

## CONTENTS

<b>13<sup>th</sup> January 1991: our Victory Day, by <i>Dr Laima Andrikienė MP</i></b>	<b>2</b>
Dr Laima Andrikienė was re-elected to <i>Seimas</i> in October 2020. She first entered politics as a member of the independence movement <i>Sąjūdis</i> and was a signatory of the 11 <sup>th</sup> March 1990 Act of Restoration of Independence. She has served as a Member of <i>Seimas</i> (1990-2000), Government Minister (1996-1998), Member of the European Parliament (2004-2014, 2016-2019). <b>Cover photo:</b> 13 <sup>th</sup> January 1991, outside Supreme Council building. Photo by A Girdziušas	
<b>The Amber Lady meets the Iron Lady – 1990, by <i>Paul Markevičius</i></b>	<b>6</b>
Paul Markevičius was the Lithuanian Association in Great Britain's Press Officer in 1990-1991 during the early days of Lithuania's independence movement when international recognition was crucial.	
<b>The British Lithuanian press up to 1990, by <i>Dalia Cidzikaitė and Silvija Stankevičiūtė</i></b>	<b>9</b>
Dalia Cidzikaitė and Silvija Stankevičiūtė are curators of diaspora publications – the Lituanica collection - at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania in Vilnius.	
<b>The immigrants, by <i>Janette Holt</i></b>	<b>12</b>
Janette Holt is a second-generation Scottish-Lithuanian, born in Edinburgh. Until her retirement she worked in the Civil Service. She holds an Open University BA and is a member of the OU Open History Society. She is a long-standing member of the British Lithuanian Society.	
<b>A Brit in Lithuania: An interview with <i>Hannah Shipman</i></b>	<b>14</b>
Hannah Shipman is an English teacher from the UK. She has lived in Vilnius for seventeen years.	
<b>The phenomenon of stage director Miltinis, by <i>Nomeda Simėnienė</i></b>	<b>16</b>
Nomeda Simėnienė is community activist, journalist, publicist and publisher, editor and owner of "Kupiškėnų mintys" newspaper. She was a member of the editorial board of the <i>Sąjūdis</i> publications "Sąjūdžio žodis" and "Laisvas žodis". In 2019 she received the Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė "Tarnaukite Lietuvai" award.	
<b>A synchronised step into the unknown, <i>Maria Kielmas</i></b>	<b>18</b>
Maria Kielmas is an energy journalist and consultant, and a member of the British-Lithuanian Society. She has worked previously as an academic in the field of earthquake engineering, an adviser on earthquake and natural hazards to the reinsurance sector, and as an explorationist in the oil industry.	
<b>Kaunas special-needs school and The Tiltas Trust, by <i>Gintarė Dantienė and Tom Macan</i></b>	<b>21</b>
Gintarė Dantienė teaches English at the Kaunas Pranas Daunys Education Centre and is also the centre's link person with the Tiltas Trust. Tom Macan is Chairman of the British-Lithuanian Society's charitable arm The Tiltas Trust.	
<b>Horse therapy at Rumšiškės and Pranas Daunys School, by <i>Tom Macan</i></b>	<b>23</b>
Tom Macan was HM Ambassador to Lithuania in 1995-1998. He is Chairman of the Tiltas Trust and a member of the British-Lithuanian Society.	
<b>Book review: by <i>Maria Kielmas</i></b>	<b>24</b>
Richard Butterwick, <i>The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: Light and Flame</i> , Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2020	
<b>Books listing: compiled by the Editor</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Lithuanian and English bird names, by <i>Andy Cuckson</i></b>	<b>26</b>
<i>Liputis</i> – the treecreeper <i>Vandeninis strazdas</i> – the dipper	
Andy Cuckson is an amateur ornithologist. Over recent years he has spent much of his time in Kretinga, his wife's home town. He is a member of the British-Lithuanian Society.	
<b>The British-Lithuanian Society</b>	<b>28</b>

### 13<sup>th</sup> January 1991: our Victory Day

*Dr Laima Andrikienė MP*

Thirty years have passed since the historic events of January 1991. Today our Lithuania is free and independent, recognised around the globe, member of NATO, the EU, the OECD and many other important international bodies. Lithuania is seen, heard, involved in decision making within the most important alliances of the democratic world. While back then, thirty years ago, we were a nation which just had, after 50 years, escaped from the USSR's prison of nations, with no army, no weapons, no diplomatic service, none of the other attributes that democratic, independent nations take for granted. Barely ten months had passed since our declaration of independence. But we possessed what proved to be a more potent weapon than the Soviet Union's coercive apparatus and Mikhail Gorbachev's soldiery: we hungered for freedom and were prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for it. We breathed in Liberty upon declaring the restoration of an independent Lithuanian state on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1990 and were prepared to defend our freedom and independence to the best of our ability: the spirit of liberty was our strength. And for thirty years now, the 13<sup>th</sup> of January has been our, free Lithuania's, victory day.

The generations have changed. Those who did not experience it will probably not understand what I am writing about. It is not bombast when words, even the most wonderful ones, mean little in today's reality of amusement and consumption. Thirty years ago these were not words: it was such a powerful feeling that those who experienced it have not forgotten even now. The yearning for freedom soared everywhere: in the universities, factories, villages and cities. That sweet word: FREEDOM...

Thirty years ago I was a Deputy (Member) of the Supreme Council, elected in the Jurbarkas District constituency, with the backing of the Reform Movement of Lithuania (*Sąjūdis*) and the Lithuanian Union of Political Prisoners and Deportees. On 11<sup>th</sup> March 1990, together with the other 123 Deputies I voted for the restoration of an independent Lithuanian state and signed the 11<sup>th</sup> March 1990 Act of Independence [see *Tiltas*, Vol.20, No.1]. During those historic January 1991 days I was in parliament [then the Supreme Council, now *Seimas*] day and the night, joined in the debates and was on watch, prepared to do whatever circumstances and the constantly changing situation may dictate. You can still see the remnants of those old barricades outside *Seimas*, one of which bears the inscription: "Here is the heart of Lithuania". When the Soviets occupied the Lithuanian

an Radio and Television (LRT) building, Lithuanian Radio set up in the gallery of the Supreme Council's plenary chamber. From there we Deputies spoke to Lithuania and the world, there LRT's reporters prepared and broadcast the news. All Lithuania eagerly waited for Radio's call-sign, and having heard it knew that parliament was not occupied, that independent Lithuania was still alive.

Back in then I understood perfectly what awaited us Deputies, especially the women, should parliament be attacked and occupied. Following the storming of the LRT building and the Vilnius TV Tower, kinfolk of fourteen of our compatriots, those who had responded to parliament's call to come and defend our freedom, did not see their loved ones alive again. They died for Lithuania, defending us all. Their memory has not faded, it is, and always will, stay alive.

The following "telegraphic" extracts of my recollection of those historic January events are from my book published - in Lithuanian - a decade ago: „Aš, Laima Andrikienė, prisiekiu..." „Signatarė" ("I, Laima Andrikienė, swear...", part I: "Signatory").

#### ***Prices increase. Protests. Government's resignation.***

<...> January 1991, Sunday the 6<sup>th</sup>, I and my family were in Druskininkai, at my parents. In the afternoon I had a phone call from the Supreme Council, from Chairman V Landsbergis's reception or office. I was invited to urgently return to Vilnius, to the Supreme Council, we must discuss what to do, the situation is extraordinary: the government is going against parliament, going *va banque*! K Prunskienė's government, ignoring parliament's preventive decision to the contrary, decided to raise prices of food products and certain other essential goods, the decision is already being implemented.

On arrival in Vilnius, I found V Landsbergis, VJ Čepaitis, G Vagnorius, E Klumbys, several others, already at the Supreme Council, in V Landsbergis's office. All look worried and somewhat confused: after all, the previous week, on 29<sup>th</sup> December, before dispersing for the New Year and a short breather, the Supreme Council had decided not to raise prices until a compensation mechanism which would soften the impact of price increases on the people had been drafted. Some of us cannot believe that the government has decided to make such a decision. We check: yes, new prices are already being displayed in the shops! We decide unanimously that we must urgently

recall the Deputies, convene a Supreme Council session and either repeal the government's decision or stop its enactment.



**8<sup>th</sup> January: Attempt to break into Supreme Council building.** Photo: A Sabaliauskas

A Supreme Council debate is to take place on 8<sup>th</sup> January. As I arrive for work that morning I see people gathering outside parliament. Inside the Supreme Council, I learn that the Head of Government, Prime Minister Prunskienė is not in Lithuania, she is in Moscow, gone to meet M Gorbachev. A plenary sitting. We hurry to repeal the government's decision. Some Deputies doubt the need for such a decision. We vote: 100 for, 4 against, 4 abstain. The government's decision is repealed. Hopefully we have just managed to block a provocation which can have long term and very painful consequences. After voting I hurry to my office, my office windows "overlook" the internal courtyard. Through the window I see how quickly that courtyard is filling with people trying to break into parliament through the main entrance. Angry faces. From above I also see my assistant Algimantas Pečiukaitis, from Jurbarkas. He is in the very centre of events, defending the main entrance together with other men. I see how Algimantas is being pushed, but he's strong and robust, not easy to move: linking arms he and the other defenders hold their ground. A stream of cold water somewhat slows the action of those trying to break in, the leading invaders are pushed back into the courtyard. My colleague Birutė Nedzinskienė, Chairman of the Supreme Council V Landsbergis himself, others, appeal through a second floor window to the protesters in the courtyard. The crowd is addressed in Russian and Lithuanian, they are told that the government's decision to raise prices has been stopped. That same evening, having returned from Moscow, the Head of Government K Prunskienė appears in the Supreme Council, mounts the podium and announces: the

government is resigning. *In corpore*. We vote on the government's resignation. The government's resignation is accepted: 72 for, 8 against, 22 abstain.

At the same time, we get the news: Soviet paratroopers have arrived in Karmėlava, more than 30 military planes carrying paratroopers have landed in Šiauliai, and so on. In Moscow the next day, 9<sup>th</sup> January, the „burokevičinkai“ (representatives of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Lithuanian Branch - named after their leader, Mykolas Burokevičius<sup>1</sup>) demand that USSR Presidential rule be established in Lithuania. As soon as the 10<sup>th</sup> January we receive President M Gorbachev's ultimatum addressed to the Supreme Council of the "Lithuanian SSR"; "to fully reinstate without delay the application of the Constitution of the USSR and the Constitution of the Lithuanian SSR". We reply to the ultimatum that same day: We, the Supreme Council of Lithuania, have no right to renounce the sovereignty of the Republic of Lithuania without the mandate of those who voted for us! We address the people: fateful days have fallen upon Lithuania and us all.

Long and unsettled days and nights begin. My days and nights in the Supreme Council. Some day before 13<sup>th</sup> January I take my seven year old son Šarūnas to his grandparents in Druskininkai. I ask mother to take him away from home should the Soviet army attack the Supreme Council, should they arrest me. After mother's request, the family of Dr Juozas Staniulis, with three children, agree that, should it be necessary, they would take Šarūnas in and look after him for as long as needed.



**11<sup>th</sup> January: Assault on Press House** Photo: A Girdziušas

On 11<sup>th</sup> January the Soviets announce that they are starting "military manoeuvres" in Vilnius. We understand: these will not be manoeuvres, it's a new occupation. That same day the National Defence Department, Press House (*Spaudos rūmai*), Vilnius railway

station, are occupied. Around the Supreme Council – a crowd of thousands, defenders, who do not disperse day or night.

***12<sup>th</sup> January at the Supreme Council. Françoise. Silent crowd.***

...During the afternoon of 12<sup>th</sup> January Françoise Thom visits our Foreign Affairs Commission office. A famous French sovietologist, friend and supporter of independent Lithuania, arrived from France. We sit to talk. Our talk is not cheery, even the French sense of humour is of no help. The windows are ajar, through them we can hear a noisy crowd outside the Supreme Council. “Armonika’s” men have come to give support, to raise the crowd’s morale. I go to see V Landsbergis, to his office, to ask what next, what shall we do. There I find G Landsbergienė. We talk briefly. Outside “Armonika”<sup>2</sup> is still playing, the crowd is singing. On returning to the Foreign Affairs Commission I find my colleagues, all are waiting for what happens next, no one leaving. Françoise is still there. We hear unusual noises, possibly gunfire. One of my colleagues calms us: probably shooting blanks, trying to create fear and panic. The gunfire becomes more intense, sounds like heavy weapons. Somebody reports: the shooting is by the TV Tower, there are injured. Françoise starts crying: I still remember how she cried, brushing away her streaming tears with shaking hands... I don’t cry. We comfort Françoise, she says she knows what awaits her should Soviet troops break into parliament.

