

# bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

\$6

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Front Cover: Easter eggs decorated with wax by Asta Čmukienė of Leipalingis, Lithuania.

Back cover: Easter eggs decorated using silk fabric. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė

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Vol. 47 No. 3 / April 2023

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

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

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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, 6812 Meadowcrest Drive, Downers Grove, IL 60516-3523. Subscription rates are: US: \$50 per year or \$95 for two years.; International: \$60 plus postage per year payable in advance in US funds. COPYRIGHT: ©2022 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 Reader,

As we know, spring is the time of rebirth in nature and the time of Easter, which this year falls on April 15th. We follow many Easter traditions, one of which is decorating Easter eggs. However, there are traditions that sank into oblivion, and we can only find them recorded in books. Let us remember some very archaic and ancient Lithuanian folk Easter customs.

In the countryside, they used to say that during Holy Week, one should not fight, get angry, or be jealous. Nor should one borrow or lend anything so that good fortune would not leave the house. After the church service on Wednesday, children would tie a fish carved out of wood to a string and drag it around the church. It was said that the herring was being driven out, and with it out, the fasting would end.

Holy Thursday was called Green Thursday or Clean Thursday. Everything in the house that was dirty had to be cleaned. And to stay healthy for the entire coming year, you would find a stream that came from the east and bathe in its golden water at sunrise. People used to bring greenery from the forest, such as lingonberry or bearberry leaves, to decorate the Easter table. The hostess used to bake bread, as it was believed that bread baked on Holy Thursday would not mold. A new pot of salt would be placed by the stove, where it would stay until Easter and protect from thunder. On Holy Thursday, the girls would replant the flowers. Farmers would cut out the dead branches of the apple trees in the garden on that day so that the garden would be more fertile. Beekeepers were lifting the hive caps. But there are also forbidden tasks on that day. They used to say that if you mill, big winds will come; if you weave, the devil will come to help.

Good Friday has always been known as the 'Ghost Easter' or the 'Ghost Door' because it was believed that they come out of purgatory. People used to visit the graveyards and bring their children and grandchildren along with them so that they would know where their ancestors were buried.

On Holy Saturday, you need to bring holy water from the church and an Easter fire from the bonfire in the churchyard. The children would light up a dried-up sponge mushroom, stick a piece of wire in it and run home with the fire smoldering in their hands. Once the fire had been lit, Easter cakes were baked and eggs were boiled.

In many parts of Lithuania, people used to wait overnight in church for the Resurrection Mass. The slumber of tiredness was broken by the jokes of those dressed as devils. Christ's coffin was guarded by young men dressed in makeshift uniforms. In Samogitia, there was even a church puppet theatre showing the Passion of Jesus.

The Easter morning was joyful; even the sun, it was said, danced. And the direction of the wind would foretell the weather for the summer ahead. On Sunday, the villagers did not stay in the town for long because whoever would get home first would do well that year. In the afternoon, young men would visit their neighbors, pass good wishes, play music, and sing songs.

Wishing you a Happy Easter,

**Karilė Vaitkutė**  
Editor

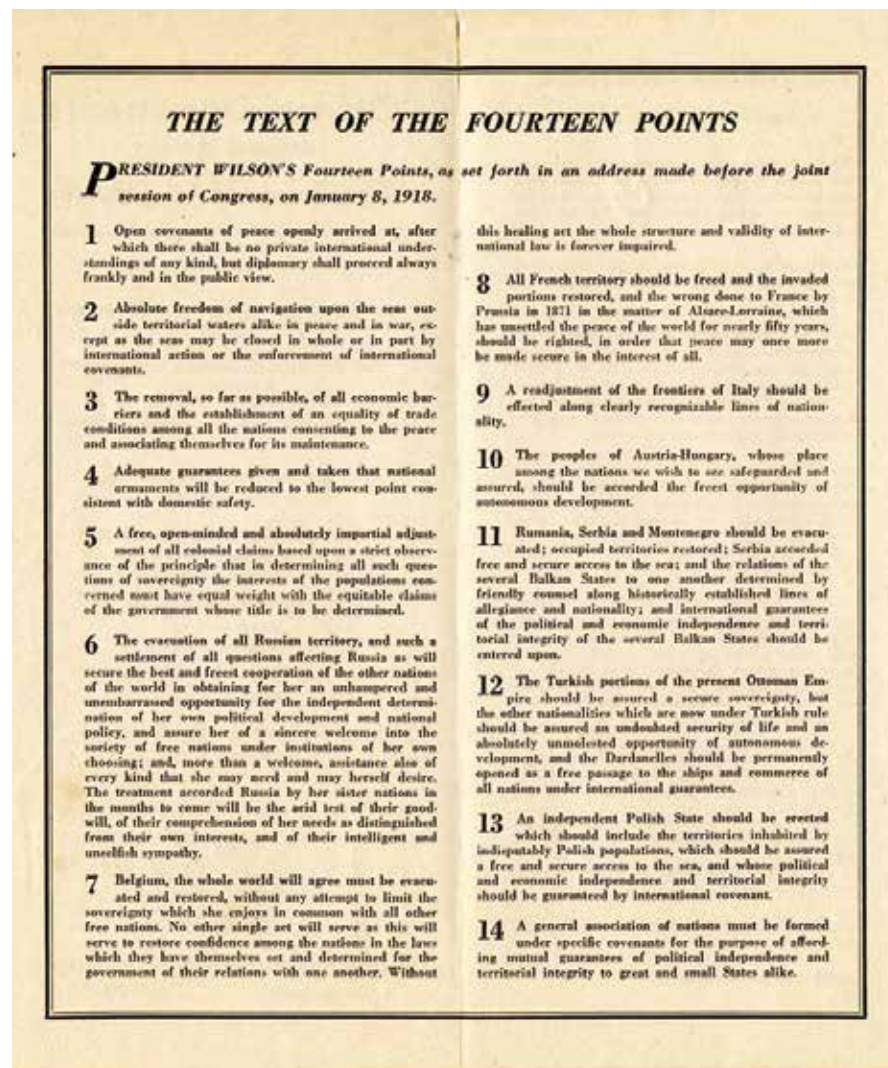
# Lithuanian-Americans Support the Resolutions of the Lithuanian Council in 1918

Juozas Skirius

Vytautas Magnus University Professor

*The outbreak of the First World War (1914-1918) and the withdrawal of the Russian government from the country (1915) gave an impulse to Lithuanians in Lithuania and the diaspora to make efforts to restore their state. Lithuanian American leaders focused their activities in two main directions: to publish articles on the subject of the restoration of the Lithuanian state in the Lithuanian and American press and to try to establish contacts with the US government in order to obtain material support and recognition for independent Lithuania. There was a large-scale upsurge and a sincere desire to sacrifice, which had*

*never been seen in the diaspora before. The hope of returning to a free Lithuania emerged. The wartime period was also important for Lithuanian Americans because it was then that their ideological currents (Catholics, Nationalists, and Socialists) were finally formed and the foundations were laid for their work together to achieve independence for their old homeland. March 13-14, 2023 marks the 105th anniversary of the unanimous decision of patriotic Lithuanian-American groups to support Lithuania's independence and to work together to gain recognition from the US government.*



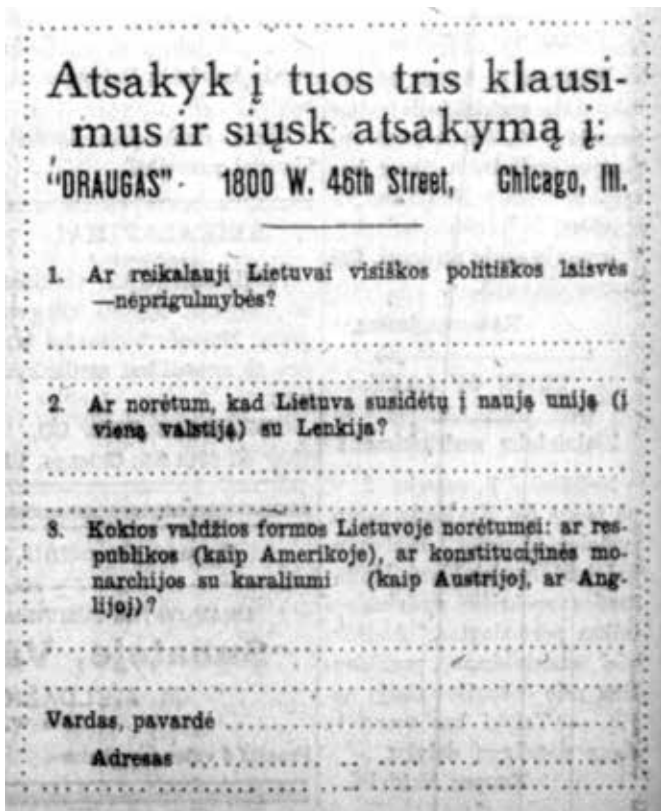
14 Points of President Woodrow Wilson

## The idea of a united Lithuanian-American Congress becomes a reality

At the beginning of 1918, for the first time, something that the entire Lithuanian diaspora (estimated at 700,000) had been striving for happened: the two most influential ideological currents in the diaspora - the Catholics and the Nationalists - finally decided to work together in the political field. They have already established political organizations: the Catholics had formed the Lithuanian-American Council, and the Nationalists founded the Lithuanian-American National Council. What was the final impetus for the Lithuanian-American leaders to take the step towards unity? It was the 14-point Peace Program that President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed on January 8, 1918, in which the Lithuanian Americans did not find the name of Lithuania. Poland was mentioned there, but Lithuania was not! That caused a great uproar among the diaspora. The danger to the Lithuanian nation in Europe (that Lithuania would be annexed to some country again) was felt not only by the leaders of the diaspora



