

bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

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NEWS JOURNAL

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Front Cover: Suktinis folk dance group dancers pose for the group's 16th birthday anniversary

According to the dance group leader Giedrė Elekšytė Knieža, after a year of pandemic and not being able to rehearse and have concerts, group members wanted to do something extraordinary for the anniversary. Suktinis was founded on February 26th, in between the two dates of Lithuania's independence days. Therefore, it was not hard to come up with the idea of this patriot photo session. Group members love Lithuania, its history, and traditions, and they devote a large number of hours to foster Lithuanian culture through dance. Photo by Giedrė Gomes

Back Cover: Lithuanians of the Los Angeles area celebrated Lithuania's Independence Restoration Day on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. It was quite a spectacle to see the ocean water sparkle in the colors of our national flag. Photo by Tomas Tumulovičius.

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from the editor



Dear readers,

The first month of spring is here. We are slowly freeing ourselves from the restraints of winter and, most importantly, from the restraints of the Covid-19 pandemic. It has been a long and difficult year. March 11th, the Day of the Restoration of Lithuania's Independence, last year was also the day of the beginning of the pandemic in the US. What a sad coincidence. However, I am sure we will endure. Lithuanians are a tough and sturdy bunch. I want to believe that we are an optimistic nation that withstood all kinds of calamities throughout centuries. The Lithuanian American Community is also strong. This year, the organization is celebrating its 70th anniversary. A special banner was designed and currently, it is traveling from one LAC chapter to another to be signed thus, symbolically, connecting and unifying us all. I hope that this beautiful initiative will inspire us to not only work and celebrate but also record our deeds and celebrations and share them with one another. In this issue of Bridges, you will read about a beautiful art exhibit in which the Lithuanian American Community New York Chapter members participated. You will also read about or see photos of the commemoration of Lithuanian Independence in various US cities. Hopefully, this year many more stories from the LAC chapters will be shared in Bridges.

Springs always brings Easter and rebirth. Happy Easter! May it bring you blessings of love, joy, peace, and hope. Celebrate our traditions. Create many more wonderful memories!

Sincerely,

Karilė Vaitkutė
Editor



VIENYBĖJE MŪSŲ STIPRYBĖ

Sveikindamas Lietuvos Valstybės atkūrimo šventės proga linkiu, kad šią reikšmingą datą paminėtumėme pakiliai ir prasmingai.

Šiais metais švenčiame mūsų organizacijos 70-metį, tai puiki proga prisiminti kartu su Lietuva nueitą nelengvą, bet prasmingą kelią link laisvės ir demokratijos stiprinimo.

Šia proga linkiu bendrystės - palaikančios, telkiančios, įpareigojančios.

Prisiminkime - mus jungia bendros vertybės ir tradicijos, jų dėka mūsų tauta išliko, kasdien stiprėjo, tai brangindami ir puoselėdami ištengsime ir toliau judėti į priekį.

Tegul mūsų visų darbų ir idėjų pamatu išlieka meilė bei pagarba Tėvynei.

JAV LB Krašto Valdybos pirmininkas
Arvydas Urbonavičius

I congratulate all American Lithuanians on the occasion of the Day of the Restoration of Lithuanian State. Let us commemorate this significant date in a meaningful way. This year, we are celebrating the 70th anniversary of our organization, the Lithuanian American Community. It is a great opportunity to remember that together with Lithuania we are travelling on the same road towards freedom and democracy. It is not an easy road but it is meaningful. On this occasion, let us remain united. Our unity supports us, binds us, and mobilizes us. Let us remember that we are united by common values and traditions. Because of them, our nation has survived and is becoming stronger with each day. By cherishing and nurturing our values, we will be moving forward. Let the foundation of our daily work be our great love and respect for Lithuania, our Motherland.

Arvydas Urbonavičius
Lithuanian American Community President



Nepriklausomybė buvo mūsų siekis,
 kuris suvienijo ir uždegė širdis.
 Kokia stipri ir vieninga gali būti
 už savo orumą kovojanti tauta!
 Linkiu, kad visada kilnūs darbai
 ir ateities gerovės siekiai
 vestų Jus Kovo 11-osios keliu.

Sveikinu Lietuvos Nepriklausomybės
 atkūrimo dienos proga



Dalia Asanavičiūtė
 Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo narė
 LRS ir PLB komisijos pirmininkė

Independence was the aspiration that united us and ignited our hearts. How strong and united can a nation be when it fights for its dignity! Let noble works and aspirations for future prosperity always lead you on the path of March 11th. Happy Lithuania's Independence Restoration Day!

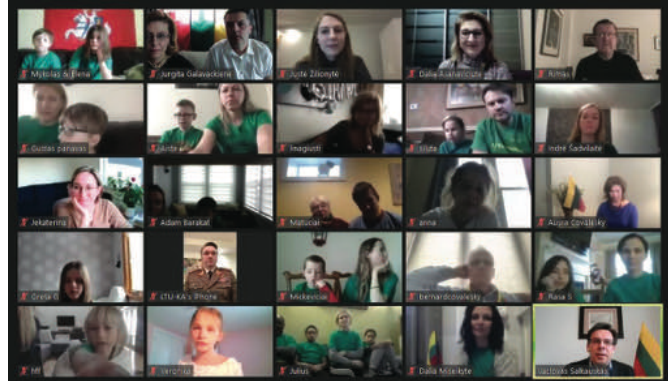
Dalia Asanavičiūtė
 Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania,
 Chair of the Lithuanian Parliament and the Lithuanian
 World Community Commission



Lithuanians in Omaha, Nebraska celebrate Lithuanian independence and the 70th anniversary of the Lithuanian American Community



Lithuanians in Los Angeles celebrate Lithuanian independence



Lithuanians in New Jersey celebrate Lithuanian independence via Zoom



Kristijonas Donelaitis Lithuanian School in Washington, DC celebrate Lithuanian independence

A Room of Your Own

By Julia Rothenberg,

Ph.D. Associate Professor of Sociology, Queensborough Community College, CUNY



A painting by Peter Pacheco

"In the midst of a pandemic, we came to realize how much we miss things that comfort us – the desire to touch another human being, to share our home with friends, and to live in a happier world. In times of despair, we have been saved by Humanity's most faithful allies: Goodness, Empathy, and Love - once more, we must call them to stand by our side. Once again, during the time of cascading uncertainties, we cling to what is precious and moves us so deeply – the infinite creativity, beauty, and the wisdom of the human spirit."

--Francine Rogers

This red-brick townhouse on West 30th street, a block from Penn Station and the wasted luxury mega project Hudson Yards and several more from NYC's commercial gallery hub, has been owned by the Lithuanian Cultural Alliance for over 100 years, explained Francine Rogers, the curator of the exhibition "A Room Your Own" on view until November 25 in the building's parlor exhibition space. One example of the sorts of ethnic cultural societies that have been so important to both assimilation and to the retention of ethnic identity, this exhibition of seven New York-based artists, all of whom are immigrants to the United States, speaks to the shifting realities of the immigrant experience in global cities. Ethnic associations, many of them formed during the waves of immigration from the late 19th to the early decades of the 20th century, acted as havens to combat isolation and provide networks and gathering places for European, working-class immigrants arriving on US shores. While, at least prior to the pandemic and the Trump administration's increasingly nativist anti-immigration policies, such associations were less relevant to a younger generation of immigrants, many of whom were well-educated artists and intellectuals like Rogers herself. Rogers and many of the Lithuanians she met in New York City came to the US in the 1990s in search not of the conventional American dream, but rather of the kind of diverse and energetic art community found in a global center like New York.

These immigrants faced a different kind of isolation – one wrought first by the increasing hyper gentrification and art market bubble created by recent decades of unprecedented wealth accumulation of the global elite. This accumulation has driven these superrich to park their excess capital in property investment, aided by the generous policies of an urban political class, and in the arts both through an increasing turn to "creative city" growth strategies and a bubble of art market speculation. This combination of astronomical levels of wealth accumulation and neoliberal urban governance coalitions has interrupted the delicate connections between artists by pricing out artists who in the past clustered close to the city's resources, forcing them to find places to live and work far and wide and smaller independent galleries and non-profits willing to show lesser-known artists.

More recently, the global pandemic and its economic impact, especially in New York, a city that relies so heavily on density and face to face networks for its economic and social advantages has further undermined NYC fragile artists' communities, composed in part of global nomads, artists from all over the world who have sacrificed the safety of family support and cultural familiarity to find their artistic voices and a different kind of community in a new and challenging environment. It is this alienation



Art by Aura Naujokaitis



ists who are remarkably diverse in terms of their national origins, their career trajectories and the materials they employ. As Rogers, whose background in theatre and set design has served her well in her choice and juxtaposition of artworks in this parlor space, explains about the title “this is a play on a room of one’s own, artists need that, but they also need to let others in.”

On entering the gallery, the viewer is first drawn to the 6 square paintings by the Danish artist Peter Pacheco, (who, as a nurse, has spent much of the past nine months attending to NYC pandemic victims) placed in serial order. Pacheco’s painterly, color-saturated paintings, independently conceived but nonetheless cohesive as a graphic quasi-narrative montage read as an assortment of vignettes, which include a wall of luscious red rosebuds pierced by one jaded looking eye, followed (left to right) by a series of disembodied feet (and one hand), sometimes standing on what appears to be a chewing gum patterned subway platform, then hanging in front of a brick wall suggestive of a prison cell, floating in a grey, airy space, standing in the snow with a subway car and night sky in the background and, in one case, engaged in a sort of multi-racial foot orgy. Pacheco’s influences, which include the Danish Cobra movement, the German Expressionist Max Beckman, Phillip Guston, and the stylized figuration of 17th-century mannerism lend a high pitched, dramatic note to the images which themselves reflect on the impossible binaries of isolation and entanglement, fecundity and expiration, and knowledge and blindness.



