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The cover: Photo by Jeanne Dorr
Pastoral scene in Klebiškio kaimas, region of Prienai, Lithuania.

RECOVERING FROM COMMUNISM

Paul A. Goble
EuroCollege
University of Tartu
Prepared for delivery to
JBANC Conference,
Washington, D.C.,
March 5, 2005

There is somewhat disturbing but quite often neglected idea found among those of many who care most about the Baltic peoples and their future: All too often, the very people who rightly consider communism to be the most evil of systems also appear to be convinced that those who suffered under it but somehow survived will be able to recover quickly and easily.

Such people frequently talk about the physical destruction wrought by the communist occupation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – the thousands and thousands of dead, deported, and exiled, the forced migration of outsiders into these countries, and the suppression of freedom and the institutions of these previously free societies.

Such efforts are both admirable – the entire world needs to know and remember what was done in the Baltic countries by the Soviets – and necessary – we and our children must have these often hitherto inaccessible facts at our command. But they are not sufficient because all too often they are combined with a suggestion that those who did outlast the system remained largely unchanged from what they had been before.

This view finds its clearest reflection in the titles and images offered by some of the most well-known studies of the situation in the post-Soviet Baltic states: One brilliant book, entitled “Return to the Western World,” features on its cover a picture of the great fish disgorging Jonah, an image that sug-

gests that he emerged relatively unchanged from the experience. And yet another outstanding study “Coming Out from Under the Ice,” suggests that readers should draw a similar conclusion.

Given the attitudes of many in the West who did not and do not want to face up to the consequences of what they said and did in the past and of many in the Baltic countries whose self-respect sometimes leads them to deny the impact of that system on their own minds and souls, this is perhaps not all that surprising.

But it is wrong, and it is time for all of us to begin to correct the situation. If we hope to overcome that past and build a better future for friends and ourselves, we have no other choice. To assist in this process, I would like to discuss with you some very preliminary answers to three of the most important questions that we need to address if we are going to be able to overcome communism in the hearts and minds of those subjected to it and not just overthrow the external arrangements it imposed on Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

These three questions are: First, what does the continuing mental and spiritual impact of the communist experience in fact look like in the Baltic countries today? Second, why is dealing with it so important now and for the future? And third, what can and should we do in order to be able to escape from the noxious influence of communism in the lives of people there.

A Legacy Too Often Ignored

In order to deal with the problem of the impact of communism on the minds and souls of the people who lived under it, we need to look at some of the protean forms in which this influence continues to



Paul Goble addresses the JBANC audience.

Photo by Rimas Gedeika

be manifest. I would like to suggest three, not because they are the only ones but because they are so central to what I am talking about.

The first involves a fundamental change in the ways in which people who have lived under communism interact with each other and with those who did not. In contrast with the way in which Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians acted before communism, those who lived under communism and have survived that system tend to be more passive, deferential, socially isolated, and given to apocalyptic or eschatological thinking. That is, they tend to assume that others will solve problems for them – as exemplified in the “end of history” mentality often seen since the three Baltic countries gained admission to NATO and the EU – or to believe that they can solve all the problems before them – or alternatively, they can solve none of them. And there are the social pathologies associated with such anomic situations: alcoholism, domestic violence, and so on.

The second set of phenomena which reflect the legacy of communism on the minds and souls of the people concerns what is not there: There are few people in church and far fewer churches than there used to be. There is a crying absence of genuine social organizations – instead we see GONGOs and DONGOs (Government organized NGOs and Donor organized NGOs, respectively). And there are very few other forms of genuinely collective behaviour.

And the third set of phenomena about which I am talking concerns the adoption of Soviet approaches for non-Soviet ends. The most common form of this might be called “Bolshevik anti-communism” – the use of Bolshevik shock tactics in the name of destroying the communist past, an approach that often overrides democratic procedures and harms at least some of those who are supposed to be helped.

While one can understand the desire of people in the Baltic countries to escape from the past, this does not represent a complete escape. In fact, such an approach – kamikaze-like – can end by subverting itself. It fails to bring the people along with it, isolating the government and other elites from the population. It creates inevitable disappointment and disillusionment. It undermines that which it is intended to create – a vibrant society in which each person is important and is valued by others for his human personhood. And it represents yet another imposition of a radical discontinuity that makes it more difficult for people to move on.

