

bridges



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from the editor

Dear Reader,

In your hands, you are holding the July/August issue of Bridges. Half a year has gone by, and it is always nice to have an opportunity to take a break and reflect on what has been done in the first half. For the Lithuanian Americans and Lithuanian Canadians, it is a very good opportunity to reflect on the major cultural event that has just passed, the 16th Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival. I hope you will enjoy several photos from the Festival that adorn the covers of this issue of Bridges. This time, Lithuanians were dancing in Philadelphia, the city where the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution were signed, and the Liberty Bell is on display. It reminds us all of how dear independence is and how democracy has to be defended every day. Lithuania too had fought for its independence and works every day to safeguard it. Lithuania and the United States have been friends for many years. This year marks the 100th anniversary since the United States recognized Lithuania's independence. Prof. Juozas Skirius wrote an article on the subject that you might enjoy reading in this issue of Bridges.

Also in this issue, you will see some black-and-white photos by Leonardas Surgaila, a photographer who traveled to the Kaliningrad Oblast in 1988-1990 and took pictures of buildings and people. These days, the Kaliningrad Region is a lot in the news. This small piece of the land changed "owners" so many times. We, Lithuanians, have to remember that Kaliningrad used to be an old Prussian city; it was called Karaliaučius in Lithuanian and Königsberg in German. And that means "King's Mountain". This city was an important center of Lithuanian literature, culture, education, and religion. The very first Lithuanian book was published in Karaliaučius in 1547.

I am grateful to our contributing writers, Alan Stankus for the preparation of the current events section, and Giedrė Kumpikas and Roland Giedraitis for their time and effort in writing down their thoughts and memories and sharing them with the readers of Bridges. I hope that some of our other readers will do the same. I always welcome articles about events in your local Lithuanian Communities.

And finally, please read a short extract from Marius Katiliškis's novel, *Fall Comes from the Forest*, masterfully translated by Birutė Šležas. The book was published by Pica Pica Press, a publishing house that is dedicated to bringing the classic texts of Lithuania to the English-speaking world.

Wishing you a good summer,
Karilė Vaitkutė
Editor

Long-awaited Recognition: the United States recognized Lithuania in 1922

Juozas Skirius

Professor and Senior Research Fellow

Institute of Lithuanian Diaspora, Vytautas Magnus University

With the fall of the empires at the end of the First World War, the conditions became favorable for the Lithuanian nation to build its independent state - the Republic of Lithuania. The year 2022 marks the 100th anniversary of the recognition of Lithuania as a political entity by the Western powers. The process has been long and complex. For example, the United States at one point linked the recognition of the Baltic States to their return to Russia. However, in the long run, the limitations of such recognition have brought benefits to Lithuania itself.

In the early years of independence, Lithuania's recognition was slow

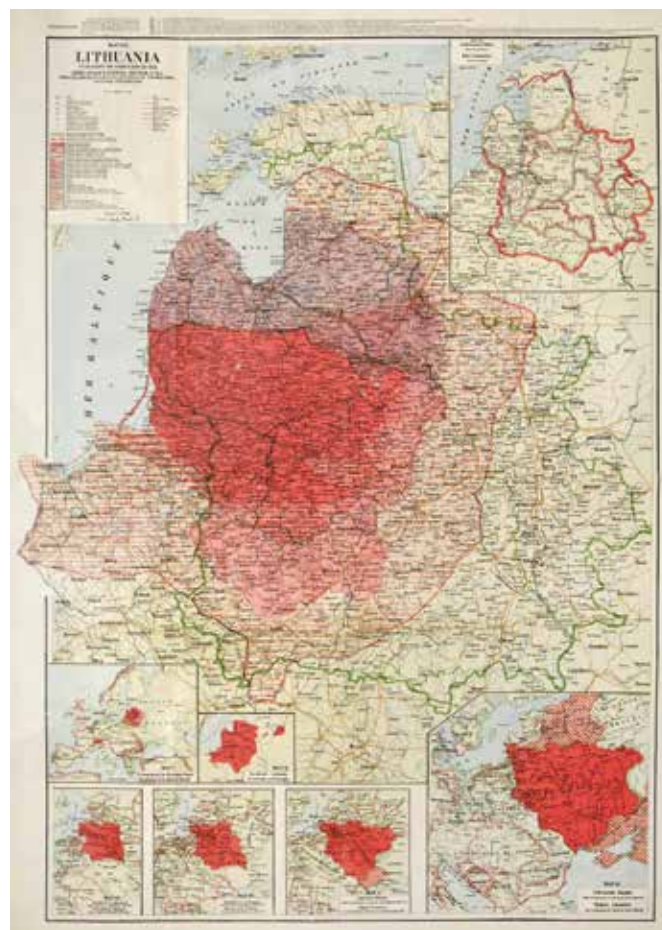
State-building is a difficult process that requires certain conditions. First of all, there must be a sufficient number of educated citizens who can organize and govern. It is also necessary to form a national understanding and a national culture, create property values that will become the economic backbone of the state, establish trade relations with foreign countries, supply the domestic market with the necessary products, and accumulate currency reserves.

Moreover, the existence of a new state must necessarily be recognized by the neighboring countries, the major powers. This recognition stabilizes the functioning of the new state in international terms and creates a basis for cooperation. Young diplomats of the new Lithuania, at the beginning of the state's existence, made great efforts to draw the attention of foreign countries to the establishment of the small state of Lithuania, seeking their approval and recognition in *de facto* and *de jure* form.

In the first years after the declaration of independence, Lithuania's international recognition was slow. Most of the major powers chose to recognize our country only *de facto*, but not *de jure*. Foreign countries were slow to officially recognize Lithuania because of its uncertain internal situation and hostile relations with Poland, as well as Russia mired in civil war.

Sweden was the first country to recognize Lithuania *de facto* in December 1918, followed by Norway and Denmark in early 1919. In September of the same year,

the Lithuanian government was recognized *de facto* by Great Britain and in May 1920 by France. However, international recognition accelerated considerably only after the peace treaty with Soviet Russia was signed on July 12, 1920. The first country to recognize Lithuania *de jure* was Latvia in February 1921, and by the end of that year, a total of 11 countries had recognized Lithuania *de jure*. But the major European powers and the United States did not hurry. Lithuania had to wait until 1922. During those four years, Lithuanian diplomats worked tirelessly.



Lithuania: Over the centuries, through maps. Originally published by the Lithuanian Bureau of Information in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1918, this map was re-issued in the US at the direction of the Lithuanian National Council. The individual maps trace the state of Lithuania from pre-historic times, through the reign of Mindaugas (1242-1263); Gediminas (1316-1341); under the domination of Algirdas and Kęstutis (1346-1377); the reign of Vytautas (1392-1430); and Lithuania's status before the final partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth when Lithuania was absorbed into the Russian empire. Picture and caption credit: Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture

Focus on the United States

Research shows that at that time, the attention of political figures in the Republic of Lithuania was more focused on the United States than on other countries. Why? First of all, after the First World War, the United States was the most economically powerful country in the world, accounting for 48% of world output. Secondly, the Americans had financial control of Europe: as many as 20 countries, including the main U.S. allies, became their debtors.

Thirdly, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson drew up the "14 Points" program in 1918 for peace and order in the post-war world. This program offered the hope of self-determination to all dependent and liberated nations. In other words, it offered the possibility of independence. All this helped the United States to become an international leader.

Fourthly, the United States was home to a large, organized, and relatively wealthy Lithuanian community of around 500-700 thousand people. Lithuanian leaders hoped to take advantage of U.S. political support, loans, and the sentiments of Lithuanian Americans for their homeland, as well as their activities and capital.

Patriotic and selfless efforts of the Lithuanian diaspora

Lithuanian communities in Chicago, New York, and other cities had their parishes and cultural institutions and published dozens of newspapers and Lithuanian books. Lithuanians were organized into associations, clubs, and societies. Their ideological division into Catholic, nationalist, and socialist currents was clearly visible. All of them carried out Lithuanian activities, invited their compatriots to various events, were sensitive to the fate of their homeland Lithuania, actively advocated the creation of an independent state, and supported Lithuanian politicians financially.

As early as the beginning of 1917, American Lithuanian Catholic and nationalist organizations submitted memoranda to the U.S. government, advocating for an independent Lithuania and asking for its recognition. On March 13-14, 1918, a Lithuanian-American National Convention was held in New York, with more than a thousand delegates participating. The aim was to unite



Photograph of the Visuotenas Amerikos-Lietuvių Seimas (National Congress of Lithuanian Americans), at 499 Grand St., Brooklyn, New York. On March 13, 1918 the third National Congress of Lithuanian-Americans met in Brooklyn, New York. Meeting less than a month after independence was proclaimed in Lithuania, these 1,200 delegates, representing various organizations throughout the U.S., reiterated their approval of the independence declaration and in the "name of 700,000 American Lithuanians" called for the government of the United States to declare its recognition of Lithuania's independence. Picture and caption credit: Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture

forces for political work. The Convention advocated Lithuanian statehood and appealed to the U.S. government to recognize and support Lithuania at the upcoming Peace Conference.

A Lithuanian-American Executive Committee was established in Washington, DC. Its obligation was to constantly remind the U.S. government, the American public, and foreign embassies of the Lithuanian question. The Committee became a temporary representation of Lithuania. Lithuanian Americans financially supported the Lithuanian delegation to the Peace Conference in Paris, and sent their representatives to assist the delegation. In addition, in 1919, the Committee collected one million signatures for the recognition of Lithuania and in May 1921, the signatures were presented at the White House to the newly-elected President Warren Harding, a Republican.

Lithuanian Americans bought bonds issued by Lithuania between 1920 and 1923, practically lending the country 1.8 million dollars. The state undertook to pay interest and redeem the loan after some time. At that time, tens of thousands of Lithuanians returned to Lithuania with their money and work experience. The patriotic attitude and selflessness of the diaspora at that time in support of their Motherland are simply astonishing.

