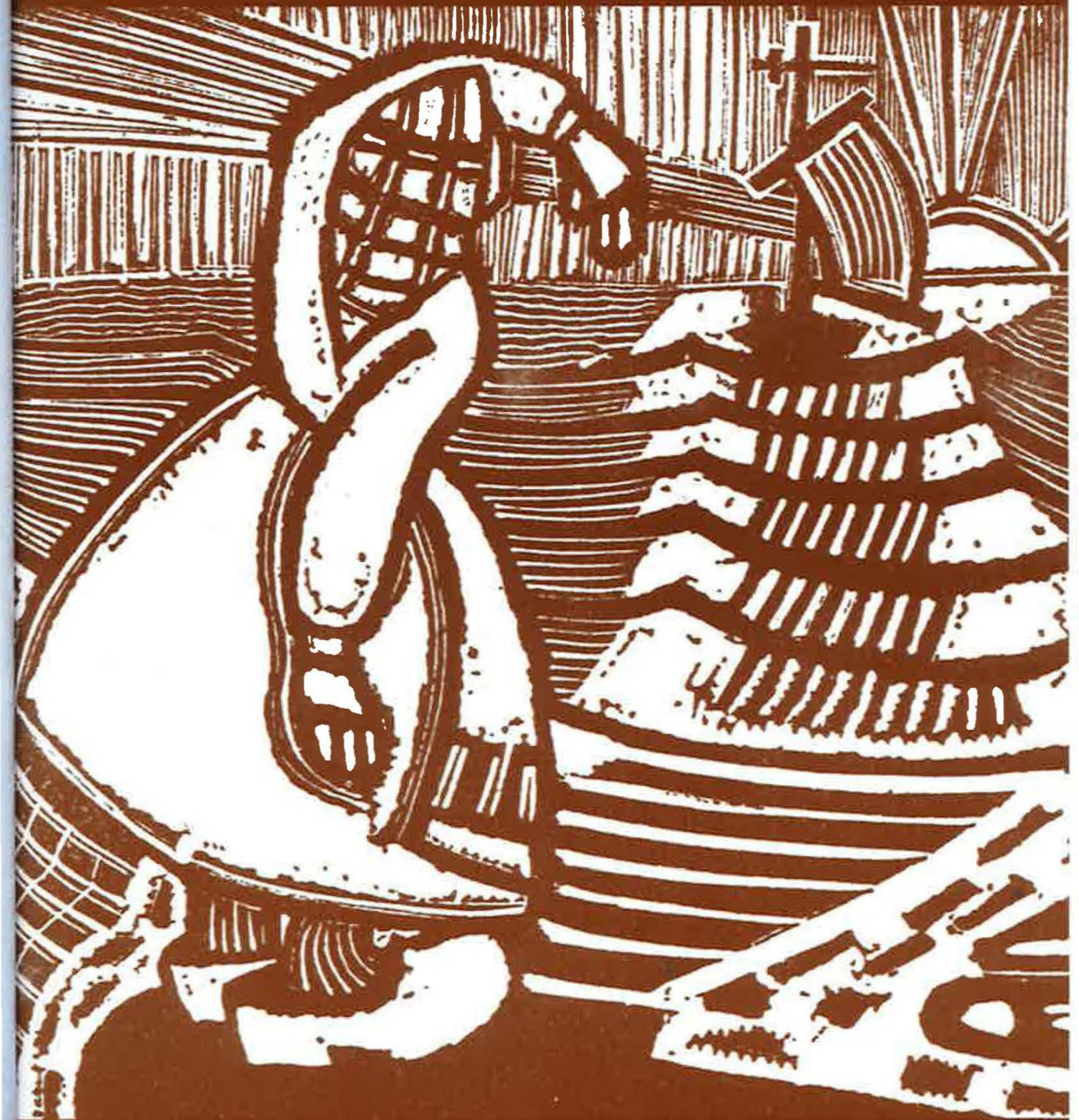


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# *Lithuanian Papers*

Volume 17 - 2003

ANNUAL JOURNAL OF THE LITHUANIAN STUDIES  
SOCIETY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

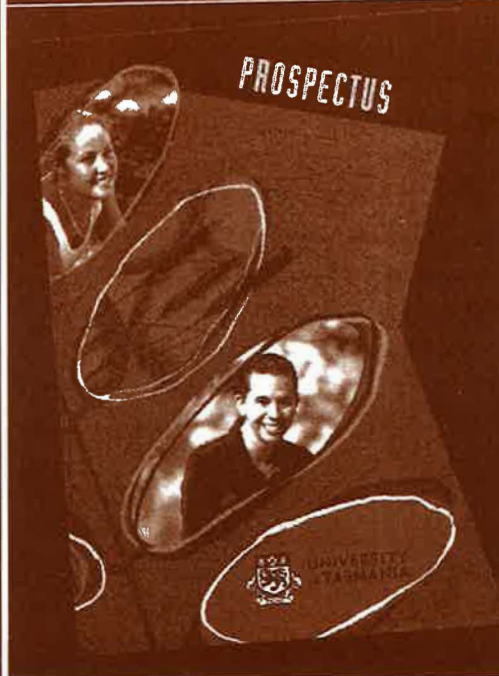


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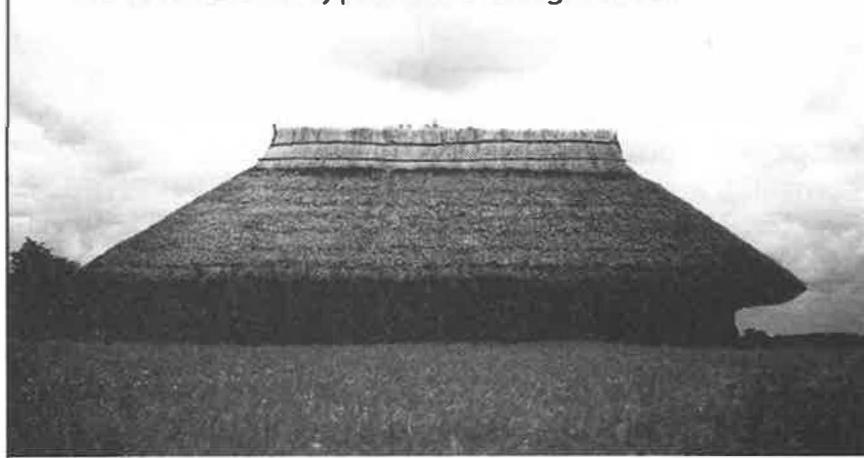
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AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

**Volume 17 - 2003**

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## The State of Lithuania: 750 Years Old



° King Mindaugas (pictured, above) was the first Lithuanian monarch to receive the Pope's crown. The coronation ceremony was carried out, on behalf of Pope Innocent IV, by Bishop Heinrich Heidenreich of Kulm in conjunction with the Livonian Master, on July 6, 1253. Mindaugas unified the Lithuanian state and started christianizing his people. He formed the strong nucleus of a state that has survived the internal strife and external attacks over the following 750 years.

This makes the state of Lithuania three times older than the United States of America; and three times older than Australia, as we know it today.

- Painting by J. Malinauskaitė / *Lithuanian Heritage*.

## Lithuania will join the European Union in 2004

**Berndt FRISCH and Magnus FRISCH**  
Greifswald / Germany

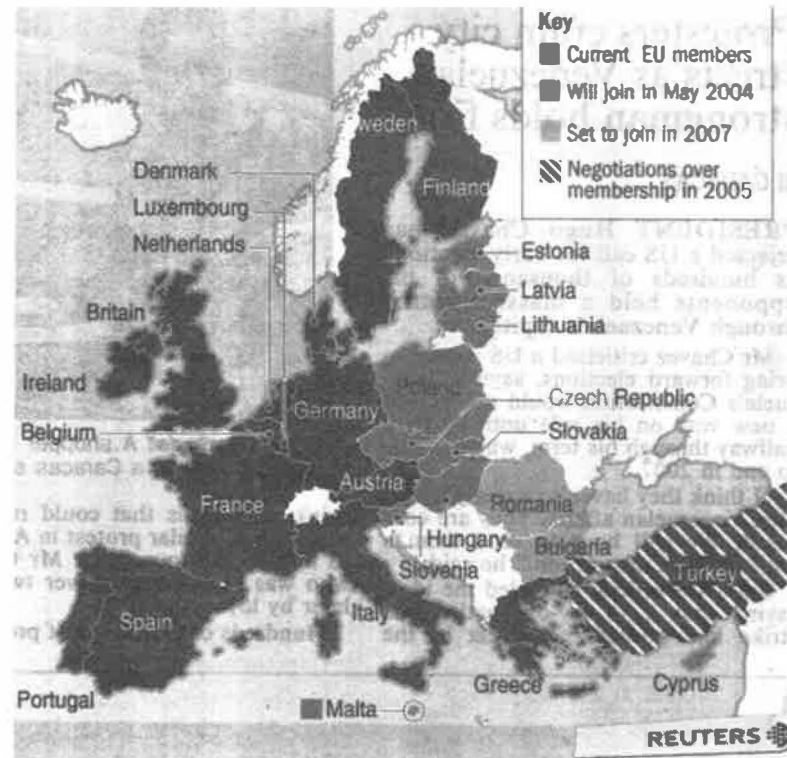
On May 1, 2004, the Republic of Lithuania will join the European Union (EU). In a referendum on May 10 and 11, 2003, 89.9 % of the electors voted in favour of joining the EU. 63.3 % of eligible persons voted.

President Rolandas Paksas said of this result, "I am proud that Lithuania has passed this test of democracy." For him, the referendum was the most important test for the electoral maturity in the history of his country. EU-president Romano Prodi hailed the consent of the Lithuanian people as an "historic vote" which has underlined the importance of Lithuania's joining the EU.

The Lithuanian government's determined publicity campaign focussed on farmers, women and pensioners contributed to this success. The government was supported by the Catholic Church. The Church referred, *inter alia*, to the position of Pope John Paul II who considered the EU to be the guarantor of peace. The Pope had spoken of the bigger states helping the smaller ones.

Lithuania joining the EU is based upon the country's considerable development since the restoration of sovereignty in August, 1991. Lithuania's political stability has been augmented by a sound economic growth showing the highest rise (6.7%) of all the candidate states wishing to join the EU in 2002. Lithuania's exports developed surprisingly strongly, with increases of 13.21% and 11% between 2000 and 2002. The national budget deficit decreased to 1.2 % of gross domestic product<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> EDITOR'S NOTE: Lithuania's currency unit *Litas* is pegged to the euro, at the exchange rate of 3.4528 litas to one euro. Reinoldijus Šarkinas, Governor of Lithuania's central bank, stated on May 19 that Lithuania should keep its current exchange rate fixed until adopting the euro in 2007. "The likely and appropriate course is to enter the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM-2) when we join the EU in 2004", Mr Šarkinas said, "[and] let [Lithuania's] currency board system 'die a natural death' after 2004".



**The European Union is expanding rapidly.** - Map by courtesy of Reuters.

However, of all the candidate states seeking admission to the EU, Lithuania is still one of the poorest. The average standard of living in Lithuania is only 30 % of the average living standard in the EU. According to official statements, the unemployment rate at the end of 2002 was 10.9 %.

Despite all the euphoria, observers will perceive Lithuania only as a "second class" member of the EU. The reason being that out of consideration for Germany and Austria, with strongly strained labour markets, there will be restricted freedom of movement for workers within the European market. Furthermore, the European agrarian plan intends that the joining countries will only get the full amount of financial aid for agriculture after ten years. That is a problem for Lithuania, because its agriculture has a share of 8 % in the gross domestic product; but 17 % of all employees work in agriculture.

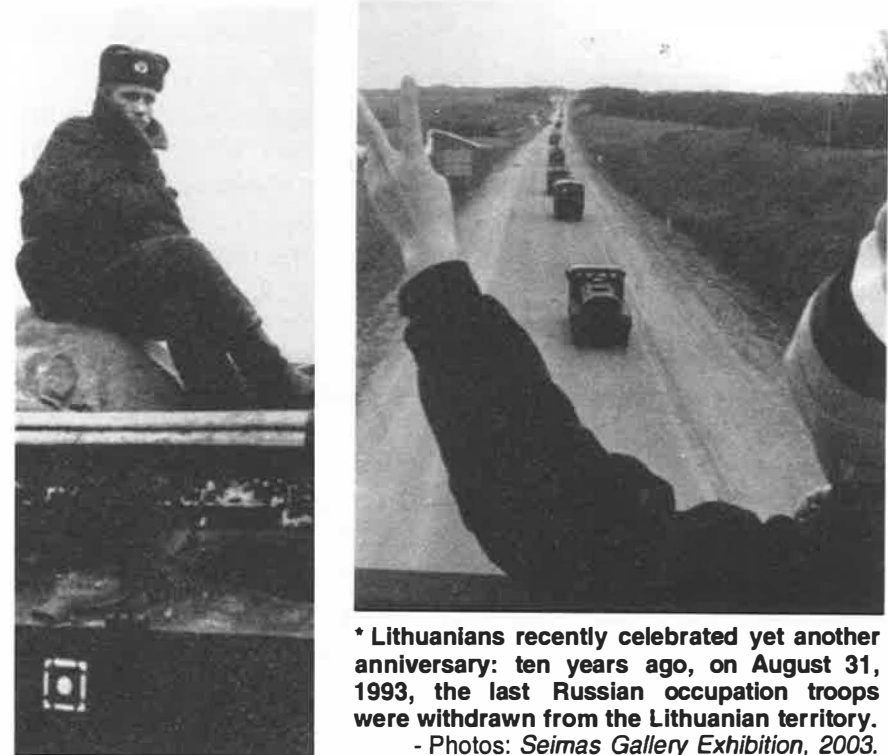
In addition the small cultivated areas – 95 % of the Lithuanian farmers cultivate less than 50 ha – hinder the economic competition.

In view of this situation it will be necessary to direct the euphoria of the Lithuanians into realistic thinking before they join. They must know that the experts assume, the eastern European countries will need at least thirty years to halve the present differences of income.

