
BRIDGES

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Linksmų Kalėdų ir Laimingų Naujųjų Metų!

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

The holiday season began...and as usual, on our block the Christmas lights started to twinkle a little too early.

We had gotten used to Thanksgiving being the holiday to initiate Christmas lights. But when our early bird neighbors decorated the day after Halloween, you could have called me Scrooge and written me off for the rest of Oct/Nov/Dec.

To top it off, my mother-in-law reminded us daily that we were running late with our decorations.

We held off until Thanksgiving. That unseasonably warm weekend, we were tempted because the rest of the neighbors shyly came out and the weather was so inviting. But we continued to hold off.

Finally, during the first December weekend, we broke down and started to decorate. We began quite simply — a strand here, a strand there. My son decided to coordinate the colors, since the street prefers white lights, and the scheme started to change. As the week wore on, he added some more color to a bush yonder and thither.

When we felt utterly satisfied, my son and I decided to walk our street at night and really appreciate the "look". Unfortunately, we were slightly disappointed. Something was missing. Yes, there were lights — coordinated and interesting scenarios — but they all led to nowhere.

We decided to put my husband's rotozip and leftover plywood to use. After many broken tips and creative discussions, we completed the Lithuanian-American contribution to our cul-de-sac.

To test out our theory, we walked the street again. This time the brilliant lights led us to the simple, white, carved nativity scene highlighted by backlighting. All that had been needed was the reason for the season — a reminder that Jesus is the hope for mankind.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor



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Lithuania's Santa Claus

The Lithuanian Santa Claus was known as Kalėdų Senelis. He was a popular Christmas wanderer, dressed in an inside out fur coat, humpbacked, carrying a crooked cane and a bag to hold gifts. Santa knocked on doors with his cane. When asked who is knocking, he would answer, "This is Kalėdų Senelis! I come from the other land, where there are hills of flour, rivers of honey, lakes of beer, rains filled with candy, and snow banks of bagels. I carry a bag filled with luck, harvest, and other goodies. Please open the door and don't chase me away to the other land." Once inside the house, Santa gave nuts to the children, sang and danced with them.

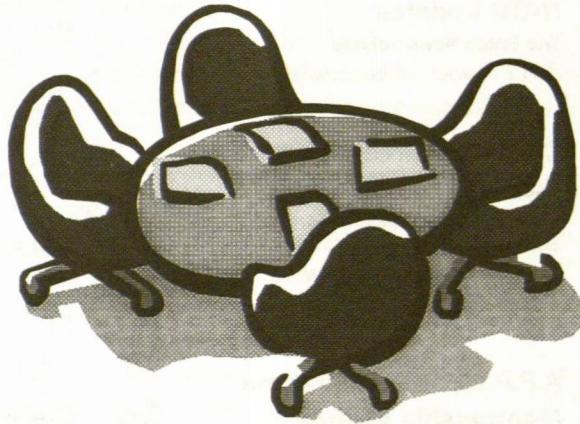
In seacoast villages, Santa was replaced by a night watchman, who visited every house singing Christmas hymns and wishing success to everyone. He was awarded delicious foods for all his efforts.

Whatever form Kalėdų Senelis took, he was always welcomed and loved by children of all ages. For he brought not only sweets, but the good news that Jesus the Christ was born for all.

On the cover:
"Mother and child" as depicted by graphic artist D. Tarabildienė. (1981)

From the Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc.

NATO Enlargement Prospects Raised at White House Meeting



White House officials discussed progress in the NATO enlargement process with representatives of the Central and East European Coalition (CEEC), including the Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC) on Nov. 28th. Invitations to the Alliance are expected to be issued at the Prague Summit in November 2002 to qualified aspirant countries, which may also include Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Other questions posed by the CEEC included NATO's relationship with Russia, results of the Bush-Putin November Summit meeting, and recent comments by NATO Secretary General Robertson. Positive signs of a new cooperative relationship with the Russian Federation are adding a new dimension to an evolving NATO, facing new threats since September 11. Also discussed was the status of the Freedom Consolidation Act, currently pending in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which is chaired by Delaware Democrat Sen. Joseph Biden.

JBANC chairman and LAC Public Affairs Chair Algis Rimas and Managing Director Karl Altai participated in the meeting. Daniel Fried, Senior Director for European and Eurasian Affairs, and Walter Andrusyszyn, both of the National Security Council, were present on behalf of the White

House.

Foreign assistance was another topic covered at the meeting. At a Capitol Hill briefing earlier that day, the status of the foreign affairs budget (the 150 Account) was highlighted. A final push was encouraged for Congressional support and increased funding for the Foreign Operations budget. The bill, still in conference committee, includes allocations for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Education Training (IMET) and SEED (Support for Eastern European Democracy) funding.

Featured guest of honor Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE) discussed the importance of a strong foreign affairs budget. Answering a question posed by JBANC chairman Algis Rimas regarding NATO enlargement, Sen. Hagel said that he is in favor of further enlargement, but it should be kept in mind that NATO is adjusting to a "fluid and dynamic world". Regarding conceivable Baltic membership in NATO, Russia should realize that there is no threat from the West, and it should refrain from using the issue as a bargaining chip.

The briefing was organized by the Campaign for U.S. Global Leadership, a coalition of over 300 organizations, which includes JBANC and its three parent organizations. More information is available from JBANC at www.jbanc.org. ♦

JBANC represents the Estonian American National Council, Inc., the American Latvian Association, Inc. and the Lithuanian American Council, Inc. Other information may be found on their website - www.jbanc.org.

NATO Updates...

Satellite press conference covers NATO and the Baltics

Baltic News Service

In a live satellite press conference between Baltic foreign ministers and U.S. diplomats in Washington and journalists in the Baltic capitals Tuesday, Baltic foreign ministers expressed certainty their countries would be invited to join NATO in Prague in 2002, while Marc Grossman, U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, was more reserved on the matter.

Lithuanian foreign minister Antanas Valionis said during the video link-up, "I have no doubt the Baltic states will get an invitation to NATO next year in Prague."

Valionis claimed the Baltic states are the best prepared candidates for membership and deserved an invitation to enter the Alliance.

U.S. Undersecretary of State Grossman said he didn't think he needed "to respond in any way" to a question on the scenario for the next wave of NATO expansion posed by BNS journalist Audrius Matonis, but said he did want to say he had discussed the issue with the Baltic foreign ministers the day before. He cited U.S. president George Bush's speech in Warsaw last June about a "Europe whole and free," and said "when it comes to Prague 2002, our job is to do as much as possible, and not as little as possible. And that is our guidance." He added: "We very much look forward to carrying out President Bush's instructions, and working toward the Prague 2002 summit."

