius on June 12th to the 14th, the Congress to Assess the Crimes of Communism and the Public Tribunal were organized for the purpose of informing the people of the world, their leaders, and the United Nations about the crimes against humanity carried out by communist regimes. With the cooperation of the Lithuanian government, the work of organizing the Congress fell to the various groups, which had resisted the Soviet Occupation, as well as those who had suffered at the hands of communists during the 1940 – 1990 time period.

The goal of the Congress was to identify ways to mitigate or minimize the possibilities for the re-emergence of communism. It is vital to encourage the leaders of democratic nations and of international organizations to seek justice, to pass laws condemning communism, to bring to justice communist criminals with no statute of limitations (*T.T.*

ed. note: as it is for Nazis). It is important to fashion and implement an international strategy to prevent the rebirth of communism. Individuals who planned and executed genocide — and their cohorts — should be identified, hunted down, and publicly condemned, age notwithstanding, just as is being done with the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Resolutions condemning communism have been adopted by the parliaments of the Czech Republic, Poland, and other Middle and Eastern European nations.

The Congress Convenes

On June 12th, representatives from 26 countries squeezed into the chambers of the Lithuanian Parliament for the opening session of the Anti-Communist Congress. Because the mass of participants could not all fit into the hall, the work of the Congress was distributed between two separate halls in the Parliament Building, while the Public Tribunal sessions convened at the Academy of Education. Those participating included government figures, leaders of society, spiritual leaders, historians, judges, lawyers, and former members of the resistance.

The Congress was co-chaired by the chair of the organizing committee, Vytas Miliauskas, and by Rasa Juknevičienė, the vice-chair of the Lithuanian Parliament. A moment of silence was observed to honor all those who perished at the hands of communists.

Prominent Speakers

Greetings from Valdas Adamkus, the president of Lithuania, were read to the assembly. A profound address was given by the president of the Lithuanian Parliament, Vytautas Landsbergis. He reminded us that the perpetrators of the Lithuanian nation’s holocaust have not yet been brought to justice, that they are receiving asylum in neighboring countries. He emphasized that the effects of the communist virus continue to be felt to this day. Provocation of societal groups to demagoguery and aggression are recognized as hallmarks of Red fascism. The Anti-Communist Congress has a multi-faceted orientation: international, intergovernmental,



local, and humanitarian. "We all need the medicine of hearing the truth about the past and familiarity with the current state of affairs."

In his speech, the chair of the Lithuanian Cabinet Council, Andrius Kubilius, demanded that reparations be made to Lithuania for the damage and destruction caused by the Russian Occupation.

Greetings were read from the presidents of Romania and Hungary. The Bulgarian Parliament's recently passed resolution regarding the criminal acts of the communist party was read to the applause of the convention.

The former president of Poland, Nobel Prize laureate Lech Walesa, was greeted enthusiastically. He lamented the fact that communism remains unpunished, despite having caused a greater number of deaths than the combined world wars of the 20th century. "Fascism has had Nuremberg, but communism remains uncondemned." "This," he added, "just provides encouragement to neo-communists."

Asking for Forgiveness

Rising to their feet, Congress participants showed their respect for the noted Russian human rights advocate Sergei Kovaliov. Speaking for himself, he asked forgiveness for the Russian nation for having supported communism and for having condoned the occupation of the Baltic countries. "It's our fault," said the professor. "Without owning up to it we cannot hope for a stable world."

Other Notables

In her speech, Dr. Jaroslava Moserova, member of the parliament of the Czech Republic, condemned communist genocide. Other speakers included the president of the General UNESCO Conference; Silvija Borisova from Bulgaria, the program director for the Research Center for Anti-Communist Resistance and Dissident Movements; Archbishop Sigitas Tamkevičius from Lithuania, the chair of the Lithuanian bishops' conference; Dr. Zita Sličytė of Lithuania, the Chief Procurator of the Public Tribunal; Kazys Saja, Lithuanian author; Evgeni Proniuk, the chair of Ukraine's political



prisoner society.

Grappling with the Beast

In his address, former political prisoner Feliksas Krasavinas noted: "I think the majority of us, whether we are from Russia, America, Australia or Israel, feel the responsibility to participate in that struggle, in whose forefront stands the Lithuanian nation, grappling with a dangerous, cunning, and still living beast – Soviet fascism."

He continued: "...hardly had the Lithuanian nation declared its independence and begun disentangling itself politically from the Soviet Union, then masses of Soviet bureaucrats arrived to subtly and deliberately insinuate themselves into all niches of government.

Now we find that they control banks, courts, the media, many aspects of government. A large segment of the Lithuanian nation, convinced by their lies, votes for them just as they did during Soviet times, ignoring the hundreds of thousands of lives surrendered by their countrymen in pursuit of this freedom."

Krasavinas concluded with the hope that this Congress signify the start of international cooperation among all nations liberated from communism.

Eyewitnesses to Genocide

Maja Kliastornaja, daughter of an executed author, movingly recounted the arrest and execution by Byelorussian communists of twenty well-known writers.

Estonian Elmut Laane, Czechs Jiri Blatni and Stanislav Drobni, Albanian Tomor Aliko, and other speakers described various crimes perpetrated by communists.

All speakers supported their reports with facts, dates, and statistics, and whenever possible, named the offending individuals. They were eyewitnesses to the genocide campaigns of communist regimes.

Public Tribunal Created

Congress members elected and confirmed the following to serve on a Public Tribunal: Chair of the Tribunal – Vytautas Zabiela, Lithuanian law-

yer, and Chief Procurator – Zita Sličytė, doctor of law, from Lithuania. Four judges: Linette Andersen, doctor of law, from the USA; Mykola Kulcinskij, a journalist and deputy from Ukraine’s parliament; Liudvigs Aivars, a lawyer from Latvia; and law historian Vytautas Raudeliūnas, from Lithuania. The Tribunal was given the mandate of collecting and writing up evidence and ultimately delivering a verdict on communism. The process was to be based on: 1) statutes which guided the work of previous international tribunals in Nuremberg, Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Rome, and 2) the laws of the nations represented at the Anti-Communist Congress.

Unheard of Miracle

On June 14th, multitudes of people from all over Lithuania squeezed into the Vilnius Sports Hall for the closing session of the Anti-Communist Congress. These were the participants of the Lithuanian resistance: former guerilla fighters, political prisoners, dissidents, other ordinary people who had experienced “communist heaven.” People who had lost their loved ones, who had been deprived of their homeland. People who never lost hope that someday communism would collapse, and that the Lithuanian tri-color would once again rise above Gediminas Castle.

They gathered with their families, children, grandchildren, and friends, because they wanted to see with their own eyes and hear with their own ears the unheard of miracle: Lithuania – our Lithuania! – was putting the worst felon of the 20th century – communism – on trial. At long last, the hopes of the victims were to be realized.

Open to the public, the session started at 11 a.m. The huge sports hall was [crowded]. Among the speakers condemning communism were lawyers from America, speakers from Albania and Russia, and the chair of the Lithuanian Parliament, Vytautas Landsbergis. They were interrupted numerous times by applause.

Resolutions

Dr. P. Jakučionis presented resolutions prepared by the Congress relating to: 1) the condemnation of communist ideology and doctrine; 2) preventive measures against the rebirth and restoration of communism; 3) an appeal to the United Nations and to the governments and parliaments of world democracies to establish an international tribunal

for the purpose of bringing to justice perpetrators of crimes under communism; 4) an appeal to the people of the world and to international organizations to support the establishment of such a tribunal; 5) disseminating information on the true meaning of genocide; 6) reparations for damage caused by communist regimes; 7) international cooperation in the research and assessment of the crimes committed under communism. These resolutions were approved by acclamation.