Lithuanian Americans prepare for the National Congress and publish articles on the subject of the Congress and Lithuania's independence. Extracts from the Draugas newspaper.



but also by ordinary Lithuanians. And so, all the Lithuanian communities started massively sending telegrams of protest and resolutions of their meetings to Washington, DC. This massive movement forced the diaspora currents and their leaders to start working more closely.

At the end of January and the beginning of February, negotiations took place between representatives of the Catholics, Nationalists, and Socialists. It was agreed to convene a Congress. At the same time, it was also agreed that during the Congress, neither side would raise any issues that the other participating sides would



be opposed to. It was announced that a National Lithuanian Congress would be convened in New York on March 13-14, 1918. The Lithuanian American delegates were to make a public statement saying that the Lithuanian diaspora wanted to see Lithuania as an independent state. A joint Lithuanian-American appeal to the public was prepared, and the Organizational Commission and the Resolutions Commission were set up.

However, only Catholic and Nationalist representatives agreed to come to New York. The Socialists refused. Furthermore, in their press, they began to strongly criticize the Congress and urge others not to attend. Why? The Socialists adhered to the spirit of internationalism. They saw it important to maintain close links between Lithuanian American workers and workers in other countries and to fight against the so-called bourgeoisie. They advocated "a free Lithuania bound by federal ties to the proletarian state of Russia". At the same time, they opposed the Catholic and Nationalist aspiration for something that socialists called "a Lithuania ruled by the bourgeoisie". That is why the Lithuanian American Socialists refused to participate in the Congress. In the press, the other two currents interpreted this deci-

sion as nothing to lose for the diaspora, because the left was not in favor of Lithuanian independence. And so, the Catholics and the Nationalists began electing their delegates to the Congress.

## **The Resolutions of the Lithuanian American National Congress of March 13-14, 1918**

The large and prestigious Madison Square Garden theatre was rented for the Congress in New York, where 1,101 delegates gathered (the actual attendance was over 1,200 delegates but some did not register properly). About two-thirds of them were from Catholic organizations and one-third was from Nationalist ones. A few dozen represented Lithuanian American Socialists who had disobeyed their leaders.

The Congress began very solemnly. It was opened by a Catholic delegate, Julius Kaupas, the future Lithuanian-American representative in the Lithuanian Constituent Congress. The secretaries were Leonardas Šimutis and Juozas Širvydas (both newspaper editors). All currents appointed their speakers: the Catholics were represented by Jonas Miliauskas and Father Jonas J. Jakaitis, while the Nationalists were represented by Matas J. Vinikas and a lawyer and editor, Bronius K. Balutis. Debates were held. The difficulties that had arisen were overcome, and the Congress finished its work without collapsing. Many years later, Leonardas Šimutis reminisced that although the Catholics had a majority in the Congress, "the majority, which wanted to involve all patriotic Lithuanians in the common work of liberating Lithuania, did not dictate to the minority. It sought ways of agreement and found them".

The Congress delegates adopted 12 important resolutions. One of the most important ones was the demand for independence for Lithuania. The very first resolution congratulated President Wilson as a defender of small nations and expressed the desire of Lithuanian Americans to see "a fully independent Lithuanian nation". In the second and the most important resolution (a kind of continuation of the first), On the Independence of Lithuania, the Congress resolved "to appeal to the President of the United States of America and to all cooperating and neutral states and to demand that they would recognize: 1) That the development of Lithuania requires the establishment of an independent democratic state within ethnographic borders and the necessary correctives for economic life; 2) That the independence of Lithuania should be ensured by a peace congress, in which Lithuanian representatives must also participate; 3) That all these resolutions be duly communicated to the defender of

the small and enslaved peoples, our highly respected President Woodrow Wilson, and to all the cooperating and neutral countries of the world." The resolutions were adopted unanimously.

These resolutions were important political support of Lithuanian Americans to the Lithuanian Council in Vilnius and the Lithuanian Independence Act that the Council proclaimed on February 16th, which the Congress delegates were probably unaware of or were unable to appreciate at the time. This is partly illustrated by an analysis of Lithuanian American newspapers of the time. The press did not mention the Act of February 16th until May and June of the same year.

Other important resolutions were: *On Lithuania's Representation at the Peace Conference, On the Form of Government, On the Return of Refugees and the Reconstruction of Lithuania, On the Position towards Lithuania's Neighboring Nations, On the Lithuanian Land, etc.*

## **The First Lithuanian Mission in Washington, D.C.**

Until the Lithuanian American National Congress, Catholics and Nationalists did their political work separately. After the Congress, it was decided to work together for the liberation of Lithuania. On the second day of the Congress, Bronius K. Balutis, a delegate of the Nationalists and editor of the weekly *Lietuva*, presented a resolution regarding a joint Executive Committee. The text read as follows: "The Lithuanian American National Congress resolves that in order to achieve the independence of Lithuania and in other matters of Lithuanian politics, the Lithuanian American Council and the Lithuanian American National Council shall elect a joint Executive Committee to carry out the joint resolutions of the two Councils. The headquarters and the number of members of that Executive Committee shall be decided by the Councils themselves."

Unfortunately, that joint political body, the Executive Committee, was not finally formed until October 29th in Washington, DC, on the premises of the Lithuanian Information Bureau, which had been in operation since 1917 and was financed by the Catholics. Tomas Norus-Naruševičius was appointed chairman of the Executive Committee, Father Jonas Žilius was appointed secretary, and Jonas Šliūpas and Kazys Česnulis were appointed members. All of them were to live in Washington, DC. Later, the Committee was expanded with the following members: from the Nationalists - Matas Vinikas, Juozas Širvydas, Jonas Liūtas, and Anicetas B. Strimaitis, and from the Catholics - Julius Kaupas, Balys Mastauskas, Jonas Lopatto, and Leonardas Šimutis. These members could live in their respective areas. The Lithuanian

Information Bureau continued to operate. Julius Bielskis continued to head it.

At the end of 1918, on behalf of the Lithuanian government, Jurgis Šaulys, the first envoy to Germany, authorized the Executive Committee to temporarily act as Lithuania's unofficial representative. Thus, the Executive Committee, not only on behalf of Lithuanian Americans but also on behalf of the Lithuanian government, addressed the US authorities on various issues, informed the American public, and constantly reminded them of the necessity of recognizing Lithuania.

At the end of 1919, a delegation of the Lithuanian government (headed by the signatory of the February 16th Act, Jonas Vileišis, and composed of the former Lithuanian Minister of National Defense, Major Povilas Žadeikis, and Father Jonas Žilius), took over the functions of the Executive Committee, leaving its members to continue to work for the Lithuanian state.

The ability of the two main ideological currents of Lithuanian Americans - Catholics and Nationalists - to

agree in 1918 and to work together for "that Lithuania", later became an example for the whole diaspora showing that unity is possible in crucial moments, putting aside one's own ambitions, one's own partisan convictions, in order to achieve a common goal - freedom for Lithuania.

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Twenty members of the first Lithuanian Council in Vilnius, 1917. From the left, sitting: Jonas Vileišis, Dr. Jurgis Šaulys, Fr. Justinas Staugaitis, Stanislovas Narutavičius, Dr. Jonas Basanavičius, Antanas Smetona, Fr. Kazimieras Steponas Šaulys, Steponas Kairys, and Jonas Smilgevičius. Standing: Kazys Bizauskas, Jonas Vailokaitis, Donatas Malinauskas, Fr. Vladas Mironas, Mykolas Biržiška, Fr. Alfonsas Petruelis, Saliamonas Banaitis, Petras Klimas, Aleksandras Stulginskis, Jokūbas Šernas, and Pranas Dovydaitis.