Graphic art by Sigita Ručinskaitė Pranevičienė

Two of the artists in the show are from Lithuania, including Aura Naujokaitis, who is the only artist whose work draws directly from an ethnic craft tradition and her grandmother, who was an avid embroiderer and an influence in her artistic development. Naujokaitis has contributed a series of delicate needlepoint representing plants, snakes, patterned abstraction, and an homage to embroidery art, traditionally associated with women artists.

The other Lithuanian artist in the show, Sigita Rucinskaitė-Pranevičienė, had an early education in visual arts at Children’s school of Arts in Vilnius but was later pressured by her family to become a pharmacist to ensure a more conventional livelihood, a profession that she practiced along with her work illustrating children’s books. After relocating to New York City with her family, she reclaimed her artistic potential with her study of design at FIT and printmaking at the School of Visual Arts with Elaine Breiger and Alphonse van Woerkom. Her sensitive dry-point portrait etchings reveal a rhythmic flow and subtle breadth of graphic dexterity and range of tone, line, and texture.

Next to Pacheco’s painting we find another patch of

- imposed by market forces that have turned cities like New York which once fostered ragtag artists into luxury playgrounds for the global elite and exacerbated by the grinding isolation imposed by the pandemic, that Rogers seeks to puncture with her exhibition of a group of art-

color from the delicate tabletop sculptures by the Jamaican-born artist and writer Shantel Rose Miller. Miller's welded architectural abstractions highlight the simple beauty of the steel and a keen designer's eye (Miller has a background in merchandize design). While Miller is still in the early stages of her career as an artist, her professional experience in the design world has helped her to develop a strong personal and professional artistic direction and narrative that will serve her well as she perfects her technical skills and aesthetic vision which is at present firmly rooted in the minimalist abstraction of sculptors like Anthony Caro and Tony Smith.



Sculptures by Shantel Rose Miller

The Brooklyn-based Italian artist Bruna D'Alessandro displays her sensual and dreamlike inner dialogue and her mastery of a variety of very different mediums through a series of ink and wet-on-wet watercolor drawings on paper as well as a welded sculpture in the shape of a daisy sprouting from a pile of earth.

The dirt on the floor nods to Walter De Maria's *The New York Earth Room*, 1977, and the contrast between the harsh gleaming steel out of which the daisy is formed and the flower shape itself creates a striking and somewhat ominous presence in the gallery while the dreamlike figures in the watercolors, depicted in the most vulnerable positions of human experience, bring to mind the work of the Haitian surrealist Hector Hyppolite.

The back of the gallery is devoted to the work of two accomplished multimedia artists, both of whom, among other things, are highly skilled welders. Korea-born artist Haksul Lee has been teaching metal sculpture at the Art Students League in New York since 2010. Unlike most of the other artists represented in this exhibit who came to New York as part of a break with family and tradition, Lee has been a precocious artist since early childhood and has pursued his calling with the blessing of his family. Lee's influences are eclectic and include Lee Bontecue, Clifford Still, Georgia O'Keeffe, Louise Bourgeois, Buckminster Fuller, and Francis Bacon. At once facile and deeply contemplative, Lee's sensibility is both playful and highly formal. His work delights in ambiguity and juxtaposition of forms and materials and the dialectic between abstraction and representation, inside and outside, painting and sculpture.

During the early days of lockdown, Lee was unable to access his New Jersey studio, where in addition to creating his own work he earned a living fabricating sculpture for



A sculpture by Bruna D'Alessandro

other artists (including Louise Bourgeois). This left him dire financial straits, and even when he was able to return to work, his lengthy commute on public transportation from his home in Queens to New Jersey was fraught with



A watercolor painting by Walter De Maria



A painting by Haksul Lee

risk and animated by the uncanny experiences of near-empty train platforms and occasional scenes of violence and desperation playing out in the eerily abandoned underground spaces. When I asked Lee if the strange visual and psychological landscape of a locked-down New York impacted his work, he replied that it hadn't much, because "my core doesn't change because of this...my work mostly reflects my core...I've gone through a lot of difficulty already".

As we contemplated one of Lee's pieces from 2011, an H 60" W 60" D 26 canvass painted in various shades and textures of black paint and soot, with a cut-out navel or key-like hole in the middle out of which peeped an aluminum sphere, Lee explained that despite the fact that the piece was untitled: "...I'm giving it some kind of persona. [My pieces are] objects, but they have some kind of persona and then they have some kind of story. Sometimes the stories are literal story and sometimes they are abstract. I cannot even put it into words, but some kind of persona I have in my mind or some kind of sensation. For this particular one, I made the inside piece first.... and then I was thinking this needs a home".

In a more recent mixed media piece, *Conceptus Et*, H 36" W 36" D 5," Lee employs delicate crosshatched pencil drawing and acrylic painting on formed steel and bronze to create a

dialogue between flat and curved, hard and soft, circle and square and inside and outside. Despite the geometric, mathematical sensibility of this piece, Lee explained to me that it was inspired by the human embryo with its splitting cells and stages of development when quantity folds into quality.

Installed next to Lee's work are selections of pieces by the Japanese-born multimedia artist Natsuki Takauji. Like Lee, Takauji, who came from a family of writers and studied creative writing at Waseda University in Tokyo before diving full-force into sculpture, has mastered a wide range of materials ranging from metal, fiber, wood, kinetic materials, water, paper, fabric, and even motor oil. She also has developed an equally wide-ranging visual vocabulary, which finds its deepest expression in site-specific, interactive sculpture. In addition to a range of smaller, formal, almost cubist-like wall pieces from an earlier period, she has contributed a lyrical tabletop sculpture made of colored string, wax delicately formed steel to the exhibit.

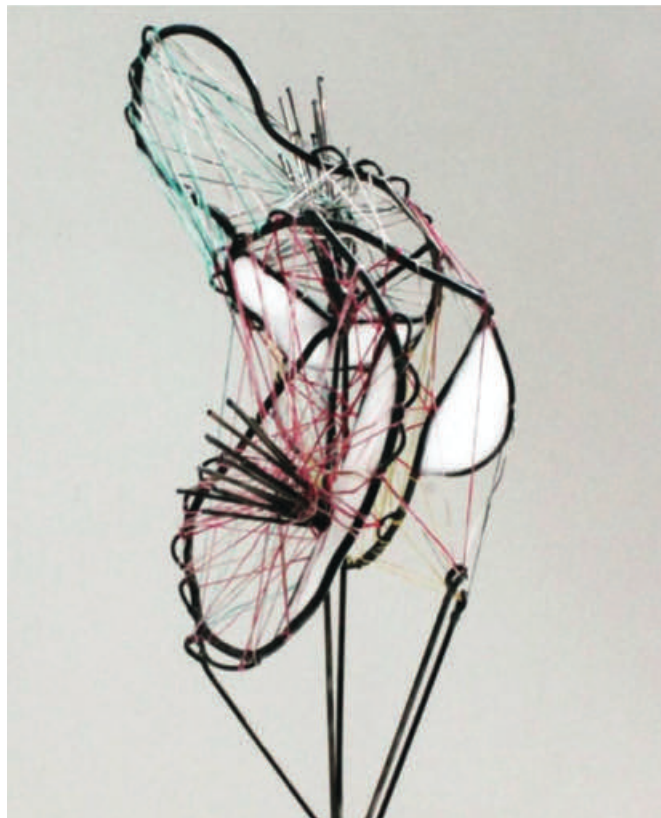
One of Takauji's interactive pieces is also on view. This piece, called "Confession," crafted from stainless steel and wood (H62" W29" L72" 2020) is in the form of an oversized, undulating chaise longue made from wood slats fixed to a steel frame. As the viewer takes a seat in this structure she looks into a small mirror placed on the inside of what becomes a curving stalk finishing the top of the chair's frame in the shape of a periscope or perhaps

a speculum. The title makes a reference to the Catholicism which Takauji was unwillingly exposed to through her early schooling in Japan, which, together with Japan's highly patriarchal culture, led her at an early age to question conventional social patterns and belief systems. As she explains: "I had to ride an overly crowded subway with the omnipresent threat of sexual assault or neglected by others, which was a given in the Tokyo system. Even if I made it through the day without attracting trouble from these men, I still had to deal with the gender inequality that being a woman in Japan forced on me in every public interaction. All of this led me to doubt and question the professed spirituality, ethics, perception and belief system in all societies." With "Confession" Takauji insists that we are ultimately beholden only to our own moral authority and sense of self, and that is a lonely place to be.

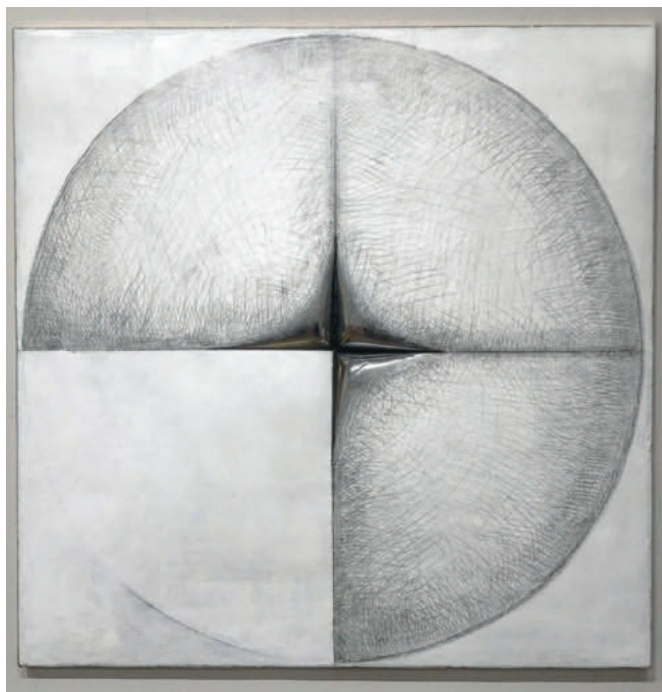
While this piece is the only interactive piece in this exhibition, Takauji explained to me that she is most excited by creating public, interactive sculptures, which she has had the opportunity to explore through several commissioned projects in public space, including "Window" – Riverside Park South, Manhattan / May 2014 - May 2015 and Window "Window II" - Rye Town Park, Rye, New York / June 2019 - September 2020.