*Dr. Berndt Frisch (60) is a teacher of History and German, member of the "Baltische Gesellschaft in Deutschland" and is the author of numerous articles and a book on Lithuania..*

*Magnus Frisch (23), cand. phil. studies Philosophy, Latin and History at the Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität at Greifswald (Germany).*

## Gone, but Not Forgotten



\* Lithuanians recently celebrated yet another anniversary: ten years ago, on August 31, 1993, the last Russian occupation troops were withdrawn from the Lithuanian territory.

- Photos: Seimas Gallery Exhibition, 2003.

## Women in Lithuania and Feminism

**Dalia MARCINKEVIČIENĖ**

University of Vilnius

Shortly before the restoration of Lithuania's independence, in 1990, Lithuanian women were very active in the political and public life. In 1996 women comprised more than 18% of the Lithuanian Parliament, despite the fact that usually women comprise about 15% in parliaments all over the world. During the last elections in 2001 women lost ground from their former position, but still comprise more than 10% in the current Parliament.

A few years ago there were even some public discussions about establishing a compulsory gender quota system during the election. According to such a system our Parliament would have been comprised equally – 50% women and 50% men. Even though such a quota was never instituted, the proposal itself tells us that women have a voice in the political life of Lithuania. I should add that women still have quotas in the main political parties of the country.

As a political achievement of women the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in Lithuania bill was passed by Parliament in 1998 and was the first legislation of its kind in the region. The next year the Office of Controller to Guarantee Equal Rights for Women and Men was established. The main aim of the Office is to check out and to eliminate gender inequality in all possible areas of public and private life. The Office is very visible publicly and even teenagers are aware of its presence. Every year the Office receives many complaints regarding gender inequality. Peoples' letters to the Office range from the complaints of sexual harassment in the work place to requests to change the order of writing of female surnames (according to Lithuanian tradition, one can recognize from a female's last name whether a woman is married or not. Some women are offended by this).

Women are also active in the labour market. It is evident that more and more women are eager to start their own small business. By 1997, women had established 30% of enterprises and men had

established 70%. Today 40% of all enterprises are launched and operated by women. Moreover, the last census discovered that for the first time in the history of Lithuania women's unemployment is less than men's, i.e., today among the number of unemployed people in Lithuania, 20% are men and 14% are women.

Lithuanian women were the first to start grass roots movements in our country. Today we have more than 150 non-governmental women's organizations, dealing with street children, the elderly, drug addicts, women's unemployment, the gypsy community in Lithuania and so on. The movement of women's grass roots organizations is quite well organized and even has its representative in the Government.



Lithuanian women are encouraged to take new initiatives. This innovative market was run as part of "Project Woman '97". Photo: Algirdas Kairys.

Today many issues regarding women, families and children are dealt with both by governmental institution and experts from women's organizations.

In the last ten years women in Lithuania have also achieved significant results in education and science. For instance, among the professors in medicine we have 47% women (188) and 53% men (215); in social sciences women comprise 45% ((238) and men – 55% (296); and the total number of women professors in humanities has increased. There are 54% (257) women professors and 46% (222) men professors in humanities. I should also add that a few years ago the rector of Vilnius University, which is the largest and the main university in Lithuania, issued a Decree setting equal quotas for academic men and women in holding positions of departmental chairs.

You will find women in every aspect of life in everyday Lithuania. They were the first to start working with computers and then to use the Internet; they constantly attend foreign language courses or try to study a new profession and are receptive to new ideas.

Nevertheless, even with all that has been said here today it doesn't mean that Lithuania is a paradise for women. Not at all. All the data I have mentioned regarding women are real, correct and speak supposedly about a very purpose-oriented, active woman in Lithuania who is almost equal to a man. And yet, some sociologists and psychologists warn us that, more often than not, women's public activities are determined not by their own choice but are impacted by men's inactivity and the masculine crisis in the post communist Lithuanian society.

For example, the current rate of suicide in males in Lithuania is one of the highest in the world (and a few years ago it was the highest). More and more unemployed men are not seeking work, but simply lie on a couch at home, watch TV and wait for the wife to bring her salary home in order to support a family. That explains why male unemployment is higher than that of women.

It seems that today the Lithuanian man is not able to compete with the new post communist conditions and is becoming more and more depressed.



- Photo: Černiauskas Brothers.

I do not want to say that women's public activity is profoundly defined by men's position in our society and she becomes responsible for both "her" and "him". Nevertheless, the so-called self-made woman's type could emerge in contemporary Lithuanian society not only as a consequence of the women's movement and feminism, but as a result of a Soviet tradition when women were responsible for almost everything.

Another interesting side of women's identity in post communist society is the following: for the last ten years more and more women in Lithuania are really becoming not only independent financially but have become self-confident enough to create a life on their own. This supposedly should imply that women in Lithuania are open-minded and have some feministic approach. On the contrary, as I said, you can find a lot of independent women in Lithuania but the majority of them categorically deny feminism and women's solidarity.

Sometimes the views of these women about feminism are very defensive. For instance, a famous Lithuanian theatre director, whose performances usually are centred on particularly strong



female characters, never misses a single occasion to claim publicly that she is not and has never been feminist, because, as she said, "she loves men and they love her".

A Lithuanian actress, whose movies are entirely centred on women's lives, confirms that she is not a feminist by any means, because according to her: "she doesn't want to fight with men". In reality the actress was probably forced to fight them throughout all of her professional life. In most cases even women from grass roots organizations whose activities are dealing exclusively with women, avoid naming themselves as feminists.

This lack of feminist identity and a lack of engagement with gender identity reflects the legacy of Soviet times, where after fifty years of living under the regime, we thought of ourselves not as women and men, but as Soviet people – a collective identity rather than an individual identity. When I ask women, "If you are not a feminist, than who are you?" the usual answer is, "I am a person, a human being" with no claim of gender. Such an answer is almost meaningless in this post Soviet era as it is too much a reminder of life under a regime that totally devalued individuality and any gender ideology.

There are several assumptions explaining the lack of a broad feminist movement in post-Communist Lithuania and why the term "feminism" itself has been more or less discredited not only in our society but everywhere in East Central Europe, i.e. in all post-socialist countries of the region. Regarding this, I took the argument of American feminist scholars Gail Kligman and Susan Gal as presented in their recent book, *The Politics of Gender After Socialism*. Their views seem to me both convincing and acceptable. According to Kligman and Gal, the first encounters of Western or, better to say, American feminists with the Eastern European women in 1990 were disappointing to both sides. Westerners reproached East European women for the desire to rely and to depend on their husbands instead of on themselves and therefore not understanding their own oppression.

American feminists also reproached them for a lack of solidarity and for the lack of interest in feminism in general. On the other

hand, Easterners accused American feminists of not understanding their historical perspective. Soviet women always felt a lack of closeness to their husbands and children. After the fall of Communism, women of Eastern Europe wanted to come back to their family and not run away from it, as was the case during the years of Communism.

In 1990 there were probably very few women who would have gone along with the calls for the "emancipation" of the family, just because this sounded too similar to the Communist ideology toward family. For that same reason strong, independent women are not always the desirable ideal of a woman in post-socialist countries. In many cases women in post-Communist Lithuania have been interested not in autonomy from their husbands and male partners, but in an increased involvement with their family life. Probably it must be understood that there can exist historically different roots of women's "dependence" in the private spheres of different societies. So, feminism in the private sphere has not been taken for granted by the women in Eastern Europe.

*Dr. Dalia Marcinkevičienė is Chair of Women's Studies Centre, at the University of Vilnius.*



\* The future women of Lithuania: Members of the children's Fashion Theatre of Kaunas, performing at Girstutis House.- Photo:Algirdas Kairys.

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## Jonas Žemaitis (1909-1954):

*A Lithuanian leader in the anti-Soviet fight*

Thierry PINET

Brussels

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Lithuania was a neutral country at the outbreak of World War II. In spite of this neutrality, Russian armed forces invaded Lithuania on June 15, 1940, followed by the German occupation in 1941-1944 and then, by the second Russian annexation until 1990. The Lithuanians rose against their foreign rulers in 1944 and continued their armed resistance for eight long years. The following article profiles one of the leaders of these 'partisans' (as the Lithuanian resistance fighters were known).*

On November 26, 1954, Jonas Žemaitis was executed in the Boutyrki prison in Moscow. This is how one of the last leaders of Lithuanian armed resistance against the Soviet occupying forces disappeared. His personal qualities, and especially his skill as a military chief, make him one of the most distinguished figures of Lithuanian patriotism. His fate deserves to be made known to a Western audience unaware of many of the tragic events associated with the Cold War.

Jonas Žemaitis was born in Palanga, on the Lithuanian littoral on 15 March 1909. In 1926, he entered the Military academy of Kaunas. At the end of his studies he entered the artillery forces and was posted to several units before being selected to study at the Artillery School of Fontainebleau in France between 1936 and 1938.



*Above right:*

This last photo of Jonas Žemaitis was taken in a KGB prison, 1953.

At the end of 1944 when the Soviets re-occupied Lithuanian territory, he was forced to hide in order to avoid being captured by their security units. In April 1945 he decided to join the Lithuanian Liberation Army. This clandestine military organization would become one of the major elements of the armed struggle against the Soviet occupying forces.

During the summer 1945, he was named chief of staff of the 'Zebenskis' division, which operated in the Raseiniai district. The year 1946 marked the beginning of a re-organization of the resistance groups. In May, Jonas Žemaitis took command of the Kęstutis military district, which encompassed three local precincts. In 1946 and 1947 he embarked on an audit of the various armed groups, regrouping the forces, strengthening the structures of command and promoting discipline and instruction among these various units. In his military district he assisted with the circulation of the *Laisvės Varpas* newspaper [the Bell of Freedom], which had a print run of between 600 and 800 copies every fifteen days. This publication gave the Lithuanian public some information on the international situation - free from the bias of Soviet propaganda.

Despite disputes within sections of the armed movement as to whether or not resistance should continue - together with Soviet attempts to infiltrate it - Žemaitis remained focused. During the summer 1948 he further rationalised the paramilitary structures, bringing his 'Kęstutis' district and the 'Žemaičiai' and 'Prisikėlimo' military areas under the same regional command of Western Lithuania.

In February 1949, Jonas Žemaitis became the supreme commander of the clandestine resistance, with the rank of the General, after a meeting of all the delegates of the southern and western zones advocated the integration of nine commands. The Lithuania Fighters' Movement [*Lietuvos Laisvės Kovų Sąjūdis/LLKS*] was interested in more than just a military outcome, however. Its ambition was to promote the moral principles inspired by Christianity, and to foster a respect for international law. In this way, the armed struggle against the occupying forces was identified with the political fight against totalitarianism, and the fight for the respect of individual values and human rights.

Under the leadership of Jonas Žemaitis, the Presidium of the Council of the LLKS covered the whole of the Lithuanian territory for the first time. Within this structure, the country was divided into three military areas and further into 'districts' to which units were attached. The lack of secure communications resources led Žemaitis to develop a mail system where safety requirements were paramount.



\* Jonas Žemaitis, photographed in 1947, during his term as commander of the Kęstutis military district. Antanas Liesys, a member of his staff, is with him in the photo.

Always on the go, he frequently inspected the sub-units in order to intensify discipline, to fight against alcohol abuse, to chair the local councils responsible for judging breaches of discipline and acts of treachery, and to keep on top of the training system.

In December 1951, he suffered a fit of cerebral thrombosis. Unable to be moved, he was obliged to spend more than a year in an underground shelter in the forest of Simkaičiai (*Simkaičių miškas*, approximately 6 km NE of Jurbarkas).

By the spring of 1953, he had recovered, but, sadly, his good fortune did not last. He was betrayed. The MVD were able to spread soporific gases in Žemaitis's hiding place in May 1953, and he was captured alive.

Taken by plane to Moscow, Žemaitis was personally questioned for an hour by Beria, the chief of the Soviet Security Service. Throughout the year-long 'legal procedure', Jonas Žemaitis consistently refused to sign a confession of responsibility, despite being subjected to interrogation and even brainwashing. He was condemned to death, and refused to appeal but requested the presence of his son. Tragically, the MVD agreed only to show him a photograph of the latter, in *Komsomol* dress.

Captain Jonas Žemaitis was shot on 26 November 1954.

*Thierry Pinet, a Bachelor of Political and Diplomatic Sciences of the Free University of Brussels, is a former analyst of foreign politics for the Belgian Ministry of Defence, and Professor of Political Environment at the EPHEC (Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes Commerciales-Brussels). He is also the author of a study entitled "The armed resistance of the Lithuanians against the Soviets after 1944", a French-language work not yet published to date. - E-mail address: <pineth@yahoo.com>*



\* The bodies of dead Lithuanian partisans were left lying in market places and in other public places, for days on end. Soviet officials were hoping that families and friends would rush to be with the victims and thus unwittingly identify them.

Photo: Lietuvos karas, p.469.

## Our Scholarship Winner for 2003

Darien Rozentals (*pictured, right*) is the winner of the keenly contested \$5,000 Lithuanian Honours Scholarship at the University of Tasmania this year. A Bachelor of Arts graduate, Darien is now undertaking her Honours in the School of English, Journalism and European Languages. Her research thesis will focus on cultural memory, the interpretation of space in Lithuania and contemporary Lithuanian writers.



Darien is no stranger to Lithuania. She says, "Last year, I travelled through the Baltic States. Of Latvian descent, I was the first in my family to visit the country since World War Two. I was amazed with how attractive and dynamic the Baltic States were, especially Lithuania where I spent almost two months. I found the country to be not only culturally diverse, but also beautiful. In particular I loved Trakai and Vilnius. Later this year, I will be returning to Lithuania to research my thesis. I am very excited about it'.

