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# BRIDGES

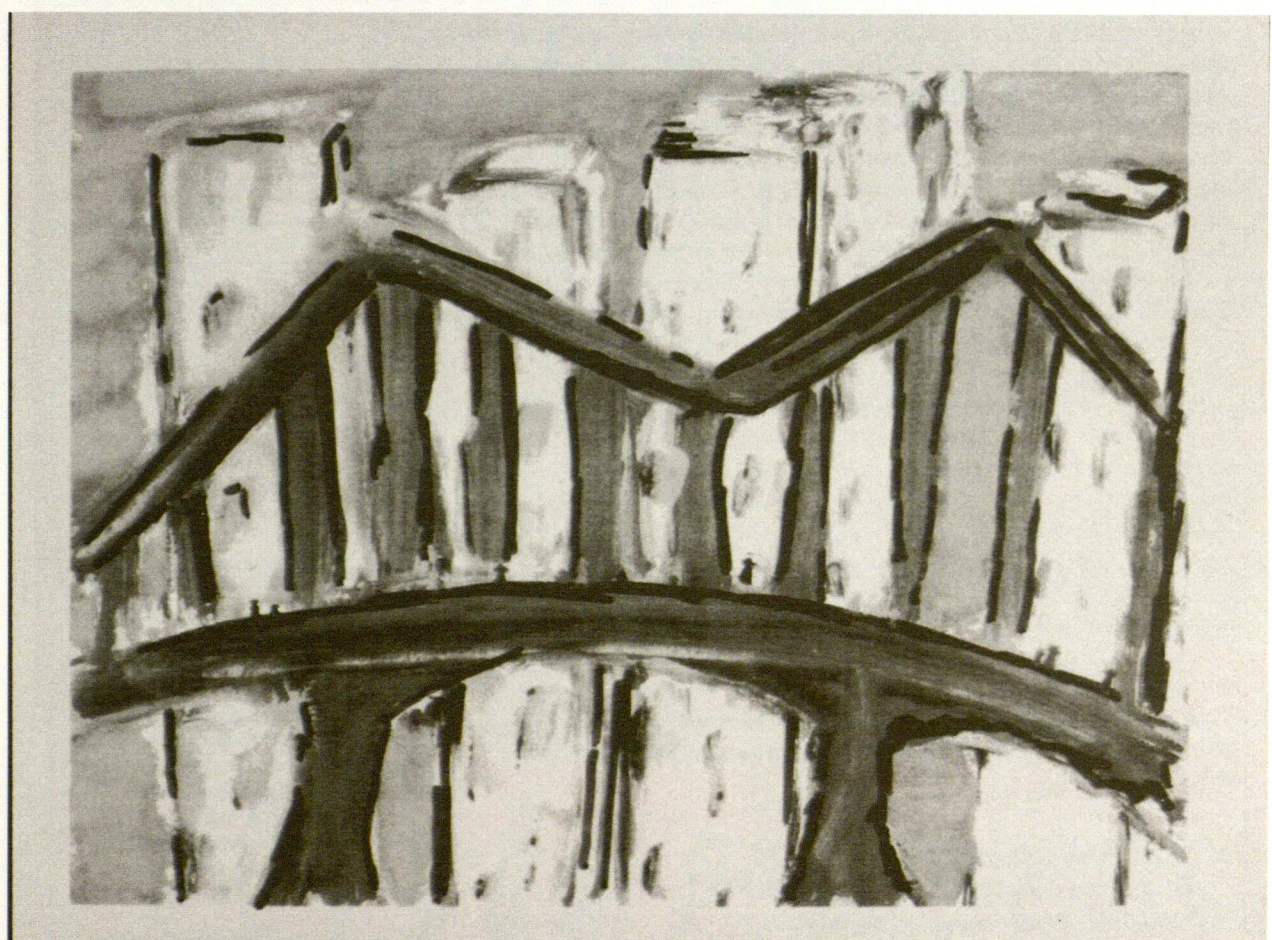
• LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL •

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Issue 1, January/February 2002

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## Our 25th Year!



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*Pres. Adamkus and the future...Commemorations...NATO news*

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# LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY, INC.

## NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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President

February 16, 2002

**Juozas Ardys**  
Vice President for Financial Affairs

Dear Fellow Lithuanian-American,

**Stasys Bačkaitis, Ph.D.**  
Vice President for Academic Affairs

February 16, 2002, the people of Lithuania will celebrate the 84th anniversary of their Declaration of Independence. We, Lithuanian-Americans, living in the United States, join in this proud celebration of regained freedom by expressing hope and confidence in Lithuania's future.

**Dalia Badaras**  
Vice President for New Immigrants  
from Lithuania

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During the year 2001, Lithuania has made great strides in its quest to become a member of two important international structures - NATO and the European Union. The successful meeting of NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Vilnius in May, has advanced Lithuania's chances of being extended an invitation to join NATO during the Summit meeting of NATO member states in Prague this November. On the positive note, has been the improvement of Lithuania's economic situation, specifically in the area of its trade with the West. At last, we have seen Lithuanian goods enter this country. Slowly, but surely, they are capturing public eye! Lithuania's President Adamkus has received U.S. attention and wide acclaim for Lithuania's successful efforts to ally itself with the United States and world democracies. Similarly, our organization's efforts have been highly successful in securing support from members of Congress and the Administration.

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Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. is continuing its efforts to embrace all Americans of Lithuanian descent and newcomers from Lithuania. We have devoted our energy and funds to help Lithuania in various ways (economic, political, charitable) and accomplished much. To reach the non-Lithuanian speaking membership, we publish the monthly magazine "Bridges", a scholarly quarterly "Lituanus", continue to improve our bilingual web site on the internet and issue organizational bulletins in both Lithuanian and English.

**Vidmantas Rukšys**  
Vice President for Youth Affairs and  
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Our work is accomplished through a coordinated effort of six (6) councils: Educational, Cultural, Human Services, Economic, Religious and Public Affairs. The LAC Washington Office in Reston, VA maintains contacts with governmental and non-governmental institutions as well as with American and Lithuanian media. We work without compensation to provide programs for us in the United States and to assist Lithuania. However, there



are overhead and operating costs to be met. On this occasion each year, we turn to you for financial support. While we value your generous contributions to numerous charitable causes throughout the year, in February we ask you not to forget the need to support your Community in the United States. Please help us continue to provide fine programs for the preservation of our ethnicity, for our own sake and that of Lithuania.

Please give generously through your Chapter on Independence Day. Should you be unable to so contribute, please forward your tax deductible donation directly to us. *Let 2002 be the year of our strengthened solidarity with our homeland - Lithuania.*

With best wishes,

S. Algimantas Gecys  
President, National Executive Committee

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## P E R S P E C T I V E S

*Just the other day, my son asked me if I've ever been "the new guy". His point was that he had to always work harder and prove to others that he was worthy in his new job. That is always tough. So is being the new guy to-be as a NATO candidate.*

*In the February 2002 issue of the Atlantic Monthly, Jeffrey Tayler decided that Lithuania just doesn't make the grade for NATO entry. In his article, "The Next Threat to NATO — The Baltics are knocking at NATO's door: Don't let them in", Tayler states, "To be effective and cohesive as a military alliance, NATO must avoid being turned into a club that any country with a grudge against Russia may join — including countries with grudges as valid as those of the Baltics." It interests me that Lithuania is accused of holding a grudge — meaning Russia did something naughty and Lithuania didn't kiss and make-up. Only one who doesn't understand the real relationship between these two countries can make such a superficial remark.*

*Any visitor to Vilnius, Lithuania's capital, can see and hear the diversity that exists. Polish, Russian, English and Lithuanian languages are heard. Minority groups are represented in the Seimas and in educational institutions, as well. Lithuanians not only respect this diversity, but also support its existence simply because they were not given the opportunity to it when they were subjugated, oppressed and controlled by the U.S.S.R. There's nothing like political slavery to help people strive for democratic values.*

*Unfortunately, Tayler did not travel to Vilnius to even see for himself. His idea of the Baltics was Narva — "a placid northeastern Estonian town bathed in sea breezes" and populated by Russians. His ears were only open to Russian opinions: "Russians repeatedly told me of their hope that the Baltic countries would join the European Union (in which their membership has been mooted for 2004) and forgo participation in NATO, which they view as an "enemy" organization in part because of the Soviet-era propaganda with which they were brought up..."*

*Tayler himself brings up the stagnant Soviet-style-slash-Communist thinking that still pervades many Russian groups. He uses this antiquated argument as a concrete reason for a trio of countries to halt their progress into the future and allow important decisions to be made for them — by Russia, no less.*

*It's tough being the new guy — but sooner or later, the new guy always shows what he's made of and proves the old cadre wrong.*

*Rasa Ardys-Juška*

Editor

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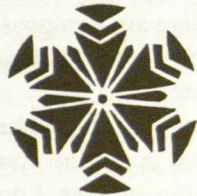
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January — Sausis...