We go out, to the people. I stand before a silent crowd which seemingly only a moment ago had been singing as though their songs would raise parliament’s roof! A silent crowd. Silent, unarmed, but radiating so much power that tanks and armoured cars are but small toys in comparison. Only that once in my life did I sense how much power can emanate from quiet but determined people, from citizens who really know why they are here and now. And that they will not budge from here.

***Night of 13<sup>th</sup> January. Attack.***

Nighttime. Storming of the Vilnius TV Tower. Lithuanian Radio and Television (LRT) building occupied. TV broadcasts cease, Lithuanian Radio falls silent. I try unsuccessfully to phone my parents in Druskininkai. I understand perfectly how my parents and my Šarūnėlis [little Šarūnas], left with them, feel. Only later will I learn that during those days and nights an ambulance often visited my mother: too much stress on her heart. The first aid doctor called to our home wanted to know what had happened:

after all, we in Druskininkai are old residents of the town, we know one another very well. My mother’s reply made clear every reason for her ill health: “My Laima is at the Supreme Council...”. Mother, even after suffering a heart attack, refused to go to hospital. She could not leave Šarūnėlis. But the very next day, dad, leaving mum and Šarūnas behind in Druskininkai, came to Vilnius to defend parliament. Upon arrival brought these words from mum: mother said that should Soviet tanks force their way into the Supreme Council, I must lie under the tanks and stop them. Because we have lived our lives (my mum was then 60, dad – nearly 64), while you Deputies are young, you are more necessary for Lithuania. I, even without mum’s words, understood where I belonged. My place: at the Supreme Council, spending the nights curled up in an armchair in my office.



**13<sup>th</sup> January: Victim under Soviet tank**

**Photo: V Usinavičius**

... We gather in the Supreme Council plenary chamber. We are informed: the firing at the TV Tower and LRT building is with live ammunition. People are not leaving, they stand in front of tanks and armoured cars unarmed. People are chanting “Gėda!” (“Shame”) and „Lietuva!“. Many are injured, there are dead. One of V Landsbergis’s deputies addresses the women Deputies and suggests they leave the building: the situation is becoming very dangerous, the tanks and armoured cars may attack parliament.

Not a single female Deputy rose. “Women, particularly those with small children, go home” – the Deputy Chairman repeats again. The women don’t budge. I hear V Landsbergis’ words: can’t you understand that they will go nowhere? Their place is here. My Deputy colleagues react in various ways. Some, for some reason, chose to check the exits and became worried on discovering that the doors were locked. Some rushed into the hall shouting: why are the doors mined, we’ll burn alive in here, we’ll suffocate in the smoke! The Supreme Council building is full of “molotov cocktails”, we’ll quickly turn into a second Pilėnai<sup>3</sup> in here! I looked at those few panicking angry men colleagues and could not understand, why suddenly now, at such a time, this compulsion to leave? Our, the Deputies’, place is here, whatever happens.

...In the Supreme Council corridor I meet Rev Robertas Grigas<sup>4</sup>. He says he’ll be with us till the end – till victory or death. I give him my office keys, so he can have somewhere to change, to contemplate, to rest... The moment comes when we in the chamber prepare to die: we pray, we (those who ask) receive absolution for our sins.

... I try to reach friends in Britain on my office phone. I call Eimutis Šova, Kazys Makūnas, Domas Banaitis. I must tell them what is happening in Vilnius. It’s critical that information about events at the TV Tower and LRT building in Konarskio street reach not just Britain but as many people as possible around the world. It was clear that the Kremlin and it’s hired help in Lithuania will attempt to spread around the world a version of the events in Vilnius that, unless we give the greatest detail about everything, we’ll not recognise ourselves, we’ll be accused of every possible sin.

... I don’t now recall for how long I didn’t leave the Supreme Council. We had to be prepared for the worst scenario. I remember the night of 17<sup>th</sup> January: I was dozing curled up in an armchair in my office when somebody running down the corridor shouted loudly: Iraq has attacked Kuwait! I became more frightened than on the night of the 13<sup>th</sup>: I thought that the Soviet Union will, for sure, take advantage of a war in another region - rich in oil and other natural resources - for its own ends. When the interest of the world is diverted in a different direction, the war will

act like a smoke screen to crush us and fragile Lithuanian independence. Later, tension slightly eased, I went home for the night.

After 13<sup>th</sup> January, a long lasting economic blockade began. The Soviet Union tried to break us, cutting off, blocking supplies, hampering our state’s life in every possible way. We had to, in M Gorbachev’s words, choke on our independence. We endured.  
<...>

#### *Author’s note*

Žydrūnas Mačiukas, adviser at the Seimas Chancellery, Historical Memory Department, selected the photographs accompanying this article.

#### *Editor’s notes*

1. Mykolas Burokevičius (1927 – 2016) was a communist leader in Lithuania. After the Communist Party of Lithuania separated from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), he established an alternative Lithuanian Communist Party on the platform of the Communist Party of the USSR, in early 1990, and led it until its ban in 1991.
2. “Armonika” was a popular Lithuanian Television and Radio’s country music male ensemble.
3. Pilėnai was a hill fort in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Its location is unknown and is subject to debate, but it is well known in the history of Lithuania due to its heroic defence against the Teutonic Order in 1336. Attacked by a large Teutonic force, the fortress, commanded by Duke Margiris, tried in vain to defend itself against the larger and stronger invader. Losing hope, the defenders decided to burn their belongings and commit mass suicide to deprive the Order of prisoners and loot. This dramatic episode from the Lithuanian Crusade caught the public imagination, inspired many works of fiction and an opera, and became a symbol of Lithuanian struggles and resistance. [From Wikipedia].
4. Rev Robertas Grigas (b. 1960). Lithuanian priest, participant in resistance to the Soviet regime. Studied at the underground theological seminary in 1985-1988, secretly ordained on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1978.

### The Amber Lady meets the Iron Lady - 1990

The meeting of Prime Minister Kazimira Prunskienė with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher  
*Paul Markevičius*

My small footnote in Lithuanian diaspora history happened by chance, a chance viewing of BBC TV news on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1990, in the home of an old friend, Romas Kinka. “Lithuania premier sees Bush but there’s no red carpet...” flashed across the screen. Within a few weeks of this 30 second TV shot, I would be Press Officer for the Lithuanian Association in Great Britain (Didžiosios Britanijos Lietuvių Sąjunga - DBLS). Romas would become Political Spokesperson, sparring adroitly with all-comers on every radio, TV and newspaper interview we could catch.

The garden stroll of Kazimira Prunskienė, Prime Minister of Lithuania, with President George Bush Snr, took place *outside, on the lawn* of the White House. A subtle hint in line with the realpolitik of the time. To be invited *inside* the White House as a Head of State would be a political statement: an acknowledgment that the visitor is the country’s official representative. This simply could not be. Lithuania was still *de facto* inside the border of the USSR, along with Latvia and Estonia. This stage-managed etiquette was played out on the lawn despite Lithuania’s *de jure* right to independence being recognised by the USA.

At that very moment, as far as I know, there was only myself and Romas, having watched the news, asking: *What if, after Bush, we could get Thatcher to meet with Prunskienė? What would it take?* We debated this briefly and then Romas did precisely what was required to start the process. He got the key question to Margaret Thatcher’s team. The answer came back instantly. She would be very happy to meet Mrs Prunskienė. This was unexpected to say the least, we were caught off-guard by the ‘be careful what you wish for’ significance and un contemplated responsibility that fell upon us.

Suddenly, my job was to relay the message to Mrs Prunskienė in Washington that Margaret Thatcher was willing to meet her. A great message to convey, you would think, to bolster the independence movement. Not so, as it turned out. The American PR company managing her visit assumed it to be bogus. I couldn’t understand why there was not an instant confirmation. Or why my constant calls were being ignored or snubbed. Eventually I got through. When Mrs Prunskienė was finally told, she of course instantly agreed to the meeting, apparently furious on

hearing that we had been asking since Monday. It was now Friday, the scheduled meeting with Thatcher was the following Monday. No time for us to plan or organise anything, let alone get our heads around what we had taken on.

What *had* we taken on? I remember being very excited and relieved to relay the good news back to our ad hoc team at the time - Romas Kinka, Vincent O’Brien and Algis Kuliukas on the Friday afternoon, with a strategy meeting agreed for Saturday morning at Lithuanian House to discuss our next steps.

#### *What had we taken on?*

I don’t think any of us had any concrete thoughts whatsoever about what we had to do next, or what to prioritise. Come Saturday morning, I witnessed the classic ‘fight or flight’ human behaviour in times of stress. Everyone in turn made their excuses about various chores and shopping commitments that they had. It was just too big, too beyond our experience to take it all in. I was angry, seemingly left on my own to figure out what to do next. But it forced me into action. From the basement of Lithuanian House in London I faxed a press release. Something that, as I read it back, seemed a ludicrously mismatched David and Goliath story. Unsurprisingly, some recipients called to check there wasn’t a crank behind it. All good journalists should establish the accuracy of the source.

My immediate task was to find news desk fax numbers in the phone directories. I found every UK radio, TV, newspaper, quality periodical that I could think of that was listed in the Yellow and Business pages. I then added international media, focusing on the US and Europe, and any other country I could think of. Then I added the Embassies and, of course, all Baltic States representative offices. Finally, I monotonously faxed my Press Release about a press conference to be held at Lithuanian House on the Monday - twice. And then waited. Before long, to my amazement, I started getting replies. They ranged from disbelief to ‘simply confirming date and time of the press conference.’

Spurred on by these responses, I called the team early that evening. It was a bit too daunting but they had got over themselves. On Sunday morning we had a



productive strategy meeting. We made decisions regarding roles and responsibilities and prioritising tasks. Romas had been in touch overnight with various MPs and sympathetic politicians to obtain supportive quotations to put into our press releases. Algis produced a timetable for the next two days. We had turned professional overnight.

Now, the media was hungry for information. The TV and Radio invitations started rolling in... “Do you have someone who can talk about Lithuania and its relations with the Soviet Union?...”

Romas understood Soviet-style propaganda and how to combat it - mainly with precise facts, plainly stated without hysteria or emotion. Just as important, he knew how to work a live media interview as if born to it. Almost everything we did was intuitive. No blueprint or rule book for this situation governed our actions.

Our watching brief was to combat Soviet propaganda that had been fed to the UK media for many years and to keep re-stating the facts to remove the Soviet air-brush over Lithuania's annexation in 1940 after the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939. Every interview had to win the moral high ground: that the declaration of the right to independence by Lithuania made on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1990 was valid. At that time, however, there was virtually zero meaningful support from the world's political leaders. Many of them were counselling Lithuania to withdraw its declaration for fear of upsetting Mikhail Gorbachev and de-stabilizing relations with an unprecedentedly reasonable, progressive Communist leader.

Romas famously ran down a BBC TV studio corridor while makeup was being applied to get on screen on time: *Newsnight live with Jeremy Paxman*. A programme segment with an important analysis on the situation inside the Soviet Union and an opportunity not to be missed. Romas received plaudits from the great Mr Paxman for being very calm when jumping into his chair - off-camera - with the programme in full flow, live. When the camera suddenly switched to him seconds later, without pause saying “I am glad you asked me that question, Jeremy.” as if he had been in that chair from the start.

Our actions, not unexpectedly, generated a fair amount of criticism within the community. But, without making light of any of the decisions or actions taken, or the way we conducted ourselves, or sound arrogant, there simply was no time to consult and get bogged down with petty politicking, drawn out discussions, egos and bickering, as was - and still

is - unfortunately common in diaspora communities. Events were simply moving too fast. But we were not mavericks just doing our own thing. We had the approval of the chairman of the Association, Jaras Alkis, and simply got on with the job as the demands of events played out. Myself based in Lithuanian House as press officer and operations manager, Romas as political spokesperson and prime media representative. Algis Kuliukas provided IT support and some logistics. Jaras undertook a number of radio and TV interviews while having to run his own business – much to the consternation of his business partner.

