

1994

My long article "Look Homeward Asia 1968-1993" was published and this coincided with a European meeting in Turin where a great professional euphoria reigned about the opportunities that were now being eagerly snapped up in the West to show the post-Soviet States in Central and Eastern Europe how to establish social services and to train the necessary professionals! I was keen to see that we learned something from the Asian experience and didn't again make the same mistakes of intellectual arrogance. My message was heard by an educator from the Jane Addams University of Chicago involved in establishing a university programme in her native newly independent Lithuania. Some months later I was invited to contribute to developments there.

Back in France again came the call to Lithuania. I arrived in Vilnius at the beginning of March. It was minus 14° centigrade, obliterated by snow and almost dark despite it being early afternoon. Our blind progress in a steamed-up-windows Lada along the highway a hundred kms to Kaunas, my destination, was something right out of Dr. Zhivago.

Vilnius is now the capital again, although it has changed hands 20 times this century - Prussian, German, Russian, Nazi, Soviet, and is still claimed by ever-pressing Poles. Half of its population used to be Jews, a cultural centre drawing rabbinical scholars from everywhere with its 100 synagogues in the old town - known as the European Jerusalem. A museum has been established and memorials at the sites where systematic slaughter of them all took place. Various revenges were taken by the very few Jewish survivors on the Nazis they could identify. There has been apparently no national accounting and retribution except some official regrets and apologies in recent times. The Lithuanians themselves were decimated also and many are still the stories of those surviving the executions and the deportations to Siberia.

The first snow-blighted view of Kaunas was of the dreary wasteland of high-rise worker's flats, one of which on these outskirts was to be mine sometime later. Kaunas was the capital during the brief period of independence between the wars. It has a population of less than half a million, was both an industrial and a university town. Seems that Vytautas Magnus University, where I am based, was closed down by the Soviets. On liberation the University was set up again although there has been talk of the municipality repeating the work of the Soviets, taking and renting the University buildings - part of the frenzy for privatization.

Kaunas, closed to foreigners for many years, is ethnically more Lithuanian than Vilnius, where an estimated third of the population is still Polish and another third Russian. The "Ultimate City Guide" No.1 says:

"Kaunas is dominated by Gothic and Renaissance style with a 16th century nucleus of old merchant houses around the Town Hall. A third of the 545 houses in the old town which practically escaped damage during WWII have so far been restored. Kaunas' Old Town was more endangered by Soviet town planners, who even considered an eight-lane throughway. The picture is only marred by the shoe factory next to Kaunas Castle."

The old town is indeed very pleasant and is now mainly pedestrian walkway with romantic old-fashioned lamposts. It is encompassed by the confluence of its two rivers - the Nemunas and the Neris - where bundled-up families feed a large cluster of soiled-looking swans. There are galleries and coffeehouses along the cobbled streets with their decorated façades and some pleasant housing being constructed among the areas of desolation. In the old town hall square, brides all freezing in their flimsy white gowns are interminably photographed surrounded by clusters of motley bedecked relatives, an accordion player circles each group looking for a few coins, and sheepish somewhat leering grooms pour out sparkling wine to their mates.

On the spot where a "Soviet tank stood for fifty years" a large cross has been erected and two more to celebrate the first two countries to formally recognize the new Lithuania - Iceland and Denmark. The overall impression of Lithuania is of the country entering a kind of convalescence after a long illness.

To begin with I was housed in a convent with retired nuns who cared for me diligently, feeding me well with meals awaiting my nightly return in a hot box insulated with plastic bags. I was soon to discover when I moved to my worker's apartment, which housed only me (and Erika later) instead of the more usual multiple families, that keeping me in warmth was a highly unusual and privileged position.

The apartment was without the shiny cleanliness of the convent house and like everyone else, without the erstwhile divine intervention, I found no heat in the radiators, although there was hot water once or twice in the bathroom. The pipes ran from floor to ceiling through the toilet. Sitting there, one warded off the ice-age.

I was out beyond the trolleybus route but after the arctic walk to it, it then took 40 minutes on the No.13 crusher to get to the University. It required some kind of commando training to make an assault across the icy ditches and the water courses between the pavement and the arriving bus, avoiding the avalanche of passengers as they tumbled out of the door under the great build-ups of pressure inside. (They appeared desperate to get into the Guinness book of records by demonstrating that their number could actually be doubled once the bus was totally filled to capacity). You then elbowingly launched yourself recklessly into the solid mass of humanity still in the bus, trying not to rebound before the doors slice you in half or leave you back in one of the water trenches. It remains to discover where one's arm is with the bag you had in your hand (everyone must carry a bag if shopping is to be made possible), and through your steamed-up spectacles find how to insert your ticket into the hole-puncturing cancelling gadget. Buses cost 5 cents a ride, taxi cabs as little as 50 cents or so, \$1.50 from the apartment, but one is ashamed to seem affluent.

