

bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

\$6

May 2021

contents

bridges

May 2021

LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN
NEWS JOURNAL

3



3 Negotiations in Moscow
An excerpt from Gen. Stasys Raštikis' memoirs
An informal translation by Roland Giedraitis from *Kovose dėl Lietuvos (Fighting for Lithuania)*

7



2 from the editor
By Karilė Vaitkutė

7 book review
Bees on the Snow
By Saulius Šaltenis,
translated by Elizabeth Novickas

our community
12 Lithuanian American Community in Cleveland
By Dr. Viktoras Stankus

12



21 We sang for Lithuania from afar
By Irena Raščiuvienė

26 Mandala Magic
By Rolandas Dabrukas

27 current events
By Alan Stankus

26



Front Cover: Healing food mandalas by Rolandas Dabrukas.

Back Cover: A healing food mandala by Rolandas Dabrukas.

bridges

Vol. 45 No. 4 / May 2021

Bridges is the English-language publication of the
Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.
lithuanian-american.org/bridges

EDITOR
Karilė Vaitkutė

ART DIRECTOR
Daniel P. Craig, Jr.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, CURRENT EVENTS
Alan J. Stankus, P.E. (ret)

ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER
Marius Naris

Editorial Office

139 Willow Blvd., Willow Springs, IL 60480
kariledalia@yahoo.com

Subscriber Services and Advertising
spauda@javlb.org

Facebook

facebook.com/BridgesLithuanianAmericanMagazine



Our thanks to
LITHUANIAN FOUNDATION
for its support of this magazine.
www.lithuanianfoundation.org

LAC, INC. NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD
14911 127th Street, Lemont, IL 60439
finansai@javlb.org

All statements and opinions, including product claims, are those of the organization/advertiser making those statements or claims. The publisher does not adopt, or put forth, any such statement or claim as his own, and any such statement or claim does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the publisher.

BRIDGES (ISSN: 87508028) is published 10 times per year (Jan/Feb and Jul/Aug combined) by Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. SUBSCRIPTIONS: For subscription questions or address changes, write to spauda@javlb.org or LAC/Bridges, 1471 Wood Avenue, Downers Grove, IL 60515. Subscription rates are: US: \$40 per year or \$75 for two years.; International: \$65 per year payable in advance in US funds. COPYRIGHT: ©2021 by Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of the publication may be reproduced without written permission of the publisher. PRINTING: Printed by Printing Center USA, Great Falls, MT.

from the editor



Dear readers,

May is here. The month of beauty. The month of recovery. The month of new hope and new promises. Just like every spring, we start over, and, at the same time, we continue our journey through our lives, our history. May revitalizes us. With its beautiful blossoms and magnificent green color that is like a magical potion of life.

In this issue of Bridges, we will read about an artist who tries to show everyone around that beauty is in our daily lives everywhere. It is so important to see beauty in even the smallest and insignificant details of our lives. Beauty revitalizes us. Beauty keeps us sane in the most difficult periods of our lives and our history.

In this issue, we will continue reading about general Raštikis and the most painful moments of his life and the life of our motherland.

We will also read about the joy that visits us when we communicate, socialize, sing, and dance. We share our culture no matter where we are. In Lithuania, In the United States. In Sakartvelo. Or Finland.

Since this year we are celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Lithuanian American Community was founded, we would like to share what we have done over these seven decades. We will read about one of our communities. I do hope that other communities will follow with their stories.

After more than a year in the grip of a deadly disease, our lives are coming back to normal. Slowly but surely. And the month of May does help us feel even more hopeful. As Lithuanians, we also remember that May is called gegužė. The name derives from the word gegutė – a cuckoo bird. Cuckoos are important in Lithuanian folklore and mythology. They were believed to know your destiny. If you hear a cuckoo bird in spring, you are to count the cuckoo sounds – that is how many years you will still live.

I hope you will have a wonderful spring and have an opportunity to listen to the wonderful sounds of nature.

Sincerely,
Karilė Vaitkutė
Editor

NEGOTIATIONS IN MOSCOW

An excerpt from Gen. Stasys Raštikis' memoirs

An informal translation by Roland Giedraitis from *Kovose dėl Lietuvos* (Fighting for Lithuania)



Ribbentrop, Molotov, and Stalin signing the secret treaty and dividing the spheres of influence in Eastern Europe, including the Baltics, on August 23, 1939

Translator's note: Soon after signing their mutual non-aggression pact, Germany and then the Soviet Union attacked Poland in September 1939. Gen. Raštikis, as head of the Lithuanian army, joins his country's delegation to negotiate the terms of Soviet bases in Lithuania. What follows are his notes of his experience in Moscow.

In September of 1939, Germany's armored and motorized army advanced quickly. In some areas, it had penetrated the secret line agreed to with Moscow which was the Narev-Visla-Sano river line. To the east of this

line, the Germans had occupied large areas with almost five million people. Of course, the Germans did not want to relinquish to the Russians the areas conquered with German blood, even though this area was promised to the Russians. On September 17th, the Russian army met the Germans in Poland, not at the agreed line, but to the east of it, on the Polish land promised to the Russians. A temporary demarcation line was established between the two armies, but this was temporary. This question was to be solved later. Otherwise, an armed conflict may ensue between the two armies. During the upcoming negotiations, the Russians were prepared to be hard, while the Germans conceding.

The Germans, apparently, wanted very much to keep the Polish lands to themselves, but they had to give something to the Soviets in return.

On September 28, Ribbentrop flew to Moscow a second time and signed a secret protocol. This would declare a new border in Poland between the two invading armies. Germany obtained large areas of Poland, which they traded by giving up Lithuania to the Soviet sphere of influence and allowing the Russians to obtain military bases in the Baltic states. There was no talk of military occupation at this time.

We now know so much now about those times, but at that time, very little was known of the secret treaties. Estonia was the first forced to sign a mutual aid treaty by agreeing to let the red army and naval units into its territory. Latvia was also forced to do the same. Lithuania was next. The political situation was catastrophic.

Initially, Lithuania's foreign minister Urbšys was invited to Moscow. Not all the cards were opened to him at that time, only the most important demands of the Kremlin. He returned to Kaunas and gave his report to the President & government. The situation was serious and tense. It was decided to send a delegation to Moscow for the

negotiations. The leader of the delegation would be Urbšys. The other members were the prime minister's assistant Bizauskas, Lithuania's representative to Moscow Dr. Natkevičius, and myself. Also, some experts were part of our delegation, namely Prof. Petkevičius, Dr. Viliamas, director Norkaitis, and the general staff colonel Rupšys.

We were met at the Moscow airport by the Russian foreign ministry's chief of protocol and members of the army's delegation. We were settled near the Kremlin in the National hotel. The same day, at about 11 PM, our delegation was informed that "the Lithuanian delegation is expected at the Kremlin." Such a late invitation surprised us. Most people go to bed at that time, but now we are summoned to a conference. Dr. Natkevičius explained to us that in the Kremlin, this was completely normal. Here, people work through the night, and the most important negotiations are conducted at night. We had no choice. We went.

Only the members of the delegation were invited, not the experts. We were assigned a couple of NKVD autos that were at our disposal by the hotel. All the Kremlin squares and streets were well lit. The tops of the Kremlin's towers were adorned with the five-pointed red star. Inside the Kremlin, there were many military guards, part of the NKVD contingent. We were stopped by the people's commissariat palace door. We had no escort except for our drivers. The two guards by the door would not let us in until we were checked by an upper ranked guard, then we were welcomed.

We were led within long corridors. Always army guards were present. We finally entered Molotov's secretary's chamber. We waited for about 15 minutes. We were finally let into Molotov's office. The room was large and spacious. We were met by the foreign minister Molotov and his advisers: former ambassador to France Potiomkin and the Russian envoy to Lithuania Pozdniakov. We were introduced to Molotov. We were all seated at a large table with Molotov at the end. There were three of us and three Russians.

Molotov refers to us as "gospoda" (tr. "sirs" or "lords").



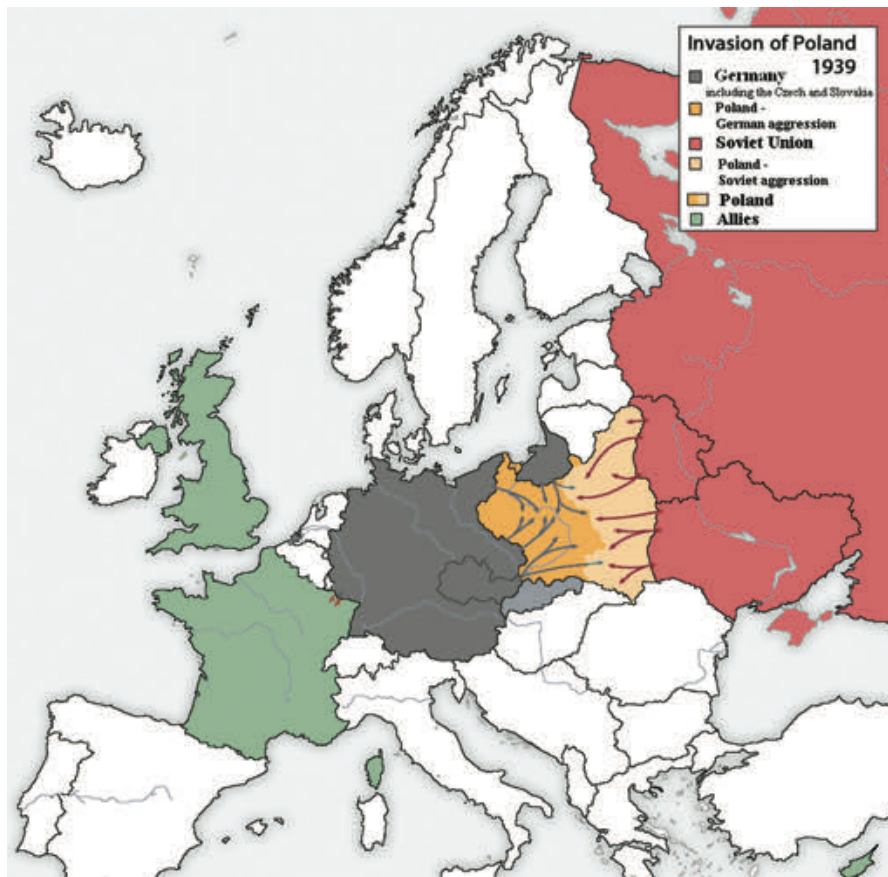
The results of the secret pact to the Baltics and Eastern Europe by 1940



Gen. Stasys Raštikis (second from left) along with Lithuania's foreign minister Juozas Urbšys fly to Moscow on October 7, 1939 to meet with Stalin and Molotov.

We also refer to him as "gospoda" except for Urbšys who uses the patronymic Vyacheslav Mikhailovich which is a more intimate term. Finally, he says to Urbšys: "Well, gospodin minister, what do you have to say?"

Urbšys details the Lithuanian position re the Russian demands. He reminds Molotov of the good relations between Lithuania and the Soviet Union over the years wishing the Soviets all the best and expresses the hope that the Soviet Union has good intentions for Lithuania. He also relates that the present delegation has the trust of their government to conduct negotiations. Molotov responds curtly and explains the Russian demands. Up to now, there are no negotiations, only expressions of individual concerns. The most sensitive point is the Russian demand to establish military bases in Lithuania. All three Lithuanian delegates state their opposition to



General map of Europe in 1939
 Poland was invaded by the Nazis and Soviets in September. The Baltics were next. Note the small triangle to the South of Lithuania, the Suwalkai Region, that was sold by the Nazis to the Soviets for \$7,500,000.



Signing of the treaty on October 10, 1939
 From the left: Natkevičius, Molotov, Urbšys (sitting), Bizauskas, Raštikis, Potemkin, Stalin, Voroshilov, Zdanov, Pozdniakov

this demand. Most of the talking is done by Molotov and Urbšys, while others chime in occasionally. Only Pozdniakov stays silent. During this session, nothing was decided. At about 1 AM, the conference ended. We all had the impression that the negotiations are going to be hard. It seemed the Russians had no intention to concede or lessen their demands. The next day, again at the late hour

of 11, we met at the same place.

