

bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

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June 2015

this month in history

June Anniversaries



665 years ago

June 29, 1440

The Lithuanian Council of Lords, without the approval of Poland, named 13-year-old Kazimieras Jogailaitis (Casimir IV Jagiellon) Grand Duke of Lithuania after the sudden death of Sigismund Kęstutaitis left the office empty.

The news was met with hostility in Poland, to the point of military threats against Lithuania. Because Casimir was underage, control over the Grand Duchy was in the hands of the Council

of Lords, presided by Jonas Goštautas, Voivode of Trakai.

During Casimir's rule, the rights of the Lithuanian nobility, irrespective of religion and ethnicity, were put on an equal footing to those of the Polish szlachta. Additionally, Casimir promised to protect the Grand Duchy's borders and not to appoint persons from the Polish Kingdom to the offices of the Grand Duchy.

Casimir succeeded his brother Władysław III as King of Poland in 1447. An active ruler, he defeated the Teutonic Knights in the Thirteen Years' War and recovered Pomerania. Casimir was the first ruler of Lithuania baptized at birth, becoming the first native Roman Catholic Grand Duke. He was the father of St. Casimir.

420 years ago

June 9, 1595

Birth of Vladislovas Vaza (Władysław IV Vasa), King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania from 1632 to 1648.

When Vladislovas was 15, his father, Sigismund III Vasa, manipulated the youth's election as tsar of Russia while Polish forces held Moscow, in a failed plan to conquer Russia and convert it to Catholicism.

Vladislovas succeeded to the Polish throne on in 1632. A popular monarch, he helped solve problems created by his father, who had created internal friction in Poland and pursued a series of profitless wars abroad. He successfully rebuffed an ensuing Muscovite siege, then launched an offensive, capturing the Russian commander. By the Peace of Polyanov that followed, Tsar Michael Romanov confirmed all earlier cessions of territory to Poland and agreed to pay 200,000 rubles in exchange for Władysław's renunciation of all claims to the tsardom.



170 years ago

June 4, 1845

Writer Julija Beniuševičiūtė-Žymantienė, pioneer of realism in Lithuanian literature who used the pseudonym Žemaitė, was born on Bukantiškės estate, in the Plungė district, to a family of impoverished Samogitian gentry. Her father taught her to read and write at home. Forbidden to play with the children

of the serfs or to speak Lithuanian by her Polonized family, she learned the language on her own and later became a major figure of the Lithuanian National Revival movement.

A strong supporter of the uprising of 1863, Žemaitė in 1865 married uprising participant Laurynas Žymantas. They worked on a farm, raising their children and battling poverty until moving to a village near Užventis in 1885. There Žemaitė met Povilas Višinskis, who discovered her talent and urged her to write. In 1894, at the age of 49, Žemaitė produced her first work, Autumn Evening (Rudens vakaras). She published 150 works in all.

Žemaitė worked as an editor in Vilnius from 1913 to 1915. During WW I, she cared for Lithuanian refugees in Petrograd, and in 1916 she came to the U.S. to collect donations for victims of war. After returning to Lithuania in 1921, she settled in Marijampolė, where she died that December.

Žemaitė's works show a deep affection for the common people. She understood the burden of serfdom and the misery borne of poverty from her own experience. She wrote about peasants in a vernacular that closely resembled the language spoken by them. Her portrayals of everyday life describe petty conflicts, lively conversations, impoverished surroundings and beautiful nature.

She was featured on the now-retired 1 litas banknote.

95 years ago

June 10, 1920

Lithuania's Constituent Seimas adopted the third and final draft of the Lithuanian Constitution.

June 12, 1920

Lithuania signed a peace treaty with the Russian SFSR in which Russia recognized Lithuania's independence *de jure* and acknowledged that vast areas of the Vilnius region belonged to Lithuania.

75 years ago

June 15, 1940

Soviet troops invaded Lithuania. The Lithuanian government protested and President Antanas Smetona left the country. The anniversary is commemorated annually in Lithuania as the Day of Mourning and Hope.

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Front cover: Women in the traditional folk dress of the Klaipėda region during a celebration of Joninės, or St. John's Day. The midsummer festival is celebrated on June 24 all around Lithuania. Traditions include singing and dancing until sunset, telling tales, searching for the magic fern blossom, jumping over bonfires, washing one's face with morning dew, and floating flower wreaths on the water © Johny13 | Dreamstime.com

Back cover: The first of the Soviet deportations began in June 1941. Lithuanian families exiled to the far north of Siberia often found themselves crowded into earthen yurts like these—often made with their own hands—with other exiles. This yurt (jurtas in Lithuanian) is in the open-air ethnographic museum at Rumšiškės. Photo: Teresė Vekteris

from the editor

A Terrible History

This month witnesses a terrible anniversary, with parallels in today's world that are a little too close for comfort.

Seventy five years ago, from June 4 to June 7, 1940, Soviet troops were mobilized along Lithuania's border under the pretext of military training.

At the same time, Moscow was accusing Lithuania of creating a secret military union with Latvia and Estonia in violation of the Treaty of Mutual Assistance that had been signed on October 10, 1939. Lithuanian Prime Minister Antanas Merkys traveled to Moscow to negotiate with Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov but the talks were a hollow gesture on the part of the Soviets. While Merkys was there, the Soviet government signed a decree ordering establishment of concentration camps for prisoners of war from the Baltic States.

On June 10, 1940, more than 220,000 Red Army troops in full combat readiness were deployed near Lithuania's eastern border. On June 14, 1940, the Soviets presented Lithuania with an ultimatum that demanded the free entry of an unlimited number of troops and formation of a Soviet-friendly government. Soviet Minister Molotov insisted that the Lithuanian government reply to the ultimatum by 10 a.m. the next day, stating to the Lithuanian diplomats, "Whatever your answer, the troops will enter Lithuania tomorrow anyway."

At its sitting at 7 a.m. the next day, June 15, the Lithuanian government decided to satisfy all the Soviet requirements, hoping to preserve Lithuania's independence, to no avail. The Red Army crossed the border of Lithuania at 3 p.m. that afternoon.

The invaders opened fire on the headquarters of the Lithuanian border guard service in Ūta (Alytus district) at 3:30 p.m., stormed the checkpoint and killed Aleksas Barauskas, chief of staff and senior border guard officer. He was the first Lithuanian citizen killed by the NKVD.

By 7 p.m., Red Army tanks had reached Kaunas and surrounded the Office of the President, the Government, the Bank of Lithuania and other governmental institutions. Lithuania was occupied without battle, due to massive political, military and diplomatic pressures. The Lithuanian government protested the Soviet occupation and President Antanas Smetona left the country. The anniversary is commemorated annually in Lithuania as the Day of Mourning and Hope.

After the invasion, the Soviets released Antanas Sniečkus, head of the formerly banned Communist Party of Lithuania, from prison. He was made head of the Department of National Security on June 19 and First Secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party in August 1940. Sniečkus initiated the first mass deportations of Lithuanians on June 14-19, 1941. He even had his own brother, with his family, deported to Siberia.

In this issue, we bring you three features related to these terrible June events:

- Vytautas Bartasius's parents were among the first exiles deported in June 1941. He was taken in by his mother's family and later fled Lithuania with his Aunt Stefanija. Their story begins on page 16.
- In October 1940, the United States declared its non-recognition policy of the Soviet annexation of Lithuania. S. Algimantas Gečys writes of the U.S. Lithuanian community's role in forming and preserving that policy beginning on page 3.
- In 1965, on the 25th anniversary of the Soviet invasion, a group of young activists began to plan a large-scale rally and march to try to influence the U.N to address the Baltic Question. Tony Mažeika chronicles their efforts beginning on page 8.

Yours with hope,



Teresė Vekteris, Editor

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Preserving the U.S. Policy of Nonrecognition of the Soviet Occupation and Incorporation of the Baltic States Into the U.S.S.R. By S. Algimantas Gečys



The Lithuanian delegation on October 15, 1940, with President Franklin D. Roosevelt when the United States declared the non-recognition policy of the Soviet Union's annexation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. M. Vaidyla, J. Laučka, F. Bagočius, J. Zuris, J. Švagždys, E. Mikužiūtė, K. Karpis, P. Grigaitis, L. Šmutis, A. Kumskis, P. Pivaronas and P. Mileris.

United States Recognition of the Baltic Republics After World War I

Every newly formed independent state seeks diplomatic *de facto* (in effect whether by right or not) and *de jure* (in effect legally) recognition from the principal foreign governments of the world. The Republic of Lithuania, resurrecting from 123 years of czarist occupation and the ashes of World War I, was no exception. However, it proved to be a formidable task. While independent Lithuania was proclaimed on February 16, 1918, the process of gaining foreign recognition was delayed for more than four years. It was only on June 30, 1922, that the Conference of Ambassadors of the Great Powers "... decided that Principal Allied Powers would recognize Lithuania *de jure*." This recognition was to be independent of determination of status of Memel (Klaipėda) "... which question

a committee of Conference secretaries" would study.¹

With Lithuania recognized by the other and more immediately concerned powers, there was no longer any reason for the United States to withhold its recognition. On July 25, 1922, at 4 p.m., the following dispatch was wired under the signature of Secretary of State Charles E. Hughes to State Department's Riga-based Commissioner Young:

"Advise Foreign Offices of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as nearly at same time as possible on the morning July 28 that the United States extends to each full recognition. The fact will be communicated to the press at Washington for publication in the morning papers of July 28 and the following statement will be made:

"The Governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have been recognized either de jure or de facto by the principal Governments of Europe and have entered into

*relations with their neighbors. In extending to them recognition on its part, the Government of the United States takes cognizance of the actual existence of these Governments during a considerable period of time and of the successful maintenance within their borders of political and economic stability. The United States has consistently maintained that the disturbed conditions of Russian affairs may not be made the occasion for the alienation of Russian territory, and this principle is not deemed to be infringed by the recognition at this time of the Governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania which have been set up and maintained by the indigenous population."*²

The Soviet Occupation of the Baltic Republics

Fast-forward to June 15, 1940. Soviet Union armed forces forcibly occupy the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. How will the United States



At the White House in 1975, National Executive Committee officials of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc., discuss with Vice President Gerald Ford the need to strengthen the U.S. non-recognition policy of the Soviet occupation of Lithuania. From left, Anthony Novasitis, Esq., Rimas Chesonis, Algimantas Gureckas, Ford, Aušra M. Zerr, S. Algimantas Gečys. Not pictured, LAC National President Juozas Gaila.



In 1978, LAC officials after a White House meeting with Vice President Walter Mondale (left) and President Jimmy Carter (fifth from left) that addressed the Lithuanian diplomatic service.

government react? Reaction is somewhat delayed. The following statement by the acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles is released to the press on July 23, 1940:

“During these past few days the devious processes where under the political independence and territorial integrity of the three small Baltic republics—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—were to be deliberately annihilated by one of their more powerful neighbors, have been rapidly drawing to their conclusion.

