



Lithuanian Parliamentary Mirror

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LITHUANIA IS COMMEMORATING THE 13 JANUARY – THE FREEDOM DEFENDERS DAY





content



Lithuanian Parliamentary Mirror

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the 13th of January – the Freedom Defenders' Day

Moments of history - 1991.

On 11 March 1990, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania – the Reconstituent Seimas – adopted the Act “On the Re-establishment of the State of Lithuania” which solemnly proclaimed the end of the period of occupation by a foreign government and the beginning of a new era of statehood.

After the Act of the 11th March on the Re-establishment of the Independent State of Lithuania was promulgated, the USSR began applying political, economic and social sanctions against Lithuania. From April to June 1990, it imposed an economic blockade on Lithuania.

On 13 January 1991, using brutal force against the unarmed population, the Soviet troops stormed the State Television and Radio buildings in Vilnius. 14 people were killed and about 600 civilians were injured.

Only on 31 August 1993, due to tremendous Lithuanian effort (political, diplomatic, economic, and even psychological) and favourable international circumstances, the occupant Soviet Army was withdrawn from the territory of the Republic of Lithuania.



*Roll-call of the volunteers in the foyer of the 1st Building of the Supreme Council – the Reconstituent Seimas.
12 January 1991. Photographer Mr. Juozapaitis*

Moments of history - 1991.



Barricade built from construction blocks in the Gediminas Av. (now the places of barricades are marked with monumental poles), protected the Parliament in 1991-1992. Inscription in the barricade reads "the Heart of Lithuania". Photographer Mr. Jasinevičius



The defenders gathered from all over Lithuania to guard the building of the Supreme Council – the Reconstituent Seimas. January 1991. Photographer Mr. Nekrošius



plenary sittings

13 January

SOLEMN SITTING OF THE SEIMAS COMMEMORATES THE FREEDOM DEFENDERS' DAY

On 13 January, Sunday, at the Seimas, in the 11 March Hall, a solemn sitting of the Seimas devoted to the commemoration of the Freedom Defenders' Day was held. Seventeen years ago people of Lithuania defended the decision made by their legally elected representatives – the Supreme Council – the Reconstituent Seimas – to re-establish the Independence of Lithuania.

Relatives and family members of those who were killed when defending Lithuania's freedom and independence the night that was fateful to Lithuania, eye-witnesses to the event who had suffered severely and become disabled, relatives and family members of those who laid their lives for the sake of the independence of the Motherland on the Lithuanian border, His Excellency President of the Republic **Valdas Adamkus**, Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania **Gediminas Kirkilas** and other members of the Government, President **Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas**, deputies of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania – the Reconstituent Seimas, Signatories to the Act of Independence, members of the first Government of the re-established independent

Republic of Lithuania, heads of the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, the Supreme Administrative Court, dignitaries and representatives of the Churches of Lithuania, Speaker of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland **Bronisław Komarowski** and the delegation headed by him, Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia **Gundars Daudze** and the delegation headed by him, representatives of diplomatic missions, representatives of the Lithuanian World Community in Lithuania, heads of the institutions accountable to the Seimas, County Governors, Rectors of higher schools, representatives of ethnic minorities, defenders-volunteers of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania – Reconstituent Seimas and other honourable guests participated in the sitting.

Speeches at the solemn sitting were delivered by Speaker of the Seimas **Viktoras Muntianas**, His Eminence Cardinal **Audrys Juozas Bačkis**, Speaker of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland **Bronisław Komorowski**, Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia **Gundars Daudze**, witness to the Medininkai massacre **Tomas Šernas**.

On 27 November 1991 the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania decided to declare the 13th of January a memorable day and to call it the Freedom Defenders' Day: "Seeking to commemorate the sacrifice of Lithuania's sons and daughters to Freedom and Independence on 13 January 1991, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania resolves:

1. To declare the 13th of January a memorable day and to call it the Freedom Defenders' Day".

Speech by Mr. Viktoras Muntianas, Speaker of the Seimas

Your Excellency President of the Republic of Lithuania,
 Dear Prime Minister,
 Your Eminence,
 Distinguished Guests: Speakers of the Parliaments of Latvia and Poland
 Members of the Government,
 Members of the Reconstituent Seimas,
 Signatories to the Act of Independence,
 Relatives of the victims that died for the freedom of Lithuania,
 Your Excellencies Ambassadors,

Every year since 2000, prior to the celebrations of Christmas and the New Year, the Vilnius TV tower is adorned with flashing light garlands that make it resemble a Christmas tree. This Christmas tree is a source of joy and delight to both, residents and guests of Vilnius.

However, 17 years ago, on the eve of 13 January and during the night, the TV tower was the site of a national tragedy. A crowd of unarmed people, who stood surrounding the tower, was attacked by tanks and armoured vehicles, as well as by soldiers of a hostile country, who did not spare any bullets nor grenades. They forced their way to the TV tower to suppress the Lithuanian television, the words of freedom, and the voice of our homeland.

On the same night, the soldiers of a hostile country who sought to ultimately put the voice of Lithuania to silence demonstrated their power at the Lithuanian radio and television building by shooting at the Lithuanian people and crippling them.

That night the enemies of our freedom killed 14 and injured about a thousand citizens of the Republic of Lithuania. Soon after midnight, the soldiers occupied the TV tower and the Lithuanian radio and television premises. It is known that the Sitkūnai radio station was to suffer the same fate. However, because of the victims at the Vilnius TV tower and the crowds of the residents of Kaunas, who surrounded the radio station, such plans were abandoned. Sitkūnai became a symbol of Lithuania's voice of freedom.

There is no doubt that the ultimate target of the leaders of the Soviet Army and the Lithuanian dissenters who collaborated with them was the Parliament – the Supreme Council of Lithuania. However, hundreds of thousands of Lithuanian people were prepared to defend it. They were even ready to die if they had to, but deliver to the whole country a free homeland. They were not frightened by one of the biggest



*At the tribune – Viktoras Muntianas, presiding over the sitting –
 First Deputy Speaker of the Seimas Česlovas Juršėnas*

armies in the world. They defended the Parliament, they defended Lithuania, and they defended our freedom.

Let us recall the horrible night of 13 January. Let us tell our children and grandchildren how it all happened. I will quote Stefan Lundberg, a Swedish journalist, who eye-witnessed the events of that night and shared his experience in the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* on 14 January 1991.

“The soldiers pointed their machine guns at people and vehicles. In a few minutes it seemed as if the devil had been let loose. Hundreds of people started making their way through to the TV tower to join the thousands of those who had surrounded the tower earlier to defend it. The tanks started moving at the people at full speed to disperse the crowd. One man stood too close to the tank and was crushed by it. It only took a few seconds for the shooting to start. The air was vibrating because of detonation. The wave impact force knocked us down. The people around were running in panic in what used to be grass, but what had turned into slippery mud under the tracks of the tanks.

Ambulance cars took away the first killed victims. Doctors provided first aid to people with head injuries from gun butts. Some men and women were speechless, standing and watching. Others were either shaking from crying, or running for shelter. The tanks started moving onto the crowd again, but the crowd began chanting: Lithuania, Lithuania! Their chant was disrupted by a deafening salvo from the troops.”

Another Swedish newspaper wrote on the same day:

“Tears ran down the cheeks of Mrs. Daiva Vėrinskienė, aged 32, a mother of two small children. “At first I thought I was going to die”, she said. She knew, however, she had to carry on to fulfil the important mission by telling everything to her daughters when they would be old enough.”

In fact, not only this woman, but also all of us who have survived the horror of that night have a task and an obligation to remember and to remind our children and grandchildren of 13 January. Moreover, we have an obligation to share the experience we gained during the whole epoch leading to 11 March.

Our children no longer remember this. Time will gradually erase this from our minds, too. However, our generation and the generations to come will always remember the fatal night of the end of the 20th century, the bloodstained night of 13 January 1991.

That night thousands of people created a human chain around the Parliament and answered the question “to be or not to be” by swearing the independent Lithuania into being.

14 citizens of Lithuania lying on their deathbed also said “TO BE” to the Lithuanian people, to Lithuania, and to the world at large.

And the world heard them. True, it did not happen overnight. The tanks of the hostile country and the armoured vehicles kept demonstrating their might on our territory for over six months, not letting Lithuania to breathe freely. Lithuania sustained inhumane political, economic, and psychological pressure from the Soviet Union, which was already in agony; however, the progressive Russian movements supported us and Lithuania emerged as a white swan from the historical non-existence and became a recognised state on its road to progress, European living standards, and the true expression of the dignity of the nation.

This road to freedom is unique in the history of Lithuania and Europe and it remains evident both in documents and people’s minds, as well as in material objects, such as the fragment of a barricade surrounding the Seimas premises. Presently it is covered by a glass structure and situated near the Western façade of the Seimas building. The people started constructing barricades on the eve of 13 January in preparation for the possible assault against the Parliament.

Box of signatories to the Act on the Re-establishment of Lithuania's Independence of 11 March



The reinforced concrete slabs of the barricades were soon adorned by simple, yet meaningful phrases: “the heart of Lithuania”, “Freedom for Lithuania”, “We will die to live”. It is all now history, but our children and the generations to come should know it.

Not only should they know and see the barricades, but also understand how the barricades of living people came to stand near the reinforced concrete slabs. Today, we already have a memorial where we can come to refresh our memories and to reflect on the past. We can reflect on the 13 January events, the way things stand today, compared to the 13 January 1991, and the present political situation on both sides of the barricades. Today it is probably useful to remember that Russia, which inherited the rights of the Soviet Union, does not want to recognise the occupation of Lithuania. It is still unwilling to recognise the damage done to Lithuania during the years of occupation. Thus, the situation has not changed much on the other side of the barricade.

On our side of the barricade, we have witnessed both qualitative and quantitative losses. In my understanding, our greatest loss is the fact that we have less of Lithuania in our hearts compared to 1991. I think that this is our most important loss.

Let us now commemorate the people whose lives allowed Lithuania to become independent. Let us commemorate the people who never spared their blood for Lithuania's freedom. Let us observe a minute of silence and voice their names:

LORETA ASANAVIČIŪTĖ,
VIRGINIJUS DRUSKIS,
DARIUS GERBUTAVIČIUS,
ROLANDAS JANKAUSKAS,
RIMANTAS JUKNEVIČIUS,
ALVYDAS KANAPINSKAS,
ALGIMANTAS PETRAS KAVOLIUKAS,
VYTAUTAS KONCEVIČIUS,
VIDAS MACIULEVIČIUS,
TITAS MASIULIS,
ALVYDAS MATULKA,
APOLINARAS JUOZAS POVILAITIS,
IGNAS ŠIMULIONIS,
VYTAUTAS VAITKUS

Thank you. Thank you for showing respect to those who gave their lives in the fight for independence of the state. They died as freedom fighters of the post-war period, they died in an uneven battle, however, they were never scared and never abandoned the ideals of their homeland.

Long live the glory of those who died defending the freedom and independence of Lithuania.

Speech by His Eminence Cardinal Audrys Juozas Bačkis

“Your Excellency President of the Republic of Lithuania, Speaker of the Seimas, Prime Minister and distinguished guests!

What did those Lithuanian children whose memory is honoured by solemn sittings and prayers every year die for? They died for their Motherland's freedom, for their State, for the future of their country – these are usual and clear answers. However, do we understand freedom, do we understand our state and its future today the way they understood it? It is only after we have given honest answers to this question that we shall relate memory to life. We shall not separate commemorations from what is going on in this hall and the entire country every day.



Audrys Juozas Bačkis

Freedom was a special word to all the Lithuanians who went out into the streets of Vilnius that cold night. Today, when we hear the word “freedom” from the lips of politicians, from television or radio, they usually mean absolutely different things. Phrases are uttered in which it would be much better to replace the word “freedom” with the word “responsibility”. That is, instead of saying freedom of trade, we should say responsible trade, instead of the words “freedom of the press” the words the responsible media should be said and “freedom of advertising should be replaced with the responsible advertising and so on.

Heroes of the 13th of January sought freedom through their duty and responsibility, through their duty until their death. Today freedom is often declared to avoid duties and responsibilities. What is one's own state? It is the state that defends its people, especially the weakest ones. Following the

13 January events there were people who contemplated that the then leaders failed to take adequate measures to protect those who were killed. It is not difficult to understand that the only such measure could be capitulation, the refusal of the aspiration for independence. But why are we constantly going back to the so-called mistakes of the history, instead of asking how people are protected today. I am not referring only to the protection of those who suffer from poverty, shortage and disability. I am speaking about the measures that would protect the unborn lives, those who are killed in accidents, drink themselves to death or take their own lives because of depression and psychoses. Whenever something is proposed for life protection, there are always purportedly more important things at stake. Lives remain unprotected because women have reproductive rights, and people who drive cars have the right to buy alcoholic beverages at petrol filling stations. Ever-new dangers are posed to lives because business has the right to the maximum profit, and politicians have the right to the support provided by business. What else is important for the state to be regarded as one's own state? One's own state is the state, which seeks to be fair to everybody and everyone. I do not believe that someone would lay their head of their own free will for a gang of robbers. This is what Saint Augustine called the state, which was not governed by justice. Pope Benedict XVI cites these severe words in his encyclical letter "God is love. He reminds us that it is justice that is the ultimate aim of the whole policy, therefore, it is the internal gauge. Alongside the important question of how to implement justice now and here, another, more important question arises, i.e. what is justice? The Holy Father underlines that practical mind necessary to take this decision must be constantly cleared because ethical blindness that arises when interests and powers take the upper hand is a threat that can never be eradicated to the end." Following the influence of powerful groups of interests, their pressure, people in power seek protection under laws such as Law on Harmonising Interests of Lobbying. However, can a written law protect better than deep convictions? Would not a clear ethic self-determination with regards to the good, the bad, the important and the accidental better protect the politicians? On 13 January the Lithuanians were lead and supported by the conviction of what was right and honourable. As history shows, such conviction was dangerous, even deathly dangerous. Defenders of freedom at the same time defended also the right to everyone's conviction, defended the right to freely express convictions and to act according to them. However, it seems that even today it is dangerous to have convictions in Lithuania. As the events of the past weeks testify, the mass media mounts organised attacks against both ordinary people and members of the parliament unhindered, tramples their dignity and convictions. Heroes of 13 January among which there were mainly young people, sought to preserve the young state. Is much being done today for the state to be preserved? Those who confronted the Soviet tanks with songs

had a clear vision of their Motherland's future. Unfortunately, I see that a conception of many present-day politicians and public men of Lithuania's future is quite dismal. Discussions about business interests are held day in day out looking for possible sponsors, however, there is no time left for such matters as education, science, family and healthy lifestyle. Are there many parliamentarians who are sincerely concerned about what kind of Lithuania's youth will mature, what their health will be, about what kind of family will bring up the next generation of children? Can many parliamentarians mention that they have done something substantial in helping parents and teachers protect the minors from violence, alcohol, drugs, propaganda of short-lived pleasures?

Defenders of freedom believed in themselves, believed in Lithuania's future, believed that God helped them. It is difficult to believe that God helps you if inside you are not sure that you are standing for justice and the truth, that you are defending people and the true course. I wish people of Lithuania, I wish heads of the State and today's politicians to be successors of the spirit of the defenders of freedom. This means living and behaving so that you could always believe that God helps you".

Speech by Speaker of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland Bronisław Komorowski

"Your Excellency President of the Republic of Lithuania, dear Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic, Your Eminence Cardinal, esteemed members of the Seimas and distinguished guests.

At the tribune – Bronisław Komorowski, presiding over the sitting – Speaker of the Seimas Viktoras Muntianas



I have a rare honour of being here today, in Vilnius, at the Seimas of Lithuania, on 13 January, on the day of commemorating the fight at the Television tower in 1991, on the day of the anniversary of the events, which brought independence and democracy to Lithuania. I have the honour of standing here in front of the high palace as the Speaker of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland and as a representative of the generation of Polish *Solidarnost*, a huge public Movement, which led Poland, as the first country in the Soviet camp, to freedom as early as 1989.

