

bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

\$5

March 2015

this month in history

March Anniversaries

760 yeas ago

March 6, 1255

King Mindaugas, who had been crowned in 1253, obtained the permission of Pope Alexander IV to crown his son as king of Lithuania, to ensure continuity of the dynasty and prevent interference from the Livonian Order. However, both Mindaugas and two of his sons were assassinated in 1263 by his nephew Treniota and rival Duke Daumantas. Treniota became the next ruler of Lithuania.

575 years ago

March 20, 1440

Grand Duke Žygimantas Kęstutaitis was assassinated in Trakai by supporters of former Grand Duke Švitrigaila. The youngest son of Grand Duke Kęstutis and Birutė, Žygimantas ruled from 1432, after signing the Union of Grodno with Jogaila and ceding territories in Volhynia and Podolia to Poland.

160 years ago

March 17, 1855

Birth of Gabrielius Narutovičius, first president of the Second Polish Republic. Born to a Lithuanian-Polish noble family in Telšiai, Narutovičius was a hydroelectric engineer who helped rebuild Poland's infrastructure after World War I. He was Minister of Public Works and Minister of Foreign Affairs before claiming a surprise victory in the 1922 presidential election. The subject of an aggressive smear campaign by the right wing, he was assassinated on December 16, 1922, only five days after taking office.

130 years ago

March 13, 1885

Birth of Sofija Kymantaitė Čiurlionienė in Joniškis. Wife of artist and composer Mykalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, she was a Lithuanian art and literary critic, writer of poetry and prose, playwright, publicist, teacher, public figure, member of Lithuanian and international women's movement, and a Lithuanian delegate to the League of Nations from 1929-1931 and 1935-1938. Čiurlionienė joined the Lithuanian women's movement in 1907 in Vilnius after returning from the University of Krakow. At 21 she participated at the first Lithuanian women's congress, impressing senior members with her eloquence and sophistication. From 1915 to 1918 she headed a Lithuanian women's group in Voronezh (Russia), where the Lithuanian school at which she was teaching was temporarily relocated and in 1929 set up the Lithuanian branch of international organization "Union des Amies de la Jeune Fille."



110 years ago

March 12, 1905

Birth of Fr. Alfonsas Lipniūnas in Talkonys. Lipniūnas was ordained in 1930, taught sociology and theology in Panvežys and Vilnius, and was named director of youth for the country. Famed for his sermons during the time of German occupation, he founded the Lithuanian Foundation to aid Lithuanians, Poles and Jews. Because of his activities, which included urging young people to resist conscription into the German army, he was imprisoned in Stutthof Concentration Camp in 1943, where he still celebrated mass daily. He died shortly after being liberated.

85 years ago



March 10, 1930

Lithuanian playwright and poet Justinas Marcinkevičius was born in Važatkiemis. Known as "the poet of the people" during the Soviet occupation, he developed a humanistic, romantic and lyric style, diverging from the heroic and propagandistic style of socialist realism. He became a prominent member of the Lithuanian

Freedom Movement, Sąjūdis. His 1974 poem, "Laisvė," was put to music by Eurika Masytė and Antikvaras, and became an unofficial anthem of the January 1991 events. He authored 14 poetry collections, three historical plays and numerous other works, and is a recipient of the Lithuanian National Prize. He died in 2011.

70 years ago

March 11-13, 1945

Battle of Kiauneliškis. In an extensive, three-day battle in Labanoras Forest, about 80 Lithuanian partisans resisted an attack on their two bunkers by about 2,000 Red Army soldiers assisted by local collaborators. Almost all of the partisans perished while about 300 Soviets and their supporters were killed.

March 27, 1945

Battle of Ažagai-Eimuliškis. Approximately 800 Soviet troops conducted a huge operation with the aim to destroy partisans in Panevežys district. In Azagai-Eimuliškis Forest, they encircled 300 partisans, who managed to escape after a lengthy battle. About 80 partisans and 400 Soviets were killed.

25 years ago

March 11, 1990

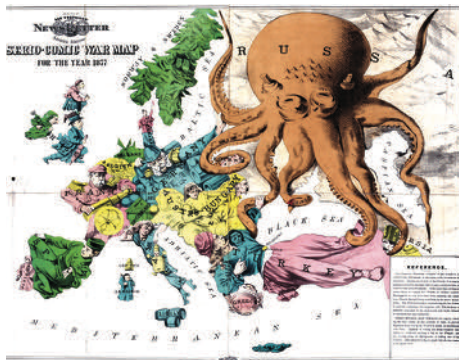
The Act of the Reestablishment of Lithuanian Independence was signed. See our special section on independence starting on page 12.

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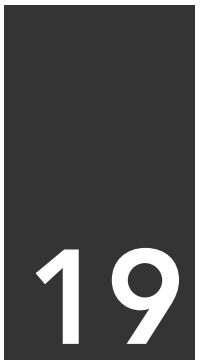
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Cover photos: 2015 Kaziuko mugė (Kaziukas fair) in Vilnius, Lithuania. Kaziuko mugė is a large annual folk arts and crafts fair dating to the beginning of the 17th century. Held in many Lithuanian communities around the world, it is named for St. Kazimieras (Casimir), and is celebrated in early March. At the fair, one can find characters in historic costume and lots of goods for purchase, including honey, cheese, bread, spices, linen, woolen and straw goods, wooden toys and cutlery, "medieval" weapons and armor, sweets, bagels, amber and verbos for Palm Sunday. Front cover photo: © Flavijus | Dreamstime.com. Back cover photo: © Renata Apanavičienė | Shutterstock.com.

from the editor

Freedom Is Not Free

Most things worth having come at a price. We must work to achieve them or afford them, and work to assure that we can maintain them. Independence is no exception.

This month, March 11 to be exact, marks the 25th anniversary of the declaration of the reestablishment of Lithuania's independence. It is a major milestone in the republic's long journey to reclaim the freedom it lost in 1939 under German and Soviet occupations.

The years between 1939 and 1990 were not without struggle. Lithuanian partisans known as "Forest Brothers" waged ultimately unsuccessful guerilla warfare against Soviet troops for years in what was known as the "war after the war." Beginning in the 1980s, members of the Lithuanian Freedom Movement, Sąjūdis, took a more peaceful, persistent and ultimately more successful approach in the fight for freedom. During it all, Lithuanian communities the world over worked to assure that the leaders of their countries remained aware of and active in efforts to regain Lithuania's independence.

After the Act of March 11, 1990, it would take more than a year, and more lives lost, until Lithuania's occupiers would finally relent and leave the country. Daiva Venckus, a Los Angeles native who in 1991 worked in the press office of the Supreme Council of Lithuania (precursor to today's Seimas, or parliament), opens a portal into the anxiety of that time period in her article beginning on page 3. She also tells us how her experiences helped her nephew discover what it means to be Lithuanian when they visited the country together last year.

After the Soviet exit, Lithuania faced new challenges of independence, including how to overcome the ideologies of its former oppressor, as related by Gražina Lansbergienė (page 14) and Tadas Alasevičius (page 19). Despite that challenge, Mrs. Lansbergienė concludes that independence has restored for her "a worthwhile life full of meaning." Mr. Alasevičius relates post-independence experiences that range from cars that actually worked to learning how to think for himself rather than mindlessly memorizing facts in school.

A lingering challenge—and perhaps even a potential threat—is Lithuania's relationship with its former occupier. Baltic-Russia relations have a long and difficult history for a number of reasons. Captain Andrius Bivainis tries to cast some light into the murkiness in his article beginning on page 7.

We have to give a special thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, which provided many of our timeline entries and helped us contact photographer Vytautas Daraškevičius, who documented Lithuania's struggles to reestablish independence in the 1980s and 1990s. Mr. Daraškevičius gave us permission to use his photos from that era in the timeline in this issue and in upcoming issues throughout the year. His pictures have appeared in exhibitions in Lithuania among those of other photographers, and we're privileged to be able to give you a glimpse into the events of the day from the perspective of a participant.

We'll also be sharing more memories of the events surrounding the reestablishment of independence throughout the coming year. Do you have a memory to share? Tell us about it! Whether you were experiencing the events firsthand in Lithuania, working for the cause of Lithuanian independence in America or following the happenings with your family or at school, please consider sharing your stories and anecdotes about that time with your fellow readers of *Bridges*. Just drop me a line at bridges.terese@gmail.com, and you may see your memory in a future issue.

In peace,



Teresė Vekteris, Editor

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Witness to History:

Discovering What It Means to Be Lithuanian

By Daiva Venckus



The author's nephew expresses "what it feels like to be Lithuanian" at the conclusion of the Dance Festival in 2014.

I stood inside the commemorative Hall of March 11 on the exact spot where two-and-a-half decades earlier Vytautas Landsbergis announced that Lithuania had re-established its independence. The news images were still fresh in my mind. My 18-year-old nephew Eli stood at my side as I described why the event was important.

This was Eli's first visit to the homeland and he was going to dance in the 2014 Song Festival, but before doing so we were spending the week together touring the sites. Born and raised in Los Angeles, he learned about Lithuanian history through our family stories and attending our local scout camp, Rambynas. I dragged him through the streets of Vilnius not only

to teach him about our history, but to walk in the footsteps of my own memories, of my days working at the Supreme Council (now known as the Seimas) in 1991. I'd been back to Vilnius through the years, but this was the first time I was giving a family member a tour of my personal past.

I'd arrived in Lithuania on January 15, 1991, two days after the tragic event at the TV Tower. I was an optimistic 24-year-old who grew up in the Los Angeles Lithuanian community and somehow ended up working as a press spokesperson under Rita Dapkutė at the Information Bureau inside the barricaded Supreme Council.

In those days I was an insignificant witness to history. Like a fly on the wall, I stood on the balcony of the now-historic hall watching the deputies debate new laws to transform the country into a democracy. I helped run press briefings in which Landsbergis—co-founder of the Sajūdis reform movement who had become chairman of the Supreme Council of Lithuania—skillfully deflected propaganda from Moscow. I translated documents, wrote press releases and updated foreign journalists on the current dangerous situation. Because of the ongoing threat, the Information Bureau had also become a hotline. Citizens would call in about Soviet military movements and we'd pass on the relevant data to the Defense Department and the Supreme Council security. We spent many restless nights camping inside the Supreme Council building waiting for Moscow's forces to attack while urging Western leadership to recognize Lithuanian independence.



Barricades behind the Supreme Council building in 1991. Photo: D. Venckus

As I stood in the historic hall with my nephew, I wondered if I could convey what it meant to be Lithuanian. Like many of my generation, I questioned if the younger generations, espe-

cially the émigré community, truly appreciated what occurred in the revolutionary years of 1988 to 1991. If you walked down the cobblestoned streets of the Vilnius Old Town, it seemed the younger set were mostly interested in hanging out in the lively bars and consuming large amounts of cepelinai. Perhaps I was just getting cranky like the generations before me and beginning to harbor the same complaints about those “young whippersnappers.”

In the days before we visited the Seimas, my nephew and I traversed the entire Vilnius center. I pointed out the office of Sąjūdis and where the 1918 declaration of independence took place. I described the depressing, empty Soviet shops of the past. I explained that Moscow closed down the churches and turned them into warehouses and museums. I showed him where the statue of Lenin once stood and where, in 1991, I watched as he was cut at the knees to remove him. We slowly wandered through the exhibits of the Museum of Genocide and Resistance and its KGB prison cells. We finally visited Antakalnis cemetery to pay our respects to the victims of the January 1991 events.

As I pulled Eli from one place to another, a feeling of déjà vu came over me as I was reminded that I too was once a “young whippersnapper.” Back in 1989, I visited Lithuania with my brother Vitas, Eli’s father, for the first time to work on archaeological digs in Kernavė and the Palace of Grand Dukes. My grandfather, Kazys Karuza, made his first visit back since he escaped during World War II and dragged us across cities to revisit his memories. He must have wondered the same thing about me then, whether I appreciated the land he came from. Back then I was in awe as my Saturday school history books came to life, but filled with sadness upon seeing the Soviet reality of occupied Lithuania. When I returned to America after that visit, I told my grandfather, “Someday I want to go back to Lithuania and live there for a while. I don’t know when or how I’m going to make it happen, but I will.” And I did. I lived in Vilnius for two years, from 1991 to 1992, and had most incredible experience of my life.

My nephew’s reaction to the streets of 2014 contrasted my first visit. The once drab and neglected walls and streets were now colorful and lively. He enjoyed the friendly restaurants serving every traditional meal imaginable. He said that based on the stories I had told him about 1991, he was almost expecting endless rows of Soviet housing and Soviet patrols, not the impressive, meticulous architecture and boisterous society that greeted him. I guess I forgot to mention how much Lithuania had changed after independence.