*The Lithuanian Honours Scholarship is worth \$5,000 per annum. It was established at the University of Tasmania in 1997. It is offered annually to the best Honours candidate in any discipline who intends writing a dissertation on an approved Lithuanian topic. If none of the candidates reach a sufficiently high academic standard, the scholarship may not be awarded in that year.*

*The Lithuanian Honours Scholarship is administered by the University of Tasmania, but the money has been donated by the Lithuanian Studies Society, by Lithuanian organisations and by individuals. The present cash reserves will be exhausted by next year and the scholarship will stop unless new sponsors are found.*

*All donations for the Lithuanian Honours Scholarship at the University of Tasmania are tax deductible. They should be sent to University of Tasmania Foundation Inc, GPO Box 252-40 and must be clearly marked, For Lithuanian Honours Scholarship only.*

## Friends of the Prisoners

Simas Kudirka, a former prisoner in the Soviet Union, visited Tasmania in June 1960 and addressed a public meeting in Hobart Town Hall. He told a packed house about his sufferings and how a small postcard from an unknown sailor in the West had immediately improved his treatment by the Soviet authorities. When a voice in the audience asked, how we in Australia could help those still behind bars, Simas replied, "Write to them. Write".

In response to Simas's appeal, eight Tasmanians came together on July 7, 1980 and formed Friends of the Prisoners (FOP), an ecumenical Christian human rights organisation. A list of 692 Soviet prisoners of conscience was given to the group by Simas Kudirka. Each Friend agreed to adopt at least one prisoner, write to that prisoner every month and to pray for him or her. This became the minimum expected from every new member.

From this humble beginning, the membership grew to over 130 Friends by June 1982, not only in Tasmania, but also in other states of Australia, in New Zealand, Britain and Finland. By 1987, the group had 900 active members and continued to expand to other countries, such as Japan, South Korea and Germany.

Many active FOP office holders and ordinary members were young people: university or high school students and young workers. FOP did not work in isolation, maintaining close contact with other human rights organisations worldwide.

During the 1980s, the Soviets released a few prisoners. Friends and other sponsors brought them to Australia, to meet the Friends who had worked for their release and to tell all Australians about their experiences. By 1991, every Soviet prisoner of conscience on FOP lists had been freed, and the organisation was disbanded.

**This is only the beginning of the story of the Friends of the Prisoners. It is a warm story of deep human compassion that had embraced the entire globe. The History of FOP is now being written by Darien Rozentals and Kate Gross, and will be published in 2004, as a limited edition book, by Lithuanian Studies Society at the University of Tasmania, PO Box 777, Sandy Bay, Tas. 7006, Australia.**

## National Inferiority Complex

Viktoras ALEKNA

Vilnius

Why don't Lithuanians value themselves more highly?

Lithuanians are the subject of interest not just from their own media and scholars, but from foreigners, especially at this time when Lithuania is preparing to join the European Union (EU). There are 13 candidate nations for membership in the EU. The European Commission has taken an interest in the people of those countries and has conducted studies to find out more about their level of culture and education, what they say about themselves, and how they value themselves.

It appears that Lithuanians are not very proud of being Lithuanian. Of the nations studied, the Slovenians have the highest opinion of themselves, next the Poles, and down the list through the other nations to Lithuania in second-last place, with only the Estonians below them on the table in thirteenth place.

Why is this so? In the time of Vytautas the Great, Lithuania was the largest and most powerful country in Europe. The Lithuanian language has the oldest form of any Indo-European language still spoken. Aren't Lithuanians proud of that?



And today Lithuanians are the best-educated nation of all 13 candidates: at least 92% of Lithuanians also speak Russian, and quite a few speak Polish, German, English, French, Italian, Spanish and Latvian. Lithuanians are in first place among the 13 candidate nations for knowledge of other languages. So why is it that Lithuanians value themselves so poorly?

I think, the national inferiority complex has historical roots. The great Lithuania of former times lost its grandeur and even its independence several centuries ago. Even before the loss of sovereignty, the ruling class of Lithuania had begun to abandon their native language, considering it to be a lowly language. The simple folk who spoke it were oppressed serfs, who carried a heavy burden of exploitation and oppression from foreign

overlords as well as their own local masters. It was not until the middle of the 19th century that Bishop Motiejus Valančius led these downtrodden serfs to understand that they are honourable Lithuanians, that there is nothing lowly about their language, and that they should not only be speaking Lithuanian to each other but also praising God in it (instead of Polish). The national consciousness that began to be raised at that time came to fruition on 16 February 1918 when Lithuanians declared independence and began the defence and development of their again sovereign state.

But the work of nation-building was interrupted after just 22 years. It is true that in that short time a whole generation grew up that was very conscious of Lithuanian nationhood. However this nation that had only begun to thrive and create its own future was brought to its knees by a new occupation lasting 50 years. The noxious practices of the occupation harmed the Lithuanians physically and spiritually, and did enormous damage to their self-esteem. Hence today Lithuanians do not rejoice sufficiently about their nation's past greatness, nor about the beauty of their language and their folksongs, nor about the heroic resistance against Soviet occupation put up by the 'forest brothers' (Lithuanian anti-Soviet partisans). The best sons of the nation were butchered by Soviet troops in the Lithuanian forests. Others had their body and spirit broken by forced labour in *Gulags* in the

Soviet taiga and tundra. Yet others were destroyed by gruelling work in the fields of collective farms, factories, or the Soviet army.

Even though Lithuania has already been independent and pursuing its own national interests for 12 years, a certain percentage of the population still asks, "What has freedom and independence brought us over these 12 years?" These countrymen have difficulty in grasping that freedom has to be struggled for, that we have to rebuild our independent country by ourselves.



Photo: Brothers Černiauskas.

Many of them are disillusioned with independence and freedom because at the top of the government, acting like rulers rather than public servants, many of the top administrators of the Soviet era are still in their posts, because a large portion of the national economy, even agriculture, is still in the hands of the former Soviet factory managers and directors of collective farms.

Some are of the opinion that Lithuanians do not fully appreciate their independence and freedom because they achieved it 'too easily', without extensive battles and spilling of blood.

Such people forget that enough Lithuanian blood has already been spilt, not just in Lithuania, but also in far off prison colonies in places such as Vorkuta, Norilsk, Magadan and Karaganda, from 1940 to 1990. That blood was spilt for the cause of Lithuanian freedom. Lithuanians today can be rightly proud that they are ahead of their neighbours in having fifteen universities, 100,000 tertiary students, thousands of teachers and academic staff and large numbers of practitioners in many fields of art and culture.

But for some reason these people of high education and culture live their own lives, somewhat aloof from the rest of the nation. The so-called 'upper class' is inclined toward Western culture, while the young generation is fascinated by Western pseudo-culture. The youth of Lithuania is being bombarded with the cheapest form of popular culture by all the television and print media. The 'bread and circuses' approach to popular culture is also being stimulated by the various festivals, celebrations and contests put on by Local Government committees and various private and public enterprises. Many of these events are often less impressive than the pre-war communal picnics, since these events all too frequently end up in drunkenness and even fisticuffs.

Not long ago Cardinal Audrys Juozas Bačkis said that when he visited Lithuania 10 years ago he believed it would take Lithuania about a decade to effect a spiritual recovery. But a decade later it is clear that even two decades won't be enough; it will take a whole new generation for Lithuania to recover spiritually, civically, and in terms of nationhood. He is probably right.

Therein, perhaps, lies the explanation for the fact that such a small percentage of Lithuanians are truly proud to be Lithuanians.

**English translation by Gintautas KAMINSKAS.**

*Viktoras Alekna, B.A. (VDU, Kaunas) is a Lithuanian writer and former high-school teacher. He spent 12 years as a prisoner of conscience in the notorious Vorkuta concentration camps and later recorded his experiences in his book, "Oi, ta Vorkuta" (in Lithuanian, 2002).*

*Gintautas Kaminskas, B.A.Hons., M.A. (Monash) is a professional translator of Lithuanian to English and English to Lithuanian.*

## The Contemporary Lithuanian Theatre

### Helmutas ŠABASEVIČIUS

#### Vilnius



The political changes which began a little over a decade ago and relaxed the grip of the severely centralised ideologies and traditions, have brought about unimagined changes in Lithuanian culture. Although the time was ripe and the opportunities so promptly seized, it would be wrong to see Lithuanian arts in the latter half of the twentieth century as solely conformist and ideologised. In fact, their independent spirit had found artistic expression often enough, fuelled by a tangible and growing modernism in European culture from the early 20th century on.

A strong Lithuanian theatre tradition has long been well known in Europe. Even in Soviet times, it was associated with an interesting directorial style, despite the fact that, as late as 1990, acting skills was the only area of theatre training actually available in Lithuania itself. All the senior, well known directors - Jonas Vaitkus, Eimuntas Nekrošius, Rimas Tuminas - learnt their craft in Moscow or Saint Petersburg.

- **Top of the Page: Meilė (Love). Anželika Cholina's Dance Theatre, 2002.**  
Choreographer: Anželika Cholina. Stage artist, Marius Jacovskis.  
- Photo: Vladimiras Gulevičius.

The phenomenon of Lithuanian culture best known in Europe is Nekrošius. It was he who first decided to sever professional ties with the State theatre system, abandoning a secure position as the Youth Theatre's senior director, to become a freelance artist. After taking part in the LIFE festival as a producer, he started his own theatre company, Meno Fortas <www.menofortas.lt> which last year presented Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Othello*. These have aroused enormous interest in and outside Lithuania, and have won for their director the Lithuanian National Prize and the prestigious European UBU Theatre Prize, among other awards. These productions are evidence of Nekrošius' rich use of visual metaphor in shaping his pieces, and his ability to enhance them in unexpected ways. Two examples are his casting of Lithuania's top pop singer Andrius Mamontovas in the eponymous role in *Hamlet* in 1997, and prima ballerina Eglė Špokaitė as Desdemona in *Othello* in 2000. Currently, Nekrošius is in rehearsal with a play based on *The Seasons*, by Kristijonas Donelaitis.

Oskaras Koršunovas is another name theatre-goers are very familiar with. One of the younger generation of directors, he rose to prominence during the breakdown of the old [political] order, and was a 1989 graduate of the first Directors' Course offered by Jonas Vaitkus at the Lithuanian Academy of Music. Koršunovas' work began to develop during his time with the National Drama Theatre (www.teatras.lt) and helped to establish playwrights Sigita Parulskis' *P.S., Byla OK* (performed at the Bonn Biennale), and French playwright Bernard Marie Koltes' *Roberto Zucco* in the Lithuanian theatre repertoire. Recognising a need, he formed the Oskaras Koršunovas Theatre (www.okt.lt) in 2000. This active and agile theatre group has established fruitful contact with others abroad and with such international theatrical events as the Avignon Festival.

Koršunovas does stage classics such as Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Bugakov's The Master and Margarita*, both of which are popular with Lithuanian audiences and are frequent entries in international festivals. However, his troupe is notable more for their performances of controversial,

new works, for example, Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and F---ing* and Marius von Mayenburg's *The Face of Fire* and *Parasites*.

Koršunovas' theatre repertoire continues to be built around scripts which are original, topical and new. Nevertheless, his most recent premiere was the Sophocles tragedy *Oedipus Rex* at the Duisburg International Theatre Festival, *Theater der Welt*, which was a German, Austrian, Swiss and Lithuanian co-production.

In any talk of the contemporary theatre scene in Lithuania mention must be made of the Theatre and Film Information and Education Centre <www.theatre.lt> whose head, Audronis Liuga, is responsible for initiating a Spring event called *New Drama*, now in its fourth year. Thanks to this, Lithuanian theatre enthusiasts have the opportunity of keeping abreast of current European trends and interpreting various contemporary dramas for themselves.

The sketches and projects in hand shown during this event often develop into serious theatre productions. Such was the case for Koršunovas with Ravenhill's and von Mayenburg's works, and for Gintaras Varnas with Jean-Luc Lagarce's *In a distant Land*, which became the hit of the 2001 season for the Kaunas Drama Theatre. The Opera and Ballet Theatre (www.opera.lt), the Lithuanian Philharmonic and the music theatres in Kaunas and Klaipėda continue to be the traditional venues for musical performances,



- Eglė Špokaitė (left) and Aurelijus Daraškevičius in *The Red Giselle*. The Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre, 2001. Choreographer, Boris Eifman. Artist, Viačeslav Okunev. - Photo: Michailis Ruškovskis.



while international festivals provide new ones. These festivals are a chance to showcase new works which, in the normal course of events, do not attract government funding. In 2000 the Vilnius Festival featured the country's first national opera premiere in a decade - Bronius Kutavičius' *Lokys* (The Bear), after Prosper Merimee's novel. Two years later the same festival presented Mindaugas Urbaitis' ballet *Acid City*.

Dance theatre, too, it is quite apparent, has been revitalised. Dancers of the Vilnius Opera and Ballet Theatre had long dominated the scene as the only professional troupe. Choreographers from abroad have been mostly working there, in recent years. Amongst them was Vladimiras Vasiljevas, a famous dancer in the Russian ballet toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He produced Sergei Prokofyev's *Romeo and Juliet*. Another foreign choreographer is Borisas Eifmanas who produced *The Red Giselle* and who is now preparing the premiere of *The Russian Hamlet*, for the opening of the 2003 Autumn season. Among other contemporary choreographers we should mention Krzysztof Pastor of Poland (*Karmen*, *Acid City*); and Xin Peng Wang from China (*Šventasis pavasaris [The holy spring]* and *Carmina Burana*).

The Lithuanian Ballet Company continues to boast talented soloists, but now they are not alone. The situation began to change in 1996 when the Dance Information Centre ([www.dance.lt](http://www.dance.lt)) was created. The Centre, headed by Audronis Imbrasas, has organised the Contemporary Dance Festival for several years in a row now, conducts seminars on contemporary dance and promotes the work of choreographers who have yet to make their name. It has given its full backing to the independent dance companies which have set up with the Centre's encouragement. Two of these are Jurijus Smoriginas's Vilnius Ballet, and Anželika Cholina Dance Theatre ([www.ach.lt](http://www.ach.lt)). Cholina is a young and energetic choreographer whose productions of *Women's Songs* (Moterų Dainos), inspired by Marlene Dietrich's songs, *Tango in Fa*, and *Love* (Meilė) are all marked by an affecting emotiveness, clever attention to production detail, and an ability to successfully marry dance with acting.