Lithuania was still considered part of Russia

The picture that emerged in the meetings of Lithuanians with U.S. representatives in 1918-1919 was that



Photo of Lithuanian Liberty loans meeting, Chicago, 1920. Support for the new independent Lithuania included financial support. Funds were raised in myriad ways and by many Lithuanian-American organizations. Lithuanian Liberty loans were collected from 1919 until 1923. Most of the money was used to support Lithuanian diplomatic missions abroad. Picture and caption credit: Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture

Lithuania was still considered part of the Russian state. President Wilson, a Democrat, and Secretary of State Robert Lansing, a Democrat, held the principle of "undivided Russia" as the official line in foreign policy (except for Poland and Finland). At the Paris Peace Conference, the Americans supported the leadership of the anti-Bolshevik forces of the Russian Empire, in particular Admiral Alexander Kolchak.

In a letter to Kolchak, signed by the heads of state of the Entente and the U.S. presidents in May 1919, the Admiral is effectively recognized as the leader of a future democratic Russia on the condition that the periphery, i.e. the non-Russian peoples, including the Lithuanians, are granted broad autonomy. Therefore, in official U.S. circles, the Lithuanian representatives were seen as representatives of an autonomous Lithuania within Russia.

Recognition only as long as the Bolsheviks were in power in Russia

Against the wishes of the Lithuanians themselves, Boris Bakhmetyev, the ambassador of the anti-Bolshevik Russian forces, tried to represent Lithuania's cause in Washington, DC from 1917-1922. Another viable approach of U.S. politicians was in favor of a possible political-

administrative union between Lithuania and Poland. Lithuanian politicians opposed such plans. There was a third American view - temporary recognition of the Baltic States while the Bolshevik regime was at the helm in Russia.

In 1921, Jonas Vileišis, the first unofficial representative of Lithuania in Washington and a signatory of the February 16th Independence Act, wrote that U.S. Secretary of State C. Hughes was "not opposed to the recognition of our independence, with the small remark that such recognition is given temporarily." That is, as long as the Bolsheviks were in power in Russia. After their collapse, the Lithuanian government would have to agree with the new democratic Russian government and the representatives of the Russian people on its future fate. This was the American political logic of the time.

The Bolsheviks did not collapse in Russia. They defeated the Russian Whites in the civil war. At the end of the war, in 1922, the Russian Ambassador Bakhmetyev resigned. On the same day, France, Great Britain, Italy, and Japan decided to prepare for de jure recognition of Lithuania. And U.S. diplomats, pre-empting these countries, "fully recognized" (i.e. de facto and de jure together) the governments of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia on July 28, 1922. The second unofficial rep-

representative of Lithuania, Valdemars Čarneckis, had already become Lithuania's legal representative and temporary trustee after the recognition and had been given the authority to set up a Lithuanian envoy in Washington.

The Baltic nations would have been returned to Russia

The recognition document says: "The United States has consistently advocated that Russia's uncertain political situation should not be a reason for the division and expropriation of Russian territory, and this principle continues to apply to the current recognition of the governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania." Note that it is not the states that are recognized, but governments. Why? It is temporary because it is a concession to the future of a future democratic Russia (!!!). The Baltic nations would be returned to Russia, with their governments, with broad cultural and administrative autonomy.

Thus, the Americans, while avoiding international obligations to the Baltic States, find not only an interesting but also an unconventional formulation of recognition. While in the U.S. press this act of recognition was welcomed and appreciated, in Lithuania it was rather restrained, without going into the substance of the recognition. The Lithuanian press wrote that "America has recognized Lithuania." In this case, it was the fact of recognition that was important.

The limitations of recognition proved to be useful

It could be argued that the limitations of the recognition of Lithuanian independence were even useful in their own way. If the U.S. government had recognized Lithuania, which at the time did not have the Vilnius region and Klaipėda, it would have made it diplomatically more difficult to recover the territories in question. Moreover, the United States was the first Western power to recognize Lithuania, even at this level, and this gave its government international credibility and moral strength to fight for its national rights.

Over time, the "principle of temporariness" in U.S.

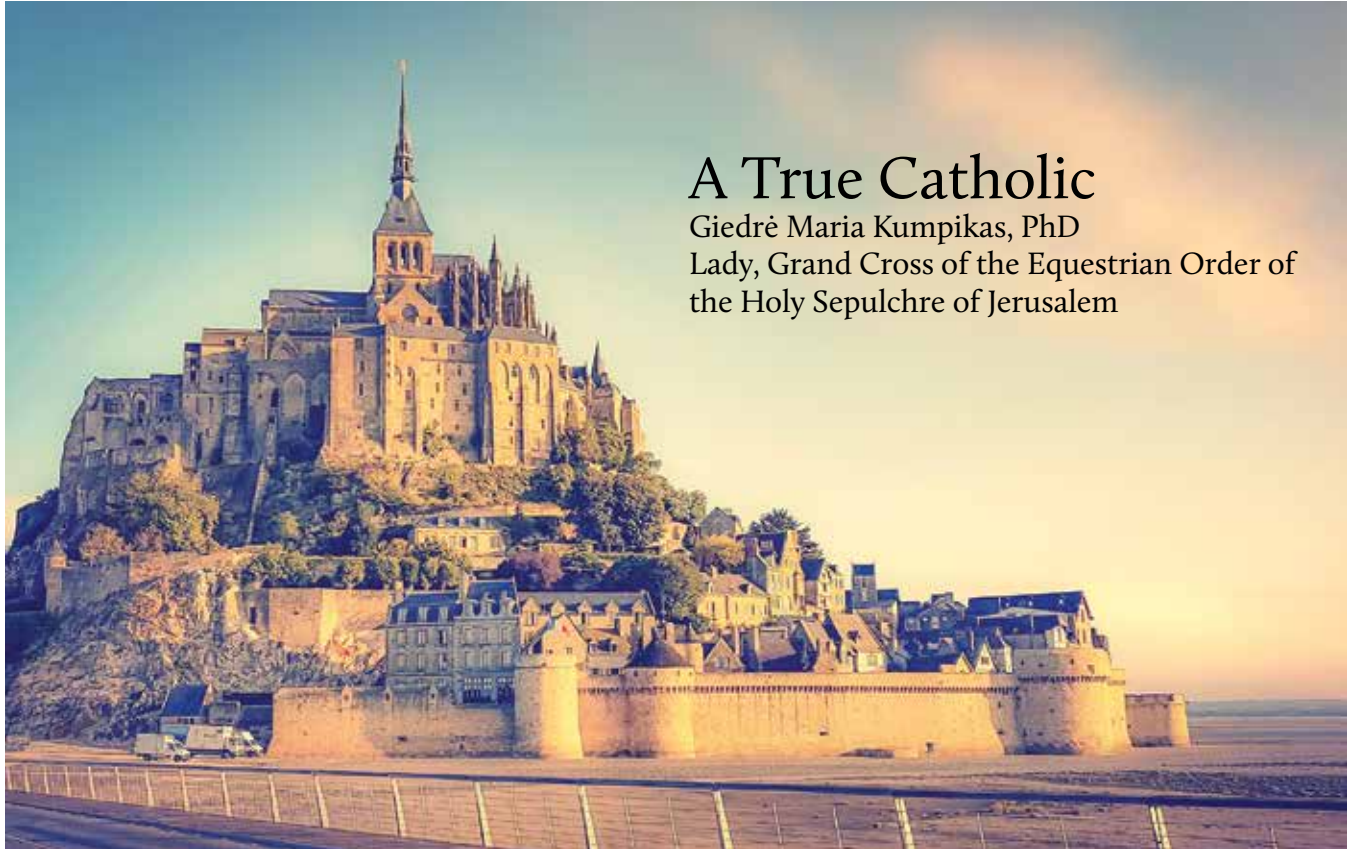


Support for the new independent Lithuania included financial support. Funds were raised in myriad ways and by many Lithuanian-American organizations. Echoing the bell that rang announcing America's independence from Britain, this bulletin was sent out with the words "Laisvės Varpas" (Bell of Freedom). Those who contributed received a certificate and a badge. Picture and caption credit: Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture

policy has evolved in the way that benefited the Baltic States. By recognizing the Bolshevik Soviet Union on November 16, 1933, the United States automatically renounced its limited position towards Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. For the Americans, these states became like Poland, Finland, and Denmark. The proof of this could be the official statement of U.S. Secretary of State B.S. Welles of July 23, 1940, in which he rejected the tragic events of 1940 in the Baltic States. The document noted that "the purposeful process by which the independence and territorial integrity of the three small Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were destroyed by one of their powerful neighbors," the Bolshevik USSR," comes to an end these days. As we can see, the Americans were already talking about the independence of the Baltic republics. This attitude was already different from that of 1922.



Poster thanking America for its recognition of Lithuanian independence, July 27, 1922. Four years and several months after Lithuania declared its independence, the United States formally announced its recognition of that fact. The Lithuanian-American community appreciated this recognition and issued a series of posters and other materials celebrating that recognition. This poster includes two female flag bearers, facing each other above the portraits of the heads of state for the U.S., President Harding, and for Lithuania, Aleksandras Stulginskis. Picture and caption credit: Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture



A True Catholic

Giedrė Maria Kumpikas, PhD

Lady, Grand Cross of the Equestrian Order of
the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

Le Mont Saint Michel

There are many reasons why I love the Catholic Church. I was raised in this faith of my parents. From early childhood, I loved the mysticism, the rites, the sacramental vestments, the statues of the Virgin Mary, the Saints, the prayers in Latin which seemed more spiritual than what we have today - in all national languages. Yes, granted, it is more comprehensible; people understand what is being said, but I, having been accustomed to Latin rites, find it less inspiring, more like rote recitation. The Latin language, which was for most incomprehensible, seemed to speak more to God and to our souls. It gave me time to drift into my own thoughts, to meditate while the priest prayed.