February — Vasaris...pondering their meanings



**On the cover:**  
Winner of "CHILD ART"  
contest in Lithuania for  
"My World in the New  
Millenium" — Dovilė  
Pūraitė, 12 years old.

Sausis, the first month of the year, is usually under a thick blanket of fine, dry (sausas) snow. Days are short, cold and dark. In fact, Lithuania's first major snowstorm in December 2001 closed roads and shut down the normal routines of business and school. It took several days to dig out.

Vasaris signals a light at the end of the tunnel. Its hopeful meaning — getting closer to summer (vasara) — combines with nature changes. Although nowhere near spring or summer, the first thaws begin, the sun shines brighter, and the days grow longer. A month of hope in which all celebrate Lithuanian Independence Day.



*H.E. Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania*

# President Adamkus speaks to Lithuania

*Lithuania's President Adamkus spoke to the nation on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2001 in preparation for the coming year of 2002 and expected political, economical, and international changes which would affect Lithuania and her people.*

Only a few weeks are left until the end of this year. Today the Seimas approved the next year's state budget, which formation demanded considerable effort. Regrettably, this budget does not live up to the pledges made by politicians, and it does not meet the expectations of the people either. Therefore, already today we must consider the tasks for the next year in order not to find ourselves in a similar situation.

Next year will be crucial for Lithuania, and will demand all our energy as well as solidarity. We should complete the accession negotiations with the European Union. We must do everything in our power to secure the membership of NATO.

These goals must not be made a subject of party games. But discussions have already started in the Seimas on whether a referendum should be held on joining the European Union. I want to remind you that the Constitution of Lithuania guarantees citizens' right to a referendum. Therefore, deliberating whether or not to allow the nation to exercise this right is indeed odd.

Politicians must ensure reaching the best possible results in the accession negotiations.

Whereas you, the people of Lithuania, will

have to decide on the basis of results attained by politicians whether or not to use your right to a referendum.

Next year will not be easy. Slowing growth of western economies will inevitably affect Lithuania's economic development. This does not necessarily entail harsh consequences. But already today we must think about measures that would allow alleviating effects of possible economic stagnation. In fact, there are two possibilities: to reinforce discipline in the state and improve the business environment.

Discipline should be established first and foremost in our tax system. In my last state-of-the-nation address, I pointed out that the share of GDP redistributed through the national budget is too small. The redistributed GDP percentage is low not because tax rates are fixed at a very low level, but because our tax system has loopholes, offers endless privileges, and does not provide an equal playing field for all. This share is small because our tax administration is poor and inefficient, and because fair business operates in fierce competition with clandestine business.

Such are the effects of the policy that for a long time was influenced by individual lob-

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*MR. VALDAS ADAMKUS is the president of the Republic of Lithuania.*



bies. We shall not succeed in establishing a clear and stable tax system if such policy is continued and reforms accommodate group interests.

Therefore I propose to the Seimas and the Government to take radical steps and task independent experts with developing the final draft of the tax reform. The Seimas could approve it by a simple vote of yes or no, without amendments. Lithuania needs a just tax system allowing for respect, support, and promotion of work in Lithuania.

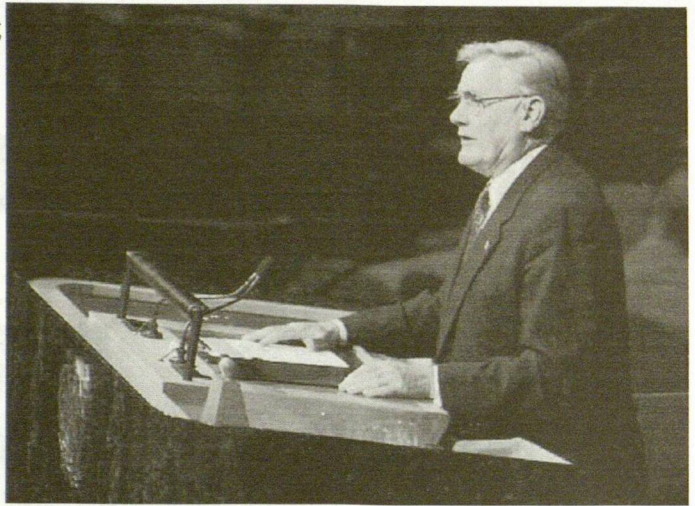
The growth of the national economy and hence our well being will depend to a large extent on the ability of the Government to attract foreign investment and work with those businessmen who already operate in our market. But rather than acting by emotions, we should be guided by clear-cut principles. Not only should our foreign partners whose operations cause numerous discussions today adhere to the rules of a civilized state, but also we should also abide by them.

The Government must investigate all circumstances of the latest accident in Butingė terminal, identify those guilty, and take all measures necessary to prevent in the future similar occurrences in the Baltic Sea.

I am aware of the difficulties that the Government faces and will deal with problems that befell on her. Still, important matters should come first. Is the issue of drinking beer during basketball matches the sole important task on its table?

Talks about Lithuania as a transit state has become an established practice. Indeed, possibilities are numerous. But shall we be able to use them?

Lithuania provides the shortest cut for gas transportation from the East to Western Europe and Karaliaučius. If the East-West gas pipeline ran through our territory, we would collect several billion litas each year for gas transit. That amount would undoubtedly exceed the proceeds of the sale of the Lithuanian Gas. Unfortunately, it looks like the Government is



not setting a task for potential investors to make efforts so that the trunk gas pipeline would run through the territory of Lithuania.

These strategic goals have direct impact on the well being of all people of Lithuania. Likewise the well being of our people depends on successful implementation of the ongoing reforms. Therefore today we should not discuss how to halt the reforms, but we should focus on how to reach the best results and accelerate their implementation. We must ensure timely payment of wages to all schoolteachers, guarantee jobs to graduates, support young families who have children but do not have sufficient means, and ensure that medicine is available in case of illness.

The present Seimas and the present Government have pledged to work for the benefit of the people of Lithuania. The program of the Government that was approved by the Seimas lists a number of important tasks. But time runs quickly.

On many occasions I have stated that I support the Government's measures designed to reach our common goals. The ruling majority, the opposition as well as all responsible politicians must, and I believe can, pool their efforts to make your, dear countrymen, expectations a reality. ♦



From the Baltic News Service

# Pres. Adamkus chats with INTERNET users

**L**ithuanian President Valdas Adamkus was for the first time online on Jan. 9<sup>th</sup> to answer questions of the people of Lithuania, who wanted to know both about the president's feelings for his wife and the urgent political issues.

When asked who he loved most – Lithuania or his wife – the president answered he loved both. However, Adamkus avoided giving a direct answer to the question about his decision concerning running for second term of office as the president.

"If you become a candidate or not a candidate, everything that you do will immediately be interpreted as relating to the election campaign," Adamkus said.

During the online talk on the Delfi chat room, which lasted for more than an hour, the president received 488 questions, 28 of which he answered. Adamkus chose the questions to answer, assisted by his spokeswoman and Delfi staff.

Answering a question on whether the Lithuanian president really has too little power and the office resembles the British throne, Adamkus said it would be interesting to put on a royal crown. However, Adamkus did not agree that the president is only responsible for



granting orders and for the defense and foreign policy. In the words of the president, the Constitution "does not contain a single word saying that the president cannot participate in the internal life of the state's politics".

Adamkus was also given questions about some politicians, amendments to the law on higher education, the fate of the nuclear plant, his favorite music, etc. According to the presidential spokeswoman Violeta Gaižauskaitė, the president was charmed with communicating on the Internet. ♦



From the Baltic News Service

# Lithuanian Seimas remembers Jan. 13th

**T**he Lithuanian Ministers of Parliament (Seimas) met over the Jan. 12-13 weekend in an extraordinary sitting to commemorate the events of January 13, 1991, officially being called Day of the Defenders of Freedom.

Lithuanian leaders from the present and past, parliamentarians, diplomats, victims and family members of those who died on January 13<sup>th</sup> and others attended. Parliamentary chairman Artūras Paulauskas gave the keynote address.

That day in 1991, Soviet tanks fired on and killed unarmed protestors surrounding the Vilnius television broadcasting tower during the long winter following Lithuania's declaration of independence from the USSR. A number of Lithuanians were driven over by the tanks and died immediately or on the way to hospital. Soviet troops also occupied the headquarters and facilities of the Lithuanian Radio and Television at a separate location, and also the Vilnius telephone exchange and the impromptu Lithuanian customs and state border set up at Medininkai, currently on the border with Belarus, killing and injuring volunteers there.

Fourteen people from all walks of life united by a desire to support the Lithuanian state from Soviet aggression died outside the



Vilnius TV tower. Hundreds more were injured.