Roger's ambitious use of the parlor space of the SLA building to give voice and community to artists who are still seeking the alternative American Dream in what is perhaps the world's most diverse city is off to a promising start. Shows like this remind us that while investors and developers, deploying their influence with city and

state government have done their best to remake New York City as a luxury paradise and speculator's wet dream, it is not too late to nurture and support the creative vitality and vision that have made this city a destination for artists.



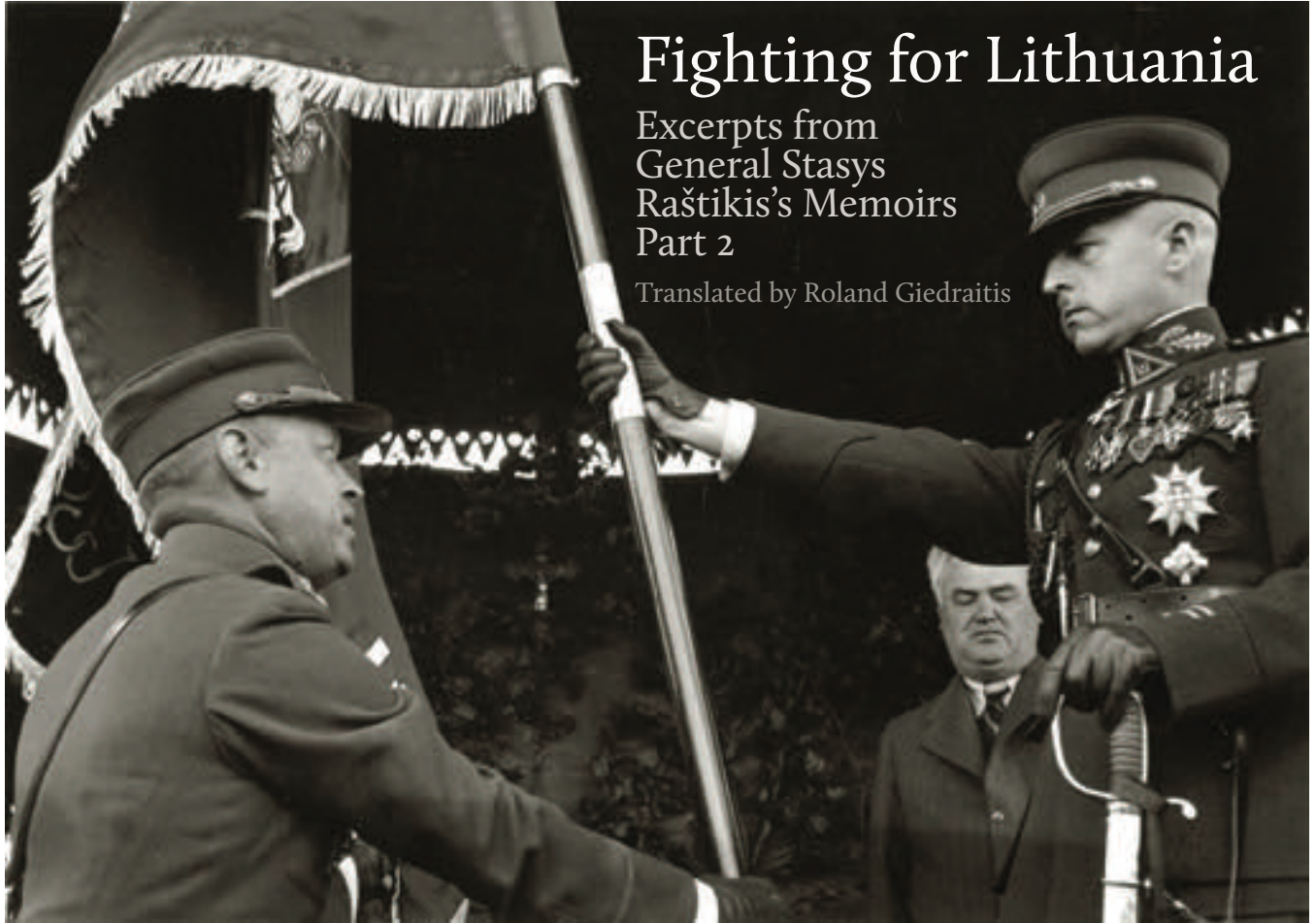
A sculpture by Natsuki Takauji



A painting by Haksul Lee



A sculpture by Natsuki Takauji



Fighting for Lithuania

Excerpts from
General Stasys
Raštikis's Memoirs
Part 2

Translated by Roland Giedraitis

General Stasys Raštikis standing with the Lithuanian Armed Forces flag during a ceremony in 1939

This is a second small fragment of his 2000 page 3 volume memoir to give you an idea of what kind of a warrior he was. At this point, he is a junior officer in the Lithuanian army in combat for Lithuanian independence from the Bolsheviks in 1919. But his foray into enemy territory ends up with an unpleasant surprise! This is an informal translation.

The struggle for Lithuanian independence is one of the most beautiful and honorable pages in the history of Lithuania. It was a big, united, and enthusiastic march of the whole nation to rebuild the lost Lithuanian state, to regain the trampled right of freedom for the nation. We, volunteer soldiers, fighting in this struggle with a rifle in our hands, went to the battlefields, fought, shed our blood, suffered pain from wounds, and languished in Bolshevik and Polish captivity. Some of us lost our health in battles and became disabled veterans, while others, about 1,500, sacrificed their lives and were buried in the battlefields. The volunteers fought not for a career, medals, personal interests, or a salary which we in 1919 did not receive for months. We fought for Lithuania and for the freedom of our nation although, unfortunately, there is still one or another compatriot who cannot or does not want to understand this.

During the night of August 27, 1919, our company received an order: the next day to take the Michailiškių village in the narrows between the lakes. It was known that there were Bolsheviks, units of the Pskov regiment. Officer Gabrėnas devised the following plan of attack: myself with the majority of the soldiers to go straight through the narrows between the lakes and start the fight; at the same time the commander of the company with the two other officers, Vištakis and Juodis, with the remaining men and the machine guns, would bypass the lake from the left and attack the foe from an unexpected direction - from the flank.

The morning of August 28 was beautiful and cool. We marched out with our brave volunteers to accomplish our assigned task. We passed the narrowest part between the lakes uneventfully. But the area ahead was confusing. Our goal - the Michailiškių Village, which was ravaged during

the battles of the First World War, was further northeast on a hill. There were several elevated mounds between us and the village. The whole area was lined with old dilapidated trenches and barbed wire fences. The trenches and the barbed wire were overgrown with grass. Elsewhere new shrubs were sprouting. Trees were almost non-existent - they were cut down by artillery shells. During the war, there was here a Russian-German front for a long time and there were fierce battles. Somewhere far away from us in the southeast, there were battles going on right now - a lot of shooting could be heard. Here, it was quiet. Only birds sang in the bushes enjoying the sun and the beautiful summer morning and not realizing at all that a bloody struggle of people is going on here - to fight or to perish.

Until now, we have been advancing in strict marching order with full security. The time came to reorient ourselves. I left the troops in a safe place where the enemy could not see them or reach them with their bullets. Myself and both of my sergeants, Martišius and Narbutas (brave men, both of whom were later awarded the Knight's Cross), went ahead to survey the area through which we would need to attack. The area was confusing. A unique obstacle was the barbed wire hidden in the high grass. No convenient or safe access to the foe was observed. Only reconnaissance could provide answers. Also we could not see or hear our opponents. I was the only one with binoculars. As I scanned the area, I observed two covered heads that quickly hid in the grass. I decided that it would be dangerous for all of us to approach the area. But we needed to establish the location of the enemy. Thus, reconnaissance was most important. After all, the lives of many of my men depended on it. So I decided to go ahead myself with a few bolder men. I left sergeant Martišius in charge of the remaining troops as my deputy. I told him what he should do if I would not return from my mission or if my message could not reach him. "Men, who wants to go with me to check out the area?" "I will! And I! Me too!" Everyone wanted to go. I selected the five bravest men and off we went. It was difficult to crawl forward. The invisible barbed wire in the grass tore our uniforms, our legs, and our hands. We did not have cutters for the wires. It was necessary to jump over ditches, climb over barbed wire fences, and be vigilant for the enemy. There really were quite a bit of barbed wire obstacles. Finally we were at the end of the trenches. We came out to an open field, but still with overgrown grass. But we could see more obstacles ahead. At last, we found some clearings where our men could penetrate. But the enemy was nowhere in sight. We just had to check one more area ahead and our reconnaissance would end. "But where is the enemy?" And as I asked, they answered: bullets were pouring out on to us from the mound. I saw a couple of

