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America's Take on Lithuania...Vilnius Cathedral...Christmas in July...Songs from the Heart

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

As a child, I was always impressed by the Lithuanian-American Community meetings in Philadelphia.

In hindsight, they were just...meetings, discussions... something that occurred every day everywhere. Yet, they were so much more. I remember the way the meetings started...with the singing of the Lithuanian and American anthems. The dignity and respect given to these anthems was almost sacred. On occasion, I would spot an elderly man or woman wiping a tear from their eyes.

After the minutes of the previous meeting were read, new business discussions would begin. Naturally, I really can't recall a single issue that had been discussed, but every issue seemed to be vital and important to the whole Community.

Not everyone agreed. Each had his/her own opinion or agenda. There were the ones who seemed to be radical and combative. Others would try to interject reason and logic. Just as there seemed to be compromise, a voice would be heard from the back of the room, "Could you repeat the question we are deciding upon?" This would send an intense flurry through the hall, and the discussions would repeat anew.

When I "came of age" and was elected to the Board of Directors representing New Jersey, it was time to become part of the decision-making body. Flashes of my childhood and those moments watching the heated debates engulfed me. This time I felt the adrenalin of combat and the drive for active involvement in a Community so filled with energy and ideas. I sensed what it felt like to be a "vessel of change", a Lithuanian patriot fighting for a worthy cause. It was exhilarating and fulfilling.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Lithuanian-American Community's work, take time to look around your own local Lithuanian group. You'll see the fruits of the Community's labor in the Lithuanian schools, elderly support groups, social gatherings, and publicity events, which kept the country of Lithuania from fading into obscurity.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

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On the cover:
A walk on the boardwalk to the Baltic Sea on a warm, windy August day. Beyond the boardwalk, vacationers relax and enjoy the water and sand.

Photo: R. Ardys-Juška



Assumption Day Celebrated in Lithuania

Most Lithuanian offices and state institutions were closed on Assumption Day – August 15th, commemorating the Virgin Mary's assumption into heaven.

During the pagan era, this day was related to the rites for Goddess Lada, with offerings of ripe crops. The pagan festival was changed into the day of Virgin Mary's assumption into heaven after the accession of Christianity in Lithuania. However, the tradition of bringing the first crops of grain, fruit, and vegetables to church remained. People believed that consecrated crops would protect their families from diseases and ill luck during the next year.

Antanas Valionis

From the NATO Parliamentary Assembly...

**“Lithuania is...
 ✓ a stabilizing factor
 ✓ a supplier of security!”**

At an international conference a while ago, I remember seeing a political scientist bearing a badge saying “Cold War Survivor”. It was meant to be ironic, but I could sense a dose of nostalgia in it for the bad but much simpler times, when the world was divided in black and white, where no conundrums of why, where, and how far to enlarge existed. The cold war over, the North Atlantic Alliance could have become such a survivor. Luckily, the Alliance transformed itself adjusting its mission and rationale to the realities of the present day international environment.

It is due to this transformation that I have the pleasure to be addressing you here today, in a city that brought forth the famous “Vilnius Nine” initiative, thus giving an early impetus to the discussions on the further enlargement of the Alliance whose Parliamentary Assembly you all represent. I hope that despite a very heavy agenda, you can still find some time to enjoy the special atmosphere of my city.

Let me start by saying that the next few years will be fundamental to all of us as the European Union (EU) and NATO enlargements gather momentum. The two enlargements mark a watershed in the history of our Continent. After centuries of conflict, a new kind of Europe is finally emerging: a Europe

whole and free, based on the community of values and shared principles, a truly undivided Europe. That, provided the enlargement process is really inclusive and open to all those willing and ready to join and thereby to contribute to extending the zone of stability, democracy, and prosperity.

For this historic opportunity not to be squandered, further NATO enlargement must not be placed on the backburner integration. Nor can it be thought of Euro-Atlantic complete by adopting partial, least-effort solutions. The extent to which NATO will be able to respond inclusively to the enlargement urge of the applicant nations will largely determine its own validity and credibility in the longer term.

A secure and stable Europe is inconceivable if a part of it is to remain in a continuous state of ambiguity, a perennial gray zone. At the end of the day, such solutions, however attractive in the immediate term, would compromise the very rationale of NATO’s continued existence.

To put it bluntly, the Baltic states need to be given a clear indication as to their future membership. We in Lithuania believe that the 2002 Prague Summit is the right place and time for the invitation to our country to be issued. The symbolism of invitations from Prague has been very aptly described by President Vaclav

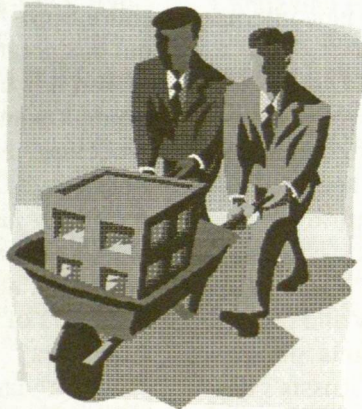
ANTANAS VALIONIS is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Committee of Political Affairs of the Parliamentary Assembly of NATO. He delivered this address on May 29, 2001 in Vilnius, during the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

Havel in his recent discourse in Bratislava, and I can but second his thoughts on the issue.

We are fully aware that NATO is not a social club. Costs and responsibilities are involved. But let me state very clearly: since reestablishing independence, Lithuania has been a supplier, and not a consumer, of security, politically and materially. What better proof of our contribution to overall security and stability than our good neighborhood policy, pursued by Lithuania from the very first days as a reestablished democracy?

Close Baltic cooperation; the strategic partnership with Poland, ending a long history of rivalry and conflict; the prudent but successful balancing act with Belarus; our policy regarding the Kaliningrad Region; our relations with Russia, on various occasions described as excellent by top Russian authorities, the recent state visit by President Adamkus to Moscow being just another example of the intense and open dialogue between our two countries; finally the "Vilnius Nine" process, started here a year ago, whereby we, the applicants, have clearly demonstrated our resolve to act as allies and to be together with the current members of the Alliance... All this speaks for Lithuania's determination to continue its role as a stabilizing factor in the region.

Furthermore, we have strongly and promptly supported all NATO decisions on the Balkans and other international issues. Through the MAP process we continuously adjust and modify various spheres of activities in keeping with NATO membership requirements. Lithuanian troops and civilian police have been on the ground in Bosnia-Herzegovina and then in Kosovo, since 1994. In 2002 Lithuania will have one high readiness battalion; which means that 700 soldiers will be ready to act for six months in any stabilizing operation abroad. By 2006 we shall have a high readiness brigade in place, ready for Arti-



cle 5 as well as for non-Article 5 operations.

Lithuania has been steadily increasing its defense budget, which today is at 1.95 per cent and in the year 2002 will reach 2 per cent of the nation's GDP. Lithuania's economic situation leaves no room for doubt regarding the implementation of this commitment.

This being said, it is important that both candidate countries and the Alliance should operate on the basis of a clear set of principles, without turning membership criteria into a sort of moving target, adjustable on a case-by-case basis. To quote Zbigniew Brzezinski at the Bratislava conference two weeks ago, "for the sake of political confidence among aspirant countries, the process of admission should be made more objective, more predictable, and more credible, even if ultimately still guided by political and strategic considerations". Indeed, "it is time to end the uncertainty".

And this brings me to the "special case" discussions. We'll be happy to hear you say that the atmosphere of Vilnius is special indeed, or that we boast a special historic and natural heritage; we admit that we have a special weakness for basketball, for that matter. But,

frankly, we in Lithuania are sick and tired of being labeled a "special case" in terms of NATO enlargement.

Are we a "special case" because we, too, adhere to the fundamental political principles such as the rule of law, respect for human rights and liberties, democratic political system, political pluralism, civil society, and market economy?

Are we "special" because we believe in the inherent necessity to contribute to collectively safeguarding these principles and thus seek to become part of the institution that has proven validity and capacity in doing that?

Or are we a "special case" because, just like the current members of the Alliance, we

believe in the necessity of standing out together against the new unpredictable threats emerging in the modern world?

Let us put things straight. The only special thing is the still lingering, I'd say, anachronistic fear that inviting the Baltic states to join the Alliance would mean trespassing the mythical red line. I see it differently: inviting the Baltic nations would mean restoring historic justice and the rightful place in European affairs to the three nations, whose destinies had been marred first by the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, then, by Soviet annexation and Yalta.

And then, the Soviet Union is no longer there.

Cold war is long over.

And NATO is a different thing altogether, having successfully transformed its mission in keeping with the exigencies of the new international environment.

It is this transformed, new NATO that Lithuania seeks to join, as we believe in exactly the same set of values and principles that keeps the Alliance together. And because being part of the Alliance would confirm the irreversibility of Lithuania's democratic choice and give added value to Lithuania's efforts to contribute to international stability and peace.

NATO's enlargement to Lithuania and the other Baltic states cannot damage Russia's democratic development, as is often argued, simply because a democratic process cannot undermine another democratic process. For it is not the democratic Russia that vehemently opposes Baltic membership.

And it was not the democratic Russia that opposed the accession of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary...

But the first enlargement took place, and the latter-day "Cassandras" had to bite their tongues: nothing happened, except that the relations between the three new allies and Russia have gained a new and positive quality.

The democratic Russia will gain from the further extension of the zone of democracy and stability to its borders. To quote the German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, "Russia's west-

ern border is also secure because NATO members contribute to the stability in its immediate vicinity. ...And security and stability for the nations of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, which are to be promoted by opening up NATO, are also in Russia's interest."¹

As an ally, Lithuania will be among the most outspoken supporters of a comprehensive and open dialogue between the Alliance and Russia. Because life does not stop with our accession to the Alliance, and Russia will continue being our largest and most important neighbor. Our recent bilateral actions, such as the Nida Initiative, the Northern Dimension initiatives, additional bilateral confidence building measures, our policy towards the Kaliningrad Region, speak for themselves. We cannot imagine the future of Europe and the entire Euro-Atlantic space being shaped without this great country, Russia.

But it is up to Russia itself to decide to what extent it wants to be part of the integration processes. Nobody can isolate Russia, but for Russia itself.

On our part, we, the candidates, have made our choice and have reiterated this choice, in one voice, at the recent meeting of the Prime Ministers of the nine applicant countries in Bratislava.