As a teenager, I believed that if I prayed very fervently, my prayers would be answered, and some were, but I also knew that I had to do my own part: "God helps those who help themselves." My education from the age of nine until seventeen was by Sisters. At first, they were Dominicans with white habits, then the Sisters of St. Francis and St. Joseph. Many were lovely, sweet, kind, and excellent teachers. Going to Catholic school was a great advantage because the education was first-class and free. At that time in the Fifties, the Diocese of Brooklyn took the two best students from each parish school in the graduating eighth grade and placed them into girls' and boys' Catho-

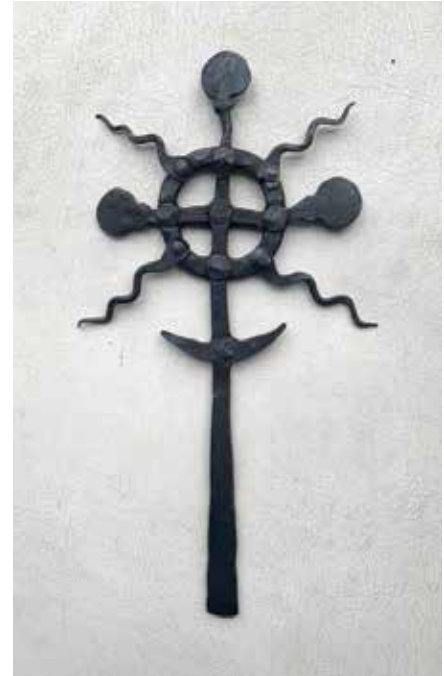
lic high schools. I attended Queen of All Saints in Brooklyn for two years, then Bishop McDonnell Memorial High School, near Prospect Park, also in Brooklyn. Queen of All Saints was a beautiful old building which also housed a church and small chapels. Every morning Mass was celebrated and if I came early enough, I attended. We had discounted bus passes to school. There were no private bus companies for us. Bishop McDonnell had a stellar reputation academically. We were known as "Bishop's Girls" and were highly regarded. Every morning we would recite "The Memorare," which I can still recite today. Our teachers inspired us, not only educated us. We were taught truthfulness, politeness, manners, respect for them and for each other. We were modest young girls who wore crisp white blouses and dark skirts. No sleeveless dresses were permitted. The Sisters lived in convents and wore the habits of their particular order.

Then, the times changed, and Sisters became modernized. Convents were closed. They no longer wore habits, but rather jeans, and had short hair. To me, it was less spiritual, less inspiring. I could no longer distinguish them from the populace. It lost something holy, self-sacrificing, and exceptional. One day, not so many years ago, I saw an elderly Sister with a lady companion walking towards me on a busy street near my home. She was wear-

ing a black habit, with a traditional head veil and had a large cross hanging from a long chain on her chest. I stopped and almost with tears in my eyes, I managed to say: "Sister, I am so happy to see you wearing a habit." She looked at me and said sweetly, "Thank you, my dear." I told her that I had attended Bishop McDonnell. She smiled and again, in her sweet, old voice, said, "Stay well my dear, and pray. Goodbye." I continued to look after her, as she slowly floated away in her garb, which she had kept as a sacred tradition. The nostalgia of my young days flooded over me; those were such innocent times. Somehow, they seemed so pure. This chance encounter made me think of a petite French Sister who was my teacher at Bishop McDonnell. She belonged to the Order of the Sisters of Charity and would have me practice speaking French with her during my lunch hour. She even gave me a gold medal in a little box containing a card with her name - Soeur Marie-Françoise.

Sometime later, as I was waiting for my car to be serviced in an auto shop, there was another woman also waiting for her car. She was dressed in everyday clothes, but there was something distinguishing about her, so, I began a conversation. She said that she was a Sister. I realized that something in her quiet bearing was so familiar. I asked her why Sisters no longer wore habits and she said that very often they were harassed and insulted; in Québec, a Sister had even been attacked. I was shocked and saddened. So, they went about their charitable duties quietly and unobtrusively.

The world had become so secular and disparaging toward religion, especially toward Catholicism. In New York, a man created a vulgar painting of



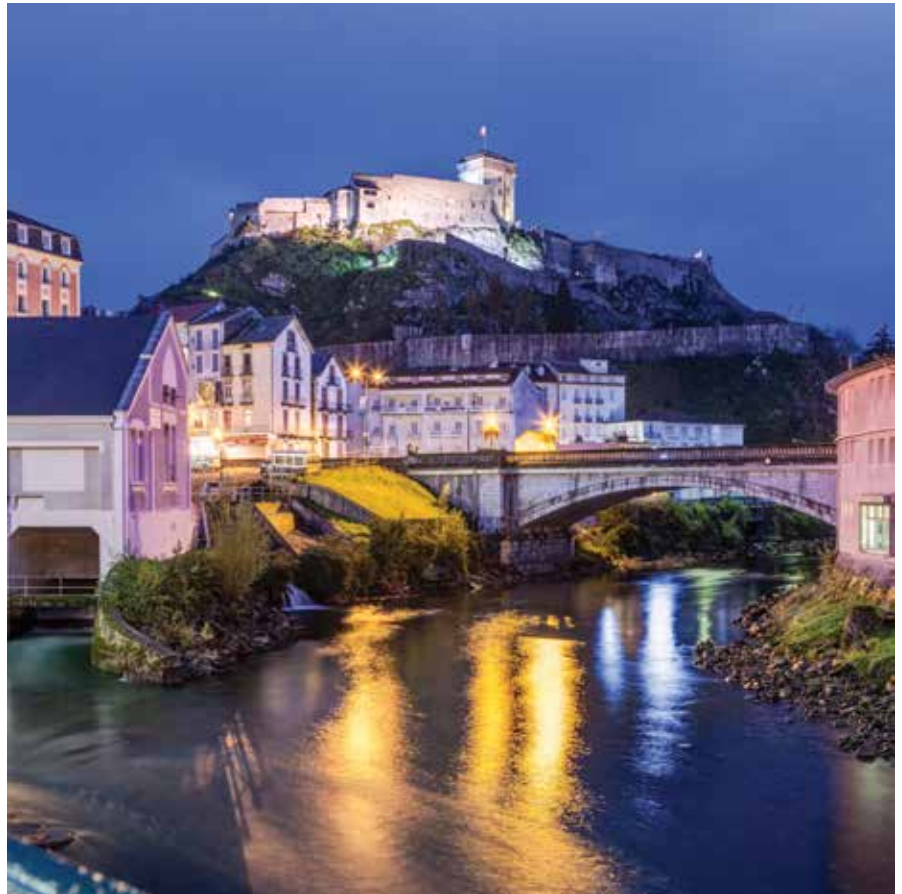
A cross by sculptor blacksmith Virgilijus Mikuckis



Queen of All Saints High School in Brooklyn

the Blessed Mother, and it was considered “art.” There have been too many of these sacrilegious and derisive incidents to enumerate. When Muslims or Jews are attacked in their religion, they react; we, Catholics turn the other cheek. Catholicism is a very difficult religion - it teaches us to forgive our enemies and to love our neighbors as ourselves. I have been observing the increasing attacks on the Church with dismay, but the prophetess Jeane Dixon, who was a devout Catholic, predicted fifty years ago, that the Church would have to go underground, and that by the year 2020, this country would be under a Totalitarian regime. We are not yet at the moment of returning to the Catacombs of Ancient Rome, but attacks against religion are more and more frequent and virulent.

The great French writer René de Chateaubriand wrote about the “Genius of Christianity.” It is a romantic presentation of the beauties of Christianity, but also, he describes very eloquently its spiritual, consoling, and uplifting message. What is a man without a belief in



The château fort de Lourdes on evening, France.



Bourges Cathedral

God? He becomes an egotist, believing only in himself, that he is all-knowing, having no indebtedness, moral or other, to anyone. Victor Hugo wrote in his poem “Et nox facta est,” (“And It Was Night”), referring to Cain fleeing the guilt of his fratricide, his conscience following him as an all-seeing eye from which he cannot escape or hide, even though he states, “It is forbidden for God to enter.” Perhaps in today’s secular world, conscience is no longer a strongly limiting factor for many people, but denying it is also morally and emotionally impossible for a thinking person, as Raskolnikov tries to do in Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*.

When I was in France some years ago and visited Le Mont St. Michel (about which I wrote in a previous article “The Old Lady Watching the Sea”) as well as other churches and

cathedrals, I was dismayed to see that these churches were, for the most part, no longer houses of worship, but had become tourist attractions. One such example was Les Enclos Bretons, small Medieval parish churches encircled by stone walls to keep the cattle out. There were many of these all throughout Brittany built in each town in competition with its neighbors. They were quite similar, many in need of renovation, which the French Government has been undertaking systematically. However, these as well were mostly tourist sites. It seemed that faith had fallen asleep and was waiting to be reawakened within these stone sanctuaries. As the Archbishop of Bourges, Armand Maillard, wrote in his article about the death of the cathedral - "Cathedrals are mortal in fact, not only in their body of stone, of glass, of wood and iron which man, nature and circumstances can destroy. They are also mortal in their soul, as men are, when one no longer understands them; when one makes them say what they do not say and when one thus violates their spirit. When one denies their grandeur and their mystery; when one deprives them of their wellspring which is faith; when one reduces them to their appearance." *

Since the Middle Ages, the Church has been a focal point in every town. After all, who is the main character in Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*? It is not the Hunchback, it is the Cathedral itself, strong and majestic, around which the mortals gather, and the drama is played out. And now, it too has been partially destroyed. The devotion and belief in God have inspired the creation of this beautiful Gothic architecture, as the author Ken Follett calls it "The Pillars of the Almighty."

Frequently, I hear references to the Inquisition, to the forced conversions imposed by the Crusaders as they rode to free the Holy Land from the Turks, to their sometimes-rapacious behavior. However, that seems to be unequal to the 80,000,000 people killed by the various communist regimes in the Twentieth Century as in Russia under Josef Stalin, in China under Mao Tse-Tung, and in Cambodia under Pol-Pot. The idea of balance must be considered as well. The message of Christianity is a good and uplifting message, in spite of the human failings of some of its representatives; the message of communism is a lie; it is repression in the name of equalization and disparagement of good, moral virtues. So, it depends on which one chooses to accentuate - the positive or the negative. I prefer to accentuate the positive.

Many years ago, I visited Lourdes in southern France, the famous town where the Virgin Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous, a young peasant girl. The resplendent Basilica on the hill, the Grotto, the Spring with its purported miraculous waters, the evening candlelight processions of the faithful chanting "Ave, Ave, Ave Maria" were awe-inspiring. Such faith cannot be mistaken. If

anyone has any doubts about the existence of God, they should visit Lourdes. It is a place where one can feel the presence of God. For the readers of this article who do not know the story of Saint Bernadette, it is quite moving. Franz Werfel, a Czech-born Jew who was running from the Nazis, came to the Grotto and prayed to the Blessed Mother. He vowed that if he escaped the Nazis, he would write the story of Lourdes and Saint Bernadette. His prayers were answered, and he kept his vow. His book *The Song of Bernadette* was published in 1941 in German and made into a film in 1943 starring Jennifer Jones. Of course, Bernadette was interrogated, questioned, and examined by both town police and the clergy. The doctor in the town admitted that he had seen such miraculous cures that science could not explain, and his statement is appropriate with which to end this article: "For those who believe in God, no explanation is necessary. For those who do not believe in God, no explanation is possible."