Besides last night's participants, Stalin himself appeared. Grayish hair, not very tall, but slightly taller than me, a bit obese, simply dressed. At this point, Stalin did not have any military rank. Greeting us, he uttered only one word: "Stalin" and extended his limp hand. He sat at the end of the table where yesterday sat Molotov and lit his pipe.

During the discussions, he gave the impression that he truly is a dictator. He thinks and decides rather slowly, but logically, coldly. Feelings or sentiments do not affect him. He enjoys humor. Sometimes, where the discussion is most serious, where it would be more fitting to cry rather than laugh, he injects some thought from some Russian writer. He was especially fond of Scedrin. He speaks Russian correctly but with a Caucasian accent. Neither Stalin nor Molotov knows any foreign language. Except, of course, Stalin speaks Georgian.

The main point of the discussion was the introduction of Russian army bases to Lithuania. The Vilnius question was put off at this point. Molotov and Stalin hotly contended that

military bases are essential against Germans. It is a big question of where and when the war will end. The Russians need to defend themselves against a possible German attack. Urbšys argued that the Germans would react to such a Russian build-up in the Baltics and Lithuania. With a smile, Stalin said: "Ribbentrop had pretensions for the whole of Lithuania, but we saved you."

The word "zaščičal" or "defend" Stalin uttered with especially bitter sarcasm. Stalin related how, as the Russians were negotiating with Ribbentrop and stating their conditions, Ribbentrop was very conciliatory and gave one concession after another. When the question came up about the sharing of spheres of influence in the Baltics between the Germans and Russians, Ribbentrop suggested the boundary to be the Dauguva River, i. e. lands to the east and north of Dauguva would be Russian, while to the west - German. "We did not agree to that," proudly and cleverly smiling, with his Caucasian accent, but correct Russian language said Stalin.

"Then Mr. Ribbentrop gave in and suggested the Lithuanian and Latvian border as the limit of influence. We did not agree to this either," with relish spoke Stalin. Then

Ribbentrop, continually giving in to the Russians, suggested the Nemunas River, i. e. leaving to the German sphere lands to the west of Nemunas. Stalin then asked Ribbentrop if Klaipeda would be given to the Russians, then, finally, Ribbentrop said no. Now Stalin did not agree to this either. Finally, Ribbentrop suggested that a small part of Lithuania, the Suvalkai region, would be left to the Germans. Stalin agreed to this.

Stalin seemed to enjoy his deliberations with Ribbentrop. It did not occur to either of them that they are dissecting the live body of Lithuania as a couple of butchers. We were doubtful of Stalin's story. Then he stated: "The matter is settled." Urbšys started to protest, but Stalin silenced him. At this point, it should be mentioned, that now we know from the published secret protocols that the Russians insisted that they get the Suvalkai Territory. Eventually, the Russians agreed to pay Germany \$7,500,000 for that especially vibrant part of Lithuania.

Stalin insisted that the world would know that there is a Russian army in Lithuania. He contended that that simple knowledge would give pause to an aggressor. Exactly what bases did Stalin want in Lithuania? They had in mind bases all along the Nemunas River, i. e. in Alytus, Raseiniai, Ukmergė, and other areas. They did not want a base in Lithuania's capital, since this would be uncomfortable for the country's sovereignty. But which capital? Kaunas or Vilnius? At this point, for tactical reasons, we did not insist on an answer.

The topic of discussion was the number of Russian troops. Their initial request was for 75,000, then for 50,000. But in my mind, the number should be proportional to the existing Lithuanian army, which in peacetime was 20,000 but due to the existing tensions, this was raised to 30,000 by partial mobilization. We suggested 13,000 Russian troops. They were insulted. Finally, we agreed to 20,000. We should bear in mind that Latvia and Estonia agreed to 25,000 for each country.

It should be noted that at this point, Lithuania was alone, isolated. Germans would not help at all nor any other country. After long discussions, the Lithuanian government decided to agree to Russian demands in principle, but try to get better terms. The question was raised to completely terminate the negotiations, but there were arguments to continue. A big morale boost to the country was the return of Vilnius as its capital although the territory was less than was warranted. The Russians would not discuss the fact that after WWI they had agreed to a much larger Lithuania than now. These areas would be given to the Byelorussians.

The deliberations in Moscow lasted a whole week. On October 10th, a pact was signed by Urbšys and Molotov. Stalin invited us to a celebratory feast attended by Stalin, Voroshilov, Zdanov, Molotov, and others. Toasts



About one-fifth of Vilnius Region (dark orange) was ceded to Lithuania in exchange for four Soviet military bases (marked with stars) according to the Mutual Assistance Treaty



On about the same day as Nazis entered Paris in June 1940, the Soviets invaded Lithuania. All eyes were on Paris!

were exchanged. Stalin and Molotov swore that in no way would there be any interference in Lithuania's internal affairs. Not just verbal, but this was also spelled out in the treaty.

On October 31, 1939, the USSR's foreign minister, during his address by radio said: "It would be wrong to say that these treaties would enable the USSR to interfere in the internal affairs of Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania, as some foreign press articles seem to suggest. It is exactly the opposite. It is formally stated in the treaties that the sovereignty of these nations would be sacred and would be untouched."

After this public and solemn pronouncement, 7 1/2 months later, the Soviet red army occupied all three Baltic countries.

Epilogue: The three independent countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were occupied and annexed to the Soviet Union in June 1940, about the same time as Paris was occupied by the Nazis. Lithuania redeclared its independence from the Soviet Union in March 1990.

Bees on the Snow

by Saulius Šaltenis,
translated by Elizabeth Novickas

Introduction by Daiva Litvinskaitė, University of Illinois at Chicago



When Saulius Šaltenis began writing his first novel *Kalės vaikai* (titled *Bees on the Snow* in English) in 1972, the short story collection *Riešutų duona* (Nut bread), probably his most famous work, had just showed up in the bookstores. The writer had previously been known as a

scenarist and short story writer with his own distinctive style, but Šaltenis's role as an original, vibrant writer and a master of irony began with *Riešutų duona*.

Šaltenis wrote the novel *Kalės vaikai* over a rather long period, from 1972 to 1988, when the Soviet Union began to fall. The writer confessed that he wrote the novel for himself, without hurrying, enjoying the writing of it as therapy for the gloomy Soviet routine. "After all, in those days how many of those around us, good friends, drank themselves to death, how many committed suicide, jumped through windows, drowned—the statistics would be horrifying."¹ The loss of nationhood, the spiritual and physical drain, and the threat of decline are themes dictated by the historical surroundings of those times and are characteristic of Šaltenis's generation of writers.² Face to face with an inability to oppose the colonizers and the threat of a declining people, the writer turned to the nation's history and patiently searched for help in deciphering the secret of the Lithuanian people's survival and the stance of the people themselves in their relationship with the occupier.

The novel displays a diversity of techniques, traditions, and genres, but no one in particular. It is a deep text; concise, unusually rich in allusions and references, and cleverly slipping away and hoodwinking the conceptualizing reader. Imitating spoken language, the narrative takes off without any preparation beforehand. A lively narrative disposition, ironical but leaning towards sarcasm, becomes the basic driving force of the text. The story seems to grab the reader by the lapels, like Karvelis grabs Kristijonas's sleeve; seems to whisper in the reader's ear, or to nod sadly. This impression, of a careless speech imposing no obligations, is deceptive—in the swirling, dynamic stream of language the reader is pulled into a world of archaic myths, legends, and supernatural tales as a backdrop to historical events that fly by, while the characters (lacking individualization but for that more readily symbolizing the human experience) take action, and moral problems are confronted.

The novel's timeframe is reminiscent of a fairytale, taking place somewhere, some time when there was a king, when Karvelis wore out a pit sitting under Kristijonas's

¹ "Ai, ai, Kristijonai! Su rašytoju Saulium Šalteniu kalbasi poetas Sigitas Geda," *Metai*, No. 12, 1995, p. 101.

² Elena Bukelienė. "Vyresniųjų proza laisvės sąlygomis." *Naujausioji lietuvių literatūra* (1988-2002), ed. Giedrius Viliūnas. Vilnius: Alma litera, 2003, p. 65.

tree, when spirits of the dead spoke in that same tree's branches and the frightful wagon of drunks constantly rattled along. The novel's characters have arrived from different cultural layers, from a legacy of oral tradition. In the book their stories are woven together with the rather sad history of the Lithuanian people, and acquire a symbolic meaning. A profusion of cultural and historical allusions lie within Lotė's story alone: A colonizer arrives in a Lithuanian area, picks out the prettiest farmstead, and drives Lotė's family from home. Marked by dreadful poverty and injustice, the girl grows up dutiful and hard-working. She reminds one of the orphan from children's fairytales, but contrary to expectations, no generous stepmother rewards Lotė's obedience and goodness. Life offers her a more realistic storyline—wronged by foreigners, losing her parents, raped by the son of the Squire, Lotė turns to drunkenness and debauchery. But it is exactly in that state, like the biblical Magdalena, that pastor Kristijonas notices her.

Kristijonas's mother, the family's strong matriarch, bargains with the plague, which has materialized in Kristijonas's birthplace in the form of the Angel of Death. The Angel of Death here sows death, but is also inseparable from the threat of Germanization. Spoken to nicely, Death agrees to be seated and to bargain for their lives, much like the devil in Lithuanian folklore enters into conversation with a human and is frequently outwitted. This time success, at least partially, turns away.

To a Lithuanian reader, the novel suggests a particular boundary of time and place not necessarily apparent to a reader from a different country. The personality of the novel's principal character, Kristijonas, and the setting he inhabits allows identifying him with his namesake Kristijonas Donelaitis (1714-1780), a poet and Evangelical Lutheran clergyman. Donelaitis, like the novel's protagonist, enjoyed working in his orchard and contriving things: he built a piano and a fortepiano, and devised microscopes and lenses for the eyes. He married a woman of German extraction for whom he built a Widow's Home.

Besides the similarities in biographic details are those in historical events: the Germanization of a Lithuanian country, the plague sweeping through, the figure of a ruling king, and attacks by Russian soldiers are all mentioned in the novel. This creates the impression the novel is set in eighteenth-century Lithuania Minor, an ethnographic section of southwest Lithuania that was within the jurisdiction of Prussia at that time. However, the historical or biographical points of the novel aren't exact, nor do they pretend to be: they are more implied than given, merge with other time periods, and intertwine with the world of legends and fairytales. The writer built his narrative as the collective memory of a people, unmarked

by dates, but uniting them and outlining the boundaries of their identity.

Šaltenis's choice of a famous leading light and his homeland as a prototype is surely not accidental: it was precisely in Lithuania Minor that Donelaitis wrote the globally-significant poem *Metai* (The Seasons), and other leading lights published the first Lithuanian book, the first Lithuanian grammar, and the first Lithuanian newspapers of the national revival, *Aušra* and *Varpas*. So we can say the first stirrings of a Lithuanian national consciousness, an inseparable part of the Lithuanian identity, lie within this area. On the other hand, in Donelaitis's time, Lithuania Minor was being rapidly colonized—an obvious parallel to the Russification of Lithuania taking place during Šaltenis's lifetime. To the writer, this reference point of a time and a place is both a required compass for a people's self-conception and a space for figurative criticisms of the Soviet period.

Each of the novel's Lithuanian characters reveal distinguishing characteristics of the Lithuanian people. The image of the hard-working Naktinis family appears before one's eyes: the proud, tidy Naktinienė, managing to keep clean even when living in a pigsty; her daughter, the quiet, sensitive Lotė, like a little spider weaving handiwork of the most remarkable designs that fill the neighbors with admiration and wonder. Lotė's son Jonelis is receptive to learning, a perceptive and good-hearted child, even if stubborn like his grandmother. And finally the hardy Karvelis, exhausted by famine in the winter, gathers undigested oats from the dung of passing horses. All of these are the characteristics of a tough people, but to Šaltenis it is the Lithuanian demeanor in the perspective of historical events that is more significant.