The video conference Tuesday came at the end of a meeting of the Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian and U.S. Partnership Commission in Washington.

Grossman addressed fears over the new U.S.-Russian relationship, and how that might relate to the future structure of NATO, reiterating that no outside country has a veto over NATO enlargement.

Last week, U.S. media reported U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld clashed over the use of the phrase "NATO at 20" in a draft communique from NATO

headquarters in Belgium. Powell prevailed and the phrase remained, a reference to the 19 NATO states plus Russia.

U.S. State's Undersecretary Grossman said during the Dec. 12th transcontinental press conference that NATO is just looking for a way to better cooperate with Russia. "What we want to try to do at NATO is find a better way for Russia and NATO to work together. But I think there are some very important principles here that we need to reestablish or restate. First of all, at the moment NATO is an alliance with 19 members. And those 19 members will remain very much in control of NATO's agenda. NATO will do what it is supposed to do, based on the Washington Treaty of 1949, which is to be a defensive alliance. And I see nothing on the horizon which would change that," Grossman said.

Latvia's top diplomat Indulis Berzinis added: "NATO, which we want to join, all of us, all three Baltic States, of course Latvia – should be a stronger, well functioning organization. And in this dialogue with Russia, and these new relations with Russia help to make NATO even stronger."

Estonian foreign minister Toomas Ilves added by way of support: "Well, I don't know what the game is, but certainly I would say from an Estonian point of view we are wholeheartedly and strongly in favor of including Russia in discussions between NATO and Russia."

"I think that we need to get over some of the mind-set that existed before. And the more actively we can include and involve Russia in discussions regarding security, the better it is for Russia and for NATO, and for the Baltic countries," Estonia's Ilves added.

Asked whether Russia respects democratic values, Baltic and U.S. diplomats said they hoped the new NATO-Russian partnership would contribute to building a democratic society in Russia. ♦

Lithuanian military doctors needed in Afghanistan

Baltic News Service

Lithuanian military medical personnel could be sent to Afghanistan or bordering regions to serve in the U.S. operation Enduring Freedom at the beginning of next year. Lithuanian doctors would serve under Czech command.

Czech deputy defense minister and former ambassador to Vilnius Stefan Fule began bilateral consultations in Vilnius on Dec. 14th, and presented Lithuanian officials an invitation signed by Czech defense minister Jaroslav Tvrdik for Lithuania to contribute to a Czech military medical mission in Central Asia.

The invitation was addressed to Lithuanian national defense minister Linas Linkevičius. Linkevičius got a verbal invitation to join the US military operation during his visit to Prague, the Czech capital, in November 2001.

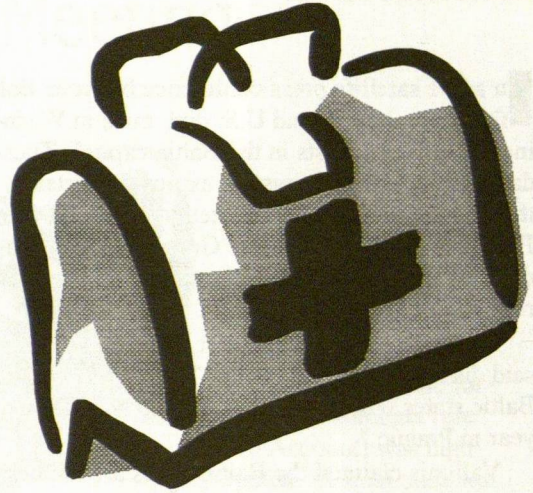
Deputy Lithuanian foreign minister responsible for coordinating NATO integration Giedrius Čekuolis told reporters after bilateral meetings between Czech and Lithuanian Defense and Foreign Ministry officials that Lithuanian military experts will travel to Prague late December to work out the technical details. Fule said the allied medical detail should travel to Afghanistan in the latter part of January 2002.

The Lithuanian and Czech sides have already prepared the appropriate resolutions to make use of the Lithuanian contribution to the war and humanitarian effort.

The Lithuanian cabinet approved a proposal on Dec. 13th to send twelve Lithuanian military doctors to serve on the U.S. operation in Afghanistan for six months. The Lithuanian parliament still needs to approve the troop deployment. The Czech parliament will also have to make a decision on allowing military doctors to serve on the mission.

The Lithuanian government resolution doesn't specify exactly where the Lithuanian troops would be deployed, mentioning only Central and South Asia. The Lithuanian military's medical service reported 21 volunteers came forward for deployment in Afghanistan.

The U.S. campaign in Afghanistan began in October as a military response to the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York and attempted



destruction of the U.S. Pentagon in Washington, D. C. The U.S. engaged Afghanistan's Taliban government in hostilities, saying they gave safe harbor to Osama bin Laden, who the U.S. believes was behind the attacks on American soil, and his network al Qaeda.

NATO invoked article 5 of the Washington collective defense treaty for the first time in the Alliance's history after September 11th. Article 5 states that an attack on any NATO member is an attack on all members. NATO supported U.S. bombardment of Afghanistan in early October.

Taliban forces have largely fled before the onslaught of U.S. air power and U.S.-supported ground assaults. While U.S. Special Forces continue to comb Afghanistan's mountain heights for signs of bin Laden, most of the attention on the ground is now focused on providing humanitarian aid to starving and wounded Afghans.

Fule said the Czech Republic and Lithuania already have good experience in serving on the same team. In 1999, ten Lithuanians served as part of the Czech field hospital deployed in Albania. ♦

Lithuanian troops prepare for mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Baltic News Service

Lithuanian troops are preparing for the NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR) mission, to start February 2002 in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The international operations subunit of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Algirdas motorized infantry division will be attending the mission, the Defense Ministry release said on Dec. 12th

Captain Marius Dabkevičius, the commander of the Lithuanian subunit, returned on Dec. 9 from Bosnia and Herzegovina where he familiarized himself with the future tasks of his troops in the mission. These include the checking of local armed forces' movement and combat readiness.

The Lithuanian troops will also be checking the weapons of the Bosnian Serbs and Muslims and the amount of the arms they possess. The protection of military bases will be an additional task for the Lithuanians. The Lithuanian troops will serve in

Bosnia and Herzegovina together with the Danish peacekeepers.

