

BRIDGES

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This Wayside Cross was erected in honor of those deported to Siberia between 1941 and 1943, in the Lithuanian Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois, in 1994. Its benefactors are Julius and Prane Pakalka.

Vytautas Landsbergis is the Chairman of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. This speech was delivered at the International Conference - "Euro-Atlantic Integration as a Key Aspect of Stability" in Vilnius, Lithuania on September 3rd, 1998.

Lithuania Addresses the Subject of NATO

The time has come to speak frankly. Signals from the Western capitals are already telling us that we should not expect good news concerning Lithuania's security when Poland and two other Central European states are accepted to the North Atlantic Alliance next year. Nothing is expected to be said in relation to you, this is how they make us adapt to the potential political pushing-out from the frozen Euro-Atlantic security area to the post-occupational zone of uncertainty and risk. Events are likely to take this course, though we hope this will not happen eventually.



Mr. Vytautas Landsbergis

Silence about the Baltic states in April 1999, not mentioning any one of them among the nearest applicants to NATO would amount to a negative sign implying the enforcement of Russian expansionist idea about the zone of its special interests. At the same time, apparently, it implies the acknowledgement of the de facto right of the powerful to determine the future of the Baltic states in one or another way. This would also mean a riskier future for the West itself which is capitulating already; thus, we will oppose this pushing-out not only for the sake of ourselves. On the other hand, the zone of interests is very well-known to us by the nearly sixty-year-old concepts and events.

In 1999, we shall commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Stalin and Hitler conspiracy, which marked the start of World War II initiated by Germany and the Soviet Union. To Lithuania this meant hundreds of thousands of lives taken away and half-a-century long annihilation of economy, nature, spiritual life and humanity. None of the countries, perpetrators of these crimes, have even offered their apologies yet.

We have won a part of our freedom already, but not the whole of it: we still cannot enjoy the actually recognized freedom to choose an international security structure, i.e. the Atlantic Alliance. Which in turn means, that the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the "zone" delimited by it, is still alive in the consciousness of politicians, even after 60 years. Our freedom is restricted by the will of Russia's political elite which makes the elite of democratic Europe step back.

At the beginning of 1999, we shall say: five years have passed since Lithuania handed in an official document asking to be accepted into the North Atlantic alliance. Have we received any answer yet? Most probably no - no answer. What kind of office is that which fails to reply to an essential document for five years? It fails to give an answer to our nation and state which did much to bring to a collapse the monster of the red totalitarianism, to allow Russia at least to try some other ways, and make the democratic Europe feel safer. We have contributed to your security, we are saying to the West, and you were able to save billions, hundreds of billions; yet,

when we are asking for security for our small state, we find ourselves speaking to a brick wall.

After Poland's accession to NATO in April 1999, the area of peace and security should be further extending Northwards, and not Eastwards. If we are not issued any answer, no clearer sign of the future membership, this shall also be an answer testifying to the disability of the West to do what is justified and just, and not to commit mistakes. Words about the open door were meaningful a few years ago. It is even uncomfortable to repeat them now, if the talk remains vague. However, in any case, who could assure that in April of the next year in Washington politicians shall not be repeating the empty phrases?

"Lithuania, however, has no wish to once again find itself as a commodity on a counter where the great traders conduct their bargaining."

For example, in words we are being told that we are an historical and real part of the family of Western civilization; however, when we knock on the door - "the open" door! - we are left outside, in the yard. There, any creature may attack and tear you to pieces just to construct for itself some half-way gnawed satellite.

Do the westerners know that Russia's laws that are valid today provide for the special social guarantees for its officers in the event they suffer damages and injuries fighting in the Baltic countries? Attention, please: they shall suffer injuries fighting on our land some time in the future, it is simply foreseen!

Has anybody noticed that a special military exercise was just recently held in the Pskov region? Permitted by the revised CFE treaty, the Russian army went out on a sudden march up to the Estonian border. The exercise was called "Operation Comeback". The West permitted to increase the army standing just in front of the Baltic states, and further remains blind to everything. The Estonians are happily dreaming about the European Union, and the latter still does not know if it should invite Lithuania to open the negotiations. Maybe it shall wait a while, since a large exercise was recently also held in Kaliningrad region, with firing of the "striking missiles". One may ask, which neighbor is Kaliningrad preparing to strike? Moreover, one may wonder whether the West may label this behavior of Russia as "Confidence building measures" Though, quite a number of such words have already been put down, signed.

In the same manner, more questions arise. What would happen if a huge fire erupted in the East just behind us? Since, in fact, anything can happen there, and it is not so difficult to realize this. For instance, a hungry army, unmanageable by any center. Shall we see, then, the West extending a helping hand or shall this hand be withdrawn in fear of getting it burnt?

When Stalin was demanding the West not to conclude a separate peace agreement with weakened Germany, nobody reminded him that it was he, Stalin, who was the first to conclude such "peace" for allies - dictators with Hitler. Nobody required a reasonable thing. Even for being on the same side with the Western allies until victory, the soviets weren't required to withdraw their armies from the occupied countries immediately after the war was over. Such demands were not raised. The Atlantic Charter went into a dustbin. Once again, we were the means of paying; such was the Yalta barter, which predetermined the horrible misfortunes for nations, for

which nobody assumes responsibility. No promises are being made to us in return to extend stronger security guarantees today. Moreover, the politicizing westerners are sometimes telling us that the occupation suffered by us is our drawback: we have already been sold, sacrificed, already "soviets". Therefore, our restored existence is again creating problems and is annoying or irritating.