Kristijonas's milieu is remarkably dark: drunkards, scaldmongers, and swindlers mock and betray their benefactor Kristijonas. However, they are also human: loving, caring, regretting. It is a faceless crowd of people whose behavior is summed up in the figure of Karvelis. Settled next door to Kristijonas, as if contrasting two individuals of different worldviews, Karvelis embodies the extensive galaxy of human weaknesses. His problem, however, lies elsewhere—compared to the enlightened Kristijonas, Karvelis isn't a self-aware individual capable of reflecting on his existence and his place in the life of a people. He adjusts well to the surroundings and seeks a better life, but without understanding the consequences of his actions, just like the other inhabitants of Kristijonas's parish. Perhaps this is where the sting to Šaltenis's irony hides, and the sadness lurking beneath it? The confrontation of values is particularly painful in the scene where the village inhabitants, riled up by the Judge and incited by the promise of eating their fill, or simply afraid to incur

the Judge's wrath, gather together to hunt down an innocent man:

Perhaps the more serious farmers felt that something wasn't right here: Why this unheard-of merriment, as if it were someone's wedding, or a wake, or a harvest feast? Why the pitchforks—what sheaves would need to be moved? Could it be bloody grain they would have to thresh with flails? (p. 104)

But the farmers fear the Judge's revenge, and remain silent. In a similar fashion, Karvelis does not understand the consequences when he keeps quiet about Lotė's rapist, nor does the man carrying a bit of meat, pilfered from the feast arranged for an innocent man's hunt, home for his children.

The writer neither condemns nor justifies the characters' behavior. He leaves that for the reader, as in the Biblical injunction, "He who has ears, let him hear." At times he ironizes, at others sighs sadly: "Lord, what are we, after all? Drab Lithuanian-bred bees... Strangers plundered our honey; strangers threw us out on the snow" (p. 70). Šaltenis compares the Lithuanian people with animals such as bees and horses. They are important life companions, hard-working, patient, enduring and suffering a great deal. Similarly, throughout the vortex of events the Lithuanian people are patient and hard-working, but oppressed and exhausted, and without the inner strength to resist.

The novel's original Lithuanian title, *Kalės vaikai*,³ literally, "Sons of a bitch," refers to numerous various humiliations arising from relations with the colonizers. Seemingly seeking to strengthen a humiliated people's spirit, to raise a man's worth, Šaltenis creates an alternative story-myth to explain this phrase's origin. Like the wolf of Rome, the little bitch suckles Kristijonas, a rare light of those times, through plague and famine. When the family is driven from their home, Lotė's little pet bitch defends it to the death, and later, in the world beyond death, she battles an army of foreigners. And even Jonelis, in resisting his morally-degraded father, barks like a dog. So the bitch is the protector of the ordinary little gray Lithuanian bee—a wronged people without rights. Most importantly, she is the hope of resistance and self-defense. Karvelis, spending his old age beneath Kristijonas's tree, threatens the foreigners who call him the relative of a dog:

If we're such a dishonorable people, then it seems we're not descended from Adam and Eve? Maybe we really did come from a Bruno, or some Bruiser is our people's father? But our father is lying like a

mountain overgrown with grass and brush, watch out, you scoundrel, he'll hear you mouthing off that way, and open one eye! Maybe you won't be here anymore, your children will grow up, and grandchildren too; our father will open the other eye, another hundred years will go by—and he'll bite you, you villains, in the heel! (p. 153)

In light of the loss of language, the political apathy, and moral degradation of the inhabitants of this Lithuanian area, the novel appears to be a pessimistic story. The narrative begins with Kristijonas's death and ends with the destruction of the tree watered with his blood. Jonelis, Kristijonas's most sincere and only follower, dies at the hands of his father. However, a tiny ray of hope remains—the next spring the dried-up tree sprouts a new offshoot, a symbol of hope and the people's vitality. Like the symbol of the white bitch, it offers the hope that the people will find an inner strength and manage to resist the colonizers, even though the current outlook is very bleak.

The novel *Bees on the Snow* could be considered as much a challenge to Lithuanians as to the world in general. The problems realized here are eternal and characteristic of all of humanity, even if Lithuanian garb was chosen. The reader will shortly sense that the time and place where the novel's action takes place is considerably wider, and the moral problems the novel grapples with are typical from one end of the earth to the other.

Šiaudinis and His Frightful Wagon Extract from *Bees on the Snow*

You see, while Šiaudinis was alive, not only did no one take fright at him, no one even considered him a man; in the tavern you could wipe your greasy fingers or a snot on his noggin as much as you pleased—for a drop of vodka, that creature would sell his mother or father to the first comer! Like a thief, he hauled everything out of his house, just so the drought wouldn't parch his throat—his wife used to lock up the garner door and the bins the same way you'd guard against a burglar, so the household goods wouldn't end up in the hands of the red-headed Grabė. After all, the tavern's garret and pantries were stuffed with homespun, wool, and sheepskins drunk away by those like Šiaudinis, and some, while swilling, left their last pair of trousers there as well.

Dear God, what's happened? Did our people swill like that in the old days? Now even the women pour it down

³ The phrase is not a curse in Lithuanian, although it certainly is in many surrounding languages, including German and Russian. (Ed.)

their throats, trouncing the men at it, and under the table their children, with their tongues hanging out, lick up whatever's spilled... Dear Lord of mine!

Late in the autumn, just before All Soul's Day, that Šiaudinis sat in his shirtsleeves by the tavern's fence, his overcoat and cap long since drunk away, chattering his teeth, smearing red snot and tears like a baby. The Lord had taken pity on his little children and called them home, while Šiaudinienė, her children buried and thoroughly satiated with this kind of life, had hung herself in the garden, but she'd hidden the children's clothes in the straw behind the rafters. And how could Šiaudinis not drink, when there's that kind of heartache? So he found those little clothes, what did the children need those little undershirts for now, the drunkard reasoned, when they were sheltered deep in the earth? To Grabė it was all the same—he took Šiaudinis's parcel, and his hand did not tremble.

The minor government clerks smacked Šiaudinis on the ear when he looked to take a sip from someone else's shot glass, but Šiaudinis just stupidly rubbed his head. All kinds of vagrants from the faraway corners of the earth had drifted in, fattened themselves on Lithuanian bread and bacon, and then made fun of the poor soul's shoes, his drooping trousers, and his parents' native language—and for a drop of vodka they forced him to yelp like a dog under the table; a barking dog or someone speaking Lithuanian was one and the same, you see, to them. The poor crazed fellow offered Grabė the coming crop, the as-yet unsown and unharvested rye, but the redheaded tavern keeper was no fool: he glanced at Šiaudinis and saw there was no spark of light in those eyes, that he was just continuing to take up space on this earth for no good reason, he'd neither sow nor reap again—and drove him aside. Father Kristijonas's heart would break whenever he glanced down from the church's little hill towards the tavern. It seemed that some, if only they could, would marinate in the tavern for their entire brief time here, counting neither days nor nights, grasping neither life's beginning nor its end... and when thrown out into the cold, these little gray Lithuanian bugs prattle on without hearing each other, crawling over one another like worker bees, senselessly heading from corner to corner, barely, barely moving as if they've been frozen, and yet all the same they struggle back to that squawking beehive, into that warm, sweltering paradise soured with smoke and a satanic stench. You see, Grabė is a real sweetheart: he lets the entire parish run up a tab—maybe he'll take pity this time too! Well, the redhead stuck the tavern book under Šiaudinis's nose and said: "It's no good, Šiaudinis, you're already holding your trousers up with your hand, with no belt you've got nothing to tie them up with... so

who's going to pay me these old debts?"

Šiaudinis tried to palm off his horse, but Grabė only sneered—what's a bag of bones like that, even handsomer than its master, good for: its spine protruding, its ribs sticking out like a skeleton's, barely able to move its feet, and completely blind—oh, and the wagon, too, was like it'd been taken apart; the floor was broken in, so Šiaudinis had to bounce along nearly sitting on the shaft, while the drunken wheels rolled crookedly, and one or another kept jumping off the axle and speeding into the ditch to rest. Šiaudinis would have pawned his soul and signed the tavern's book in blood, except there wasn't so much as a whisper left of that soul; perhaps he'd had one once upon a time, but he didn't remember anymore where and when he'd lost it, behind which drying shed rafter he'd stuck it.

"Well, you could pawn your tongue," the crafty red-head offered.

Šiaudinis thought a bit, and then thought a bit more. Scratching his head, he even laughed to himself: what's that tongue to him—he lived all alone, he wasn't going to talk to himself, and after all, it's not his hands, nor his feet, nor his eyes—and so he agreed, since the tavern keeper promised to have mercy... and opened his greasy tavern book wide. Šiaudinis stuck out his tongue and pressed it to the paper like a seal, while the devil giggled unpleasantly from a dark corner. Šiaudinis hit the bottle hard until the middle of the night, crawled out of the tavern last, and rattled away on his crazy wheels, never to return home again—although indeed, no one much missed him.

He only showed up in the spring. Two women were scrubbing clothes next to the river and heard a sound coming from the water, something like grinding teeth, or someone moaning; in a fright, they looked, and looked about, and what a fog there was! Just then the head of a horse and the wagon with Šiaudinis, who'd disappeared before All Soul's Day, emerged from the very depths—not a horse, just skin and bones, and the wagon to match the horse: it looks like it's going to disintegrate at any moment, since it's rolling along without a road or a path. Wherever the blind nag turns, that's where it goes—be there a river—or not; a tree—or not; while Šiaudinis relentlessly shakes his blackened, twisted mouth, dangling the tongue pawned to the redheaded tavern keeper like a bast shoe string. The poor soul wants to speak, maybe to ask the way to the graveyard, but in the tavern he'd flippantly renounced it, pawned the native Lithuanian tongue he'd been gifted and hadn't acquired a new, foreign one, only a few cuss words brought from the corners of the earth had stuck—so there it is, his entire wealth! And so Šiaudinis wanders to this day, longing just to rest

book review

in consecrated ground, grinding his teeth and covered in piteous tears; he wants to speak, and cheers up when he sees someone, more than a small child yearning for its mother; he waves his arms, wants to say a word, but there's only a vague murmuring, mooing, and whimpering coming out of his throat—worse than a rabid animal. Because of course, it's as empty as a grave-pit in his mouth—not a word; only a foreign curse still stirs and lets out a stink, like some toad or slug. After that many years knocking about, Šiaudinis had gathered many others like him in his hideous wagon; those who had drowned or frozen in the ditches took a seat in Šiaudinis's coach with their heads hanging, their eyes bulging, throwing up on the drunken wheels...

Lithuanian horses

Extract from *Bees on the Snow*

It turned out that Karvelis had strayed considerably from the road, and was stopped on the very precipice by the deep pit where the late Kristijonas once dug clay for bricks for the new church and the Widows' Home—it was there at the bottom that someone in a weak voice shouted and stirred. Well, it was the Bishop's emissaries that had plunged in there—they had been driving along, wrapped in beaver collars, to interrogate the now-deceased pastor, and what a joke they made of themselves! The horse got startled, tore out of its harness (the devil knows how) and then it sped away screeching, or sank straight into the earth, just like the travelers. They knocked their teeth into the sleigh falling into the pit; blood poured over Doctor Zaksas's eyes and he was struck senseless, while Mr. Abelis still stirred about a bit in the snow, mistakenly thinking his fellow traveler was no longer alive. (That's why he drank the vodka alone—out of fear, and so he wouldn't freeze.) Karvelis would have pulled them out regardless, but with his teeth Mr. Abelis tore a ring with a costly stone from his finger, and emptied out not just his own, but Doctor Zaksas's pockets too, jingled the coins, raised the price—if only that figure just barely visible in the snowstorm wouldn't leave. So that's how Karvelis cleaned the gentlemen out, helping them out of the pit with the reins—he poured all the riches into the bag with the oats, and even forgot the snowstorm; in his delight, he kept sifting through the oats with his hand and catching at the coins like they were slippery burbots, and afterwards he purposely wept and moaned to the gentlemen that he'd lost both his oats and their riches. The riches raised such a desire to live in him that he struck the mare hard enough so the whip handle broke, and then he threatened her with the bag with the

golden oats! The mare just turned her head towards her master, who was perhaps foaming at the mouth more than she was, and started to kneel, as if she were really saying, "Oh, what a fool! What's that gold to me, what are those gentlemen, when the time's come to croak!" The bellringer was ashamed; he even covered the little mare, wet with sweat, with his own sheepskin, knelt next to her as if he were in church, and in repentance, blowing his warm breath in her ear, whispered this: "Dearest little mare of mine, stand up on your little feet, our good pastor isn't buried yet, what on earth will I do here on my own, without my own people, just these strange gentlemen? Let my arm wither if I should ever threaten you again, but after all, whoever cares to has boxed my ears, too! Don't our ribs show after a long winter just like the horses'? Angelic little mare, I'll feed you nothing but oats, and a piece of bread on holidays... You see how much wealth has fallen from heaven; just take me home! You little Lithuanian horses of ours, you can do anything; look, you make it through the winter practically without feed, gnawing on bark or tearing the straw off the roof... if God would give you nails instead of hooves you'd climb up into the trees like squirrels and chew on twigs... See there, the runners are covered in your grandfather's dear bones—even after death he's served faithfully for so many years. And when he was alive he used to pull out of any quagmire, any snowbank—he'd jump like some rabbit..." Karvelis kissed the bones, the slick little runners, and the sleigh, as if it were alive, stirred in the direction of home, and then—you'd think the grandfather had scolded his grandchild—the mare stood up trembling, the bellringer crossed himself and shouted—the little mare jumped like mad, Mr. Abelis very nearly tumbled out of the sleigh like a sack, and off she went as if through waves, rising up here, sinking in the snow there... The little mare, with no one showing her, merely asked nicely, found the road home by herself. When nothing could be seen two yards ahead, the virtuous beast lit the road with just her beautifully marked forehead, as white as white could be, like the Star of Bethlehem gushing sparks in Mr. Kristijonas's Christmas wafer.



