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# 100 Years Later: A Facebook Post and a Monument in the Ramygala Cemetery Reunite the Kraujalis Family

Michael Kraujalis

My paternal grandfather, Motiejus Kraujalis, came to America from Lithuania in 1906 when he was 16 years old. He died in 1968 a few months before I was born. He went by “Mike” in America, and I was named Michael after him. I have some vague memories of my paternal Lithuanian grandmother, Josephine, who died a few years later. I remember visiting her home in Chicago and the smell of Lithuanian black bread and bacon. Smells I would later associate with the holidays when we would celebrate our heritage by baking kugelis and eating Lithuanian rye bread that my father would get from the Cicero Bakery in Chicago.

Growing up in the 1970s and 80s when Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union, it seemed impossible that I would ever visit Lithuania. Our family in America had no contact with relatives there. When Lithuania gained independence again, I was busy going to school and starting a career and family. A few years ago I ran across a Lithuanian-American who had just returned from his first visit to Lithuania and encouraged me to go. When my son Henry graduated from high school, we decided we were going to make a father-and-son trip to the home of our ancestors.

When my father, Richard, learned of our trip, he presented us with one of the few family heirlooms he had from Lithuania. It was a picture taken in 1923 of a monument that my grandfather had commissioned to be built in Lithuania for his deceased parents, Antanas and Marijona. In the picture were three unidentified men with the monument. My father asked us to find the monument while we were in Lithuania though he did not know exactly where it was or who the three men were. My grandfather had never seen the monument himself, as he never returned to Lithuania after coming to America.

My father told me that my grandfather came from Ramygala. I thought we should begin our search for the monument in that town and did some online investigation. I learned that Ramygala held a goat beauty pageant around the time of the summer solstice. My son and I decided that we would try to coordinate our trip around this event and bought tickets to Lithuania for the summer of 2020. I began to follow the Ramygala Facebook page to try to learn more about the town and festival. Then the COVID-19 pandemic ensued, and our trip was canceled.

One weekend morning, after our trip was called off, I noticed someone had posted some old photos of Ramygala to its Facebook page. I began to absentmindedly look through them. It was a collection of black-and-white pictures of events at the church and school. I remember thinking that maybe I was looking at relatives of mine. I clicked the next picture in the album and there it was, the exact same picture my father had given me of the three men and the monument. I could not believe it. I posted to the Facebook page that I also had a copy of that picture and asked if anyone knew where the monument was located.

Unbeknownst to me, a distant relative in Lithuania had the same pic-



Photo of the monument from 1923. From left: Stanislovas Kraujalis (seated), Kazimieras Gabulas and Stanislovas Janionis.



Monument on August 13, 2023. From left: Jonas, Michael and Henry Kraujalis.



Reunion at the Ramygala Cemetery. From left: Jonas, Henry and Michael Kraujalis, Sigita Rimaitienė, Irena Jaloveckienė, Emilijus Lyberis, Rasa Zabelavičienė and Loreta Klim.

ture and had the same question about the location of the monument. Her name was Rasa Zabelavičienė. Her great-great-grandmother was the sister of my great-grandfather, Antanas Kraujalis, for whom the monument was constructed. Rasa had obtained the photo from her aunt, Elena Gabulaitė, a Lithuanian educator and writer. Rasa had remembered the picture prominently displayed in Elena's house.

My grandfather was very close to his cousin Kazimieras Gabulas, who was Elena's uncle. He had sent money to Kazimieras to have the monument built, and Kazimieras is one of the men in the photo. Kazimieras had gone to America like my grandfather but returned to Lithuania to visit. While he was in Lithuania Kazimieras' brother, Juozapas, became ill and died. Instead of returning to America, he stayed to help care for the Juozapas' children, including Elena. My grandfather sent money to Kazimieras and other relatives in Lithuania to help them out. Elena was impressed with his generosity, and she

included accounts of him in a book she wrote about her family, entitled "Tėviškės takais."

Rasa was intrigued by the monument and had gone herself to look for it in the Ramygala cemetery. She found a monument that had a cross on it like the one in the picture, but a marble plaque with the inscription "Petrauskas family" was on its base. It turns out that Agnietė-Zofija, known as the "fox," a daughter from Antanas' third marriage, married a Petrauskas and had the marble plaque placed over the original Kraujalis family inscription.

When I posted to Facebook inquiring about the monument, a cousin of Rasa's saw the post and contacted her that an American was inquiring about the monument. Rasa then contacted me through Facebook Messenger, and we exchanged family photos and information, with her son translating my messages. She was able to provide me with a family tree back to 1795 from the Lithuanian

archives. We said we would meet whenever I was able to travel to Lithuania. She said she would be in contact with other relatives in Lithuania who also might be interested in meeting.

While waiting out the pandemic to travel, I signed up for Lithuanian language classes at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture in the fall of 2020. I had perused a textbook on the Lithuanian language in the past and thought it would be too difficult to learn. With classes now available via Zoom and the extra time afforded by the pandemic, I decided to take on the challenge. Over a year and a half of classes, I learned a great deal about the Lithuanian language and culture from my teacher and classmates.

In December of 2021, I was contacted on Facebook by another Lithuanian relative, Indrė Karosaitė, the great-great-granddaughter of my grandfather's brother, Stanislovas. Stanislovas was one of the other men in the monument photo. Indrė's grandmother, Elena, remembered her grandfather talking about my grandfather. She wanted to meet and relate these family stories to us when we visited Lithuania. Indrė said there were other relatives interested in meeting, and they would be in contact.

I considered traveling to Lithuania in the summer of 2022, but the invasion of Ukraine by Russia and



Looking over the family tree with Irena in Kėdainiai.

continued uncertainty about the coronavirus deterred me. In the spring of 2023, it looked like there was a window of opportunity, and I purchased plane tickets to Lithuania for my son and me.

It was at this time that I was notified through Indrė that Jonas Kraujalis, who was the grandson of my father's brother, Stanislovas, had heard about our trip. He and his wife, Ramutė, graciously offered to be our hosts during part of our stay in Lithuania and to accompany us to Ramygala.

On August 13, 2023, 100 years after the monument was completed, Jonas, Ramutė, Henry, and I began our trip to Ramygala to see the memorial that my grandfather had commissioned but had never seen in person himself. On the way, we stopped in Kėdainiai and met Irena Jaloveckienė, a granddaughter of Stanislovas



Reunion in Ramygala. Bronė Lyberienė (seated), who lives in Ramygala, was instrumental in having the monument restored. Also pictured is Aniceta Galiauskienė standing behind Bronė on the left.

Kraujalis, who presented us with a poster-size family tree, adding to the history that Rasa had obtained. Rasa was also there to meet us for our journey to Ramygala.

We then proceeded to Ramygala where we were warmly met at the cemetery by several other relatives, including Bronė, a descendant of my great-grandfather's third wife, who had the monument restored with its original Kraujalis inscription earlier in the summer. Together at the memorial, we lit a candle and acknowledged our ancestors who had come before us and whose remembrance had brought us back together after all these years.



Restored monument inscription.



Due to the unique white streak in its cross, Rasa was able to find the monument in the Ramygala Cemetery, even when the inscription on its base was covered.

Jonas, Ramutė Kraujalienė, Michael and Henry meet with Irena in Kedainiai on the way to Ramygala.



# The Role of the Lithuanian World Community

Prof. Dr. Juozas Skirius

Senior Research Fellow at the Vytautas Magnus University Institute of Lithuanian Diaspora and  
Research Fellow at the Lithuanian National Martynas Mažvydas Library

65 years ago, on August 28-31, 1958, representatives of Lithuanian refugees (DP), delegated by communities in various countries, gathered in New York and announced the official establishment of the Lithuanian World Community (LWC), which was to unite Lithuanians scattered all over the world, to preserve the Lithuanian identity and culture, to support and fight for the independence of Lithuania, and to coordinate the actions of all Lithuanians. One of the LWC's main goals was to preserve Lithuanian identity as much as possible. The role of the LWC today is no less important than when it was founded when Lithuania was annexed by foreigners. The fourth great wave of migration from Lithuania, which began in the 1990s, demonstrated the vitality and necessity of LWC.

Lithuania's support for its diaspora

The idea of a World Lithuanian Community was not new: it was born in the interwar period, in the late 1930s,

when the cries of the Lithuanian diaspora in South America were heard in Lithuania because of the economic depression (1929-1932). At that time, the South American Lithuanians were the second largest diaspora after the Lithuanians in the US, but their economic conditions were much more difficult than those of the Lithuanians in the US.

The front rank of the Lithuanian intelligentsia (Rapolas Skipitis, Kazys Kasakaitis, the signatory Prof. Mykolas Biržiška, Ona Kairiūkštienė, Petras Ruseckas, and others) responded to the appeals of South American Lithuanians for support. They took the initiative to organize the Society for the Support of Lithuanians Abroad (SSLA) and on 7 February 1932, the Society held its first meeting. The founding meeting of the Society was held in Kaunas on 7/7. The aim was to maintain relations with the diaspora so that it would not be separated from the nation's core. The organization helped the diaspora to establish Lithuanian schools and provided them with teachers and



Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania



Lithuanian books, supported their press, organizations, and parishes, and helped in the development of the performing arts.