The Russian politicians of yesterday's thinking are in particular irritated by our wish to become secure. Thus, from the West we hear a piece of advice -- "Not to irritate" The same was suggested 60 years ago, when Lithuania was hit by the ultimatums of three neighbors one after another. Lithuania, however, has no wish to once again find itself as a commodity on a counter where the great traders conduct their bargaining.

Anyway, if it happened so, we fail to understand why the West cannot tell Russia something straightforwardly. In a number of cases, the unhappy and highly unbalanced country even experiences the shortage of borders; it has neither money, nor guarantees against the chaos which is called "smuta" in Russian. Yet once again it receives donated funds for saving itself and pressing its neighbors. Thus, why is it impossible to say: "Well, here are lots of billions for you again, but forget about your dominance in the Baltic States. They want to be with the West, and we provide a haven to them!"

Maybe this seems to be the ransom of hostages. Yet it is better to ransom somebody, rather than give money out of fear for nothing.

The funniest thing is that in exchange for the money, the West receives the orders of the officials of the partner-Russia: "We will not let the Baltics be accepted! Niet!" What could that mean? At best, states that are the most benevolent towards us translate it in a softer way: see, Russia disagrees. Thus, you are in for a long-lasting wait. This is how we come to experience the actually recognized veto right of Russia. And when Western politicians claim that they do not recognize this right of Russia, these are only words, words, words. Another "confidence building measure" which brings the West another humiliation.

The day is approaching when three Central European states will become NATO members. If on that day nothing is uttered about other states determined for the membership, in particular about Poland's neighbor and strategic partner Lithuania; in other words, if empty phrases or a shameful silence follow the fanfare on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of NATO, we will bear witness to moral and political catastrophe of the West.

Lithuania poses no danger both in the East and in the West. However the West is able to create disasters for itself as it has happened in the past. For instance, it has proceeded towards them by tucking money into the quagmire where the red-starred explosives are getting rusty, and by not insisting on the removal of the detonators in order to accomplish true changes. The Western money, given away without proper control, has probably done more harm. While words about the reforms in Russia have made it possible to avoid implementing them. Today everybody is reaping the harvest of political illusions.

Next to all that is happening in our neighborhood, the international situation could be destabilized to an even larger extent. This is what would result from an unfortunate

decision of the West to halt the steady process of peace guarantees, i.e. the enlargement of the North Atlantic Alliance. If, by halting this process, the Western politicians destabilize the present positive development of NATO and thus awaken the Eastern imperial appetite for the former colonies and dominions - who will be responsible? Names will be entered here. On the other hand, names of the brave people who did not stop the NATO enlargement will be put down here forever, too.

To be reminded again and again: if the West gives away a certain part of itself, the part which is less valued by them, for instance, a country or countries on the Eastern coast of the Baltic sea, then something else, in terms of morale and geopolitics, will have to be given away.

There was the Baltic Way in 1989, there is the Atlantic way now - for everyone or not? There is the Munich way - not yet abolished, not yet closed - but still looming. And the direction of the latter is very well known.

The situation of Lithuania is special. When defending itself against the West in the Middle Ages, it naturally halted "Drang nach Osten" In later centuries, up until the end of the twentieth century, it halted Russia's "Drang nach Westen" by defending itself against the Eastern imperialism. The country can be further employed for this purpose. "You, our partner Lithuania, endure the vacuum of security, endure for long without actual support from us, and later we will see whether you should be offered the Atlantic, or Munich way" This is the stand of the West, not worded yet, but felt in the forecast of events 1999. The vacuum, however, is not everlasting. The vacuum is usually filled; air or something else works its way into the vacuum from the side where the pressure is greater.

Until now, Lithuania has not received the most important elements of armament it needs. Nevertheless, Lithuania will not follow the Munich way. It is a part of the West and will not abandon this position, even if it had to express regrets about the doubts of the Western ally.

A short while ago, Lithuanian press published the remarks of the former commander of the German Army - Bundeswehr General Major Dietrich Genschel about our path to NATO. I would like to quote a couple of ideas from that article: "Russia's opposition and Western concern [about that]...poses a powerful obstacle for the continuation of the accession process. The Baltic states are placed in an adverse position as a result of large gaps in the guarantees of firm security. Accession to NATO is the only way to fill in this gap".

These two points are separated by a vast field where one can notice newly ploughed areas of secure life and trenches of the old insecure life. That is the field where the political diplomatic work is carried out and a moral political fight is waged.

English Books for Lithuania: A Real Treasure

Albert Gustaff, a retired assistant Professor of Electrical Engineering, and his wife, Leona, were in Siauliai, Lithuania, teaching English as a Second language in 1992 at the invitation of the Prefect of Siauliu Pedagoginis Institutas. They prepared for their visit by attending classes in new methods of teaching English as a Second language at the University of Maryland, and teaching immigrants at the Sacred Heart Language School in Washington, D.C. Albert and Leona live in Frederick, MD.

"Look at the beautiful pictures!" "They're also in color." "The paper is pure white." "It has a silky smooth finish."

The teachers of English as a Second Language in Siauliai, Lithuania, were examining the books my wife, Leona, and I carried with us when we arrived in the country to teach at Siauliu Pedagoginis Institutas. The year was 1992, and the nation, after many unsettling years, had been set free from the yoke of Communism. The George Soros Foundation in the United States of America had presented us with a grant to pay for travel expenses, including costs for transporting the 200 books that were donated by different publishing companies, an overhead projector, and a cassette recorder.

We arrived in February and remained there until December teaching the Pedagogical Institute, the Engineers Club, and Kaunas Technological Institute. We gave conferences to teachers in elementary and high schools, and helped the mayor and his staff to understand the spoken English language. Our classes generally consisted of six to eight submissive, quiet, and scared students eager to learn the language from native born teachers of English speaking countries. They read and wrote the language well, but were hesitant about speaking it.