That is not to say that radical measures are always inappropriate. Sometimes it was the only possible if not an entirely good way to proceed. Nor is it to say that nothing positive has been accomplished. Much has. But it is to insist that because the approach used had its roots in the very system it was intended to destroy, the

application of such methods entailed real costs. And those costs will have to be paid eventually.

Unfortunately, membership in the EU and other international organizations has simultaneously increased the likelihood that political elites can and will make choices without reference to the population and that that trend will only prolong the time needed to overcome the impact of communism in the Baltic countries.

Why This Matters

The reasons why all this matters should be obvious. All of us grew up hearing George Santayana’s classic observation that “those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it.” But we often do not consider its obvious corollary: those who refuse to confront an evil past will find that such a past never goes completely away. All of us celebrate the Germans for facing up to and denouncing the crimes of Hitler and the Nazis, and all of us are disturbed that the post-Soviet Russian government has been unwilling to acknowledge and seek atonement for the crimes of the Soviet past.

But most of us do not consider as carefully as we might just how dangerous that is for people in the position of the Baltic countries. All three countries have gone some distance in confronting aspects of the Soviet past, but none of them has succeeded in addressing all the aspects of that past either out of a belief that they do not need or a fear that talking about it will open up old wounds. If the first view is understandable and the second is very real – indeed both views informed much of Western advice to the Baltic countries – neither is defensible in the long term. It simply puts off the issues that need to be aired if that past and its impact on the human spirit in the Baltic countries is to be understood and then transcended.

There are courageous people in the Baltic countries who have begun this process, but I would like to take this opportunity to point to two courageous Russian scholars who have acknowledged the Soviet past and its impact on the Baltic countries and the rest of Eastern Europe. In an essay published in the Moscow journal “Voprosy filosofii” a few years ago, the two wrote that “the Soviet army liberated the Soviet Union from Hitlerite dictatorship, but it could not liberate anyone else. A state which was not free could not bring freedom to others. In that, the USSR was different from its Western allies.”

That is not only a good start: It is a model for us in thinking about what happened at the end of World War II.

But there is a second reason why we need to look at the past especially now. The security agencies of the Russian state are still active in the Baltic countries. They are exploiting the past, and they are engaging in a strategy typical of a “newly weak” power – foreign policy on the cheap via subversion. Unless the Baltic nations confront what communism did to their minds and hearts, they will be less able to cope with this particular challenge. Indeed, to my mind, facing up to this past is every bit as important for the national security of the Baltic countries as helath and law and even more critical than military strength.

And yet a third reason is that the Baltic nations of today owe it to the world and to future generations to testify what happened to them and why. They cannot do so by pointing to physical destruction alone. They must talk about what communism did insidiously and frighteningly to their parents and sometimes to themselves.

That we need to be reminded of all this too is suggested by an advertisement I read in the “Washington Post” only yesterday:

The Red Army chorus is coming to the American capital and promises to sing the Soviet national anthem written for Stalin! One can't imagine that anyone in the U.S. would tolerate the appearance of a German group who took its name from the Nazi past and who promised to sing a Nazi-era song. And we should not either. But the fact that we make such a distinction suggests how much of an evil influence Soviet communism had – and continues to have – even on those who never lived under it.

What We Must Do

The Baltic governments have taken some important steps to overcome the past. They have organized a variety of historical commissions, they have prepared textbooks to inform the next generation about what happened, and perhaps most important they have worked hard to overcome the fear many have felt about talking about that past and its continuing legacy. But clearly more needs to be done.

Perhaps the place to start is to recognize that capitalism alone does not solve the problem. It is at best a means rather than an end in itself. Baltic societies must promote the rebuilding of churches, families and communities – the most important carriers and transmitters of values – if they are to move confidently toward a free and democratic future. And both they and we need to understand that

this process will be neither easy nor quick: It will require at least a generation of hard work and perhaps more.

Right now, the Baltic countries and the West are faced with a particular challenge: how to respond to Russian President Vladimir Putin's efforts to whitewash the Soviet past by celebrating the USSR's participation in the Allied victory over Hitler. Each of the three Baltic presidents has had to decide what to do. Each has made a slightly different decision reflecting not only how finely balanced the issues of what to do are but also an increasing sophistication as to how best to cope with this latest Russian campaign.