# Omaha Lithuanian-American Community Celebrates 70th Anniversary

By Ingrida Pakalniškytė

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Omaha Lithuanian-American Community (OLAC). Established in April, 1952 by Lithuanians who had immigrated to the United States following World War II, it continues to work hard to preserve the Lithuanian language, customs, and traditions, and to share its rich cultural heritage with the City of Omaha and beyond. As an independent chapter of the larger Lithuanian Community of the United States, OLAC provides a foundation for preserving Lithuania's unique culture.

The book "We Lithuanians", published in 1984, details OLAC's significant accomplishments. Through its leadership and financial support, Omaha Lithuanians have actively participated in various public events and TV programs, sharing their ethnic cuisine, Christmas traditions, folk music and dances both locally and on the national stage.

Community chronicles document that the Lithuanian Omaha Choir participated in Omaha's centennial celebration in 1954. That year, together with the Lithu-



Ausra at XVI Dance festival in Philadelphia July, 2022

anian dance group "Ausra" as well as groups from other nationalities, the choir also performed at a special event welcoming Secretary General of the United Nations Trygve Lie. That event was attended by the governor of Nebraska, Robert Crosby and other government officials, as well as 35,000 spectators.

On May 4, 1975 the Lithuanian choir "Rambynas" received special recognition from Nebraska's Governor J.J. Exon in honor of its 25th anniversary.

Both "Rambynas" and the dance group "Aušra" have represented Omaha at a number of Lithuanian song and dance



SaulesTakas Site Photo Montage







Wood carvings

festivals in Chicago, Cleveland, and other Lithuanian communities around the United States as well as Canada. Last July the “Aušra” group danced in the 16th North American Lithuanian folk dance festival in Philadelphia, and hopes to take their performance to the international Lithuanian folk dance festival in Lithuania in 2024.

The Omaha Lithuanian Women’s Club also promoted Lithuanian traditions by showcasing their unique amber artifacts, wood carvings, jewelry, and fine linens at various Omaha venues. During the annual Christmas tree festival at the Durham Museum, the Club displayed Christmas tree decorating traditions using intricate straw ornaments. One year the women were invited to give a tutorial of straw making ornaments on a local TV program.

The embroidery of linens and traditional costumes reflects a special aspect of Lithuanian cultural heritage. Patterns of embroidery noted in clothes, tablecloths, window treatments, bed coverings and decorations were specific to each region of Lithuania. Individual families inserted additional signature elements to make embroidery uniquely their own. To pass on this art, women in Omaha sewed, stitched and created Lithuanian dolls

dressed in folk dance costumes and displayed their craftsmanship at different festivals and events.

At the initiative of Lithuanians living in Omaha area the community’s connection to Omaha strengthened when Šiauliai, Lithuania and Omaha became Sister Cities in 1996 under then Mayor Hal Daub. Since then, the two cities have built a strong connection through their universities and various cultural exchanges. The creation of the sculpture garden at Lauritzen Gardens featuring Lithuanian wood carvings and folk art is a hallmark of that cultural exchange. The unveiling of the wood sculpture of “Eglė” by Lithuanian artist Aurimas Šimkus was attended by Mayor Jean Stothert and Rolandas Kriščiūnas, the Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania.

OLAC collaborates and maintains close ties with other cultural groups in Omaha. When war broke out unexpectedly in Ukraine in February, 2022, the impact was felt among Omaha Lithuanians. They gathered in big numbers to show a solidarity with Ukrainians. Substantial donations were collected and sent to help refugees forced to flee their homeland. Having regained its independence from the Soviet Union 32 years ago, Lithuanians value



University of Nebraska and University of Šiauliai

freedom, and respect and advocate for the sovereignty of their neighboring countries.

Omaha Lithuanians are proud to be a part of Omaha’s diverse ethnic community and to have the opportunity to share their national traditions and culture with the citizens of Omaha. Spurred by a desire to preserve and share its Lithuanian identity and culture, OLAC continues to accomplish its goals, and now it will be up to the younger generation of Lithuanian-Americans to continue this important work.

## current events

### Security

Lithuanian Defense Minister Arvydas Anušauskas proposed increasing the number of conscripts in 2027 from 3,800 to 5,000 and offering more alternatives to initial military service. After completing their 6-month service, half of the conscripts would be assigned to the reserves and the other half could volunteer for an additional 3 months to fulfill their military obligation.



The annual winter Snow Meeting of security experts was held in Vilnius to focus on support for Ukraine and the forthcoming NATO Summit in Vilnius in mid-July 2023. It is estimated that 5,000 attendees from 40 delegations from NATO members and partner countries will come.

A major gas line explosion occurred near Valakėliai, about 15 miles north of Panevėžys in northern Lithuania, which sent flames about 150 feet into the sky and caused the evacuation of almost all of the 250 residents. AB Amber Grid, which operates the pipeline believes that the cause was a defective weld and not sabotage. This section carries gas from the Klaipėda port to Latvia.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and Polish President Andrzej Duda met at the Potocki Palace in Lviv, Ukraine as the second summit of the Lublin Triangle and among other results confirmed their support for a special international tribunal to prosecute Russia for crimes committed during its war on Ukraine. Mr. Duda said that Poland would transfer some of its German Leopard tanks to Ukraine and President Nausėda said that Lithuania would provide some anti-aircraft systems to Kyiv to protect against Iranian drones. The two NATO members said that they would support Ukraine's admission to the European Union and NATO.

A nine-member delegation of the Seimas Committee on National Security and Defense visited Taiwan for a six-day visit to Taiwan's President and the Secretary General of the National Security Council.

The USS Roosevelt, an Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer, arrived in Klaipėda for a scheduled port visit where it will refuel and unload stores. Roosevelt is forward deployed to the US Station Base Rota, Spain, and had a port call in Tallinn, Estonia.

### Ukraine

The US Department of Defense announced that between 90 and 100 Ukrainian soldiers will begin training on the MIM-104 Patriot air defense systems at Fort Sill, OK. Training is expected to last several months after which Ukraine is expected to receive the first shipment of Patriots. Ukraine currently uses Soviet-era systems including the S-300 and Buk for its ground-based air defense network. Although the Patriot system was designed in the late 1970s, it has been updated with new missiles and other components. It uses the AN/MPQ-53/65 passive electronically scanned array radar which can detect low-cross-section targets and is highly resistant to countermeasures. It is currently in use by at least 17 countries including Germany, Greece, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

January 13 marks the Day of Freedom Defenders to honor the 14 civilians who were killed in Vilnius defending the TV tower against Soviet troops. This year Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky delivered the primary address at the Freedom Prize award ceremony.

The Lithuanian government has allocated 38 million euros to the Ministry of Education, Science, and Sport for Ukrainian refugees. Most (34 million) are directed to the education and transportation of children. On September 1, 2022, more than 13,000 Ukrainian children were registered in kindergartens and schools but there are about 7,500 children between 6 and 16 years that are not in school. The Ministry had asked for 65 million euros for its task.

The Lithuanian Migration Department warned that scammers are sending emails soliciting information from Ukrainian refugees regarding military service. Refugees are cautioned to not respond to this fictitious questionnaire.

Building on the successful campaign to raise 5 million euros for the purchase of the Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2

drone (which was later donated by Baykar), a group of Lithuanian charities has launched a crowdfunding campaign to purchase several Israeli-made radars for about 1 million euros each to defend Ukrainian infrastructure such as power plants and water towers. The group includes Blue/Yellow, Laisvės TV, 1K Fund and Strong Together, and the Lithuanian public broadcaster LRT. The campaign is called "Radarom" which is the combination of the Lithuanian words for "radar" and "let's make it together".

In support of Ukraine, the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theater removed works by Russian composers from this season's schedule including Sergey Prokofiev's ballet Romeo and Juliet and Igor Stravinsky's The Rite of Spring.

## Covid-19

With the lifting of travel restrictions in China, the European Union recommends that Chinese tourists take a Covid-19 rapid antigen test and only travel with a negative result. Vilnius Airport plans to start testing wastewater for Covid-19.

The Constitutional Court ruled that the government of former Prime Minister Saulius Skvernelis did not violate the Constitution with restrictions on beauty and dental services in March 2020. A dental and beauty service provider had sought 34,000 euros in damages from the state for lost revenue as the result of the restrictions.

## Business

Airwallex obtained an electronic money institution (EMI) license from the Bank of Lithuania in October 2021 and plans to expand their Vilnius team from 16 to 20 during 2023. They provide financial infrastructure for e-commerce, travel, and logistics businesses to accept payments and move money internationally. It has raised \$900 million and has a valuation of \$5.5 billion and in 2022 processed \$50 billion in annualized transactions with a global team of about 1,200 in 19 locations in North America, Asia Pacific, and the UK. It services over 150 countries and over 50 currencies.



A Lithuanian renewable energy company, Green Genius, will invest 90 million euros in a 100 MW solar project in Jekabpils, Latvia. The solar park will cover 151 hectares which could power 41,000 households.