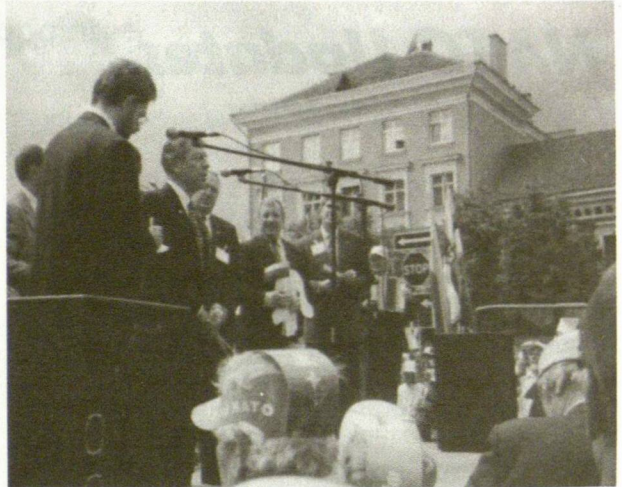
In Lithuania, this choice was stated once again, firmly and clearly, last week, in a joint accord of eleven main political parties, reaffirming Lithuania's resolve to seek NATO membership and to actively participate in European common foreign and security policy. And in an appeal by twenty-three Lithuanian youth organizations, calling on NATO to invite Lithuania to join the Alliance in the year 2002.

Now it is the moment for you to make your choices. And as you do so, we hope that Lithuania will not be punished a second time, simply because its transformation has been too successful and peaceful to glue the world's worried attention. ♦

¹ Citation from *Die Zeit*, 2001 April 5.

Sara Perkins

U.S. Delegation's Impressions of NATO Parliamentary Trip



U.S. Sen. George V. Voinovich speaks at a rally on Lithuania's independence.

Senator George V. Voinovich, along with Senators Gordon Smith (R-OR), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Richard Durbin (D-IL) participated in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Vilnius, Lithuania in late May.

The delegation traveled to Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia where they observed what each country was doing to prepare for NATO membership. Voinovich met personally with the leaders from these countries as well as toured their defense facilities. He later stated that he was very impressed with the state of their militaries and with their commitment to the principles of democracy and open society, which are fundamental beliefs of NATO countries.

"I met with leaders from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and heard their appeals to belong to NATO and was impressed when I saw what each country was doing to prepare for membership," he stated.

During their stop in Vilnius, Lithuania, Voinovich was particularly thrilled when he spoke before a crowd of 1,500 people in the public square about his long-standing support of independence for Lithuania. He later described the experience as a "a memory for my lifetime".

While in Lithuania, he also met with Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus and toured a military defense facility in Karmelava and the Baltic Battalion training base in Rukla.

During the meeting, the delegates agreed on two resolutions: one to expand the NATO Alliance during the 2002 summit in Prague and another encouraging countries Southeast Europe to continue their move forward to increase stability, democracy and lasting security, while also expressing NATO's commitment to the region during that process.

On their way back from the NATO meeting, the delegation also visited Poland, which was recently admitted into NATO in March 1999. While there, they visited with the President and Prime Minister of Poland and discussed how important NATO expansion was to the security of Europe and to the United States by providing a strong partner in addressing global challenges and opportunities. Finally, Voinovich stated that he was pleased that President Bush took a strong position on NATO expansion during his recent trip to Europe. During his remarks in Poland, the president stressed the importance of bringing in new members and how that can extend security and stability throughout Europe. ♦

SARA PERKINS works in the office of U.S. Senator George V. Voinovich, Washington, D.C. Photo from Sen. Voinovich's office.

NATO Updates...

From the Baltic News Service

U.S. Congress Advisers Sum Up Their Visit to Lithuania

Lithuania's aspiration to join NATO is getting more support and understanding in Washington, a delegation of U.S. congress advisers said after meeting Lithuanian Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis in Vilnius on Aug. 17th. The delegation, including influential advisers to the members of the Senate and House of Representatives Foreign Relations, Armed Services and Appropriations Committees, arrived for a four-day visit in Lithuania Aug 16th.

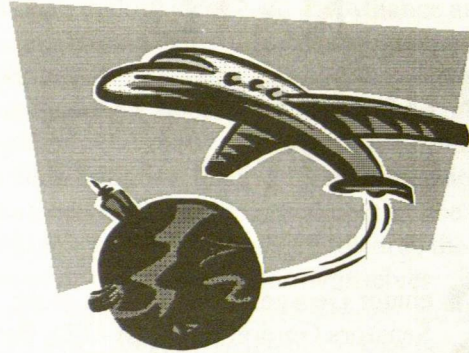
Daiva Rimašauskaitė, the head of the ministry's press office, told BNS that the visiting U.S. Senate and House of Representatives advisers assured Valionis that the United States' support to Lithuanian NATO aims and the understanding is growing stronger. The advisers said the support would become more evident when processes related with NATO enlargement become more active in U.S. policy this fall.

The U.S. delegation inquired about the Lithuanian economic situation, public support to NATO membership, and the position NATO member-states have taken with regard to the Baltics' future membership in the alliance. The advisers also applauded the improving relations between Lithuania and its neighbors and the developing cooperation with the neighboring Russian Kaliningrad region.

"Some of the efforts you're making are striking," Philip Petersen, head of the U.S. Potomac Fund that organized the visit of the advisers to Lithuania said, laying special emphasis on the activity of the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington.

Speaking about possible obstacles on Lithuania's road to NATO, representatives of the U.S. delegation pointed to possible changes in Lithuania's political climate and the meeting of commitments, especially those on defense spending.

Committee on Foreign Affairs chairman Gediminas Kirkilas claimed the majority of Lithuanians support NATO membership and that those having doubts do so because of their difficult social situation and disappointment with the authorities. He



also underscored that the major parties agree on the foreign policy goals, and the Social Democrat Algirdas Brazauskas-led government, which took office in July, is not intending to deviate from them.

Petersen said one or all three of the Baltic states should be admitted into the alliance in order to modernize Russia. "It would help to modernize Russia. I believe that the Russian President Vladimir Putin is aware of it. I believe that we may help Putin to take Russia out of the 18th century," he said.

Head of the staff of the Foreign Affairs Committee's Sub-Committee on European Affairs, Vincent Morelli, said Congress will launch debates on the draft law on NATO enlargement in September. In the law, the Congress is intending to approve enlargement and financial support to the candidate states.

According to Morelli, the presentation of the draft law in the House of Representatives should coincide with the visit of Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus to Washington, scheduled for September 9-16.

It is the fourth such visit of the U.S. Congress advisers to Lithuania. ♦

Head of Lithuanian Land Forces Appointed

Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus appointed former military envoy to NATO and the Western European Union (WEU), Valdas Tutkus, to head the country's land forces, presidential adviser for defense matters Darius Kalibatas announced on Aug. 13th.

The post of commander of ground forces – essential to Lithuania's army – was created in a law on the organization of the country's national defense system and military service adopted in 1998, although it has remained unfilled until now.

Under the law, the commander of ground forces is at the same time deputy commander of the military, and in case of hostilities, the commander of ground forces is in charge of military operations.

Tutkus, 40, has studied at the Tashkent School of Infantry Commanders, the Moscow Military Academy, and the NATO Defense College in Rome. He returned to Lithuania earlier this month

after spending two years in Brussels. He was replaced by Lieutenant Colonel Alvydas Kunigėlis in the position in Belgium.

Three types of armed forces serve under the Lithuanian military – air, ground and sea forces. Lithuania's Ground Forces are in charge of military defense of the state's territory and defense of the state. The Lithuanian Air Force is in charge of controlling, defending and protecting airspace and supporting ground forces, naval forces, and search and rescue operations. The Lithuanian Navy is responsible for territorial waters and Lithuania's exclusive economic zone at sea, defending the coastline and shipping, evacuation, search and rescue and other specialized tasks.

Colonel Edvardas Mažeikis is commander of the Lithuanian Air Force, and sea captain Kęstutis Mačijauskas is commander of the Lithuanian Navy. ♦

Lithuania's NATO Accession Will Strengthen Ties With Kaliningrad

NATO enlargement and Lithuanian membership in the alliance will contribute to the development of relations between Lithuania and the neighboring Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, as well as to Russia's cooperation with NATO, Lithuanian ambassador in Washington has said.

Lithuanian Ambassador to the U.S., Vygaudas Ušackas said this in a private meeting with Kaliningrad region Governor, Admiral Vladimir Yegorov on Aug 13th. Ušackas also met with Kaliningrad regional Duma Chairman Vladimir Nikitin.

Ušackas, while on vacation in western Lithuanian sea resort Nida, told BNS he went to the neighboring Kaliningrad region to visit Yegorov, with whom he has been acquainted for several years. Ušackas and Admiral Yegorov met when the latter headed Russia's Baltic Fleet and Ušackas worked as director of the Political Department at the Foreign Ministry and later was deputy foreign minister, participating in the drawing of Kaliningrad into European cooperation.

One of the major tasks of Ušackas' diplomatic mission in Washington is mobilizing political support to Lithuania's NATO membership. Lithuania is expecting an invitation to the alliance at its summit scheduled for autumn 2002 in Prague.

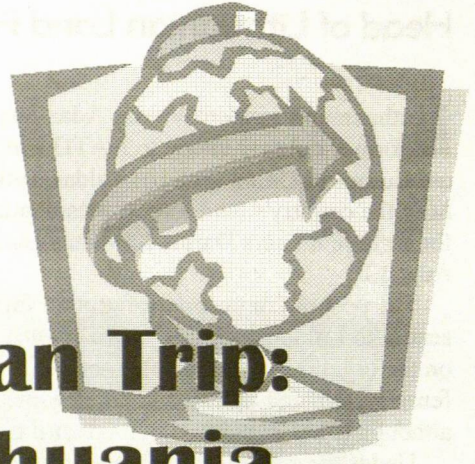
Russia is negatively disposed towards the prospect of NATO enlargement to the Baltic states, also fearing that its greatly militarized enclave of Kaliningrad, surrounded by Poland and Lithuania, would be isolated as a result of the alliance expansion. ♦



Ina Navazelskis

No More Munichs No More Yaltas

Bush's European Trip: Impact on Lithuania



U.S. President George W. Bush's trip to Europe in mid-June was good news for Lithuania. Ten years after independence, geopolitically Lithuania still remains in murky territory. Russia, emphasizing geographical proximity – and therefore, implicit legitimacy to domination – calls her the "near abroad", while western powers, emphasizing political affinity, call her one of post-Communist Europe's "transitional democracies." Thus, ten years on, Lithuania is still not entirely free from Russian pretensions to control – or at the very least, influence – and still not yet firmly anchored in western economic, political and military structures.

