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The OSCE should not lose sight of the fact that “action on substance rather than perpetual reform of its working structures” is ultimately what matters most, said Lithuanian Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis in his address to the Permanent Council shortly before the Ministerial Council meeting in Ljubljana. The Foreign Minister spoke with the *OSCE Magazine* about how his country’s “special geographical place” and unique democratization experience were being used to advantage within the Organization.

INTERVIEW: FOREIGN MINISTER ANTANAS VALIONIS OF LITHUANIA

Lithuania finds its niche

Dynamic “good-neighbour” policy serves as role model

OSCE Magazine: Do you remember where you were when the Helsinki Final Act was signed 30 years ago?

Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis: I remember the momentous event that took place in Finlandia Hall in 1975. I was 25 years old then. Although I was working in a totally different area, I was fully aware of the implications of the historic gathering and of the many Helsinki Committees that citizens formed to monitor the signatories’ compliance with the Agreement’s human rights provisions.

Things were very different for us then, and the Helsinki Accord presented us with many new opportunities. We concentrated on human rights-related issues, such as freedom to worship, which was frowned upon within the USSR.

Then in 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev was elected Soviet leader and we witnessed the unfolding of *perestroika*. Lithuania seized the chance to declare independence on 11 March 1990. We have come a long way since then.

In fact, I am sure you will agree that your early participation in the Conference on Security and Co-operation (CSCE) served you in good stead.

Things moved quickly from the time we became participants in the CSCE on 10 September 1991 and signed the Helsinki Final Act the following October. At the end of that year, we signed the one-year-old Charter of Paris, the landmark agreement within the Helsinki Process that signalled the beginning of the post-Cold War era. The CSCE’s contribution towards ensuring the withdrawal of Russian troops from Lithuania — completed in August 1993 — was a very important one. More than a decade later, in April 2004, we were accepted as members of NATO. The following May we joined the European Union.

What are your thoughts on the future of the OSCE 30 years after the Helsinki signing and 10 years after the CSCE’s transformation into the OSCE?

The period surrounding the anniversary is a difficult one for the OSCE. In my address to the Permanent Council on

27 October [2005], I tried to put things into perspective by emphasizing that whatever the outcome of the reform discussion, we should never forget that the OSCE's purpose is to act on substance rather than to undertake perpetual reform of its working structures.

My feeling is that it is the willingness of decision-makers to devote full attention to contentious issues such as "frozen" conflicts — rather than to the structures themselves — that gets the OSCE into gear. Strengthening regional co-operation at all levels would go a long way towards maintaining peace and stability in the OSCE countries.

Having said that, we should not forget that we have made remarkable progress on our basic priorities — democratization, human rights, and security and stability in the OSCE region — and this remains our biggest success.

From the perspective of a new EU and NATO member such as Lithuania, what are the remaining advantages of being an OSCE participating State?

It's true that there *are* many forums in which the same issues are being discussed. But the composition of these bodies is not exactly the same. The Russian Federation, the United States, and the countries of Central Asia, for example, do not belong to the European Union. Russia-NATO consultations are important but remain limited. Here at the OSCE, our format is all-inclusive, and the scope and range of the issues discussed are definitely wider.

From Lithuania's point of view, since the OSCE is a regional security organization, one of its enormous advantages is that it can count on about a dozen sub-regional groups and organizations, including those of its Partners for Co-operation.

Take the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), which was formed in 1992 and currently consists of 11 States. Lithuania believes that, within the OSCE, this group should draw up new partnerships with counterparts in south-eastern Europe, the Black Sea area, the Caucasus and in Central Asia in fields such as environmental and energy security.

We also believe strongly in the OSCE's potential to manage and help resolve conflicts, especially frozen conflicts, which I've already mentioned.

In many cases, what is sorely lacking is the political will to provide the OSCE with the resources it needs to be active in the entire crisis cycle — from fostering political dialogue, to improving field offices' ability

to monitor issues, assess local needs, and build local authorities' capacities in policing and other key areas.

We also value the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and strongly urge that its tools be strengthened so that it can carry out its tasks properly. By the way, I'm proud to say that Lithuanian nationals take part in election observation missions and that this contribution will continue to grow.