We soon became aware that good English Literature did not exist there. There were no dictionaries, thesauri, fiction or non-fiction books of value. The paper in the books was tan and rough. Pictures were small sketches in black and white. Lessons were taught by translation and grammar methods. The library was inadequate, and literature books were ineffective and rough translations of Russian translations of English and American authors. Notebooks were common because of the scarcity of books. Students brought them to class each day and took copious notes. Ten year-old textbooks portrayed America as full of harsh living conditions, and indicated that much anger existed between peoples of different races. At first, we were met with hostility, but later we were greeted with respect and acceptance.

We found that English was becoming an important language for Lithuanians. They recognized its significance in science, technology, business and economics, and in international travel. Dr. Zilinskas, director of French studies at the Institute, attended an international academic conference in Paris expecting to participate in the French he spoke fluently. The conference was conducted in English! Students from elementary grades and college attendees were dropping Russian language studies and begging to be admitted into English as a Second Language classes. Text books and other comparable contemporary literature to modernize the teaching of English were lacking. Unfortunately, no financial aid was available in the government or the Education department to take care of this need.

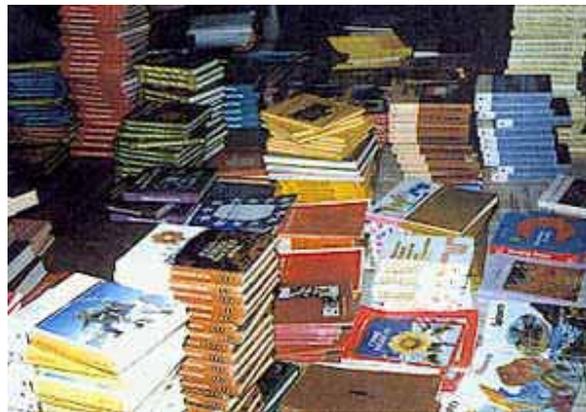
When we returned to the states, we began to search for sources, as well as, ways and means to collect books to send to Lithuania. Edward Bubelis, a retired teacher of English in Maryland, discovered that Carroll and Baltimore County schools discarded hundreds of books every year. With the consent of the Superintendent of each county, we collected over eight hundred books, selecting those that were most appropriate for the Lithuanian teachers of English. We sent sets of 30 to 50 books each in writing, composition, grammar, reading anthologies, dictionaries, thesauri, English and American classics, fiction and non-fiction books for class levels from third grade to the University level to teachers in Siauliai and Vilnius.

For the first time, many teachers were able to use modern methods to teach English. They accepted the books with keen pleasure and sent many letters of thanks. A center library was set up by teachers in Siauliai, so that the English books would be available to over thirty schools within the city and its vicinity.

I am writing to express our enormous thanks to you for your help. The books we received (so many) are a real treasure. And most important - they are sets. "The Barefoot Island" was used by Vilija Barkauskiene last year. She and her students greatly enjoyed working with them. Now more teachers will be able to use the books you have sent for their lessons. Some of them have already borrowed a copy from the library to study during the summer.

Eugenija Vaiciuliene

Anglu Kalbos Mokytoju Asociacija



Books are sorted and ready for packing.

Photo: Albert Gustaff

The news of the receipt of the original group of books had traveled quickly, and we received requests from teachers in many towns and villages. After much study and consideration, we have concluded that enough books can be collected from the county schools in Maryland to supply all the schools in Lithuania.

It's just marvelous that you have such good intentions of helping Lithuanian schools to supply them with English textbooks. Our school needs them badly.

*Birute Urbutiene
Headmistress of
S. Neris Secondary School,
Vilkaviskis*

We are very happy that you are going to supply our school with English books.

*Ona Jasiuleviciene
K. Donelaitis Secondary School*

Our school is a small country school and such schools are very often forgotten when we have some sort of distribution of something useful among district schools. It would be very kind of you if you could send us some grammar reference books and grammar exercises.

*Verbalize Secondary School,
Vilkaviskis*

We would be very happy if you could send us some books. We would like to get some grammar books but not one but about 15 copies of the same kind.

*A. Eilkevicius,
Ausros Vidurine Mokykla, Vilkaviskis*

For the past seven years, the Lithuanian government has been engaged in changing its economy from the Soviet-style, planned economy to the Western-style, market economy. Lithuanian leaders and businessmen were not trained to work in the Western-style economy. The new generation of young people are preparing to help leaders and businessmen to change to a market economy. Providing English books for primary, middle, and secondary schools is a first and important step.



Aldona Yanulavage packs books for Lithuania.

The Lithuanian-American Community estimates that there are one million Lithuanian Americans living in this

Photo: Albert Gustaff

country. For several years they have generously donated food, clothing, and medicines through many different organizations. With the help of volunteers from the Baltimore Lithuanian Community and other Maryland groups, there are now approximately 9,000 books packed and ready to ship. It is estimated that the cost of shipping and distributing a container-load of books to teachers in Lithuania will be approximately \$7,000. We hope to send good literature to the students of Lithuania and provide some assistance to its President, Valdas Adamkus, a former board member of the Lithuanian American Community before he returned to his native land. We have the books but we lack the funds to transport them to Lithuania.

The Lithuanian Human Services Council, a non-profit branch of the Lithuanian-American Community, has agreed to support the "Books for Lithuania" project. Mrs. Birute Jasaitis heads the administration of these funds. A donation of \$50 would supply enough books for 18 classrooms of 30 students each, but any amount would be gratefully accepted. Be a part of educating Lithuania's youth!

