
BRIDGES

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Special Focus — Lithuanians Exiled in Siberia

P e r s p e c t i v e s

The month of June has traditionally focused on ending the school year — both American and Lithuanian Saturday schools; eagerly preparing for the summer camps and programs; and attending the last events, such as the Mass and program honoring those who were deported to Siberia during the terrible days in June in the 1940s.

My parents would often tell us about the events of the Siberian deportations. Since my uncle and grandmother had been exiled to a Soviet camp, the subject was close to home, and my parents were intent in making us understand the horrors and trials my own relatives and friends had experienced. It was right to know this. Yet, it took away from a great day of celebration — Father's Day.

Although it's almost embarrassing to admit, we girls, more often than not, only remembered Father's Day as we glanced at the Sunday paper. In a rush we'd color cards, greet our father with profuse hugs and kisses, and became accommodating when we were not normally so. Somehow Father's Day was not as festive or glorious as Mother's Day was. Yet, that's the way my Father preferred it to be. Or so it seems now in hindsight.

My father's soul always was and is centered on the Lithuanian spirit. As a child, I remember the fervency with which he involved himself in Lithuanian-American community matters. As I grew older, our discussions about Lithuanian matters at the dinner table at times extended into the night. Now, when I visit with my family, we all prepare ourselves in advance for the stimulating conversations ranging from Lithuanian history, politics, literature, to personal experiences. All these conversations and discussions have enriched my life and, now, my sons' lives.

My father has never wanted a one-time-a-year card and tie. He's just always wanted to be able to pass on to us the Lithuanian 'dvasia' (spirit) and watch it blossom in us and our children. That seems to be when he is most happy. Ačiū, tête, we feel truly blessed by you.

Happy Father's Day to all fathers everywhere!

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

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**The Magic of St. John's Night**

With all its ancient mysteries, Lithuania's celebration of St. John's night can be a part of your traditional picnic! Part of the midsummer night's festivities can include a bonfire, refreshments, singing Lithuanian songs about youth and love, and telling Lithuanian folktales about witches, demons, and the fern blossom's magic. Have the kids search for the mystical fern blossom and let the fun begin — the Lithuanian way!

— Source: *Lithuanian Customs and Traditions* by Danutė Brazytė -Bindokienė.

On the cover:
The Hill of Crosses in
Šiauliai, Lithuania.
—photo: R. Ardys-Juška

From Lithuania...

New Prime Minister and Cabinet Sworn in

President Valdas Adamkus signed a decree approving the members of the Cabinet proposed by Prime Minister Rolandas Paksas on June 1st and the new ninth government was sworn in during ceremonies on June 11th.

The new Prime Minister of Lithuania, Rolandas Paksas comes from Telšiai in western Lithuania. Born in 1956, he studied at the Vilnius Civil Engineering Institute (presently Vilnius Technical University), which awarded him a diploma in industrial and civil engineering in 1979. Later he undertook studies at the Civil Aviation Academy in former Leningrad (St. Petersburg). He worked there as a pilot-instructor until 1985.

During 1985 to 1992 Paksas led the S. Darius and S. Girėnas flying club and aviation unit under the Voluntary Defense Service (SKAT). His achievements in aviation included multiple champion titles in the nationals for acrobatic flying and twice champion in the former USSR. Paksas switched to the private sector assuming the role of president in Restako construction firm from 1992 to 1997.

In the 1997 local elections, Paksas won the seat of Vilnius mayor and has maintained an excellent reputation as city leader. Paksas is married with two children.

Paksas outlined a new government program maintaining that his predecessor Gediminas Vagnorius' Cabinet would "serve as ground-work" for a new program, but insisted it includes modifications related to liberalization of

the business environment and export of Lithuanian products especially agriculture products. Paksas is also resolved to revise budget expenditure and plans to order a State audit. According to Paksas, the basic concern of the new government should be formation of the most favorable conditions for the growth of the national economy.

His concerns also included the necessity to increase the number of workplaces especially in rural areas, developing self-governance as wide as possible, and to make the government closer to the people. Paksas said the formal institutions should raise the degree of co-ordination in their actions and do their best to make Lithuania's people feel more secure. During the swearing in ceremony, Paksas thanked everybody including the opposition, which criticized his program. The Premier admitted that the program lacked concrete details; however, he vowed to provide for specifics during the planning of government activities.

The Premier was quoted as saying that with slightly more than a year left before next parliamentary polls the existing ministries should not be merged or reformed otherwise. Paksas replaced seven ministers. The posts of the different ministries are as follows:

- Finance Minister – incumbent Secretary of Finance Ministry Jonas Lioginas, replacing Algirdas Semėta.
- Economy Minister -- the former governor of Property Bank, Eugenijus Maldeikis, who replaced Vincas Babilius.
- Public Administration Reforms and Municipi-

SOURCE for this news article was the ELTA News Agency.

palties Minister -- Sigitas Kaktys, replacing Kestutis Skrebys.

- Justice Minister -- the incumbent Justice vice-minister Gintaras Balčiunas, who replaced Vytautas Pakalniškis.
- Interior Minister -- former Chief Commissioner of Vilnius city police Česlovas Blažys, who replaced Stasys Sedbaras.
- Health Minister -- Raimundas Alekna, replacing former ministry head Mindaugas Stankevičius.
- Culture Minister -- former program director under Open Society Fund, restoration expert Artūras Bėkšta, replacing Saulius Šaltenis.

Seven ministers retained their posts from the former Cabinet. These ministers are: Algirdas Saudargas as Foreign Minister; Defense Minister Česlovas Stankevičius; Minister for Social Care and Labour Irena Degutienė; Minister of Transport Rimantas Didžiokas; Education Minister Kornelijus Platelis; Minister of Agriculture Edvardas Makelis; and Environment Minister Danius Lygis. These officials were the members of ex-Premier Gediminas Vagnorius's team.

In addition to these changes, Pakšas appointed his former advisor in the Vilnius municipality, journalist Dalia Kutraitė-Giedraitienė to the office of government chancellor, the press service of government reported to ELTA. Another appointment was that of the Prime Minister's spokesperson -- well-known journalist Jonas Čekuolis. ♦

Lithuanian-American Nominated for Army's Leadership

President Valdas Adamkus nominated the incumbent defense vice-minister, Lithuanian-American Jonas Kronkaitis for the office of Commander-in-Chief on June 10th.

Kronkaitis, a reserve Colonel of the U.S. army, notified Adamkus of permission which U.S. institutions gave to him to occupy a high-ranking military position in Lithuania. Permission from the Pentagon and the State Department enabled him to safeguard his pension as American reserve officer and other social security guarantees.

"I think my contribution to the army can be significant, and I will try to do my best to make the armed forces of Lithuania stronger," the nominee said after an interview with President Adamkus. Speaking about his required duties, Kronkaitis said he would continue the launched reforms in the army by focusing on training of officers and non-commissioned officers pursuant to NATO standards.

"One of the major problems is that we lack well-trained personnel. Therefore, training officers and non-commissioned officers remains a priority task," he said. According to the officer, Lithuanian troops are armed in accordance with current needs.

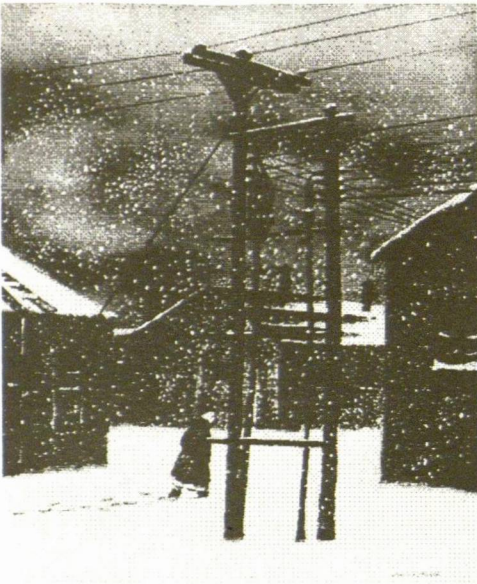
"With growth and improvement of the army, more advanced arms will be purchased. For instance, at the moment we do not need bombers or a strong artillery." Kronkaitis continued.

Sixty-four year old Kronkaitis is an expert of military machines. His previous career included such positions as that of inspector general in the U.S. army headquarters and director general of the Rock Island Arsenal. He had served in different units for 27 years, including two years in the Vietnam War.

Prior to his appointment as Lithuanian defense vice-minister, he had worked with the group of Lithuanian-American officers who coordinated a State security plan outlining the creation of efficient military forces brought in line with NATO norms.

