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Lithuanian Women...Heroes to Remember...A Bishop's 200th Birthday Commemoration

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

Living in a household of men – at one point the dog, frog, goldfish and lizards were also of the male persuasion – it is not always smart to remind my loved ones that Lithuanian girls really do rule.

Article after article, story after story continues to bring out the strength of character, hopeful nature, and intelligent perseverance of the Lithuanian female. When I attended Lithuanian school, my favorite historical personage was Emilija Plateraitė. She was one of the leaders of the 1831 insurrection against Russia. She was extremely patriotic and had planned to participate in any confrontation with the Russians most of her life. She trained in the use of weapons and studied military strategy. Unfortunately, en route to Poland for another battle, Emilija became ill and died.

Her devotion to her country and the fact that she was undaunted by a social status which may have proved inflexible in another country, Emilija was truly a role model for independent-minded young women.

From there, I saw women in our Lithuanian-American communities giving of themselves joyously and concertedly and listened to stories told by my mother and others about women's heroic deeds. In our household, going to college or working towards a profession was never questioned. Being a woman would not be what may stifle our efforts – only our lack of drive or initiative.

May is the month we celebrate Mother's Day. We should also remember all Lithuanian women – wives, mothers, grandmothers, sisters, friends – who have helped shape Lithuanian culture in Lithuania and here in the U.S. They are the ones who sat by a spinning wheel while teaching their young ones the forbidden Lithuanian language in the 1800's. They ran with their children through war-torn countries and scavenged for food during World War II. They conquered the language barrier and helped support their families as immigrants and refugees. These same Lithuanian women, lovingly dressed in their national folk costumes, danced and sang for all to see that Lithuania was still alive.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

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Why is Lithuania Our "Mother Land"?

"Since earliest times, the Lithuanians have had a highly developed family structure. It is believed that in prehistoric times Lithuania had a matriarchal culture, that is, the right of inheritance went from mother to daughter.

A married woman, wife and mother was always held in high esteem and honor.

The married woman owned and managed the family's property. The welfare of the homestead and family was determined by her industriousness and talents. The Lithuanian woman's kindness, piety and loyalty to her country and family was widely lauded in copious folklore and honored in written literature."

*From Danute Brazytė-Bindokienė's **Lithuanian Customs and Traditions.**
Chicago, IL: Lithuanian World Community, Inc., 1989.*

On the cover:

The cover of Aldona Gricienė's 1991 children's book entitled, *Saulius, listen closely.* The illustrator is Algė Varnaitė.

From The Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

THE FACTS

on NATO and Lithuania

How important is NATO to Lithuania? When detailed discussions and long articles give the minute essentials, the following "Point by Point" summaries present the bottom line information you can discuss with your own Senator, Representative or local officials. Help guarantee their support for the NATO 2002 Enlargement Session.

POINT 1: Why is an Enlarged NATO Important to U.S. Security?

- The security of the United States rests on the security of Europe.
- NATO is the only effective defense alliance uniting North American and European democracies. It has a proven track record of success.
- NATO was successful in helping to win the Cold War and it is still needed to preserve peace, stability and security in Europe.
- A peaceful, stable and secure Europe must be democratic, subject to the rule of law, and driven by free market principles — traits that are encouraged by NATO membership.
- A viable NATO is the only real guarantor of a Europe, whole and free, and of United States security interests in Europe.
- A viable NATO must include all European aspirants that share with the current members the principles upon which the NATO alliance is based and that are able and willing to contribute to the resources of the Alliance.
- An enlarged NATO will result in an enlarged zone of peace and stability in Europe to the benefit of all countries, including Russia.

POINT 2: *Why Should NATO Be Enlarged in 2002?*

- After the fall of the Soviet Union, Europe has a unique opportunity to become free and undivided into competing national spheres of interest.
- The democracies of Central and East Europe, having once been victims of Communism, wish to take their rightful place among the nations of the Euroatlantic community and to safeguard their security through collective self-defense.
- The first wave of enlargement brought into NATO Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. The Alliance benefited and there were no adverse effects for Russia.
- Admission of additional new members who meet the standards of NATO membership would further increase the resources available to NATO.
- Admission of new members would enable NATO to better discharge its peacekeeping duties and maintain peace and stability in Europe.
- Failure to invite additional qualified members at the next opportunity, the NATO Summit of 2002, would lead to loss of momentum in the enlargement process and undermine the aspirations of the candidate countries to participate as full partners in the Euroatlantic community of nations.
- Failure to enlarge in 2002 would give aid and comfort to the forces of reaction in Europe, and lead to new political dividing lines being drawn across the map of Europe.

POINT 3: *Why Invite the Baltic Countries Into NATO in 2002?*

- There are currently nine countries, including the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, aspiring to NATO membership. Russia is especially opposed to membership for the Baltic countries, claiming that they are part of its sphere of influence.
- Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have been consigned during the 20th century to the Soviet Union's sphere of influence, once by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and then by the Yalta Agreement. This led to occupation and great loss of life and suffering for the Baltic peoples.
- Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are working democracies, with the rule of law and free market economies. They share the same traditions and principles as the existing NATO members.
- Lithuania and the other Baltic countries strongly aspire to join NATO and they have worked hard to comply with the requirements for membership.
- Baltic aspirants that qualify should be invited to membership in 2002, along with other qualified aspirants. Rejection of qualified Baltic countries because of Russian objections would consign them to a buffer zone, which Russia would be tempted to dominate. The result would disrupt European stability and injure U.S. security interests.

POINT 4: *Why Invite Lithuania Into NATO in 2002?*

- Lithuania is well on its way to satisfy the requirements for NATO membership, including military preparedness. It is ready to be invited to join NATO.
- Lithuania has been a responsible member of the international community of nations. It is cooperating closely with Poland, Latvia, Estonia and other countries in NATO peacekeeping operations in the Balkans. It conducts joint military programs with Poland and the other Baltic countries.
- Lithuania is committed by its own legislation to spend the equivalent of two percent of its GNP for defense by 2002. This level of spending is in keeping with NATO membership requirements.
- Lithuania would be expected to be a net contributor to the Alliance, and not be a net consumer of security.
- Lithuania has excellent relations with all its neighbors, including Russia. Lithuania does not represent a danger to Russia.
- Lithuania in NATO would serve to increase stability in Europe by voiding Russian claims to an exclusive sphere of influence in the Baltics.
- If Lithuania is the only Baltic country to be invited into NATO in 2002, that would give confidence to all three Baltic countries. Entry of even one Baltic applicant would set a precedent that Russian threats would not be accepted. ♦

Ask Your Congressman and Senator to Support Baltic Resolutions H. Con. Res. 116 and S. Con. Res. 34

Washington, DC (JBANC) – Congressman John Shimkus (R-IL) introduced House Concurrent Resolution 116 on April 26, recommending the integration of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The three Baltic countries, states the language, should be invited to join NATO in 2002.

H. Con. Res. 116 commends the Baltic countries [with showing] progress toward political and economic liberty and meeting the guidelines for prospective [NATO] members. Also, Baltic cooperation in the NATO-led multinational military force in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo is pointed out, along with the fact that all three countries are steadily in-

creasing their defense budget allocations and are adapting to NATO standards. Furthermore, Baltic NATO membership would ensure stability, freedom, and peace in the Baltic region and Europe as a whole.

As of May 2, there are 11 co-sponsors for H. Con. Res. 116: Representatives Robert A. Borski (D-PA); Christopher Cox (R-CA); Phil English (R-PA); Van Hilleary (R-TN); Joe Knollenberg (R-MI); Dennis Kucinich (D-OH); William O. Lipinski (D-IL); Michael R. McNulty (D-NY); Bob Schaffer (R-CO); Frank Wolf (R-VA); and Martin Frost (D-TX). All are members of the House Baltic Caucus except for Congressman Wolf. More co-sponsors are needed to secure successful passage of this

resolution.