The TV facility wasn't the main site Lithuanian activists sought to protect from seizure. Thousands of people, including media representatives from various parts of the world, held vigil at the parliament building itself, then known as the Supreme Soviet. Outside, civilians warmed themselves around bon fires and erected make-

shift barricades on the plaza and surround streets; and volunteers delivered hot meals and drinks. Inside, sandbags littered the corridors, security was tight, and leaders, especially Vytautas Landsbergis, the head of the independence organization Sajūdis, occasionally emerged to address civilian defenders below on the situation. Soviet troops never attacked the parliament building.

Here, in the U.S., many Lithuanian-American radio programs and newspapers issued special reports remembering these events and the people who had been martyred. ♦



## Pres. Bush calls Lithuania leading NATO candidate state

**T**he U.S. President George W. Bush reiterated his support to NATO enlargement and called Lithuania the leader of the alliance candidate states at a meeting with Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus on Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>. Adamkus and Bush had their 45-minute long meeting in the Oval Office of the White House

"Such a meeting has never taken place before. It was a very pleasant, businesslike conversation, and we heard such evaluations from the U.S. president that we've never been given earlier," Adamkus told BNS.

Diplomats have called the meeting historic, as it was for the first time that the Lithuanian and U.S. leaders had a bilateral meeting at the White House. The Lithuanian and U.S. presidents have met before during the joint meetings of American and Baltic leaders and at international forums.

During their meeting, Bush said that Lithuania's NATO integration efforts were seen and appreciated, presidential spokeswoman Violeta Gaižauskaitė informed.

At the same time, the U.S. president underscored it was still too early to name the countries to become the alliance members. "The decision will be [given] in [the] fall," Lithuanian Ambassador in the U.S. Vygaudas Ušackas quoted Bush as saying.

In the words of the ambassador, the head of the U.S. reiterated that all the candidate states should be aware that the decision on the expansion will first of all depend on their readiness to join NATO.

According to Gaižauskaitė, Adamkus said

at the meeting with Bush that Lithuania is preparing for NATO membership thoroughly and expects its efforts to be appreciated.

Adamkus said he passed on words from the presidents of Latvia and Estonia assuring they were determined to continue efforts to become NATO members and to be net contributors to security in the organization.

Adamkus also said they talked about trade, luring investment to Lithuania, and international relations, and particularly about Russia and its Kaliningrad region. He said they touched on protection of Lithuania's cultural and Jewish heritage as well.

During the conversation with Bush, Adamkus recalled that their meeting was originally scheduled for September 11, 2001 but was cancelled following the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. Adamkus had to terminate the visit and return to Vilnius.

The Lithuanian president once again expressed Lithuania's support to the U.S.-built coalition to combat terrorism. Adamkus said that Lithuania is already acting as a NATO partner: its military doctors are to leave for the Afghanistan region in the near future and its peacekeepers have been attending the mission in the Balkans for several years already.

Discussing Russia, both presidents expressed a hope that Russia will maintain constructive relations both with NATO member states and the countries seeking membership in the alliance.

Adamkus extended an invitation to Bush to pay a visit to Lithuania. No U.S. president has yet visited Lithuania. ♦



## **NATO Updates...**

### **U.S. Senate Foreign Relations aids visit Lithuania**

***Baltic News Service***

**T**hree staff aids from the U.S. Senate's Foreign Relations Committee arrived in Lithuania on Jan. 16<sup>th</sup> to acquaint themselves with Lithuanian preparations for NATO membership, the nation's foreign policy priorities, and expansion of defense forces.

The Lithuanian Foreign Ministry reported David Merkel, Patti Mc Nerney, and Mark Esper visited on January 16 and 17 and met with Lithuanian defense minister Linas Linkevičius, deputy foreign minister Giedrius Čekuolis, and chairman of the parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee Gediminas Kirkilas.

The Senate committee staff members visited the Lithuanian military training base in Rukla and the Regional Airspace Observation and Control Center in Karmelava, Lithuania.

The purpose of their visit was to prepare for the Senate debate on NATO expansion taking place this year.

The advisors also visited Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, and NATO headquarters in Europe later Jan. and early Feb, the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry reported. ♦

### **NATO ambassadors give Lithuania recommendations**

***Baltic News Service***

**A**mbassadors from NATO member states are telling Lithuanians to make known to the world their achievements in the fields of social policy, culture and education, and not just in Euro-Atlantic integration.

Lithuanian president Valdas Adamkus hosted the annual lunch meeting with NATO ambassadors on Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>. Representatives from most of the 19 NATO embassies to Lithuania were able to attend the event.

Presidential spokeswoman Violeta Gaizauskaitė told BNS the president thanked the ambassadors for their help in Lithuania's move to join the Alliance, and said he hoped they would be talking about positive results at next year's annual lunch. Lithuania hopes to receive an invitation to join NATO at the summit meeting in Prague in November.

Czech ambassador to Lithuania Petr Voznica said he believed the Prague summit would be

crucial for Lithuania, and that the country would be invited to join. The Czech embassy in Vilnius also serves as a NATO contact embassy to Lithuania.

Ambassadors and ambassadorial representatives from France, the Netherlands, Canada, the U.S., Portugal, Turkey, Italy and Poland told the president Lithuania needs to tell the world of its achievements outside the field of Euro-Atlantic integration, in culture, science and education, social policy and tourism.

The ambassadors approved of an agreement signed on to by all major Lithuanian political parties in the spring last year to increase defense spending to two percent of the Lithuanian GDP by 2004. ♦



## NATO again asks Lithuania to extend mission in Balkans

*Baltic News Service*

**N**ATO's military commanders have asked Lithuania to leave its Air Forces plane An-26 in the mission in Southern Europe until the end of 2002 because NATO's military commanders were not sure if Bulgaria's Air Forces plane would join the mission in time to replace the Lithuanian team. The mission was originally planned to end in March 2002.

The government said, in an explanatory note to the document, that this was a request from NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in December 2001.

"When NATO asks us to do something, and we are able to do that, it is a very big political plus for Lithuania as a candidate to NATO," Lithuanian Defense Vice-Minister Jonas Gečas told BNS.

Last year, SHAPE asked Lithuania to extend its An-26 presence in the peace-keeping mission for the same reason -- Bulgaria failed to send a plane to replace Lithuanians.

The Lithuanian Air Forces' transport plane An-26 with a seven-member crew is deployed in a NATO base in Naples, Italy, performing tasks in a NATO-led peace operation in the Kosovo

province and the effort to stabilize peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The plane left Lithuania last spring and was originally planned to return after six months but the mission was extended to March 2002 in September.

Gečas noted that the presence of the military aircraft in the peace mission was a significant proof of Lithuania's military partnership with NATO, which the Baltic state hopes to join. Lithuania is the first among the three Baltic states to send a plane to a NATO-led mission. Furthermore, actual peace-keeping activities are extremely useful for Lithuanian military pilots.

The An-26 crew is replaced approximately every six months to allow as many as possible troops to participate in a NATO operation. NATO pays for the fuel needed for the transport plane, while Lithuania has to cover the expenses of the troops' participation -- about three million litas (EUR 0.84 mln) per year allocated from the defense budget.

The An-26, equipped to carry up to 38 persons or up to 5.5 tons of cargo, is used for transportation and communication between different NATO military units in Europe during missions. ◆

## IMF comments about the Baltic states

*Baltic News Service*

**A** new study on Baltic membership in NATO and the EU initiated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) found that the Baltic states are more able to accept the financial burden of entering NATO and the EU and to undertake macroeconomic stabilizing measures associated with membership in those organization.

Director Horst Kohler and other IMF officials presented the study's conclusions to Lithuanian president Valdas Adamkus on Jan. 17th, presidential spokeswoman Violeta Gaižauskaitė told BNS.

IMF officials reportedly also spoke about the changing situation in the EU and CIS countries,

encouraging Lithuania to continue with its policy of consolidated budget balancing.

"IMF officials said Lithuania has begun reorganization and privatization in the gas and energy sector, and they wanted that to happen [apparently]. They also accented the importance of improving Lithuanian tax policy," Gaižauskaitė said.

Adamkus reportedly briefed IMF officials on economics and reforms in Lithuania, and said after Lithuania joins NATO they should expect to see much greater economic progress in connection with increased foreign investment. ◆



*Edmund Pultinas  
and Teresė Gečys*

## ***February and March...*** **...months to commemorate** **Lithuania's Independence**

**T**his is a day to honor the sacrifices of those people who twice succeeded in restoring independence to Lithuania after long periods of foreign occupation. The story of the restoration of Lithuania in 1990 is an event that we as Lithuanian-Americans can all be proud of, but it was the tragedy at the TV tower which, in my view, truly won independence. This restoration [11] years ago, like in 1918, was a long time coming, and it commanded a high price. Certainly there was the tragedy at the Vilnius TV tower. Those who were killed and wounded deserved to be heroes because of their sacrifice. On the other hand, all those who were there in solidarity are heroes, but for the grace of God they could have been among the killed and wounded.