In Lithuania the Commander-in-Chief is appointed by parliament, if nominated by the president. That will occur within the next few weeks if Kronkaitis receives Parliamentary approval. ♦

Leona T. Gustaff



Exiled to Siberia Laima's Story

In 1992, my husband and I spent ten months teaching English as a Second Language at the **Pedagogical**

Institute Šiauliai, Lithuania. While there we had the occasion to meet and talk with many returned 'Tremtiniai' (Exiles), who had been forcibly taken to Siberia by the Russian Politboro.

As with one voice each of them proclaimed, "Please tell the world about how we suffered when we were forced to leave our homes and journey to the icy tundra of Siberia."

Laima Guzevičiūtė Uždavinienė is a cousin of my husband. Her father, Stasys Guzevičius, was my husband's father's brother. Her mother was Ona Zubavičiūtė Guzevičienė.

Laima narrated the story of her family's unwelcome exile, telling me the hardships, the tragedies, and how they braved all the difficult problems. She was seven years old when the family was rudely interrupted in their morning slumber, and was forced to leave their home within hours. She did not return for fifteen years.

This is her story as she related it to me. I have taken the liberty to add descriptions of different places she lived in during her exile.

LEONA T. GUSTAFF is a contributing writer for BRIDGES and lives in Frederick, MD.

The house was warm, secure, peaceful. The window drapes had been closed tight to shut out the rising sun. On June 14th in 1941 we were not aware of the tragedy about to enter our lives. A thick, fluffy comforter covered me and kept me safe. Tètè and Mama slept quietly in the adjacent room. Algis, my three-year-old brother, was in sound slumber in his trundle bed. Suddenly, at 5 a.m., sharp staccato raps at the entrance of our home aroused us. "Guzevičius, wake up! Let us in! We are the militia!"

Tètè grabbed his robe and slippers and rushed to the front entrance with my Mama, brother and me running close behind. When he opened the door he encountered two men standing on the steps leading into the house. One was dressed in a Russian military outfit; the second was a friend, Dabulavičius, who lived nearby in the village of Brazavo.

"Labas," Tètè, startled and not prepared for what was to follow, greeted the men. The military man, a member of the Russian armed forces, grabbed him by the shoulders, pushed him back into the room, swung him around quickly, clasped his hands to his back, and shackled him with metal hand-cuffs. My brother and I were frightened and bewildered. We were sobbing aloud as Mama pulled at the arms of the soldier and begged him to tell her of what my father was guilty.

"Dabulavičius," she pleaded, "Please tell them not to do this. Stasys has never hurt anyone. He is a good man and does not deserve this kind of treatment. He has even lent you a large sum of money recently so that you could build an addition to your home." Dabulavičius stood by silently and turned his head away so that he would not have to look at my mother.

"Tylèk!" The soldier, pushing Mama aside, ordered her to be silent. "Pack whatever you think the entire family will need for a long journey. Your baggage must be less than 120 kilograms."

The Times

At that time the Soviet Union was in total control of Lithuania. Russian military leaders were aware that 175 divisions of the Third Reich's Wermacht were advancing toward the Soviet Union's western frontier. The soldiers would have to travel through Lithuania.

There had been rumors that Bolshevik militia was gathering educated Lithuanian men and army leaders to incarcerate them in prison or exile them to a foreign land. In order to receive gifts from the military or, in some instances, to save their own lives, neighbors had been approaching the Soviet officers and volunteering evidence of conversations that they had witnessed of discontent with the political regime in power. These were generally trumped up falsehoods. Tètè then realized that his friend had conjured up treacherous untrue charges about him.

Only eight days later, on June 22, the Germans attacked the Soviet Union forcing the Red Army to withdraw from Lithuania. Unfortunately, we were already on a desperate journey to an unknown destination.

Tètè, my father, was a teacher in the Kalvarijas district. He was born in 1894 in Suvalkija, not far from the town of Punkskas, the third in a family of eighteen children, nine of whom were either still born or died soon after birth. He had attended Primary and Secondary schools in Lithuania, received his university education in Russia and returned to Lithuania to teach in Kalvarija. He spoke six languages -- Polish, German, Russian, French, Jewish, Lithuanian -- was the owner of an extensive library with thousands of books, and had founded and promoted new elementary schools in the Marijampolė district.

Active in the community, a leader in the Kalvarija area, he had organized and taught both children and teenagers many different traditional dances. He enjoyed farming, fertilizing the land, and planting seeds to grow potatoes, carrots, and cabbage. He also

propagated apple trees. He never imbibed liquor, despised alcoholics, and launched programs against alcoholism.

Tètè was 33 years old when he married my mother, who was only seventeen years of age. But Mama possessed great physical strength, loved to read, and had lively intelligent conversations with him. She and Tètè together had purchased a home in Trakėnai from a German nationalist who was returning to his country.

Trakėnai is located about five kilometers south of Kalvarija. It initially had been a large German estate, but eventually was divided into small parcels of land for German families. They bought the property, which consisted of a home and barn with land for farming. Each month they sent a sum of money to the original proprietor, who according to country laws, was the true owner until the entire amount of the sale was paid.

The Beginning of the Journey

Mama quickly gathered warm clothing and made small bundles for my brother and me to carry. She snatched the feather comforters from the beds and collected coats, sweaters, socks, and boots. She packed potatoes, cheese, sugar and flour, which she and my father carried. Soon, a truck filled with other Lithuanian families roared to a stop in front of our home. Mama, Tètè, Algis, and I climbed into the back of the vehicle and searched for an area to put our hurriedly collected bags. My parents held us tight and comforted us as they wiped away our tears. The truck continued on its route until we reached Kalvarijos Railroad Station.

When we arrived at the station we were surprised to see a large group of people who also carried bundles of hastily collected clothing, food, and bedding. There was noise and considerable agitation. Children cried, sobbing aloud. People talked incessantly, looked for friends, made sure certain family

members were not separated, and asked each other if they knew where they were going. Everyone was frightened. No one knew the answers.

Tètè met a friend. "Ulevičius, what is happening here?"

"I'm not sure, but haven't you heard the rumors?"

"That educated Lithuanian men would be put into prison or exiled to Siberia? Yes, I had heard but it is difficult to believe that Communists would be so cruel."

"Speak softly, my friend, so as not to be overheard. We must be careful. We cannot trust anyone."

We were pushed into straight lines and commandeered into freight cars -- actually into cattle cars -- that formerly had carried farm animals from the villages to the cities. People were jammed together. Soldiers shoved more men, women, and children into already overcrowded cars. Everyone looked for an area on the floor where they could put their belongings and perhaps sit down. My parents found a small spot where we could huddle together and keep our bundles of clothing and blankets close to us.

The Train of Horrors

The train began to move slowly and then picked up speed. Trapped in boxes with boarded up windows we moved through our beloved nation quickly. We could only imagine the clear natural lakes, boggy swamps, small working farms, and forests of birch, pine, and spruce trees that we passed. I don't believe any of us realized that this would be our last journey through the Lithuanian countryside for many years. How could we possibly know that some of us would never see this land again but would die and be buried in strange, inhospitable territory where we would suffer bitter cold, hunger, and absence of the ordinary needs and comforts of our existence?

We were thirsty when we made our first

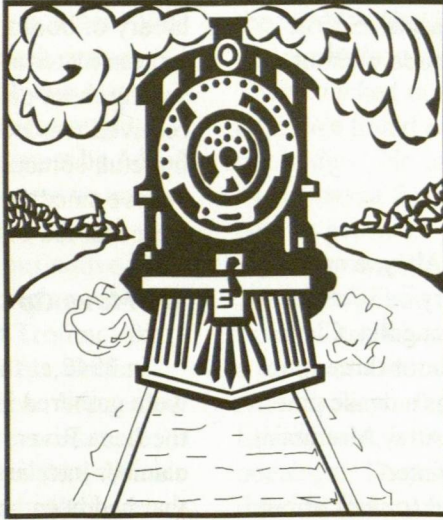
stop at Kaunas. Crying children begged for something to drink. "Look, they're bringing water," a woman on the train shouted. She had noticed a soldier carrying a pail of water and walking towards our train. Everyone rushed to the door that was a little ajar.

Mama reached out to take the pail of precious water from the soldier but he, fearing she wished to escape, angrily banged shut the door, which hit her on the head and knocked her down. She fell to the hard floor into a dead faint. "She did not awaken from this unconscious state for the next five hours," my father told me years later. Until the end of her life she had very painful headaches.

From Kaunas the train began to move slowly towards the Russian border where for the first time we were given food: watery gruel and a small piece of black bread. Traveling in a daze suspended by time, we learned we were on the Trans-Siberian railway and feared we were on the way to Siberia.