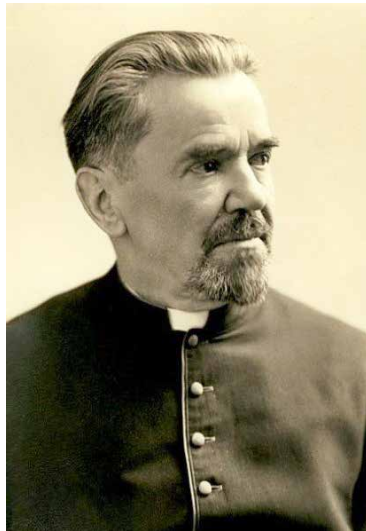
SSLA tried to maintain the national consciousness, organized and sponsored excursions to Lithuania and provided scholarships for emigrant youth to study at the Vytautas Magnus University (VMU). President Antanas Smetona supported these contacts, pointing out that a third of our nation lives across the Lithuanian border. In 1927-1940, Lithuania's relations with the Lithuanian diaspora were steadily strengthening. Interestingly, Lithuania gave more support to the diaspora than it received from it. This was a kind of gratitude for the diaspora's support in the creation of independent Lithuania after February 16, 1918.

In 1935, the SSLA organized the first Lithuanian World Congress in Kaunas, which was supposed to bring Lithuanians all over the world closer to Lithuania. Representatives of eight countries (Great Britain, Argentina, Brazil, USA, Canada, Latvia, France, and Uruguay) participated in the Congress. During the Congress, the World Lithuanian Union was founded to unite Lithuanians from all over the world in national, cultural, and economic matters. However, due to international tensions in Europe, the war, and the Soviet occupation, the Union was unable to develop any significant activities.

### Creating Little Lithuania in Western Europe

The idea of mobilizing Lithuanians resurfaced at the end of the Second World War, among Lithuanian refugees to Western Europe and especially among the leaders of the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania (SCLL). These refugees were dominated by intellectuals from the Lithuanian society, who were in quite high positions: artists, clergymen, scientists, military officers, doctors, civil servants, etc. Around 50% of the scientific and pedagogical staff of VMU alone fled to the West. After fleeing the Bolshevik terror, Lithuanians began to come together in Western Europe, especially in Germany.

The SCLL drafted the Constitution of the Lithuanian Exile Community (LEC), which was adopted in 1946 at a congress of representatives of exiles in Hanau, Germany. The new organization was given the following tasks: to maintain a strong Lithuanian nation in exile; to preserve the good name of the Lithuanian people; to take care of educational, cultural, and social affairs; to help the exiles to adapt to the new conditions (in accordance with their



Prelate Mykolas Krupavičius

professions and specialties); to foster national solidarity, democratic consciousness, and the love of work. These were the laws acceptable to all Lithuanians, which were later incorporated into the documents of the World Lithuanian Community. Thus, the LEC united all Lithuanians in Western Europe, organized schools, and supported and patronized national culture education. In a short period of time, a "Little Lithuania" was created there.

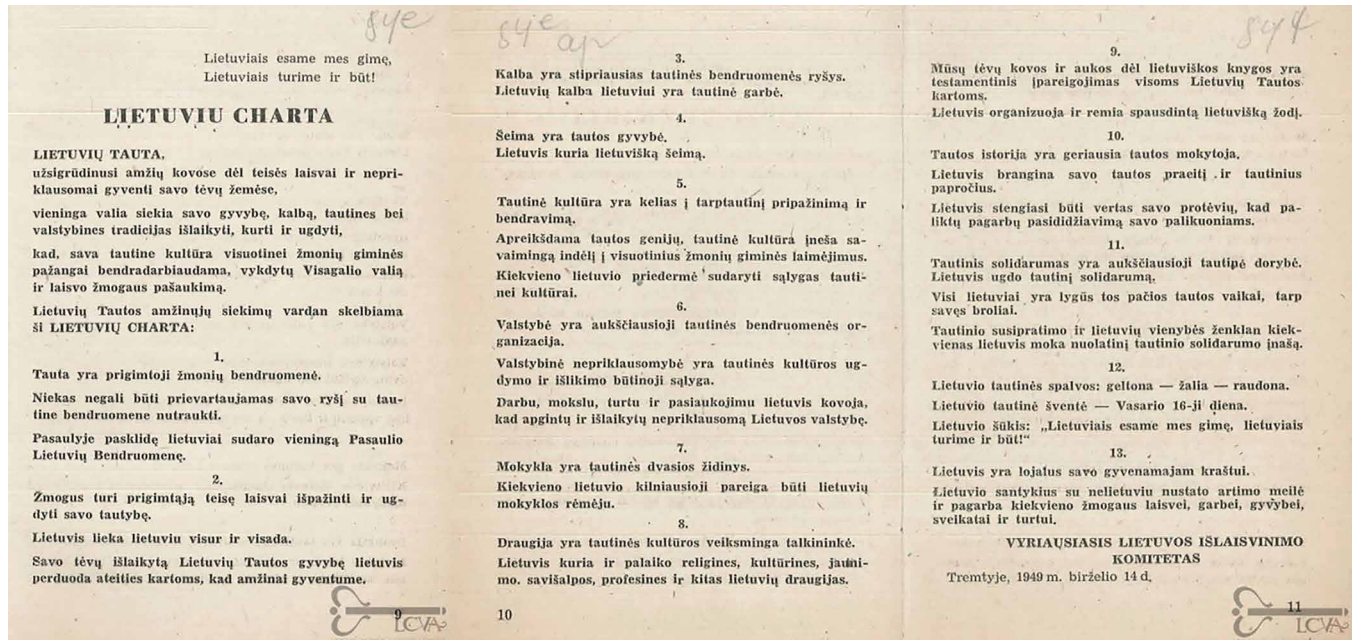
The goal to remain a strong nation in the diaspora

In 1948-1949, more and more Lithuanian DPs left Germany and other countries in Western Europe and found a new refuge overseas. The issues addressed by the worldwide Lithuanian organization became particularly urgent at that time. However, the Lithuanian leaders had noticed the problems of emigration long before it happened, so the consequences of emigration did not catch the Lithuanians completely off guard. The SCLL, at its meeting in 1947, had already adopted the following resolution: "To ask the Executive Council to prepare regulations for the organization of a worldwide Lithuanian community".

In October 1948, the CLLC adopted a draft constitution of the LWC, which, after long deliberations, was finally approved on 27 May 1949. According to it, Lithuanian communities were to be established in every region of the world with their own governing bodies: a regional council, a board, a control commission, a court of honor, districts, and their bodies. In addition, central organs were to be created: the PLB Seimas, the PLB Board, etc.

On June 14, 1949, the SCLL published the basic laws of the ideology of the LWC, called the Lithuanian Charter (13 points), which laid down the basic directives for the preservation of Lithuanian identity and obliged them to follow them. On the same day, the Constitution of the LWC and the Provisional Regulations of the LWC were adopted. The Chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania, Mykolas Krupavičius, was entrusted with their implementation. It should also be noted that the first part of the first paragraph of the LWC Constitution states that "The LWC Constitution is based on the Lithuanian Charter", which was and is the aim of the LWC to remain a strong nation in the Diaspora.

It should be noted that the LWC started from the bottom: first, the Communities of the Regions were created, and then the LWC was formed. Its organizational end was marked by the 1958 Seimas.



Lithuanian Charter

## Mykolas Krupavičius – the ideologist of the World Lithuanian Community

During the three fateful years leading up to the 1949 decisions, the main initiator and ideologist of the creation of the LWC was Prelate Mykolas Krupavičius (1885-1970). He was the chairman of the SCLL (1945-1955) and a former political and public figure in the Republic of Lithuania. According to the historian Vincas Bartusevičius, "he had the main burden of turning the lifeless paragraphs written on paper into life".

First of all, the idea of the new organization had to be promoted, its importance, aims, and objectives explained, and the procedure for its establishment outlined. To this end, Krupavičius traveled to almost all Lithuanian camps in Western Europe, wrote newsletters on organizational matters, and persistently urged the acceleration of collaborative work. His biographer, Petras Maldeikis, calls the prelate the founder of the LWC. Krupavičius himself considered the SCLL to be the father of the LWC, and himself to be the only one who gave the idea to the committee: "The father of the LWC was the SCLL. I had the happiness and the honor to put it on track". Thus, the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania, headed by Krupavičius, created the Statute of the LWC and the Lithuanian Charter, and the prelate himself created the community according to the Statute. How did he envision it?

For Krupavičius, the organization of the LWC was anti-party. According to him, the people who come to any leadership of the LWC have to rise above their own party's cause, otherwise, the community will inevitably be divided

from within. He said: "The LWC is a temple where it is forbidden to enter with party prayer books because in this temple there is only one prayer: the Lithuanian prayer". Thus, the World Lithuanian Community was created to preserve Lithuanian identity and was supposed to include all expatriate Lithuanians.

Krupavičius himself explained that "LWC is not a society, but a national community. Anyone who wants to become a member of the society can join. And to the national community belongs every Lithuanian, regardless of where he was born, whether he wants to be a member of the community or not, whether he speaks Lithuanian or not, whether he is useful to the community or harmful to it, whether he is a disgrace to the community or a problem, whether he has just seen the world or whether he is climbing into the coffin. (...) whether he is a Catholic or an Evangelical, (...) whether he is a landlord or a beggar; (...) a member of the LWC is every man in whose veins flows Lithuanian blood (...) even if he does not see Lithuania or does not want to see it". As Petras Maldeikis points out, for the Chairman of the SCLL, the model of a community is a Lithuanian county or a parish.