Saulius Šaltenis's career includes working as an editor, playwright, and screenwriter, and writing novels, short stories, and musicals. He helped found the cultural weekly Šiaurės Atėnai in 1989 and actively took part in Lithuania's transition to independence. He then served as the Minister of Culture from 1996 to

1999. In 2020, he won the Lithuanian National Prize for his contributions to Lithuanian literature.

Lithuanian American Community in Cleveland

A few highlights of the role of Cleveland Lithuanians in the development and growth of the Lithuanian American Community

By Dr. Viktoras Stankus
LAC Cleveland Chapter VP of Information



On February 16, 2018, the Lithuanian Independence 100 Years Celebration at City of Cleveland Mayor Frank G. Jackson's Mayoral Chambers with the Lithuanian delegation. Front row left to right: Virginija Motiejūnienė; Loretta Gudėnienė; Rūta Degutienė, Cleveland Lithuanian Club President; Dr. Zita Maščinskienė; Nomeda Vucianienė, LAC Ohio District Chair. Second row left to right: Darius Tuskenis; Valerie McCall, Cleveland Mayor's Chief of Government and International Affairs; Dr. Viktoras Stankus, LAC Cleveland Chapter VP of Information; Ingrida Bublys, Lithuanian Honorary Consul; Frank G. Jackson, Cleveland Mayor; Algis Gudėnas, LAC Cleveland Chapter President; Vincas Taraška; Rasa Taraškienė; Alexandra Kudukis; Sonda Vaičiškauskienė.

Historically, the concept of a Lithuanian World Community (Pasaulio Lietuvių Bendruomenė) which would preserve the Lithuanian identity and culture and the hope of a restored and free Lithuania among the numerous Lithuanian refugees who fled Lithuania from the Soviet horror to other lands during WWII (75,000 in Germany alone in 1949) was advanced by the VLIK, the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania, in its Lithuanian Charter (Lietuvių Charta) presented on June 14, 1949. At the same time, the VLIK announced the temporary statutes for its proposed Lithuanian World Community that would unite Lithuanians throughout the diaspora by founding Chapters in the various countries they had fled to.

Cleveland's Fertile Soil

The 30,000 Lithuanian Displaced Persons that arrived in the USA during 1949-1951 (some already in 1948) were holding on to the concept of a World Lithuanian Community (Pasaulio Lietuvių Bendruomenė). However, the leaders of the earlier established Lithuanian American institutions like ALTas (Amerikos Lietuvių Taryba – Lithuanian American Council), and especially the chief editors of the Chicago Lithuanian newspapers Draugas and Naujienos, were skeptical and not receptive to the newcomers' proposed organization, the Lithuanian American Community (LAC) that would encompass all Lithuanian Americans under its umbrella. Some prominent American Lithu-

our community

anian leaders, among them, respected Clevelanders Kazys Karpus and community activist Pijus J. Ziurys, lobbied for LAC (LAC Yearbook: JAV LB Trys Dešimtmečiai, 1982, Franciscan Press, Brooklyn, N.Y.) Karpus, who was instrumental in founding the predecessor organization of ALTas, left ALTas in protest for its opposition to a new arrival in America, President Smetona of Lithuania, that Karpus had invited to reside in Cleveland. Smetona set the tone to restore Lithuania's independence meeting with President Roosevelt and continued his efforts till he perished from a suspicious fire in his apartment in Cleveland in 1944. Karpus had been part of a delegation at the White House, imploring President Franklin Roosevelt to uphold Lithuania's independence.

Karpus and his views were well known to American Lithuanians. He came to the USA in 1909 and became a typesetter and reporter for the South Boston newspaper Keleivis. In Brooklyn, New York, he worked for Vienybė Lietuvninkų and on the staff of Tėvynė, a weekly newspaper published by the Lithuanian Alliance (Susivienijimas Lietuvių Amerikoje – SLA) in New York. He was also a correspondent for the Chicago Draugas. In 1914, he was invited to Cleveland to be on the staff of the Lithuanian newspaper Dirva and then served as its owner and edi-

tor till 1948 when he ceded the paper to the new Lithuanian immigrants, who were open-minded regarding LAC forming in the USA. Karpus aided them in developing LAC and stayed on at Dirva for some years as manager, helping them publish and navigate the newspaper (JAV Lietuviai, Vilnius 2002; Encyclopedia Lituanica, So. Boston, 1973).

The idea of Lithuanian American Community found fertile ground in Cleveland, and Cleveland Lithuanians participated positively in its growth. The early Lithuanian Americans espoused restoring Lithuania's freedom. Jonas Rimašauskas, a member of the Lithuanian anti-Nazi resistance, survived incarceration in a Nazi concentration camp, emigrated to the USA, and settled in Cleveland in 1949. At the age of 29, he created an exhibit entitled "Genocide in Lithuania.". Through text and graphic pictures of tortured to death Lithuanians, the exhibit depicted the terror, enslavement, and barbarity of the ruthless Soviet occupation of Lithuania. On June 17-20, 1951, Ziuris and other American Lithuanians arranged for the general American population to view the shocking "Genocide in Lithuania" exhibit with handout brochures at Cleveland's downtown historical Public Auditorium/Hall. Later, the American Lithuanian Council headquar-



February 17, 2018, Cleveland LAC Chapter's 100 Year Celebration of Lithuania's restored Independence for the greater Cleveland public at Cleveland State University Auditorium, Finale. On stage: Cleveland Lithuanian Choir Exultate (Rita Čyvaitė Kliorienė, director), Cleveland Lithuanian Folk Dance Group Švyturys (Aušrinė Širvinskienė and Eglė Žukauskienė, directors), Montreal Lithuanian Choir Balsas (Aleksandras Stankevičius and Kristina Kliorytė, directors), Toronto Lithuanian Youth Ensemble Gintaras (Romas Jonušonis, director; Jurgita Slatkienė, Vida Kairienė, Kassandra Kulnytė Douglas, Vilija Yčaitė, and Ramona Kaminskaitė – teachers), and Toronto Lithuanian Choir Volungė (Dalia Skrinskaitė Viskontienė, director; Danguolė Radtke, assistant; Ilona Beres, choir's accompanist). The children are the Cleveland Švyturys and Toronto Gintaras dancers.

tered in Chicago would take the exhibit on tour across the USA.

The first years of the Lithuanian American Community and Cleveland Chapter

The concept of Lithuanian American Community was spelled out by concerned Lithuanian Americans in the Act (Aktas) promulgated on November 18, 1951, New York, New York. A transitional LAC Temporary Organizing Committee (Laikinasis Organizacinis Komitetas) was formed in 1951. It then elected a National Council (Taryba), which elected the first LAC National Executive Committee (Centro-Krašto Valdyba) for the years 1951-1958, and located it in friendly, pro-LAC Cleveland. Its Chairman was Stasys Barzdukas, who from the start supported the formation of LAC.

A giant of the LAC, Clevelander Barzdukas, was a Lithuanian language scholar, pedagogue, and Lithuanian language teacher. He was already Chairman of the first local Cleveland LAC Chapter (Apylinkė) established around St. George's Lithuanian parish at Superior and East 65th in 1952, per guidelines of the Temporary Organizing Committee, when he was elected Chairman of the first LAC National Executive Committee; he was also elected Chairman of the 2nd National Executive Committee, also in Cleveland, in 1958-1961. Barzdukas served as Chairman of the LAC National Council (Taryba) 1961-1964, and Chairman of the Lithuanian World Community (PLB) 1969-1973. He was instrumental in founding the Community's magazine, Pasaulio Lietuvis (World Lithuanian) that became the voice of the World Lithuanian Community, and was its editor from 1963 to 1975. Other Lithuanian Clevelanders would follow his dedicated example and work on behalf of the LAC and Lithuania.

An inspiration to Lithuanians, Clevelanders, Americans, and people worldwide was the saga of Barbara Armonas as told in her book, *Leave Your Tears in Moscow*, to Cleveland engineer A. Nasvytis. Translated into several languages, the story serialized in *Life Magazine*, first published in book form in 1961. Barbara was a Cleveland Lithuanian housewife, stranded pregnant in Lithuania when the Soviets occupied Lithuania in 1940 and would not allow her to leave for America. Later they would exile her and her newborn son to Siberia, in detention till 1960. The undaunted efforts of her husband John (Jonas) and her daughter Donna in Cleveland ultimately secured her release to the USA.

An inspiring story after Barbara Armonas saga was the plight suffered in fortitude by Benediktas Butkus. The Soviets deported him from Soviet-occupied Lithuania in June 1941 to 27 years of imprisonment in the Gulag. But

the steadfast perseverance in Cleveland of his wife Pranė, his daughters Nijolė and famed Lithuanian soloist Aldona Butkutė Stempužis, his son, Raimondas Benediktas (the son Butkus never knew he had,) and the US Congressional intervention, Butkus was allowed to join his family in Cleveland in 1967. Butkus' diary documenting the brutal Soviet repression, *Laisvės Netekus (Having Lost Freedom)* was published in Lithuania in 1990.

A second LAC Cleveland Chapter (Apylinkė) was founded in 1958. It clustered around the newer Our Lady of Perpetual Help Lithuanian parish at Neff Road and East 185th Street. The Chapter's long-term active Chairman was Povilas Mikšys, and later, a very young Ingrida Stasaitė (later as Mrs. Bublys, the future Lithuanian Honorary Consul) would serve as a dedicated member. The two Chapters started a merging process in 1971. From 1971 to 1982, the merged Chapter's earnest Chairman was Jurgis Malskis.

Raimundas (Ray) Kudukis was a Cleveland engineer and the Utilities Director of the City of Cleveland appointed by Republican mayor Ralph Perk (of Czech descent, a great friend of Lithuanians who founded the American Nationalities Movement which endorsed freedom for the Captive Nations). Kudukis was recognized for his role in the Republican party, through which he promoted the Lithuanian cause. His wife, Gražina (Grace) Kudukis, promoted the Lithuanian cause through her leadership in the League of Women Voters. The godfather of Kudukis's son was a Republican leader, Nelson Rockefeller. Kudukis was the Chairman of the 1976 VIII LAC National Council, and VP of the Lithuanian World Community. Kudukis, one of the directors of the Lithuanian Club, founded the bipartisan Lithuanian Civic Club (headquartered at the Lithuanian Club) whose endorsement was sought by Republican and Democrat politicians alike. He talked LAC member Dr. V. Stankus into being nationalities co-chair to elect a Democrat (the Republican party said OK), but of Jewish Lithuanian Litvak descent, Eric Fingerhut, who asked for help from, in his estimation, "a fellow Lithuanian." Kudukis, with his fellow Lithuanians and Republican activists, was happy that the US President George H. Bush, while visiting Cleveland and following the Republican Party's suggestion for an Ethnic Meeting, chose to speak to Cleveland's nationality and ethnic leaders at the Cleveland Community Center/Club on the topic of freedom for the Captive Nations, Lithuania among them. It garnered great American media attention.