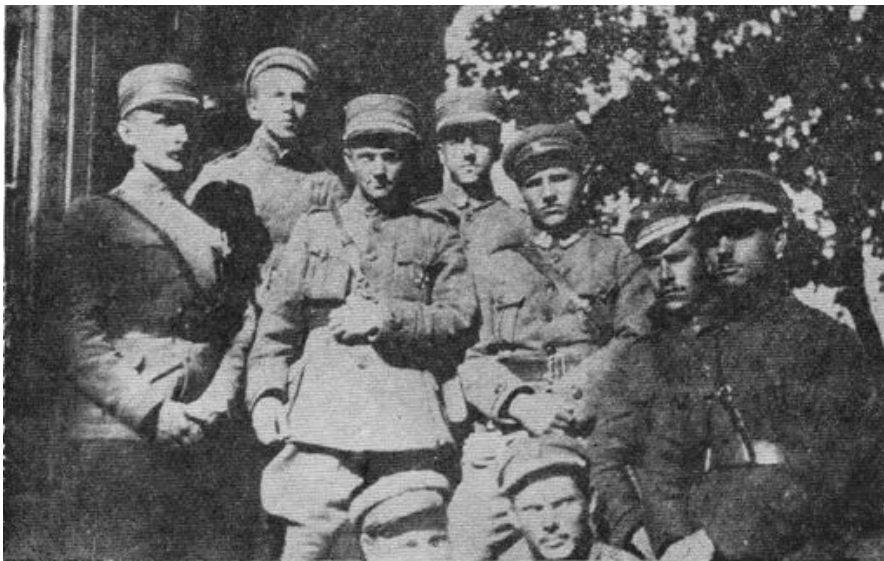


The future general as a lieutenant in the new Lithuanian army, c. 1920

dozen heads through my binoculars. There was no doubt they were the Bolsheviks and there were quite a few. We answered them with a volley of our own. Now our reconnaissance was truly at an end - the Bolshevik positions were established. We had to hurry back. But to return on the same route while under fire from the enemy was dangerous. I ordered my men to crawl to the left, to reach the edge of the lake, and, making use of natural camouflage, to return to our own area. My men crawled first, I was the last. Suddenly, while I crawled, something hit me very hard, and the rifle fell from my right hand. The Bolshevik bullet shot through my shoulder. My hand went numb. Blood began seeping through my uniform. When I moved I felt pain. I felt weak. I still managed to turn closer to one of my men and said to him: "Crawl faster, and tell them everything, Martišius!" I was so weakened I could not crawl myself. I decided to take a break. With the healthy hand, I took the binoculars to look at the enemy side from where they were shooting at us, but I could not see them. My watch said it is 10 am...I got weaker. Suddenly a new, even stronger blow hit me. My hat fell off. I woke up. I wanted to get up, but I fell...the shots persisted. A heat-wave flooded my right leg. The bolshevik second bullet



Officer Raštikis's Lithuanian army troops. The first officer sitting in the front is Stasys Raštikis in 1919.



Stasys Raštikis among Lithuanian soldiers

shot through it, smashing bone. My boot was shattered terribly and there was a lot of blood. Now my leg started to hurt. I could not move anymore. The hot summer sun was relentless. I was weak, I was very thirsty. I heard shots from the enemy, which was close, and the shots from my men were far off. What later happened, I don't remember... While I regained consciousness. I heard loud shooting on both sides of the front. Bullets were everywhere. My soldiers were gone. I was tortured by the pain of my wounds and thirst, but my mind was sharp. I soon realized that I was completely helpless lying in the fire zone between the Bolsheviks and Lithuanians. I knew I had to move to a safe, lower area, but I could not move. The shooting from our side gave me hope. Martišius will arrive with my brave men and I will be saved! I was very anxious that my own would come. The sun, my wounds,

and thirst tortured me. God, why don't they come?! Darkness filled my eyes and all disappeared...Then, I heard shooting again. I was very afraid. Any one of the whizzing bullets could kill me, but I wanted so much to live! I remembered my parents, brothers, friends, and our dear Dūkštas village where I spent my youth. They all now seemed very dear and precious, and the world so pretty, so beautiful. Could this be the moment that I have to say goodbye? No! To live, to live! I was still hoping that my squad would come and rescue me. They must come. They must! After all, we were the attackers and the Bolsheviks were on the defensive and withdrawing. And now I was waiting for our own; they would give me water to drink and salve my lips, dress my wounds and rescue me from the unknown. I started to pray. It was the most sincere prayer of a wounded soldier. The sun was still scorching me. But I prayed! This was not from my lips but from the depths of my feelings. And this calmed me. A prayer from a weakened body seemed to distance me from this most dangerous station. And the noise of the battle seemed not so terrible and the sun seemed to have some mercy on me and my wounds seemed less painful. I felt weak but blissful at the same time...if death is like this then, I would say, that it is not so scary, but

pleasing, even happy. Not without reason, the ancient Romans would say that it is sweet to die for your homeland. And thus, accompanied by the music of machine guns and rifle shots, I weakened, and I fell asleep...or fainted. How long I was unconscious I do not know... Then I felt some strong hands grabbed me by my shoulders. I opened my eyes. It was dark. Maybe my eyes were weakened since I did not see anything, but I heard Russian swearing and angry foreign words: "He's still alive! Quick, remove his boots!" One was holding me by the shoulders while another began removing my boots. While he was pulling the boots from the left leg, I felt pain from the strong hands holding my wounded shoulder. But when they started pulling the boot from the right leg, I felt that they would remove my entire wounded leg. The pain was indescribable. The pain jarred the rest of me and



Stasys Raštikis probably lay wounded in one of these hospitals.

I started whimpering. Now I realized that I was abandoned by my men and now, in the darkness of night, I was in the hands of the Bolsheviks. The situation was tragic. What was I supposed to do? I was helpless. A terrible thought came to my mind...I heard that the Bolsheviks execute officers who are captured. I heard a lot about that while I was still free. Will this be my fate? I was besieged by pain, fear, and enemies. They were two. They pulled me, tossed me, checked my pockets, and removed my uniform and pants. I was left only with my underclothes. "Take off his shirt." one said to the other. "But they are bloody." the other answered. "It's nothing, it will wash and be good." But they did not take my shirt. They took me by my arms and dragged me someplace. And again I felt severe pain, especially in my wounded leg, which was dragged. Somehow I was able to place the wounded leg on the healthy one, and that felt better. But I was unable to stand the pain so I passed out again, so I don't remember what else they did to me.I regained consciousness again... I was lying in a trench. Around me were people talking Russian and Latvian. Later I found that I was captured by the 6th Latvian bolshevik Pskov regiment. I remember pleading: "Water, please water!" and they



Stasys Raštikis

answered: “No water for him!” somebody answered in a harsh tone. Nevertheless, I did get some water. After drinking some I felt better. The August night was not too dark, but it was damp and cold. Lying at bottom of the trench I saw stars. A bunch of Bolsheviks gathered around me: some old and some young. They were discussing my fate. “Let’s take him to the end of the trench and bury him!” a young voice said. But an older bearded Russian objected, and the others agreed. The young one started swearing and getting hot. “They shoot our men, so we should shoot him!” I don’t know how the argument would have ended if the young one was not ousted. My wounds caused my temperature to rise, but in the cool night lying in my shirt I was still cold. I did not worry so much about the cold since it was a question of life and death. Will they execute me? The Russians had some kind people. One older Red Army man came over to me and said: “I saw how you were approaching us. You were too daring. Nobody was asking you to do this.” I saw that he truly took pity on me. But the others were very malicious. I became calmer when stretchers were provided and I was taken away. At first, they carried me in the trenches, then they exited and carried me further. The stretcher bearers got tired and stopped to rest. I was placed on the top edge of the trench surrounded by Red Army men. There were many and nearby, the Lithuanians, noticing a gathering started shooting. The Bolsheviks ducked down to the trench while I was left topside. A new danger: the bolshe-

viks did not shoot me, but I could be shot by a Lithuanian bullet! But again I was helpless since I had no energy to lift myself from the stretcher and slide inside the trench. Thankfully, the shooting soon stopped... I was carried to a village which, I understood, housed the regimental staff. I was not yet interrogated. They put me in a farmer’s cart and, with two armed guards I was taken to Daugpilis (Dvinsk). Even though the cart had some straw, it nevertheless unpleasantly jostled my wounds, and the pain intensified. In Daugpilis I was placed in some room on the floor. I noticed an armed guard in the doorway. So far nobody had looked at my wounds. For some time, apparently, I slept since when I woke I was in the same room with the sun shining. In the middle of the room, there was a table and two chairs. There were no other furnishings. My shirt and underpants were bloody. The floor was bloody and my hands were bloody. I could tell from the sun’s rays that it was about noon. I was approached by two chekists (tr. Soviet secret police) who were dressed in new leather jackets with revolvers hanging from their belts. The jackets were adorned with a metal red star. They began interrogating me.

Translator’s note: Raštikis spent the next 20 months in Soviet captivity. He was shuttled between different POW camps, suffered in the Lubyanka prison in Moscow. He was finally released in 1921 in a prisoner exchange and continued his military career in the Lithuanian army.



Stasys Raštikis among Lithuanian soldiers

Chicago Lithuanians Celebrate February 16th, the Day of Restoration of the State of Lithuania



Hill of Lithuanian tricolors by the Lithuanian Nativity BVM Church

The Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania in Chicago together with the Lithuanian American Community, the LAC Marquette Park Chapter, the BVM Nativity Lithuanian Parish, and the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union in Exile organized a celebration of the Day of Restoration of the State of Lithuania. The celebration took place at the historic Lithuanian Catholic parish – Nativity BVM - in Chicago.

The commemoration began with Holy Mass in honor of Lithuania's freedom. After Mass, a 30-meter long tricolor Lithuanian flag was solemnly brought into the church and blessed by the parish priest Jaunius Kelpšas. Afterward, Consul General of the Republic of Lithuania in Chicago Mantvydas Bekešius, the Chairman of the Cultural Council of the Lithuanian Community Giedrė Knieža, and the Chairman of the Council of the Youth Center Antanas Rašymas delivered their welcome speeches.



Attending Mass at the Nativity BVM Church



Consul General Mantvydas Bekešius

The musical program was performed by a Lithuanian jazz vocalist, composer, and kanklės player Simona Smirnova who came from New York. A graduate of the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre and the prestigious Berklee College of Music in New York, Smirnova released her second album, Joan of Arc, for String Quartet, a month ago, featuring her compositions for string quartet, voice, kanklės, and piano. Simona's music mixes jazz, chamber orchestra music, kanklės sounds, and popular music melodies. During the event, Smirnova performed interpretations of Lithuanian folk songs and

our community



Lithuanian flag is being brought into the church for blessing songs by contemporary authors.

On the day, Chicago Lithuanians also joined the “Sea of Tricolors” Campaign organized by the World Lithuanian Community. Even though winter in Chicago was especially cold this year, Lithuanians made a snow hill outside the church, and Lithuanian tricolors bloomed on the snow hill during the celebration.