Baltic Americans and their friends must recognize both the nature of this challenge and the complexities involved in responding to it rather than assuming there is a single template and a single answer to all questions – an assumption that sometimes appears to ignore not only history but the nature of the kind of democratic life we want to see promoted in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – and indeed everywhere in the world.

Today as many of you know is the 52nd anniversary of the death of Joseph Stalin who enslaved not only the Soviet people but the Baltic countries and half of Europe, a man whose crimes continue to influence the world both directly and indirectly.

As many of you also know, I worked for some years at RFE/RL. When Radio Liberty began broadcasting in Russia on March 1, 1953, many in the Russian service wanted to open each broadcast with a ticking clock and a voice saying "the era of Stalin is coming to an end." But American managers blocked that idea, fearful that the Georgian Stalin might live for a long time. In fact, four days later he was dead: Perhaps RFE/RL was simply too much for him.

But that clock continues to tick, despite the triumphs of 1990 and 1991 and the more recent revolution in Ukraine. And if the Baltic nations and their friends genuinely hope to move into a new time, we must confront the past not only to overcome it but to ensure that those like Putin who want to preserve it will not succeed.

Paul A. Goble

Paul A. Goble, a prolific author and expert on Soviet nationality problems and Baltic affairs, has been employed at the EuroCollege at Tartu University since 2004. Before that he was senior advisor to the Director of the International Broadcasting Bureau and the Director of the Voice of America, Communications Director at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He has been decorated by the governments of the three Baltic countries for his role in helping them regain their independence.

Bridges
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UPRISE

It was a miracle, observed witnesses of this summer's demonstrations in Lithuania. Uninterrupted by militia, 100,000 voices joined in the singing of the banned national anthem while banned national flags waved overhead. "Lietuva... Lietuva... Lietuva..." called the voices

en masse, rhythmically, a militant, earthshaking lovesong like a vast heartbeat of a nation declaring "I am alive, alive!" Speakers demanded, "We want our language respected, our history taught truthfully, our land protected from ecological and economic disasters..."

The Spirit is Still There

*The 60's!
Weren't they great!!!*

They were the most exciting; the most fun-loving; the most care-free years of my life!

For more than half of those years, I attended college with only two major concerns – girls and passing exams. There were four of us, “draugai,” (friends) who attended the City College of New York, and for better or for worse, had many of the same interests. Throughout the school year we would continuously plan how to spend the upcoming summer months. We could hardly wait for summer to come!! And, as soon as it did, we would jump into our “Betsy,” a 1958 Chevy, and off we would go to face that summer’s challenges! We would hit all the Lithuanian summer camps, either as counselors or as campers (the best, by far, was “Dainava” the “studentu stovykla”). In between camps, we would visit the Lithuanian “ghettos” – such as Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Detroit and, of course, Chicago. We had great a time! Met many wonderful, exciting people (most of them, of course, were young ladies); danced, sang, drank good ole “Bud,” and, on rare occasions, we picked up something that challenged our grey cells. What a great way to spend our summer vacation!

One year, (our senior year) our well planned summer vacation hit a snag. We realized that we made a great miscalculation – two weeks left before the start of college and we had no place to go! What a disaster!

One day while we were deliberating our dilemma one of us said, “I got it! I heard that in Northeastern Pennsylvania, in the coal mining region, a Lithuanian Festival will take place and that there will be thousands (close to 15,000) of Lithuanians gathering for a weekend of merriment. There will be plenty of Lithuanian singing, folk dancing, good foods, and many good looking girls!”

That did it!! Came Saturday morning, off we went to the hills of Pennsylvania

About three hours from the “City,” (NYC), we began to drive through many small coal mining towns. As we entered, we were astonished at what we saw. Everywhere we turned, we saw Lithuanian flags – from windows, from roofs, from flag poles. Banners were strung across streets announcing the Lithuanian Art and Craft Festival. We were amazed! One town after another – the same sights!

It was strange. We were in the USA, yet at the same time we



Zilvinas, Lithuanian Dance Group from Philadelphia PA, directed by Estera Bendziute Washofsky, has been performing for many years at this Northeastern Pennsylvania Lithuanian Festival.

began to experience feelings which we had not felt as intensely as now. Seeing all those flags flying in so many public places made our chests swell with immense Lithuanian Pride. Driving through one of the towns, we decided that it was time to quench our thirst. So naturally we looked for the nearest pub. Finding it, we entered it. This time we weren’t too surprised at seeing either the Lithuanian flag or the many pictures hanging from the walls depicting various Lithuanian pastoral scenes. No sooner did we find our way to the bar, than a smiling elderly gentleman came over and asked us, in Lithuanian, whether we spoke Lithuanian. When we said yes, his smile became even bigger and he immediately ordered a few “Buds” for us and said, “I sveikata !! What a guy!