Years later Onutė Garbštienė, who was also deported in 1941, published her diary, which described some of the difficulties we had encountered:

" Suddenly the hammering of axes echoed down the length of the train. We shuddered as if hit by a charge of electricity! They were boarding up the windows, so the "wild beasts" wouldn't escape from their cages. Some other people climbed inside. They made holes in the walls, to the outside, and also cut a hole in the floor, for our toilet. Everything was



so degrading, horrifying, and shameful. Who has ever heard that men and women, crowded into this single area, had to take care of their personal needs in front of each other!

We got used to the shame but not to the stench. The stench was unbearable because many, especially the children, were suffering from diarrhea caused by drinking

contaminated water. Not everyone was able to make it directly into the hole. Soon the edges became encrusted with excrement. We couldn't even sit down. We started using a chamber pot, but the stench was even worse. Later we begged and were given permission to take care of this matter wherever we stopped. All shame evaporated! Everyone would squat under the cars and relieve themselves. Constipation was a problem. Suddenly: "Hurry up! Get back inside!" Everyone would run back to their assigned cars with their clothing in disarray! And this went on for the duration of the trip."

Our journey lasted three weeks. Parents were exhausted. Children were tired, moody, and restless. Everyone slept on whatever makeshift accommodation they could make on the floor. Some slept on their baggage. Some were fortunate to have blankets or feather comforters. The daily ration of watery gruel and small slice of rye bread was not enough to

satisfy hunger, and many were ill. The perilous trip posed severe difficulty for infants and some died in their grieving mother's arms. Soviet guards tossed them into the woods without benefit of a burial.

The First Stop

Eventually we reached the Altay, a sparsely populated mountainous territory in South Siberia, close to Northwest Mongolia, China, and Northeast Kazakhstan. About three times the size of Lithuania, it contains a dense pine forest, which extends into the Altay Mountains. We lived there for the entire winter.

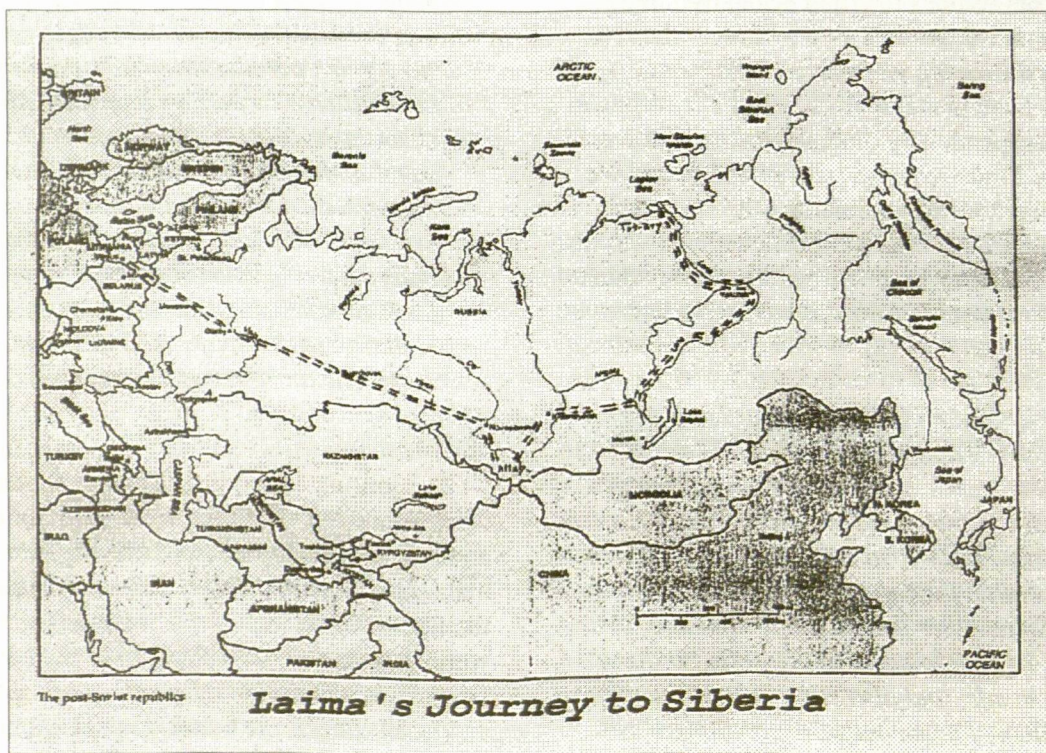
Mama and Tètè were forced to walk about five kilometers through dark forests to the trees they were ordered to cut. The soles of their boots were worn through, and they covered their feet with rags to help them suffer the ice, twigs, and other debris they walked through on their tortuous journeys. Tètè was not accustomed to such labor, and each evening his

body was filled with pain; his fingers so frozen that he could not bend them. He longed for his library of books. Newspapers, journals, or written materials of any kind did not exist among these people. The only news we received was by word of mouth -- sometimes hopeful, sometimes sad, but always difficult to believe since the source was unknown. We were still fed only bread and watery soup.

We Move On

In 1942, at the first signs of summer, we were gathered into trucks and transported to the Lena River, where we were forced to clamber into large barges, heavy wired cages that had been built to transport prisoners. Armed guards patrolled us constantly.

The adults again began to wonder where we were going. "Perhaps we are going to America," said Mr. Abramaičius, the father of a family we had befriended while living in Altay. We were not taken to America but instead, we entered a hellish situation; recollections of



The post-Soviet republics

Laima's Journey to Siberia

which sicken our hearts and spirits and we don't want to remember.

Slowly we sailed down the Lena River. We passed 'taiga' -- forests of pine, larch, spruce, and birch. We fought legions of biting insects, mosquitoes, and gnats. At times we caught sight of reindeer. "Those woods must be full of mushrooms," Abramaičius mentioned to my father. The thought of this delicacy that flourished in the birch woods in our native land brought a sense of sorrow and longing.

We traveled until we reached Trofimovska, a fishing village on the river near the Arctic ocean, not far from the Laptev Sea. We settled in the town of Tiksi. The adults were ordered to pitch tents, the only shelter available. Winter temperature dipped down to minus 40 degree F; summers seldom reached plus 50 degree F. Our bodies were not conditioned to live in severely cold climate.

We were fortunate that Mama had taken feather comforters so that we were able to weather the cold somewhat. Others did not even have blankets. Many became ill and quite a few passed away from malnutrition and the frigid environment. Entire families died. The dead were interred in the unfriendly foreign soil. We hoped that someday their bodies might be returned to their beloved Lithuania.

Daily Life Continues

The tents were freezing cold, harsh, and distressing; so, the adults decided to build better living conditions. "We can build barracks," said one Lithuanian, "We can catch the logs in the Lena River." The men waded barefoot into the icy water, caught floating logs, brought them to shore, and built the barracks. They covered the outside walls with snow and ice which they learned would help keep out the frigid temperature. They also found a large iron stove, which they placed in the middle of the building.

About 10 or 15 families moved with us into the barracks, but we were not destined to be

comfortable very long. Soon, we were attacked by a common enemy found all over the world -- lice! We found them everywhere - in our beds, on the floors, in our clothing. They attacked our hands, our faces, and our legs. We found them in our hair and all over our bodies. No one was safe from the lice. In Trofimovska there was nothing available to help us get rid of them. We had to kill them with our own hands.

The only food available was fish from the frozen Lena River. Mama and Tètè organized a group of Lithuanians into a fishing brigade. After drilling a few holes in the ice, they'd put bait on lines, which they lowered into the openings. They sat for hours waiting for signs that fish had snatched the bait, and we had more substantial food to add to our meager supply of bread.

During the second winter in Trofimovska, weak from hunger, I was not able to walk, and I lay in bed for two months. My brother Algis was also in poor health. His teeth began to decay. More Lithuanians died from the hunger and cold. I don't know how we were saved from death.

I remember that Mama sold her wrist watch to a Jakutian native for 30 kilos of black rye flour. She made 'lepioskas', and as we ate the mealy pancake we became stronger. Sometimes Tètè still caught some fish, but eventually the Russian brigadier leader did not permit him to bring the fish home. This was our most difficult winter. We never had enough to eat, and we were always cold.

Uprooted Again

In the spring, we were taken to the Siberian Islands to fish for the Communist regime. At first we lived together with the Abramaičius family in a 'yurta', a collapsible shelter built from logs and canvas. The next year Tètè and I built a 'yurta' for our family to live in separately and alone.

Tètè began to barter the fish he caught for

flour, and mama continued to make 'lepioskas'. Tètè and Mama fished every day but they caught very few fish. Tètè's health was failing, and he got tired very quickly. He had been diagnosed with a hernia in Lithuania. Since he was unaccustomed to the rigors of this difficult life, he suffered more intensely each day.