On the morning of February 14th, members of the Chicago Lithuanian Running Club organized a festive run downtown Chicago in honor of the Day of the Restoration of the State of Lithuania.

Organizers: Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania in Chicago, the Lithuanian American Community, the LAC Marquette Park Chapter, Nativity BVM Lithuanian Parish, the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union in Exile. The musical program was organized by the LAC Cultural Council and supported by the Lithuanian Foundation.

All photos by Sandra Ščedrina Studio Light Inc. Consulate General of the Republic of Lithuania in Chicago information



From the left: Auksuolė Kišonaitė Marcilevičienė, Žygis Janus, Nida Grigalavičiūtė, Consul General Mantvydas Bekešius, Simona Smirnova, Ieva Dilytė, Consulate staff members.



The LAC Marquette Park Chapter Chairwoman Auksuolė Kišonaitė Marcilevičienė



The LAC 70th Anniversary banner held by members of the LAC Marquette Park Chapter

Unlike Others, but Unforgettable February 16th

By Gintautas Steponavičius and Elena Skališienė



The LAC Waukegan – Lake County Chapter receiving the LAC 70th anniversary banner. From the left: Violeta Rutkauskienė, Elena Skališienė, Simona Smirnova, Vesta Steponavičiūtė, Žaneta Steponavičienė, Gintautas Steponavičius, and Jolita Vilimienė. Photo by Jolita Vilimienė

It has been almost a year now since the world – the USA included – has been suffering from an onslaught of the Coronavirus. In some states, such as Illinois, it seems that the virus has been more widespread. Life, therefore, had to come to somewhat of a standstill. Progress in the usually active Lithuanian communities abated. Of course, many "connected" in virtual space, which is one of the necessary means allowing for the continuation of events, conferences, and meetings without the in-person presence. However, virtual existence will never replace traditional gatherings. Lithuanians, just like anyone else, prefer to meet and communicate in person.

For that reason, members of the Lithuanian American Community Waukegan-Lake County Chapter (hereafter LAC W-LCC) announced to those who wish to participate that the commemoration of the most profound moment in Lithuania in the 20th century – the Declaration of Independence – will take place. This year, the LAC W-LCC will also mark the 130th anniversary since the first Lithuanian officially registered himself as a resident of Waukegan and the 70th anniversary of the LAC in the United States. Our chapter is one of 52 that form this non-profit organization.

Due to the pandemic, the commemoration of the anniversaries had to be rather limited. Even so, we believe that the event was a success. On Sunday, February 14, after the Holy Mass conducted in the Lithuanian language by Fr. Gediminas Keršys at the Santa Maria del Popolo Chapel in Mundelein, Illinois, musician and singer Simona Smirnova from New York delighted us with musical renditions on her zither (kanklės). It was the second time that she visited our community. Simona was born in Lithuania. Her songs and music touched on well-known renditions such as "Laisvė" (Freedom), "Viešpaties Lelija" (Lilly of the Lord), and "Paukščiai" (The Birds). After the concert, attendees were invited to receive the LAC 70th-

anniversary banner brought by members of the LAC Chicago Chapter. The banner was welcomed by a folk dance rendition "Kepurinė" (The Hat Dance) performed by the LAC W-LCC folk dance group Rusnė.

Words of greeting were said by Giedrė Knieža, the LAC Cultural Committee Chairwoman. The banner was received by the LAC W-LCC Chapter Board members, namely, Elena Skališienė, Vesta Steponavičiūtė, Violeta Rutkauskienė, Palmira Janušonienė-Westholm, Jolita Vilimienė, Paulius Slavėnas, and President Gintautas Steponavičius. In his greeting, President Steponavičius noted that the Chapter's Board is comprised of very active LAC members, ranging in age from 30s to 80s. The President emphasized that the Board's achievements were all on behalf of LITHUANIA as well as UNITY.

The LAC W-LCC Gediminas Lithuanian Saturday School accepts students desiring to learn or enhance the Lithuanian language. Classes are held in the Santa Maria del Popolo (SMDP) parish edifice located in Mundelein, Illinois. Holy Mass in the Lithuanian language is celebrated at the SMDP Chapel every second Sunday of the month. For those who love folk dancing, there are two dance groups in our community: Laumė led by Vaida Indriliūnas and Rusnė led by Nijolė Černiauskienė. Rusnė is organized into two groups: children's and adults'.

After his welcome remarks, Chapter President Steponavičius inscribed the words "Waukegan – Lake County Apylinkė" on the LAC 70th Anniversary banner. Of course, we will not be the only ones inscribing our community's name on the flag. The banner will travel throughout the 52 LAC Chapters to glean similar inscriptions.

We want to believe -- actually, we do believe -- that the LAC will survive and flourish, unite and sustain all Lithuanians who live here now and who will live here in the future. Our major aim is TO MAINTAIN "LITHUANIANISM."

We would like to conclude these remarks with the following words: ONE NATION – ONE FAMILY! IN THE NAME OF LITHUANIA, UNITY HERE WILL ALWAYS GROW AND FOSTER!

A special note: Even though the photograph shows that no masks are being worn, we did wear them during the church service as well as the commemoration, and we took them off for a minute or two while the pictures were being taken. Let's be optimistic; let's be healthy and persevere through this pandemic.

UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

Memoir of a Siberian Deportee

By Juzė Avižienytė Žukauskienė

Translated from the Lithuanian by Giedrė Kumpikas, Ph.D., niece of the author, and Isabel Kumpikas, sister of the author

16. A NEW STAGE IN OUR LIFE

A new stage. What did it promise? We did not rejoice but we also were not too despondent. We were all convinced that the war would end soon and that we would return again to our normal way of life. We thought that we would earn enough for our daily bread and we would have enough clothing. Oh, how naive we were! We did not know that we would work so much and so hard for so many years and would earn nothing, and that bread, not to speak of anything better, would be only a dream!

We awakened early. The clouds had parted and it was no longer raining. The commandant of the collective farm *Shabalin* arrived accompanied by the chairman of the collective farm *Rusakov* and the brigadier Zhukov as well as a group of curious onlookers.

We were lined up in the schoolyard. The "superiors" looked us over as if we were animals brought to the market, and discussed something among themselves. Finally we heard a command:

"Everyone between 17 and 45 years old step forward to the right, the rest - to the left."

We all felt very uncomfortable. My husband and I and our seventeen-year old son stepped to the right; the two smaller ones remained to the left. The smallest one began to cry and Stasiukas, although he was himself frightened, tried to calm him. Other cries were heard, especially among the very small children, since the young mothers went to the right and they had separated from the fathers at *Naujoji Vilnia*.

"The superiors" started to look us over sharply, and pointing to one or another, continuously discussed something. I remembered Harriet Beecher Stowe's book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which I had read at one time, and the slave market: I did not control myself and murmured:

"I wonder if they're going to look at our teeth?"

Apparently, "the superiors" were not very pleased. There were very few strong men: 4 Jews, 7 Lithuanians. Older men, children and women - formed a motley group. And even these the *Komarovka* collective farm had to share with two other farms.

Our inspection was over. A few flat-carts arrived. They started calling us out by our last names and ordered us to load our things onto the carts. We were all assigned to live with local inhabitants. The farm was very poor. The

small huts they inhabited were tiny, made of rough-hewn beams, with small windows and covered with birch bark. Only the school had large windows and was covered with boards. Also, the more respectable houses were the commandant's abode and the collective farm office. The yards were enclosed by poles. The collective farm people had no other buildings besides the "*chatas*"*, the afore-mentioned shacks. Cattle walked around freely, the chickens also; no one kept pigs here because they had nothing with which to feed them.

The road was slushy from the rain. Under the wheels, the liquefied mud made gurgling noises, while we trudged along in a group behind the carts. Our carts, finally, turned into one of those pole enclosures. The yard was covered with uncut grass and weeds. The small house hardly resembled anything livable, since, from the backyard, no windows or doors were to be seen, only in one wall, which measured about one and a half meters, was a gaping hole: a piece cut out of one beam served as a window. The little hut resembled a poor stall.

"Is it possible that we will have to live here?" I fearfully asked the collective farm worker who had driven us here.

"Yes, the commandant told me to bring you here. Hey! Landlady, come and take in your cottagers." shouted the worker loudly.

A middle-aged lady came out of the side door.

"Hello, landlady!" we greeted her. The woman bowed low and answered in a pleasant voice:

"Hello, welcome, welcome, newcomers!"

We took up our bundles and followed after the woman.

The door of the hut was very low and we had to bend down quite a bit, although none of us was very tall. The Siberian inhabitants here made the doors low so that the heat would not escape and so that they would need less "refined" building material. Our hosts were not old inhabitants either, but had been brought here by force ten years ago from the Altai Territory. * In 1931, when collectivization began, as "*kulaki*"**, they had been deprived of their properties and been forcibly driven here into an uninhabitable *taiga*. Later, we learned much from them about their terrible experiences and hardships.

The blind wall we had seen from the yard was only an addition to the dwelling hut. At one end of the hut, was a small anteroom and at the other, a cow stall.

As we stepped into the living space of the *chata*, we were very surprised. The walls were immaculately white-washed, the floors were of cedar boards, the color of light wax and polished to a bright shine. There were two windows facing south and one west. There were benches of the same type of boards and also polished to the same brilliance and the table was covered with a clean tablecloth. In the corner hung an icon.* The left corner was taken up by a huge bread-baking stove made of well-beaten clay, and

the right corner, by a bed as high as a man's chest and covered with a patchwork bedspread made of bits and pieces of rags. In front of the opening of the stove, small shelves were fastened to the wall for dishes. They were also covered by a make-shift curtain of small bits of rags. This was their entire wealth...

We put our bundles into the addition to the main dwelling.

"If you have anything of value, bring it into the main chata and put it under the bed, otherwise, when we go off to work, someone might steal it," our landlady suggested.

"Maybe you would like to cook something, there's a fireplace in the yard. It didn't rain today, so we fired the stove early because we have to go to work, but we were allowed to stay home today because you arrived. The commandant ordered the sauna to be heated. You will flog yourselves with leafy branches after your journey. All of your bones will relax..." explained our landlady pleasantly.