Mykolas Krupavičius attached great importance to the Lithuanian Charter. He likened the principles of the Charter to cement, which is supposed to unite all the Lithuanians scattered around the world, like individual bricks, into one durable building - a fortress of Lithuanians. He called the Lithuanian Charter a commitment to the conscience of every Lithuanian. It is "like a signpost for the brothers scattered over the wide roads of the world, pointing the only right direction to the national

hearth of their ancestors, their parents and themselves". It is addressed to all Lithuanians, to the Lithuanian family, and to all organizations.

The ideologist of the creation of the LWC urged to preserve Lithuanian identity and the Lithuanian language, to establish Lithuanian schools, and to distribute Lithuanian books and press wherever there are Lithuanian youth. Krupavičius considered mixed families to be the most dangerous thing for Lithuania, against which all factors - the family, the school, the press, the church, parents, and organizations - should fight. At the same time, he stressed, that it is necessary to create opportunities for young people to get to know each other and to create Lithuanian families. That is what prelate Krupavičius was like!

### The Lithuanian World Community grows

The convocation of the LWC Seimas was delayed because the establishment of communities was not the same in different countries. At the end of August 1958, 20 communities took part in the work of the Seimas in New York, sending 112 delegates (symbolically, this number was set in honor of the Lithuanian Founding Seimas of 1920, because 112 elected representatives of the nation were also present there). The First Seimas set the guidelines for the work of the LWC, and its structure, and elected the leading links. The Constitution, which had been drafted earlier, was adopted. The leadership functions were divided between the Seimas, the Board, the Control Commission, and the Court of Honor. A separate institution, the LWC Cultural Council, was formed as an advisory body to the

LWC Board. Jonas Matulionis from Canada was elected as the first chairman.

Unfortunately, the Lithuanian World Community did not become an all-Lithuanian diaspora organization covering all areas. But it did become one of many larger diaspora organizations, such as the Lithuanian American Council, the SCLL, the Lithuanian Union of Great Britain, etc. Lithuanian philosopher Juozas Girnius, describing the meaning of the LWC, wrote: "The meaning of the LWC is not to be a broader organization, but to mobilize for the struggle for national life (...) The ideological basis of the LWC is the will to stay in the Lithuanian nation, not only for oneself but also to educate the younger generation to be a part of the Lithuanian nation".

Over the years, the LWC has been growing more and more: in 1958 it consisted of 20 communities, in 1992 - 25, in 2003 - 35, in 2020 - 47, and this year - 55 Lithuanian communities. This growth is attributed to the new and large wave of Lithuanian diaspora after 1990, which has spread to many countries. This shows the vitality of the organization and that the LWC is in the marathon of its activities - one can joke that it is still far from the finish line.

The Lithuanian World Community will continue to exist as long as there is a Lithuanian diaspora, as long as there is a Lithuanian nation that has survived on this planet Earth. The LWC is now not only a preserver and promoter of Lithuanian identity, a mobilizer and coordinator of the Lithuanian people overseas (which was especially important when the organization was founded in the conditions of occupied Lithuania) but also an assistant and advisor to the Lithuanian government.



Lithuanian World Community Congress in 2022

# The Lithuanian Gene

All Lithuanians living in the USA are members of the Lithuanian American Community. Efforts to preserve our identity through our traditions, our language, and culture unite us. In the twists and turns of history, Lithuanians always find a place for themselves and a way to survive in order to stay confident in themselves and preserve their Lithuanian identity.

Our lives are diverse: some might be more colorful and vibrant than others. However, whatever they might be, they are our lives and our stories. They are like colorful beads strung together in a necklace, or maybe connected in a DNA spiral so that they do not get lost and stay together. After all, it is always more fun to stay connected. We might say that the stories of our lives are held together, strung on the "thread" of our community, and we enrich one another by telling those stories.

What is the code of our Lithuanian gene? We will try to find out by sharing the stories of those who live among us.

## We worked hand in hand with Lithuania

Liuda Rugienienė

The Commission of the Lithuanian Parliament and the Lithuanian American Community began its work in 1996. The first chairman of the Commission was Donatas Skučas, and three years later, Liuda Rugienienė took over the position, co-chairing the Commission together with Vaclovas Karbauskis, then a member of the Parliament.

These are Liuda Rugienienė's reminiscences of that active period.

When I think about the first few years after the restoration of Lithuania's independence, I remember that we worried about what the relationship between Lithuania and the diaspora would be.

Lithuanian Americans were not ready for a planned cooperation with Lithuania. Therefore, on June 19-20, 1993, President of the Lithuanian American Community Algimantas Gečys and Chairwoman of the LAC Michigan Chapter Liuda Rugienienė decided to organize a public political conference. An enthusiastic organizing committee was formed.

Over 200 American and Canadian Lithuanians of various professions and backgrounds signed up to attend the conference. From Lithuania came the then Prime Minister Adolfas Šleževičius, members of the Lithuanian Parliament Romualdas Ozolas, Aloyzas Sakalas, and Saulius Šaltenis. Also in attendance were diplomat Stasys Lozoraitis and the future President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus.

The themes of the lectures and symposia were "Diaspora's point of view: Relations between the independent state of Lithuania and the diaspora" (Dr. V. Adamkus, attorney Rimas Domanskis, Dr. Juozas Kazickas, and Dr. Tomas Remeikis) and "Obstacles in the relations between the diaspora and Lithuania: barriers, gaps or abyss" (Dr. Vytautas Bieliauskas). The Special Committee, chaired by Bronius Nemickas, proposed conclusions, which were almost unanimously adopted by the participants.

The conference gave an oppor-



Liuda Rugienienė with her husband, the late Algis Rugienius, who has helped with the Lithuanian American Community work.



Janina Šniaukštienė and the then Parliament member Vaclovas Karbauskis visited from Lithuania in 2001

tunity to consult with each other, and the idea to establish a commission of representatives of the Lithuanian Parliament and the diaspora was born. A commission of the Parliament of Lithuania and the Lithuanian World Community (LWC) was considered, but the LWC Board did not approve, and the Lithuanian American Community (LAC) decided to establish such a commission alone. The principles of bilateral representation between Lithuania and the LAC had to be formulated.

In 1994, at its annual session, the 14th Council of the LAC adopted the following resolution: "The LAC Council approves the establishment of the Commission of the Lithuanian Parliament and Lithuanian Diaspora in the USA and Canada and obliges the LAC Council of Social Affairs to prepare the stipulations for the representation of the LAC in the Commission and to present them to the LAC Council for approval within a month." A couple of months later, the Lithuanian Canadian Community (LCC) also discussed the establishment of such a commission but it was not adopted by one vote.

On January 26, 1995, the Lithuanian Parliament adopted a resolution on the establishment of the Commission: "1. To establish a Commission of Representatives of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania and the Lithuanian American Community and to approve the Regulations of the Commission [...]. 2. To instruct the Board of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania to work out the issues of the Commission's headquarters and financing."

This Parliament resolution was signed by the then Speaker of the Parliament, Česlovas Juršėnas, and entered into force on May 10 after it was published in the *Valstybės Žinios* publication. The LAC Board of Directors approved the draft prepared by the National Executive Committee. Important resolutions were adopted. The representatives of the Commission had to be members of the LAC Board of Directors but the Commission could be supplemented by representatives of Lithuanian Communities from other countries, if all the members of the Commission agreed to it. After all, we were regularly approached with the question of why only Americans could participate.

This was the beginning of the establishment of the Commission. We overcame obstacles that were com-

ing not from Lithuania but from our own country; we also received sincere support and assistance. When the Commission began its work, its members prepared a document called "The Integral Nation" which set out the principles and scope of activities. The joint work principles were the same as those already set in the Lithuanian Charter (*Lietuvių Charta*) and the Lithuanian Constitution. The Commission members agreed that the work would be organized in the following areas: national security, ethnic affairs, youth, education, culture, sports, health, social affairs, economy, and international policy.

It should be noted that the Commission discussed almost all of the topics mentioned here, developed joint projects, and proposed them to the Lithuanian Parliament and to the LAC for implementation. The matter



Lithuanian scientists participated in the *XII Mokslo ir kūrybos simpoziumas* in Chicago. Liuda Rugienienė is the sixth from the right.

of Lithuania's accession to NATO was discussed at the national security meetings. One of the first projects was the commemoration of the anniversary of Martynas Mažvydas, for which *Pirmoji Amerikos lietuviška knyga* (The First American Lithuanian Book) by Mykolas Tvarauskas was published.

We are glad that the work of the above-mentioned Commission is still ongoing and has grown into a Commission of the Lithuanian Parliament and the World Lithuanian Community. In 2021 it celebrated its 26th anniversary.

March 1, 2021

Source: <https://javlb.org/liuda-rugieniene/>. Translated by Karile Vaitkute.

## Vytis – the Symbol of Lithuania and Lithuanians

Loreta Timukienė

Lithuanian American Gintaras Karosas could talk for hours on end about the Vytis, one of the symbols of our state. Much of his work is related to this symbol and keeping Lithuanian identity. Vytis, which Gintaras saw as a symbol of his distant homeland when he was a child, fell so deeply into his heart that he still carries that feeling of love, nostalgia, and pride for his homeland and is proud of it today. In his childhood, he was particularly impressed by the Boston Lithuanian Drama Theatre, where such Lithuanian emigre luminaries as Bernardas Brazdžionis, Antanas Gustaitis, Stasys Santvaras, and Antanas Škėma were active. One of the plays in which Gintaras participated when he was eleven years old was "Vincas Kudirka." He then fell in love with the symbol of Lithuania, Vytis. Driven by this feeling, the Lithuanian American has done a lot to make Lithuania's name as widely known as possible.

