
BRIDGES

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The LAC Celebrates...The Power of the Lithuanian Voice...A Boy and a Bicycle

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

Just a few thoughts...

I thought I'd relax a little with this month and share a few thoughts regarding BRIDGES.

Into the month of October, I received my issue of the September BRIDGES. I know. It sounds strange that the editor should receive her issue so late. But it's something we all will have to get used to for a while.

As we all have watched and listened to the news, the anthrax scares and infections have stepped up security at the post offices and delayed some of the mail. BRIDGES will be delayed, and that cannot be helped.

We will keep putting together the issues. If we seem a little out of date, please forgive. We will keep the delays in mind and try to stay away from events that may have already passed. For example, the Ainiai concerts will be in full swing during November (see page 21). We hope that the dates of their concerts reach you in time.

There are weeks that the well seems to be going dry. Then I receive articles from writers who have the most interesting news to share. I'd like to thank them for thinking about the BRIDGES readers, and also for taking such an interest in the diversity of subject matter. I often think — what else can we cover that our readers may want to know? And our contributors never fail to be right on target.

If you have an article that you would like to share with our readers, please send them off to me at the editorial office address of:

*1212 Mohegan Road
Manasquan, NJ 08736*

...or better yet, e-mail the article as a WORD attachment to rasaj@att.net.

Rasa Ardys-Juška
Editor

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Lithuanian Art Displayed on a Heritage Trail

Many nationalities have contributed to the development of the United States, including Alexander, Maine, which is home to the nonprofit corporation, *History Dome and Art Park, Inc.*, featuring heritage trails meant for walking and inspiration. The trails honor and display the visual aspects of ethnic cultures — including Lithuania.

The heritage trails rely on outdoor displays rather than on the indoor museum type presentations. The displays are open to the public by appointment only, since the staffing is only part-time. To date, most of the visitors have been student groups from area schools as well as local business representatives and artists.

The "Lithuanian Heritage Trail" is a prototype trail. It features Lithuanian woodcarvings (*pictured on our cover*). That heritage included "wayside shrines" and the tradition of other wood sculptures, toys, folk costumes, and straw ornaments for Christmas trees and wedding decorations. The woodcarving tradition included depictions of ordinary people as well as various "characters".

Several donors from Florida and Indiana provided the funds for building the trail and purchasing some of the sculptures as well as the "in kind" donations of work.

The town of Alexander sits astride route 9, which leads to the 4th busiest border crossing between Canada and US. Three to four million tourists are estimated to travel this North-South road every year.

On the cover:
Scenes from the History Dome and Art Park, in Alexander, Maine, which features the Lithuanian Heritage Trail.

Prof. Dr. Vytautas Bieliauskas

THE GOLDEN JUBILEE of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

Lithuanian-Americans have many different organizations: some of them are national and others are local. However, among them, the most encompassing is the Lithuanian-American Community, which this year is celebrating the Golden Jubilee of its existence.

Founded in 1951, the Lithuanian-American Community (LAC) is a community-based, non-profit organization, providing educational, cultural, and social services to its members. It has 63 local chapters in 27 states and the District of Columbia attending to the interest of approximately 800,000 Americans of Lithuanian descent.

The LAC has its roots in Europe, and during its 50 years of existence in the USA, it has grown, developed, and adapted to the changing times. It is quite appropriate on this occasion of the Golden Jubilee to retrace its beginnings, to become acquainted with its goals and aspirations, to provide some insight into its unique structure, and to highlight some of its achievements.

The Beginnings

At the end of WWII, there were many Lithuanian refugees who were either forced to work in Germany or who fled to Germany to avoid becoming involved in the battles between the Soviets and Germans. Most of these people lived in parts of Germany controlled by the allied forces: USA, France, Britain, etc.

They lived in the camps for Displaced Persons (DP) hoping to return to their home country. How-

ever, after the Jalta conference, it became quite evident that they could not return to Lithuania as long as it was occupied by the Soviets. Life in DP camps continued for several years, and their future was very undetermined.

At that time the Supreme Committee to Liberate Lithuania (Vyriausias Lietuvos Išlaisvinimo Komitetas) was established, which consisted of representatives from different Lithuanian political parties, whose goal was to do everything possible to free Lithuania. While the Supreme Committee was dedicated to continue its work in the political arena, the majority of the Lithuanian refugees, especially those not involved in any political parties, were left outside. The chairman, Mgrs. M. Krupavičius, with approval of its governing body, developed a new concept for an organization, which would be primarily interested in education, culture, and social services. This organization was to be "home away from home" for all Lithuanians living abroad. This new organization was to be called "Community", which would be available to everyone who called himself Lithuanian without regard to his political ideology or his education or his religion.

Krupavičius envisioned this Lithuanian Community as becoming the umbrella for all Lithuanians living in different foreign countries. At first, he called a meeting of Lithuanian leaders at the Lithuanian Refugee Camp in Hanau, Germany, where the Lithuanian Refugee Committee was elected. This committee later changed its name to the Lithuanian World Refugee Community. In 1950, Krupavičius met again with Lithuanian edu-

PROF. DR. VYTAUTAS BIELIAUSKAS is a former president of the Lithuanian World Community and has been a member and chairman of numerous Lithuanian-American Community committees. He is also a professor and chairman of the Psychology department at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio.

cators and cultural activists who together agreed upon the basic principles for what they called the "Lithuanian World Community". This was the prototype idea for Lithuanian Communities to be established in every country where Lithuanians were or would be residing.

According to Krupavičius, the Lithuanian Community had only one goal: Lithuania. He said, "The Lithuanian World Community is a temple which cannot be entered with party prayer books, because the only prayer here was "being Lithuanian" (lietuviškumas).

He didn't think that there was a need for official membership, because every Lithuanian living in that area was automatically a member. There was not to be any membership fee, but rather only voluntary contributions according to the ability and desire to contribute. As a matter of fact, this "Community" was not to be considered as an organization, but rather as a family to which each member belonged via a natural relationship.

These were the beginnings, which were very idealistic and for many unrealistic, and it couldn't fly. But it did fly, and it grew into a very large community, which after 50 years is still alive and flourishing.

The Lithuanian-American Community

Beginning in 1948, the allies started the resettlement of refugees from Eastern Europe to different Western countries. A large number of these Lithuanian DPs came to the USA — approx. 30,000. They found that there were already various Lithuanian organizations existing here, but they couldn't find any one that could be as encompassing as the Lithuanian Community.

And so, on November 18, 1951, "The Lithuanian Community of the USA" was established, which was incorporated under the same name on February 13, 1952 in Hartford, Connecticut.

On Nov. 15, 1987, the Board of Directors' meeting in St. Petersburg, Florida voted to change the official English name to "The Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.". The Lithuanian name remained the same – J.A.V. Lietuvių Bendruomenė).

It is interesting to note the goals of the LAC, Inc. which state "to organize and unite, for their mutual benefit, persons of Lithuanian descent into a Lithuanian Community in the various cities and towns of the United States, to uphold and defend

the United States Constitution, to foster the ideals of American democracy, to participate in American cultural drives, to perpetuate Lithuanian customs in the United States, to give sympathetic aid and support to Lithuanians not residing in the United States, to aid in the reestablishment of the independence of Lithuania, and to do all and everything necessary or convenient for the accomplishment of any of the purposes above mentioned or incidental thereto."

All the above goals were the guiding lights for the LAC, Inc. until Lithuania became independent. Now that this particular goal has been reached, the statement has been modified to read, "to support the growth of the democratic institutions and economic as well as social reforms in the Republic of Lithuania".