“From the day when the peoples of these republics first gained their independent and democratic form of government, the people of the United States have watched their admirable progress in self-government with deep and sympathetic interest.

“The policy of this Government is universally known. The people of the United States are opposed to predatory activities no matter whether they are carried out by the use of force or by threat of force. They are likewise opposed to any form of intervention on the

part of one state, however powerful, in the domestic concerns of any other sovereign state, however weak.

“These principles constitute the very foundations upon which the existing relationship between the 21 sovereign republics of the New World rests.

“The United States will continue to stand by these principles, because of the conviction of the American people that unless the doctrine in which these principles are inherent once again governs the relations between nations, the rule of reason, of justice, and of law—in other words, the basis of modern civilization itself—cannot be preserved.”³

This statement by Sumner Welles formed the basis of the American Principle of Non-recognition of the Soviet Occupation and Incorporation of the Baltic States into the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.). During 50 years of Soviet occupation, the United States government stood by the *de jure* recognition extended to the Baltic republics in 1922. There were occasions when the United States could have been more resolute, when in the spirit of détente its officials seemed to allow the non-recognition policy to be frayed and weakened. That’s when the Baltic diaspora in the U.S. rose to the occasion and through members of Congress, demonstrations and protests attempted to reshape the distorted policy to a desired level.

A Valuable Lesson From President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

On October 15, 1940, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt received a delegation of the Lithuanian American Council in the White House. The spokesman for the delegation, Dr. Pijus Grigaitis, read the special memorandum regarding the concern of Lithuanian Americans over the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union. The memorandum noted that:

“When Lithuania fell, it seemed that the earth, particularly those who had recognized her as independent, were disinterested, none condemned that act of extirpation which to the Lithuanians of America seemed so needful of condemnation. ... Then on the 23rd day July, 1940, your State Department,

Mr. President, announced the attitude of the Government of the United States regarding the loss of Lithuania's independence. ... It was an act of condemnation of a wrong committed by a great power against a weak nation. At last the clamor of destruction was overcome by the call to reason and justice. ... We are proud that our United States of America stands firmly behind a policy that knows no compromise with aggression."

After listening to the delegation's remarks and upon the acceptance of the memorandum, President Roosevelt outdid the Lithuanians in his reply. He went on to say that the United States would do everything in its power to hasten the day of independence, and that after the war Lithuania and the other enslaved nations would be free. He continued:

"It pleased me to see that you, American citizens of Lithuanian origin, are so deeply concerned with the fate of your mother country. My ancestors came to this country long before you came. They were from Holland. Regardless of the fact that many years have passed, I still consider Holland as the land of my forefathers; the misfortunes that befell Holland pains me deeply and I shall do everything in my power to make Holland a free country again. The ancestors of my wife came from Belgium, naturally, the fate of Belgium is in no less a degree a concern of mine. Therefore, I understand perfectly your feelings concerning the fate of Lithuania.

"But let me tell you that you have made here two mistakes; the first mistake is in your address that you gave me. It is stated here that Lithuania has lost its independence. It is a mistake to say so. Lithuania did not lose her independence. Lithuania's independence was only temporarily put aside. Time will come and Lithuania will be free again. This will happen much sooner than you may expect. The other mistake as I observed was made by one of your speakers when he referred to Lithuania as a very small state. Look at the Latin American Republics and you will see that they are even smaller states than Lithuania, but they live a free and happy life. It is not fit even to talk about the smallness of Lithuania for even the smallest nation has the same right to enjoy independence as the largest nation."⁴



LAC National Executive Committee officials meet with U.S. Congressman Dante Fascell, chair of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, in 1978. The discussion centered on Soviet human rights violations and the need to replenish dwindling personnel of Lithuania's Diplomatic Service. From left, S. Algimantas Gečys, Congressman Fascell, Aušra M. Zerr and Algimantas Gureckas.



U.S. Congressman Charles F. Dougherty, co-chair of the Congressional Caucus for the Baltic States and Ukraine, speaks at a rally in Philadelphia. In 1979, he introduced legislation for the United States to fund the operation of the Lithuania Legation in Washington, D.C.

Non-Recognition Principle: How Was It Made to Work

By not recognizing the incorporation of the Baltic republics into the Soviet Union, the United States permitted the Lithuanian Legation in Washington, D.C., and Lithuania's consulates in New York, Chicago, Boston and Los Angeles to continue to function. Their operations as well as those of legations and

consulates in countries that had similarly refused to recognize Lithuania's annexation (Canada, United Kingdom, Vatican, Argentina, Brazil, Switzerland, etc.) were funded from the assets of Lithuania's government. At the outset of World War II, these assets were disbursed for safe keeping to the United States and to other European countries.

Within the Department of State the office to deal with issues related to the



At the LAC Board of Directors meeting in Chicago in 1980, Dr. Stephen Aiello (left), special assistant to President Jimmy Carter, is thanked by Lithuanian General Consul in Chicago Juze Daudzvardiene, after he announced that the United States was willing to extend diplomatic status to newly appointed Lithuanian representatives who were not in Lithuania's diplomatic service in 1940. At right is world Lithuanian Community President Bronius Nainys.



Chief National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski (center) accepts an LAC award honoring President Jimmy Carter. From left, Aušra M. Zerr, S. Algimantas Gečys, Dr. Brzezinski, unidentified White House staffer, Rimas Chesonis (1980).

Baltic republics was retained and adequately staffed. It closely followed armed resistance in Lithuania and subsequent dissident activities within the Baltics. Upon the signing of the Helsinki Accords in 1975, the "Baltic desk" closely involved itself with the condemnation of violations of human rights in Soviet-occupied Baltic republics. Once a year, on the occasion of Lithuania's independence day, the Department of State would issue a congratulatory letter under the signature of the Secretary of State reconfirming the continued United States policy of non-recognition. Some of the statements within the letters appeared weak (e.g., Henry Kissinger's); others unequivocally

strong and to the point (e.g., William P. Rodgers). In later years, upon the adoption of Captive Nation Day legislation, the White House on June 15 scheduled an audience with the President to commemorate the Captive Nations' Day. Still later, the United States Congress began to observe Black Ribbon Day. It commemorated the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 between Nazi Germany and the U.S.S.R., which had subjected independent countries of Eastern Europe to foreign dominance.

The policy of non-recognition played an important part in keeping the populations of the Baltic nations informed. Voice of America broadcasts were reach-

ing the shores of the Baltic. In the 1970s, Radio Liberty broadcasts were begun. While these were more candid than those of VoA, the Lithuanian American Community lobbied the Department of State and Congress to place Baltic broadcasts under the auspices of Radio Free Europe (RFE). Because Radio Liberty broadcasts were beamed solely to U.S.S.R. republics, the Community felt that the special status of the Baltic republics demanded that the broadcasts be carried from Radio Free Europe, primarily serving the "independent" Soviet satellite countries. In 1984, RFE began its broadcasts to the Baltics and continued well into the years of reestablished independence.

An interesting aspect of the non-recognition policy was the restricted travel of United States diplomats into the Baltic States' territory. Protests arose when United States Consul General in Leningrad Culver Gleysteen visited Vilnius in the fall of 1972. In responding to a letter from U.S. Senator Hugh Scott, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations David M. Abishire defended the visit by claiming its purpose being "... to familiarize with the city and to meet with city officials with whom he (Mr. Gleysteen) will have to deal in order to facilitate contacts between Americans and Lithuanians. The visit was thus in line with the U.S. Government's desire to maintain contacts with the Lithuanian people without altering our long-standing policy of refusing to recognize Lithuania's forcible incorporation into the Soviet Union."⁵ There have been reports that in order to avoid problems, the U.S. government representatives, at the start of consultations with local Baltic officials, chose to rattle off a statement pertaining to the policy of non-recognition.

It is worth mentioning that the United States closely watched the events in the Baltics. Refugee Baltic politicians were employed to conduct research and to keep the government informed. Students with leadership qualities were given CIA stipends to pursue university studies. The students had to sign an agreement that they would return to their native lands once independence was restored.

Baltic Diaspora on the Watch

As the years passed, it remained the duty of the sizeable Baltic diaspora within the United States to guard the U.S. policy of non-recognition. New U.S. leaders were being elected and history lessons learned were carried into retirement and graves. The Baltic concerns had to be passed on to the new leaders of the government. It was of utmost importance that the policy of non-recognition remain strong despite periodic thawing of U.S. and U.S.S.R. relations and subsequent Glasnost.

One area where the efforts of the Baltic organizations, in particular the Lithuanian American Community, Inc., bore fruit was the designation of the Baltic republics within the maps published by the U.S. government. A disclaimer on the maps stated that the United States does not recognize the Soviet annexation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the Soviet Union. Furthermore, in the new editions of the world map of the U.S. Foreign Service posts, the Baltic republics were identified and depicted in their present actual boundaries. In addition, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were inscribed in the maps with their English names. It was noted to the U.S. Geographer that transliterated Russian names of the Baltic republics were unacceptable as well as their designation as Soviet socialist republics.

The Baltic diaspora was facing a considerable problem. It was obvious that the continued functioning of fully accredited diplomatic representatives of the last independent governments of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in the United States and several other Western countries provided a visible expression and gave substance to the policy of non-recognition of the annexation. It was also evident that without diplomatic representation the unsettled international status of the Baltic countries would be soon forgotten by the general public and would lose most of its advantages for the Baltic peoples as well as its restraining influence upon the Soviets. Yet an erosion of Baltic diplomatic service was setting in and, unless arrested, it was headed toward gradual

disappearance of Baltic representation.

The position of the Department of State was to recognize Baltic diplomats that had been commissioned by the last presidents of independent Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. At some 40 years later, old age was taking its toll, and the Lithuanian American Community, Inc. (LAC) began to lobby President Jimmy Carter's administration to permit admittance of new diplomats into Lithuania's diplomatic service. The effort was successful. On October 25, 1980, presidential assistant for ethnic affairs Dr. Stephen Aiello came to LAC's annual meeting in Chicago to advise of a new presidential policy that will permit persons of a third country to serve as Lithuanian diplomats. "Third country" meant that a Lithuanian-American could not represent Lithuania as diplomat; however, a Lithuanian-Canadian could. In 1983, resident of Italy Mr. Stasys Lozoraitis, Jr. was appointed counselor of the Lithuanian Legation in Washington, D.C. Upon the restoration of Lithuania's independence in 1990, he was named Lithuania's ambassador to the United States.