If your Congressman has not yet signed onto HCR 116, please ask him/her to do so. Calls of support are also needed to the House International Relations Committee at: 202-225-5021.

Also on April 26, Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell (R-CO) introduced Senate Concurrent Resolution 34, which congratulates the Baltic nations on the tenth anniversary of the reestablishment of their full independence. S. Con. Res. 34 calls on the President of the United States to build upon the close and mutually beneficial relations with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania that have existed since the restoration of their full independence.

This measure has been co-sponsored by Senators Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and George Voinovich (R-OH).

Please ask your Senator to support S. Con. Res. 34. Messages of support to Congressman

Shimkus, Senator Campbell and to the co-sponsors are also needed.

Commenting for the record, Senator Campbell stated that, "In the ten years following the restoration of their full independence, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have demonstrated their commitment to democracy, human rights, and rule of law at home. At the same time, they have actively participated in a wide range of international structures, while pursuing further integration into European political, economic and security organizations."

The Colorado Senator added that "it is fitting that we introduce this resolution today, coinciding with (Latvian) President Vike-Freiberga's working visit to Washington." This occurred the same day as JBANC's 40th anniversary celebration

For additional information on getting in touch with Congress, please contact JBANC, the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121, or check your telephone catalogue's blue pages. ♦

NATO Updates...

From the Baltic News Service

U.S. Sen. Durbin Hopes U.S. President Supports Lithuania's NATO Bid

U.S. Senator Richard Durbin, an ardent supporter of Lithuania's Euro-Atlantic aims, believes that the position taken by U.S. President George W. Bush will have the most influence upon those undecided about NATO enlargement.

If the president indicates during the coming several months he believes further expansion of NATO to be the right thing to do, it will be easier to collect the necessary votes in support of the alliance's enlargement, the senator told Lithuania's *Respublika* daily newspaper.

Durbin was in Lithuania to participate in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly spring session scheduled in Vilnius starting May 27th. A total



of five U.S. senators and 10 members of the House of Representatives attended the five-day session.

In the interview given to *Respublika* on the eve of the session, Durbin said he was disappointed with former pres. George Bush's procrastination to recognize Lithuania's independence in 1990. The senator expressed a hope that his son will show more political will and understand the importance of NATO membership for the Baltic State's future.

In his opinion, the deciding factor that will persuade his colleagues to vote for Lithuania is the country's military preparedness and ability to take on membership obligations. (more)➤

Durbin noted that a number of skeptical senators would vote against to avoid Russia's critical reaction on the matter. He voiced certitude that there will be many politicians at the Congress who will sacrifice the idea of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia's NATO entry to the stress-free relations between the United States and Russia.

Lithuania, ranked among best-prepared candidates for NATO membership, expects an invitation to the alliance during its 2002 summit in Prague.

Democrat Durbin, who is of Lithuanian descent, heads the Baltic Caucus at the Senate, which embraces all senators supporting NATO

membership of the three Baltic Nations. Durbin has been decorated with the 2nd degree order of Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas for his merits to Lithuania. Washington, DC (JBANC)

The following Senators had indicated that they would join Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) as part of the Congressional delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly meeting in Vilnius on May 27-31: Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR); Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA); Senator George Voinovich (R-OH); Senator Robert Bennett (R-UT); and Senator Paul Sarbanes (D-MD) ◆

NATO PA Head Restates Commitment to Open-Door Policy

Rafael Estrella, president of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, stressed the alliance's commitment to stick to the open-door policy, expressing a hope that the three Baltic states would be invited to join the defense organization next year. The NATO Parliamentary Assembly's spring session is the first session held outside the boundaries of the 19-member organization.

In an interview distributed May 25th by the assembly's secretariat, Estrella said it was clear the alliance adhered to the policy that NATO should enlarge and keep its door open to new members. "Undoubtedly, this helps to reinforce security in the entire Euro-Atlantic region," he said.

Asked if Lithuania would be acceded NATO membership in spite of Russia's opposition, Estrella said he hoped this will happen. He said that the objections expressed during the first stage of the alliance's enlargement were ungrounded, adding that Russia's fears – legitimate, but unjustifiable – were basically a reflection of the past.

"NATO is not an instrument to enlarge any empire," said Estrella. The president of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly stressed the enlargement processes contributed to the deepening of relations between Russia and new members of the alliance.

"It is believable that Russia will understand the European vision, and NATO will dispel its doubts regarding the alliance's future enlargement," he added.

In his words, key items on the agenda at the Vilnius session will be the situation in South-eastern Europe, anti-missile defense, and European defense plans. ◆

Vilnius NATO PA Session: Large Accomplishment for Country

Lithuania's delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (PA) unanimously claimed the spring session held in Vilnius May 27th to the 31st is a great victory for Lithuania.

The Lithuanian delegation consists of five members of the Lithuanian parliament, or Seimas – members of the ruling coalition liberal Algirdas Gričius and social liberal Alvydas Sadeckas, members of the Social Democratic opposition Gediminas Kirkilas and Algirdas Kuncinas and opposition Conservative party MP Rasa Juknevičienė.

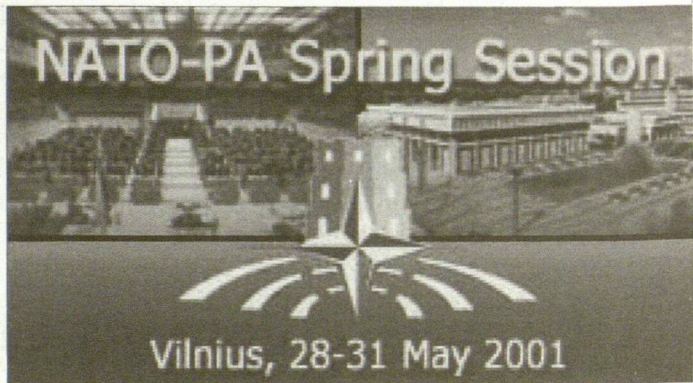
Juknevičienė said Lithuania was moving closer to the Alliance by hosting the conference in Vilnius. "The very fact the conference is happening in Vilnius is a step forward," she said.

Sadeckas said a glorious victory for Lithuania would be if public support for NATO membership grew after the NATO PA.

Their press conference devoted much attention to the Russian Duma's decision to boycott the NATO PA session in Vilnius. The Russian delegation of Duma deputies stayed away because of fears that their participation would be misinterpreted, as a tacit sign Russia no longer opposes NATO expansion.

Kirkilas said Russia's decision is no surprise. "On the other hand, it could benefit Lithuania, if we consider that the Russian delegation could have exerted influence on the position of certain countries," Kirkilas said.

Juknevičienė said there was no reason to blow the Russian boycott out of proportion. "The decision on NATO enlargement will not be made in Moscow, it depends on Washing-



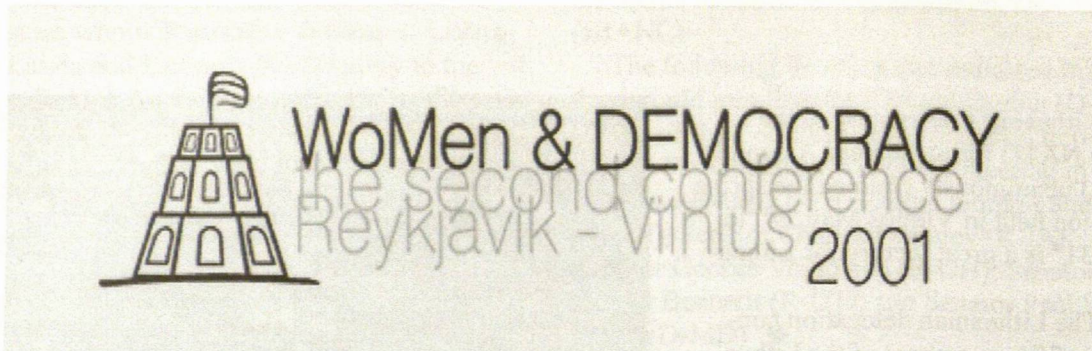
ton's will," she pointed out. She said the large delegation from the U.S. Congress deserved more attention than Russia's boycott.