### ***The Lithuanian Association's Aid Lithuania Fund***

A fund was set up by the Lithuanian Association to cover operational expenses. ‘ALF’ - *Aid Lithuania Fund* was born principally to cover the cost of looking after a Prime Minister at The Hilton Hotel, Park Lane. We didn't want to be seen to give our dignitary less respect than any other visiting Prime Minister, or look small and weak as a country by booking her into a lesser location. Just as important, top hotels had trained staff who understood red carpet protocol. Some of our compatriots didn't understand this and thought we were throwing money away by trying to show off.

[It should be noted that all the expenses of Mrs Prunskienė's stay in the UK were paid for by the British-Lithuanian community, not by somebody in the USA as has sometimes been claimed.]

Support was drawn principally from the younger members of the community. Mainly Mikel Ludwig and Zita Žilinskaitė. People who could get somewhere quickly, (eg No.10 Downing Street, Foreign Office) relay messages, act as go-betweens, take instruction and think on their feet. They never once let us down, even though at times certain circumstances stretched them. Algis provided our first printed, timetabled agenda to coordinate meetings with Margaret Thatcher, the Foreign Office, and the press conference. Just seeing the folder containing the hour-by-hour agenda filled us with pride and a greater sense of purpose. It gave us a huge psychological boost.

We all worked long hours. I was in the basement office 24 hours a day. I slept on the floor to be sure of not missing anything. I got bacon and eggs graciously served by the normally taciturn manager Kazys Makūnas. Both Nijolė Dargis - endless cups of tea and all the phone messages I missed, and Vladas Dargis - political and media advice as editor of

*Europos Lietuvis*, provided constant support in Lithuanian House.

There were also several emotional moments. Hard to describe the satisfaction and pride of walking into a Notting Hill newsagent and seeing the same press released headlines splashed across the newspaper front pages. “The Amber Lady Meets the Iron Lady” on a number of publications and used as the attention-grabbing headline by TV news readers. Or the surreal moment watching the first morning news programme on a portable TV, introducing the lead story with an image of a plane landing at Heathrow Airport: “Lithuania’s Prime Minister flies in from Washington for talks with Margaret Thatcher, to seek urgent support...”. And repeated throughout the entire day. It was the lead story in our media and some international media for 24 hours. And stayed as a top news item throughout the following week.

Lithuanians, inspired by *Sąjūdis*, had been carrying out demonstrations without bloodshed, bravely protesting inside the rusting Iron Curtain. From little to no coverage it was now receiving serious media attention. The phone was literally ringing off the hook. Each time I placed the receiver down, it immediately rang again. Everyone wanted more information and to confirm the press conference to take place at Lithuanian House after Mrs Prunskienė’s meeting with Mrs Thatcher. As I sat in the basement office just below the entrance door I could hear the front door buzzer every few minutes, signalling a constant stream of media visitors.

### ***The Press conference***

On the day of the press conference, timed to be after the meeting with Thatcher, what we had planned and imagined took on a whole new dimension. I had set up the first floor hall earlier with rows of chairs facing a top table for Mrs Prunskienė and Romas as translator, with Lithuanian and British flags draped either side. When I went back upstairs shortly before the conference to announce a slight delay, I got a shock. The ‘world’s’ media, with TV/ video cameras and countless zoom-lensed cameras pointing at the top table, *had* turned up. It was self-evidently a big story judging by the number of media representatives - around 80 journalists and photographers. This created an air of anticipation and excitement surrounding the “*What did Margaret say?*” and “*Will she help Lithuania?*” questions, especially as the

meeting with 10 Downing Street had gone on twice as long as scheduled, lasting around eighty minutes.



**Mrs Prunskienė meeting the Lithuanian community. Left-right: Mrs Prunskienė, Romas Kinka, Mr and Mrs Barėnas, at Lithuanian House.**

As Press Officer you realise that whatever else you think you are doing, your job is to enable as many journalists as possible to get their story on time. Almost everything else is secondary or there is no news. And of course, inevitably some were missed, mostly by not having enough time and qualified people to help. Romas was the official translator for the meeting in No.10. He also had to provide this role for journalists wanting their own individual interviews. Some journalists could be accommodated (prioritisation based on the perceived quality, influence and readership circulation of their media). Those interviews carried on non-stop into the evening. Some were less sympathetic to our cause, they were really not interested in empathising with the significance it had for us. Regardless, we, and most certainly Mrs Prunskienė, would never have stopped the interviews, tired or not.

I was called up from the basement to meet Mrs Prunskienė around 9 pm. It was an honour and privilege to finally meet the highly talented Lithuanian leader who had been the focus of all our daily deliberations during the previous week. Pleasantries and sincere thanks for my efforts were exchanged. I felt deflated however, because I could not speak to her in her own language and had no time to get to know her or share some thoughts on what this intense period had all meant.



## The British Lithuanian press up to 1990

### *Dalia Cidzikaitė and Silvija Stankevičiūtė*

#### *Before World War II*

We wish to begin this short article with a correction to the many texts found on the internet about Lithuanian publications abroad. „Vikipedija“ – the internet encyclopaedia – under „Lithuanian newspapers in the United Kingdom“ states that the first Lithuanian publication in Britain was „The Overseas and Home News Bulletin“ („Užsienio ir vidaus žinių biuletenis“) which appeared on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1947.

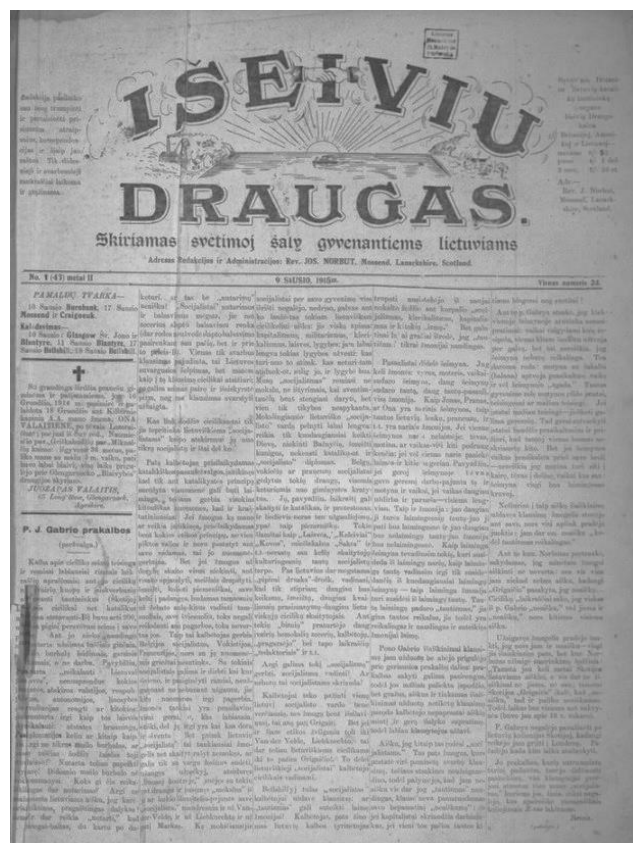
The article's author forgets that the history of the British Lithuanian press goes back much further, for example to 1899, when the first issue of „Vaidelytė“ appeared in Glasgow on 18<sup>th</sup> August. The fortnightly, nationally-minded paper was published by Vytautas & Montvila, edited by Jonas (John) V Montvila and Vincas Varnagiris. The only copy of „Vaidelytė“ held by the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania (henceforth, the National Library) – No.6, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1899 – contains Lithuanian news from Glasgow, Wishaw, London, Liverpool and Leeds, their organisations and activities. The paper also served more mundane purposes: it carried advertisements by firms transferring money to Lithuania, and by those making sausage too. You can find a digitised version at: <https://www.epaveldas.lt/recordDescription/LNB/C1C1B0000844999>.

The vast majority of Lithuanian migrants in the UK at that time were manual labourers, so it is unsurprising that the contemporary Lithuanian press was oriented towards that social class. One such publication was „Rankpelnis“ („The Labourer“), first published on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1920 in Bellshill, Lanarkshire, by the Lithuanian Socialist Association in Great Britain. „Rankpelnis“ became the newspaper of the Lithuanian Communist Association in Great Britain, and from 1922 till 1923 was the organ of the British Communist Party (Comintern Section) Lithuanian Branch. It was published twice weekly during 1907–1908 and 1911–1914, once weekly 1909–1910, 1915–1923. The paper also had supplements „Laikas“ („Time“) and „Širšės“ („Hornets“). You can find more information about this publication and a few issues on: <https://www.epaveldas.lt/recordDescription/LNB/C1C1B0000412754>.

The Lithuanian Roman Catholic Workers Association in Great Britain's „Išievių draugas“

(„The Emigrants' Friend“) (edited and managed by Rev Jos Norbut [Juozas Norbutas] – subtitled „For Lithuanians living in a foreign land“ - made its appearance on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1914 in Mossend, Lanarkshire. Initially it was published monthly, free of charge. With time it became the community's political and literary paper. The publisher changed too: from the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Workers Association in Great Britain to the Scottish Workers Association (1928-1947), and finally to the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Workers St Joseph's Association in Great Britain (weekly, 1948-1982). You can find digitised 1914-1939 copies on:

<https://www.epaveldas.lt/recordDescription/LNB/LNB018CA32F>.



#### *Išievių Draugas*

#### *After World War II*

After World War II, British-Lithuanian community activities and press were invigorated by the arrival of some 6000 refugees from Displaced Persons' (DP) camps in the British Zone of Germany. On the initiative of the Lithuanian Association in Great Britain - Didžiosios Britanijos Lietuvių Sąjunga,

DBLS - (founded in 1947), „Užsienio ir vidaus žinių biuletenis“ („The Overseas and Home News Bulletin“), made its first appearance on 25th July 1947. „Britanijos Lietuvis“ („The British Lithuanian“) appeared in October of the same year.



### Britanijos Lietuvis

In its first issue, printed with a mechanical duplicator and comprising only four pages, the Bulletin appeals on the front page to its readers with the following words: „This weekly bulletin is published in order to inform [Association] members about international and home events. Its publication will cease when it becomes possible to publish a newspaper meeting everyone's requirements. Members are asked for contributions towards the improvement of the bulletin“. The most important aim of the publication was to publish foreign and UK news (it contained many interesting items about the post-war economic and political situation in western Europe), and to publicise the activities of the Association. As was the case with most Lithuanian organisation abroad, the Association relied in the main on the goodwill and generosity of members and other Lithuanians. For example, in the second issue the Association thanks Lithuanians passing through the Hull transit camp for donating £10; in the third issue, Lithuanian women working in Brompton sanatorium are thanked for donating £1 each.

A short survey about „the British Lithuanian“ in the sixth issue of the Bulletin reveals that the Association had for some time planned the publication of a much more substantial newspaper with a different title. The survey poses seven questions. The editors of the mooted paper wanted to know the opinion of its readership about what articles and information they liked, which they didn't like, whether they wished in future to see more illustrations, whether they would prefer a larger format, even whether the cover price could be increased. The Bulletin also performed the invaluable post-war job of tracing people. In its seventh issue the following item appears: „Miss Zosė /surname unknown/, 17 years old, who arrived in England on 21<sup>st</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup> July from Flensburg via Seedorf, is requested to supply her address to the Lithuanian Association in GB [...]. We have received a letter for her“. In other words, the Association used the Bulletin to locate people and as a sort of post office. A new column, „Question Corner“ in which the editors answer readers' questions, appears in the eighth issue. Editorial columns feature from issue No.12. The Bulletin was produced by M Šilkaitis and M Bajorinas, helped by A Masaitis, J Vilčinskas and B Daumantas.

In its 1947 14<sup>th</sup> issue, newly named „Britanijos lietuvis“, the editors inform their readers about the change of title, rejoiced that the paper now has not four but eight pages, share their future plans. „There is no need to explain the importance of a Lithuanian newspaper because everyone understands that well. The paper does not serve only as a source of news, but also fulfils the function of a postman“, write the editors (1947.X.24, p.1). According to them, within a mere few months reader numbers surpassed 500. The editors were determined to double that. There was no need to wait for long, in the issue of 21<sup>st</sup> November 1947 (No.18) they announce that subscriber numbers had almost reached 1000. Also, that same issue, devoted to the first general meeting of the Association that took place on 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> November 1947, featured a picture on the front page. The technology was also new, it was printed photostatically.