Activities

During fifty years, the Lithuanian-American Community has sponsored a variety of activities and programs. To promote the heritage of Lithuanian culture, it has created a Council of Cultural Affairs which has sponsored events and festivals, such as folk dance, song and theater festivals, concerts, arts exhibits etc. Some of these events were produced in cooperation with the Lithuanian-Canadian Community as North American festivals, and they took place alternatively in the USA and Canada.

The Council of Educational Affairs has established a network of Lithuanian Language Schools, which provide classes, mostly on weekends, to Lithuanian-Americans desiring to learn reading and writing in Lithuanian, as well as receiving information about their Lithuanian heritage and traditions. The LAC helps to develop up-to-date educational programs, provides seminars for teacher training, and also prepares instructional materials and mediates the acquisition of books and visual aids.

The Council for Religious Affairs works closely with the Education Council in providing materials for the teaching of religion in the weekend schools.

The Human Services Council has its headquarters in Marquette Park, Illinois, and provides services to Lithuanians in need of information, legal aid, medical aid, family assistance, senior help etc. It publishes a monthly magazine "*Pensininkas*" for senior citizens. Through its subsidiary "The Lithuanian Children's Hope", the Council provides

special orthopedic care and treatment of Lithuania's children. The Lithuanian Freedom Fighters Fund helps to give support to former Lithuanian freedom fighters who suffered from the Soviet Occupation and who are now in need of assistance due to their advanced age and/or injuries.

The Economic Affairs Council sponsors conferences and trade shows, both in Lithuania and the USA, thus providing opportunities for U.S. business leaders to invest in Lithuania. The Public Affairs Council has worked very intensively in supporting Lithuania's efforts to achieve its independence by providing financial as well as expert advice through the years of occupation. Currently, this Council is working with all the affiliates of the LAC to promote Lithuania's inclusion into NATO.

These are examples of most of the activities of the Lithuanian-American Community. In addition, it is worth to mention that the LAC publishes *Bridges*, a monthly magazine in English, and *Tinklas* (Net) a quarterly information bulletin for its members, which is distributed through local chapters. The LAC is in the process of publishing a book describing all the activities in its regions and its chapters during fifty years, which should appear toward the end of this year. (More information about The Lithuanian-American Community can be obtained online at www.javlb.org)

Future plans and concerns

The Lithuanian-American Community, as was mentioned in the beginning, was created by the new wave of Lithuanian emigrants who came to the USA after WWII. These people were very ardent supporters of all Lithuanian activities in this country, but they were especially dedicated to the restoration of the independence of Lithuania. Most of them came here without any financial basis; they had to start "from scratch". But many of them were highly educated, skillful, and diligent. They established themselves, and they and their families became an integral part of American life and culture.

However, about forty years of the fifty-year history took place during the time when Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union. This occupation made contact with the home country very rare and



The first LAC Executive Committee — circa 1955.

many times impossible. The generation that came here after being born and growing up in independent Lithuania remembered and loved their home country very much. However, their children and grandchildren, whose knowledge about Lithuania was based on hearsay of their parents and grandparents, and who were dispersed in many places where there were no Lithuanians living, slowly began to lose their national identity. Only in localities where the LAC chapters existed did Lithuanian national identity remain alive.

With the restoration of the Republic of Lithuania, we all experienced a regeneration of interest in our Lithuanian heritage. The opening of the boundaries and frequent visits revived the national feelings of many Lithuanian-Americans, especially of the younger generation. This was a wonderful blessing for all the efforts of the LAC.

This freedom also brought some difficulties to the newly reborn Republic, especially economic difficulties. Having suffered fifty years of Soviet occupation, Lithuania's economy was devastated, and it is still in an emergency status. Lithuania's frequently changing governments have not been able to establish adequate programs to either regenerate or reform the infrastructures of the economic establishments. Therefore, unemployment is higher than can be tolerated, corruption still very prevalent, and legislature and police have difficulties in guaranteeing personal security to the citizens.

As a result of these conditions, many young people are leaving the country and looking for jobs elsewhere, and the older Lithuanian émigrés, who

originally were planning to return to their country of origin, are now remaining in their adopted countries. As a matter of fact, we are experiencing a new wave of Lithuanian immigration in various Western countries, especially in the U.S. Unofficial statistics suggest that several tens of thousands of Lithuanians have arrived and are still arriving in this country. They too are in the process of establishing themselves, i.e. finding jobs and homes for their families.

The Lithuanian-American Community, according to its membership principles, is open to becoming a home to all new immigrants if they desire to join it. However, clear communications is not easy to establish between the earlier immigrants and the new ones. Both groups have been living in different cultures. We assimilated different values and ideologies, and therefore there obviously exist gaps in communication that need to be overcome.

As experience shows, the LAC has been trying to meet the demands of changing times. For example, two years ago, the Board of Directors voted to change the membership requirement instituting the provision whereby a spouse of non-Lithuanian descent who is married to a Lithuanian can become a full voting member of the LAC, provided he/she desires it. This move has been joyfully accepted by many Lithuanian families in intermarriages with non-Lithuanians who and whose children are highly interested in becoming part of Lithuanian culture and expanding their knowledge of Lithuanian heritage.

Will the LAC be able to attract and assemble into its structure this new wave of immigrants? At the present, some of them are joining local chapters, especially the Lithuanian Language Schools, but some are reluctant to do so. Some are trying to establish their own exclusive groups, creating little "ghettos" in some localities. We have several Lithuanian newspapers that have been published for years in the U.S., but mostly they are edited and written by the earlier immigrants, whose style and way of thinking are different from the new immigrants. Therefore, there has been a newspaper founded by the "new wave". This newspaper, "*Amerikos Lietuvis*" (The American Lithuanian) seems to be serving the many needs of the newcomers that our traditional papers couldn't do without losing their regular readers. Times are changing, and only time will show how we will be able to work out these differences.

The Lithuanian-American Community's original founders or their descendants who are aging and retiring are still mostly governing the LAC. The new immigrants could take over its leadership, if they decide that the LAC is a home for them, too.

New arrivals find it difficult to understand why and how so many of us have been working for various Lithuanian organizations by giving our time and efforts on a volunteer basis. Many of them are struggling to survive, and they would find it burdensome to give up their time without pay.

Maybe the time will return when the LAC will have to establish paid positions, as was done some years ago. Maybe it is time to reconsider our membership structure by introducing dues and membership cards. This would provide a more specified structure to the Lithuanian-American Community that it might need now. The generosity of being or not being a member of the community or, as some say, not being even able to withdraw from it because "in your veins flows Lithuanian blood", can smell as demagogic control and not as generosity.

By and large, our new Lithuanian-Americans are well meaning, highly intelligent, and diligent people. They are being forced to seek home outside of their country because Lithuania cannot afford them. We should welcome them and be happy that they join the LAC, because they are its future.

The Lithuanian-American Community is celebrating its glorious Golden Jubilee for which we all should be grateful. Throughout these 50 years, it has been home for all Lithuanian-Americans.

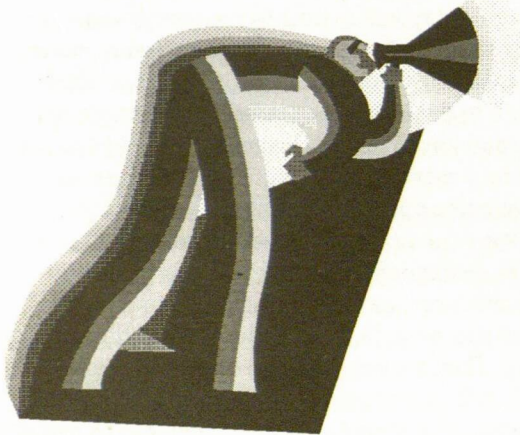
In this home we can continue the development of our Lithuanian culture. It has provided the base for our writers and poets, enabling them to express their creativity. It has also provided a platform for dialogue on a diversity of topics, and above all it has mobilized all patriotic forces to work for freeing Lithuania.

