

MARRIED LIFE FOR STUDENTS: NOT EASY BUT IT WORKS

By Richardas Degutis, a student at Vilnius University

On my first acquaintance with newly-weds, I usually try to guess which of the two is most lucky. I think Jurda and Antanas Raulickiai whom I met at a new year party both are.

They met at a students' get-together. It was April 1, "the liars' fair." Everything that takes place on that day is just a joke. Yet, Jurda, a student of bibliography, and Antanas, a future psychologist, married, despite their young age (both are 20) and prejudices (meeting each other on a liars' day). They have lived together for 16 months now.

At birthday parties, Lithuanians sing "long years to you" and not "happy birthday". We wished Jurda a "fertile year." But Tony (as I call Antanas) coyly parried: "No children so far. First we have to become financially independent."

The family earns 150 rubles monthly. Jurda is an excellent student, therefore her scholarship is higher than usual—60 rubles a month, besides, her folks give her 50 rubles. "In their opinion this is the minimal sum one needs," says Tony. Loafing is not alien to him, but he passed his exams last summer quite successfully and now adds his 40 rubles to the family budget each month. It's a pretty good income for a student in-law. I guess not have to pay for their flat, as they live with Antanas' folks. Neither do they buy food because Antanas' parents take care of that as well.

Antanas does not always get along well with his parents-in-law. I guess it's inevitable when you meet them more frequently than once a year. So he was very much surprised when they gave him a car on the first anniversary of their married life. True, it's a bit worn-out, but it will work for a long time. Soon the parents will present them with a four-room flat. That will be dream about a new flat.

There is a joke that every woman lacks three things—a good husband, a nasty son, and a decent evening dress. Jurda, too, complains about her husband: "He drives like a madman. When the speedometer shows 100 km/hr, I scream or shut my eyes."

Rasa and Arturas Raciak were both lucky, too. But their life is totally different. They study in different cities: Arturas in Vilnius, at the history department of Vilnius University, and Rasa at the medical college in Kaunas.

I know Arturas well, we play on the same basketball team. You'd never guess that this merry, light-hearted guy is the head of a family. They married when Arturas returned from the army and entered the university. Though they too had financial problems, soon a son was born in their family. Aurimas is now eighteen months old. Naturally, they wanted to live together, but after Aurimas was born, they had to live separately for a year. Rasa and the baby went to live with her parents, as the students' trade union at the university could not provide them with a room in a dorm for student families.

This year they were lucky, they say. They got a room in Kaunas. Regretably Arturas has to travel 100 km to the university every day, but he can spend every evening with his family. Rasa interrupted her studies for 12 months and returned to the college only this year. Two scholarships are not enough to make both ends meet, though the rent is just symbolic. Parents cannot help their. Rasa's folks are both pensioners, and Arturas has only a mother.

"I study days and work nights," he says. He had to take a job as a nurse in a mental institution. The work isn't fascinating, but he earns 130 rubles for 12 nightshift duties.

This week's Feature looks at a number of very informative articles written by University students from the USSR. Publication of these articles represents one aspect of what should be an on-going exchange of information between the Brunswickan and the student paper at Vilnius University in Lithuania. Readers will discover that while there may be a great deal of difference between the cultures of Canadians and Russians, there are interesting similarities which have a lot to do with being young and seeking to be educated in today's world. We are happy to share in this exchange and we encourage you to write us giving your responses to this Feature.

Kwame Dawes (Features Editor)

FOUR CENTURIES OF THE VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

ALGIRDAS LIPSTAS;
EDITOR OF THE V.S.U. STUDENT NEWSPAPER

The Vilnius University is more than 400 years old -- the oldest higher educational institution not only in Lithuania (a Soviet Baltic Republic) but also in the Soviet Union.

In the 16th century the reformation ideas swept through the Rzeczpospolita Polska -- the state of Poland and Lithuania. The dangerous spreaders of heresy included graduates of west European Protestant universities, there being no university in Lithuania. In a bid to stop the spreading of negative ideas, the Jesuits Order established a collegium in Vilnius on April 1, 1570. Nine years later the collegium was turned by a king's decree into a university -- ALMA ACADEMIA ET UNIVERSITAS VILNEUSIS -- which was a Jesuitic, Catholic, of course.

There were but two faculties at the university first -- the theological and philosophical ones. The Faculty of Law appeared in the 17th century. An observatory (the oldest in eastern Europe) was opened in 1753.

Upon abolition of the Jesuits Order in 1773 the Vilnius University became secular and led all schools in the territory. But shortly afterwards the Rzeczpospolita was divided between Austria, Prussia and the Russian Empire, and Vilnius and Lithuania became part of the Empire. The university again got new rules and a curator-supervisor. However, during a recent discussion of university autonomy, Assistant Professor Saulius Vengrys said the university in 1803 enjoyed more rights than now.

Europe's biggest botanical gardens, a zoology museum, a unique library founded in 1570, several medical institutes, three clinics and even a pharmacy of its own have been functioning at the university since the early 19th century. Active public life has given rise to a multitude of student brotherhoods and alliances within its walls. And many student and lecturers in 1830-1831 took part in the uprising which shook the Empire and the territory of the former Rzeczpospolita. That decided its fate: The uprising was suppressed and the university -- closed down. It was deprived of its collections of valueless publications and relics which were transferred to other educational institutions of the Russian Empire. Many of them have never been returned.

Soviet power was proclaimed in Lithuania in 1918, and in March 1919 a decree was issued to open the Vilnius University. But the city was occupied by bourgeois Poland. Between two world wars a Polish university was functioning in Vilnius, and a Lithuanian one -- in Kaunas (the then capital of bourgeois Lithuania), that worked by the rules of the old Vilnius University.