I am honoured to be addressing the representatives of the nation, on account of which freedom crossed the borderline of the then Soviet Union. This speeded up the empires' journey to a storehouse of the old relics of history.

Hence, I bow my head before bravery and resolution of the Lithuanians who fought for freedom. I bow my head before Lithuanian determination, which has become a saying in Poland, and which brought you, Lithuanians, the long-sought independence. I am proud that during those great and difficult days we, people of Poland's *Solidarity*, were together with Lithuania. It is with pride and gratitude that among all those who rest in peace I remember Kuronis, my elder colleague from the ranks of anti-Communist opposition of the 7th – 8th decades. I also remember my colleague minister in the first non-communist Government

who in 1991 delivered a speech here, in the same building, declaring that he was ready to die if the necessity arose for the sake of your and our happiness, for freedom of the Poles and freedom of the Lithuanians.

To deliver a speech here, at the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, is the honour because half of my Polish heart has come from here, from Lithuania. It has come not only from Vilnius, but also from Aukštaitija, from Žemaitija, from Rokiškis, Kėdainiai and Šiauliai because throughout several centuries my ancestors created here Rzeczpospolita, the commonwealth of the two nations. My ancestry thought and felt the way Adam Mickiewicz expressed it in the Polish words "Lithuania, my Motherland, you are like health".

Therefore today – on the Freedom Defenders' Day – I would like to express great happiness that the Poles and the Lithuanians are going along the same road. This time they are walking along the road that started from winning back the freedom and is leading to its reasonable use and establishment of relations with the West within the framework of the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union. These reasonable choices, reasonable decisions that our nations have made, testify not only to historic commonness of our fates but also to commonness of today's aspirations and dreams about a better and safer future.



Participants of the sitting pay homage to the perished defenders of Lithuania's freedom by observing a minute of silence

Therefore, on my way here I gladly stopped by in Sejny where there is the Consulate of the Republic of Lithuania, a beautiful modern Lithuanian high school and a monument to Bishop Antanas Baranuskas. Everything testifies to the fact that in free and democratic countries within the framework of meeting the European standards, problems of ethnic minorities that are even complicated by nature, can be resolved better and faster. I would like very much that our both parliaments should preserve these standards both in Poland and in Lithuania, that the Parliament of Poland should take care of the Lithuanians living in Poland and the Parliament of Lithuania should take care of the Poles residing in Lithuania. They should be preserved especially now that our accession to the Schengen Area encourages more frequent bilateral visits and makes travelling and co-operation on the border easier.

I have hopes that we are facing good opportunities to look for what brings us closer within the framework of a large political, economic and civil project, which is the European Union. Therefore it is worth thinking about taking common pride in history, about an excellent creation of the European Constitution – the Constitution of 3 May 1991, as well as common integration experience and close cooperation of all the nations in Europe, as well as in Central and Eastern Europe. It is worth remembering traditions and experience of Rzeczpospolita of the two nations, many nations, many cultures and many religions.

We, Poles and Lithuanians, can show Europe one of the oldest and most interesting traditions of democratic integration and tolerance going back to the 16th century. Together we can contribute to Europe that is under the process of integration, take pride in our own values and show to others that we are more than poor relatives of the mature democratic countries of the West.

However, we also have to think about what forms the fundamentals of the development of our nations and our states today. We have to think and act for the benefit of a common vision of European integration. We have to think and act for the benefit of the Treaty reforming the European Union, which will soon come into effect and relevant contents of fulfilling laws. This is a big issue and a great challenge. What we together can offer to Europe as our own project is our European Eastern policy and common security policy.

Concern about our mutual neighbours must be our common task, especially with regards to Belarus who cannot enjoy freedom and true democracy yet. Poland and Lithuania together have to take care of this form of the European Neighbourhood Policy at the forum of the European Union so that our borders, Polish-Lithuanian borders, should not become a new dividing line of the continent. Together we have to continue supporting our close neighbour Ukraine on its way to the Euro-Atlantic structures.

Also, together we have to answer to the question what we are going to offer as our vision of the European policy of energy solidarity and how closely our Parliaments are going to cooperate participating together in the process of creating European law on the basis of new institutional decisions, which are being implemented on the basis of the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon. Therefore, on the Freedom Defenders' Day, I would like to wish the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the entire Lithuania, as well as Poland, resolution and courage in securing our Lithuanian and Polish freedom in the European contents, for that freedom, for participation of the Lithuanians in the fight for freedom".

Speech by Speaker of the Seima of the Republic of Latvia Gundars Daudze

Highly Esteemed President of the Republic of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus, Honourable Speaker of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania Mr. Muntianas, Esteemed Speaker of the Sejm of Poland Mr Komarovski, Esteemed Deputies, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The delegation of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia has the great honour of paying homage to the defenders of freedom together with our Lithuanian colleagues today. Those people were determined to make the supreme



Gundars Daudze

sacrifice for the noble cause, i.e. the freedom of their State and Nation. Seventeen years ago in Riga, having constructed barricades in Vecrigas Street, we were anxiously looking forward to receiving news from Lithuania. In severe frost of January people who gathered around fires in the streets were firmly determined to defend their Motherland. That was the time of bravery, which inspired many people to fight later for the establishment of independence of our countries, for the victory of democracy over tyranny, for freedom and self-determination.

Solidarity of the Baltic States of those days was the force, which pushed the Baltic countries to their further successful return to the family of the states of Europe. This process was crowned with the aspiration when in 2004 Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia became full-fledged members of the European Union and NATO. Seventeen years ago membership of the European Union and NATO was a distant and abstract dream. However, we clearly understood that only working together we would prove to the world that our place was in democratic Europe.

Esteem Lithuanian colleagues!

I am a great supporter of cooperation between the Baltic States. I am deeply convinced that at the present time joint actions of the Baltic States and wider cooperation in the region is unavoidable, we have specific goals – energy, transport, relations with our neighbours, environmental protection and plenty of others, which can be solved best when working together. I recently discussed these issues when paying an official visit to Lithuania. On behalf of the deputies of the Saeima of Latvia allow me to thank the Speaker of the Seimas and the Seimas deputies for friendly and warm reception.

Highly esteemed President, honoured deputies,

This year we are celebrating the 90th anniversary of the creation of the States of Latvia and Estonia and the re-establishment of the statehood of Lithuania. This was not an easy road and we can boast of our outstanding achievements. We can also be happy that we have achieved such a degree of maturity when we can share our experience with others. We achieved that thanks to brave, patriotic and dedicated people who stood at the very inception of the re-establishment of our statehood. Memory of these people has been perpetuated on the pages of our history and must never be obliterated from our minds and heart as the symbol of our eternal gratitude.

On my behalf and on behalf of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia I would like to thank everyone who fought and defended the independence of our countries.

Speech by Witness to Medininkai Massacre Tomas Šernas

Your Excellency President, esteemed defenders of freedom, honoured members of the Reconstituent Seimas, signatories, dear members of the Seimas, distinguished foreign and other guests,



Tomas Šernas

I have suffered physically not during the 13 January events. Then I suffered only psychologically. Not long ago I had a certificate of the disabled in which the following reason of injury was specified: *injury due to the aggression of the Soviet Union carried out on 13 January 1991 and the events that followed*”.

In Medininkai, at Lithuania's border and customs post, on 31 July 1991 a military crime was committed – officials of Soviet military structures aiming at the heads shot dead the Lithuanian officials who did not show any resistance. A bullet was put through my head too.

Both painful dates are related in their cruelty, symbolism and tendencies. The massacre of one date was carried out on the 13th day, that of the other – on the 31st day. The figures repeat – one and three. Fourteen people fell victim on 13 January, and seven people were killed in Medininkai massacre, exactly half the first number. If we can try to justify the 13th of January by lack of psychological preparation of the soldiers who faced the demonstration in darkness, on the 31st of July the soldiers demonstrated their professional readiness. They laid down the officials of Lithuania on the floor and shot them dead in cold blood.



The first two rows – members of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, in the third row – justices of the Constitutional Court

Both events are similar in one aspect, i.e. consistent lying. Following the military crime in Medininkai, which was committed by a special subversive unit from Riga, the very same day the political board of the Baltic military district issued a statement that the crime had been committed by those who wanted to “drive” a wedge between the Soviet people and the Soviet Army. This means, by the same Lithuanians who were striving for independence.

After the 13th of January I talked to a young Russian soldier who guarded the then military base in Šiaurės Town. It turned out that the authorities explained to the soldiers that the civilians who defended the Television tower were armed and drunk. Such were the statements issued by espionage and secret services about the situation. Therefore, as though it was necessary to put the place in order. Speaking in the current political language – it was necessary to carry out the mission. I explained to him that it was not true. Everybody knows that the defenders of the tower were merely a demonstration without any arms, but the young soldier was not concerned about what was true and what was not. Soldiers are apt to believing in the espionage and secret services. It is not surprising that these bloody crimes and a lie encouraged Lithuania to join the European Union and NATO structures as soon as possible. Today Lithuanian soldiers carry out missions in foreign countries and together with our most important strategic partners are looking for but cannot find banned weapons about which the espionage and secret services had informed them.

When assessing the events according to military logic, Lithuania lost both, on the 13th of January and the 31st of July. In fact, however, it was not only Lithuania that won politically. I am deeply convinced that Russia won too. I am greatly concerned that present-day ideologists of Russia evaluate the downfall of the Soviet Union as reduction of

Russia’s powers and the humiliation of the state. As it often happens, the aggressor itself feels to be a victim. Perhaps it is because of this political conscience, or rather, a psychological reason that thus far no trial has been held and the guilty of military crimes have not been punished yet. Grave crimes against humanity were committed in Lithuania but due to political reasons on the other side they are not even defined as crimes.

In any case this problem remains. I myself and the large majority of Lithuanian people want our country to maintain the best possible relations with Russia. However, the massacre, military crimes have been committed. The guilty ones have not been punished, the victims have not been apologised to, and they have not been compensated for in any way. Nothing has happened thus far in this direction, nobody considers painful problems of recent historical past. Though we really want good relations to be maintained between the two countries, we can form the opinion that in reality it is only we ourselves who want mutual respectful relations. Do we have to expect everything to go into oblivion in the long run?

I remember that the 13 January night was cold, a cold wind was blowing. The most terrible thing was to wait for the morning. We wanted to see the light. The sun rises in the morning and terrible shadows hide. Dirty business usually tries to avoid the light. It was really horrible. And even now I am somewhat afraid. Though it is day time, here and now there is a shadow of anxiety. And if I omitted poetical comparisons and spoke in the language of pragmatic realists, I would say that I am a citizen of a very small country in a very disturbing world, which is ever more often governed by all kinds of secret services and business interests of large companies rather than political parties only.

However, looking at 13 January I see a real hope rather than a painful symbol of freedom. This date in the history of a small nation reminds me that when a lie, open or concealed intimidation become too predominant in politics, somehow miraculously there always appear men and women who stop being afraid and start changing the situation. The fact that an honourable small country Iceland was the first to take up political responsibility in recognising the independence of Lithuania when larger and more powerful countries only cautiously watched the processes gives hope. Has the world become safer now, can Lithuania feel safe already? I doubt

whether there is a clear answer to this question. The best answer can be given in the words of Psalm 121 (1,2) of the Bible:

"1. I lift up my eyes to the hills – / where will my help come from? 2. My help comes from LORD, / the Maker of heaven and earth."

It is only when believing in the truth and freedom that people change not only the fate of their country but also provide hope to the whole world. Thank you for your attention."



In the evening of 12 January by the Seimas building a renovated memorial of barricades commemorating the 13 January events was solemnly opened. At the microphone – Speaker of the Seimas Viktoras Muntianas





In the evening of 12 January the fire of remembrance is set in the Independence Square. Open-door hours are held in the Seimas building. Visitors are observing a photography exhibition collected from the archive of the Seimas office and from the unpublished collection of documentary photography of 13 January taken by Rimantas Dichavičius



15 January

COMMEMORATION OF THE 85TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE KLAIPĖDA UPRISING AT THE SEIMAS

It was for the first time that the Seimas commemorated the Day of Klaipėda region and the 85th anniversary of its annexation to Lithuania. On that occasion Speaker of the Seimas **Viktoras Muntianas**, member of the Seimas **Vytautas Čepas** spoke about the historical importance of the uprising of January 1923.

“The Eternal Book on Rambynas Hill”, the heaviest and largest book in Lithuania, was brought to the Parliament on this occasion and presented at the Parliamentary Gallery. Members of the Seimas signed it personally. They were given this honour because it was them, members of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania of 2004-2008 term, who legalised the official commemoration of this date (see p. 63)

“The Eternal Book on Rambynas Hill” was presented to the Patriarch of Lithuania Minor Martynas Jankus in 1928 when commemorating the tenth anniversary of Lithuania’s independence and the 70th birth anniversary of Martynas Jankus. This was a present the Lithuanian society gave to Martynas Jankus for his contribution to annexing Klaipėda region to Lithuania. “The Eternal Book on Rambynas Hill” had become a guest book of Martynas Jankus and Lithuania Minor, it contained autographs of inter-war government officials and diplomats. Vilhelmas Storosta-Vydūnas was the first to be given the honour to make a memorable entry in that book.

Following the Klaipėda uprising that took place in January 1923, Klaipėda region was annexed to Lithuania. The memorable **day of 15 January – the day of Klaipėda region** – was legalised on 19 July 2006. Then member of the Commission on the Actualisation of Lithuanian Traditions

and Heritage Prof. Antanas Tyla, supporting the initiative of the Seimas members to supplement the list of memorable days with the **Day of Klaipėda region, wrote that** “15 January 1923 is a truly significant and memorable day to the Lithuanian State and the Lithuanians. Its contents consist of a long-lived aspiration of the Lithuanian nation to have the Baltic coast with Klaipėda in the territory of its state and the realisation of that aspiration through their own efforts. On the same day the rebels who were killed in the uprising in Klaipėda region are honoured.”

At the beginning of the 20th century, on 30 November 1918, seeking to unite Lithuanian lands occupied by the Teutonic Order in the re-establishing modern State of Lithuania, the **National Council of Prussian Lithuania** adopted the decision “that we, Lithuanians, residing here in Prussian Lithuania, constitute the majority of the population of this land, and demand, on the basis of Wilson’s right of self-determination of peoples, that Lithuania Minor should be annexed to Lithuania”.

According to Prof. Antanas Tyla, under different conditions this aspiration was partly implemented by the insurrection of 15 January 1923, which was supported by the Lithuanian State and a part of local population, and which resulted in Klaipėda and the region being annexed by Lithuania: “In this way Klaipėda region became part of the Republic of Lithuania. This was confirmed by Lithuania’s Treaty with Germany. And re-annexation of Klaipėda region by Hitlerite Germany in 1939 was an act of compulsion. The Treaty concluded between Lithuania and Germany in 1928 was in force in international practice. Klaipėda region was not included in Karaliaučius region created at Potsdam conference”.



Klaipėda seaport

Speech by Viktoras Muntianas, Speaker of the Seimas,

Fellow Members of the Seimas,

Today we celebrate the day of Klaipėda. Today we commemorate the 85th anniversary of the Klaipėda uprising. During those cold days in January 1923, Lithuania took the most significant and the boldest political and military step in its interwar history by satisfying the necessity of the state to have the access to the Baltic Sea and to use the vital Klaipėda seaport.