Send to:

The Lithuanian Human Services Council
Re: Books for Lithuania/B. Jasaitis
2711 West 71 st. Str. Chicago IL 60629
Tel: 773-476-2655

A Child's Dreams can be Fulfilled

Jeanne Dorr is a member of the Board of Directors of Lithuanian Orphan Care, a branch of the Human Services Council of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc. She is also a Social Studies teacher in New Jersey.

This is a departure from my usual columns because this month I am going to share my space with one of our Orphan Care children. The essay included in my column was written by a young sixteen year-old lady who I had stumbled upon by accident.

Several sponsors asked me to take additional money to their children, and it is in this way I found Jurgita Kundrotaite from Mankunelio village in the area of Lazdijai. Her sponsor is a friend of mine, and even though he never corresponded with Jurgita, he asked me if I could take an envelope to her. We decided I would look the home situation over, and if all seemed well, I would leave the envelope. If I had any doubts about how the money would be spent I would return it to him.

Jurgita was brought to us by Countryside Children's Fund. So, I phoned the director of the fund, Regina Svoba, and explained the situation. I knew she would offer to make the trip with me, and I was not surprised when she said, "When do you want to go?" As far as I was concerned, the sooner the better. I'm not too comfortable walking around with other people's money. We started out early the next morning. It was a rather long trip with the usual rain.

Our first stop was to pick up the local social worker in the area; there is no way we could find these villages. The social worker was a very caring young woman, and she told us about many problems the area faced. The land was not good for farming and there was a lack of jobs.

As we continued our trip, the paved roads gave way to dirt roads which could accommodate only one car. While I prayed that another car would not come from the opposite direction, rocks kept hitting the bottom of the car, while stones hit the windshield. We didn't need a car, we needed a tank.

As we approached the farm house, Jurgita's grandmother met us. She didn't know we were coming, but she greeted us like long-lost relatives. She kept kissing me and asking me to thank Jurgita's sponsor. She still didn't know I had an additional gift with me. The grandmother immediately started issuing orders to her daughter to set the table. The daughter is a widow and also lived on the farm.

As we entered the house, Jurgita appeared. She is a beautiful young woman whose manners and gentility fit the word 'lady'. We found it very easy to talk to Jurgita and her grandmother. They were very forthcoming with the answers to our questions. For many reasons, Jurgita was raised by her grandmother from the age of two weeks.

Jurgita stands with her grandmother.

Photo: Jeanne Dorr



For short intervals, Jurgita would return home to live with her parents. When her father was 32 years old, he died and Jurgita went back to her grandmother.

Eventually, Jurgita's mother remarried and once again Jurgita was sent to live with her mother. But it was a very unhappy time for Jurgita and her grandmother. Jurgita cried and cried, until it was decided it was best for everyone to let her return to her grandmother's house. By this time, the photo album was brought out and we were shown pictures of Jurgita's family during happier days.

We were summoned to the table for a delicious lunch. Everything was home grown, even the juice was made from their berries. Jurgita's grandmother refused to take "no" for an answer when she offered second and third helpings. In the course of our conversation, Jurgita told us how much she enjoyed school. During the school year, she lived with an uncle in Prienai and on weekends, she returned to the farm. She was about to start twelfth grade and was looking forward to September. She shared her fond memories of her village primary school, where she had to walk eight kilometers to get a bus each day.

When we asked her what she would like to do after graduation, she became silent. I guess it was to gather the courage for her next statement. She told us her dream was to become a journalist, but she hadn't the slightest idea of how to get started. This sent immediate bells ringing in both Regina's head and mine. One of the goals of Lithuanian Orphan Care is to help our children lead a meaningful life when they reach adulthood. To do this, we encourage them to pursue higher education or to acquire a trade.

Jurgita asked us if she could read an assignment she was given last year which won first prize in her class. The theme was to write about the person the students most admired. While most wrote about well-known people, Jurgita wrote about her grandmother. She didn't really "read" it to us because she worked so long and so hard writing it that she practically had it memorized. Instead, she looked at her grandmother while she recited, occasionally glancing down at a word. There wasn't a dry eye at the table. Her grandmother was sitting next to me, and she grabbed my hand while tears were streaming down her cheeks. I glanced at her work worn hand. This was a woman who didn't need a microwave, a dishwasher, or a car. The words being conveyed by her beloved granddaughter brought her all the pleasure and joy that no amount of money could even buy. When Jurgita finished, it seemed a long time before anyone was able to speak.

Regina gained her composure first by promising her that Countryside Children would continue to help her reach her dream. Regina's husband, Jonas, is the editor-in-chief of Valstieciu Laikrastis (newspaper), and she encouraged Jurgita to enter contests which the paper frequently sponsors for young writers. These contests bring prizes along with the thrill of seeing their work in print. She also promised to publish her winning essay.

After I came to my senses, I told Jurgita that I had no doubt the BRIDGES readers would be both excited and inspired by reading her words. I promised her I would share my space with her and send her a copy of BRIDGES Ó so that she could see her work published in English. I also promised her that her sponsor would continue to support her beyond her 18th birthday. I know him well enough to speak for him and make this commitment on his part. Now it was the flustered Jurgita's turn to

speak. Once she was able to find her voice, she started to thank us over and over, as her eyes were brimming with tears.

Then it was time to take our leave and start back to Vilnius. We thanked Jurgita's aunt for the delicious lunch which she put together on the spur of the moment. Both the aunt and the grandmother tried to persuade us to stay for supper. Given the quality of lunch, it was a tempting offer, but we had to get started. I asked Jurgita to show me where she did most of her writing, and she led me to a tiny room where she slept. There was a small desk, but most of the time, she wrote while sitting on the bed and balancing her notebook on her knee. I guess that shoots down the theory that if students do not have a perfect place to study, they will not succeed.