It didn’t take too long before others joined our little group – and merriment followed. We listened to amazing stories of their journey from Lithuania to America, about their harrowing experiences in the damp, narrow, dust filled coal mines, and about their ambitions. (Most of our new friends immigrated to the USA prior to the World War I or shortly thereafter). We could have spent the entire day listening to their marvelous tales, but the Festival was beckoning us. So we said our good byes and off we went.

When we got to Lakeside Park, in Barnesville, we were no longer surprised to hear Lithuanian music, songs, or smell that good ole Lithuanian food. It seemed that everywhere we turned, we heard Lithuanian spoken. We saw many people walking around proudly wearing T-shirts which proclaimed “Proud to be Lithuanian”, “Lithuanian Power”, “Kiss me, I’m Lithuanian,” and many more. Walking and talking to the people we soon began to get into the swing of things – we began to really feel proud of our heritage.

We met great people, ate great food, sang Lithuanian songs – learned some very old folks songs – some of which were “finer” than our “studentu” songs – and of course met some truly lovely young ladies! What a day!

Before we knew it, the festivities came to an end and it was time to head back to the “City.” We said our good byes, shook hands, promised that we would return next year. But, alas, things did not

turn out that way. More than forty years passed before I was able to fulfill our promise.

Forty Years Later – Frackville, Pa

Last August, the 90th annual Lithuanian Arts and Crafts Festival took place in Frackville (as it has for the past 15 years). Since Philadelphia's folk dance group, "Zilvinas", was going to perform there, I decided that this would be a great opportunity to join them and see how the Festival had changed since my last visit – 40 years ago. On our way to Frackville, we passed through the same towns as I did 40 years ago. This time, however, they evoked different emotions – those of sadness and disappointment. This time there were only a scattering of Lithuanian flags on public display.

When we arrived at the Frackville Mall, I entered it with a queasy feeling of apprehension. As we approached the center of the Mall, I could hear the Lithuanian music, could smell the food, but that uneasy feeling continued to persist. Once we got there, that uneasy feeling proved to be correct. I was saddened by what I saw. There were considerably fewer people; the atmosphere was more subdued – a far cry from the carnival atmosphere of 40 years ago. It was sad.

Should it have been, or was it merely my desire to cling to a nostalgic, romantic vision? Reality shows that the passage of time brings forth various changes. People's values and interests change; they intermarry and become acculturated. This is reality. This is what has occurred here.

Overcoming my initial disappointment, I proceeded to meander around to see what I could see. What I soon saw (felt) was that although the number of people were fewer than in the past, nevertheless their pride in being Lithuanian was just as strong as in the past. I saw many people young and old – still wearing T-shirts proclaiming to everyone that they were Lithuanians and proud of it. Now, however, the T-shirts (many of the Grateful Death motifs) were focused on the great achievements of Lithuania's national basketball team. They proclaimed – hey, man, I'm one of them and I am Proud of it!



Luschas family, mother Elaine and daughters Krissty and Carol demonstrating the art of making straw Christmas ornaments.

As I strolled through the Mall, I met many very interesting people. Among them – the Luschas family. The mother and her two daughters, who were dressed in the traditional folk costumes, were demonstrating the art of making Christmas ornaments from straw. During our conversation I asked a question which has often been in the back of my mind, namely, why would a third generation person want to retain her Lithuanian heritage? Carol, the older of the two sisters, answered this way: "When I was 10 or 11 years old I would sit and listen to my grandmother and my aunt bicker in Lithuanian. I was very curious what they were saying. Every chance I got I would ask them to teach me basic Lithuanian words, such as "father," "mother," "hello," and how to count in Lithuanian. I also asked my grandfather to teach me the national anthem.

I thought of Lithuania and its culture as being a great mystery, something whose history is not well known by the average person, and it's something that should be known. So from then on I just became fascinated with Lithuania. The more I researched it, the greater my infatuation with the country became.