However, we should start the commemoration of the Klaipėda uprising by recalling the facts of distant past. The coast of the Curonian Lagoon, where the city of Klaipėda was founded, had been populated by the Baltic tribes up till the 13th century. When the Livonian Order conquered the precincts of Klaipėda in 1252 and built the castle of Magdeburg, it started an intensive colonisation and germanisation of the region. Even after the Battle of Grunwald when the Teutonic Order was destroyed, our seacoast remained in the hands of Germans, though the Lithuanian name of Klaipėda referred to in the letter of 1413 by Vytautas the Great clearly demonstrated the Lithuanian origin of the city.

Until the 20th century the Klaipėda region belonged to Germans. After the First World War with the transformation of the map of Europe and the restoration of the independence of the Lithuanian State, Lithuanians had stronger hopes to recover the Klaipėda region.

A favourable situation emerged after the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919, during which it was decided to separate the Klaipėda region from Germany and transfer it to the League of Nations.

In the beginning of 1920, Klaipėda fell under the three-year French rule; however, in general, German laws, administrative, judicial and education system remained effective in the region. Due to its clever manoeuvres, Lithuania enhanced its influence in the Klaipėda region. On 15 November 1921, the Constituent Seimas voted for the annexation of the Klaipėda region and for granting it autonomy. The time was ripe to take actions in the end of 1922.

Critical events started on the night of 10 January 1923. Alongside with 300 volunteers from Klaipėda, Lithuanian volunteer riflemen and soldiers played a major role in the revolt. The night of 15 January saw fatal events and in the early morning the French Commissar surrendered. On 19 January Šilutė Declaration on the annexation of the Klaipėda region by Lithuania was issued. The army of the Republic of Lithuania marched into Klaipėda later the same day. The Klaipėda region, a part of Lithuania Minor, was finally united with Lithuania.



Viktoras Muntianas

All this is an 85 year-old history. Nevertheless, resolute and bold steps that were taken by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of the time represent a clear example of political thinking, and modern day politicians should understand, realise and remember its meaning. We can summarise the implications of the Klaipėda uprising in the following way: **if it had not been for the uprising of the Klaipėda region, it could have possibly been annexed to the Kaliningrad region after 1945. We have been saved from the grim possibility by the farsighted step of the Lithuanian Government.**

What does Klaipėda mean today? First of all, it is a port, which is used for transportation of 50 per cent of all Lithuania's cargo and for marine fishing. It also offers crude oil resources in the Shelf of the Baltic Sea and wind energy. It attracts abundant investment – LTL 621 million has already been invested in the free economic zone of Klaipėda alone and LTL 110 million into construction underway; in addition, projects have been prepared for LTL 341 million. Thus, the investment portfolio will amount to more than a billion litas. The economic potential of the Klaipėda region also includes the Būtingė terminal, which is the major and so far the only economic link with the world. By the way, Lithuania recovered

Būtingė not during the Klaipėda revolt but after prior negotiations with Latvia. We can firmly state that Klaipėda is one of the strongest economic regions in Lithuania.

Klaipėda University has become the most well known educational hub in Western Lithuania with nearly 10 000 students and 600 professors, associate professors and teachers. In addition to scientific research, the University addresses the needs of Lithuania as a coastal state. It has been rapidly developing as a modern and important centre of science, studies and artistic work not only in the Western region but also in the entire Lithuania.

There have been many changes in the development of ethnic culture in the Klaipėda region over the course of time. For a number of centuries Lithuania Minor was the seedbed of Lithuanian culture: it was the place where the first Lithuanian book, the first grammar, and the first collection of folk songs were published. The writer Kristijonas Donelaitis lived in this region. It saw the birth of Lithuanian press at the end of the 19th century and the establishment of Lithuanian associations. This national revival movement was mostly active in Tilžė on the left bank of the river Nemunas. After the annexation of the Klaipėda region by Lithuania in 1923, the seeds of Lithuanian culture sprang in this part of Lithuania Minor as well. When Germany occupied Klaipėda, Lithuanian culture was suppressed again. However, since the 1960s thanks to Alfonsas Žalys, head of Klaipėda and later signatory to the Act of the Independent State of Lithuania, the development of national culture in Klaipėda accelerated significantly.

Naturally, it was only after the restoration of the independence that the Klaipėda region could reveal the beauty of its national culture. Sea festivals, Jazz festivals, song festivals, two professional theatres, the best concert hall in Lithuania, more than ten exhibition halls and museums, including the famous dolphinarium, active heritage conservation, ethnic traditions – all these cultural objects and activities are a vast national treasure of Lithuania.

Coastal aspirations of the Lithuanian state were weakened or even suppressed for many centuries due to objective and sometimes biased reasons. In the 21st century we finally have a unique chance to develop a modern Lithuanian marine metropolis. Certainly, this is a task for years and probably even decades. Nevertheless, the participants of the Klaipėda uprising had a similar task. They deserve to see the vision of Lithuania as an important coastal state today becomes reality.

Speech by Seimas member Vytautas Čepas

Dear pupils, esteemed fellow members of the Seimas, honoured journalists. I am not a historian, I am a psychologist, therefore, I shall try not to burden your memory with different dates, figures or abundant names during these minutes of commemoration given to me.



Vytautas Čepas

What are we commemorating today? It is a paradox that historians have not come to an agreement thus far how the events of 10-15 January 1923 in the Klaipėda region should be valued: an uprising, liberation or, as it used to be called then, annexation, or perhaps a seizure or even occupation. This confusion of conceptions arose because of the exclusively unique situation, when the Lithuanian State, which had not been recognised *de jure* yet, had to conceal most of its actions with respect to the Klaipėda region under the veil of well-turned diplomatic phrases, pretend to know nothing, and often simply tell the untruth.

At that time the situation was such that, vividly speaking, the card dealt to Lithuania in a poker game over the Klaipėda region was not a winning one, however, even with weak trump cards an excellent political game was played. The weakest trump card in the hands of then Prime Minister of Lithuania Ernestas Galvanauskas was the very residents of Lithuania Minor. Even radical Lithuanians (*inhabitants of Lithuania Minor or Prussia*) who lived there and spoke Lithuanian, were quite reserved about the idea of annexation. Let's not forget the "memelanders", that is, the Germans who constituted the majority of the inhabitants in Klaipėda, Šilutė, Pagėgiai and accounted for 68 thousand as compared to 54 thousand Lithuanians.

One of the most famous “liberators” of the land and activist of the Council of Prussian Lithuanians Erdmonas Simonaitis later stated the following: “Rebels could be recruited in Lithuania only”. Indifference of the Lithuanians was not a secret to Chairman of the National Guard Vincas Krėvė who sent his scouts to Klaipėda, and who later wrote the following: “On the whole, the majority of the inhabitants of the Klaipėda region, even those who spoke Lithuanian, regarded the possibility to join Lithuania with indifference and showed no happiness altogether.” When the operation was over, Ernestas Galvanauskas summed it up, I am quoting: “Neither the Lithuanians were looking forward to live in Lithuania, nor the Germans, to live in Germany. Both sides were merely concerned about their own benefits.”

Though it is not pleasant to admit, this situation was determined not only by a different level of economic development of Lithuania and Lithuania Minor, which

was considerably higher in Lithuania Minor, but also by differences in the mentality of the Lithuanians residing on both sides of the Nemunas River. There was a mentality of German pragmatism that the Lithuanians developed within 500 years following the Treaty of Lake Melno of 1422, and emotionality, which was more characteristic of the inhabitants of Lithuania, and which was most often expressed through various manifestations of patriotism, especially during different movements. However, it should be recognised that the Ernestas Galvanauskas’ Government was acting especially pragmatically and rationally at the time. Patriotism of volunteers and activists of Lithuania Minor put into the clothes of pragmatism and rationality soon gave birth to the force, which permitted Lithuania to enjoy the fruits of political diplomacy and military victory. None the stronger was Lithuania’s political card, however, a well planned and financially provided propagandistic activity soon paved the way for the future of the Klaipėda region.



Opposition

Looking through the documents of those times one cannot help wondering at the tremendous work and persistence, which the then Lithuanian authorities, the National Guard, various patriotic organisations, the American Lithuanians demonstrated in preparing for the annexation of the Klaipėda region to Lithuania.

Activist of American Lithuanians Jonas Žilius, having become a representative of Lithuania in the Klaipėda region, did not only campaign for the annexation but also financially supported the local inhabitants by generously giving them money. For that purpose, that is, the campaign and propaganda, he transferred 850 thousand ducats through secret channels of Kaunas. He provided ample funds. In 1920 the Military representation of Lithuania was supported with 100 thousand ducats. The newspaper *Memelgau Zeitung* was bought in the name of Martynas Jankus for 3 million 300 thousand ducats. Money was also donated to politicians and hiring of historians. As many as ten most famous speakers of the region were bribed. At the same time immovable property was bought, companies were established, and economic blockade was organised in the region: it was prohibited to raft in the Nemunas River, corn and food products were not supplied. The aim of the campaign was to show that in the economic sense Lithuania Minor depended more on Lithuania.

A grand political gesture was made at the end of 1919 when the State Council adopted the Law on Elections to the Constituent Seimas, which permitted the inhabitants of the Klaipėda region to take part in the elections, and co-opt delegates of the region to the State Council.

Diplomatic trump cards of Lithuania were even weaker not because Lithuanian delegations were not admitted to the Conference of Ambassadors that was convened in Paris on a regular basis and to the Union of Nations but also because it was necessary to manoeuvre between the Entente States, Poland, Soviet Russia which had won the war and Germany who had lost the war and firmly held onto the Klaipėda region.

The duet of France and Poland was especially dangerous to Lithuania. The French Government that was extremely anti-German and headed by George Clémenceau, was interested in restoring as large and powerful Poland as possible, which was Germany's eternal enemy, as they put it. It is understandable that the Poles did not oppose to that. All the more so, by sheltering Lithuania Minor they laid claims to entire Lithuania. In 1919 their representative Roman Dmowski handed a letter to the Commission that was determining the borders of Germany and Poland, which read as follows: "The lower reaches of the Nemunas River, the north-eastern part

of Eastern Prussia in which the Lithuanians lived, must be joined with Lithuania, and later, together with that region, annexed to the State of Poland."

Later, after the idea of a free state occurred, which, by the way, was greatly supported by the French and the Poles, who were hoping to assume considerable power, the Germans became greatly worried because they soon understood that later, after favourable conditions had formed, it would be more difficult to exert influence on the territory administered by several powerful states than if it belonged to Lithuania only. In this way they unexpectedly became ardent supporters of the annexation of the Klaipėda region to Lithuania and urged Lithuania not to be afraid and use force against the French. Furthermore, the German Government started to support the Lithuanians financially, and to threaten the "memelanders" and the Germans who were set against the annexation to be punished by force. Soviet Russia also laid claims to "historically Slavic lands". However, having important problems of its own and few chances to Lithuania Minor, it did not demonstrate its traditional aggressiveness with respect to foreign territories.

The then politicians of Lithuania did not doubt and did not avoid contacts with Russia, which had always imperialistic schemes in mind. Strangely enough, unlike now, those politicians were not in for anything for such contacts. Thus, in 1922 at Kaunas Railway station Ernestas Galvanauskas organised a secret meeting with Foreign Minister of Russia Georgi Chicherin who was on his way to Lausanne. Following a four-hour intensive conversation, he received the promise that in case Poland resorted to force against Lithuania, Soviet Russia would not stay aside. It should be admitted that the Soviets kept their promise and after the events in the Klaipėda region had started, it concentrated its armed forces on the Polish border.

Military cards of the Lithuanian Army were somewhat better. After positions of the French and the Poles had weakened, having assured Germany's support and approval of Soviet Russia, Lithuania precisely accurately, as secretly as possible, prepared and on 10-15 January 1923, that is, exactly 85 years ago, carried out the so-called plan of the uprising of the Klaipėda region. 1079 men participated in the campaign: 40 officials, 584 soldiers and 455 riflemen. In the French garrison there were 250 Alps riflemen, that is, the French, and 350 "policants", that is, the police workers and policemen who disobeyed the German authorities, joined them, and 300 mobilised "memelanders". Their resistance was met only on the outskirts of Klaipėda. Twelve people were killed on Lithuania's side, the French lost two lives. Two residents of Klaipėda were killed accidentally.

Lithuania's side was prepared for the annexation of the region better in both a military and psychological sense. All participants in the operation were ordered to wear civil clothes, to leave in Lithuania not only their documents but also newspapers, cigarettes, matches, that is, everything that could testify to the fact that they were not residents of the Klaipėda region. All higher officers had to change their names into more Klaipėda-like ones. In this way Commander of the military operation Jonas Polovinkas became Budrys, Chief of the Staff Tomkus – Oksas, his Deputy Juozas Šarauskas – Juozapaitis. Ernestas Galvanauskas himself instructed Jonas Polovinkas-Budrys how to behave after crossing the border of the region: "Avoid using guns against the French, treat the local population as politely as possible, do not plunder, do not drink hard." Moreover, it was categorically ordered not to engage in any political discussions with the local population. One cannot help admiring patriotism of the participants in the campaign, because a common patriotism nowadays is demonstrative and loudly expressed, whereas real patriotism is silent. Heads of the National Guard were warned by the authorities of Lithuania – in case political events had acquired an insufficient, unfavourable direction in place, the initiators

and executors of the ostensible uprising could be brought to a court's responsibility. This was not concealed from ordinary participants in the march, however, this did not stop them.

On 16 February 1923 the Conference of Ambassadors decided to recognise the Klaipėda region as belonging to Lithuania. However, it also set many conditions, including the requirement for the autonomy of the region. Lithuania's side, considering joining of both Lithuanias to be the most important goal, accepted these conditions. On 19 February, i.e. three days later, the French and the British vessels left Klaipėda Port, and one day later the Government of Lithuania appointed Antanas Smetona as its commissioner in the Klaipėda region who, by the way, was a member of the National Guard. The annexation of the Klaipėda region showed that the Lithuanian State, which had just returned from oblivion, was able not only to perceive its interests but also to defend them. Most European politicians and historians regarded the annexation operation of the Klaipėda region, and still regard it now, as one of the most resolute steps of the State of Lithuania in fighting for its historical lands and integrity of its territory. Thank you for your attention.

29 January

NEW UNION (SOCIAL LIBERALS) POLITICAL GROUP WITHDREW FROM OPPOSITION

Chairman of the sitting of the Seimas **Česlovas Juršėnas** announced that **the New Union (Social Liberals) Political Group had signed a joint activity declaration with regards to the coalition Government and commenced work within the majority of the Seimas**. The cooperation agreement sets forth as follows: "Pursuant to Clause 8 of the cooperation agreement of Lithuanian Social Democratic Party Political Group and Peasants and People's Political Group of the Seimas of 1 June 2006, the New Union (Social Liberals) Political Group joined the cooperation agreement of Lithuanian Social Democratic Party Political Group and Peasants and People's Political Group of the Seimas of 1 June 2006 on the basis of equality and **becomes a fully-fledged partner to the agreement of the ruling coalition – Lithuanian Social Democrats Party, Peasants and People's Union, Liberal and Centre Union, Civil Democracy Party**. With the view of efficient performance of the Seimas and the Government, this agreement **on formation of the steady majority and common work in the Seimas for the period until the ordinary election of the Seimas** is signed for the good of democracy of the Lithuanian people and future stability of the state. Formation of the majority of the Seimas will enable the Government to continue successful implementation of the action programme, maintain growth



Members of the New Union (Social Liberals) Political Group
Artūras Paulauskas and Antanas Valionis



Members of the ruling Social Democratic Party Political Group: Juozas Palionis (First Deputy Elder of the Political Group), Bronius Bradauskas, Irena Šiaulienė (Elder of the Political Group), Zigmantas Balčytis, Vytautas Saulis, Algis Rimas

of the economy of Lithuania and seek approximation of the level of economic development of the country to the average of the EU countries as set forth in the National Sustainable Development Strategy. It will also reduce marginalisation,

increase social stability and improve welfare of the citizens, pursue the fiscal policy, create a knowledge society and knowledge-based economy, and deal with relevant education and public security problems”.