The Taiwan Minister of Digital Affairs and the Lithuanian Economy and Innovation Minister have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the implementation of digital technologies in businesses and the development of digital skills of students and teachers.

Taiwan's Industrial Technology Research Institute and Lithuania's Teltonika IoT Group have signed a contract worth 14 million euros to share semiconductor patents and technology. The IoT, the Internet of Things, provides a system of interrelated computing devices, mechanical and digital equipment, objects, animals, or people that can transfer data over a network without requiring human-to-computer or human-to-human interaction. Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs will provide 10 million euros and Teltonika will contribute 4 million euros to the projects which are expected to be completed by 2027.

The World Trade Organization has taken up the European Union's case against China regarding China's banning imports from Lithuania on "health grounds" including wheat, peat, logs, dairy products, beef, and alcohol. The underlying reason is Lithuania's closer ties with Taiwan. Another EU case against China involves patents where Chinese courts barred EU patent owners from turning to EU courts to protect their intellectual property. The European Commission said that Chinese manufacturers had pressured their courts to coerce patent holders to grant them cheaper access to European technology.

The Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant (INPP) shut down the first Soviet RBMK-type reactor in 2004 and the second unit in 2009. Lithuania has contracted with two groups to dismantle the facility. Each contract is for 5.5 million euros and covers 4 years. One group includes Westinghouse Electric Spain, a subsidiary of US Westinghouse Electric and Jacobs Slovakia, and the Lithuanian Energy Institute. The other group includes Electricite de France and Graphitec.

The Lithuanian Central Bank fined Revolut 70,000 euros for failing to submit audited accounts for an important European subsidiary for the 2021 fiscal year. British regulators are also concerned that Revolut has yet to file audited accounts for two important holding companies in Britain after material misstatements were identified in 2022.

# current events

The Vilnius Public Transport, VVT, will receive a loan of 49 million euros from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development for the purchase of 159 new trolleybuses, with 91 being purchased within the next 2 years and the remaining being purchased in 2025 as replacements for existing units. The VVT has 405 buses and 252 trolleybuses.



On November 21, 2013, the roof of the Maxima Supermarket in Zolitude, Latvia collapsed killing 54 people. On January 24, 2023, the Riga Regional Court ruled in an appeal of the criminal case against construction engineer Ivars Sergets. The court originally sentenced Sergets to six years in prison. The court of appeal added six more months to his sentence. In addition, he is required to pay several thousand euros in moral compensation and will not be allowed to work in his profession for 5 years.

The Lithuanian State Data Agency reported that on January 1, 2023, Lithuania had 2,860,000 permanent residents, an increase of about 74,400 from last year, mostly due to an influx of Ukrainian women and children refugees. Last year, 62,000 people came from Ukraine, 9,900 came from Belarus, 5,800 came from the United Kingdom and 3,200 came from Russia. Ukraine was the destination of 4,700 permanent residents who emigrated.

The Lithuanian State Data Agency also reported that the natural population change continued to be negative in 2022. There were 21,900 births (down by 1,400 (-6%)) and 40,300 deaths (down by 7,400 (-15.5%)).

## General

Kęstutis Jucevičius, head of the Financial Crime Investigative Service (FNIT) from 2012 to 2017, was arrested by the anti-corruption watchdog, the Special Investigation Service (STT) on charges of demanding and accepting a 2,000 euro bribe. The STT investigation found that he promised to change a person's procedural status as part of an FNIT investigation and promised the return of assets taken during the investigation.

President Nausėda attended the funeral of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI saying that it was a great loss for the Church and for all the faithful.



The Seimas proclaimed 2023 as the year of the Klaipėda Region. President Gitanas Nausėda spoke at a commemoration event marking the centenary of its incorporation into Lithuania. The region was part of Germany (Memel) but with its defeat in the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles, detached it from Germany and put it under the provisional protection of the French. With Poland and Lithuania both vying for the region, about 1,100 Lithuanian volunteers launched a military operation "Klaipėda Revolt" in January 1923 which took the city. The Principal Allied and Associated Powers decided on February 16, to allow Lithuania to annex the Klaipėda Region.

## February 16th commemoration at the Lithuanian School of Colorado with cepelinas and a quiz about Lithuania

*Kornelija Viečaitė*  
Colorado Lithuanian School teacher

On February 18th, Lithuanians from Colorado, their friends, and guests gathered at the Colorado Lithuanian School to celebrate February 16th, the Day of the Restoration of the State of Lithuania, which is important to every Lithuanian in every corner of the world.

We wanted to celebrate this significant date in a warm and friendly environment and informal meeting. Colorado Lithuanian School organized a support event for the school, during which the parents of the students made cepelinas. There were about 200 pre-orders alone, and during the day, even more cepelinas were made as guests joined in. It was not only Lithuanians who tasted the traditional Lithuanian meat and cottage cheese cepelinas, but also local Americans who were eager to enjoy these Lithuanian delicacies. All the money raised during the event goes to the Colorado Lithuanian Language School, which takes care of the Lithuanian language, customs, and traditions of children living in Colorado.

Thank you to all the sponsors who contributed in one way or another to this event in Colorado!

While some worked in the kitchen making cepelinas, other members of the Lithuanian community in Colorado and guests tested their knowledge about Lithuania in the



# our community



quiz "We Are Together," organized by the Lithuanian Language Commission of the Republic of Lithuania. The Lithuanians of Colorado guessed with enthusiasm and zeal which village is the small Lithuanian cultural capital of 2023, what national holiday Lithuanians celebrated on September 8th in the interwar period, and answered a variety of other questions.

The quiz was also organized for children, both students of the Colorado Lithuanian Language School and guests. The children demonstrated their knowledge of interesting facts about Lithuania and Lithuanian grammar. They had to think how many consonants or vowels end the surname of the current President of Lithuania, how many numerals are in Janina Degutyté's poem "Two hands," and at the same time, guess which Lithuanian tower is taller than the Eiffel Tower in Paris, and what is the name of the famous swimmer and goldfish Rūta Meilutytė, another beautiful symbolic name for Lithuania.



# our community



After both quizzes, the participants left with good moods, smiles, and, we hope, at least a little more knowledge about their homeland. It is not the first time that the Colorado Lithuanian School has become a place where Lithuanians that live in Colorado can come together and create a little Lithuania.



## our community

# Lithuanians chased winter out of their backyards with songs, dances, and energetic relay races

*Kornelija Viečaitė*  
*Colorado Lithuanian School teacher*

On the last Saturday of February, the students of the Lithuanian school in Colorado, together with their parents, gathered to welcome the coming spring and to chase the winter away so that it would return only next year. On a sunny and almost spring-like Saturday, the community of Colorado Lithuanian School danced, made noise, had fun, and in every other way, drove winter out of their backyard.

Participants dressed up as devils, witches, fairies, bears, and horned donkeys, showed who could dance, and lifted their feet "scratched" by straw boots. The celebration was crowned with the traditional fight between the symbols of spring and winter - Kanapinis and Lašininis, played by the boys of higher grades. After a fierce battle and with the help of the children, Kanapinis won. The participants danced the last dance and then, everyone was invited to enjoy pancakes. There were all kinds of pancakes: flour, yeast, cast, and custard - just like a real Lithuanian Užgavėnės.

There were also agility competitions for children. They had to throw a potato on the ground with a wooden spatula, work with a spoon and get their feet wet in a game of chase. Although exhausted, the children ended the day with smiles on their faces and symbolic prizes in their hands.

Winter and snow may not be gone from Colorado yet, but Lithuanians of Colorado are sending their Užgavėnės energy to Lithuania and making sure that winter and snow leave as soon as possible and that there are more and more sunny days.







# our community



# 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

### 61. DOCTOR STASĖ ŠAKENIENĖ

The road of life taken by Doctor Šakenienė, like that of all deported Lithuanians, was thorny and tortuous. Like all Lithuanians, she had been deported not so she could live somewhere else but so she would be destroyed. I had been acquainted with her in Kaunas since my university days, and when we met on the barge as we were being transported north, we felt very close. Fortunately for us, in our place of deportation, we lived almost next to each other. Our family lived on one side of the river at Komarovka, hers on the other. Therefore, we used to meet quite often. She gave us medical help. Sometimes she would come with her little children in the evening to warm herself in our warm, cozy chata and to talk, to console herself. We would treat them with baked grated potatoes and would accompany her into the dark night, the cold snow. She was a physician with a surgeon's specialty, but no one could avail himself of her knowledge because the commandant had forbidden it.