Outside we met her grandfather and cousins who were busy cleaning mushrooms which they had picked that morning. A short distance away two more cousins were trying to get a horse moving. Apparently the horse was on vacation because he simply refused to budge. As we were leaving, I asked Jurgita to write about Lithuania. She agreed, but I figured I would have to send her three or four reminders.

We put off saying goodbye as long as we could, but the moment to leave finally came. We hugged and kissed each other. I hated to leave this family, especially Jurgita. I wanted to stay and be a part of her school year. But I also wanted to get home so that you, BRIDGES readers, could see the kinds of young people we are helping.

When I returned to America, I found an envelope with Jurgita's thoughts about Lithuania. This is how serious this 16 year-old is about writing. You will read her views about Lithuania in a future issue of BRIDGES. After reading her essay, you certainly won't want to miss her next composition.

Jurgita also wrote to thank her sponsor for the extra help. Before I had a chance to ask him if he would continue to help her, the sponsor told me he was in for the long haul. He intends to see her through until her dreams are realized. No, I must amend that sentence. Not her dreams, but our dreams.

Thank you to Jurgita's sponsor who wishes to remain anonymous and to Countryside Children's Fund who take a personal interest in each and every child. A word of gratitude to Violeta and Kazys Razgaitis of Rosemont, Pennsylvania for translating the essay into English. Credit must be given to Jurgita's grandparents for encouraging her to stay in school and to always do her best. But our heartfelt gratitude goes to Jurgita herself. In spite of adverse conditions, she followed her dream.

The cost to sponsor a child is \$150 a year. ANY donation is gratefully appreciated. Please send your tax-deductible check to:



Lithuanian Orphan Care

2711 W. 71st St.

Chicago, IL 60629

(Please mention that you read the article in BRIDGES.)

My Ideal

The possibilities of perfecting oneself and becoming a better person increases when you have ideals or someone to look up to, someone you want to be like. For that reason even your ideals gain strength and hope from people who match them.

I also have an ideal, actually a person, thanks to whom I am who I am and what I am. This is a person whom I trust. Of course this person has made mistakes, has suffered, has fallen and then risen. This person is my Grandmother.

From the day I was born, I lived with my Grandmother. My first word was "Grandma", not "Mama"; even though I have a mother who gave birth to me and is my good friend. I grew up surrounded by endless love and caring. I had many toys and friends, as well as neighbors who loved me. I was surrounded by the wonderful beauty of the Dzukija countryside and its goodhearted people, and the refreshing land, actually everything that's good.

My Grandmother taught me to know God, goodness, sincerity, sensitivity, and industriousness. She taught me to feel for others, to forgive, to understand others, and most importantly, to be myself. A person whose soul shines a strong will, deep thoughts, and even deeper feelings is a person who appears once in a lifetime. Because friends and acquaintances may be rare and priceless like diamonds, they may also be untrustworthy.

I now often look at her with immense gratitude and love: at her tired eyes reflecting the world's worries; at her face wrinkled by eroding perspiration; and at her hair white as an apple tree in bloom. I cannot comprehend this person's strong will and goodness.

She often would tuck me in at night; she would comfort me when I would awake from a bad dream. In the evening, she would tell me stories which I have now hear thousands of times, but they are still dear to me. Grandmother helped me not to judge my mother. Although one cannot help but judge her; she is a person who makes mistakes, fails, gives in. I learned to accept and respect people for who they are, to love them without requiring anything in return.

When I am sad or things aren't going well, she always knows how to comfort me. To have a loving person and to feel their support is the most wonderful feeling, and I am

happy that I can experience it. Time marches on, and it again brings colorful daily varieties; let it also bring to our hearts at least a small part of that joy and hope.

Jurgita Kundrotaite

Edward W. Baranauskas has contributed to BRIDGES in previous publications. Mr. Baranauskas traveled to Lithuania this past summer bringing back with him many new memories of today's Lithuania.

Vilnius and the Parking Solution

I visited Lithuania several times during the Soviet period. There was no problem, then, for the motorist trying to find a parking space in Vilnius; probably because automobiles were few in numbers. There were no time limits for parking, either. I remember how surprised my relatives were when I told them that the average motorist in America had to pay to park their cars in certain areas of most cities. I was told there was never such a practice in the Soviet Union. My, how times have changed since the "good old Soviet days."

Since my last visit to Vilnius two years ago, I was impressed with the number of automobiles clogging its streets and highways. Bumper to bumper traffic seemed commonplace, more so during the rush hour. One of my relatives thought that there were perhaps ten times more cars driving around Vilnius today than there were in the pre-independence days.

I noticed one change that pleasantly surprised me. Motorists must now pay for the privilege of parking in the Old Town and the bustling center of the city, where most of the commercial and government businesses take place. This parking fee only applies to these two congested areas, while the rest of Vilnius is not affected.

One afternoon, my relatives and I went to have dinner at Ritos Smukle (Rita's Tavern), an affordable restaurant by Lithuanian standards, owned and operated by a former Chicago resident, Rita Dapkus. After driving around, we finally found a vacant spot to leave the car. I noticed there were no parking meters at the curbs to help locate where to park; as many of us are familiar with back home. Instead, each space is clearly marked off with painted white lines.

One of my relatives excused himself, and returned in a minute or so with a piece of paper he placed inside the car, on top of the driver's side of the dashboard. He explained that it was a receipt for the parking fee he had to pay, with large numbers indicating the time of expiration. I noticed a gentleman wearing a sleeveless or colored vest was walking around, looking through the windshield of each car, and checking the time on each receipt. This procedure was something new to me.