29 January

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE HANDED IN HIS RESIGNATION

Member of the Seimas **Algimantas Matulevičius** made a statement as to resignation of the position of the Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Defence (CNSD). The statement sets forth as follows: “Due to recent employment of pressure and defamation methods unacceptable for a democratic state, I am compelled to resign from office of the Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Defence. Since October 2006 I have been presiding over the Committee, observing the provisions of the Statute of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the collegial opinion of the Committee members and strictly adhering to the procedures of democratic governance. Each important issue with regard to the national security was discussed and considered by the Committee.

Public accusations of Prime Minister Gediminas Kirkilas as to inappropriate style of my parliamentary work, some of my speeches and expressly conveyed civil position with respect to maladies existent in the state and encouragement to eliminate them are simply restriction of the right to a free mandate entitled to me by the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. I assume that I have fallen into disfavour with the political opponents after parliamentary investigation of operation of the State Security Department collectively carried out with the members of the Committee on National Security and Defence, the conclusions of which, by the way, approved by the Seimas, reveal scandalous facts of faulty mechanisms of the state governance.

I do not understand why the Prime Minister, by criticising work of the Chairman of the Committee and ignoring the conclusions of the parliamentary investigation approved by the Seimas, tolerates his present adviser Albinas Januška, who was referred to in the investigation as the person involved in questionable contacts and dubious relations. I also do not understand why the issue of discharge of compromised heads of the SSD has not been dealt with until now.

Regrettably, my efforts and those of the members of CNSD to follow the basic democratic procedure in the sphere of the state governance smashed against an enormous opposition wall. I have constantly been and I still am subjected to attacks and slander. As a result, my colleagues from our political group also encounter problems. I have never hung on any positions, and I agreed to take office with the hope of fair work for the good of our state and its citizens. Nevertheless, being in office of the Chairman of the Committee, I cannot accept misconduct and conceal it. I cannot quietly watch the system of national security being destroyed in pursuance of narrow private interest alone.

Being unable to keep silent and accept the fact that the activity of the Committee on National Security and Defence is degraded due to attacks targeted at me and in protest to various political insinuations in my regard, I declare that I resign from office of the Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Defence. I ask the honourable Seimas



Algimantas Matulevičius

to arrange an open discussion on my decision in the plenary sitting of the Seimas wherein I would be granted the right to take the floor”.

30 January

ALGIMANTAS MATULEVIČIUS WILL CONTINUE TO PRESIDE OVER THE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE

In view of the resignation of Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Defence of the Seimas Algimantas Matulevičius, the Board of the Seimas held an unplanned sitting on 30 January.

Having heard the statement of Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Defence Algimantas Matulevičius, the Seimas, under the special urgency procedure, commenced the procedure of adoption of the draft decision of the Seimas as to the Decision **Regarding Recognition of Article 21 of Approval of Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen of Committees of the Seimas**” invalid No. XP-2828 of the Seimas. It is suggested in the draft decision to **discharge** Algimantas Matulevičius from office of the Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Defence.

48 members of the Seimas voted for adoption of draft decision No. XP-2828, 37 voted against it, and 9 abstained (101 members of the Seimas signed in). **The decision was not adopted.**

The members of the Lithuanian Social Democrats Party Political Group, Peasants and People’s, New Union (Social Liberals), Liberal and Centre Union Political Group voted for discharge of Mr. Matulevičius from the position of the Chairman. Votes against discharge of Mr. Matulevičius were given by the members of Homeland Union and Liberals Movement Political Group. The “Labourers” did not vote.

Upon voting down (rejection of draft decision No. XP-2828) by the Seimas, **Algimantas Matulevičius** continues as the Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Defence.

1 February

MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT ARTŪRAS PAULAUSKAS AND OMBUDSMAN OF THE SEIMAS ROMAS VALENTUKEVIČIUS TOOK AN OATH IN THE SEIMAS



Viktoras Muntianas and Artūras Paulauskas



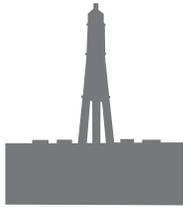
Viktoras Muntianas and Romas Valentukevičius

New Minister of Environment **Artūras Paulauskas** took an oath in the Seimas. The oath was received by Speaker of the Seimas **Viktoras Muntianas**.

As set forth in Article 93 of the Constitution, by taking office the Prime Minister and Ministers take an oath to be loyal to the Republic of Lithuania, observe the Constitution and the laws. The text of the oath is defined by the Law on the Government.

Seimas Ombudsman **Romas Valentukevičius** also took an oath in the Seimas. The oath was received by Speaker of the Seimas Viktoras Muntianas.

On 12 December 2007 the Seimas, following Article 7 of the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen and taking into account the proposal of the Speaker of the Seimas, decided to appoint Romas Valentukevičius Seimas Ombudsman for another term to carry out investigation of performance of the state institutions and officials. The decision takes effect on 13 February 2008 (Decision of the Seimas "Regarding Appointment of Romas Valentukevičius Seimas Ombudsman" (draft decision No. XP-2775)).



seimas returned to the problem of ignalina nuclear power plant

11 January

Minister of Economy **Vytas Navickas** submitted Bill of the Law Amending Articles 10 and 11 of the **Law on the Nuclear Power Plant** No.XP-2799 by which **it is proposed to create a national investor by establishing of a new company, national electricity company**, which would control the key part of the power energy system of the Republic of Lithuania, electricity transmission and distribution networks, through its subsidiaries. **The national investor on the basis of private initiatives would be engaged in implementation of strategic electricity projects, such as construction of a new nuclear power plant in Lithuania and construction of connections of the power energy system of the Republic of Lithuania with the power energy systems of the Republic of Poland and the Kingdom of Sweden.** The Law on the Nuclear Power Plant that is in force lays down that the national investor is the public company "Lietuvos energija" which has presented its private initiative to invest in the project of a new nuclear power plant.



Vytas Navickas



Members of the Labour Party Political Group: Etela Karpickienė (First Deputy Elder of the Political Group), Rimantas Bašys and Vydas Gedvilas (Seimas Deputy Speaker)

It has been decided to take recess in submission of Draft Law Amending Articles 10 and 11 of the **Law on the Nuclear Power Plant** until the next sitting (15 January). Recess was proposed by Deputy Speaker of the Seimas **Andrius Kubilius** on behalf of four opposition Political Groups (on behalf of the Homeland Union, Order and Justice (Liberal Democrats), Labour Party and Liberals Movement Political Groups),

at the same time submitting for approval of the protocol decision of the Seimas thereby suggesting adopting the final decision in an extraordinary session on 11 to 23 February. It has been decided to form an editorial commission for the improvement of the draft protocol decision of the Seimas.



MPs: Jonas Čekuolis (the Liberal and Central Union Political Group), Vladimir Orechov, Petras Baguška, Juozas Jaruševičius (the Civil Democracy Political Group)

15 January

DRAFT LAW AMENDING THE LAW ON THE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT SUBMITTED BY THE GOVERNMENT APPROVED AFTER SUBMISSION

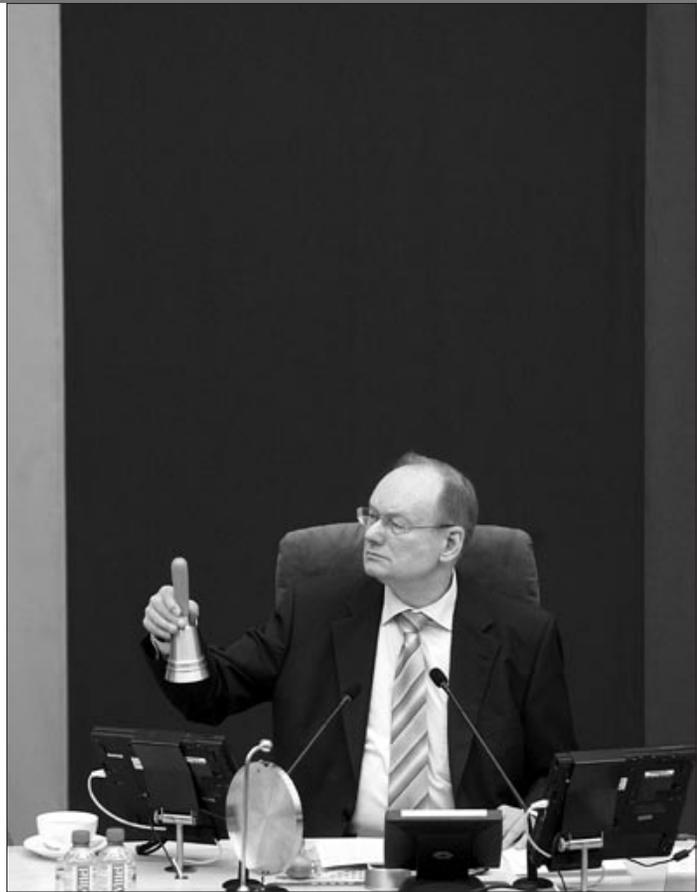
Draft Law Amending Articles 10 and 11 of the Law on the Nuclear Power Plant No. XP-2799 **was approved after submission**. Votes: for – 68, against – 15, abstained – 28.

It was decided to commence the procedure of consideration of the Draft Law. The Committee on Economics was appointed as the principal committee for consideration of

the Draft Law, with the Committee on Audit, the Committee on National Security and Defence and the Committee on Legal Affairs performing as ancillary committees.

The protocol decision of the Seimas by which the working group formed at the plenary sitting of the Seimas of 11 January 2008 was delegated to formulate harmonised amendments and proposals as to the Draft Law Amending Articles 10 and 11 of the Law on the Nuclear Power Plant No. XP-2799 was adopted. Votes: for – 73, against – 3, abstained – 22.

Seimas First Deputy Speaker Česlovas Juršėnas is presiding over the sitting of the Seimas



Members of the Homeland Union Political Group Vida Marija Čigriejienė and Antanas Matulas

31 January

SEIMAS PROCEEDS WITH CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT LAW AMENDING ARTICLES 8, 10, 11 AND 20 OF THE LAW ON THE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

Having voted for Draft **Law Amending Articles 8, 10, 11 and 20 of the Law on the Nuclear Power Plant No. XP-2799(3)** (for - 64, against - 47, abstained – 6) approved by the principal Committee on Economics, the Seimas **started considering the amendments submitted by the members of the Seimas as to Draft Law**. Draft Law stipulates formation of the national investor Leo LT on the basis of a new patronising enterprise instead of “Lietuvos energija”, as previously planned.

The conclusion of the principal Committee on Economics was delivered by Chairwoman of the Committee **Birutė Vėsaitė**. Conclusions of ancillary committees were presented by the following persons: **Vytautas Saulis** (on behalf of the Committee on Audit), **Skirmantas Pabedinskas** (on behalf of the Committee on National Security and Defence), **Julius Sabatauskas** (on behalf of the Committee on Legal Affairs).

According to Chairman of the Committee on Legal Affairs **Julius Sabatauskas**, “provisions of the Draft Law determining engagement of the national investor in construction of power energy system connections are possibly inconsistent with the principles of rule of law and legal clarity fixed in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. The provisions of Clause 1 of Article 1 of the Draft Law likewise possibly contravene Clause 3 of Article 46 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania which sets forth that the state regulates its economic activity so that it serves for the common good of the nation, Clause 4 which lays down that the law prohibits monopolisation of production and the market, protects the freedom of fair competition, and Clause 5 which defines that the state shall protect consumers’ interests”.

The Committee on National Security and Defence suggested that the principal Committee on Economics should **lay down** in the Draft Law **that “the block of shares comprising at**



MPs: Nijolė Steiblienė, Algirdas Monkevičius (the New Union (Social Liberals) Political Group), Saulius Lapėnas (the Liberal and Centre Union Political Group)

least 67% of the shares of the national investor and of the votes in the general shareholders meeting of the national investor shall belong to the Republic of Lithuania by the property right”.

Elder of the Order and Justice Political Group **Valentinas Mazuronis** stated that the members of the Political Group would not approve the proposed Draft Law unless their proposals were taken in consideration, which were the inclusion of “three protectors” which would prevent from profitable sale or exchange of the available shares by the private investor until the power plant and electricity connections with Poland and Sweden are constructed.

According to Elder of the Homeland Union Political Group **Andrius Kubilius**, an immense damage to implementation of the whole strategically important project was caused by careless and distrusted activities of the Government: “In fact, in the entire process of negotiations we saw that the Government was absolutely unprepared for the negotiations, failed to do basic homework, and acted more like a small subsidiary of “NDX Energija”, domiciled at Gediminas Ave. 11 than the discretionary Government of Lithuania. Regrettably, we must say that during the whole process of negotiations we had to observe and try to prevent from the evaluation of property of companies favourable to the private entity, the absence of the governmental position in the negotiations that would serve the state interests and even negotiations infringing the law in force. This did not add confidence to the negotiation results. The way the project was presented to the public undermined confidence even to a greater extent. Instead of rational argumentation and presentation of figures on the Government’s side and making efforts to have all matters discussed and considered in public, we saw and heard only propaganda reminding of the Soviet construction of “BAM”, wherein any doubt was instantly renounced as an imperialistic scheme, recalling the same Soviet rhetoric. Today, when dependence of the Government on the questionable groups of influence becomes increasingly conspicuous, there arise even more doubts that the draft laws submitted to the Seimas reflect something more than merely publicly declared objectives”, leader of the Conservative Party Mr. Kubilius reproached the Government.



Chairwoman of the Committee on Economics Birutė Vėsaitė



Seimas Deputy Speaker Andrius Kubilius and MP Vincė Vaidevutė Margevičienė (the Homeland Union Political Group)

The Liberal and Centre Union Political Group claimed that the draft law “does not ensure adequate representation of public interest as well as transparent formation of the national investor and its effective and legal activities in the future”.

Urging to approve the submitted draft law, Elder of the Civil Democracy Political Group **Algirdas Ivanauskas** said that “on the initiative of the honourable Minister of Economy a truly adequate number of protectors have been included in order to secure construction of the power plant, to establish connections with Sweden and Poland, and to be able to ensure our national power security in a concrete way”.

Expressing discontent with work of the Government, representative of the Liberals Movement Political Group **Petras Auštrevičius** regretted that “only one of the partners danced the nuclear tango, while negotiators of the Government were stamping on one spot”.

Elder of the Labour Party Political Group **Virginija Baltraitienė** also expressed her regret that the Government headed by Gediminas Kirkilas once again demonstrated that it disregarded the Seimas and legal acts adopted by it, thus, the negotiations were conducted not pursuant to the Law already in effect but in the interests of “Vilniaus prekyba”: “Unfortunately, the Government gave in to the pressure exerted by “Vilniaus prekyba” and placed the Seimas in a tight spot with respect to the time. Today, upon failure to adopt the amendments to the Law, we would have to go back to the starting point and start it all over again. This would mean to suspend the construction of the power plant for at least two years, if not to fail it altogether”, said **Ms. Baltraitienė**.

According to the estimation of Chairwoman of the Committee on Economics of the Seimas, Social Democrat **Birutė Vėsaitė**, the Law to be adopted will constitute the most important decision made by the Seimas in recent years for the residents of Lithuania and the competitiveness of the country,



At the microphone – MP Saulius Pečeliūnas, in the row – MP Petras Auštrevičius (Elder of the Liberals Movement Political Group). MPs in the second plan (from the left): Julius Veselka, Petras Gražulis, Gintaras Steponavičius (Deputy Speaker of the Seimas)

DRAFT LAW AMENDING ARTICLES 8, 10, 11 AND 20 OF THE LAW ON THE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT WAS VOTED THROUGH AFTER CONSIDERATION

The Seimas approved the Draft **Law Amending Articles 8, 10, 11 and 20 of the Law on the Nuclear Power Plant** No. XP-2799(3) after consideration. Votes: for – 67, against – 49,

abstained – 3. Adoption of the draft law is scheduled on 1 February.