### Europos lietuvis

The „Britanijos lietuvis“ title survived for just one year (1952-1953) before being replaced by „Europos lietuvių laikraštis“ („Newspaper of the European Lithuanians“). Then, in 1953, with issue No.39, it became „Europos lietuvis“ („The European Lithuanian“). The paper was published in London until 1992, from 1992-1995 in Vilnius, from 1996 in Nottingham and finally back in London. It was a

weekly until 1996, fortnightly from 1996-2000. Its publisher changed in 1954 when publication was taken over by Lithuanian House Ltd [not a change *de facto* because the Association was the majority shareholder in the Company, and both entities were run by the same people based at the same address - *Editor*]. Vladas Dargis, who became Editor in 1987 was in post for nearly ten years. It was his idea to have the paper printed in Vilnius (from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1990). The Association decided to return publication to Britain in 1996 [one reason being that the postal from Lithuania to the UK, where most readers were, proved to be unreliable]. The paper's history is described in some detail in „Britanijos Lietuviai, 1947-1973“ (Nida Press; London, 1978) by Kazys Barėnas – [himself a former Editor].

From its very beginning it was intended that this periodical should not be just for Lithuanians in Britain but for those throughout Europe. In the 24<sup>th</sup> September 1953 issue the Editorial declared that „Europos lietuvis“ is a symbol of the efforts of the European Lithuanian communities to draw closer so as to work together for the good of Lithuania and lithuanianism“. The paper analysed post-war political issues such as: the work of the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania (Vyriausiasis Lietuvos Išlaisvinimo Komitetas – VLIKas), the activities of the Baltic Council [in Great Britain], the Soviet Union's actions, the guerilla war in Lithuania, the diaspora's efforts to restore Lithuanian independence. It printed news about compatriots in the USA, Switzerland, Belgium, France, Germany and Italy, discussed the subject of human rights, diligently commented about ways to restore the homeland's independence. Reminiscences about prominent members of the diaspora and their published books also featured. Digitised copies „Europos lietuvis“ from 1953-2009 can be found on: <https://www.epaveldas.lt/object/recordDescription/LNB/C1B0002106552>.

### *Šiaurinės Anglijos lietuvių biuletenis*

In December 1967 a new Lithuanian newspaper appeared in Manchester: „Šiaurinės Anglijos lietuvių biuletenis“ („North of England Lithuanians' Bulletin“), published by the North of England Cultural Circle, edited by D. Dainauskas, S. Lauruvėnas, A. Podvoiskis. It came out three times a year (before Christmas and Easter, and during the

Summer holidays) until 1992. The National Library holds only two examples of this publication: 1984 No.44, and 1990 No.75 (the latter issue being titled „England's Lithuanians' Bulletin“). An Editorial by Kazys Barėnas in a 1981 issue, headed „What unifies us and what divides us“, maintains that tensions between the elected and the electors had grown to such an extent that it affected even the Bulletin, „in which until now all those who had found space for their joys and worries no longer found room for democratic opinions and decisions“. The same issue reports on the Association's General meeting, its reports, discussions, resolutions, etc. Reminiscences from the past, news about Lithuanians in northern England (Manchester, Bolton, Leigh and Ashford, Bradford) and Scotland also feature.

The contents of the July 1990 issue are more varied. There are historical topics (the murder of the Russian Czar's family, extermination of Lithuanians, Grand Dukes of Lithuania), social issues such as „In what is modern youth most interested“, „Love for a machine is stronger than that for a woman“, scientific themes (geothermal energy, the human and health). Several readers' letters are printed, one from Australia, another from Lithuania. The latter is particularly interesting because its author – Laima Andrikienė – was to become a member of the Lithuanian Parliament (1990-2000) and of the European Parliament (2004-2019). In total there were 82 issues of the Bulletin.

We have encountered mention of several other UK Lithuanian publications of limited scope and small circulation. One such is „Šaltinio žurnalas“ (1969–1993), of which we have unfortunately found no copies.

### *Editor's note*

Lithuanian publications in Britain encompassed more than newspapers; books, magazines and pamphlets were also published here. The first Lithuanian book known to be printed in England was the Chylinski Bible in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. After World War II, Nida Press in London published some 100 titles ranging from translations of Greek myths, to memoirs to poetry and novels by diaspora authors. For more information see Silvija Velavičienė in *Didžiosios Britanijos lietuvių bendruomenė: praeitis, dabartis, ateitis*, Versus aureus: Vilnius, 2008.

## The immigrants

### Janette Holt

My grand-parents, Annie and Charlie Thomson arrived in Scotland somewhere between 1898 and 1901. They had married in Alwit Poland, at least that was on their marriage certificate; the place was in fact Alvitas. The wedding date was 26<sup>th</sup> November 1898. They were Lithuanian and at the date of marriage they were both 19. Reverting to their Lithuanian names they were Ona and Kazimer Balsavitius although on their children's birth certificates he is Casaak and she is Annie. Not until her death certificate is she shown as Ona.

The village of Alvitas is close to Virbalis and the photo possibly resembles their rural surroundings [although Virbalis is larger than Alvitas]. Her mother was Magda Egneruti, her father Usus Shutritute was a farm labourer. His father, named Kazimer, was a farmer and his mother was Margaret Titscuti.



Ст. Вержболово, Сѣв.-Зап. ж. д.  
Улица изъ п. Кибаргы.

Virballen, Une rue à Kybartų.

### Virbalis

My grandmother recalled Cossack horsemen riding through the village without any warning, and that it was dangerous to be in their path. She also remembered nurturing a lamb, such was the rustic nature of their lives. Her mother had urged her to marry Charlie as he was a good man.

Many Lithuanians were emigrating, especially young men who could be drafted into the Czarist Russian army to serve up to 15 years. It is possible that before embarking on their journey Charlie or both of them were in East Prussia for a spell. Work had to be found to augment the necessary cash needed for their travels. She said that they travelled via Berlina, the white or bright city, Hamburga, the port, and Hulla, which was Hull, and then onward to Scotland by train or ferry.

Married life began in the little hamlet of Blinkbonny - which means bonny view - a now-lost village of West Lothian, the nearby town being West Calder. The first of thirteen children was born on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1901. The name on the birth certificate is Annie Belsavoz the father's signature marked 'X'. Some of the immigrants could read and write and were instrumental in helping with correspondence home. It seemed to be the case with our family that that correspondence stopped after or during World War I.

In 1917, because of an Act of Parliament, "allied aliens" like Lithuanians were called up for military service in the British Army. Units were sent to Russia and landed in the middle of the Revolution. This depleted the Lithuanian community in Scotland as most of these men - who had left wives and children behind - did not return. To the shame of the British Government, these settled women and children were repatriated back to Lithuania. Charlie was deferred from military action because of a poisoned knee.

He would in 1918 witness the sad death of Annie, their firstborn, who at the age of 16 had developed tuberculosis. The young woman with bonny hair was laid to rest in common ground in the Catholic cemetery of Mount Vernon in Edinburgh. A sister Olessa (aged 4) already lay there in 1914, and their last baby, Marija, joined them in 1924 (aged 4 months). The deaths of these three girls was a heartbreak to Ona. With Annie, her firstborn and helpmate gone, she was devastated. However, there were her other children to think of, and she was to bear Matilda in the following December.

By 1918 no other Lithuanians resided in the village of Newcraighall where Annie and Charlie had lived from 1904. In 1909-10 the village hosted thirteen Lithuanian families, identifiable on the Valuation Rolls by "ski" at the tail end of their Scottish name. For example, our name Thomsonski, also Millarski, Savageski, Ruditeski and so on. Life in the village was tolerable despite the low-quality brick housing. Attractive by the standards of other coal mining villages but inadequate, with only two rooms and a small scullery kitchen. The Annual Rateable Value of £8 and 9 shillings determined the rents paid to the Niddrie and Benhar Coal Company. Most houses in Scotland tended to be of stone, well insulated and dry, but brick colliery houses quickly constructed by the colliery company tended to be damp. The illnesses ascribed to early deaths in the family, such

as pneumonia and rheumatic fever, were notoriously triggered by damp living conditions and overcrowding.

With two sons working with their father - too hard in my grandmother's opinion - she decided that they should move to town. A Jewish village trader, named Davidson, was asked if there was a shop to rent in Edinburgh. He came back with the property at No 16 Pleasance, and the year 1926 saw the family move to Edinburgh. The oldest boy Joseph, and possibly Victor, still worked with their father at the coal mine, while the family set up the business in town. Previously a second-hand clothes shop, this was cleared out to make way for grocery and confectionery. The tenancy was in the daughter's name, Helen Thomson.

Anela (aged 23) and sister Lena, now 17 but who had begun working aged 14, who had toiled at the pit head picking out stones from the coal conveyor belt, found new employment in town. Nellie worked in the Rubber Mill, Lena was in service, while their mother with the help of the younger boys ran the shop. School age children went to St Patrick's School - just a short walk round the block - with other children who were of Lithuanian, Italian, Irish and Scottish parentage.

Of the other Lithuanians, one family ran a cobblers business, another had a small furniture workshop. There was also an antiques shop and another like ours, a confectioners. In fact, if you counted the many children, there was a sizeable nucleus of Lithuanians living in the town and they of course socialised together, each knowing each other's 'business'.



**Grandmother in her finery**

This photograph of my grandmother tells me a story of intrepidity, of hardship overcome, of striving for a better life out of poverty, and a very real work ethic. She would fight off sleep at her sewing machine while making and altering clothes for her large family. A talented woman who, although not educated, added English to the other three languages she spoke. In her fur coat she shows that she almost made it, but not quite.

Before she died, very suddenly in 1938, she and my mother were looking for a new home. Two large and spacious flats were considered and, had she lived just a few months more, a decision would have been made as to which one suited them. The family would then have moved, retaining the business, but no longer living in cramped quarters at the back of the shop

Joseph the eldest son had predeceased her, dying in 1928 of pneumonia. It was after their move from the village. A possible cause of his illness could have been the longer bicycle ride home from work in his damp pit clothes. No pit-head baths were installed at the colliery until 1936. Joseph at 23 loved football and the photograph with his teammates must be the first one taken of anyone in the family. He is a nice looking boy, and was considering marriage. His girlfriend was from Portobello, so it was very likely that they met while he lived in Newcraighall



**Grandfather Charlie with daughters and grandchildren**

Grandfather Charlie, in 1960, is with his two daughters, Lena, Tilly and Tilly's family. He is again living in Newcraighall, and a widower for the second time. The time he lived in town did not suit Charlie, although it was in Edinburgh that he met Jean, his second wife.

After leaving work in the coal mine, and I don't know exactly when, he worked in Portobello Fairground with his son, also Charlie. The fairground job had possibly followed on from a

business project which did not succeed. That was a fish and chip shop on the west side of town. Charlie ran this with the help of daughter Lena. The shop was in a bad spot, being in a side street, and there was competition from the Italian chip shop round the corner in the main street. It was therefore destined to fail. Location, location...

After his wife died, Charlie returned to the colliery and worked there until retirement well over the age of 65. Newcraighall was where he settled with Jean, but the family link remained with daughter Lena. She would visit Ellen McKay, a school friend still living in the village, and at the same time call in to see her father and Jean. Charlie died in 1966 of chronic bronchitis and heart disease. My mother, when visiting him in hospital, spoke in Lithuanian.

Having married a Scottish woman it must have been years since he had used his own language but, close to death, the language of his childhood was the one he spoke.

This is my family's story, but I hope in time there will be the other fascinating Lithuanian immigrant tales told and written and passed down through the generations.

#### ***Further reading***

Janette Holt, *Scottish diaspora tapestry: the Reverse Diaspora panel for Lithuania*, Tiltas Vol.15, No.2.  
Frank Cassellis (Kasiulaitis), *My book-smuggler grandfather*, Tiltas Vol.16, No.2.

### **A Brit in Lithuania** ***An interview with Hannah Shipman***

#### ***What brought you to Lithuania in the first place?***

I've been involved in teaching English all of my adult life, first in Prague, then Tallinn; after a couple of years of working there for a language school, I was offered the opportunity to open a new branch of the school here in Vilnius. It was an exciting time — I initially ran the school, becoming co-owner and director a year later.