As Lithuania was striving to achieve its independence, Gintaras brought to Lithuania a large number of national merchandise designed by his company Baltic Associates. In many of these posters and stickers, you can see a stylized Vytis. Today, nobody wonders how there were so many flags with Vytis at the Sąjūdis rallies in those days, in Soviet-era Lithuania, and where



A sticker of a Lithuanian company with the inscription I LOVE LITHUANIANS in the hands of US President Ronald Reagan. Photo from Karosas personal archive



The Vytautas Magnus War Museum hosted a meeting with Gintaras Karosas, a promoter of Lithuanian identity and author of the stylized Vytis. Photo of Vytautas Magnus War Museum

such a large number of emblems with the Pillars of Gediminas and the Iron Wolf come from. We probably would not have seen the treasures created by Gintaras, if not for the changes in our country that brought us freedom. Showing the originals of his drawings, Gintaras says that he cannot count how many Vytis, Iron Wolves, and other Lithuanian symbols created by his company are used today by people, institutions, and organizations in Lithuania and abroad.

Vytis is the sign that has rallied us for centuries to defend our homeland. It was banned in Lithuania for 50 years but remained a symbol of great hope in our occupied country. Vytis is a sign that Lithuanians abroad kept in their hearts, it was the engine of their national activity.

Today, not many people know about the Knights of America, the oldest Lithuanian organizations, and the Lithuanian song and dance festivals where our Tricolor flag was flown. The Lithuanian symbols were used by Lithuanian Americans when addressing American politicians when talking about Lithuania's occupation, when welcoming Lithuania's freedom, and when Lithuania was accepted to NATO.

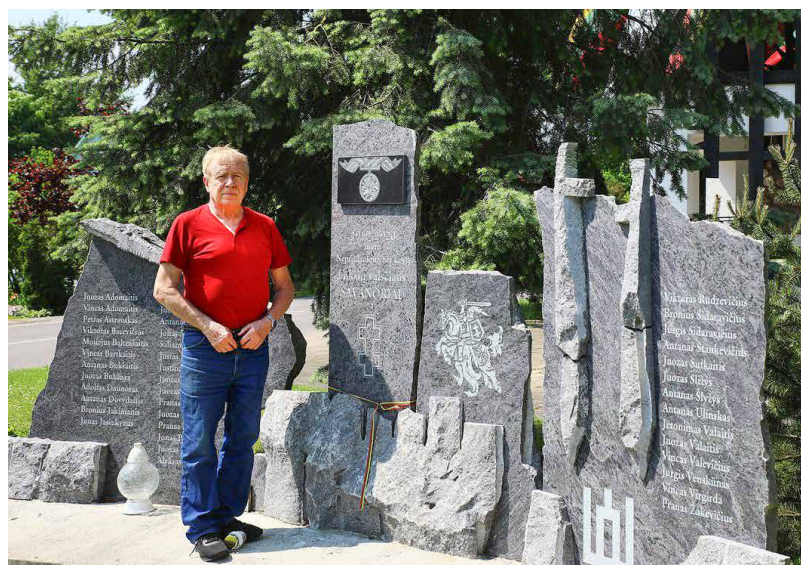
In Lithuania, Vytis was defended by the volunteer soldiers in 1918 and then brought back to us by the Sąjūdis in 1988. In exile, the nation's sign did not need to be returned. It was part of the life of DPs, the hope of a generation exiled from their homeland. It was carried through the coal mines of Pennsylvania and the slaughterhouses of Chicago, through the streets of Brooklyn and the skyscrapers of Boston by the activists of the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania, the correspondents of Draugas, the authors of the Lith-



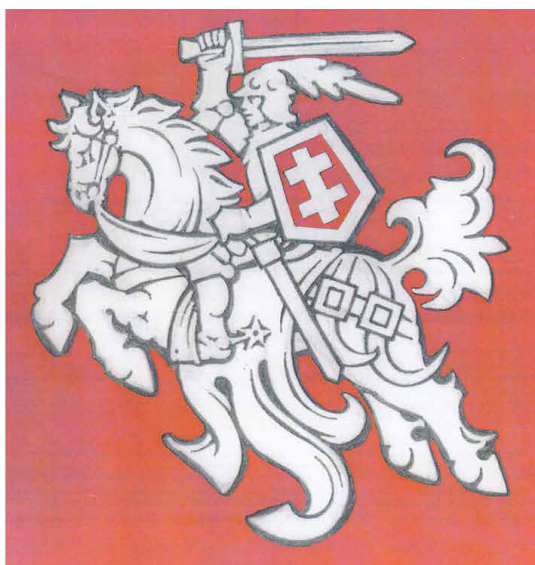
In 2021 Prof. Vytautas Landsbergis visited Gintaras Karosas in Florida

uanian Encyclopaedia, and the publishers of countless Lithuanian books. These were the people who mobilized the diaspora into Lithuanian activities, choirs, dance circles, and sports teams.

One of them is Gintaras Karosas. He was born in Augsburg, Germany, where his parents, Felicija and Albinas, fled Lithuania to escape the incoming Soviets. When Gintaras was one year old, the family moved and settled in the United States. Although he had never seen Lithuania, he grew up surrounded by Lithuanian music, songs, and dances from an early age, attending a Lithuanian language school on weekends and taking part in ateitininkai and scout camps. While living in the USA, he started a family and, after graduating with a degree in public administration from the university, he worked in



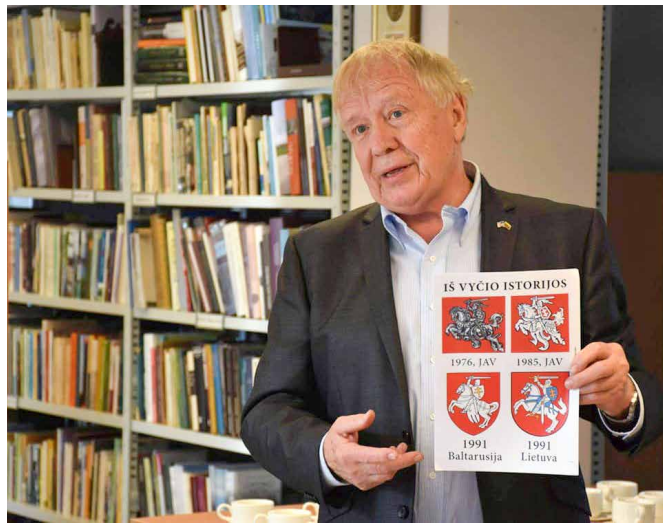
In Lukšiai, Lithuania, a memorial honoring the volunteer soldiers of 1919-1920, a monument with a carved Vytis, created by Karosas in Boston in 1985



various state institutions, including the Massachusetts Governor's Administration.

At the age of 21, he began his political career, organizing international evenings where ethnic groups participate with their flags, exhibitions, and national costumes. Later he organized the Lithuanian Youth Union summer trips to North America. Showing the archives he has collected, Gintaras talks about the 80-day youth trip across America in 1972, when he put national signs on buses, which attracted a lot of attention from both the population and the media.

When Lithuania started to revive and realized the importance of national merchandise, Karosas started making everything for the Sąjūdis. He says that he produced about 50,000 different patriotic stickers, and he also brought other symbols with him. It was important to produce, transport, and distribute as quickly as possible. But how did such quantities reach Lithuania? All sorts of tricks had to be used: through tourist groups, giving gifts to people, and mixing Lithuanian symbols with Russian stickers. It would have been a problem in Lithuania if yel-



The exhibition featured signs of the Lithuanian American community's resistance to the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, the emigrant-born Knights of the Cross, Iron Wolves, posters distributed in the Lithuanian American community, and the symbols of patriotic organizations.

low, green, and red stickers had come, but stickers with Žalgiris didn't bother the Russians, who often were confused between the symbols. It was a kind of smuggling. Another way to get away with Lithuanian paraphernalia was to hand the Russians American items, badges that people had never seen in Soviet times. There is no doubt that this Lithuanian symbolism strengthened people's aspirations for freedom and their determination to fight for Lithuania's freedom at that time.

Karosas presented his stickers to Presidents George

Bush and Ronald Reagan. After that, the fate of the Baltic States became the subject of intense interest in the Western press. Karosas tells us about the changes in one of the stickers: before independence, the background of barbed wire reading "Lithuania wants freedom" changed to "Lithuania is free" after March 1990.

Another of Karosas' works dedicated to Lithuania is the Lithuanian Heritage Catalogue, published in a print run of 46,000 in 1979-1985 when Lithuania was in the



A few years ago, G. Karosas decided to collect Lithuanian national paraphernalia that had been created in America for decades and to prepare an exhibition so that people who visited the exhibition could see the work of the diaspora in Lithuania's quest for independence.

depths of the Soviet era. This catalog, published in English, is a treasure trove for anyone wishing to get a closer look at Lithuanian heritage. Thanks to this publication, Lithuania's name rang out loud and wide in America and around the world at a time when it was not even on the world map as a country. It is full of information in English about Lithuania and Lithuanians, our traditional food, customs, books, and the most famous Lithuanians in the USA. The catalog is full of Lithuanian symbols, from the Vytis, the Iron Wolf, and the Tricolor, to national clothing, amber and other jewelry, Easter eggs and their patterns.