1 February

The Seimas sustained the proposal of the Government to adopt the Draft Law Amending Articles 8, 10, 11, 20 of the **Law on the Nuclear Power Plant** No. XP-2799(4) in

accordance with the special urgency procedure. Votes: for – 62, against – 42, abstained – 5.

National investor Leo LT which will start constructions of the new power plant and electricity bridge with Poland and Sweden is suggested to be formed not on the basis of "Lietuvos energija", as it was previously planned but of a new patronising company. Shares controlled by "Lietuvos energija" as well as the shares of "Rytų skirstomieji tinklai" and VST shares owned by private company "NDX energija" would be consolidated into such company.

Representatives of the Conservatives and Liberals Movement Political Group urged not to speed up adoption of the amendments to the Law on the Nuclear Power Plant. According to representative of the Liberals Movement Political Group **Petras Auštrevičius**, during the meeting with the member of the Political Group, Head of the State

Security Department **Povilas Malakauskas** did not disperse the doubts "that the risks pertaining to the Law still persist": "no one has amended the Law in the way that the doubts also raised by the representatives involved in the discussions regarding these amendments would be resolved", said Mr. Auštrevičius.

The consideration of the issue of Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant has generated many emotions and heated discussions in the Seimas Sitting Hall



AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW ON THE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT WERE ADOPTED

Law Amending Articles 8, 10, 11, 20 of the **Law on the Nuclear Power Plant was adopted** (bill No. XP-2799(4)). Votes: for – 63, against – 11, 3 abstained.

The opposition Political Groups of the Seimas – the members of the Order and Justice (Liberal Democrats) Political Group, the Liberals Movement Political Group (except for Audrius Endzinas) and the Homeland Union Political Group - did not vote. The members of the Liberal and Centre Union voted against. The Social Democrats, the “Peasants”, the Social Liberals, except for Nijolė Steiblienė, the Civil Democrats and the “Labourers” (except for Loreta Graužinienė) voted for the amendments.

The following members of the Seimas “**abstained**” in the voting: Rima Baškienė, Saulius Bucevičius, Henrikas Žukauskas. Votes **against** were casted by: Loreta Graužinienė, Vytautas Bogušis, Algis Čaplikas, Saulius Lapėnas, Rimantas Remeika, Vladimiras Volčio, Raimondas Šukys, Algimantas Matulevičius, Algirdas Monkevičius, Nijolė Steiblienė, Artūras Skardžius.

The national investor is the national electric company controlling the main part of the power energy system of the Republic of Lithuania – electricity transmission and distribution networks – through its subsidiaries. In

pursuance of its activity objective, the national investor shall be engaged in implementation of the strategic electricity projects - **construction of a new nuclear power plant in Lithuania and construction of connections of the power energy system of the Republic of Lithuania with the power energy systems of the Republic of Poland and the Kingdom of Sweden** – on the basis of a private initiative and in accordance with the procedure established by the Law on Electricity and other legal acts.

The Law will not grant the national investor company exclusive rights in respect of other persons in the process of implementation of the strategic electricity projects – the projects of electricity bridge with Poland and Sweden. The Government and “NDX energija” shall respectively control 61.7 and 38.3 per cent of the shares of national investor “Leo LT”.

The Seimas rejected proposals of a few members of the Parliament and the Committee on National Security and Defence to set the state share at 2/3, or 67 per cent of the shares of the national investor instead of 1/2, as provided by the adopted Law. The Seimas sustained only the amendment proposed by Social Liberal **Vaclovas Karbauskis** which stipulates that the Law on the Nuclear Power Plant shall not grant the national investor company exclusive



Members of the opposition, Order and Justice (Liberal Democrats) Political Group, Alfonsas Dailis Barakauskas and Remigijus Ačas demonstrate a poster opposing the selection procedure for the national investor

rights in respect of other enterprises in the process of implementation of the planned strategic electricity projects – construction of the power plant and electricity connections and engagement in other power projects.

Furthermore, the Law Amending Article 3 of the Law on **Enterprises and Facilities Strategically Important for National Security** and other Enterprises Important for National Security and Supplementing the Law With Article 4 (1) (bill No. XP-2807(2)) was adopted. Votes: for – 64, against – 1, abstained – 8.

The list of the enterprises strategically important for national security includes the national investor, **Kruonis Pumped Storage Plant (PSP) and Kaunas HPP**.

Power energy system connections of the Republic of Lithuania with the systems of the Republic of Poland and the Kingdom of Sweden, project implementing company and the new nuclear power plant defined in the Law on the Nuclear Power Plant of the Republic of Lithuania have particular strategic importance for national security.



From the right: Prime Minister Gediminas Kirkilas, Speaker of the Seimas Viktoras Muntianas, Chairman of the Committee on National Security and Defence Algimantas Matulevičius



Members of the Liberals Movement Political Group Gintaras Šileikis (Deputy Elder of the Political Group) and Algis Kašėta



adopted laws & decrees

In January, the Seimas passed 30 laws, resolutions and other legal acts.

11 January

ROMAS VALENTUKEVIČIUS WILL REMAIN IN CHARGE OF THE SEIMAS OMBUDSMEN'S OFFICE

The Seimas passed the Resolution **on Appointment of the Head of the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office**. Voting results: for – 71.

In compliance with Article 28 of the Law on the Seimas Ombudsmen and taking account of the recommendation

of the Speaker of the Seimas, the Seimas appointed **Romas Valentukevičius** for the second term of office as the head of the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office (see p. 22). The resolution will enter into force on 13 February 2008. **Mr. Valentukevičius** has been in charge of the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office since 12 February 2003.

COMPOSITION OF THE SEIMAS DELEGATION AT THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE IN 2008 APPROVED

The Seimas passed the Resolution **on the Seimas Delegation at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 2008**. Voting results: for – 54.

The Seimas appointed the following MPs as members of the Seimas delegation at the Parliamentary Assembly of

the Council of Europe in 2008: Zigmantas Balčytis; Egidijus Klumbis; Dangutė Mikutienė; Aldona Staponkienė; deputy members of the Seimas delegation at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 2008 – Remigijus Ačas; Gediminas Jakavonis; Egidijus Vareikis; Birutė Vėsaitė.

ADOPTED AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW ON ADVERTISING

Law Amending and Supplementing Articles 1, 2, 5, 6, 12, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25 and the Annex of **the Law on Advertising**. Voting results: for – 66, abstained – 2.

Amendments of and supplements to the Law on Advertising have the aim of harmonising provisions of the law with the provisions of directives of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market relating to misleading and comparative advertising.

Information will be considered as non-exhaustive if it fails to disclose material information: **“the information contained in an advertisement shall also be deemed non-exhaustive**

where the material information is not disclosed, is hidden or is provided in an unclear, unintelligible, ambiguous or untimely manner and is required by the average consumer for him to be able to take an informed transactional decision, where this causes or is likely to cause the average consumer to take such a transactional decision that he would not have taken otherwise.” These amendments aim at protecting a consumer, namely, a natural person who takes a decision to purchase, purchases and uses a product or service to satisfy the personal, family, household needs not related to business or profession against unfair commercial practices, including misleading and non-permissible comparative advertising.

The Seimas prohibited the use of the advertising imitating road signs or using road sign symbols, **limited advertising on roads, above the roads, in traffic lanes and safety zones, with the exception of the stands informing road users about the road condition**; also in **streets and alongside the streets if it may obscure the technical means of traffic routing, impair visibility, blind the road users, also pose a threat to the road users. An advertisement installed in violation of these requirements must be removed, pulled down or dismantled without compensating its owner for losses or at the expense of the persons who have installed it.**

Displaying of external visual advertising without a municipality's authorisation will be prohibited.

Law Amending Articles 189¹⁴, 244 and 259¹ of the **Code of Administrative Offences**. Voting results: for – 67. This law lays down a procedure for imposing penalties and their amount. In the event of establishment of aggravating circumstances, the largest amount of a penalty for the use of misleading or non-permissible comparative advertising could reach LTL 120 thousand.

15 January

REDUCED RATE OF THE VALUE ADDED TAX WILL BE CHARGED ON FRUIT AND VEGETABLES FROM 2009

Law Supplementing Article 19 of the **Law on Value Added Tax**. Voting results: for – 56, against – 10, abstained – 35.

The Seimas resolved to levy, from **1 January 2009**, a reduced rate of the value added tax (VAT) of 5 per cent not only on imported or exported vegetables and fruit, but also on the produce grown in our country provided it meets the requirements of the legal acts valid in the Republic of Lithuania and Lithuanian standards.

In passing the law, the Seimas supported a proposal of the Committee on Rural Affairs to alter the date of entry into force of the law, because the state budget of 2008 has already been approved, and implementation of it as the plan of state

budget revenue and appropriations for the budget year has already begun.

The Liberal and Centre Union Political Group did not support this law and voted "against".

According to Liberal Centrist Raimundas Palaitis, reduction of the VAT rate is not going to result in reduction of prices for consumers, because traders may make use of the opportunity to increase their profit.

In the opinion of the Government, the state budget is going to lose approximately LTL 50 million per year due to this tax relief.



17 January

SEIMAS PROLONGED THE SEIMAS AUTUMN SESSION

The Seimas passed the Resolution **on Prolongation of the 7th (Autumn) Seimas Session**. Voting results: for – 55, against – 26, abstained – 28.

The Seimas resolved to prolong the 7th (autumn) Seimas session until **1 February 2008**.

AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW ON ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS NOT ADOPTED

The Seimas did not pass Draft Law No XP-2455 Grn Amending and Supplementing Articles 1, 3, 7, 12, 34, 77, Section Nine and the Annex of the **Law on Electronic Communications** and Supplementing the Law with a New Annex as returned by the President of the Republic. Results of voting for passing of the law without amendments (for the law passed by the Seimas): for – 34, against – 67, abstained – 6. Not adopted. Results of voting for passing of the law with amendments of the President of the Republic: for – 3, against – 92, abstained – 12. Not adopted. The law passed earlier remains in force (2004).

Under the law passed on 18 December 2007 (see p.), the Seimas sought to implement the provisions of Directive 2006/24/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 relating to the **duty** of providers of publicly available electronic communications services and of public communications networks **to retain certain data** for periods of not less than six months and not more than two years from the date of the communication.

The provisions of the mentioned directive were reflected in the law passed by the Seimas, which stipulated that traffic data of the subscriber or registered user of electronic communications services may be retained for not more than six months from the date of the communication, **with**

the exception of the cases when a bill has been lawfully challenged or the data are required for entities of operational activities, pre-trial investigation bodies, prosecutor, court or judge to prevent and investigate criminal acts. It was proposed that such data could be **retained for 12 months from the date of the communication** and provided free of charge to competent institutions in order to ensure that the data are available for the purposes of investigation, detection and prosecution of serious and grave crimes as they are defined in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania. The Seimas did not support these amendments.

Moreover, the Seimas did not support the proposal of the President of the Republic to supplement the law passed by the Seimas and stipulate that in respect of the economic entities providing public electronic communications services and/or public communications networks, **the expenses of acquisition, installation (adjustment), updating and maintenance of the equipment** not required to ensure the business activities of an economic entity, **but required to store the documents listed in Annex 1 to the Law would be reimbursed from funds of the state budget** as well as stipulate that this provision would enter into force from the adoption of the law, i.e., from its publication in the official gazette Valstybės Žinios.



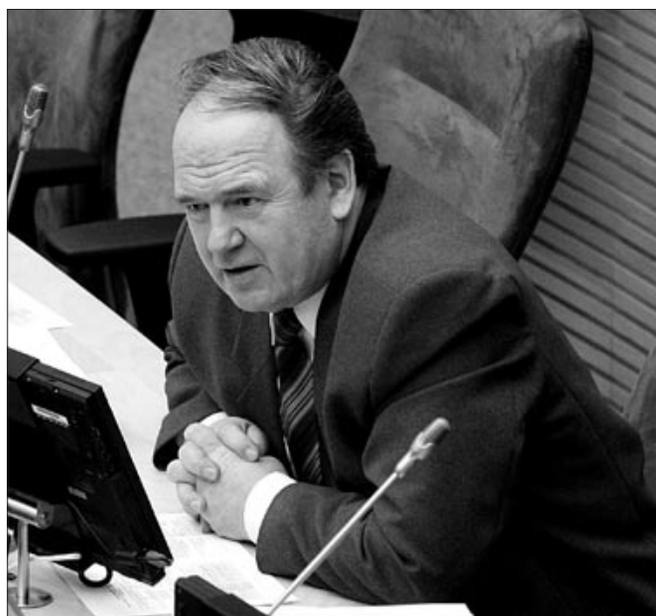
Visitors of the Seimas are observing the sitting

SEIMAS PASSED THE LAW AMENDING THE LAW ON PREVENTION OF MONEY LAUNDERING WITH THE AMENDMENTS PROPOSED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

The Seimas passed the Law Amending the Law on Prevention of Money Laundering with the amendments proposed by the President of the Republic. Voting results: for – 80, abstained – 2.

The law has the aim of specifying the measures of prevention of money laundering and/or terrorist financing as well as the institutions responsible for implementation of the measures of prevention of money laundering and/or terrorist financing. **As of June**, gaming companies **will be under the obligation to check the identity of a client** entering a casino and register him, also register him when he exchanges cash for tokens or tokens for cash irrespective of the amount.

The President of the Republic returned the law passed by the Seimas for repeated consideration on the ground that provisions of the Law Amending and Supplementing the Law on Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing **contradicted** a provision stipulated in paragraph 1 of Article 20 of the **valid** Gaming Law. In order to prevent violation of the constitutional principles of the rule of law, legal certainty and legal clarity, the President of the Republic **proposed**



MP Liudvikas Sabutis (the Homeland Union Political Group)



MPs Egidijus Vareikis and Rimantas Jonas Dagys (the Homeland Union Political Group)

to postpone the date of entry into force of paragraph 4 of Article 9 of the Law on Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing provided in Article 1 of the Law **until 1 June** to enable the Seimas to harmonise provisions of paragraph 4 of Article 9 of the Law on Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing and of paragraph 1 of Article 20 of the Gaming Law.

Paragraph 4 of Article 9 of the Law on Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing provided in Article 1 of the Law stipulates the obligation for gaming companies to **obligatorily check the identity of a client entering a gaming establishment (casino) and register him; also register him when he exchanges cash for tokens or tokens for cash irrespective of the amount.** Meanwhile, paragraph 1 of Article 20 of the Republic of Lithuania Gaming Law establishes that **the gaming operator must register,**

in accordance with the procedure established by the Government, only the persons who either exchange cash for tokens or make a stake, or collect a winning in excess of LTL 3 500 or an equivalent amount in foreign currency.

According to the President of the Republic, in the event of entry into force of the provisions stipulated in paragraph 4 of Article 9 of the Law on Prevention of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing provided in Article 1 of the Law, two valid laws **would stipulate different and mutually contradicting norms** setting forth **requirements for establishment of clients' identity.** Such a different legal regulation would violate the constitutional principle of clarity and intelligibility of legal norms for persons under law, legal certainty and legal security presupposing the duty of the state to ensure the stability and certainty of legal regulation.

18 January

PROCEDURE FOR USING THE EMBLEM AND NAME OF THE RED CRYSTAL LAID DOWN

The Seimas passed the **Law Amending Article 109 of the Criminal Code** (voting results: for – 69) and the **Law Amending the Title of the Law on the Emblem and the Name of the Lithuanian Red Cross Society, the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, the Title of Chapter III and Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 25, 27** (voting results: for – 67, against – 1, abstained – 4).

The adopted amendments to the laws ensure implementation of the international commitments of the Republic of Lithuania related to protection of the emblem and name

of the Red Crystal as adopted by the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 on the Protection of Victims of War, and relating to the Adoption of an Additional Distinctive Emblem (Protocol III), done on 8 December 2005.