I thought perhaps I was throwing too much history at him and that he’d find it boring, but he kept asking more questions. He said he was loving “being Lithuanian.” But I started to wonder myself what it really meant to be Lithuanian? Was it because we spoke the language and danced the folk dances and sang the old songs and enjoyed a good cepelinas? And those of us in the émigré community who are citizens of other countries, how



Daiva (right) in 1991 in front of Vytautas Landsbergis’ office with Audronis Ažubalis (left), then official spokesperson and later Lithuania’s Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2010 to 2012.

can we too identify as Lithuanian? What is the one element that unifies us? What was that identity that my grandparents and parents tried to pass onto me? What was I specifically trying to pass on to my young nephew?

At the Seimas I showed him where the barricades stood. We went inside the small memorial to look at the pictures of 1991 and the artifacts. A few objects from the recent Ukrainian Euro-aidan revolution were laid out on a table: helmets and Molotov cocktails. They stood as an ominous reminder that although Lithuania was independent, freedom was not guaranteed. The world could change in a split second.

Inside the Seimas I described where our defenders, the volunteers who then were his age, lived and slept. I showed him where Landsbergis’ office, now a conference room, had been surrounded with sand bags. Where the Molotov cocktails were lined up.

I showed him my office, the Information Bureau, on the fourth floor, also now a conference room. I led him to a window with a view of the TV Tower and said, “This is the exact spot where I could have died.” It was the first time I had told this story to a family member.

I told my nephew about the last days of the Soviet Union. When Gorbachev was taken hostage during the three-day August Putsch (the 1991 Soviet coup d’état attempt), while all eyes were on Moscow, Soviet troops were active throughout Lithuania. We were barricaded inside the Supreme Council building, preparing to be attacked. Soviet troops seized dozens of buildings and transmission towers throughout the country. Checkpoints and armed patrols harassed citizens. Reports of columns of tanks were headed our way.

At one point our InfoBureau fax operator, Arvydas, called me into the fax room. “I want to show you something on the telex machine.” I stood over him as he continued, “I programmed shortcut messages just in case things get crazy—in case I can’t get messages out. I made things simple.”



Daiva inputting press releases into the telex machine, 1991.



Daiva on the barricades in front of the bridge over the Neris River, 1991.

I acknowledged that I remembered how to use the machine. He continued, "Now, message #1 is 'We are surrounded.' I don't like where he is going with this, I thought. "Message #2 is 'We are under attack.'" I bit my lip. "Message #3 is 'We are dead.'"

I realized that when the bullets started coming at us, Arvydas planned to stay at the telex machine and hit message #3 himself before he dropped dead. And he expected me to send out the message if he was killed before doing so. There was no time to think about such things. "Okay, I understand," I said. "I can handle it if I have to."

As I turned to leave, a Lithuanian volunteer guard appeared in the fax room doorway, blocking me. He addressed Arvydas, "Do you want a weapon? A pistol?"

"Uh, no. I'll be all right," he said, shocked.

The guard disappeared before I could tell him I wanted a gun. Women were told to leave the building, but many of us remained. I thought it was rather sexist that I wasn't offered a gun, not that it would be much help against tanks.

At 11 p.m. those tanks appeared. Our latest reports had the count at 100. I watched the tanks creep toward the barricades on the bridge spanning the Neris River. Thousands of citizens had been holding vigil to protect the building. They ran toward the bridge, scrambled over the barricades and shook their fists at the tanks.

Are they crazy? I thought. After the events of January 13 they knew what the Soviet soldiers were capable of, but they still found the courage to face the threat head-on. The tanks adjusted their barrels to get a good aim at us. However, after a half hour, no shots were fired and they withdrew. I didn't die that night.

During each minute of the coup attempt we believed the Soviet military would attack. Everyone inside was on high alert to defend the building. The next day, when Soviet military helicopters flew over the building, we thought paratroopers were going to drop onto the roof. I didn't sleep the entire three days.

My nerves were shot. At some time during the blur of the days I, along with a group of coworkers and volunteer guards, received last rites from a Catholic priest.

By late evening on August 21, 1991, it was clear the August Coup was failing. Late that night I was staring out the window while talking on the phone to a journalist when several flashes of light and explosions erupted outside. Gunfire rattled the windows.

We're under attack! I screamed in my head.

My mind tried to understand what I was seeing. Light continued to flash to my right, at our street entrance checkpoint. A Soviet military Jeep zoomed past the checkpoint alongside of the river in front of the Parliament building, right past my window. People outside ran toward it. Multiple flares shot into the sky, reflecting in the river below. The Jeep made a U-turn and headed back toward the checkpoint. More gunfire. Two flashes of light. People running everywhere. Then an ambulance whizzed past.

Even though the putsch had failed, a rogue group of KGB OMON soldiers decided to show us that they were still in charge. It was a clear indication that Moscow would never accept Lithuanian independence. The soldiers were captured, but a Lithuanian volunteer, Artūras Sakalauskas, was killed. He was the last victim of the Soviet occupation.

I looked at my nephew and I could tell my story was weighing heavily on him. It was time to move on. I led him outside, walking along the street behind the Seimas to a small monument, a rock with a plaque, designating the spot where Artūras was shot. Most people do not know it is there. I instructed my nephew that each time he returns to Lithuania he must visit Antakalnis cemetery and this rock to recognize those who died in the final struggle for freedom.

Our last stop on the tour was the TV Tower.

I was about to describe what happened the night of January 13, 1991, but I was compelled to talk about the moment that Lithuania truly achieved freedom.

By the morning of August 22, 1991, the Moscow Putsch was over and Gorbachev had returned to Moscow. It seemed the

coup was over, as Soviet troops were withdrawing from the buildings they seized during the Putsch. However, as long as the Vilnius TV Tower and other buildings in Lithuania seized in January were occupied by Soviet forces, a coup was still in effect in Lithuania. Was Gorbachev ready to allow Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to become free and independent nations?

Landsbergis called USSR General Moisejev and informed him that if Soviet troops did not withdraw from the buildings they seized in January, Lithuanians—both citizens and volunteer forces—would take the buildings themselves. He left that open to interpretation. Our volunteer guards mobilized, running through the hallways of Parliament preparing for the consequences of our ultimatum. However, at the last minute Landsbergis received a call from a Soviet colonel who said the Soviet military would begin withdrawing from the seized buildings. It felt like we'd dodged a bullet, but we could not believe it was actually going to happen. Would the Soviets really leave?

That afternoon we received word that the Soviet troops would withdraw from the TV Tower and Rita Dapkutė told me to confirm if it was true. I arrived at the TV Tower at 4:15 p.m. and worked my way through the crowd of tens of thousands toward the Tower complex main gate. Along the way I ran into many foreign journalists who'd just arrived from Moscow.

As the journalists recognized me as an employee of the Information Bureau, they pulled me in multiple directions to help them with on-the-spot translations as they interviewed the crowd. Each person was in a state of disbelief, "I can't believe this is actually happening."

I easily found a friend, Edis (who worked at Sajūdis), in the huge crowd. He was standing alongside the road near the main gate, bullhorn in hand, directing the crowd, "When the vehicles leave, turn your backs to them and remain silent. Turn your backs to them. They do not deserve the respect to be acknowledged. Turn your backs to them ..."

Finally, at 6:07 p.m., the gates of the Tower complex opened. A Soviet military column of six trucks and two Jeeps inched past. The thousands who gathered, as if in a choreographed dance routine, turned away from the military column and stood frozen in silence. We were one, in spirit and final rebelliousness.

Lithuanians had more than enough justification, especially after 50 years of brutal Soviet occupation, to express hatred toward the Soviet military.

A British journalist standing next to me whispered, "I've never witnessed anything like this. This is the most powerful moment of defiance I've ever experienced."

This is what it means to be Lithuanian, I thought.

I turned to my nephew and explained, "The most powerful tradition of the Lithuanian people is maintaining a connection with the past. Despite the attempts of outside forces to break that connection, we have prevailed. We never gave up. My grandparents and parents were my link to that past. I picked up the chain in 1989, and it's my duty to tell the stories and hold the chain until it's the time for your generation to pick it up."

Eli nodded and stared at the TV Tower.

I wasn't sure if he understood what I was trying to convey to him. The next day I dropped him off at the dorms to prepare for the dance performance of the song festival.

A week later I sat with my mother and amongst friends who had children participating in the dance event. Watching 8,000 people perform beautifully choreographed dances was exhilarating. I spotted my nephew with his friends, working hard to stay in sync with the more skilled Lithuanian dancers.

After the finale, I found Eli in the middle of stadium celebrating with the other dancers and asked him, "How does it feel to be Lithuanian?" Sweat covered his face. His juostas was tied around his head like a headband. He just looked at me, with the face of exhaustion, overwhelmed by my question and his experiences. He threw his arms into the air and yelled, "Ahhhhhhh!"

I knew that feeling. It is indescribable. It is the awareness of your identity. Who you are deep inside. It is the feeling of being a part of something bigger than yourself. Like my moment at the TV Tower when the Soviet troops withdrew. Being connected to the traditions; feeling connected to your ancestral past.

After all the festivities were done, over a plate of cepelinai, Eli announced, "I want to come back and live here for a while."

I couldn't help but smile. I don't know what kind of Lithuania my nephew will return to in the future, but I do know the future of Lithuania is in good hands with the next generation.



Eli at Trakai holding the standard of his dance group, Los Angeles LB Spindulys.

Daiva Venckus was a press spokesperson (1991-1992) for the Lithuanian Parliament during its struggle to break away from the Soviet Union. She currently guest lectures on the topics of the Soviet Union and Lithuanian independence to schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District as well as private schools. She also provides consulting for companies doing business in the region of the former Soviet Union. She climbs mountains for fun. Read her blog at daivavenckus.com.

Obscured Baltic-Russia Relations: Where Is the Light Switch in the Tunnel?