I'm originally from the East Midlands (now home to thousands of Lithuanians), and I'd always had itchy feet; those big skies and fields had to lead somewhere. I used to think I must have been one of the first from Lincolnshire to visit Vilnius, only to realise that a mere 613 years before I arrived, Henry Bolingbroke (later the first English-speaking King since the Norman conquest — Henry IV) [see *Tiltas* Vol.12, No.1, p.22] had been involved in the unsuccessful siege of Vilnius in 1390. Henry's birth place, Bolingbroke Castle, was just a few miles from my hometown; the ruins provided an atmospheric venue for performances of Shakespeare's plays. I wonder how recognisable modern Vilnius would be to Henry? I'd like to think he'd recognise the steely determination of the inhabitants of this thriving city.

Unlike Henry who stayed a year and then came back on a separate Crusade, I have never left; my initial contract was for one year — 17 years later, I'm still here!

#### ***Can you remember your first impressions of Vilnius?***

It's hard to remember now, but parts of Vilnius were rather run-down, in a charming kind of way. Perhaps Vilnius has lost some of its edginess. I used to collect examples of amusing English on signs or menus (things like "caesarian salad" or "stodgy set to the beer" are, alas, much harder to find nowadays), most of which were too charming to even want to correct. Vilnius is small enough to be homely but large enough to offer as much culture to satiate my appetite.

#### ***Speaking of appetites, what do you think of Lithuanian food?***

I love all the potato dishes, but I can still hear the audible gasp as I decided to add some carrot salad to my plate containing *cepelinai* — I now understand that this attempt to add vegetables to the national dish was a sacrilegious act worthy of confiscating my residence permit! I always smile when I see *šalti-barščiai* — it took me about three years to take the plunge and try it; I used to think it looked a bit like a radioactive disaster in a bowl. Now I know it is totally natural and is very refreshing on a hot summer's day! Looking back at my younger self, I am amused by my naivety or lack of understanding stemming from my limited Lithuanian. I spent a long time thinking that the *žuvienė* and *bulvienė* on offer in the canteen were the recipes of the cooks called Mrs Fish



and Mrs Potato! Little did I know! Thankfully, my language skills are better now.

### ***What's your relationship with the Lithuanian language?***

As a teacher, I can't help but be fascinated by languages, but I'd be lying if I didn't acknowledge that it is a love-hate relationship at times. I like the sound of Lithuanian; certain sounds just appeal to me (uo, ž). I'm convinced that Lithuanians make good IT programmers as they are used to logical languages that require an analytical brain. Street names reflect the history or topography; I've lived in many places in town: Paupio gatvė by the river Vilnelė, Trench Street in Northern Town where the Soviet barracks once stood, Volunteer Avenue stretching to Kaunas, Tower Street (near the old wall and bastions), etc. I'm still ashamed by how frequently I make simple grammatical errors, but to say that Lithuanian is impossible to learn is simply not true. I've accepted that I will be a life-long learner who will always be labelled 'užsienietė' no matter how hard I try.

### ***What keeps you here? Why have you stayed in Lithuania?***

It is easy to love Vilnius. I can see the Neris and so many trees around, currently topped with glistening snow. Lithuania is not so far away from my parents in Kent, although the Coronavirus has made it feel further away than it used to be. A year or so after I arrived, I met Vitas. Gradually our friendship blossomed into something more. He wouldn't want to live anywhere else, so we've stayed here. It's good to be near my Lithuanian family, and Vilnius oozes history, be it from the obvious UNESCO-protected Old Town to the painful memories of the 13<sup>th</sup> January events at the TV Tower.

It's a vibrant place to be, and I feel as if I have developed along with the country. It is inevitable that the place and people from your adopted homeland rub off on you, but it is impossible to measure how Lithuania has shaped me as a person. My brother once commented that I had become somewhat stoic. I took this as a compliment in the sense that Lithuanians are remarkably resilient and able to cope with changes. I also think it is important not to sink into an apathetic acceptance, but to be proactive in trying to change things for the better. I suppose I see myself as being on a mission to help Lithuanians find their voice, their idiolect, in English.

### ***Tell us more about your work***

Work-wise, Lithuania has been good to me, affording a breadth of opportunities and experiences. As one of the few female Brits to settle in Lithuania, I am asked to do random things, such as voiceovers for museums. I've been working with the British Council since 2004 in the Baltics and Belarus — my trips to Minsk have made me realise and appreciate just how far Lithuania has come. In 2009, I began teaching at Vilnius University and I also freelance under the name 'EnglishTeacher.lt' — my tagline is "English for Interesting People".

I am privileged to be able to form relationships with people I probably wouldn't otherwise have met. Many of my current students came of age during the last years of occupation and soon after; they remember both worlds. The connections I build as a teacher provide fulfilment. I work with all sorts of people from business people to comedians, politicians to TV producers and now know more about medieval history, olfactory delights, internal audit, EU institutions, marketing, HR, green energy, programming, etc.

### ***When you are not working, what do you get up to?***

Vitas has instilled in me a love of the countryside and homegrown food, although the sole responsibility for our balcony garden is in his green fingers. We have found a place near a beautiful lake with clear skies, and a calm breeze for reading, fishing, and cooking on an open fire — pleasures we miss during the pandemic. My life is less complete without trips to Trakai to watch rowing regattas before gorging on *kibinai* and refreshing *gira*. The pandemic has made me realise I miss the lull of trolleybus 17 and its microcosm of life. I love taking photos of quirky things that catch my eye. Lithuania has taught me to value simplicity; to be grateful with what I have.

### ***What has changed in Lithuania?***

Aside from the obvious changes in prices and building developments across the city, I think the main thing is people's attitudes towards Lithuania itself. A few years ago, there seemed to be a lack of self-esteem or pride in Lithuania ("...but why on earth would you buy a local shampoo?"). I am really pleased that the self-consciousness and ensuing confidence of the country has increased due to the vibrant start-up scene, attracting fin-tech companies and creating successful apps. We have an ever-increasing number of Erasmus students in our classrooms as a result of the positive feedback from the first cohorts of students a few years ago. Now stu-



dents actively choose Vilnius, which is rightfully gaining its identity as a modern European city. Lithuanian experts now advise other countries on how to deal with cyber crime and propaganda; my role is to help them communicate more effectively in English.

### *How will Brexit affect you?*

I feel as European as ever, despite Brexit. As a staunch ‘Remainer’, I am trying to move on from the deep resentment, sadness, and — at times, downright anger — that Brexit has evoked over the last few years. The British Embassy did a good job of keeping us informed amidst the fog of uncertainty; I am grateful for all the work that must have gone on behind the scenes. At least now we have some clarity. Hopefully, in the long-run, I might come to understand the positives. Unfortunately, many companies have stopped shipping to the EU due to “teething problems” and the palaver of dealing with Customs.

In the event that my parents get ill, returning to the UK for any length of time with Vitas will involve a lot of paperwork or some difficult choices. As a permanent resident here, I simply need to return to Migration to swap my permanent residency card, so I am grateful that Lithuania is making the process as smooth as possible, but I still feel that I lack some rights.

### *What kind of rights?*

I’m talking about voting rights. UK law stipulates that I can no longer vote in Britain as I have lived away for more than 15 years. I can’t vote in parliamentary elections here, as I am not a Lithuanian citizen (and would apply tomorrow if Lithuania allowed dual citizenship for long-term ex-EU residents). I have now lost the right to vote in EU elections, which also stings as previously I had voted for Lithuania MEPs. I think it is normal to wish to have a voice at the ballot box.

### *What would you change about Lithuania?*

For a nation that has suffered a lot, I would sometimes expect to find more empathy in my classroom — more tolerance of the Other. Thankfully, the education system is evolving and the language level of my students improves from year to year — this is measurable, but it is more difficult to track critical thinking skills and the ability to work in teams with different people. There is still work to be done.

This plucky nation has always spanned different cultures and mentalities. I am proud to have made my home in a forward-looking technologically-minded country that has an ever more important role to play in bridging East and West in the current geopolitical environment. I hope I can continue to contribute to the ever-improving level of English in the country.

## **The phenomenon of stage director Miltinis** *Nomeda Simėnienė*

Panevėžys, a place in north Lithuania built on either side of the Nevėžis will celebrate its 518<sup>th</sup> birthday this year (2021). The fifth largest Lithuanian town by population, it currently has some 90,000 inhabitants.

Every place has its own legend and Panevėžys is no exception. That is stage director Juozas Miltinis (1907-1994), the theatre he built and the star actors that he cultivated.

The idea of establishing his own theatre most probably gestated in 1933, when he arrived in Paris to study under the famous actor, director and teacher Charles Dullin, who at the time ran one of the most famous French theatres, the Théâtre de l’Atelier, alongside which he had also founded his famous theatre studio. Miltinis studied there with such future legends of the French theatre as Jean Vilar, Jean-Louis Barrault and others. At the same time attended

lectures in art history, philosophy and other subjects at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France. He met with Pablo Picasso, poets Louis Aragon, Jacques Prévert and Paul Eluard, and other notables in the arts.

Miltinis got on well in Paris, but, dreaming of a theatre of his own, and having absorbed a lot of intellectual energy, decided in 1937 to return to Lithuania. [Having spent a short while in London to learn English and study the theatre], he began working at the theatre studio of the Chamber of Labour [somewhat akin to a Workmen’s Institute] in Kaunas in 1938. In 1940, after the Soviet occupation, Miltinis was appointed „actor with the right to direct“ at the newly-founded theatre in Panevėžys. He and a few enthusiasts from the Chamber of Labour, who were destined to become true stars of theatre and film, moved to Panevėžys. Their first premiere, on

15<sup>th</sup> March 1941, was of „Sidabrinis slėnis“ (The Silver Valley) by Nikolai Pogodin [an exponent of ‚Soviet realism‘].

At the Panevėžys theatre studio Miltinis managed to create celebrities, professional actors, out of still maturing youngsters. „Philosophers and poets, acrobats and mimes, masters of the control of voice and body, strange alloys of intellect and feeling“ was what Miltinis wanted to see. And he succeeded! After all, there was no education establishment in the town where his pupils could receive a higher education. Their entire baggage of knowledge, the foundations of a fundamental education in philosophy, ethics, psychology they got from Miltinis. Bearing in mind that those were sombre Soviet times when even a good book was scarce, not everyone can imagine today that the actors had to transcribe by hand a good book, a work on philosophy, borrowed somehow from somewhere.

Not all who studied under Miltinis became actors. But the young people (Miltinis took really ‚green‘ teenagers, 15 and 16-years olds) who spent time with such a celebrity, even if they quit the theatre for a variety reasons, went away marked by Miltinis‘ hand: full of curiosity, striving for individualism, not thinking in clichés, unimpressed by mass production, seeking answers to existential questions. Many of Miltinis‘ students became directors, script writers, artists.



**Juozas Miltinis in his library with actor Vaclovas Blėdis (left)** Photo: Antanas Gylis

As asserted by theatre critic Šarūnė Trinkūnaitė „Miltinis‘ teaching did not limit itself to theatre-studio activity only. He, at least in the early days of the Panevėžys theatre‘ s life, persistently encroached on all of ‚his children‘ s‘ walks of life, encouraged them to think that the actor-artist had no moral right to have another lord other than their art‘. He tried to

teach them to live in accordance with the agenda of the ideal ‚theatre devotee‘: he forbade marriage, having fun, socialising, mixing with the audience, ie going on stage after the performance to bow, accept applause and flowers, etc. Of course, in the long run, such discipline ceased to apply. However, the rules of the Panevėžys theatre as a closed sect of the ‚Theatre‘ s Chosen‘, or of an island separated from the outside world, persisted until he left and even for a time afterwards. Another director‘ s or actor‘ s work here was completely unimaginable“. This was the first and only such theatre-studio in Lithuania. The most successful plays directed by Miltinis in Panevėžys were: Henrik Ibsen‘ s „Heda Gabler“ (1957), Arthur Miller‘ s „Death of a Salesman“ (1958), Anton Chekhov‘ s „Ivanov“ (1960), William Shakespeare‘ s „Macbeth“ (1961), Wolfgang Borchert‘ s „The Man Outside“ (1966), Friedrich Dürrenmatt‘ s „The Physicists“ (1967), and August Strindberg‘ s „The Dance of Death“ (1973).