The Lithuanian subunit includes 95 troops. Danish officers provided the Lithuanian troops with a one-month tactical combat training; a week ago, the Lithuanian soldiers started their training in peace stabilization. The peacekeepers will also have a month of training in Denmark, starting on Jan. 3, 2002

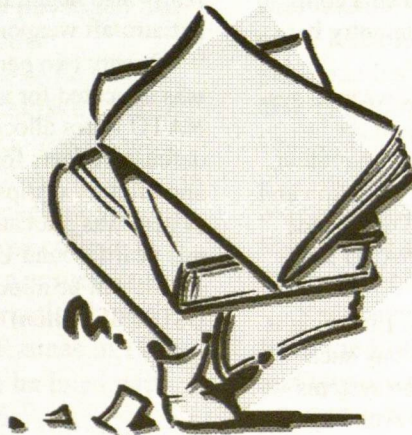
Currently, 30 Lithuanian peacekeepers are serving in Kosovo, the Joint Guardian operation, in the Polish battalion. One Lithuanian officer is attending the OSCE border observation mission in Georgia. The Lithuanian An-26 aircraft and seven peacekeepers are carrying out NATO-led peacekeeping operations from Naples, Italy. ♦

Support for NATO membership increases in Lithuania

Baltic News Service

Lithuania's aim of NATO membership is currently supported by 64.6 percent of the country's population, a recent public opinion poll has shown. According to the survey, conducted by the Vilmorus pollster in November to December 2001, the support for Lithuania's NATO integration has grown by 0.6 percentage points as compared to the June 2001 poll.

Of those polled, 22 percent said Lithuania does not need NATO membership, which is a decrease by 3.5 percent since the last poll. Also, 21.1 percent of the poll respondents said they doubted the necessity of Lithuania's NATO membership since they are not sure that this is the cheapest way of ensuring



state security.

A small percentage, 4.3 percent, said they were not interested in Lithuania's NATO integration and the perspectives of Lithuania's state security.

1,010 respondents (18 years of age and older) were polled in eighteen Lithuanian cities and 56 villages for the survey, ordered by the Foreign Ministry.

Support for NATO membership has been on a stable increase in Lithuania during the recent years. ♦

Lithuania purchasing U.S. antitank weaponry

Baltic News Service

Lithuania has decided to purchase the Javelin medium range antitank weapon system from the U.S. for USD 9.125 million. A contract for the deal is to be signed in Vilnius December 17.

The Lithuanian Defense Ministry reported defense minister Linas Linkevičius will sign the deal in the name of the Lithuanian government. U.S. officials have already put their signature to the terms of agreement.

U.S. ambassador to Lithuania John Tefft, commander of the Lithuanian military, General Major Jonas Kronkaitis, the head of the leadership of the U.S. armed forces assistance for security affairs, General Major Bruce Scott, and Michael Crisp, President of the Lockheed Martin company, the producer of the Javelin antitank system, will attend the signing of the contract.

The Lithuanian government adopted the decision to purchase the antitank systems after a market research was carried out and the effectiveness of the weaponry evaluated, a press release said.

Under the contract, the weaponry should reach Lithuania by 2004, however, the U.S. government agreed to look for possibilities to supply the Javelin antitank systems to the Lithuanian armed forces by October 2002. Lithuania had undertaken a commitment to establish the mechanized infantry battalion of Rukla, Lithuania by that date.

The Javelin medium range antitank weapon systems will be also used by a regular readiness brigade, to be composed, besides the Rukla battalion, of the Panevėžys mechanized infantry battalion and Alytus motorized infantry battalion. The brigade must be established according to the NATO standards by the end of 2006.

According to the Defense Ministry, Lithuania is the first among the European states to buy such modern medium range antitank weapon systems from the U.S. The production of the Javelin systems started in 1994. The U.S. ground forces and the Marine Corps are armed with the Javelin systems.

The Javelin is a man-portable antitank weapon system that can be used from within buildings, which is especially important when the fighting is underway in an urbanized territory.

The Javelin's range is approximately 2,500 meters; the system is equipped with the day sight and night vision sight, which allows firing at night and in cases of poor visibility. The total weight of one antitank system is 25 kilograms.

The Javelin systems are sold to Lithuania under most favorable terms and at the same price they are acquired at by the U.S. armed forces.

The U.S. signed its first contracts with Lithuania according to its government military sale to foreign states program in 1995. By 2001, 28 contracts were signed for USD 18.2 million, of which only USD 72,000 were paid from the budget of the Lithuanian Defense Ministry.

The other part of the purchase was paid from the means of the U.S. military financing for foreign states program. The funds of the program may not be used for purchasing weaponry; they were used to buy equipment for the Military Cartography Center, the Regional Air Space Surveillance Center, etc.

On Oct. 7, 2001, the Defense Ministry signed a deal with the German EADS Company on the purchase of medium range air space surveillance radars, worth USD 18.8 million. Lithuania is currently also negotiating the purchase of short-range antiaircraft weaponry.

Twenty two percent of the total defense budget was allocated for acquiring weaponry this year. NATO states allocate around 25 percent of their defense budgets for purchasing modern weaponry and military equipment. The Lithuanian defense system was allocated around 1.95 percent of GDP this year (around USD 230 million), while next year it will be allocated 2 percent of GDP (around USD 0.25 billion). ♦

Justinas Sajauskas and Stasys Sajauskas
Translated by Algirdas Kepalas

Christmas Greetings from the East

Collectors of all different things in Lithuania know the name of Aleksandras Mykolas Račkus well. Especially the numismatists: this son of a patriotic book smuggler, historian, museum curator, and physician had amassed a fine collection of coins.

Dr. Aleksandras M. Račkus, as he called himself, was born in 1893 in Cekiškė. Growing up and after two years in Kaunas Gymnasium (school), he left for the USA in 1910. He worked there and educated himself at various schools until he finished medical college in Chicago in 1922 and received a surgeon's diploma. For several years he practiced medicine in Chicago. He came to Kaunas in 1936, but returned to Chicago where he lived with his wife until his death in 1965.

All the activity of a historian and of a collector was dedicated to Lithuania. A romantic



who had more enthusiasm than special knowledge, Račkus never missed an opportunity to publicize his country. He founded a Lithuanian museum for numismatics and history in Chicago in 1917. In 1919, he issued a medal dedicated to the first anniversary of Lithuania's independence (sculptor Van der Bergen). He helped Darius and Girėnas prepare themselves for their flight.

Račkus brought a very valuable exposition from the Lithuanian Museum for Numismatics and History to the World Lithuanian Congress of 1935 in Kaunas (the items were later acquired by the Ministry of Education in Lithuania). In this exposition A. M. Račkus pre-

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Dr. Aleksandras Račkus

sented his collection of Lithuanian coins, which in volume did not have equal in the world. It even surpasses the Lithuanian part of the famous E. Hutten-Czapski numismatic collection in the National Museum of Cracow. Later, A. M. Račkus' collection formed the basis for the Historical Section of the Vytautas the Great Museum of Culture, which today is the Numismatic Section of the M. K. Čiurlionis National Museum. For this activity Aleksandras Račkus received a high decoration, the Order of Vytautas the Great, 3rd Class.