By Capt. Andrius Bivainis

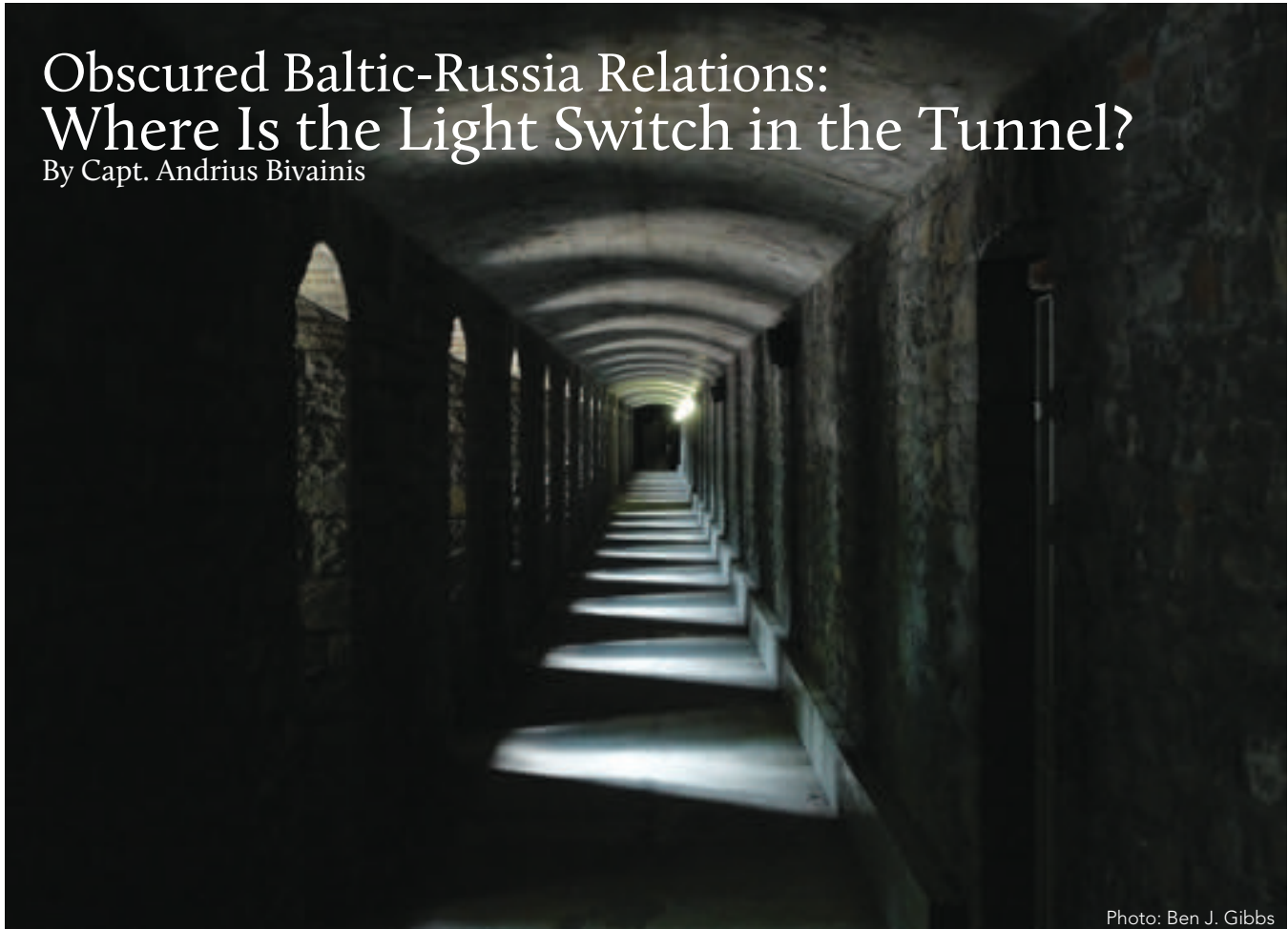


Photo: Ben J. Gibbs

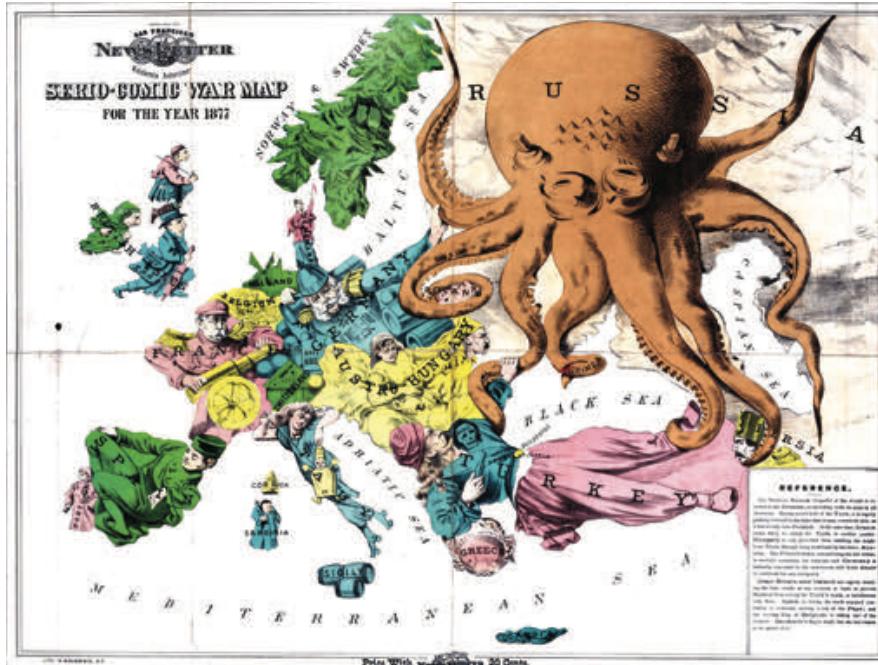
Contemporary Baltic-Russia relations may be evaluated within a wide spectrum of associations: from emotional ties to political apprehension and, of course, economic and energy relations. This article offers a current overview of tensions in the region as Lithuania, together with its Baltic “sisters,” celebrates the 25th anniversary of independence. The allegorical association of obscured foreign relations and the need to find the light switch serves to highlight suggestions to reinforce resistance against increasing Russian geopolitical offense, as open and hostile confrontation in Ukraine has shifted international attention to Eastern Europe once again.

For the majority of the population in the Baltic States, the term “Baltic-Russia relations” could provoke various associations of 50 years of Soviet annexation. These associations should be described as mixed feelings. Public opinion varies from hate for the authoritarian control and political determinism to silent recall for socialistic stability and “benefits.” Despite the mixed emotional associations, Baltic-Russia relations are more efficiently described in rational terms.

Economic and trade ties could be seen as a strong determinant of relations between the Baltic States and Russia. During the independence period, Lithuanian economic relations

have been highlighted by two crises in Russia. These crises have demonstrated the practical need to develop diversified export markets. More than that, the case at the Stockholm Arbitrage concerning Gazprom’s manipulative gas trade in Lithuania is another example of trade tensions between these neighbors. In addition, trade of goods has been disturbed by periodic Moscow-implemented sanctions. Sanctions for meat and fish production from Latvia or milk products from Lithuania are only some recent examples; more cases may follow.

All of these disturbances in regional relations suggest that tension is the defining feature of economic and political relations between the Baltic States and Russia. Political tensions have been rising since 2004, when Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia became members of the European Union and NATO. The guarantee of collective defense in the region has exerted significant influence on Russia’s geopolitical interests. Tensions in the Baltic region could be described as the ongoing process of the marginal shift of influential powers in Eastern Europe. This shift of influence reaches the scale of the Potsdam agreements ratified after World War II and provokes Russia’s geopolitical reaction encoded in political, economic and energy actions.



Top: This map from 1877 depicts Russia as extending its tentacles into neighboring countries. The text in the bottom right corner states in part:

"The Octopus—Russia—forgetful of the wound it received in the Crimea [Russia's loss in the Crimean war of 1853-1856], is stretching forth its arms in all directions. Having seized hold of the Turk [at the beginning of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878], it is eagerly pushing forward in the hope that it may overwhelm him, as it has already done Poland ... Hungary is only prevented from assisting its neighbor, Russia, through being held back by its sister, Austria. The Frenchman, remembering his late defeat [in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871] is carefully examining his weapons; and Germany is naturally interested in his movements and holds himself in readiness for any emergency."

Bottom: This 1899 map depicts Russia in the form of Tsar Nicholas II, accompanied by what appears to be Mother Russia, carrying an imperial flag.

Geopolitics Plays Out

Geopolitical influence could be named as the main reason behind the tense relations of the countries. There is a living historical perception promoted in Moscow that the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea is an area that they have defended and developed since the times of imperial Russia. One could remember caricaturist maps from the 19th century, where imperial Russia stands in watch on these shores, ready to wipe out Prussian influence spreading from current Polish lands. These historical images are finding modernized perceptions in current Moscow's strategic thinking.

Russia's President Vladimir Putin, during his annual speech in 2005, stated that the "genuine tragedy" was the collapse of the Soviet Union'. Statement like this from Russian officials clearly illustrate geopolitical trends that are so important in Eastern Europe on the whole. Re-establishment of influence and control in the post-Soviet area and deterrence of Western influence could be named as the overall strategic objectives. Of course, these objectives are difficult to achieve if the potential subjects of Moscow's control are dispersed as independent states with their own international agendas and without strong reliance to pro-Russian historical ties.

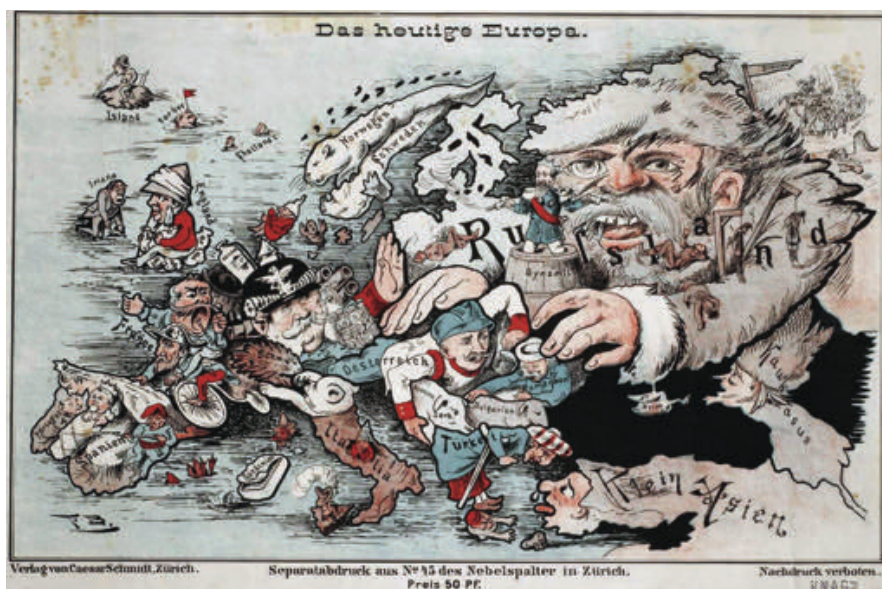
This definition of geopolitical influence in post-Soviet areas might sound like a phobia. To counterweight any phobic arguments, actual assets used to re-establish Moscow's influence should be discussed. The biggest range of potential influence should be linked to soft-power assets. These are assets employed in formation of public opinion, financial

and trade ties, and political interference. The trade sanctions mentioned earlier illustrate how Russian influence can be empowered unilaterally to terminate export ties and provoke disturbances on domestic political agendas. Moreover, political interference is the other influential soft-power asset employed through supervision of Moscow-funded political parties or movements. Large business enterprises also could become another influential asset. These are internal, financially capable assets that usually profit from trade with Russia and are ready to support their interests in trade or energy markets. If these business enterprises start to control famous media channels,

a solid foundation is set for widespread public opinion control. This is a general soft-power enforcement scenario currently observed in Lithuania. Once law enforcement institutions began to prosecute some leaders of political movements and bankrupt business owners, they have been eager to escape to Moscow. This trend clearly illustrates that pro-Russian political or business activists are supported and coordinated by powers in Moscow.

In terms of hard-power assets, military capabilities are often highlighted. Russia has demonstrated in recent years its capabilities to conduct large-scale military maneuvers next to its western borders. A large military exercise in Northern Caucasus in 2008 ended in implementation of territorial control over two previously Georgian districts after a five-day war. In face of this rapid conflict, the Baltic States were prompted to reconsider their own geographical security and defense cooperation within NATO. Currently increased military build-up of Alliance capabilities in the Baltic region has been developed as a preventive reaction to the Ukrainian crisis.

The militarized version of the grand chess game has a tendency to continue as Russian military presence on Ukrainian soil has been highlighted numerous times over the past year. The tendencies of the Ukrainian conflict are well understood in the Baltic States, which are generally defined as “the next possible frontier.” More than that, regional dependence on Russian energy infrastructure could be named as an even more serious hard-power asset—and could be the most effective asset at Moscow’s disposal. Russia-Ukraine gas disputes in 2009 highlighted the devastating effect of possible energy resource shut-down scenarios. Control of energy resources is the asset that could enable rapid influence over large populations and bring strong pressure on the governments of the Baltic States. Luckily, the new “Independence” liquefied natural gas terminal in Klaipėda port should be considered a firm step toward national independence on energy resources. However, a long battle for national interests awaits after significant rejections of nuclear power plant and shale gas development projects.



Top: This German map from 1914, shows Germany and Austria-Hungary defending against a Russia that appears to want to devour all.

Bottom: Another German map from 1914, titled “Today’s Europe,” also shows Russia’s reach. It depicts gallows appearing across European Russia and illustrates the subjugation of Siberian peoples in the top right corner.

What Happened With Ukraine

Ukraine offers the best recent example of a battle for geopolitical influence over Eastern Europe. Former Ukraine President Victor Yanukovich rejected the long-awaited Association Agreement with the EU. With this step, he neglected a long-formed will of the population. The decision caused a growing

wave of demonstrations and provoked significant social tensions in the Crimea and Donbas regions, where silent engagement by the Russian Federation has been playing a destructive role for more than a year.

What is more, Russian aggressive foreign policy has been based on exploitation of internal socio-political tensions. That is why the scale of geopolitical influence has favored Russian interests in Ukraine. In December 2013 some voices offered a sound description of the previous Ukrainian governing regime's legitimacy, terming it a "dysfunctional system of sultanistic rule [with] the government and parliament [turned] into rubber-stamp institutions."² This definition might sound too harsh but it definitely highlights essential elements of Ukrainian destabilization. These elements were a governing elite focused on their own profit, weakened democratic control of governing bodies, and a fractured and forcefully pushed away political opposition.

To sum up, Ukraine is a destabilized national entity with internal political, economic and social fractures playing out in favor of Russian interests. In this case, dominant oligarchic groups have been acting as Moscow's advocating asset for a prolonged period even prior the current open and hostile confrontation. Kyiv initially, and now the eastern Donbas region with the Crimea peninsula, have been illustrating the hard-case scenario that results in violence and civil disturbances. The Baltic States should learn the Ukrainian lesson fast and develop their own strategic goals for resisting disturbances of external influence.

Toward the Light Switch

General Carl von Clausewitz had suggested that every means of war or conflict faces resistance.³ This classical notion should be expanded by stating that every similar case of collisions, whether performed in open violence or conducted by overt influential assets, should be studied and proper lessons learned. The recent geopolitical influence battle in Ukraine should be considered as possible options to neutralize pro-Russian influence in the Baltic States are discussed.

The most effective resistance to undesired influential factors is strong and united public opinion that forms a basis for an open-minded and democratic values-oriented society. Pro-European society in the case of the Baltic States should be considered as a foundation of united and strong political will to promote national security issues and develop independent capabilities. Increased independence from Russia in energy, trade and financial sectors is the precondition for the allegorical light switch. Some essential steps should be implemented to establish this precondition for revised and cooperative relations between Lithuania and Russia.

First of all, laws regarding financial donation to political parties or movements should be revised. Reviews should be based on principles of proportionality and rational fund limits. This could prevent trade of political will and promotion of partisan interests.

The second step should be formation of a counterbalance to the role of large enterprises in mass media. This is the way to balance possible influence of public opinion that could cause devastating effects on popular will and even a neglecting of strategic projects. One should remember management of increased opposition to the Visaginas nuclear power plant or possible exploitation of shale gas resources in Lithuania.