A small and stable country steeped in the tradition of both Eastern and Western Europe as well as a model of good neighbourliness: these are what people associate most with Lithuania. How are you using that to advantage within the OSCE?

It is indeed true that we are located in a rather special geographical place. From a political vantage point, we can say that our "East" — Russia's Kaliningrad region — is in the West. Some 30 km from our capital, Vilnius, we have another neighbour — Belarus. We share a border with Poland, which is an EU and NATO country just as we are.

And of course we share the well-known "Baltic experience" not only with Latvia and Estonia but also with our Nordic neighbours. This continues to serve us all well in many areas, in the fight against trafficking in human beings for example.

This is what drives Lithuania's dynamic foreign policy. We are interested in sharing our experience with our eastern neighbours, especially those in the Southern Caucasus. Since we were able to complete negotiations for EU accession and are now fully-fledged members, we can serve as a good role model.

At the same time, we have good and pragmatic relations with Russia. I think Europe can feel secure about our neighbourhood. If Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and Russia reach a stage when they can be called truly democratic, Europe will be in an extremely favourable strategic situation indeed.

In this connection, the agreement reached between Tbilisi and Moscow in May [2005] on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia makes me optimistic that this long-drawn out issue will finally be resolved within the next few years.

How would you sum up Lithuania's unique democratization experience?

Lithuania's transition to being a democratic country with a market-oriented economy is still at the work-in-progress stage. The tasks may seem simple since the guidelines are there, but the most difficult



Lithuania Facts & Figures

Population	3.4 million
Shared borders	Belarus (724 km), Latvia (610 km), Russia (303 km), Poland (110 km), Baltic Sea coast (99 km)
Ethnic composition	Lithuanians (83.5 per cent), Poles (7 per cent), Russians (6 per cent), Belarusians (1.5 per cent), Ukrainians (1 per cent), others (1 per cent)
GDP per capita, 2004	5,264 euros. Since 2001, GDP has been growing by an average of 7.3 per cent a year, among the highest growth rates in Europe.

part is by no means over: changing people's way of thinking. We are still tackling many negative aspects of life in Lithuania — in the areas of human rights and corruption, for example.

This is why we are now focusing on improving people's socio-economic situation by modernizing our economy as much as we can. We have had five very successful years. We are doing well; our impressive growth rates have been among the highest in Europe.

But you never believe politicians when they say everything is all right, do you! We still have a lot to do. Real life is more complex than that, and besides, people's expectations are usually greater than politicians' ability to fulfil them. The march towards progress has to continue every day.

In July 2004, Lithuania applied for the OSCE chairmanship in 2010. What was the driving force behind this move?

We value the OSCE's huge potential for strengthening co-operative security, democratic values and human rights in the whole Euro-Atlantic area.

And I believe it is time to move from being "consumers" of democracy and security to becoming more active participants who can help determine the destiny of the

region. Lithuania participates in a number of international missions, including those in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. The Provincial Reconstruction Team that has been hard at work in Afghanistan's Ghor Province since June 2005 is Lithuanian-led.

We have gained some valuable experience in the Council of Europe where I chaired the Committee of Ministers in 2001-2002 for six months. Having personally experienced the intense efforts that these crucial positions demand, I can well imagine what a huge challenge it will pose for the future Foreign Minister to be at the helm of the OSCE. The OSCE's membership is larger — 55 against the 46 in the Council of Europe — and the position lasts one full year.

Do you foresee your being that Foreign Minister?

I have held this post for a total of five years in three separate terms. My first appointment started on 9 November 2000 and I'm still here. The job involves travelling abroad about 160 to 170 days a year. That means being airborne about 260 hours a year — which adds up to more than 10 days. No, I don't think I'll be the Foreign Minister in 2010, but wherever I'll be, don't worry, I'll still be active!

Your visit follows shortly after the opening of an exhibition of the works of Lithuanian-American artist Ray Bartkus.

Art and artists have always had an enormous following in Lithuania. Ray Bartkus, who was born and educated in Lithuania, decided to live in the United States not too long ago, so, unlike his compatriots before him, he left under comparatively more "normal" circumstances. We have struggled to bring about the free movement of people, goods and capital, which has made it possible for people like Ray to settle in a place of their own choosing and where they feel they can be most creative.

Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis started his career as a foreman at the Kaunas Meat Processing Plant, moving on to a senior post in the Ministry of Agriculture. He later headed Lithuania's Delegation responsible for EU Accession Negotiations and was his country's Ambassador to Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. He holds a PhD in Political Science from Warsaw University. He is also a graduate of the Kaunas Polytechnic Institute's Faculty of Mechanics.

Art as commentary

Treading the delicate waters of OSCE diplomacy



Shared values and deep historical and cultural ties within the OSCE community were put on artistic display when the Lithuanian and U.S. Missions pooled efforts to bring the published lithographs, etchings and pencil drawings of artist Rimvydas (Ray) Bartkus to Vienna in October 2005. A graduate of the Vilnius Art Academy, Mr. Bartkus, 44, is one of the most successful illustrators in the United States today. The *OSCE Magazine* spoke with the New York resident after the opening of his exhibition at the Hofburg.

OSCE Magazine: “Connectivity Power”: What exactly did you have in mind when you chose this as the theme of your exhibition?

Ray Bartkus: It was actually U.S. Ambassador Julie Finley who turned it into the title of the show after coming across it in one of my illustrations. Americans are great at marketing and come to think of it, the choice seemed very appropriate.

What were your prime considerations in choosing which works to display at the Hofburg?

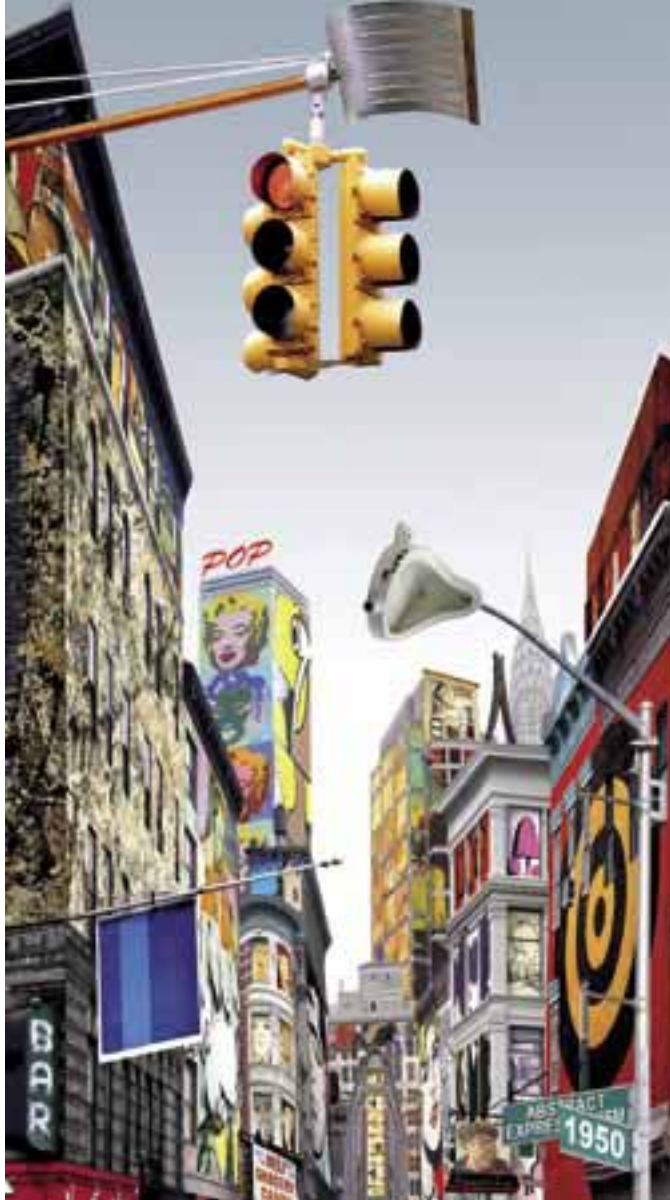
As I was going through hundreds of my sketches and art work, I was surprised to see how many took quite a critical or

sarcastic or ironic view towards world affairs. I had a hard time selecting those that would be relevant and at the same time “inoffensive” to the OSCE ambassadors present. But hey, we like to criticize everybody and everything in New York — it makes the world spin and maybe improve a little.