The modern history of the Vilnius University began in the autumn of 1944 when Vilnius was liberated from German fascist invaders. The university has been widened since. Its 14 faculties have long outgrown the old building in the downtown. The most prestigious 18th-century classrooms were given to future historians and philologist who must feel that the time is not out of joint.

The university has a more than 16,000 enrollment now. Every fourth inhabitant of Lithuania with a higher education is its graduate.

FIRST YEAR CAPERS: OF FUXES AND DEANS

By Ausrine Pecturaitė, a student at Vilnius University

We started our studies on September 1. This day is a real feast for all of us, but especially for first-year students. They get "baptized" on this day. Before a freshman is "baptized", the student community does not regard him as its equal member. Only after this symbolic procedure does he become a "fux", a first-year student. "Fuxus Fu!"--we have all been fuxes. The higher you climb up scholarly peaks, the more rights you have to baptize newcomers.

This year baptizing at the philology department included a "cuckoo"--a student who has to sit up in a tree, according to the scenario. He jokingly warned: "Formerly, one could be persecuted for anecdotes. Now the times have changed, but nobody knows what'll come next..." But the students could not care less.

Fuxes know that there is no escape from being dipped into the fountain pool. Br-r-r-r. Cold water promises pneumonia, but freshmen plunge in obediently. What else can you do if a medieval knight urges you into the water with his spear? Besides, you have to paint a portrait of the dean. They say it will be kept in the museum. What if the dean doesn't like your masterpiece?

Attention. A solemn moment. If in the good old days everybody took part in the elections of Miss Philology, today, in the age of glasnost and democracy, the great monk who bosses the show usurped this privilege. "Attention, guards. Let it be her." He points to a cute fuxette.

Another solemn moment: fuxes must carry the faculty's first man, the dean, to the newly-elected miss. Of course, through the fountain. Dropping the dean into the water is tantamount to saying farewell to the university. Then the dean and beautiful Miss Philology waltz around the fountain and kiss in front of the audience.



VISŲ ŠALIŲ PROLETARAI, VIENYKITEŠ! TARYBINIS STUDENTAS

VILNIAUS DARBO RAUDONOSIOS VĖLIAVOS IR TAUTŲ DRAUGYSTĖS ORDINŲ VALSTYBINIO V. KAPSUKO UNIVERSITETO REKTORATO, PARTIJOS, KOMJAUNIMO IR PROFSAJUNGOS KOMITETŲ SAVAITRAŠTIS

WHAT INHABITANTS OF LITHUANIA THINK OF THE IGNALINA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

By Gintaras Visockas, correspondent of newspaper TARIBINIS STUDENTAS

An ad published in the Lithuanian youth newspaper KOM-SOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA caused an avalanche of letters against the construction of the third power generating unit at the Ignalina nuclear power plant.

The ad asked all who are "concerned over reliable, ecologically clean and efficient operation of the nuclear power plant" to voice their opinion. Nearly 3,000 letters with about 200,000 signatures were received by the paper's editorial board in the first ten days. The days are gone when people preferred to keep mum, thinking that they were unable to change anything.

The letters came from all Lithuanian cities. The greatest number of signatures (about 30,000) was collected in Vilnius. People from neighboring Latvia and other Soviet republics also responded to the proposal.

The signatures were collected at institutions, hospitals, collective-farms, churches, movie houses, libraries, in the streets, in dwelling houses and troop units, at wedding ceremonies and meetings, even in places of detention. The letters contain many texts and drawings by children. The longest was 14 pages. And one Vilnius family sent its signatures twice to make the case stronger. But there are no letters signed collectively by the staff of the city or district party or Young Communist League committees.

On average, one out of every 18 letter-writers submits his own proposals. A number of authors voice the view that the Ignalina nuclear power plant should be dismantled and that construction of other projects of this kind in Lithuania should never be planned in the future.

All work at the third power-generating unit of the Ignalina plant was halted on September 9, 1988, and a plan to lay up the construction is now being worked out.

"Ring of Life" is the name of another protest against the Ignalina nuclear plant. It is described here by Gintaras Visockas, a student of Vilnius University and a participant in this action:

"The protest near the Ignalina nuclear power plant was held in the city and are leaving the tents and automobiles, decorated with the national flag, dear now, after the 'ring of life'."

"In the light of bonfires the people sang during the night, and in daytime, joining hands, surrounding the water of which is used by the power plant and over the fate of the national park adjacent to the national flag, Lithuania's biggest lake, the water of which is used by the plant, and which is dying now. True, there were no loud speeches, and we were not allowed to hold a rally, but it was not forbidden to us to join hands and to cast a glance at this wound of our country which is unlikely to heal any time in the future."

"We expressed our concern by songs, posters, flags and simply by raising hands. The living autumn forest and the severe lake, which has already been sentenced to death, spoke back to us. But not everyone understood our anxiety--during the meeting at the conference hall the managers and personnel of the plant accused the 'ring of life' organizers of nationalism. They tried to convince us that the power plant is reliable and that there are no grounds for fear, (though accidents at the plant seem to have been frequent in its design). They ignored our demands to form an international commission of experts."

"We were far less numerous than we should have been. I did not see here many people who are well-known in the republic and whom I would very much like to see here. Maybe they were gathering mushrooms or watching the Olympics on TV that day? Or, perhaps, I simply did not notice them because still there were very many of us--about 15,000."

"I am glad that I saw an old man with a walking-stick who had found the strength to come. I am glad that I saw pupils of Vilnius schools and students of the university, and a boy who held a national flag, three times bigger than himself, for the whole day. I am happy because we were united and strong that day."

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