In the early 1980s it became common knowledge that the source of financial support for Lithuania's diplomatic service—the frozen assets of Lithuania in the United States—were being rapidly depleted and in a few years would be completely exhausted. The concern was relayed by the Lithuanian American Community to U.S. Congressman Charles F. Dougherty, who at the time co-chaired the Congressional Caucus for the Baltic States and Ukraine. Dougherty introduced legislation in the House of Representatives (H.R. 5407) to fund Lithuania's Legation in the United States with an annual stipend of \$250,000. The officials of the Department of State were up in arms. A better solution had to be found, one that would less irritate the Soviets. At the behest of State Department, Latvian diplomats' arms were twisted. Latvia's Diplomatic Service funds were invested at a higher rate, with an understanding that Latvia would provide a loan to Lithuania. In 2003, Lithuania's President Algir-



Angele Nelsas of the Baltic-American Freedom League and S. Algimantas Gecys after testifying on behalf of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia at the National Republican Subcommittee on Foreign Policy in New Orleans in 1988.

das M. Brazauskas repaid the so-called "honor loan" to the Latvian government.

In conclusion

After half a century of foreign occupation the Baltic States are independent. They are members of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The faith placed by the United States in the Baltic people was amply rewarded. The soldiers of the three Baltic republics have fought in Kosovo; and along with troops from the United States they are in the process of establishing a free Afghanistan. The Lithuanian people can be proud of being the first to lay groundwork in dismembering the "Evil Empire"—the Soviet Union.

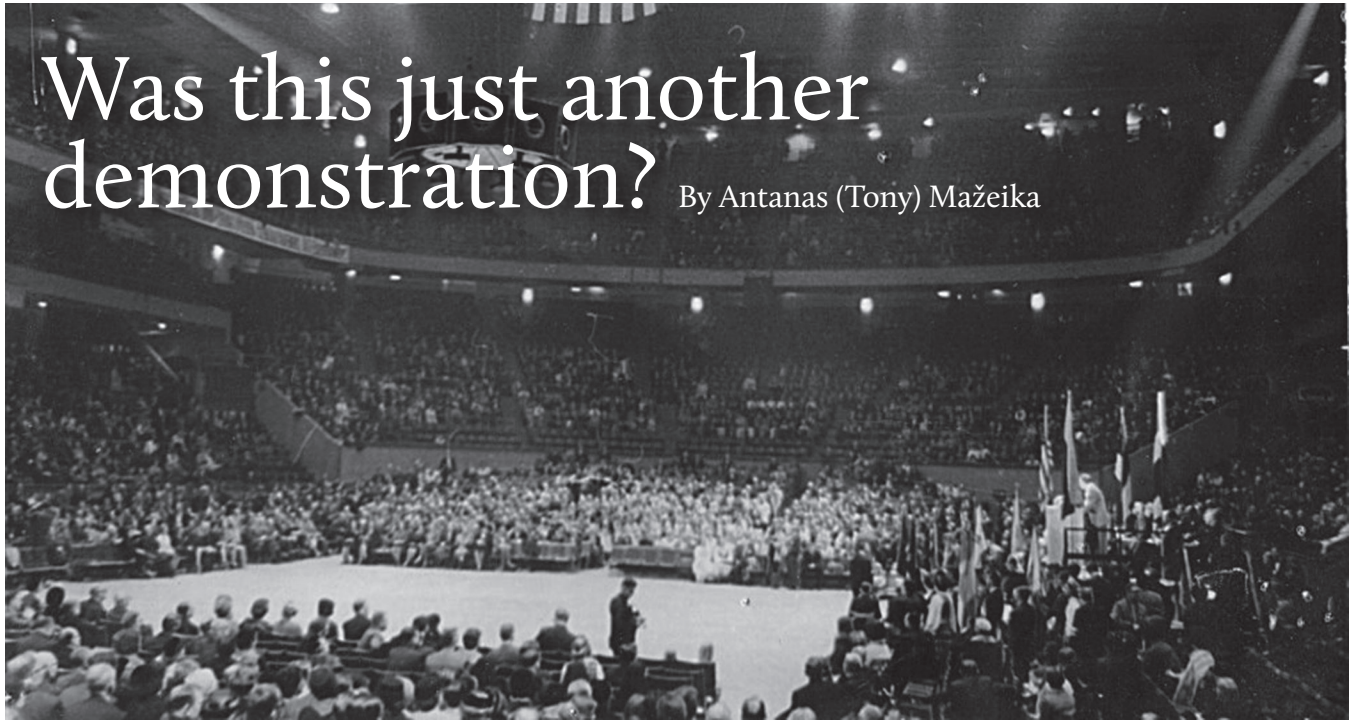
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S. Algimantas Gečys is a long-time activist within the World Lithuanian Community, Inc. and the Lithuanian American Community, Inc. He served three terms as national president of the Lithuanian American Community and at different times (for 14 years) headed its Public Affairs Council.

Was this just another demonstration?

By Antanas (Tony) Mažeika



1965 rally at Madison Square Garden. Photo: Tony Mažeika

The year is 1965.

The Vietnam War intensifies and the U.S. Army launches an attack in the Highlands in November 1965.

Martin Luther King organizes the historic Freedom March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.

The U.S.S.R.'s Luna 7 crash lands on the moon.

The United Nations concentrates on an anti-colonial agendas.

U.N. Draft resolutions 2027 and 2020 "provided measures to accelerate promotion and respect for human rights; promote elimination of all forms of religious intolerance."

Rhodesia proclaims independence from Britain.

New York City, the northeastern United States and Canada experience a 13-hour electric power blackout on November 9.

It had been 12 years since Lithuania's active armed war of resistance against Soviet occupation (1944-1953) ended.

The Baltic nations mark the 25th anniversary of the Soviet invasion and annexation.

Lithuanian-American Experience

By 1965, Lithuanian and other Baltic refugees (displaced persons) had now been resettled in the United States and Canada for approaching 15 years.

Remnants of free Lithuania's former political parties were part of the Supreme Committee for Liberation of Lithuania (VLIKAS). This Committee was the surviving organ of Lithuania's military resistance groups operating in Lithuania. VLIKAS was headquartered in New York. There was no government in exile. The question was, other than formal U.S. recognition of embassies and consulates in exile, what if any support was there for restoration of Lithuania's independence? With a name like "Supreme Committee for Liberation," what was the liberation mission? What were the plans for protesting 25 years of Soviet occupation and tyranny?

Newer arrivals as well as other Lithuanian Americans saw hope fading for restoration of independence. Many felt that VLIKAS and the Committee for a Free Lithuania, largely influenced by the U.S. Department of State, had become

bureaucratic, provincial, insular and passive. The leadership organizations had little recognition in the larger political world. There was little public relations activity. The leadership groups felt intimidated by the State Department.

Until the 1960s, activities of the émigré communities had largely been cultural and linguistic. Heavy emphasis was made on the retention and teaching of Lithuanian language, music, songs and history. Since occupation in 1940, significant efforts had been made by Lithuanian-American community organizations like the Knights of Lithuania, Lithuanian leagues and Catholic charities. The Lithuanian American Council, an umbrella group of most Lithuanian-American organizations, held an audience with President Franklin Roosevelt at the White House in the fall of 1940. Through their efforts, Roosevelt issued a strong U.S. condemnation of the Soviet invasion of the Baltic nations and voiced the formal U.S. policy of non-recognition of the illegal annexation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

During World War II, Lithuanian-

American charities and foundations undertook significant efforts to aid Lithuanian survivors. Much of that aid reached displaced Lithuanians who had made it safely to American, French and British occupied zones of Germany. From 1940 onward, Lithuanian-Americans, largely members of the Knights of Lithuania, successfully organized more than one million letters to the editors of newspapers across America. Similar letters and appeals were made to members of the U.S. Congress and Senate. On several occasions, the House of Representatives opened its February 16 session with an invocation commemorating Lithuania's independence. Lithuanian-American organizations reminded the American public of Soviet oppression and the U.S. policy of not recognizing the forcible annexation of Lithuania. In the early 1950s, U.S. Congressional committee hearings upheld U.S. foreign policy toward the Baltic nations and verified the horrendous conditions they suffered, including executions and large-scale forced deportations to Siberian gulags and slave labor camps.

Policies of the U.S. Press, News Services and Television

After World War II, Lithuanian Americans and the resettled "displaced persons" took advantage of educational opportunities in the U.S. Significant numbers not only completed college but went on to achieve medical, engineering, law and other post-graduate degrees. For Lithuanians, education was a prime cultural value. All Lithuanian-American citizens and legal immigrants were part of the American military draft. In the early 1950s, some were deployed to combat in Korea, facing off against a Soviet-supported North Korea. After 1945, the American economy enjoyed unprecedented growth, creating many job opportunities. Significant numbers of Lithuanian-Americans and newly settled immigrants moved away from their historic urban ethnic communities to growing communities around the nation. Destinations included Houston, Atlanta, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland and Seattle among other cities.

After 1945, American media coverage and mention of the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia faded. Attention shifted to the U.S. and NATO threat from the U.S.S.R. and the Soviet-controlled Warsaw Pact nations. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Communist East Germany were politically and economically dominated by the Soviets and occupied with Soviet troops. In 1950, the U.S. responded militarily to North Korea's invasion of South Korea.

By 1965, American news organizations reported almost nothing about Lithuania. Coverage seemed limited to local events organized by Baltic communities in cities around the country. By and large we experienced a conspiracy of silence, an acceptance of the status quo and conditions in a Soviet Lithuania. This absence of coverage was most typically represented by the *New York Times* editorial policy adopted by the television networks (ABC, CBS, NBC), which totally omitted the Baltic nations from maps of the U.S.S.R. The countries were not even represented by dotted lines, which would have at least minimally acknowledged the formal U.S. policy of not recognizing the illegal annexation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. In effect, the Baltic nations no longer existed.

Youth Activism: Challenging the Status Quo

In 1965, Soviet propaganda was celebrating 25 years of Baltic incorporation into the U.S.S.R. Soviet newspapers, journals, films and radio broadcasts highlighted the "unprecedented economic productivity and living conditions" in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

Sovietization and Russification were intensifying, especially in Latvia and Estonia where nearly 25 percent of the populations were Russian imports. Mikhail Suslov, chief Soviet ideologist and chairman of the Central Committee bureau for Lithuanian affairs, organized massive deportations to Siberia and predicted that there would be a "Lithuania without any Lithuanians."

At that point, a group of five activists—four Lithuanian-Americans and a recent refugee from Lithuania—met and discussed potential plans to publicly raise awareness and confront 25 years of illegal and criminal occupation of the Baltics.

Anthony "Tony" B. Mažeika, 25 years old, was born in Manhattan and later lived in Pittsburgh until 1952. He was influenced by his father, Anthony John, who was also U.S.-born but raised in free Lithuania until 1926, when he returned to New York. Tony's father was involved in Lithuanian activities his whole life. He was executive board member and president of the Knights of Lithuania before and during World War II. He was very active in refugee aid during the War and in the 1950s. Tony also belonged to the Knights, but later considered creative ideas outside of existing Lithuanian organizations that would aggressively support restoration of independence.