One day, while we were still in Komarovka, a neighbor, Samoilova, came running up crying. Her year-old son was suffering terribly. His whole side was red and burning—it couldn't be touched. The hospital assistant, Paukson, could not help; she said there was a boil inside. I sent Samoilova to Doctor Šakenienė, who performed the operation by cutting out the boil and cleaning the abscess. The woman did not know how to thank her but still was visibly worried about complications. The little patient was relieved and fell asleep. The doctor was getting ready to go home, and the mother, out of gratitude, brought out a glass of cranberries to give her! This was not surprising. She gave what she had herself. If it were summer, the chickens would be laying—she had five of them—and she would give at least some eggs or a liter of milk. Now she had to be satisfied with some berries which grow about 13 to 15 km away, where few have time to pick them, the work at the collective farm and at home being overwhelming.

The doctor stopped by after having been to the neigh-

bor's and said: "Please, help yourselves. I received an honorarium for the operation."

The child recovered. The mother and grandmother spread the word right away to everyone that the Lithuanian doctor had saved their child.

Of course, the information quickly reached Parbig and the militia. This was due to the services of the farm's commandant, Shabalin. Immediately, the representatives of the hospital and militia arrived from Parbig.

The interrogation of Samoilova: "Was the doctor wearing a white gown? Did she anesthetize?" And so on.

The woman was very angry and insulted the interrogators since she was furious at their insolence.

The interrogators only threatened her with prison, but they warned the doctor that she should not dare practice medicine.

In the spring, the doctor, together with all the others, was sent to do hard labor: dig soil, hoe potatoes, and so on. She did not have the strength to fulfill the norm. Instigated by Shabalin, the governing body of the collective farm threw out Šakenienė as a member of the farm.



She was very pleased about that, since, in any case, no matter how much you work on the collective farm, the reward was the same: the workdays are written down, but you get nothing for them. She wrote an application to be released from Komarovka. The commandant answered in the negative. Without permission, she went to Parbig, to the regional commandant. She returned with an order for Shabalin to release her immediately.

Doctor Šakenienė, having tied up in bundles what clothes she had that were not yet worn away into rags takes her children and sets out for the regional center to seek her fortune. They all weaken along the way. The load gets heavier. Especially heavy, and until then not needed, is the bundle with the medical books and physician's diploma. After 8 km, in Bolotka on the way, at the local teacher's house, she leaves her books and diploma. Mortally tired, she reaches Parbig together with her small children. She receives shelter at the house of some old people. She has to look for a job. After all, she is a physician. She goes to the local hospital.

"Take me at least as an orderly or a cleaner." The director of the hospital answers rather roughly: "There is no room. All positions are taken."

Tears. But with tears, you will not feed yourself or your children. She gets a job at the Manufacturing Enterprise. She is given a yoke and pails. "You will carry water to the locomobile." She becomes exhausted. She drags the pails slipping and sliding. She cannot bring it quickly enough. To bring the water she gets a mangy, lame horse and a barrel. The water is taken from the river. The banks are steep and slippery. She fills the barrel. The little horse slides, stumbles, and barely makes it up the bank. She doesn't have the heart to whip him and urge him on by force. She leaves the horse with the sled on the bank, then scoops the water from a hole in the ice and pours it into the barrel. She, a physician, a specialist in surgery, pities the poor, lame horse, even though no one pities her, a human being, a mother of children. Having bundled her feet with rags, with one hand, she pulls the little horse by the reins. In the other one, she has—a rosary. One must seek solace somewhere.

Bringing the water in this fashion perhaps takes too long. Someone else is appointed to this task. The doctor is told to chop wood.

One day, the director of the hospital herself comes personally:

"Does Šakenienė work here? Is she on the job?" she asks.

"Yes, she is. What do you want?" says Šakenienė roughly.

"You are being summoned immediately by the Regional Health Section."

The doctor shakes off the sawdust and the snow and

goes to the Regional Health Section.

"You are a doctor?"

"Yes, I am a doctor."

"Do you have a diploma?"

"Yes, I have, but I left it at Bolotovka."

"An operation is needed immediately. You see what kind of weather it is: the sky and earth seem like one. Planes are not flying. We cannot bring a surgeon from Tomsk. Get ready for the operation. We'll retrieve the documents."

"Lord! Is it really possible? Will I again be able to help people according to my specialty?" thinks the doctor, extremely moved. But a physician cannot be emotional. He needs a clear head and self-control.

She throws off her rags. She washes herself. Her hands are rough; her fingers are stiff.

What kind of a patient is it? Will the operation be a success? There are a hundred questions. Until they bring her diploma from 18 km away, she soaks her hands in warm water, scrubs them, massages them, and prays to God that He will give her strength and that everything will be successful.

The patient is the wife of a high official. The horses of the militia are like dragons. Neither storms nor snowdrifts are obstacles for them. After three hours, Šakenienė's documents and medical books are presented. During that time, the physician has become acquainted with the patient's medical history and gotten ready.

This is how she recounted everything later: "As soon as I put on my white gown, the cozy, warm atmosphere of the hospital enveloped me. I immediately felt I was a human being, a physician. I felt strength in myself and regained my self-confidence. The operation was difficult: a supplicated, burst appendix. In such cases, there is almost no hope."

But Doctor Šakenienė was nevertheless successful in saving the woman's life. After the successful operation, the patient would need additional hospital care.

The director of the hospital and a young physician, Vesiolova, having assisted with the operation, saw what the Lithuanian Doctor Šakenienė was capable of. And so, she was accepted into the hospital as an assistant! She would be able to take care of the patient herself.

While she was tending to this first patient, they brought in a little girl with diphtheria from Vysoko-Jaro (about 60 km away). She was choking, turning blue. Her little throat was swollen. There was almost no pulse.

The situation was hopeless. The director of the hospital just waved her hand despairingly. Šakenienė was of a different opinion. But it was necessary to operate immediately. The mother, in tears, was imploring Šakenienė:

"Save my little daughter, Doctor, save her somehow!"

She is getting ready for the operation. But the nurse

announces, "There is no more pulse!"

Šakenienė makes a decision: A throat incision, a tube is inserted. Air gets into the lungs. The membrane covering the throat flies out through the mouth.

"There's a pulse!" shouts the nurse.

The girl is saved and gets well. After a while, her mother arrives. Wanting to thank the doctor, she offers her a cow! Naturally, Šakenienė refuses the gift--it would cause her own doom due to jealousy from the powers.

And so operation followed operation, all successful. And when the representative of the Public Health Office came from Tomsk in the summer and asked, "Why is it that you never ask for a surgeon from Tomsk," he got the answer: "Now we have our own surgeon, Doctor Šakenienė, the very same person the director of the hospital had so roughly rejected. But her position was still only that of an assistant. A deportee was always suspect. To appoint her to responsible duties was forbidden. She was only able to work as a qualified physician because in this place they did not have a specialist of this type.

## 62. WE HELD ON

Starvation is distancing itself from us. We had planted the whole garden. The harvest is good. We have enough vegetables and potatoes. We are even baking bread from the flour we saved up every couple of days. I grate potatoes. I mix bread not with water but with raw potato liquid. It comes out very well: it is thrifty and tasty. We are regularly able to buy milk from our neighbor.

Together with Stasiukas, we gathered feed for the director's cow from the corners of the taiga. For doing that we got a piglet. There would even be enough potatoes to feed him. He was not big—only five weeks old. But he needed something stronger than just potatoes. And here we found a solution. The two Liudai on their way back from work would stop at the leather processing shop. There they could often get the membranes removed from the processed hides. The membranes include some fat, so adding them to the potatoes gives the potatoes the smell of meat. Soon "Whitey" the pig was growing as if on yeast.

Besides that, Stasiukas gets a weir. The day he places it in the brook, look: he catches a little fish.

We held on! Hope was strengthening us. We thought that perhaps we would be able to return to Lithuania soon. Only no one was answering from Lithuania, no matter how often we wrote. It could not be that everyone had perished. My last attempt: I wrote to my sister Slavėnienė in Šeštokai, even though there was little hope. She had only been teaching there. It was possible that neither she nor the school was left. The boys, Stasiukas and Liudukas, wrote to Aušros gimnazija in Kaunas. \* Maybe

they would send them their certificates of study. After a period of about three weeks, letters came from my sister and from Aušros gimnazija. Who can describe how much joy we had, how many hopes! My sister wrote that we should send a certificate that we are allowed to receive packages. Then she would be able to send us food and clothing since without such a certificate the post office does not accept mailings.

Immediately, we all take out those required certificates from our respective jobs and send them to Lithuania. This takes a long time. To Tomsk, by horse and oxen is about 300 km. That takes a month or even a month and a half. After that, the certificates must travel by steamboat on the Ob to Novosibirsk and go from there by train. By then, it will be summer. Little riverboats go from Parbig to Kolpashevo, and from Kolpashevo come more powerful boats. But still, until we exchange letters, it will take three to four months.