Fifty years represents a sign of maturity in the life of an individual, but it is a milestone in the life of an organization. The LAC has reached many goals in its destiny, but many more remain. We have many energetic people: young and old, who are proud of their heritage and who love Lithuania. True, we now have a free Lithuania, which we can visit and to which we can return, but away from it, the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. will remain our home. ♦

Ina Navazelskis

The Lithuanian-American Community's Public Advocacy Day Meeting:

The POWER of the Lithuanian Voice



Ten years after independence, Lithuania is free, but not yet secure. To ensure her security, Lithuania wants to be a NATO member. The next eighteen months will be critical, as the decision as to who will be invited to join will be announced at a NATO summit meeting in Prague in November 2002.

Thus, Lithuania needs help. As in the past, the participation of Lithuanians living in the United States will be crucial. Time is short: it is time for action.

That was the message that resounded, over and over again, from the speakers at the one-day seminar on Public Advocacy in Washington D.C. on the 30th of June 2001.

Sponsored by the Public Affairs Committee of the Lithuanian American Community and the Lithuanian Youth League, the seminar was held just a few blocks from the White House at George Washington University. It featured prominent ac-

tivists and professionals from the Lithuanian-American community, as well as representatives from both the Lithuanian government and Lithuanian Embassy in Washington. Addressed mainly to young Lithuanians who are in the first years of their professional careers, the seminar's purpose was to invite them to become more active in Lithuanian public affairs, and to provide them with concrete advice from experienced professionals on how to do that.

But, much more actually transpired. In concise, focused presentations, throughout the day, the speakers outlined to the some 30 people in the audience not only what must be done, but why. They provided a context to understand issues Lithuania must deal with as she seeks NATO membership, and gave well-informed assessments of the resources available in the Lithuanian-American community. In addition, speaker after speaker offered his/her own reflections of how to place current Lithuanian-American community life in the context

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

of fifty years of activism in the United States.

History

The morning started off with three presentations under the heading: *Lithuanian-American Public Advocacy: Past Present and Future*. Architect Arvydas Barzdukas, active in LAC affairs for several decades, outlined the history of LAC (Bendruomenė) from its inception in the mid-1950s.

Mr. Barzdukas remembered the beginnings of Lithuanian exiles from World War II in the United States. Arriving in New York from Europe, he said, he still remembered as a child that each family member received \$4.00 to help them start their new life. After some years, when the refugees had settled -- although "mūsų tėvai gyveno Amerikoje laikinai; niekad negalvojo kad šičia gyvens ir mirs" (*our parents lived in America temporarily; never thinking that they would really live and die here*) -- they noticed there was no single unifying organization uniting all Lithuanians. That is when the idea for the Lithuanian-American Community (LAC/Bendruomenė) came about.

"It was guided by two idealistic principles," Barzdukas said. "First, that every Lithuanian belongs to Bendruomenė. "Priklausimas buvo teisė, o ne privilegija" (*Membership was a right, not a privilege.*). Second, that Bendruomenė would be run "tiesiogine demokratine tvarka" (*in a straight-*

forward democratic way). For that first committee elected in 1955, Barzdukas said, "Ninety-five candidates stood for election and 27 were elected."

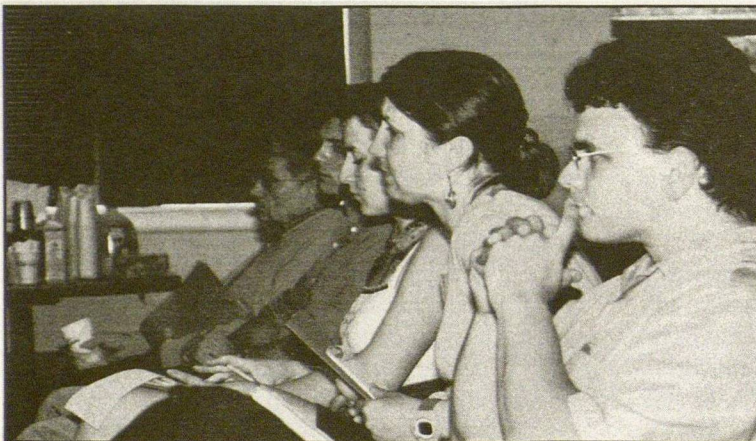
Today, almost 50 years later, he concluded to his audience, "Estafetės lazdelė pereina į jūsų rankas. Vieną dieną mūsų nebus, kas nors turės likti." (*The relay baton is being given to you. One day we will not be here, someone must continue.*)

Next, Darius Sužiedelis, who had worked in Lithuanian government structures in the early 1990s, and now is a young professional in Washington DC, outlined the challenges that Bendruomenė faces today. The organization needs to make a shift to meet the needs of a new generation of Lithuanian Americans, Sužiedelis said. A Lithuanian organization is as relevant as it can help to answer such questions as, "Who do I want to be? How can the organization help me be that?"

"Norim išlikti, norim gyventi kur norim, ir lietuviškose aplinkose," (*We want to survive, we want to live where we decide, and in Lithuanian surroundings.*) was the sentiment of many children of WWII's Lithuanian refugees, said Sužiedelis.

Sužiedelis added that two main questions face Lithuanians in the United States today -- and that these questions have not changed much in the past eleven years. The first, he said, revolves around "santykiai su Lietuva -- kokie yra, kokie bus?" (*the relationship with Lithuania -- what are they, what will they be?*) According to Sužiedelis, it is time that "lietuviai iš Lietuvos nusto[tu] žiūrėti į išeiviją kaip į pinigų šaltinį, ir kad išeivija nusto[tu] žiūrėti į Lietuvą kaip tarybukai arba landsbergininkai" (*...Lithuanians from Lithuania would stop seeing Lithuanian-Americans as a well for money, and that Lithuanian-Americans would stop seeing Lithuania as communists or Landsbergites.*)

The second question, said Sužiedelis, dealt with "mūsų identiteto išsaugojimas" (*our identity's protection*). Sužiedelis remembered that ten years ago, many people in Bendruomenė said that there was no need for the organization anymore, as Lithuania had regained her independence. But, he answered, "dėl NATO plėtros, galim dar suvaidinti didelę rolę."



Members of the audience representing two generations of Lithuanians in the U.S.
Photo: I. Navazelskis

Šitie metai gali būti pas-
kutini kai tikrai mūsų
reikės." (...for NATO's
expansion, we can un-
dertake a big role. This
year may be the last for
which we will be truly
needed.)

"Mes turim padėti
Lietuvai tapti NATO
nare, mes turim padėti
jos įvaizdžio
formavimą. Lietuviai
apie save kalbėti gerai
nemoka. Lietuvoje yra
labai daug teigiamų
pusių ir privalom juos
pasakyti." (We have to
help Lithuania become a
NATO member, we have
to help form her presence. Lithuanians don't know
how to talk about themselves. There are a lot of
positive sides to Lithuania and it is our duty to in-
form others about them.)

Bringing the first presentation to a close, Marius
Petrušonis, a native of Lithuania, and recent post-
graduate from George Washington University,
gave an overview of who future activists would
likely be – drawn from the ranks of the "third
wave" – Lithuanians who have come to the United
States in the past decade.