Speaking in the name of the organizing committee, Dr. Jakučionis thanked the leaders of the Lithuanian government and Parliament and the municipality of Vilnius for their support in holding the Congress. He thanked the Lithuanians of the United States, Canada, Australia, and other countries; he thanked the Lithuanian National Foundation, Canadian Lithuanian Foundation, the Adenauer Foundation, former political prisoners, deportees, guerilla fighters, soldiers and volunteers – all who either morally or materially contributed to the organizational efforts of this congress.

The Public Tribunal’s Chief Procurator, Dr. Zita Sličytė, referring to the enormous amount of evidence received, reported that the Tribunal was unable to complete its mandate in the given time. She requested authorization to continue the work of the Tribunal through September of this year. Thus concluded the first ever International Congress and Public Tribunal convened to probe the crimes of communist regimes.

Unified by their hopes, their flags and their songs, the assembled masses then marched from the Sports Hall to Vilnius Cathedral to attend a special Mass. Later, they continued on to Lukiškių Aikštė (a town square) where they participated in a solemn ceremony commemorating June 14, 1941, the date of the first mass deportations to Siberia. God grant that our homeland and our people never ever again be subjected to such torment! ♦

Fr. William Wolkovich-Valkavičius

LITHUANIAN RESCUERS OF JEWS

"I have dedicated several years to re-searching this question... I arrived at the conclusion that in Lithuania about 12,000 people took part in Jew-rescuing."

— *Genius Procuta, Tėviškės Žiburiai, March 16, 1999*

"I am persuaded that we must explain and name all Lithuanians who aided Jews and memorialize the noble work of those Lithuanians."

— *Dr. S. Ginaitė, Žydų Tautos Tragedijos Lietuvoje Pradžia, (Vilnius: Miša Press, 1994, p. 3)*

During the German takeover of Lithuania, 1941-1944, the Nazis devised a plan to send death squads A, B, C, and D into occupied lands to destroy Jews. The target of group A was Lithuanian Jewry, with the intention of foisting blame on native Lithuanians. Within a few years, an estimated 200,000 Lithuanian Jews perished. A tiny number of extremist ethnic Lithuanians shamelessly participated in this mass killing, as Dr. S. Ginaitė, a Lithuanian Jew, records in the above-mentioned booklet.

Meanwhile, in the 1980s and 1990s, screeching headlines in the U.S. press about Nazi collaborators created the impression of massive cooperation and participation by Lithuanians in the Holocaust. Such an illusion is a grievous slander.

The truth is that countless heroic Lithuanians risked their safety and lives, and some were executed by the Nazis in attempting to save Jews. In many an instance, for months and even several years, networking clergy and lay people collabo-

rated to seclude fellow Jewish Lithuanians in rectories and churches, barns, sheds, and cellars.

Nevertheless, Lithuanian sources about rescuers for the decades following the 1940s were practically non-existent. Little witness found its way into the two standard encyclopedias, i.e., *Lietuviškoji Enciklopedija* (Boston, 1885, 1953-1968,) and *Encyclopedia Lituanica* (Boston, 1974-1978). Then in 1979, Monsignor Juozas Prunskis, Ph.D., a renowned, prolific writer, composed an invaluable forty-eight page booklet, derived solely from Jewish archives in Chicago, entitled *Lithuania's Jews and the Holocaust*. Therein one finds many instances of Lithuanian rescuers.

Unfortunately, once the printing was exhausted, no reprints followed. In Brazil, by 1985 Algis Mošinskis collected names of over 500 Lithuanian rescuers. Supplemented by researchers, D. Jasaitis and S. Binkienė, the list rose to a thousand. For the next two decades, hardly any more information found its way into print.

FR. WILLIAM WOLKOVICH-VALKAVIČIUS is the rector of St. George Parish in Norwood, Massachusetts. He is also the author of several books, including the most recently published *Lithuanian Religious Life in America*.

More recently, however, a volume appeared in Lithuania called *Gurevičiaus Srašai*, in which the researcher, after ten years of inquiry, tabulated a count of over 6,000 Lithuanian rescuers and over 10,000 of the saved. Furthermore, the Gaon Jewish Museum in Vilnius has published two illustrated volumes in an ongoing series of rescue testimonials in Lithuanian and English called *Gyvybę ir Duoną Nešančios Rankos – Hands Bringing Life and Bread*.

The Israel government in the early 1950s established a permanent memorial organization, Yad Vashem (address: P.O. Box 3477, 91034 Jerusalem, Israel), to collect material on all rescuers. When satisfactory evidence was found, the institute began granting a "Righteous Gentile" award. The list for Lithuanian rescuers is a major fount of information. By 1985, sixteen Lithuanians merited the honor. By 1994, the figure rose to 160, whose names appear in Nr. 46, 1994 of *Dienovidis*. Since then, the list has grown considerably higher. The Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. maintains a complete list.

Meanwhile, other data about these valiant rescuers remains scattered in various archives, such as the 3,000-volume Holocaust collection at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, and only in the past generation has information begun to emerge. Perhaps some scholar will soon write a thorough monograph in tribute to the rescuers. Here is a small sampling of such stories, set down in the chronological order of pertinent sources.



Naujienos, August 4-18, 1949

(Contains a long list of Lithuanians severely punished or killed)

(Cited in Prunskis, *Lithuania's Jews and the Holocaust*)

Farmer Zabolanskas, village of Papsniai, jailed for hiding Jews, was so harshly treated that he went out of his mind. The farm of Vaclovas Baguckas was confiscated. A certain Stelmokas, in whose house jewess Icakovienė and her son found shelter, was deported to Germany and murdered in the concentration camp near Stettin. A certain Kerza and his wife were executed. Three members of the Jablonskis family were executed. There follow the names of another fifteen who were executed. (p. 26)

Lietuviškoji Enciklopedija,
Vol. XXXVI (1969), p. 541

The article notes the extensive, noble efforts of Ona Šimaitė who organized a secret rescue network in Vilnius. In recognition of her endeavors, the Israel government eventually bestowed honorary citizenship on her.

The author names twenty other rescuers, including clergy such as Archbishop Mečislovas Reinys, and laity such as Jonas Kardelis, Director of Vital Statistics, who provided Jews with life-saving passports. In Kaunas, the pastor of St. Anthony Parish, Fr. J. Želvys, baptized (simulated presumably) many Jewish children so as to supply them with Baptismal certificates as tickets to safety and eventual freedom. Dr. B. Matulionis sent away his Jewish students to Austria to study. The pastor at Viduklė sheltered some 200 Jewish children in his church. When the Nazis came, the priest blocked the door and was shot to death as well as the youngsters.



Juozas Prunskis,
Lithuania's Jews and the Holocaust
(Chicago: 1969)

"Among others executed for hiding and trying to save Jews, we find ... [13 names listed, along with three unnamed Lithuanians]." (p. 26)

"A number of Lithuanians were hanged at the cathedral square in Kaunas with placards announcing the reason for the execution affixed to their bodies: 'For saving Jews.' (p. 27)

"In November, 1943, the [Nazi] SS unit detected that Leonas Jonušas, owner of land at Medininkai, Telšiai district, was hiding Naftallin, daughter of a Jew, together with her small daughter. The Nazis arrested Jonušas, along with his two sons and one daughter, beat them severely and locked them in the cellar of the Tryškiai school.... In the city of Pilviškiai, Juozas Matulaitis housed about 10 Jews, women and children in the cellar of his house. The neighborhood women brought food for the rescued Jews. In the village of Parausiai, farmer Juozas Narjauskas hid four Jewish women. The Nazis detected them and had the Jewish women and the Narjauskas family deported to Germany. Nobody ever saw them again. Vytautas Juodka, 57, a resident of Vilnius, was arrested on December 12, 1941, because the Nazis found two Jewish women, Miriam and Izabella Podselver, who had escaped from the ghetto, hiding in his

house. Juodka, together with these women, were murdered. (p. 28)

Draugas, September 30, 1974

(Excerpts from letter-to-the-editor from rescued Jewish woman, nee S. Grodnikaitė)

“When I was arrested by the Nazis and placed in the Lukiškis prison basement in Vilnius, and then became ill, I was bloated from starvation and stricken with fever..., the family of Vanda and Antanas Geniotis, now living in Chicago, came to my aid. Knowing my condition, they began bringing me food and making visits. How they sneaked past the guards, I have no idea. Because of their help, I stayed alive...”