We were hungry but food was the biggest problem. We tried to get some potatoes.

"Oh! Dearies, we don't have any for ourselves. This spring there was a huge flood. At the end of June everything was flooded. All the potatoes that had been planted were destroyed. Whoever had any left, the collective farm took all of them away. That's the plan. We have to replant everything all over again instead of those soggy ones. They told us that in the fall, after we harvest them, we'll get some for our workdays. In our gardens, as you see, we have three ares and a family of five. Bread - it's only a memory. We only feed ourselves with potatoes and skimmed milk."

"Why only skimmed? You have a cow, you can make cottage cheese, butter..."

"Oh, dearies! You will live and you will learn..."

In the spring, the cows can hardly drag their feet along and once they go out onto the grass, they're eaten by mosquitos. Once those disappear, they're beset by other pests: horseflies, gadflies. The cattle knock themselves out trying to fend them off. We get about 5-6 litres of milk a day. The government requires that we supply 300 litres and they demand 4% fat. But what do we know about what percent fat it is? So we pour out 400 litres and more, to make up for the fat.

As for the cow, we have to give the government 48 kg of meat and the hide of the animal."

"What do you mean?! You have one cow and from that cow, you have to give up milk and meat and the hide? So what do you do the following year?" We are amazed, disbelieving but our landlord laughed.

"Well, you have to be very clever how you go about giving the meat from a live cow, its hide, and also keep on milking it so that both you and the government would have milk. And now you also want some milk."

Yes, we became convinced of that later, that it was as he

said, only we were not able to be so "clever" and pay our account to the government and for that we paid dearly. But, about that, later.

The brigadier Sidor Zhukov came by and announced that we did not have to go to work today and that we could heat the "*bania*"* and wash ourselves and do our laundry. We were also allowed to go to the store and buy "necessary items."

How to heat the bania, I did not know, nor where to get wood, nor where to get a basin to heat the water for washing.

Our landlady led me to the shore of the river, to a liliputian 3x3 meter hut, containing no window except for a hole cut in the beam about 30 cm long and the width of the beam. It was stopped up with a clump of grass. In the corner stood a small beaten-clay stove with a large opening. The floor was covered with thin split rails and the door was so low that even if you crouched down very low, you had to be careful not to scrape your back. The ceiling and the walls were all encrusted with soot, and even if you brushed against it lightly, you soiled yourself with a black sticky mass. Our landlady brought a cast-iron pot about the size of a pail, with a pointy bottom, a wide top and round pot-belly in the middle. She was a very pleasant little woman and asked how she should address me, that is, what my name and my father's name was. Since here, everyone called each other only by their first name, but if they wished to show respect to someone, they also used the patronymic*, therefore, "*velichayut*" meant to show respect. I told her I was Juzefa Stanislavovna.

"Oh, that's so hard to pronounce! Perhaps I won't remember it. I will only call you by the patronymic," said our landlady. But even "Stanislavovna" was too difficult to remember and she called me by a Russian name she had heard which was easier to pronounce - "Jaroslavna." I never corrected her. Let her call me by whatever name was easier for her.

"Just watch, Jaroslavna, when you are heating the water, make sure the pot is full, otherwise the edges will chip, and it can even crack completely. And that will be it, we'll have no more "*bania*." We won't be able to buy another one anywhere."

I filled up the pot to the brim with water and the landlady herself lit the stove. Thick, black clouds poured out in billows through the door and the hole in the wall. I couldn't go inside, I was suffocating. And I had no idea how to place a pot without a handle into the stove. I could not comprehend how one would be able to heat enough water in that one pot so that a family of five could wash itself.

As soon as our landlady left, I built a small bonfire on the shore of the river. My husband and children came to help. Having looked at the "miracles" in the "*bania*," they

all washed themselves in the river and I, having heated some water on the little bonfire, began to wash clothes which had become soiled and dirty during six weeks of inhuman traveling conditions.

And so began the first day of our new life.

17. "LIFE" ON THE COLLECTIVE FARM

A couple of days later, the team-leader came to order us to work. It was seven o'clock in the morning and it was raining. My husband and the boys were assigned to work on construction right there in the village, and I, with the other women, was sent to pull flax.

"What kind of pulling will it be since it's raining," I said.

"There are not too many clear days," answered the team-leader, "and when the weather is fair, the hay will have to be gathered, and later we'll have to take in the other crops."

Over my silk dress, I put on a little robe, tied my hair with a ribbon and went to the horse yard, where the workers would gather in the morning and would be assigned to jobs. The local women were wearing long skirts of homespun, coarse, bag-like fabric and jackets of indefinite color and kind, they were covered up to the eyes with kerchiefs or simply with a piece of some old material; some were wearing pig-skin boots, others had wrapped their calves with rags and were wearing bast-shoes. When they saw my bare legs, my slip-in shoes, and my uncovered head, they gasped in disbelief. Some more women, who had also been recently brought here, came dressed similarly to me. The local women were startled, gasped and asked if we didn't have any "sturdier" clothing.

"Oh, you'll see with your silks: you'll be eaten alive."

We had nothing else. We were all office employees, teachers and had no special clothing. Besides, upon leaving, we took the best that we had.

The team-leader looked us over, as if to evaluate the "work force," scornfully smiled a little from the corner of his mouth and said:

"O.K., you broads, let's go!" he got on his horse, and we, in a group, moved after him.

We turned into the *taiga* on a marshy path, and the rain continued falling. Our silk clothes were soaked through. We marched for about an hour and still no flax. We Lithuanian women kept looking at our watches. It was already nine o'clock when we arrived at a forest clearing and saw a sizable area of flax. The team-leader assigned one of the local women as the field team-leader.

"Stand in line and pull. Like this!" She demonstrated for us how to pull and how to bind the flax.

The field team-leader took her stand first. We lined up and began to pull, more precisely, to grope around for thin, not very high flax in the tall, thick grass. The team-leader, having circled around a bit, and having urged us to work conscientiously, rode away.

When the women sensed, that the team-leader was at a safe distance and could no longer see us, immediately, some had to go into the bushes, others lit a bonfire, so that the smoke would keep the mosquitos away, and all the local women, in unison, began to curse him:

"That rat! That skunk! That creep! give him the quota, work conscientiously! And the fact that we're being soaked by the rain, eaten up by gnats and mosquitos, doesn't cross his mind or his... Let's sit down, girls, and rest. We plodded through the mud such a long way, we can barely drag our feet, and he wants his quota!"

They all swarmed around the bonfire, which, due to the rain, was smoking more that it was burning. But that was better, because the more smoke there was, the less the mosquitos and gnats attacked us. We Lithuanians, with our thin soaked dresses, were poorly protected from those bloodsuckers, and our bare hands, legs and faces were actually glued over with those "flying insects." We tried to defend ourselves as best we could, we brushed them off with our hands from our faces and legs, and our local friends sort of mocked us and, at the same time, pitied us:

"Now you know what our dear mother *taiga* is," and the field team-leader added:

"Go and work with them! Give him the quota! They don't know anything - they're city-dwellers... Girls, don't try too hard: We'll pick where we can, or we'll trample it into the grass. The devil himself cannot tell the green flax from the grass; and secondly, they don't know anything, so what kind of quota can we have with such as they?!"

We immediately understood that, the trampled flax and the unfulfilled quota will be blamed on us, and they, as experienced workers, will remain guiltless."

"Women, let's separate from them so they won't be able to blame us for the quality or the quota, and we will only be accountable for our work," I offered.

"Good, good, Žukauskiene, you lead." I accepted. I was born and raised on a farm and I was familiar with all the work there. The difference was that, in Lithuania, flax was pulled when it was already yellow and clean. But here? It was still completely green, lost in the grass, which was taller than the flax itself. One could not pull it, but one had to pick it out from amidst the grass in small hand fulls.

"Comrade women," I addressed the Russians, "you are good, experienced workers and we feel that if we work together we will only hold you back, so let's do it this way - you work on your own and we'll work on our own."

"Look what a smart one we have here! You think you'll do the quota? They give such quotas here that you'll exhaust yourself completely and still will not succeed. Fine! You pull and we shall see!"

I did not quite understand how one could pull 900 square meters of such flax. It seemed rather intimidating.

"Well, how we'll do, we'll do, at least no one else will be

blamed for it."

I measured out for each one of us ten wide steps from the edge, and we all cleared for ourselves long, narrow paths deep into the flax, and each one of us marked off her own plot. The rain stopped a little but, because of that, we were attacked by mosquitos. The buzzing even made our ears ring. They actually glued themselves to our backs, our faces, our legs. We crushed them with our hands, and swatted them off our backs with hand fulls of flax, but it was impossible to protect ourselves. The only thing that helped a little was the smoke.

Towards evening, the weather cleared completely, and even the sun came out. It was already behind the tops of the tall cedars and soon, hid behind the dark trees of the *taiga*.

"O.K., women, that's enough! Let's go home," said the field team-leader. We all jumped up and started going down the curving path toward the village. We were hurrying, so that we would get home before dark. After we had gone about 2-3 kilometers, we met the team-leader riding toward us.

"What the devil! You broads! Why did you stop working? Go back immediately!" yelled the team-leader.

"Sidor, why are you shouting?! You can see that it's getting dark, and it's still a long way home. The cows have come home and still have to be milked, we have to make supper for the children. And when will we get back? In the dark? And then? We'll have chores to do till morning! buzzed all the women.

"After all, we completed the quota," I interjected, although I had my doubts even about our Lithuanian women who had worked conscientiously, but, about the Russian women, there was no doubt that they had not completed their quota.

"In the Soviet Union it is allowed to do even two or three quotas. Do you know, that Stachanov* completed 33 quotas during his shift," retorted the team-leader and stood barring the way with his horse.

The women, paying no attention to him, started pushing past his horse, through the *taiga*.