From November 1, 1936 to April 1, 1938, A. M. Račkus worked in the Vytautas the Great Museum of Culture as manager of the Historical Section and arranged his collection. In 1940, in order to escape Soviet occupation, he returned to the USA. There he established a Museum of Lituaniatics¹ again, not forgetting his beloved numismatics. He was an active participant in the founding of the American-Lithuanian Philatelic Society and took part in almost all the better-known Lithuanian newspapers. He wrote a book about the Goths, and edited the first volume of a planned multi-volume *Cyclopedia* about Lithuanian numismatics.²

All these are known facts about this uncommonly active man. It is less known that he was an artist, too. He drew Lithuanian hill forts. On one of them, he showed a castle near Če-

kiškė belonging to nobleman Račkus. He also drew Christmas postal cards.

In 1996, Dr. A.M. Račkus' relative from Vilnius, Irena Kubilienė, visited America. When the librarian of St. Casimir Convent in Chicago found out who had arrived, she presented the guest with a collection of Christmas cards drawn by Dr. Račkus. These cards came to the convent library after the death of their childless author.

The collection is not a large one: 16 greeting cards printed on multi-colored inflexible paper. They all, except one, are attributed to the hand of Dr. A.M. Račkus. It is not difficult to determine the author of the cards. Five of them are marked with initials of the artist: A. R.; R.; R-s; or A. Račkus. Nine cards are decorated with Christmas greetings, from Dr. and Mrs. Račkus, just signed and sent to family friends. Only two cards of the collection are not signed. For one of these, the design of the "Freedom Bell" was used which is signed "R," and on the other, frame of the card contained "Comfort of the Ill" (names of the postal cards here and further on are ours). Nobody but the author of the cards could do this.

The greeting cards are multi-colored, printed by a silk-screen. Most of them are 12 x 16 cm. or similar sizes, and only two, which we conditionally shall call "The Bell" and "Mary of Šiluva" are of 9.5 x 19 cm. in size.

Six of the 16 cards are dated. The oldest one, "Comfort of the Ill", was drawn in 1951; the newest, "King Mindaugas' Church", was created in 1958. Other cards are dated thus: "The Flight to Egypt" – 1952; "Mary of the Gate of Dawn" – 1953; "Little Sun" – 1955; and "Freedom Bell" – 1956.

We call it the Christmas collection, although Christmas is not mentioned in all the greetings, and Dr. A. M. Račkus' Christmas cards are a little unusual. What are they like? What are their subjects?

As already mentioned, A. M. Račkus came to the US repeatedly to avoid occupation. Therefore it is not by chance that the motif of the loss of the Fatherland reoccurs in his

Christmas and other greetings.

For instance, the oldest dated card, "Comfort of the Ill", shows Mary standing on a stone holding the baby Jesus. Next to them is a forest, the witnesses of the miracle. This picture is repeated in cards: one is printed against the color orange, the other against a rose lake background. The orange card is enclosed in a less flexible paper frame. In the center of the drawing there is an inscription: "Comfort of the Ill, I am calling You!" Below are found drifts of snow, a stake or fence surrounded by barbed wire and another sentence, this time in English, "There is no Christmas in Lithuania".

The same statement is repeated in "Flight to Egypt", drawn in 1952. The card shows the loss of the Fatherland in two pictures. At the top is the Holy Family escaping from the cruelty of Herod. Below is a grieving refugee of post-war years. A curious detail: intentionally or not, the letters "DP" (Displaced Persons) are next to the upper, biblical subject.

The collection reproduces five miraculous pictures of Mary from various sanctuaries of Lithuania: Vilnius, Žemaičių Kalvarija, Šiluva, Krekenava, and Paežeriai. Below the picture of Mary of the Gate of Dawn it is written in English: "People don't have Christmas in occupied Lithuania."

This similar "Freedom" theme is found on two greetings with the Liberty Bell, drawn in such a way that the addressee could read word after word a meaningful greeting from the American Lithuanians to their countrymen in Lithuania.

Another Christmas greeting has a long text that it would be more fitting to call it an illustrated summons and not a greeting. The drawing features a woman with two children and a bundle. Behind her is the sky in flames, and in front of her, a tablet with an inscription: "D.P.



20th Century." The text reads, "They fled to the USA and other countries from the bestial hands of Stalin and his NKVD."

Politically, other greetings are more neutral. Three of them show coins – after all, it was a numismatist who drew them. And, we should add, a romantic. The inclination to exalt the Lithuanian culture resulted in unavoidable inaccuracies for his "numismatic" greetings – inaccuracies easy to notice for an investigator of today. This does not diminish A. M. Račkus' importance to the numismatics of Lithuania, and it is understandable that without comparison it was more difficult to get information in his time than now.

Račkus' greeting cards are varied and interesting upon inspection. They contain his love for his country and his numismatic interests. One greeting card shows the Cathedral built by Mindaugas, King of Lithuania in 1254. Its appearance is recreated from the coin on the left. On the right side there is the obverse of a Lithuanian denar of Kęstutis' time with the Columns of Gediminas, outwardly resembling the figure shown in the first coin. The English text below asserts that Mindaugas struck this coin, and it shows the first church built in Lithuania by Mindaugas.

Another Christmas card shows a so-called denar of Vytautas, from which originated one of the more conspicuous misconceptions of Lithuanian heraldry: the Insignia of Vytautas. Next to the shown coin is a Latin note "A.D. 1410 MONETA VITOLDI m. DUC. LITUANIAE (1410, coin of the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Vytautas). The secret of the origin of the Insignia of Vytautas is in the Verkiai hoard, preserved in the Numismatic Section of the M. K. Čiurlionis Museum. Here is that denar of Kęstutis, one of circa 2000 denars of this hoard, with a supposed letter "V." The silver denar (13mm. side, .3 gr. of weight) is so thin that a fragment of the middle upright of the Columns of Gediminas shown on the obverse was punched through negatively (recess) [incuse] into the reverse side spearhead and cross.

There are many denars in the hoard of Verkiai of which one or other fragment of obverse has been punched through into the reverse or visa versa: a fragment from the reverse into the obverse. But mostly these fragments are not like some letters, usually just distortions of the picture's other side.