Kudukis also worked with ALTas. Cleveland was unique among US Lithuanian communities in that members of LAC would also be members of ALTas, and eventually, they held joint February 16th celebrations, till LAC gradually assumed the sole role. For February 16th, 1978, Jonas

our community

Nasvytis of the recognized Nasvytis family, an activist in the Democratic party, arranged for US Senator John Glenn to speak at Cleveland's Lithuanian Club and the February 16th ceremonies at Our Lady of Perpetual Help auditorium held by ALTas (Algis Rukšėnas, President, Dr. Viktoras Stankus, vice President.) Jewish leader Dr. Allan Riga attended. At a later February 16th celebration, US senator Howard Metzenbaum, of Jewish Lithuanian heritage, spoke strongly for a free Lithuania. His speech was printed on the front page of The Plain Dealer, Ohio's largest newspaper. The publicity and sympathy generated for Lithuania by Cleveland author Algis Rukšėnas's book, Day of Shame, about the attempted defection of a Lithuanian sailor Simas Kudirka, who jumped on to an American ship from a Soviet ship but was forcibly returned to it, was worldwide.

Relations with the Jewish community

Jewish support in restoring Lithuania's independence was needed. Good relations between the Jewish and Lithuanian communities would affect this positively. One important event was when future Lithuanian Consul Ingrida Bublys and Dr. Stankus visited the Park Synagogue in Cleveland to hear the plight of a young Lithuanian Jewish girl, Mila Girsas (Girsh). The Soviets would allow her parents, younger sister, and brother to leave Soviet-occupied Lithuania. Dr. Stankus contacted his contacts in Washington D.C., who arranged for then US President Gerald Ford to hear Mila's plight from Mila and Dr. Stankus when Ford was campaigning in Cleveland. Ford appealed to the Soviet government and Mila's family was allowed to emigrate to the USA. Henceforth the Jewish community and the American Jewish Committee with its director Dr. Martin Plax then worked with Dr. Stankus, the Lithuanian Community representative in the Ohio Helsinki Accords Council, founded by Gaila Klimas, the niece of former Lithuanian minister Petras Klimas, to promote human rights in Soviet-occupied Lithuania. She made it possible for Simas Kudirka to speak at the famed Cleveland City Club. And when Dr. Stankus was able to prove that Nazi-occupied Lithuania boycotted the forced formation of a Lithuanian SS by the German occupiers of Lithuania in WWII on the Northern Ohio NBC Sunday Magazine program, the Jewish Community became even more receptive to Lithuania's plight. This was crucial when the drive for Lithuanian NATO membership would begin. Ingrida Bublys and Dr. Stankus continued to gather sympathy for Lithuania by meeting in 1996 US House Majority leader Tip O'Neil and US Senator Howard Metzenbaum.

The Work of Educational Council

Cleveland continued to contribute positively. Milda Lenkauskienė, the 1992 World Lithuanian Community's Educational Council Chair did the organizing work for the first five World Lithuanian Youth Congresses, 1966-1983. She was chairperson of the IV World Lithuanian Culture Congress in Toronto in 1988; in 1992, she was the Chair of the World Lithuanian Community's Educational Council. On January 21-22, 1983, the LAC Lithuanian Youth Commission was formed in preparation for the Lithuanian World Congress. Members were Dalia Orentaitė and Dr. V. Stankus in Cleveland, V. Plioplys in Chicago, and Violeta Abariūtė in Detroit. Two Lithuanian Youth Association Congresses (Stovyklos) took place in Metropolitan Cleveland: at Kent State University and Oberlin College, the first US university to admit women and black students.

The support of the Ohio Lithuanian Medical Association

The Ohio Lithuanian Medical Association (Ohio Lietuvių Gydytojų Draugija) was founded in 1956 in Cleveland. Its headquarters and the majority of its members are located there. It is mentionable because it played a significant cultural role for Lithuanians, not only in Cleveland but across the USA, and many of its members also worked in the LAC or conversely. From 1957 to 2000, it granted a yearly \$1000 cultural award, a total of \$44,000 for those years, to deserving individuals and institutions. The first award went to poet and author Algirdas Landsbergis of New York. Other awards went to the Lithuanian Encyclopedia, the Kent State Lithuanian Program near Cleveland, 29 well-known Lithuanians, such as K. Banaitis, B. Kviklys, Rita Čyvaitė Kliorienė, B. Raila, A. Maceina, Z. Ivinskis. Among them was the author of books on Lithuanian cuisine and culinary art Stefanija Stasiene, the mother of future Lithuanian Honorary Consul (1996) Ingrida Stasaitė Bublys.

As the Chair of the LAC Cultural Council (1980-1989,) Ingrida Bublys augmented the OLMA initial awards program and promoted new positive cultural initiatives. In November of 1980, she called for the first-ever cultural conference of the LAC Chapters and districts' cultural activists who met in Cleveland. Tomas Venclova, for whom Dr. Stankus arranged an interview with the Cleveland Jewish News, Dr. Razma, and Honorary Consul V. Kleiza spoke about how their respective fields impacted Lithuanian culture. Participants from various cities in the USA attended. The Cultural Council then initiated a Cultural Awards celebration. The first one took place in Cleveland on May 17, 1981, initiating the beginning of

annual cultural awards. The first recipient of this prize was poet Kazys Bradūnas. In 1984, at the 2nd cultural activists' conference in Cleveland, the award recipient was Juozas Kapočius, the publisher of *Lietuvių Enciklopedija* (Lithuanian Encyclopedia.) Its first volume was printed in 1953, and the last volume XXXV was printed in 1966. Ingrida Bublys had much earlier raised the prospect of publishing a needed supplementary volume XXXVI, which was published in 1969. The Encyclopedia was very important because it forced the Soviets to allow a Lithuanian-language encyclopedia to be published in Soviet-occupied Lithuania just as the Soviets were beginning a campaign to force the Lithuanian language out of schools. Kapočius also published an English version, *Encyclopedia Lituanica*, in 1973. The Kent State Lithuanian Program also received the award.

The LAC activities during 1982-1985

The LAC National Executive Committee (Centro-Krašto Valdyba, 1982-1985) was located in Cleveland. Dr. Antanas Butkus was the Chairman. The Committee accomplished several important projects (as per Butkus report, *An Urgent Message, Bridges*, Feb 1984.) With the initiative of the Executive Committee's Educational Council Chairman Jonas Kavaliūnas and the Lithuanian American Council (by direct request of the World Lithuanian Congress - Seimas), a campaign was organized to establish a Lithuanian Chair at an American university. Shortly, over \$84,000 was collected, and the first installment for the Chair was completed. A Social Affairs Council was established. It was headed by Dr. Butkus and procured for the LAC Cleveland Chapter a \$3,500,000 loan from HUD to build Lithuanian senior citizens' homes. Homes were planned for Chicago and Los Angeles. The vice-Chairman for finances of the Cultural Council A. Mackevičius started a process whereby a tax-exempt status would be obtained for the Lithuanian American Community. Dr. Butkus tasked his VP of Special Affairs, Dr. Stankus, to maintain liaison with the Jewish community, to keep getting Jewish leaders such as Dr. Bell, Dr. A. Kasen, Barry Schrage, Dr. Plax, and groups like the Oppressed Jewry to continue to attend February 16th celebrations, to be on board of aiding the restoration of Lithuania's independence, and for him and Ingrida Bublys to keep attending the Jewish Seder celebrations and write up the events for the Lithuanian press.

The first six Lithuanian Folk Dance Festivals had taken place in Chicago, but by 1983 it was apparent that Chicago would not be able to host the VII Dance Festival, and Cleveland was tasked with the responsibility. Some thought it could not be successful here or draw enough

folk dance groups and audiences nationwide. But under the driven capable leadership of Dr. Butkus, who involved his Executive Committee's members to take part in the Festival Organizing Committee's work, the VII Festival was a superlative success. Some 2,000 dancers, a total of fifty ensembles, together with the audience upwards of ten thousand participants. Even dance groups from outside the USA - Inkaras from Argentina, Nemunas from Brazil, Vasario 16 Lithuanian School folk dancers from Germany - participated. Ingrida Bublys had spread the word through the Cultural Council, and the Organizing Committee's Rūta Degutis (the future director of Cleveland's Lithuanian Club) traveled to and distributed information of the festival among Pennsylvania's 250,000 strong Lithuanian heritage population.

The years that led to Lithuania's freedom

The LAC Cleveland Chapter and the LAC Ohio district worked diligently from 1982 to 2001. The Chapter's Presidents and chairpersons were V. Čyvas, V. Brizgys, R. Apanavičius, Ada Stungienė, Dr. V. Stankus, Dr. R. Šilkaitis, Dr. D. Degėsys, and Milita Nasvytienė. Individual LAC members also contributed. They arranged for the Jewish refusenik, young Litvinov, a descendant of famed diplomat Maksim Litvinov who escaped the Soviet Union, to speak about freedom to young Lithuanians at the Lithuanian Club. In answer to a letter by Paul Alšėnas, the US State Department sent Undersecretary of State George Vest to speak to young Lithuanians at the Lithuanian Club, assuring them that the State Department upholds Lithuania's freedom versus the USSR. A young representative of the Jewish Defense League also spoke to young Lithuanians at the Club about defending freedom. Valdas Adamkus, the future President of Lithuania, spoke at the February 16th commemorations in Cleveland in 1984 and 1989, calling for the restoration of Lithuania's freedom.

The LAC was proud of Cleveland's Lithuanian art ensembles. The storied Čiurlionis Art Ensemble, led by maestro Alfonsas Mikulskis, performed at venues in the USA and Canada, at New York's Carnegie and Philharmonic Halls, and Civic Opera in Chicago; it toured in South America and, eventually, in free Lithuania in June of 1990. Cleveland Folk Dance Group Grandinėlė (director Liudas Sagys, orchestra's director Rita Čyvaitė Kliorienė) participated in Rome, February 26 - March 5, 1984, on the 500 Anniversary of Lithuania's patron saint St. Casimir's canonization. Later, Švyturys director Aušrinė Širvinskienė took up the mantle of Grandinėlė. Popular amongst the US Lithuanian colonies, the Cleveland Men's Octet (director Ritas Babickas) not only toured in the USA but also in Australia and Lithuania. Algirdas Biel-



At Cleveland Hopkins International Airport greeting Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius, here to attend the 2015 LAC XXI National Council's 1st Session and the Cleveland LAC Lietuvių Dienos - Lithuanian Days.

Left to right: Lithuanian Embassy Counsellor Lyra Puišytė Bostroem; LAC Ohio District VP Dr. Viktoras Stankus; US Senator Rob Portman's delegate George Brown; Lithuania's Ambassador to the US Rolandas Kriščiūnas; Cleveland Švyturys Lithuanian Folk Dance Group co-director Eglė Širvinskaitė Žukauskienė; Lithuania's Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius; Lithuanian Honorary Consul Ingrida Bublys; Lithuanian Consul General in Chicago Marijus Gudynas; Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson's representative and Chief of Airport Operations; LAC Cleveland Chapter President Algis Gudėnas.

skus is worth mentioning for being the organizer of Lithuanian sports in North America, leading to SALFASS.

The 1986 February 16th speaker was linguist Dr. A. Klimas. Vytautas Skuodis, the famed defender of human rights in Soviet-occupied Lithuania, spoke at the Lithuanian parish on December 7, 1987. George Voinovich, Mayor of Cleveland, future governor of Ohio, and later US Senator, and friend of Lithuanians, honored Skuodis. The dawn of freedom asserts itself. On June 1-4, 1989, Lithuania's Sąjūdis member Emanuelis Zingeris (his trip arranged by Gaila Klimas of OHAC) speaks at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Lithuanian parish and American venues in Cleveland about Lithuania's struggle for freedom.