*La Cathédrale de Bourges Arts Sacrés, Hors-Série No. 6
Translation by Giedrė Maria Kumpikas

June 9, 2022



Jennifer Jones in Franz Werfel's *The Song of Bernadette*, 1944

DANGER IN THE DESERT

An account of an experience in the California desert by Roland Giedraitis

It does not matter how well prepared you are, the unexpected can still produce perils. Even doctors can get in trouble!

Lithuanians, like so many other peoples, are fond of nature. Something about a beautiful sunset or the sight of a waterfall soothes the soul while awakening in us humility and awe of nature. Climb the mountain! Sail the high seas! Venture into a desert!

My wife and I have an enduring love of the outdoors. Hiking, camping, sailing, or traveling to scenic destinations is an avocation that we enjoy very much. When I finished my military obligation (Captain, U.S. Army Dental Corps), we moved to beautiful California. To better acquaint ourselves with the customs and lay of the land, we enrolled in a year-long Sierra Club mountaineering course. We met weekly for a year, hearing talks about hiking equipment, first aid, conditioning, map reading, and similar. We hiked with full packs on overnight hikes; did repelling from cliffs; snow camping, which included ice ax practice where four of us are joined together by rope: one pretends to fall and slide while the others poke their ice axes into the hard snow to stop the fall. Thrilling!

Besides my army training, I am a certified Red Cross first aid and CPR instructor. My wife, Danutė, has the green tie of Lithuanian girl scouts, which is roughly equivalent to an American Eagle Scout. She is also a dentist.

We felt prepared for all kinds of hazards. By ourselves, we climbed the summits of Mt. Whitney and Mt. Gorgonio, for example.



Dr. Roland and Dr. Danutė during an earlier successful hike to Lost Palms Canyon

Joshua Tree National Park is one of our favorites for hiking and exploring. It is only a three-hour drive from Los Angeles. Home of the exotic and resplendent Joshua Trees and hundreds of miles of hiking trails. One of our favorites is the hike to Lost Canyon. It is not difficult since it is only about 9 miles round trip from our campsite. We had done it a couple of times, so perhaps we were a bit overconfident when we ventured out this Spring on this hike again. We did not carry a pack, just some minimal food, and some water canteens. No telephone since there is no reception in the park.

All went well until about two hours into the hike Danutė started complaining that she was not feeling well. Specifically, she could not stand up or walk. No balance. We sat down near a bush to see if the ailment would pass. She tried and tried but could not get up. We waited 1/2 hour, still no go. Basically, we were stranded.

The trail was moderately used. As we were resting, passing hikers asked us if we needed help. We said no, hoping the ailment would heal itself. But after 45 minutes, we decided we did need help. So when the next hiker asked us if we were OK, we said NO! And yes, we needed help! The hiker agreed to hurry to the trailhead for assistance. After another hour, help did arrive in the form of two park rangers who seemed like they jogged over since they were sweaty. They checked her vital signs of temperature, blood pressure, orientation, and even blood sugar level. All seemed normal. But she still could not get up. The rangers decided she either had to be carried out or flown out. They radioed a CHP (California

Highway Patrol) helicopter that was flying nearby. Luckily, they were not busy. The helicopter landed close to us amid a swirl of sand generated by its rotors. A paramedic emerged, checked her again, and decided she needed to be airlifted. Her first-ever helicopter ride! They could only carry one passenger at a time, so I was left behind, but 25 minutes later, they returned to ferry me out. Two fire trucks and an ambulance awaited near the park's ranger station. They put her in an ambulance, and all of us rode to the campground, where I picked up our motorhome to follow them. We were not too far from civilization. The ride to a Palm Springs hospital took about an hour.

I parked my RV and hurried to the emergency room. There she was, sitting in a wheelchair among dozens of other patients. 'How are you feeling?' I asked. 'What have they done to you? What seems to be the problem?' She said that again they checked her vitals with nothing spectacular to report. Now she was just sitting as the doctors were triaging other patients. I could not remain there due to hospital proto-



Dr. Danutè under a majestic Joshua Tree in the park



Dr. Danutè and Dr. Roland in the Joshua Tree National Park wilderness with a glimpse of Salton Sea on the horizon

cols, so we communicated with our mobile phones while I sat outside. In the meantime, I contacted Patrick, our son-in-law, who lives in the Palm Springs area. After sitting in the emergency room for almost four hours, nothing was being done to her. No further checks. The preliminary diagnosis was vertigo, e.g., loss of balance. Danutè lost her patience. She said she was now feeling OK, so she signed herself out against medical advice. We spent two nights at Patrick's home recovering. (Thank you, Patrick and Andrea!) When we returned to Los Angeles, she immediately went to Kaiser's urgent care department. They took her right away and confirmed the diagnosis as vertigo, probably triggered by dehydration. There is no good medicine



A CHP rescue helicopter finally arrives. Two park rangers are checking out Dr. Danutė, who cannot walk or stand up.

for this, but some head exercises were suggested. She was now up and about with her balance restored. The exercises seemed to help. We are back in our normal hiking mode.

By the way, the park rangers and the helicopter rides were free, but the emergency room fee was about \$4,000. Apparently, just sitting there costs \$500 an hour! The ambulance fee was around \$2,000. Luckily, we have good medical insurance, so most of that was covered.

It turned out not that big of a deal. But at the time of distress, you do not know what it is. Yes, enjoy hiking and nature! But be aware that unpleasant surprises can happen at any time.



Dr. Danutė being escorted by a CHP paramedic to the California Highway Patrol rescue helicopter



The view from the helicopter's cockpit: the greenery in the distance is an oasis and our starting point of the hike.



The view from the helicopter: fire engines and ambulance are waiting at the park's ranger station.

THE KALININGRAD REGION

Photographs by Leonardas Surgaila

This is Kaliningrad Region. It lies between Poland and Lithuania. This is what the land looked like in 1988-1990 when I was taking these photographs there. Today, I think, not much has changed.

Before WWII, the land belonged to German Empire and was called East Prussia. After the war, at the Potsdam Conference, it was decided that most of the region would become part of Poland, while a third, including the capital Königsberg, would go to the USSR.

There has never been anything Russian in the region's history. A Baltic people, related to Lithuanians and speaking a similar language, lived there. They called themselves Prussians. The Teutonic Knights conquered them in the 13th-15th centuries and founded a new state. However, they called it the same name: Prussia.

When the Soviet Union got the land, all the names of towns, rivers, lakes, and other places were changed to Russian names. They were newly-invented names. The capital Königsberg was renamed Kaliningrad after Mikhail Kalinin, former chairman of the Presidium of the USSR's Supreme Council.

The Germans would only Germanise the old names. New names were given only to brand new towns they built. The names of lakes and rivers are several thousand years old. Usually, the conquerors keep the same names but adapt them to their language. Slavs never lived here, and there were no Slavic names.

Prussia was famous for its abundance of churches and castles. The Teutonic Knights fought wars with Lithuania from the 13th to the 15th centuries. Lithuanians, together with the Poles, finally stopped them at the Battle of Žalgiris (Grunwald) in 1410. Prussia, however, remained German.

Before WWII, Eastern Prussia was a very well economically developed and wonderful land. Germans, Prussians, Lithuanians, and people of various other nationalities lived there. There were hardly any Russians.

After WWII, the Poles restored castles and churches in the part of East Prussia that went to them.

Towards the end of World War II, local people fled Prussia in a hurry. Those who didn't make it were almost all wiped out by the Soviet army.





During the Soviet period, new inhabitants were brought in from Russia. However, they were not rebuilding the country; they were destroying it further. Military bases were built. The coast was devastated and impoverished.

It is a unique place in Europe where you can see not only the ruins of churches and castles but entire streets and houses that date back to WWII!







Security

Lithuania withdrew its Ambassador Eitvydas Bajarūnas from Russia, shut down its consulate in St. Petersburg, and has expelled Russia's Ambassador to Lithuania, Aleksei Isakov, due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, another day which will live in infamy.

The Pennsylvania National Guard (PANG) has had summer exercises in Lithuania for 29 years. PANG provides for Lithuanian instructors, participates in joint exercises, and supports Lithuania's planned purchase of UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. Lithuania's Minister of Defense, Arvydas Anušauskas, met with Major General Mark K. Schindler, Adjutant General of PANG, and stressed the aspiration to maintain a permanent presence of US troops in Lithuania.

Interior Minister Agnė Bilotaitė indicated that threats to national security increased after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and a state of emergency was declared on February 25. The Belarusian regime continues to destabilize political and public order in neighboring countries and provides a route for illegal migration through Russia and Belarus. Lithuania has pushed back over 1,600 foreigners that tried to cross the border. The Interior Minister forwarded a request for assistance from Ukraine's Interior Minister Denys Monastyskyj to Lithuanian Defense Minister Arvydas Anušauskas for help in clearing areas mined by Russian troops in Ukraine, investigating war crimes committed by the Russian army, and providing rehabilitation services to wounded Ukrainian soldiers and police.

The US outlet, NEWSARMY, reports that Russia-allied Belarus is deploying troops to Ashmyany, within 50 km of Vilnius. The Belarusian Hajun project news site reported that a convoy of about 40 Belarus' military vehicles was moving from Minsk toward the Ashmyany district along the M7 highway. The news footage shows the convoy consisting of BTR-82A armored personnel carriers and a BTR-80K command vehicle.

Defense Minister Arvydas Anušauskas and Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak met in Vilnius and agreed to



consider joint purchases of military equipment, e.g. multiple rocket launchers. Blaszczak said that he had "somewhat jokingly" suggested that Lithuania should buy the Polish "Piorun," man-portable low aircraft defense system, instead of the U.S. Stinger system.

The Lithuanian and Estonian chiefs of defense met in Vilnius to discuss bilateral military cooperation, joint projects, and regional security as part of the trilateral Baltic working group. One topic was the acquisition of M142 HIMARS multiple rocket-launching systems. The High Mobility Artillery Rocket System is manufactured by Lockheed Martin in the US and has been used by Ukrainian forces against Russian targets in Ukraine.