"Kur trečioji banga eina?" asked Petrusonis.
"Trečioji banga nėra piliečiai. Negali lobizmą vyk-
dyti kongrese. Mus jungia bendri tikslai – išlaiky-
mas lietuviškumą. Ką galim daryti – pagyventi tą rei-
kalą, naujo kraujo įleisti." (Where is the third wave
going? The third wave are not yet citizens. They
cannot lobby Congress. General goals unite us –
continuing our Lithuanian culture. What we can
do – live that goal, allow new blood to refresh us.)

This was very necessary, he said, as there is an
apolitical sentiment amongst young Lithuanians.
Petrušonis continued, "Jaunimo sąjunga yra neu-
trali NATO plėtros klausimu. Reikia įtikinti, kad
nesibaigia politinė veikla kai paskelbė Lietuvos ne-
priklausomybę." (The youth are neutral toward the
NATO membership question. They have to be con-
vinced that political interests did not end when
Lithuania proclaimed her independence.)

The second presentation of the morning was by
Dr. Elona Vaišnienė of Yale University. Dr.



The audience listens to the speakers concerning NATO enlargement.

Photo: I. Navazelskis

Vaišnienė's presentation, titled "The U.S., the
Lithuanian-American Community, and Lithuania
Need it: What is it?", focused on the subject of
"social capital" which is what she called the dynamism that is generated when people in a commu-
nity choose activities that promote the social good,
choose to "išseiti už savo tiesioginių asmeninių in-
teresus" (...to support their personal interests).

Ms. Vaišnienė's message was that although
Lithuania's refugees from WWII had been stripped
of all their worldly goods, they were rich in social
capital, and that this is a legacy to draw on for the
future.

Lithuania's WWII refugees in the U.S. were
able to recreate their society in exile – which in-
cluded founding schools and summer camps for
children, publishing a full encyclopedia as well as
countless books and newspapers, and raising an
ethnically-aware generation of children. Moreover,
said Dr. Vaišnienė, the benefits to both individuals
and communities, which are high in social capital,
are not only political or ethnic. "Yra daug aukštes-
nis individų gerbūvis, mažiau depresijos, firmos
veikia geriau, mažiau infarkto – mažiau narkomani-
jos, daugiau jaunimo baigia vidurines mokyk-
las." (There is a higher quality of life, a decrease
in depression, businesses operate better, a de-
crease in heart attacks – a decrease in drug abuse,
an increase in the amount of graduates versus
dropouts.)

She remarked that ten years after independence,

it has become apparent that the needs of Lithuanians in their homeland and Lithuanians abroad are different. "But the need to promote social capital – to foster it, to develop it – is something that we all need," she maintained. "Focusing on promoting this dynamic in our communities can revitalize them." "And working on the NATO issue," she continued, "would bring many other benefits." "NATO reikalas ir išeivija ir trečioji banga ir Lietuva mus vienija. Mes turim ką nors bendra, tegul būna tas magnetas, kur sukuria iš to bendruomenę." she said. *(The NATO issue and those abroad and the third wave and Lithuania are uniting. We have something in common, let it be a magnet, which creates a community.)*

Where does Lithuania stand now? NATO membership

Participants from Lithuania – Dr. Algirdas Gričius, currently member of the Seimas belonging to the Liberal Party, and Mr. Renatas Norkus from the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington – led the mid-day presentations. They provided overviews of how things stood politically, both domestically as well as internationally, for Lithuania in her NATO quest.

Both speakers have had several years experience in negotiations and representing Lithuania's interests to the international community. Dr. Algirdas Gričius, head of the parliamentary commission on NATO membership questions, told the audience that current changes in Lithuania's government notwithstanding – referring to the appointment of Algirdas Brazauskas as the new prime minister at that time – the push for NATO will go forward. Mr. Brazauskas will have little room to maneuver in another direction, Gričius claimed. He highlighted the work that still needs to be done within Lithuania: to convince more people that setting aside two percent of the country's budget for defense issues is an investment in the future. Many of them, he admitted, are skeptical about NATO because the cost seems so high, and current economic hardships so severe. And, he says, there is considerable populist speculation exploiting the two percent figure amongst those who are against Lithuania joining NATO.

"Matau savo pareigas ir darbą, tiek Vilniuje,

tiek ambasadoje, aiškinti mūsų siekius, mūsų pasirėngimus. Kai kurie žmonės galvoja, kad mes aukojam 2% NATO gynybai. Bet, reikia aiškinti, kad tai yra investicijos į (ateities) investicijų kurie daugiau įplauks į Lietuvą kai ji bus NATO narė – kai ji bus saugi," explained Gričius. *(I see my job responsibilities, not only in Vilnius, but as well as at the Embassy, to include explaining to people our goals, our preparations. Some people think that we contribute 2% to the protection of NATO. But, I have to explain that this is an investment in our future investments which will return to Lithuania when she is a member – when she is safe.)*

Mr. Renatas Norkus, who worked two years as a member of Lithuania's delegation to NATO in Brussels, recently joined the Embassy in Washington. He followed Mr. Gričius' presentation by outlining some of the work that had been done there.

"Mūsų kova už nepriklausomybę tęsiasi," he said, adding that "JAV Lietuvių Bendruomenės" vaidmuo yra labai svarbi. Mes neeinam į NATO tiktai kad norim būti NATO nare. Mes norim būti saugūs." *(Our battle for independence continues. The Lithuanian-American Community's role is very important. We are not heading toward NATO just to be a member. We want to be secure and safe.)*

Lithuania's position for NATO membership was stronger than several other hopeful applicants, Norkus said, because earlier than others, Lithuania had prepared a Membership Action Plan. "Mes jautėm labai didelę atsakomybę darydami tai. Kaip teko girdėti Briuselyje, daugelių atvejų Lietuva atrodė geriausiai." *(We felt a responsibility to do so. As we heard in Brussels, in many instances Lithuania showed their accomplishments as the best.)* Norkus credited this to the fact that there was a defense plan already drawn up ten years ago, as well as the activities of General Kronkaitis, a Lithuanian-American retired from the U.S. military who had been a key advisor at the Lithuanian Ministry of Defense.

Mr. Norkus addressed the question of how Lithuania's inclusion into NATO supports the U.S.'s own security interests. "There are three reasons – moral, strategic, and political," he said. "The moral argument is our history, and the steps that previous U.S. presidents did not take" in supporting Lithuania's democratic aims in the past. The strategic reason, he said, is that Lithuania is part of an area, including airspace that has regional strategic importance. And the political reason is

that, "it is important for the United States that the zone of stability (in Europe) would stretch as far as possible. NATO expansion is useful for Russia. It is important to the West. Everyone knows that Central Europe was a field of war."

"Jeigu Lietuva taps NATO nare," Norkus concluded, "tai Lietuva bus pro-Amerikos NATO narė." (*If Lithuania becomes a NATO member, then Lithuania will be a pro-American NATO member.*)

Summing up his presentation, Mr. Norkus said that of the 19 current NATO members, 15 support NATO enlargement. Of those 15, seven support enlargement for the Baltic countries. "Uždavinys Lietuvos diplomatijos ir Lietuvos politikų" (*The assignment for Lithuania's diplomats and politicians...*) will be to convince the remaining countries to support Lithuania's inclusion into NATO."

What To Do?

The afternoon presentations were led by Marius Petrušonis and Asta Banionis. They focused on how to generate effective activity in the political arena. Mr. Petrušonis gave examples of using the Internet to get information both about how to effectively lobby individual members of the U.S. Senate and Congress; while Ms. Banionis drew on her extensive experience as director of the Lithuanian-American Community's Washington office from 1989-1997, where she organized many campaigns on behalf of Lithuanian interests.