Algirdas "Al" M. Budreckis, Ph.D., was born in New Jersey in 1937 and grew up in Newark. He was a prolific writer, newspaper reporter and historian. Among his many published books were *The Lithuanians in America* and *The Lithuanian National Revolt of 1941*. He translated Dr. Albertas Gerutis' book *Lithuania 700 Years*, among other works. He had deep knowledge of Lithuanian-American ethnic history.

Anthony "Tony" V. Sniečkus, born in Brooklyn, N.Y., was a first-generation Lithuanian American, member of Annunciation parish in Brooklyn and a member of the Knights of Lithuania. He was an articulate writer and the author of the November 7, 1965, *New York Times* full-page ad, "Appeal to the Conscience of the United Nations," signed by 128 national and international notables. The Appeal called upon the United Nations to formally raise the issue of the Baltic nations, which were forcibly occupied in 1940 and re-occupied by the U.S.S.R. in 1944. The three nations were recognized members of the League of Nations until its demise during World War II.

Romas Kezys was born in Lithuania and fled with his family westward to



March toward the U.N. Photos: Tony Mažeika

escape the Soviets. They joined thousands of other Lithuanian refugees in American-occupied Germany. He came to New York, completed business school and later became marketing manager for a large toy manufacturer. He was very involved in Lithuanian cultural activities, including Lithuanian Scouts. His business background was of great assistance in the financial organization of the planned events.

Juozas Miklovas was a recent defector from Lithuania, interested in the United Nations and very interested in the possible categorization of Soviet occupation as a form of colonialism. He participated in a group called the Anti-Colonial League, with public affairs efforts directed toward the United Nations.

American Methods of Political Advocacy

The stated goals of this activist group were to appeal to the conscience of the United Nations, raise the Issue of the Baltic nations in the General Assembly, and organize vigorous lobbying of the U.S. Congress and Senate to promote U.S. initiation of the Baltic issue at the U.N. They emphasized that the legal case for the Baltic nations included the continuing U.S. policy of not recognizing the illegal forcible annexation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and that the Baltic nations had been recognized members of the former League of Nations.

The three “American-Lits” had a distinct advantage of understanding the American and Lithuanian émigré mentalities, worldview and history. They applied contemporary ideas and methods beneficial to Lithuania. As Americans they realized that the U.S. had won World War II and was a powerful military opponent of the Soviet Union. Americans are problem

solvers and could never accept the idea of capitulation or surrender. In their minds, the options available to assist the occupied Baltics were numerous. These American-Lits were ready to directly confront the Soviets in the public forum.

Lithuanian nationalism in America had been primarily linguistic, with newer ethnic organizations and cultural groups continuing to singularly emphasize language retention. To create public affairs strategies influencing the public and promoting action in Washington and New York, contemporary American methods of communication and advocacy needed to be initiated. We were confronting a full-scale Soviet propaganda war. As a result, every effort was undertaken to motivate inclusive and unified national Baltic-American participation. This was ethnic American community organizing. “Lithuanian and Baltic American power” became a slogan. This was also the time of civil rights protests and the United Nations anti-colonial agenda. It was our time to pursue all avenues to discredit and demotivate the Soviets.

All five activists were committed to the fundamental, uncompromised political principle that supported full restoration of sovereignty to the illegally occupied and annexed Baltic nations. This included support for strengthening of the continued U.S. policy of non-recognition and *de jure* recognition of the free legations and consulates of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The activists also believed that the secret Molotov-Ribbentrop pact between Hitler and Stalin in August 1939 needed to be effectively publicized. Both Stalin and Hitler were responsible for the start of World War II and the ensuing slaughter of Eastern Europe.

Continuing public resistance to Soviet rule was essential because a small minority of resettled refugees were wavering in their belief that Lithuania would regain its sovereignty. Some were lured by the Soviet policy of “bendradaravimas” or cooperation with Soviet Lithuania. They believed this would lead to legal acceptance of Soviet incorporation. Cultural and educational exchanges, “connections



with the fatherland,” were encouraged and controlled by Moscow.

As the existing Baltic leadership in the U.S. had no announced plans for marking the 25th anniversary of annexation, an ad hoc committee was established to organize events publicizing this somber date. The five young activists realized that Lithuanian Americans across the nation were mentally and emotionally searching for a major event. Committee to Restore Lithuania was chosen as the official name of the committee that would organize a rally at Madison Square Garden followed by a march to the United Nations.

The five organizing activists were elected as coordinators and executive board directors, with Mažeika as committee head. Initially there was some pushback from several Lithuanian leadership organizations. There was a perception that this independent undertaking would undermine future “control and authority” by existing community organizations. There was fear of a “professional Americanization” process. Unfortunately, it revealed provincial or parochial attitudes by some.

The Organizing Committee honorary chairman was Msgr. Jonas Balkūnas. He was a prominent Catholic pastor, Lithuanian activist and member of the Assembly of Captive European Nations in New York. Working committees were selected from volunteering Lithuanian-American groups and communities.

Representatives of major Lithuanian American central and Catholic organizations were included in operations, including VLIKAS, the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc., Knights of Lithuania and Ateitis Youth Chapters.

Lithuanian press and promotion included all Lithuanian publications of the time: *Draugas*, *Dirva*, *Darbininkas*, *Vienybė* and *Keleivis*. National and local American media were contacted by Lithuanian organizing committees across the nation.

Coordinators Mažeika, Sniečkus and Budreckis undertook visits to major cities to promote events, financial aid and establishment of local committees to support attendance at the event and march. Visits to cities were completed including Boston and Worcester, Mass.; Providence, R.I.; Waterbury, Hartford and Putnam, Conn.; Newark and Kearny, N.J.; Scranton, Wilkes-Barre and Philadelphia, Pa.; Cleveland, Ohio; Detroit and Chicago, among other cities. Local committees supporting the event, organizing travel arrangements, and setting up publicity were a success.

The political action plan was grandiose and accented the current themes resonating with the United Nations and the dominant American media. There were three major activities associated with the plan

First, full-page ads in the *New York Times* Paris and New York editions

Committee to Restore Lithuania working group chairs

Financial Committee chairman:
Antanas Reventas,
Brooklyn, NY

Documentation:
Marius Ambrose,
Irvington, NJ

United Nations Committee:
Algimantas Gureckas,
Brooklyn

Lithuanian Press Committee:
Vincas Rastenis,
Woodhaven, NY

Press Information and Press Releases: **Tony Sniečkus**

Organizing Committee:
Vytautas Radzivanas,
Richmond Hill, NY

Youth Organizing Committee:
Ričardas Legeckis,
Jamaica, NY

Legal Committee:
Stepas Bredes,
Brooklyn, NY

Technical Committee:
Jonas Subačius,
Richmond Hill, NY

Secretary:
Irena Sandanavičiute,
Brooklyn, NY

Treasurer:
Antanas Diržys,
Brooklyn, NY

Travel Room reservations:
Kazimieras Vainius,
Maspeth, NY

Fund Raising and Financial Review:
Romas Kezys



The marquee outside Madison Square Garden on November 13, 1965. Photo: Tony Mažeika



Marchers gathering in front of Madison Square Garden. Photo: Tony Mažeika

were planned for Sunday, November 7, 1965. This task was organized by Tony Sniečkus. He sent a formal letter of request to national elected officials, community and religious leaders, and international notables, requesting their formal endorsement of the appeal to be published in the *Times*.

The 128 signatories of the appeal included 27 congressmen, eight senators, eight governors, five mayors and former Vice President Richard M. Nixon. Other notables included conservative philosopher Sidney Hook, retired Navy Admiral Arthur W. Radford, director of Fordham's Russian Institute Rev. Walter Jaskiewicz,

Rev. Raymond Swords of Holy Cross College, Baltimore Colts quarterback Johnny Unitis, and Notre Dame coach Ed Krause. There were others who supported the appeal but could not publicly sign this petition.

The *New York Times* was not enthusiastic about the placement of this ad. Sniečkus commented, "I was still unsettled about this even after securing a copy of the again, run page with the full information which I had approved two days earlier. In fact, I presented each endorsement in the ad that was signed since, for reasons beyond me, there was a note of skepticism in the office that handled this

ad. Of course, I had earlier consulted with Otto Tolisicius (*New York Times* editor) in this project and unfortunately, I found none of his enthusiasm at the New York Times office after payment for the New York and Paris ads, was received." The ad cost \$7,200.

Second, a massive rally was planned for New York's Madison Square Garden, the largest indoor arena on the East Coast, on November 13, 1965. The venue cost was \$14,000. Major contributors to the event included Juozas Kazickas, Tony Mažeika and Romas Kezys

Among the prominent, influential speakers who accepted invitations to the rally were Sen. Karl Mundt of South Dakota, Congressman John Rooney of Brooklyn, N.Y., and Rev. Raymond Swords of Holy Cross College. Master of ceremonies was Leo Cherne of the International Rescue Committee and Research Institute of America. Introductory remarks were made by Tony Mažeika and presentation of resolutions by Tony Sniečkus.

Senator Mundt pledged his full support for the U.S. introducing the "Baltic Question" at the United Nations. Congressman Rooney stated, "I am proud that the U.S. has continuously condemned the atrocious act of the Russians in their illegal annexation of the Baltic nations and that the U.S. has been steadfast in refusing to recognize any Soviet interests there. ... The Baltic republics need more radio broadcasts by American facilities. ... they need a maximum in flow of gifts of food, medicines, clothes, supplies without repressive Soviet shipment costs. ... I plan to meet with Ambassador Arthur Goldberg to discuss certain positive approaches to accomplish maximum results from any U.N. action."

Messages and telegrams were received from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Richard M. Nixon, Speaker of the House John McCormack, AFL-CIO President George Meany, Sen. Edmund Muskie, Sen. Joseph Tydings and Sen. Jacob Javits. New York City Mayor Robert F. Wagner proclaimed November 13 as "Self Determination to Baltic States Day."

The Madison Square Garden program

committee included Jadvyga Matulaitienė and orchestra director Joe Thomas. The program provided multiple dance groups and choirs, a vocal program, concert musician and a marching band from St. Peter's Church in Boston. The entire three-hour Madison Square Garden program and March to the United Nations was professionally recorded by WRUL radio, New York, a non-governmental commercial short-wave broadcast channel heard throughout Europe. Segments and interviews from the event were broadcast as news. The events were also filmed in color and dubbed with sound for historical reference.

The third activity was the march from Madison Square Garden at 47th street to Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza at the U.N. Efficient march/parade organization, including city permits for 14,000 marchers and marshals with walkie-talkies, provided effective control that enabled continuous, uninterrupted marching across Manhattan.