There is also a heraldic misunderstanding of the same kind regarding Vytautas' initial "V." This denar of the Verkiai hoard with the letter "V" first was irresponsibly copied for the numismatic literature by M. Gumowski. Perhaps because the letter "V" supposedly signified Vytautas' initial (sic-Passic). These denars even today are being attributed to Vytautas. To be sure, M. Gumowski himself thought that "V" meant the mint of Vilnius. Later a Lithuanian heraldic symbol was created from this design in 1930 – the 500th anniversary of the death Vytautas the Great. It was popularized, shown in the paper notes the Republic of Lithuania, and the decorations. Regrettably this heraldic misconception spreads even today – for instance, in the emblem of the Chasseurs battalion of Vytautas the Great in Kaunas and the shoulder patches of its soldiers.³⁻⁴

The curiosity of collectors induced us to look at the other side of the cards. They are

mostly blank. Only on the "Comfort of the Ill", "Mary of the Gates of Dawn", "Mary of Krekenava", and "the Freedom Bell", is there an imprint that the cards were created and manufactured by Dr. A. M. Račkus of Chicago.

It is questionable whether Dr. A. M. Račkus will enter Lithuanian art history with his amateurish cards. But he will enter the memory of the nation as a man who endeavored with all available means to lift up the spirit of his small nation. ♦

FOOTNOTES

1. *Lietuvių enciklopedija*. South Boston. Vol. 24, p. 328-329.
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From A.P.P.L.E.'s Report to the Corps

A.P.P.L.E.'s

First Lifetime Membership Awards

After the celebration of our tenth anniversary in July 2000, an idea was proposed at the officers' meeting in August.

Now that we were an organization with a history, why not establish a lifetime membership award to recognize individuals who have given many years of distinguished service to A.P.P.L.E.? The nominees were determined very quickly and unanimously: cofounder and former president Vaiva Vėbra, and two Lithuanian colleagues, Marytė Speicienė and Dr. Algirdas Grigonis.

During the spring meeting in Chicago, the board of directors approved the recommendation to begin this new tradition for our organization. So it was at the opening ceremonies of the A.P.P.L.E. 2001 summer seminars in Vilnius that the names of these three individuals were announced.

The first to be called to the podium was Vaiva Vėbra, who was at the time the Assistant Minister of Education in Lithuania and was one of the officials at the opening ceremony. In 1990, Vaiva along with Juratė Krokytė, inspired by the ideas of Darius Kuolys, then Minister of Education, took the first steps toward defining the mission of A.P.P.L.E., and beginning our work. Vaiva served on the board of directors for a num-

ber of years, but her major contributions came during her eight-year tenure as president of A.P.P.L.E.

We still benefit from many of Vaiva's contributions, such as [the newsletter *A.P.P.L.E. – Report to the Corps*]. Vaiva and her helpers pretty much started *Report to the Corps* single-handedly. Taken by surprise and grinning from ear to ear, Vaiva came up to accept her award from president Gita Kupčinskas and jokingly expressed her concern that she was afraid to think what lifetime membership in such a demanding organization would involve.

Next, immediate past president Emilija Sakadolskis presented the award to Marytė Speicienė, currently serving at the Ministry of Education and Science in the area of professional development. Marytė began her work with A.P.P.L.E. during the very first summer seminars in 1991.

At the time she was working at the Teachers' In-service Institute (which we now know as the Pedagogical Professional Development Center) in Baltupiai, Vilnius. She remained there for a number of years and became our primary contact person in lieu of an office manager. She even tried to establish the first teacher center in Lithuania in the name of A.P.P.L.E. at the Institute. Even when Marytė left for her position at

A.P.P.L.E. — REPORT TO THE CORPS is the official publication of American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education, which is edited by Katie Hoyle. More information is found on their website at www.applequest.org.

the ministry, she took her A.P.P.L.E. obligations with her.

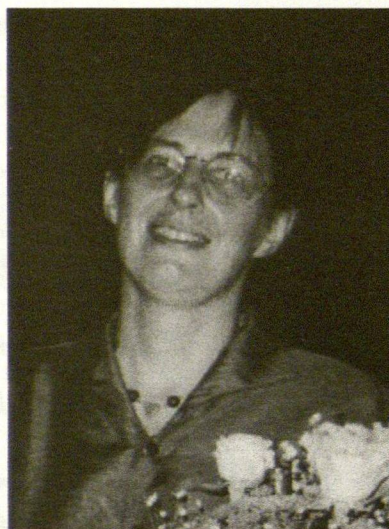
Marytė now remains our primary contact person at the ministry. Marytė accepted her award in her usual self-effacing, gentle way.

The final recipient, Dr. Algirdas Grigonis, was not present at the opening ceremonies in Vilnius. His name was recognized *in absentia* by president-elect Dr. Phil Taylor because Dr. Grigonis was off at the opening ceremonies of another series of A.P.P.L.E. seminars, organized and run by the only A.P.P.L.E. chapter in Lithuania.

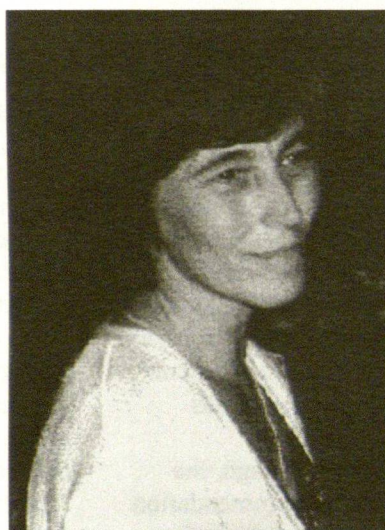
The reason for his absence was also the reason for his recognition. Dr. Grigonis and a faithful crew of A.P.P.L.E. participants in Kaunas established not only an A.P.P.L.E. chapter, but also a teacher center that focuses its resources in the field of special education.

The long-term cooperation of Dr. Grigonis and our own Dr. Karl Janowitz has proved to be very fruitful. Besides ensuring the success of the teacher resource center, their collaboration is the foundation for a series of special needs seminars in the smaller communities of Lithuania every summer as well as a seminar or two during the academic year. This summer alone, Dr. Grigonis and the A.P.P.L.E. lecturers we provided reached over 450 special education teachers in six locations. Phil and Gita caught up with Karl and him in Skaudvilė in order to make the presentation.