I asked my relatives many questions during dinner about how this parking system works. First, the motorist must buy a parking card, which is available at many of the



A motorist finds a "boot" locked on his tire for a parking violation.

Photo: Edward Baranauskas

newsstands or kiosks that are scattered throughout the city. Depending on how many times you wish to park, the cost is either 25 or 50 litas. The charge for one-half hour of parking is one litas, and for one hour it is two litas. In figuring out this fee in U.S. currency, since the exchange rate is four litas to one U.S. dollar, the parking charge is 50 cents for one hour.

Electronic machines, about the same height as the meters we see at home, are located at each parking area. Each time the card is inserted, the total unused time can be seen on a small screen. After pressing a button to indicate how many half-hours you wish to park, a piece of paper slips out that shows the time of day and the exact time the parking limit expires.

If the attendant does not see the receipt on top of the dashboard or if the time limit has exceeded, he notifies his superiors. Another man arrives to install and lock a boot on the left, front tire; so, that the vehicle cannot be moved. There is a telephone number on it for the unlucky motorist to call and have the boot removed.

This experience results in a total fine of 100 litas: 50 for the man's services to come and remove the boot, and another 50 for the parking violation. The fine can either be paid in full right there, for which he will be given an official statement showing payment. If he cannot pay then, he will be given one month to pay the fine at the Lietuvos Taupomasis Bankas (Lithuanian Savings Bank). If this is not complied with, then the police will take the person's driver's license.

After we left the restaurant, I was surprised to see the car parked next to ours with a boot locked on the left, front wheel. The owner was really upset when he saw that. He claimed he forgot to put the parking receipt on top of the dashboard, as required. As we drove away, he was waiting to have the boot removed.

Credit must be given to the Vilnius authorities for putting in place such an organized parking system. Rules are strictly enforced, the cost to the motorist discourages all-day parking, and this gives the use of mass transit a big boost. The big winner is the city treasury, which gets some much needed revenue.

Perhaps some of the cities in the United States, who are looking for additional revenue, should pattern their parking rules after Vilnius model.

PERSPECTIVES

Fall is a peculiar season. We start out with the opening of school, then the odd days off for special people in history, then Halloween Ō zooming straight into Christmas. One trip to the nearest mall right after Halloween allows you to witness witches and goblins magically reappear as Santa and his elves.

I suppose one "gimme" holiday usually follows another "gimme" holiday. Yet what people don't realize is the treasure trove of "gimme" holidays quietly packed away in the inconspicuous month of November.

November starts off with All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day. What wonderful "gimme" days those are. Just think of all the inspiration, memories, and miracles given to us by the saints and loved ones who were once a part of our lives. In Lithuania, processions march into cemeteries to light candles on the graves of their family and friends. People reminisce, pray, and gather gentle strength from those who still keep a watch over us.

November 11th marks Veteran's Day. The assorted wars have produced many veterans and wartime survivors who can still hear the whistling bomb or the anguished cry. Our ears hear the power of their gift to their country when we say that our country is free.

Thanksgiving spurs people to give to their neighbor. Without the usual glance at the time schedule, they visit the poor, the weak, and the sickly. They give of their own food and friendship. Families unite, while strangers kindly salute each other. An opportune moment comes to whisper "thank you" to all seen and unseen who have succeeded to breathe wondrous gifts into our souls.

By November 29th, Advent's beginning, we should feel awed by the wonder of these "gimmes". Yet Advent succeeds in giving the most awesome of gifts - a promise of a Savior. The anticipation, the vigil, continues until Christmas. This fervent excitement renews our hope in Man.

Our very beings are refreshed with the gentle touches from centuries past and the warm, loving hugs from those in our lives at this very moment. November feeds our souls to urge us on into the cold depths of winter. It becomes the month which opens our inner spirits to a most wondrous dance of life.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM LITHUANIA

- Lithuanian exports in the first seven months of this year rose by 9.1 percent as compared to 1997 numbers.
- The bulk of foreign investments went to the Lithuanian processing industry
Ö the largest investor being the United States.
- Since the beginning of this year, Lithuania's population fell by 903 people - totaling 3.703 million inhabitants.
- From January to September, the number of registered divorces decreased by 685 compared to 1997.
- In the first eight months of this year, 250 more people arrived to Lithuania as compared to 1997. The largest number of foreign tourists this year was registered in August, while Lithuanians also chose the same month for their visits abroad.
- The main priority fields for budget spending next year will be education, healthcare and social security, and Lithuania's integration into the European Union.
- The number of global computer network users soared by 30 to 40 percent compared to last year. Currently, up to 60,000 people use the Internet.
- A survey of 1,025 Lithuanian families showed that 3 percent had a home computer; while, 1.8 percent intended to buy one.
- About 100 Lithuanian enterprises faced serious financial problems due to the Russian financial crisis. Over 50 of these companies - mostly food processing and light industries - have asked for financial support.
- The Lithuanian national air carrier, Lithuanian Airlines, leased another two planes from SAAB.
- October's average monthly wages stood at 1,049.9 litas (\$260.72) after taxes - rising 1.8 percent compared to September's averages.
- Lithuania's Ignalina nuclear plant generated more than 9.65 billion kWh of electric energy during the first nine months of 1998. The nuclear station's two blocks had been operating at 50.6 percent of their capacity. The plant is planning to increase generation up to 13.68 billion kWh of electricity.
- Lithuanian military air forces (KOP) purchased and delivered two new fighters from the Czech Republic. The new planes would be employed for the control of Lithuanian air space and military training. The purchase cost the government as much as 8.2 million litas.