Most of you know better than I about events in Lithuania. Many of you lived there, or had a parent who came from there. Some of you will be leaving the United States to return to Lithuania. As many of you know, my grandparents came from Lithuania almost a hundred years ago. But all of us here have our own perspective of Lithuania ranging from myself to those who just arrived.

[Eleven] years ago my image of Lithuania and Lithuanians was like the picture on a TV screen with the power off, and suddenly the power is turned on and the picture appears. All of a sudden, Lithuania was in the news. They were talking about independence in Lithuania, in Estonia. Of course, there were positive developments with Solidarity in Poland and in Hungary in the late 1980's. I remember a sad interview published in Time or Newsweek where they were able to interview some Lithuanians who said that Poland had a chance of making it but not Lithuania, not a part of the Soviet Union. Even when Lithuania declared a resumption of its independence, I remember talking to my sister with the discussion being essentially maybe they came too far, too fast, and that with a Hungarian style crack down they would be worse off than they were. Well, here we are [11] years later celebrating freedom for Lithuania.

The TV tower tragedy and the actions of the Sajūdis group rightfully are associated with the restoration of independence, but in my view none of this would have happened had not Lithuanians of today and years ago, in Lithuania and abroad, always had a spirit of inde-

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*EDMUND PULTINAS is the co-chair of the Cincinnati, Ohio chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. This speech was given at the February 16<sup>th</sup> - Independence Day Commemoration in Cincinnati in 2001. TERESĖ GEČYS is the Lithuanian-American Community's Information Services Director and Secretary.*



pendence and the willingness to take risks for this independence. As I said before freedom for Lithuania was a long time coming, and it was paid in advance

History teaches us about all the revolutions and wars against czarist regimes throughout the 19th century with terrible consequences for Lithuania... a twenty-year respite of independence lasting until 1940. The current chapter begins with the Molotov-Ribbentrop arrangement, trainloads of Lithuanians sent to Siberia, the partisans in the woods fighting against hopeless odds to restore justice and freedoms to Lithuanians, the ordinary Lithuanians who passed through the KGB center in Vilnius, the faithful erecting their crosses on the Hill of Crosses in Šiauliai, the people who published the underground newspapers and Chronicles, all the people of the Baltics holding hands in a show of solidarity, the people abroad who kept hopes alive, maintaining an embassy in Washington for 50 years without a country.

History is something that you read about in books, but spirit is something that is felt. Lithuania exists today because of the spirit of its people. We, as Lithuanian-Americans, have a share in that spirit... why else would we be here? Perhaps the semantics are not proper, but the kids I grew up with in what would now be called an ethnic neighborhood certainly carried a dual identity of being American and Lithuanian. When asked what nationality you were, the response was Lithuanian. So when Lithuanians in Vilnius [11] years ago stood alone (help was not on its way for them) and stood their ground, we all felt very proud.

Much has changed [during those] years since then. Freedom hasn't brought good times to Lithuania, but it is still free. Literally almost every day via the internet I get messages about the integration of Lithuania into western Europe via the European Union and NATO. On the other hand, there is very strong resistance by the Russian leadership to the entry of Lithuania and the other Baltic countries into NATO. There are individuals and groups in the U.S. that likewise think that entry into

NATO would be a bad idea. I read about polls in the Baltics, which indicate that only about half of the voters believe in their country's joining NATO or the European Union.

Of course, there is uncertainty and risk. There has always been that for Lithuania. It was true in Vytautas' time, and it is true now. Unlike [11] years ago, we as Lithuanian-Americans probably have the best opportunity to help Lithuania and America by actively supporting the passage of a NATO invitation for Lithuania in the U.S. Senate, which will come up soon. This is something we can all do.

— Edmund Pultinas



### Here follows a list of LAC chapters and their Independence Day Commemorations.

#### **BOSTON REGION**

##### **Boston, MA Sunday, February 24, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Peter Lithuanian R. C. Church, 50 West 6th Street (Flaherty Way), So. Boston, 10:30 a.m.

Commemoration at Lithuanian Citizens Association Hall, 368 W. Broadway, So. Boston, 1:00 p.m.

Organizers: LAC, American Lithuanian Council, Lithuanian National Assoc.

##### **Brockton, MA Sunday, Feb. 10, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Casimir Lithuanian R.C. Church, Corner of Sawtell and Ames Streets., Brockton, 10:30 a.m.

Commemoration at St. Casimir Parish Hall immediately following the Mass.



**Cape Cod, MA**      **Sunday, March 10, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at Our Lady of Victory R. C. Church, South Main Street, Centerville, MA, 12 noon.

Commemoration in the parish hall immediately following the Mass.

**Providence, RI**      **Sunday, Feb. 17, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Casimir Lithuanian R.C. Church, 350 Smith St., Providence, 10:00 a.m.

Commemoration at St. Casimir Parish Hall immediately following the Mass,

**Worcester, MA**      **Sunday, Feb. 17, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Casimir Lithuanian R.C. Church, Waverly and Providence Sts., 10:00 a.m.

Commemoration at St. Casimir Parish Hall immediately following the Mass.

Organizers: Council of Lithuanian Organizations of Worcester of which LAC is a member.

**CONNECTICUT REGION****Hartford, CT**      **Sunday, February 10, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at Holy Trinity Lithuanian R. C. Church, 53 Capitol Ave., Hartford, 9:00 a.m.

Commemoration at the Holy Trinity Parish Hall immediately following the Mass.

**New Britain, CT.**      **Sunday, Feb. 3, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Andrew Lithuanian R.C. Church, 397 Church St., New Britain, CT, 11:00 a.m.

Commemoration at St. Andrew Parish Hall 12:30 p.m.

**Eastern Connecticut**      **Sunday, Feb. 17, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at Immaculate Conception Convent, 600 Liberty Highway, Putnam, CT.

Commemoration at Matulaitis Nursing Home Auditorium, 10 Thuber Rd., Putnam, CT, 2:00 p.m.

**Waterbury, CT**      **Friday, Feb. 15, 2002**

Lithuanian flag raising ceremony at Waterbury City Hall, 10:00 a.m.

Organized by Knights of Lithuania Waterbury Council.

**Sunday, February 18, 2001**

Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Joseph Lithuanian R.

C. Church, 46 Congress Ave., Waterbury, 10:30 a.m.

Commemoration in the St. Joseph School Hall immediately following Mass.

Organized by LAC and Knights of Lithuania.

**FLORIDA REGION (including Georgia)****Atlanta, GA**      **Information not available****Daytona Beach, FL**      **Sunday, Feb. 10, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at Prince of Peace R.C. Church, 600 S. Nova Rd., Ormond Beach, FL, 2:30 p.m.

Commemoration in parish hall immediately following the Mass.

**Palm Beach, FL**      **Friday, Feb. 15, 2002**

Lithuanian Flag Raising Ceremony at Juno Beach City Hall, 10:00 a.m., Saturday, February 16, 2002.

Commemoration at St. Paul of the Cross Parish Hall, 10970 State Road, A1A, North Palm Beach, FL, 2:00 p.m.

**Pompano Beach, FL**      **Saturday, Feb. 16, 2002**

Independence Day Commemoration at Avian Restaurant, 1401 S.E. Federal Hwy., Deerfield Beach, FL, 12:00 noon (during traditional meeting).

**St. Petersburg, FL**      **Saturday, Feb. 16, 2002**

Commemoration at the Lithuanian American Club of St. Petersburg, 4880 46th Ave, St. Petersburg, FL, 2:00 p.m.

**Sunday, Feb. 17, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church, 5800 15th Ave., Gulfport, FL, 1:00 p.m.

**Sunny Hills, FL**      **Sunday, Feb. 17, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Theresa R.C. Church, 2056 Sunny Hills Blvd., Sunny Hills, FL 32428, 11:00 a.m.

Commemoration at St. Theresa Parish Auditorium, 3:00 p.m.

**MICHIGAN REGION****Detroit, MI**      **Sunday, Feb. 10, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at Divine Providence



Lithuanian R.C. Church, 25335 W. Nine Mile Road, Southfield, MI, 10:30 a.m.

Commemoration at the parish hall immediately following the Mass.

Organized by Detroit Lithuanian-American Organizations Center.

**Sunday, March 17, 2002**

March 11 Restoration of Independence Commemoration, Divine Providence Church Parish Hall, 12:00 noon. Organized by Detroit chapter of LAC.

**Grand Rapids, MI Sunday, Feb. 17, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at Sts. Peter and Paul Lithuanian R.C. Church, Myrtle and Quarry Sts., Grand Rapids, 9:30 a.m.