In other words, Lithuania is not yet where she wants to be.

She wants to be part of the EU and NATO. And it was Lithuania's – as well as Estonia's, Latvia's and several other post-communist countries' – aspirations to join NATO that was high on the president's agenda. Although not singling out any country by name, in his talks in Europe President Bush sent the unmistakable message that they all should take heart – they were on the way.

"All of Europe's new democracies," he said in a keynote speech in Warsaw on June 15th, "from

the Baltic to the Black Sea and all that lie between, should have the same chance for security and freedom – and the same chance to join the institutions of Europe – as Europe's old democracies have." As far as the U.S. was concerned, Bush implied the door for Lithuania to NATO will be open very soon indeed.

This message came in the context of a much broader one, far more significant in geopolitical terms. Bush used his first European trip to introduce his administration's policy for a new European order in the wake of Communist collapse on the continent a decade ago. To the degree that this policy – and Bush himself – will be accepted, is the degree to which Lithuania's hopes, at least in the short term, for early NATO membership depend.

More than the other applicants from post-Communist Europe, the Baltic countries present the Western alliance with a thorny challenge. If accepted into NATO, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia would be the first countries from the territory of the former Soviet Union to become members.

Predictably, Moscow is not pleased. Russia's leaders are voicing even more opposition – complete with dire predictions of destabilizing the less-than-stable U.S.-Russian relationship even further – than with the first wave of NATO

INA NAVAZELSKIS was a staff member of the Washington, D.C. Lithuanian-American Community Office during the 2001 summer.

enlargement to former Soviet bloc countries of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic a few years ago. Understandably, the western democracies do not wish to antagonize Russia. It is not surprising that Lithuania, therefore, feared that her efforts to join NATO might become victim in the inevitable global chess playing where certain interests are sacrificed for the sake of other ones. Given the other goals the U.S. president was hoping to achieve, it was not clear how strongly – if at all – he would support NATO's second wave of enlargement.

So like the rest of Europe, Lithuania waited to hear what the new president – five months in office, and as yet untested on foreign affairs – would say.

The worst did not happen. Gintė Damušis, Lithuania's ambassador to NATO in Brussels, said that the major gain for Lithuania from Bush's trip was that "the possibility that the second wave of expansion might not happen, or would be postponed" was removed from the negotiating table. Referred to as the "zero option", this possibility had hung in the air for months, and the fact that it was dismissed, Damušis said, was no small achievement.

According to Damušis, "The clarity with which the U.S. put forward its position on the NATO enlargement question encouraged other NATO members to state their own views more forcefully in Brussels. From discussions with the representatives of other members during the NATO summit meeting, I was able to learn that at least one third of these NATO members mentioned the Baltic States in a positive manner. This gives not only Lithuania and the other Baltic States hope, but also the NATO members themselves."

The U.S. position for NATO's expansion indeed left no doubt. "The question of "when" may still be up for debate within NATO," Bush told a cheering crowd of Poles in Warsaw. "The question of "whether" should not be. As we plan to enlarge NATO, no nation should be used as a pawn in the agendas of others. We will not trade away the fate of free European peoples. No more Munichs. No more Yaltas."

As a result, "champagne corks were popping in Riga, Tallinn, and Vilnius, and rightly so,"

wrote Robert Kagan, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in the *Washington Post*.

Bush's Trip to Europe: Background Factors

The stakes were high for President Bush in Europe. He needed his trip to be a success. He needed to establish himself as a leader to be taken seriously in global affairs, one who would inspire respect and confidence amongst other world leaders.

This desired outcome was far from assured. Since coming into office five months ago, the view in European capitals about Bush's leadership qualities on the world stage had been – at best – very reserved. Headlines of major Europeans newspapers were sharply critical of the U.S. President. Bush had no knowledge and even less little interest in foreign affairs, they claimed. Bush was a stereotypical American leader who, while ignorant of the rest of the world, was ready to throw the weight of the U.S.' superpower status around when he wanted to and didn't care what anyone else thought of it. Bush supported policies – such as the death penalty – considered barbaric in most of Western Europe.

Indeed, the Bush administration had gotten off to a shaky start in foreign matters. Bush's first international decision – to veto/break the the Kyoto Agreement, which dealt with global environmental issues, did not sit well with Europe's leaders, most of whom supported it. The differences were not only in policy, but also in style. Europeans hadn't liked the manner in which Bush had made his decision – unilaterally, they charged – without consulting them. In addition, during the president's first days in Europe, he was dogged by demonstrators, protesting the death penalty. His trip took place within days of the execution by lethal injection of Timothy McVeigh, the convicted Oklahoma City bomber of a federal building there several years ago – which had resulted in the deaths of over 160 people, including many children.

Then there was the matter of the agenda items of the trip itself. By no means were all of NATO's strongest members in agreement of the

alliance's proposed eastern expansion. The UK, Germany and France were jittery about it, fearing to antagonize Russia. Nor were many of them happy about Bush's other major agenda items – his proposed missile defense plans and desire to scrap ABM treaty that the U.S. had signed with the Soviet Union in the 1970's which prohibited the U.S. from developing a missile defense shield which Bush now wanted.

Russia was firmly opposed to doing away with the ABM. NATO's response to the ongoing crises in the Balkans – particularly in Macedonia – was also on the agenda. And finally, the largest question for Europeans was what kind of role did the U.S. see itself playing in European affairs in the future. Would it pull back from its current commitments? Would it choose to no longer be a European power?

It is in this context that Lithuania's push for acceptance into NATO must be viewed.

Bush had five days to change the low expectations that Europe seemed to have of him. And in 122 hours, logging almost 10,800 miles (10,799 to be exact), visiting five countries, meeting with over twenty world leaders, participating in four summit meetings, he more or less did. He started his trip in Spain, on more familiar territory, as Spain's is one of the few conservative governments left in the EU – and he was personally acquainted with King Juan Carlos. Then it was on to Brussels for a meeting with NATO allies, then to Sweden for EU talks, then Poland, where Bush rolled out his proposal for a new Europe, and finally to Slovenia on the last day for a day-long meeting with President Vladimir Putin of Russia.

Build-up Before the Trip

There had been a great deal of talk about NATO enlargement on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean in the weeks preceding the trip. While support for it was more lukewarm in western European capitals, strong support – particularly for Baltic aspirations – came from Central Europe. President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic told journalists after meeting with Latvian Prime Minister Andris Berzins on June 12th that the decision regarding admitting the Baltic



States into NATO " will be a clear test and a sign of whether the world is really ready and wants to build a new, more just order".

His views were echoed by others. In editorial pages of major American newspapers, several commentators urged support for the same position. For example, Jan Nowak, former consultant to the U.S. National Security Council and former director of the Polish Service at Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, wrote in the *Washington Times* on June 13th that "admission of these small democracies into NATO offers the best chance to prevent the outbreak of a second Cold War," and warned that "over the past year, there has been an ominous escalation of Russia's threats to its Baltic neighbors" complete with issuing statements that they had joined the Soviet Union in June 1940 "at their own request."

Likewise, there was considerable bi-partisan support for the Baltic States from the U.S. Capitol. In a letter signed June 8th, half a dozen U.S. senators – including Senators Richard Durbin (D), Jesse Helms (R), George Voinovich (R), Gordon Smith (R), Barbara Mikulski (D), and George Allen (R) – wrote that by late 2002, the Baltic States will have met NATO membership requirements. "Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are models of how to transform successfully and peacefully into free market democracies," the letter stated, "... They have embraced civilian control of their militaries, they have participated in

international peacekeeping, and they have demonstrated their ability to operate with the military forces of NATO countries under NATO standards."

Similarly, Senator Richard Lugar told the CSIS Washington Roundtable on June 13th that for NATO's enlargement "the defining issue will be the Baltic states. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are among the great success stories of Europe's post-communist transition. Their illegal annexation by the Soviet Union sixty years ago should not determine Western policy today. If the Baltic States continue to perform and meet our standards, we should bring them in – all of them – at Prague."

Lugar also told his audience that the U.S. "must finish the job of overcoming Europe's Cold War divisions... we must adapt our strategic alliances to meet the challenges of the future."

Thus in Congress, at conferences and symposia in Washington and elsewhere, on television news programs, momentum grew, and support for Lithuania's admission to NATO was far stronger than opposition to it. That opposition, when it was voiced, especially by high-ranking visitors from the Russian government at symposia such as once at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, just days before Bush's trip to Russia, was met by almost a uniform response from Americans – "NATO is going to enlarge, and you will have to get used to it."

Munich, Yalta and History

History was invoked repeatedly throughout President Bush's trip – in particular in Warsaw, where Bush delivered his keynote European address. There was, of course, a particular symbolism and resonance that Bush chose Warsaw in which to deliver it.

"Yalta did not ratify a natural divide," he told the Poles. "It divided a living civilization. The partition of Europe was not a fact of geography. It was an act of violence. Our goal is to erase the false lines. Our goal is to erase the false lines that have divided Europe for too long. The future of every European nation must be determined by the progress of internal reform, not the interests of outside powers."

Predictably, the Poles – and not only the Poles – cheered. Many political analysts said that Bush's had been a calculated move, well suited to the president's own agenda. He could count on more support from Poland than from other European nations further west, and what he had to say would be far more popular in Poland than in other European capitals.

And indeed, it was. In a city which had suffered much as a result of global diplomacy half a century ago when appeasement had been the order of the day. When Bush invoked Munich, he referred to the disastrous policy of appeasement championed by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, when in 1938 in Munich, the western powers gave in to Nazi leader Adolf Hitler's demands to annex Czechoslovakia. This appeasement to blatant Nazi aggression very soon resulted in World War II. And by Yalta, Bush referred to the meeting in that Soviet resort in 1945 when U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin divided Europe into spheres of influence, effectively condemning Central and Eastern Europe to half a century of Soviet occupation and domination.

This sorry history was certainly on the minds on Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians – in fact, very much so. While Bush was introducing a policy to try to undo the damage wrought by Munich and Yalta, Balts were commemorating the disastrous results of those two appeasements. In mid-June Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians commemorated the 60th anniversary of deportations of people from the Baltic States to Siberia that the Soviet Union commenced in June 1941 and ended only over a decade later. This had been a direct result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, when the two dictatorships divided up the territories of their nervous neighbors sandwiched in between them. That pact was made possible because of the Munich appeasement, which had preceded it, emboldening Hitler to prepare for war, and emboldening Stalin to grab the Baltic States.