A few years ago, Karosas decided to collect Lithuanian national paraphernalia that had been created in America for decades and to put together an exhibition so that people could see the work of the diaspora in Lithuania's quest for independence. The Libraries of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush and Museums in California and Texas have sent photographs, especially for this exhibition. The exhibition, presented in Lithuania in 2019, is of interest to many because it tells the



story of who really created the popular modern Vytis, the Iron Wolf printed on T-shirts and souvenirs, and the origin of the Žalgiris stickers and the posters in support of the Persitvarvarkymo Sąjūdis. This exhibition has already traveled to a number of places in Lithuania. Another similar exhibition, complete with interesting exhibits, is traveling through European countries, and another is being presented in the United States.

Gintaras Karosas is an active member of the Vytis Foundation. The Foundation initiated the erection of the sculpture "The Soldier of Freedom" in Kaunas and in Pasvalys, the erection of monuments to Žygimantas Augustas and poet Balys Brazdžionis. Historical books and films are published on the initiative of the Foundation.

Many guests from Lithuania have visited Gintaras's home in St. Petersburg, Florida. Gintaras's home is like a small Lithuanian island in sunny Florida, where the host can tell anyone who visits a number of interesting stories about Lithuania and its symbols. For Karosas, the Vytis, which he saw as a child and fell into his heart, has become the most important thread connecting him to Lithuania, which gives him the desire to create and spread the message about Lithuania as widely as possible.



Photos from G. Karosas' personal archive. G. Karosas in front of the Rupintojėlis at his homestead in Florida.



In the summer of 1972, members of the Lithuanian American Youth Union traveled around North America in G. Karosas's bus, putting national signs on the bus, which attracted a lot of attention from both the population and the media.

# Vilnius celebrates its 700th birthday

Today, the Lithuanian capital Vilnius is a lively, energetic, and bold city that presents itself under the slogan “700 Years Young”. But how did Vilnius look 200 years ago? A study undertaken by the National Museum of Lithuania revealed a great surprise: A model had been made of the city back in the 19th century, recording to the smallest detail the face of the city that would soon change fundamentally.

This unexpected historical discovery has developed into an extraordinary gift for the city, its people, and its guests as Vilnius celebrates 700 years of existence. The model has been restored and is currently being displayed by the National Museum of Lithuania in a pavilion entitled “Vilnius 200 Years Ago.” This was made possible using recently discovered archival drawings on over 50 large format sheets.

Preparing such material two hundred years ago was a complicated task and must have taken at least several



Fortifications around Gediminas Hill. Painting by Vasiliy Sadovnikov, 1848. Lithuanian National Museum

years to complete. Documenting the city was done without any equipment, simply by walking the streets, drawing and sketching every façade, window, door, and roof.

Later, the model could be assembled from small wooden panels.

“We don’t know what happened to the model created back then, but our scientists have been able to determine that it was created for military purposes. At the time, Lithuania had lost its statehood and was part of the Tsarist Empire. The Tsarist government feared unrest and had just put down the 1831 Uprising. Having the entire city before their eyes was very important. It’s ironic, but very fortunate, how everything has changed since that time: We’re not only free now but we also have this unique material about our city’s history. Historical justice has been restored since the model created to suppress our drive for freedom has now been reborn to increase our knowledge about the city,” said the National Museum’s director Dr. Rūta Kačkutė.



Vilnius in the 19th century. Gates of Dawn. From Vilnius album of Jonas K. Vilčinskis. Lithuanian National Museum



Vilnius 200 Years Ago Pavilion near the National Museum of Lithuania. Photo by Aiste Rakauskaite

## The look of Vilnius 200 years ago

Over the 700 years of its existence, the face of Vilnius changed many times, but particularly drastically in the early 19th century. The model sketches created on the threshold of that change are a priceless historical resource. They demonstrate, to the finest degree, the details of the era's façades, and even the city's array of colors. The differences between now and 200 years ago are astonishing: Not every place so familiar to Vilnius sites and discovered by tourists and guests today is immediately recognizable. The development of the city in that period was still quite archaic – with narrow streets and rural suburbs. The Old Town was much denser, with outbuildings still standing alongside homes. These were later demolished, and such medieval features as city gates and defensive walls, still visible in the model, vanished. The most noticeable detail is that the model still lacks Gediminas Avenue, which pierced the Old Town like an arrow, or the imperial Naujamiestis (New Town), and the streets along the Neris River – lined with historical buildings today – then marked the outskirts of the city, complete with sprawling garden plots.

The model also contains signs of what was a complicated period for the Lithuanian state. Not many people today know that the Tsarist government

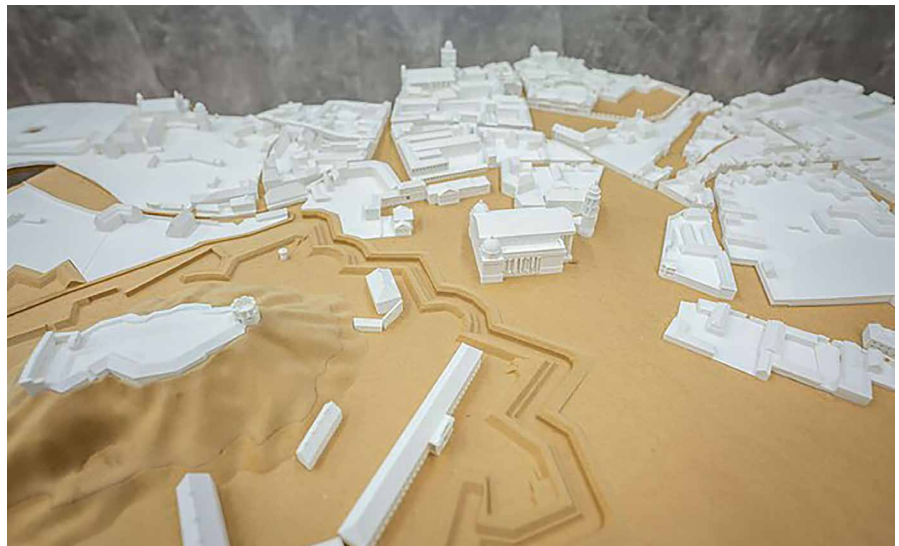
had placed cannons, aimed outward at the city, upon Gediminas Hill, today considered a symbol of Lithuanian statehood. For many years, the entire area around the hill was an inaccessible fortress – but today it is the most visited site in Vilnius. The model also shows huge ditches dug into Gediminas Hill and platforms for the cannons. So that rebels could not approach the fortress unnoticed, the expansive bishop's palace and its two towers on Cathedral Square, and other buildings still visible in the model, were demolished.

“The model created two hundred years ago was very precisely documented. This allowed us to convert the drawings into a 3D version and recreate the Vilnius city model using contemporary methods. To exhibit

it, we chose an exceptional architectural solution: the creation of an accessible pavilion in a public city space. By doing so, we not only stepped outside traditional museum spaces but we also blended into the fabric of the city”, says project director Asta Ivanauskienė.

The 19th-century model of Vilnius will be on display until 15 October 2023 at the National Museum of Lithuania's “Vilnius 200 Years Ago” Pavilion, opened to celebrate the city's 700th anniversary. Admission is free, and the experience has been adapted for foreign tourists: Audio narratives exploring the model have been recorded in Lithuanian, Polish, and English.

Source: <https://www.700vilnius.lt>



### Security

In the lead-up to the NATO summit in Vilnius, July 11-12, police investigated the hacking of sensitive summit information by a group calling themselves “From Russia with Love.” The non-public information included security arrangements, travel routes of delegations, hotels where NATO leaders and delegations were staying, the names of security guards, and the types of weapons and communication equipment.

The NATO meeting included leaders of the 31 NATO allies, including new member Finland, prospective member Sweden, several non-NATO member nations (Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and Australia), and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. The meeting did not include a current invitation of membership to Ukraine out of concern of Russia escalating the conflict in Ukraine and beyond. Further military aid to Ukraine was announced, including U.S. cluster munitions, German tanks and vehicles, French long-range missiles, and more British tank ammunition and vehicles. NATO nations are expected to spend at least 2% of GDP on defense; some that exceed that goal are the United States, the Baltic nations, and Poland. The European nations will spend \$375 billion on defense this year. NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, who has held the position since 2014, agreed to a fourth one-year extension of his service.

President Joe Biden, speaking in the Grand Courtyard of Vilnius University said, “It is good to be back in Vilnius, a nation and region that knows better than anyone the transformational power of freedom. You

showed the world that the strength of a united nation cannot be denied. Together with your brothers and sisters in Estonia and Latvia, you helped to end the era of division through the power of connection.” When speaking with Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda, President Biden added, “The United States is here today to reaffirm our commitment to NATO [...], we are committed to Lithuania and the Baltics and NATO.”

The Pabradė training area, 30 miles northeast of Vilnius, hosted artillery firing exercises by French, Lithuanian, and the U.S. They practiced live fire of different weapon systems. Known as Barbara’s Resolve 23, the exercise was attended by French General Francois Goguenhaim, commander of French forces in Europe, Alix Everad, the French ambassador to Lithuania, Mindaugas Steponavičius, Chief of the Defense Staff of the Lithuanian Armed Forces and Artūras Radvilas, Commander of the Lithuanian Land Forces. The U.S. forces were visited by Senators Dan Sullivan of Alaska, Richard Durbin of Illinois, Agnus King of Maine, Pete Ricketts of Nebraska, and Thom Tillis of North Carolina.