Finally, the third consecutive step should be continued development of diversified energy resources. This is the objective element that could significantly decrease dependence on Russian energy infrastructure. Success in this field could help Lithuania and Latvia in particular to neutralize the most effective Russian hard-power asset. This is a long-term objective that requires consecutive efforts in implementing all described steps of resistance.

To sum up, the way toward the light switch in contemporary obscured relations are publicly supported national strategic goals with strong and united political will to implement them. The Baltic States still are located on a battlefield for geopolitical influence. Lithuania is caught between multiple frontiers, as Kaliningrad Oblast and Belarus surround the majority of its land and sea borders. That is why outcomes of the current confrontation in Ukraine are very significant for Lithuania on its 25th anniversary of regained independence. Our own effort will define future outcomes and capabilities, as we all need to stand united and cooperate to light up regional relations. Russia is actively exporting its geopolitical credits, with Minsk and Kyiv as their most attractive importers. Lithuania with the other Baltic States has the backing of Western regional organizations, but still the greatest effort depends on internal performance to resist the spread of undesirable geopolitical influence. At the 25th anniversary of regained independence, we need to stand united and act agile in the face of changing geopolitical realities.

¹"Putin: Soviet Collapse a 'genuine tragedy,'" NBC News Brief, 25 April 2005, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/7632057/ns/world_news/t/putin-soviet-collapse-genuine-tragedy/#.UtvheuVc7sw, obtained 2014 01 18.

²Motyl A., "Yanukovich Must Go", Foreign Affairs, 11 December 2013, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/140491/alexander-j-motyl/yanukovich-must-go>, obtained 2014 01 16.

³Carl von Clausewitz, Selections from *On War*, Sweet Water Press, USA, 2006, p. 49.



Captain Andrius Bivainis is an active-duty military officer serving in the Lithuanian Land Force. He studied at the Virginia Military Institute in 2006 under an exchange program, and since then has maintained contact with the Lithuanian community in the United States. He gained international experience during tours of service in the NATO Response Force and ISAF mission in Afghanistan. Bivainis earned his master's degree in political science and diplomacy at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas.



In Mother's Eyes: The Diaspora Diary of Rozė Kriaučiūnas, Part 2

The violets in Bavaria reminded Rozė of her native Inkūnai, in Lithuania. Photo: Stephen C. Dickson

March 18, 1945.

Pietenfeld [Germany]

It's Sunday. People do not have to work today and are heading to the fields in groups to enjoy the first signs of spring. It is evident here already that winter will not be returning. The violets are already in bloom, just like the ones in my homeland, Lithuania. As I look at them, in my thoughts I return to my birthplace. The violets are blooming there too, and perhaps my brother and my sisters are also enjoying them. Or is it the brutal Bolshevik butchers? They have massacred many noble-hearted Lithuanians and might now be enjoying the beauty of nature. I too was meandering through the Bavarian [Germany's southernmost state] fields, alone. These forested rolling hills covered with blossoms reminded me of Inkūnai [Lithuania]. It would be quite pleasant if only I could forget this miserable life of a refugee! Or if Mykolas were with me. Or if I at least knew where he is. But now—what am I to do all alone? Enough time has been spent in tears and misery. I can find some peace in prayer. I

believe that God will not abandon me, if I am worthy. I have fared well until now. My children have not gone hungry, nor have they had to live through many terrors of the war. Too, this is a quiet part of Germany. The town is not that close and is not that big. The bombers fly farther away. May God grant that in this place we will soon see the end of the war.

I ended up here unexpectedly from Gotenhafen while on my way to Braunau (Am Inn) [Austria], where I thought my brother-in-law Šukys was now located. Actually, I had not wanted to go there, but I felt that I had no choice. It would be safer there, and Šukys, being a mature man, would be a great support for us.

The journey was very long and arduous. At each train station there were very many travelers, and it was very difficult to get on a train. I had a lot of baggage and no help carrying it. We would always be last, and often there would be no more room. From Stolp [now Slupsk, Poland] to Stettin [now Szczecin, Poland] we traveled on a military train. We froze for half a day in the rain sitting on rusty train

wheels, but a better railroad car was not available. In Köslin [Koszalin, Poland] we were able to transfer to a small enclosed hut-like compartment, where at least raindrops no longer fell on our heads. We passed Stettin, Berlin, and Leipzig [Germany]. The train station at Leipzig had been bombed, and we had to get off at a smaller station nearby. For the first time we slept on bare straw, for even while working in the fields I only used to nap a bit while sitting on a bag of straw. We met some Lithuanian refugees here. Grigaliūnas, an agronomist, said he knew Šukys' address. He had already relocated to Pomerania [then a land in northeast Germany]. His son, Zenonas, who was still traveling with us, wanted to leave us and go back there, but he was unable to obtain the necessary permission. I was at a loss where to proceed next.

I did not even know for which destination to buy train tickets, so I simply asked for tickets farther south, and unexpectedly we found ourselves on our way to Würzburg [Germany]. Once on the train, I was able to look at a map, and thus at the next station I confidently asked for tickets to Nürnberg [Germany]. When the train approached a town with a severely bombed-out train station, we had to disembark and carry our baggage over a mile to the next station. That was very hard, but with God's help we made it. After just a short train ride we again saw evidence of bombings, and at Treuchtlingen [Germany], we saw a devastating sight. Bomb crater was next to bomb crater. Many houses were in ruins, and there were bodies among the ruins. The bombardment had happened a week ago, and bodies were still being taken for burial several at a time. For us too it was harder here than it had been anywhere else. We had to walk about two and a half miles carrying our belongings, which was, oh, so difficult. We had to rest often, but finally, we were just too tired and left some of our things and ran to the next station. I then went back to get them, and as I was returning, the whistle blew, the train arrived, and we were left behind. It had snowed a lot recently, and the ground was

wet. We were so thirsty that we ate the fresh snow as if it were the most delicious candy.

In the evening another train arrived, and we took it to Eichstätt [Germany]. The train sped southward, and since we were exhausted, we were all drowsy. The children fell asleep, as did Zenonas and a friend of his. Alone with my thoughts, I wondered what would happen next and where we could find a safe haven. We had been traveling all week long without a break and without proper meals. I was especially concerned about Vitalija. She had turned pale in just a week's time. We still had some Lithuanian bacon, but no bread, and that is not food for a child. I have placed my trust in God, which gives me some peace. Only He has protected us and kept us safe all this time.

As I was thinking such thoughts, the train began to slow down and I heard them announce Eichstätt. Immediately I began to wake everyone. Quickly I moved our things outside the door of the compartment while Zenonas began to throw and carry them off the train. Suddenly the train began to move. We were all still on the train, except Zenonas, who was left behind with our things. We got off at the next stop, but there was no waiting room there. A kind station attendant allowed us to stay in his office overnight. We spread our coats, and for the first time in eight days, lay down in relative comfort. It was as good as sleeping in the very best bed. In the morning we took the train back [illegible text] to Eichstätt, and thus ended our long and difficult journey.

We got off at Eichstätt and right away tried to find the nearest N.S.V. [German National Socialist People's Charity] location because we were hungry. But it was Sunday, and everything was closed. Only after dinnertime did someone take us to the sleeping quarters for refugees.

It is beautiful here. The city is surrounded by hills and forests. There are many Catholic churches. There are even services in the Lithuanian language. I decided to attend, but an air raid alarm sounded, and we spent two hours in the basement. Only Lithuanians had gath-

ered for this occasion from various localities, but there was no one I knew. Even so, it was pleasant to chat with them. There is a Lithuanian seminary here, and many Lithuanian refugees live in the neighboring villages. In the evening, the Rev. Tulaba, who teaches at the seminary, came to our sleeping quarters with the Rev. Grauslys looking for me. Someone had told them that we have nothing to eat. Father Grauslys brought us bread and promised to let me know when he heard of a place in which we could stay.

Those last difficult days of travel took a great toll on my health. I felt terrible and could not walk much. So I waited patiently to feel better and did not go the N.S.V. It was not so bad there. I once got some food ration cards, and sometimes there was tea or soup. So I was taking it easy.

After several days passed I went to the N.S.V. to inquire about a place to stay. I asked for a place in Pietenfeld because that is where Father Grauslys had been assigned. I was told that it was overcrowded there, but when I kept pleading, I was given a written permit. On the next day, which was March 8, we left at 8:30 a.m., once again carrying our belongings

to the train station. Ours was the first stop, and after the train had moved for what seemed like only several minutes, it stopped, and we got off. We were in a forest. There were no houses, no road. We felt uneasy. But soon we spotted a road leading into the forest. We left Romualdas and Vitalija with our things, and I and Elvyra set off to look for Pietenfeld. The road led constantly uphill, and it was hard to keep climbing. We could see no end to the forest. There was a lot of fresh snow, which was melting quickly, and it was wet. Eventually we spotted a church steeple among the hills. After a few more steps we could see the entire town encircled by hills and forests.

The village near the town was not a beckoning sight. The houses were of brick or cement. The roofs looked odd, being constructed of split rocks of various sizes. We quickly sought out Father Grauslys. He seemed somewhat surprised to see me. Apparently, it really was hard to find a place to live here. We began to search, but no one wanted to take us in. Meanwhile, the children were waiting alone at the edge of the forest hungry, cold, and maybe frightened. So Elvyra went back to stay with them as I waited to hear about



Church in Pietenfeld, Germany, the Bavarian village where the Kriaciunas family was able to find temporary housing.

potential lodgings. At last the mayor said to bring everything to his house, for we could stay there temporarily. But how was I to bring everything such a long distance? We sought out a sled, and I drove off. There was little snow on the road, but I thought that the children were being brought in by a horse-driven cart, and went to meet them. But I found them where I had left them, and again came back without our things. Only Romualdas and Vitalija walked back with me while Elvyra stayed behind alone with our things. When we returned, the children were given some warm milk and bread to eat, and again we went to get our belongings, but this time we had a hand cart with wheels. Luck was with us, for after a short distance we met Elvyra riding in a wagon pulled by cattle. So we were able to put all our possessions into the mayor's entrance hall and could finally rest in a warm kitchen. The next day, the mayor tried to find a place for us but could not. He still couldn't find anything during the next several days. He then told me to go back to the Eichstätt N.S.V. and ask for a permit to settle in another village. I could not face having to drag around my children and our possessions any further, and I begged him to be allowed to stay, assuring him that the tiniest room would be fine. The mayor finally found one, but the homeowners did not want us. I then asked them myself, promising that we would not be a nuisance and that the children would behave, and so on. The owners relented and said they would take us in. The children were overjoyed when I told them and jumped up to start carrying our things there, so that the people would not change their minds.

The room was tiny and in the attic. It held only two beds, a stove to heat the room, and a simple apparatus for cooking food. It was so wonderful to have this room all to ourselves and not have to share it with others, who inevitably start analyzing what one is doing or what one is cooking.

In addition, our landlady was very kind. She empathized with our situation and let us [illegible text]. Every day she

brought us soup or pancakes, or a quart of milk. In general the people here are sincere, generous, ordinary folk. Moreover, they are very devout. There is a small church here, and many attend daily. I had seen such services in Lithuania. People here pray together after meals and also in the evening. Both the young and little and the old go to church.

I thought back to the Prussian farmers we had worked for earlier. What a big difference there is between them and these Bavarian farmers. Here all the people are hardworking and do not have separate meals for laborers. They show concern for the less fortunate and are charitable. Our landlady here is incomparably kinder, even though I do not work for her, unlike the haughty woman for which we all had to work. She never gave any milk to little Vitalija, whereas here we are given a little of everything gratis. It is even acceptable in this community to beg when necessary. Refugees make the rounds asking for some bread or potatoes. My Elvyra and Romualdas also got up the courage to try this, but they were not very successful and did not get much, possibly because they had not come from the city. I was surprised that Romualdas had dared to go and ask for bread. Who would have thought a year ago that we would not even have enough bread! Or had my heart had a premonition that such would be the case? Back home I was always willing to be as helpful as possible to those in need. I wanted to give and gave as much as I could. Now my own hands are extended in need, and it is truly heartwarming when I am not rejected but am helped by the people of this foreign land. God will reward them.

March 29, 1945

Today is Holy Thursday. It is obvious that Easter is nearly here. Everyone is cleaning, putting things in order, and baking cakes and cookies. But I, and perhaps there are many like me, am sitting quietly because I have nothing to do. Last year I too ran around busily doing chores and preparing food for Easter. I wonder who is living in my home now and climb-

ing up and down my stairs while looking forward to Easter. A Godless atheist could be running my household now, and Easter means nothing to such. Who knows the answer? Who can tell me one single word about the homeland I had to leave? Is my mother in good health? My beloved brother, John? And how are the others? How sorry I used to feel for him, and how it pained me to listen to Mykolas' sometimes just and sometimes unjust reproaches regarding him. Perhaps he has been laid to rest already in his native land and is at peace? Or has his health improved, and is he worrying, uncertain of my fate. Is he grieving the loss of his sister, the one he loved most and the one who took him under her wing? I wonder if we are destined to ever meet again on this earth. I wonder if I will ever be able to confide my troubles to anyone else? Dear God, please guide me in my life's journey so that I can return to my homeland, to my beloved brother and my sisters. And help me to find out where my husband, Mykolas, is. It's so lonely, so sad here alone among strangers.