Head of the Lithuanian delegation liberal Gričius was kinder to the Russians, saying "any kind of dialogue with Russia would be useful."

The NATO PA in Vilnius was the largest international event Lithuania has seen in the past decade. More than 200 parliamentarians from NATO states and more than 70 from 16 NATO associated states attended.

The NATO PA includes a total of 17 associated countries – Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Macedonia (officially the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Switzerland and Ukraine. ♦

From the Third Lithuanian Women's Congress...



Lithuania's Women at the Dawn of the New Millennium

Lithuania welcomes the first year of the 21st century as a host capital of [the] women's movement. On December 9th, 2000, over one thousand Lithuanian women gathered in Vilnius on the occasion of the Third Lithuanian Women's Congress. Women, representatives of the non-governmental sector, conceived the idea of the Congress. The first two congresses, held in 1907 and 1937, and the Third Congress were organized with the assistance of its promoters and with the help of public initiative, aiming not to dwell on painful issues, but to suggest tangible propositions as to how to improve both life of the state and life in the state, to strengthen a multi-stranded and comprehensive participation of women in the state and public life, [and] to make them believe in their potential.

The Vilnius Conference of June 15th to the 17th, 2001 is another international event, which turns Vilnius into an international women's capi-

tal. This is the Second Conference on Women and Democracy, Reykjavik – Vilnius.

The 1999 Reykjavik Conference – "Women and Democracy", entrusted Lithuania to welcome guests from five Nordic states, three Baltic states, the USA, and Russia. The Vilnius Conference also extended invitations to the representatives of Poland, Germany, Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers. More than 500 participants are expected to come to the conference, including European Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs Anna Diamantopoulou; Commissioner of the Council of the Baltic Sea States on Democratic Development Helle Degn; First Deputy Speaker of the Finnish Parliament Ms Sirkka-Liisa Anttila; Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers Mr. Soren Christensen; Head of the IOM Regional Bureau for the Nordic and Baltic countries Mr. Jose-Angelo Oropeza; Minister of Gender Equality of Denmark Ms. Lotte Bundsgaard; Minister of Social

THE THIRD LITHUANIAN WOMEN'S CONGRESS is released information on the events with input from Ramunė Traukymienė, a member of the National Organizing Committee, Evaldas Ignatavičius, Vice-minister of Foreign Affairs, Chair of the International Planning Committee and Chair of the National Steering Committee and the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Additional informational can be found on www.womenanddemocracy.lt.

Affairs of Estonia Mr. Eiki Nestor; Minister of Social Affairs of Iceland Mr. Pall Petursson; Minister of Welfare of Latvia Mr. Andrejs Požarnovs; Minister of Social Security and Labour of Lithuania Ms. Vilija Blinkevičiūtė; Minister of Gender Equality of Sweden Ms. Margareta Winberg; Minister of Health and Social Services of Finland Mr. Osmo Soinivaara, the President of Latvia Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga and the President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus.

The President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus has shown his personal interest in the Conference and will formally welcome the participants.

The Conference will comprehensively discuss key issues related to the full voiced participation of women and men in the democratic processes. It will highlight the joint projects, which the states of the Baltic Sea region and the USA initiated at the Reykjavik Conference two years ago. Having reviewed the progress made to date, the Conference intends to initiate new international projects and to seek by concerted efforts their effective implementation.

During the two days of the Conference, the participants will be offered a wide range of topics to discuss and to share expertise. Our aim is to encourage and enhance the dialogue between politicians, researchers, civil servants, NGO's and other experts in the field from all the participating countries. We do hope that the Conference will lead to the closer cooperation between the participants and will facilitate new important initiatives in this area.

Two plenary sessions devoted to the topics "Future Challenges for Gender Equality Work" and "Trafficking in Women: Protection and Prevention" will take place at the Conference. Twelve workshops, such as "Economic and Labour Policy from a Gender Perspective", "Women and Entrepreneurship", "Developing Leadership Skills", "Governments Promoting Gender Equality with the Input of NGOs on International Level", "Governments Promoting Gender Equality with the Input of NGOs on National Level", "Municipality Promoting Gender Equality with the Input of NGOs", "Media Promoting Gender Equality", "Men Promoting Gender Equality", "The Social Partners promoting Gender Equality in Working Life", "Young

Women and Men: New Challenges", "Crossing Borders against Trafficking in Women", "Gender Aspects on Minorities" will be organized.

As a host country Lithuania is invited to chair the workshop on "Governments promoting gender equality with the inputs on NGO's on a national level". Vice Minister for Social Security and Labour Mr. Rimantas Kairelis will be the chairperson and Head of the Division of Equality, Ministry of Family of Germany Ms. Brigitte Unger-Soyka will be co-chairperson. The workshop will concentrate on the development of legislation, development of national institutional mechanisms, implementation of gender mainstreaming strategy, gender equality programs, covering all critical areas, cooperation with non-governmental organizations, and as a result will initiate bilateral and multilateral projects related to these issues.

Lithuania is also invited to co-chair the workshop "Crossing borders against trafficking in women". Deputy Chairman of the Board of the Lithuanian Parliament Mr. Gintaras Stepovičius will be co-chairperson and Minister of Gender Equality of Sweden Ms. Margareta Winberg will be chairperson. Violence against women, prostitution, and trafficking in women are sore issues and a big international problem. Therefore, activities of this working group initiated by Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou together with Sweden are to be treated as a very important step.

The final document of the United Nation's Special Session foresees actions to be taken in this field through a comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy consisting of legislative measures, prevention campaigns, exchange of information assistance, and protection for and reintegration of the victims and prosecution of all the offenders involved, including the intermediaries. Also part of the strategy would include strengthening national mechanisms, international cooperation, and partnership with non-governmental organizations. Taking steps to combat this, a national program on control and prevention of prostitution and trafficking in women is to be adopted by the Government of Lithuania at the end of May of this year. This program includes actions and measures of the prevention of trafficking in

women and protection of the victims of trafficking.

It is vital to understand the changes within Lithuania that have taken place highlighting its perseverance to equalize human life. Women are getting more involved in public activity and the number of women's organizations is growing. More than 70 women's organizations are registered in the Directory of Women's Organizations 2000. One of the most important fields of activities is studies and awareness raising.

As well as governmental institutions, Lithuanian NGOs are working actively on Lithuania's society's awareness about gender equality. Four Women's studies centers are acting on such directions as academic, publishing, educational and etc. The Women's Issues Information Centre initiates research studies and conducts statistical surveys. The Centre also is trying to build a data bank with particular emphasis on gender and social research, which so far has been invisible on profiles of women in various demographic trends such as unemployment, women entrepreneurs, education, marriage and divorce patterns, etc.

Women's participation in the Lithuanian economy becomes more and more significant. It was marked by a rapid growth in the number of female workers and employees, which increased during the period of 1945-1998. Women make up 48.5 percent of the total employed population. Women comprise the majority at the bottom of the occupational pyramid, where socio-economic job categories are represented.

According to the Law on Wages, it is forbidden to reduce wages due to a person's sex, age, race, nationality, or political convictions. Despite that, statistics show that women's average wages differ comparing to men's by about 23 percent, because of their lower positions at work.

The average annual unemployment rate in 1999 was 8.4 percent. The unemployment rate among women by the end of March 2001 was 12 percent; while among men – 14.4 percent. Since 1998, the men's unemployment rate remains higher than women's. About 30 % of the employed are working part-time. Women consist 60 % of all people who work part-time.