"Look at the smart-aleck! It's easy for you, sitting in your office, drawing up quotas with your pencil. But you stand in line with us and pull flax, then you'll see what the quotas are like. You sit on your horse like a lord. Even the village is near for you. You try to go through these quagmires on your own feet..."

On and on, the furious, hungry and tired women fired angry words. The team-leader, swearing "in Russian style," rode off in the direction of the flax field, and we women, cackling like geese, broke our way through the brushwood towards home.

I was not accustomed, that one answered superiors so roughly and insolently and I said so aloud.

"What! A superior! He's a cur, an ass-kisser! He's a deportee like all of us, only he plays up to the commandant and that's why he's the team-leader," seethed the women.

I had no desire to talk with them. We still had very little knowledge about the people from here. We broke off branches from birch trees, we were striking our backs and legs, we were defending ourselves from the mosquitos. We reached the village after the sun had set. My body was burning as if I were in embers. My face was swollen, my eyelids drooped over my eyes, my arms and legs became covered with white blisters.

At first, I scratched and tore at the skin of my arms and legs until blood appeared, and rubbed my eyelids. But as I peeled my skin down to the blood, the greater was the itching.

"Oh, Jaroslavna, don't scratch, you'll have trouble. You must rub yourself with tar, then the gnats don't attack you, and from the mosquitos, you can protect yourself with smoke. How could you go out into the *taiga* dressed in such clothing? Oh, when we were driven here, we also scratched ourselves down to the blood and smeared ourselves with tar. But now, we have no blood left, so we are attacked less," our landlady comforted me.

I had no tar. Besides, where could I have put myself all smeared with tar? At that time, I was still concerned with my bedding and clothing. I ran to the river, I peeled off my wet clothes and jumped into the dark water. At once, the itching became less painful. Eagerly, I went deeper, where the water was colder and poured water on my head, and submerged my face. I felt some relief. But how long can one stay in the water? Returning to the hut, I felt happy, even though my hungry children and my husband were waiting. What could I think up for supper? My husband had gotten some milk and some potatoes, which were already bubbling for a long time in a pot outside on a small bonfire.

There is probably nothing more pleasant, having soaked all day in the cold rain, than to feel on one's body, not the stinging of gnats and mosquitos, but clean, dry clothes and without any worries to eat hot boiled potatoes with milk for supper!

But that happiness did not last long. As soon as I warmed up, a maddening itching began.

That night I began to hallucinate, thereby terrifying my husband. As soon as it was light, he ran to the hospital, to the doctor's assistant. When she arrived, she diagnosed that it was Siberian fever, a serious form of malaria. My temperature was 41.2 C.* I was already unconscious and there was no medicine.

Later, I was told, that women would come to visit and would sigh and would give whatever advice each one could think of. And I was burning, as if on fire, from time to time, my skin would appear to be covered with goose

bumps and my body would shiver from an uncontrollable shaking. It was very dark in that windowless addition to the building, where we had set up our sleeping quarters. My condition was hopeless. My husband and older sons were called back from work. They informed our doctor Šakenienė from Kaunas. She came right away and brought some quinine, which she had taken with her when she was being deported from Lithuania.

After 24 hours, I regained semi-consciousness. Somehow, managing to half-open my swollen eyelids, I saw a faint gleam, and in its light, my sobbing children and husband. Behind them, dimly appeared some pale, faintly discernible faces. They thought that I was dying and for that reason had lit a candle. It struck me, that it was my wake and that they were going to bury me, and with my last remaining strength, I cried out, I don't know why, in Russian:

"Don't bury me in this swamp!" I had no more strength. In my head, a gray mass began to swirl and creak and I sank into oblivion once again.

After three days, I began to regain consciousness more frequently and for longer periods of time. Every day, I was visited by Doctor Šakenienė and by the supervisor of the hospital, Paukson. The doctor's assistant brought an iron bed from the hospital, and I was no longer lying on some planks in that lean-to, but rather in a room and I could see the light of day. My husband did everything he could. He obtained some denatured alcohol and with it tried to reduce that burning itching.

My swelling went down. After nine days I regained consciousness completely, but my temperature was still fluctuating between 38 C* and 41 C*; it would especially go up towards evening. My doctors praised me that I was strong, that I tolerated such a high temperature, which very few people survive. I began to improve. Both doctors were still visiting me. Other women would come also. Even the supervisor of the collective farm came as well as the team-leader.

With the permission of the commandant, the supervisor dispensed 10 liters of milk and 5 kilograms of flour at government price from the collective farm warehouse. And so, every day, I had some milk and a flour patty, which our landlady would bake for me. The mother of the supervisor, a little old lady, recalling her free life in the Altai Territory and their hardships during the first years of deportation, would bring me either an egg, or a small carrot, or a "shanushka" (a flat patty with mashed potatoes). They did not have very much either, since they were a large family of ten and their garden was the same size as everyone else's: three ares and a cow. My landlady, on the sly from her husband, who left for work very early, would give me some raspberry tea and would put in a tablespoon of honey, as they had four beehives. From this balsam, I was

getting stronger very quickly. Actually, not so quickly. After six weeks, I could still not stand on my feet. In gratitude to my landlady, I gave her a bedsheet as a gift and her daughter a silk blouse.

Out of joy that morning, our landlady gave me not only tea with honey but also a glass of boiled milk with a small patty. But she was late for work. Unexpectedly, her husband returned and, glancing at the table, was stunned. He looked at his wife, his eyes blazing with rage while she stood terrified and confused:

"....." a vulgar Russian expletive and angry words:

"What is this? What are you doing here?" Why are you late for work?" another expletive followed. The frightened woman was unable to utter a word, grabbed a scythe, and as she was leaving, tied on her kerchief and ran out to cut the rye.

From that morning, our landlord became very cranky and rough. Having smeared his boots heavily with tar, he would come closer and would try to brush against my clean white coverlet with them. He started grumbling, that winter was coming and that his children would return from the "kulstan;"* where could ten people possibly fit in their small house? He was right and I thought about it with horror. Our money was simply melting away. To get food every day was becoming harder and harder. Only my husband and my oldest son were working. We were too inexperienced and too honest.

The children were sent out to rake hay. The poor youngsters, thought that the more they would do, the more they would earn. They worked with all their strength, especially since the team-leader praised them and evaluated them as fifth category, while experienced women were only third. As a result of that, on the second day, my fourteen-year old son, Stasiukas, lifting a bale of hay onto a haystack, a load much above his strength, overstrained himself. He began to vomit, he had severe headaches and stabbing pains under his chest cavity

"The boy ruptured a hernia," diagnosed the doctor's assistant.

**chatas* - huts

*Altai Territory - central Asia between Mongolia and Sinkiang Province in W. China and between Kazakhstan and the Russian S.F.S.R.

**kulaki* - rich farmers

**icon* - a holy picture

**bania* - bath or sauna


**patronymic* - a father's name used to show respect, therefore, Stanislavovna, meant daughter of Stanislav, the Russian version of the Lithuanian name Stanislovas or the abbreviated form Stasys.

**Stachanov* - a famous Soviet worker known for his tremendous strength and endurance

*41.2 C = 106 F

*38 C = 101 F

**kulstan* - field camp



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Lithuanian Studies at the University of Illinois in Chicago



The University of Illinois in Chicago campus

Located in the heart of Chicago, the University of Illinois is a vital part of the educational, technological and cultural fabric of the region. UIC is among the top five most diverse campuses in the nation and a national leader among urban, public higher education institutions in providing access to underrepresented students. Faculty, students and staff in every college work with neighborhood, foundation and government partners on a wide range of projects to improve the quality of life in communities around the world.

Chicago is home to the largest concentration of Central and East Europeans outside of Europe; the Department of Polish, Russian, and Lithuanian Studies (formerly Slavic and Baltic Languages and Literatures) at UIC is truly representative of this ethnic diversity.

The Department's mission is threefold: to educate global citizens who can thrive in diverse cultural contexts, provide service to the UIC community, and to conduct quality research in the fields of language and literary studies. The expertise and experience of our faculty gives students the opportunity to excel in their particular areas of interest. We strive to create an intellectually stimulating environment in order to help students think creatively and critically about the world in which they live.

The Department holds the Endowed Chair of Lithuanian Studies (since 1984) directed by Professor Giedrius Subačius. The Lithuanian language classes for beginners are taught by adjunct lecturer Karile Vaitkute.

If you are a student at the University of Illinois you can choose from several options to study the Lithuanian language and the Lithuanian culture.

LITH 101. Elementary Lithuanian I. 4 hours.

Basic grammar and vocabulary; developing effective speaking skills. Students will be introduced to the Lithuanian culture. Course Information: Extensive computer use required. For students who have had no formal work in Lithuanian. This class is taught in a blended format. Internet access is required. A high-speed connection is strongly recommended.

LITH 102. Elementary Lithuanian II. 4 hours.

Continuation of LITH 101. The objective of the course is to provide students with basic skills for understanding and speaking Lithuanian. Course Information: Four additional half hours each week in the language laboratory. The class is taught in a blended format. Internet access is required. A high-speed connection is strongly recommended. Prerequisite(s): Grade of C or higher in LITH 101 or appropriate score on the departmental placement test.

LITH 103. Intermediate Lithuanian I. 4 hours.

Further development of grammar and vocabulary; developing effective communicative skills. Students will be introduced to Lithuanian culture. Course Information:



Prof. Giedrius Subačius and adjunct lecturer Karilė Vaitkutė with students at the University of Illinois in 2018



Students meeting with Mission Siberia project participants, Marija Čyvaitė and Aistė Eidukaitytė



Students meeting with Lithuania's Parliament Member, Vytautas Juozapaitis

Extensive computer use required. This class is taught in a blended format. Internet access is required. A high-speed connection is strongly recommended. Prerequisite(s): Grade of C or better in LITH 102; or appropriate score on the department placement test.