*Below, left: Eglė Špokaltė as Desdemona in William Shakespeare's Othello. Meno fortas (The fortress of art), 2000. Producer Eimuntas Nekrošius. Visual artist, Nadežda Gultiajeva. -Photo: Dmitrijus Matvejevas.*



Clearly, theatre life in Lithuania today is intense like never before. No less intense is the criticism of government policy on culture, the attempts to address the inadequacies of the Lithuanian laws which regulate cultural development, and the attacks on the imperfections of a subsidy and support system from government and non-government sources. The whirlwind of these rapid changes has flung out to the periphery, some in the artistic community who are not less talented, but simply less forceful.

For some years now, the motley world of today's Lithuanian art and culture has been absorbing both the positive and the negative from the perceived cultural experiences of the rest of the world. The resultant salient features of the current scene are dynamic: the constant break-up of artist groups, the disbanding of theatre collectives rapidly replaced by new personnel, the closure of some galleries and the opening of new ones, new theatre collectives and new ideas.

**English translation by Regina KRUTULYTĖ-SHARE.**

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*Regina KRUTULYTĖ-SHARE, B.A., Dip.Ed., Cert.TESOL (Tas.) is a Tasmanian-based language teacher who spent a great part of the past decade in Lithuania teaching, translating and editing.*

## Aitvaras

Algimantas P. TAŠKŪNAS

University of Tasmania

In Lithuanian mythology, *Aitvaras* is a mysterious creature that brings wealth and prosperity to its master. An *aitvaras* comes in many shapes and sizes. Outdoors, he may appear as a dragon in flight, with a long, fiery tail. Indoors, an *aitvaras* may take the form of a rooster or a cat.

*Aitvaras* does not undertake any productive work. He steals from other people's properties and takes the loot to his master. This may include money, grain and milk products, especially butter and cottage cheese.

An *aitvaras* can be bought, but only at the very large markets, such as Riga, Klaipėda and Karaliaučius (Königsberg). You can also hatch it, or obtain it from the devil in exchange for your soul.

Occasionally, a person may find and bring home a simple object like a piece of rope or a parcel of old newspapers – and unwittingly acquire an *Aitvaras* in this way.

*Aitvaras* eats only cooked food, mainly porridge and scrambled eggs. In this, he differs fundamentally from *kaukas* (a different kind of a Lithuanian goblin) who exists on raw foods.

Once in your house, an *Aitvaras* is very difficult to get rid of. Various "recipes" circulate in the Lithuanian folklore. One method to drive an *Aitvaras* away is to set him a task which he cannot perform.

An ancient folk-tale, going back at least to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, tells us about a Lithuanian farmer's unfortunate involvement with *Aitvaras*.<sup>1</sup> The man was walking home on a stormy autumn night when he spotted a black, rain-soaked chicken under a wild pear tree. The chicken was shivering with cold and the farmer, taking pity on the tiny bird, carried it home. It soon turned out that the chicken was an *Aitvaras*. He started delivering potatoes, grain and

<sup>1</sup> GREIMAS, Algirdas Julius (1990). *Tautos atminties beiėškant: Apie dievus ir žmones*. Vilnius & Chicago: A.Mackaus knygu leidimo fondas, p.90.



When a new farmhouse was built in a village, gossip would spread that an *Aitvaras* had provided the money for it. Photo: R.Tarvydas.

cash. However, the farmer was a God-fearing person and wouldn't have a bar of such dishonest practices. He wanted to get rid of his *Aitvaras*, but did not know how.

Meanwhile, neighbours reported seeing a huge pillar of light that kept descending upon the farmer's house at night. Local rumour had it that the farmer was hoarding a devil. Finally, the community decided that the man had to abandon his home, leaving his *aitvaras* inside. The farmer hurriedly sold his grain reserves, animals, all he could - and bought a new home a mile away. As he vacated his old homestead with the last of his belongings, the building was torched from all four corners.

The farmer was naive, of course, when he believed that he could destroy an *Aitvaras* with fire. Just as his wagon drew away from the *apidėmė* (former homestead), the farmer suddenly heard a black chicken singing at the back of his vehicle. The *Aitvaras* was there, happily looking forward to settling down in his new home...

Algimantas P. Taškūnas, OAM, Ph.D. B.A. Hons. (Tas.), M.Ed. Admin. (N.E.), B.Com. (W.Aust.), is the Editor of this journal.



**Above:** Vaclovas Ratas, *The Hunt*, 1952 (Perth). Wood engraving, 14.5 x 14 cm.

**Opposite (on Page 35):** Vaclovas Ratas in 1934, as a young 24-year-old artist.

## Vaclovas Ratas

Tiiu REISSAR

Sydney

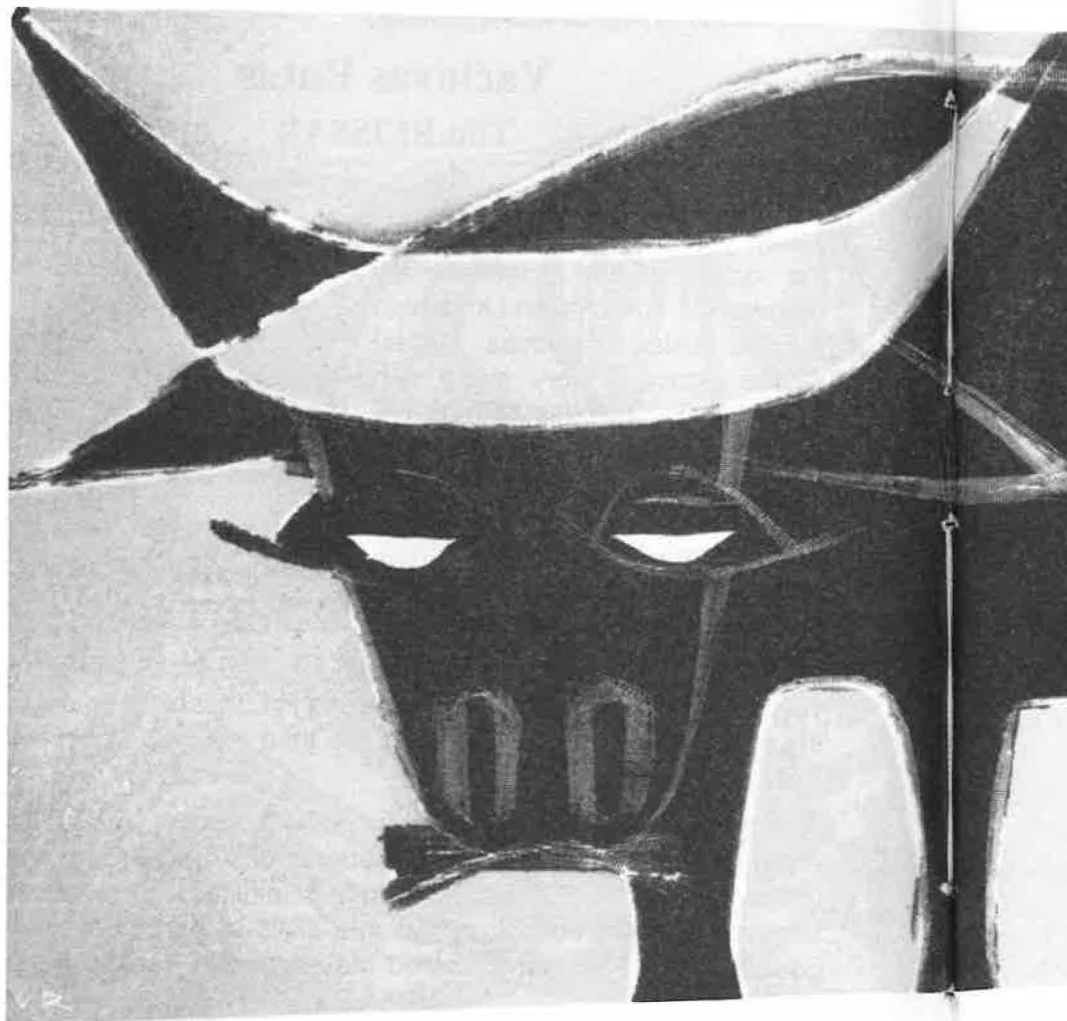
Thirty years have passed since the death of the internationally renowned Australian-Lithuanian graphic artist, Vaclovas Ratas, whose legacy is very much with us today. Vaclovas Rataiskis-Ratas was born on February 25, 1910 in Paseirė\_village, Lazdijai county, Lithuania. The Lithuanian Art Museum honoured the artist, by attaching a plaque, in 1999, to the house where he was born.



Ratas had three distinct creative periods. The first - his formative years, studies and subsequent success in Lithuania. His second - the period of exile in Germany and the third - of new beginnings in Australia.

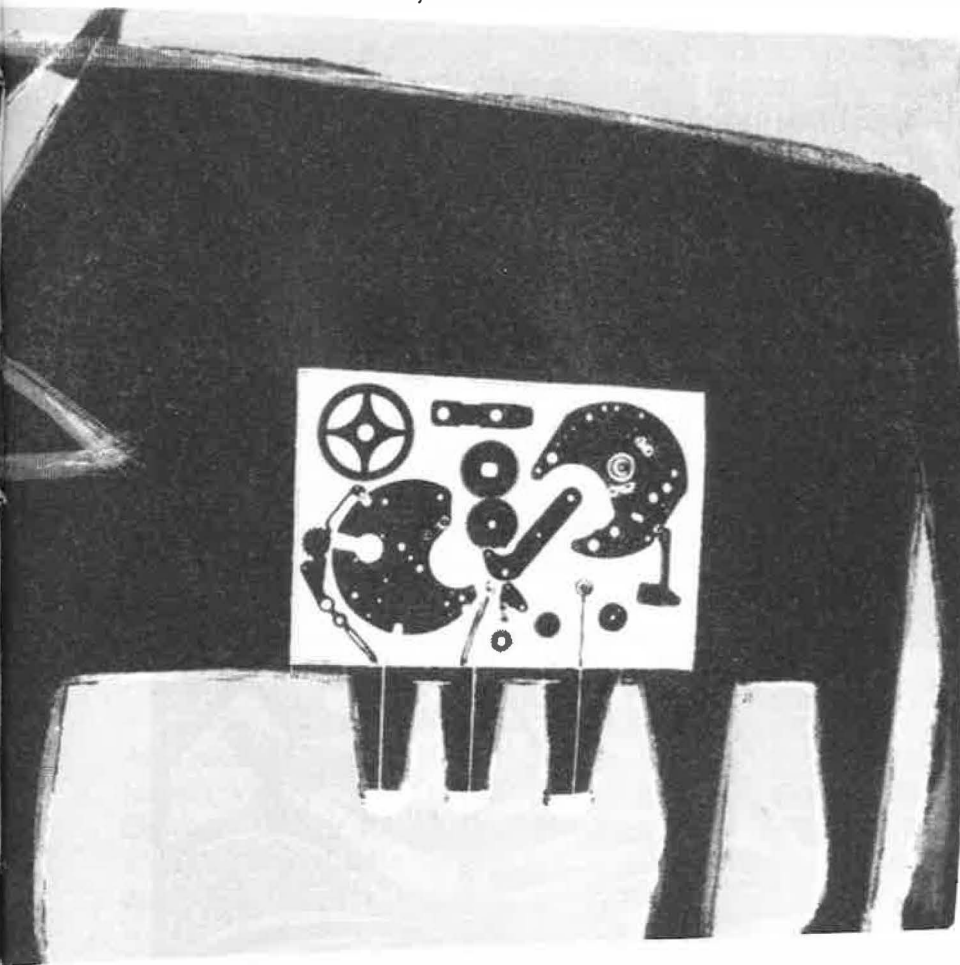
Having shown exceptional talent for drawing from a young age, he enrolled in the Kaunas National Academy of Art, where he studied under the noted Professor Adomas Galdikas, from whom he acquired a broad outlook on art and skills of printmaking. Ratas graduated in 1935 and furthered his studies in Venice, Florence and Rome.

By 1933 Ratas had already made a name for himself in art circles having joined the groups "Art" and "Forma". After graduation he illustrated the book "*Seku Seku Pasaką*" and began participating in art exhibitions in Lithuania and beyond. At the International Art Exhibition in Paris in 1937, Ratas was awarded the Prix d'Honneur for his woodcut illustrations of "*Juratė and Kastytis*", a ballad by the Lithuanian poet Maironis. The same year he took part in an international exhibition of lithographs and woodcuts in Chicago, USA. He achieved considerable recognition as one of the leading young graphic artists in Lithuania. His works were purchased by notable collectors and galleries in Europe and USA.



Between 1937 and 1944, Ratas was a senior curator of art at Čiurlionis Gallery, of Vytautas Magnus Cultural Museum in Kaunas. Then the advancing Soviet front forced him to flee to Vienna with his family. After the war, moving to Augsburg, Germany, he became art editor of the newspaper *Žiburiai* and ran his own art school.

He participated in the International Graphic Arts and Book Exhibition in Belgium, the Netherlands, Paris and Germany. Ratas took part in publishing *40 Woodcuts* (1946), *Lithuanian Art in Exile* (1948) and his woodcuts illustrated the book *The Twelve Ravens* (1949).



**Vaclovas Ratas, *Milk Factory*, 1970 (Sydney).** Woodblock & Metal Collage Print, 35 x 66.5 cm.

In 1949, Ratas and his family migrated to Australia, first to Perth then in 1954 to Sydney. He worked as designer-model maker at Darbyshire Pottery in Perth and Diana Pottery in Sydney. He enjoyed the challenges of pottery, and he produced exciting new forms and metallic glazes not seen in Australia before.

Roger Butler, in the book *The Europeans* (National Gallery of Australia), writes, "The speed with which the emigre artist embraced Aboriginal art is astounding. Vaclovas Ratas who landed in Perth in 1949 produced woodcuts that incorporated

Aboriginal motifs by the end of that year". Ratas' two major wood engraving exhibitions in Perth were in 1951 and 1953, featuring 21 West Australian images.

Renowned for his graphic works in Europe, Ratas was now in a country where his art was not understood; where a "print" still meant a reproduction. The attitude to printmaking was the same in Sydney as in Perth, except that in Sydney Ratas was not alone. He joined the Contemporary Art Society and embarked on his new role as a pioneer. He gathered a group of printmakers who all saw the need to raise public awareness and understanding of their art.