A study conducted by the Statistical Department as part of the EUROSTAT project collected

information regarding 11,000 businesses in Lithuania. They found that 29% of the businesses surveyed were female-owned. It is a significant number if compared to the European Union. Female entrepreneurs tend to set up businesses in the service and trade sectors. As one of the significant measures in this field, it has to be mentioned that at the beginning of the year of 2000 the North Investment Bank Credit Line was issued for businesswomen to develop small business. The existing forms of assistance for developing small businesses were presented at the Conference on "Women and Business, Opportunities of Today".

In respect to education of women, Lithuania is in a prominent position. Education is one of the areas where women achieved quite a lot – 69.9% of all students in college type schools and 57.6 % in higher schools are women. More and more women are seeking to achieve higher scientific degrees. The number of women awarded the degree of the Doctor of Science is also gradually increasing. In 1998-1999, there were 51.8 percent of women in the studies for a Doctor's degree and 48.2 percent were men. The percentage of graduates is slightly different: 45.6 percent women to 54.4 percent men.

Lithuania is not a state chosen at random. This is the acknowledgement of the policies pursued by the Lithuanian authorities in the area of democracy and gender equality. The institutional reform, the care for national minorities, the national mechanism for the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men (which has been introduced this current year), the equal opportunities law, and the establishment of the ombudsmen institution – these are all new realities of Lithuanian life. ♦

Jeanne Dorr

The Legacy of the Medininkai Border Guards



July 31st is a date that probably doesn't mean anything to most people reading this article. It's important to me because it is my wedding anniversary, but since 1991 my special day has been tainted. It was on that day that a brutal crime was committed on Lithuanian border guards and customs officers. It was on that day that I first heard and read the word "Medininkai". It was impossible for me to know then that nine years later Lithuania would be free, and I would be meeting with some of the widows and children left behind by that heinous crime. It was crime that would take away forever the sons, husbands, and fathers of these families.

Times were chaotic in Lithuania: jobs needed to be filled and people had to be trained for these positions. It was a time of renewal, not only for a nation but for her people as well. Newspapers were running advertisements for these new jobs, and people were eager to fill them. Today you will read how the course of these families' lives was changed because an ad was answered in the paper. Lithuania needed people to become cus-

toms officers on her borders, and many people answered the call. The candidates were interviewed and carefully scrutinized. Few people were actually chosen for these positions.

I often go through the lists of children that Lithuanian Orphan Care supports. I have to admit that I'm not a person who pays attention to details. However, over and over I kept seeing the word "Medininkai" on the list. I thought it was rather strange that all these children lived on the same street but gave it no further thought until I got to Lithuania. What I learned from Regina Svoba, director of Countryside Children's Fund, was that Medininkai was not a street, it was a word that signified that these children were on our list because their fathers were murdered on their jobs in Medininkai.

Regina asked me if I would like to meet with these families, and of course I agreed. The meeting was scheduled to take place the next day at the apartment of one of the mothers in Vilnius. She would get together as many of the other mothers as she could on such short notice. The

JEANNE DORR is a member of the Board of Directors of Lithuanian Orphan Care, a branch of the Human Services Council of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. She is also a Social Studies teacher in New Jersey.

next afternoon was spent with the partisan I wrote about in an earlier issue of BRIDGES. We were quite late getting back to Vilnius and looked like two wet shaggy dogs by the time we arrived at the apartment. To add insult to injury, we were not only wet, but also we were wearing dirty jeans and sweatshirts – not exactly your average dinner clothing.

We arrived at a fairly new complex in Vilnius where two young gentlemen greeted us at the door. I have to admit this was only after ringing three wrong doorbells in the apartment building. Eleven year-old Justinas and nine year-old Šarūnas welcomed us and took our wet coats.

They were such gentlemen that they showed no shock or reaction to what we looked like. We were greeted by several women, and it is their memories of that terrible day that I would like to share with you.

We were in the apartment of Genutė Orlavičienė, and you could see the pride she had in her two sons. The boys made the appetizers and also served them. Each of the women brought a dish from home. The food was delicious, and the conversation was lively as we sat in Genutė's living room around her coffee table that was laden with food. In some ways, I think we were all trying to prolong the enjoyable conversation so that we could avoid the tragic subject of my interview.

During our meal, I learned that one of the women was present because her husband died as a result of the January 13 siege of the television tower. Elena Mačiulskienė's husband, Stasys, was not listed as one of the "official" deaths of that night because he died three months later. But have no doubts, he died because he was protecting the television tower.

Stasys was a thirty-eight year-old factory worker. When he heard the call for the people to come out and protect the tower, he went. He was injured in the neck and also suffered head trauma. He was taken to the hospital that night along with the hundreds of others who were guarding the tower. Later he came home but was



From left: Elena, Alytė, Genutė, Rūta

Photo: Jeanne Dorr

in the hospital more than he was out. Surgery was performed on Stasys and a short time later he died – another cruel statistic of the Soviet troops. He was a statistic that did not have to happen. It happened because the Lithuanian people wanted what rightfully belonged to them, a free nation.

Stasys left behind his wife Elena and two young sons: Bronius was barely five years old and Stasys was not yet three. Bronius, who was always with Stasys, missed his father and could not understand why he wasn't coming home. He stopped talking, and Elena was beside herself with worry. Both children became ill, and many nights she walked the floor with them until dawn. At one point she felt she could not go on living, and she tried to kill herself by taking an over dose of pills. Life was just too much to bear without her beloved Stasys. Bronius still misses his father, but Stasys was too young and so he was robbed of even the memory of a daddy.

Elena is working now, but the memories are still there and she and the other women of January 13, as well as the women of Medininkai, seek out each other's company. As hard as we try to understand their pain, we can't. We didn't suffer their horrible nightmares, and only they can help each other. All we can do is listen and try to understand.

Alytė Musteikienė's husband, thirty-three year-old Antanas, was not a man to give in to

fear. He especially did not fear death. He always felt the need to help Lithuania. When the Parliament building was surrounded in January, he guarded the inside, armed with only a homemade Molotov cocktail.

In December of 1990 he became a customs officer after answering the newspaper ad. He had previously been a construction worker and was so proud of his new job. In February, he was transferred to the border post of Medininkai. Alytė became more and more fearful, not just for Antanas, but for her seven year-old daughter, Kristina, and her almost two year-old son, Justinas. Antanas would tell her about the tanks that would circle the customs post. It was a time of broken windows, burning buildings, and gunshots. Her worst fears were when he worked nights. The hours seemed to be endless until he returned home.

Then the nightmare began. A passing truck driver found the bodies on the morning of July 31st. Six men were dead, and two were badly injured. The killers presumed the two men were also dead. One man would die two days later, while the lone survivor was moved from hospital to hospital and guarded by Lithuanians for fear of reprisals. He was, after all, the only witness to that terrible night. The information was being released in dribs and drabs. Alytė was trying to telephone everywhere she could think of for information and received no answers except wait and see. The women hoped against hope, and yet all believed their husbands were alive.

The worst part was the waiting, there were no names released until noon and in those few moments the lives, hopes, and dreams of these families came crashing down among them. Alytė begged to see her husband's body, but permission was denied. The men were almost unrecognizable. She continued begging, she had to see him just one more time. She was an operating room nurse, and she could tolerate blood and smashed bodies, but again she was refused.

Now, she was a young widow with two small children. Little Kristina cried constantly for her father. When her teacher mentioned that Kristina's father died as a Lithuanian hero, she cried all the way from school. She didn't want her classmates to know her father was dead; all she

wanted was to be normal. When Alytė tried to tell her she was fortunate that she still had four grandparents, Kristina cried out, "How can you say I'm fortunate when I don't have my father?" As she wrote in her school essay, all they had left of their fathers are their portraits, their spirits, and their graves. Antanas was another statistic in the fight for a free Lithuania that we must always safeguard.