March 30, 1945

Good Friday is a holiday here, but I did chores, washed clothes, and baked a cake. Meanwhile, my landlady baked twelve cakes!

A group of Lithuanian refugees arrived here from Eichstätt looking for their friend Gasiūnas. I asked them if they had heard anything about Mykolas, but they knew nothing. They said that the British forces were advancing rapidly, and they were eagerly awaiting them, for the British supposedly did not harm Lithuanians.

I would so like to spend a month or two in peace and quiet. I am tired of the constant wartime dangers, of the ever-present fear. Who knows what will happen when the new armies show up? At least today there is enough bread, and I don't expect things to get much better. All I want is for a quick end to the war. Then we might even find our "daddy" and return to our beloved homeland, Lithuania.

To be continued in the April issue.

The Long Road to Freedom

Milestones and Memories

Special section on the 25th Anniversary of the Reestablishment of the Independent State of Lithuania

In Order to Rebuild an Independent State

By *Gražina Landsbergienė* Translated by *Saulius Sužiedėlis*



Gražina Landsbergienė (at right) with husband and 1990 Supreme Council of Lithuania Chairman Vytautas Landsbergis.

In the rebuilding of an independent state, most important was the brave and consistent support from people, their powerful commitment and tenacity. The people's staying power was a huge force in resisting the pressure to "compromise," to make various bargains. As a result, March 11 fulfilled the nation's longings. Hope was realized: we would create our future ourselves, we would protect our language, our culture and the environment. The creation of the future was a period of searching and reconstruction that meant disassociating ourselves from the directives and plans of a foreign country, as well as certain habits that we had taken up. The restriction of infor-

mation and the falsification of historical sources, simply put, the legacy of lies, was not conquered quickly and did not disappear from our consciousness. The ideology that came from the East has a place among some who still listen. Therefore there is a hidden friction that does not allow us to easily choose our own path and create our own future. But is it an enormous fortune to live in our own country, to observe and concern ourselves with successes in the fields of culture, science and the economy, to see how people's lives are changed. Sometimes one is happy witnessing the accomplishments, sometimes it is sad to see the pointless obstacles, the inability to form a strong middle class, which would help create a prosperous future for the entire nation. I would think that this is a problem not only in Lithuania: the greed of one part of society that comes at the expense of a speedier and more worthy renaissance. But the hope remains that a rebirth is possible since the nation is alive.

In my own field, I am happy with the accomplishments in art and music. We are no longer behind the iron curtain; it is possible to go abroad for improvement, to disseminate our achievements, to communicate and work together, even to compete. And all this happens under Lithuania's emblem, and not that of the generalized-anonymous USSR. A great change is the opening of boundless possibilities; communication is not forbidden. We remembered and held up our rejected, "ideologically unacceptable"

political leaders and cultural figures who had been isolated in oblivion. Among those who did not fit in under the Soviet doctrine were very many great Lithuanian leaders, historians, writers and others. So there is no longer any obstacle for the youth to discover, to know the past, to join in, to create the nation's future. This is happening with purpose, without harming their consciousness, without distorting history.

At this time, it is disturbing that we are surrounded by the ideology of violence, which shows little respect for the concepts of statehood and identity. We still remember well the iron curtain behind which stood the "safe" melting pot of forcibly assimilated nations. One would like to believe that the international community will be capable of defending and supporting the nations that had endured in the struggle for freedom. Independence reflects both the will of the nation, as well as respect for that will (as expressed, for example, in the Singing Revolution). As a former exile, a victim of deportation, I can say that Independence has restored to me a worthwhile life full of meaning.

Gražina Landsbergienė was born in 1930 in Anykščiai, was exiled to Irkutsk, in Siberia, with her family in 1949, and returned to Lithuania in 1957. An accomplished pianist, she has performed internationally and is a professor at the Lithuanian Academy of Music. She is married to Vytautas Landsbergis, who in 1990, as chairman of the Supreme Council of Lithuania, declared re-establishment of independence.

August 23, 1939

Signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

The pact and its secret protocols divided Eastern Europe into spheres of influence and led to the occupation of the Baltic States in 1940.

November 17, 1940

Establishment of the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF), whose objective was the reestablishment of Independence with the assistance of Germany.

June 22, 1941

The invasion of Nazi Germany.

During the occupation of Lithuania by Nazi Germany, 240,000 Lithuanian citizens (including 200,000 Jews) were killed, 60,000 transported to labor camps and 29,500 sent to concentration camps in Germany.

June 15, 1940

Occupation and annexation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union.

During this first occupation by the Soviet Union (through June 22, 1941), 23,000 Lithuanian citizens were imprisoned, killed or deported to Siberia.

December 26, 1940

Establishment of the Union of Lithuanian Fighters for Freedom (ULFF).

June 23, 1941

Revolt against the Soviet invaders.

The LAF formed a provisional government and declared the reestablishment of the Free and Independent Lithuanian State.

August 5, 1941

Suspension of the activities of the LAF provisional government under pressure from the German invaders.

Summer 1944

The Red Army occupied Lithuania again.

1944 – 1953

“The War after the War”

After pushing out the Nazis in the summer of 1944, Soviet troops occupied Lithuania for a second time and immediately reinstated a brutal regime, fueling resistance among the Lithuanian population, including guerrilla warfare by Lithuanian partisans. The leadership of the partisans was destroyed in 1953, effectively ending the underground partisan war, though individual fighters held out until the 1960s. It is estimated that 20,000 to 30,000 Lithuanian freedom fighters and their supporters were killed.

November 25, 1943

Establishment of the Supreme Lithuanian Liberation Committee.

The committee (Vyriausiasis Lietuvos išlaisvinimo komitetas or VLIK in Lithuanian) moved abroad after World War II and was active until 1992.

May 14, 1972

Romas Kalanta’s self-immolation.

Kalanta, a 19-year-old Lithuanian student, set himself on fire in Kaunas to protest Soviet occupation of Lithuania. His death provoked the largest post-war anti-Soviet protests in Lithuania.

From 1975

Underground press became much more abundant.

Publications included *Aušra* (The Dawn), *Perspektyvos* (Perspectives), *Alma Mater*, *Šalin vergiją!* (Slavery off!), *Dievas ir Tėvynė* (God and Homeland), *Rūpintojėlis* (The Roadcross) among others.

The year 1976

The Helsinki Group was established in Lithuania to observe how the USSR followed the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act.

November 10, 1978

Five Lithuanian priests establish the Catholic Committee for the Protection of Rights of Believers.

The year 1985

M. Gorbachev started perestroika.

June 14, 1978

The underground Lithuanian Freedom League (Lietuvos laisvės lyga, LFL) is established, and the newspaper Laisvės šauklys (The Freedom Herald) appears.

August 23, 1979

"The Joint Declaration," signed by 45 national liberation fighters from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, was issued, demanding that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact be declared null and void.

July 17, 1988

Sąjūdis rally at Vingis Park in Vilnius.



October 7, 1988

The national flag was hoisted on Gediminas Tower in Vilnius.

August 23, 1988

Massive protest rally at Vingis Park in Vilnius, with 250,000 people gathered to protest the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and its secret protocols.



September 1988

Environmental campaign "Let's embrace the Baltic Sea" in Šventoji.



June 3, 1988

The Establishment of the Lithuanian Reform Movement (Sąjūdis).

During a meeting at the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences on June 3, 1988, intellectuals formed an initiative group of the Lithuanian Reform Movement to mobilize support for democratic change and, ultimately, Lithuanian independence. The group of 35, mostly artists, gained nationwide support.

June 19, 1988

Sąjūdžio žinios (Sąjūdis News) began publishing.

August 23, 1987

Anti-Soviet rally to condemn the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

Despite the Soviet ban on public demonstrations in Lithuania, a rally to mark the anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between the Soviet Union and the Nazi Germany was organized at the Mickevičius monument in Vilnius on August 23, 1987. Participants condemned the pact and its consequences for Lithuania's statehood and demanded freedom for Lithuania.

June 24, 1988

First massive pro-independence gathering organized by Sąjūdis took place.

About 100,000 people gathered in Vilnius' Vingis Park to support the goals of the Lithuanian Reform Movement.

October 22-23, 1988

Sąjūdis Congress held at Vilnius Sport Hall, with 1,021 delegates and 4,000 guests present. The Congress elected the Sąjūdis Seimas. All of Lithuania kept up with events via radio and television broadcasts. It was a great lesson in freedom for the nation, the turning point in the struggle for liberation.



February 1989, Vilnius. Protest rally at the Kalnų Parkas (Hill Park) against summoning of young men by the occupational army to fulfill military service

November 24, 1988

The Sąjūdis Seimas elects its Council, with Vytautas Landsbergis as chairman.

February 16, 1989

In Kaunas, the Sąjūdis Seimas passed a declaration that expressed the firm resolution of the nation to reestablish its independence in a peaceful way.

Timeline photographs from

"To Freedom," an exhibition by Vytautas Daraškevičius

Photographer's statement: "I immersed myself into Sąjūdis (the Reform Movement of Lithuania), which began in June 1988. I tried not to miss any larger event and was always actively photographing them. I was not a representative of the official media, so no accreditation was authorized for me. I was seldom present at closed events. However, I was most of all interested not in this. Back then and even today I still think that the strongest force driving this unique movement belonged not to its leaders, but rather to the Lithuanian people who so unanimously participated in it en masse. Therefore, I most often tried to capture their mood, faces radiating surprise, determination, hope, joy..."



May 14, 1989, Vilnius. Youth rally in Kalnų Parkas (Hill Park) on the occasion of the anniversary of the self-immolation of Romas Kalanta



May 1989, Vilnius. Seeing delegates off at the Kalnų Parkas (Hill Park) to the Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union

May 18, 1989

Lithuanian SSR Supreme Council passed the amendment to the Constitution: "In the Lithuanian SSR, only laws passed by its Supreme Council or by a referendum shall be valid."

May 25, 1989

The Lithuanian Delegates at the Congress in the Kremlin impacted considerably the 2,250 USSR People's Deputies: they contributed to the activation of democracy in the Soviet Union, made the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact available to the public, and demanded they be recognized as null and void. Unions of artists separated themselves from Moscow; the restoration of political parties from the period before the occupation started.

August 23, 1989

The Baltic Way.

The Baltic Way was a peaceful political demonstration during which approximately 2 million people joined hands to form a human chain spanning 675.5 kilometers across the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It marked the 50th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.



January 1990, Vilnius. National rally during the visit to Vilnius of the leader of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev

August 6, 1989

The Gotland Declaration.

Members of the Lithuanian émigré community, Sąjūdis and the Lithuanian Communist Party at a meeting in Gotland, Sweden, signed a declaration stating: "The vital objective of all Lithuanians in the world is the reestablishment of the independent Lithuanian state."

December 19, 1989

At the Congress of the Lithuanian Communist Party, Lithuanian Communists separated from the Communist Party of the USSR.

Why 11 March 1990 Is an Important Date to Me

By Tadas Alasevičius

On 11 March 1990, Lithuania restored its independence after half a decade of Soviet occupation. It marked the beginning of major changes in every Lithuanian's life, including mine. At the time I was a 6-year-old child. My mind was too young to fully comprehend the meaning of the event. But today I can truly appreciate the effect that Lithuania's independence has had on my country and my life. I would like to share some of my personal observations of why 11 March is an important date to me.

First of all, independence meant that Lithuania gained access to the rest of the free world. People got the right to freely travel, exchange information with the world, trade with the world and conduct other activities across international borders that previously had not been possible due to Soviet restrictions. It is quite funny to remember some of the first dealings with the western world. For example, when my dad brought an old Volkswagen from Germany in 1992 it was something amazing and almost unreal. The design of the car was beautiful and, unlike Soviet cars, it did not break after driving every hundred kilometers. In 2002 I received an opportunity to study at the U.S. Naval Academy for four years, which turned out to be one of the greatest experiences in

my life. If there had been no 11 March, I would not even have dreamed about such a possibility. I feel that the interaction between Lithuania and the world has been steadily growing since 1990. It has been extremely valuable in bringing new knowledge to Lithuania from around the world as well as allowing Lithuanians to take part in various international projects and contribute to a better world.

After the declaration of independence, the Lithuanians were excited about the new beginning. Communist statues and monuments were removed from the streets. New books were printed without pictures of Lenin and other Soviet symbols. However, the most difficult part was changing the way of thinking that had been impressed by the years of the occupation. I think my personal example can illustrate that quite well. For instance, before coming to the U.S. Naval Academy I had been accustomed to learning history by simply memorizing historical facts. At the academy, it was useful to know historical facts, but it was much more important to provide your own conclusions and analysis based on the facts. It took me a while to get used to it because I had to learn new forms of thinking. Another thing was refining personal beliefs about what's right and wrong. In

my opinion, my country has been going through a similar process. Free thinking and positive approach to life have been increasing in Lithuania since restoring independence. The results are visible in many aspects of Lithuanian life.