Vytautas Landsbergis, the head of Sąjūdis and Lithuania's Seimas, speaks to Cleveland's LAC and assembled Lithuanians on March 16, 1994. Ohio Helsinki Accords Council Chair Gaila Klimas arranges for Landsbergis to speak at the Cleveland City Club. Founded in 1912, The Cleveland City Club is the oldest free speech forum in the USA; it established a Chapter in Volgograd, which Putin later closed. LAC representative Dr. Stankus participated in Landsbergis' meetings with Archbishop Pilla of the Cleveland Diocese, and with Cleveland's Jewish leaders at the Jewish Community Federation and wrote up the events for the Lithuanian press.

US President Bill Clinton speaks at the Eastern Euro-

pean Conference in downtown Cleveland in June of 1995. Alfonsas Eidintas, the first Lithuanian ambassador to the USA since the announcement of the restoration of Lithuania's independence on March 11, 1990 (Russian troops stayed till 1993), attends the conference. Impressed with LAC representative Ingrida Bublys, Eidintas recommends her for Lithuania's Honorary Consul to the USA. In 1996, she becomes Lithuania's first Honorary Consul to the USA. Honorary Consul I. Bublys and Dr. Stankus are LAC delegates to the World Lithuanian Congress (Seimas) in Vilnius, Lithuania on July 1-7, 1997. President-elect George H. Bush responds in a letter to LAC representative Dr. V. Stankus: Do not worry, we will raise Lithuania's freedom issue with President Reagan at our meeting with Gorbachev in December 1997 in New York.

On January 6, 1998, The Plain Dealer, Ohio's largest newspaper, features a photo and a story on Valdas Adamkus being elected Lithuania's President. It prints positive commentary on the election by LAC Chapter Co-chairman Dr. Stankus. Lithuanian Honorary Consul Ingrida Bublys arranges for Lithuania's foreign minister Algirdas Saudargas to visit Cleveland on January 17-18 to speak to the Lithuanian community, and separately to NE Ohio American leaders. Story and photos were published in The Plain Dealer by reporter Tom Quinn and in the sub-

urban News-Herald. Lithuanian commentary in the early edition was made by Algis Rukšėnas and Romas Bublys, and in the 2nd edition, by Dr. V. Stankus.

A sensation for fans and the American and world press was when on January 20, 1998, Arvydas Sabonis of the Portland Trail Blazers played against Žydrūnas Ilgauskas of the Cleveland Cavaliers. Cavaliers issue a press pass to Dr. Stankus and his young cub reporter and photographer to write about the event for the Cleveland Lithuanian newspaper *Dirva*, to interview Sabonis and Ilgauskas. The *Plain Dealer* (January 21, 1998) quotes Dr. Stankus: "Here's the old master (Sabonis) against the young pup (Ilgauskas). Lithuanians are interested in seeing who is going to teach who what?" On October 7-8, the Cleveland LAC Chapter, during its Lithuanian Days event, raises \$2,000 for *Dirva*.

Working for Lithuania's inclusion into NATO

George Voinovich, former mayor of Cleveland and current governor of Ohio, announces his candidacy on March 17, 1998, and wins in November as US senator. He tasks Dr. Stankus, his coordinator of "Lithuanians for Voinovich" and member of the Nationalities Movement, to work with him and the Voinovich-nurtured Nationalities Movement, to help get Lithuania and the other six East European nations into NATO. On November 14, 1999, Dr. Stankus arranges "The Baltics into NATO - When?", a NATO forum and luncheon with Congressman John Shimkus (R-IL) and Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) (the respective Baltic Caucus Chairs in the House of Representatives) held at Cleveland's Lithuanian Community Center/Club. A video of the Forum to be sent to Baltic Presidents.

The publicity generated and the subsequent work for NATO expansion led to the story in *The Plain Dealer* on November 18, 2002, "Clevelanders planning a bash for NATO growth." The story reported that LAC representative Dr. Viktoras Stankus, in March of 2001, coordinated an "Ohio Appeal" letter sent to every US senator asking for NATO membership for Lithuania and the six other East European nations, signed by Dr. Martin Plax, Area Director, American Jewish Committee, Cleveland Chapter; John Borkowski, President Polish American Congress, Ohio Division; and by LAC representative, Dr. V. Stankus. In May 2001, the US Senate votes 85-6, agreeing that Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia submit their applications to join NATO, effectively endorsing NATO's "big bang" expansion. Subsequently, Lithuanian Honorary Consul Ingrida Bublys and Dr. Stankus are invited, along with other activists, to the White House to hear President George



November 14, 1999, NATO forum - luncheon, "The Baltics into NATO - When?" at the Cleveland Lithuanian Community Center/Club. Left to right: Dr. Viktoras Stankus, Dr. Raimundas Šilkaitis, US Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), OLP Pastor Gediminas Kijauskas, S. J., Congressman John Shimkus (R-IL), and Maris Manteniaks, Baltic American Committee President.

W. Bush, General Colin Powell, Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice speak and celebrate the US Senate's NATO affirmation. The *Plain Dealer* did not bring out this last part about the celebration at the White House but continued to write that 300 activists plan to gather at the biggest Lithuanian church in town, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Thursday night, November 21st. The celebration was open to all once the invitations formally go out earlier in the day at the NATO summit in Prague. Senator George Voinovich, the only US Congress member invited to the summit, hopes to address the Cleveland crowd electronically from his airplane on his way back to America. Sen. Voinovich relayed earlier the State Department's request that LAC Chapter Vice President Dr. Stankus organize such an event together with his Lithuanian American Community and the American Nationalities Movement. The State Department sent as the event's keynote speaker David J. Trachtenberg, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security. Algis Gudėnas, the LAC Chapter's President, diligently oversaw everyone's efforts for a successful celebration; he also insisted that the event be open to all Clevelanders and that the Chapter provide the food and refreshments on this joyous occasion. The State Department would comment later that Cleveland was the only city that held such an event requested by State. And Cleveland was pro-NATO during the February 16th celebration in 2002 when Lithuanian ambassador Vygaudas Ušackas asked the Cleveland American Jewish Committee's Area Director Dr. Martin Plax and its President John Siegel to continue to support Lithuania into NATO.



Post 9/11, at the Rock and Roll Hall on Cleveland's North Shore, Homeland Security Chief Michael Chertoff (left) asks US Senator George Voinovich (right) - who led the charge to get Lithuania and the other six nations into NATO - to now lead the assembled Cleveland Nationality representatives to help monitor terrorists infiltrating to Cleveland and the USA via Lake Erie from already infiltrated Canada. Reporting for the Lithuanian press, LAC representative Dr. V. Stankus (center).

Cleveland LAC Chapter, May 2002-2021: led ably by President Algis Gudėnas; VP of information Dr. Stankus, VP of Cultural Affairs Nomedā Vucianienė. For most of this period, Nomedā Vucianienė also served as LAC Ohio District President, VP Dr. Stankus. President Gudėnas ably led the February 16th and Lithuanian Days celebrations and the Chapter's participation in the parades for Polish Constitution Day (really of the Republic of Two Nations - Poland and Lithuania), and in support of Ukraine on Ukrainian Independence Day.

"Celebrate Seven" took place on March 29, 2004, at Cleveland's Lithuanian OLPH auditorium. The event co-chairs, Grace Kudukis and Dr. Stankus lead the LAC Chapter's ceremonies, open to all Clevelanders, celebrating the much-awaited acceptance of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia into NATO. The LAC National Executive Committee President Vaiva Vėbraitė, advisor to President Adamkus, holds the committee's annual meeting on August 20, 2005, at OLPH in Cleveland, meets with the Cleveland Chapter's officers, then presents her report to the assembled and asks for their and the Cleveland Chapter's suggestions regarding the work of the National Committee. The story written by Dr. Stankus was published in Bridges (November 2005).

LAC representatives, Lithuanian Honorary Consul Ingrida Bublys, and Dr. Stankus hear respected Soviet dissident Natan Sharansky speak in Cleveland, at an event organized by Cleveland's Jewish organizations. The event, and question and answer period where Sharansky answered a question regarding Lithuania, and photo with Sharansky was published in Bridges ("Dissent, Freedom, Democracy!", January-February, 2006, by Dr. Stankus.)

After 9/11, Homeland Security chief Michael Chertoff asks Senator Voinovich to gather the Nationalities Move-

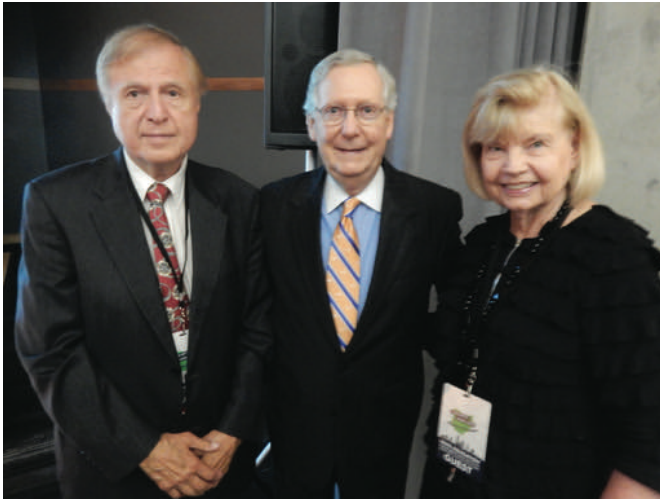
ment leaders at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame located at Cleveland's North Coast Harbor, to hear his exhortation for the leaders to help monitor terrorists infiltrating to Cleveland, to the USA, via Lake Erie from earlier terrorist infiltrated Canada. Dr. V. Stankus reports the event to the Lithuanian press.

Later years

The LAC XXI National Council's First session, starting September 25, 2015, took place in Cleveland during the Lithuanian Days. Its theme was Preservation of Lithuania's Freedom and its Culture. The annual meeting of SALFASS, the North American Lithuanian Athletic Union, took place at the same time. The exhausting schedule of hosting the session, organizing sightseeing tours, overseeing the Lithuanian Days, and seeing to the itinerary of visiting Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius was ably achieved by the Chapter's determined President Algis Gudėnas and his Chapter's equally resolved board members.

At the session, World Lithuanian Community President Dalia Henke presented meaningful new projects that would benefit the Lithuanian diaspora. Minister Linkevičius in his presentation stressed the paramount importance of preserving Lithuania's statehood. He stated that the input of the Lithuanian diaspora is crucial in strengthening Lithuania's statehood and its aspirations, in advertising Lithuania's good name, and countering negative propaganda directed against it. Lithuania's ambassador to the USA Rolandas Kriščiūnas and Lithuanian Consul General Consul in Chicago Marijus Gudyas also addressed the session. Minister Linkevičius also participated during the SALFASS meeting at the Lithuanian Club, and the Lithuanian Days.

Lithuania's statesmen then visited the St. Casimir Lithuanian parish, met with its pastor, Rev. Juozas Bacevičius (Bacevice), visited the final resting place of President Smetona at All Souls Cemetery, and were received at Cleveland's Lithuanian Consulate by Lithuanian Honorary Consul Ingrida Bublys and her husband Romas Bublys. Minister Linkevičius, mindful that the famous rabbinical Telshe Yeshiva (to escape the Soviets, it moved to Cleveland) is located in Cleveland. The minister was gratified that the Cleveland LAC maintains good relations with the Jewish community and its Litvaks. The minister's visit was reported on the internet by Debbie Hanson: <http://www.clevelandpeople.com/groups/lithuanian/2015/lithuanian-minister.htm> ("Foreign Minister Linkevičius' visit to Cleveland"), and by Dr. V. Stankus in Draugas (November 12, 2015, "Laisvės tema, nuskambėjusi Clevelando Lietuvių dienose").



At the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, July 18-21, 2016. Briefing to Ohio Delegation by US Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell. LAC representative Dr. Viktoras Stankus, Senator McConnell: "Yes, NATO is important for the safety of the USA and Lithuania"; Lithuanian Honorary Consul Ingrida Bublys.