Banionis passed out lists of Senators who had voted on the first wave of NATO expansion a few years ago, when the question of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic's inclusion were up for debate. She described the points of view and issues of all the senators, highlighting those who were likely to support the Baltic States, and those who were not, and how to best approach them to change minds.

The most effective mechanisms, she said, were activating the local chapters of the LAC. She used the example of LAC's Colorado chapter several years ago, who "inventoried their skills – for example, one was a nurse, another a contractor, etc. – got their professional organizations to endorse Lithuanian independence, and with this in their portfolios, contacted their congress people and newspaper editors."

"Approach this as a military campaign," Banionis told her audience. "We have 2½ years to convince 67 senators to vote for us;" adding that "we should aim for a full 80 or 81 senators." Banionis explained that there were already some 19 to 20 U. S. senators in support of Lithuania's NATO membership, and that even if Lithuania would be invited in November 2002 to join NATO, another full year would probably pass before the U.S. Senate would ratify this decision.

At the end of her presentation, Banionis was joined by Ina Navazelskis, at that time LAC's director of the Washington office, and Columbia Law student Arvidas Remėza, in answering audience questions on the most useful tactics to employ in courting the press. "Magnifying your message is something one should always be thinking about while developing your strategic plan," advised Banionis

Conclusion

The seminar was organized and chaired by Algis Rimas, a career diplomat with the U.S. State Department for several years, and currently director of the Committee on Public Affairs for the Lithuanian-American Community.

"I had no idea what this would be about when I first learned of this seminar," said Aušra Kaminskienė, one member of the audience who moved to the U.S. from Lithuania some five years ago. "It was so useful, I wish more people had known about it. I certainly would have brought along two young Lithuanians who are currently visiting here in Washington." ♦

Ramunė Kubilius

Jesuit Tradition Continues

Seventy percent of the population in Lithuania is Roman Catholic, according to *Religious Movements in Lithuania: East-West Church & Ministry* (Report 8, Winter 2000). Yet Lithuania still doesn't have too many Catholic schools and a number of the schools now operating are actually revived schools that religious orders have sponsored again for the first time since before World War II. The Marian Fathers, for example, again operate a high school in Marijampolė. The Franciscan sisters operate a dormitory for girls who attend a nearby high school in Kretinga. There is much lost time in which to play catch up. To quote the Bible, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few."

JESUITS IN LITHUANIA

The Jesuits have had a long history in Lithuania, as far back as 1569. Vilnius University, in fact, had its roots as a Jesuit academy of higher learning. Since Lithuania regained its independence, the Jesuits once again have taken a leading role in educating future citizens and leaders of Lithuania in a Christian environment. The Jesuits strive to promote the moral and intellectual life of the Baltic region by nurturing human dignity and mature faith, by emphasizing scholarship and excellence in



The yard of Vilnius Jesuit High School near St. Casimir Church.

Catholic education, and by supporting a truly civil society based upon truth and service to others.

Kaunas Jesuit School re-opened under Jesuit direction in 1991. Its facilities were formerly occupied by a state school operating near St. Francis Xavier Church. Festivities are planned in October 2001 for the 10th anniversary of the Kaunas school.

The Vilnius Jesuit School re-opened in September 1995 in the broken down structure of its pre-occupation facilities behind St. Casimir's Church in the Old Town section in Vilnius. Most of the instructors at both schools have master's or doctoral degrees and undergo training and continuing education specifically geared for working in a Catholic educational institution. Ninety five percent of the students in both schools go on to higher education.

THE SCHOOLS

The Kaunas Jesuit High School was founded in

RAMUNĖ KUBILIUS is a regular contributor to BRIDGES. Assistance in preparing this article was provided by Grasilda Reimys, a volunteer with the Project, and Tadas Kulbis, Executive Director of the Lithuanian Jesuit Fathers-Baltic Project.

1649 by the Jesuit order. The Kaunas Jesuit college prep school just celebrated its 350-year anniversary. Its current Headmaster is Father Gintaras Vitkus, S.J. Enrollment at the school is 547. The 56-member faculty includes two Jesuits.

The Vilnius Jesuit High School is one of the oldest high schools in Lithuania. It was founded July 17, 1570 and is the only Catholic high school in the capital city of Vilnius. Its headmaster is Father Antanas Gražulis, S.J. Enrollment at the school is 451, with 52 on the faculty, including two Jesuits and two Sisters of the Eucharist.

The goal of the two coeducational college preparatory schools is to help in the upbringing of individual students in competence, compassion, and conscience. The curricula at both schools are very challenging with a focus on morals, self-esteem, and volunteerism in the context of Christian education.

To look at an annual publication of either school or to speak with either of the headmasters is to see and hear about life in a Catholic high school common probably anywhere. Fresh smiling young faces, young people in uniform kept challenged and busy in the classroom and extracurricular activities.

The students have passed rigid entrance examinations to be accepted into the schools. There are many more candidates for entrance than there is room to accept the students. Thus, the student body is representative of their country. Students come from large families and small, financially comfortable and financially strapped, from rural and urban homes.

Some students have the opportunity to participate in short and longer term exchange programs. For example, during the 2000-2001 academic year, two students spent the year in English and one studied in Germany, and three in the United States. Some students earn scholarships for university study both in Lithuania and abroad. One former student, for example, not only received a scholarship to attend the Kaunas Jesuit High School, but also showed such scholarly promise that he received a scholarship to

Georgetown University near Washington D.C. from which he recently graduated.

Some Jesuit high school students volunteer by delivering meals to the homes of the elderly; others volunteer in hospitals, participate in various school festivals, and greet visitors to their schools.

Teachers and headmasters participate in recertification and training programs. In addition to the principles of the Jesuit educational tradition, both schools also follow the curricula set by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education. Interestingly, because of the way their revivals took place, by definition, one school is considered to be a public school, the other a private school.

SUPPORT

Father Antanas Saulaitis, SJ is the Lithuanian and Latvian Jesuit Provincial. In one annual fundraiser mailing, he expressed the challenges at hand in this way: "Despite the lack of facilities and the disrepair of the buildings, the schools have been maintained with the enthusiasm of their teachers, parents, students, and generous donors. Rebuilding the schools is not an easy task, but with the help of many individuals, this large project can be accomplished."

What the schools have a minimum of is space – the entire student body does not fit in the school cafeterias at once. Adequate space is not available



Vilnius Jesuit High School students lunch with Rev. Antanas Saulaitis, Provincial of Lithuania's and Latvia's Jesuits.

Photo: Tadas Kulbis



Kaunas Jesuit High School students and guests with Rev. Algis Baniulis, SJ and Rev. Gintaras Vitkus, SJ, the school's director.

for school assemblies. Gym classes and sports activities are often held off-site at other facilities in the area. The buildings are historical, but old and require constant maintenance.

Along with other community projects required in their curriculum, students in the Jesuit high schools assist in maintaining their schools. Parents of students in the high schools are asked to contribute tuition for their children, and they help in various projects. Additional funds are needed for projects in order to keep the schools viable and functioning. Both schools help provide scholarships for financially needy students, continuing education seminars for teachers, and renovation projects in the older facilities. The Kaunas school, for example has plans to purchase classroom laboratory equipment and musical instruments.

Renovation and construction projects are planned for a student library, and for a multi-purpose academic and athletic facility. The Vilnius school is renovating the school cafeteria, building a student retreat/camp facility, as well as purchasing athletic equipment and facilities.