Western correspondents reporting out of Vilnius filed stories about the commemoration of the deportations. "With prayers and hymns out-

side a former KGB headquarters, veterans of the mass deportation of Lithuanians by Stalin yesterday remembered the day exactly 60 years ago they were herded into cattle [cars] and exiled to Siberia." reported Marcus Warren in the British newspaper the *Daily Telegraph* on June 15th – the day of Bush's speech in Warsaw.

One former exile from this event, Stasys Goberis – who had been 12 years old when secret policemen had walked into his bedroom and told him to prepare for a journey which ultimately lasted 27 years – told Warren that "joining NATO is exceptionally important. Russia is run by the ex-KGB and the generals. It is a very dangerous situation."

Indeed, other Western correspondents and commentators noted that the version of history being publicized in Moscow was quite different. Ominously, in recent months newspapers in Moscow once again invoked the old myth that the Baltic States had joined the Soviet Union voluntarily in 1940.

Likewise, in Estonia, president Lennart Meri had spent three weeks traveling around the country to personally meet about 7,000 survivors of those deportations. And NATO enlargement was very much on his mind.

"Estonia is expecting to join NATO," Meri said. "It'll mean our children and our children's children won't have to be worried about their security. Let them be worried about their math homework instead."

What now?

By and large, President Bush achieved what he set out to do in Europe. If he had been viewed with skepticism as ill-equipped to be the leader of the world's remaining superpower when he arrived, by the time he left five days later, much had happened to change this.

As Lithuania's ambassador to the U.S., Ušackas said, "In a meeting with the ambassadors of foreign governments here in Washington, it was clear that they were impressed with his vision."

Reaction in Lithuania, says Ušackas, was likewise "very positive. "We were all waiting for leadership." he said. Ušackas further says

that the Europe trip "commits the U.S. administration to NATO enlargement and that pressure must be kept up on the administration to follow through."

"Everyone is very impressed by his strongly-expressed will" says Ušackas of Bush's speech. "But there is not yet an answer to the questions of "What's next?" "What procedures do we follow?"

President Bush's visit set the agenda, the tone, and the timetable. It was determined that the decision of which countries to invite to join NATO will be made in Prague at the next NATO summit meeting in Prague in November 2002. That is less than a year and a half away.

Perhaps the final words on what to do should be left to Lithuania's diplomats, who work on the NATO question on a daily basis. Ambassador Damušis and Ambassador Ušackas are among those most closely associated with the NATO enlargement for Lithuania. Both say the same thing – while the news is good, there is a great deal still left to do. And Lithuania needs everyone's support, especially that of Lithuanian-Americans.

Says Ambassador Damušis: "I am not one of those who continuously repeats that Lithuania's chances to become a NATO member are very good. There are many factors which will determine whether Lithuania will be invited to join – and not all of them depend on Lithuania... However, there are also political factors, for example, the will by NATO's current members to take the political decision for inviting new members. The support and activism of Lithuanian-Americans helps to support and strengthen the U.S. position, not only in regard to the necessity and usefulness of NATO enlargement as a whole, but specifically for Lithuania's membership. The U.S. still takes a leadership role."

Vygaudas Ušackas joins Damušis, and says that much will still have to be done in Lithuania as well – particularly regarding the allocation of resources to the defense budget. He likewise recognizes the significant impact that Lithuanian-Americans have on Congress and the White House. His message to the Lithuanian-American community is simple and as clear as President Bush's speech was: "Keep working!" ♦

From the 50th Anniversary Committee of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

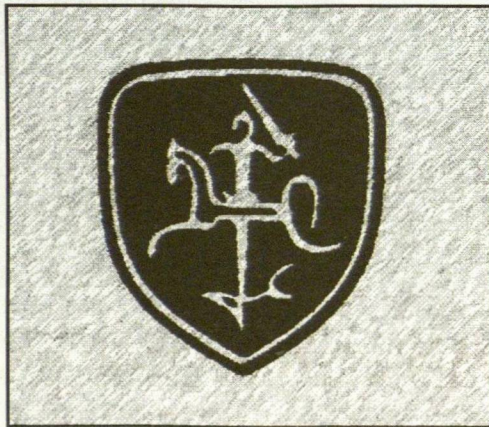
THE LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY, INC.

Fifty Years Young 1951 - 2001

This year, the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. (LAC) is celebrating its 50th year anniversary.

This uniquely organized body with over 60 chapters throughout the United States — incorporating one and all of Lithuanian heritage — shapes and drives the activities which preserve our traditions and enrich the nation in which we live. The extensive network of Lithuanian heritage schools, folk dance and song festivals, sports events, an array of cultural activities, diversity of publications (including *BRIDGES*) and numerous organizations have endeavored to keep alive our spirit and traditions that feed it.

The Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. has witnessed and experienced the sorrows, hopes and triumphs of an occupied, fighting and, finally, free Lithuania. Throughout this process, the Community has banded us all together to ensure the survival and growth of our



unique culture so that it wasn't lost, but stayed alive.

Now, as our homeland faces decades of regrowth, the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. is there to lend a helping hand — to the ailing child, to the orphan, to the lonely aged, to the former political prisoners and partisans, to those arriving on these American shores and looking for more secure life to help support family members left behind. The Community gently prods U.S. political leaders not to overlook, but help in Lithuania's efforts to become a full-fledged member of the world community of free, politically, and economically secure nations.

All this is being done while, at the same time, continuing the nurturing process of preserving the Lithuanian heritage for future generations of Lithuanian-Americans. The process — begun 50 years ago — continues to evolve, to grow, to keep pace with new chal-

lenges of changing times.

Through the end of this year and into the next, many of the original chapters will hold jubilee celebrations. From October 9th through 14th, 2001, in Chicago, an array of activities are planned to kick off the main celebration of this auspicious anniversary.

We invite you to take note of these activities, and plan to participate in the meetings, concerts, exhibits, and commemorative religious services.

A highlight of the October celebrations is a concert tour by Lithuania's eminent and world acclaimed Boys' Choir *Ažuoliukas* under the direction of Vytautas Miškinis.

LAC EVENTS IN THE CHICAGO AREA

October 8-11, 2001 Meetings of the Joint Commission of Lithuanian Parliament and LAC Board of Directors, Lithuanian World Center, 14911 127th St., Lemont, IL.

October 12-13, 2001 Annual meeting of LAC Board of Directors, Radisson Hotel, Alsip, IL.

Saturday, October 13, 2001 LAC 50th Anniversary Observance and Celebration, Lithuanian Youth Center, 5600 South Claremont Ave., Chicago, IL.

- **5:00 PM** - Opening of Photo Exhibit "Fifty Years of Community Commitment".
- **6:00 PM** - Official Jubilee Observance followed by entertainment featuring Lithuanian Heritage School students, Folk Dance Group GRANDIS and choir DAINAVA.

Sunday, October 14, 2001 Religious Services of Thanksgiving

- **10:30 AM** - Mass of Thanksgiving, Nativity BVM Lithuanian R.C. Church, South Washtenaw Ave. at 69th St., Lithuanian Plaza. Main celebrant Rev. Bishop Jonas Kauneckas, Auxiliary Bishop of Telšiai, Lithuania

- **10:30 AM** Service of Thanksgiving, Lithuanian Evangelical Home Church, 6641 South Troy St., Chicago, IL. Rev. Bishop Hansas G. Dumpys, officiating.

Sunday, October 14, 2001 Concert by Boys' Choir *Ažuoliukas* from Lithuania, Maria High School Auditorium, Corner 67th and California Streets, Marquette Park, Chicago, IL.

- Tickets: \$25, 20, \$15 on sale at Lithuanian Human Services Office, 2711 West 71st St., Chicago. Tel. (773) 476-2655.

On this jubilee occasion, we extend our most sincere thanks for your past support and participation. At the same time, we are asking for your continued active involvement and financial assistance so that endeavors begun 50 years ago, can continue and flourish.

For information about Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. in general and the location of your nearest LAC Chapter, visit our website: javlb.org

If you would like to donate to the LAC's future, please mail checks payable to *Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.* to:

Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

Mr. Ramutis Pliura, Treasurer

1927 West Blvd.

Racine, WI 53403 ♦

Marija Remys

Singing from the Heart



Ažuoliukas means a small oak tree in Lithuanian. Yet, to many people this word is associated with a choir. *Ažuoliukas* is the name of a well-known Boys' Choir (teenagers' and male choirs, too), which has delighted the public for 40 years and won awards at Lithuanian and International choir competitions. All its achievements have been reached through long hours of hard work and skill of the teachers. The choir found its way to the children's hearts and taught them to pursue a charming goal.

Ažuoliukas did not give music lessons alone. Until 1990, while Lithuania was incorporated in the Soviet Union, the choir repeatedly experienced the pressure of the Soviet system when culture and art were fitted into one frame. The achievements of small nations won recognition only with great difficulties. Nevertheless, the choir continued to sing louder and bolder. It

proved to the world that Lithuania existed and that her people were alive and talented.

Prof. Hermanas Perelšteinis established the boys' choir in 1959 at a small club in Vilnius. The number of children in the choir constantly grew, and five years later there was not enough room for 40 boys in the small hall. The Vilnius Teachers' House took in *Ažuoliukas* (they hold rehearsals there even today). The small choir of little boys began to expand and gain fame. The repertoire featured not only children's songs, but also complicated pieces.

The Choir's repertoire consists of contemporary and classical secular and religious music. A significant part of it is accompanied by orchestra. Pieces performed by the choir include:

- *Requiem* by Mozart
- *The War Requiem* by Britten
- *Dido and Aeneas* by Purcell
- *Gloria, Stabat Mater* by Poulenc

MARIJA REMYS is the chairperson of the Cultural Affairs Council of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

- *Die Jahreszeiten* by Haydn
- *Alexander Nevsky* by Prokofiev
- *Magnificat* by Bach
- *Symphonies Nr. 2, 3, 8* by Mahler
- *Tosca* by Puccini
- *La domination de Faust* by Berlioz
- *Don't Touch a Blue Globe* by Balsys
- *Gloria* by V. Augustinas and others.

Vytautas Miškinis is the Artistic Director of the *Ažuoliukas* Boys' and Male Choir since 1979. He is also Professor of Choral Conducting at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and the President of the Lithuanian Choral Union.