“Then Aleksandras Lileikis, who served in [Police] Security came to my aid. I was brought to his office. Thanks mostly to his efforts and the efforts of Mr. Genys, I was recognized as a Lithuanian and was released from prison under a surname different from mine.”

“Having gone to A. Lileikis, I obtained some money from him for my departure to Radviliškis...” [at Radviliškis] I was introduced to the secondary school chaplain, Fr. Klemensas Razminas, through whose intervention asylum was found for me with a farmer ten kilometers outside the city.”

“Today, having come to the United States after so many years, I am truly grateful to all those people who showed such heart and humanity in helping me and at the same time risking their lives.”
“Other Lithuanians helped not just me, but many others. To all of them belong my sincerest thanks.”

Avraham Tory,

Surviving the Holocaust:

The Kovno [Kaunas] Ghetto Diary

(Harvard University Press, 1990)

Entry of July 30, 1942 (p. 118) – “Today I received a letter from a person living in a nearby hamlet. He cries for help. He has been hiding for a long time; together with his family; they are hidden in a barn.”

Entry of August 2, 1942 (p. 120) – “Two sisters have arrived in the Ghetto from Skaudvilė. They were saved by a miracle. Until now they have been hiding in peasant houses.”

Entry of December 1, 1942 (p. 157) – “A Jewish woman who has been hiding in a peasant’s stable since the winter of 1941 with her husband – both

from the village of Vidiškai – came into the Ghetto with a work group that had been working in town.”

Atgimimas,

Nos. 43, 45, 48, 49, 1991

(Selection of 87 examples of various rescuers based on data in extensive archives of Dr. Kazys Pempkus, testifying to the widespread aid given by Lithuanians)

In the Alytus area, agronomist Alfonsas Našliūnas organized a network of rescuers during the entire Nazi occupation. In particular he sheltered the Jew - Belkinaitė, using falsified documents to pass her off as his daughter.

In the Daugiai area, Doškūnai villagers hid and sheltered three Jews: Levin, Somkė, and his wife.

In the Seirijai area, Rev. Dr. Liutkevičius, during the entire Nazi occupation, hid and protected Jews who had fled from the ghetto.

In the Stakliškė area, a certain Bekešius hid and protected in his home Raškė Susterytė and four members of her family. The Gestapo did a search of the home, looking for sequestered Jews. One of the sheltered Jews threw a hand grenade at the police officials, but very much unsuccessfully. He fatally wounded the daughter of Bekešius.

In the Vabalninkai area, Jonas Aukštikalnis and Juozas Slavinskas, from the village of Radžgaliai hid and protected Sacharaitė [only maiden surname known] and her husband, both of whom had escaped from the ghetto in Pasvalis.

In Kaunas, Attorney Katilius hid and protected inhabitant Susteraitė [only maiden surname known] and her young son. Rescued from the Kaunas ghetto, together with Susteraitė were Susteris and Sachnovskis. After the second Bolshevik occupation, they withdrew to Germany where they live in Furst, Bahnhof str., Nr. 4.

Vytautas Moras hid and protected in his home Kaunas ghetto escapees: Elijas Boikovičius, his wife, and their two young children, Arikas and Rubinas.

Hard-labor Kaunas prison official, Capt. Ignas Vylius, taking advantage of his position, in autumn of 1941, released from Kaunas 30 Jewish prisoners who had been brought here by Gestapo officials after escaping from the Kaunas ghetto. These prisoners faced the death penalty. Among the escapees were: Golcbergas, Freimanas, Hodosas, and others.

Orchestra members of the Kaunas National Opera hid and protected a former colleague, concert-

master Dr. Berkovičius, who had escaped from the Kaunas ghetto.

Palčiauskas, the mayor of Kaunas, hid and protected in his home Kaunas ghetto escapees: surgeon Zacharinas and engineer Stonis' wife.

Several young Jews found haven in the Kaunas priests' seminary, where they were enrolled as "clerics."

For aiding Jews, Mingaila, a resident of Viliampolė, was arrested by the Gestapo and along with some Jews was shot to death.

At Jonava, the forest ranger of Martiškiai hid two Jewish families. When the Germans discovered this, they shot to death the forester and the Jews.

At Lapė, for hiding and protecting Jews, Marijonas Petrošius, in Žemaitkiemis, was arrested and imprisoned by the Gestapo, and the buildings on his farm were burned down.



Aleksandras Shtromas,

"In Defense of a Nation Falsely Singled Out: A Lithuanian Jew Puts Wartime Record Straight,"

The Los Angeles Times,

reprinted in *The Observer*,

November/December, 1991.

... many Lithuanians ... nobly and self-sacrificially tried to save their Jewish compatriots from extinction during the Nazi occupation. Having escaped from the Nazi death camp near Kaunas, I, for example, was hidden by the family of a bookkeeper, Antanas Macenavičius, who kept me in his home, shared with me the family's meager wartime rations, and did so knowing pretty well that, if found out, he, his wife and daughter would be executed together with him. My sister, her husband, and mother-in-law were hidden in a similar fashion by a factory foreman, a father of two children, Vytautas Rinkevičius. And my cousin lived as a foster daughter with the mother of four children whose husband, a Lithuanian general, had been executed by the Soviets. Every Jewish family in Lithuania whose relatives survived the Nazis can tell similar stories. The Catholic clergy was the pioneering and organizing force in the efforts to save Jewish lives. Many Catholic priests sheltered and fed Jews who were running for their lives, and when there were too many to hide on church property, distributed them among parishioners who faithfully followed the priest's directions. The priests of the parish where my saviors – I.e., the

Macenavičius lived, knew about my Jewish identity, and in order to provide me with a more reliable cover, used me as an altar boy. Only with the help of a few priests was the woman who sheltered my cousin able to afford to keep her more or less adequately fed and dressed."

N.B. On March 7, 1989, Professor Shtromas visited this author at Norwood, Massachusetts. Even after a half century, with grateful nostalgia, he began to recite the Latin responses of the Catholic Mass that he had learned as a subterfuge.



Draugas

Feb. 16, 1994.

(Story about Dr. Benjaminas Zakarinas)

"Father [Rev. Simonas Morkūnas], help! Tomorrow my wife and I will be annihilated. Lend me 2,000 marks to give to the [Nazi] guard who promised the two of us that he would let us out of the ghetto to escape. I gave him the aforementioned sum ... Forget the loan. It's a gift. My gift saved their lives. After the war, they returned to Lithuania."

"In the aforementioned hospital [Kaunas Communicable Diseases Hosp.], there was a young Jewish woman of about 20 years of age in hiding. One morning she came to me, expressing a desire to return to the ghetto because she was bored hiding in the hospital. After a long conversation, I succeeded in convincing her not to return to the ghetto."

"I provided passports of deceased people to Jews so they could escape. I assisted Jews in the ghetto with food."