Marchers carried huge banners and signs reading, "UN Membership for Independent Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia," "Communist Occupation is Terror, Deportation, Hunger, Slavery," "Russian Colonialism is not Her Internal Affair," "UN Proclaim Rights of Baltic Nations" and "We Love Peace but not Under Communist Slavery." At the U.N. Plaza, a black and white directional street sign was attached to a traffic light with a one-way sign reading "UN Membership for Independent Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia." The crowds were peaceful but emotional. All along the march, streets were blocked as thousands of onlookers stopped and watched the mile-long demonstration. Many Lithuanian women carrying signs wore colorful national costumes. The march itself provided a huge positive public relations and educational boost to New Yorkers who may have never learned about Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia before. Photographers, TV cameras, live radio reporters and journalists followed and interviewed the marchers and spokesmen.

Sniečkus remembers that "at the con-



Dancers in Madison Square Garden. Photo: Tony Mažeika

clusion of the ceremonies, all participants left the Garden bearing their assortment of banners, flags and placards, proceeding cross-town to the U.N. complex. The 'parade,' escorted by mounted and motorcycle police, and led by a Lithuanian marching band from Boston, gave some bystanders the idea that the circus had come to town, and tied up New York City traffic north- and south-bound for miles. Upon reaching the U.N. building, however, it was evident that, contrary to expectations and prior agreements, the police had decided to limit access and would not permit the throng to enter the U.N. grounds. A compromise was negotiated, which permitted the lead flag-bearers for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, led by Messrs. Mažeika and Sniečkus, to approach the building, at which point the flags of the three nations were dipped toward the U.N., signifying that the doors of the world's premier organization were closed to them."

The media—both TV and print—lavished attention on the day's events, which helped to build sympathy and good will for the so-called "Captive Nations."

The Soviet celebration of 25 years of "liberation" (read "occupation") had at least been countered by the free demonstration of truth by genuinely free citizens. The United Nations, an organization in which the Soviets wielded a veto, made no move whatsoever, and the Baltic countries remained under Soviet domi-

nation for another 25 years.

The Continuing Struggle

It is important to understand that the November 13, 1965, rally and march were the beginning of organized, unified public action. An immediate result of the popular event was the birth of Baltic Appeal to the United Nations (BATUN). The group was incorporated in New York State and provided constant educational information on the Baltic status to members of the United Nations.

However, in 1965 it was realistically understood that no official action could be initiated at the U.N. without sponsorship by the U.S. or Canada.

It would take great efforts to convince Lithuanian ethnic organizations over time that privately funded public affairs and political interest groups were essential to the revival of the Baltic independence. A huge door was opened in 1981 when progressive-thinking Baltic Americans in Los Angeles, together with Leslie Dutton of the Hannaford Company, organized the Baltic American Freedom League (BAFL). Tony and Danutė Mažeika were part of the organizing committee. The Reagan Administration over eight years provided an open door, much-needed support and endorsement to the Baltic cause. BAFL provided high-level contacts with foreign policy specialists, human rights advocates, and elected and federal governmental officials including

THE NEW YORK TIMES, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1965

AN APPEAL TO THE CONSCIENCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The Baltic Question

...that the Baltic States have been unjustly and illegally annexed to the Soviet Union... that the United States should recognize the independence of the Baltic States... that the United States should support the Baltic States in their struggle for freedom and independence...

AN APPEAL TO THE MEMBER STATES OF THE UNITED NATIONS

...that the United States should recognize the independence of the Baltic States... that the United States should support the Baltic States in their struggle for freedom and independence...

COMMITTEE TO RESTORE LITHUANIA'S INDEPENDENCE

Members: [List of names]

The full-page *New York Times* ad that ran on November 7, 1965, appealed to the United Nations General Assembly to take up "The Baltic Question" and act on the Soviet Union's forcible annexation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. It was signed by 128 notable people of the day.

the State Department. BAFL representatives attended many events at the White House through 1988.

In 1984, Mažeika, executive board member of BAFL, participated in a major public relations campaign aimed at preventing Soviet participation at the Los Angeles Olympic Games. It was an excellent opportunity to publicly raise the Baltic issue among world media. The "Ban the Soviets" coalition brilliantly organized a creative media campaign discrediting Soviet political propaganda, arousing suspicion about Soviet spy activities and publicizing the availability of safe houses in Los Angeles for any Soviet athletes who intended to defect. The Soviets were caught off guard. It was a potential PR nightmare for the Russians. Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko felt threatened that the U.S.S.R. might lose some world-class athletes at the L.A. Games. After a meeting during which the U.S. Department of State confirmed that U.S. federal law prohibited the forcible return of any person whose safety might

be threatened by a foreign government, the Soviets and the Warsaw Pact nations withdrew from the games. They charged that the U.S. would not provide "normal Olympic security for its athletes," code for U.S. refusal to force any athletes seeking political asylum to return to any country from which they chose to defect.

A New Day in World History

Similar cooperative work was undertaken by the Joint Baltic American National Committee (JBANC). On April 11, 1990, 14 members of BAFL and JBANC met with President George H. Bush at the White House to advocate immediate U.S. recognition of Vytautas Landsbergis' newly declared independent government. The delegation assertively and capably argued that it was in the best interests of the United States to immediately recognize the newly restored Lithuanian Republic. The meeting included the highest Cabinet members, including Secretary of State James Baker, National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, Chief of Staff John Sununu and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, among others. Bush re-iterated the U.S. policy of non-recognition but, on the advice of staff, did not recognize the new government for fear he would be "accused of inciting another Hungarian revolution." It would take another year of lobbying and public demonstrations and global viewing of bloody events in Lithuania on CNN before independence was officially recognized.

Sniečkus commented, "A new day in world history has dawned. Lithuania is free again. Lithuania was admitted to United Nations membership in 1991, as her flag was joyously raised among others in New York's Rockefeller Plaza. Her citizens recently voted to join the European Union, and full membership in the NATO alliance is confidently anticipated.

"Generations have grown up without knowledge or memory of the 1965 appeal to the United Nations. But many do remain, who remember the energy and excitement of that effort to stir the free world's conscience. That movement was led by strong-willed persons motivated by

their love of Lithuania, and their determination that it should be liberated and her occupiers expelled. Let us hope that the need does not arise again, but if it should, pray that future generations will rise to her defense with the same strength of purpose and dedication shown by those who organized and participated in that demonstration."

This year, 2015, commemorates 25 years of restored Lithuanian sovereignty and independence that was fought for with blood in the streets in 1990 and 1991. Soviet tanks took the lives of innocent protestors. The barricaded Lithuanian Parliament was under siege. The United States finally recognized a free Lithuania in 1991. In 2002, President Bush visited Lithuania, formally welcoming Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia into NATO. Today once again, Lithuania faces serious threats, this time from Putin's Russia. Sovereignty and independence must be defended forever. The historic adversary is once again at the gates of the Baltic nations. Every effort must be undertaken by citizen groups to bolster U.S. commitment to NATO and the defense of Lithuanian, Latvia, and Estonia. Fortunately, the Congress of the United States is favorable.

Antanas (Tony) Mažeika is a long-time Lithuanian-American activist. He chaired the Committee to Restore Lithuania's Independence that organized the 1965 Rally and March on the U.N. and was one of the founders of the Baltic American Freedom League. He has also been involved in the Ban the Soviets Coalition and Coalition for Constitutional Justice and Security. He now lives in Mission Viejo, Calif., where he is a realtor and financial officer of the American Legion Baltic Post #405.



Copies of the *New York Times* ad and audio CDs of the November 13, 1965, event at Madison Square Garden are available by contacting Tony Mažeika at tony@tonymazeika.com.

The Long Road to Freedom

Milestones and Memories

June 1, 1990

During a U.S.- U.S.S.R. Summit in Washington, D.C., Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev called the proclamation of Lithuania's independence "absurd."



U.S. President George Bush signed a trade agreement with the U.S.S.R. despite its economic crack-down on Lithuania. Members of Congress criticized Bush, warning that such an agreement would not find support in Congress unless Moscow changed its position on Lithuania.

June 7, 1990

The U.S. House of Representatives decided to ban the sale of computer and telecommunication equipment to the Soviet Union until the Soviet government would begin negotiations with Lithuania on the restoration of independence.

June 12, 1990

The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania adopted the Catholic Church Restitution Act.

June 30, 1990

The Soviet Union reopened the oil pipeline to Lithuania.

June 29, 1990

After lengthy debate, the Lithuanian Parliament agreed to declare a 100-day moratorium on the Act on the Restoration of the Independent Lithuanian if Moscow would end its economic blockade and if negotiations between Moscow and Vilnius would start. Members of Parliament voted for the resolution on the moratorium 69 to 35, with two abstentions. The resolution was backed by Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis, who said: "Two years ago we chose the peaceful route to independence, the route of negotiations. Now the condition for negotiations is a moratorium."



The Legacy of June 14, 1941



One Man's Extraordinary Journey By Aldona Page

Vytautas Bartašius at about a year old, with his mother and father, just a few years before his parents were deported to Siberia.

Every year in the month of June we remember the fateful, heart-breaking events that took place in Lithuania on June 14, 1941. In the early hours of that terrible morning, the massive Lithuanian deportation to Siberia began. While people slept peacefully in their homes, huge Russian trucks rumbled through the many streets of the major cities. Armed Russian soldiers barged into the homes of people marked for deportation and forced them into the trucks. They were taken to the railroad station, where they were herded into already full and overcrowded freight trains marked for the distant and long journey to Siberia.

Only a few people are alive today from the generation who lived through these horrible events, those who escaped by the good fortune of not being at home that morning, and those who hid in the forests or otherwise evaded the authorities. But almost every one of us have heard about it from our parents or grandparents, because almost every Lithuanian family experienced the heartbreaking loss of family, friends or acquaintances in that first year of Soviet occupation.

Even though 75 years have passed since, and even the most painful wounds heal, we cannot forget the people who were taken by the terror regime to perish in the taiga, or pine forests,

of frigid Siberia. We cannot forget the partisans who went to live in the forest and risked their lives to fight for the freedom of Lithuania's people. We cannot forget those who saved themselves and escaped the terror from the East when the Soviets advanced again in 1944. The exiles fled into the unknown, into war-devastated western Europe believing that they could bear witness to the world about Lithuania's enslavement and torture, the killing and deporting of her people, and believing that after the war they could return home. We cannot forget those who stayed to guard their land from foreign colonists even if they had to live in continual fear of suspicions and persecutions and had to continually move from place to place not to be detected. This is the legacy of the horrible, heartbreaking days of June 1941.

Today the young generation born in newly independent Lithuania, or here in America, doesn't know much about those repressive days, and sometimes are not interested to find out more about them. Today's life gallops forth in such giant leaps and at such a speed that it doesn't leave much time to explore other events. Sadly though, the rushing time takes with it more and more of the old generation of those who have personally experienced and lived through the cruel times in Lithuania and could vividly relate their story. Other terror survivors have quietly accepted their past, have closed up their memories and guard them in their hearts silently so as not to open the old wounds and feel the pain again.