At this point, I turned off the tape recorder because I felt I could not continue with the interview. I was emotionally drained. This was the only time this ever happened to me. Readers, you had to be in this room to feel the pain and love of these women. None had remarried, and all are raising their children alone. Yet they gathered around me and told me how difficult it was for them to tell their story for many years, and now they were ready to talk. It is only through their encouragement and patience this interview continued.

Rūta Jononienė's husband was one of two policemen who lost his life that night. Because of the problems at Medininkai and because the customs men were unarmed, two policemen were assigned to the night shift. They each had a pistol and an automatic. For one policeman, it was his final day on the job before he would retire. He never made it. But the other policeman, Juozas Janonis, was only twenty-eight years old when he died. He would never be there for his two year-old son, Evaldas, to comfort him or to laugh with him. He would never be there to see Evaldas grow up.

Rūta begged her husband to change jobs, but he loved his work. Juozas always told her, "What will be, will be." That day Juozas took his wedding ring off for the first and only time since he was married. He left it at home in case "something might happen".

Rūta told me the worst times of the year for her are holidays. Nine years have gone by, but she can't get past the holidays without Juozas. She said that Evaldas seems to have quick flashbacks of his father, such as sitting on his lap and "driving" the car while it was parked. Rūta works as a policewoman while she is raising her son alone. One more tragic statistic of July 31.

Genutė Orłavičienė was our gracious hostess

for the evening. Honislovas Orlovičius was a thirty-six year-old customs officer. Like the other men, he answered the ad in the newspaper, and like the others, he was proud of his new profession. The test and the background check were comprehensive. It was during this background investigation that he found out that his grandmother's brother had lived in America, something he never knew. Like most of the men, he worked only six months at his new job before he was killed. He started his job on February 4th, and there was such joy in their house.

The evening before, he had taken Genutė to the hospital, and that morning their son Šarūnas was born. Could life get any better for Honislovas? How many people could boast of the birth of a new son and the start of a new career on the same day? He was sure it was a good omen, not to mention that he already had two year-old Justinas who was his pride and joy.

Genutė had mixed emotions. Every day she would stand near their window and watch and listen for his car. Only then could she relax. As is the tradition of many Lithuanian families, they moved to the village for the summer. Genutė usually walked to a small hill to wait for her husband to return. In fact, a neighbor chided her for being so nervous and urged her to relax. She waited and waited, but there was no husband to greet. He told her that he might attend a meeting after work. She wanted to believe with all her heart that he was there. The village house had no telephone so there was no way to communicate. After she returned to the house, a neighbor ran to her and told her of a problem at Medininkai. They immediately turned on the radio, but again, it would be many hours until she heard the grim details.

For a long time Justinas would look at every man on the street or in the park. He was so sure he would find his daddy, but daddy would never come home again. Genutė supports herself and her sons by working as a cashier in the customs department. One more widow and two more fatherless children because of July 31.

Dr. Giedrė Žilinskienė was also present for the dinner. She is a medical doctor and a good friend to all the children and the mothers. Dr. Žilinskienė was and is a proponent of children's

rights in Lithuania. She has been the rock for these mothers so many times at all hours of the day and night. She is still there for them whenever they need her, whether as a physician or as a friend.

The sole survivor was Tomas Šernas. Tomas switched working days with someone else so he could have extra time off for his wedding. Genutė's husband jokingly told him a few days earlier that they would celebrate the following week after the wedding. How could they know that for Honislovas there would be no next week and for Tomas there would be no wedding. Tomas was beaten senseless and left for dead. The wedding did take place two years later, but Tomas' friends from Medininkai were not there with him. Tomas is the proud father of a beautiful daughter, but the joy is mingled with sadness. He will never chase his little girl or run with her through a field because Tomas is confined to a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Tomas is another statistic of July 31st.

The mothers shared the "official" photographs with me. They had to fight long and hard to obtain copies of them, but they had to have some kind of closure. Readers, I am not going to go into details here. All I will tell you is that at that moment I became physically ill. These men were not murdered, they were slaughtered. Their blood covered the walls and floors. I have never seen and pray I will never see such photographs again. These murders were not the work of human beings; no man could do this to another.

Although Justinas and Šarūnas did not see the photos, they put their heads down on the table. The room was totally silent, and all I could do was give the pictures back without saying a word. For all intent and purposes, the interview was over. At this point, I didn't know if I could or would ever write this article.

In a few short hours, I formed a very strong bond with these women. As I was leaving, they asked me if I would attend the cemetery ceremonies and the Mass for their husbands on July 31st. There was no way that I could refuse them such a small favor. In fact, I was honored that they asked me. I did not tell them that July 31st would be my 35th wedding anniversary.

That day is always long and difficult for them.

Each year they and their children leave Vilnius before dawn and drive to the Medininkai border so they can have some private moments where the tragedy happened. They place flowers and candles on the spot, each representing personal memories and questions that will never be answered. They have protested and demonstrated that the criminals be brought to justice. Their cries have fallen on Moscow's deaf ears.

July 31st was a working day for me. It was probably the strangest wedding anniversary I will ever have. I was spending the entire day with Gražina Landsbergis and the children she had recommended to Orphan Care. I phoned her and told her I would have to shorten the schedule because I needed to be at the cemetery at noon. She told me she would go with me, and so Gražina, my husband, and I set out for Antakalnis Cemetery in Vilnius. We were a little late and got there as the priest was speaking.

The three of us stood together in the crowd as I watched the families who seemed solemnly lost in their own thoughts. Suddenly I felt a tug on my sleeve. Šarūnas had made his way over to me and started whispering. As I bent down to hear him, he told me the mothers wanted me to stand with them for the ceremony. I was so moved and so honored, I couldn't even answer as he put his hand in mine and the crowd parted as he led me to them. Each one of us embraced, lost in our own thoughts. The guns saluted, and each thunderous roar brought out raw emotions. Both the customs officers and the police took turns standing as honor guards.

As Professor Vytautas Landsbergis slowly walked to each grave, paused, and placed flowers on them, there was not a dry eye in view. Even the biggest and strongest young men stood silently with tears rolling down their cheeks. I couldn't help but wonder what went through Tomas' mind as he sat apart from everyone else in his wheelchair. People stopped and placed flowers in his hand, and he graciously thanked them.

I was scheduled to meet with Tomas

earlier in my trip, but his father had died and we never had that interview. As I approached him, my eyes began to fill up. I took his hand and for a moment said nothing – what can you say to someone who has suffered so much physically, mentally, and emotionally? He thanked me for the help he receives from Lithuanian Orphan Care for his daughter.

The mothers asked Gražina, my husband, and me to join them at a reception after the cemetery, but this was a working day. We had appointments to keep with Orphan Care children.

Later that evening, we returned to Vilnius Cathedral for a Mass that was said for the men. As I looked around the cathedral, that was filled to capacity, I wondered how many people really understood the impact that one brutal act had had on these families? The men lost their lives, and the families lost their hope.

As the mothers and I said good-bye for the second time that day, I knew this was not a final farewell. Our bond will stay as strong as it was the moment we met.

I would like to thank the Lithuanian Citizens' of Western Pennsylvania for sponsoring all the children who were left behind by these terrible



Genutė with sons Šarūnas and Justinas.

Photo: Jeanne Dorr

acts. There is no end to the generosity of these fine people. I also want to thank the sponsor of Tomas' daughter. Lithuanian Orphan Care provides a vital service to the children of Lithuania. Please help us continue to serve these families through your generosity. The cost to sponsor a child is \$150 a year, but all donations are grate-

fully appreciated. Your tax-deductible checks can be sent to:

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

An Additional Message...