The Law Amending Article 109 of the Criminal Code specifies that anyone who unlawfully uses the emblem of the Red Cross, the Red Crescent, the Red Crystal, the United Nations Organization or another universally recognised emblem (sign) or name during an international or other

MP Egidijus Klumbys, the Order and Justice (Liberal Democrats) Political Group



than international armed conflict shall be punished with imprisonment for a term of up to three years or a fine (according to the explanatory note, unlawful use of emblems and names at a time other than during an armed conflict remains subject to administrative liability). The law also specifies the emblem and name of the Red Crystal and lays down a procedure for using them.

The Seimas passed the Resolution Amending Article 1 of the Seimas Resolution **on the Delegation of the Seimas of the**

Republic of Lithuania at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Voting results: for – 74, against – 1.

The composition of the Seimas delegation at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe is as follows: Audronius Ažubalis; Virginijus Domarkas; Raimondas Šukys. Arminas Lydeka has been removed from the list of members of the delegation, Raimondas Šukys has been entered onto the list.

SEIMAS ESTABLISHED THE MINIMUM FIXED AMOUNT OF TAX ON INCOME FROM THE ACTIVITIES EXERCISED UNDER A BUSINESS CERTIFICATE

The Seimas passed the Law Amending and Supplementing Articles 6 and 38 of the **Law on Personal Income Tax**. Voting results: for – 47, against – 7, abstained – 19.

The amendments of the Law on Personal Income Tax specify the minimum fixed amount of tax on income from the activities exercised under a business certificate, and this amount is not subject to redistribution when drafting and approving the Law on the Approval of Financial Indicators of the State Budget and Municipal Budgets of the relevant year.

The price of a business certificate will depend on the minimum monthly salary, the amount of non-taxable minimum and the income tax rate and should not fall below

LTL 1094,4. The amendments to the law will enter into force as of July this year. Municipalities should establish new rates by then.

Municipalities have been granted the right to levy a lower tax rate on the persons engaged in traditional crafts; disabled persons; the persons who have attained the pensionable age; the parents raising children under 18 years of age, also older children if they are full-time pupils of general education schools or an older disabled child rated as requiring permanent special nursing care; full-time pupils and students of general education and vocational schools, higher education institutions; the unemployed persons who are registered, in accordance with the established procedure, at local labour exchange offices.



MPs Saulius Lapėnas and Raimundas Palaitis (the Liberal and Centre Union Political Group)

Opinions of MPs concerning the adopted amendments differed. According to MP **Raimundas Palaitis**, the amendments will create better activity conditions for the persons and residents holding business certificates and other persons and residents engaged in individual activities, the right of municipal councils to determine the fixed amounts of tax on income from the activities exercised under a business certificate will be exercised more efficiently. In the opinion of Liberal **Gintaras Šileikis**, these amendments, which provide for exceptions, are discriminatory.

Law Amending and Supplementing Articles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 21, 24, 25 and the Annex of the Law on Insurance of **Deposits and Liabilities to Investors**. Voting results: for – 73, abstained – 1.

The law stipulates that the Law on Insurance of **Deposits and Liabilities to Investors** regulates relations not only with entities of the European Union Member States, but also entities of the states of the European Economic Area.

In light of the clarifications presented in a communication published by the European Commission on 29 November 2006, the law establishes that as of the current year the Lithuanian deposit insurance system must fully conform to provisions of Directive 94/19/EC, i.e., the amount of the deposits and investments subject to reimbursement must be 100% – deposits or liabilities to investors in the amount of up to EUR 3 000 and 90% – in the amount of up to EUR 22 000.

The law provides a clearer definition of the insurance of deposits and investments of a state enterprise, the rights and duties of management bodies, the owner of the enterprise, implementing institutions (namely, the Ministry of Finance) as well as the sphere of competence of the council of the enterprise. The law specifies that the council of an undertaking shall approve an estimate of administration costs of the Deposit Insurance Fund and the Fund of Insurance of Liabilities to Investors, and the total estimate of revenues and costs of this state enterprise – an institution implementing the rights and duties of the owner of the enterprise.



ratified international documents

18 January

Law on Ratification of the Geneva Act of the Hague Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Industrial Designs. Voting results: for – 72. Adopted.

Law on Ratification of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on Cooperation in Combating Crime and International Terrorism. Voting results: for – 74. Adopted.

Law on Ratification of the International Health Regulations (2005). Voting results: for – 72.

STATISTICS OF THE 7TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE SEIMAS

Session VII

(10.09.2007–01.02.2008)

63 Sittings of the Seimas were held

Totally adopted:

124 Laws

52 Decisions

4 Resolutions

The Board of the Seimas arranged 291 sittings and adopted 2048 decisions from 15.11.2004 to 01.02.2008.

The Speaker of the Seimas issued 159 enactments from 15.11.2004 to 07.01.2008



at the Seimas committees

AUDIT MATTERS

Problems of Lithuania Post must be solved systematically

On 16 January the Seimas Audit Committee seeking to elucidate how State interests are ensured, organised a circuit sitting to **the state-controlled Lithuania Post**.

During the sitting the issues of efficiency of the activities of Lithuania Post were discussed. Management of the enterprise provided information about the current problems and perspectives. Lithuania Post regards **insufficient control of enterprises providing courier services and imperfect legal regulation** as one of the major problems.

The Communications Regulatory Authority, which performs the market regulation functions, admits that technically it is complicated to control whether a letter is delivered using the post or couriers' services. Seeking to deter the enterprises providing courier services from a temptation to violate the requirements laid down in the law, the Communications Regulatory Authority submitted to the Ministry of Transport and Communications draft laws amending the Code of Administrative Law Violations and the Postal Law, in which administrative responsibility is made stricter, and economic sanctions for violating laws are provided for.

Chairman of the Audit Committee **Donatas Jankauskas**, having heard the information and answers to additional questions said that *"The issue of efficiency of the activities of the Lithuania Post and the use of property is systematic and requires immediate actions – beginning with the improvement of the Postal Law and ending with an increase in the efficiency of management of the enterprise"*.



Donatas Jankauskas

31 January

Salaries of employees of public undertakings and institutions must be made public

The Seimas Audit Committee registered the draft of the Seimas resolution thereby urging the Government to immediately establish the procedure for presenting the data about salaries of the employees of public undertakings, stated controlled limited liability companies and public institutions specifying that **information about the salaries of the employees of these institutions should be public**. Seeking to eliminate the existing loopholes in the legislation as soon as possible, this draft Resolution of the Seimas should be considered according to the procedure of special urgency.

“At the present time there is no legal act regulating information about the salaries received by specialists from the state, and management bodies of each enterprise or institution are free to declare at their discretion any information to be a commercial secret. The following question arises: how can a public undertaking, which disposes of the state property, conceal financial information from that very state?” says Chairman of the Audit Committee **Donatas Jankauskas**.

The Resolution of the Government was in force until 8 September 2007 thereby *The Procedure for Providing Data about the Salaries of the Employees, Civil Servants, State Politicians, Judges and State Officials* was approved. Due to unknown reasons on 29 August 2007 this Resolution was repealed. *Because of this reason public undertakings took advantage of the right to conceal information from the public about the salaries of their employees, which they received from the state.* What is more, most often board members of state controlled enterprises are also representatives of the executive power – employees of ministries.

ECONOMICS**The Committee on Economics proposed to the Government to adopt a general payment book faster and to start developing the information system of business controlling institutions**

On 30 January the Committee on Economics discussed how its decision adopted on 29 November 2006 on improving the procedure for collecting payments from natural persons for energy and utilities was being implemented. Representatives of the Ministries of Economy and Agriculture, the Administration of the Office of the President, the State Consumer Rights Protection Authority, *Lietuvos dujos AB*, the Lithuanian National Consumer Federation, the Lithuanian

Within this context one can recall the Seimas Resolution of 30 June 2005 Regarding the Implementation of the Recommendations of the State Control of the Republic of Lithuania for Improving Management of Public Institutions. Thereby this Resolution it was proposed to the Government that the procedure for accountability, control of using the funds of public institutions whose joint owners are ministries or other state institutions, the state property and the budgetary funds, as well as the use of these funds to pay salaries should be established. Unfortunately, following more than two years, this Resolution of the Seimas has not been implemented.

The Seimas Audit Committee, in carrying out parliamentary control of the state enterprise *Valstybės turto fondas* (State Property Fund), considered issues of efficiency of the activities and results of using property of that enterprise. The enterprise provided information from which it became clear that part of profit derived by the State Property Fund was distributed among the employees of the enterprise as additional pay to the basic salary depending on the performance results. Seeking to elucidate what amounts were paid to the employees of the state-owned enterprise from the profit earned by the enterprise, the Audit Committee asked the State Property Fund to provide data about the salaries received by the employees of the enterprise and additional pays, as well as bonuses. The state-owned enterprise stating that salaries of its employees have been recognised as a commercial secret by the Board of the enterprise, agreed to provide the Audit Committee, which was carrying out parliamentary control, with the requested data only on condition that members of the Committee, prior to becoming acquainted with the information being provided, should sign the pledge of confidentiality.

Lina Milonaitė,
Adviser to the Office of the Audit Committee

Consumers Association, the associated business structures took part in the discussion. The participants in the sitting discussed what had already been done and what was to be done to ensure the possibility for the residents to choose ways of payment with minimum expenses incurred. Seeking to achieve a more rapid adoption of the payment book as an obligatory alternative to the ways of payment, the Committee decided to propose to the Government that it should draw the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Transport and Communications into the process of adopting this book, as well as in the preparation of legal acts necessary for its adoption. Furthermore, the State Consumer Rights Protection Authority was proposed to organise education

of consumers (as well as to co-ordinate education of other state and municipal institutions, the activities of consumer associations in organising education) about the existing alternatives to the ways of paying for energy and utilities and the possibilities provided by separate ways of payment.

The Committee also considered the issue of developing the information system of business controlling institutions that was of importance to business, especially to small and medium-sized business. Taking into consideration the fact that business lacks systemised information about business controlling institutions, that associated business structures constantly underline the necessity to improve the system

of business controlling institutions (especially from the aspects of its clarity, publicity, avoidance of doubling the functions performed by the controlling institutions), the Government was offered to consider the objectives that could be implemented in developing the information system of business controlling institutions, the possibilities of its development and successful functioning, and to take actions to develop a relevant information system of business controlling institutions.

*Gina Pajuodienė,
Adviser to the Office of the Committee on Economics*

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Priorities of Slovenia's presidency over the European Union were presented at the Seimas

*On 16 January, at a joint sitting of the Committees on European Affairs and Foreign Affairs **Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to Lithuania Rudolf Gabrovec presented the programme of his country's presidency over the European Union for January – June 2008.***

The slogan of Slovenia's presidency is "Synergy of Europe". According to the Ambassador, major priorities of the activity will be as follows: ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on the European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, a successful beginning of a new stage of the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, solving

of issues of climate change and energy, strengthening the European perspective for the Western Balkan countries, encouraging a dialogue on European cultures, religions and traditions.

It is planned that on 23 January this year the European Commission shall announce a new energy and climate change package containing the proposal concerning each country's participation in seeking to achieve common objectives. Another topical issue to be considered during Slovenia's presidency over the European Union is the issue of the status of Kosovo. On the other hand, such issues as reviewing the European Union budget, integration of work force, other relevant issues in the sphere of energy and environmental protection will not be considered.

The Committee on European Affairs approves of the position that the country's courts should not be obligated to handle cases of dissolution of marriages, the existence or validity of which was not recognised by Lithuanian law

On 18 January, at a sitting of the Committee on European Affairs the proposal concerning the Council Regulation amending the provisions of Regulation 2201/2003 (EC) as regards jurisdiction and introducing rules concerning applicable law in matrimonial matters was being discussed.

Thereby this proposal the European Commission seeks to create a clear and all-embracing legal basis for hearing cases related to matrimonial matters in the European Union, ensuring to the citizens legal certainty, definiteness, flexibility and the right to appeal to court, provide the spouses with a limited possibility to choose a court to decide divorce or separation proceedings, as well as applicable law in relation to divorce or separation proceedings.

Intense and heated discussions at the Committee on European Affairs were generated by the provisions of the proposal whereby it was sought to deal with the situations when law of a member state whose courts have jurisdiction in divorce proceedings according to the regulation, did not provide for divorce proceedings or did not recognise the existence or validity of a relevant marriage. This is the issue noted for extreme social and cultural sensitivity, and it is also significant taking into consideration free movement of persons in the European Union, which determines appearance of international couples, as well as taking into account the nature of the regulation as a legal act of direct application.

The positions of authors of the opinion of the Committee **Rimantas Jonas Dagys** and **Marija Aušrinė Pavilionienė** differed on this issue. In the opinion of member of the Committee on European Affairs Rimantas Jonas Dagys, courts of the Republic of Lithuania should not deal with the issues of dissolving marriages which are not recognised by law of

the Republic of Lithuania (for example, marriages between persons of the same sex, polygamy). The representatives of the Ministry of Justice and the Committee on Legal Affairs approved of this position. On the other hand, Deputy Chairwoman of the Committee Marija Aušrinė Pavilionienė proposed that the creation of the possibility for deciding divorce proceedings should be approved. This proposal was approved by the Department of the European Law and the Seimas Committee on Human Rights.

Following the discussions it was decided to vote on the two proposals alternatively. Thereby the decision adopted by the Committee on European Affairs, the representatives of Lithuania in working groups of the Council of the European Union are suggested to seek that courts of the Republic of Lithuania should not be obligated to decide cases of dissolving marriages whose existence or validity is not recognised by Lithuanian law (8 out of 15 members of the Committee participating in the sitting at that time voted in favour of this decision of the Committee).

The Committee on European Affairs listened to the report of the Permanent Representative of the Seimas to the European Union and became acquainted with the plans of the Information Bureau of the European Parliament

At the sitting of the Committee on European Affairs held on 25 January, Permanent Representative of the Seimas to the European Union **Loreta Raulinaitytė** presented a report on her activities.

The Permanent Representative of the Seimas introduced the participants of the sitting with the pressing issues that are being considered in the European Union institutions and informed them which issues related to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the model of its activities are interesting to the European Union institutions and parliaments of other member states of the European Union. Loreta Raulinaitytė emphasised the importance of specialised visits of the Seimas Committees to the European Union institutions and underlined their benefit to Lithuania when considering issues of the European agenda and preparing conclusions about draft laws which transpose the provisions of the legal acts of the European Union.

Also, the members of the Committee were introduced with the activities of the Information Bureau of the European Parliament in Lithuania. Head of the Bureau Daiva Jakaitė informed the participants of the sitting that in the near future the Bureau will seek a closer cooperation with the public and the media by presenting the activities of the European Parliament and its members. The principle task of the Bureau in the immediate future is to present urgent issues of the European Union, which are being considered at the European Parliament, in an interesting and attractive way. With regards to this, it is planned to devote much attention to organising information events, first and foremost, at district schools of Lithuania, providing information to the media of cities and small towns. Also, an interactive Internet project devoted to the youth is planned to be carried out, which is expected to encourage the youth to take greater interest in the European Union, its institutional structure and issues under consideration.

Julijus Glebovas
Adviser to the Committee on European Affairs

LEGAL AFFAIRS

25 January

Directives of the police system functioning and its improvement programme were discussed

The Committee on Legal Affairs held a sitting in which it analysed **the process of implementation of the development programme for the police system in Lithuania** (approved on 21 December 2006). The sitting was attended by Police Commissioner General **Vizgirdas Telyčėnas**, representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and the Police Department under the Ministry of the Interior who presented the course of carrying out the programme, its results, problems and their possible solutions.