In Philadelphia, as in other Lithuanian communities, we still can find several active pensioners who were born before World War II in the first years of Lithuanian Independence and who acutely remember the first Russian occupation of 1940-41. One Sunday, during the traditional gathering after church at St. Andrew's parish hall, I chanced to get into a lengthy conversation with an elderly parishioner, Vytautas Bartašius, and came to know how painfully he experienced the first June days of that year when he lost both his parents and became an orphan. He agreed to share his extraordinary family story with me.

In independent interwar Lithuania, Vytautas' father, Juozas, was the mayor of Utena, a town in the eastern part of Lithuania. His mother, Genovaitė Kazickaitė Bartašienė, was a pharmacist. Vytautas was only a few days shy of turning 5 years old when, on the night of June 14, 1941, his mother was working late in the pharmacy and was apprehended for deportation by Russian soldiers. At that time, little Vytukas (Vytautas' childhood nickname) and his father had moved outside Utena, to live with his father's brother Kazimieras in the Laukniai village. They were hiding in the forest, because the arrests had already begun. While they were safe in the forest, they heard through the grapevine that if the father came in and gave himself up, the mother would be released. Father decided to give himself up.

Not long afterwards, two men came in a horse-drawn carriage to take the father. Vytukas was dressed in a dress so that he would look like a girl and would not be apprehended with his father. He stood behind the corner of uncle's house and for

the last time saw his father as he knelt low on the ground, kissed Lithuanian soil, and entered the carriage to be taken into exile. However, in a betrayal typical of the regime, his mother was never released and his father was not even deported to the same place where his mother had been taken.

Shortly afterwards, Uncle Kazimieras brought Vytukas back to Utena, where his Aunt Stefanija took him over to the farm of his Kazickas grandparents not far from Utena. Several days later, two Russian officials arrived and took Vytukas to the railroad station in Utena to say goodbye to his father. However, he never saw his father. The train was so tightly packed with people that he could only touch his hand through a split in the wall of the freight car. Later that year, when the Germans ousted the Russians from Lithuania, a German officer named Dickhauser came to live in the Bartašius home. He was appointed as an agriculture overseer and had to collect food and fodder from the farmers. He befriended the young boy and Vytukas learned to converse in German.

In July of 1944, when the Russian front from the East was coming closer, Vytukas and his aunt left Utena and departed to Prussia toward Tilsit. During the journey they lived through three horror-filled nights of bombing from inside the Sts. Peter and Paul church in Šiauliai, where they had stopped to spend a couple of nights in the church's rectory. During the chaos of the bombing, Vytukas got separated from his aunt and, after not being able to find her, he asked the fleeing German soldiers to take him across the border on the way to Tilsit. The soldiers took pity on the young traveler and promised to take him there.

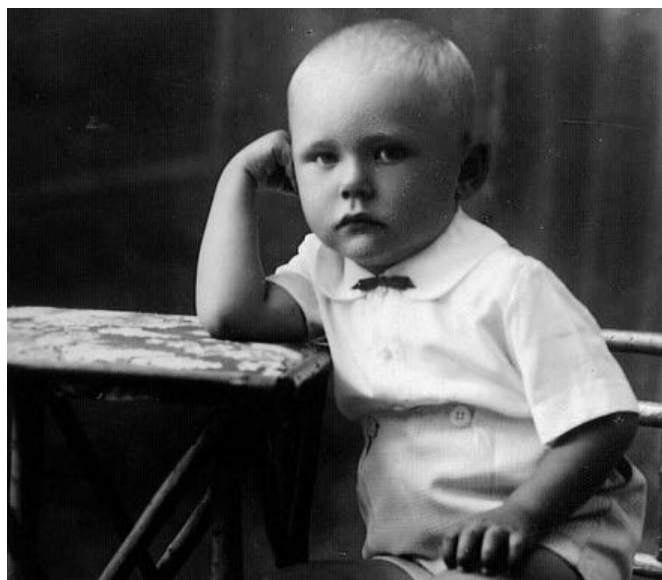
When he arrived to Tilsit, by a stroke of luck, he met a man named Baltrusch, who spoke Lithuanian as many Prussians did at that time. It turned out that Baltrusch was well acquainted with officer Dickhauser who had lived in Utena. Dickhauser had a land estate called "Gut Dilben" close to Tilsit and lived in Baltrusch's neighborhood. He took Vytukas over to "Gut Dilben" and soon enough his Aunt Stefanija found her way to the estate. However, this was only the beginning of the horrible days ahead.

In February 1945, Russians surrounded Tilsit and the nearby area, which was being threatened to be incorporated into the Soviet regime. Vytukas and his aunt joined the convoy of refugees fleeing from the nearing front. Because of the cold weather, they did not sit in the carriage but walked for three days and nights, on the frozen Kuršių marios (Curonian lagoon) toward Danzig. The journey was very dangerous because people were continually shot at from the airplanes, escaping the bullets by diving under their carriages.

All of the travelers were very tired and hungry. One night, when the airplane attacks had quieted down for a while, Vytukas ventured to look for something to eat to ease his terrible hunger. He came upon a dead soldier in full fight attire and, upon turning him over, found bread and a can of meat in his backpack, which he devoured. Then he thought maybe he would find some money. Kneeling close to the soldier, he



Wedding of Vytautas' parents, Genovaitė Kazickaitė and Juozas Bartašius, on August 17, 1935. Standing, from left, Vytautas' godmother Bronė Saladžius, Col. Pranas Saladžius and his mother's brother, Jonas Kazickas.



Vytukas at age 3.

stuck his hand under his helmet hoping to find some hidden Reichsmarks, but instead pulled out a handful of the soldier's shattered brain.

After Vytukas and Aunt Stefanija arrived in Pomerania they were very disappointed because they did not succeed in overtaking the Russian front, and again had to bear the brutal Russian oppression. After several days, a detail of Cossacks rode in and began attacking people with their swords in the streets. Later, the Russians organized a "kolhoz" (collective farm) for horses and herded all of the adults to work there. Finding out that among the refugees were some Lithuanians, they tried to return them to Lithuania, which everyone feared, knowing the torture waiting for them should they return.

Unexpectedly, one night a possibility arose to escape the farm, and in several days, Vytukas and his aunt reached Danzig. But



Vytautas' father in Siberia in 1953. He returned to Lithuania in 1956 and died in 1965. A street in Utena now bears his name.

it was unsafe to stay there because the Russians were already stepping on their heels. They went to the railroad station and Stefanija begged for a spot on a train to continue their journey further. Finally they were allowed to travel on the roof of the freight train, as there was no room in the fully packed carriages. It seemed the dangerous journey would never end; however, they reached Berlin in the Russian zone, where they lucked onto an underground passage that crossed over to the American zone. There Vytukas remembered officer Dickhauser's stories about his brother living in Bavaria near Augsburg, and with his aunt decided to travel further to Bavaria, to finally escape the Russian threat. While living there, he went to school, received the sacraments of Holy Communion and confirmation, and finished sixth grade in German school. There he also welcomed the end of the war.

Post-war Germany was full of refugee camps and organizations to support the masses displaced by war. Through IRO (International Refugee Organization) Vytukas' uncle, his father's cousin Colonel Pranas Saladžius, found Vytukas and Aunt Stefanija in Bavaria, and invited them to the Lithuanian refugee camp in Schwäbisch Gmünd in the American zone. Vytautas by this time had almost forgotten the Lithuanian language, but throughout the summer vacation, his uncle prepared him



Vytautas and Danute's wedding in 1961. At left, Antanas and Brone Impulevicius, the bride's parents, and at right, Vytautas' Aunt Stefanija.



Vytautas and his mother in 1989.

and Vytautas entered Lithuanian high school in Schwäbisch Gmünd. Later, when the refugee camp was transferred to Kassel and München (Munich), he finished the fifth class in Lithuanian high school.

On June 15, 1950, Vytautas and his Aunt Stefanija sailed to New York and, after arriving in America, settled in Philadelphia, where his mother's brother Jonas had come earlier. In 1955, Vytautas, with help and support from his Aunt Stefanija, who had found job as a seamstress, finished Philadelphia Catholic Boys High School. Without having the means to continue his studies, the 19-year old Vytautas joined the American army.

However, this is not the end of Vytautas' life story, which has been full of unexpected events. Upon return from the army, he received a grant and continued his studies at Villanova University, receiving a bachelor of science degree in engineering. In 1961 he married Danutė Impulevičius and raised and schooled three children—Joseph, Steven and Andrea. His courage tempered the harsh and painful events he had experienced in his early life, and allowed him to achieve his goals in his personal life, fulfilling his duties as an American citizen, and participating and supporting all the efforts in building a better and happier future for his native land, Lithuania.

Vytautas and Danutė Bartasius now live in Mount Laurel, N.J.

Šalta Agurkų Sriuba

(Chilled Cucumber Soup)

By Jana Sirusaitė
Motivans



Chilled cucumber soup is like šaltibarščiai without the beets.

Last summer, we visited my Močiutė Sofija's family home in Andrioniškis, not far from Anykščiai. The house was built by my great-great-great grandfather Kazimieras Zlatkus in 1810, and has remained in the family since then. The house is beautifully situated on the edge of a forest and along the banks of the Šventoji River. Previously the home was occupied by the extended family, but when my great grandfather Klemensas Zlatkus died in 1974, the house and property were divided among his children. After many renovations and additions, it has now become a three-family structure. One end of the house



The house as it looked in 1957, before it was divided among the children of Jana's great grandfather.

belongs to the family of Močiutė's brother Vytas and the other end to the family of Močiutė's sister Janina.

Močiutė's brother Leonas and his family live in the middle unit of the house. His wife, Regina, is a talented cook and always prepares something special for us. The recipe for boiled varškėčiai (cheese dumplings) in the May 2014 issue of *Bridges* came from her. This time, Regina picked fresh cucumbers and dill from the garden and made a refreshing šalta agurkų sriuba (chilled cucumber soup). This was a new food experience for me. It was like our well-known and loved šaltibarščiai without the beets. What a great idea! Here is another cold soup to enjoy on a warm summer day.

I had to experiment a little bit to come up with a recipe and I think you will like the result. Just like šaltibarščiai, this is a soup that is open to interpretation. I used English cucumbers because they have very few seeds and a pleasing crunch. Regular supermarket cucumbers have large seeds and a thick waxy peel, so they are not the optimum choice. During the summer, when cucumbers are in season, the best option would be fresh pickling cucumbers known as Kirby.

I chose to use sour cream for the soup. Other options are buttermilk, yogurt or kefir. The soup can also be thinned with ice water, chicken or vegetable broth, or milk if you prefer. You can also add some lemon juice to give the soup a little extra zip.



Jana (center) and part of her Lithuanian family in front of the much-renovated and expanded house her great-great-great grandfather built in 1810.

a taste of lithuania

Šalta Agurkų Sriuba (Chilled Cucumber Soup)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 English cucumbers
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh dill
- 2 cups sour cream

TOPPING

Chopped fresh dill and scallions, finely diced hard-boiled eggs



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cut cucumbers into 1/4 inch slices, then cut the slices into small cubes.