Encrypted copies of important Lithuanian databases are being stored in Lithuania and also in one of the data centers in a NATO country. This will provide backup to servers in Lithuania. More than 1,000 terabytes of the most critical data include the Register of Residents of the Republic of Lithuania, the Real Estate Register and Cadastral survey, the Address Register, and other data.

In its annual national threat assessment, Lithuania's State Security Department noted that right-wing extremists are seeking to radicalize teenagers and may try to carry out terror attacks against ethnic or religious minorities, refugees, human rights activists, or defenders. The SSD cited several dozen people in Lithuania spreading right-wing extremist accelerationism ideology on digital platforms and public places by putting stickers and distributing flyers. The accelerators desire to speed racial conflict through assassinations, murders, and terrorist attacks as a means to violently achieve a white ethnostate.

current events

Ukraine

A crowd fundraiser organized by Laisvės TV was able to raise 5.9 million euros in 3-days to buy a Turkish Bayraktar TB-2 combat drone as a gift from the Lithuania people to Ukraine. The manufacturer, Baykar, was so impressed that it will donate one TB-2 and suggests that 1.5 million euros be allocated to drone munitions and the remaining 4.4 million euros be earmarked for humanitarian or other assistance to Ukraine. In recent years Ukraine has purchased more than 20 Bayraktar TB-2 armed drones, and in January, Ukraine purchased 16 TB-2s, which were delivered in early March.

Lithuania's Defense Ministry and army will provide 20 M113 armored personnel carriers (APC), 10 military trucks, and 10 all-terrain vehicles used for demining to Ukraine, estimated in value at 15.5 million euros. The 20 APC are part of 200 given to Lithuania from the US.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda said that Russia's blockade of Ukraine's port of Odesa may be countered by reorganizing transit routes through Poland and the Baltic countries. Possible rail, truck, and seaport routes could provide revenue to Ukraine and moderate the global grain shortage in Europe and North Africa.

More than 50,000 refugees from Ukraine have registered in Lithuania, with 200-300 arriving daily, less than 10% of those who came in mid-March. Some Ukrainians who fled



Turkey made a gift of fully equipped combat drone Bayraktar TB2 drone to Lithuania! Laisves TV had an agreement with Lithuania's Ministry of Defense to pay 1.5 million euro to buy weaponry for the Lithuanian Bayraktar. The rest of money – 4.4 million – according to the wish of gift-giving Turkish side will be used for humanitarian, defense, and logistic help for Ukraine.

are now returning home via three free Kautra buses from Kaunas for Lviv on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. The buses pick up Ukrainians who want to evacuate for the return trip.



The Seimas unanimously recognized Russia's war against Ukraine as genocide of the Ukrainian people and Russia as a state that supports and perpetrates terrorism. The resolution passed with 128 votes in favor, none against, and no abstentions.

COVID-19

The Ministry of Health has ended the "extreme situation" regarding COVID-19 because of a steady decline in the number of new cases and hospital admissions. Lithuania has reached over 80% primary immunization, and about 40% have received an additional vaccine dose. Mask-wearing remains recommended but no longer compulsory in all indoor facilities. After a positive COVID-19 test, self-isolation will no longer be compulsory. Family

doctors will decide on their patients' sick leave based on the individual's condition. The National Center for Public Health will no longer collect questionnaires on the infected person's contacts but will continue to investigate coronavirus outbreaks.

The Ministry of Health indicates that all travelers, regardless of their country of origin, will be permitted restriction-free entry to Lithuania, even if they do not hold a valid vaccination, recovery, or test certificate.

Business

The 580 km, 500 million euro Poland-Lithuanian Gas Connector (GIPL), under construction since 2020, has started operating and can deliver 2 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas per year-covering 10% of Poland's annual demand. It so happens that Russia's Gazprom stopped deliveries just



days before the GIPL became operational. Czechia (formerly known as the Czech Republic) has expressed interest in Polish gas because it fears that Russia will cut deliveries to them.

Ryanair announced that FRC LT, a Ryanair Group company, has won the land-lease tender for 7,043 square meters of ground at Kaunas Airport for 40 years. The construction will start on the maintenance facility in Q4 of 2022, with operations scheduled for Q4 of 2023. Plans include the construction of two new maintenance hangers and an expansion of the existing aircraft repair shop. The new facility will increase Ryanair's competitiveness and create 200 new highly-paid jobs for engineers, mechanics, and administrative personnel. Ryanair will fly 50 routes involving 150 weekly flights, including 12 new summer routes. Flights to Madrid, Budapest, Eindhoven, Gothenburg, Stockholm, and Finland will be among them. Ryanair has over 2,300 employees in Lithuania.

Building on its base in Reykjavik, Iceland, PAYSTRAX, a payment processing solutions provider, is doubling its 30-person operations in Vilnius and Klaipėda. It claims to onboard a new customer within a day and goes live with Point of Sale (POS) terminals within three days versus 3-6 weeks for competitive systems.

After reporting a loss of 6.4 million euros last year, the state-owned Lithuanian Post plans on increasing prices for its services and laying off 600 of its 3,700 employees. The CEO attributes the loss to the scrapping of the VAT relief on parcels from non-EU countries, which resulted in a 64% decline in volume in the second half of the year.

General

During the 73rd Berlin International Film Festival, the European Film Market will take place from February 16 to 23, 2023, highlighting Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as the Countries in Focus. The organizers hope that it will be an opportunity for Baltic producers, film distributors, sponsors, and creative talents to collaborate with partners in other countries. Starting in 2017, the Country in Focus program has highlighted Mexico, Canada, Norway, and Chile.



Last month Lithuania was in the spotlight for being the EU member with the highest inflation rate of 15.7%. The Lithuanian statistics office now announced that this month, the inflation rate was 16.6%, again the highest rate among EU members. On a month-month basis, consumer prices rose by 1.9%.

In March 2022, a month after Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, NATO members decided to extend the term of Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg by a year, until September 30, 2023. He had a new job lined up as Governor of Norway's Central Bank, so it is unlikely that the extension would be further extended. A favorite candidate among NATO insiders is Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of Lithuania from 2009 to 2019, known as the "Iron Lady of the Baltics" for her tough stance on Russia.

FALL COMES FROM THE FOREST

By Marius Katiliškis

Translated by Birutė Vaičjurgis Šležas

A tale of passion and deceit, set in Lithuania between the wars. A series of chance events dash a young man's hopes of a government job, leading Tilius to a temporary job at a farmstead where the woman of the house is young and pretty...

Chapter 16

The Canal Work Begins

People streamed toward the Vilkija carrying shovels and sacks. [...] Whoever had the time, whoever wanted to earn something and wasn't lazy, could boldly head for the river and get started. That was the announcement the crier made from the top of a wagon at the marketplace. You'll get paid for how much you do; they won't be picking or classifying people. There'll be enough work for everyone.

Restless souls and dutiful folks showed up as the sun was rising, as though they feared they might oversleep and miss their turn. And so it continued without pause. At eight o'clock there was a crowd of a good hundred men. And they kept coming. The town's unemployed, those who were handy at everything and would go wherever there was a job to be done. They threshed flax, cut trees, split logs, smashed rocks, and dug gravel for construction and roads. Lodgers and tenant farmers from the surrounding villages, who could subsist with a cow and a couple of pigs and a garden next to their wretched cottages. Those with little land and small farms whose family was growing and who never turned down extra work, though it might be during the harvest itself. Hired hands who had fled their farmers, tattered vagrants from the town marketplace, and even students from the high school.

A group of them was right there, attracting everyone's attention.

It wasn't simply on a lark that one of them had gotten the idea. He needed to earn money over the summer so he could finish school and continue his studies. When he mentioned what he'd be doing that summer, his plan caught on with others. Most of them were boy scouts who thought there was no better way to gain experience and knowledge than through the hard meaningful work they'd be doing in the forest, the swamps, and by the water. Some of them expected a vacation spent this way would help ease the burden on their folks and themselves, others felt the pull of adventure and inseparable

friendships. One of them had a father with a large store who could allow his son to knock about wherever he liked without begrudging him some small change. Another, from a wealthy farm, had to run off in secret, after his father turned blue in a rage because he was going off with roustabouts and would bring shame down on him. But what do young people care?

They kept to themselves, in a tight group, seemingly ready to repulse attacks of any kind whatsoever. In short pants, with knives stuck into wide leather sheaths on their belts, their shirt fronts open, their hair tossed by the wind and bleached by the sun. They had brought all their work tools with them. The instigator of the venture had considered all the details and had planned for everything. They had knapsacks crammed with the most essential things for rugged outdoor living, and on them hung pots, pans, and other kitchen wares. They were going to make their own meals. They'd subsist mostly on fish—that's what those fishing rods and nets were for. They'd live in tents, laying spruce branches on the ground — that's what the canvas bundles and ropes were for. They'd each take turns on a daily basis doing the domestic chores. They'd cook, fry, darn, and maintain the campfire. They'd try to manage as much as possible by foraging, buying only bread and milk. They'd have enough fish and crayfish, mushrooms and berries. They'd gladly do some serious hunting, too, taking down a boar or a goat, if they weren't avowed friends of nature and respectful of the law.

There were other enticing things as well, which they discussed only in whispers and kept to themselves, each to pursue on his own. Whoever had facial hair could grow a beard or a mustache. They'd smoke pipes, because how else are you going to keep the mosquitoes away? They'd go and drink along with the men, huddled in some tavern alongside the forest, and play cards, a Finnish knife stuck into the table in front of them. And they'd get into fights—something you couldn't avoid, no matter how hard you tried. Tavern girls are good at causing brawls. They'll catch a bunch of snakes and hang them on the sides of their tents, to drive terror into anyone who came to look. And there won't be any lack of visitors. The hired girls were already all in a tizzy from curiosity.

"So then, you've decided to do some digging?" someone at the bridge railing inquired.

"That's what we've decided, Pops."

"But your pants aren't long enough. Your knees are gonna get wet."

"All the better. We'll strip them off and wade around without them, like storks. There won't be any women around, will there, Grandpa? What do you think?"

"Women probably not. But then you've got forest fairies in the bogs, plenty of them," another fellow was joshing them.