Readers, I have come to you often with hat in hand, asking for your support for Lithuania's children. Now I am asking for your help for their future. There have been numerous articles printed in BRIDGES about expansion of NATO to include the Baltics. If you belong to a chapter of the Lithuanian- American Community, you will probably receive a letter asking for your help. However, because so many of you write to me, I know that you are not affiliated with any group. I am asking you, for the future of Lithuania, please sit down and write a letter to **BOTH** your senators and to President Bush urging them to support Lithuania's bid for entry into NATO. Enlist the support of your families. When your senators appeal to you at election time and list their accomplishments, let that list include supporting the Baltic States' entrance into NATO.

I usually end with a quote, but I would like to share with you a short essay and a poem written by two children who lost their fathers at Medininkai.

The Rose

By Justinas Orlovicius, in honor of his mother

I woke up one morning and thought, "What a wonderful day it is today!" I remembered it was my mom's birthday. I told my mom I was going to visit my friend, Antanas, but instead I rushed to the shop. I was dazzled by the flowers. The shop assistant suggested various kinds of flowers. Carnations, tulips and cacti. I said, "Tulips cease blooming very quickly. I won't be able to bring home a fern. The cactus has too many prickles." I was about to leave, but at that moment I noticed a rose. It was red as blood and smelled sweet. It had a long prickled stem. I asked the shop assistant to wrap the rose. I brought it to my mom and she was so happy.

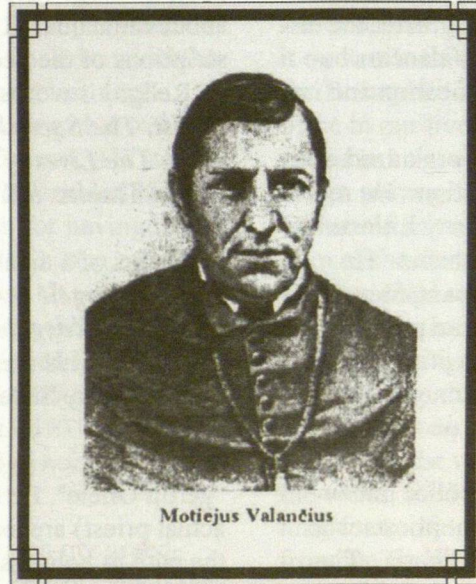
Medininkai

Kristina Musteikytė, in memory of her father, Antanas

*It was not necessary to go there.
To go and risk.
But they said, "Who, if not we?"
They loved their homeland
More than anything else in the world.
But they did not have to die.
Neither they nor anyone else.
It was a heroic deed....
But nobody knows who was the killer
And nobody had revealed this secret.
Why did all this have to happen?
We loved them so much....
But now only their photographs, their spirits,
and their graves remain of them.*

2001 – The Year of Bishop Motiejus Valančius

The lasting contributions of Bishop Motiejus Valančius (1801-1875) to Lithuania are being remembered by Lithuanians throughout the world this year as they commemorate 200 years since his birth. One need only glance at the accomplishments of the greatest educator, historian, ethnographer and writer of 19th century Lithuania to understand why 2001 has been declared "the year of Bishop Motiejus Valančius".



Motiejus Valančius

nence. According to Valančius' statistics, after two years, 83% of Catholics had joined the movement. People viewed it as beneficial and erected monuments and crosses in thanksgiving. Such a stone cross, built in the cemetery of Nevarėnai in 1858, still stands. Unfortunately, the czarist government viewed these societies as a threat and banned them in 1864.

Advocate of Temperance

The years 1849-75, when Valančius served as Bishop of Samogitia, were years of Russian suppression. In order to subjugate the Lithuanian people, the Russians encouraged the consumption of alcohol. Bishop Valančius, a man of deep faith, wrote that in 1858, the Holy Spirit inspired him to instruct the people about temperance. He organized societies called "blaivybės brolijos" (temperance brotherhoods) throughout Lithuania. During his pastoral visits, he urged parish priests to sign people up by having them take the oath of absti-

Educator

Bishop Valančius contributed significantly to the spread of literacy among the peasants through the founding of parish schools to teach the Catholic faith and the Lithuanian language. Up to that time, the Polish language had been given preference over Lithuanian. These schools accomplished their goals. After 10 to 12 years, some estimates state that the literacy rate of peasants was 50%. Unfortunately, after the 1863 insurrection, the czarist government, under the leadership of Governor-General M. N. Muraviev, closed all parochial schools. It also forbade the construction of new churches, controlled the appointment of parish priests, limited seminary enrollment, and forced school

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children to attend Orthodox services.

The policy of Russification intensified as the Cyrillic alphabet was introduced into the Lithuanian language and all Lithuanian books and printed matter were banned. In May 1864, Bishop Valančius was ordered to move to Kaunas from his residence in Varniai so that he could be watched more carefully. These restrictions did not stop him. The greater the difficulties, the stauncher Bishop Valančius became in his opposition to Russification and in his defense of the Church.

The Bishop showed the first organized example of resistance to Russification. He refused to give his imprimatur to any Lithuanian books printed in the Cyrillic alphabet. He wrote several anti-government pamphlets aimed especially at the Lithuanian peasants and paid a Prussian publisher to print them in Tilžė (Tilsit). They were then smuggled into Lithuania and distributed to the people through a secret network.

Unfortunately, the Russian police uncovered this network in 1870. Eight priests who were a part of it were exiled to Siberia. The Bishop himself was not punished. However, his residence was searched and the Governor of Kaunas spoke to him. As a result of this campaign, the people completely rejected Cyrillic books. Thanks to the writings of Bishop Valančius, they were determined to preserve their faith and their language. The publishing of books in Tilžė and their smuggling into Lithuania continued and developed into the book smugglers' movement carried on by other brave individuals.

Writer

Bishop Valančius is also known as the father of Lithuanian prose. He wrote numerous religious books for the common people using simple language that they could understand. He wanted them to learn about God, live virtuous lives, and resist the government's plans to russify Lithuania and to convert the people to

Orthodoxy. He told them not to accept Cyrillic books and not to send their children to Russian schools. Instead, he urged home schooling using old Lithuanian prayer books and organizing secret schools.

Valančius' best known prose work is *Palangos Juzė*, a collection of stories told by Juzė, a village tailor from Palanga who travels about Lithuania. It contains many colorful descriptions of the people and their customs.

Religious works include: *The Life of Jesus Christ*, *The Sacred History of the Old Testament*, *The Lives of the Saints* and the translation of Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*.

Works of a didactic nature are: *Paaugusių žmonių knygelė – A Book for Older People* and *Vaikų Knygelė – A Book for Children*. *Vaikų Knygelė* was reedited in modern Lithuanian by Sister Ona Mikailaitė and reprinted in 1978 by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Putnam. Characters such as "geroji Onelė", Petrelė and Pranas Bielskis (an actual priest) are examples to be followed on the path to holiness. They are good, obedient, hard working, and respectful. On the other hand, Gustas Sukčius and Pranas Paukštvanagėlis portray what happens to those who break the Ten Commandments. They are either punished or die untimely deaths. These delightful stories are needed today to replace characters that promote witchcraft and evil.

Valančius' history, *The Diocese of Samogitia* was the first scholarly work of its times. Besides containing a history of the diocese from 1417 to 1841, it provides a wealth of information on the political and cultural life of Lithuania. *Samogitian Proverbs* contains 1300 popular adages collected by the Bishop.

Bishop of Samogitia

To accomplish all of his tasks, Bishop Valančius rose early. After Mass, he was available to all. Even though very busy, he always had many visitors and never refused to

see anyone or was ever cross. He ate quickly so as to have more time for prayer, work, and service. Under him, thirty brick and twenty wooden churches were built. Of his 9,200 days as bishop, 1,500 were spent traveling. He visited 350 parishes. When he was not out visiting, he was busy writing books and several thousand letters.