According to Trinkūnaitė, these Miltinis productions „cemented the Panevėžys theatre‘ s reputation throughout the Soviet Union as being exceptional, superbly erudite, imaginatively directed, with outstanding acting“.

The theatre‘ s fame brought changes to Panevėžys too. Hotels, new cafés and restaurants were built in the 1960s. Miltinis fashioned not only the theatre but the town too, although one of his biggest dreams, an arts university, never did materialise.

„In the 1960s Miltinis unquestionably became *the* authority on directing complex-souled rôles. His ensemble demonstrated acting of the highest calibre. The Panevėžys theatre diligently cultivated its image, and, most importantly – kept it“ Trinkūnaitė maintains.

Many theatre students and critics believe that the superb quality of its actors was the reason for the theatre‘ s success. Artists such as Stasys Petronaitis, Donatas Banionis, Algimantas Masiulis, Eugenija Šulgaitė, Regina Zdanavičiūtė, Gediminas Karka, Stepas Kosmauskas, Henrieta Hokušaitė, Dalia Melėnaitė, Vaclovas Blėdis, Kazimieras Vitkus and many others.

In 1980 Miltinis withdrew from the theatre he had created and nurtured. Departed without leaving a successor. One could say he demolished it. „Perhaps even deliberately, as part of his legend‘ s ‚dowry‘“ according to Trinkūnaitė. It is possible. His good friend the dramatist Juozas Grušas once very aptly said „within Juozas Miltinis there is very little of man. He‘ s half God, half beast.“

In 1995, a year after Miltinis' death, the Panevėžys Drama Theatre and a secondary school in the town were named after him.



**Sculpture of Juozas Miltinis in front of the Miltinis Drama Theatre, Panevėžys**

The Juozas Miltinis Legacy Studies Centre was opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1996 in the Panevėžys flat where he lived for the last few years of his life. The director bequeathed his library, manuscripts, art collection, and some personal effects to the town's Gabrielė Petkevičaitė Bitė Public Library.

His collection contains 3500 books and 37 art works. The Legacy Centre Director's Angelė Mikelinskaitė believes that Miltinis collected books very purposefully. They were sent by close friends and famous people - it could be said that they were donated. Apart from dictionaries, there are many psychological and sociological works, books on the theatre and the plays which he put on the stage. Manuscripts, a variety of documents, correspondence, drawings, notes, synopses, form the most valuable part of the bequest. They reveal the director's social circle, interests, character traits. The collection is recognised as one of national importance and has been included in the UNESCO „Memory of the World” Register.

Juozas Miltinis was honoured both by the then Soviet Union and the Republic of Lithuania. In 1980 he was made an Honorary Citizen of Panevėžys. In 1994 he received the Commander's Cross of the Order of Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas. In 1995, posthumously, France awarded him the Knight's Cross of the Order of Arts and Letters (Ordre des Arts et des Lettres). [He died on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1994.]

On 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007 his statue, created by Regimantas Midvikis, was unveiled in front of the Drama Theatre.

### **A synchronised step into the unknown**

*Maria Kielmas*

On 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020 the Baltic States reached an important milestone in their decades-long ambition to escape Russian control over their electricity networks and fully integrate with the European Union's energy market. The EU's Innovation and Networks Agency (INEA) signed a €720 million grant with the electricity system transmission operators of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, together with Poland, to help integrate the Baltic grids with the rest of continental Europe. Called the Baltic Synchronisation process, the project aims to be completed by 2025. EU Energy Commissioner Kadri Simson said in a statement that the project will “also facilitate the take-up of renewable energy in the Baltic States and Poland, helping them achieve the European Green Deal objectives.”

But the laws of physics are already overriding the EU's Green Deal political ambitions. Increasing

generation of intermittent energy from renewable sources such as wind and solar is destabilising the EU integrated power grid, the Central European Network (CEN). There is no power when the wind doesn't blow, or blows too fast, when the sun doesn't shine and when, as this winter, solar panels are buried in snow. A Europe-wide power outage was only avoided on 8<sup>th</sup> January this year by imports of coal and nuclear-generated electricity from neighbouring countries. Unless and until mega-scale electricity storage facilities are invented that will ensure emergency power supplies over days and weeks, rather than minutes, the EU energy supply must be supported by large amounts of gas, hard coal and lignite-fired power generation, as well as nuclear energy, much of which will come increasingly from Russia. That's why Germany is pressing ahead with the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia, as well as gas supplies from elsewhere, including the United

States. Under its energy transition, *Energiewende*, Germany plans to phase out all nuclear power by 2022 and coal by 2038. But it has also reached a physical limit for the further expansion of renewable energy domestically to compensate for closed-in power generation capacity. Absent a radical change in the EU's energy policy, Russian control over Baltic States' power supplies will not ease.

### ***How transmission works***

National and international electricity transmission and distribution systems run both direct and alternating current. High voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission lines are preferred for large distances, more than 600 km, because they have lower losses than high voltage alternating current (HVAC) lines, which are usually used for shorter distances. A synchronous system means that all power plants attached to it generate electric alternating current at the same speed (of rotors in turbines) and frequency. If this frequency changes in one location, that segment is cut off from the grid and a blackouts result. The system's operator, i.e. controller, has the job of balancing this generation load with customer demand. This works by either disconnecting some generators when there is a surplus or calling in reserve capacity during times of high demand.



### ***Ignalina***

The Soviet Union's "Mir" synchronous power system, developed from the mid-1950s, connected its republics and the Warsaw Pact members. It was reshaped as the Integrated Power System/Unified Power System (IPS/UPS) after the Soviet collapse when all the European members, other than the Baltics, left. Belarus, Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania interconnected and integrated their grids under the BRELL agreement that works synchronously within the IPS/UPS zone, which ensures the BRELL reserve capacity and system

security. This system is connected to Finland, Sweden and Poland through HVDC links. Estlink 1 (350 megawatt (MW)) and Estlink 2 (650 MW) connect Estonia to Finland. The 700 MW Nordbalt link connects Lithuania to Sweden and the 500 MW LitPol links connected Lithuania to Poland. A second 500 MW, LitPol link is planned by 2025. So far, these links are used only for electricity trading, and do not provide the BRELL system with any reserve capacity.

### ***Moving away***

The Tallinn-based think tank International Centre for Defence and Security dubbed the Baltics' plan to synchronise with the EU's CEN grid as "BRELLxit." The three countries decided on this in 2007 but disagreed on how to integrate their system with the EU, finally agreeing in 2018 join the EU grid through the LitPol link. In any case, the Nordic countries have never been keen on more than trading links with the Baltic grid. A synchronous connection would require three more subsea cables, whose integrity could be threatened by Russian vessels in the eastern Baltic, and the provision of expensive new reserve capacity at a time when existing power supply in Sweden is unreliable because of that country's closure of nuclear plants.

Poland wasn't keen on a synchronous link initially partly because of imbalances on its grid connections to Germany caused by the intermittency of German renewable power generation, and partly because of its own needs to diversify from dependence on coal. The Polish coal industry is terminally uneconomic, the same position as Britain's in the 1960s and 1970s. Nuclear is the only viable large scale replacement for coal, and the country has theoretical plans to build six nuclear reactors over 20 years. Finance for this nuclear venture remains an imponderable. But the viability of the new Russian-built Astravets nuclear plant in Belarus and whether Russia will go ahead with building a second nuclear plant in Belarus are crucial factors in Polish nuclear energy economics. Energy-poor Lithuanian will find itself in the middle of this debate.

### ***Ignalina and Astravets***

The 2,600 MW Ignalina nuclear power plant produced nearly 80% of Lithuania's power supply of which about 60% was exported. After its decommissioning in 2009, Lithuanian became a power importer. In 2020, 45% came from Sweden, 5% from Belarus. Lithuania fiercely opposed the construction of Astravets on safety grounds and

halted all commercial trade with the plant when it came online in November last year. But this did not stop the physical movement of electrons through the BRELL grid and in February this year, 12% of Lithuanian's electricity came from Astravets. In addition, supplies from Sweden could drop sharply as that country faces power shortages due to the intermittency of its renewable energy generators that have not compensated for shut-in nuclear capacity. Stockholm lost its bid for the 2026 Winter Olympics to Milan because Sweden couldn't guarantee reliable power supplies.

Astravets safety issues are also an unwelcome problem for Lithuania. Astravets is a VVER-1200 design, a pressurized water reactor with double containment structures. An inner containment guards against the release of radioactive emissions while an outer containment guards against external impact. The design has received an overall positive verdict from the European Nuclear Regulators Safety Group (ENREG). Russia has exported this reactor design to Turkey, Malaysia and China. The Three Mile Island nuclear plant in Pennsylvania was an earlier pressurised water reactor design. During the 1979 meltdown accident, its containment structure worked. By contrast Ignalina was a graphite-moderate reactor (RMBK), like the doomed Chernobyl plant, with no containment at all, and was a disaster waiting to happen.



### **Astravets**

The quality of Astravets construction remains a serious issue. During construction, the reactor vessel slipped out of its cradle, hitting the ground. Builders did not follow instructions. It was eventually replaced but that vessel hit a power line during construction. One day after the plant came online in November, power generation halted because of a transformer failure. The Russian nuclear regulatory agency, Gostamnadzor, thinks Rosatom the Russian company building Astravets, is incompetent and hiding safety failings.

### ***Wind over-optimism***

Lithuania has a national energy independence strategy forecasting that by 2030, windfarms will generate 50% of its electricity needs. This is probably an over-optimistic estimate as operational windfarms have consistently produced far less energy than expected. Europe's largest offshore wind farm developer, Denmark's Ørsted, has attributed this to two aspects of wind behaviour: the blockage effect and the wake effect. Blockage comes as wind slows as it approaches an object in its path, such as a wind turbine. It passes through the blades at a lower speed, generating less energy. It continues to slow downwind as the turbine has extracted energy. This is the wake effect. Loss of speed continues on impact with neighbouring turbines on the windfarm. So the optimal windfarm size is far lower than has been assumed, and varies with location characteristics. In addition, the eastern Baltic Sea has become almost a Russian lake where Russian naval vessels frequently stop trawlers and research ships from working. There is no guarantee there will be no Russian interference even in the Baltic littoral states' exclusive economic zones.

Europe's move into renewable energy has not only put pressure on existing transmission grids, it needs expensive new power lines to track temperatures and line capacity in real time, many of which have been routed through forest regions. In Sweden and Germany, local populations resident around such proposed routes have often succeed in halting new projects. The result is that renewable energy generated in the north of both countries, cannot be adequately transmitted to the south where most of the demand is situated.

### ***Fire risks***

Utilities are also worried about the wildfire risk. When lightning strikes a power line, resulting sparks can ignite any flammable material on the forest floor, known as the fuel load. In the past, rural populations used to clear this debris and use it for heating cooking and animal bedding. But the exodus of the rural population to cities and the closure of Cold War bases and collective farms has resulted in a sharp increase of this debris. According to the European Forest Institute, this fuel load in northern and central Europe is 10 times that of the Mediterranean region.

In the Netherlands and Finland, utilities clear a 70-metre wide zone under a power line of all vegetation, with the cleared space lined by flowering shrubs that attract bees and butterflies. But the LitPol link in Poland uses grounded shielding wires that protect zones where the line passes over forests. In safety

terms, this is second best to vegetation clearance which would be more expensive and face local opposition.

The upshot is that as the EU pursues its decarbonisation policy to be “climate neutral” by 2050, electricity generation and transmission is becoming increasingly unreliable. The Baltic States have little or no reserve capacity. The Kruonis pumped storage hydroelectric plant just east of Kaunas is Lithuania’s only such plant. Estonia still relies on burning polluting oil shale for power generation but is considering developing small modular nuclear reactors. This could be an answer for Latvia and Lithuania too. But as yet, Baltic power synchronisation with the CEN is a step into the

unknown that may still have a large element of Russian control.

#### *Editor’s note*

The Astravets (Lith. Astravas) nuclear power station is roughly 40 km from Vilnius. It was built by Rosatom, Russia’s state atomic energy corporation, and financed by Moscow through a \$10 billion loan. The Lithuanian authorities have serious concerns about its safety because the project has been developed in non-compliance with international standards of environmental and nuclear safety, with recurrent serious violations, repetitive incidences on the construction site, poor occupational safety culture, lack of competence and expertise in the project development process on the part of nuclear safety regulatory authority and organisations in charge of construction work.