The Lithuanian Jesuit Fathers-Baltic Project has succeeded in providing some financial, consulting, and other support for the schools. The Project is part of a larger effort by Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, General of the Society of Jesus, who has made it a priority to reestablish Jesuit activity and rebuild

Jesuit institutions in Eastern Europe. Alumni of Jesuit-run high schools and universities here in the United States comprise the core of the Board of Directors of support for the Lithuanian Project. Supporters have included alumni and persons who value the intellectual and Christian values. Support has included gifts of time, expertise, and financial support.

What is the minimal return expected by some of those who work in the schools? The ambitions of the Headmaster of the Vilnius Jesuit

School, Father Gražulis, could be said to be very idealistic, modest, but very practical. In one interview, he expressed the sentiment that "If we educate and train (at least) one (good) young father or mother, then it is all worth it?"

It would appear that the Jesuit schools in Lithuania seek to do what all good educational institutions worldwide should try to do. They strive to educate morally upstanding, responsible, and contributing members of society who will be generous and caring parents and members of their communities.

If you would like to make a donation, it can be made payable to: Lithuanian Jesuit Fathers-Baltic Project, Baltic Jesuit Advancement Office, 2345 West 56th Street, Chicago, IL 60636, USA.

All donations are tax deductible as allowed by law. Information may be obtained by contacting Mr. Tadas Kulbis, Executive Director, tel. 773-737-9891, e-mail: lithjesuit@aol.com. Visit the Project's web site at: www.balticjesuits.org. ♦

Photo: Tadas Kulbis

Jeanne Dorr

...A Tribute to...

Artūras

He wasn't a star athlete nor was he a brilliant student. He was probably as close to average as a boy can be. He spent such a short time on earth, only thirteen years, but he taught so much to so many.

His name was Artūras, and he lived in the small village of Klebiškio kaimas, part of the Prėnai area. His father was dead, and his mother was trying to cope the best she could with Artūras' leukemia as well as raising his active four-year-old brother.

Artūras was diagnosed in second grade with the terrible disease, and he suffered constant ups and downs. His principal, Jonas Kirkliuskas brought him to the attention of Lithuanian Orphan Care and Countryside Children. The entire school marveled at Artūras' tenacity as he fought his pain and tried to attend school as often as he could. During his sixth grade year he was almost permanently home bound, and a teacher would come to his house to teach him. But he dragged himself to school on the final day of school so that he could be part of the class picture. His classmates half carried and half lifted him so that he would forever have a place with them. But Artūras would not survive to be in the seventh grade picture. He almost made it, but in May he breathed his final labored breath on this earth. He did not live to be part of the seventh grade class picture.



I heard of Artūras through his principal. I knew the family was in great need and I contacted the Knights of Lithuania in Minersville, Pa. They quickly came to his aid with funds for medicine and vitamins, and they immediately placed him on their prayer list.

We found him a sponsor who was also very concerned for him. His sponsor is a dear friend who serves on the Board of Directors of Aid to Lithuania and takes an active interest in the children he sponsors.

Last summer I was to meet with Artūras in June, but our first two visits were postponed because he was in the hospital in Vilnius. I

didn't want to visit him there because I felt it would be an uncomfortable situation for both him and his mother. I asked the principal to phone me the moment Artūras was home and up to company – any time, no notice required, I would be there at the drop of a hat, regardless of where I was in Lithuania.

I phoned daily to check on him and the prognosis was not good. But at the end of July, I received the call I was waiting for – I would finally meet this young boy who was already such a part of my life. I arrived late that evening in Prėnai, and the meeting was set for the next morning because that was the time of day Artūras felt his best. Before we left the house, Jonas phoned Artūras' mother to be sure that he was up to the meeting. She told the principal that her son did not close his eyes all

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.

night because he was so excited that he would be finally meeting the American teacher. My stomach was also churning because I was just as excited that I was meeting him.

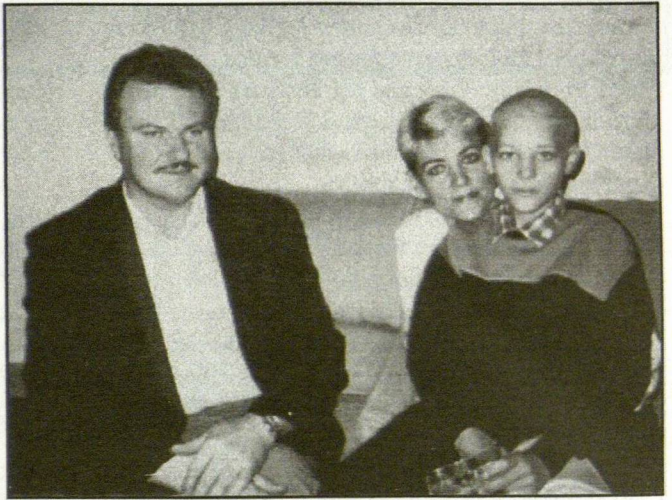
I assumed the meeting would take place at Artūras' house, so I was quite surprised when we stopped in front of the school. There, standing outside, were Artūras and his mother. He was much smaller in stature than the average child of that age, and he was wearing a cap to cover his loss of hair. His mother was much younger than I expected, but the strain on her face and the dark circles under her eyes were evidence of how much she was also suffering. When Artūras put his arms around me and hugged me, I could feel his bones through his shirt. But he was smiling as he handed me a single red rose.

We went into the school's faculty room where we exchanged some lively banter. I sensed he was uncomfortable and self-conscious about his loss of hair as he kept tugging at the cap. He didn't know if I was joking or not when I told him that many American athletes pay big money to have their heads completely shaved. A smile that no amount of money could buy broke out on his face as he removed his cap, and we all admired his head.

The discussion continued about sports, music, friends, and everything else that moves the average teenager. His friends in this tiny village remained loyal to him, but he tired quickly when they came to visit him. I asked Artūras if he could have one gift what it would be. He didn't hesitate for even the blink of an eye. He told me there was no way his mother could afford it, but he longed for a used, blue bicycle. I promised him that if the time ever came that he would be physically able to ride, he would have his bike. He realized that at this point, he was too weak for the bike.

We continued to sit on the couch – his mother, Artūras, and I, just holding hands. Words weren't needed; we all knew the score. He was an intelligent, young man, and we would not insult his intelligence by offering him false hopes.

As prearranged with the principal, I needed time alone with Artūras' mother. Her needs were as great as his were. Jonas took Artūras into his office to look at some photographs while the young mother and I talked. I asked her why we were meeting at the school and not her house. Silence. I



Jonas Kirkliauskas, Artūras and his mother.

Photo: J. Dorr

asked her a second time. She turned away as she told me her house was dilapidated and in terrible disrepair. I told her there was nothing that I had not seen in Lithuania that would shock or surprise me. I was not there to see her house; I was there to pay my respects to this brave young man and his courageous mother.

She told me how hard it was to watch her son dying before her eyes; she had already lost her husband to death. Was there something she had not done? Perhaps better doctors or a more expensive hospital would have helped. But I think we both knew she was grappling for straws.

She felt guilty leaving her four year-old while Artūras was in the hospital in Vilnius. She never left her older son's bedside for a moment. Worse yet was the cost for her to stay in Vilnius. She slept on a chair next to his bed, brought as much food from home as she could, but she figured it cost her approximately a dollar a day to stay in Vilnius. Over a long period of time, she just didn't have it. But she would never let Artūras see her worry. Instead, she cried at night when he finally would sleep for short spurts.

She told me how ashamed she was because she had to ask for local government assistance to buy wood for her house the previous winter. She swallowed her pride because she couldn't risk her son catching a cold.