Commemoration at Sts. Peter and Paul Family Center immediately following the Mass.

**Lansing, MI**

Participates in the Detroit, MI commemorations.

**NEW YORK REGION**

**Long Island, Manhattan, Queens Sunday, February 17, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at Church of Transfiguration, 64-25 Perry Avenue, Maspeth, NY, 11:30 a.m.

Commemoration at Union Congregational Church Auditorium, 86-15 114th Street, Richmond Hill, NY, 4:00 p.m.

**Rochester, NY Sunday, Feb. 17, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at St. George Lithuanian R.C. Church, 545 Hudson Ave., Rochester, 10:30 a.m. Commemoration at the parish hall immediately following the Mass.

**KAUNAS**



**OHIO REGION**

**Cincinnati, OH Sunday, Feb. 10, 2002**

Commemoration at Highland Heights Community, 17 Meadow Lane, Highland Heights, KY 41076, 2:00 p.m.

Participation by representatives of Dayton, OH Lithuanian-American Community

**Cleveland, OH Sunday, Feb. 17, 2002**

Laying of wreath at Lithuanian Wayside Cross and Mass of Thanksgiving at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, 18022 Neff Rd., Cleveland, 9:45 a.m.

Mass of Thanksgiving at St. George Lithuanian R.C. Church, 65th and Superior, Cleveland, 10:30 a.m.

Commemoration at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish Hall, 4:00 p.m.

Organizers with American Lithuanian Council Cleveland Chapter.

**SOUTHEAST REGION**

**Baltimore, MD Sunday, Feb. 17, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Alphonsus Lithuanian R.C. Church, 114 W. Saratoga St. at Park Ave., Baltimore, 8:30 a.m.

Commemoration at Lithuanian Hall, 851-853 Hollis St., Baltimore, 2:00 p.m.

Organizers: LAC with Council of Lithuanian Societies of Maryland.

**Elizabeth, NJ Sunday, March 3, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at Sts. Peter and Paul Lithuanian R.C. Church, 211 Ripley Place, Elizabeth, 11:00 a.m.

Commemoration at the parish hall at 12:30 p.m.

**Newark, NJ**

Commemoration with Elizabeth Chapter of LAC.

**Philadelphia, PA Sunday, Feb. 24, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Andrew Lithuanian R.C. Church, 19th and Wallace Sts., Philadelphia, 10:30 a.m.

Commemoration at the Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia (Richmond Area), 2:00 p.m.



**Pittston, PA Thursday, Feb. 14, 2002**

Lithuanian flag raising ceremony at Pittston City Hall, 11:00 a.m. followed by refreshments with city dignitaries at St. Casimir Lithuanian R.C. parish.

Lithuanian flag is flown for two weeks.

Organized by Knights of Lithuania.

**Scranton, PA Saturday, Feb. 16, 2002**

Lithuanian flag raising ceremony, Scranton City Hall, 10:00 a.m.

Organized by Knights of Lithuania.

Month of February, all Sunday Mass Homilies about Lithuania at St. Joseph Lithuanian R.C. Church, Main and Green Ridge Streets, Scranton.

**Wilkes-Barre, PA Friday, Feb. 15, 2002**

Lithuanian flag raising ceremony at Luzerne County Courthouse, 9:45 a.m.

Organized by Knights of Lithuania.

**Washington, DC Sunday, Feb. 24, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Matthew R.C. Cathedral, 1725 Rhode Island Ave., Washington, DC, 10:00 a.m.

Commemoration at Latvian Hall, 415 Hurley Ave., Rockville, MD, 2:00 p.m.

**MIDWESTERN REGION****Brighton Park (Chicago), IL Sunday, Feb. 17, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at Immaculate Conception Lithuanian R.C. Church, 4420 So. Fairfield Ave., Brighton Park, Chicago, IL, 10:30 a.m.

Commemoration at the school hall immediately following the Mass.

**Cicero IL January 22, 2002**

Cicero City Hall reading of Lithuanian Day Resolution, 10:30 a.m.

**Thursday, February 14, 2002**

Cicero City Hall Lithuanian flag raising ceremony, 12 noon.

**Sunday, February 10, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Anthony Lithuanian R.C. Church, 1515 So. 50th Ave., Cicero, 9:00 a.m.

Commemoration at the parish hall immediately following the Mass.

Organized with American Lithuanian Council chapter.



Vilnius

**East Chicago, IN Sunday, Feb. 10, 2002**

With American Lithuanian Council and Knights of Lithuania, Commemoration at American Legion Post 430, 7430 Broadway (Rt. 53), Merrillville, IN, 1:00 p.m.

**East St. Louis, IL Sunday, Feb. 17, 2002**

Mass of Thanksgiving at Immaculate Conception Lithuanian R.C. Church, 1509 Baugh Ave., East St. Louis, 10:30 a.m.

Commemoration at the parish hall immediately following the Mass 11:30 a.m.

**Lemont, IL Saturday, Feb. 16, 2002**

Gala Independence Day Banquet, Lithuanian World Center, 14911 127th Street, Lemont, IL, 6:00 p.m.

**Sunday, February 17, 2002**

Wreath laying ceremony, 10:30 a.m.

Mass of Thanksgiving Blessed Matulaitis Mission Lithuanian World Center, Lemont, IL, 11:00 a.m.

Organized by Lemont chapter of LAC.

Commemoration in main auditorium of Lithuanian World Center, Lemont, IL immediately following the Mass at 12 noon, organized by Midwestern Region of LAC.

**Waukegan, IL Sunday, Feb. 24, 2002**

Commemoration at Libertyville Civic Center, 135 West Church Street, Libertyville, IL, 3:00 p.m.

**Minnesota Saturday, Feb. 16, 2002  
(Twin Cities Area)**

Religious service followed by commemoration and cultural program at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 2561 Victoria St., Roseville, MN, 5 p.m.



**Indianapolis, IN** Plans in process to celebrate March 11th restoration of independence.

For information, please contact LAC Chapter President Mindaugas Balčius at (317) 283-1258, mindabalcius@hotmail.com

### **WESTERN REGION**

**Alaska** **Saturday, Feb. 23, 2002**  
"Lithuanian Independence Day Celebration Get Together", Anchorage, Alaska.

Please contact Asta Spurgis-Sirvelis at 907-277-7897 for more information.

**Phoenix, AZ** **Sunday, Feb. 10, 2002**  
Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Elizabeth Seton R.C. Church, 9728 Palmeras Dr., Sun City, AZ, 1:15 p.m.

Commemoration at the parish hall immediately following the Mass at 2 p.m.

**Los Angeles, CA** **Sunday, Feb. 17, 2002**  
Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Casimir Lithuanian R. C. Church, 2716 St. George St., 10:30 a.m.

Commemoration at the parish hall immediately following the Mass at 12:00 noon.

Organized with American Lithuanian Council Chapter

**San Diego, CA** **Sunday, Feb. 24, 2002**  
Commemoration at Oceanside Senior Center, 455 Country Club Lane, Oceanside, CA, 1:30 p.m.

For information contact Regina Lišauskas at 760-943-9434

**San Francisco, CA** **Sunday, March 10, 2002**  
Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Mary Magdalene Church, Barryman and Milvia Sts, Berkeley, CA, 12:00 noon (tentative).

Commemoration at the parish hall immediately following the Mass.

For information and to confirm time, please call Rita Kovas at (510) 843-4749.

**Portland, OR** **Saturday, March 2, 2002**  
Commemoration at the Latvian Hall, 5500 SW Dosch St., Portland, 5:00 p.m.

For information contact Vilius Zalpys at 360-834-6988

**Seattle, WA** **Saturday, Feb. 9, 2002**

Commemoration at the Latvian Hall at Latvian Lutheran Church, 11716 Third Ave. NE, Seattle, 4:30 p.m.

### **NEW "PLAINS" REGION**

**Colorado** **Sunday March 3, 2002**  
Mass of Thanksgiving at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel R.C. Church, 34th and Navajo Streets, Denver, CO  
Tel. (303) 455-0447, 2:00 p.m.

Commemoration at the parish hall immediately following the Mass at 3:00 p.m.

**Kansas City, KS** **Sunday, March 3, 2001**  
Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Cyril Church, 44 N. Mill, Kansas City, 11:00 a.m.

Program to follow in church hall.

**Omaha, NE** **Sunday, Feb. 17, 2002**  
Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Anthony Lithuanian Catholic church, 32nd and "S" Streets, Omaha, NE, 10:00 a.m.

Commemoration at St. Anthony Parish Social Hall, 32nd and T Streets, Omaha, 11:00 a.m.