We lived on the islands for two years when suddenly we noticed that the Jakutian native brigades were leaving the area. Fish were also disappearing; they swam elsewhere. The Jakutians had the inner sense to know when the fish would leave the islands, and they followed the fish to their new destination.

The Lithuanians also began to look for ways to leave the islands. Widows with children were given permission by the Communists to go to Jakutsk, a major city almost a thousand miles south on the Lena River. Tètè and Mama decided to travel to the Baluno region and settle in the village of Tit-Ary. We were still not far from the Laptev Sea.

Tètè spoke Russian very well, and he was fortunate to receive employment as a school manager in Tit-Ary. Native teachers taught writing poorly, and he helped many students formulate good notebooks. For the first time in our exile to Siberia I could go to school. I was so happy that I finished two years of classes in one year.

We Say Goodbye

In 1945, we heard that the war had ended. Tètè wrote a letter to his brother, Joseph, who had emigrated many years earlier to America and lived in a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts. He was delivering it to the post office when he was accosted and beaten severely by Communist Commandos who resented the fact that he had a brother in the United States. Tètè became seriously ill. He needed major surgery but the only medical assistance available to the exiles was an apprentice to a veterinarian.

We made plans to search for a surgeon. Tètè and I boarded a barge that was returning

to Jakutsk after unloading food and other provisions. We sailed up the Lena River to our destination. The journey lasted one week. Since Tètè was a Lithuanian 'tremtinys' (exile), he didn't have the necessary papers for permission to enter. When we arrived at Jakutsk, we were too frightened to go into the city. We were forced to return to Tit-Ary without the benefit of seeing a skilled physician.

Tètè's health became weaker each day. The medication given to him by the veterinarian's assistant would not relieve the pain. His concern that he was not strong enough to gather provisions for his family hastened the end of his life. Mama was devastated. Each day they conversed and planned about where she would go should his life be terminated. Although his health had deteriorated, he was a comfort to us and we looked to him for moral support. He died in Tit-Ary in 1948 and was interred there in the deep icy tundra. He was fifty four years old.

We Escape

After the death of my father, Mama, Algis, and I escaped to Jakutsk, as my parents had planned. Seven years previous, when I had been seven years of age, we had been forced by the Communists to leave our comfortable home in Lithuania and travel to Siberia -- seven difficult, miserable, unhappy years for which we questioned the unfortunate circumstances which propelled us into this strange life.

We reached the city of Jakutsk and were compelled to register our arrival. The general was not inclined to let us stay, and he told Mama, "If you do not find a job within seven days you must return to Tit-Ary."

Jakutsk is the capital and major city of the Jakutia region. Similar to a large Soviet city, it had many schools, the Luovo Cooperative Institute, a theater, and industry that had developed during the war. Its great distance from Moscow gave it the ability to make crucial weapons and military supplies far from



the impact of bombs and other artillery. The weather is the coldest in the world, and buildings are built on piles driven into the permafrost. In 1948 the majority of the population was Russian, many of which were exiles, including some from East European countries.

We searched and found Lithuanian exiles who had settled in Jakutsk earlier. Willing to help us, they informed Mama about a manager at a glass factory who would hire her. Shortly after mama began to work in the factory, I was also given employment in the same building.

I wanted to continue my education; so, I returned to school and finished the Tenth Form at the Middle School after completing two grades in one year. We learned to speak Russian in school and on the streets, but we always spoke Lithuanian in our home.

I loved to sing and wished to study music but I couldn't get a piano; so, I entered the Jakutsk Technical Cooperative School and studied accounting. I was a good student and worked diligently. The administration advised me that I was one of two graduates with the highest scholastic marks, and I would receive a scholarship to Luovo Cooperative Institute. But Communist Security Officials informed me that I could not take advantage of the education given at the Institute. The honor was not available to Lithuanian exiles.

Hoping to See Lithuania

In 1953, Stalin died and the Communists began to slowly allow children and teachers to return to Lithuania, but I was ordered to work as a bookkeeper in the city of Jakutsk. After two years I was awarded a vacation and permission to travel to Lithuania.

I wrote to my father's brother, Pranas, who resided in Kaunas to tell him the good news. My Uncle Pranas was a respected Chemical Engineer who had been incarcerated in jail by the Communists for two years but never had to leave for Siberia. He invited me to stay with him and sent me the money I needed for the journey.

In 1956 I was in Kaunas. I traveled on the same Trans-Siberian Railway route I had taken from Lithuania to Siberia fifteen years ago. But this time I saw the clear natural lakes, boggy swamps, small working farms, and forests of birch, pine, and spruce trees that I could only imagine on my first and only trip from the country of my birthplace. I cannot begin to explain the immense joy and pain I felt; joy that I lived to enter Lithuania again and pain that my father would never return to see his homestead, his apple trees, or the schools where he taught.

If Tètè were with me, he would not have recognized his beloved Lithuania. The ruling Soviet party dictated and controlled all public

and private actions in the land. Politics, the radio, accounting, education were conducted in Russian. In the schools the Russian language was predominant. No Lithuanian was heard on the radio. Religious education was forbidden, and free expression of our native tongue, songs, and holiday celebrations was not allowed. Lithuanians worked within the Communist system in order to survive.

The family home in Trakėnai had been leveled and rebuilt twice. Tėtė had given his important documents to his brother Pranas to retain in his possession when we were forcefully sent to Siberia. Unfortunately, Pranas' home was also damaged during the war and all papers had been burned or destroyed. I wondered what would happen with our house and land. Strangers had taken residency there.

Still, I preferred to remain in Lithuania. I didn't want to return to Siberia, but my documents were only for a three-month sojourn. It was a difficult and terrifying time. A friend suggested that I lose my pass but I was afraid.

I was fortunate. Uncle Pranas' wife's sister was married to a Russian General, and she urged him to petition the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in Lithuania, Justas Paleckis, to give me leave to stay in my country.

All the documents had to be issued in Vilnius; so, I traveled there to stay with the General. He felt sorry for me, and indicated that he himself would go to Moscow to get permission for me to remain in Lithuania if Justas Paleckis refused. To my joy, I was awarded an extension of my vacation for one entire year.

At the end of the year I was allowed to remain in Lithuania, but I was asked to leave Vilnius. I didn't leave Vilnius and concealed my residency by omitting to register my presence. Kipras Petrauskas, a renowned composer of music with important influential friends, admitted me into his home. I resided with his family and was warned to hide when

men of the militia came to visit.

Eventually, after some time, I ventured into the market place and found work as an accountant in a 'prekyba' (business shop). Gradually I began to work with other 'prekybas' and after thirty-six years I was the accountant for all the 'prekybas' in Vilnius.

A Family Reunited

Three years after I had returned to Lithuania, I saved enough rubles to send for my mother. She traveled on the same Trans-Siberian railway that had taken us to Siberia. Her delight in her return to her native land was the ability to buy fresh fruits and vegetables that were difficult to purchase in the tundra. Since she learned to speak Russian in the country of her exile, she had no difficulty communicating with the language demanded by the Communist regime. But we still spoke Lithuanian in our home.

Three years later my mother and I welcomed my brother to Lithuania. We all recognized that it was not the same country we had been forced to leave many years earlier. But we were in the land of our birth, the land of our ancestors. We were home among friends and relatives. ♦

Siberian Deportees to See Justice in the Courts

For the first time in Lithuania, investigation leading to criminal cases regarding mass deportations of people during World War II and later has begun. The Rokiškis district prosecutor's office finished their investigation of Ignas Pauliukas, who is charged with co-operation with repressive bodies of Soviet power and carrying out deportations of Lithuania's citizens.

Pauliukas, former chairman of Ziboliai rural neighborhood in Rokiškis county, is accused of having deported the family of Pranas Laužadis on June 14, 1941. Pauliukas is also charged with backing genocide actions.

The Pauliukas case was handed over to Panevėžys district court during early June 1999. ♦

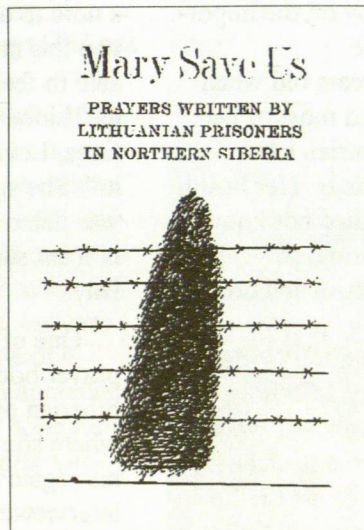
Sr. Ona Mikaila

HONORING A COURAGEOUS WOMAN

When the "Siberian Prayer Book", as it was popularly known among Lithuanians, was first published 40 years ago in 1959, no one could have predicted that it would attract worldwide attention. The first English edition of *Mary Save Us!* was published by the Paulist Press in New York in 1960. Three other English editions subsequently appeared, the last being a large commemorative edition titled *The Living Testament of Faith and Courage*, published in 1965, the 25th anniversary of the Soviet occupation of Lithuania.