The USS Roosevelt, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer, made a return visit to Klaipėda in July for the annual Sea Festival after an initial visit in January. The ship’s crew includes approximately 300 officers, non-commissioned officers, and sailors.

In response to Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko indicating that the Russian mercenary group Wagner “is asking to go West and asks me for permission to go on a trip to Warsaw,” Poland and Lithuania are considering closing the border with Belarus.



### Ukraine

Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė met with Prime Minister of the German State of Bavaria Markus Soder, representatives of think tanks, security experts, and business executives to discuss relations with Ukraine in respect to culture, economy, and security.

The Lithuanian Red Cross appealed to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies asking to take action against the Belarus Red Cross for taking Ukrainian children from Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine to Belarus. The appeal calls this transfer “unlawful deportations” and calls for international war crime charges against Belarusian President Alexander

Lukashenko, similar to the charges against Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Ukrainians will no longer be required to take a theory and practical driving test to exchange their Ukrainian A and B category driving licenses for Lithuanian versions. The mutual agreement allows the same recognition for Lithuanians desiring Ukrainian licenses.

The Bank of Lithuania raised 105,600 euros for humanitarian aid to war-affected population of Ukraine by selling commemorative coins for 14.52 euros each, with 10 euros being donated. The coins were purchased by Lithuanian and foreign companies and individuals.

### Business

The Finance Ministry plans on asking the European Commission for a loan of over 1.8 billion euros for investment in two areas: a billion will go toward loans to businesses, and the rest will go toward electrical generation from renewable sources.

The Finance Ministry has revised its 2023 GDP forecast from 0.5% growth to 1.0% contraction. It projects that the slowdown will be temporary and 2024 will see a 2.5% growth.

Lithuania's state-owned energy company Ignitis Group will receive a 25 million euro investment over ten years from Germany's World Fund for energy and climate change solution start-ups.

Bulgaria's first unicorn, Payhawk, which simplifies business payments, company credit cards, reimbursable business expenses, accounts payable, and accounting software into a single product has opened an office in Vilnius. It now has an Electronic Money Institution license from the Bank of Lithuania. Payhawk serves clients in 32 countries in Europe, the UK, and the U.S., with offices in London, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, New York, Paris, Sophia, and now Vilnius. The customer base includes LuxAir and Babel.

The state-owned railway company Lithuanian Railways said that its profits decreased from 23.5 million euros in 2021 to 1.2 million euros in 2022 due to a 39% drop in freight volume from the Ukrainian war and sanctions against Russia and Belarus. Profit was also impacted by higher energy costs, a slowdown in construction, and a disruption in supply chains. There will be no

dividend paid to the state this year. The freight division, LTG Cargo, plans on spending 100 million euros to purchase electric locomotives to transport freight between Vilnius and the seaport of Klaipėda.

### General

The Archdiocese of Kaunas has proposed for the beatification of Adelė Dirsytė, a Catholic lay-woman and teacher with Caritas who took care of orphans and the poor and wrote articles on the education of women and girls. She was accused of anti-Soviet activities, and in November 1946, was sentenced to ten years in prison in Siberia, where she was beaten, tortured, and died on September 26, 1955, just short of the end of her sentence. While in prison, she authored a prayer book now known as Mary, Save Us.



According to the European Union's Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices (HICP), Lithuania's annual inflation rate was 8.2%. June monthly rate decreased to only 0.1% (on an annualized basis X12 months =1.2%).

The Constitutional Court approved the spelling of some Lithuanian citizens' names in Latin-based non-Lithuanian characters in personnel documents. Some Lithuanian nationals of Polish background, including Justice Minister Ewelina Dobrowolska, changed the spelling of their names.

The Seimas started a debate by asking the Constitutional Court whether the Istanbul Convention is compatible with the Lithuanian Constitution. Lithuania signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence on July 7, 2013 (more than ten years ago,) but the Seimas has yet to ratify it. Turkiye (Turkey) was the first to ratify the Istanbul Convention, but in 2021, it rescinded its approval by decree of President Erdogan. The legislation is an ongoing contention between traditional family values and LGBTQ rights.

# Šaltanosiai. Dumplings with blueberries

If you like dumplings you must taste šaltanosiai at least once. These blueberry-filled dumplings are a hit with children and nostalgic adults alike. No special knowledge is required to make them, but a few tips might be helpful. The dough can be made just using water, flour, and salt, but some add an egg and a tablespoon of oil or melted butter to the dough. The dough with the egg and fat will be slightly firmer and stiffer and is more suitable for dumplings with a filling that releases a little juice. Whatever the dough, knead it very well until it is smooth, and then wrap it in plastic cling wrap and let it rest for at least half an hour to make it easier to work with. Knead the dough well again before rolling it out. If you use frozen blueberries instead of fresh blueberries for the filling, do not thaw them, otherwise, you will end up with softened berries, which are difficult to stuff into dumplings. It is very important to crimp the edge very carefully, as even a single rupture will stain the water blue. Carefully place the dumplings in a wide saucepan of boiling water, stirring very gently, lifting only slightly from the bottom to prevent sticking, and wait for the water to boil and the dumplings to rise to the surface. Just a couple of minutes after that and they will be cooked.

## Ingredients:

For the dough:

4 cups of wheat flour

A pinch of salt

1 egg

1 tbsp oil or melted butter

lukewarm water

For the filling:

2 cups of blueberries

2-3 tablespoons of brown sugar

1/2 teaspoon of cinnamon

## Method:

First, put the flour in a wide bowl, make a well in the middle, add the salt (you can dissolve it in water, it will spread better), beat the egg, add the oil and a little water, and mix all the ingredients with a spoon or your fingers. Add as much water as necessary to avoid dry flour and then knead the dough to a medium softness - it should be stiff but not too hard. After kneading, roll the dough into a ball, wrap it in cling wrap, and leave it

for at least half an hour.

Place the washed and drained blueberries in a bowl and mix with the sugar and cinnamon.

Knead the dough again and shape the dough into dumplings by adding a teaspoon of filling. You can roll the dough into a thin sheet and press out circles, or you can cut the dough into pieces and roll each piece into a circle - whichever you prefer. Cover the part of the dough that you are not working with at the time with a damp kitchen towel to prevent it from drying out.

Place the dumplings in a wide saucepan of salted water brought to a boil, stir gently to prevent them from sticking to the bottom, allow them to rise to the surface, and cook for a further 2 to 3 minutes.

Serve with your favorite sauce - melted butter, sour cream, or yogurt.

It is known that Adam Mickiewicz, who lived in Paris, used to eat šaltanosiai and reminisce about his childhood in Lithuania. Different varieties of these dumplings were common throughout Lithuania in the 18th and 19th centuries. They included šaltanosiai with cottage cheese, berries, hemp, or poppy seed filling.

Why are they called šaltanosiai (translated as "cold nose")? It is because of their shape and color. Real šaltanosiai should be crescent-shaped with a 'nose' at each end. Blueberry-filled dumplings, one of their most popular varieties, are eaten cold and resemble a frozen nose. By the way, šaltanosiai is one of the few Lithuanian dishes that are widespread throughout the region and have found their way into Polish, Russian, German, and Litvak cuisines.

The oldest recipes for šaltanosiai date back to the 18th century. The filling was made of cottage cheese mixed with sour cream, egg yolks, and a little butter and flavored with nutmeg. A number of recipes for šaltanosiai can be found in 19th-century Lithuanian cookbooks. Vincentina Zavadzka from Vilnius, author of the 19th-century gastronomic bestseller *Lietuvos gospadinė* (Lithuanian Cook), recommends that they be eaten along with other dishes for lunch. But no matter when you eat them, you're sure to remember your childhood!

Here are the recipes for šaltanosiai with two classic fillings - blueberries and cottage cheese - based on the 1893 book *Lietuvos gospadinė* by Liudvika Didžiulienė-Žmona. The dough will be the same in both cases.



Šaltanosiai. Photo by Karilė Vaitkutė

Ingredients:

For the dough:

4 eggs  
6 tbsp milk  
4 cups of wheat flour

For the curd filling:

17 oz dry curd  
2 eggs  
salt to taste  
mint leaves  
3.5 oz butter or 7 oz sour cream

For the blueberry filling:

14 oz blueberries  
2 tbsp sugar  
7 oz sour cream

Method:

Whisk the eggs with the milk and add the flour to the prepared mixture. Knead the dough until it no longer sticks to your hands.

Roll out the dough thinly and cut out scones approximately 7 cm in diameter. You can do this with a glass. Prepare the filling.

For the cheese filling, beat the eggs into the cottage cheese, season with salt and chopped mint leaves and mix until smooth.

For the blueberry filling, mix the blueberries with the sugar.

Place the filling on each prepared scone, fold the scone in half, and pinch the edges tightly.

Place the prepared šaltanosiai in boiling water. Stir gently to prevent sticking to the bottom, allow to rise to the surface, and cook for a few more minutes. Once the dumplings are cooked, scoop them out.

The dumplings with cheese filling are served with melted butter or sour cream. Šaltanosiai with blueberries are usually eaten with sour cream.