**Houston, TX** **Sunday, Feb. 24, 2002**  
Commemoration at Holy Cross Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall, 7901 Westview Road (at Wirt Road), Houston, 4:00 p.m. ♦



Šiauliai



Alytus

*Illustrations are of Lithuanian heraldry.*



Edward Baranauskas

# Meeting up with an old friend...

**T**his is my story of meeting an old friend of mine in Lithuania, Simas Kudirka, after a passage of some twenty years.

Our friendship began in 1975 when I was a member of the Supreme Council of the Knights of Lithuania, serving as Co-Chair of the Public Relations Committee with Helen Kulber. That same year, Simas was one of the guests of honor at the Knights of Lithuania National Convention in New York City; the other was Congressman Robert F. Hanrahan of Illinois, a member of Congress who was instrumental in obtaining Simas' release from the Soviet Gulag and his eventual return to the United States.

May I refresh the memories for those who may not know, or even remember, who Simas Kudirka was?

In 1970, Simas Kudirka was a radio operator on a Soviet fishing trawler. He attracted worldwide attention after his attempted leap for freedom onto the deck of a United States Coast Guard cutter failed. His own officers forcibly returned him to his ship with the approval of the Coast Guard admiralty.

I had the opportunity of meeting Simas and his wife, Genė, at many social gatherings in the metropolitan New York City area over the

years. When he left New York and moved to California, we lost contact with each other.

I often wondered what happened to him, and how he was doing. From some of my friends, I learned that he, together with his 94 year-old mother, moved to Lithuania and lived in a small town called Pilviškiai, near Vilkaviškis.

Will there be a chance, I thought, of my meeting him in Lithuania? My wife and I packed many of our personal belongings together with some of our furniture and had them shipped to our new home in Vilnius. After our arrival in June, we were so busy unpacking and getting settled in our new environment, that I lost all track of time.

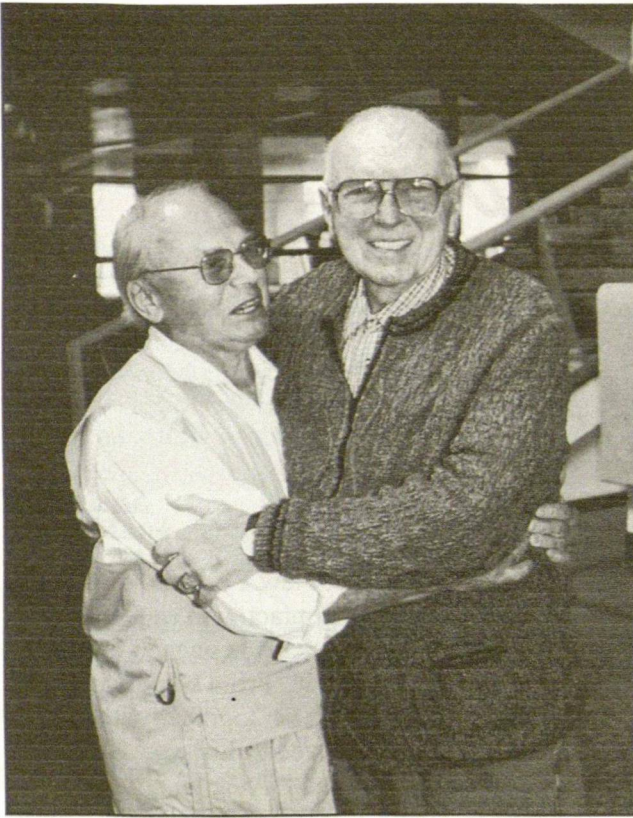
My problem was this: how do I find Simas? Fortunately, I had a directory (*Žinynas*) that listed all of the parishes in Lithuania, together with the names of their pastors, addresses, and phone numbers. In the Diocese of Vilkaviškis, I found the phone number of Father Antanas Žukauskas, pastor of the church in Pilviškiai.

Thanks to Father Žukauskas, I was able to find Simas' phone number, and he answered my call. I introduced myself, and imagine my surprise when he told me he remembered me. He was leaving for America in a few days; he

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*EDWARD BARANAUSKAS has written for Bridges for several years from his home in Schenectady, New York. He has recently relocated to Lithuania.*





*Edward Baranauskas and Simas Kudirka meet again.  
Photo: E. Baranauskas*

went on to say, and gave me the date and time of departure, plus his destination, Frankfurt. I told him that I would love to see him at the airport in Vilnius before he left.

On the morning of his flight, I arrived at the airport well ahead of his scheduled departure time and sat down near the gate listing the 12:20 flight to Frankfurt. Within a matter of minutes, three people stood nearby, and I recognized Simas by the sound of his voice. He had changed since I last saw him, for he was now wearing glasses and had lost most of his hair. I was wondering if he would recognize me, for what little hair I had left was now gray.

I walked up to him, introduced myself, and words are hard to describe the emotional moments that followed.

We hugged each other for a few moments, and then he introduced me to some of his

friends. One of them was the gentleman who had given Simas' telephone number to Father Žukauskas. If I understood him correctly, he screens all of the incoming calls for Simas in order to avoid any unnecessary or crank calls.

I told him that 1998 was the last time I was in Lithuania. He asked me if I noticed any changes that may have taken place since my last visit. Yes, indeed, I told him. He was surprised, to say the very least, when I told him about how the automatic teller machines (ATM) operate, and how this has changed the banking system world-wide.

These ATMs are scattered throughout most major cities in most banks in Lithuania, from what I was able to observe. And how has the introduction of these machines changed the banking system? Well, I went on to say, that my savings are in a bank in New York state, and even though I am living here, some 5,000 miles away, I can withdraw money from my account simply by inserting a Master Money debit card into a slot in the ATM, pressing the correct buttons, and watching the exact amount of litas come sliding out from one of the other slots within a matter of seconds. This may have been the first time Simas knew that such a machine existed.

His wife, Genė, had stayed behind in California in order to obtain greater Social Security benefits when she retires next year. Both are planning on coming back to Lithuania in May of 2002, and settling down in the house he is now renovating. Then, he said, his days of traveling will be over.

We bade each other farewell before he left to board his flight, with the promise that we will surely meet again when he returns home next year.

This was certainly a most memorable day for both of us.

&



By now, I am sure, many of us know about the attempted defection of Simas Kudirka and of its failure. But, how much do we know of its aftermath?

Simas experienced all the hardships of a Siberian prison camp, the long and grueling work, little and inedible food, contrasting freezing and boiling temperatures, solitary confinement, beatings, and lack of medical care.

But what of Mrs. Kudirka, Maria Genovaitė (Genè) and her two children? What was their plight and how did they suffer?

She knew her husband was outspoken where freedom and justice were concerned, but she had no prior knowledge of what he had intended to do. He was always disagreeing and getting into arguments with the Communists, and that is why he was often shifted from boat to boat.

Rumors of her husband's attempted escape reached her via his fellow sailors, but there was nothing exact or official. Some said he had been killed; others said he was in prison, and still others claimed he was in America. It was not until ten days or so later that Soviet agents and Secret Police arrived at her home in the city of Griškabūdis and told her that her husband had been arrested for high treason.

A search of her house had been authorized, and the entire contents were registered. Mrs. Kudirka, anticipating such a search, had burned any materials she felt would be incriminating. Consequently, the Secret Police did not discover anything substantial, but still confiscated several magnetic [recorded] tapes, reading and writing materials, and books, including a prayer book. These items, they felt, could be used as circumstantial evidence. Every second or third day, from the time of the search until his trial began on May 20, 1971, she was called in by the Secret Police for intensive questioning.

Agents tried to persuade her to denounce her husband and aid the Communist state. Soviet officials told her she should divorce him, since he would be away for a long time. She would not. During this period, she saw Simas

only once, at Christmas time. This visit was an exception to the rule and was granted only because she refused, under penalty, to answer any more questions unless she could see him.

Kudirka's trial lasted only four days and was closed to the public, except for the presence of his wife and mother. Immediately after its conclusion, Secret Police again arrived at the Kudirka residence. This time, however, they took everything, leaving only two beds, a wardrobe closet, and her kitchen utensils.

With her husband in prison and her home left bare, Mrs. Kudirka was forced to send her son, who was not of school age at that time, into the countryside to live with her mother-in-law. Her daughter remained with her to attend school, while she worked 11 hours a day, seven days a week at a government store.

The security police left her pretty much alone except for periodic questioning, usually a result of some rebellion, act of disobedience, or prisoners' strike led by Simas. All she ever told them was this: "You took him into your hands, and you re-educate him".

It was awfully upsetting, and there were moments of despair for Mrs. Kudirka, but she strongly felt that there had to be people like Simas who fought for principles. ♦

*(Source of information: Interview given by Mrs. Kudirka to Schenectady Gazette, Thursday, September 18, 1975).*



# C U R R E N T E V E N T S

## How one man can make a difference

**A**n international newspaper for Rolls-Royce employees, *The Post*, printed an article highlighting Lloyd Roach, an active member in the Indianapolis Lithuanian-American community. He has become the official unofficial welcome-to-Indianapolis caretaker of newly arrived Lithuanians.