During the 1960's the little book was translated into many languages: German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Polish, and even into Korean and Chinese. These editions contained glowing introductions by the Catholic cardinals and archbishops of these various countries.

The Archbishop of Westminster in London commended the little book especially to those suffering from depression: "Written in conditions of utmost misery and hopelessness these prayers are a proof that the soul can rise above material degradation on the wings of faith and



love." Cardinal Cushing of Boston wrote: "Four young Lithuanian girls wasting away in the very flowering of their lives, as a result of inhuman treatment, secretly wrote the thoughts that they spoke to God, as day by day they saw no hope of liberation...No more beautiful or promising document could come from a

Siberian prison..." The 'day of liberation' was still very far in the unknown future.

Although four young women helped make the prayer book, its author was actually a young teacher, Adelė Dirsytė who died in Siberia in 1955. During the half-century of Soviet occupation, neither she, nor her book was known in Lithuania. Only as recently as 1997 has she been brought to the attention of the public. This year marks the 90th anniversary of her birth in 1909. A wooden relief sculpture depicting the Blessed Mother has been put up in the Kėdainiai churchyard where she is buried. On April 17, 1999, a special memorial Mass was offered by the parish priest in the church of Kėdainiai, which was filled with people. Among them were Adelė's two sisters who had

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also been exiled to Siberia with her. After the Mass, the sculpture was blessed while the students from a local high school recited poems, sang hymns, and placed flowers around the memorial.

Kėdainiai itself is in the news this year because it is celebrating the 400th anniversary of one of the oldest Lithuanian books. This is a book of homilies translated into Lithuanian by Canon Mikalojus Daukša and published in 1599 with a famous introductory essay on the importance of the Lithuanian language.

Adelė Dirsytė was only 44 years old when she died. She had already served most of her ten-year sentence in various Siberian labor camps and was due to return home. Her health was broken, however, and she died not knowing that her little prayer book would travel the world as a "living testament of faith and courage".

A university graduate, just before World War II Adelė worked with various Catholic charitable organizations and taught in several high schools. In 1944 she joined a Lithuanian resistance movement working against the Soviet government and was also active in the Catholic youth organization "Ateitis". In 1946 the KGB arrested her for helping someone to evade the them. Sent to the Siberian Gulag the following year, then being 38 years old, she would spend the rest of her life in Siberia.

Adelė not only survived the horrendous conditions of the Soviet labor camps, but she also helped others not to fall into despair. She used her influence and skills as a teacher to gather young girls around her. They would discuss books and say poems they knew, but especially Adelė tried to keep up their spirits by speaking of the meaning of life. They would celebrate religious feast days together; she taught them to pray, and in the evening, after a hard day's work, they would say the rosary, counting their beads on rosaries made out of their bread ration. All this had to be done in secret, but Adelė risked the wrath of the camp guards, because she saw how important it was

to keep up the religious faith and morale of the young people so far from home.

In 1950 Adelė began to write down the prayers she had composed on little scraps of paper. With the help of three young friends, the bits of paper were sewn together to form a book. It consisted of 70 small handwritten pages about 2 by 3 inches in size with a home-made cloth cover. One of the copies of this little prayer book was smuggled out of camp with a note to a friend, Pranute; "We are sending you this little book so that you will be better able to feel, reflect, and worship the Lord with us. Lionė G. made it, Valė B. drew the pictures, Levutė V. glued it together, and I wrote it." She signed herself: *Ad* for Adelė. The note was dated February 16, 1953. The date is significant since it is Lithuanian Independence Day.

One of the three girls who helped make the prayer book, Levutė Vizbaraitė, survived the Siberian ordeal and returned to Lithuania, where she was married and lived to see Lithuania regain her independence. In 1997 she was interviewed for a Lithuanian Catholic magazine and shared her memories of Adelė. Adelė was often punished by camp authorities for her "subversive" activities. She endured many interrogations, beatings, and solitary confinement. Levutė remembers her courage and self-sacrifice: "I could see how much she suffered. She always offered her pain to our Blessed Mother Mary for Lithuania. The continual torture weakened her health, and she was often in pain. After one interrogation she came back with a bruised face and spitting blood. Later she admitted that her teeth had been knocked out."

In the late fall of 1953 Adelė was again taken out of the camp and returned the following spring. She was in a terrible state but was put back in confinement as a psychiatric case. Her friends pleaded with the guard to be allowed to visit her. They found her black and blue, her hair shorn, very thin. She ate some of

the food they brought. They managed to visit her again, but this time she was very quiet and very sad. She would not eat any food saying, that they needed it for they were working, while she was not.

In 1954 she was placed in the psychiatric ward of the camp hospital. Her friends still came to see her and brought the Christmas wafer to share with her. She accepted it. At that time she was enduring forced feeding. In 1955 many of the Lithuanian girls were being allowed to return home but Adelė Dirsytė did not return, she died.

The title of the Siberian prayer book, *Mary Save Us! (Marija Gelbėki Mus!)* is a prayer in itself, a prayer that was heard many years later when Lithuania finally did regain her independence. Today, as we reread the simple and achingly poignant words, "the poetry of suffering" as one of her former students calls it, we can appreciate the great faith and courage of a woman who never gave up. We can appreciate the cost of freedom and continue to hope for the spiritual rebirth of Lithuania. Adelė Dirsytės prayers have not grown old.

Mary, save the land
woven with blood and tears,
with self-sacrifice, resolution and love.
Mary, awaken in our breasts
the power of mighty giants.

Preserve the pure spirit of our nation,
fostered through the ages
by our forefathers.

Mary, enlighten those
who have wandered astray,
intercede for the souls of fallen heroes.
Raise up our holy Lithuania
that it may radiate and shine
among other nations like a splendid star
to glorify you and your Son's
boundless mercy and love.



The wooden relief sculpture depicting the Blessed Mother in memory of Adelė Dirsytė stands in the Kėdainiai churchyard.
Photo from Sr. O. Mikaila

Note: The Siberian prayer book was first printed in Putnam, Connecticut where the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception have the various editions of it on display in their Lithuanian museum.

Ina Bertulytė Bray

The Siberian Experience Televised



During March and April of this year, a number of Public Broadcasting television stations in various regions of the U.S. aired the profoundly moving documentary, "Stolen Years." We in the Seattle/Puget Sound area were among the fortunate to see it -- thanks to public pressure.

In this documentary, eleven survivors of the Arctic Soviet Gulags, mostly Russian, but also Hungarian, Ukrainian, and Austrian, relive those years of banishment to that physically and morally dehumanizing hell. Robert Conquest, the well-known historian and author, currently the senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, provides the historic background. We briefly see Joseph Stalin, smiling to his minions parading before him. And then, we the viewers, descend into the stories that we have heard repeated since childhood; stories whose genesis has forever changed the lives of so many of us.

We enter into the memories of the aging men and women on the screen as they return to their youth "stolen" from them by their brutal arrests and incarcerations. We experience along with them their nightmarish transports to their final destinations and their unbearable existence in the frozen hell, where a chunk of bread becomes currency, where the depth of human depravity has no bounds, where each day survived becomes a miracle.

It will be difficult to forget the recounting of the brutality of the male criminal prisoners towards the female political prisoners on that final boat voyage

across the Sea of Okhotsk to Magadan. In the extant literature on the Gulags, rape is rarely alluded to. These incredible women give proof of its vicious existence. Photographed from helicopters, stark images of crumbling gold, uranium, or tin mines in the permafrost region of Kolyma provide some backdrops.

The visual images that most powerfully echo the memories of the survivors, however, are Nicolai Gutman's renditions on canvas. Mr. Gutman is one of the survivors featured in the documentary. After his release from the Gulag in 1954, for more than forty years, Mr. Gutman's paint brushes secretly recorded what he had witnessed and experienced during his imprisonment -- a feat, which if discovered, quite easily could have meant a return to Siberia or worse. Considering that the Soviet regime had made every possible effort to suppress any record or even recollection of the Gulags, this visual legacy and its partial inclusion in "Stolen Years", is truly invaluable. (The collection of 50 of Gutman's paintings can be seen at www.jamestown.org/html/gulag-ltr.htm.)