"We'll tame those fairies and set them to work beating our shirts clean."

"They'll beat your bare backs, too, not just your shirts. After a day, there won't be a single one of you left. Your mama's not gonna be bringing you tea in bed, and what'll you do then?"

"We'll drink booze. Like this!" The youth gestured with his hands and mouth how he'd drink, tilting the bottle.

"Your legs are a little wobbly yet, kiddies."

"If they put a baby nipple on the bottle's neck, then maybe?" A ditch digger cast sullen looks at them, unable to shake the thought that those kids might be depriving quite a few of them of work.

The young lads held their own. They were prepared to give it right back. And were steadfastly ready for anything.

"Maybe you'd care for a drop of potato liquor, neighbor? We've brought it for all sorts of illnesses," one of the students patted his pocket, approaching the sullen fellow.

"Soowee, you runt, go slop the swine!"

"But they're all sold off to the English, there's none left."

"So maybe that farm owner over there will hire you to herd his? I heard them squealing, wallowing around in their pen," gestured another toward Basiuliškės, a ditch digger who was just as angry and unfriendly.

"And did they fire you from the pigs if you're looking for work here?"

The ditch digger cursed, and then cleared his lungs. He put down his shovel and spit twice into his palms. Rubbing them, he went out onto the road.

"Come on over here, you little no-good! I'll crush you with my fingernail like a bedbug. Come on! Who wants it?"

"Don't start, Každaila! Come back!" they shouted to him from the bridge.

"I'll show them, those snots, to give me lip."

"Každaila, I'm telling you, don't go there!" Petras the Red warned him.

The line of students didn't even budge. They didn't appear afraid of the tall man with dark features, and they had no intention of moving. When he stopped a few steps away, his shoulders pulled in and fists clenched, a curly-haired, freckle-nosed young fellow emerged from the line and shouted:

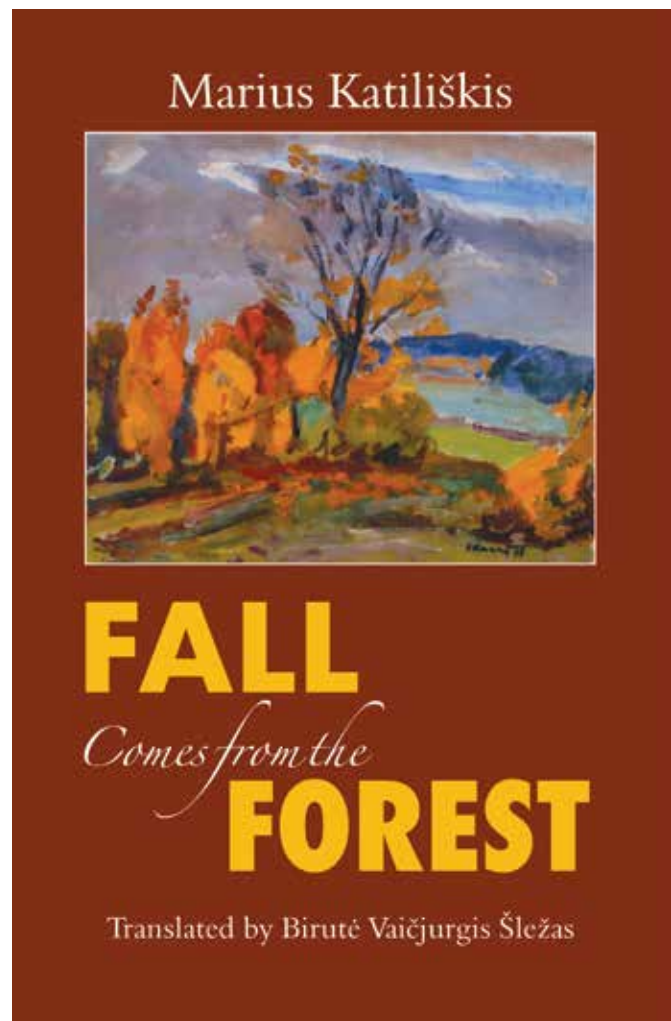
"So, give it to me! I want it!"

Každaila, infuriated to no end by such unheard-of insolence, gave it his all. His fist went whistling in an arc through the air. But Curly-Hair just ducked and rushed headlong into his stomach, toppling the assailant onto the dusty road.

"Hooray! Hooray!" crowed the victorious bunch. The whole bridge shook with laughter. The roadside meadow beneath the trees let out a buzz and a whoosh as if it had bounced into the air. [...]

It was an unexpectedly good beginning. The young folks were in a jubilant mood.

To order the book, please visit www.picapica.press



Birutė Šležas will be giving readings from her translation of Marius Katiliškis's masterpiece *Fall Comes from the Forest* at the following locations: August 10 - Ateitininkų studijų savaitė, Kennebunk, ME; August 27 - Kultūros dienos, Neringa Camp, VT; September 24 - SLA Art Space, NYC.

UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

Memoir of a Siberian Deportee

By Juzė Avižienytė Žukauskienė

Translated from the Lithuanian by Giedrė Kumpikas, Ph.D., niece of the author, and Isabel Kumpikas, sister of the author

40. EFFORTS TO ESCAPE DEATH BY STARVATION

That same day, I wrote a request to the chairman of the collective farm that he would allow us to leave the farm and to the commandant that he would allow us to move out of Komarovka. I received answers immediately: only a majority vote by the full assembly of the members of the collective farm could release someone from the farm, and only the regional commandant could release from the settlement. Yes! It was a long procedure. I knew that commandant Shabalin would make every effort not to release us.

My God! My God! How were we going to live? What would we do? I had no time to think about myself, but my hungry children and my sick, famished husband were driving me out of my mind.

"My Lord! My Lord!" I cried raising my arms to Heaven, "Do not let us die of hunger here! If we stay alive, I swear to You, Oh Lord, to be forever thankful and rejoice if only we have bread and water. I shall be able to do the most difficult work, the dirtiest work and I shall be content and thankful to You."

It was the cry of a human being overcome by hopelessness, the cry of a mother who was seeing her children perishing needlessly, children who were only on the threshold of life.

The Siberian spring, as usual, was moving in force. Everywhere water was murmuring and dripping. By the fences, in the warmth of the sun, the reddish nettle leaves were coming up. The collective farm was preparing for the spring sowing, and I still kept asking the chairman to call the meeting of all the farmers. There were other important things to discuss: the plans for seeding, how to assign people for work, and so on. Finally, the meeting took place. Among other points to discuss was "the petition of the Žukauskas family to be released from the collective farm." The time came to discuss our petition. It was read by the chairman. He asked the members to state their opinion. Everyone was silent, afraid of sticking their necks out, waiting to see what the "superiors" will say. After that, even the "ordinary people" will know what to say.

The commandant spoke up:

"I feel that we cannot satisfy this request. Why? The collective farm is overloaded with work. We lack working hands. It is already the spring sowing, the work on the farms, the plans are big. It is necessary to grow many potatoes, tobacco, not to speak of grain, weeding, hay-making. We have work above and beyond our means. Can we allow four workers to leave? To release Žukauskiene? Who will work in the office? Who can replace her? To release her son Liudas? The number of workers in the fields will decrease. And he knows that after the sowing the plan is to clean the riverbanks. He has done this work; he is used to it. Stasys? He is a student, but at the same time, he is the warehouseman of the brick factory. Did anyone organize the brick factory as he did? And he can work in the fields in the summer. Finally, the little one. He is already a worker too. You all know that the little ones are sent to weed, later to the tobacco, the potatoes. I do not speak of the father - he is a sick man, but even he can be of some use. Who is for not letting them out of the collective farm?" A forest of hands comes up, everyone is "for."

I sat there half-dead. Was it possible that my last hope was lost to save ourselves?

Everyone dispersed. The militiaman Chiusov came up to me.

"Do not be offended, I have about two bags full of small potatoes. They froze. Maybe you can pick some out. I would like to offer you better ones but, you know, our resources are not very great either. Even if they're frozen, at least they're not rotten. It's some sort of food."

"Thank you very much!" I accepted with gratitude. "Perhaps I'll be able to repay you someday."

It was good that Chiusov had no animals. He himself lived on a government bread ration and vegetables that he grew himself. He had tuberculosis and was being treated by Dr. Šakenienė. Actually, she had nothing to treat him with, she only gave her advice.

What joy that I received some frozen, dirty, small potatoes, fit only for pigs.

My God! If only someone gave us a day's portion, which we used to feed the pigs at Papartėliai.* How many peas, how much barley flour, and grated potatoes! Now it would be enough for a year for us. If only someone gave us the greasy dishwater, which used to clog up the drain of the sink. What an excellent soup it would make if we poured it over the frozen potatoes and nettles! But... enough sighing, it will not make you full.

At the office, I asked the chairman to write out an advance for my workdays - in flour. There were 425 workdays. He wrote out 4 kg (!) of flour.

Halfway through the month of May, the collective farm began the sowing. My oldest son Liudas was sent to the

field camp with other adolescents to plough, to harrow, to sow. Even though the school year had not ended, the 11th and 12th-grade students, according to the commandant's order, were sent out to work. Stasiukas also fell into this number. He worked closer to the collective farm center and would run home every day, while the oldest one, after ten days, was brought back swollen, shining as if he were of glass. It seemed that if one were to touch his face and calves with a finger, they would burst from the swelling. My husband was hobbling around the chata little by little. I wrung my hands hopelessly: what to do, how to help? Again, I ran over to the chairman. Again, he wrote out 4 kg of flour and 10 liters of skimmed milk.

"He is dying of hunger. He needs milk, at least some porridge," stated the medical assistant Paukson.

I brought home the milk. I boiled some nettles with a somewhat larger quantity of flour.

"My dearest Liudeli! * What happened? Didn't they give you anything to eat there? At the office, we issued several grams of barley, 500 grams of bread each."

"Mamyte,* I don't know what you write out. We barely get 100 grams of bread, and you couldn't find a grain of barley in the barley water. The Russians even laugh: "A grain of barley chases a grain of barley with a stick, but can't catch it," but we have to work hard. The cows, taken from the people, even without their harness or harrows, can barely drag their feet. You beat them and beat them. Where it's dry, it's not too bad, but, when you drive them into the hollows, into the soft fields, they collapse. You can beat them, pull them, they stay down, while the team-leader curses to make his lungs burst: we don't have the norm yet, drive them harder! My heart cannot bear it, to torture those starved animals. There is no feed. The grass is still sparse, and they graze only at night."