(Reminiscences of Msgr. Simonas Morkūnas)



Draugas, Feb. 18, 1995

(Story about eleven Lithuanian recipients of "Righteous Gentile" medals)

The "Righteous Gentile" recognition, originated in 1967, was set for various districts of Lithuania at the hands of Tova Herzl, Extraordinary Deputy to Lithuania.



Boston Globe, (Magazine Section),

April 30, 1995

(Story about rescued children:

Ellen Zitkin and Zvi Griliches)

"After the Germans invaded Lithuania in 1941, the family was forced into a ghetto. Zitkin, then 7 years old, was removed and hidden in an orphan-

age. Her name was changed to protect her from being identified as Jewish.” “Zvil Griliches, as a Jewish boy who had been circumcised, was much harder to hide.”

❧
Knights of Lithuania
Lithuanian Affairs Newsletter

April, 1996
(Rescuers recognized)

“Nine ‘rescuers’ honored in Kaunas” - In an emotional ceremony held in Kaunas City Hall on March 26, Israel’s Yad Vashem Museum paid tribute to Lithuanians who rescued Jews at great risk to their own lives during the Nazi occupation. The Israel ambassador to the Baltics, Tova Herzl, spoke at the ceremony which was attended by the “rescuers,” their families and members of Lithuania’s small Jewish community.

(Taken from the *BALTIC TIMES*)

❧
Draugas,
May 29, 1998

(Story about unexpected reunion of rescuer
and the rescued)

“Jews Honored Natives of Šiauliai” - description of multiple rescue efforts in Šiauliai by attorney K. Venclauskis, his wife Stanislova, and their daughters: Danutė and Grožvylė. One such rescued Jew, Aaron Frenkel, eventually came to Waterbury, Connecticut, and opened a meat market, now operated by his son, Sid. Rescuers Danutė and her mother also eventually immigrated to the United States, and found themselves in Waterbury. One day by happenstance, Danutė paid a visit to the market where Aaron recognized them! Imagine the emotional meeting that renewed ties of friendship. When Danutė observed her 95th birthday, the Jewish Federation of Waterbury arranged an impressive banquet to honor her. This article records the festivity as follows:

“At the entrance to the hall, leaflets in English and Lithuanian were distributed, describing the destruction of Jews, all the horrors of the Holocaust, and the efforts of Lithuanians to rescue Jews. It was a pleasure to hear Lithuanian spoken by Jews chatting among themselves. ... Afra Farhi, a representative of the Israel Consulate who had come from New York, read a touching speech. She announced that the government of Israel was giving the highest order, up to now not yet ever awarded to a non-Jew, for heroism shown by Danutė in res-

cuing hundreds of Jews during the Holocaust years. Furthermore, she [Afra Farhi] gave a \$1,000 gift, adding that Danutė will receive a monthly \$400 pension for the rest of her life.”

❧
Draugas, April 20, 1999
(Humanitarian Awards)

“Recognition Given to Lithuanians Who Aided Jews During the War” - news story stemming from the *Baltic News Service*, describes President Valdas Adamkus bestowing humanitarian awards for rescuers of those in life-threatening conditions. Recipients included: a monk, Fr. Stanislaus, and 35 others.

❧
Boston College Magazine
Summer, 1999

(Story about artist and writer, Samuel Bak)

“... when the Russian army fought its way into the city [Vilnius or ViIna], young [Samuel] Bak and his mother were among the 200 survivors, having escaped from a work camp and been hidden at various times by Benedictine nuns.”

❧
Tėviškės Žiburiai,
June 15, 1999

(Recollections of youth by Giedrė Milukaitis who
lived in Kaunas during Nazi occupation)

“Quietly knocking on a door, we enter the neighbor’s kitchen where there is a pile of baked muffins, while more are baking. I ask my mother why there is such a quantity of tasty goods. Very softly she whispers in my ear, ‘They are for Jews, my child, but don’t tell anyone. Hitler wants to burn them alive. People are helping them...’”

On one occasion Giedrė noticed an unfamiliar color in the cutlets her mother was baking. “Mama, why are those cutlets of such a strange color? ‘They are made from beef only. Jews don’t eat pork. I bake cutlets for those unfortunate ones.’”

“Our neighbor Marcinkus must have been one of the organizers in the work of rescuing Jews. People of the surrounding area helped out, preparing food, and taking turns, a day at a time, hiding Jews or their children at one’s home. What struck me most was the fact that among the neighbors there was not a single traitor.”

These are but a few of the many stories
receiving belated recognition. ♦

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

From the Media

Russian Nuclear Weapons Closer to Lithuania Than Wanted

Mel Huang, of the *Central Europe Review* web magazine, reported on the latest Russian maneuvers — placing tactical nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad close to the Baltics in early January 2001. Here follow excerpts from his report, "Not in Our Backyard" of Jan. 15th.

When the Washington Times published a report suggesting that Russia has moved tactical nuclear weapons into Kaliningrad, naturally the Baltic states — especially Lithuania, which shares a border with Russia's Baltic exclave — were especially concerned.

This is probably the worst "Not-In-My-Back-Yard" (NIMBY) situation possible for the Baltic states, as the alleged deployment of the tactical arm — which, if the reported specific armament details are true — would directly threaten parts of Poland and Lithuania. Reuters quoted another U.S. official with a dire and frightening suggestion: "If you are worried about deterrence and your forces are deteriorating, nukes do wonders for your self-confidence."

The Balts React

Politicians and national defense officials in all three Baltic countries reacted at first with extreme caution, and many appeared stunned by the news.

Analysts quickly came up with several scenarios that could have led to the nukes being moved in, ranging from Governor Yegorov asserting his new office and the strength of the military in Kaliningrad to Moscow's continual reliance on tactical nuclear weapons as they restructure the military.

Former Estonian Defense Forces Chief-of-Staff Major General Ants Laaneots, now an instructor at the Baltic Defense College, linked the move to Russian President Putin's new military doctrine on first-use of nuclear weapons. Some even suggested this was Moscow's welcoming gift for incoming U.S. President George W. Bush. However, one of

the most likely scenarios for the move appears to be the continuous campaign by Moscow to derail the NATO integration aspirations of the Baltic states.

Coincidentally, the defense ministers of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland met in Krakow the Sunday after the report surfaced to attend a seminar on Baltic integration into NATO. However, the reports of the nuclear deployment obviously factored into the talks, and the consensus reaction focused on the need for verification. Defense ministers Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis of Latvia, Linas Linkevičius of Lithuania, and others joined the Polish call for an international inspection team to check the nuclear status of the neighboring exclave.

However, a vast majority of officials chose to remain cautious in their response, making little or no comment

The U.S. Congress Reacts

On Capitol Hill in Washington, the report evoked memories of the Cold War, as members of the U.S. Congress voiced very strong opinions on the possible nuclear build-up in Kaliningrad. Two issues dear to Washington — Russian military build-up and nuclear proliferation — returned in one stroke, invoking some of the strongest language offered by prominent congressmen about Kaliningrad, the Baltic Sea region and the NATO aspirations of the Baltic states.

The strongest of all comments came from the outgoing chairman of the International Relations Committee, Representative Benjamin Gilman (R-NY). Gilman told the Washington Times, "If Russia has, in fact, transferred tactical nuclear weapons to Kaliningrad, we would have to view that as an alarming development that threatens the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe."

Most significantly for the Baltics, Gilman said in the same statement, "These reports underscore the need to promptly enlarge the NATO alliance to include the previously captive nations of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia." Gilman, always a Baltics sup-

porter during his many years in Congress, issued this sharp statement at a time when others would argue for caution in US policy towards the Baltic states.

If the intended outcome of the reported move was to derail the NATO aspirations of the Baltic states, especially in the eyes of the 16 NATO capitals, Representative Gilman provided a solid answer in rebuff.