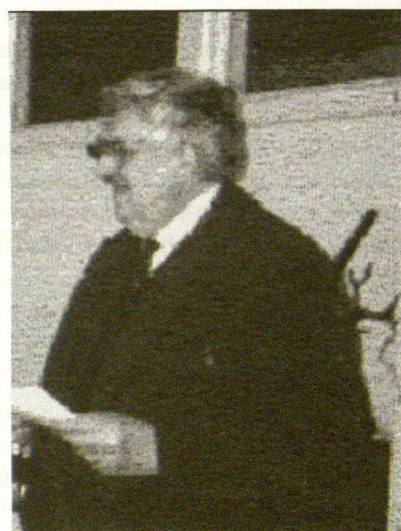
Now that we have begun this tradition, our eyes have been opened to the many, many people who have made A.P.P.L.E. the viable and successful organization that it is. Surely, we will not run out of candidates for this award for many years to come. ♦



Vaiva Vėbra



Marytė Speicienė



Dr. Algirdas Grigonis

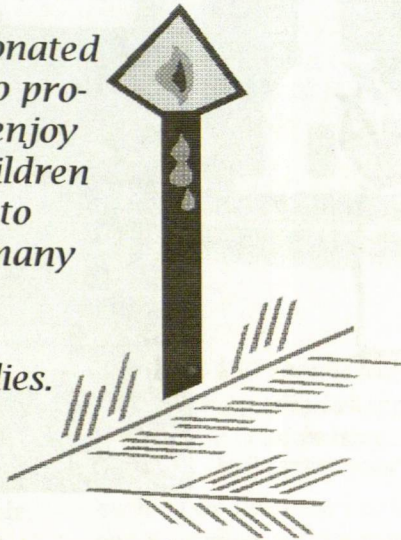
Jeanne Dorr

Christmas Greetings from the Children of Lithuania

On behalf of the Lithuanian Orphan Committee and the children we serve in Lithuania we wish you, our Bridges readers, a New Year filled with good health and happiness. Our wish for the world is a year filled with peace for all.

Thank you to all who donated to Lithuanian Orphan Care to provide Christmas gifts. Please enjoy the pictures of Lithuanian children receiving their gifts. Thanks to your generosity, there were many smiling faces.

*God bless you and your families.
Jeanne Dorr*



Santa — Kalėdų Senelis — visits a country school.

Photo: Countryside Children's Fund



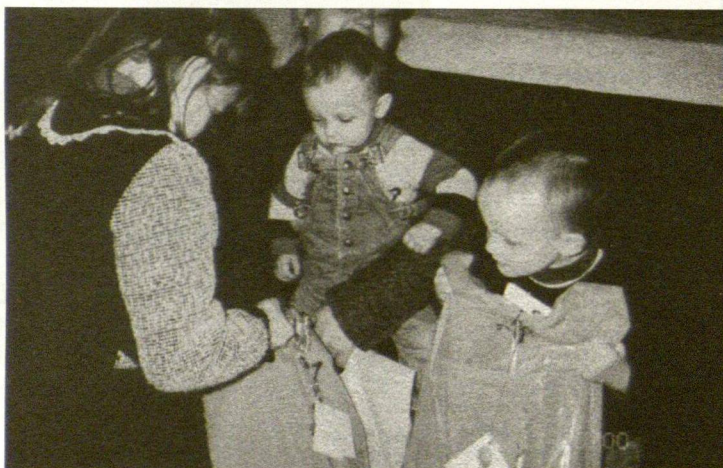
JEANNE DORR is a member of the Board of Directors of Lithuanian Orphan Care, a branch of the Human Services Council of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. She is also a Social Studies teacher in New Jersey.



*The village children happily greet
Kalėdų Senelis.
Photo: Countryside Children's Fund*



*Even the youngest enjoy their gifts,
compliments of Mrs. Landsbergis.
Photo: Countryside Children's Fund*



*Children in Vilnius watch Kalėdų
Senelis distribute the gifts,
compliments of Mrs. Landsbergis.
Photo: Countryside Children's Fund*

Reflections

Clem Blazewick

the saga of a Lithuanian church

The saying, "What is old, becomes new again" isn't exactly what many Pittsburgh Lithuanian-Americans have been witnessing lately regarding their old parish, St. Casimir's Church. The church will soon be transformed into... condominiums.

The first major work on changing over the former St. Casimir Church [in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania] into a six-unit luxury condominium will begin in January [2002] when the new church owner, Joshua Gross, will start framing in the interior walls of the project.

The project began when St. Casimir School was sold by the Catholic Diocese in 1993 to Nicholas Gurgiolo who then remodeled the school building into 18 rental apartments. He purchased St. Casimir Church last year, and then he sold the former church to Mr. Gross about a year ago.

He got the idea of the church conversion after having many experiences with large projects with Sargent Electric where he is employed as head of two divisions of Brite House Electrical. He found that St. Casimir Church was structurally strong, and that it had a good terracotta roof. He had to repair the box gutters, which had deteriorated. He will put in new windows in most areas and plans to make another entrance on 22nd St.

A considerable amount of planning was



necessary and zoning had to be approved before anything could happen.

Mr. Gross envisions a new inner building structure with units of about 3,000 square feet each. Two units have already been reserved and four more will be sold, semi-finished, for between \$150,000 and \$200,000. It is estimated that the total cost of each condominium, when done, will be about \$300,000.

Four of the condos will have ceilings 55 ft. high and two, with bell towers, will go up 80 feet. It is expected that each will have two to three floors. A two-car garage has already been built on the right side of the former church in the sacristy area. Five of the condos will have garages in the basement.

Each condo will have forced air heat and central air conditioning, and each will have its own gas, water and electric meters. Each new

CLEM BLAZEVIK wrote this article using data taken from the St. Casimir Alumni Association Newsletter for the Lithuanian Citizens' Society Newsletter, December 2001 issue.

owner will plan and install the kind of kitchen, bathroom, stairs, floors and other details as desired.

Mr. Gross expects to complete his first condominium in 2002 with the entire project taking three years to finish. The outside appearance of the building will be preserved.

The parish history of St. Casimir is similar to that of most ethnic parishes at the turn-of-the-century. In 1893, the Diocese of Pittsburgh appointed Rev. John I. Šukaitis, formerly of Lithuania, as pastor. This became the first Lithuanian parish in the city of Pittsburgh. Records indicate that construction on the church began around 1900. The members, recognizing the need to worship together and to establish a school to teach the Lithuanian language, purchased land located at 22nd and Sarah Sts.

A one-floor school building, which served as a two-room, four-grade schoolhouse and church, was completed in 1900. Bishop R. Phelan dedicated St. Casimir Church on June

27, 1902.

The church and school were built in different architectural styles. The church followed the Romanesque style with baroque overtones. This style resembles the medieval churches of Lithuania. The school, which was built for public use, was done in a renaissance revival style.

The second and third stories of the school building were completed in 1908 to accommodate the increasing number of students. The ninth grade was added in 1934, and the Department of Education accredited the high school in 1937.

St. Casimir served the area until 1969 when the Diocese merged the school with other elementary and secondary schools of the area forming "South Side Catholic", thus ending the history of St. Casimir School.

No one could have ever guessed the fate of the school and church. ♦

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

Miss Zukas appears again!