Ratas was the force behind the mounting of the First Australian Graphic Art Exhibition at David Jones Gallery in 1960. Artists from all states took part and money raised by NSW Lithuanians. This exhibition was the first of its kind in Australia, as many of the processes used had not previously been seen here. Amongst the most innovative works were Ratas' prints made from plaster blocks.



Vaclovas Ratas, *The Trees*, 1953 (Perth, WA). Wood engraving, 14.5x14 cm.



Vaclovas Ratas, *Mimi*. 1965 (Sydney). Wood engraving, 12.5 x 18.5 cm.

As a result of that exhibition the Sydney Printmakers Society was formed, initially with 24 members. Yearly exhibitions were held at Blaxland Gallery at the Grace Bros store. These became an important event of the Sydney Art Calendar. Ratas' past curatorial experience proved invaluable in assembling and presenting the works to their greatest advantage in each exhibition. The Printmakers attracted growing interest from the public, art collectors and critics. The society's activities and its membership continued to grow over the years, and activities now include cultural exchange exhibitions overseas. The legacy Ratas left to Australia in forming the Sydney Printmakers Society may even have surpassed all his expectations.

In 1962 he participated in Australian Travelling Exhibition, S-E Asia; 1963 Print Survey, Australia; 1966 Australian Prints Today, Washington D.C., USA; 1969 British International Print Biennale. 1967 he edited "*Eleven Lithuanian Artists in Australia*", while in 1970 he illustrated the book "*The Mountain Devil*" by Agnė Lukšytė. The Australian Fashion Design Award (Silver) was awarded to him in 1965.

Sadly, in 1966 Ratas was diagnosed with acute leukaemia and six months to live. His wife Regina, insisted he was not told of this "sentence". His daughter Ramona took leave of absence from touring with the Australian Ballet and took some of his work to America. There she mounted successful solo exhibitions on his behalf in New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles and Boston.

In the seven years of life until his death, his style became colourful and joyful. He developed a unique monotype technique with his fantasy turning to nature, the sun, sea, birds. He died on January 3, 1973, in Telopea, Sydney.

Vaclovas Ratas is remembered as an artist of diverse talents, who excelled in traditional methods, was able to grasp new concepts and who constantly experimented with new techniques. He was a quiet man, very determined in his aims. He did not waste words or actions on trivia, but lived purposefully, never accepting defeat. Ratas' work is represented at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, major Australian State Art Galleries, Lithuanian Art Museum, Vilnius and Kaunas, as well as internationally.

The legacy of this great man, Vaclovas Ratas, is woven into the artistic fabric of Australia.

*Tiiu Reissar is the former President of Sydney Printmakers Society (1986-93) and a member since 1982. Born in Estonia, she is a teacher of Printmaking and a TAFE Lecturer.*



**Vaclovas Ratas with daughter Ramona in Sydney, 1964.**

## The Lithuanian Language

James HENDIN

The Lithuanian language is a remarkable field of study, because it has endured the test of time. Any language that is being learned by a non-native speaker may present itself with a number of unique challenges that are at first difficult to grasp. Lithuanian certainly has its share of them. It is a very old language, one that dates back several thousand years to the original Indo-European proto-language known as Sanskrit. Of all the languages that fall into the Indo-European language group, which includes English, Latin and Greek, it has, at present, undergone the least amount of change. For this reason it is of particular interest to linguists, who are often required to add it to their academic field of study.

Lithuanian belongs to the Baltic language group which once included such languages as Couronian, Semigallian and Prussian. These languages either became extinct or were assimilated by the Lithuanians, Latvians, or the Slavic people of Poland and Belarus. Its closest living relative today is Latvian, from which is split over 2000 years ago. Its origins are uncertain, though it is believed that it may have come from somewhere in the Eurasian steppes around 2000 BC. Native speakers of Lithuanian are legion, as there are between three to four million living within Lithuania proper, and countless numbers in adopted homelands around the world. Wherever they have settled they have worked admirably at maintaining their language as well as their culture by establishing language schools, cultural centres and publications.

It is not a very easy language to learn, and in fact it is regarded as one of the world's most difficult. When studying any language it is important to find links with other related tongues. This can help you to remember vocabulary. One of the ways to do this is to look for cognates, which are words that are shared from one language to the next with respect to origin. For example, the Lithuanian word 'žmonės' (people) is related to the Latin word 'homines'. Another example is found in 'vienas' (one), which is kin to Latin 'unus'. Even in Greek such links can be observed. The word 'hypnos' (dream) is a cognate of Lithuanian 'sapnas'.

*LITHUANIAN WORD OF THE DAY is a free subscription service on the Internet that is offered to anyone interested in acquiring a basic knowledge of the Lithuanian language. Each day, Monday through Friday, a word is chosen, then presented with either its conjugations or declensions, followed by its usage in sentence format. Featured words come from a variety of sources, including subscriber suggestions, current events, as well as random selection. It is an on-line classroom provided through the efforts of James Hendin (pictured on the opposite Page) who is based in Northern Florida, USA. No exams are given, and the individual is encouraged to learn at his or her own pace. Its goal is to help give the individual an understanding and appreciation of the Lithuanian language and culture. You can sign up for Lithuanian Word of the Day through the following web site:*

**<http://www.angelfire.com/ut/Luthuanian/index.html>**

*Once you submit your e-mail address, an invitation will be sent to you. You need only respond to it by sending it back as a reply. Everyone, regardless of ethnic background or language history, is welcome.*

To be able to function properly in a language it's important to have a good understanding of its grammar. Lithuanian has two classes of nouns that are either masculine or feminine. Generally they are easy to identify because of their endings. Words that finish with -as, -is, -ys, or -us are masculine, and words that end in -a or -e are feminine. But as with any rule there are exceptions. *Akis* (eye), for example, is a feminine noun. There are also some words that end with '-o'. '*vanduo*' (water) is masculine, but '*sesuo*' (sister) is feminine. When encountering such exceptions is a matter of just making an effort to remember them, rather than attempting to find a way to rationalize them.

There are seven different cases that will affect every Lithuanian noun. These are also known as declensions. The seven different

cases are: nominative, which is used when the noun is the subject of the verb; genitive, which shows its origin or source; dative, the case that indicates the indirect object; accusative, the direct object; instrumental, which shows the noun serving as an instrument or means of doing something; locative, showing its location; and vocative used to address a noun.



Because of their complexity, Lithuanian verbs require special attention, as there are several different categories that help a verb to function. They can, at times, show number, i.e. either singular or plural. They can show gender, distinguishing between masculine and feminine. They have tenses, conveying a time frame in which an action occurs.

Lithuanian verbs can also have moods, which is the way in which a speaker's attitude towards an action is expressed. The indicative mood expresses the idea whether an action is taking place, has done so, or will. The imperative is more or less a command. For example '*eik!*' (go!) is the familiar form used when speaking to someone you know. '*Eikite!*' - when speaking to two or more, or to an individual you don't know well. There is also the permissive mood, which more or less allows an action to be performed. This can also be achieved by adding a prefix. There is also the subjunctive mood, which is a way to express a wish, '*Jeigu jis turėtų laiko...*' - 'If only he had some time...'

There are so many wonderful avenues of the Lithuanian language to explore. Here I have given you just a small sampling of what you'll encounter. I encourage you to embark on a journey to study it. By doing so you unlock a door that opens to the heart and soul of an entire people.

*James Hendin, an avid language enthusiast, studied German and Russian at the University of Illinois, then added Lithuanian, Swedish, Faeroese, Old Norse, Yiddish, Hebrew and Afrikaans. James is currently employed in data processing near Jacksonville, Florida, USA*

## Letters to the Editor

### Lithuanian Papers

*Lithuanian Papers* journal clearly represents a long tradition of quality research by the Lithuanian Studies Society and it is a significant contribution to the vitality of our diverse Australian history and culture. You and your society are to be complimented on your efforts.

**The Hon. Gary HARDGRAVE, M.P.**  
Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs,  
Canberra, A.C.T.

### Lustration

Five years ago, Professor Richard Pipes wrote in your *Lithuanian Papers* about the urgent need to "lustrate" (cleanse) Lithuania and other ex-Communist states [LP, Vol.12-1998, page 9]. Sadly, the successive governments of Lithuania seem to have ignored Professor Pipes and have failed to purge Lithuania of the terrible Communist legacy.

Many troubles bedevilling Lithuania today are due to this cause. Like cancer, the Communist legacy will not disappear, and future generations of Lithuanians will have to pay for it dearly.

**(Dr) J.C. MILLER,**  
Melbourne, Vic.

### Appeal

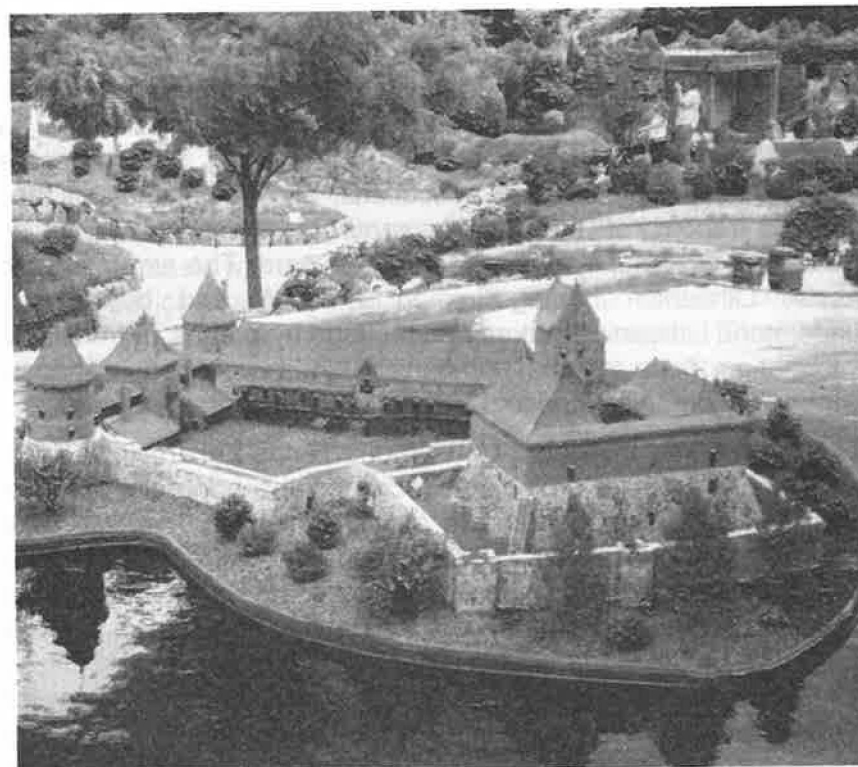
*Sefardas*, a charity and support fund, has been registered in Lithuania. It is aiming at erecting a monument dedicated to the Lithuanian citizens, the world's righteous people, who rescued Jews during the Second World War. *Sefardas* is asking for your support and assistance.

More details are available on Internet <<http://www.sefardas.com>> or by e-mail: [info@sefardas.com](mailto:info@sefardas.com) or [J\\_Joheles@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:J_Joheles@yahoo.co.uk)  
Tel/fax: +370 37 201430; Tel: 861514436.

**Julia JOHELES,**  
J. Bakanausko St. 25, PO Box 2285, LT-3000 Kaunas (Lithuania).

\* *The Editor welcomes letters, especially brief ones, at P.O. Box 777, Sandy Bay, 7006 and reserves the right to condense or edit them.*

## A Lithuanian Castle in Canberra



A scale replica of the Island Castle of Trakai now graces Cockington Green in Canberra, Australia's capital city (pictured above). The project was initiated and sponsored by Canberra Lithuanian Scouts' veterans' group *Židinys*.

The model was built to 1:50 scale by Mr Mindaugas Mauragis, a Lithuanian resident of Canberra since 1966. The project took two years from inception to completion. The castle took over 3,000 hours to build. Material and establishment costs came to \$3,000.

The original Island Castle of Trakai was built in Lithuania, around 1377. Grand Duke Vytautas the Great completed the construction of the castle in 1409. It was the residence of Lithuanian grand princes during the 15th century. It is the only "Water Castle" in Lithuania, occupying an entire island of 1.8 hectares, in Lake Galvė.

**Rasa MAURAGIS.**



## Sydney Lithuanian Information Centre

Sydney Lithuanian Information Centre (SLIC) is a new on-line English language website project, now under construction at [www.slic.org.au](http://www.slic.org.au). It is supported by the Government of New South Wales through the Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW. The aim of the SLIC website is to preserve valuable historical, cultural, educational and social material and have a record of the achievements of the NSW Australian Lithuanian Community over the past 55 years. The aim is also to assist Lithuanian heritage youth in NSW and beyond, to understand Lithuanian culture and heritage by means of translated information, links to other Lithuanian world websites, services, community organisations and events.

The project was instigated by Ramona Ratas-Zakarevičius, who was then a "special projects" director on the honorary board of Sydney Lithuanian Club, known as Lithuanian Club Limited. The genesis of the project was in 2000, when she was establishing the Club's website and searching for historical data on the early years of the Club. She came up against the paucity of historical material in the English language and was constantly referred to the "bible", the Lithuanian community Yearbooks of 1961 and 1983, which were in the Lithuanian language. It became obvious that having a library full of Lithuanian books at the Club no longer served the majority of the younger heritage Lithuanians, the under-55-year-olds, who did not speak, write, or understand the Lithuanian language. A new way to reach them in English was vital. They now by far outnumber the original 3,000 Lithuanian displaced persons, who had migrated to NSW in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

In July 2001 she decided to apply for the 2002 Community Development Grants Program from the New South Wales Government. She invited a group of younger Australian Lithuanian enthusiasts to form a steering committee to discuss this grant application. With a unanimous "go for it", the vital six, Lolita and Danny Kalėda, Daniel Hornas, Denis Staitis, Ramutis Zakarevičius and Ramona Ratas-Zakarevičius, completed the "NSW Australian Lithuanian Internet Based Resource Centre" grant application. The grant application was successful, with \$13,200 (including

GST) awarded towards the purchase of computer equipment and software for an internet site, which has now been renamed SLIC. This successful grant was announced in a letter from the Premier of New South Wales, Mr Bob Carr, on 3 January, 2002. Mr Tony Stewart MP, Member for Bankstown, presented a cheque for \$13,200 in May, 2002 at Sydney Lithuanian Club in Bankstown. The computer equipment is housed at the Sydney Lithuanian Club which is facilitating the project.