Finally, towards fall, my good sister sent me three packages: one with smoked bacon, and two with clothing. Liudukas received his high school diploma from Aušros gimnazija while Stasiukas received a certificate for eleven years of study and a letter with 500 rubles from his former homeroom teacher and his friends and classmates.

What joy! What happiness to the point of tears! We received news from Lithuania. Sometimes the letters were coded, but for us, even without the key, they were easily understood. For the coded words were actually euphemisms: "Gražina" for Lithuania, "godfather" for Stalin, "chess playing" for partisan fights, and so on, were not understood by the censors and were not objected to. In this fashion, we learned about those who had died and those who had been deported. Liudukas found out that two of the girls from his class were fishing on the Lena River at -40 or -50C. They were catching fish with nets and with bare hands. (Apparently, one can get used to anything!) Some had died from things as simple as frostbite. There was much news. It was mostly tragic. In general, our epoch is tragic, savage, and sad. There is no creative initiative, no joy, and no goodness. Throughout, there is only destruction and dreadfulness. Again, I recall the verses of Liudas Sakalinis,\* written after the war of 1915-1918:

When truly  
Will clear skies return  
With the dawn of another life?  
When people become calm,  
Then the soul will be reborn  
To feel the sacred rays.

Instead of "When the people become calm," I would say: "When they forget revenge."

Aušros gimnazija - In 1915 Aušra High School was the first high school established in Kaunas. It was given the name "Aušros," meaning "of the dawn" in 1923. Many great intellectuals graduated from this school, among them the President of Lithuania, Valdas Adamkus. It is still in existence.

Lena River - Northern Siberia (N 70° 44.280' E 127° 21.281'). It was one of the harshest and worst places where deportees were taken. The temperatures would fall to -50C, and people, mostly women, would have to fish with their bare hands in freezing water. The conditions there were the most inhumane. A very good account of this area is given in a short leaflet called "Frozen Inferno."

Liudas Sakalinis – the pen name of the author's husband, Captain Liudas Žukauskas. His poetic work was not prolific. To our knowledge, he published one collection – "Širdis ir plienas" ("Heart and Steel").

### 63. ONE MORE JOY

At the beginning of 1946, the commandant arrived, called together the "new contingent," and read the decision of the Soviet Government, that we had been deported not for 20 years but forever.

"So there is your Pentecost, Granny!"\*

When we were first brought here, we were told that we were deported for only five years, and when the Front was already moving westward, they delighted us with 20 years of deportation, and now, here was a real joy—deportation for a lifetime!

Actually, most of the deportees had already died. From the ones I knew, two Juozukai\* had died: the high school graduate Lazauskas, about whom I wrote previously, who went out of his mind and died in Komarovka; the other one, who also became insane, was the policeman Juškėnas. Also dead were the family of the old Savickai, who used to come begging, a family of three people; Vitas Astrauskas, the youngest of Namajėnienė; the former attorney Žilinskas, and others. And all of these within the previous three years and in only the one settlement of Komarovka! Who would be left after 20 years? So it was the same, 20 years or for one's whole life.

\*"So, there is your Pentecost, Granny!" - A saying meaning that something joyful you were waiting for is a great disappointment.

\*Juozukai - once again, the plural ending in -ai for two boys named Juozas.

### 64. OUR THIRD PALACE IN SIBERIA

The rising waters of the river in Parbig forced a lot of logs into the canal of our garden, and the water flooded

our shack up to the roof.

We had to evacuate. The director assigned another lodging temporarily. We got the idea that we should build ourselves another, better hut, especially since fate itself—the flooding river—had supplied us with building materials. No one counted the logs here. It didn't matter if a thousand logs more or less reached the final dock, and our palace needed only about half a hundred.

The children began to get busy at once. As soon as he didn't have to load the barges, Stasiukas grabbed an ax. On Sundays, Liudas came to help. Having asked for permission at the sawmill of the Manufacturing Enterprise and having asked a couple of young men to help, he cut boards for the ceilings, floors, roof, partitions, and other things. Having gotten horses from the MTS, he brought them to the building area. Since we were four workers, we easily received a warrant for bricks, lime, and glass. These materials were brought by boat.

After about three months, our palace rose: 3m x 6m=18 sq. m.

It was a true palace, with a real glazed tile stove and two glass windows. Besides, this hut was built in a higher place where the flooding waters of the river did not reach.

We acquired fish traps and a fish spear. Once the waters receded, we had fish quite frequently.

Once in a while, we would give a present of a two-pound pike to the director. For this, his wife would give us a piece of bacon and 3 or 4 liters of milk.

As I mentioned, the average workers or collective farmers did not raise pigs since they had nothing to feed them, while in Melstroy, the director was almost the first who raised even a two-year-old pig. He lived alone with his wife and much preferred to eat fish to somewhat rusty bacon.

We planted about 12 ares\* of potatoes and all sorts of vegetables. We got vegetable seeds from Lithuania.

\*12 ares = 1/4 acre. For a more exact explanation, see note in Ch. 15.

### 65. INCONSTANCY OF SUPERIORS

It is difficult to say, but those officials holding responsible positions had to be replaced quite frequently. It was a poor and harsh life, so each one who came close to the government corn bin, couldn't resist dipping into it. So, at the "Tobacco Station," three directors were replaced within two years. Permiakov was removed because of those 3600 rubles. He was not sentenced but sent off to the Front in spite of the fact that he only had one eye. I resigned myself. I do not know how long "The Hat" could have held on, but in 1945 the station itself was liquidated, since the southern frost regions had already

been liberated from the Hitlerites, and was more suitable for the growing of tobacco. The manager of the store also changed, even though there was nothing to steal there—they used to sell only rations of bread according to coupons and 400 grams of salt per person per month. The manager of the manufactured goods station was also changed.

He was sentenced to five years in prison. The manager of the grain-storing station was replaced at his own request. The director Chudynov of Zagotzerno, whom we found when we came at the beginning of 1945, gave over his duties to his assistant Deyev as being more literate. But the latter only lasted a few months. After him, they sent the communist Moskolenko. However, even he barely lasted one year. After the grain had been taken away, and an inspection made, something was found to be not right. The warehouseman and the accountant were removed, while the director was put in prison. Of course, first, they took away his Party Card. The hearing was closed. No one knows what he was charged with.

Another Party member, Mangaziev, came to fill the director's position, and Tatar Shalin was appointed chief bookkeeper. About them, I shall speak later since they carried out a major swindle. A new teacher also arrived, a gypsy, Maria Georgiyevna. She knew more or less how to teach the children to read and write, but as far as arithmetic was concerned—not an iota. Juozukas was already in the third grade. He always solved his problems because if he did not understand something, I would explain it to him. The others had no such recourse.

"How do you always solve them?" the teacher asked him once since she herself was capable neither of solving them nor explaining them.

"My mother explains if I don't understand something," answered the child.

And so, one day, the teacher came to my hut and asked that I explain problems with fractions to her. She was completely unable to unravel them. The problem was more or less the following:  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the collective field is planted with wheat,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the remaining field is planted with barley, and  $\frac{2}{5}$  of the remaining field is planted with potatoes. The remaining part of 120 hectares was left for rye. How big was the field?

## 66. MY NEW JOB

The teacher immediately asked that I agree to be the school's cleaning lady. At first, I was rather dubious. Even though all work is honorable, having been a middle school teacher, having been a bookkeeper-inspector of foreign payments in a government bank, and even in Siberia having even been a director, to be a cleaning lady in an elementary school seemed rather shaming.

"Don't think that you will have to do everything. I'll wash the floor myself. The pupils will have to tidy up the classroom after class. You will only stoke the stove and take care of the keys. During the remaining time, you'll help me with the math problems."

Well, what could I say? The conditions were better than good. The job was right by my home, I would get bread every day, the pay was steady, and helping the teacher to extricate herself from the scholastic labyrinth would be mere child's play. I agreed.

The teacher moved in next door—at Michailovna's. It was quite pleasant to associate with her.

We decided to have a party for New Year's Eve. What could we plan? We decided to invite young people from amongst the workers to participate in a concert. There were four young men of the same age as Stasiukas, but of girls who were seasonal collective workers, there were more. There was a troupe to make up a choir.

The Program. The choir would sing several popular folk songs. The harmonica player would play some popular songs. The pupils would recite some poems. Stasiukas would sing "An Oak Is Growing in the Forest" in a duet with a girl who had a beautiful voice. With all that, everyone would have a good time.

Among the others, Juozukas would recite a Lithuanian poem written by his father. I suggested to Maria that the poem also be recited in Russian. So I translated "To the Unknown Soldier" into Russian; I did it rather well, I think. But I was told I shouldn't have bothered. "If they don't understand, they don't need to. Let their ears twitch."

"Well, if there's no need, there's no need, but then we ought to organize some sort of play," I suggested

"But what? And how could we perform?"