Other prominent congressmen also commented on the report of the Kaliningrad nuclear build-up. Representative Curt Weldon (R-PA) — best known for his work to help free American Edmund Pope from his Russian prison sentence — told the Washington Times that international inspection in Kaliningrad, as suggested also by Poland and the Baltic states, should be a "minimum requirement," adding that Russia "should have nothing to hide."

It is clear that, if the report is true and the move is an attempt to sway momentum away from Baltic integration into NATO, it may be backfiring — especially in Washington, where many Cold War warriors remain in prominent offices and many more are returning with the incoming Bush administration.

What Next?

It is hard to predict what will happen next, as the United States is embroiled in the difficult process of transition between administrations. Cabinet members will still need to be confirmed, while many top national security-related officials will still need to be appointed.

On the issue of missile defense there have been enough indications that relations with Russia will be difficult in the coming years — although the implications and effects of U.S.-Russian relations on the Baltics will be much harder to assess until the actions of the Bush administration towards the Baltic countries become apparent. That could still be months away.

In any case, the calls for a verification process will continue from Capitol Hill, Warsaw, Vilnius, Riga, Tallinn and many other capitals. However, like in any realistic scenario, if any verification proceeds, there is absolutely no chance Russia would be caught red-handed in Kaliningrad.

What is necessary is an enforceable agreement on international or multi-national monitoring, along the lines of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. Though the CFE, including its

monitoring provisions, is weak and seriously flawed — especially towards the Baltics — it does build some mutual trust in the region. Kaliningrad is always viewed suspiciously by many for its ambiguous post-Cold War role and development, and this report does nothing to soothe the nerves of neighboring countries.

Russian military build-up and nuclear proliferation will always be headline-making issues in Washington. The longer suspicion looms on this issue, the more congressmen will be likely to make strong statements of alarm at the build-up and, in turn, statements of support for the Baltics.

If the election of George W Bush was a shot in the arm for Cold War warriors, this report is the Viagra. [sic] ♦

Lithuanian Support for

VILNIUS, Jan 3, BNS - The number of Lithuanians who want Lithuania to join NATO is increasing rapidly, according to a public opinion survey ordered by the Lithuanian foreign ministry.

The survey, performed in December by the SIC Rinkos Tyrimai pollster, shows that 48.9 percent of Lithuanian residents approve of Lithuania's goal to become a NATO member.

The Lithuanian foreign ministry reports that compared to three earlier public opinion surveys conducted in 2000, the number of those who approve NATO membership is up sharply.

According to a January 21-30, 2000 survey by the Baltijos Tyrimai polling firm, 38 percent of Lithuanian residents approved of membership in the North Atlantic alliance. A survey by SIC Rinkos Tyrimai in August indicated 42.2 percent support.

NATO membership was mostly supported by men, people 15-29 years old, ethnic Lithuanians, people with higher education diplomas, students, and people whose monthly income per member of household was 100 USD or higher.

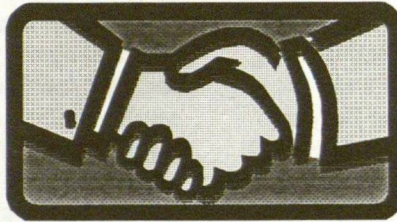
Among those not approving of NATO membership were 30-39 year olds, ethnic Russians and people with the lowest incomes.

The highest number of undecided was among ethnic Poles, women, pensioners and the unemployed. ↗

US-Baltic States Partnership Charter Celebrates Third Year

VILNIUS, Jan 16, BNS - According to a statement by the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry's press service, in signing the Partnership Charter on January 16, 1998, the three Baltic presidents and the U.S. president began a new era in cooperation between the U.S., Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

The charter confirmed the common goal of all partners to work together and join forces for setting the stage for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia's entry



into European and trans-Atlantic political, economic, and security institutions, including NATO.

The U.S.-Baltic States Partnership Charter witnesses to U.S. concern for the Baltic region and expresses the vision of an indivisible

and free Europe, the press release stated. The U.S. has repeatedly expressed support for the Baltic States' membership in NATO.

During the signing ceremony, former president Clinton said, "The door to NATO is and will remain open to every partner nation, and the U.S. is determined to create the preconditions by which Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania will one day cross its threshold."

The Lithuanian Foreign Ministry is hoping that the newly-elected U.S. president, George W. Bush, who has promised to push allies in Europe to continue the enlargement process in 2002, will continue to render support to Lithuanian efforts to join the alliance, that he will continue U.S. policy regarding the Baltic States, and that he will strengthen and deepen the partnership.

Over the three years since the signing of the charter, the U.S. and Lithuania have regularly held bilateral meetings on security and economic issues. One of the major aims of the security consultations is to strengthen Lithuanian national defense and prepare the country for NATO membership by creating modern and effective military forces up to NATO standards.

The US has allocated 9 million USD for doing just that in Lithuania in 2001.

A Partnership Commission, called for in the charter and led by the nations' foreign ministers, has become an important forum for consultations between the U.S. and the Baltic States. The fourth annual meeting of the Partnership Commission is scheduled to be held in Vilnius next summer.

The press release stated that in the spirit of the Partnership Charter with the U.S., Lithuania will continue to prepare for NATO membership and to cooperate with the U.S., Poland, Baltic and other states in the region, expanding friendly relations and encouraging mutually beneficial economic ties, thus assuring security and stability in the region. ♦

NATO Membership Up Sharply

The director of SIC Rinkos Tyrimai, Mindaugas Degutis, told BNS the difference in results for the two surveys were due to the different way the questions were phrased.

In November informants were asked their opinion on Lithuania's becoming a NATO member and were given several alternative answers.

In December they were asked how they would vote in a referendum and were only given the possibility to vote for or against.

"It's possible that those who harbor doubts or disapprove NATO membership might vote for membership in a referendum," Degutis said.

Petras Zapolskas, director of the Lithuanian foreign ministry's information and culture department, told BNS the growth of public support for NATO over November and December could have been caused by important international meetings and "efforts to inform the Lithuanian public about NATO."

A draft resolution, which named Lithuania as a potential NATO member, was deliberated at a session of the NATO parliamentary assembly held in Berlin in November. There was also much discussion about Lithuania's NATO candidacy in the last session of the Baltic Assembly, held in Vilnius in December. ♦

Vilnius' Jewish Character To Be Restored

VILNIUS, Jan 1, BNS - The Wall Street Journal covered plans to restore the historic Jewish quarter in Vilnius, Lithuania, and to the stumbling blocks along the way.

The *Journal's* Baltic correspondent Benjamin Smith took a walk through the winding streets of Vilnius' Old Town, once upon a time the seat of a thriving Yiddish culture, with signer of the Lithuanian 1990 Act of Independence, former parliamentarian and Lithuanian Jew Emanuelis Zingeris.

The *Wall Street Journal's European Edition* noted that around half of Vilnius residents were Jews at the beginning of the century, but that the majority were murdered by the Nazis, and the former Jewish residential "quarter" (Jews lived throughout the city without restriction, but there were areas of denser population, including the area around the Great Synagogue in the Old Town. - BNS) was razed during World War II and later when the Soviet occupation began.

Zingeris, who, according to the *Journal*, restored the city's Jewish community and established the Lithuanian State Jewish Museum a decade ago, has launched an ambitious plan to rebuild Jewish Vilnius.

The daily reported that Zingeris dreams of restoring elements of Jewish life in Vilnius and wants to rebuild the Great Synagogue, which once stood

here.

However, Zingeris' ambitions are raising questions among other Jews and progressive Lithuanians, who say that building projects are not the best way to commemorate a lost past, and that the tiny Jewish community in the city, once called Jerusalem of the North across the Yiddish continuum in Europe, has no use for a large synagogue, the paper reported.