I found a shopping mall (pall?) where you take your own bags and jars and line up for every single item (average 10 minutes per queue). Serving everything is quite opposite to fast-food, there seems to be a need to do everything at a speed as near as possible to actually moving backwards. (Can it still be the black Soviet humour: "They pretend to pay us, and we pretend to

work?"). Stores with plastic and shiny things have a little opening through which customers and owners do business (a bit like the defences that go up for the Notting Hill carnival); the grocery, which has bread (very good) and many cake things (creamy and not good at all) is rather dreary. There is now some imported fruit (Colombia, Ecuador and Spain) for the first time, and pickled vegetables mostly from elsewhere.

Crowds, every day as in a football match, descend on the open market past the old women on the pavement selling a hunk of bacon fat, old shoes, a brassiere or an individual something. The market consists of a kind of church hall with some long stalls outside. Inside there is a veritable carnage. Blooded carcasses are everywhere being attacked and mutilated with woodsmen's axes, the crunch of bones and squelch of flesh provides a satanic symphony. Skin-stripped severed heads of cows, sheep, goats and split pig's skulls stare fixedly and raw but insistently demand attention; one or two sensitive souls here and there stick on a pair of modest paper monocles to cover the bulging eyeballs, no doubt to save them from observing the mayhem. Our daughter Miri's vegetarianism is obviously well-founded. There are also great tubs of sauerkraut to taste to decide which particular sour you prefer and the purchases are crammed into the jar you bring along. There are enormous jars of pickled cucumbers, tasting just like my grandmother used to make.

I now enter the stores as if I know what I am doing. Window-dressing is not the thing here and although there is no obvious lack of utilitarian things (except antibiotics and medicines etc.) it is not clear what there is to buy until you get inside. However, I seem to find that cafes are usually named by the single items that they sell, such as "pienas" for a milk bar, "Zeppelin" for a ton-weight zeppelin-shaped potato-covered meatball, and so on. Konditorie manages "kave" (coffee), a few cookies and a kind of jelly.

There are a number of folkloric stores, amber is in abundance (prices have soared since the advent of the film Jurassic Park), dried flowers are woven tightly in lovely patterns on long sticks especially for Easter, the traditional crowns for the girls' costumes are very pretty.

Once the weather had improved to the level of sub-arctic I began to explore the social whirl of the town. There is an excellent music theatre, a sort of elegant colonial façade fronts aircraft-hanger type megalomaniac marble foyers which surprisingly lead into the delightfully proportioned intimate purple plush velveteed gold and cream decorated plaster auditorium. I bought my \$1.25cents ticket to my splendid box seat for Fidelio, to be given Traviata instead. All ages are in their best clothes which they promenade in the foyers at the intermissions and there is very inexpensive champagne available. Frequently they staged Hapsburg Vienna light opera musicals with marvellously costumed scenes in gorgeous palaces which ill prepared you for re-entry to the bleak glacial landscape of Kaunas outside.

Having discovered the totally unexpected splendour of the music theatre happenings I was fast becoming an intrepid socialite. I was soon again in my "usual" seat for "My Fair Lady". Liza did a kind of Punch and Judy version of the flower seller but became much more soprano voiced and at home in her lovely gowns later with Professor Higgins. He, a rather corpulent man, was much too serious in epiglottal song to remind one of Rex Harrison. Doolittle played apparently

his off stage real life role of drunkard and enjoyed himself. The chorus did their Cockney thing and although I completely missed the usual bring-the-house-down "Not bloody likely" (how is it said in Lithuanian?) I enjoyed the music, the ambience, and the memory of the triumph with my parody "My Bare Lady", the story of Lady Godiva, performed in New York's International House many years ago. "I could have pranced all night....I'm not even saddle sore..." etc. On that occasion I danced chest to bosom with Shelley Winters and came close, very close to stardom...Ah well.