My trip to Lithuania was a vacation of a life time and a dream that I thought would never come true. We saw all the major cities. It was in Trakai that we saw a little old woman demonstrating how to make folk costumes. We saw the costumes that she had made – we fell in love with them and bought them right then and there. Kaunas was my favorite city because there we met our Lithuanian friends who treated us like kings – we ate so much until we thought our stomachs would burst. It was a great time being there"

Around two in the afternoon – it was show time. The first group to appear was a group of young fourth generation school kids who were taught by a third generation lady. Seeing this group, whose teacher and students were so far removed from Lithuania, perform the old, traditional folk dances was truly a moving experience. The Spirit continues!

Zilvinas was the next group to perform. During a break in its performance, a gentleman approached and asked whether some of the dancers wouldn't mind having their picture taken with his mother. He stated that his mother really loved the costumes and since she would be celebrating her 100 year birthday the next day, this would be a great birthday present. Naturally, the dancers didn't disappoint her. After the photos were taken, the young, spirited 100 year old "mociute" started to sing Lietuva Teyme Musu (the Lithuanian Hymn). Soon the audience followed her. This, dear readers, left a big lump in my throat!

After Zilvinas finished their official program, they invited the audience to get up and dance with them. And so they did – the young and the old. One could see that they were truly enjoying themselves and that they were experiencing something special.

As with all good things, the festivities ended and we headed home. On the way back, I began to reflect on the day's events. True, the numbers have decreased substantially from what they were 40 years ago, but the Spirit, the Pride of being Lithuanian is



Grandfather and his granddaughter dancing together. The separate generation still trying to adhere to their heritage.

just as strong as it was then. For over 100 years these folks kept the Lithuanian flame burning. They worked for little pay, many hours under extremely deplorable working conditions, yet they built beautiful churches, sent thousands upon thousands of pounds of clothing and other material goods to Lithuania (they are continuing to do that to this date), and they maintained their Lithuanian heritage.

Today, however, even though the spirit is there, the manpower is decreasing rapidly. Thus, it is harder and harder to organize events such as the Festival. This being the case, I believe we need to have more cooperation among the different cities and organizations by supporting each other's efforts in helping one another retain our Lithuanian heritage.

How? Well, we can join hands and organize other events apart from the Festival. For example several times a year we can have Masses in their churches where they lack Lithuanian speaking priests. We can have dance groups and choirs come to perform (currently Baltimore's Malunas and Philadelphia's Zilvinas folk dance groups perform in the Festival) in their towns. We can have dancers, singers from Lithuania come here and perform. (Currently the Lithuanian American National Executive Committee sponsors such groups to come to America. Why not include one of these towns as part of their itinerary)? The mining towns were always known for their great sports teams and their support for their teams. In fact, Jason Miller's "That Championship Season" was written about a reunion of a Northeastern Pennsylvania coal town's winning basketball team. Why not organize a basketball tournament there? I bet there are plenty of talented Lithuanians who would love to compete against other Lithuanians.

Finally, I believe that it would be of great benefit to the "Trecioji Banga" ("The third wave") of Lithuanian immigrants to take a trip to this area. See how the early Lithuanians lived, worked, prayed. See what Lithuanian Pride is all about.

Lithuanian Spirit and Pride continue to flourish in the hills of Pennsylvania.

Rimas Gedeika

Rimas Gedeika lives in New Jersey and is active in the Lithuanian Sports Community.

Editor's note: This year's Lithuanian Days will be held on August 6 and 7 at the Schuylkill Mall, Frackville, PA.

For more information please contact bermika@infionline.net

** All photos by Rimas Gedeika*

Bridges Passages

Bridges July - August 1987 Gorbachev Educates Americans

Twenty visiting American Congressmen in Moscow were lectured by Gorbachev on nationalities, minorities, and against "American interference in Soviet human rights practices." He suggested that the U.S. "solve its race problems by setting up separate states for blacks, Puerto Ricans and Polish-Americans." Gorbachev also said that the Soviet Union's system of republics was based on "ethnic background" and culture. Representative Mickey Leland, a black Democrat from Texas, told the press that he found the remarks "offensive" and Gorbachev "rather uninformed about the aspirations and desires of black people in America."