People are very good. Before I leave for Lithuania, many readers send me money and tell me to use it wherever I see a need on my journeys

through the country. See a need? Every day I saw needs, but I had prepared myself for this one. A friend from New York and her husband were in Lithuania at the same time, and when I told them about Artūras, they did not hesitate to give me a generous gift to help his mother. That gift, along with the generosity of others, would at least spare his mother some worry for a few months.

I opened her hand and simply tucked the money in her palm. She looked at the bills and turned her face away as tears streamed down her cheeks. She barely regained her composure when Artūras and Jonas returned. We talked a little while longer, and then it was time to say good-bye.

Usually when I say good-bye to our Orphan Care children, it is until the next time we meet. We all knew there would be no next time. I hugged and kissed both Artūras and his mother, and I could feel her tears mixed in with my own. I turned back one more time to wave to Artūras, it really was good-bye forever.

I left some of my own money with Jonas for the used, blue bicycle, even if he could ride it just once. But in reality, we both knew I was leaving money for Artūras' funeral.

While still in Lithuania, I arranged with a dear friend who was a pediatrician to have one of the best cancer specialists examine Artūras. This doctor knew the agony of losing a child as her own son had died at the age of nine. She readily agreed to contact the person she felt was the best in the field. The doctor was away, and it would be several weeks before he could examine Artūras. We all knew this was for the benefit of his mother, so she could lose the guilt of not doing the best she could.

I returned to America leaving part of my heart in Klebiškio kaimas.

It wasn't too long before my doctor friend sent me an email. I knew even before I read it. All the tests proved that nothing more could be done and that Artūras' mother, the other doctors, and the hospital, had done all that was humanly possible for him. It was all in God's hands.

At Christmas, I received a Christmas card and a letter from Artūras. He never mentioned his health but asked me to please thank all the people he would never meet for all they had done for him. I have the letter along with one petal from the rose he gave me, tucked away with my most precious possessions. I will never forget this young boy, and the impact he had on the lives of so many peo-

ple.

Toward his final days he suffered terribly from the pain. At last his moment came, and there will be no more pain ever again.

Artūras never got his used, blue bicycle, but if you listen and watch very carefully on a quiet star lit night, you just might see a streak of blue whizzing by in the sky. I'm sure they have blue bicycles in heaven. In fact, maybe Artūras has a new, blue bike. Rest in peace, Artūrai. You deserve some comfort after your long struggle.

I would like to thank principal Jonas Kirkliuskas for all his worry and concern, Artūras' sponsor, Knights of Lithuania C.144, Countryside Children's Fund in Vilnius, Julie and Paul in New York, and everyone else who in any way, tried to lessen Artūras' suffering. We did not lose a child; we gained an angel.

Last year I asked the BRIDGES readers to send a gift to Lithuanian Orphan Care so that Countryside Children and Mrs. Landsbergis could provide needy children with a small Christmas gift. The cost of each gift is about \$1. The children receive crayons, paper, a hair barrette, or a small book. Actually, they receive anything that a \$1 could buy. I know it is very early to think about Christmas, however in this case, the money has to be forwarded to Lithuania. There, the items will be purchased and gift-wrapped. For some children, it will be the only present they will receive.

Please, if you belong to an organization, ask them to also participate. Last year your response was overwhelming, as I knew it would be. Hundreds of children received their only Christmas gift, thanks to your generosity. This year let us make it even bigger, so that more children can benefit. Let us do it as a tribute to Artūras. He never got his used, blue bicycle, but we can make sure that other children receive a small part of our hearts.

The cost to sponsor a child for a year is \$150. Lithuanian Orphan Care is grateful for all gifts. If you would like your donation to be used for Christmas gifts, please write "Christmas gifts" on your check or in a note.

Please send your tax-deductible gifts to:

Lithuanian Orphan Care

2711 W. 71st St.

Chicago, IL. 60629 ♦

Sr. Ona Mikaila

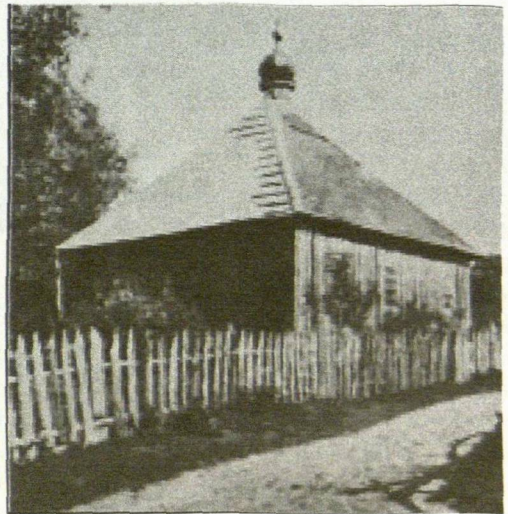
Lithuania's MUSLIMS

Presently there are about 10,000 Muslims living in Lithuania who worship Allah in four mosques. The oldest Muslim communities go back 600 years to the end of the 14th century when Grand Duke Vytautas during his military campaigns in the Crimea brought back Tatars (or Tartars) to Lithuania as prisoners of war and as colonists. These Muslim warriors originated in east central Asia. Vytautas gave them land in Lithuania and protected them while they, in turn, served in his army.

Over time, they formed their own communities; the largest being in Vilnius where at one time there were 8,000 and a wooden mosque was built for them. In 1925, Bishop Matulaitis' report on the religious minorities of Vilnius mentions that two Muslims converted to Christianity. However, most of the people descended from the Tatars remained faithful to Islam and to their traditions, although they lost their language. As independent Lithuania developed, she was careful to respect religious minorities.

During the Soviet years, Muslims were persecuted by the communists just like other religious groups in Lithuania, but they survived. When Soviet tanks rolled into Vilnius in January 1991 and took the lives of 15 Lithuanian protesters, one of these, a young woman – Loreta Asanavičiūtė was a Muslim and is considered to be not only a Lithuanian patriot, but also a heroine.

"She is a descendent of the Grand Duke



Asanas," asserts Jonas Aleksandravičius, head of the Muslim community of Nemėžis, a village near Vilnius that has a mosque with its own mullah. Aleksandravičius, a descendent of the Tatars, as well as most of the Muslims of Lithuania have denounced the terrorist acts of September 11th in America and are horrified that their religion is connected with such brutality.

During the last six years, the number of Muslims in Lithuania has grown, adding refugees from Lebanon, Uzbekistan, Chechnya and, most recently, Afghanistan who have sought political asylum. The Lithuanian government has been sympathetic to their plight, since Lithuania's memories of its own occupation and persecution by the Soviets is still very fresh.

*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.*

Professor Egdūnas Račius, who lectures at the Institute for International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University, has given an introductory course on Islam to Lithuanian students for the past seven years.

Račius says, "Most Lithuanians do not know very much about Islam: many think that "jihad" is primarily an attack on people of a different nationality and different faith from the Muslims."

After the tragedy of September 11th, some Lithuanians have become more nervous and fearful toward Muslims. So far, there have been no attacks or protests by Lithuanians on the four mosques. However, on October 15th, the editorial office of the Lithuanian daily *Republic* (a tabloid-type paper published in Vilnius) received an envelope with white powder in it, similar to those received in the USA. The mailroom worker who opened the envelope, found the powder enclosed in paper torn from a writing tablet and labeled "Jihad".