In the Seattle area, the University of Washington was the first to preview this documentary for the general public. Major credit for the televised airing in this region and organizing the preview activities at the University goes to the Center for Civil Society International and its director, Holt Ruffin, a long-time friend and supporter of Baltic causes. Additional sponsors of the University event were the Jackson School of International Studies of the U. of

INA BERTULYTĖ BRAY is a current member of the Board of Directors of the Lithuanian American Community Inc.

W., the Henry M. Jackson Foundation, and the Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities at the U. of W.

A reception before the preview attracted an impressively broad segment of the Seattle community who had professional or emotional interests in Eastern Europe. Our Baltic community representatives were included. Mr. Ruffin, as well as the University, considered the presentation of this documentary of such significance, that all three individuals responsible for the production of the film, director Bruce Young, producer Jennifer Law Young, and script writer Vladimir Klimenko, and one of the survivors featured in the documentary, Semyon Vilenski, were flown here from various parts of the globe, specifically for the evening.

The lively interaction among the guests in the reception hall had a counterbalance. However, a photographic exhibit on the walls enveloped us: graphically depicting what we were about to see on the screen. The viewing of the documentary, which followed, was open to the public, and although it was mid-week, the auditorium of the University's Henry Art Gallery was packed, and people had to be turned away.

The film lasted an hour and stunned the audience. The almost grotesque subject matter, contrasted with the simplicity, dignity, and straightforwardness of its presentation, visibly moved the viewers. Following the showing, members of the panel engaged the audience in what became an emotion-filled dialogue.

Holt Ruffin, Professor Herbert Ellison, and world renowned specialist on Soviet history, Semyon Vilenski (the just seen survivor), and the originators of the film -- Bruce Young, Jennifer Law Young, and Vladimir Klimenko, and Vlad Raskin of the Jackson School, all spoke, reacted, amplified, explained, and reminisced, providing a poignant dimension.

For us Lithuanians, a high point came when a member of the audience, Vytautas Svagzdys, himself and his wife survivors of the Gulags of Norilsk, stood up and with breaking voice expressed gratitude to all responsible for this film and for its presentation. For this was his story as well, he said, his and that of millions who never came back. Perhaps Vytautas Svagzdys reaffirmed what on the screen the survivors had alluded to or stated in various

ways: their mission in their remaining years is not to let the horrors of the Gulags or their victims be forgotten. The documentary "Stolen Years" is a fitting memorial to those victims.

For decades, the Western press, the media, and the filmmakers only gingerly touched upon Soviet participation in World War II and the aftermath that raged in the USSR. Western governments, in the interests of "détente", officially ignored the Gulags. Academics, claiming objectivity or neutrality, frequently accepted the Soviet line of the non-existence of the Gulags. To this day, any coverage of this holocaust in Siberia remains scant. When the makers of this film approached funding sources expecting to hear that they are competing with a long line of others interested in this subject, they were surprised that they stood alone!

At the time of this writing (mid-May), Public Broadcasting Stations in a number of areas of the United States have not yet aired "Stolen Years" and in all likelihood will not do so unless they feel public pressure from their viewers. Fortunately, in Los Angeles, the Sacramento area, possibly Cleveland, and other cities, as well as in Canada and Australia, Lithuanians as well as Hungarians and perhaps others, are already making such efforts.

The video "Stolen Years" is available for purchase from:

The Blackwell Corp.
1000 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22209
tel. 703 524-2300

The price is \$39.95 including shipping and handling; MasterCard and VISA accepted. (It does not exist in PAL format)

The companion volume to the documentary is just appearing in major bookstores. The price is \$29.95 but <www.Amazon.com> and <www.Barnesandnoble.com> offers a 30% discount.

The makers of the film, Bruce Young, the director; Jennifer Law Young, the producer; and Vladimir Klimenko, the scriptwriter, have given us back our story. Now it is our task to promote "Stolen Years." It must be aired wherever the English language is spoken; we must inform the public of its existence; and we must get the video and its companion volume into libraries. After fifty years of virtual silence, the window to the holocaust in the Siberian Gulags is finally coming ajar. ♦

Irena Blekys

Thoughts on the 50th Anniversary of the Deportations

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the largest deportation of Baltic people to Siberia. By a conservative estimate, 200,000 to 456,000 Balts were forcibly removed from their homelands in 1949.

This deportation coincided with the height of the partisan warfare going on in Lithuania, and the peak of collectivization of the countryside. When Lithuania was reoccupied by the Soviets, the massive deportations started on June 14 and 15th of 1941, and then interrupted by the German invasion, started up again in 1945 and continued each year up to 1952. By then about nine percent of the native population of the Baltics had been deported.

The Soviets were firmly entrenched in the larger towns of Lithuania and were waging a battle to break the resistance of the countryside. Each territorial unit was given a quota of people to be deported, and each local commission of communist party members, KGB, and Soviets prepared a list.

To keep people in terror, deportations were unannounced and carried out on one or two consecutive days. If people on the list were away from home that day, then their neighbors could very likely be seized to take their place so that the quota would be filled. While there were increasing numbers of Lithuanians being executed between 1945 and 1949 for struggling against the Soviets, the number beginning to side with the Soviets was also rising. For instance, the ranks of communist youth, 'komjaunuoliai', increased from 3,800 in 1945 to 34,000 by 1950. Some deportees faced their own neighbors who were helping to round up those to be forcibly removed. Most of the deportees were not expected to live; so, those who were enforcing the

deportation orders took their possessions.

Deportation was a highly efficient process for torturing people to death. It required little active effort on the part of those responsible. If you survived the mental trauma of being taken away and seeing family members separated and herded into cattle cars to travel to unknown destinations, then the years of inhuman work loads with little food or adequate clothing could be ensured of killing you. Survivors who wrote memoirs of their experience describe vast expanses littered with the graves and bones of Lithuanian deportees from the snowy Urals to the Arctic shore, from Kamchatka to the Altai mountain gorges, across Kazakhstan steppes and the Baikal taiga, to the banks of the Lena and Yenisey rivers.

Today the internment camps no longer exist. There is no Auschwitz where tours can be given to show the inhumanity of the Soviet Gulag. The fences and watchtowers have been dismantled and only the survivors who have returned to gather the bones of their family members or to erect memorials for those left behind on this road of Golgotha can find these places of internment. No visual reminders exist except for those few who have attempted to exorcise their ghosts by painting. (A moving series of paintings of the Gulag experience can be found on the web at www.jamestown.org/getman.)

So it is hard to remind people of the Baltics and the world of the moral debt we owe to those who were repressed. Likewise the imagination of the West has resisted rather than welcomed the stories of Soviet genocide since we all were complicit so long with a system that had offered salvation through class struggle. But what remain are the stories, the poems, and the songs of deportation. That is our history and our literature of the 20th century. It deserves to be translated and passed on to all who pride themselves as Lithuanians. ♦

IRENA BLEKYS is a member of the Board of Directors of the Lithuanian-American Community Inc., and an officer of the LAC, Inc., Washington State Chapter. This article appeared in the TULPÉ TIMES, Vol. 19, No. 2, May, 1999 — the Washington Chapter publication.

Rožė Somkaitė

Joy to Many...

No sooner had Lithuania reestablished her independence, the Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid began to ship humanitarian aid to large families, schools and orphanages. It has sent off books and literature for university libraries as well as medical and physical therapy equipment for hospitals. Sixteen containers have been dispatched overseas in the last four years alone.

Schools in the Vilnius area requested typewriters. Thirty-five schools took advantage of the 130 computers they received to start computer classes. Panevezys held a weeklong computer training session for teachers. Home economics classes benefited from sewing machines, patterns, and cloth; knitting and weaving classes received yarn. Several country schools in the Vilnius area were sent world globes, writing utensils, books, pens, colored pencils, notebooks and paper. Middle schools put microscopes and chemical lab equipment to good use. Clothing, footwear, and food make up most of the shipments.

This huge Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid undertaking

could not happen without the help of a group of dedicated New Jersey volunteers or the use of premises donated by Dr. Alice Navit. The young dentist has not only offered the use of her property but has spread the word among her patients who now come with donations.

On April 10, 1999, a container sailed for Lithuania loaded with 1,200 boxes addressed to 32 schools, eight schools of higher learning, Scouts and other youth camps, three parishes, five family centers, two religious congregations, two hospitals, the Country Children's Fund, the Lithuanian Catholic Women's Association, the Political Prisoner and Exile Society, three orphanages and many large families.