"Nations" - not "Minorities"

Gorbachev is obviously uninformed about the "aspirations and desires" of the nations that form the Soviet empire. By comparing Soviet "minorities" with U.S. "minorities," he was regaling his guests with inaccurate information. The states in U.S.A. are regional administrative subdivisions that have nothing to do with

nationality or ethnicity. The so-called Soviet "republics" - a blatant misnomer - are actually nations annexed by Moscow in the course of Russian and Soviet Russian history. The Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians, for instance, live in their ancestral homelands where they are still "majorities," despite the relentless tide of Russification. They are not "ethnic minorities," as those in the U.S., a nation of immigrants; they are occupied nations.

The "Big Lie" on Human Rights

The Soviet official's flippant and arrogant approach to the human rights problem must have had a sobering effect on the visiting Congressmen, who could not but realize that the main difference between the two systems was not "capitalism" versus "socialism," but the Soviets' continuing use of the "Big Lie". Rep. Steny H. Hoyer (D-Md.) struck the right note when he said that a "serious Soviet approach toward human rights offenses" was a "litmus test" for the "Credibility of Soviet democratization and economic reform." National self-determination is a fundamental right.

The Legend of Birutė

Many stories have been told and many songs have been sung about her. While historians have some documented proof of her life from Lithuanian and other chronicles, most of the stories about Birutė were handed down by Lithuanians from generation to generation. They were generally believed to have some historical basis because of that. Since these stories could not be verified, however, they have been called merely legends by historians.

The year of her birth is not known. She was born near Palanga to a family of Samogitian magnates, probably early in the 14th century. It may be of interest to note that Samogitia is a part of Lithuania that is today known as Žemaitija. Palanga is located on the shores of the Baltic Sea with miles of beaches of pure sand. It is surrounded by pine forests, and stands between two hills that are associated with many legends. All of this lends a distinct romantic aura to Palanga.

The lovely Birutė was a priestess (Lithuanian: *vaidilute*). On the altar at the top of the highest hill in Palanga, she and her vestal companions guarded and kept the sacred fires burning night and day. This was part of the pagan ritual that dated back to the days of the ancient Lithuanians.

The chance meeting, and the marriage of Grand Duke Kęstutis and Birutė, became a love story and a legend. Kęstutis was on his way home to Trakai after defeating the Teutonic Knights in battle, and stopped at Palanga. One day, while riding on horseback, he saw a beautiful maiden walking barefoot along the beach. She had long, blonde braids with a wreath of *rūta* (rue) on her head, and was wearing an amber necklace around her neck. He was charmed by her beauty. He wanted her to be his wife, and asked for her hand in marriage. She did not wish to consent, at first, because she was a priestess. According to pagan custom, she promised the gods to preserve her chastity until the end of her days, and was herself honored as a goddess. But, how could she say "no" to a Grand Duke? Kęstutis took her from there by force, and accompanied her with great respect to Trakai, his residence. He invited his brothers, held a large wedding feast, and took Birute as his wife.

Kęstutis, like his brother Algirdas, was married twice. Nothing is known about his first wife: her



Birutė, mother of Vytautas the Great by Johann N. Ender (1793-1854)

name, where she came from, or what became of her. They were parents of three sons, that much is certain. Some historians think that there may have been a fourth son, but that cannot be proven. Since historians surmise that Kęstutis was born about 1300, he must have been close to 50 years of age when he took Birute for his second wife. She may have been half his age, considering the fact that she became the mother of three sons and three daughters. Their first child, a son, was born about 1350 at the palace in Trakai. Little did they realize, then, that this baby boy would someday become the most famous of

all of Lithuania's rulers: Vytautas the Great.

Birutė and Kęstutis were not able to live happily ever after, unfortunately. His nephew, Jogaila, arrested him in a coup, and imprisoned him. He died in prison in 1382 under mysterious circumstances. Birutė managed to return to her native Palanga where she remained devoted to her former gods. It was here that she died in 1389, and it is believed that she was buried on, or near, the hill by her sons, Vytautas and Zygmantas, on her request.

The hill has been called by Lithuanians as "Birutė's Kalnas", or translated into English, it means "Birutė's Hill".

People respected and loved Birute very much, and since they considered the hill as her burial ground, it was named in her honor. They came here quite often to pray to her, but with the passage of time, this practice faded away. Later on, and the exact year is not known, the pastor of Palanga had a small house of worship built at the top of the hill to give the area a more Christian meaning, and named it "St. George's Chapel". This wooden structure decayed and began to crumble as the years went by, and another one was constructed in its place. Eventually a red brick, octogen-shaped, neo-Gothic chapel, designed by Karl Meer, was constructed in 1868 and still stands there today.