"True, to find a suitable short skit ready-made would be hard, but to think up some fantasy about 'Santa Claus' and 'the Snow Maiden' is not difficult. On the other hand, what can we dress in for costumes? We have to stop thinking of something so elaborate!"

"Well! Everything you say is true. And everyone is in rags. We have nothing to wear every day, so why talk about fantasy costumes!"

Nevertheless, we decided to perform at least one scene from Gogol's work *The Inspector General*.

It was quite a performance! We prepared the evening before in the school. The young people prepared the stage elevation with great enthusiasm. We did not have a curtain. Stasiukas was the mayor, another young boy played Chlestako, and so on. Since Stasiukas' pants were torn, and he didn't have any others, one of the guards from Zagotzerno lent him a pair. The pants were sewn from a stolen government sack.

On his seat was a stamp, not very visible but with the

dye not completely obliterated and still noticeable.

Chlestakov appeared with the same kind of pants, over which he had let his shirt hang and belted it. All the actors were without make-up.

Nonetheless, the play went on!

And everyone found it beautiful.

Everyone was in a good mood. Everyone was pleased.

That little evening was our first show but not our last.

However, Maria taught only one year and the other teacher did not want to waste his time with such silliness.

He was a family man more interested in his everyday life than culture. I also lost my job, since this teacher's wife took over my duties, and the new teacher could solve arithmetic problems himself.

## 67. THE ATTACKS OF THE GIRLS

Our children grew into good-looking young men. They were handsome not only to their mother but to others also. Girls especially showed them their liking, and not just ordinary ones. Since Stasiukas was a good actor and singer, any one of the girls would have liked to have him as her own. However, he was friendly with all of them but showed no special preference for anyone. The teacher, Maria Georgiyevna, especially tried to attract him, but without success. Once she came over to me and said, "Am I beautiful?"

"Of course, you are beautiful. You are so slim. You have such beautiful, big eyes, and your hair—it's a real masterpiece!" I said to her because she really was beautiful.

"So, why does your son not appreciate me?"

"What are you talking about? He really appreciates you and respects you greatly. He is constantly praising you for your refinement and your activity."

I would have told her much more, but she interrupted me: "So why doesn't he want such a treasure?"

I did not understand right away that Stasys was refusing to share a common bed with her.

"I don't demand that he live with me his whole life, but while I am here, I want a man," she said.

I must confess that such an avowal stunned me. I never expected that a young woman would demand that, even though she was a Soviet and a hot-blooded gypsy.

"It seems to me, Maria Georgiyevna, that nothing will come of this.

I shall not propose such things to my son. Look for some Russian man. They are more gallant. Lithuanians are cold-blooded.

"Nevertheless, if we were left somewhere alone together, I would seduce him. He couldn't resist." Here she really shocked me! Such burning passion I could not imagine.

"Well, you know, Maria, I gladly help you solve arith-

metic problems, but I categorically refuse to help in matters of love. Don't speak of this to me. And, as for my son, I won't even mention our conversation to him or your wishes."

She left, disappointed and displeased.

After some time had elapsed, she found herself for a few nights a Russian who had sailed there on some boat. But there was a problem: she had no blanket. What rich people! A teacher who could not even save up enough money for a blanket. She ran over to the manager of the base of the manufactured goods to borrow a blanket for the purpose of tracing the designs. There was only one room where she lodged. The owner's bed was at one end of the chata, Maria's at the other—closer to the door and the stove. The children were quite grown and were sleeping on the hearth.

Who could believe that a teacher could bring a man home under such circumstances or behave in such a way?

And yet, it was so! To make matters worse, Russians do not know how to be quiet. Immediately, the whole settlement was bursting with laughter, about how the teacher was tracing designs. The woman, who had lent her the blanket came running over, cursed her out in the worst possible language, and took back her blanket. That man visited her a few more nights and then took off. Soon after, Maria moved away not only from Melstroy, but out of the region completely.

I had mentioned that after Liudukas' "cold bath," he was tended to and later nursed not only by Doctor Šakenienė but also especially cared for by the young Doctor Liuda Vesiolova.

When they wanted to send Liudukas off somewhere farther away or to a more difficult job, Doctor Liudmila immediately protested and wrote out a medical excuse. The group leader once said, "Don't bother him, he's walking around with the doctor hand in hand."

Of course, Doctor Šakenienė could not behave so boldly—she was a deportee and was under constant surveillance and control. By contrast, Liudmila was free and had strong backing in Tomsk. She was not afraid of anything. You can't argue with a doctor. With her influence, the superiors appointed him as an electrician and were very pleased that he turned out to be a rather good specialist.

The friendship between Liudukas and Liuda became stronger. They often went to the club to dance or would go for walks together. Liuda would quite often take his arm in public. But even the beautiful Liuda was not content with dances and walks—she proposed marriage to Liudas. He became confused and immediately turned to me for advice.

"You know, my son, Doctor Liuda is a very beautiful



and very pleasant young woman, a doctor with higher education. But, in my opinion, she does not suit you as a wife. You will only be her servant. She is even now dictating her wishes to you, and you carry them out obediently. Here, where there are no Russian people of her level, she likes you. But she won't stay here forever—you will remain not a widower, but no longer a young, unattached man. Besides, Russian women are not very constant in general. What guarantee do you have that after a while, she will not tire of you?"

And so, the friendship of the two Liudai cooled off. Doctor Liuda was highly insulted. As if wanting to get even or to show that she had no shortage of men, she began to go to the dances with the Jew, Gendler. She found no Russians at her station. Shortly thereafter, she moved away from Parbig altogether.

And there was one other woman interested in Liudukas.

A young widow, Genė Snarskienė, arrived from Komarovka.

There she had been "friends" with the new chairman of the collective farm. He was not married but had already chosen my former superior, Tonia, the daughter of the former chairman of the collective farm. She, of course, was angry at her competitor and complained to the commandant. The latter ordered the president to send Gene to a farm 12 km away as a milkmaid.

Many people were getting permits to leave the collective farm.

There was a decree that if a woman had a husband who was not a collective farmer, she could leave to join her husband without any hindrance. And so, Genė came to Parbig looking for a husband, since her real husband, with whom she had only lived six months until the deportation, had died in the camp, while her son, who had been born at Komarovka, barely survived three weeks.

In Parbig she wanted to buy herself a fictitious husband so that she could move off the collective farm.

Until 1945, the union of a man and woman in the Soviet Union had been unregulated: no marriage license, no obligations. After having lived together as long as they liked, a couple could later, if they grew tired of each other, go off wherever they pleased.

Of course, most often, it was the man who left since the woman would have a child and all the worries were on her.

It was a rare man who wanted to raise children and have family responsibilities. But the war was over. The officials had come in contact with a cultured, civilized world where family relationships were handled differently. So in the USSR, family relationships were reorganized and suitable laws and registration for marriage licenses were introduced.

And so Genė offered one boy, then another, her former husband's boots and suit so that he would register with her as her husband. If he didn't want to, he didn't have to live with her—he only needed to sign a document giving her the right to leave the collective farm "so that she would be united with her family."

The bribe was not small. It was no joke to get a pair of boots and a suit simply for a signature.

But not one of the young men accepted.

Then Genė started to pester my husband to urge Liudas to marry her. The father was softhearted. He was always determined to do good for people. He himself knew quite well what a "sweet life" it was to work in servitude on a collective farm. So he talked Liudas into signing a fictitious marriage certificate.

When he went to register, the district chairman said to Liudas, "Think of what you're doing. Why do you want a noose around your neck?"

It is easier to put on than to take off."

But Liudas felt uncomfortable in renegeing. He was an honorable boy. He had promised. And to run away at the last moment, to disappoint a woman, he lacked the resolution.

And so, Genė Snarskienė, having kept her last name, received a certificate saying that she had married Liudas Žukauskas. She left for the collective farm to obtain a release.

The administration of the collective farm, basing itself on the new law, no longer had the right to detain her at the collective farm. In such a way, Genė moved to Parbig and got a room with another Lithuanian girl, Marytė, in an abandoned chata. But it was risky to live apart from one's husband. Both could be punished for the deception. And so, for the sake of appearances, she talked Liudas into living in the same chata at least for a while. Liudukas moved in with the women unwillingly. He got nothing for it: neither the promised boots nor the suit.

And he lost his right to eat in the dining room. He was no longer issued a coupon for dinner—he had a wife, therefore, he was taken care of at home. And he, poor boy, wanting to remain "a straw man," cooked his own dinner and took care of everything himself.

Genė, in truth, started trying to seduce him and even invited him into her bed since he was sleeping on the floor. But Liudas, frightened at becoming a real husband, refused the warm bed and moved in with some Russian.