Leaving the US Senate after years of service, Senator George Voinovich had presented US Senator Rob Portman (R-OH), of Swiss descent, to the American Nationalities Movement as his successor to counter Russian aggression against Eastern and Central Europe. Senator Portman worked diligently to protect the freedom of Ukraine against Putin's Russia. He authored and passed legislation in the US Senate for the USA to uphold the security of Ukraine. The LAC representatives, Lithuanian Honorary Consul Ingrida Bublys and Dr. Stankus participated in his many conferences, some with the Ukrainian ambassador to the US in attendance, where Senator Portman called on the Nationality Movement to work on behalf of Ukraine, and Lithuania as well. The Plain Dealer (Sunday, May 17, 2015) prints Dr. Stankus' letter supporting Senator Portman's stand, "Let the Kremlin celebrate without us." Upon the passing of the USA and the nationalities champion Senator George Voinovich, The Plain Dealer (Sunday, June 26, 2016) prints Dr. Stankus' letter, "Voinovich pushed to expand NATO."

During the Republican National Convention in Cleveland on July 18-21, 2016, Senator Portman arranged for Senator Mitch McConnell, the Senate majority leader, to brief the Ohio delegation. LAC representatives, Lithuanian Consul Ingrida Bublys, and Dr. Stankus attended. Senator McConnell answered Dr. Stankus's question: "Yes, a strong NATO is very important to the security of the USA and Lithuania." The report on the briefing by Dr. Stankus was published in *Dirva* and *Draugas*, copies with English translation were sent to senators McConnell and Portman. On September 18, 2016, Senator Portman speaks at the 80th-anniversary celebration of the estab-

lishment of the Cleveland Lithuanian Cultural Garden. The story by Dr. V. Stankus was published in *Draugas*. On October 8, 2016, Sen. Portman's full-page ad in *Dirva* says: "Portman stands strong with Lithuania." In April of 2018, Sen. Portman addresses the Nationalities Conference at the Cleveland Lithuanian Club (story in *Draugas*.) Augustinas and Aistė Žemaitis, recorders of Lithuanian culture abroad, visit the Lithuanian Club, Telshe Yeshiva, even the Rock and Roll Hall that has Lithuanian connections. Mantvydas Bekešius, Lithuanian Consul General in Chicago, visit the gravesite of President Smetona in Cleveland.

Celebrating Lithuania's 100 years

The 100 years celebration of the restoration of Lithuania's independence was commemorated by two magnificent events in Cleveland. On February 16, 2018, the Mayor of Cleveland, Frank G. Jackson, a dear friend of Lithuanians, graciously received the Lithuanian delegation in his stately Mayoral Chambers at Cleveland City Hall, to movingly celebrate Lithuania's independence anniversary. He greeted each member of the delegation personally: Lithuania's Honorary Consul Ingrida Bublys, the President of the LAC Cleveland Chapter Algis Gudėnas and his staff, and the President of the LAC Ohio District Nomedas Vucianienė. Mayor issued a press release, and Dr. V. Stankus wrote to *Draugas*.

The second extraordinary event, hosted by the LAC Cleveland Chapter (President Algis Gudėnas) and the Cleveland State University Center for International Services and Programs, with the diligent input of Lithuanian Honorary Consul Ingrida Bublys and the artistic organizing talent of Cleveland Exultate Choir director Rita Čyvaitė Kliorienė, soared like a magnificent rocket at the CSU Auditorium on February 17, 2018! The Canadian ensembles were glad to reciprocate, to return the favor to Exultate which had participated in Ottawa at Canada's 150th Birthday Celebration. The American public was duly impressed, among them Lee C. Shapiro, Director of the Cleveland American Jewish Committee. She was returning the favor to the LAC representatives that had attended the Jewish Passover Seder celebrations over the years.

The Cleveland LAC Chapter has been on a high since the 2018 February 16th celebration. It works diligently, despite Corona, to promote Lithuanian culture, the safety and security of Lithuania. It just signed the LAC traveling banner commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the establishment of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc., and this article celebrates 70 years of LAC in Cleveland.

We sang for Lithuania from afar

By Irena Raščiuvienė



Genys Lithuanian School

Some songs are sung again and again when celebrating important Lithuanian holidays. One of them is a song by Abarius and Zdebskis called "Palaimink, Dieve, mus" (God, Bless Us). The lyrics of this song – Coming from all lands by all roads / We hurry to embrace you ... – describe, and not at all hyperbolically, the scale and direction of special journeys, dedicated to Lithuanian songs, dances, folk art, and traditions: immense crowds would gather in Vingio Park, Kalnų Park, Cathedral Square, and Bernardine Garden, go to concert arenas and halls, flock on mounds and hills, in valleys and town and village squares.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has blocked many of the world's roads, closed many doors. But there were still windows, and in them, were longing faces. The desire to meet, sing, rejoice, and celebrate the Day of Restoration of the Lithuanian State - February 16th - has not disappeared. This is how the project "Let our songs sound throughout all countries" was born. It felt as if the echo of the poet Bernardas Brazdžionis' poem verse - "You will love Lithuania from afar" - has come to us. It was like a directive.

The initiator of the project is Auksė Motto, Chairwoman of the Board of Education of the Lithuanian American Community. She soon found like-minded people, because good ideas are like birds: they are free to fly far; they find a place to land and make nests. In Lithuania, Elona Bagdanavičienė, Chief Specialist at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania, undertook to develop this idea. She organized a project team in Vilnius and coordinated its work. The following twenty Lithuanian American schools wanted to participate in the celebration program: Alexandra Kazickienė in NY; Atžalynas in Portland, OR; Lietuvėlė in Jackson, NJ; Bernardas Brazdžionis in San Diego, CA; Chicago in Chicago, IL; Edvardas Gervickas in Rochester, NY; Gediminas in Mundelein, IL; Genys in San Francisco, CA; Colorado in Denver, CO; Maironis in Lemont, IL; Maironis in Brooklyn, NY; Martynas Mažvydas in Minneapolis, MN; Saulė in Atlanta, GA; Smiltelė in West Palm Beach, FL; St. Casimir in Cleveland, OH; St. Casimir in Los Angeles, CA; Vincas Krėvė in PA; Vaiva Vėbraitė in Hartford, CT; Vyturys in Norwalk, CT.



Chicago Lithuanian School



The Edward Gervickas Lithuanian Heritage School

Members of Lithuanian communities in Belgium and Norway joined. The circle of participants was supplemented by friends: students of the Lithuanian Language and Culture Center of Sakartvelo Technical University

and representatives of the community of Vilnius Vytautas Magnus Gymnasium. Exactly as in the song, letters, messages, texts, and contexts, recordings of songs and images, drawings, photographs, script guidelines were

our community



Oslo Lithuanian Folklore Ensemble "Gintarėliai"



Lietuvėlė School in Jackson, New Jersey



Sakartvelo Lithuanian Cultural Center

flowing in from all lands. There were a lot of discussions, suggestions, corrections, adjustments, and improvements.

The festival "Let our songs sound throughout all countries" (Maironis) began with solemn sounds of Lithuanian horns and fragments from a recording of a previous Song Festival, in which, as if awakened by the melody of Gytis Paškevičius' song "Mano kraštas" (My Land), the most beautiful images of Lithuania flew in a kaleidoscope. Probably, many people were repeating to themselves: "This land was given to me by destiny..." And the question "How to preserve your name in children?" is likely not to remain a rhetorical one: participants will respond with a performance, spectators by watching, joining, evaluating, sharing impressions; teachers and parents will try to answer this question every day by working, teaching, raising, and educating.

.....After a short introduction, with the Lithuanian flag flying on the screen, the participants joined in singing the Lithuanian national anthem. Then, on the occasion of the Day of Restoration of the State, Dovydas Špokauskas, the Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in the United States of America, congratulated everyone, and other meetings continued in the virtual space. Among the honorable guests were Vaclovas Šalkauskas, Consul General of the Republic of Lithuania in New York, and Jurgita Šiugždinienė, Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania. Auksė Motto, Chairwoman of the Board of Education of the Lithuanian American Community, spoke sincere words on behalf of Lithuanians in America. Greetings came from Asta Kulikauskaitė, a member of the Lithuanian community in Belgium and a teacher at the 2nd European School in



D. Asanavičiūtė and J. Bružas



Elena Bagdanavičienė

Brussels; Elena Valiulienė, the leader of the Oslo Lithuanian community folklore ensemble "Gabija," Oslo Gintaras Lithuanian School children's folklore ensemble "Gintarėliai," and Oslo Gintaras Lithuanian School teacher; and Vidas Kavaliauskas, head of the Sakartvelo Lithuanian Language and Culture Center.

.....Elona Bagdanavičienė happily thanked the guests and introduced the participants: "It's great that we are together and can sing the most beautiful songs together. And there is a great deal of those songs." Only a small part of them, nineteen in all, will be sung today. All are put together in a booklet created especially for this celebration, so everyone will be able to sing along.

In the concert, the participants were taking turns. Solo-

ists, duets, trios, and ensembles sang; quite numerous choirs and ethnographic groups also performed; teachers and parents played musical instruments; dancers were spinning in circles. Performers were of all ages and experiences, from little preschoolers to various grade students, from young people to teachers, to parents and grandparents. Everyone fit. And how nicely dressed they were! In national costumes, both, traditional and somewhat stylized, in clothes of the colors of our flag or at least wearing delicate tri-color accessories - scarves, ribbons, pins or badges; some wore masks of the dearest colors (as sung in the song) instead of simple ones, others waved flags or fans of the same dearest colors. The set design was also thoughtfully created, reminding of what is important and cannot be forgotten. In the background, there were words of the Lithuanian anthem, patterns of our national costumes, sashes, and textiles, souvenirs, a loaf of bread on a tablecloth, a Lithuanian book, a bouquet of clover in a clay jug. Sincere performances by our young, congratulations and wishes were moving; some of them were pronounced beautifully, expressively, correctly, others were said somewhat timidly, trying to remember as accurately as possible, not to be confused, still others in accents uncharacteristic to our language. Every word was true, sincere, and very moving.

Special gifts for the celebration came from Sakartvelo. Prof. Vidas Kavaliauskas, the founder of the Lithuanian Language and Culture Center in Tbilisi, spoke about the activities, and his students spoke in Lithuanian, spun in a

our community



Maironis Lithuanian School

dance circle, and sang. A song by Maironis, "Oi, neverk motušėle" (Oh, don't cry, dear mother,) which is very dear to a Lithuanian heart, sounded impressively and excitingly against the background of the Caucasus Mountains.

The event was broadcast from Vilnius Vytautas Magnus Gymnasium. Its principal, Rytis Komičius, introduced us to the gymnasium's history and present work. During a short tour, he drew our attention to the details that safeguard the memory of the personalities who founded the gymnasium and made it famous and testified to the cherished values. Among other achievements, the gymnasium is proud of its tradition of choral singing, and therefore, the gymnasium alumni choir Post scriptum (leader - Stasė Skurulskienė, music teacher expert) also joined this project. The choir singers, together with other participants, performed the popular song "Mūsų dienos kaip šventė" (Our Days Are like a Celebration.) The song sounded like the good wishes of all participants to one another: let us enjoy the days of our lives, foster the feelings of togetherness, and let us not forget our Motherland Lithuania, its language and songs.

On the Zoom platform, the festive program "Let our songs sound throughout all countries" came to an end. However, its songs, lyrics, images, and names remain in the vastness of the virtual space. And so, we can say that the celebration continues.

The project was sponsored by the Lithuanian Foundation. To them, we say a sincere Thank You.

If you weren't able to attend the celebration, don't despair. You can find it recorded on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUiv6wOEW30>



Auksė Motto, LAC Educational Council Chair

Mandala Magic

By Rolandas Dabrukas



Renowned Los Angeles-based artist, Rolandas Dabrukas, wants to enhance your life and spiritual being with some 'Mandala Magic.'

The word 'Mandala' comes from Sanskrit, a classical Indian language. Loosely translated, it means 'circle.' However, it is much more than a simple shape. A mandala represents universal wholeness and can be seen as a model for the organizational structure of life, reminding us of our relationship with the infinite world, both beyond and within our bodies and minds.

Lithuanian-born Rolandas wants to bring this concept to life by combining art with healthy food mandalas. He explains: "For each mandala, I choose products that can offer the best possible health benefits. For example, one mandala made of fruits will have the strongest concentration of vitamin A while another will have fortified vitamin C. My mandalas also stimulate the senses with their color healing properties. For example, green increases appetite while yellow stimulates the mind. I create mandalas with different themes, for example, four seasons, children's mandalas, fruit mandalas, vegetable mandalas, or just fun mandalas."