Shortly before his death, Bishop Valančius wrote a pastoral letter to his flock, to which he always referred to as “mano avelės” (my lambs). He thanks God for being able to have helped them on the road to heaven. He states that it was Jesus’ grace, which enabled him to do any good and thanks them for having loved and listened to him. It was their love, which enabled him to shepherd them. It will soon be time to leave them, and he asks their prayers for his sinful soul. Their beloved Bishop fell ill and died in Kaunas on May 29, 1875.

Bishop Valančius’ Lessons for Today

As a little girl, I would watch my grandmother pray from old prayer books, which she had brought with her from Lithuania. One was *Aukso Altorius*, which was popular during Valančius’ time. The other, *Giesmių Knyga* or *Kantičkos* was published in Tilžė in 1906 and has a forward written by Bishop Valančius dated 1859. His concern for his flock is evident when he writes of having published this edition because people had been requesting a book with all of the hymns that they knew and loved. It contains 863 pages of hymns for all occasions – Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, to Mary and various saints, for starting and ending one’s day. They are testimony to the great love and respect people had for God. They turned to Him not only in need, but also in thanksgiving. Their lives were simple, yet their faith was great. There was no materialism to distract them from God.

Holding the now-yellowed copies of these books, I imagine myself back in the time of Bishop Valančius when mothers would sit at

their spinning wheels with such prayer books teaching their children from them. They were ready to hide the books at a moment’s notice and continue with their spinning if the police were to arrive unexpectedly.

As we commemorate 200 years since the birth of Bishop Valančius, may his spirit and ideas reawaken us to the importance of God, the beauty of our faith and the duty of passing it on to our children. If he were alive today, the Bishop would urge us to return God to first place in our lives. He would continue to educate about the evils of not only alcohol, but of drugs, pornography, and promiscuity as well. He would ask us to return to the simple wisdom of the devout peasant woman sitting beside her child who seems to have known so much more than we do today, with all of our technologically advanced possessions: that the only treasure that matters is that of heaven.

To “have no love for the world, nor the things that the world affords. If anyone loves the world, the Father’s love has no place in him, for nothing that the world affords comes from the Father. Carnal allurements, enticements for the eye, the life of empty show – all these are from the world. And the world with its seductions is passing away, but the man who does God’s will endures forever.”

I John 2:15-17 ♦

Reflections

Sr. Margarita Bareikaitė

Mary, A Joy to Jesus

One of the great joys of love is to give – to give what one has to the person we live with. To give what one is, to give oneself. This is essential to love.

St. Thomas Aquinas says that the Blessed Virgin Mary gave her consent “in place of the whole human race”. Because Mary accepted God’s will for her, we are able to accept the fruits of Christ’s redemption into our own lives.

Mary had given the Divine Master all she had, leaving all things for His sake. The Archangel Gabriel himself found her full of grace. God chose Mary from all eternity. Mary, in fact, is the masterpiece of Jesus’ power and loving kindness. We shall never understand the heavenly divine joy that Jesus finds in regarding His wonderful Mother, “All generations in fact have proclaimed her blessed”.

When we look at Mary in the gospels, we see that she is connected with the life and mission of Jesus. “Mary’s unique role in our redemption follows from her complete cooperation in her own personal redemption. Because she received the Redeemer into her own life with such deep faith, at the moments of the Annunciation, Calvary, and Pentecost... she cooperated maternally



in Christ’s objective redemption of the human race.” (Cath. Cath.)

We can find Mary’s presence mostly in the Gospel of St. Luke – the birth of Jesus was recorded in both Matthew (1:18-25) and Luke (2:1-20). The Gospel of St. John mentions Mary “standing near the cross” at Jesus’ crucifixion (John 19:25-27). The Acts of the Apostles presents Mary with the Apostles at the Pentecost (1:14). Mary’s presence in the New Testament is enough to portray the unique role she plays within the Christian faith today. Her spirit and example stand out as the embodiment of all the ideals Jesus taught. As we read the Holy Bible, we see little written about the Mother of God, but it is enough for us to realize that Mary is a key figure in the New Testament and continues to be in today’s Church through the whole world. ♦

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

Lithuanian Children's Relief, Inc. Enters its Eleventh Year

In 1990, a small group of people in Boston decided that something must be done about the horrendous conditions in Lithuania's orphanages.

With the help of many people within the Boston community and donors worldwide, Lithuanian Children's Relief, Inc. has made a significant impact on the lives of thousands of children in Lithuania living in institutions and in impoverished rural communities.

Lithuanian Children's Relief, Inc is very proud of the fact that each dollar donated to LCR results in three times that amount of aid to Lithuania. This has been accomplished through LCR's partnership with the U.S. government's foreign aid organization called USALD (United States Agency for International Development)

Here is a sampling of programs and fundraisers sponsored by Lithuanian Children's Inc. (LCR)

- **Medical Assistance Project:** Dr. Dunn operated on Aušra Stroputė to correct a jaw deformity. She was hospitalized for seven days at Milton Hospital. The value of the donated hospitalization and physician's services was approximately \$40,000.00.
- **Medical Mission:** Three medical teams (surgical, anesthesiology, and nursing team) spent two weeks training Lithuanian professionals and performed 29 surgeries on children with facial deformities.
- **Gerber Baby Food Project:** A shipment of baby food valued at over \$1 million was sent to the six infant's institutions, tuberculosis sanatoriums and children's homes throughout Lithuania.
- **Hearing aids and testing equipment** delivered to Kaunas Home for Deaf Children.
- **Vaccine Mission:** LCR received 800 doses of measles, mumps, rubella vaccine from the Catholic Medical Mission Board and organized a team of nurses to travel to Lithuania to admin-

ister the vaccines to institutionalized children.

- **Diaper project:** LCR purchased and shipped 5,000 diapers to infants homes in Lithuania and outfitted all six infants institutions with three washing machines and three clothes dryers.

- **Fight Against Tuberculosis:** LCR purchased and delivered to Lithuania 45,000 doses of anti-tuberculosis medicine, which provided a full nine months of treatment for over 110 children.

- **Medical assistance for Renata:** A six year-old girl was brought to Boston and treated at Shriner's Burn Institute.

- **As a result of an individual donation,** a pediatric fibro-bronchial scope was purchased and delivered to the Kaunas Infectious Clinic.

- **Lithuanian Open Golf Tournament:** In cooperation with Ed Shakalis and supporters of the Lithuanian Open, a pediatric ventilator was purchased and delivered to Telšiai Hospital. This year a neonatal infant monitor and a pre-mature infant incubator will be purchased and delivered to Rokiškės Hospital.

- **Medical assistance for Paulius and Vytautas Leveris:** Twins from Lithuania who were blinded by insufficient oxygen in their incubators were brought to Boston for medical treatment.

- **School Supply Project:** Over 50,000 pencils, 10,000 notebooks and many other school supplies were purchased and shipped to the Ministry of Education who distributed them to children living in orphanages.

Lithuanian Children's Relief extends its heartfelt thanks to everyone who has ever helped at a fundraiser or loaded containers or sorted clothing. Your strong support and strong backs have enabled LCR to move mountains. To contact LCR, phone 617-268-6030 or write to LCR, P.O. Box 497, South Boston, MA 02127. ♦

Lithuanian Teachers to Participate in "The Year of the Brain" Seminars

Walpole, MA – Close on the heels of excellent news that Amanda Muliolienė, one of its computer specialists, was presented with the First Order of the Grand Duke Gediminas by President Valdas Adamkus, the American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education (A.P.P.L.E.) and the Lithuanian Ministry of Education announces groundbreaking in-service teaching seminars for elementary and secondary teachers in Lithuania: "The Year of the Brain."

The seminars, which will be conducted at the Vilnius Pedagogical Institute from July 16-27, 2001, not only satisfy part of the requirements for Lithuanian teachers' recertification, but also represent the latest theories and methods for teachers.