The sculpture of Birutė at the foot of the hill was created by the noted Lithuanian sculptor Konstancija Petrikaitė-Tulienė in 1965. The two words inscribed on the pedestal, "Tau, Birute!" may not seem to mean



Vito Tamulis

Vitautis Casimirus "Vito" Tamulis was born in Cambridge, MA in 1911. He was a prep sensation at Boston English High, pitching his school to the city championship in 1930. Turning down several college scholarship offers, Yankees scout Gene McCann signed him shortly before his 19th birthday. He worked his way up the Yankee chain:

Chambersburg (Blue Ridge), Cumberland (Middle Atlantic), Albany (Eastern) and Binghamton (NYP), culminating in 1934 with a 13-7, 2.74 9. record with the Newark Bears. The Newark teams during the 1930's are rated as among the one hundred best minor league teams of all time.

He made his major league bow September 25, pitching a seven-hit shutout at Philadelphia. Tamulis had a successful 10-5, 4.09 record with three shutouts for the Yankees in 1935. During the winter, he was stricken with pleurisy and missed half the 1936 season. Still not fully recovered, he was sent to Newark and remained there in 1937. I ran across a story by a man who was just a young kid admiring the '37 Bears. His favorite player was Tamulis and one day after a game he had the opportunity to talk to Vito and ask for his autograph. While signing the autograph, Vito said, "Kid, I know something you don't know."

"What's that Mr. Tamulis?"

"You're standing on my new shoes." Followed by a hearty laugh and a rub on the kid's head.

After the '37 season, he was traded to the St. Louis Browns. After going 0-3, 7.63 in 1938, he was claimed on waivers by Brooklyn and enjoyed three successful seasons with the Dodgers, going 29-19, 3.77. In November 1940, Tamulis was traded to the Phillies in the deal that brought Kirby Higbee to Brooklyn. After six games with Philadelphia in 1941, he was back with the Dodgers, but after going 0-1, 5.56 in 18 total games he was released to Nashville. In 1942 he was 20-8, 4.28 in helping the Vols to the Southern Association and Dixie Series championships. He entered the service after the '42 season. Returning to Nashville after the war, he went 7-6 in 1946. In 1948 he was recruited to manage the Hopkinsville Hoppers in the Kitty League.

The purest junk -- the junkiest pitch in history -- is the Eephus pitch. Said to have been invented by Rip Sewell of the Pittsburgh Pirates in the thirties, it was also Vito Tamulis' secret pitch. The Eephus pitch is a pitch with absolutely nothing on it -- no velocity, no fancy spin, and

no break. No deception at all. And most of all, no SPEED. It is the blooper pitch. Sometimes, the ball dropped down into the strike zone while the hitter flailed. More often they managed some kind of contact, yet for some reason they couldn't knock it out of the park. And that's all they wanted to do. A hitter doesn't see an outrageous pitch like the Eephus and think, Single. The Eephus pitch was an insult: they wanted to pulverize it, kill it, crush it. They'd get so worked up waiting for it they couldn't see it straight, and they'd ground out, or pop out, or miss altogether.

Left-hander Vito Tamulis used a principle opposite of Sewell's. He announced the pitch, and reserved it for a select few good hitters with quick bats ... often for the great Johnny Mize. Tamulis was 5' 9", had trouble controlling his weight, and he was anything but intimidating. He was rotund, and he was a junkballer -- good control, no fastball throughout his career. As a lefty, he was often called on to face the left-handed Mize. Tamulis would walk halfway in toward the plate and announce that he was going to throw a rainbow change: Here, hit this, you big stiff.

Mize had an incredibly quick bat. He pulled everything, even the best fastballs. His bat was so fast, it could be almost a weakness, and against Tamulis it was a weakness. He would nearly kill himself trying to hit this garbage ball from a pitcher who was not quite marginal.

Hitters in the Kitty League in 1948 probably did not know they were in the same company as the great Johnny Mize. Had they know this perhaps they would have not felt so bad about not hitting the little fat man. Tamulis went 15-1 during the regular season and 17-3 overall with a 2.32 ERA in 1948. He also hit 5 homer runs with a batting average of .355. His Hoppers finish in first place ending the regular season. He personally beat the second place, and eventual playoff champion Union City Greyhounds five times. The Hopkinsville Hoppers were so successful against the Greyhounds that the Union City fans hated them almost as much as they hated the Fulton Lookouts.