Participants of the sitting, when assessing the situation prior to the implementation of the programme, identified the most important problems: an excessive number of territorial police bodies impede their management organisation; bureaucratic, complicated and time and expenses consuming procedures related to receiving applications, conducting inquiries during the pre-trial investigation, examining the place of the event, etc., are carried out; ineffective system of motivating police officers is employed, leading to the creation of an unattractive image of the profession; a negative image of the police in a society is projected.

It was pointed out at the sitting that the above-mentioned problems were gradually being solved.

Seeking to improve the system of police management, a working group has been set up at the Police Department to manage police bodies and optimise their activities. It is planned to leave seven out of twenty specialised police bodies. In 2007 a few services of the police system were already reorganised in this way by joining them. Moreover, functions irrelevant to the police work were dismissed or delegated to other bodies, for example, the issuing of a driving licence was delegated to the state enterprise *Regitra*, and the declaration of one's place of residence was delegated to municipal districts and other subdivisions of municipal administrations.

The programme also proposes that the activities and management of territorial police bodies should be organised on the principle of districts. Ten police commissariats of a higher level should carry out functions of management of finance, economy and the personnel, and the police commissariats of lower levels located in the districts should carry out direct functions. This would determine a more rational use of the budgetary funds, and the police activities would become more efficient. Furthermore, it is planned to implement quality management systems seeking to simplify them taking into consideration the most efficient utilisation of the resources available.

Seeking to solve the problems of motivating police officers, the importance was placed on the improvement of working conditions, possibilities to receive vocational training and professional development, the implementation of transparent and clear system of evaluation, as well as the increase in salaries and creation of transparent possibilities for pursuing a career.

It was specified in the programme that as of 1 January 2008, salaries of the policemen of the second category shall increase by as much as about 38 per cent, and those of investigators of the sixth category, by about 26 per cent. The salary of a starting police officer shall increase from LTL 1 190 to LTL 1 640 (LTL 450), the salary of a starting investigator, from LTL 1 720 to LTL 2 150 (LTL 430). As of 1 January 2008, the maximum amount of compensation for travelling expenses to the police officers shall increase from LTL 115 to LTL 147. Moreover, additional funds shall be allocated to the police bodies for additional payments to be paid to the police officers who are on duty at home or in another place.

Seeking to achieve efficiency of the police activities and seeking to improve the image of the police, the programme underlines the significance of strengthening the role of the police as a social partner. Attention is drawn to the fact that the media more often notices the problems that the police encounters and "forgets" to mention positive changes in solving the crime.

The Committee decided to organise more sittings during the spring session of the Seimas within the framework of parliamentary control, in which separate issues relating to both, the implementation of the said programme and the police system functioning and its improvement shall be considered.

Information provided by the Seimas Committee on Legal Affairs

DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION SOCIETY

RESEARCH ON UNIVERSAL COMPUTER LITERACY WAS PRESENTED

On 30 January, Associate Professor of Computer Department of Kaunas University Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Alfredas Otas** presented to the Committee on the Development of Information Society a research on situation of general computer literacy, conducted at the Centre for Computer Literacy of Kaunas Technological University, which was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Science. According to Alfredas Otas, in order to carry out the research on general computer literacy questionnaires were employed as a research instrument, and the results obtained had to be compared with the results of the research carried out in 2006 and 2005. Also, residents between the ages of 15 and 70 were interviewed.

During the sitting Alfredas Otas presented main conclusions of the research: as much as 0.98 per cent of the respondents have ECDL certificate, which certifies that the holder has basic IT knowledge and skills, 50.98 per cent of the respondents assess their computer competence as good though they have no official certificate to certify that, 19.92 per cent of the respondents have minimum computer literacy, 13.28 per cent of the respondents have weak computer literacy whose level does not reach a minimum knowledge of computer literacy, and as much as 14.84 per cent of the respondents admit that they do not know how to work with a computer.



At the Committee sitting

Also, about one third of the respondents do not use electronic services at all. It is thought that this is not only because of a low level of competence, but most probably there are too few electronic services, which are necessary, understandable and attractive to people of an advanced age.

Alfredas Otas noted that qualification requirements set to the employees by the employers have not become important yet either, and they do not encourage motivation for improving computer literacy skills of the employees of private companies. Computer literacy requirements to civil servants are not set clearly either – the situation is such that about one third of civil servants have a low level of computer skills or lack them altogether. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that it is necessary to organise more free of charge courses in computer literacy to the inhabitants. Also, computer literacy requirements should be clearly identified in qualification and certification requirements set to state and municipal employees.

However, a growth is observed in assessing the results of the research on general computer literacy carried out in 2005, 2006 and 2007. In summing up these results it can be stated that the number of respondents who declare their high computer literacy is on the increase: 48.56 per cent, 49.92

per cent and 51.5 per cent of potentially active population of the country, respectively.

According to Alfredas Otas, it was for the first time in 2007 that none of the respondents enrolled in a study programme admitted that they did not know how to work with a computer. The ongoing computerisation of the country's schools, increasing attention paid to information technologies in the process of studies is showing the results already.

The Committee on the Development of Information Society, having listened to the presentation about the research on general computer literacy, decided to apply to the Ministry of the Interior with a request to evaluate the possibility and expediency of establishing a general (basic) level of computer literacy and apply it to all civil servants, as well as to elaborate on how the Strategy for the Development of Public Administration until 2010 in the sphere of developing computer literacy of civil servants is planned to be implemented, and what are possible results and perspectives.

*Aušra Valantiežūtė,
Assistant to the Committee on the Development of
Information Society*

FAMILY AND CHILD AFFAIRS

The Commission for Family and Child Affairs discussed adoption problems

On 30 January, during its sitting, the Commission for Family and Child Affairs discussed adoption problems in Lithuania. The Commission, in response to the decision of the European Court of Human Rights under which the prohibition for a person to seek to adopt children because of his/her sexual orientation violates the European Convention of the Protection of Human Rights and Basic Freedoms, sought to elucidate whether persons of non-traditional sexual orientation have the right to adopt Lithuanian children.

Representatives of the Ministries of Justice, Social Security and Labour, the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service, the Children Rights' Ombudswoman participated in the sitting. The representatives of the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service confirmed that, first and foremost, requirements for a marital status are set to adoptive parents (both the residents of the Republic of Lithuania and foreigners), and, according to the Civil Code of the Republic of Lithuania, married couples have the right of precedence to adoption. Marriage is a voluntary agreement between man and woman to create legal family relations, which is legalised in the procedure established by law. It is only in exceptional cases that an unmarried (single) person is permitted to adopt children. Individuals who are not married can obtain permission to adopt a child if relevant services positively evaluate preparedness of an individual to bring up an adopted child on his/her own, and whether this does not jeopardise the child's interests.

It is worth noticing that the aim of the adoption procedure is, first and foremost, to serve the interests of the adoptive child rather than those of the family or the persons seeking to adopt the child. It is important that specialists of the child rights protection services and the adoption service should fulfil their duties with great responsibility in preparing the adoptive parents because they must choose a family that would ensure the child's interests. Exceptions must be made with greatest responsibility in the event an unmarried (single) person wants to adopt a child. The child's interests must remain to be of highest priority.

Representatives of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour presented the Resolution of the Government of the Republic



Chair of the Commission for Family and Child Affairs Rima Baškiene



Children Rights' Ombudswoman Rimantė Šalaševičiūtė

of Lithuania concerning the strategy for reorganising the child's care system and approving the plan for implementing its measures, as well as a report about carrying out the state policy strategy for the child's well-being and the plan for the implementation of its measures, informed the participants in the sitting about the proposals submitted to the Government concerning the improvement of the adoption system.

Members of the Commission for Family and Child Affairs drew attention to the significance of the responsibility in adopting children, and to the obligation of responsible institutions to follow the principle of priority of the child's interests.

Chairwoman of the Seimas Commission for Family and Child Affairs Rima Baškiienė



At the Commission sitting





international relations

9 January 2008

Press Release

Notice of member of the Lithuanian Seimas Audronius Ažubalis: MP suggests organising a joint forum of parliamentarians of the Baltic Sea states to assess the ecological situation of the Baltic Sea

In September 2007, Deputy Chair of the Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs Mr. Audronius Ažubalis addressed the Green Party of Germany regarding the German and Russian undertaking Nord Stream AG, which is planning to build a gas pipeline on the Baltic seabed which has been declared to be a particularly sensitive marine area. Mr. Ažubalis has already received a second response from members of the Green Parliamentary Group of the German Bundestag.

In his letter to Mr. Ažubalis dated October 2007, Deputy Chair of the Green Parliamentary Group of the German Bundestag Mr. **Jürgen Trittin** (former federal minister of environmental protection) said that the Green Party professedly made a conclusion that construction of an additional gas pipeline would be of great significance to supply safety for both Germany and the entire EU.

Meanwhile, member of the same Parliamentary Group and former Minister of Environmental Protection of Schleswig-Holstein Mr. **Rainer Steeblock**—in his response to Mr. Ažubalis dated 30 November 2007—pointed out that the Green Parliamentary Group of the German Bundestag had not yet formulated its final opinion. Mr. Steeblock maintained that the Parliamentary Group concurred with doubts stated by Mr. Ažubalis and it has expressed strong reproof related to the ecological safety menaced by old munitions buried in the Baltic seabed, possible oil spillage threat, and the intended gas pipeline route Natura 2000 to be built in protected areas. Criticism by the German Green Parliamentary Group is also aimed at the fact that the Baltic States and Poland were hardly involved into consultations on issues pertaining to the bilateral German and Russian project; and finally, these states are again bypassed when planning the route. The German Green Parliamentary Group is currently discussing a query to the Federal Government, which also contains a request to assess a possible relocation of the gas pipeline from the seabed to land.



Audronius Ažubalis

Hopefully, the response shall be given by the Government to the German Green Parliamentary Group in January 2008. Mr. Ažubalis was promised to be immediately delivered this response and the opinion regarding the assessment of the land route.

The member of the Lithuanian Seimas—whilst continuing written communication with the German Green Parliamentary Group—has suggested Mr. Steeblock organising a joint forum of parliamentarians of the Baltic Sea states to assess the ecological situation of the Baltic Sea and take specific recommendations for respective Governments. This forum might become a serious baseline in strengthening the role of national parliamentarians and resolving ecological issues of global significance.

Member of the Seimas Audronius Ažubalis

DELEGATION HEADED BY THE SPEAKER OF THE LATVIAN SAEIMA VISITS SEIMAS

On 11–13 January, the delegation headed by Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia **Gundars Daudze** visited Lithuania.

On 11 January, the guests met with Speaker of the Seimas **Viktoras Muntianas** (see p. 53), Minister for Foreign Affairs **Petras Vaitiekūnas**, Prime Minister **Gediminas Kirkilas**, and President **Valdas Adamkus**.



Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania to Latvia Antanas Vinkus, Mr. Daudze, Speaker of the Seimas Viktoras Muntianas and Latvian Ambassador to the Republic of Lithuania Hardijs Baumanis

On 12 January, the delegation headed by Mr. Daudze went to Druskininkai Municipality where they met with heads of the municipality, visited Druskininkai Hospital, health resorts, etc., and in the evening the guests attended the unveiling ceremony of the memorial for 13 January near the Seimas building.



At the microphone – Gundars Daudze

On 13 January, Speaker of the Latvian Parliament delivered a speech in the solemn sitting of the Seimas (see p. 11) marking the Freedom Defenders' Day in the 11 March Hall. Later, Latvian guests participated in the raising ceremony of the National Flag in the Independence Square and paid tribute to the memory of victims of 13 January in Antakalnis cemetery.

HEAD OF THE POLISH PARLIAMENT ATTENDS THE EVENTS MARKING THE FREEDOM DEFENDERS' DAY

On 13–15 January, the delegation headed by Speaker of the Polish Parliament **Bronisław Komorowski** paid a visit to Lithuania. The guests attended the events marking the Freedom Defenders' Day and met with the President of the State, and heads of the Seimas and the Government.

On 13 January, the Head of the Polish Parliament had breakfast with First Deputy Speaker of the Seimas **Česlovas Juršėnas**, later delivered a speech in the solemn sitting of the Seimas (see p. 9); the Polish delegation also attended the ceremony of hoisting the National Flag in the Independence Square, high Mass in Vilnius Cathedral, and visited the graves of victims of 13 January in Antakalnis cemetery (Mr. Komorowski also visited the graves of Polish soldiers in Antakalnis cemetery).

The delegation went to the old Rasos cemetery, where they paid tribute to the memory of Jonas Basanavičius and Józef Piłsudski, and visited Paneriai cemetery.

On 14 January, the delegation met with the heads of Polish non-governmental organisations, Prime Minister **Gediminas Kirkilas**, Minister for Foreign Affairs **Petras Vaitiekūnas**, and Speaker of the Seimas **Viktoras Muntianas** (see p. 55). A joint press conference of **Viktoras Muntianas** and **Bronisław Komorowski** was organised after the last meeting. In the afternoon, President of the Republic of Lithuania **Valdas Adamkus** received the guest and later the ceremony of awarding an honorary doctorate to Bronisław Komorowski was held in Mykolas Romeris University.



Česlovas Juršėnas, Bronisław Komorowski, Gundars Daudze, Viktoras Muntianas in the Independence Square during the ceremony of hoisting the Lithuanian flag (13 01 2008)

US CONGRESSMAN JOHN SHIMKUS PAYS A VISIT TO LITHUANIA

On 16–19 January, **John Shimkus**, member of the US House of Representatives and co-chairman of the House Baltic Caucus, paid a visit to Lithuania. On 17 January, President of the Republic of Lithuania **Valdas Adamkus** received the guest.

On 18 January, the member of the US House of Representatives met with Minister for Foreign Affairs **Petras Vaitiekūnas**, Prime Minister **Gediminas Kirkilas**, Speaker of the Seimas **Viktoras Muntianas**, and the members of the Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs. After the meeting, the guest visited the new Seimas Plenary Sitings Hall.

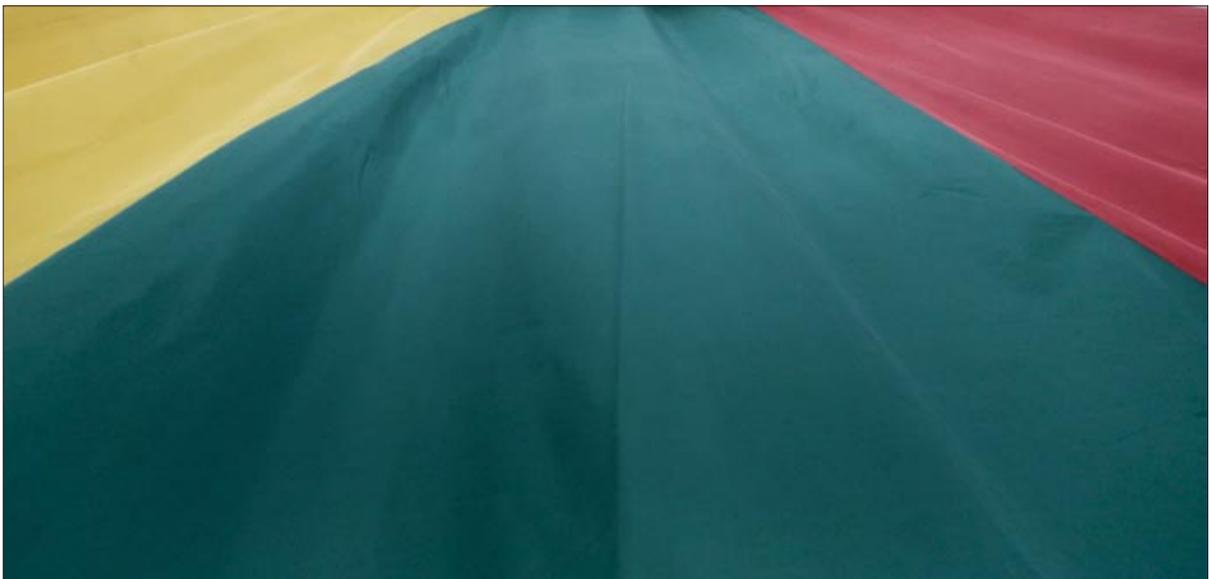
*US Ambassador to Lithuania John Albert Cloud JR
and Mr. Shimkus >>>*



speaker of the Seimas

1 January

Speaker of the Seimas participated in the solemn ceremony marking the 89th anniversary of hoisting of the flag, held in the courtyard of Gediminas Castle.