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Based on "Old Lithuanian Recipes. Anželika Laužikienė, Rimvydas Laužikas, 2020.  
Vilnius University Publishing House

# 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

### 76. A SERIOUS FRAUDULENT SCAM

There is a threat of a flood. The mill will be inundated; the region will be left without bread. The river is still jammed with floating logs. The mill is working day and night.

From Melstroy, a worker, Andrei Shalin, the chief bookkeeper's son, is brought in. Like that girl for whom I had baked 2 kg of bread some time before, he is left to face God's will. About work and even how you will feed yourself, no one cares. With a bread coupon for a store in Melstroy, no one will sell you any bread in Parbig. So the boy Andrei can get nothing to eat. The first day he went to the eatery and only sipped some "balanda." The second day, he was weak but had to drag sacks.

The *zagotzerno* warehouseman Krutikov arrived. Andrei asked him to arrange a job change because he could get no bread but has to work. Krutikov, who used to be a forester, says to Andrei, "You're stupid. You are wading through bread and you're crying that you have none."

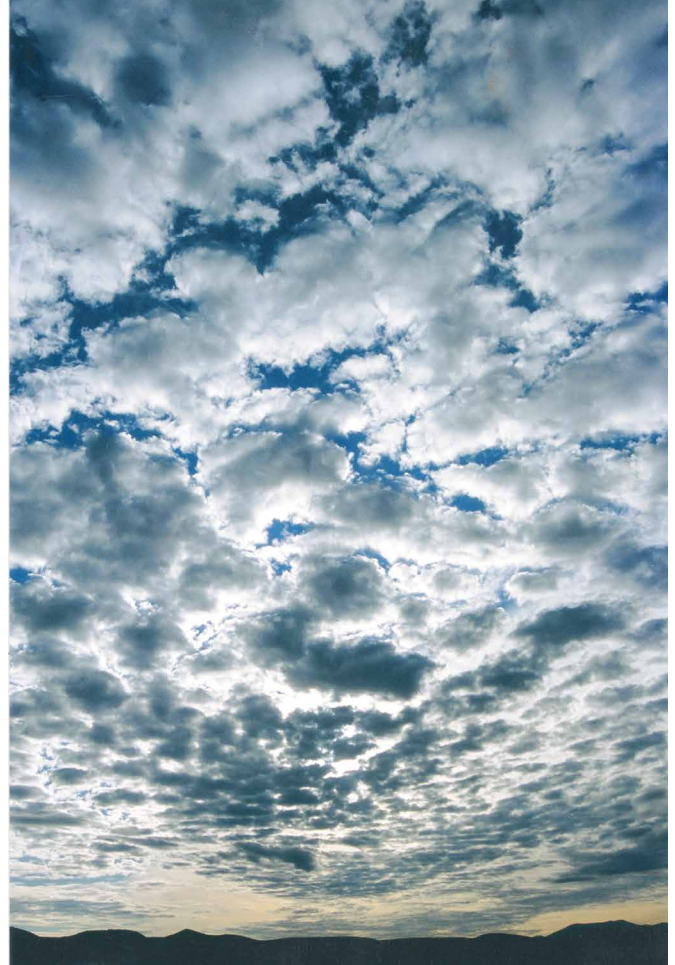
Andrei understood that he could take some flour and that one of the local women would bake him some bread. Believing that they would deduct it from his ration, he took a very modest amount, only 3 kg of flour. At least, that is what the witness who was asked to bake the bread showed. For stealing bread, Andrei was sentenced to eight years in prison. His father advised him to appeal and to justify himself by saying that he did not steal but that he took it with the warehouseman's knowledge.

Krutikov was also interrogated. He is also threatened with eight years. "I won't go to prison alone! This is not a question of 2-3 kg."

The interrogator, of course, became interested in what he meant that he wouldn't go alone and promised Krutikov that nothing would happen to him if he were willing to be a witness against others. And who else is guilty?

And so, he betrayed the whole group.

It was no longer 2-3 kg, but about 20 tons. Sensation! Who were these bold ones?



Siberian Sky. Photograph by Rolandas Žygas

At once, the center's director, Mangazeyev, was arrested along with the head bookkeeper Shalin, the director of the depth charges of the Krylovka station (Uvarev), and the manager of the Svetlo-Zelonoe store. And Krutikov was imprisoned anyway. (There now! So much for "You'll only be a witness!") The interrogator was very shrewd. He also promised others that they would only be witnesses for a clear exposure of the affair. Naïve people!

The essence of the case was the following:

Uvarev sent a car from Krylovka with a request to issue 2-3 tons of wheat from the Melstroy *zagotzerno*. He gave the order to the driver: "When you get there, don't go to the bookkeeper's office. They'll fuss around forever. Go straight to the director."

Once the car had made the delivery and left, he called the director, saying that a man was coming who knew nothing about the scheme. The man went to the director. The latter ordered the warehouseman (according to the director's instructions) to issue the desired amount of grain. But the permit to transport



it out of the area needed to be given in writing by the acting bookkeeper—Stasys. And he had to get the documents back so that he would know to whom, when, what, and how much had been distributed.

Of course, the warehouseman bypassed Stasys and went to the chief bookkeeper. He issued the permit, which had to be surrendered to the guardsman by the one leaving the territory. The guard always checks the number of sacks carefully and the license plate of the car. Only then, can one leave. When the changing of the guard is completed, the collected documents are given over to the acting bookkeeper.

So that this thieves' document would not fall into Stasys' hands, the warehouseman, escorting the car with the stolen grain, ordered the contents of the car checked to ascertain whether they matched exactly the list on the permit, saying, "I'll turn the documents in to the bookkeeper's office myself." The guard was not worried: the warehouseman would not steal from himself.

The car then took the grain to the mill at Krylovka. From there, the flour was taken care of by the store manager.

The trial was public—a rarity in those times. A large number of people gathered. I also attended. The process is interesting. The Public Prosecutor brings charges. The accused are permitted to avail themselves of defenders. A defender is appointed by the State, but the defendant must pay the defender himself. And the defender is obviously afraid that he himself will be accused of the tolerance of crime. He is, therefore, rather an accuser than a defender. But the accused probably do not know what the role of the defender is and hope that he will defend them seriously.

All agreed to be defended by the public defender. Only Andrei Shalin was wiser. He stated, "I refuse! I do not need a defender. I have committed no crime."

At the beginning of the proceedings, the prosecutor read the act of accusation, in which was set forth who was being charged and with what according to which article. Lastly, he announced the charge against Andrei Shalin. According to some article, he was being charged with theft in production — "*chishcheniye na proizvodstve*,"

The prosecutor stated why he was qualifying the crime thus: "I looked through many cases in the Tomsk courts. There I found a case where, for three packs of cigarettes, the thief received 8 years. Why? Imagine that 150 people work in the factory and that each one walks out with three packs. That makes 450 packs a day, 26 more times a month. And for the year? Just imagine how large the losses are for the state! No! One must not stroke the head of thieves, one must strike it!"

This speech of the prosecutor penetrated deeply into my brain: the comparison was not rational. It was not the right article. I was burning to say something aloud. But a trial is not a meeting, and I was not a lawyer.

Recess. The judges and the assessors went to lunch. The accused were also taken out for two hours. I stopped by to talk to some acquaintances, recounting my impressions. No one was surprised. "They know the laws better. What can we tell them?"

Nevertheless, I decided to say something. Well, not say something, but write something. Asking for a piece of paper, I wrote: "Honored Citizen Prosecutor, please forgive me. I regret that I am not a lawyer. You, as a man of the law, know the articles better, but my opinion is purely humane—different. I wish to ask that you review the article cited in the case against Andrei Shalin. His theft is not that of a hundred workers. He was only appointed by chance for 2-3 days when the region was threatened with being left without bread. He was rushing to produce a reserve of flour for the time-period of the flood. He could not leave his post, and he had to eat. And especially note that since he did not act on his own without consulting a superior. This was not theft of production. This was the imminent catastrophe of starvation."

I did not sign the note; however, once the court was in session, I gave it to the guard to give to the prosecutor.

After a few hours, the judgment of the court was announced: the highest penalty to Mangazeyev—25 years hard labor; most of the others, 20 years each; two, 15 years in prison; Andrei Shalin, 5 years, suspended sentence.

In addition to my note, there was another report, a physician's, which informed the court that the "accused Mangazeyev was sick with a disease"—it was not announced publicly which one — "and would not be able to serve his sentence." The prosecutor read the note aloud and stated: "He is rotten both morally and physically." My note was not read.

I am triumphant that such a modest, decent young man is not found guilty on the ridiculous charge.

I do not know whether my note had any effect in the sentencing. I told no one about sending it; I did not boast. How happy Andrei's mother, little sister, and brother were that Andrei was able to come home. They had already cried over the loss of a father and son.

## 77. A NEW ADMINISTRATION

Instead of the swindlers, the station was taken over by new officials. The director, Mariyasov, a man of

slight build, not tall, but who looked energetic and was quite a bit more literate than the former four. He was even a deputy of the regional soviet, having received the regional letter of praise - "pachiotnaya gramata." The chief bookkeeper, Kopydov, was not tall, but rather sturdily built, with a bald head. He was also more literate and younger than Shalin. The warehouseman, Baicev was simply called Fedia, since he was born here, grew up here, finished three grades of the local school here. Everyone knew him well. Up to now, he had been a simple worker. He had missed the Front because he had been too young. The assistant was his wife. The chief of security, the same. Stasiukas, in his place. The positions are filled, the apparatus is working. I am still working wherever. I made friends with the director's wife. I help her with this or that, I advise her on some matters.