In my opinion, the restoration of independence on 11 March 1990 was much more than just placing Lithuania back on world maps. It was the beginning of transformation toward life, which allows people to freely think and choose the way they want to live. The quality of life in Lithuania has dramatically improved in both material and psychological ways. Looking at the past years I also see one truth. After losing freedom it is not only difficult to restore it, but also to recover from the oppression of the occupation. Therefore, I am thankful for life that 11 March 1990 made possible.

Tadas Alasevičius was born in Šiauliai, Lithuania. He graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 2006, and served in the Lithuanian Navy from 2006 to 2012. He currently serves in the Joint Staff of the Lithuanian Armed Forces.



February 24, 1990

First Democratic Elections to the Lithuanian SSR Supreme Council.

Lithuanian Reform Movement candidates won an overwhelming majority (107 out of 133 seats).

March 1, 1990

Deputies elected by Sąjūdis formed three commissions: for the development of a plan for the reestablishment of the independence of Lithuania, for the reorganization of the activities of the Supreme Council and for the internal affairs of the state.

March 11, 1990

The Restoration of the Independent State of Lithuania.

On March 11, 1990, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania adopted an Act on the Restoration of the Independent State of Lithuania.



Vytautas Landsbergis (center) at the building of the Supreme Council

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Banish the “Brrrr!” With Barščiai (Borscht)

By Jana Sirusaitė Motivans, Bridges food editor



Hot beet soup does a great job of warming one up on a cold day.

Lithuanians love beets, along with all the other sturdy root vegetables that can be stored to last throughout the winter. My relatives in the Lithuanian countryside carefully tend a large garden all summer long. They enjoy the fresh produce in season but, more importantly, they grow enough to fill their root cellar to last throughout the long, cold winter. They store potatoes, beets, carrots, onions and apples in large bins. Mushrooms picked from the forest are threaded onto string and hung to dry. Pickles and tomatoes are preserved in jars, as are berries and jams. The root cellar also contains a barrel or two of homemade beer. To complete the provisions, hams and homemade sausages are hung in the home's attic. After many years of wars, political uncertainty and scarcities, farm families managed to survive by storing enough food to be self-sufficient.



Above: These photos taken a while ago show the root cellar provisions of some of Jana's relatives in the Lithuanian countryside. Shelves are laden with preserves made by Teta (Aunt) Valentina. Dede (Uncle) Jonas with some barrels of homemade beer.

Things have changed rapidly in Lithuania since independence, and now there are many more grocery stores with a wide variety of food products available. Families no longer have to prepare for winter the way they did in the past, but many families in the countryside still continue to do so, both out of habit and for financial reasons.

Here is a recipe for a hearty beet soup to warm you up on a cold winter day. This recipe is made with fresh beets roasted to bring out their natural sweetness. Dried mushrooms are added for flavor. Of course, we need to add dill and sour cream, and serve some boiled potatoes along with the soup to make it a truly Lithuanian experience. As most of us do not have a root cellar, we can buy our beets, potatoes and dried mushrooms from a local farmer's market or grocery store. Enjoy the soup and stay warm!

a taste of lithuania

Barščiai

(Borscht)

INGREDIENTS

- 5 pounds fresh beets
- 1 ounce dried porcini mushrooms
- 1 cup hot water
- 10 cups chicken or vegetable soup stock
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2/3 cup coarsely chopped celery leaves
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped fresh dill

PREPARATION

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Place a large piece of aluminium foil onto a baking sheet. Place a piece of parchment paper on the foil, and then put the beets onto the parchment paper-lined foil. Wrap up tightly, using more foil if needed, to enclose the beets. Slide the baking sheet into the oven and bake until tender. This typically takes about an hour, but if the beets are large it could take up to an hour and a half.



2. While the beets are roasting, soak the dried mushrooms in the hot water. Drain through a fine-mesh sieve, reserving the soaking liquid. Coarsely chop the mushrooms.



3. When beets are done (you should be able to easily pierce them with the tip of a knife), let them cool, then peel and coarsely grate them.



4. In a large soup pot, combine stock, grated beets, mushrooms, mushroom liquid, celery leaves, parsley, garlic and sugar. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, and cook for 30 minutes.



5. In a small bowl, combine the sour cream and flour and stir until smooth. Remove a ladleful of liquid from the soup pot and whisk into the sour cream mixture, then stir this mixture back into the soup. Cook until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Stir in dill just before serving. Serve with boiled potatoes and additional dill and sour cream.

Support LISS Through the BLISS Fund

The BLISS (Biruté's Lithuanian International Student Services) Fund was established in 2010 in memory of Biruté Bublys (Biruté Baltrušaitytė Bublienė, 1950-2010). Biruté was a vibrant, inspiring leader and organizer who was felled by cancer while joyfully developing Lithuanian International Student Services, LISS, a summer internship program that she had founded and worked on until a few days before her death. Her death left her family devastated and all who knew her in shock. Donations poured in to support Biruté's beloved LISS; the moneys became known as the BLISS Fund.

Birutė Bublys was born in a displaced persons camp in Germany (her parents had fled the Soviet occupation of Lithuania) and arrived in the United States with her family in 1961. She earned a B.A. from Oakland University in Michigan and an M.B.A. from Central Michigan University, and did additional graduate work at the University of Michigan. Subsequently, she taught German and literature in high school, was a consultant to corporations and hotels, was a manager for the municipality of Detroit, and was a successful real estate agent in Bloomfield, Mich.

Birutė's special love was her Lithuanian heritage. She was fluent in Lithuanian, held leadership positions in Lithuanian-American organizations, married an architect who was a fellow Lithuanian-American and brought up two daughters with a strong sense of their Lithuanian roots.

The BLISS Fund furthers Biruté's (fondly called "Mama Bubs" by LISS interns) vision of immersing college students of Lithuanian heritage for six weeks during the summer in the language and culture of Lithuania, thus invigorating their ethnic roots while adding an international dimension to their college educa-



Birutė Bublys, LISS founder.

tion. LISS interns also receive practical work experience in their majors: interns work in Lithuania's operating rooms, childcare institutions, banks, businesses, governmental ministries, museums and other places of employment, including the media and the arts. The placements are in Vilnius, Kaunas and the port city of Klaipėda.

You are invited to support the annual immersion summer program in Lithuania, begun and nurtured with such love by Biruté Bublys. Please make out your check to Lithuanian American Community, Inc., and write BLISS FUND on the memo line. Mail donations to Juozas Kazlauskas, LAC Treasurer, 500C Falls Boulevard, #323, Quincy, MA 02169.

Submitted by Ina Stankevičienė, LISS program coordinator.

Lithuania Shines at New York Times Travel Show



More than 20,000 visitors to the *New York Times* Travel Show this year were introduced to Lithuania's tourist routes, history, cultural heritage, landscape and specialized sports and medical tourism, and even got a chance to sample šakotis and krupnikas. Visitors were also treated to performances by three folklore groups from New Jersey—children's choir "Varpelis," children's instrumental music group "Spindulėlis" and dance group "Viesulas."

The Consulate General of Lithuania coordinated the country's presence to promote Lithuania to North American tourism companies. The show took place in New York's Javits Center from January 23-25, 2015.

Photograph courtesy of the Consulate General of Lithuania in New York

Uniting New York State's Diverse Lithuanian Community

An Interview with Algirdas Grybas



Algirdas Grybas addressing the New York Lithuanian community at the Lithuanian Consulate General in New York (July 2013).

In June 2013, Algirdas Grybas became the chairman of the Lithuanian-American Community New York district (LACNY), a regional unit representing Lithuanians and their family members living in the state of New York. In this interview with *Bridges*, Algirdas talks about his background, New York Lithuanians and the role of the organization in a vibrant and diverse community.

Tell us a little about yourself.

I was born and raised in Klaipėda, Lithuania. My early days were full of extracurricular activities: I graduated from a Juozas Karosas music school (saxophone), competed in national and international debating championships, organized events and participated in student government.

At the age of 16, I learned about an International Baccalaureate class at Vilnius Lyceum (a high school in the capital)—the only program in Lithuania at the time to provide high school education in English. With an Oxford dictionary in my hands, I decided to attempt the unusual: leave my parents and hometown in hopes of pursuing studies abroad.

After high school graduation, three years of math undergraduate studies at Jacobs University Bremen (Germany) and summer internships at Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt (Germany), my quest to become a financial professional took me further west: I was admitted to the Tepper School of Business at Carnegie Mellon University (Pittsburgh, Pa.) for M.Sc. studies in computational finance.

Obtaining a degree in a quantitative finance field at the peak of the financial crisis of 2008 wasn't great timing, but my genuine interest in the field and Lithuanian perseverance helped me

build a successful career on Wall Street. I manage portfolios of complex derivative securities and build analytical portfolio management tools.

Tell us about your involvement in the New York Lithuanian community.

As soon as I moved to New York, I immediately began searching for a Lithuanian community. How could I not? My entire extended family lives in Lithuania and I had no Lithuanian friends in New York, but was determined to maintain my Lithuanian roots and identity in this vibrant, multicultural city.

After attending several events, I quickly realized the community was active and vibrant, but needed help spreading information. Therefore, I built a website, www.nylithuanian.org, which aims to be the most comprehensive source of information about Lithuanians living in the state of New York. You'll find announcements of past and future events, photo albums, articles about our community members and classifieds. The website also provides regularly updated contact information of all Lithuanian organizations active in New York.

Interested readers are also encouraged to subscribe to our weekly newsletter: with more than 1,100 subscribers, it's by far the largest Lithuanian e-newsletter service in the state. Although currently most information on the website is provided in Lithuanian, I am very excited to announce that we're working on an English version of the website, and readers of *Bridges* will be among the first to find out once it's available.

You can also follow us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube: search for "nylithuanian."



With the former Consul General and New York City Chapter during the Lithuanian Independence Day celebration (February 2014).



New York Lithuanians participated in the global Lithuanian 5K run (June 2014).

Tell us a bit about the New York community—its history and today.

New York Lithuanians have a very long and rich history; after all, the Lithuanian American Community, the largest Lithuanian immigrant organization, was founded in New York City in 1951. After six years, I am still only beginning to understand and appreciate the diversity and depth of the local heritage. During difficult periods in 20th century Europe, America and New York have always been the safe haven for intelligent, honest and hard-working people. Lithuanians thus established a community here early on; for example, New York has one of the oldest American Lithuanian sports clubs, established in 1903. The oldest building owned by American Lithuanians since 1896 can also be found right in the heart of Manhattan.

Today, New York is home to one of the most diverse Lithuanian communities in the country. With the largest, most dynamic city of New York and vast swaths of countryside, the state has attracted Lithuanians young and old, ambitious go-getters and lovers of rural lifestyle. With three Lithuanian schools, four active chapters, the Lithuanian Consulate General and a multitude of other organizations, New York is rich in Lithuanian culture. The General Assembly at the United Nations headquarters is attended by the highest Lithuanian policymakers every year. We assist Lithuanian companies looking to expand their exports to the U.S. and help American companies searching for investment opportunities in Eastern Europe. Through partnerships with Ukrainian and other Eastern European organizations, we are spreading the word about our community to the broader audience in New York.



Meeting with a visionary and advisor to Richard Branson's Mars One Program Vldas Lasas and young New York Lithuanian professionals (February 2014).

What are your challenges? How do you tackle them?

Just like any large, diverse organization, LACNY has room for improvement. Due to the dynamic, high-paced lifestyle of New York City, we have to relentlessly look for effective ways to provide information and gauge interest, especially among younger community members. My hope is that a successful website and proactive role in social networks is doing just that.

We'd like to see a wider range of events and activities, appealing to different groups within the community. We are often asked for topic-based, high-quality discussions with professionals in various fields. This requires us to build an in-depth contact database that would provide insights into areas of knowledge possessed by members of the community.

Lack of real estate ownership means we must constantly search for partnership opportunities, because venue rentals in the city are prohibitively expensive. We are very fortunate to have the Lithuanian Consulate General provide space for cultural events, meetings and discussions.

And the need for information in English has been known and discussed for a long time.

No doubt, as a voluntary non-profit organization, we constantly struggle to keep up with requests, to stay current and to facilitate our members' needs. But to me that's a good problem to have—it's proof that the New York Lithuanian community is doing well.

Is there anything else you would like our readers to know?

LACNY is a voluntary non-profit community organization and, as such, could always use a helping hand. If you're interested in joining us in any capacity whatsoever, contact us at apygarda@nylithuanian.org.

Lithuanian Scouts Hold Kaziukas Charity Fair in Hartford



Hartford Scouts' leader Linas Banevičius

Holidays are wonderful, life becomes merrier, and we long for the signs of the spring. We remember our homeland. Lithuanian scouts never forget deep-rooted national traditions. The eternal fire of Lithuanian patriotism calls us to continuously preserve our Lithuanian heritage. Saint Kazimieras (Casimir) is not only the patron saint of Lithuania, he is also the patron saint of scouts. It is traditional for scouts to celebrate St. Kazimieras's holiday because he loved "God, Homeland, and Other" very deeply, and this is the scouts' motto.