"It will cost a huge amount of money to rebuild the Jewish quarter, and there is probably no Jewish community here," the paper quoted Linas Vildziūnas, president of the Lithuanian Holocaust studies organization "House of Memory", as saying. He called it "just theatrical decoration."

Zingeris himself said his "greatest fear" is of building "a Jewish Disneyland."

Last summer, the Lithuanian parliament adopted a resolution called "For the Restoration of Characteristic Fragments of the Historical Ghetto of Vilnius in the Vilnius Old Town." The resolution calls for the Lithuanian government to draw up a program for restoring Jewish features of the city, to allocate an unspecified amount of land in the Old Town for restored fragments of historical Jewish life, and to organize an international search for investments needed to put the program into action. ♦

Pope Appoints Lithuanian Archbishop as Cardinal

VILNIUS, Jan 22, BNS - Pope John Paul selected archbishop of Vilnius, Audrys Juozas Bačkis, a cardinal on Sunday.

Bačkis, 63, is the second Lithuanian priest to be given the highest and most honorable title in the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church.

Vincentas Sladkevičius, who passed away last year, was named a cardinal in 1988.

Once formally invested in February, Bačkis will be eligible to participate in the conclave of cardinals for the next 17 years until he turns 80. The Lithuanian cardinal will be among those who will elect the next Pope from among themselves after the death of the Pontiff.

Bačkis was 18th out of the 37 new cardinals named by the Pope on Jan. 21st. The candidates were selected from over 4,000 bishops all over the

world.

Bačkis, who was conferred priesthood in Rome 40 years ago, will have to make another trip to the Italian capital to receive the cardinal's regalia – a red hat and a ring. The official admission into the College of Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church is scheduled for Feb. 21st.

Bačkis, raised in a family of a diplomat and a teacher, was the undersecretary of the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church in the Vatican between 1979 and 1989. In 1988, the Pope appointed him the head of the diplomatic mission of the Church in the Netherlands. Bačkis was conferred bishopric later that year.

After Lithuania restored its independence in March 1990, Bačkis was appointed archbishop of Vilnius on Dec. 24th 1991. ♦

Three International Events Planned in Vilnius

VILNIUS, Jan 27, BNS - Three large events are to take place in Vilnius this year where foreign heads of state and leaders of international organizations will attend.

The event marathon will begin with the *Dialogue of Civilizations Conference* in April, followed by a session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in May, and a conference on gender equality in June.

The international *Dialogue of Civilizations Conference*, April 23-26, will include Lithuanian president Valdas Adamkus, Polish president Aleksandr Kwasniewski, and UNESCO secretary-general Koichiro Matsuura among its distinguished guests. Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma has also said he will attend the event. Invitations to the conference have been sent out to 60 different countries. The meeting of intellectuals, public figures and artists will culminate in a joint declaration.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly's spring session will be held in Vilnius on May 27-31. Representatives from 43 different states and NATO secretary general George Robertson will attend. The NATO PA is made up of 214 parliamentarians from the 19 NATO member states and 73 parliamentarians from 17 associated states.

To start the summer, between June 15 and 17, Vilnius will host a conference called "Female and Male Possibilities and Democracy," organized by Lithuania and the Nordic states. Lithuanian president Valdas Adamkus and wife Alma are patrons of the event. Latvian president Vaira Vike-Freiburga, Polish first lady Jolanta Kwasniewska, and women and men from 12 other states will take part. This last conference will be the continuation of a forum held in Iceland in 1999, which was attended by former U.S. president Clinton and wife, current senator Hillary Clinton. Conference delegates were relayed greetings from the Lithuanian first lady as well as her invitation to organize another event in the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius. ♦

Vilnius Doesn't Laugh at Clinton Joke

VILNIUS, Jan 27, BNS - They're not laughing in the corridors of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry at certain remarks made, apparently in jest, by U.S. officials last week concerning skyjacking terrorists from Lithuania.

Last Saturday, the outgoing Clinton administration press secretary, Jake Siewert, briefed reporters on Bill Clinton's plans for his post-presidential future. Answering to rumors that the former president might sign on to several Hollywood deals, Siewert said U.S. citizen Bill Clinton might be tempted into a film about Lithuanian terrorists.

The press secretary laid out the plot for the Washington press corps: terrorists from Lithuania have high jacked Air Force One, and the U.S. president, held hostage, eventually secures promises of his release after forgiving Lithuanian debt to the U.S. of 3.2 billion dollars and making loan guarantees.

The Lithuanian daily *Lietuvos Rytas* reported on Saturday that Siewert had indicated Clinton was planning to more or less present this plot to his producer friend Steven Spielberg's film company. Spielberg has often spent the night in the White House during the Clinton presidency and is one of the Democratic Party's larger contributors.

"If that was supposed to be humor, it was a failure," the head of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry's Information and Culture Department, Petras Zapolskas, told BNS.

Zapolskas reported that officials at the Lithuanian embassy in Washington had relayed the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry's concern over "this kind of humor" to Siewert. Zapolskas also pointed out Lithuania has no foreign debt to the United States.

A half year ago the world's highest-paid actor, Mel Gibson, also made Lithuania the butt of a rather odd joke. He said he was afraid of "Lithuanians appearing armed with golf clubs who want to beat your brains out." ♦

Training for Military Cadets in Works

VILNIUS, Jan 9, BNS - The Lithuanian Military Academy and Vilnius University's Institute of International Relations and Political Science signed a four-year cooperation agreement in Vilnius on Jan. 16th. The agreement was signed by head of academy colonel Algis Vaičeliūnas and institute director Raimundas Lopata.

The Lithuanian Military Academy reported a new poli-sci bachelor program has already been drawn up, with studies to commence in fall 2001.

With Lithuania preparing to enter NATO, there is a need to train military cadets as international relations specialists for future careers within the Lithuanian defense network, who will be the best-qualified candidates for serving as defense attaches and for work in international organizations. The best students will later be able to pursue a master's degree in international relations as well as study in courses for captains.

The United States' West Point, England's Sandherst and the Danish Military Academies helped Institute faculty in designing the new course.

In the agreement, the Lithuanian Military Academy and Vilnius University's Institute of International Relations will work together to establish a Strategic Research Center, whose aim is to undertake strategic research of a fundamental and applied nature, provide professional expert aid in the sphere of defense policy, and train strategists.

There are preparations as well for a number of joint projects – organizing seminars, conferences, and carrying out academic research in the field of international relations. ♦

Lithuanian Home-Guard Celebrates 10th Anniversary

VILNIUS, Jan 16, BNS - Lithuanian defense volunteer forces, known as the "home-guard" in other countries, celebrated their 10th anniversary, the Defense Ministry has said.

The anniversary was marked by a solemn march in the central Cathedral Square and a celebration at the headquarters of the volunteer forces in Vilnius.

According to Lithuanian laws, volunteer forces are a component part of the country's army and embrace over 10,000 volunteer troops and more than 2,000 professional service soldiers as of this day.

Between the declaration of the Lithuanian independence on March 11 1990 and 1991, all defense

Lithuania To Host Another Session of "War Games"

VILNIUS, Jan 15, BNS - Lithuania is planning to host the international training session, "Amber Hope 2001", which will be attended by over 2,000 troops from 11 countries and civilian organizations, Lithuania's Defense Ministry said.

Commander of the Geležinis Vilkas motorized infantry brigade, Colonel Jonas Vytautas Zukas, has been appointed to head the international war games.