This fun-loving artist wants to create art that is beneficial to one's health. "I want people to be reminded of color harmony, healthy diet, and aesthetics present in their daily lives. My expectation is to create a demand for healing mandalas in people's daily lives by making not only placemats but also bags, backpacks, puzzles, memory games, table games, toys, coloring books, kitchen



towels, napkins, coasters, paper plates, aprons, table cloths, and pillowcases."

For more details, check out Rolandas' social media: Instagram@rolandasdabrukas, Facebook: Rolandas Dabrukas, and his website www.WhimsicalFineArts.com

Los Feliz-based Rolandas has already successfully sold his products at the Baltic Centennial in Boston, the Lithuanian Days in Los Angeles, and farmers markets in Portland, New Jersey, and Europe.

You can contact him directly by calling 203-494-6857 or writing an e-mail to rolandas2@mac.com

You can also visit his shop at <https://www.etsy.com/shop/HealingFoodMandalas?ref=seller-platform-mcnav>

current events

Security

...Ukrainian Commander in Chief Ruslan Khomchack informed the Ukrainian Parliament of Russian troops from different regions assembling near the Ukrainian-Russian border without any announcement of a training exercise. Recently four Ukrainian soldiers were killed in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine by shelling from an area occupied by Russian separatists. The U.S. European Command raised its alert status to the highest level. U.S. National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan affirmed U.S. support for Ukraine's sovereignty and its territorial integrity. President Joe Biden recently approved \$125 million in military aid to Ukraine including two armed patrol boats and counter-artillery radar. As Vice President, he was the Obama administration's primary emissary to Ukraine and visited six times.

...Within six hours NATO aircraft intercepted six different groups of Russian military aircraft flying over the Baltic, Black, and North Seas. Italian fighters flying for NATO intercepted Russian fighter jets and a Russian Il-38 maritime patrol aircraft flying from Kaliningrad over the Baltic Sea. Norwegian F-16s intercepted two Tu-95 Bear bombers and two Tu-160 Blackjack bombers over the North Sea. The Norwegian aircraft were joined by U.K Typhoon aircraft and Belgium F-16s. Three Russian military aircraft were detected by NATO radars over the Black Sea and tracked by Turkish, Romanian, and Bulgarian fighters until they left the area. U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken called out Russian actions for "reckless and adversarial actions" at a NATO meeting in Brussels. It is noted that Russians often fly without transmitting a transponder code indicating their altitude and position and do not file a flight plan or communicate with air traffic controllers thereby endangering other aircraft including a civilian.

...Over only one month the Lithuanian Armed Forces' Strategic Communications Department registered 382 instances of false information against Lithuania, Poland, and U.S. troops. This activity was 32% greater than the average of the previous 6 months. Disinformation was aimed at discrediting politicians, media, democracy, energy independence, Lithuania-Belarus relations, and NATO. By focused responses, these falsehoods were "neutralized".

...The Polish National Atomic Energy Agency and the Health Ministry websites were hacked and carried claims of a supposed nuclear waste leak from Lithuania which threatened Poland. The Polish government indicated it had the hallmarks of a Russian cyberattack.

...It is reported that a Russian impersonator of Russian oligarch and friend of Russian President Vladimir Putin, Yevgeny Prigozhin, made multiple visits to Lithuania, despite being on the European sanctions list. Prigozhin has been indicted in the U.S. for his financial support of the St. Petersburg troll factory that attempted to influence the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. The impersonator's travels were probes to discredit Lithuania's border control and by extension the Schengen border control and NATO. Prigozhin is well known for handling dirty tasks on behalf of Putin. Lyubov Sobol of Russian opposition leader Aleksei Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation said "He is not afraid of dirty tricks" and "He can fulfill any task for Putin, ranging from fighting the opposition to sending mercenaries to Syria", she said. "He serves certain interests in certain spheres, and Putin trusts him." Facebook identified his Internet Research Agency as the source of 80,000 divisive posts during the 2016 election that covered race relations, religion, gun laws, and gay rights that reached 126 million Americans.

...During an official visit by Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda to Ukraine a Protocol was signed which identifies bilateral cooperation on implementation of Ukraine's strategic goals of membership in the European Union and NATO. Also included in the document are bilateral cooperation in defense, security, energy, transport, and logistics, education and science, culture, and tourism. One specific agreement notes the special role of youth in building international relations between Lithuania and Ukraine.

...Lithuania's Chief of Defense, Lieutenant General Valdemaras Rupšys tested positive for COVID-19 after being in contact with an infected person and showing cold-like systems. Before he self-quarantined, several officers were exposed and are in self-quarantine and were scheduled to be tested.

Covid-19

...Lithuanian laboratory, Rezus.lt, has opened a Covid-19 testing site at a temporary building just outside the main gateway of Vilnius Airport where passengers can receive the necessary test before or after their flight. Passengers can register at the website: www.rezus.lt or by phone +370 632 22122. They subsequently plan on opening similar sites at Kaunas and Palanga Airports.

...The Lithuania Health Ministry has received a total of 343,000 doses of Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine with 40,000 last month and anticipates a 40% increase next month

to 56,000 doses. Additionally, Lithuania has received 160,000 doses of Moderna/AstraZeneca vaccine for a total of 503,000 with 437,588 being delivered.

...The European Union's European Medicines Agency has not approved the Russian-developed Sputnik V vaccine so it would not qualify for the Digital Green Certificate as part of a vaccine passport which is expected in mid-June. Sputnik V has been used in Russian-controlled areas like eastern Ukraine and parts of Georgia. Slovakia's Prime Minister Igor Matovic step down after other parties in his coalition objected to his and the Minister of Health's purchase and delivery of 200,000 doses of the Russian-made vaccine.

...The Lithuanian Center of Registers plans to issue an immunity certificate by summertime which will indicate if a patient has been vaccinated, has had the infection, or has had a negative COVID-19 test which will be encrypted in the QR code. It will also include a special private encryption key. A public encryption key will be sent to a common European Union system. Three companies were invited to bid on the project to develop the software; one declined and two submitted proposals and one is undergoing evaluation. According to the Center, the development cost will be in the range of several tens of thousands of euros.

...With Lithuania being in lockdown since December, with non-essential stores closed and only family households able to meet, the Seimas has approved mandatory COVID-19 tests for medical, social care, and education staff. Anyone refusing to be tested must work remotely or be suspended without pay. Recently the UK and South African variants have been detected in Lithuania. When restaurants reopen, their workers will also need to be tested. All mandatory tests will be paid for by Lithuania.

...The eight Foreign Ministers of the Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8) attended a virtual meeting organized by Finland which focused on COVID-19 pandemic management which requires a coordinated response. Participants also discussed relations with China and Russia, the Eastern Partnership policy, and the United Nations Security Council agenda.

Business

...With Lithuania officially refusing to use electricity from the Belarusian nuclear power plant, the wholesale power price rose by 14% to 52.3 euros per megawatt-hour, the highest of the Baltic nations where Latvia and Estonia

prices have not increased. Sweden has also seen an increase in price because of a fall in production coincident with a rise in consumption.

...The information system, which is responsible for customs clearance, failed for 3 days resulting in multi-kilometer backups at the Kamenny Log at the Lithuanian-Belarus border. At one point more than 800 heavy-duty trucks were in the Kamenny queue and more than 2,000 total at various checkpoints.

...The Vilnius Regional Court temporarily suspended the bidding process for a contract to supply luggage scanning equipment to Lithuania Airports, the state-owned operator of Lithuania's three international airports after the Polish office of the Chinese state-owned company, Nuctech Warsaw, was disqualified on the grounds of national security. Last year The Wall Street Journal reported that Nuctech's "extreme low-level pricing strategy" suggests that its motives are not commercial but rather "an interest to control strategic EU infrastructure and data-driven knowledge". The Journal goes on to say, "A campaign by the National Security Council and a handful of US agencies is trying to rally European governments to uproot Nuctech, a well-connected Chinese state-controlled company whose screening systems for cargo, luggage and passengers are becoming a fixture at ports, border crossings, and airports across Europe". Under Chinese law, Nuctech's data on passengers and luggage could be made available to Chinese intelligence and security services. Without the suspension, the order would go to a U.S.-based competitor whose bid price was much higher.

...Regarding Lithuania's Airports, Mitnija, the contractor building the Vilnius new departures building has withdrawn from the 25 million euro project because of the 4-month hiatus in work due to the pandemic and difficulties in construction funding. The project's goal is to increase the area by a third and increase passenger throughput from 900 to 2,400 passengers per hour. In 2019 Vilnius handled 5 million passengers while Warsaw's Chopin saw 18.9 million, Riga-7.8 million, and Minsk-2.2 million.

...The Israeli state-run company, Israel Aerospace Industries, (IAI) will establish an aircraft maintenance center at Siauliai International Airport in partnership with the Lithuanian maintenance repair organization, Aviatic. The former Soviet airport is now home to NATO aircraft providing security to the Baltic region. The new center will provide aircraft maintenance and overhaul services, con-

current events

version of passenger airplanes into cargo configuration, and the training, certification, and licensing of personnel.

...Atlanta-headquartered Dematic which has been in Kaunas since 2007 currently employs 180 and grew by 56 during the pandemic year, 2020. With an office in Vilnius, it plans on adding 100 specialists in controls, mechanical engineering, software development, and solutions development in 2021. Dematic is an intralogistics innovator that designs, builds, and supports intelligent, automated solutions for manufacturing, warehouse, and distribution systems. It has engineering centers, manufacturing facilities, and service centers in more than 25 countries with 10,000 employees and more than 6,000 worldwide customers. It is part of the KION Group, a global leader in industrial trucks and a leading provider of warehouse automation.

General

...A new hiking trail is envisioned to go from the Polish-Lithuanian border to Tallinn, Estonia spanning 1300 miles via connecting National Forests in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. This year officials are laying out trail markers. With stages of about 12 miles each, it is estimated that it will take between 102 and 114 days to hike the full length.

By comparison, the Appalachian Trail runs 2,180 miles from Georgia to Maine can take 200 days for the 1 in 4 that succeed. Eventually, the new hiking path will link with longer European paths that join the Netherlands, Germany, and Poland.

...Lithuania's public broadcaster, Lithuanian National Radio and Television (LRT) is the focus of a 46-page complaint by its commercial competitors, including Delfi and 15min, which is asking the European Commission to reduce its state-financed budget and online news operations. It may take years before a decision is rendered. While the pandemic has reduced commercial advertising revenue by over 50% resulting in layoffs and pay cuts, LRT is funded by taxes on personal income and excise taxes which recently increased by 15% to reach \$64 million for 2021. LRT is the only major newsroom with a full-time investigative staff and has three TV channels, three radio stations, and online news sites in Lithuanian, Russian, and English. A critical point came when LRT won air rights for this season's EuroLeague basketball games which losing bidder Delfi CEO Vytautas Benokraitis said, "Basketball is a religion here in Lithuania". The loss of these rights will eliminate the revenue generated by Delfi's payroll. Adding salt to the wound, LRT will sell sponsorships to the broadcast games.



SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

Please check all that apply:

- New Renewal
 Gift Donation

Mail to:

LAC, Inc./BRIDGES Subscriptions
 1471 Wood Avenue
 Downers Grove, IL 60515

Please send:

- 1 year electronic (10 issues via email) \$30
 1 year print (10 issues by mail) \$40
 2 years print (20 issues by mail) \$75

Order online with PayPal at lithuanian-american.org

Make check payable to: Lithuanian American Community. Please mark "Bridges" on the Memo line.

 Your Name (please print)

 Gift Subscription Name (please print)

 Your Email

 Gift Subscription Email

 Your Address

 Apt. No.

 Gift Subscription Address

 Apt. No.

 City

 State

 Zip

 City

 State

 Zip

NAUJIENA!

**Visi JAV lietuvių renginiai
po vienu stogu!**

JAV LB Kultūros Tarybos kuriamas
naujas internetinis puslapis



www.renginiaijav.org

Norintys įdėti skelbimus, rašykite el. paštu arba skambinkite:



kultura@javlb.org
708-288-6662

bridges

VOLUME 45

ISSUE 4

LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