"And where are the horses?"

"You know yourself that there are few horses, and they are very lean. They are harnessed only to the plough. The harness is bad, it rubs the skin off, the backs are hollow, the necks are suppurated. They drove one horse to such a point that his neck was swollen, the puss ran down in a stream, even down to the road. They harness him. He falls down and screams in pain. I had never imagined such slave labor either for animals or for humans. And those people are as if possessed by beastly cruelty!"

"They did not harness that horse for three days, but they did not feed it either. They say it's free, let it graze, but the poor animal can't get up. Then, Kostiucha (the field team leader) asked:

"Guys, will you eat horse meat? We'll butcher the bay."

"We'll eat it, we'll eat it, kill him!"

"We came home for lunch. The kettle was boiling, foaming, the foam was even dropping down the sides. The smell was something like meat, but very disgusting. The cook

began to pull dark red meat out of the kettle, cut it into portions. Some young guys who had some patties and a bottle of milk, refused in disgust. We hungrier ones, having nothing else, closed our eyes and ate not only our portion but the portions of those who had refused. But afterwards, I saw before my eyes, the suppurated, swollen neck of the bay and the bubbling kettle. It seemed as if the puss had been boiling there... I began to feel sick. I began to vomit uncontrollably. It felt as if my liver were coming out through my throat. After that, I could eat nothing from that kettle, and, as you know, I had nothing of my own, and I had to work. Kostuchia kept calling: "Come on, come on! Hurry up!"

"Time does not wait" said comrade Stalin."

* *Vanagas* - last name meaning "hawk"

* *Juozuk* - "Joey," a form of direct address for the diminutive version of the name *Juozas*, or *Joseph*

* *Ziutiūnia* - a diminutive of *Josefa*, in English - *Josephine*

41. NEW HOPES

After eighteen days, the Regional Commandant Shilkov came to Komarovka. Again, an obligatory assembly, again on the agenda, a four-point item "The Žukauskas family's release from the collective farm."

The Regional Commandant spoke:

"...three weeks ago, you rejected the petition of the Žukauskas family to be released from the collective farm. And what use did the farm have from this family? They are educated people, they are soft, they do not know how to do farm work. At the slightest thing, they become sick. They are not workers, but the plan applies to them too. Others must work for them so that the plan can be carried out. You know that the Soviet Government is required to care for the sick. Time and expensive bread are being wasted for no reason. In truth, as Žukauskas writes in his letter, the farm does not need corpses, it is only a heavy burden. I propose to release the Žukauskas family from the collective farm.

Of course, everyone voted "Yes." Who would dare to vote other than the way the commandant, especially the regional one, wanted?

And so, ended the first stage, the collective farm, of one family of Siberian deportees, but the suffering and hardships did not end.

At once, with my own hand, on a small piece of Juozukas' notebook - even such paper was a luxury - and not in the margin of an old book or newspaper, I wrote "a certificate" that Žukauskas, Liudas and his entire family are released from the collective farm "Putj Lenin."

42. THE BEGINNING OF LIFE WORKING IN PRODUCTION

And so, we were no longer collective farmers. I handed over the office documents to the bookkeeper: the stubs of the expense and disbursement orders, and the balance in the register. My son Stasiukas gave over the brick warehouse. He and my youngest son, Juozukas, were still attending school and in the afternoon, would pick medunkas* (juicy, soft-stemmed small bluish flowers) and "goat beards" for food. We ate the medunkas raw, but the "goat beard" heads I would steam in a pot, and when I got a glass of milk from somewhere, I would add it to the brew. The children would eat this soup and be happy that it was tasty like an omelette.

Both Liudai, father and son, after serious illnesses, were back on their feet. Under the window, the "warm bed" was already green with cabbage heads. In the garden, although they had not sprouted yet, a bed of carrots and turnips were planted.

My husband, having received an order from the local hospital, left for the regional hospital. It was possibly only a pretext. Of course, the opinion of stronger doctors was important, but it was even more important to find a shelter for a family and work outside a collective farm.

I offered our chata to everyone for sale. But who would buy it and for what? And it had cost us 1500 rubles. After three days, my husband returned and brought back two loaves of fragrant bread! We had certainly not expected such a treat. I immediately cut up one small loaf (2 kg) and distributed it to everyone. They did not pay attention to my warning not to hurry so, but they all ate it greedily. We bombarded him with questions, where he had been able to get such an unattainable treasure. My husband recounted:

"I was lucky: by chance I met the official, who in 1941 had gotten your English suit and velvet dress. He received me like "family." It seems that they are organizing a tobacco receiving point in the region and he is the director. He needs workers badly. He immediately took care of our hiring, gave us papers that we started yesterday. I received a ration card for bread and bread itself. Let's get ready and leave right away."

"And what about the chata? After all, it cost us a lot. We can't just leave it?" I asked him.

"Oh, the heck with that 'coffin!' Won't these two loaves of bread which we'll get every second day make up for this shack?"

Hurriedly I allotted to my Lithuanian women the beds of carrots, turnip, and onions, we tied up our belongings and loaded down with bundles we set out on our way. This time the traveling was not difficult, although we walked overburdened. Of what importance were 26 kilometers of

a taiga road? Of what importance were swarms of blood-thirsty mosquitoes, in comparison with the hope that we would be paid for our work and that we would receive bread? We walked as if on wings and arrived at our destination.

The director himself brought us to our "abode" and said that there should be room enough for five more people here.

The "abode" was a small house and had been taken from four orphaned children and the first workers who had begun building the warehouse for the tobacco "point," the store and the barracks for the workers had been settled there. The house had apparently been built by strong owners, because it was constructed of good, heavy logs, the floor of planed boards, the stove of bricks. There were three windows facing south, two towards the west. The area was 36 square meters. It was spacious.

But, besides our family, we found living there the four orphans whose parents had built the house. The oldest of these was seventeen years old, the youngest ten. In addition to them, a Lithuanian woman Lazauskienė, with her daughter, was living there, the same woman whose stepson had become deranged and died of starvation at Komarovka; a worker Navalichina with her son Subacheva; a laboratory assistant Zaciepina and a warehouse woman Lyza Kartashova. In all there were sixteen people. Everyone slept on whatever they had dropped on the floor. We also fell onto the floor, covered only with the clothes we had on, not even undressing so that the mosquitoes would not eat us up. Just before lying down, we would light a "censer" of fuel into a dug-out clay cavity, we put some embers and on top of that some dried cow dung. This produced "good" smoke which the mosquitoes feared most.

It was fortunate that the director had a cow, and the 'point' had a horse, so we had "incense."

The preference of cooking on the stove went first to the former owners and to the obnoxious Navalichina, sometimes, to the warehouse woman; all of us others cooked outside on small bonfires.

The director and his wife, the bookkeeper and the director's "trusted one" Kustova with two children had settled in the former owner's granary which had been converted into living quarters. How and when the owners of this house, the Chiuvasi Eremeyevs had wound up here from the region of the Volga, no one knew. The children, born already in Siberia and having lost their parents quite early, did not know much. Their parents had, apparently, been well-off. This was attested to by the good buildings, which had enticed the government to take them from the under-aged orphans for the afore-mentioned "point."

The children would not go anywhere to complain, there would be less "bother."

43. FIRST DAY AT WORK

Having rested one day, we went to work. We went to the forest to fell trees. We were not experienced woodcutters. Kustova with Navalichina were the "instructors." They commanded, shouted but did not explain as they should have how to hew a tree, from which side to make the first cut so that it would fall in the necessary direction. I understood that only later and only from practice. The work did not go very well. The mosquitos and moshkes were eating us up, we were almost barefoot. We were terrified of stepping on a snake, of injuring ourselves on felled branches and roots.

We had two saws. With one of them, my oldest son Liudas and I would fell the trees, my second son, Stasiukas, would hew the tree with an ax. The other workers chopped up the branches, heaped them in piles. Kustova, with a horse, dragged the trees to an accessible spot.

While Liudukas and I were working, our saw got stuck, that is, when the cut tree leaned to fall, we were not quick enough to pull it out. It almost broke. That would be a terrible catastrophe. If a person is killed, it is no one's fault, but a saw! Where to get another one?

I was immediately removed from using the saw; I was given an ax to chop up branches. I was not successful here either, I did not have the strength to cut off a branch with one stroke, and the thicker ones, I "pecked at" several times like a woodpecker. One time, perhaps not quite accurately, I "flashed" a hard branch with the ax and, bouncing back, it hit me in the foot. I cut my toe through the nail and through both joints. Blood was spurting forth. This upset my son and husband greatly, while the "experienced" women were yelling and insulting me for my "clumsiness."

Tearing off half a handkerchief, I tied up my toe tightly, but I worked no more, I was afraid of losing too much blood. Fortunately, it was getting on towards evening and we walked home soon.

I did not go to work for a few days. Since the hospital was eight kilometers away, I was not able to get a dispensation from work. Therefore, it was considered unexcused, and for those days, I received no bread ration. However, my husband and children were getting theirs, we all shared the precious bread. I was unhappy about depriving my hungry children.

A telegram came that barges were arriving to take away the tobacco. Everybody became active. There could be no sickness or sick people! The director, having gone to the base of the regional cooperative union, requested, and received "additional food." He brought back a small barrel of salted mushrooms. Everyone was jumping for joy.

Gruzdi, gruzdi! * shouted the women. These were not gruzdi, but only a mixture of taiga mushrooms, salted together with all their blades and leaves. And the smell

was not appealing. But, for hungry people, even this was a windfall.

They were weighed out right away to everyone. Our family of five received five kilograms. It was rather a large pot, which, of course, evoked the envy of many:

"Oh! You are lucky, look at the pot you got, while we only got a small bowl," objected the single women.

"How is it that you don't understand? Each one of us received no more than you. Pool all five rations together and you'll have as much," I tried to explain.

"Look! You even bring back two loaves of bread, while we are only given a small piece." I waved my hand at them, what could I explain to such as they? But that stupid envy sometimes created a lot of unpleasantness.