Amber Hope was first held in Lithuania in 1997. The training session, held once every two years, was first a trilateral activity of Lithuanian, Danish and Polish armed forces. Romanian and German troops joined the session in 1999.

The 2001 war games, to take place in Rukla and Pabradė training grounds on Aug. 28 - Sept. 6, will be attended by about 2,000 troops from Denmark, Estonia, Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States, Latvia, Poland, Lithuania, Finland, Sweden, Germany, and civilian organizations: the International Red Cross, the Lithuanian Red Cross, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the international police task force.

The Lithuanian Defense Ministry said that the main goals of the "Amber Hope 2001" was cooperation between NATO members and partner-states in the planning and implementation of joint peace keeping operations, improvement of interaction among armed forces of participating countries, and inclusion of international organizations into international war games. ♦

structures were formed on a voluntary basis and without legal regulation – people joined volunteer units in a number of the country's cities and districts.

In January 1991, the parliament adopted a law stipulating establishment of the Volunteer Defense Service, which was renamed Defense Volunteer Forces in spring 1998.

The main field of activities of volunteer forces is combat training based on principles of territorial defense and guerilla war. Volunteer troops participate in exercises in training grounds and unit centers. The forces are divided into 10 units and have two air squadrons. ♦

Lithuanian-American Community Chapters Celebrate Lithuanian Independence Day

February 16th and March 11th mark the days of the first independence of 1918 and the reestablishment of independence in 1990, respectively. It has been a Lithuanian-American Community chapter tradition to commemorate and now celebrate the independences fought and finally won by generations of Lithuanians on Lithuania's soil and here in the United States through their hard work and commitment to keep Lithuania alive.

Lithuanian-Americans and those interested in participating in these traditional commemorations can do so by attending any of the following listed, according to area, below. In some locations Independence Day celebrations are organized in cooperation with other Lithuanian-American organizations.

BOSTON REGION

Boston, MA: Sunday, February 11, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Peter Lithuanian R.C. Church, 50 West 6th Street, So. Boston, 10:30 a.m. Commemoration at Lithuanian Citizens Association Hall 368 W. Broadway, So. Boston, 1:00 p.m.

Brockton, MA: Sunday, February 18, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Casimir Lithuanian R.C. Church, 20 Webster St., Brockton, 10:30 a.m. Commemoration at St. Casimir Parish Hall, 12 noon, immediately following the Mass.

Cape Cod: Sunday, February 18, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at Our Lady of Victory R.C. Church, Centerville, MA, 12 noon. Commemoration at Craigville Conference Center Manor Building, 2:00 p.m.

Providence, RI: Sunday, February 18, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving

at St. Casimir Lithuanian R.C. Church, 350 Smith St., Providence, 10:00 a.m. Commemoration at St. Casimir Parish Hall immediately following the Mass.

Worcester, MA: Sunday, February 18, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Casimir Lithuanian R.C. Church, Waverly and Providence Sts., 10:00 a.m. Commemoration at St. Casimir Parish Hall immediately following the Mass.

CONNECTICUT REGION

Bridgeport, CT: Information not available at time of going to print.

Hartford, CT: Sunday, February 11, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at Holy Trinity Lithuanian R.C. Church, 41 Capitol Ave., 10:00 a.m. Commemoration at the Holy Trinity Parish Hall immediately following the Mass.

New Britain, CT: Sunday, Feb-

ruary 11, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Andrew Lithuanian R.C. Church, 378 Church St., New Britain, 11:00 a.m. Commemoration at St. Andrew Parish Hall, 1:00 p.m.

Eastern Connecticut: Sunday, February 11, 2001. Commemoration at Matulaitis Nursing Home, 10 Thuber Rd., Putnam, CT, 2:00 p.m.

Waterbury, CT: Sunday, February 18, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Joseph Lithuanian R.C. Church, 46 Congress Ave., 11:00 a.m. Commemoration in the St. Joseph School Hall immediately following Mass.

FLORIDA REGION

Atlanta, GA: To be held third week in March, particulars not available at this time.

Daytona Beach, FL: Sunday, February 11, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at Prince of Peace

R.C. Church, Ormond Beach, FL, 2:30 p.m. Commemoration in parish hall immediately following the Mass.

Miami, FL: In process of being organized.

Palm Beach, FL: Sunday, February 4, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Jude R.C. Church Chapel, Tequesta, FL, 2:00 p.m. Friday, February 16, 2001 — Lithuanian Flag Raising Ceremony at Juno Beach City Hall, 10:00 a.m. Saturday, February 24, 2001 — Commemoration at Methodist Church Hall, 701 Ocean View Drive, Juno Beach, 2:00 p.m.

St. Petersburg, FL: Saturday, February 17, 2001. Commemoration at the Lithuanian Club, 2:00 p.m. Sunday, February 18, 2001, Mass of Thanksgiving at Holy Name of Jesus Church, Gulfport, FL, 1:00 p.m.

Sunny Hills, FL: Sunday, February 18, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Theresa R.C. Church, Sunny Hills Blvd., 11:00 a.m. Commemoration at St. Theresa Parish Auditorium, 3:00 p.m.

MICHIGAN REGION

Detroit, MI: Sunday, February 11, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at Divine Providence Lithuanian R.C. Church, 25335 W. Nine Mile Road, Southfield, MI, 10:30 a.m. Commemoration at the parish hall immediately following the Mass. (Organized by Detroit Lithuanian-American Organizations Center)

Grand Rapids, MI: Sunday, February 25, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at Sts. Peter and

Paul Lithuanian R.C. Church, Myrtle and Quarry Sts., 9:30 a.m. Commemoration at Sts. Peter and Paul Parish Hall immediately following the Mass.

NEW YORK REGION

Long Island, Manhattan, Queens: Sunday, February 18, 2001. Commemoration at Lithuanian Cultural Center (Židiny) 341 Highland Blvd., Brooklyn, NY, 2:00 p.m.

Rochester, NY: Sunday, March 11, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. George Lithuanian R.C. Church, 545 Hudson Ave., Rochester, 10:30 a.m. Commemoration at the parish hall at 12:00 noon.



OHIO REGION

Cincinnati, OH: Sunday, February 25, 2001. Commemoration at Highland Meadows Clubhouse, 1A Highland Meadows Drive, Highland Heights, KY, 41076 2:00 p.m.

Cleveland, OH: Saturday, February 17, 2001. Celebration at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Lithuanian Parish, 18022 Neff Rd., Cleveland, 6:30 p.m. Sunday, February 18, 2001 — laying

of wreath at Lithuanian Wayside Cross and Mass of Thanksgiving at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, 9:45 a.m. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. George Lithuanian R.C. Church, 65th and Superior, Cleveland, 10:30 a.m.

SOUTHEAST REGION

Baltimore, MD: Sunday, February 18, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Alphonsus Lithuanian R.C. Church, 114 W. Saratoga St. at Park Ave., Baltimore, 8:30 a.m. Commemoration at Lithuanian Hall, 851-853 Hollis St., Baltimore, 2:00 p.m.

Elizabeth, NJ: Sunday, February 25, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at Sts. Peter and Paul Lithuanian R.C. Church, 211 Ripley Place, Elizabeth, 11:00 a.m. Commemoration at the parish hall at 12 noon.

Newark, NJ: Commemoration with Elizabeth Chapter.

Philadelphia, PA: Sunday, February 18, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Andrew Lithuanian R.C. Church, 19th and Wallace Sts., Philadelphia, 10:30 a.m. Commemoration at the Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia (Richmond Area), 2:00 p.m.

Scranton, PA: Saturday, February 17, 2001. Lithuanian flag raising ceremony Scranton City Hall at 10:00 a.m. During the month of February, all Sunday Mass Homilies will focus on Lithuania — St. Joseph Lithuanian R.C. Church, Main and Green Ridge Streets, Scranton.