All work in conjunction to this grant is a 'labour of love' on a volunteer basis without payment. Computer equipment was bought on the advice of a Technical Committee set up in March 2002. The SLIC team at present consists of project manager - Tony Mikus, connectivity - Danny Kalėda, content and translation - Ramutis Zakarevičius, treasurer and Club representative - Denis Staitis, webmaster - Petras Virzintas, co-ordinator and chair - Ramona Ratas-Zakarevičius. It is hoped that future grants will provide for manpower, which would ensure the longevity and expansion of this project, enticing innovative younger people's involvement.

**Ramona RATAS - ZAKAREVIČIUS.**



- Receiving Premier Bob Carr's grant: front, from left, Alis Migus, President of the Sydney Lithuanian Club ; Ramona Ratas-Zakarevičius, Project instigator and Chair; Tony Stewart, M.P. for Bankstown. Rear, from left: A. Keblikienė and G. Galic, Club directors.

## More on Scholarships

### University of Tasmania

The Lithuanian Studies Society at the University of Tasmania assists a student taking honours in any Faculty of the University where the student's thesis involves an aspect of the study of Lithuania or Lithuanians. Valued at \$5,000 for one year. See the display advertisements in this issue for more details.

### University of Toronto

The University of Toronto encourages Lithuanian Studies through its Marija Aukštaitė Program. This program has two components, one for graduate students and the other for scholars. Student support falls into four categories: (1) costs of research/travel to Lithuania by University of Toronto graduate students whose projects relate to Lithuania; (2) costs of study at the University of Toronto by graduate students from Lithuania in the humanities and social sciences; (3) support for doctoral students at the University of Toronto who are writing dissertations on topics related to Lithuania; and (4) support of the costs of U of T students presenting conference papers on topics relating to Lithuania. The scholars' component will support scholars at the University of Toronto in any capacity for research expenses relating to studies of Lithuania, as well as research stays at the University of Toronto by scholars from Lithuania. The graduate student component is supported by the Marija Aukštaitė Graduate Student Fund, created from a donation by Mr. Frank Hylands, son of the poet Marija Aukštaitė. The scholars component will continue to draw money from the Marija Aukštaitė bursary, which is supported by Frank and George Hylands and their families. Queries may be addressed to the Director, CREES, Munk Centre, University of Toronto, 1 Devonshire Place, Toronto, Ontario M5S 3K7, Canada.

As of fall 2003 the University of Toronto has established a graduate student exchange agreement with the University of Vilnius. Starting in academic year 2003-2004 funds will be available to support one student from Toronto studying for a semester in Vilnius or one student from Lithuania studying for a semester in Toronto. Support comes from the Marija Aukštaitė Program in Lithuanian Studies.

(Dr) Peter SOLOMON.

*Two thousand years ago, many Teutonic tribes elected a king only in wartime. The king ruled a tribe, not a territory. Later, when the tribes were converted to Christianity, the king's prestige increased. After Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Emperor of the Romans on Christmas Day 800, the popes continued to claim the right to crown all kings of Europe. But the kings, in turn, gained the right to confirm the election of popes and often appointed their own supporters.*

*By the start of the second millennium, a European king was not considered to be a king, unless crowned by the Pope. Using this criterion, Mindaugas (late 1100s-1263) was the only 'real' king of Lithuania. Is this important now?*

## When is a Kingdom not a Kingdom?

P. Algis RAULINAITIS

Los Angeles

This year, 2003, Lithuania commemorates the 750th anniversary of the coronation of King Mindaugas. Unfortunately, this event gives rise to many misconceptions. Some people call it the beginning of the State of Lithuania; Mindaugas is made out to be the founder of the state, and the only king of Lithuania.

A quick glance at the history of Lithuania will show that there exists written documentation of the State of Lithuania prior to the reign of Mindaugas. In 1219 Lithuania concluded a peace treaty with Volinija. Twenty-one rulers of various parts of Lithuania signed it. Mindaugas was one of the signatories. Lithuania's name was first mentioned in the Chronicles of Quedlinburg in 1009.



• Above: King Mindaugas, by Alessandro Guagnini (1538-1614).

To paraphrase a British writer, history is too important to be left to historians. Especially ones such as Polish historian Jan Dlugosz, Secretary of Bishop Zbigniew Olesnicki, from whom he acquired the theocratic ideas of the Middle Ages and a hatred of Lithuania. This hatred drove him to falsify documents and include fictional stories, such as one relating to a conversation between Jogaila and the Grand Master of the German order in December, 1410. Such a meeting never took place.

Dlugosz was the first historian to refer to Jogaila as Grand Duke of Lithuania. Jogaila himself did not use that title. All his seals bore the inscription "King of Lithuania" and later, after he received the crown of Poland, "King of Lithuania and Poland".

Vygand of Marburg, in his *New Chronicle of Prussia*, which Dlugosz used as his main source for his Annals of Poland, refers to Jogaila as king.

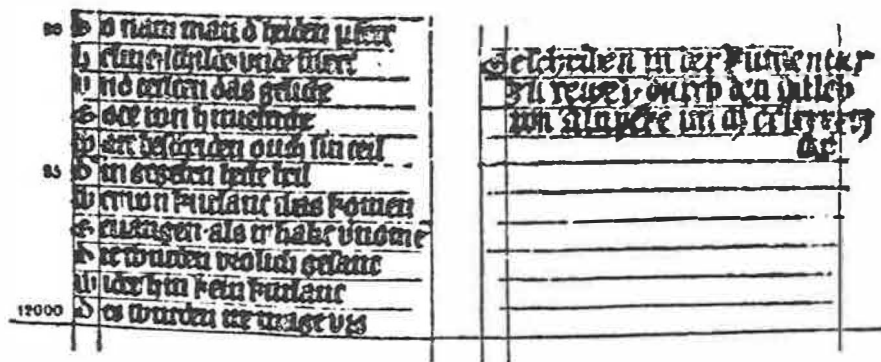
However, most of our early historians seem to have been affected by an inferiority complex and did not question the virulently anti-Lithuanian Dlugosz and started following his usage. Only now have some historians delved more deeply and tried to restore the rightful titles to Lithuanian rulers. Once a state becomes a kingdom, its rulers retain the title of king.

Even in 1917, the Lithuanian Council was debating whether to retain monarchical rule and the following appears in its minutes of December 8, 1917: "Leaving the final decision to the Constituent Assembly (*Steigiamasis Seimas*), the Lithuanian Council assumes that under the current circumstances and conditions, a *constitutional hereditary monarchy*, i.e. a kingdom, governed in a democratic, parliamentary way, with a *Catholic ruler is most fitting*".<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

In 1250, Mindaugas asked for an interview with Master Andreas who agreed to the talks and rode with a large retinue to the royal halls of Mindaugas.

<sup>1</sup> P. Klimas, *The Creation of Lithuanian State in 1915-1918 in: First Decade of Independent Lithuania 1918-1928*, London: Nida, p. 29.



- The final page of the *Livonia Rhymed Chronicle*. This document was originally written in German, at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Covering the period of 1143 to 1290, the *Chronicle* consists of a total of 12,017 rhymed lines. It describes the Livonian Order's conquests of the native people - Latgalians, Estonians, Žiemgallians and Curonians; and the establishment of Christianity in Livonia. The *Chronicle* offers an extensive account of the neighbouring state of Lithuania and the Lithuanian forays into the isle of Sarema (Ezel) in 1219. The *Rhymed Chronicle* contains the only known report of the progress of the Battle of Saulė near Šiauliai, in 1236.

The *Livonia Rhymed Chronicle* describes their meeting as follows:

"Now I will tell you some of the other marvels that happened to the master of Livonia. He was well known in Lithuania to King Mindaugas, who ruled over the people of the land. It happened that a messenger of the king came to the master, saying that King Mindaugas would be pleased if he might have the good fortune to see the master. For this he would be forever grateful. Such was the request of the king's messenger. When the master had heard the messenger who had come to him, he took counsel with his brothers and the rode over many wide moors until he came to the land of King Mindaugas.

"He was received by him as befitting a lord. The queen also went up to him and kindly welcomed him and all the brothers who had come there with him. Afterward, when it was time to eat, nothing proper to such an occasion was omitted.

"They treated their guests well. After they had eaten the meal and had been sitting around the table a short time, the king thanked the master of Livonia for coming to there to him. When the master had heard the king's words he spoke kindly, saying to Mindaugas, King of the Lithuanians, "If you become a Christian, I will give you great honour. I will secure the crown for you, unless I die."<sup>2</sup>

This passage indicates that the Livonian order considered Mindaugas a king, albeit a pagan one, even before the Pope proclaimed him a king.

Later Lithuania's ruler Vytenis is referred to as king in the *Chronicle of Prussia*. King Gediminas signed his letters as "King of Lithuanians and many Russians", and was addressed as such by Pope John XXII.<sup>3</sup>



- Ringaudas, King Mindaugas's predecessor, who ruled at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> and at the start of the 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. - From a 16<sup>th</sup> c. drawing, by an unknown artist. Ack.: *The Lithuanian Heritage Magazine*.

<sup>2</sup> (2001) *The Rhymed Chronicle of Livonia*. Translated by Jerry C. Smith and William L. Urban. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Chicago: Lithuanian Research and Studies Center Inc., 3451-3497, p.41.

<sup>3</sup> (1966). *Letters of Gediminas*. Vilnius: Mintis, p.91.

Having covered the titles of some of the kings of Lithuania, let us return to the question of when Lithuania became a state. For this we have to adopt a definition of a state.

Two main theories exist relating to the definition of a state: a broad one and a narrow one. The broad definition describes a state as a system combining three elements: a nation (inhabitants), a territory and a government. The narrow definition is more complicated and harder to grasp. We will stick with the broad definition.

The name of Lithuania is mentioned for the first time in 1009, in Saxon chronicles describing the death of St. Brunon. According to Wibert, the political organization led by king Netimeras had several hierarchical levels. St. Brunon was killed by the "duke of this land" who is on a lower level than Netimeras to whom Wibert refers as "rex" or king. The existence of a king and subservient dukes indicates that Lithuania at that time had the structure of a state.

Looking at archeological evidence, some historians do not differentiate between Lithuanians and Balts and find the requirements of a state in Tacitus's reports (approx 55-120 AD). Vincentas Liulevičius states that Lithuania had a state-like organization in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and does not have many doubts about its existence in the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

Some historians point out that hunter tribes with a rudimentary political organization existed in the pre-ice age. Around 11,800 BC they came to Lithuania and probably created a chiefdom, just a step below a state.

Around 9,300 BC the territories used by the hunter tribes for their wanderings began to shrink and an agricultural way of life evolved. The roots of tribal political organization became apparent in 3,600 – 2,600 BC and reinforced habitats appeared around 1,300 BC.

Of course, the time frame from 11,800 BC to 100 AD needs a lot more research before we can determine with certainty the date of Lithuania's creation as a state.

<sup>4</sup> Liulevičius, V. 1970, *Aidai*, No.7, p.295.



- From a 14<sup>th</sup> century engraving, by an unknown artist (repr. R. Koenig, 1884).

However, it can be stated that Lithuania was a kingdom from 1009, when the name Lithuania was first mentioned through at least 1918 when the Lithuanian Council debated the wisdom of re-establishing a constitutional monarchy.

*Pranas Algis Raulinaitis, cand.iuris (Albert Ludwigs Uni., Freiburg/Breisgau). is a retired lawyer and business executive. Before settling in USA in 1954, he lived in Australia for 5 years and furthered his studies at the University of Melbourne.*

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## Lithuania: Black and White

(*Lithuanian Crime Statistics*)

Stasys GOŠTAUTAS

Dallas, Texas

In May 2003, Lithuania signed the documents for becoming a member of the European Union. Lithuania, maybe - but Lithuania's thieves, swindlers, *mafiosi*, murderers, drug addicts and similar disreputable types have already been in the European Union for some time now. There is no shortage of them in Latin America or the USA, either. Truly there is no limit to Lithuanians' "diligence" and inventiveness! Just a couple of days ago in the Belgian city of Liege, the trial got under way of 17 men from Kaunas accused of stealing 2000 automobiles and smuggling car parts to Lithuania.

Four Lithuanians sit in Colombian jails, awaiting trial for smuggling narcotics. One of them is from Telšiai, two from Kaunas, and another from Klaipėda. In Spain, racketeers are running wild. In Norway, Lithuanians have achieved notoriety as hired assassins. Indeed, due to these offences Norwegian police now consider Kaunas to be the synthetic drugs capital of Europe, from which narcotics are mostly sent to Scandinavian countries. The complaint there is that these drugs are too... pure!. Many narcotics dealers have already been convicted. The worst thing is that many of the sentences have been too lenient and this has shocked not only the victims' families, but also the prosecutors who now fear harassment.

I hardly need to tell you what is happening in USA. Our Embassy and consulates are well aware of the criminal activity taking place. Soon there will be no honour attached to being Honorary Consul for Lithuania. Crime statistics for Lithuania tell a sad story. We are leaders not just in suicide rates but in crime rates. Why? Surely Lithuania is no worse off than other former Soviet bloc countries? Even if that were so, that would not justify the fact that, over the last 12 years, about 200 thousand young Lithuanians have been incarcerated, and that,

percentage-wise. Lithuania's crime rate surpasses that of all European Union countries: 4.15 for every 1,000 inhabitants.

Some time ago in South America I saw lots of children begging for a slice of bread, but never so many as in Kaunas a couple of years ago. What happens to the overseas aid we send for orphans in Lithuania? And our aid for pensioners and repatriated deportees from Siberia? It seems that in Lithuania these days anything goes in order to get some financial benefit in the name of patriotism. Deportees returning from Siberia are approached by all sorts of racketeers, politicians, public servants and businessmen, who hope to make a profit.