He began his career in *Ažuoliukas* at the age of seven as a vocalist, and continued as Artistic Director from the age of 25. All the achievements of the choir in the past 20 years have been accomplished under Mr. Miškinis' leadership.

For several years he conducted the Kaunas State Choir and Vocal Ensemble *Museum Musicum*. With the choirs, he has won prestigious prizes at numerous International and National competitions. Currently Mr. Miškinis is an Artistic Director and Chief Conductor of All-Lithuanian Choral Festivals. Vytautas Miškinis has led choral performances in more than 20 countries.

He has lectured and held seminars on the subject of Music education and conducting in Lithuania and abroad. He has participated in numerous National and International choral events as a jury member, conductor, composer and advisor. He has composed approximately 100 religious motets, twelve Masses and approximately 300 secular songs, which are performed by choirs throughout Lithuania and the rest of Europe.

Ažuoliukas has taken part in numerous international festivals. The *Ažuoliukas* male choir won gold and silver medals at the International Choir Contest in Varna, thud place in Gorizzia, third place in Tolosa, first place with the commendation "Excellent Performance at the International Level" at the Chamber Choir Contest in

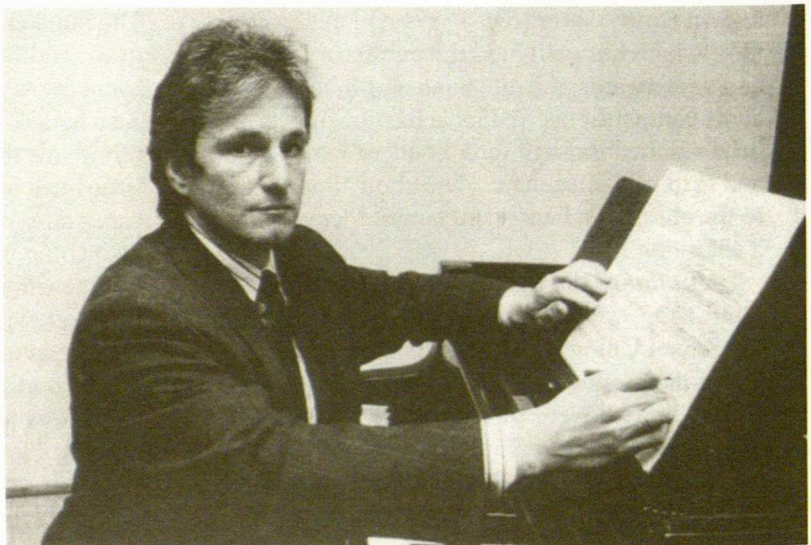
Marktoberdorf. The *Ažuoliukas* Boys' Choir was awarded Grand Prix at the International Contest of Children's Choirs in Nantes. The choir has won almost every Lithuanian choir contest in which it has participated since 1960.

Ažuoliukas has had a numerous concert tours traveling to such countries as Byelorussia, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden and the Ukraine.

The choir has given numerous performances on radio and television as well as recorded about 30 LPs and 11 CDs. A lot of its performances were given together with the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra (under S. Sondeckis), Lithuanian National Symphony Orchestra (under J. Domarkas) and the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra (G. Rinkevičius), as well as with orchestras from other countries.

Today *Ažuoliukas* is eight separate choirs — from little boys' to a male-voice choir. The youngest singers are six years old, while the oldest ones will shortly turn 40. The choir served as a basis for setting up the Vilnius *Ažuoliukas* Music School, founded in 1979, where children acquire a full musical education. They are taught by 50 teachers, eight of whom once sang in the choir themselves.

Rehearsals, concerts and tours...there is one important feature about it. *Ažuoliukas* is a spe-



Choir Director Vytautas Miškinis.



The Ažuoliukas Choir.

cial attraction for Vilnius' young boys. It is like an oasis or one large family who knows the secret joy of being together. The choir's conductor, Miškinis, primarily is an educator and secondly a conductor. The mutual understanding and trust between him and the choir developed in them a need to sing and feel the joy of singing. It enabled them to perform the most complicated musical pieces to perfection.

During the years, more than 6,000 singers have been members of the choir. Its principles of socializing and learning taught them to be independent, responsible, and active, which was very useful in life. You can find former *Ažuoliukas* pupils in every sphere of life.

The *Ažuoliukas* will be performing here in the United States. Their first appearances will be in Washington, D.C.:

- **WASHINGTON, DC**

Friday, October 5, 2001 - 7:00 PM The Church of the Epiphany, 1317 G St., Washington, DC Tickets: \$20, \$15, \$10 (Children and Students). To order tickets call MasterWorks Chorus (301) 840-0008. Information: Ruta Kalvaitis-Skučas, tel.(301) 987-0322, e-mail: RutaKS@aol.com

- **NEW YORK CITY**

Saturday, October 6, 2001, 8:00 PM New York Society of Ethical Culture, 2 West 64th St. (off Central Park West) Tickets: \$30, \$25 (students), children to 10 years of age FREE. Information: Laima Šileikis-Hood, tel. (212) 982-1335, e-mail: ljhood@worldnet.att.net.

- **CLEVELAND, OH**

Friday, October 12, 2001 - 7:00 PM, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Lithuanian Parish Auditorium, 18022 Neff Rd., Cleveland. Tickets: \$20, \$15, \$10 (\$5 Students). Information: Viktoras Šilėnas, tel. (216) 531-8207.

- **SALT LAKE CITY, UT**

Monday, October 15- Sunday, October 21, 2001 - Various times and venues together with children's choirs from over 20 countries in "Voices of Friendship" Festival. Check your local newspapers for announcements of international telecasts of the highlights of the Festival during this week and during 2002 Winter Olympic Games..

- Other performances will be announced. ♦

Sister Ona Mikaila



the story of vilnius cathedral

The Cathedral of Vilnius is the oldest and most important church in Lithuania. Its history touches the very beginnings of Christianity in the country and mirrors the tragedy and triumphs of the faith journey of its people.

Until 1984 there was no archeological evidence that Mindaugas had built a cathedral in Vilnius after he and his family with a group of nobles were baptized in 1251. Pope Innocent IV, very pleased with Mindaugas, wrote in a letter in 1251: "...the noble King Mindaugas has donated land and money for the building of a future cathedral." In 1253 Mindaugas was anointed with holy oils as the first Catholic king of Lithuania.

Almost by accident, traces of Mindaugas' Cathedral were found in 1984. At that time the Cathedral had been turned into an art gallery by the Soviet government. Plans were made by the Institute

for the Preservation of Monuments to install a new ventilation system with air circulating beneath the floor, since the building tended to be damp. Archeologists were called in to dig up the floor; this led to excavations and investigations that unearthed the foundations of a 13th century church with a square tower in the Romanesque style.

Remnants of an ancient structure built of field stones were also found. This evidence substantiated the writings of 14th century historians that Vilnius Cathedral stood on the site of an old pagan shrine or temple that faced the Neris River and had a raised altar with steps leading up to it.

Mindaugas' effort to christianize Lithuania and have her take her place among the cultured Christian nations of Europe failed tragically. He and his family were murdered in 1263 by a faction who bitterly opposed bringing in a religion professed by Lithuania's enemies – the Teutonic Knights. After

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

Mindaugas' death, his Cathedral was probably once again used for pagan ritual until it fell into ruin.

Christianity did come to Lithuania over one hundred years after the tragic death of Mindaugas, ushered in by King Jogaila of Poland and Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania. Both rulers had received baptism in Cracow. The 15th century Polish historian, Jan Dlugoš wrote that in 1378 King Wladislaw (Jogaila's Christian name) had decreed that the old pagan shrine with its altar and perpetual flame be destroyed, since a cathedral would be erected there with its altar on the very spot where the pagan fire used to burn.

Jogaila and Vytautas, determined to bring Christianity to the Lithuanians at long last, made preparations for this event, beginning in the capital city of Vilnius. Among these preparations must have been the rebuilding of the Cathedral. On February 17, 1337, the day on which the Diocese of Vilnius was established, King Jogaila proclaimed: "The church has been erected in our Vilnius Castle, where we have decided to set up the throne of the Bishop of Vilnius." Because the Cathedral was built in the territory of the Lower Castle, residence of Lithuanian rulers, it was referred to as the "castle church".

This Cathedral built by Jogaila did not last very long: some records state that it burned down in 1399, while other historians contend that it was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1419 that ravaged the entire city of Vilnius with its wooden buildings.

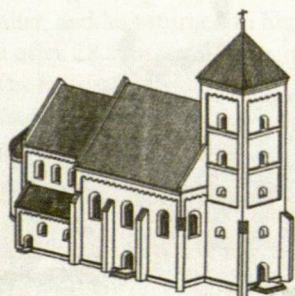
Vytautas proceeded to rebuild the Cathedral from its foundations. The new building was larger and higher in the high Gothic style with a very ornate facade and unequal octagonal spires. Archeological evidence bears out this written description: fragments of the gothic arches and arched windows have been found. Vytautas and his wife Ona were buried in the Cathedral.

Joachim Knackfus' drawings of Jogaila's and Vytautas' Cathedrals are interesting, but their authenticity is debatable. It was thought that in the 18th century someone had traveled to Rome and brought back four drawings of Vilnius Cathedral, which were copied by J. Knackfus, whose father was an architect. These drawings came into the possession of Theodore Narbutas (1784 – 1864) who had them lithographed and used them as illustrations for his nine-volume history of Lithuania (written in Polish).

Vytautas' Gothic Cathedral burned down in 1530, during the reign of Sigismund the Elder. At that time the Bishop of Vilnius was Jonas of the Sigismund ducal family; he undertook the task of rebuilding the Cathedral signing a contract with Italian architect Bernardinus Zanobi in 1534. It was not quite finished, when it caught fire in 1539. Giovanni Cini from Sienna completed construction in about 1545 to 1548. Sigismund the Elder died in 1548, but his wife, Queen Bona Sforza, living in Cracow, ordered an Italian sculptor to make a marble monument for the tomb of Vytautas the Great, and this was delivered in 1545.