Lithuanian American fictional librarian, Wilhelmina (Helma) Zukas is back in the newest Jo Dereske mystery novel **Miss Zukas Shelves the Evidence**, published in 2001. The series comes out in paperback.

The heroine, a prim and proper librarian, works as a reference librarian in the public library of the fictional town of Bellhaven, Washington, and gets herself involved with various murder mysteries. The heroine is in her late thirties (as best as the reader can ascertain), has a cat named Boy Cat Zukas, an artist friend from Michigan days named Ruth, and her gentleman friend is Police Chief Wayne Gallant. She drives a well-maintained twenty-year old Buick given to her as a graduation present and moved to the state of Washington after library school to get away from her family in Michigan.

The author, like her character, lives in the State of Washington, is a (former) librarian, and is of Lithuanian American descent.

What makes the series of books (eight so far) fun is that light mystery lovers should like the twists and turns of a typical mystery novel that doesn't have much gore. Librarians (like myself) like to see how familiar the author is with our world, in this case the inner workings and patrons of a public library. Lithuanian Americans will find it fun to see how the author intertwines tidbits about the heroine's childhood in a Lithuanian American community in the fictional town of Spoon River, Michigan, her wacky Lithuanian relatives, and the ways she informs people she meets about her ethnic heritage.

Examples of Lithuanian-isms from the latest mystery include mentions such as the following:

(Chapter 13)

"...Helma had to compose herself a moment at the sight of her eighty-four year-old Lithuanian immigrant aunt, her father's oldest sister, the last of that generation of siblings, standing before her in a pair of denims and a pink sweater set with faux pearls sewn around the neck..."

AND

"That poor man," Aunt Em agreed. She still retained a slight Lithuanian accent that

turned her th's into t's and ing's into ink. "You're probably just sick at heart. Have you been to visit him yet?"

So, to find out the context of these excerpts, and to become more familiar with the adventures of Miss Zukas, read Jo Dereske's latest book, or her earlier ones, which include catchy titles such as **Out of Circulation** or **Miss Zukas and the Island Murders**. ♦

— *Ramunė Kubilius*

Lithuanian Parliament adopts 2002 budget

The Lithuanian parliament (Seimas) endorsed a draft state budget for the year 2002 on Dec. 13th. The decision was made by a vote of 72 to 51 with two abstentions. The revenues into the state budget are expected to reach 8.807 billion litas (USD 2.201 billion), and the expenditure is estimated to amount to 9.942 billion litas in 2002. The budget deficit is to come to 1.135 billion litas.

The national budget, which includes the central government and municipalities, should receive 10.269 billion litas in revenues, while its expenditure should reach 11.404 billion litas.

Following the adoption of some amendments, however, the budget revenues and expenditures should grow slightly.

By a majority of votes, The Seimas approved the proposal of Algirdas Butkevičius, a Social Democrat and chairman of the Parliamentary Budget and Finance Committee, to raise the budget revenues by 61 million litas, which would be allocated to agriculture, education and health care.

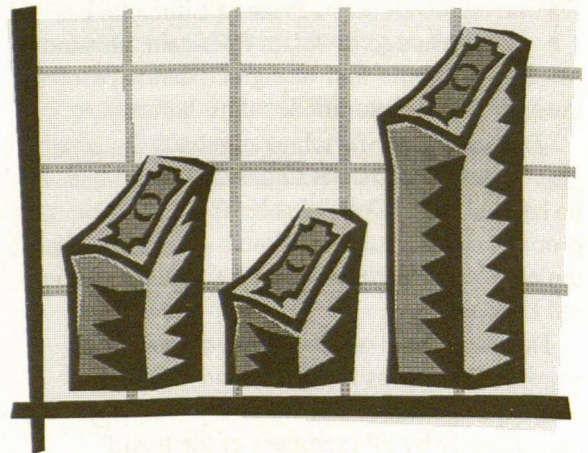
Some 30 million litas of these funds would be allocated to the Special Rural Support Scheme, 14 million litas to the State Patient's Fund, and 11 million litas to science and research.

The parliament's ruling majority approved the budget regardless of the opposition's proposals to postpone the approval until the laws on certain fields on financing, which are not in full confor-

mity with the draft, have been amended.

Under the law, at least five percent of GDP are to be allocated to health care, 6.5 percent of GDP to education and 1.5 percent to science and research. The government's draft provided for less funds to be allocated to these fields.

The 2002 budget has been drawn up in the light of the assumption that Lithuania's GDP will grow by 4 percent and will total 51.403 billion litas, and inflation will stand at 2.6 percent. ♦



Strobe Talbott awarded Order of Grand Duke Gediminas

Lithuanian president Valdas Adamkus awarded former U.S. Under secretary of State in the Clinton administration Strobe Talbott the order of Grand Duke Gediminas on Dec. 6th for contributions to the Lithuanian state.

The president awarded Talbott the order of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Gediminas, second degree, a high state award dedicated to the memory of February 16th, the day Lithuania re-emerged on the world stage as an independent power at the close of World War I.

"When Lithuania needed friends and support, you were there with us. I thank you in the name of the government, but moreover, in the name of the entire nation," Adamkus said.

Talbott said at the award ceremony he was optimistic regarding next year. Next year, 2002, could be the date future generations of Lithuanians mark as the year their country joined NATO. Lithuanian hopes are high for the Prague summit of NATO leaders in November of 2002 to issue an invitation.

Talbott is currently director of Yale University's -- his alma mater -- Center for Globalization Studies. Talbott was an active advocate of

the Baltic states in the Clinton administration, supporting increased ties between Washington and the Baltic capitals, and economic and military development aid. He was the main coordinator of U.S. policy with the Baltic states and one of the initiators of the US-Baltic Charter signed in 1998.

The former secretary of state was also the chairman of the US-Baltic Partnership Commission for three years, a forum for working out the forms military, economic and political cooperation should take between the U.S. and the Baltic states.

Strobe Talbott came to government after working as a journalist for TIME magazine for 21 years. He translated and edited two volumes of former Soviet leader Nikita Krushchev's memoirs, published in the early 1970s in English and was and is a widely respected authority on Soviet and Russian affairs. After serving a year as Washington's ambassador-at-large and special advisor to the secretary of state on the former Soviet Union, Talbott was appointed under secretary of state on February 22, 1994. ♦

Lithuanian Concord Prize awarded to Polish president

The eighth Concord Prize of Lithuania has been awarded to Polish President Alexander Kwasniewski, the first foreign citizen to receive the Lithuanian decoration.

The sculpture of a white angel and the order granted by the Concord Foundation this year will be handed to the Polish leader for his input in the promotion of Lithuanian-Polish cooperation and the efforts to improve Lithuania's image in Western Europe.