PARLIAMENT LEADERS OF EUROPEAN NATIONS IN VILNIUS

The parliament leaders of European Union-seekers, the nations of central and eastern Europe, were in Vilnius November 9 to 11 for the sixth meeting with Chairman of the Europarlament, Jose Maria Gil-Robles.

The parliamentary delegations from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Poland, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Hungary considered changes in the EU enlargement process. They also discussed the struggle against organized crime, migration and visa problems.

Vilnius had been selected as a venue for the forum during the 5th annual meeting of EU associated countries' parliament leaders in March, 1998 in Bucharest.

The Chairman of Lithuania's Seimas, Vytautas Landsbergis, accentuated that common efforts might lead to treatment of the Baltic states along with Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and other countries as a related geopolitical group, instead of some isolated special case in the context of European problems. u

Source for Current Events news articles: ELTA News Agency

ADAMKUS ENCOURAGES U.S. LITHUANIANS TO KEEP UP THEIR NATIONAL SPIRIT

During his latest United States visit, Lithuania's President Valdas Adamkus had breakfast with the representatives of over 50 U.S.-based Lithuanian-American organizations in Chicago's Lithuanian restaurant Seklycia in late October. President Valdas Adamkus heartened Lithuanian-Americans to foster their national spirit, and promised support from Lithuania's government for this goal.

Adamkus also urged the Lithuanian community to exercise its influence in a NATO bid. He hailed their initiative to send letters to Congressmen accentuating the aspiration of Lithuania to integrate into the alliance.

Shortly after breakfast, the president had a conversation with five Lithuanian children who arrived in Chicago for medical treatment. He thanked LAC's Human Services Council Chairperson, Birute Jasaitiene, for giving these children a chance to get treatment from American doctors.

In an interview to a few American journalists, President Adamkus stated that it was a pleasure for him to come back to the place where he had lived for a few decades. "Of course, I miss my old friends who stayed here, but we have not cut short our contacts. Therefore, I availed myself of this opportunity to meet some of them during my stay," he spoke.

He also talked of his years in the States. "As I look at the Great Lakes, where people can bathe freely, I understand that I have achieved something in my life. When I had

arrived in Chicago, these lakes had been very polluted and nobody was allowed to bathe in them," said Adamkus.

The current leader of Lithuania had spearheaded the 5th region of the U.S. Environmental Agency. Within his jurisdiction was also the ecological protection of the Great Lakes.

In addition to meeting with the Lithuanian-American Community, Pres. Adamkus met with the Governor of Illinois State, Jim Edgar, Chicago's Archbishop Francis George, and Mayor Richard Daley.

LITHUANIAN MASTER CLARINETIST IN THE U.S.

Professor Algirdas Budrys, master artist and clarinetist, performed in the premiere performance of a Cultural Exchange between the Lithuanian National Conservatory and Raritan Valley Community College/Central Jersey Symphony Orchestra on October 24.

Co-founded by Maestro Roger Briscoe and Rosetta Senkus Bacon, the program facilitates the artistic and educational exchange between two cultures. Professor Budrys enjoyed his two-week stay at the Raritan Valley Community College as Artist in Residence.

Prof. Budrys is also celebrating 40 years of performing this season and is being honored in gala concerts throughout Lithuania. He has given concerts in all the former Soviet Republics, as well as in Hungary, Poland, Germany, Great Britain, France, and in other European countries.

In 1986, he was appointed Artistic Director of the Lithuanian National Philharmonic. Presently he is head of the Wind Department of the National Conservatory in Vilnius and Artistic Director of the National Wind Orchestra "Trimitas".

Prof. Budrys and pianist Rosetta Senkus Bacon performed several pieces at St. Andrew's Lithuanian Parish Hall at noon on Oct. 18.

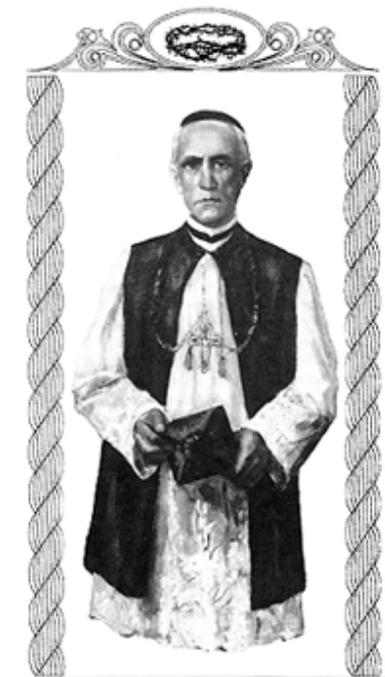
Reflections

Bernadeta Miliauskaite-Harris is a member of the Council of Religious Affairs of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc.

Archbishop Teofilus Matulionis: The Beatification of a Lithuanian Martyr

The Catholic Church in Lithuania owes its survival to the courage of people, who while living under Soviet rule, chose to defend their beliefs in the face of imprisonment, torture, even death. Among those who refused to surrender to Communist threats were Bishop Vincentas Borisevicius, Archbishop Mecislovas Reinsys, Archbishop Teofilus Matulionis, and Bishop Pranas Ramanauskas. The beatification process has begun for the first three.

Beatification, followed by sainthood, has always been a mysterious process for laymen. What measures are taken to assess a candidate's standing for this honor? The recent proclamation of St. Edith Stein's inclusion into sainthood brought about controversial reactions from both the Catholic Church and the Jewish community. Yet, her intercession in behalf of a little girl's life, and her actions and pleas in behalf of the Jewish population proved to be a strong argument for saintliness in the eyes of the Catholic Church.