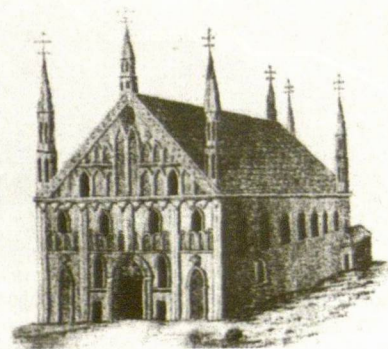
The new Cathedral was attached to the royal residence being built at about the same time, and its appearance was preserved in drawings and engravings made in the 18th century. Pietro Rossi made a well-known sketch of the Cathedral and palace, which unfortunately, was lost. Since it was so popular, several copies were made of it (at least five are known to exist).

Like the mythical phoenix, which dies by fire and keeps rising again from its own ashes, the Vilnius Cathedral did so as well. In 1610, the buildings of the royal residence and the Cathedral were damaged by fire once again and were restored in the Baroque style by Dutch architect Peter Nonhaart. By this time the Cathedral had acquired



Left: 13th cent. Cathedral with square tower. Sketch by N. Kitkauskas.

Right: Vilnius Cathedral in the 14th cent., burnt down in 1530. Sketch by J. Knackfus.



eleven side chapels, most of which were the mausoleums of noble families who were buried there. The most beautiful chapel was dedicated to St. Casimir and completed in 1636. A silver casket with his remains was placed in it. The chapel is richly ornamented Baroque; its walls made of colored marble. Over the altar hangs the famous three-armed painting of the saint. According to legend, the artist made a mistake when painting the saint holding a lily. He then tried to cover up the arm and painted another one, but the first kept showing through. And so St. Casimir was left with three arms.

In the summer of 1655, the Muscovite (Russian) army marched into Vilnius and ravaged the city for six years. The Russians made their headquarters in the royal residence, vandalizing, looting, and burning the palace and the Cathedral. Its interior was badly damaged, and its altars, paintings, and tomb monuments were destroyed. At this time, Vytautas' tomb disappeared.

Finally in 1777, Bishop Ignatius Masalski and the Vilnius Cathedral Chapter hired a young Lithuanian architect by the name of Laurence Stuoka-Gucevičius to restore and remodel the Cathedral. He was known to the bishop, for he had already rebuilt his summer residence at Verkiai, just outside of Vilnius. Gucevičius, the talented son of a serf, had received an excellent education: he studied architecture at the Vilnius Academy (which later became the University of Vilnius) and in Rome. For two years he traveled around Europe observing the architecture in cities like Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen, Lubeck, Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Paris. Gucevičius also taught architecture at his Alma Mater, emphasizing the priority of construction over decoration.

In 1778, he completed the design, and in 1883 the actual construction began. At that time the ar-

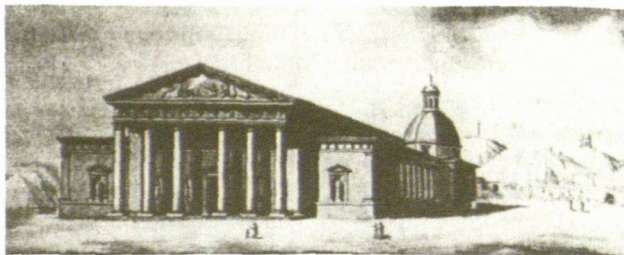
chitect was only 30 years old. He did not live to see the completion of his monumental project in the classical style, and it was finished completely differently from anything that had been done before.

Gucevičius envisioned the Cathedral in the form of a Greek temple with six graceful Doric columns adorning the facade. He brought all the various chapels into a unified whole, leaving the St. Casimir chapel intact. Unfortunately, this talented man died in 1798 without seeing the completion of his work. It was finished by Michael Szulc.

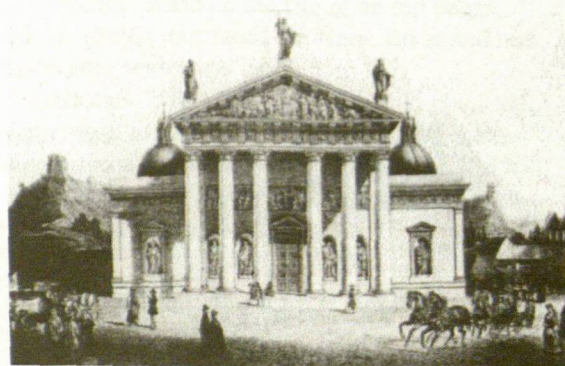
The frontal reliefs and statues for the niches were created by Italian sculptor Tommaso Ruggi. The three statues for the roof were designed by Gucevičius and made by sculptor Karolis Jelskis: the middle one is St. Helena with the cross and on either side stand St. Stanislaus and St. Casimir, patron saints of the Cathedral and of Vilnius.

During the time of Lithuania's independence from 1918 to 1939, Vilnius Cathedral was often referred to as "the white swan of Vilnius". On December 8, 1918, Bishop George Matulaitis was installed in the Cathedral as Bishop of Vilnius. He gave his opening sermon not only in Polish, but also in Lithuanian – something that hadn't been done in four hundred years. Bishop Matulaitis was instrumental in having Pope Benedict XV, who had appointed him bishop, elevate Vilnius Cathedral to the status of basilica in 1922. In 1925, the Diocese of Vilnius became an archdiocese.

During the spring floods of 1931, water seeped into the underground crypts of the Cathedral and cracks had appeared in some of its walls because of its location on damp and silty ground. Extensive repairs were undertaken, and in the course some unusual finds were uncovered: an urn with the heart of King Wladislaw Vaza was found under the altar in St. Casimir's chapel; under the central nave



*Top: Project sketched by L. Stuoka-Gucevičius for the Cathedral.
Right: Vilnius Cathedral in 1854. Sketch by V. Sadovnikov.*



the remains of King Alexander were found and also the remains of Sigismund Augustus' two wives – Elizabeth and Barbara. They were reinterred in new tombs and placed in a special crypt.

Vilnius was returned to Lithuania in 1938, after the Polish occupation from 1919 to 1938. After World War II, Vilnius and its Cathedral came under Soviet domination. In 1945, Archbishop Mečislovas Reinys was appointed apostolic administrator to the Lithuanian part of the Archdiocese of Vilnius (the other part of it was in Poland) by Pope Pius XII. Archbishop Reinys was arrested by the Soviet secret police in 1947 and eventually died a martyr's death in Vladimir prison in Siberia.

By 1949, Vilnius Cathedral stood empty. Members of the Church Committee wrote to Moscow pleading: "...believers look with pain upon this, the 'Mother of all Lithuanian churches' now left without a priest and religious services..." They were also worried about St. Casimir's casket and relics. The Soviet authorities responded by closing the Cathedral in 1950. On March 17, 1952, Bishop K. Paltarokas and a small group of people secretly brought St. Casimir's casket and relics by car to the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul, where they remained until 1989.

Bishop Julian Steponavičius was appointed apostolic administrator of the archdiocese of Vilnius in 1957, but he could not use the Cathedral, nor was he allowed to remain in office for long. In 1961 he was arrested by Soviet authorities and banished to the town of Žagarė in northern Lithuania, near the border with Latvia so that he would not be able to exercise his duties. He lived in exile for 28 years.

In 1988 the Soviet government returned Vilnius Cathedral to the Catholic Church of Lithuania. The winds of freedom were beginning to be felt. Pope John Paul II appointed Julian Steponavičius Archbishop of Vilnius, and he returned to his diocese after 28 years at the age of 78.

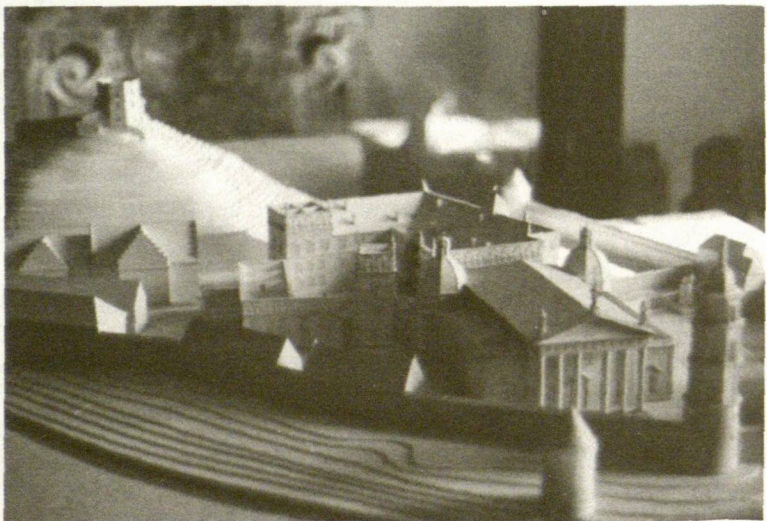
On February 5, 1989, Vilnius Cathedral was reconsecrated. The most poignant moment occurred when Archbishop Steponavičius prostrated himself on the floor before the main altar to atone for the desecration of the house of God. Solemn high Mass followed during which the

Archbishop gave a brief but moving homily:

"Today we must ask pardon and thank the Almighty for allowing us to return to the house of our soul after forty years..." He went on to speak of how the Cathedral had suffered along with its people. From 1950 to 1956, while it had stood empty, it was looted three times. At first the communists said that it was to be used as a workshop to repair tractors; later they said it would be turned into a warehouse. Finally, in 1956, it was turned over to the Art Museum of Vilnius to be made into a picture gallery and concert hall. Then it was returned to the faithful; the Museum people helped to repair and restore it. Although some of its liturgical vestments and vessels had been stolen, many had been secretly hidden away and preserved for this great day.

A month later on the feast of St. Casimir, March 4th, the St. Casimir's silver casket and relics were carried through the streets of Vilnius in solemn procession and returned to their rightful place in his chapel in the Cathedral.

One of the priests who participated in these momentous events, put it well: "Vilnius Cathedral is the barometer of our nation's history. When it is bright, our Cathedral is filled with light; when it is dark, our Cathedral is dark as well. In the course of history, it has often suffered damage, but when our country rose up again, so did our Cathedral." ♦



An architectural depiction of the Cathedral of Vilnius.

Photo: Bernard Narušis

Jeanne Dorr

Christmas in July



Through Lithuanian Orphan Care and writing for *Bridges* I have been given the rare opportunity of meeting people from all over the world. Granted, some I have met only through letters and phone calls, but nevertheless, they have become friends. However, every so often, I manage to meet some of you in person, and through the years Julie Skurdenis and her husband, Paul Lalli, have become two of my dearest friends. Julie and Paul are both college professors in New York, and Julie is also a travel writer.