11 January

Speaker of the Seimas: political and economic changes promote closer relations between Lithuania and Latvia

Speaker of the Seimas Viktoras Muntianas received Speaker of the Latvian Saeima **Gundars Daudze**.

During the conversation it was noted that the meeting was held after two events important for both countries – accession to the Schengen area and the formation of the new Latvian Government.



Gundars Daudze

Mr. Muntianas expressed his concern about the problems of frontier residents. After the enlargement of the Schengen area, local roads crossing the border should be rebuilt, convenient bus connection organised, and bicycle paths made. Improvement of infrastructure would expand tourism opportunities as well.

The Speaker of the Seimas approved of the idea to provide pupils of frontier schools with an opportunity to learn the second Baltic language permanently as an elective subject of the curriculum. "This would be an opportunity for the Baltic nations to communicate without the help of the third languages," noted Mr. Muntianas.

The Speaker of the Seimas drew attention to the fact that although borders between the states were removed, the Sea Border Agreement signed by Lithuania and Latvia in 1999 and ratified by the Lithuanian Seimas has not yet been ratified by the Latvian Saeima. The guest confirmed that the text of the agreement was returned to the Latvian Government and would be deliberated shortly.

The guest also approved of the initiatives to ensure cooperation of both countries in different fields, and search for possibilities for the national broadcasters to exchange information directly. According to Mr. Daudze, the Lithuanian experience is very important when dealing with energy issues. Currently, Latvia considers the possibilities and prospects of the construction of a nuclear power plant.



Guntars Daudze and Viktoras Muntianas

12 January

Speaker of the Seimas participated in the unveiling of the Memorial commemorating the 13 January events held next to the Seimas.



Next to the Speaker of the Seimas is Minister of National Defence Juozas Olekas



13 January

Speaker of the Seimas attended the ceremony of hoisting the State Flag in the Independence Square (see photo below).

Speaker of the Seimas paid tribute to the victims of the 13 January events in the Antakalnis cemetery (see cover page).

Speaker of the Seimas met with those who suffered in the 13 January events and with the relatives of the perished ones.



14 January

Speaker of the Seimas accepted the invitation to open the exhibition “Treasury of Vilnius Cathedral” in Warsaw

Speaker of the Seimas Viktoras Muntianas met with Marshal of the Polish Sejm **Bronisław Komorowski** to discuss versatile cooperation prospects of both countries and their parliaments.

The meeting emphasised the relevance and significance of the trilateral Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Parliamentary Assembly in developing the neighbourhood policy and disseminating democracy. The most important aspects of neighbour relations with Belarus were also discussed, and opinions exchanged concerning the need to renew the debates within the EU on a common policy in relations with Russia.



Bronisław Komorowski



At the joint press conference

The Speaker of the Seimas noted the significance of joint infrastructure projects and the EU support. He asked Mr. Komorowski to urge the Polish Government not to delay the signature of the agreement concerning the construction of the electricity link between Lithuania and Poland.

During the meeting, the opportunities to continue the tradition, which was started last year, to mark the anniversary of the Constitution of 3 May 1791 by jointly drafting the scenario of the celebration were discussed, seeking that this event reaches the European Parliament.

Mr. Muntianas accepted Mr. Komorowski's invitation to open the exhibition "Treasury of Vilnius Cathedral" in the Royal

Palace in Warsaw on 2 July this year. The impressive exhibits from Vilnius Cathedral will be presented in the Royal Palace in Krakow as of 15 October.

The Speaker of the Seimas agreed with the staff exchange programme of the Lithuanian Seimas and the Polish Sejm offices proposed by the guest. "It is a good way to better know each other and maintain friendly and collegial relations in various levels of the parliaments," stated the guest.

In the short run, the Office of the Polish Sejm plans to offer several grants for Lithuanian students who are interested in parliamentary studies.



After the meeting between the Speaker of the Seimas and the Marshal of the Polish Sejm

17 January

Speaker of the Seimas participated in the discussion **“The Treaty of Lisbon: What is Next?”** held in the Constitution Hall.



Speaker of the Seimas greeted the soldiers from the **National Defence Volunteer Forces on the 17th anniversary** of their establishment.





18 January

Speaker of the Seimas: “visa-free regime between Lithuania and the USA is an integral part of close bilateral relations”

Speaker of the Seimas Viktoras Muntianas met with U. S. Congressman **John Shimkus**. The importance of a visa-free regime between Lithuania and the USA was emphasised at the meeting.

Mr. Muntianas expressed his delight that Lithuania became member of the Schengen area as planned. Mr. Shimkus considered this fact to be an important aspect as regards a visa-free regime between both states. According to the Speaker of the Seimas, it is also an important aspect of liberal commercial and investment relations because business relations cannot prosper if movement is restricted by certain

obstacles. Lithuania intensively and constructively follows the guidelines of the programme for lifting a visa regime; almost all requirements have been met.

Speaker of the Seimas Mr. Muntianas thanked for the U. S. contribution to NATO through patrolling the air space of the Baltic States: "The mission ensures that the entire NATO air space keeps uniform standards and guarantees sufficient

security to all allies". The Speaker of the Seimas stressed that it was very important to prolong the current patrolling of the NATO air space until 2018.

Lithuania's contribution to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, which includes the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Chakhcharan, Ghor province, was also discussed at the meeting.



24 January

Speaker of the Seimas received representatives of *Piliečių Santalka* (citizens Alliance) and the *Lietuvos Sąjūdis* (Lithuania's Movement).

Speaker of the Seimas visited child care institutions in Ukmergė, Jonava and Kaunas.

Drafted referring to the information of the Secretariat of the Speaker of the Seimas



events

EVENTS COMMEMORATING THE FREEDOM DEFENDERS' DAY

This year marks the seventeenth anniversary since the people of Lithuania defended the decision adopted by their duly elected representatives of the Supreme Council – Reconstituent Seimas to restore the Lithuania's independence. On 12–13 January, the events dedicated to the Freedom Defenders' Day are traditionally held in Lithuania.

12 January

- 17th traditional international run **"Along the Road of Life and Death"** took place (stretching from the Antakalnis cemetery, in which the victims of the 13 January 1991 events rest in peace, to the TV tower, which witnessed the cruellest acts of violence carried out by the Soviet troops).

- **Open-door hours were held in the Seimas building.** The photography exhibition "Hard Steps of the Rebirth" by **Rimantas Dichavičius** was opened, and photographs taken from the Seimas archives were presented at the Parliamentary Gallery. The video showing the events taken in January 1991 was shown, the Children Choir of the Lithuanian Radio and Television and the Utena Choir of Deportees performed at the Parliamentary Gallery.



The memorial for the 13 January events was opened next to the Seimas buildings. *The exhibition "Witnesses" was presented at the memorial for the 13 January events.*

- The Fire of Remembrance – the symbol of the 13 January – was set by the TV Tower, the Lithuanian National Radio and Television and at the Independence Square by the Seimas.

- The Sąjūdis Movement was remembered at the Fire of Remembrance.

- Literature and music event "Thoughts of Anxiety" was held at the hall of the TV tower.

- Concert "In Memoriam" was performed in the academic church of St. John.



13 January

- A solemn sitting of the Seimas to commemorate the Freedom Defenders' Day was held (see p. 5).

- The State's Flag was hoisted at the Independence Square in the capital.

- Mass was held in Vilnius Cathedral Basilica.

- The victims of the 13 January were commemorated in the Antakalnis cemetery. Also soldiers from the National Defence Volunteer Forces paid tribute to the Freedom Defenders, buried in cemeteries of Alytus, Kaunas, Kėdainiai, Marijampolė, and Rokiškis.

- Heads of the Seimas met with those who suffered during the 13 January events as well as with the relatives of the perished ones.

“THE ETERNAL BOOK ON RAMBYNAS HILL” WAS PRESENTED

On 15 January, in the first official commemoration of the Day of the Klaipėda region and the 85th anniversary of the region's annexation to Lithuania Major, **“The Eternal Book on Rambynas Hill”** was presented at the Parliamentary Gallery. Members of the Seimas could write personal entries into the book.



Prof. Domas Kaunas

“The Eternal Book on Rambynas Hill” was given to patriarch of Lithuania Minor Martynas Jankus as a merit award for annexing the Klaipėda region to Lithuania Major in 1928 to mark the anniversary of Lithuania's independence. The book had become a book of guests of Lithuania Minor, in which the most prominent activists of Lithuanian society of those times, as well as foreign ambassadors signed. Vydūnas was the first to make an entry into the book. In 1938, due to the Hitlerites' occupation of the region, Martynas Jankus hid “the Eternal Book on Rambynas Hill” in Kaunas. Since 1963 it has been stored in the Rare Book division of Martynas Mažvydas National Library.



In 2002 when marking the 80th anniversary of the accession of the Klaipėda region to Lithuania Major, the book underwent its revival. Its copy was made which was identical to the original. The book was brought back to the home of the so-called president of Lithuania Minor Martynas Jankus in Bitėnai. Within the next six years the book has enjoyed its popularity, and many well-known people, amongst which the members of the Seimas and the President have signed it. In 2003, entries, made by editors-in-chief of various newspapers and heads of publishing houses in the book, became a manifest of nationality and adherence to human values. The old "Eternal Book on Rambynas Hill" was brought to the Seimas only once – on 15 January 2002. This year the book will be brought to the Seimas together with its original copy.



MPs Vytautas Galvonas and Dalia Teišerskytė



17 January

DISCUSSION ON THE PROCESSES OF RATIFICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TREATY OF LISBON

At the round table discussion “**The Treaty of Lisbon: What is Next?**” held in the Seimas, the representatives from Lithuania and other member states and institutions of the European Union discussed the significance of the new treaty for Europe in the 21st century, shared their ideas on programmes of its ratification and presentation to the public, and discussed prospects for the implementation of specific provisions of the treaty. The participants of the discussion were given a welcome address by Speaker of the Seimas **Viktoras Muntianas**, presentations on the most important aspects of the new treaty, as well as on current developments in the European Union were made by Representative of the European Parliament who participated at the Intergovernmental Conference where the treaty was drafted, **Elmar Brok**, Director General of the DG Communication of the European Commission **Claus Haugaard Sørensen**, and President of the Executive Committee of the European Strategy Forum and Director of the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) **Peter Ludlow**. The peculiarities of the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon and its presentation to the public were presented by Deputy Chairman of the European Union Affairs Committee of the Polish Parliament **Andrzej Galazewski** and Head of the Department of the EU Policy under the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs **Ole Toft**.

Deputy Speaker of the Seimas, Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs **Andrius Kubilius** pointed out in his speech that the Seimas could start its spring session with the procedures for the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon which could be finalised at the beginning of May. Since on 1 May Lithuania marks its fourth anniversary of the membership of the European Union and on 9 May Europe celebrates Europe Day, it would be worthwhile to associate the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon with these dates. Until then a public awareness campaign concerning the treaty could be launched.

Undersecretary of Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs **Žygimantas Pavilionis** gave a speech on a new look at the role of the European Union in the world, while Chairman of the Committee on European Affairs of the Portuguese Parliament **Vitalino Canas** contemplated ways to reform various spheres of the EU policies. Deputy Director for European Affairs of the Government of Slovenia which currently runs the EU Presidency, **Gregor Krajc** presented the immediate plans for implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, while Deputy Director of the European Integration Department under the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs **Paula**

Sastrowijoto considered possible further developments in the EU after the Treaty of Lisbon.

In the past few years there were many discussions on the future of the EU, its institutional architecture and various policies. Debates on the future of Europe took place in the Convention, in two intergovernmental conferences and in national forums held by the member states.

On 13 December 2007 the Treaty of Lisbon was signed. Its ratification should mark the end of important internal reform process for the European Union.

*Evaldas Sinkevičius,
Adviser to the Committee on European Affairs*

On 23 January, the Order and Justice (Liberal Democrats) Political Group organised the conference “**Prospects for the Crop Insurance System in Lithuania**”. At the conference topical issues and prospects for the crop insurance system were considered: advantages, disadvantages and alternatives to the new model of implementation were discussed.

On 23 January, Committee on Human Rights together with State Data Protection Inspectorate organised the conference “**The European Data Protection Day for the Young**”. This event was dedicated to mark the European Data Protection Day which is celebrated on 28 January. (The celebration of this day was initiated by the Council of Europe and welcomed by the European Commission. On this day the European countries are encouraged to organise various events related to data protection and informing as many as possible European citizens about their rights in this sphere). This day has already been marked in Lithuania for the second time.

On 23 January, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Lithuanian Children and Youth Centre organised **the annual conference on the Long-term Programmes of Civic and Ethnic Education**, in which the implementation of the Programme in 2007 was discussed, and the most successful national and municipal projects promoting citizenship and national identity were presented.

DISCUSSION ON FURTHER EU ENLARGEMENT

On 25 January, at the European Information Bureau a discussion was organised by the Seimas European Information Bureau and the Seimas Information Club **“Towards a Wider European Union: EU Enlargement to Western Balkans”**. Introductory speeches were delivered by member of the European Parliament **Justas Vincas Paleckis**, Deputy Director of the European Union Department of the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs **Sigitas Mitkus** and Chairman of the Board of “European Social, Legal and Economic Projects” **Klaudijus Maniokas**.

MEP Justas Vincas Paleckis in his speech expressed a great personal interest in the EU enlargement to Western Balkans, praised progress made by individual Western Balkans countries seeking the membership to the European Union and named the most serious problems these countries are facing. The speaker pointed out that the European Union possesses an appealing characteristic that has attracted even 11 countries who wish to join the EU. Therefore, we should continue to be appealing to others so that the mentioned countries could undergo faster changes, have a functioning market economy, democracy, and would ensure human rights and other European values. The role of the European Union in this kind of transformation is indeed crucial.

Sigitas Mitkus presented the EU enlargement strategy, discussed the issue of Kosovo and Lithuania’s position with regards to it, and introduced the participants of the events to Lithuania’s interests in the Western Balkans region. The speaker noted that we had the same start as the Balkan countries, and our progress was reflected by the figures. According to the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the relations between Lithuania and the Balkans have



Participants of the discussion





Minister of National Defence Juozas Olekas and MEP Justas Vincas Paleckis

become more intense, as Lithuania encourages closer cooperation with the potential EU member states.

Klaudijus Maniokas noted in his speech that Lithuania actively supports the European Union enlargement. However, it has been so far planned to extend the boundaries of the enlargement only towards the eastern neighbours, but we often forget that it is a far-fetched plan. The presenter held the view that until the European Union opens its door to Western Balkans, any other enlargement cannot be possible. Moreover, it is worth reminding that the enlargement cannot be achieved automatically. Thus, if Lithuania regards its eastern neighbours as potential EU members and seeks to extend the EU stability and security zone to the East, it should more actively support the EU enlargement to Western Balkans. Mr. Maniokas named conditions under which the European Union has the already mentioned appeal to others. According to him the appeal for the membership is not the same in Western Balkans as it is in the Eastern and Western European countries. Therefore, in order to strengthen this appeal, we should employ measures that would bring about the benefits of the EU in the short term. Some of such measures could be moving towards a visa free regime, offering assistance to civil society.



Members of the Seimas, foreign ambassadors residing in Lithuania and staff of embassies, public servants from Seimas and other public authorities, representatives of society and media took part in the discussion.

Advisor to the Seimas European Information Bureau
Jurga Valančiūtė