A child can get a hefty sentence for stealing a loaf of bread, but meanwhile all sorts of con men running scams on the government never end up in Lukiškės prison. (They say "It used to be patriotic to steal from the Soviet government, so we got used to it.")

I will end this section by asking why the former president of Lithuania, Valdas Adamkus, was not included in the Lithuanian delegation that went to Athens to sign the agreement for Lithuania's entry into the European Union.



- Excluded from delegation: Valdas Adamkus, the former President of Lithuania. - Photo: Gintaras Mačiulis/Seimo Kronika.

After all, he made a major contribution in bringing Lithuania to the point of signing. It would be interesting to know who took his place. Political scandals, party squabbles and intrigues by the nation's leaders on the way to Athens did not bring honour to our nation. The only genuine grievance was that the airplane used for the occasion was too humble. It's good that young people began to arrange meetings and to protest in the square in front of the president's residence.

But all these misfortunes are but one side of the coin. On almost the same day that Valdas Adamkus was not included in the delegation that flew off so proudly to Athens, the director general of UNESCO asked the ex-president to be one of the organization's Good Will Ambassadors, along with 36 other noteworthy people, including at least two who have had links with Lithuania: Montserrat Caballet and Mstislav Rostropovich.

When we read *New York Times* commentaries about Violeta Urmanavičiūtė singing in the Metropolitan Opera and when we listen to her singing in Wagner's Parsifal, which was broadcast right across America, we proudly proclaim that we have seen and heard her in person, and have spoken with her and congratulated her. Not to mention all the other Lithuanian singers who have performed in concerts in famous operas around the world: I. Milkevičiūtė, N. Ambrazaitytė, S. Stonytė, V. Noreika and others.

When we listen to Muza Rubackytė's Piano Concerto being performed in Boston by world standard conductors and soloists, we say "Isn't Lithuania great?!" Or when we read in the Spanish press about the *M. K. Čiurlionis Exhibition* taking place in Madrid from 11 February to 25 May 2003, called "Musical analogies - Kandinsky and his contemporaries".

Almost an entire exhibition room is dedicated to Čiurlionis, called "Cosmological symphony", where 20 of his paintings are being displayed. Bravo to the organizers of the exhibition and to the staff of the Čiurlionis Museum in Kaunas!

Indeed, not long ago Italian Jolanda Nigro Covre wrote a monumental book called "Astrattismo" (Milano, Federico Motta Editore, 2002) in which more than 10 pages deal with Čiurlionis



- **Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, 1875 - 1911**, Lithuanian painter and composer. This portrait was created in oil, circa 1970, by Stasys Neliubšys, 120 x 114 cm. - Collection Lithuanian House Adelaide.

and the Swede Hilma af Klint (not to be confused with the Austrian Klimt) as the founders of esoteric art.

Jolanda Nigro Covre draws parallels with Kandinsky, Kupka, Franz Mark and others. Or taking part in the opening of an exhibition by artist Stasys Eidrigevičius in Boston, Paris, Warsaw or Panevėžys, one has to admit that Lithuanians are cultural people.

When one reads in the Colombian or Italian press the reviews of director Eimuntas Nekrošius' latest stage masterpiece, then it is good to be Lithuanian and feel: even though our country is small, it has produced a lot of talent over the last hundred years. It looks like the creative forces amassed during the 20th century are leaking through into the 21st century.

In the window of an expensive jewellery shop you can see the masterpiece jewellery creations of Alex Sepkus, laid out as if in a museum. On the Internet you find Romualdas Sviedrys' IBM patents. Open *New Yorker* magazine or the *New York Times*

newspaper and you will see cartoons created by a Lithuanian; go to Harvard and you will find the latest film of Šarūnas Bartas. When you read about film festivals in San Francisco or elsewhere and see Lithuanian surnames among the list of prize-winners, when you watch television and see Lithuanian contestants leading the field in dancing on ice, and others doing well in ballroom dancing competitions - not to mention our world class basketball masters and world famous hockey players! All that is very pleasant and helps one to forget about the other sad facts.

#### English translation by Gintautas KAMINSKAS.

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*Gintautas Kaminskas, B.A. Hons., M.A. (Monash) is a professional translator of Lithuanian to English and English to Lithuanian.*



- **Mindaugas Urbaitis's *Acid City*** was performed at the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre in 2002. Choreographer, Krzysztof Pastor. Artist, Adomas Jacovskis. - Photo: Michailas Raškovskis.

## Book Reviews

### *Lithuanian Artists*

KAZOKAS, Genovaitė (2003), *Lithuanian Artists in Australia, 1950-1990*. Melbourne: Europe-Australia Institute 2003. ISBN 1 86272 634 5.

*Lithuanian Artists in Australia 1950-1990* evolved from a doctoral thesis presented by Genovaitė Kazokas at the University of Tasmania in 1992. The publication was financially assisted by the Australian-Lithuanian Foundation and the Canberra Lithuanian Community Association.

The book sets out to explore and document the work of one hundred and thirty-seven Lithuanian visual artists, past and present, and their contribution, if any, to the Australian art scene. The work has been thoroughly researched and collated. Kazokas has drawn from primary sources gained through interviews, and from secondary sources. Very precise endnotes are provided. The book is illustrated with one hundred and fifty-seven plates, although justice is not always done to the represented works because of the cost constraints of publishing. The bibliography is most comprehensive and wide-ranging, with references to both Lithuanian and English publications.

In the prologue, Kazokas emphasises the expectation held by the Lithuanian refugees that 'their period of exile in Australia would be brief and that it would not be necessary to establish a long-term commitment to Australia' (p1). Kazokas points out that for centuries Lithuania was primarily an agricultural society with images and themes resulting from involvement with the land penetrating all artistic modes of expression.

Thus the loss felt by Lithuanian artists of their landscape and folklore leads Kazokas to suggest that Lithuanian art in Australia is 'predominantly anti-hedonistic and pantheistic with strong links to mythology' (p3). She also observes the works as being humourless.

The first two chapters deal with a general history of Lithuania, its cultural history and the experiences of the emigres prior to their



• Henry Šalkauskas, *The Search*, 1950, linocut, 17.5 x 17.5 cm.

arrival in Australia. Kazokas also explains her methodology; a generational classification, with explanation of the terms "Vanguard", "Delayed" and "Latecomers".

Chapters three to five chronicle the artists by region, starting at Sydney, progressing to Melbourne then on to Adelaide. Biographical details include the periods of the artists' establishment. An overview of the social conditions in which the artists worked provides a wider understanding of their difficulties. The contrast between the training in the graphic media of the emigres and the work of the then contemporary Australian artists is well detailed. The emigres' continuing language difficulties enhanced their isolation, precluding them from gaining a better insight into the prevailing Australian art scene.

The concluding chapter examines the settlement and work of Lithuanian artists in smaller communities such as Canberra, Newcastle, Wollongong and Perth. It is interesting that many of these artists, Australian trained, entered various branches of the teaching profession.



Of particular note in this chapter is the work of Olegas Truchanas whose photography brought a new perspective and appreciation of the Tasmanian wilderness to the Australian public.

The inclusion of non-artist Bronius Šredersas in this book best sums up the cultural contribution made by Lithuanians to Australian art. Šredersas, drawing from his family background of art appreciation, donated his collection of Australian artworks to the people of Wollongong as a gesture of thanks. Šredersas' donation inspired the genesis of the City of Wollongong art gallery.

In summation, Lithuanian artists not only brought a rich if conservative artistic heritage to Australia but, according to Kazokas, in turn also gained artistic maturity here. However, it appears that no strong school of Lithuanian art has emerged in Australia.

Although of interest to a limited audience, *Lithuanian Artists in Australia 1950-1990* is important to students of art history being, as it is, the first comprehensive study of Lithuanian art in Australia.

**Patricia SLIDŽIŪNAS.**

*Patricia Slidžiūnas, B.A., Dip.Ed. (Macquarie); PGD ED Studies (UTS, Syd) has worked as trained guide at the Art Gallery of NSW and in the guide training program, Wollongong City Gallery. E-mail address: [pattox@bigpond.co](mailto:pattox@bigpond.co)*



• Leeka Kraucevičius, *Sonata*, 1981, pastel, 55 x 75 cm.

### *The Last Girl*

**COLLISHAW, Stephan (2003), *The Last Girl*. New York: St Martin's Press, 309pp.**

*The Last Girl* is Stephan Collishaw's first novel and is set in and around Vilnius, in its various occupations and incarnations. Collishaw is a teacher who lives in Nottingham, UK, and the novel's wealth of historical and geographical detail betrays a well-studied fascination with the many stories that surround Lithuania's ancient capital.

*The Last Girl* focuses on a once-famous writer in mid-90s Vilnius, Steponas Daumantas, and approaches the psychology of personal and national guilt through a montage of stories that surround a younger Daumantas during World War II, his memories of these and his struggles to come to terms with the past:

*"And what do you do, Mr Daumantas?"*

*I laughed. "Me, I'm an old man, a pensioner. What did you think I was, a soldier?"*

*"You don't look so old and anyway, age is in the mind," she said with the simple-minded confidence of the young.*

*"I'm old in the mind too."*

*"Well, what did you do then, Old Mr Daumantas?"*

*I toyed with the idea of lying, of creating another person for her. Her eyes were upon me and I did indeed once more feel young in my mind. If being young means confusion and stuttering nervousness. (p. 31)*

The Calvino-like construction of the story-telling voices, however, together with the staccato division of chapters (sixty-one in all) and a cracking pace ensures that *The Last Girl* is much more than a mere travelogue-inspired novel:

*And we forgot. Nobody spoke of those years, our lips were sealed...Yes, the communists defended us against our pasts. They allowed us to forget. They allowed us to bury the dead beneath slogans and platitudes, beneath the suffocating layers of lies and deception and the rewriting of history. (p. 299)*

It is precisely the complex issue of "what did you do then?" that *The Last Girl* breaks open in its portrayal of a multi-ethnic, multi-layered Vilnius, and it uses the city's many-faceted history to explore the nexus between memory and forgiveness:

*She paused, drawing deeply on her cigarette.*

*"It was a long time ago, Steponas. Many people did things they regret. Many people did things they were ashamed of, even if it didn't seem that they were."*

*"I thought that if I wrote it down, if I faced up to it after all these years, it would make me feel better."*

*"And does it?"*

*"No. It doesn't. The memory doesn't bring forgiveness."*

*"But it is good to remember, even if there is no hope of forgiveness." (p. 296)*

Layers of memories are painfully revisited like parts of the Old City throughout *The Last Girl*. Readers see the city of Vilnius variously as a late-twentieth century multicultural metropolis complete with smoky, seedy bars, Mafia types, bribery and prostitution, "short dark alley-ways" and the "spiked ribs of the fallen-in roofs"; as Wilno, during the Polish occupation of the region in 1938; as the "Jerusalem of the North" whose population was once one-third Jewish, and where "the narrow alleys rang with the sound of Yiddish" in the Vilna of 1720; as a city of wartime ghettos and horrific deeds; the post-war "capital of the Soviet Republic of Lithuania"; a city whose "church spires rose above the winding streets", home to cathedrals and synagogues, nationalists and communists, of both KGB offices and the shrine to Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn.

*The Last Girl* - ruthlessly at times - interrogates the relationship between identity and dominating ideologies, and the effects that the latter has on transforming the former:

*Lenin Square, where he stood so proudly, is now Lukiškių Square...This city is a master in the art of reinvention...Good Lithuanian heroes have replaced all those good communists...Ah yes, we are masters at reinventing ourselves, at distancing ourselves from what we were. (p. 20)*



• **Vilnius:** A sketch by an unknown contemporary artist.

The importance of language, of writing and identifying through literature is explored in depth through the relationships Daumantas, the writer, forms:

*She spoke a correct but slightly accented Russian. When I replied in Polish she frowned.*

*"You are a poet are you not?" she told me. "You should speak in the language of poets. Polish is just so ...parochial."*

*"Poland has its poets, too," I ventured. (p. 222)*

*The Last Girl* is an optimistic celebration of hope that the sad stories of the past - "the damp sour scent of decay, stale air" (p. 9) - should be openly approached.

This is now becoming a desirable place to live; it was not always so (p. 8).

**Vince TAŠKŪNAS.**

Vince Taškūnas, B.A. (Tas.) is the Associate Editor of this journal and works as media adviser to the President of the Australian Senate, Hon. Paul Calvert. E-mail address: <Vince.Taskunas@aph.gov.au>

### *Lithuanian History*

**KIAUPA, ZIGMAS (2002), *The History of Lithuania*. Vilnius: baltos lankos. ISBN 9955-429-75-5. 450pp.**

This book follows an earlier history of Lithuania to 1795, when the Polish Lithuanian union was finally partitioned between Prussia, Austria-Hungary and Russia. These early chapters are retained.

Under the Tsars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kiaupa describes the osmotic forgings of a distinctive Lithuanian culture and national identity. The imposition of chauvinist Russian measures evokes widespread passive resistance, led by the Catholic Church in particular. The banning of Roman script in favour of Cyrillic is countered by the smuggling of texts over the German border; such traditions as the *dainos* (folksongs), are cultivated and fostered; in almost every village a "secret school" is established, wherein native tongue and national ethos alike are inculcated in the young.

The first independence period (1918-40) is marred, firstly by the ongoing tension with Poland which in the post-WWI chaos had seized Vilnius; secondly, after 1926, by the authoritarian one-party rule of Antanas Smetona. All narrated in a writing style I find most laborious, despite three translators being engaged.

Moreover, this book is riddled with spelling errors - Island (for Iceland!), emigreses (!) and *sins* meaning heaven knows what. Both lexicon and chains of events are confusing, even contradictory (e.g., pp.426, 440). This is important in the treatment of the black years of the Soviet-Nazi-Soviet sequence of subjugations of 1940-1991, for still there are those who exhibit a spiteful racism towards Lithuania and her people.

Kiaupa candidly admits that some Lithuanians, perhaps three in every thousand, participated in the Nazi pogroms. As the wider anti-Nazi resistance developed, perhaps an equal number helped and sheltered Jewish survivors.