The Lord has blessed us in the person of Ms. Mathilda Miliauskas, chairperson of the charity committee of the Lithuanian Citizens Society of Western Pennsylvania. Through Ms. Miliauskas' efforts, the club filled one-third of the container with footwear, clothes, toys and books for children, sewing machines, bicycles, computers, and kitchen items. Ms. Miliauskas supplemented all these goodies

with a \$500 donation to help defray some of the container packing expenses. She is truly a gift from God! Our most sincere thanks to Mathilda and the members of the Lithuanian Citizens Society of Western Pennsylvania who responded so generously to their president's call for action.

Our second Guardian Angel is Mrs. Madeline Petkus, social affairs chair of the South Jersey Lithuanian Club of Whiting, NJ. This club once again delivered some 100 packed boxes for the container to Lithuania. A simple message always accompanies their gifts: "May this reach those whose need is the greatest." Our heartfelt thanks to our good angel Madeline Petkus and Whiting's South Jersey Lithuanian Club.

The members of these two clubs probably don't even realize the joy their gifts bring to children and their parents. Take for example the little 4 year-old girl who tucks her newly obtained shoes under her pillow so that no one can take them away from her. And maybe the adults will begin to believe in the goodness of God and their fellow men. ♦

ROŽE ŠOMKAITĖ has energetically volunteered her time not only for the Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid but also for many Lithuanian organizations for most of her life.

C u r r e n t E v e n t s

Stasys Lozoraitis Reburied in Kaunas

The last will of prominent Lithuanian diplomat, Stasys Lozoraitis, jr. has been fulfilled – the remains of the late diplomat were reburied in the Petrašiūnai cemetery of Kaunas city on June 15th.

Lozoraitis' widow Daniela and his brother, Lithuanian Ambassador to the Holy See and Malta Order Kazys Lozoraitis escorted the remains from the U.S.

Thousands of Kaunas dwellers flocked to Vytautas Magnus Church to pay homage to the late 'President of Hope', the name given to Lozoraitis as he contested the presidential post in Lithuania in 1993.

President Valdas Adamkus, Speaker of the Parliament Vytautas Landsbergis, and Prime Minister Rolandas Paksas attended the mass.

"I cannot speak without emotions about the person with whom I had shared joy and sorrow for half of my lifetime. Stasys Lozoraitis opted for a mode of life, which affirmed existence of truth in life, and he never ceased to protect and safeguard it. The title of 'The President of Hope' will remain in the memory of people and history textbooks," Adamkus had stated.

Adamkus handed the Vytiš Cross 1st Grade Order to the late diplomat's widow, Daniela, which was awarded post mortem to Lozoraitis. The leader of Seimas Vytautas Landsbergis, foreign ministry official Rimantas Morkvėnas and Mayor of Kaunas Henrikas Tamulis also spoke by the coffin of the late diplomat.

"We will manage to perpetuate the remembrance of the deceased if we give sense to his hopes and expectations by our work. Your respect for Stasys Lozoraitis proves that he still lives in your hearts," said Kazys Lozoraitis, the brother of the late diplomat.

To perpetuate the name of Lozoraitis, a street and school were named after him in Kaunas. Moreover, there was a chapel-pole erected in the 6th Kaunas fort in 1994 and a monument in 1996. ♦

Geothermal Plant Under Construction

A demonstrative plant of geothermal power that is to extract hot water from the Earth's deep layers and utilize it for municipal needs has already concluded about one third of construction.

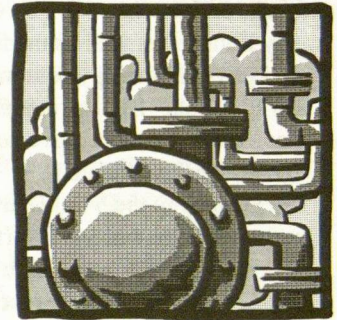
After the installation is done in the deep part, the over-ground construction of the buildings is to start. The plant is planned to be put into operation by the end of 1999.

All the equipment is ordered and being manufactured, but there are some fears that the funds will be exhausted soon, according to UAB Geoterma Director Bronius Radeckas.

The PHARE program, as planned earlier, is expected to allocate one million U.S. dollars, but the funding was delayed. The PHARE funds were planned to finance laying geothermal pipelines. Hot water is to flow up from more than

a one-kilometer depth and after utilization, it will be returned to the same section under the ground. The wells will be joined with the city boiler by geothermal pipelines. Two extraction wells are to produce 400 to 450 cubic meters of water with its temperature being about 38 degrees Celsius.

The Klaipėda demonstrative 40 MW geothermal power plant project costs are to exceed \$18 million. Previously plans were to provide Klaipėda citizens with heating and hot water from the hot groundwater resources. However, Geoterma estimations showed the plant would be able to meet about 80 percent of Klaipėda demands for hot water. Experts still don't know when and who will pay for the high expenses of plant construction. ♦



Source for news from Lithuania: ELTA News Agency

Officials Decorated for Supporting Lithuania

President Valdas Adamkus awarded high Lithuanian orders to U.S. and UK officials and officers who participated at an international conference on NATO in Lithuania on May 31st.

US Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of State Ronald Asmus was decorated with the Grand Duke of Lithuania Gediminas 2nd Grade Order. International Defense Advisor Council Chairman General Sir Garry Johnson; U.S. Defense Department -- European and NATO Policy Department Director Major General Henry A. Kievenaar Jr.; and RAND Corporation experts Stephen F. Larrabee and Robert C. Nurick were awarded the Grand Duke of Lithuania Gediminas 3rd Grade Order.

The Presidential decree stated that the orders were meant to show Lithuania's gratitude for the personal attempts to support Lithuania's integration into international defense structures, and for the strengthening of co-operation between Lithuanian and foreign defense forces. ♦

Schools to Benefit from World Bank

A part of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) loan granted to Lithuania by the will be used for educational institutions in five municipalities to renovate heat insulation, as well as for regeneration investment projects.

Varena, Šiauliai, Širvintos, Kupiškis and Klaipėda municipalities have already applied for the support, with the total sum reaching \$1.03 million. The next Cabinet meeting is to allocate the loan among the five municipalities for a 10-year period.

Three years ago, a loan agreement was signed with World Bank for \$10 million for a project on energy saving and housing demonstration purposes. The agreement covers also the above-mentioned school heat insulation projects. The projects have already been implemented in Vilnius and Kaunas, where seven schools were renovated during 1997 and 1998.

World Bank decided to revise the loan allocation and proposed an additional \$2.9 million for school renovation to be completed in 1999. ♦

Indicators Show Lithuania Faring Well

Lithuania is one of the leading Central European states regarding inflation, wage growth, and volume of direct foreign investments, according to the *Business Central Europe Journal*.

The Business Central Europe Journal publishes monthly reviews on the main macroeconomic indicators of the Central European states based on different sources, including JP Morgan, Nomura, Reuters, national statistics bodies and others.

Lithuania took first place among twelve CEE states registering the lowest 2.4 percent annual inflation. The highest inflation among the twelve countries was registered in Russia (84.4%) and Romania (40.6%). Polish inflation stood at 8.6%; Estonian at 6.5%; and Hungarian at 10.3 %.

Lithuania also shares top standing with Bulgaria regarding growth rate of average monthly wages. In the last twelve months Lithuania posted 26 % wage growth; while, in Bulgaria they soared to 27 %. Lithuania also took the leading position in the field of direct foreign investments. Slovenia, Latvia and Bulgaria attracted the lowest amount of foreign investments.

On the other hand, Lithuania was in second position according to GDP growth rate and employment. According to other indicators -- budget balancing, industry production growth, foreign debt/GDP ratio -- Lithuania stood at 3 to 6th positions among twelve CEE states. ♦

Trivia Quiz!

The Russian composer Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolai Andreevich (1844-1908) is best known for his most famous symphonic suite "Scheherazade" that is based on material from "The Arabian Nights". The question is, who were his ancestors?

- a Lithuanian family.
- The mythical god, Jupiter.
- Pompey the Great.

Look on page 25 for the answer.

– Ed Shakalis

Baltic Sea Made Safe

Four Swedish war ships with the Lithuanian frigate ŽEMAITIS, a patrol ship DZŪKAS, and a patrol warship HK-21 participated in joint naval exercises in the Lithuanian territorial waters of the Baltic Sea searching for unexploded mines and destroying them in late May.

The main goal of the exercise was to detect and destroy the explosives which had been hidden in the sea since World War II. This will guarantee safer sea navigation and commercial fishing in the Baltic Sea. ♦

Amber Art Competition

The German Amber Museum in Ribnitz-Damgarten has once again announced an Amber-Art Competition in 1999. The first ore was held in 1993 on a national scale, but has now become international.