2. Place the cucumber pieces into a medium-sized bowl, and toss with the olive oil to glaze them lightly. Add salt, garlic, dill and pepper to taste. Cover and chill for at least an hour, preferably longer.



3. Drain off the excess liquid and add the sour cream to the mixture. Check the seasoning, adding salt and pepper if necessary, and chill until ready to serve.



4. Just before serving, sprinkle each bowl with chopped fresh dill and scallions and finely diced hard-boiled eggs. Serve with boiled potatoes or dark Lithuanian bread.



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Ray Bartkus: Storylines

Internationally Acclaimed Artist Premieres Exhibit in U.S.



Beauty and the Beast, 2006-2009, oil painting, cabinets.

Storylines, an immersive environment created by Ray Bartkus's monumental, figurative paintings, was exhibited for the first time in the United States at Drexel University's Leonard Perlestein Gallery in Philadelphia from April 7 to May 24, 2015. Much of the work in this exhibit had been seen internationally in Lithuania, Poland, Austria, Japan and the Netherlands.

A Lithuanian-born artist and illustrator, Bartkus is renowned for illustrations appearing in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *Time* magazine among others. In this work, Bartkus's giant canvases address how representational art is a tool for exploring the mysteries of humankind and the universe. "While I admire and value modern and postmodern art tremendously," Bartkus writes, "the curious feeling of engagement and learning about existential problems of today by looking into the paintings which were done 500 years ago, by people with completely different worldview and mindset, intrigues me. I believe that a representational nature of the paintings makes this transcendence possible."

Born Rimvydas Bartkus in Vilnius, Lithuania, the artist moved to New York in 1991 and subsequently to Philadelphia. Since graduating from Vilnius Art Academy as a printmaker, he has been creating lithographs, pencil drawings, digital art, installations and oil paintings, and exhibiting his work throughout the United States, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, France and Canada. His works are on display in collections at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., and the National Art Museum of Lithuania, among many others. He is also the designer of the 50 litas bill that was in circulation in Lithuania until its transition to the euro.

His illustrations appear regularly on the covers and pages of the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Harper's*, *Billboard*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Boston Globe* and other prestigious publications. Many of his illustrations have received awards from the Society of Publication Designers, the Society of Newspaper Designers and the Society of Illustrators.

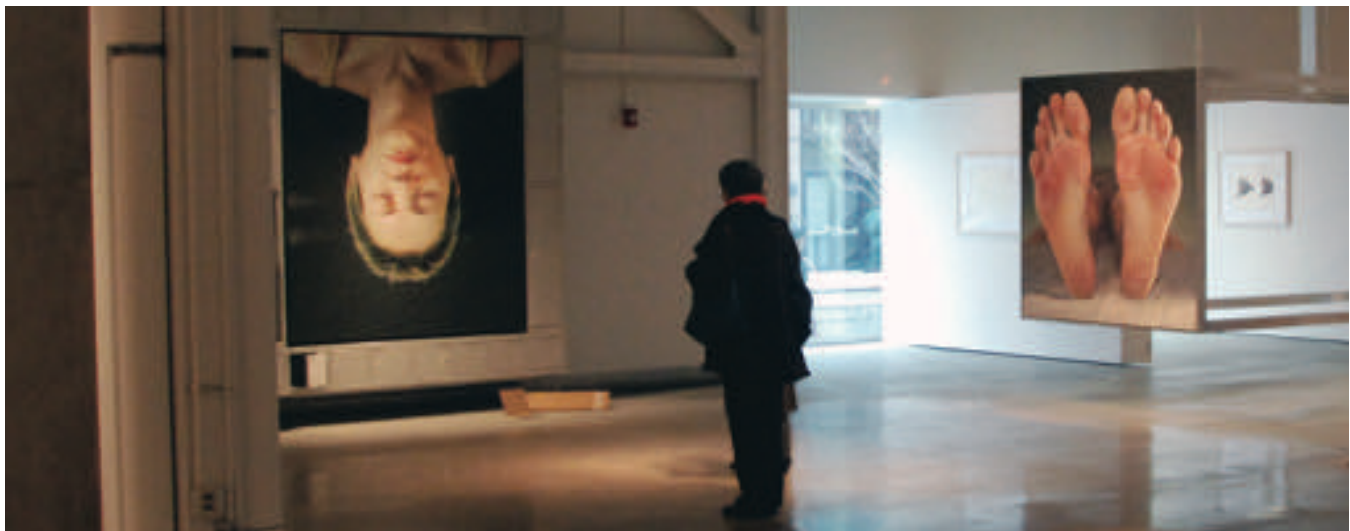
Learn more about the artist at his website, raybartkus.com.



Believers, 2005-2008, oil painting, drawers, mirrors, installation view.
Photo: Rimas Gedeika



Artist Ray Bartkus speaks about his unique art to an interested audience during a gallery talk. Photo: Rimas Gedeika



The Leonard Perlstein Gallery at Drexel University in Philadelphia was the site of the Ray Bartkus exhibit Storylines. Photo: Rimas Gedeika

Volunteers Ready Camp for Summer



"Many hands make light work" is a refrain often heard at Camp Neringa, and it was never more true than at June's Talka Work Weekend, when dozens of volunteers converged on the Vermont camp to get it in shape for the summer season.

Former and current camp staff, campers and friends tackled a variety of jobs, from cleaning and garden work to trail cleanup, carpentry and painting. At the end of the day the crew sat down to a communal meal before retiring outdoors to recoup their energy around the laužas (campfire).

Photos by Dana Vainauskienė.



Deportees Remembered at Šiluva Chapel in D.C.

On June 14, 2015, Washington, D.C.'s Lithuanian Community commemorated the tragic June 1941 deportation of thousands of Lithuanian people to Siberia by the Soviet Union

A Mass to remember this great tragedy was held in the Our Lady of Šiluva Chapel in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. The Mass was celebrated by Monsignor Rolandas Makrickas, the first Secretary to the Papal Nuncio (embassy to the Holy See)

In attendance was Žygimantas Pavilionis, Lithuania's Ambassador to The United States and Mexico. It was his last Mass in America prior to being reassigned to Lithuania. Also attending the Mass were several executive committee members of the Washington, D.C., and Baltimore chapters of the Lithuanian American Community.

In June 2016, the Šiluva Chapel will celebrate its 50th anniversary. To commemorate this golden jubilee, an exhibition will take place between June 30 and October 17, 2016, in the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception's Memorial Hall.



Ambassador Pavilionis (standing at lectern), attending his last mass at the Šiluva Chapel, reads a passage. Photo: Rimantas Gedeika

New Consulate General Open in Los Angeles

On May 31, 2015, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania Linas Linkevičius officially opened the Consulate General of Lithuania in Los Angeles. New Consul General Darius Gaidys took up his post on June 1, 2015.

Los Angeles is home to a significant Lithuanian-American community, estimated at 100,000.

This is Lithuania's first Consulate General on the West Coast, and will serve much of the western U.S., including the West Coast from San Diego to Alaska and the states of Arizona, Utah, Nevada and Hawaii.

This is Lithuania's fourth formal diplomatic presence in the United States following the establishment of the embassy in Washington, D.C., and Consulates General in New York and Chicago. The formalization of a Lithuanian presence on the West Coast will enhance the delivery of consular services and help promote cooperation with the regional Lithuanian community. It will also serve to promote tourism and cultural exchanges and contribute significantly to the promotion of trade and investment opportunities.

Outside of Washington, D.C., and New York City, L.A. has become a key site for international representation, with more than 60 Consulates General functioning there.

Lithuania has long been represented by an Honorary Consul in Los Angeles. Vytautas Čekanauskas served as Honorary Consul for more than 30 years after the position was established in 1977 by the Chief of the Lithuanian Diplomatic Service (in exile). Following her father's death, Daiva Čekanauskas-Navarrette was appointed Lithuania's Honorary Consul for California. She remains in a similar position as Honorary Consul in Santa Barbara, Calif., following the opening of the new Consulate General.



At the opening of the new Consulate General are new Consul General Darius Gaidys (left), Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania Linas Linkevičius (second from left) and Lithuania's Ambassador to the United States Žygimantas Pavilionis (right). Photo: Ludo Segers

While in L.A., Linkevičius met with the European Consuls General in Los Angeles to discuss issues of common concern and report on the work of the United Nations Security Council under Lithuania's presidency. He also met with members of the American Jewish Committee in Los Angeles, many of whom have Lithuanian roots, to discuss Lithuania's achievements in the 25 years since regaining independence in 1990 and to answer questions that ranged from business opportunities to energy issues to Middle East politics. During the visit, he awarded the Lithuanian Diplomacy Star to Richard Maullin, Chairman of the Board of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute at the Vilnius University and President of the Friends of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute.

International Travelers Introduced to Lithuania

On May 26, 2015, travelers passing through Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey had the chance to learn about Lithuania, its cultures and traditions, and travel options. Lithuania was one of several exhibitors during the airport's European Union Solidarity Day celebration.

American and international tourists tasted Lithuanian šakotis, donuts, homemade brown bread, cheese and meat products. The food products were introduced by New Jersey Lithuanians Vytautas and Natalia Gromovas and Andrew and Lina Stanionis.

The Newark airport holds a Europe Day celebration each year. This year, the Lithuanians shared the spotlight with by Polish, Hungarian, Spanish, French and German officials. Every day, nearly 100,000 passengers travel through Newark.



Deputy Minister Meets with Lithuanian and Jewish Communities



Deputy Minister Bekešius at meeting with Lithuanian community groups.

On May 3 and 4, 2015, Lithuanian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mantvydas Bekešius, during a visit to New York, met with a number of Lithuanian-American organizations and representatives of the Lithuanian and Jewish communities.

During a meeting with Lithuanian Alliance of America and Tauto Fondas, he learned about the organizations' accomplishments and difficulties with transferring archive holdings from New York to Lithuania. Later, while at the consulate in New York, he discussed dual citizenship, Lithuania's advanced technology, opportunities to invest in Lithuania, events in Ukraine and other issues of concern with the New York Lithuanian community.

Bekešius also met with the World Jewish Congress (WJC), the American Jewish Committee (AJC), B'nai B'rith International and the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO). During the meetings, the vice-minister presented Lithuania's ini-



Deputy Minister Bekešius (left) at the YIVO 90th anniversary conference.

tiatives for educating the public about Lithuanian and Jewish history, cultural experiences and the Holocaust. The organizations thanked Lithuania for its good relations with Israel and for its position on the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Ukraine.