Washington, DC: Sunday, Feb-

ruary 18, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Matthew R.C. Cathedral at 10:00 a.m. Commemoration at Latvian Hall, 415 Hurley Ave., Rockville, MD, 2:00 p.m.

MIDWESTERN REGION

Brighton Park (Chicago), IL: Sunday, February 18, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at Immaculate Conception Lithuanian R.C. Church, 4420 So. Fairfield Ave., Brighton Park, Chicago, IL, 10:30 a.m. Commemoration at the school hall immediately following the Mass.

Cicero IL: Sunday, February 11, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Anthony Lithuanian R.C. Church, 1515 So. 50th Ave., Cicero, 9:00 a.m. Commemoration at the parish hall immediately following the Mass.

Chicago, IL: Sunday, February 11, 2001. Commemoration at VFW Hall with Lithuanian-American Council and Knights of Lithuania, 6880 Hendricks, Merrillville, IN, 1:00 p.m.

East St. Louis, IL: Sunday, March 4, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at Immaculate Conception Lithuanian R.C. Church, 1509 Baugh Ave., East St. Louis, 10:30 a.m. Commemoration at the parish hall immediately following the Mass.

Indianapolis, IN: End of February or beginning of March. Latvian Community Center, 1008 West 64th St., Indianapolis. For information, please call Inga Narijauskaitė at 317-569-1080.

Lemont, IL: Sunday, February 18, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving

Blessed Matulaitis Mission — Lithuanian World Center, Lemont, IL, 11:00 a.m. Commemoration in main auditorium immediately following the Mass.

Waukegan, IL: Sunday, February 25, 2001. Commemoration at Libertyville Civic Center, 135 West Church Street, Libertyville, IL, 2:30 p.m.

Minnesota: Sunday, February 18, 2001. Twin Cities Area — Commemoration at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Roseville, MN, 6 p.m.

WESTERN REGION

Arizona: Sunday, February 11, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Elizabeth Seton R.C. Church, 9728 Palmeras Dr., Sun City, AZ, 1:15 p.m. Commemoration at the parish hall immediately following the Mass.

Los Angeles, CA: Sunday, February 18, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Casimir Lithuanian R. C. Church, 2716 St. George St., 10:30 a.m. Commemoration at the parish hall at 12:15 p.m.

Portland, OR: Saturday, February 17, 2001. Commemoration at the Latvian Hall, 5500 SW Dosch St., Portland, 3:30 p.m.

San Diego, CA: Sunday, March 4, 2001. Commemoration at Oceanside Citizens Center, San Diego, 1:30 p.m.

San Francisco, CA: Sunday, February 25, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at Immaculate Conception Church, 215 Silliman St., San Francisco, 12:30 p.m. Commemoration at the parish hall immediately following the Mass.

Seattle, WA: Saturday, February 10, 2001. Commemoration at the Latvian Center, 11710 Third Ave. NE, Seattle, 4:30 p.m.

INDEPENDENT CHAPTERS

(not within any of the above regions)

Colorado: Saturday, February 24, 2001. Mass and Commemoration at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel R.C. Church, 34th and Navajo Streets, Denver, 2:00 p.m.

Kansas City, KS: Sunday, March 4, 2001. Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Cyril Church, 44 N. Mill, Kansas City, 11:00 a.m. Program to follow in church hall.

Omaha, NE: Sunday, February 11, 2001. Commemoration at St. Anthony Church Hall, 32nd and T Streets, Omaha, 11:00 a.m.

Houston, TX: Sunday, March 4, 2001. Commemoration at Holy Cross Lutheran Church Hall, 7901 Westview Road (at Wirt Road), Houston, 2:00 p.m. ♦

If you cannot attend any of the commemorations listed, but would like to donate to the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc., please make your check payable and send it to:

The Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

c/o Ramas Pliura, treas.

1927 West Boulevard.

Racine, WI 53403

R e f l e c t i o n s

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Reflecting Upon Who We Are

During World War II, when Lithuanians ran from their homeland for fear they would be imprisoned, deported or killed, many writers and poets were among this large group.

They were all in exile. Many thought they would return after the War. Others resigned themselves to the inevitable hold and power of Soviet dominance on their country. In their writing, poets expressed the thoughts and soulful reflections of their uncertain future.

Vladas Šlaitas wrote of what exiles felt as a whole about their state of being during the transitional period between the War and final settlement.

Worst Punishment

If you want to punish a man
beyond what he can stand,
don't shoot him,
don't hang him,
don't lock him for life in a cell.

Send him away; turn
his homeland to heaps of ashes, flood the green
fields with blood-red brine.
Exile him. Then thousands of eyes,
knife-sharp and strange, will shoot him;
each day unfamiliar trees will hang him;
strange houses and other ways of life
will be his prison to the end of his days.

If you want to punish a man,
banish him; let him walk day by day
in the shadows of strange homes
until his feelings run dry
and his veins grow parched
and all that is left of a man is a shadow.

You want to torture a man to death —
Exile him.

As time went on, hope of returning to their homeland ran out for many. When Lithuania re-established its independence in 1990, those who had survived the many years of exile returned to their homeland to visit, in some cases to live.

Juliija Švabaitė Gylienė expresses her thoughts on her visit to Vilnius.

By The Cathedral Bell Square

I returned. And observed.
And touched with my hand.
I, a thief, one of the poor, who feeds on the bread
of strangers —
O my Vilnius.

Bloody and wooden Vilnius,
betrayed Vilnius —
redeemed not by me,
suffered not by me,
(I swore, remember —
that my right hand should wither
if I forsook you...)

Vilnius of the beggars,
Vilnius of the guards,
Vilnius of grand dukes —
I brought nothing to show you,
but you remembered me...

It is said that God works in mysterious ways. There is a reason for Lithuania suffering so much over the centuries. The suffering brought about strength in character, pride in heritage, deep belief in God, intense love for family, and loyalty to one's country. Each of us holds the history of our country within our very souls. Who are we? We are "Lithuania" — no matter where we live. ♦

RASA ARDYS-JUŠKA is the editor of BRIDGES. "Worst Punishment" was translated by Demie Jonaitis. "By The Cathedral Square" was translated by Aušra Gylytė Karkienė. Both poems and additional Lithuanian-American literature are found in Lithuanian Writers in the West, edited by Alina Skrupskelis, published by the Lithuanian Library Press, 1979.

Invitation To... **The 2001 JBANC Conference**

The Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC) invites you to attend our fourth Baltic Conference, "Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania: The Next Ten Years", from March 8-10, 2001, in the Washington, DC metropolitan area at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City.

The program will include visits and briefings with government officials and Members of Congress on Friday, March 9 and a full day of presentations and seminars on Saturday, March 10. A special economics seminar is also being planned for Thursday, March 8.

The conference offers a unique opportunity to participate in discussions on Baltic political, military, economic and regional developments. You will also be able to interact with leaders and specialists in government, media, business and academia.

- Special rates are available for those registering before February 15 for the conference.
- This early registration package of \$105 will include conference costs plus lunch and dinner on March 10.
- The regular conference registration fee of \$130 will apply to registrations submitted after February 15th.
- Lower rates for students are also available.

Call, fax, or e-mail JBANC for details or simply register before February 15 by mailing to JBANC your name, address, telephone number and e-mail, along with your \$105 check. Please make checks out to "JBANC Conference". Registration forms are also available upon request.

If you need a hotel reservation, you may take advantage of the special \$129 daily conference rate offered by the Hyatt Regency. Please call 1-800-233-1234 and mention that you will be attending the JBANC conference.

This offer is available only until February 15.

Please contact JBANC for more information.

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