### **Kaunas special-needs school and The Tiltas Trust** *Gintarė Dantienė and Tom Macan*

*It was in 2017 that The Tiltas Trust (TTT) began to develop a relationship with the Kaunas Pranas Daunys Educational Centre [Kauno Prano Daunio ugdymo centras]. “Tiltas” readers may recall a touching article by our blind supporter Alice Robinson and her friend Sister Marie in Tiltas Volume 19, Number 1. So, who was Pranas Daunys and what does the institution named after him do?*

Pranas Daunys (1900-1962) was a pioneering advocate for the education of the blind in Lithuania. He volunteered for the Lithuanian army in 1919, achieving the rank of corporal. During the Wars of Independence he was injured by an exploding grenade, lost his sight and partially lost his hearing. In 1925-1926 he studied at the Riga Institute for the Blind. Subsequently he was actively involved in the work of the Lithuanian Institute for the Blind, and adapted the Braille alphabet for the Lithuanian language. He was a proficient musician, taught music at the Institute and gave public piano recitals. He was also one of the founders of the Lithuanian Institute for the Deaf-Mute.

The Pranas Daunys Educational Centre comes under the responsibility of Kaunas City Council. Initially it was for the blind and partially-sighted but more recently it has extended its curriculum to meet the needs of those with wider developmental issues, particularly those with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). So, today, the centre’s mission is to provide an education which meets these children’s basic and special needs, to identify relevant areas of development and on that basis, to educate, develop and instil key values, based on individual educational strategies.

176 children of all ages are currently on the centre’s roll. 26 pupils are visually impaired, while 150 have a range of ASD, 49 of whom are in the kindergarten.

The centre is structured with:

- A kindergarten, catering for children aged from 2 to 7 split into pre-school and pre-primary education groups;
- A primary school providing education for years 1 to 4;
- A basic school for years to 10, with separate classes for those with visual impairment and those with ASD.

In addition to the teaching staff, the school draws on support from therapists, specialist subject teachers, speech therapists, tiflo-pedagogues [teachers focussed on the needs of visually-impaired learners], psychologists, ergotherapists, rehabilitologists, physiotherapists, masseurs and kinesia specialists.

As well as education, an important part of the centre’s work is the provision of social help and health care services for its pupils. Its outreach service provides specialist pedagogical help for children with visual disabilities who are studying at home or in mainstream educational institutions, and to adults who have lost their sight. It also sees a role in

providing methodological and advisory support for all teachers, therapists and parents across Lithuania involved in the teaching and upbringing of children with educational challenges.

The centre attaches high importance to non-formal education. There is a music school within the centre while other activities include sport (swimming pool, expression of movement); art (art therapy, ceramics, folklore); craft; woodwork; and computing.



**Visitors from England: Sr Marie, Kevin Lonergan and Alice Robinson, 2018**

In providing some of these activities, the centre enjoys the support of various governmental and public organizations. Universities and other institutions of higher education are very important, and in some cases their students are able to gain practical experience at the centre.

TTT's initial involvement with the centre was to enable Pranas Daunys pupils to experience therapeutic riding (hippotherapy) and related activities with the horses at Rumšiškės, which the Trust had previously supported with the help of Riding for the Disabled (RDA UK). The first sessions were supported by Alice Robinson.

Last autumn four groups of our children and teachers returned to Rumšiškės for more hippotherapy sessions. In the morning of the first trip the weather seemed really bad but the sun appeared by the time we got to our destination. As the children caught their first sight of the horse, we could see fear, confusion; later, after touching, communicating and the riding horse, smiles and joy. Their parents expressed their appreciation in a letter to the centre: „In the name of all the parents, I wish to sincerely thank your school for organising the hippotherapy. Being with a horse, riding, caressing it, gave our children joy, laughter and fun. Communicating with the horse calmed them,

reduced tension and fear, our children become more self-confident and more independent. From the photos taken by their teacher we could see their smiles, which did not disappear till they got back home that evening. They returned glowing with joy“.



**Children's thanks for the horse therapy at Rumšiškės**

More recently TTT has been seeking to support work with ASD children. In the UK, the National Autistic Society (NAS) is the leading organisation and the Trust has funded the centre's membership for a three-year period. A particular concern of the teaching staff has been the preparation of the older pupils for „life after school“. They have identified NAS training on „Sex and Relationships Education“ as well-suited to their needs and the Trust is co-funding an on-line training course.

Please visit the centre's website  
<https://www.kasuc.lm.lt>

#### **Related articles**

- Justina Jazdauskaitė, *Visiting UK Hippotherapy centres*, Tiltas Vol.17, No.1  
 Kevin Lonergan, *A visit to Lithuania: Where hope meets heart*, Tiltas Vol.18, No.2  
 Sister Marie Tighe, *A retreat with a difference*, Tiltas Vol.19, No.1  
 Wendy Howe, *Kaunas Pranas Daunys School*, Tiltas Vol.20, No.1



## Horse therapy at Rumšiškės and Pranas Daunys School

*Tom Macan*

Many Tiltas readers will be aware of the support that The Tiltas Trust (TTT) has given to the horse-therapy programme for disabled youngsters at the Rumšiškės Folk Museum. For some this means actually riding a horse; for others it may be simply being in the presence of horses, helping with grooming or saddling-up, perhaps even mucking out stables.

More recently, the Trust has given specific support to the Pranas Daunys School in Kaunas which originally provided education for the blind/partially-sighted but now is almost entirely focussed on the needs of autistic youngsters. We have been inspired and supported in this by Alice Robinson who is herself blind. In 2018 and in her 88<sup>th</sup> year, she visited Pranas Daunys and Rumšiškės: Kevin Lonergan and Sister Marie, two friends who accompanied her on this adventure recorded their impressions in the Autumn 2018 and Spring 2019 editions of Tiltas.



### Horse therapy at Rumšiškės

At a time when so much activity in both the UK and Lithuania, not least TTT's programme of exchanges, was brought to a standstill by Covid-19, it was immensely encouraging to learn that Pranas Daunys had been able to sustain a number of days of activity at Rumšiškės, particularly for autistic children.

In a recent letter, Lolita Andriuškevičienė (Deputy Director (Education) at Pranas Daunys School) wrote: "I send thanks to TTT from our pupils and

parents. We are very grateful and happy for making this possible." She also enclosed the children's artwork and photographs, some which accompany this article.

Even more touching was a letter of thanks from the parents of one of the children:

"On behalf of all of the parents, I would like to thank the school community and administration for the education that was arranged for hippotherapy.

For our children being next to horses, riding, stroking them gives them joy, laughter, cheerful and happy memories. Being in the vicinity of horses soothes them, reduces tension and fear and leads the children to have greater confidence in themselves and become more independent.

From the photographs that the teacher took, we saw how the children were smiling, how the smiles remained on their faces until the evening, how many overcame their fear and made efforts to ride. The children on their return lit up with joy.

Thank you for the opportunities that you made possible and, even in this difficult time, providing joy and pleasant memories."

Pranas Daunys School has also, with TTT encouragement, entered a small group for the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award. Our understanding is that these are the first disabled children to participate in the award in Lithuania.

To provide further support for the school, TTT has funded its membership of the National Autistic Society ([www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)) for a three-year period. We are now investigating with the school and NAS whether the latter might be able to provide training (probably remotely by Zoom) to help the school meet the challenge of preparing older pupils for independent, adult life.

## BOOK REVIEW

Maria Kielmas

**Richard Butterwick, *The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: Light and Flame*, Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2020**

*“Witaj Maj! Trzeci Maj! U polaków błogi raj!”* “Greetings May! Third of May! A blissful paradise for Poles!”

This is the song that all Polish schoolchildren have learned, except in Poland during the Communist period, to celebrate the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1791 Constitution of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It was Europe’s first and the world’s second written constitution after the 1789 Constitution and has been mythologised by Poles to almost divine levels. Initially, independent Lithuania was not as enthusiastic about the charter as Poland but now the two countries commemorate it as a remarkable political achievement that established a constitution monarchy, and provided political equality for burghers with the nobility. It did not abolish serfdom but prepared for this through placing peasants under government, not local noble, protection.

The Constitution was the high point in Richard Butterwick’s account of the last 60 years of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. He notes that it was easy for outsiders, such as British diplomats, to misread the Commonwealth’s politics as a bizarre contest between two magnate factions and their foreign protectors. The politics of the time certainly were mafia-like. The Czartoryskis and Poniatowskis, known as the *familia* were supported by Russia as well as Austria and Great Britain, while the Potockis gained support from the Prussian and French side.

Russian Empress Catherine II was always eager to legalise her interventions in the Commonwealth by pressing the Czartoryskis to request assistance and to thank her for defending Polish freedoms. It seems Russian policy hasn’t changed at all over the centuries! The demise began with the first partition in 1772 [by Russia, Prussia and Austro-Hungary] when legislators – the nobility – entered the loss of territory into the Commonwealth’s laws. Butterwick calls this the story of a victim ratifying its own amputation.

He paints a sympathetically realistic portrait of Stanisław August Poniatowski, the last King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. Poniatowski cut a pathetic figure contracting debts, retainers and palaces. Though they had been lovers, Catherine and Poniatowski misjudged each other. He misjudged her intentions to control Commonwealth affairs and she misjudged his aim to reform the Commonwealth. An erudite man of the Enlightenment, Poniatowski ordered the rebuilding of Vilnius Cathedral and made a large contribution to the Constitution. But it was inevitable that the Constitution would anger the Commonwealth’s neighbours. It was a serious error of judgement on Poniatowski’s part to think that Russia would not intervene. The 1792 second partition came in the aftermath of the war with Russia and the Targowica confederation. Two years later Tadeusz Kościuszko led his uprising to save the Constitution only to fail leading to the third and final partition the following year.

Butterwick’s account is a detailed tale – part thriller, part family saga - of what he dubs “Light and Flame”. Individuals and geographical names are all in Polish in the text but a helpful eight-language translation of relevant geographical names whose borders and inhabitants’ languages have changed over the centuries. In its attempts at reform the Commonwealth had to sail between the Scylla of absolute monarchy and the Charybdis of revolutionary terror. It could have become a going, modern concern but the ship of state sank in the crossfire.

*Editor’s note*

Richard Butterwick-Pawlikowski is Professor of Polish Lithuanian History at University College London (UCL) and a Committee member of the British-Lithuanian Society.

## BOOKS LISTING

*Compiled by the Editor*

**Andrzej Chwalba, Krzysztof Zamorski (Eds), *The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: History, Memory, Legacy*, Routledge: New York and London, 2021**

This volume provides a fresh perspective of the history and legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as well as the often-disputed memory of it in contemporary Europe.

The unions between the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania have fascinated many readers particularly because many solutions that have been implemented in the EU have been adopted from its Central and Eastern European predecessor. The collection of essays presented in this volume are divided into three parts – the Beginnings of Poland-Lithuania, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Legacy and Memory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – and represent a selection of the papers delivered at the Third Congress of International Researchers of Polish History which was held in Cracow on 11-14 October 2017. Through their application of different historiographical perspectives and schools of history they offer the reader a fresh take on the Commonwealth's history and legacy, as well as the memory of it in the countries that are its inheritors, namely Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus and Ukraine.

**Violeta Davoliūtė, Tomas Balkelis, *Narratives of Exile and Identity: Soviet Deportation Memoirs from the Baltic States*, CEU Press: Budapest, 2018**

This collection of essays considers the Soviet-era gulag in the Baltic States within the broader international research on displacement and cultural memory. Scholars from the Baltic States, Western Europe, Canada, and the USA explore the following questions: Do different groups of deportees experience deportation differently? How do the accounts of women, children and men differ? Do various ethnic groups remember the past differently? How do they use historical and cultural paradigms to structure their experience in unique ways? To answer these questions the authors researched archives, read testimonies (with an emphasis on testimonies by women and children), interviewed former deportees, and examined cultural artifacts produced since the late 1980s, applying cross-disciplinary approaches used in the study of Holocaust testimonies.