The establisher of the Concord Foundation, entrepreneur Julius Kazėnas, said that Kwasniewski's candidacy for the award was supported unanimously by all members of the board.

The date when the prize would be handed to Kwasniewski is yet to be ascertained. The Con-

cord Foundation informed the Polish Embassy of its decision on Dec. 4th 2001. Kwasniewski is expected to receive the award in Warsaw.

The annual prize is awarded to three persons for promotion of concord, with the first order delivered in the end of the year to the winner, the second on Easter, and the third on the first Saturday in July next year.

Among winners of the Concord Prize is former Lithuanian president, Prime Minister Algirdas Brazauskas, poet Justinas Marcinkevičius, Roman Catholic Monsignor Kazimieras Vasilauskas and Cardinal Vincentas Stadkevičius, professor Viktorija Daujotytė, Father Stanislovas Mykolas Dobrovolskis, and actor Donatas Banionis. ♦

Flounder gone from Baltic coast after oil spill

Flounder, known in Europe as plaices, have almost diminished from the Lithuanian coast, and cod supplies dropped by 60 percent following the recent oil spillage at the Lithuanian Butingė terminal, according to the lab of the Lithuanian Fisheries Institute.

Šarūnas Toliušis, the head of the lab in Lithuania's port city of Klaipėda, told BNS on Dec. 13th that specialists are continuing to explore possible changes in the sea bottom and the spillage influence zone, which could reach approximately 25 square kilometers.

In Toliušis' words, the size of the area affected by the oil spillage depends on the direction of wind and underwater currents.

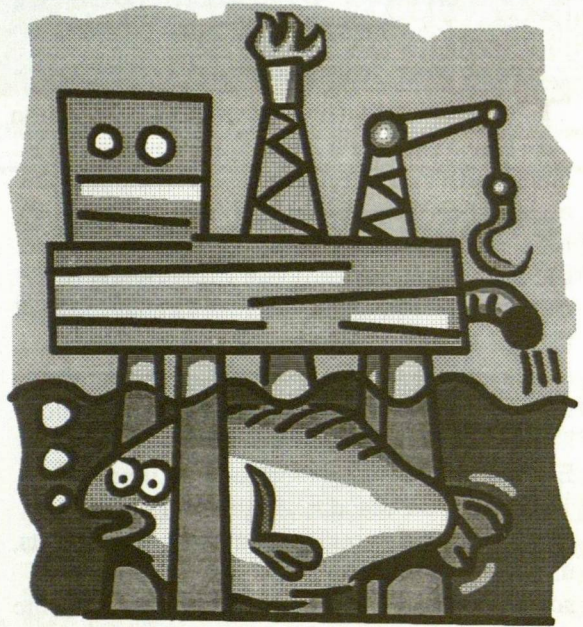
The buoy of the Butingė terminal operated by Mažeikių Nafta (Mažeikiai Oil) concern is located just several kilometers from the Lithuanian northern border with Latvia.

Fishermen reported that they couldn't fish for three days when the oil-spill clean-up operations went into gear. They said fish stocks were noticeably down after the fishermen returned to the sea. In addition, they fear that fish may not return to spawn.

The rural fishermen said the accident happened at the height of the smelt and cod harvest, and fish stocks were off by 50 to 80 percent. Wholesale purchasers don't want to buy what they think are polluted fish not fit for human consumption, the fishermen said.

The lab director dismissed fishermen's recent statements that the fish near Butingė swallowed oil and are now contaminated and not good for food as "fishermen's fantasies". In Toliušis' words, the fish did not swallow oil but moved to clean water areas.

Following the Nov. 23rd oil spillage in Butingė, fishermen of the Šventoji region maintain that all fish have disappeared in the area, leaving them without work. They also demanded compensation of what they say is one million litas (USD 0.25 mln) in damages



from Mažeikių Nafta, which is operated by the U.S. energy group Williams International.

Lab specialists pledge to continue examining and observing the affected zone until fish return to the area. Toliušis said all fish should be back in several months.

On Nov. 23rd the floating terminal facility, a mere few kilometers from the Latvian border, spilled around 60 metric tons of oil into the Baltic Sea. Lithuanian experts calculated damages to the environment coming to around USD 650,000.

The terminal under Williams management had two other accidents during its short operational life since 1999. One other event saw significant amounts of crude released into the Baltic Sea. ♦

*News from Lithuania
- from the Baltic News Service*

European Union to fund Lithuania's preparation for membership

Two financial memorandums of the European Union's (EU) PHARE 2001 program stipulating assistance to Lithuania's efforts to join the organization were signed in Vilnius on Dec. 14th. Lithuanian Finance Minister Dalia Grybauskaitė and the head of the European Commission (EC) delegation in Lithuania, Michael Graham, signed the agreements.

The memoranda confirm the agreement that the EU will grant the Baltic state 15.578 million Euros in financial assistance, with 4.278 million Euros in co-financing allocated by Lithuania. The bulk of the amount – eight million Euros – will be directed to regional environment projects, three million Euros to a professional training scheme, and 1.75 million Euros for the economic restructuring project of Ignalina, Visaginas and Zarasai. The projects falling within the framework of the memorandum will have to be implemented by November 2004.

The funding memorandum of the 2001 PHARE cooperation project in the Baltic Sea region confirms the agreement to finance projects worth three million Euros. Another 0.6 million Euros would be contributed by Lithuania. Projects for the program will be selected through a competition and should be aimed at development of local, regional, and non-governmental organizations in the Baltic region.

The final deadline for paying out the funds is November 2004. ♦

Lithuania's Pres. Adamkus to visit U.S. and Mexico in 2002

Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus will go to the United States in January 2002 to continue the agenda disrupted by the Sept. 11 terrorism and make the first official trip to Mexico, his service reported.

Adamkus told BNS he would be in the U.S. on Jan. 22nd and 23rd, 2002, with a meeting preliminarily planned with U.S. President George W. Bush on Jan. 23rd.

The Lithuanian president's visit to the U.S. was originally planned for Sept. 9th to the 17th but was cut short by the terrorist attacks on Washington D.C. and New York.

Adamkus, the only president in New York during the terrorist onslaught, was planned to meet U.S. Vice-President Richard Cheney on Sept. 11th, with a brief conversation expected with Bush.

From the U.S., the Lithuanian president will make an official two-day visit to Mexico. He will be the first Lithuanian leader to visit the country.

The president is planning to stay in Mexico after the visit there and spend his traditional holidays on the Pacific coast. Adamkus' family and friends have been spending their holidays in Iktapa, Mexico for over a decade, and the tradition was never broken after his election as president in the beginning of 1998. ♦

**Merry Christmas
and a Happy New
Year to all of our
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