Since the distance from Hopkinsville to Union City was too great to return home after each game, the Hoppers were one of three teams that stayed overnight during any series played in Union City. Consequently they did not have a regular batboy and that job went to the youngster who was earliest to meet the bus and ask the manager for the job. The pay was usually a practice ball, plus any broken bats. I was nine years old and this was my first successful quest for the job. As the visiting team the Hoppers and I were in the third base dugout.

My grandmother, who never missed a game, was seated in her regular spot on the first base side of the grandstand. I couldn't wait for her to see me go out to retrieve the bats. I didn't have to wait long. She made the trek through the grandstand to the third base side and called me through the chicken-wire screen. I had never seen her so mad. Rather than being happy for my chance to get a ball or bat, and for having beat out some of the older guys for the job, she considered me a traitor and an embarrassment for aiding and abetting the enemy. I was told where I best get and when I best get there. While I argued, I knew I had a losing position because she always came through with a dime for a cold drink during the seventh inning stretch and that was every game. The Hopper job was only three nights. As I pleaded the first Hopper was retired on a ground ball to Don Petschow at third.

Vito Tamulis barked, "Kid! You gonna get the bat, or what?"

I ran to the plate and picked up the bat. As soon as I returned it to the dugout I told Mr. Tamulis that I would find him a replacement. I knew that wouldn't be hard because there were several friends sitting on top of the dugout waiting for the opportunity. As I started around the dugout and off the field, he called to me. "Hey, kid."

When I turned, he pitched me a warm-up ball.

Quietly I pulled for the Hoppers the rest of the season when they were not playing the Greyhounds.

Vito Tamulis returned to manage the Hopkinsville team in 1951 and he continued to live in the Nashville area until his death in 1974.

Source:

http://www.unioncitygreyhounds.homestead.com/files/Vito_Tamulis_kharacter.htm

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History of Our Community in Colorado

Perhaps the earliest information about Colorado Lithuanians is a news item appearing in the 1899 October issue of the newspaper Tevynne:

There are not many Lithuanians in the Colorado city of Denver. Approximately 13. There are a few Lithuanians in Rapland, mostly from Prussia. They work as farm hands, earn \$1.50 a day with meals, \$2.50 - \$3.50 without meals. Most likely there are some fortune seekers in the Rocky Mountains, but nothing is known about them.

The U.S. Census Bureau statistics show that in the period from 1899 to 1914 a total of 280 Lithuanians arrived in Colorado. The Textbook for New Arrivals, published in 1914 by K.V. Rackauskas, provides additional information:

Cameo, Colorado: 12 Lithuanians hanging on. They work at the tunnel in construction. Otherwise nothing is known about their life and working conditions. There are 13 Lithuanian families in Lafayette, and some in the following areas: Marshall, Superior, Louisville, Erie, Puritan, Fredrick.

According to Bruno Zaweckis, who moved from Chicago to Denver in 1924, about 70 Lithuanian families at that time lived in Colorado, mostly in Globeville, in the 10th Avenue and Sheridan Boulevard area.

In 1959, only a few families were left in Denver from the earlier Lithuanian arrivals. In most cases, their children had established mixed marriages and with a few exceptions stopped participating in Lithuanian activities. Then a "second" wave of Lithuanians started to arrive, those who left Lithuania because of the Soviet occupation. Their number slowly grew and at one time reached nearly 100 families. Lithuanian activity picked up, the Colorado Chapter of the Lithuanian American Community was established, later the folk dance group "Ruta" was established and close contact was maintained with the state and federal government officials promoting Lithuania's fight for freedom.

In Colorado history seems to repeat itself. The representatives of the "second" wave of arrivals are slowly disappearing because of age and mixed marriages. In their place, a few interested in maintaining the Lithuanian community keep activities going. The situation, however is improving. A "third" wave of arrivals has appeared on the scene. These are the newcomers from newly independent Lithuania. They are joining the local Lithuanian activities and already can be found among the officers of the Lithuanian American Community (LAC) and the folk dance group. The future of Colorado Lithuanians is in their hands.

<http://www.coloradolithuanians.org>