Under renewed Soviet occupation, the constant elements in Lithuania's struggle persist. When the armed resistance of 1944-56 proves futile, Lithuanian patriotism reverts to passive modes of earlier times. Even the ruling Communists, Kiaupa claims, are

often concerned "to do no further harm" when Lithuanian national interests are at risk. Conversely, the pivotal role of the Church seems underrated.

Really, any reader needs to already have a comprehensive grasp of Lithuanian history before tackling this book. If any subsequent reprints include an index and are subjected to *thorough and competent* proofreading, such might yet transform it into a useful reference on the subject.

**Bruce KING.**

*Bruce King has been an intensive researcher and supporter of Lithuania over the past 30 years. His comments on Baltic topics are published in the Australian media regularly.*

### *Informative and Invigorating*

**MATSUMURA, Kazuto, editor (2002), *Lectures on Language Situation: Russia, Estonia, Finland*. ICHEL Linguistic Studies, Vol.6. University of Tokyo: Dept. of Asian and Pacific Linguistics, Institute of Cross-Cultural Studies, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology, July 2002. ISBN 4-9901344-0-0.**

This collection of three comprehensive papers is informative as well as highly invigorating. All three contributions, written by Russian, Estonian and Finnish specialists, deal with the language situation and with minority languages in their own countries. At the same time, however, they discuss a wide range of general issues applicable to all countries. For this reason, Matsumura's concise 64-page book should be read not only by language buffs, but also by the social scientists and policy-makers everywhere.

For example, who are the minorities? We discover that, in Russia, the term "indigenous minority" has an official definition: an ethnic group counting less than 50,000 persons. What criteria should Lithuania and Australia use in defining their respective minorities?

Similarly, when Lithuania joins the European Union, it will have to ratify the EU's minority language agreement. Which languages will Lithuania choose to protect and at what level? This book offers a lot of food for thought, based on the Finnish experience since 1995.

We look forward to further editions in this fine series.

### *An Innocent Victim's Evidence*

**GRINKEVIČIŪTĖ, Dalia (2002), *A Stolen Youth, A Stolen Homeland: Memoirs*. Translated from the Lithuanian by Izolda Geniušienė. Vilnius: Lithuanian Writers' Union, in association with Lapteviečiai, Lithuanian deportees to the Laptev Sea, 179pp.**

Last year, *Lithuanian Papers* reprinted "Frozen Inferno". In this 16-page brochure, readers were offered a brief insight into the man-made hell of Siberia and the innocent prisoners' incessant struggle to survive inside the Arctic Circle. This first-hand testimony was provided by Dalia Grinkevičiūtė, a young Lithuanian woman who was barely fourteen when she and her mother were taken away during the mass deportations from Lithuania in 1941.

Dalia's evidence is now available in greater detail and in English translation. *A Stolen Youth, A Stolen Homeland* is a recent hardbound book based on the 1950 version of her memoirs. The volume is handsomely presented and is easy to read. It is illustrated by a collection of photographs and some drawings by Gintautas Martynaitis, a former fellow prisoner.

Dalia describes the extremes of human misery and the uneven battles against scurvy, dysentery and lice. Hundreds of different people - Finns, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Jews and many other nationalities - coexist in a camp. Some fight, some flirt with the camp bosses (p.93), some dwell in their memories, and all try to beat starvation.

Written in a simple language by a woman of incredible courage, this book will inspire everyone.

**A second version** of Dalia Grinkevičiūtė's memoirs, titled *Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea*, was published last year (2002) by Senecio Press. The translation and notes are by Romas Kinka. Elena Gaputytė who had conceived the whole project illustrated the book and the foreword was by Irena Veisaitė. The editorial director was Živilė Šlekytė-Stanton. *(Tiltas)*



### **In Brief**

#### **Champions - Again**

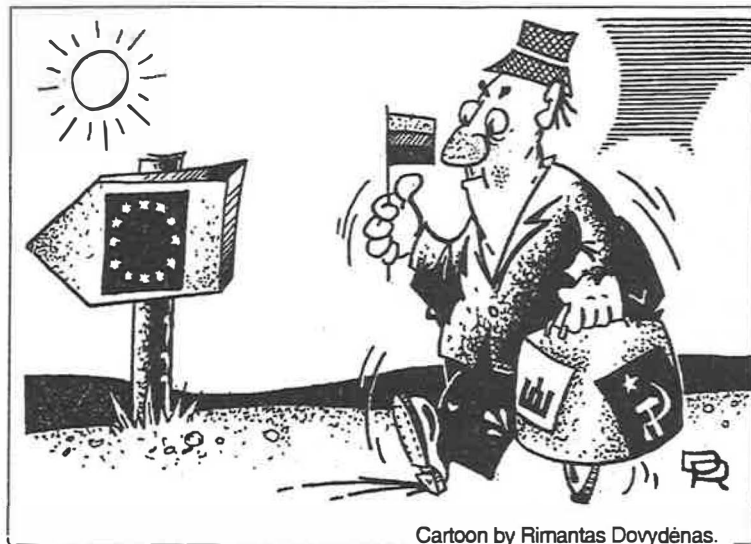
On September 14 this year, Lithuania claimed its first European basketball championship in 64 years, after beating Spain 93-84 in the final. This has qualified the Lithuanian basketballers to compete at next year's Olympic Games in Athens. Other eligible teams from Europe will be Spain, Italy, Serbia and Montenegro (world champions) and Greece (hosts). Lithuanians were the European basketball champions in 1937 and 1939. *- Tėviškės Aidai.*

#### **Trafficking in Women**

The Geneva-based International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported recently that about 2,000 citizens of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania fall victim to trafficking in human beings each year. About half of the victims come from Lithuania. Most are women aged 21 to 30, but some underage girls are also involved. The victims are usually sold into prostitution, at prices ranging from US\$3,000 to \$10,000. Some of the destinations of human trafficking from the Baltic States include Germany, Spain, Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Italy as well as Finland and Sweden.



\* This problem is not confined to Australia: there are illegal migrants and asylum seekers in present-day Lithuania, too. *- Photo: Vlada Inčiūtė.*



Cartoon by Rimantas Dovydenas.

## Moving Ahead

The Railways of Lithuania have posted a turnover of 413.5 million Litas in the first half of 2003. This is an increase of 17.5%, compared to 2002. The growth came from increased cargo traffic (19.7 million tonnes or 14.6% more than in the first half of 2002) and from increased productivity. Compared to January-July 2002, income from cargo grew by 22%, while passenger revenue fell by 15.7%.

- Verslo Žinios.

## Kaliningrad

437 businesses with Lithuanian and Russian capital and sixteen branches of Lithuanian firms were operating in the Kaliningrad (Königsberg/Karaliaučius) region last year. The volume of trade between Russia and Lithuania had grown considerably in recent years, according to the Lithuanian Association of Trade, Industry and Crafts. Russian imports comprised 23% of Lithuania's total imports, in the first quarter of 2002.

Surrounded by the European Union's fifteen nations, the Kaliningrad region is now facing isolation, as the EU's 15-nation bloc is planning to expand east. Key unresolved problems include unimpeded transit to Russia's mainland, non-visa travel by people across Lithuania, energy supplies, and fisheries.

- RIAN/Pravda.

## Our Thanks

Many people have helped to produce and pay for this 17<sup>th</sup> issue of *Lithuanian Papers*. We thank the Societies Council of Tasmania University Union for its contribution of \$1,000. *(The Union's logo appears on the right).*



We thank all other financial supporters who are listed below. We thank our valued contributors, in Australia and overseas, who have written for this journal without honoraria. We thank our editors, circulation helpers and other volunteers who have spent literally hundreds of hours on *Lithuanian Papers*, without pay.

We thank our advertisers and the following donors:

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*P.&Z.Andriukaitis*, *R.Čėsna*, *B.Dambrauskas*, *A.Grosas*, *Dr.J.Hendin*, *I.Kairys*, *J.Kojelis*, *JW.Kuncas*, *J.Lašaitis*, *V.Rupinskas*, *V.Vaitkus*, *Dr.A.Viliunas*, *M&J.Vizgirda*, *M.Zunde*, \$50 each; *Adelaide Lithuanian House Library*, \$48; *V.Navickas*, *J.Paškevičius*, \$40 each; *R.Alyta*, *G.Pranauskas*, \$35 each; *Adelaide Lithuanian Catholic Women's Society*, *J.Bardauskas*, *E.Jonaitis*, *R.Mataitis*, *OAM*, *M.Neverauskas*, *J.Rakauskas*, \$30 each; *A.&R.Ulba*, \$28.30; *C.E. Ashman*, \$28; *LL.Bricky*, *BA.Budrys*, *L.Pocius*, *R.Rupinskas*, *D.Simankevičius*, \$25 each; *B.Harrison*, \$20.50; *B.Barratt*, *P.Bielskis*, *J.Bimba*, *ED.Davidenas*, *G.Gudauskas*, *M.Kanas*, *P.Kazlauskas*, *C.Kent-Kriaučiūnas*, *P.Kruk*, *J.Kupris*, *WA.Mameniskis*, *A.Meiliūnas*, *VA.Navakas*, *P.&P.Pullinen*, *J.&V.Repševičius*, *V.Stanevičius*, *Sydney Lithuanian Women's Social Services Society*, *B.Šikšnius*, *R.&R.Urmonas*, *V.Vasiliauskas*, *A.Virgeningas*, \$20 each; *JA.Juragis*, *L.Saviskis*, \$15 each; *A.Vyšniauskienė*, \$14; *G.A.Kateiva*, *I.Vilkišienė*, \$12 each; *V.Antanaitis*, *A.Barzdukas*, *WJ.Getson*, *B.Griffith*, *DrPI.Jokubka*, *V.Joseph*, *Miliauskienė*, *ER.Pankevičius*, *Pikelienė*, *KJ.Sack*, *R.T.*, *E.Tugaudis*, \$10 each; and several lesser amounts.

We are also indebted to the Elena Petravičius Trust which has paid \$2,100 for 300 copies of this issue, to be distributed gratis to readers in Tasmania. Many thanks!

**Vince J. TAŠKŪNAS, President, LSS.**

## Lithuania - Main Facts

**Location:** on the Eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. Lithuania borders Poland and Kaliningrad (currently under Russian administration) to the southwest and west; Latvia to the north; Belarus to the east and south.

**Area:** 65,300 square kilometres (25,212 square miles), about the size of Tasmania or West Virginia.

**Population** (May 1, 2003): 3,462,600. Distributed between urban 67%, and rural 33%.

**Ethnic groups:** Lithuanians, 83.5 per cent; Russians 6.3 per cent; Poles, 6.7 per cent.

**Literacy rate:** 98 per cent.

**Capital:** Vilnius (population 541,800).

**National language:** Lithuanian, an ancient Indo-European language of the Baltic group. Lithuanians use a Latin-based alphabet of 32 letters.

**Form of Government:** Parliamentary republic.

**Head of State:** President (Rolandas Paksas, elected Jan.5,2003)

**National assembly:** Seimas (parliament), consisting of 141 members who are elected for 4-year terms.

**Chairman of Seimas:** Arturas Paulauskas.

**Religion:** Predominantly Roman Catholic (estimated 80%). A number of other religions are also practised: Evangelical Lutheran, Russian Orthodox, Judaic, etc.



° Vytis - Lithuanian coat of arms.

**Population density:** 53.026 per 1 square km.

**Chief Products:** Agriculture, forestry, fishing, light industry.

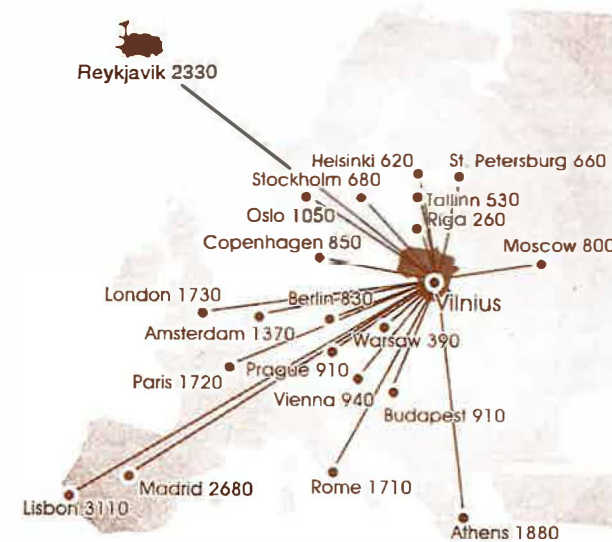
**GDP, % growth** (2002): 6.1.

**Exports** (2002): 6,235m.euros

**Imports** (2002): 7.667 m.euros

**Per capita annual income:** US\$7,300.

**Current account deficit:** 2.67 billion Litass (773 m. euros) or 5.3% pf GDP.



° The distances (in kilometres) from Vilnius, Lithuania's capital, to various European cities.

**Greatest distances:** East-West 373 km, North-South 276 km.

**Highest points:** Juozapinė (293.6 metres), Kruopinė (293.4m), Nevaišiai (288.9m).

**Major rivers:** Nemunas (937.4km), Neris (509.5km).

**Largest lakes:** Drūkšiai (4479ha), Dysnai (2439.4ha), Dusia (2334.2ha). Altogether, there are over 4,000 lakes in Lithuania. Of these, 2,830 are larger than 0.5 ha, covering a total of 880 sq.km.

**Climate:** Temperate, between maritime and continental. Mean annual temperature is 6.7 degrees Celsius. Average January temperature in Vilnius is -4.3 degrees Celsius; July average, 18.1 degrees Celsius.

Annual precipitation, 744.6 mm. Humidity, 78%.

**National currency:** Litas, equals 100 centas.

Exchange rates vary daily. Recent rates of exchange were: (approx.): Euro 1 equals 3.50 Litas; or US\$1 equals 3 Litas; or AU\$1 equals approx.2 Litas.

Sources: S. Litvinaviciene/ LR Gvt. Statistics Dept., Bank of Finland/BOFIT, Lithuanian Heritage, Lithuania in the World.