Lloyd is a senior quality engineer – metrologist with Rolls-Royce since 1986. He is also a member of the Board of Trustees of the Lithuanian Free Market Institute in Vilnius for the last nine years. His 1997 Masters thesis was entitled,

"American High-Tech Business in Lithuania."

According to *The Post*, Lloyd, a non-Lithuanian, first visited Lithuania as a consultant 19 years ago and made many life-long friends. Since then, he has welcomed dozens of Lithuanians to this home and raised thousands of dollars in aid for poor families and orphaned children in Lithuania.

Lloyd's visit initiated a strong bond with Lithuanians. He was quoted as saying, "They were a delight to work with. When I left, they pleaded with me, 'Don't forget us. We don't have a voice in the outside world.' I started sending boxes of supplies to several families. They would draw outlines of their feet, and I would send them shoes. One family asked for pepper, so I sent them 60 boxes. They said they never had so many visitors at Christmas time!"

For the last eight years, Lloyd has supported the Radviliškis Orphanage. When he



visited the orphanage, Lloyd had these impressions, "Yes, they may be poor in money, but they are rich in ways that are of a higher order! I left the orphanage with a smile on my face and a song in my heart. What one gives is truly returned ten-fold!"

As for the future, Lloyd recently told Teresė Gečys, LAC information services coordinator, "My plan or dream is to be an active participant in building high-tech manufacturing plants in Lithuania. I completely believe that we are very close to a truly economic rebuilding of Lithuania! Most of the pieces of the puzzle are already in place for this to take place. I believe that the next two years will be pivotal years for Lithuania: in a very positive way! However, support from the United States will surely be important!" ♦



## In memory of Margaret and Charles "Kazys" Žemaitis

**I**n 2001, Lithuanian-Americans of Kansas City lost two very active pillars of the Community, the husband and wife team of Margaret and Kazys Žemaitis. Margaret passed away on January 26<sup>th</sup> and Kazys just a few months later on August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2001.



From left: Anita Strumillo, director of "Aidas" Lithuanian Folk Dancers of Kansas City, Charles "Kazys" Žemaitis and Margaret Žemaitis.

"was most passionate about her husband Kazys, her children, her grandchildren, international travel, and the Lithuanian culture, including the heritage, costumes, and weaving." She and Kazys were a host family to five college basketball players from Lithuania.

Both Margaret and Kazys were born in Kansas City and remained life long residents. Both were active in their own individual American organizations. Margaret's career highlights included co-ownership of an antique business and consulting as a Certified Independent Antiques Appraiser. She had been a flight attendant, an In-Flight Service Manager, and a Medical Administrator for TWA.

Kazys was a Captain in the Training Division of the Kansas City Fire Department, who was instrumental in establishing the Kansas City Firefighters Museum. Captain Žemaitis retired in 1997 after 30 years of service. He was a member of International Association of Firefighters and the Top of the Morning Club. He was a U.S. Navy veteran who had served on the aircraft carrier USS Hornet as an aviation specialist on the flight deck.

In Lithuanian activities, Margaret and Kazys were inseparable. Both were members of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc., Kansas City Chapter, founding members of Lithuanians of America - Kansas City, and both were dancers in "Aidas" Lithuanian Folk Dance Group. Margaret also belonged to the Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute as an assistant director of "Aidas" dancers.

In Margaret's obituary it was noted that she

At the time of his death, Kazys was the president of the Kansas City Chapter of Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. The Chapter participated in the international ethnic events in Kansas City with Lithuanian crafts, food, and Lithuanian folk dancing. "Kazys was a distinguished gentleman and father-figure, who brought great credit to himself and his Lithuanian ancestry," according to the obituary in *Wells Fargo Financial*.

Kazys and Margaret Žemaitis are survived by four children: Jeremy J. Žemaitis, Lori J. Kugelman, Sally Dannov, and Amy Newman; by six grandchildren; as well as brothers and sisters of Kazys Žemaitis.

Not only will the members of the Kansas City Chapter of LAC but all of "Lietuvių Bendruomenė" will miss the enthusiasm for all things Lithuanian of Kazys and Margaret. We are confident that Lithuanian-Americans of Kansas City will honor their memory by continuing the many Lithuanian endeavors of Kazys and Margaret.

(Information for this article supplied by Kate Porterfield, the newly elected LAC representative for Kansas City Chapter.)

— *Teresė M. Gečys*



## Strange, but true...

**A** 1952 book, *The Natural*, by Bernard Malamud and the 1984 movie starring Robert Redford was inspired by the real life of a Lithuanian-American baseball player Eddie Waitkus. Waitkus, a Philadelphia Phillies player, formerly with the Cubs was also the subject of a *Chicago Sun Times* article by Gary Wisby published on Aug. 19, 2001.

In 1949, Eddie Waitkus was the victim of an obsessed fan who shot him. At that time, newspaper reports noted that baseball players replaced matinee idols in the affections of teenaged girls. In any case, Waitkus, a former U.S. Army sergeant, recovered from his injuries. He never missed a season, was leadoff hitter when the Phillies won the National League pennant in 1950, and won the Comeback of the Year Award.

Waitkus continued to play for Philadelphia through the 1954 season before being traded to Baltimore for \$40,000. Late in 1955 he returned to Philadelphia and at the end of the 1955 season he retired.

According to family and friends of Eddie Waitkus, he was never the same after the shooting. It cost him an all-star spot and he had

missed another season. He went through some tough times after baseball. During his final years, he worked at Ted Williams' baseball camp in the summer and basically collected unemployment during the winter. He entered a Boston Veterans Administration Hospital in the summer of 1972, and it was there that he died on September 15, 1972. Eleven days after his 53rd birthday.

The obsessed fan, Ruth Ann Steinhagen, was a 19 year-old typist who got a crush on Waitkus while attending Cubs games in 1947. She papered her room with his pictures, and when she learned he was Lithuanian, she tried to learn the language. After the shooting, she was judged insane, sent to a mental institution, and released a few years later. ♦

— *Ramunė Kubilius*



## Omaha Lithuanians celebrated their 50th!

**T**he first Lithuanians came to Omaha, Nebraska in 1949, and by 1951, the community was approximately 700 strong. In 1950, the Lithuanian Exile Community was formed. This was reorganized on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1953 to become what is still known as the Lithuanian-American Community's Omaha chapter. A year long celebration with many interesting events and activities took place during 2001 to commemorate this momentous 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Over the years, this chapter has maintained a Lithuanian cultural school, Aušra folk dance group, Rambynas choir, a parish – St. Anthony's, a Lithuanian Women's Club, A Hunter and Fisherman's Group, and scouts. This active group hosts many dinners serving traditional foods to raise funds for local activities and for needy families in Lithuania. They have also gotten together with Latvians and

Estonians to hold a Baltic picnic.

Omaha and Šiauliai began a sister city relationship that includes city offices, companies (local and international), visiting entertainment groups and two very active university relationships – Creighton University and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. A yearly student exchange program between Creighton Prep High School and Kaunas Jesuit School, and exchanges between other Lithuanian cities and Bellevue University for athletic and business degrees are in full swing.

The LAC Omaha chapter's committee members include: Rūta Jaudegis, Ruth Lake, Nijolė Sudavičius-MacCallum (chairperson), Arvydas Urbanavičius, Margarita Sederavičius-Hathaway, Eugene Radžiunas, Rūta Talžūnienė, Algirdas Mackevičius, and Danguolė Antanėlis-Hanson. ♦



## Lithuanian Children's Relief continues its work

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

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

We are very proud of the fact that each dollar donated to LCR results in three times that amount of aid to Lithuania. This has been accomplished through our partnership with the U.S. government's foreign aid organization called USAID (United States Agency for International Development).

Our heartfelt thanks go out to everyone who has ever helped at a fundraiser or loaded containers or sorted clothing. Your strong support and strong backs have enabled LCR to move mountains.

Here is just a sampling of programs and projects that LCR has been able to establish and continue to support.

- Medical Assistance Project — Dr. Dunn operated on Aušra Stroputė to correct a jaw deformity. She was hospitalized for seven days at Milton Hospital. The value of the donated hospitalization and physician's services was approximately \$40,000.
- Medical Mission — Three medical teams (surgical, anesthesiology, and nursing team) spent two weeks training Lithuanian professionals and performed 29 surgeries on children with facial deformities.
- Gerber Baby Food Project — A shipment of baby food valued at over \$1 million was sent to the six infant's institutions, tuberculosis sanatoriums and children's homes throughout Lithuania.
- Hearing aids and testing equipment were delivered to the Kaunas Home for Deaf Children.
- Vaccine Mission — LCR received 800 doses of measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine from the Catholic Medical Mission Board and organized a team of nurses to travel to Lithuania to administer the vaccines to institutionalized children.
- Diaper project — LCR purchased and shipped 5,000 diapers to infants' homes in Lithuania and outfitted all six infants institutions with three washing machines and three clothes dryers.
- Fight Against Tuberculosis — LCR purchased and

delivered to Lithuania 45,000 doses of anti-tuberculosis medicine, which provided a full nine months of treatment for over 110 children.