We both happened to be in Lithuania at the same time. Paul was studying the Lithuanian language at Vilnius University, and Julie was writing travel articles as well as visiting archaeological sites. The couple also sponsor two children through Lithuanian Orphan Care and always visit both families while in Lithuania. When talking to Julie on the phone, I mentioned I would be in Vilnius working with Mrs. Landsbergis and asked her if she would like to join us. She immediately cleared her busy agenda for the following day. I knew it meant making a lot of changes in her already overcrowded schedule, but children are a priority with Julie.

Please relax and join us on a trip we made with Gražina Landsbergis, wife of Professor Vytautas Landsbergis. Mrs. Landsbergis is a mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother and her love for

Lithuania's children runs deep. She knows the children she helps and is aware of their circum-

stances and the reasons they need help. In fact, she told Julie that one of the children she sponsors was quite ill during the winter and that Orphan Care helped with the medicine the young boy needed. Although Julie corresponds with the boy's mother, she was unaware of just how ill the child was during the winter.

While we were traveling, Mrs. Landsbergis told us a very heart warming story. A young man entered her office, and she had no idea who he was. He was well dressed and handed her an envelope containing \$2,500. He wanted her to know how grateful he was for the help he and his family received from Orphan Care when they were destitute. He and his siblings were very young when their father was killed in an accident, and four years later their mother died of cancer. Their aunt took them into her house as well as into her heart. But it was so difficult trying to meet even their basic needs. There just wasn't enough money.

At this point, the children received help from Lithuanian Orphan Care. This made the difference in keeping the family together. Over the years, the children grew and did well in school, but tragedy struck again. The young man's brother was coming home from school when thugs jumped him. Before the police could reach him, he was beaten to death.

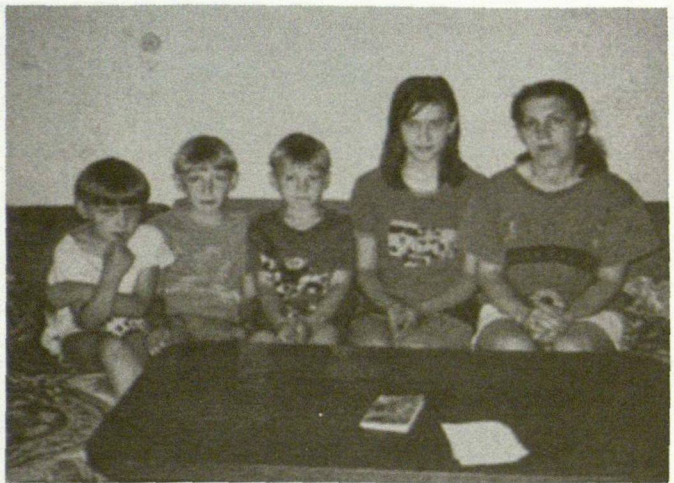
JEANNE DORR is a member of the Board of Directors of Lithuanian Orphan Care, a branch of the Human Services Council of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. She is also a Social Studies teacher in New Jersey. Photos by Jeanne Dorr.

The family continued to cling to one another and over the years, Rimas, the gentleman in her office, was able to open a small business. He worked long hours seven days a week and his business prospered, but he never forgot the people who kept his family together. That day he stood in Mrs. Landsbergis' office with words of gratitude and an envelope so that other families could remain together in times of a crisis. It's this kind of story that makes it all worthwhile.

As we were driving to our destination, Mrs. Landsbergis asked our driver to stop at a memorial that was parked along one of the railroad tracks. It was a boxcar that was similar to the ones that took so many thousands of people from their homes to Siberia. Mrs. Landsbergis walked around touching all sides of the car. She showed us how, when they were taken away, they could only look through the slats and had no idea where they were being taken or long their journey would be. She seemed to be reliving her nightmare of being deported while she was still a teenager. Julie and I had no words; what can you say to someone who has experienced these horrors? We could never understand the pain and suffering the people endured.

Our first visit was in the city of Vilnius. My initial reaction when I saw the "house" was that it was a boxcar from an abandoned train. Upon looking more closely, I did indeed see that it was a house about the size of a boxcar with two families sharing it. We knocked on one of the doors and a woman answered. She looked quite weary but invited us inside. The four of us were crowded in the tiny room. There was a small couch where the woman and her ten-year-old daughter slept. There really wasn't room to pull the couch out and be comfortable on it. In fact, I don't even know if you could pull it out.

There was a tiny table with some books on it. On the wall was the iron wolf, one of the patriotic symbols of Lithuanian history. The mother told us she was thirty-eight years old and that her daughter, Ielena, was ten. She was so proud of her daughter, who was an excellent student. In fact, she was such a good student that she was selected by her school to attend a special camp in Norway, with the

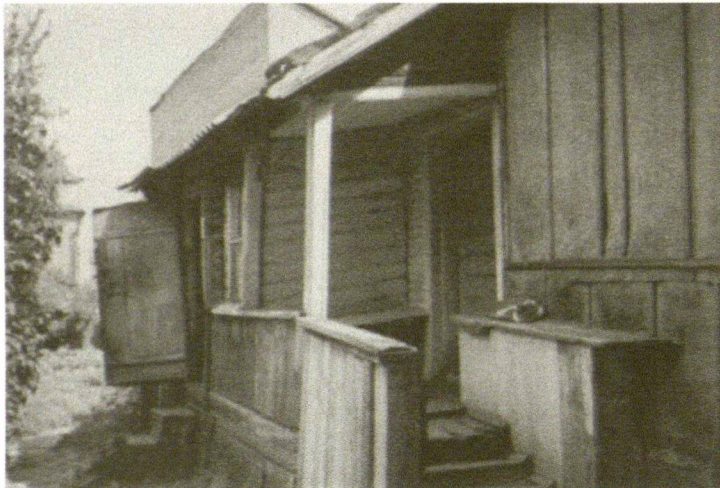


Ielena's family.

Norwegian government providing the money for expenses. Her mother proudly showed us the photographs her daughter brought back from Norway. This journey was something the mother could only imagine from the photographs; she knew it was out of her reach. But it was something that her ten-year-old Ielena reached by studying so very hard.

The thought quickly crossed my mind as to where Ielena studied, especially in the cold winter months. It brought to my mind all the "expert" advice I read in my teacher's manuals about how a good student needs privacy, her own desk, proper lighting, and everything else money could buy. This little girl was lucky to have a pencil and a sheet of paper. In fact, the house not only had no heat, it had no electricity or indoor plumbing. The proud mother showed us all of the academic awards her daughter received, and we were just as proud as her mother was because she was one of "our" children.

Ielena's mother told us about her life. Although she was only thirty-eight, she looked much older. She was badly in need of dental work and had several missing teeth. She had, at one time, been an excellent seamstress but was rapidly losing her eyesight. She could no longer thread a needle or sew fine stitches. The store that employed her had to let her go. She looks for work every day, but as many of us know, the want ads in Lithuanian newspapers often tell applicants not to apply if they are over thirty-five. A woman with an eye problem and little formal education has very little chance for employment. She was willing to scrub floors or wash



Ielena's house.

windows but was refused wherever she went.

Now she and Ielena live on less than \$50 a month plus the Orphan Care money. Their vitamins and clothes come from charity shipments that are sent to Mrs. Landsbergis' office. But they are always careful not to take too much because as the mother told us; there are always people who have less. It took a stretch of my imagination to remember where I saw less.

We were told that the woman's parents had lived in this house for more than thirty years. When they died, the house was hers. She did not speak of Ielena's father except to say he did not live with them, he did not help them, and she did not know where he was. The "kitchen" was behind a curtain. There was a wood stove to cook on and a pail to wash dishes, but there were no dishes. What happened to them? Over the years they broke, and there was no money to replace them. I caught a quick glance of Julie out of the corner of my eye and instinctively knew there would be dishes in that house before nightfall.

We went outside where we were shown the garden. The mother and daughter had planted everything they could possibly squeeze into a small space, but there was real concern that it would be a hard growing season because of too much rain and not enough sun. Often, they would both board a bus a go to the outskirts of the city where they would pick berries and mushrooms. They would eat what they could and then sit along the highway to sell the rest.

We hugged each other and said our good-byes,

but I knew we would be returning soon. Before we turned the corner, Julie was talking about dishes and glasses. We wanted to stop at a store "just to look." I really didn't see why we needed a basket if we were only looking, but I went along with the pretense. First we stopped at the dishes, all colors, shapes and sizes were tastefully displayed. Little by little, the basket began to fill up. Of course, she couldn't buy dishes without cups and saucers; that led to glasses. In the middle of all this she leaned over and told me this was her Christmas present to her husband. She was sure he would be delighted that she bought the woman

and her child all these things.

Somehow the store did not do a very good job wrapping all these items, and we still had to make another stop a few miles from Vilnius. We put them in the van in what we felt was the most secure manner and started off to the countryside. This was going to be a happy occasion as I was bringing a widow with four children an envelope from one of the sponsors. What I didn't count on was the condition of the roads – I should say lack of roads. I felt we were driving through the middle of the woods, over rocks, and through ruts. Needless to say, dishes were rattling and glasses were shaking; so were the fillings in my teeth. We were leaning in all directions trying to hang on to dishes and glasses. We were holding packages with whatever we could, including hands, feet and necks.

As we approached the farm, we saw a huge cement wall lying on the ground. I told Julie how the woman's husband was building the family a house. Every night after putting in a full day on his job, he would work on his house until it got dark. One night the wife heard a terrible scream and a crash. When she ran outside, she saw her husband had been pinned under a huge cement wall, which had fallen on him. They had no phone, and there was no way to get help. She tried to run, but she fell. When she got up and ran back to him, he was already dead. Only a few minutes had passed but it seemed like a lifetime. In those few moments she went from a being a happy wife and mother to a grieving widow with four children. The wall is still on the property and the woman still has nightmares.

As we sat in her living room, she told us about the children. We were not strangers as this was my third visit to her. They are doing well in school but missed their father. Holidays are especially painful. The children came in to greet us. They sat quietly and were very respectful. Their father would have been so proud of them. The school is 18 kilometers away. The mother was able to drive them when her old car was working, but now it sits rusting in the yard. The children have to depend on neighbors to get there.

Before they leave for school, the children milk the cows and feed the pigs and chickens. While she had the car, the mother worked delivering newspapers, now she works the farm. The money from the newspapers is sorely missed. She wasn't bitter, and she has hope that her children will some day have a better life. She is very grateful to Lithuanian Orphan Care not only for the financial help but because she knows that someone far away cares about her and her children.