In addition to Blessed George Matulaitis, Lithuania has been the home for three candidates for beatification: Bishop Vincentas Borisevicius, Archbishop Mecislovas Reinsys, and Archbishop Teofilus Matulionis. Their lives attest to the courage and faith that brings them forth to beatification. A look into the life of Archbishop Teofilus Matulionis enlightens the fervent meaning of the beatification process to the memory of a martyr, the faith that he treasured and protected, and the country that he strengthened with his unending work.

Teofilus Matulionis was born on a farm in Kudoriskis on June 22, 1873. He was ordained a priest on March 4, 1900 and assigned to parishes in Latvia and Russia. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, churches were closed and their property confiscated. In March of 1923, Rev. Matulionis and fifteen other priests were arrested and tried. He was sentenced to three years in prison and released on February 25, 1925.

From 1925 to 1929, Matulionis served at a parish in Leningrad. There, he was secretly consecrated a bishop by Bishop Maleckis on February 9, 1929. On Nov. 11, 1929, Bishop Matulionis was accused of spying for Lithuania and arrested a second time. He was held in Leningrad Prison for one year without trial. At night, he was

interrogated; and forbidden to rest during the day. This did not prevent him from loving his persecutors. One night he told his interrogator that he felt sorry that the interrogator had to put up with him because he really did not have any information for him. His sincerity touched the heart of his persecutor so much, that the next day he brought the Bishop a sandwich.

If Bishop Matulionis had agreed to spy on his fellow priests and parishioners, he would have been released. He firmly refused to go against the dictates of his conscience. As a result, he was exiled for ten years to an area near the White Sea. He rejoiced at being able to join the 34 other priests imprisoned there, who lived in unbearable conditions, including starvation, disease, and torture. The climate was brutally cold. Prisoners were required to cut and clear 50 meters of forest a day. Sundays were not observed. Even though threatened, the Catholic priests did not work on Sundays. They would rise from one to five in the morning and secretly celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in groups of three or four; while one kept watch for guards.

The priests formed a commune in which they shared all money and packages received. It was broken up, and Bishop Matulionis was sent back to Leningrad Prison for more interrogations. From there, he was sent 250 kilometers north to labor in the forests 12 hours a day dragging logs.

After Lithuania declared independence on Feb. 16, 1918, a prisoner exchange was arranged between Lithuania and Russia. On Oct. 19, 1933, Bishop Matulionis, along with ten priests and three lay people, returned to Kaunas. His first act was to thank Pope Pius XI for his prayers and support by sending him a telegram. After regaining his strength, he personally visited the Holy Father on March 24, 1934. As he knelt for the Pope's blessing, Pius XI raised him up from his knees and knelt before him saying, " You are a martyr. You are the one who must bless me."

Bishop Matulionis visited 15 Lithuanian parishes in the United States from 1934 to 1936. Those who heard him speak, described him as kind, humble, loving, and forgiving. He spoke about his imprisonment only when asked and without the slightest hint of revenge. His main theme was the importance of suffering.

Back in Lithuania, the Bishop conscientiously shepherded his flock through World War II. People sought to escape the harshness of the German occupation by turning to alcohol. As Bishop of Kaisiadoriai, he invited everyone to abstain from alcohol. He urged people to pray for peace, to repent, and to consecrate themselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

In the summer of 1944, as the Germans were weakening, it became obvious that the Communists would return to Lithuania. Bishop Matulionis issued guidelines, which stated that priests were to remain with their parishioners. Only those in imminent danger would be allowed to leave and only with his permission. He urged all pastors to hold days of prayer.

After bombing Kaisiadoriai, the Communists returned on July 13, 1944. Bishop Matulionis continued to shepherd his flock by defending their rights. He wrote a lengthy memorandum to the Soviet authorities detailing the needs of the Catholic Church. A few of the issues he addressed were: that the Church be able to maintain official relations with the Vatican, that Sunday continue to be observed as a day of

rest, that priests be able to catechize children and to conduct their duties without fear of arrest, that priests and Church property be exempt from exorbitant taxes, and that priests be able to minister to all who need them – such as Army recruits and the sick in hospitals.

On Feb. 21, 1946, the bishops met in Kaunas, and prepared a pastoral letter urging people to pray and work for the glory of God and the good of society. The letter was deemed anti-government by the authorities and forbidden to be published. Seventy-three year-old Bishop Matulionis was once again arrested – on Dec. 18, 1946, and imprisoned for nine months. He went to the interrogations dressed as if he was going to the altar; wearing a cassock and surplice. His interrogator admitted that even though Bishop Matulionis did not say much, he always spoke the truth. He was sentenced to seven years in the notorious Vladimir Prison in Moscow, without a trial. There he fell ill and was transferred to an invalid home in Mordovia to recover.

At the end of 1955, many prisoners were released – but not Bishop Matulionis. His relatives and friends wrote many letters to the authorities requesting the release of the elderly Bishop. That day finally arrived on April 26, 1956. He returned to Vilnius on May 4, 1956. His first stop was "Ausros Vartai" to thank God and the Blessed Mother for his freedom. After visiting with relatives, he went to live at the rectory in Birstonas where he was given one room.

On June 6, 1958, Bishop Matulionis received government notice that he would have to move out. A friend, Rev. A. Pronckietis, pastor of Seduva, took him in. There he spent his final years. Hard labor and imprisonment took their toll. This good shepherd, who sacrificed his freedom for his people, received his eternal reward on Aug. 20, 1962. Before his death, in February, Bishop Matulionis received a telegram from the Vatican notifying him that the Holy Father had bestowed upon him the title of Archbishop.