The director obtained five bags (200 kilograms) of grain with chaff from Zagotzerno, the grain processing point. His wife said that it had also been requested as a food supplement. They would grind it and when we loaded the barges, we would get some flour. The director's wife and I were assigned to fan the wheat. We spread out sheets, scooped up that trash - one couldn't call it grain - into pails and raising it above our heads poured it against the wind onto the sheets. The grain, being heavier, fell closer, the wind blew the chaff and the dust further away. But the larger pieces of dirt fell together with the grain. I suggested we sift it through a sieve.

"Are you joking! Look how tiny the grain is, it will also fall through the sieve. It's all right! We'll eat it as is."

We went to get the last two sacks. They took my breath away! They were sewn from the finest Lithuanian eight-heddle loom linen cloth! My God! I looked at those sacks and imagined how our Lithuanian girls, by a feeble flickering light, on those long, long autumn evenings, according to Maironis, * "...wove thin, white linen cloth, and spun the little wheels with their foot." How much painstaking work to weave such thread, how much labor to thread, and loom those exquisite designs? Then the barbarians came. They needed to pour in grain they were stealing or something else that had not been earned by them, they did not care how much harm and pain they caused others.

"Why are you gaping so," Tatiana woke me from my daydreaming.

I picked up that eight-heddle linen sack and I felt as if someone's hot tears, as if someone's warm hands and.... tears began to stream from my eyes. The sack slipped from my hands.

"What's wrong with you? Can't you carry it?"

"It's not that, Tanya, you won't understand. Do you know what kind of bags these are and from where?"

"Fyodor brought them back from Zagotzerno."

I did not speak, I did not explain, I dragged the sack where I had to and began to fan the grain again. But this was no longer grain with chaff, but good grain, apparently

really destined as a food supplement for the workers who would load the barges.

* *gruzdi* - a fine grade of mushrooms

* *Maironis* - the most famous Lithuanian poet (19th-20th century). His themes were patriotic, nationalistic, and humanistic. He is considered the Poet of Lithuanian Reawakening.

44. SURPRISE

I do not know whether it was the fault of those appropriated 3600 rubles or something else, but the director's "favorites" began to agitate against us even more. However, the regional authorities evaluated us differently.

I received from the Novosibirsk main office an authorization with the broadest rights and the order to take over the Station.

In other words, I was appointed director. Everyone was astir: the sympathizers rejoiced; the "enemies" became worried, sullen while I felt as if snow had fallen on my head. I was not at all happy about it. I was a laboratory assistant, I was a warehouse keeper when the permanent one was on vacation, I am a bookkeeper, but only temporarily and now a **d i r e c t o r**!

I really did not want all the cares of a director, but most of all, I did not relish the regional superiors' meetings which all the people with leadership positions had to attend. At these meetings, they always found a way to reproach everyone with some "misdoing" and it was always "discussed." I was also afraid of the plans which had not been carried out in the spring, when it would be necessary to order the boats, to load them in time so that there would be no delay for which we could receive a large financial fine. The director would have to pay a part of it since the greatest responsibility was his. Besides, we were waiting for the end of the war. A normal worker would find it easier to leave his job than a responsible official. I discussed it with my family and decided to go to the regional center and, receiving the approval there, to send a statement to the Novosibirsk office that they withdraw my authorization and that I refuse the director's duties.

I went to see the commandant and explained the situation.

"Why do you not want to accept the confidence extended to you? You will certainly be able to manage the Station better than Permiakov."

"There are many reasons. I have no experience, I don't know the Soviet laws at all, and, as you see, the authorization is broad: 'to receive and dispatch freight at railroad stations and loading docks, sign documents, to take care of all banking and financial operations, to sign checks, to hire and fire workers and so on.' But most important, I am a deportee. You yourself will not allow me to go to Novo-

sibirsk where I would have to go shortly. Not only that, Novosibirsk is 1000 kilometers away, but even within the boundaries of the region I have to ask your permission. Give me at least some man. I agree to work, but let there be at least some official "hat," my head I'll lend you."

"Yes, about those trips, there might be some difficulties, of course, not from our side. We cannot keep Permiakov any longer. The head office let him go according to the "recommendation" of the prosecutor. He's being drafted into the army. In one way or another, you'll have to take over the Station and without delay. We'll try to find you a "hat" later," laughed the commandant.

Upon returning to the Station, I announced that I was definitively ordered to take over.

Permiakov was furious:

"Well, so then! Take over! Here! Sign!" He had already signed the act of transfer, on which were written down the inventory and a list of other valuables.

"How can I sign? I must check everything," I answered calmly.

"What is there to check? Only the horse and the stamp are at my disposal, and everything else belongs to others' accounts," Permiakov was angry.

I began to read the act he gave me:

1) horse.....1

2) carts.....2

3) sets of harness....2, and so on.

"Ivan Fyodorovitch, so where are those two carts? We only have one and with only three wheels at that. As for the harness, we only have one set, not two."

"You are all very literate, you are very smart! One cart you'll pick up from Zagotzkot, while the harness and one wheel from Zagotzern, the director borrowed it," the irritated Permiakov was almost screaming. I continued speaking calmly:

"Ivan Fyodorovitch, you are getting upset needlessly. I did not apply for your position and don't want to be the director at all. If you find my "literacy" terrifying, submit another candidate, someone less literate. But you must understand that I cannot sign and accept what is not there."

"What do you mean, isn't there? I'm telling you you'll get everything back from Zagotzern and Zagotzkot," Permiakov was yelling and turning red.

"Don't be angry! You won't accomplish anything with anger. Give me their statements that they owe us these things, and everything will be in order."

"I have no written statements and I won't give you any..."

"All right, I'll go to those people who owe these things, and they'll say to me, 'I don't know you and I've never seen you before and I borrowed nothing from you.' So, Ivan Fyodorovitch, we'll draw up a statement not like this one, but one which corresponds to accounting books and in the second column we'll put what really exists. And if anything is

missing, you'll give me statements of accountability."

"Oh, you're clever, clever!" He furiously threw the stamp on the table, "Here take it! That's my whole Station. What there is, you'll find without me," and he walked out the door.

Back again I went to the regional office. I had to take over the Station, only without Permiakov, but rather with a commission. The "favorites" toned down, became polite, apparently, they were afraid that I would seek revenge for all their "dirty tricks" or that I would fire them. But I did not exercise my director's power. I would wait for the "hat."

After a few months, they sent me a "hat," an almost illiterate Tatar. Newly appointed, not yet approved by the office and not yet possessing the authorization of a director, he immediately called a production meeting; this was very important in the Soviet Union.

"Friends, I am strict. I require order and discipline."

"The beginning is not bad." We all glanced at each other, where was that disorder and who was undisciplined.

The director felt secure, proud, although his appearance was far from heroic: his "hundred seam" quilted cotton-filled jacket had worn-out sleeves, his hair was disheveled, - perhaps it had never seen a comb - black like a Negro's, curled, long, his fingernails black and so on. He continued:

"The Bachkar Region has invited us to a socialist competition. They have promised to grow 600 kilograms of tobacco per hectare. And I say that we can grow 1000 kilograms per hectare. We must make an effort!"

We were all silent, because no one had any idea how much tobacco could be grown on one hectare. They were ready to raise their hands "for."

I stood up:

"Before accepting such a promise, one must think a little. I have already grown tobacco here in Siberia, in Komarovka. Besides, I was a bookkeeper and I know how many hectares each collective farm was growing and how much they delivered to the Station. The maximum is 400 kilograms per hectare. So how can we prepare 1000 kilograms per hectare, when we don't even grow the tobacco? After all, the climate of Siberia is not favorable for tobacco. Throughout those 35-40 summer days without frost, the tobacco did not have sufficient time to grow enough leaves."

He interrupted me. The Tatar raised his voice almost to a screech, because in the Soviet Union no one dared to oppose the "superiors." And here, what insolence! He, a Party member, an esteemed Bolshevik was proposing something, and I, a deportee, dared to oppose him!

"What! Anti-government agitation? Do you want to ruin our determination to compete? We must try!"

I tried to say that this was not an agitation, but a realistic outlook at the possibilities. What will we say after we have promised to grow 1000 kilograms but will take in only 7-8? We will disappoint those who believed it to be possible.

I was inexperienced, I was not familiar with the Soviet system. It seemed to me that it was very unethical to make such promises when you knew beforehand that you will not be able to carry them out. However, the director "hat" was an old Bolshevik and knew that it was necessary to "urge" people with big promises. If you don't fulfill them, there will be many reasons for self-justification.

"The hat" was screeching again, that we must try with all our might, that we must compete, that we must not give in to the agitation of "unsuitable elements..." For such, we would find a suitable place, etc., etc.

My frightened children looked at me, while the former director's wife and "favorites" were chattering away enthusiastically as they supported the "hat" and, of course, everyone voted for the proposal to grow 1000 kilograms on one hectare.

At home, my husband and my children again reproached me for getting involved in such matters:

"What do you need all this for? They're old Bolsheviks, they know their system, let them do as they please, you'll just bring misfortune not only on yourself but on your whole family."

Yes! They were right, but I said that if this meeting had taken place after my authorization had been withdrawn, I would have kept quiet, however, I was still the official director and I would have to sign the agreement. I could not sign such stupidities. If we don't fulfill it, I'll be responsible if I don't sign, it's sabotage. Nevertheless, I did not sign, and the "hat" felt like a hero and willingly scribbled his name.

We set up the salary sheets. We had to get money from the bank. On the check, two signatures were necessary: the bookkeeper's and the director's. I kept quiet. The "hat" signed. He went to the bank for the money. There they asked him:

"Where is your authorization from the highest Novosibirsk office? We must verify your signature, its sample, then you will be able to take the money. We consider the director to be Žukauskienė. Her authorization has not been revoked."

The "hat" returned feeling defeated. What to do? Everyone was waiting for their pay, including our family.

"Write out a new check, I'll sign it." I went to the bank and got the money. I stopped at the commandant's office to ask them to take steps that Novosibirsk would withdraw my authorization sooner and would send the authorization for Agbulin.

"So, how is your new director?" asked the commandant.

"Let me answer you with an anecdote I heard a long time ago," I said smiling.

"Fine, fine! Tell me."

"A certain year, to a certain district, the Czar appointed a new governor. After a while, meeting a high-born landowner newly arrived from that district, the Czar asked him:



bridges

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