For more than 60 years, Connecticut's capital, Hartford, has been celebrating the annual Kaziukas fair. Its main organizer is senior scout Danguolė Ruseckaite-Banevičienė. Proceeds from this fair support Hartford Atlantic Region Scouts, Lithuanian "Tėvynės garsai" radio program and maintenance of Holy Trinity church in Hartford.

As always, leader and local chair Linas Banevičius started the celebration. He and Debbie Pileikienė informed everybody about the scout girls who participated in summer camp and



received scout badges. Rev. Charles Jacobs conducted the prayer. Lionė Simonaitienė, B. Zabulienė and B. Nenortienė cut the celebration opening ribbon.

Scout Aldona Saimininkienė organized the Kaziukas fair lottery. Vendors sold many of their handcrafted souvenirs, verbos, amber jewelry and artifacts among many other things.

The fair was attended by a senior 93-year-old scout Juozas Bružas from the Eastern Connecticut District. His scouting experience started with emigration to England. On February 1, 1958, the Lithuanian Youth Alliance of Great Britain was established, and Bružas was in charge of Bedford city scouts. Hartford scouts' Kaziukas fair brought back great memories and made a long-lasting impression on the respected guest.

And what would a fair be without Lithuanian meals? For a couple of days the kitchen was buzzing with busy Banevičius, Dzikas and Nenortas families. Marytė Banevičienė, Debbie Pileikienė and Ona Ambrazaitienė baked 16 pans of kugelis! Regina Zabulytė-Milttenburger, Liucija Maciūnienė, Andrius Banevičius, Paulius Nenortas, Vytenis Nenortas, Rasa Kapeckienė, Anastasia and Sophia Dzikaitė, Irene Dzikienė and other volunteers worked hard helping in the kitchen. Participants were treated to the delicious traditional dish of braised cabbage with sausage.

What a colorful festivity—baskets full of treats and crafts. Everybody is smiling on this occasion as they meet and mingle. Of course, Lent is here—we need to turn back to ourselves and ponder about life so we can later smile with the smile as light as the promise of the spring. You wake up on Monday morning after Kaziukas fair and feel happy—something nice has happened.

Submitted by Irena Nakienė-Valys, LAC Eastern Connecticut Chapter Chair

Ambassador Pavilionis Makes First Visit to Portland



During his speech, Pavilionis emphasized the growth that Lithuania had been able to achieve since independence.

Ambassador Žygmantas Pavilionis started the New Year with his first ever visit to Portland, Ore. Just about a year ago, his plans to explore this town were hampered by a snow and ice storm that unexpectedly hit the Rose City just two days prior to the scheduled trip. However, this time around, nature was gracious enough to greet the honorable guest with mild temperature and a ray of sunshine.

On January 15-16, 2015, His Excellency Žygmantas Pavilionis, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the United States of America and Mexico, was visiting Portland, Ore., where he took part in the annual Oregon World Affairs Council and Portland State University conference.

Pavilionis gave a speech on the current situation in Eastern Europe, Russia's aggression and the crisis in Ukraine. According to the ambassador, a representative from Lithuania was nominated as guest speaker due to our country's exceptional history and active involvement when forming EU Eastern policy, as well as one of the most successful transformations in the region. During his speech, Pavilionis emphasized the growth that Lithuania had been able to achieve since independence, growth that is inspiring other countries and growth that recently had been crowned by joining the Eurozone on January 1, 2015.

During the two-day conference, the ambassador met with local companies and presented investment opportunities in Lithuania. Oregon's businesses were specifically interested in high-tech, energy, transportation and agricultural



The ambassador's presentation "Russia and the Near Abroad" drew an auditorium full of Portland State University students and community members. sectors and promised to invite Lithuanian representatives to future trade fairs.

The Portland chapter of the Lithuanian American Community was glad to welcome the ambassador their city. At the reception with community members, Pavilionis discussed the introduction of euro, education, politics and other topics. He also shared the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry's plans to open Lithuanian consulate in Los Angeles in early 2016. The students of the newly established Portland Lithuanian Heritage School "Atžalynas" honored the ambassador with the Lithuanian Anthem.

The World Affairs Council of Oregon is a private, non-partisan, non-profit organization. Its purpose is to broaden public awareness and understanding of international affairs and to foster international engagement. As a member of the World Affairs Council of America, it offers more than 40 public programs per year, hosts over 500 emerging leaders and serves as the local resource to international community.

Submitted by Ingrida Misevičienė, chair, Portland LAC.



Portland Lithuanian Heritage School "Atžalynas" students honored the ambassador with the Lithuanian Anthem.

St. Andrew's Celebrates 95 Years in Philadelphia



Archbishop Chaput greets former *Bridges* editor Jeanne Shalna Dorr. St. Andrew's pastor, Rev. Peter Burkauskas, is in the background.

St. Andrew's Lithuanian Catholic Church became Philadelphia's third Lithuanian parish when it was founded in February 1924. Located at 19th and Wallace Streets in the city's Fairmount section, not far from the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the church still has a weekly Lithuanian language Sunday mass and is home to the Vinco Krevės Lithuanian Heritage School and Philadelphia's Laisvė Choir.

In 2011, St. Andrew's was merged with the city's oldest Lithuanian parish, South Philadelphia's St. Casimir. The latter remains open as a worship site.



More than 500 people attended the celebration.

Parishioners, many of whom live in the suburbs and travel up to an hour each way to attend Sunday Mass, held a gala celebration of St. Andrew's 95th anniversary last November. The day began with a mass concelebrated by Father Peter Burkauskas, pastor of St. Andrew's, and special guests Archbishop Charles Chaput of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia; Msgr. Rolandas Makrickas, first secretary of the Apostolic Nunciature in Washington, D.C., and a native Lithuanian; and Rev. John E. Puodziunas, minister provincial of the Franciscan Friars Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province in Franklin, Wisc., and former St. Andrew's parishioner. After mass, the approximately 500 participants convened in the parish hall for remarks, food, festivities and entertainment.



The celebration continued after mass in the parish hall with entertainment, remarks and traditional Lithuanian food.



From left, Msgr. Rolandas Makickas, Honorary Consult Krista Bard and Philadelphia LAC President Vytas Maciūnas. Photos: Rimas Gedeika

N.Y. Community Commemorates Defenders of Freedom



Bishop Kévalas with young parishioners and N.Y. Lithuanian community members after Mass at Annunciation Church.

The New York Lithuanian community marked Defenders of Freedom Day, honoring the January 13, 1991, events, in which 14 people who died while defending the Vilnius TV Tower against Soviet tanks, with two events.

On January 13, 2015, the Lithuanian Consulate General in New York hosted a concert with cellist Gleb Pyšniak and violinist Dalia Dėdinskaitė. Pyšniak is one of the most prominent cellists of his generation in the Baltic countries. He debuted at the age of 14 with the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra, and has held recitals in prestigious concert halls in the world. Dėdinskaitė, one of the most famous violinists of the younger generation of Lithuania, won the prestigious International Violin Competition

in Germany, "Violin in Dresden," in 2010. She has performed in many European countries, the U.S. and New Zealand.

The following Sunday, the January Events were commemorated with a Mass at the Church of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary in Brooklyn, N.Y., celebrated by Bishop Kestutis Kévalas, from Kaunas, and Father Vytautas Volertas. Before Mass, pictures of the freedom defenders were carried in while the congregation offered a prayer and the parish choir sang. Among the guests at the celebration were Lithuanian Consul General in New York Julius Pranevčius and LAC President Sigita Šimkuvienė.



From left, Lithuania's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Raimonda Murmokaitė, violinist Dalia Dėdinskaitė, cellist Gleb Pysniak and Lithuanian Consul General in New York Julius Pranevičius.

Lithuanian Hall in Baltimore Turns 100



Baltimore's Lithuanian community gathered on January 10, 2015, to celebrate the Lithuanian Hall's 100th anniversary with a 10-hour celebration that featured a banquet, numerous special guests, performances, music and dancing.

Although Baltimore-area Lithuanians had several small gathering places since the turn of the 20th century, within 10 years' time there wasn't a single venue that could hold the burgeoning community's numbers for any large event. Then, in 1914, a number of Lithuanian fraternal societies pooled their resources to establish the Lithuanian Hall Association and fund the purchase of two adjoining properties at 851 and 853 Hollins Street. Those two buildings were remodeled into a single large facility that became the Baltimore Lithuanian Hall, which was again enlarged in 1921.

Over its history, the hall has witnessed many significant events, from weddings and funerals to anti-Soviet protests and visits from the illuminati of the Lithuanian independence movement. Today, in addition to being the hub of Lithuanian life in Baltimore, the "Lith Hall" is home to popular first-Friday dance parties.

current events

In the EU and Eurozone

... A 35-country study by consulting company Grant Thornton has revealed that the Baltic States have a high share of women in company management, compared to European and world averages. Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania are in fourth, fifth and sixth places with 36, 35 and 33 percent, respectively. The EU average is 26 percent. In Lithuania, female managers who responded to the survey often were the company founders (64 percent), well above Estonia (12 percent) and Latvia (16 percent).

... According to a Eurobarometer survey, 85 percent of Internet users in the EU believe that the risk of becoming a victim of cyber crime is growing (up 9 percent from 2013), while 81 percent of Lithuanians think they might become victims of cyber crime (6 percent fewer than in 2013) and 87 percent of them avoid disclosing personal information online.

... In February 2015 report, the Council of Europe Anti-Corruption Group acknowledged the comprehensive legal and institutional framework developed by Lithuania to prevent and fight corruption among members of parliament, judges and prosecutors. However, perceived levels of corruption are still above the EU average and levels of public trust in parliament and the judiciary are particularly low. The report recommends that authorities shift focus to ensure that legal norms are understood and enforced, proactively address matters of ethics and integrity, and promote and safeguard access to information.

In the World

... Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė received Ukraine's Person of the Year Award, presented by the Ukrainian Higher Academic Council, at a March 21, 2015, ceremony in Kyiv. Grybauskaitė has been a strong supporter of Ukraine and its territorial integrity in the face of Russian aggression, calling for arming Ukraine, providing medical assistance to wounded Ukrainian soldiers and advocating for Ukraine's full integration into the EU. The event launched a week of festivities to celebrate Lithuania's support for Ukraine and the strong ties between the two nations, including a cooking show with Lithuanian and Ukrainian chefs working together to create national dishes. The project's organizers have launched a social media campaign whose name translates as "thank you Lithuania."

... During a March visit to New Zealand, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius opened a new Honorary Consulate in Auckland, with businessman Algis John Mack, who is of Lithuanian descent, as new honorary consul. Audronius Peculaitis received the Lithuanian Diplomacy Star for service in the post for the previous seven years. The countries also negotiated an agreement to allow young Lithuanian citizens between the ages of 18 and 30 to participate in a work and travel program in New Zealand. More than 250 Lithuanians currently live New Zealand.

... On February 22, 2015, President Dalia Grybauskaitė traveled to Kyiv, Ukraine, to attend, together with other European leaders, commemorative events for Maidan's anniversary and the March of Dignity in memory of Maidan victims.

... The U.S. Army announced that it would soon send armored Stryker vehicles on a 1,100-mile convoy through six European countries to show solidarity with its allies. The troops and vehicles will be moving from training exercises conducted as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve in Estonia, Lithuania and Poland. They will travel through Latvia and the Czech Republic to Vilseck, Germany, near the Czech border.

... Russia has issued a formal complaint to Lithuania, saying the Baltic country's supply of weapons to Ukraine violates the international Arms Trade Treaty as well as EU and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe agreements. Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius denied violating any agreements, saying, "We have supplied help to the Ukrainian army in small quantities and openly, and yet we are reprimanded by the country that continually supplies arms to the conflict in Ukraine, in non-symbolic quantities, and denies doing so."

... Germany plans to send 500 soldiers to Lithuania for military training this year to demonstrate its commitment to NATO. German soldiers would be deployed from April through July and separate units would also arrive in Lithuania for exercises from July through November. Although Germany also plans to contribute soldiers to the NATO Force Integration Units in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, it has refused to sell Boxer tanks to Lithuania.

... As the U.S. and several Eastern European NATO countries conduct a series of military exercises in March near Russia's border, Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered his Northern Fleet "to full alert in a snap combat readiness exercise" in the Arctic. The land, sea and air drill involved 38,000 troops, 41 ships, 15 submarines and 110 aircraft.

... A USA Today article on female world leaders published on March 9, 2015, cited Dalia Grybauskaitė as one of five "women you may not have heard of, but who are playing crucial political roles at a troubled time for Europe." In reporting Grybauskaitė's tough stance, the article said that, "When it comes to standing up to Vladimir Putin, few of Europe's male leaders can match the 'cojones' of Lithuania's president."