During the YIVO Institute for Jewish Studies' 90-year anniversary conference, a large crowd of participants welcomed the deputy minister. Bekešius said that the Lithuanian state and history are inseparable from the Jewish people, who as an integral part of Lithuanian society, contributed much to its scientific, economic and cultural development. He pointed out that many famous artists, writers and sculptors lived and worked in Lithuania, including Romain Gary, Jascha Heifetz and Jacques Lipshitz. He also made note of the Vilna Gaon and the Litvak community, which had been an integral part of Vilnius since the 14th century, earning the city the title "Jerusalem of the North."

Nashville Reads *Between Shades of Gray*

This year's "Nashville Reads" book was the young-adult novel *Between Shades of Gray*, the story of a Lithuanian family exiled to Siberia, by Rūta Šepetys. At the May 12, 2015, finale event at the Nashville Public Library, Mayor Karl Dean revealed that the all-city read of the book was the most successful to date.

The event featured readings from the book by local students, a talk by Šepetys and original piano compositions by Gavin Mikhail that will form the soundtrack for the movie that is being made from the book.

Rūta Šepetys (second from left), with student readers (from left) Otto, Stella and Olivia. The father of twins Otto and Olivia is from Iceland, the first country to recognize Lithuania's independence. Stella's parents are from Croatia.



Philadelphia Lithuanian Folk Art Institute Participates in Global Cultural Exchange at Penn Museum

Philadelphia's Lithuanian Folk Art Institute (LFAI), located at the Lithuanian Music Hall at 2715 E. Allegheny Avenue, has been in existence for more than 35 years. During that time, it has actively participated in the cultural life of Philadelphia-area Lithuanians by presenting folk art exhibits and various handcraft workshops, commemorating famous Lithuanian poets, reviewing new books, studying Lithuanian music and organizing folk music concerts by local musicians. Although most of the cultural activities performed by the Folk Art Institute take place in the Lithuanian community, it also joins and participates in the important cultural events organized by the wider international community.

Most recently, the Institute participated in the University of Pennsylvania Archeology Department's December 6, 2014, festival entitled "Peace Around the World." In these challenging times, the Lithuanian Folk Art Institute was very happy to join and strengthen the gathering of different nationalities rallying for a safer and better life for all, an especially timely sentiment just a couple weeks before Christmas.

Many nationalities sang in their native tongues; others danced expressive ethnic dances or presented unique artistic expression by painting beautiful sand pictures on the floor. Another group presented their national food to be sampled, as well as demonstrating many other interesting national customs. The multitude of nations was large, and their offerings were many. Philadelphia's Lithuanian Folk Art Institute demonstrated Christmas straw ornament making and had a Christmas tree decorated with the latest creations of experienced straw ornament maker Angelė Puodžiūnas. On a table, the Institute displayed a map of Lithuania, beautifully patterned hand-made sashes and weavings, and books and literature about Lithuania's land and history. The table was headed by the Institute's director, Aldona Page, assisted by Angelė Puodžiūnas as well as Kęstutis and Joyce Lukas. It attracted many visitors and created a lot of interest in the intricate art of hand-making Christmas decorations from straw.

Arriving guests were issued "passports of peace," which allowed them free admission to the museum and access to its many galleries while exploring holiday traditions and culture. They could sample exotic food, learn how to dance to a foreign tune or create their own Christmas ornaments out of straw. The celebration at the Archeology Museum of The University of Pennsylvania attracted many visitors and united Philadelphia's international community in a shared concern. It was, indeed, a coming together in support of peace around the world.

Submitted by Aldona Rastenyté



From left, Joyce Lukas, Angelė Puodžiūnas, Aldona Page and Kęstutis Lukas.

Casting Call

A New York filmmaker seeks Lithuanians to be interviewed for a short film. Individuals should have some experience with the transition from Soviet rule to independence in 1990. Preference will be given to former or current teachers, actors, government representatives, musicians and performers. The interviews will be recorded on audio and video. Interviews can be conducted in English or Lithuanian. Email Mike Crane at cranemike@gmail.com.

Family Language Courses in Vilnius in August

From August 3 to 15, 2015, the Language and Culture Institute in Vilnius will offer its traditional intensive Lithuanian language summer courses for families, with classes for children and adults. An accompanying cultural program includes guided tours in Lithuania, educational programs, šakotis baking, ethno-cultural evenings, meetings with famous Lithuanian people and foreigners living in Lithuania. For more information, visit <http://lingualit.lt/en/main/language-teaching-2/lithuanian-language-courses>.

our community

Community Says Goodbye to Old Lithuanian Church



Ramutė Žukaitė, LAC Long Island District Chairman.

Demolition is now over at the 105-year-old Our Lady of Vilnius—Aušros Vartai—in New York’s Hudson Square, near the Holland Tunnel. But before the last swing of the wrecking ball, 22 Lithuanian community members and parishioners from around New York City and Long Island—plus one visiting from Lithuania—came to say a final goodbye at a makeshift shrine in front of a green plywood construction wall shielding the demolition site on April 26, 2015.

The church was built by Lithuanian settlers who lived and worked in the Lower West Side of New York and worked on the Hudson River docks. The building of the Holland Tunnel in the

1930s, however, decimated the community and displaced many Lithuanian families. The church never really recovered from the loss of its base.

When the Archdiocese of New York padlocked the church in 2007, citing structural issues and a dwindling congregation, the church community resisted. They took their case to the Vatican, the Lithuanian Embassy and Consulate, and to court, but none of their appeals could prevent the archdiocese from selling the building. Along with an adjacent property, the site will become an 18-story, 30-unit condo building.

The congregation members lit 105 memorial candles—one for each year of the historic church’s existence—and held lilies as they shared memories and tributes. Following the public remembrances and prayers, those gathered shared a final fellowship with a “Communion-like” wine, along with koldūnai.



Last meeting and prayer recitation by Our Lady of Vilnius church.

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June 2015

Please verify all events, as places and times are subject to change.

ONGOING

Through August 30
No Home To Go To: The Story of Baltic Displaced Persons 1944-1952 (traveling exhibit)
 Philadelphia Public Library Main Branch, 19th and the Parkway, Philadelphia

Through September 1
Siberia Souls
 Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, 6500 S Pulaski Rd., Chicago
 Info: balzekasmuseum.org

Through December 31
No Home To Go To: The Story of Baltic Displaced Persons 1944-1952
 Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, 6500 South Pulaski Rd., Chicago
 Info: balzekasmuseum.org

AUGUST 2015

August 2-9
Lithuanian Heritage Camp
 Camp Dainava, Manchester, Mich.
 Info: rimapolikaits@aol.com, dainava.org

August 2-15
Heritage Children's Camp in English ages 7-16
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Info: neringa.org

August 7-9
Knights of Lithuania 102nd National Convention
 Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista, Orlando, Fla.
 Info: knightsoflithuania.com

August 9-16
LTSI Dance Course for 15th North American Lithuanian Dance Festival
 Camp Dainava, Manchester, Mich.
 Info: ltsi.org, netz@g2a.net, 608-356-6549

August 12
Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute General Meeting
 Camp Dainava, Manchester, Mich.
 Info: ltsi.org

August 15-16
101st Annual Lithuanian Days
 Schuylkill Mall, Frackville, Pa.
 Info: kofl144.weebly.com/101st-annual-lithuanian-days.html

August 15-22
"Third Week" Youth Camp in English ages 12-16
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Info: neringa.org

August 16-21
Lankas Lithuanian Summer Camp
 West Coast Latvian Education Center, Shelton, Wash.
 Camp is conducted in English and is open to families and campers of all ages.
 Info: lankastovykla@gmail.com, seattle.lithuanian-american.org

August 21-23
Ethnic Enrichment Festival
 Swope Park, 4701 East Gregory Blvd., Kansas City, Mo.
 Visit Gediminas Castle booth.
 Aidas folkdance group performs Sunday, August 23, at 1:30 p.m.
 Info: eeckc.org

August 22-30
Meno8Dienos Adult Art Camp (Lithuanian language)
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Info: neringa.org

August 28-29
Portland Lithuanian Community "Hood to Coast" Run
 Timberline Lodge to Seaside, Ore.
 Info: portlandlithuanians.com

August 30, 11 a.m.
Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Science Meeting
 Members' meeting 11 a.m.; public program 1 p.m.
 Immaculate Conception Convent, 500 Liberty Highway, Putnam, Conn.
 Info: lkma.org

SEPTEMBER 2015

September 19
Omaha Lithuanian Community Golf Outing Fundraiser
 Info: omahoslbt.blogspot.com

September 12, 12-5 p.m.
Portland Lithuanian Community Picnic
 Rooster Rock State Park (shelter A), Exit 25, Hwy 84, Corbett, Ore.
 Info: portlandlithuanians.com/events

September 19, 1-3 p.m.
Amber Roots Heritage Club
 Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia
 Info: milliemarks@aol.com

September 20, 10:30 a.m.
Lithuanian Family Day and Mass
 before World Meeting of Families and Pope Francis visit
 St. Andrew Lithuanian Catholic Church, 19th and Wallace Sts., Philadelphia
 Mass celebrants: Bishop Rimantas Norvila of Vilkaviškis, Lithuania, Msgr. Edmundas Putrimas and St. Andrew's pastor Father Peter Burkauskas.

September 27, 7:30 p.m.
Viktoras Paukštelis Piano Concert
 Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall, 881 7th Ave., New York City
 Info: nylithuanian.org/renginiai/785/

OCTOBER 2015

October 3 and 4
Los Angeles Lithuanian Fair
 St. Casimir's Parish grounds, 2718 St. George Street, Los Angeles
 Info: lithuanianfair.com

October 9-11
Iškyla/Walk-a-Thon
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Info: neringa.org

October 17, 1-3 p.m.
Amber Roots Heritage Club
 Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia
 Info: milliemarks@aol.com

October 25, 12:30 p.m.
Child's Gate to Learning Fall Harvest Fundraising Lunch
 Lithuanian World Center, 14911 127th St., Lemont, Ill.
 Info: vvm@childgate.org

NOVEMBER 2015

November 7, 5:30 p.m.
Lithuanian Foundation Annual Fall Gala
 Lithuanian World Center, 14911 127th St., Lemont, Ill.
 Tickets: lithuanianfoundation.org or 630-257-1616

November 7 and 8
Philadelphia Lithuanian Fair
 Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia
 Info: lithuanianmha.org

November 21, 1-3 p.m.
Amber Roots Heritage Club
 Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia
 Info: milliemarks@aol.com

DECEMBER 2015

December 6, time TBA
Omaha Lithuanian Community Christmas Program
 Sts. Peter & Paul Church, Omaha, Nebr.
 Info: omahoslbt.blogspot.com

December 12
Kansas City Lithuanian Community Christmas Party, Potluck Dinner and Kučios
 Cedar Creek Clubhouse, Olathe, Kans.
 Info: kclith.org

December, date TBA
Amber Roots Heritage Club Kučios
 Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia
 Info: milliemarks@aol.com

JULY 2016

July 3
15th North American Lithuanian Dance Festival
 Royal Farms Arena, Baltimore
 Info: sokiusvente2016.org

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