The essays in the book also examine the issues of cultural transmission and commemoration,

as well as public manifestations of the after-effects of deportations in contemporary social, cultural and political contexts of Baltic societies, including reflections of the Gulag in literature, the cinema and museums.

**Artūras Dubonis, Darius Antanavičius, Raimonda Ragauskienė, Ramunė Šmigelskytė-Stukienė, *The Lithuanian Metrica: History and Research*, Academic Studies Press: Brookline, MA, 2020**

This volume analyses the history of the Lithuanian Metrica—the chancellery books of the Lithuanian grand duke—from the formation of its books in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century until now. It reveals how the first Metrica books emerged in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, discussing the titles given to them in different periods in history, and explains why the Lithuanian Metrica should be considered the State archive of early Lithuania. Material hitherto unknown in academic literature about the fate of the Lithuanian Metrica at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in the last years of the existence of the joint Polish-Lithuanian State, is also revealed in this account. The book dedicates a great deal of attention to the history of the publication and research of the documents and books of the Lithuanian Metrica, which are now kept in Moscow, as a historical source.

**Mark Galeotti, *A Short History of Russia: from the Pagans to Putin*, Ebury Press, 2021**

Russia is a country with no natural borders, no single ethnos, no true central identity. At the crossroads of Europe and Asia, it is everyone's 'other'. And yet it is one of the most powerful nations on earth, a master game-player on the global stage with a rich history of war and peace, poets and revolutionaries.

In this essential whistle-stop tour of the world's most misunderstood nation, Mark Galeotti takes us behind the myths to the heart of the Russian story: from the formation of a nation to its early legends - including Ivan the Terrible and Catherine the Great - to the rise and fall of the Romanovs, the Russian Revolution, the Cold War, Chernobyl and the end of the Soviet Union - plus the arrival of an obscure politician named Vladimir Putin.

**Marija Gimbutas, *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe: Myths and Cult Images*, University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, 2007**

In this beautifully illustrated study of sculpture, vases, and other cult objects portraying the Goddess, fertility images, and mythical animals, Marija Gimbutas sketches the matrilineal village culture that existed in southeastern Europe between 6500 and 3500 B.C., before it was overwhelmed by the patriarchal Indo-Europeans. The analysis of this rich mythical imagery tells us much about early humanity's concepts of the cosmos, of humans' relations with nature, and of the complementary roles of male and female.

Professor Marija Gimbutas (Marija Gimbutienė, 1921 – 1994) was a Lithuanian-American archaeologist and anthropologist known for her research into the Neolithic and Bronze Age cultures of "Old Europe" and for her Kurgan hypothesis, which located the Proto-Indo-European homeland in the Pontic Steppe.

**Jędrzej Kitowicz: *Customs and Culture in Poland under the Last Saxon King: Selections from Opis obyczajów za panowania Augusta III by father Jędrzej Kitowicz, 1728-1804*, CEU Press: Budapest, 2019**

Jędrzej Kitowicz was a parish priest in central Poland with a military and worldly past. In his later years, after putting the affairs of his parish in order, he composed a colourful chronicle of all aspects and walks of life under King August III. He seems to have written mostly from memory, creating in the process the most complete record that exists of society in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Poland. A man with omnivorous tastes, a keen sense of observation, and a wry—at times bawdy—sense of humour, Kitowicz's realistic and robust literary technique has been compared in

its earthiness and evocativeness to Flemish genre painting. A noteworthy example of 18<sup>th</sup>-century writing and narrative talent, his *Opis* reveals an astounding visual memory and a modern ethnographer's eye for material culture.

The present book consists of 51 chapters, including all of the most celebrated ones, from Father Kitowicz's *Opis*, complete with a comprehensive introduction. Topics include religious beliefs, customs and institutions, child-rearing, education, the judiciary and the military. Particularly vivid are the descriptions of the lives of the nobility, ranging from cooking through men's and women's wear to household entertainments and drinking habits. A commentary by the editor introduces each chapter.

**Yves Plasseraud, *Irena Veisaitė: Tolerance and Involvement*, Brill Rodopi: Leiden, 2015**

The late Irena Veisaitė (d. 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020) was held in deep esteem throughout her country. This volume is an attempt to relate the difficult journey of her remarkable life against the backdrop of the complex history of Lithuania and its Litvaks (Lithuanian Jews).

After being rescued by Christian Lithuanian families and having survived the Holocaust Irena Veisaitė devoted herself to study and creative work. She was a memorable lecturer, respected theatre critic, associate film director, and also founder and chairman of the Open Society Fund (Soros Foundation) which made an invaluable contribution to the process of democratisation in Lithuania. Irena Veisaitė made it her life's work to speak up for dialogue and mutual understanding and believed that even in the most difficult circumstances it is possible to preserve one's humanity. Having lived through some of the major atrocities of the twentieth century, her insistence on the need for tolerance has inspired many.

## Lithuanian and English bird names

Andy Cuckson

### *Liputis* – the treecreeper

This small insectivorous woodland bird is seen in both Lithuania and the British Isles. There are two species in northern Europe, *miškinis liputis* the common (or Eurasian) treecreeper, and *sodinis liputis* the short-toed treecreeper. Physical differences between them are slight, but they share eye-catching behaviour which has fostered unique names for them in both the Lithuanian and English languages.

Treecreepers forage on the trunks of large trees, moving up the trunk in small hops with their feet together. The down-curved, relatively long and slender bill is used for probing bark for insects, their larvae and spiders. The long toes have strongly curved claws for gripping, allowing the hopping motion. They fly to the bottom of a tree, and then climb in a spiral fashion up and around the trunk as they hunt for food.

Their quite long, stiff tails are used as a prop while climbing.

The Lithuanian name *liputis* translates as ‘little climber,’ and is derived from the verb *lipti* meaning to climb, clamber, scale, swarm or swarm up. *Liputis* is a noun which apparently is applied to nothing else other than the bird.

For English names, my primary source as usual is *The Oxford Book of British Bird Names* by WB Lockwood (Oxford University Press, 1984). He finds that the English name was originally ‘creeper,’ first recorded in 1544 as the Latinized ‘creperam.’ Some early naturalists preferred ‘common creeper.’ ‘Tree creeper’ first appeared in 1814, and replaced ‘common creeper’ as standard in 1883. In local names, ‘bark’ is sometimes substituted for ‘tree,’ as in ‘bark runner’ and ‘bark creeper.’ The standard name now usually appears as ‘treecreeper.’



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### The Treecreeper

Prof Lockwood explains that the ‘creeper’ name is ‘in reference to the characteristic movements, the bird creeping, mouse-like, over the trunk and boughs of trees, as it searches for the minute life upon which

it feeds.’ He also includes the Somerset name ‘tree mouse,’ which alludes directly to the mouse-like creeping. Other local names he gives are from Wiltshire ‘tree climber,’ from Oxfordshire ‘tree clipper,’ and Scottish ‘tree speeler.’ Both the local words ‘clipper’ and ‘speeler’ mean climber, so the latter three names are effectively the same as Lithuanian *liputis*.

While emphasising the singular ‘mouse-like’ behaviour of the bird, he adds that in those local ‘tree climber’ names there are ‘similar allusions.’ Here I feel that Lockwood, just for once, misses an important point. Rather than evoking the ‘mouse-like creeping,’ all the ‘climber’ names refer to the second and rather more visible behavioural trait, which he fails to mention. What is truly eye-catching about this bird is the unique foraging pattern it follows. It only *climbs up*, from the bottom of a tree, never down, and usually follows *a spiral path*, especially where tree trunks are undisturbed by branches. When it decides to search another tree, it flies down to the bottom of its next choice to start climbing again, and so the pattern is repeated.

Observant forest dwellers, hundreds and even thousands of years ago, were probably as captivated as modern humans by this regular routine. It has given strong motivation for the bird’s various ‘climber’ names in both the Lithuanian and English languages, and even appears to have resulted in a special derivation to create the Lithuanian name.

I must thank my wife, Rasa, for her observations concerning *liputis*, the verb *lipti* and other words in her native language concerning climbing.

## *Vandeninis strazdas* – the dipper

The *vandeninis strazdas* or dipper (*Cinclus cinclus*) is a European songbird, occurring in both Lithuania and the north and west of the British Isles, which lives next to freshwater rivers and streams. It feeds quite remarkably in the water, where, by walking submerged along the river bottom and almost swimming at times, it hunts aquatic invertebrates such as caddis flies. Its plumage is shades of dark brown to almost grey-black, with a white chin and breast. It is pertinent to this article that a dipper is about the size of and generally looks like a short-tailed, dumpy species of thrush.

*Vandeninis strazdas* can translate as ‘water thrush,’ but the species is unrelated to the actual thrushes like

the song thrush *strazdas giesmininkas* (*Turdus philomelos*) and blackbird *juodasis strazdas* (*Turdus merula*). Lithuanians had little trouble identifying all the related thrush species as such, even with markedly different colours, and named them using the ancient song thrush name *strazdas*<sup>1</sup> but with specifiers to tell them apart. The dipper misnomer is an exception. It is uncertain, though, how much these names have been adjusted to be systematic. To country folk, *strazdas* alone signified the song thrush, with *giesmininkas* (songster) perhaps added late to fit the classification system. Being a misnomer, *vandeninis strazdas* is more likely to be a folk or early naturalist’s name. The bird can certainly look like an aquatic

*juodasis strazdas*, and the name only needed a suitable new adjective.

The English certainly saw that the various thrushes were related, as names were sometimes swapped, and specifiers used if needed. For example, and depending on region, the ring ouzel<sup>2</sup> (*Turdus torquatus*), which looks like a blackbird with a partial white neck ring, could be called ‘fell blackbird,’ ‘heath thristle,’ where thristle means a small thrush, or ‘rock ouzel.’ But with the dipper, they too were deceived by appearances, and thought as Lithuanians did that it was some kind of blackbird or thrush. English dipper folk names include ‘brook ouzel’ and ‘water ouzel,’ both first recorded in 1678. ‘Water ouzel’ was found in Somerset, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Yorkshire. Similarly, the Scots coined the name ‘water blackbird’ for the dipper.



### The Dipper

The English folk name ‘dipper’ – one that dips or dives into water – was applied originally to various water birds, and was still used for the little grebe in Yorkshire in the late-20<sup>th</sup> century. First recorded for this bird in 1771 as ‘*Cinclus* Water Ouzel or Dipper’ it gradually became the standard name after 1843, but ‘brook ouzel’ was still found in local use in 1912.

*Vandeninis strazdas* is still the standard name in Lithuania, where the language in any case is generally conservative. An equivalent of water ouzel to name a bird I’ve seen in the local brook is fine by me. We can see that folk names for the dipper in both languages have arisen out of identical motivations – its unique aquatic behaviour, and the mistaken belief that it is a kind of thrush.

To write this, I have consulted Lithuanian birdwatchers’ field guides and the ‘BTO Birdfacts’ web site for current names and data. But as usual, I am indebted to the work of W. B. Lockwood, *The Oxford Book of British Bird Names*, for much of the information used here, as well as the inspiration to look for less obvious motivations for the naming of birds in these two languages.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For the origin of *strazdas* or thrush, see *Lithuanian and English Bird Names* in ‘Tiltas’ Vol.11, No.1, Feb 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Ouzel (or ousel) is the oldest English blackbird name. It had Old British (Celtic) origins, meaning ‘black,’ in about the second millennium B.C.

### The British-Lithuanian Society

The British-Lithuanian Society (B-LS), established in 1994, aims to further links of all kinds including academic, charitable, cultural, educational, political and business between individuals and organisations in the United Kingdom and Lithuania.

The Society arranges a varied programme of talks, book launches and social activities. Talks are given by experts in their field. Most of the Society’s functions are held at the Embassy of Lithuania in London, where members and their guests may continue the evening over wine and snacks. NOTE: Suspended during Covid-19 emergency.

The Society also engages in cultural projects, sometimes jointly with the Embassy of Lithuania, that encourage links between the UK and Lithuania.

The Society’s Registered Charity, The Tiltas Trust (TTT), facilitates contacts and exchanges between NGOs in the UK and Lithuania.

Different classes of membership are available: Ordinary, Student, Sustaining, Corporate and Life. The fee supplement paid by the latter three classes goes to The Tiltas Trust and qualifies as Gift Aid for UK taxpayers. Membership details are available from blssecretary@hotmail.com.