According to Gita Kupčinskienė, President of A.P.P.L.E., "Educators need to become acquainted with the basic function of the human brain. They need the skills to evaluate the latest research and to test them in their classrooms."

A.P.P.L.E., a nonprofit volunteer organization founded in 1990 at the dawn of independence by Lithuanian-American educators Vaiva Vebraitė (now Deputy Minister of Education in Lithuania) and Jūratė Krokys, has successfully recruited several U.S. experts in the field of brain research and education for the summer seminars. Dr. Anita Scarborough, for instance,

will lecture on "The Developing Brain"; Dr. Jackie Allen on "The Neuropsychology of the Brain;" Dr. Jo Ann Hammer will speak on "Neurokinesiology of the Brain" (the relationship between the brain and physical movement); Dr. Stephen Williams "The Brain and Memory"; Maureen Powell on "Vision and the Brain"; and Jane Crowden on "The Brain and Comprehension." These general lectures will be followed by discussion groups and intensive training in workshops within the disciplines of administration, computer education, elementary and preschool education, English as a foreign language, music, language arts, psychology, and religion and ethics. Additionally, this summer A.P.P.L.E. and the Ministry will sponsor separate seminars on special education in Kaunas, children at risk in Giruliai, computers in Salčininkai, as well seminars on agriculture.

In the past, A.P.P.L.E., a major contributor to the cause of democratic educational reform in Lithuania, has sponsored with the Ministry many other key educational initiatives, including cooperative learning, educational psychology, children-at-risk, action research (classroom-based field research), and writing across the curriculum. President Kupčinskienė explains, "As action research is conducted in the area of brain research throughout the classrooms of the United States, there is no reason why it should not find its counterpart in Lithuania."

Educators and other professionals interested in joining A.P.P.L.E. in Lithuania in summer 2001 should contact:

Shirley Sabo,
Vice President for Personnel and Recruiting
118 Cook Rd.
Prospect, CT 06712
(203) 758-4600
smsabo@aol.com

Web site, <http://www.applequest.org/index.html> ♦

– wende11 Mayo

TRIVIA QUIZ!

The Bagel was invented in what country?

- A. Germany
- B. Poland
- C. Lithuania
- D. Austria

(answer on page 26)

– Ed Shakalis

"The Most Beautiful Mezzo-soprano in the World"

The following is an excerpt from a review of Lithuania's operatic star Violeta Urmanavičiūtė-Urmana, who recently appeared on the New York Metropolitan Opera stage.

"The Most Beautiful Mezzo-Soprano in the World" ... are the words of Riccardo Muti about Violeta Urmanavičiūtė-Urmana used during his visit in Vilnius in June 2000. "My friend Violeta Urmana is a singer of the highest level... Such a voice as hers is an exception. She possesses remarkable vocal powers. The compass of her voice is extremely wide and especially in the high register. As we speak of the singing of hers we do not mean the mezzo-soprano or soprano any longer, we mean the voice of an extraordinary beauty and enormous powers, the voice that sounds equally well both in high and low registers, and we also mean the singer's unique talent."

Riccardo Muti was so fascinated by Urmana that he invited her to sing at the famous **La Scala**. On Nov. 16, 2000, the first concert initiating the cycle of the events dedicated to the year of Giuseppe Verdi took place there.

It is very gratifying that Pierre Boulez, too, was impressed by our singer. After he recorded Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (The Song of the Earth), he invited Urmana to take part in the recording of Mahler's songs. On March 3, 2001, Boulez conducted Mahler's *Third Symphony* in the famous Carnegie Hall with Urmana performing the part of the mezzo-soprano.

On March 29, 2001, Violeta's debut and five performances of *Parsifal* took place at the Metropolitan Opera House. She appeared in the role of Kundry alongside Plácido Domingo as Parsifal and James Levine as conductor. The series of the "American debut" finished with concerts in Chicago and Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* performed under the baton of James Levine in the Carnegie Hall on May 6th

The critics have called her "the jewel that



Violeta Urmanavičiūtė-Urmana

helped Wagner's *Parsifal* to keep its splendor "just after her first appearance at the Festival of Bayreuth in 1999. However, no words can render Violeta's singing. How understandable is the text of this most difficult among opera parts! How many colors of repentance and lust and what an emotional fire shimmered in her beautiful voice! The only word – "Parsifal" – in her lips was more attractive than the flutter of the flower girls that lasted for almost an hour! And when she pronounce the curse of Kundry it seemed that she let it out from the bottom of her heart...

The most gratifying was a thunderous ovation she received and the compliment that could be heard among the audience... 'this stage has never seen such a Kundry before.' "

– Audronė Nekrošienė
From *Muzikos Barai*, March 2001 issue

87th Annual Lithuanian Days

The Knights of Lithuania, Council 144 invite you to celebrate the 87th Annual Lithuanian Days to be held August 11th and 12th, 2001 at the Schuylkill Mall, Frackville PA from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. Lithuanian cuisine will feature kugelis, bulvinės dešros (potato sausages), mesinės dešros (sausages), bandukės, šaltibarščiai (cold beet soup), lapienė, to mention a few. There will be entertainment, demonstrations, displays and a large selection of imported Lithuanian items.

Proceeds from the event benefits many Lithuanian causes, among them the Lithuanian Pontifical College of St. Casimir in Rome, and Council 144's Lithuanian Humanitarian Aid. This committee, just in the past year, has supplied approximately 6,000 lbs. of aid to orphanages, country schools, and hospitals, homes for the elderly, churches, very needy large families, daycares and others.

Come and enjoy the great Coal Region's hospitality. For more information on the event, and places of interest in the area, please contact Bernice Mikatavage, 570-544-4598 or bermika@infi.net. Iki pasimatymo! ♦

– *Bernice Mikatavage*

Answer to Trivia Question

A popular legend claims that a non-Jewish Viennese baker invented bagels in 1683. He called the ring-shaped breads buegal (stirrup) to honor a Polish prince and his cavalry in victory over the Turks.

However, in 1610, bagels are mentioned in the community regulations of Krakow, Poland. The citation affirms that bagels is an appropriate gift for pregnant women. The name of this doughnut-shaped bread may be from bougal, a Middle High German word for "ring" or beigen, a Yiddish word for "bends" pointing to a Teutonic origin.

Three Brothers Take Oath to Serve Lithuania Together

For the first time in the history of the Lithuanian army, three brothers, Andrius, Petras and Povilas Markevičius, together took an oath to serve their country. The brothers took the oath on May 25th in the headquarters of the motorized infantry brigade **Geležinis Vilkas** in Vilnius, Defense

Ministry's Public Information Department reported. The brothers have already served for a month in the Lithuanian army's guard of honor company.

In the words of twins Povilas and Petras, 20, their 22 year-old brother Andrius talked them into serving together. According to the brothers, their first impressions of army service are good, and they have not abandoned their plans to relate their future life to the army.

Head of the guard of honor company Captain Darius Kondratavičius said the Markevičiai were the pair of twins in ten years serving in the company.

A total of 78 soldiers from several companies took the oath in the **Geležinis Vilkas** headquarters. Parents, friends and relations who attended the ceremony had an opportunity to meet the company's leadership. After the ceremony, the soldiers were released home until Sunday, while on Monday they were scheduled to go to the Pabradė military ground to attend shooting exercises.

Every year, over four thousand youths perform military service in the Lithuanian army. ♦
– *Baltic News Service*

The bagel followed only rye bread as the most common bread among Eastern European Jews. These round rings commonly accompanied men to work and students to school, providing them with a filling lunch. Back in the 1930's, I remember the American-Lithuanians calling bagels "baronkys". In Lithuania, they have always been small, sweet "baronkos" given as treats. ♦

– *Ed Shakalis*

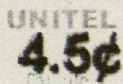
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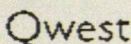
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