Does one have to be a “political animal” to be able to illustrate global concerns such as nuclear proliferation and terrorism?

Politics, the economy, science and the arts affect everyone — unless one is an ignoramus. Some of us choose to express an

“Psychomanhattananalysis”
by Ray Bartkus for *New York Times Book Review*, 1995



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Illustrations by Ray Bartkus

1 "Paint City", *New York Times Book Review*, 25 December 2005

2 "Deglobalization", *Harper's Magazine*, 2004

3 "Witch", *New York Times Book Review*, 2001

4 "Cleanup of Ground Zero", *New York Times Book Review*, 2002

5 "Peace Now?", *Time Magazine* cover, 6 November 1995

idea or two through an artistic medium — and those who are not “political animals” might actually have a fresher perspective. **Do give us a peek into the world of magazine illustration, especially in a city known for its vibrancy and its diversity.**

Every day, art directors at the better magazines receive up to 50 portfolios from all over the world from artists and illustrators hoping for a “gig”. It is this diverse competition that keeps me on my toes. Once in a while it so happens that I’ve had too many conflicting deadlines, and I’ve had to refuse assignments, but that’s risky — that art director might never call again. **What is it like to be on the covers and in the pages of some of the most prestigious publications in the United States?**

The pay is good and the assignments are extremely interesting — most of the time anyway. I’ve had the opportunity to illustrate the writings of Salman Rushdie, Francis Fukuyama, Margaret Atwood, to name just a few.

How easy or difficult is it to illustrate articles whose editorial line or message you don’t agree with?

I am always interested in listening to an opposing opinion, and I am rarely forced to be very literal and to follow the text exactly. A strong visual image is more important than a literal explanation.

When is an illustration more effective than a photograph?

Computer programmes such as Photoshop have blurred the line between the two media.

Recently, with the help of Photoshop, I created a fictional Greek god for a book on ancient Greece. Later, I received a few e-mails from prominent scholars asking me which museum had the piece!

What’s the shortest time you’ve been given for an assignment?

Three to four hours is quite standard for *The Wall Street Journal*.

Any favourite publications to work for and why?

This is my ideal scenario: The editor has given the art director a great deal of free-



dom and responsibility to carry out a vision for the publication's overall design and concept. The art director in turn gives the artist the freedom and responsibility to create a needed illustration — from conceiving the idea to its final realization.

In my 15 years of working in this field I know of only one publication that operates under conditions similar to these, and I am proud to say I work for it: It's the *New York Times Book Review* under Art Director Steven Heller.

How can someone with deep Lithuanian roots illustrate articles by (mostly) American writers so effectively?

Years ago, when foreigners would come to a Soviet bloc country, they would notice all the red banners on every corner advertising the Communist Party. Growing up in this environment, I hardly took notice of them. Sometimes it takes an outsider to point out the most obvious aspects of American life, to come up with a different interpretation. Luckily for me, New Yorkers are accepting of differing points of view.

What role did the exhibition at the OSCE play in your personal and professional life? And in your parents' lives?

It's always good to observe one's works from a different light — their faults and strengths can be seen more easily. As for my parents, they were of course thrilled to be present at the opening. Ten years ago, they would have had to apply for a visa from the Austrian Government. And some 15 years ago, Soviet authorities wouldn't have allowed them to travel abroad at all, especially to meet a son who works for the "rotten mouthpieces of capitalism". At that time, too, to have been able to afford to fly from Vilnius to Vienna just for a show would have been the stuff of fairy tales. I am thrilled by the opportunities that the expansion of the EU has opened up. Connectivity Power!



Ray Bartkus: "I consider myself a 'Vilniuser' in New York."



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"The United States, a nation of immigrants, has always been enriched by the talents of those who came to our shores," U.S. Ambassador Julie Finley said at the opening of "Connectivity Power" at the Hofburg's *Neuer Saal*. "Mr. Bartkus, who will always draw from his Lithuanian roots, now takes his energy from the vibrancy of New York."

Lithuanian Ambassador Rytis Paulauskas added: "Working as an illustrator is a delicate task in this rapidly changing world. Rimvydas' creations must quickly and accurately reflect political and cultural developments. Although the art of illustration seems to focus on the fleeting, the artist's reflections on the issues are lasting and relevant to us all."



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