The time seemed to fly and once again it was time to say goodbye. This is always the saddest part of any visit, and this time was no different. She had tears in her eyes as the van was driving away. As we flew over the same ruts, we were real professionals at holding down the purchases. As we neared the city limits, we took a quick check – not one broken item. We were certainly proud of ourselves.

We again approached the house and knocked on the door. When Ielena's mother was given her dishes and glasses, it was like Christmas in July. She honestly couldn't say anything and neither could we. It takes so little to put a smile on someone's face.

These are the children who will not receive any Christmas gifts, and there are thousands more like them. The parents are not mean or cruel; there is simply no money for gifts. Each year, Mrs. Landsbergis hosts a Christmas party for as many children as the money will allow. Each child will receive a small bag. Some children sing, others dance, or recite a poem. Countryside Children's Fund and its president, Regina Svoba, go to the poorest schools in Lithuania with Santa Claus in tow. They provide for as many children as we can help them provide for. The cost to give a child a small gift – a box of crayons, some pencils, and a chocolate bar – is about \$1.

Last year, *Bridges* readers, you provided for

hundreds of children. For many, it was their one and only Christmas gift. But there were still so many more who received nothing. Christmas was the same as any other day. Won't you please help again this year? It is very important that you respond as soon as possible as we have to send the money to Lithuania. There, the volunteers will buy and wrap each little gift. Organizations, please let us hear from you.

I want to thank Mrs. Landsbergis for spending so many hours with me while I was in Lithuania. A special thank you to Julie for her care and generosity, and to Paul for being so gracious about the Christmas gift he did not receive. Heartfelt thanks to Joanne M. from Minersville, Pa. who has taken Ielena and her mother under her personal care, and to Msgr. Peter Madus and the parishioners of St. Joseph's Lithuanian Church in Scranton, Pa. for their support and generosity. Please keep in mind the words of Dr Seuss, "Unless someone like you cares a whole lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." You are that someone. For these children there is no one else.

The cost to sponsor a child is \$150 a year. Any donation is gratefully appreciated. If you would like your gift to be put toward Christmas gifts, please make a notation a your check. Please send your tax-deductible checks to:

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



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

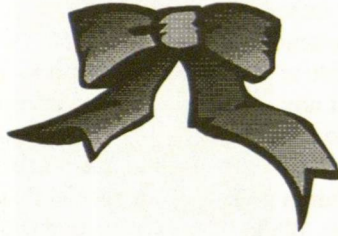
Lithuania Commemorates Black-Ribbon Day

National flags with black ribbons were hoisted in Lithuania on Aug. 23rd to mention the 62nd anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, which gave the Balts to the Soviets.

Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus decorated five persons for their self-sacrifice and endurance in fighting for the freedom of Lithuania with the 5th degree Order of the Vytyis Cross. Two of the freedom fighters were granted the order posthumously.

Various solemn events were scheduled to take place in Lithuania's cities in commemoration of the black-ribbon day.

The anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop



pact was first marked in Vilnius in 1987. A rally was then held near a monument to Adomas Mickevičius in spite of prohibitions by the then Soviet administration.

In 1989, hundreds of thousands of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian people held hands and formed a human chain from Vilnius to Tallinn to demonstrate their solidarity and commemorate the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact.

A year later, Lithuania's *Sajūdis* movement staged a demonstration on the Lithuanian-Polish border guarded by Soviet military, even though Lithuania had declared its independence on March 11 1990. ♦

U.S. Military Air Forces will Be Taking Charity to Lithuania



Agricultural equipment collected in California as charity will be delivered to a 10-hectare model farm in Šiauliai region, central Lithuania, onboard U.S. Military Air Forces' aircrafts in the near future.

A charity load estimated at USD 350,000 was raised in California in approximately six months and will be allocated to the Auksučiai land training and forest ecologic management project, the California state newspaper *Enterprise* reported.

The Auksučiai farm was inherited by Vytautas Šliupas, son of a Lithuanian pre-war public person Jonas Šliupas.

According to Šliupas, who returned to Lithuania and regained the country's citizenship several years ago, the aim of the Auksučiai project is teaching the farmers in Auksučiai district to compete in the market. The donated agricultural equipment will be rented out to the farmers. The agricultural equipment to be received is about 40 tons of weight.

The agricultural load, including tractors, combines and other equipment, should reach Lithuania in the near future, when agreement is reached with the U.S. Military Air Forces leadership on the transportation of the cargo, Šliupas recently informed BNS by e-mail. ♦

—News from Lithuania: Baltic News Service

An American in Vilnius

My wife and I arrived in Vilnius on Monday morning June 4th by way of Helsinki, Finland. We were greeted at the airport by relatives and friends with hugs, kisses, and the traditional bouquets of flowers.

It took us about five days to get adjusted to our new environment because of the jet lag. One of the first differences I noticed was that daylight starts to creep in about 3:30 a.m.. About a half hour later, the sun starts to make an appearance, and if the day is not cloudy, Vilnius is bathed in brilliant sunshine by 4:30. That impressed me very much.

I would like to tell you about some of the changes that have taken place in Lithuania since we were last here in 1998.

Before leaving home, I went to our bank branch manager and informed him that my wife and I were going to live in Lithuania permanently, and would like to leave our checking account here. I wanted to know if there would be a problem for us in withdrawing funds from it because of our moving.

There would be no problem, he assured me. One of the options available was for us to apply for a Master Money debit card, which our bank issued to its qualified customers. This MasterCard is accepted at merchant locations and ATMs worldwide anywhere its logo is displayed. Genutė and I received our PIN numbers after we received our cards.

All of this sounded nice, but the one question that had us wondering was this: Could we use our cards in Lithuania? For security reasons, no trans-

action could be validated without the person's PIN (Personal Identification Number).

On our first trip to downtown Vilnius, we stopped at Vilniaus Bankas, one of the biggest banks in Lithuania, and noticed an ATM standing in one corner of the entrance. It did display the MasterCard logo and the Cirrus symbol, which was also important; for without this symbol, nothing could be done. This was one of four symbols shown on the reverse side of our cards.

We were delighted, and decided to try our luck.

The ATMs in Lithuania will only give you the Lithuanian currency, the litas, and not any currency of your choice. The exchange rate is four litas to one United States dollar. My wife used her card, and followed the instructions exactly, requesting 200 litas. Within a matter of seconds, and without any hesitation, out of the machine came four new, crisp litas bills that totaled 200 litas. We were astounded and overjoyed.

It seemed incredible to us. Here we were in Vilnius, about 4,500 miles away from our bank in New York state, withdrawing money from our account in a matter of seconds. I met a tourist from Chicago, and he told me that he only took one hundred dollars with him. He used his ATM card to withdraw the amount of litas he needed. Does this mean the end of Traveller's Checks?

I am proud that Lithuania is now a part of the high-tech community, and is no longer lagging behind the rest of the world. ♦

— Edward Baranauskas

A Call to Action to Help Lithuania

Next year can either be a year of celebration or great disappointment for Lithuania and us all. Currently, there is only moderate U.S. support for Lithuania's admission into NATO. In Europe, strong opposition is being generated by Russia.

The Lithuanian-American Community, in a nationwide campaign, is asking for your help to build strong U.S. support for Lithuania's admission into NATO. You can help Lithuania achieve permanent security by:

- collecting at least 10 signatures under the enclosed NATO petition. Ten signatures are easy to collect. Make copies of the petition

found on the next page if you can collect more signatures. →

- writing a letter to President G.W. Bush.
- writing letters to your state Senators and to your district Congressman/woman asking them to join the Baltic Caucus and to support Lithuania's invitation into NATO.
- or, calling the White House Comment Line at 1-202-456-1111 and asking for President Bush's continued support. ♦

— Vytautas Bagdonavičius

To: *President George W. Bush*
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Petition

1. Since it has been established that the enlargement of NATO is in the interest of the United States in securing peace and stability; and
2. Since the United States has consistently supported the enlargement of NATO as a national policy and has supported the quest of the aspiring nations that have signed a joint resolution in Vilnius May 2000 to that effect;
3. Therefore, we now urge you, Mr. President, to activate the above stated policy of these United States and invite such aspiring nations to NATO membership and that the Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania be included in such invitation at the NATO summit in 2002.

Americans for NATO Enlargement

NAME	ADDRESS

Please mail to: Lithuanian-American Community, Inc., 11250 Roger Bacon Drive, Suite 17C, Reston, VA 20190-5202.

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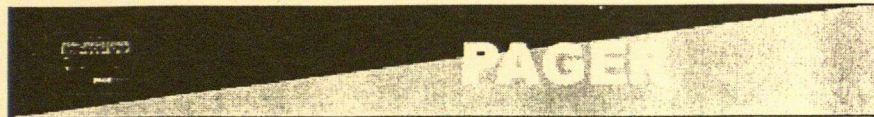
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Internet Access

Stop overpaying for internet service! We've got High-Speed DSL and Dial-Up providers that deliver, for less.

Satellite TV

We offer deeply discounted satellite dishes, receivers, and even FREE professional installation - only with **DIRECTV** and **DISH Network**, the leaders in Digital Satellite Television!

Computers

Looking for deeply discounted computer hardware and home electronics? We've got a HUGE selection of PCs, laptops, and accessories. Get a great computer for a great price!

Callback Service

If you live outside of the USA, then you may consider using International Callback Service to bypass your local phone network and call abroad at US prices.

Calling Cards

Our Calling Cards feature top notch billed and prepaid services that will save you and your loved ones money when making calls away from home.

Voice Messaging

We offer unified messaging, managed voice distribution lists, and conference calling that even a child could use. Leverage your time with technology.

Cellular/PCS

Only the finest in billed and prepaid discount cellular/PCS systems through providers like **Cingular**, **Verizon**, **AT&T Wireless**, **ALLTEL**, **CellularOne** and more!

Home Security

Protect your home or business with security systems from Protect America. FREE equipment, with monitoring contract.

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Discount ISP Dial-Up Service, **DSL Service**, T1 Service, Web Hosting - everything you need to get on the net at a fraction of the retail price.

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Looking for a way to bypass your current long distance carrier? Or simply looking for good international rates without having to switch LD Companies? Click here.

Web Hosting

Looking to create a website? Looking to relocate or upgrade your existing site? You've come to the right place.

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We have what you need to stay in touch! Our PageNet service covers most of North America and features the popular Motorola Wordline and Numeric pagers.

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