- Medical assistance for Renata — A six year-old girl was brought to Boston and treated at Shriner's Burn Institute.
- As a result of an individual donation a pediatric fibro bronchial scope was purchased and delivered to the Kaunas Infectious Clinic.
- The Lithuanian Open Golf Tournament — In cooperation with Ed Shakalis and supporters of the Lithuanian Open, a pediatric ventilator was purchased and delivered to Telšiai Hospital. During 2002, a neonatal infant monitor and a pre-mature infant incubator will be purchased and delivered to Rokiškės Hospital.
- Medical assistance for Paulius and Vytautas Leveris — Twins from Lithuania who were blinded by insufficient oxygen in their incubators were brought to Boston for medical treatment.
- School Supply Project — Over 50,000 pencils, 10,000 notebooks, and many other school supplies were purchased and shipped to Lithuania's Ministry of Education who distributed them to children living in orphanages.

LCR received funding from many individuals, groups and event proceeds. Some of these included: a benefit concert performed by Marytė Bizinkauskas and Veronica Cote at Maironis Park in Worcester, MA; two organ recitals were held at St. Casimir's Church; a basketball game between the South Boston Lithuanian basketball players and the South Shore Doctors team; and Jonathan Phillips and Algis Kalvaitis raised money for LCR by completing the Boston Marathon.

Many other people and groups helped and continue to raise funds for LCR in diverse ways. One interesting project is "Save a Stamp — Save a Child". Foreign and domestic stamps are collected and sent to Sr. Helen CJC (261 Thatcher St., Brockton, MA 02302). This has been a big success.

If you would like more information or would like to send a donation, please write to Lithuanian Children's Relief  
P.O. Box 497  
South Boston, MA 02127 or 617-268-6030 ♦



## Lithuanian athletes are off to the Winter Olympics

**E**ight athletes will represent Lithuania and compete for medals in the Winter Olympic Games starting in Salt Lake City next month.

The Olympic delegation, confirmed by executives of the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee (LTOK) on Jan. 11<sup>th</sup>, embraces a total of 19 persons including eight athletes, coaches, doctors and heads of national federations of sports represented in the group. Olympic skiing champion Vida Vencienė will head Lithuania's Olympic mission in Salt Lake City.

The LTOK executive committee also endorsed the estimate of expenditure of the Olympic delega-

tion at 795,000 litas (US \$198,000).

The Lithuanian Olympic team includes figure skaters Margarita Drobiazko and Povilas Vanagas; biathlon athletes Liūtauras Barila and Diana Rasi-movičiūtė; skiers Ričardas Panavas, Irina Terentjeva, Vladislovas Zybailo and Vadimas Gusevas. Lithuania expects the highest place for Drobiazko and Vanagas who are thought to rank 3rd-6th.

Ranking among the first 20 skiers would be a good achievement for Panavas; while Zybailo and Barila would be satisfied to be in the top 40. The Winter Olympics will take place in Salt Lake City, Utah on Feb. 8<sup>th</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup>. ♦

## New Vilnius guidebook

**T**he Lithuanian capital Vilnius' network of tourism services has added a new item to its repertoire for foreign guests to navigate the winding streets of the medieval city – a guidebook in English called **Vilnius on Foot**.

The publication features three routes for tourists to learn about the ancient capital, called the "Vilnius Old Town", "Vilnius Baroque" and "Vilnius: the Lithuanian Capital". Attractions are displayed on a map. The book features colored photographs, descriptions of sites worth visiting, and approximate walking times.

The Vilnius municipality reported the guidebook is intended for individual tourists who want to learn about the city on their own initiative, and for other visitors who want more detailed information on the city's cultural heritage.

Some of the books will be distributed free of charge at tourism industry events, Lithuanian embassies and information centers, travel agencies, restaurants, and other places. Another portion of the print-run will be sold at tourism information centers.

The Vilnius municipality's Vilnius Tourism Information Center and the Lithuanian Tourism Department cooperatively published the guide.

An electronic version is to go on-line at the Vilnius city homepage [www.vilnius.lt](http://www.vilnius.lt), and a CD is also being released, the Vilnius municipality reported. ♦

## Constitutional anniversaries

**T**he parliament of Lithuania adopted a decision to declare 2002 the year of marking Constitutional anniversaries in Lithuania at an extraordinary plenary session on Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>.

This year marks 80 years since the adoption of the first standing pre-war Constitution of Lithuania by the Constituent Seimas on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1922, which also declared the restoration of Lithuania's independence, and 10 years since the adoption of the Constitution of the restored independent state of Lithuania by the Reconstituent Seimas on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1992.

The parliament also addressed the government, municipalities, the academic community, and institutions asking to encourage research into the constitutional development of Lithuania and parliamentarianism.

A commission headed by the parliamentary chairman Artūras Paulauskas approved a program to mark these anniversaries with seven scientific conferences – three of them international – to be held in Lithuania this year together with many other events. The first conference is scheduled to take place on January 16<sup>th</sup> at the Constitution Hall at the parliament building.

During the conferences, the improvement of the Constitution of Lithuania with a view to Lithuania's integration into the European Union (EU) will be discussed among other issues. ♦

*News from Lithuania — Baltic News Service*



## Ignalina workers want to privatize plant

**W**orkers at Lithuania's Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant (INPP) are calling for legislation to allow privatizing the Soviet-era reactor, to draw greater foreign infusions of capital to the Lithuanian nuclear power industry, and to solve serious unemployment facing staff there.

A press release sent to BNS on Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> by the collective of INPP workers revealed the new plan. The statement was adopted at a meeting of the labor union at INPP on January 9<sup>th</sup>.

Lithuania's State Nuclear Energy Safety Inspection also called for changing INPP's legal corporate status at the end of December.

Nuclear safety chief Saulius Kutas told BNS at the time that operating under law as a state enterprise, INPP couldn't insure complete nuclear safety. He said he believed nuclear safety at INPP would be better served by restructuring from a state enterprise to a public company, as is the norm in a number of Western European states.

The statement by INPP workers also called for immediately deciding what to about the future course of the domestic nuclear power industry. They also stressed the need to safeguard workers and nuclear engineers at the plant and to begin negotiations with Russia on returning used fuel. Currently the power plant stores used fuel rods on site.

The workers said Lithuania has all the right conditions for a thriving nuclear industry. They claimed the utilization of nuclear technology in Lithuania engenders development of the country's scientific and technological potential and contributes to economic growth.

The statement said the second reactor at INPP "can and should" be used for the full term prescribed in its engineering specifications – until 2017 – and claimed if it were further modernized, it could run a further 10 to 15 years.

Ignalina currently produces around three-quarters of all Lithuanian electricity. The two reactors housed at Ignalina are Soviet manufacture RBMK models, the same reactor type that failed at Chernobyl and originally designed for dual use, both to produce electricity and nuclear weapons materials. Nuclear engineers consider the design



inherently unsafe because of the way fuel rods are cooled, and reaction events possible when running at low power.

Under pressure from the European Union, Lithuania decided to shut the first reactor at INPP off in 2005. The Lithuanian cabinet should announce whether Lithuania intends to unplug the second reactor or not this February. Lithuania plans to conclude EU negotiations this year to enter in 2004. The EU and European Commission have

been pressuring Lithuania to mothball the second reactor at INPP by 2009.

The statement from INPP workers accused the state of insufficient efforts to mitigate the effects of closure on the first reactor on the local economy. The workers said: "With no government program in place or investments allocated for solving the problem of employment, we will fail to solve the growing problem of unemployment in the INPP region." According to data from January 1, 2002, there are 4,611 people working at INPP; a portion of whom will lose their jobs when the first reactor there goes off line.

International experts predict the phase of INPP closure until 2010 will cost around 270 million euros and some 542 million euros over the next 30 years. They say that taking the social costs and radioactive waste into account, the total cost over the next 100 years will top 2.5 billion euros.

Lithuanian officials have called on the EU to help shoulder the large financial burden of closing down INPP. International donors have already allocated around 200 million euros for closing the first INPP reactor down.

Some observers contend the EU is mainly worried about large volumes of cheap electricity flooding EU markets after accession, which could drive some companies in the west out of business, rather than about nuclear safety threats posed by Ignalina. While the EU pushes Lithuania toward closing INPP, German nuclear plants are officially being phased out, and some market observers claim Europe could fail to meet internal consumer demand for electricity in the coming years. ♦



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