Professor Račius, who was interviewed by the respectable and widely read Vilnius daily, *Lietuvos Rytas* in the September 22nd issue, claims that Lithuanians have become overly fearful of the Muslims among them because they too are influenced by the alarmist reporting by the U.S. media, especially CNN. In his view, Lithuanians need not be afraid of the Muslims, since Lithuania has never had any quarrel with the Arab nations. But the arrival of powder-filled envelopes at the U.S. embassy and President Adamkus' residence created a stir in Vilnius on October 16th.

According to the Lithuanian press, the Muslims in Lithuania are experiencing various feelings: some feel threatened, while others do not. Muslim Mahir Gamzayez says, "Living in Lithuania has not become any worse for us. I do not think it will become so, since there is a deep-rooted tradition of tolerance here". He is a native of Azerbaijan and has been living in Lithuania for 20 years leading his Muslim community here.

Jonas Aleksandravičius is also confident that, despite the extensive reporting on the events of September 11th in the Lithuanian newspapers, this has not created a negative attitude toward the Muslims. Naturally, most Lithuanians sympathize with America's grief, for many have visited New York and Washington and have friends and relatives there.

K. Zujienė, who is a Sunni Muslim living in Lithuania for 37 years and a leader of the Uzbek

community, adamantly condemned the acts of terror in the U.S., while defending Islam. "There are perversions in every religion. The Muslim faith does not condone terrorism," states Zujienė.

Mihar Gamzayez agrees, "We condemn terrorism and feel great discomfort that it has been given a religious coloring. Our religion does not wage war. Islam does not encourage conflict between people and nations. The Koran has been translated into Lithuanian, and anyone can read it and be convinced of this."

In its coverage of the September 11th tragedy, another Lithuanian paper for rural people called *Valstiečių Laikraštis* (Sept. 15., Vilnius) headlined the event as "a blow to democracy and civilization". The detailed article with pictures and maps went on to say that "the stench of terrorism and hatred for Western civilization rises from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria... It is evident that this horrible disease of our time must be healed not only by military force, but also through peaceful means, by objective discussion of international conflict and uprooting its deeper causes".

Prof. Račius, of Vilnius University who studied Islam and Muslim communities in New York and Kuwait, also sees the present conflict as being more complex than appears on the surface. He does not view the confrontation between the USA and the Taliban as being simply a conflict of "Good versus Evil". According to him, "It can also be viewed as a confrontation between two different 'Goods'. Each side is fighting for what it believes is right and each sees itself as being a champion for "Right". What is needed is more dialogue, not bombs." (*Lietuvos Rytas*, nr. 22, Sept. 22)

Obviously, Lithuanians are sympathetic and sensitively aware of what Americans are feeling in the wake of the massive loss of life on September 11th, and the atmosphere of anxiety that terrorist acts are intended to create. The fear and distrust of the long-enduring Soviet regime have made Lithuanians chronically anxious about signs of aggression coming from the East. However, they too are learning the difficult lessons of tolerance that true democracy requires – separating the guilty few from the many decent people – in this case the Muslims of Lithuania. ♦

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

Lithuanian Music Ensemble comes to America

The Lithuanian Music Ensemble AINIAI from Kaunas, Lithuania are coming to a Lithuanian-American community near you! Founded in Kaunas in 1991, AINIAI consists of six professional musicians. The musical director is a professional reed-pipe player and composer Jonas Urbonas. All of the musicians are graduates of the Lithuanian National Music Academy. Every member is a poly-instrumentalist, a master of many different instruments. On their American tour, AINIAI will be joined by professional singers Česlovas Nausėda, Juozas Janušaitis, and Rasa Juzukonytė.

The ensemble is unique because of the variety of folk instruments it uses. Over 20 folk instruments will be heard during the concert, including kanklės, reed-pipes, horns, goat horns, panpipes, loam bells, swingers, wooden bells, harness bells, and others.

The various instruments not only allow the musicians to play Lithuanian folk melodies, but also original works composed for countryside orchestras, and music ensembles. In Lithuania, they are often invited to perform at national holidays and various celebrations. They are very well known throughout the country.

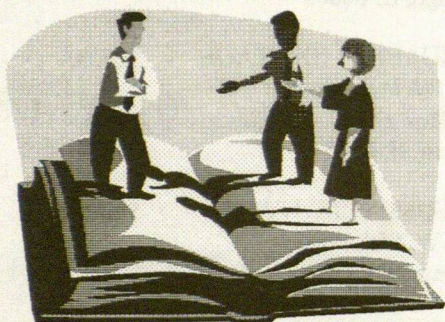
The concerts will begin in Washington, D.C. on Nov. 10th and proceed to the following cities (contact people and phone numbers included):

- 11/10 – Washington, D.C. (Dina Kopilevic, tel. 202-234-5860 x19)
- 11/11 – Philadelphia (Teresė Gečys, tel. 215-938-0783)



- 11/14 – Putnam, CT (Sr. Paulė, tel. 860-928-7955)
- 11/16 – Boston, Mass. (Aidas Kupčinskas, tel. 508-668-2167)
- 11/17 – Hartford, CT (Dana Grajauskaitė, tel. 860-657-9067)
- 11/18 – Elizabeth, NJ (Rimgaudas Radzevičius, tel. 973-439-1169)
- 11/23 – Cleveland, Ohio (BALFAS chair. Vincas Apanius, tel. 440-729-0843)
- 11/24 – Detroit, Michigan (Msgr. Aloyzas Volškis, tel. 248-827-7071)
- 11/25 – Chicago, IL (World Lithuanian Center, tel. 630-257-8787). ♦

Trivia Quiz!



Who is known as the father of the Modern Standard Lithuanian Language?

- (a) Antanas Baranauskas
- (b) Christian Donelaitis
- (c) Jonas Jablonskis
- (d) August Schleicher

(answer on page 22.)

— Edward Shakalis

Answer to Trivia Quiz

Jonas Jablonskis (pseudonym Rygiškių Jonas; 1860-1930) is known as the father of Modern Standard Lithuanian, as we know it today. He was responsible for the creation of such everyday words as pirmadienas — 'Monday' (pirmas 'first' plus diena 'day'), ateitis — 'future' (at-eiti 'to come, to arrive').

As a practical linguist, Jonas Jablonskis asserted himself above all through works designed to serve practical ends. Several of his works include *Lietuvių Kalbos Sintaksė* (Lithuanian Syntax, 1911), and *Lietuvių Kalbos Gramatika* (Lithuanian Grammar, 1922). Simply put, he eliminated Slavic and other foreign words from the Lithuanian language.

The displaced persons (refugees) who came to America in the late 1940's and 50's, spoke Modern Lithuanian that was standardized by Jablonskis; while the American-Lithuanians spoke the "peas-

ant Lithuanian" language taught to them by their parents who came to America in the early 1900's.

I remember some American-Lithuanians saying: "I don't understand the people who recently came from Lithuania; they speak differently from us". The Americans also felt that the speakers of Modern Lithuanian looked down on those who spoke the "peasant Lithuanian" language.

It is interesting to note that Lithuanian Historians credit the Lithuanian peasant with preserving the Lithuanian language and culture. However, should you ask a wise old Lithuanian peasant, which version of the Lithuanian language is superior, he would probably answer; "Tik velnias žino." (Only the devil knows.) ♦

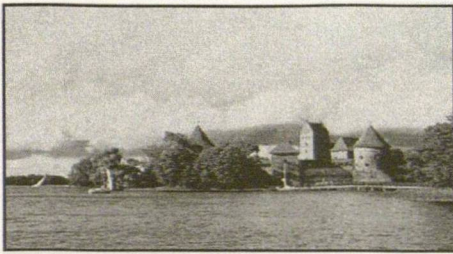
— Ed Shkalis

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