LITH 104. Intermediate Lithuanian II. 4 hours.
Builds upon the previous three terms work. It continues the development of students' reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills in Lithuanian. Course Information: This class is taught in a blended format. Internet access is required. A high-speed connection is strongly recommended. Prerequisite(s): Grade of C or higher in LITH 103 or appropriate score on the department placement test.

LITH 115. Lithuanian Culture. 3 hours.
A thematic study of Lithuanian culture from antiquity to the present in an historical and political context. Course Information: Knowledge of Lithuanian is not required. World Cultures course.

LITH 399. Independent Study. 1-3 hours.
Investigation of special problems under the general direction of a staff member. Course Information: May be repeated to a maximum of 6 hours. Prerequisite(s): Junior standing, consent of the instructor and the head of the department. Class Schedule Information: This course

counts toward the limited number of independent study hours accepted toward the degree and the major.

LITH 499. Independent Study. 1-4 hours.
Investigation of special problems under the general direction of a staff member. Course Information: May be repeated to a maximum of 8 hours. Graduate students may register for more than one section per term; undergraduates may only register for one section per term. Prerequisite(s): Senior or graduate standing, consent of the instructor and the head of the department. Class Schedule Information: This course counts toward the limited number of independent study hours accepted toward the undergraduate degree and the major.

Registration for Fall 2021 classes will begin at the end of March. The University plans to offer a large number of on-campus, in-person classes with the expectation that a significant number of individuals in the community will be vaccinated before the fall semester begins. Lithuanian classes will be conducted in hybrid mode. Some will be at the University and some via Zoom.

We encourage all to learn Lithuanian. For some, it might be just brushing up their grammar skills, for others – a great way to stay connected to the language of their ancestors.

current events

Security

...The new Minister of National Defense Arvydas Anušauskas in an interview with the Baltic News Service indicated that he has started work on a comprehensive defense plan which includes assistance in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, possible introduction of universal military service beyond the 4,000 annual draft, the inclusion of women in certain military roles, the increase in infrastructure to support and train a larger force, the role of other institutions and society in civil resistance to an invasion, the combination of Belarus and Russia in the Union State and the potential threat of Chinese investment in strategic sectors, e.g. airport security equipment and 5G networks.

...The governments of Poland and Lithuania suspect that Russia is the source of cyber disinformation attacks which aim to upset relations between the two NATO allies. The cyber-attack occurred on the eve of the Lithuanian government transition. Twenty-two websites operated by Lithuania's public sector were hacked. One false press release supposedly from the Lithuanian Condition Border Guard Service (VSAT) claimed that a Polish diplomat was caught smuggling firearms, explosives, and narcotics into Lithuania. Stanislaw Zaryn, a press officer for Poland's Internal Security Agency (ABW), told the Associated Press that a fake Facebook account pretending to belong to a regional Polish official was spreading the false "news" in Polish. Defense Minister Anušauskas noted that disinformation attacks were mainly focused on military, NATO, and government agencies but that municipalities should also be prepared for attacks.

...Amid the January 6 insurrection attack on the US Capitol, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was on a phone conversation with Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis regarding continuing bilateral cooperation for security in the Baltic region with an invitation that the US bolster its military presence in Lithuania and cooperation within NATO.

...While Lithuania awaits delivery of its Blackhawk helicopters, Lithuania's current Russian MI-8 helicopters need to be kept in repair. Slovakia's Leteche Opravovne Trencin has gained permission from Russia's state enterprise Russian Helicopters, a division of Rostec, which is on the US sanction list. The contract is worth 6 million euros and includes a provision that the helicopters not be transported to third countries. The Slovak company will perform 92% of the repair work and 8% will be performed by a subcontractor from Azerbaijan.

...The Lithuanian Seimas adopted a resolution backed by 108 with only 5 abstaining affirming strengthening the strategic partnership with the US including seeking American armed forces' permanent presence in Lithuania in contrast to the current action of rotating German and US battalions.

...Via video conference, 5 members of the US 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment stationed in Pabradė met with 10 Lithuanian military cadets of the General Povilas Plechavičius Cadet Lyceum in Kaunas. The Battalion is equipped with Bradley Fighting Vehicles and M1 Abrams Tanks with a 120 mm main gun where the crew eats, sleeps, and lives in the tank and endures the Lithuanian snow and cold.

COVID-19

...Lithuania plans on buying a total of 7.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines from AstraZeneca, BioNTech/Pfizer, CureVac, Janssen, and Sanofi/GSK. It has received two batches totaling 20,475 from BioNTech/Pfizer which have been distributed among five hospitals for first and second shots/jabs for 9,750 medical workers in Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, and Panevėžys. According to the head of Santara Clinics in Vilnius, any medical worker who declines to be vaccinated will not be allowed to work with COVID-19 patients. An order for 1.4 million doses has been placed with Germany's CureVac.

...Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė said that Lithuania is not interested in purchasing the Russian-developed Sputnik V vaccine despite Hungary's authorization of its use and Germany's consideration of it as an option.

...Because of the appearance of new mutations of COVID-19, travelers returning from countries with the mutations will be required to show test results performed within 48 hours of their arrival in Lithuania. Travelers will need to quarantine for 14 days after arriving from the UK, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Denmark, Brazil, Israel, South Africa, and the Netherlands. They can shorten the isolation after 10 days by having a negative COVID-19 test at their own expense. Citizens from Liechtenstein and Switzerland entering Lithuania will have to isolate for 10 days upon arrival.

...Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė and President Gitanas Nausėda agree that Lithuania is capable of vaccinating two-thirds of its population by mid-summer if it has enough vaccines. The target can be made if about 35,000 people are vaccinated daily in the second quarter to reach 2 million people.

...The Health Ministry funded 200-euro gift coupons for healthcare workers for use at hotels at resorts in Druskininkai, Neringa, and Palanga, the top three Lithuanian resort destinations. While Evalda Šiškauskienė, President of the Lithuanian Association of Hotels and Restaurants is appreciative, she noted that about 30% of the business hotels remain closed since mid-March 2020.

Business

...A Lloyd's of London Business Broker, W. Denis Insurance of Leeds, in the UK, has opened a new brokerage in Lithuania following UK's exit from the European Union which would have prevented them from covering EU based risks. The subsidiary, W Denis Europe UADB is authorized and regulated by the Bank of Lithuania. The CEO is Vida Jarašiūnaitė, who has 20 years in the insurance industry and previously worked for the Baltic Underwriting Agency.

...A Dutch electronics design company, Sintecs, plans on opening an R&D office in Vilnius to expand its offerings in high-speed products and high-end multi-layer printed circuit board (PCB) design. Founded in 2000, Sintecs employs 60 in the Netherlands and Belarus. Sintecs has developed products for Bosch, Ericsson, General Dynamics, Motorola, Philips, Siemens, and others. The company's cybersecurity capability was recognized at the 2019 Consumer Electronic Show (CES) where a high-grade personal security router, Scalys TrustBOX, developed in partnership with Microsoft and NXP, won the Best of Innovation Award in the Cybersecurity and Personal Privacy category. The Vilnius office will recruit 25-50 people with expertise in PCB design, signal, and power integrity analysis, cybersecurity, embedded software design as well as Electronic Computer-Aided Design (ECAD) component library engineering with over a thousand components and the ability to characterize other components as needed.

...The Polish-run oil company PKN Orlen will purchase liquefied natural gas from the Klaipėda terminal to fire their new 750 MW power station in Ostrołęka in northeast Poland and reduce its dependence on Russia's Gazprom. The plant was originally slated to use coal but environmental and financing issues dictated the change despite the objections of Polish coal mining trade unions.

...In 2020 the Seimas passed a law limiting a single person or group of related persons from acquiring more than 1,500 hectares of forest land in Lithuania. The European Commission views this limitation as restricting the

free flow of capital and may start an infringement procedure against Lithuania according to the Lithuanian Environment Ministry.

General

...The Lithuanian Employment Service reports that at the beginning of the year, 277,000 were unemployed making up 16% of the workforce. Last year at the same time the unemployment rate stood at 8.6%. Business has been offered subsidies to retain jobs during the lockdown including 100% of wages up to 1.5 times the minimum wage or 963 euros per month

...The Seimas has awarded the 2021 Lithuanian Freedom Prize to Belarus' democratic opposition to Alexander Lukashenko's "landslide" victory in the August 9 Presidential Election. The Seimas voted 110 in favor, none against, and one abstention. The 5,000 euro prize was established in 2011 to honor organizations and individuals for their efforts in defending freedom, democracy, and human rights and for promoting international cooperation for self-determination and independence of Eastern and Central European nations. Previous awardees include Archbishop Sigitas Tamkevičius, founder and editor of the underground Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, and Lithuania's first post-independence leader Vytautas Landsbergis. Last year the prize went to Albinas Kentra, the chronicler of the Lithuanian Revival movement.

...The Lithuanian Foreign Ministry told the Migration Department that descendants of the second, third and fourth generation of Lithuanian emigrants who want to restore their Lithuanian citizenship will not need to go to Lithuania. They can apply via a diplomatic representative or consular office or directly to the Migration Department via the MIGRIS system.

...Lithuania will carry out a census in January 2021. In 2011 the population composition was 84.2% Lithuanian, 6.6% Polish, 5.8% Russian, 1.2% Belarusians, 0.5% Ukrainians, and 0.6% others. With the recent unrest in Ukraine, it is estimated that they are now the largest non-Lithuanian group. The new census will quantify the estimates.

...Because of unrest in Belarus and COVID-19, the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) withdrew the 2021 Ice Hockey World Championship from co-hosts Minsk, Belarus, and Riga, Latvia, and will hold it only in Riga from May 21 to June 6. Lithuania did not qualify; sixteen teams will compete including Latvia, Russia, and the United States.

current events



In honor of March 11th, the Day of the Restoration of Lithuania's Independence, Lithuanian flag was raised at an annual ceremony in the town center of Lemont, Illinois, home of many Lithuanians and the World Lithuanian Center. Thank you to Lemont chapter of U.S.-Lithuanian community and WLC for organizing the event and everyone for attending and celebrating together!

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