... Marius Janukonis, director of the Eastern Neighborhood Policy Department at the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Lithuania, has been appointed Lithuania's new ambassador to Ukraine. Janukonis will assume his new duties on March 31, 2015, succeeding retired ambassador to Ukraine Petras Vaitiekunas.

... Latvian television show "De facto" reported that Latvian gas supplier Latvijas Gaze has created new rules that limit gas supplies to Latvia and preclude consumers in Latvia from using gas from Lithuania. The company is also accused of organizing access to its pipelines and facility to give priority to the company itself and discriminating against consumers and traders outside Latvia, namely Estonia.

... On a working visit to the United States on March 7-9, 2015, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevičius met with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to discuss NATO summit decisions on collective defense, the situation in Ukraine, Lithuanian-U.S. economic cooperation, energy and information security, and prospects of Lithuanian membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. He also attended a security round table discussion, visited the local Lithuanian community and joined the celebration of the 25th anniversary of Restoration of Independence at the Baltimore Lithuanian Hall.

... Lithuanian customs workers in Siauliai discovered and detained antique coins being shipped to Russia, the U.S., Sweden, Great Britain and the Netherlands. The seven coins were found in six postal items allegedly signed under a fictitious name. It is illegal to transport cultural property from Lithuania without a permit from the Ministry of Culture.

... Thousands of Yiddish manuscripts that survived the Holocaust and Stalin's anti-Jewish campaign because a Lithuanian librarian hid them in a Catholic church basement are now being restored. They and thousands of documents that ended up in the U.S. after the Holocaust are being prepared for digitization by New York-based YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. They plan to put more than one million manuscripts online in a digital archive highlighting pre-war Jewish life in Eastern Europe.

... Boris Nemtsov, the Russian opposition politician who was assassinated in front of the Kremlin, once considered seeking political asylum in Lithuania, according to Lithuania's former Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius. Kubilius told Delfi.lt that Nemtsov had asked the politician in 2012 whether he would be eligible for asylum if he was charged over his participation in the 20102 mass anti-Kremlin riots in Moscow.

... The Visaginas Committee of the Lithuanian Red Cross, the Vitebsk Oblast Office of the Belarusian Red Cross Society and the Norwegian Red Cross have signed a tripartite agreement intended to improve emergency response practices and home care services in the three countries.

... Monika Linkytė and Vaidas Baumila will represent Lithuania in this year's Eurovision song contest in Vienna. Television viewers and professional judges chose the duet to sing "This Time."

... Retired Lithuanian champion figure skater Aidas Reklis became a U.S. citizen on February 3, 2015. Reklis, 32, won Lithuania's national championship in men's figure skating every year from 1999 to 2006. He moved to the Chicago area, where he briefly competed in ice dancing and began coaching Olympic and national-level figure skaters. He now coaches in California.

... Lithuanian model Irma Mali, who now lives in Ireland, has joined the cast of popular television drama Game of Thrones.

In Lithuania

... The Seimas (parliament) of Lithuania voted overwhelmingly in favor of restoring conscription, which had ended in 2008, in response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine. The country plans to draft 3,000 to 3,500 young men between 19 and 26 years of age for nine months of service every year beginning this summer. Lithuania has around 15,000 troops, down from the nearly 39,000 it had before joining NATO, and has no military aircraft or tanks.

... Lithuania held municipal elections in March, with 15,000 candidates running for 1,524 city and town council seats and 400 candidates for 60 mayoral positions. The elections were the first in which Lithuanians could participate in direct mayoral elections. Previously, mayors were elected by municipal councils. Election outcomes revealed that the Liberal Movement has emerged as the third-biggest political party, challenging the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats, according to political experts. Liberal Movement candidate Remigijus Simaišius unseated incumbent Mayor Arturas Zuokas in Vilnius.

... Lithuania will not hold another inquiry into alleged CIA prisons in the Baltic country after the U.S. Senate published a report on torture, according to Loreta Grauziniene, speaker of the Lithuanian parliament, citing insufficient support for it among parliament members. Lithuania was not named in the U.S. Senate report, but its description of "detention center Violet" is consistent with a 2009-2010 Lithuanian parliament investigation that found the CIA had set up and run premises that could be used as a detention center near Vilnius in 2004-2006.

... An 84-year-old former Soviet state security officer, Stanislovas Drelingas, was found guilty of genocide and sentenced to five years in jail for his role in the 1956 arrest of anti-Soviet "Forest Brothers" guerilla leader Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas. The court ruled that although his role in the crime was secondary, he had helped the Soviet administration. Vanagas was sentenced to death and shot after spending a year in a Vilnius jail. Last year, Lithuania's Constitutional Court ruled that deportations and repressions carried out by the Soviets during the guerrilla war could be classified as genocide, as the actions were aimed at annihilating a significant part of the Lithuanian nation.

current events

... Lithuania's chief rabbi has urged the Evangelical Reformed Church there to remove Jewish headstones being used as stairs to a Vilnius church so they can be preserved. The headstones were made into the Pylimo Street building's 30-foot-long staircase when Lithuania was part of the Soviet Union. After independence, the building was returned to the church, renovated and reopened in 2007, but the headstones remained intact.

... Lithuania's national broadcaster, LRT, has announced that it will launch new Russian-language programming in response to Kremlin propaganda. In addition to more Western programming for Russian-speaking audiences, the broadcaster said it plans to produce a program that would expose and explain sources of propaganda.

... Seventy-nine percent of people in Lithuania say they oppose legislation instituting same-sex partnership, according to a recent survey by RAIT, but the number of those in support has doubled over the last year to 15 percent. In 2014, only 7 percent of people in Lithuania said they supported legalizing same-sex partnerships. The survey also found 82 percent opposed to same-sex marriage.

... On February 16, coinciding with Lithuania's 1918 independence day, about 500 Lithuanians, some sporting Nazi swastikas, attended a far right march in Kaunas. The city was the scene of the Baltics' worst World War II-era Jewish pogroms, where nearly 10,000 people were killed in one day in 1941. The march was the eighth such event organized by the Lithuanian Nationalist Youth Union. Anti-fascist groups followed the march in a silent counter-demonstration.

... A 21-year-old Lithuanian man became the first person with a birth defect to undergo bionic reconstruction. Martynas Girulis, who was born with arthrogyrosis, a neuromuscular disease that left him unable to use his arms, received a bionic arm that he controls with his brain after undergoing surgery in Austria in late 2014. Before surgery, both of his arms were inert and he needed help getting through the day. Now, he can use his hands to lift, hold and move things. The Lithuanian government covered 80 percent of the cost of the EUR 92,000 bionic arm.

... Statistics Lithuania reported that 36,600 residents emigrated from and 24,300 persons immigrated to Lithuania in 2014. Compared to 2013, the number of emigrants decreased by 2,200 (5.7 percent) and immigrants increased by 2,300 (3.7 percent).

Business

... Facebook paid \$1.3 million to 321 hackers worldwide last year who helped spot security flaws in the social network's software. The largest award in 2014 was \$30,000, which was paid to someone in Lithuania. The minimum award in the "bug bounty" program is \$500. The average reward in 2014 was \$1,788.

... Lithuania recently signed a preliminary agreement with Louisiana-based Delfin LNG to supply liquefied natural gas (LNG), following a separate deal last year with Texas-based Cheniere Energy.

... Cushman & Wakefield's global report, "Where in the World? Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) & Shared Service Location Index," for the first time includes Lithuania as a top outsourcing location, ranking it 11th. Vietnam ranked first.

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March 2015

Please verify all events, as places and times are subject to change.

MAY 2015

Through May 24
"Storylines" Exhibit by Ray Bartkus
 Leonard Pearlstein Gallery,
 Drexel University, 3401 Filbert
 Street, Philadelphia, Pa.
 Gallery open Tuesday through
 Sunday, 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
 Info: facebook.com/
 leonardpearlsteingallery

May 1-15
**Lithuanian American
 Community National Congress
 Elections**
 Info: agrybas@nylithuanian.org

May 9, 6 p.m.
**Grandis Annual Folk Dance
 Concert**
 Lithuanian World Center, 14911
 127th Street, Lemont, Ill.
 Info: grandis.vadovai@gmail.com,
 630-254-4953

May 9-10, 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
**43rd Annual Baltimore Lithu-
 anian Festival**
 Catonsville Armory, 130 Mellor
 Avenue, Catonsville, Md.

May 12, 6:15 p.m.
**Between Shades of Gray: Read-
 ing by Rūta Šepetytė and U.S.
 Premiere of Piano Composi-
 tions by Gavin Mikhail**
 Nashville Public Library, 615
 Church St., Nashville, Tenn.
 Info: nashvillepubliclibrary.org/
 nashvillereads

May 15, 6:30 p.m.
Judita Leitaite Concert
 1014 North Shore Rd., Lake
 Oswego, Ore.
 Info: portlandlithuanians.com/
 events

May 22-25
Song Festival Youth Seminar
 Camp Dainava, Manchester, Mich.
 Info: liudaslands@gmail.com

May 29-31
**Joninės Traditional Longest Day
 of Summer Celebration**
 Acorns Resort, Milford Lake, Kans.
 Join for the whole weekend, or
 come for a day.
 Info: renata.bakelyte@gmail.com

JUNE 2015

June 5-7
2015 Sporto Svente
 Cleveland, Ohio
 Pre-registration deadline April 3.
 Basketball: ptitas@hotmail.com,
 Volleyball: rytasroo@gmail.com,
 Table tennis: ecapas@hotmail.
 com, Chess: TBA

June 6-7
Talka Work Weekend
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Help get camp ready for summer.
 Info: regina@neringa.org, 978-
 582-5592

June 8 - July 17
Lithuanian Language Course
 University of Pittsburgh
 Info: sli.pitt.edu

June 20-27
Detroit Lithuanian Scouts Camp
 Camp Dainava, Manchester, Mich.
 Info: dainava.org

June 27 - July 1
**Heritage Family Camp - English
 (younger children)**
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Info: neringa.org

JULY 2015

July 1-5
**Heritage Family Camp - English
 (older children)**
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Info: neringa.org

July 3-5
**X North American Lithuanian
 Song Festival**
 University of Illinois at Chicago
 Pavilion, 525 S. Racine St.,
 Chicago
 Info: dainusvente.org/en

July 5-11
**Family Camp for Lithuanian
 Speakers**
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Info: neringa.org

July 6-18
Moksleivų Ateitininkų Stovykla
 Camp Dainava, Manchester,
 Mich.
 Info: mesmas.org

July 12-26
**Children's Camp for Lithuanian
 Speakers ages 7-16**
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Info: neringa.org

July 18-26
Jaunujų Ateitininkų Stovykla
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Info: ritarack@gmail.com

July 26
**Lithuanian Friendship Day
 "Putnam Picnic"**
 600 Liberty Hwy., Putnam, Conn.
 Info: neringa.org

July 26-August 1
**"Third Week" Youth Camp for
 Lithuanian Speakers ages 12-16**
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Info: neringa.org

AUGUST 2015

August 2-9
Lithuanian Heritage Camp
 Camp Dainava, Manchester,
 Mich.
 Info: rimapolikaitis@aol.com,
 dainava.org

August 2-15
**Heritage Children's Camp in
 English ages 7-16**
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Info: neringa.org

August 7-9
**Knights of Lithuania 102nd
 National Convention**
 Hilton Orlando Lake Buena
 Vista, Walt Disney World Resort,
 Orlando, Fla.
 Info: knightsoflithuania.
 com/102nd-national-convention

August 9-16
**LTSI Dance Course for 15th
 North American Lithuanian
 Dance Festival**
 Camp Dainava, Manchester,
 Mich.
 Info: lttsi.org, netz@g2a.net,
 608-356-6549

August 15-22
**"Third Week" Youth Camp in
 English ages 12-16**
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Info: portlandlithuanians.com

August 16-21
Lankas Lithuanian Camp
 West Coast Latvian Education
 Center, Shelton, Wash.
 Info: lankostovykla.com

August 22-30
**Meno8Dienos Adult Art Camp in
 Lithuanian**
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Info: neringa.org

August 28
**Portland Lithuanian Community
 "Hood to Coast" Run**
 Timberline Lodge to Seaside, Ore.
 Info: portlandlithuanians.com/
 events

SEPTEMBER 2015

September 12, 12-5 p.m.
**Portland Lithuanian Community
 Picnic**
 Rooster Rock State Park (shelter A),
 Exit 25, highway 84, Corbett, Ore.
 Info: portlandlithuanians.com/
 events

OCTOBER 2015

October 9-11
Iškyla/Walk-a-Thon
 Camp Neringa, Brattleboro, Vt.
 Info: neringa.org

JULY 2016

July 3
**15th North American Lithuanian
 Dance Festival**
 Royal Farms Arena, Baltimore
 Info: sokiusvente2016.org

GOT EVENTS?

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 bridges.terese@gmail.com two
 months in advance of the publica-
 tion date of the magazine.

Erratum

In the January/February 2015 issue
 "Readers Respond" section, the
 dates that Carl Barzilauskas played
 for the New York Jets should have
 read 1974-1977.

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ISSUE 2

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