Prizes will be awarded for contemporary artistic creations in amber. The amber may be used in its natural state with additions; it may be polished and combined with precious metals. This amber art can take various forms: jewelry, small sculpture and useful implements. A special prize will be awarded for the most unusual and original creation.

The German Amber Museum will have a special amber art exhibition from May 15th to October 15th of 1999. The three prizes for the winners of the competition will be awarded on opening day, May 15. These prizes will be given in US dollars: first prize -- \$2000; second prize -- \$1000.00; third prize -- \$500.00.

An international committee consisting of members from all the countries participating in the competition will judge the amber art creations. The prizewinning creations and other entries will be on exhibit at the Amber Museum. After the amber art exhibition closes, an auction will be held October 17th for the benefit of all participants.

The address of the Amber Museum is:
 Deutschland Bernsteinmuseum
 Ribnitz-Damgarten
 Im Kloster 1-2
 18311 Ribnitz-Damgarten
 Germany ♦

—Sr. Ona Mikaila

Books For Lithuania Project

Lithuanian exiles still play an important role for the new generation of young people that will help leaders and businessmen to shape their country's economy. They will be distributing cartons of English textbooks to teachers and their compensation is included in the budget of \$7000. It is our way of providing some assistance to the new president, Valdas Adamkus who faces a difficult task.

The Lithuanian Human Services Council is supporting the **Books for Lithuania** project. Donations to the Council are tax exempt. A donation of \$50 will supply enough textbooks and reading books for 18 classrooms of 30 students each, but any amount would be gratefully accepted. Be a part of helping Lithuania to grow.

Send to:

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

—Leona Gustaff

Letter to the Editor...

“Thanks to the editor of “Bridges” for placing two articles in [Issue 3 1999]: “The Young Man with Mesmerizing Eyes” by Jeanne Dorr and “Some Reflections on Teaching in Lithuania” by John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J. I found these articles not only interesting but also give insight into some of Lithuania’s youth’s deep patriotism, endurance to overcome poverty, and seeking education.

I know many of Lithuania’s young people continue to be indifferent to patriotism and want to get rich quickly. To influence those young people to become good Lithuanians, it may help to print the above mentioned articles or something similar in Lithuania’s newspapers designated to young people.”

—Juozas S. Kriaučianas
 Alka’s Director

Editor’s Note: Thank you very much for your thoughts, and also to those who have written or commented to me personally regarding these articles. I found them to be moving and motivating as well. ♦

Friendship Day Picnic

A special celebration will highlight the traditional Friendship Day Picnic at the Immaculate Conception Convent in Putnam, Connecticut on Sunday, July 25th.

This year Camp Neringa celebrates its 30th anniversary; while, it will be the 56th year of the Convent's sponsored summer camps. The original summer camps started with Camp Immaculata on the Putnam convent grounds. Many of the camp's former campers are now directors at Camp Neringa.

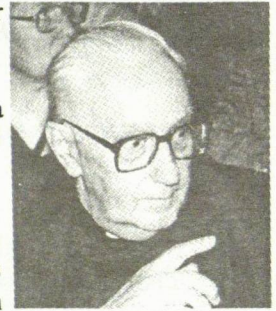
The day starts with Holy Mass concelebrated on the convent grounds. The program includes lunch and activities — featuring ethnic foods and arts and crafts exhibits. Later, a festive program follows performed by the Camp Neringa campers with drawing of gifts, and finally a prayer vigil for Lithuania in the chapel. This year a new feature was added — dancing and games open to all.

The Immaculate Conception Convent is located at 600 Liberty Highway in Putnam, Connecticut. The program begins at 11:00 a.m. with Holy Mass with the 5:00 p.m. dancing and games bringing the day to a close. ♦

A Salute to a Marian Father

Heading towards the year 2000 is a Marian Father, Rev. Vytautas Bagdanavičius, who is not only a priest, a religious, a philosopher, a writer, and an artist, but also in his 90th year of creativity and activity.

Rev. Bagdanavičius lives in the Chicago Congregation of Marian Fathers. According to *The Marian Tidings*, (a Marian publication), Father Vytautas is the author of numerous books and articles for the Lithuanian language newspaper *Draugas*. His articles have focused on the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, the destiny of man as shown by the books of St. John's revelations, the spirituality of ethnicity based on being Lithuanian, and the religious significance in literary works. Father Vytautas's hobbies include watercolor painting and the monastery's rose garden. ♦



Rev. Vytautas Bagdanavičius.
Photo from *The Marian Tidings*

Answer to the Trivia Quiz!

Before you answer, I suggest you read the following: In Anatol Lieven's book, *The Baltic Revolution, (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence)*, the author wrote the following footnote:

"The transformation of the Lithuanian pagan heritage into a more modern form began with the Renaissance. Chroniclers, looking for words to describe Lithuanian pagan spirits, naturally turned to classical antiquity and came up with names like 'dryad'. After the Lithuanian union with Poland, Lithuanian noble families, seeking to catch up with the Poniatowskis and dignify the paganism of their recent past, began to claim that their paganism was of classical origin and that they themselves were descendants of the ancient Romans. I myself had an amusing taste of this in a conversation with a woman from the Rimsky-Korsakov family in St. Petersburg. The Korsakovs were a Lithuanian family who accompanied a fifteenth century Lithuanian princess to Moscow to marry a Russian prince, and themselves became Russian nobles. They later successfully petitioned the Tsar to add Rimsky to their name to denote their Roman origin. I inquired about this. "Well," Tatiana Vladimirovna said, "Family

legend has it that we are descended from the god Jupiter, but this is not true of course." I nodded sympathetically. Then she continued, "But what does appear to be the case is that we are in fact descended from Pompey the Great."

What is your answer?

- A Lithuanian family*; is probably the correct answer. According to the *Lietuvių Pavardžių Žodynas (The Lithuanian Surname Dictionary)*, 1985, a Korsakovas family lives in Vegeriai and another in Vilnius.
- The mythical god, Jupiter*; I heard he is now a high priest of a pagan cult. (I'm not sure how many Lithuanians belong) located in the hills of Los Angeles, California. Recently, he was spotted with Elvis Presley in Harvard Square (The Republic of Cambridge, Ma.)
- Pompey the Great*; Why not! If you are lucky to be blessed with a noble Roman nose, or you have a hidden desire to wear a toga and a rūta (rue) wreath on your head, you too may be his descendant or at

Sr. Margarita Bareikaitė

Renewal Through the Mass

The Church is calling all of us to RENEW. The first step for renewal is getting the most out of the Holy Mass. That is why it is so important to attend mass every Sunday.

The first part of the Mass is reading and preaching the Word of God. The second part is the Eucharist -- a time of healing sin fragments in all of us. Sin separates us from one another and from all we are called to be. The remnants of sin cling to us in the petty bickering, meanness of spirit, and insecure prejudices that pepper our daily lives.

Wholeness requires a basic healing, an act that realigns our spirit with the purpose of our existence. Jesus claimed this to be His mission: "I have come that all may be made one." In the Eucharistic prayer, and this is especially clear in Eucharistic prayer IV, we hear that forgiveness has been won by the blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. We celebrate this belief when we gather with one another at Christ's Church and offer the sacrifice that makes us one.

Our unity is the result of participating in the Eucharistic prayer, in sharing a greeting of peace, and in receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. At the same time it heals and strengthens us to work together towards bringing the gift of forgiveness to a broken world. ♦



A Joyful Choice

Joy is a major theme of Jesus' parables, and God has entrusted to each person a particular joyful talent; a task that has not been entrusted to anyone else.

God calls within our own hearts. For most people this talent or vocation is expressed through marriage and family life, while for others as a priest or as a religious vocation. Those who consider a religious vocation may wonder how to know if this is right for him or her. The first thing to do is pray and open the subject up to God. Then look to see what brings joy.

As prayer with the Lord continues, one may ask questions such as, "Lord, what do you want of me?" or "Am I willing to be a temple of the Holy Spirit — that God would dwell in my body?" The Lord invites us to open our hearts to experience the outpouring of God's compassionate love: love that affirms, heals, and gives purpose to our lives. It is also the love that calls us to heroic service after the example of the Lord Jesus and to be at the service of others.

If you have asked such questions and dreamt of being sent by Jesus to share Jesus' love with children, youth at camp, through catechetical and social service work with the community, or nursing the sick, then make your dream a reality by coming to join the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception at 600 Liberty Hwy., Putnam, CT 06260.

Thus your ministry can become the roadmap for your journey to become who God created you to be. ♦

SR. MARGARITA BAREIKAITĖ belongs to the order of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a Lithuanian order in Putnam, Connecticut. She is also the Chairperson of the Religious Affairs Council for the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

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