In the summer, I am appointed territory guard. We worked in three shifts. Now, "watchfulness, watchfulness and again watchfulness," such was our cry. Stolen grain must not slip through the gates of the city.

Even though Lithuanians were considered "untouchables," we were invested with great confidence. I had already heard many times from various ranks of Russians themselves the saying: "Eto ne nash brat ruski" - (That is not our brother Russian.) The chief of security also showed watchfulness: he checked to see if any of the guards were snoozing, especially at night.

## 78. AN UNEXPECTED ENEMY

And not without reason. One of the women guards, Tankova, was very devoted to the Party but not a member (she had not been accepted into the Party for some reason or other even though she really desired it and was trying to earn it). Everyone knew her as a secret security agent, actually not secret, just unofficial. She was in the habit of showing much friendship for me.

Then one night, having been drinking, she wrapped herself in her fur and fell asleep, having tied a dog to herself to warn her if anyone came by.

The chief, checking up on the guards, found her asleep. Naturally, he reported it to the director. The latter wrote up a reprimand. Meanwhile, Stasiukas, the artist for the bulletin newspaper, was ordered to draw a caricature of Tankova sleeping on guard duty and to put it in the paper. Tankova had probably found out that Stasiukas was to draw her. At any rate, she came over to visit me, bringing a 200 g bottle of pure alcohol. "Let's drink! I respect you very much. You Lithuanians are cultured people. We'll show them! That Evdokimenka"—the chief of the guards — "is a savage." She voiced many reproaches against everyone

else as well.

I took the bottle, not daring to refuse, and leaning closely against the kitchen shelf, I poured her a glass of alcohol but plain water for myself. We drank. I repeated that maneuver a second time.

She got drunk but, nevertheless, telling me to follow, staggered off to the Red Corner where young people gathered to have a good time. There she went staggering about, waving her arms and boasting, "Wait, Žukauskienė will come. We'll wipe all of your noses in the dirt. We'll show you how cultured people dance. We'll dance western dances, not your Russian stomping about." When I didn't show up right away, she began to stomp about herself and fall down. She decided that her skirt was in the way.

I did come, as I had promised, but quite late. I was hoping that she would have fallen down somewhere and would be sleeping. But no such luck! I found her without her skirt, tottering around in the middle of the room. I hid behind some other seated women. I was afraid to show myself since I knew that she would importune me with requests to dance, and if I refused, she would become insulted, and I would acquire a very unfavorable and dangerous enemy.

But someone told her that I had arrived. She looked around and immediately staggered up to me, saying, "Let's go dance. We'll show them how cultured people dance. Let's show these savages cultured dances." She was slurring, barely able to move her tongue.

I doubted if she had ever seen the dances of cultured people. I resorted to diplomacy. "You know, Lyda, you treated me so much that I can barely walk. You see, I couldn't even come earlier; I had to lie down. So, dancing won't work out today. I'll fall down and make a laughing-stock of myself in front of everyone." She was disappointed but believed me. She soon sat down in a corner and fell asleep. And everyone had a hearty laugh about Tankova's cultured dances without a skirt. No one liked her, but all avoided her. But could Russians keep quiet?

The following day, when she had sobered up, they laid it all out: "Instead of cultured dances you just showed a bare ass. Disheveled, your nose running, you wanted Žukauskiene to dance with you. You don't know how to dance cultured dances," and so on.

Well, she became angry. And here was an enemy out of nothing.

Added to this, was Stasiukas' caricature. Although the editor, not wanting to make Tankova his personal enemy, did not place her caricature in the paper, nevertheless, many saw it.

Everyone had a good laugh about it. They all made fun of Tankova. She did not have many friends. The

director found himself on her list of enemies for the reprimand that she had received for sleeping on guard duty. Tankova stated that all her enemies, first of all, Žukauskienė and the director, would find themselves “where white bears bathe.”

Stasiukas, not wanting to be in the agent’s sight, put in a request to resign. The director refused, put a notation on the request, stating, “There is no replacement.” Stasys turned to the commandant. The latter advised him to put in a second request after two weeks. If he was not released, he could leave of his own free will.

Stasiukas left for Parbig to be an accountant at the MTS. I remained alone in Melstroy.

### 79. A WIDOW’S HALFPENNY\*

One evening, Liudukas comes running up: “Mamyte, do you have a ‘widow’s halfpenny?’”\*

“I have 40 rubles, I can give them to you if you need them.”

“Unfortunately, that’s not enough. You see, we want to buy a little house from a tractor driver, a house he’s just begun building. He’s been appointed to Kionga, so he’s selling his little house for 500 rubles.

“Why do you need a house that’s not completed, when you already have a good, finished one of your own?” I ask surprised.

“Mamyte, it’s not for us. You know those children who spent Christmas Eve with us, Jonukas and Birutė? The Armenians are treating them very badly. Hungry and wretched people are very cruel, and these, are especially so. Those children can’t even move around in there. They make them sleep in a corner, by the door. There is never any room for them to cook or to wash anything. We have to help them. I’ll give 200, Stasys 150, 40 from you. I’ll guarantee the remaining hundred. Maybe they’ll agree to wait, or maybe the children themselves will scrape up some of it. They’ll pay us back later.”

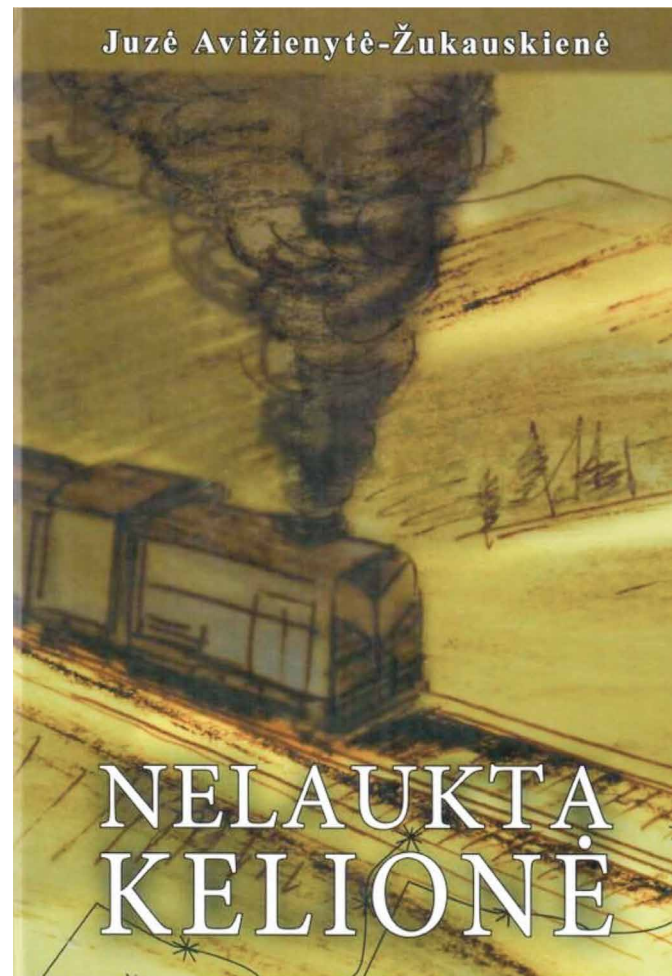
I know that dormitories are so crowded that there’s not even room to turn around, and, of course, the cruelest and most brutal grownups rule. The children won’t go to complain to anyone—no one will help them. Their only recourse is tears. Liudukas is sensitive, Stasys energetic. They mobilize the funds and buy the framework house.

The nearest Sunday, again Lithuanian assistance. In the taiga, they prepare the necessary amount of forest timber, they get horses from the MTS, bring the logs to the place. In the evenings and on Sundays, everyone helps. After a month, the little house is finished. Jonukas himself lays the bricks for a stove, and the orphans step into paradise. What joy, what peace! No

one interferes with their studies; they are in nobody’s way. The children work during the day; in the evening, they attend evening school. The Russians are surprised: how can one work and study. What for? Here again, the Lithuanians are united—they all help, they all study.

The food processing plant gets its own electrical generator (dynamo) and is detached from the manufacturing enterprise. They need a third electrician. Liudas, who is considered an electrician with higher learning and the most experienced, recommends Jonukas and helps and advises him. Jonukas becomes an electrician and doesn’t need to wade through snow up to his armpits or to gnaw on frozen bread.

*\*A Widow’s Halfpenny – a reference to Jesus Christ who observed people making donations and remarked that the rich threw in larger amounts, what they had left over, a poor widow threw in two farthings which was a larger sum for her, who had nothing. (Mark 12.41-44)*



The book is available in Lithuanian at the Balzekas Museum Gift Shop.



On May 12, 2024, a referendum on the legalization of multiple citizenship will be held in Lithuania. The draft Constitutional Law on Citizenship, which elaborates on the principles of citizenship of the Republic of Lithuania and the grounds for acquiring and losing it, is available here: <https://e-Seimas.lrs.lt/.../3a2ea860d44d11ed9b3c9397e1236c2a>. The World Lithuanian Community is preparing a plan for engaging the diaspora and disseminating the referendum to it. Meetings are also planned with the Chief Elections Committee (CEC) and other institutions to improve the automation and dissemination of voting registration processes. If you have ideas and/or would like to contribute, please contact [plb@plb.lt](mailto:plb@plb.lt).



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