Genė found herself Petras, who agreed to be her true husband and received the boots and the suit. Before that, Petras had been living with a Russian widow who was raising three children. She used to feed him and do his laundry. With great vexation, she cursed the deserter Petras and the seductress Genė, although such morals surprised no one.

# EASTER EGG DECORATING TRADITIONS

...Decorated Easter egg is a symbol of life, renewal, and fertility. It remains the most important part of Spring festivals, from Easter to Pentecost...

...Spring festivals are celebrations of joy, expressed by twirling, dancing, or swaying. This dynamic is represented in art by circles, concentric circles, and wreaths. Folk art and folklore show the power of the sun: its strong dynamism, its variety of shapes, its special color changes, and its harmony...



Easter eggs decorated by Virginija Muntvydienė of Šiauliai District, Lithuania



Easter eggs decorated by Vitenė Repšienė of Kupiškis District, Lithuania

...One of the oldest Easter egg decorating methods involves painting various patterns with wax. The egg must be boiled, and the wax needs to be hot, otherwise, it will not apply correctly. The patterns painted on eggs include “the sun, stars, plants, snakes” – common rebirth symbols in Lithuania...

...Once the wax hardens, the egg is dipped in a colorful natural dye extracted from various types of plants: grass, thatch, tree branches, flowers, and even some vegetables. Specific plants supply a specific color of dye. For example, alder bark would color the egg black, onion skins would give off a light yellow or dark brown tint, and beetroot would color the egg red...

...When decorating Easter eggs, Lithuanians usually first divide them in half with a band of some kind of ornament. These are symbols of the rising and setting Sun. This is a cyclical conception of time, typical of peoples of agricultural culture. The timeline thus divides the egg in half. The sky is at the top; it must contain the sun of the day. At the bottom is the lagoon of the underworld, where, according to mythological images, the sun sails each night in a boat to the east...

...The colors carry a specific symbolic meaning. For example, red represents life, and yellow is used in the hopes of attracting a plentiful harvest season. A green Easter egg symbolizes spring and greenery, while a black one, symbolizes soil...



Easter eggs decorated by Genovaitė Vyšniauskienė of Kelme District, Lithuania



Easter eggs decorated by Marija Banikonienė of Alytus District, Lithuania



Easter eggs from the collection of the Lithuanian Scientific Society, late 19th - early 20th century. From the collection of the Lithuanian National Museum

...Our ancestors believed that there were many gods. Eggs were sacrificed to the earth goddess Žemyna, as well as to the gods of the house (the eggs for them were decorated with a spiral design), and they were put in cemeteries and crossroads. Easter eggs for Žemyn were decorated with plant motifs and were to be given as a gift or buried under the ground on St. George's Day. On Holy Thursday, people would go to the cemetery to bury Easter eggs. The egg of the goddess Milda was important for conception...

...During Easter breakfast, one of the eggs was to be divided into as many pieces as there were people in the household. The head of the family would have the first slice, followed by everyone else – from eldest to youngest. Housemistress would have the last slice. This ritual was believed to bring abundance and wealth to one's home...

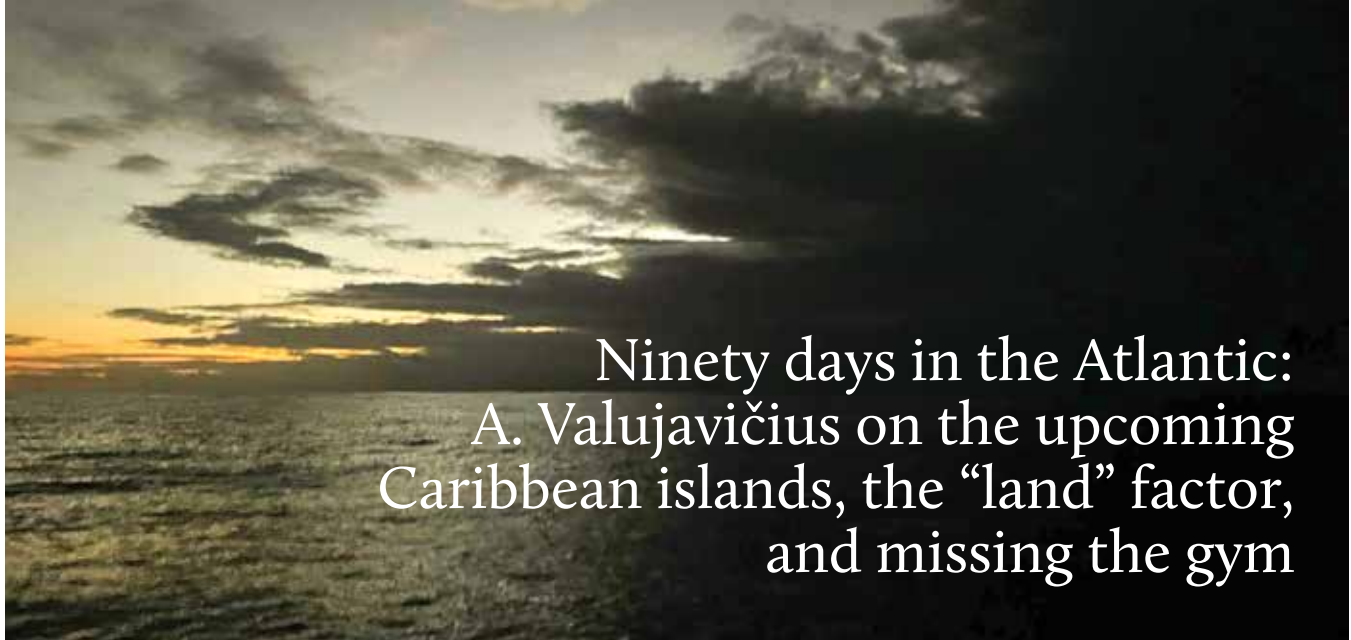


Easter eggs decorated by Lina Valutkevičienė of Lazdijai District, Lithuania



Easter eggs decorated by Odeta Tumėnaitė-Bražėnienė of Rokiškis District, Lithuania

...Other important Easter traditions include egg cracking and egg rolling. One would take a hard-boiled margutis and then tap the egg of the opponent, aiming to crack their egg without breaking one's own. The egg rolling game involves people rolling eggs off an incline plank in turn and trying to hit previously rolled eggs. If one's egg hits another, one can take both. Whoever collects the most eggs, wins...



# Ninety days in the Atlantic: A. Valujavičius on the upcoming Caribbean islands, the “land” factor, and missing the gym

For 90 days now, traveler Aurimas Valujavičius has been making his dream come true – alone, unsupported, and unaccompanied, he is paddling across the Atlantic Ocean toward the shore of North America. With a favorable wind, which on some days reached a speed of 37 kph, he cuts through the waves of the ocean and rapidly approaches the Caribbean islands. After letting go of his oars, he shares his thoughts on three months spent in the ocean.

“Good and favorable winds have settled in so far, so it's going well towards Miami. The Caribbean islands are only a couple of hundred nautical miles away. Maybe in a few days, I'll start seeing lights, maybe not. But islands don't impress me, and I don't have the “land” factor at all. The finale of the trip for me is Miami, and everything

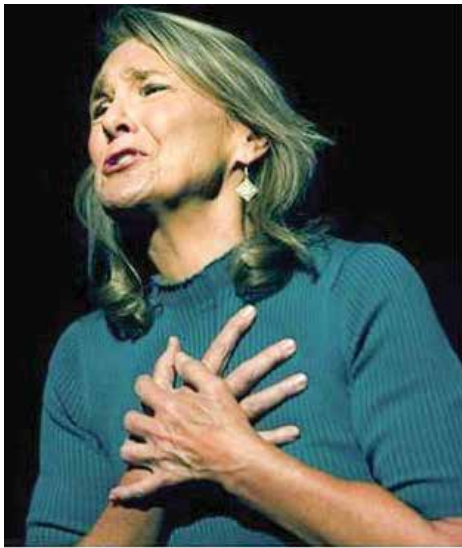


else doesn't matter. On the contrary, more land means more shipping, and it just means more danger to me.

I've gotten used to the image of seeing only the ocean, so the passing ships just raise my alertness level, and my relaxation disappears. My health is fine, as it was three months ago. It's only with nostalgia that I remember the gym – so one of the first things will be to go back to it. I don't miss anything anymore. It's a bit sad that the journey is coming to an end,” says a traveler rowing in the open ocean for 90 days.

A. Valujavičius aims to cross the Atlantic Ocean from the mainland of Europe to the mainland of North America (a seaport in Florida) in 110 days or less in a single rowing boat, thus celebrating the 90th anniversary of the famous Lituania flight of S. Darius and S. Girėnas, and to set the Lithuanian record and break the world record. By doing so, the traveler will become the first Lithuanian and the third person in the world to complete such a route.





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VOLUME 47

ISSUE 3

LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