Growing bolder, later I tried the rare western movies. "Age of Innocence" was advertised. I bought my 50 cents ticket. The movie seemed to be centred round a hunk of a man who spent much of his time perilously strolling on parapets above streets far below, or on the peaks of roofs, or over warehouse lift shafts. Young women seemed to follow him in his nonchalant pursuits and occasionally one or other, clinging desperately to his shirt which would rip (fine torso), would fall nonchalantly to her death. This would not worry him for long and he would throw brassiered girls around at the disco a la John Travolta, before strolling, as was his habit, along a crenellated high-pitched rooftop once more, casually talking on his cellular telephone while his correspondent, in her black underwear, was orgasmically turned-on. Quite what he said in achieving these successes I could not make out. Was it Czech and the city Prague? I don't know. However, I began to have the faintest suspicion that this was not the Age of Innocence. When this dawned I went in search of enlightenment and was hastened through the rain, where a door was unlocked by a woman who pitied me for having missed the beginning of the "Age" and seemed to question whether I had been under-aged at my previous location.

I was now in a large cinema, totally unheated, with the audience swaddled up to the eyes in warm clothing. A full-size screen now and again declared over the lovingly filmed technicoloured snacks at formal Victorian family everyday umpteenth-course banquets: "This video is the property of CTNV. Duplication, sale or rental is forbidden". The fascinating feature of this new experience was that there was only one booming very masculine voice-over (totally drowning the genteel English of the soundtrack) which translated indiscriminately all that was said by everybody - the narrator, the men, women, children the young and old alike. An achievement, I suppose, something like the skill of the pianist during the era of the silent movies. Except that no attempt was made here to change the range of tones or emotions of the various speakers. This, boom boom, what did they said innit?

Months later I was to be taken to the only night-spot open, a dark cavernous red-velvet walled Soviet-styled restaurant where a good group (great saxophone) played 1960s pop and the Beatles and a few mini-skirted girls (how is it they don't freeze to death?) danced. This is apparently the real swinging scene before the town is returned to its nightly atmosphere of the tomb. There was Spanish champagne at \$5 a bottle, on which it said in English: "The attractive packaging will grace any elegant table".

All of this, it must be understood, has nothing to do with the planet one re-enters outside, on which Lithuania is situated, or why I was there in the first place....

A two-year Master's degree programme had been established in the University the previous year. The "Centrum" for "Professional Education in Social Welfare" is financed for three years by the Conference of Catholic Bishops in the USA. Much goes to the credit of the drive of an outstanding Sister heading up Caritas, which is newly emerging as the leading non-government organisation. There is clearly a swing to religion as the churches are well attended by old, young, men and women alike. The churches, many Sovietised as factories and store-houses, are being restored despite the desperate economic situation.

The programme is staffed by expatriate academics from Chicago, Loyola in Illinois, a wonderful and exasperating Argentinean/American from Rutgers New Jersey, and other itinerants, giving time like myself.

My responsibility was to set up a fieldwork sequence in the curriculum where the students would both serve and learn. A "practicum" it had to be named, as both 'field' and 'work' seemed not to go down well with the didactic traditions of the University. Social reality, especially where it is so distressing, is mostly shunned by academic institutions everywhere. The relationship between the University and our "Centrum", it was explained to me somewhat obscurely, "...was a chess game, like the power relationship between the King and Queen". Given our particular ambience and financial support system, I could not resist observing that we had many more than two Bishops on our side... but I could see that I would have to watch that as a pawn in this game I did not perform the role of the off-to-the-side parallel thinking, black (humour) knight.

Within two-weeks - students unseen, they were away in Poland - I had visited, tried to understand, and set up "contracts" with a range of placements. These extended from institutions for infants to a hospice for the dying, places of incarceration for delinquents and the physically and mentally handicapped, the psychiatric, the drug abusers, the alcoholics (of epidemic proportions), family (Catholic) counselling, the destitute, released prisoners, and municipality services for the aged, pensioners, and the schools.

There had been until now no personnel specifically trained in social service functions, in building voluntary service in communities or in bringing about genuine community participation for social change (other than that which was politically motivated), so that there existed no indigenous role models or experienced supervision. My role was to develop and supervise the practice for the time being from within the University itself and to discover what needed to be done and the priorities for the future social development agenda. Much of my learning came from the daily journals on social conditions, and the "case" records I required the students to keep. I began to get a glimpse of the reality under-belly of Lithuania 1994.

Many of the factories are now closed. Raw materials and the items manufactured used to go to the Soviet Union. This has now ceased and there is widespread unemployment. Many of my students are such as qualified physicians and engineers for whom there is no longer work or prospects. Privatization has gone mad, with no one but an organised Mafia rejoicing. Seems Lithuanian Airlines now has a regular flight (with ancient Russian aircraft) and loads of drunken passengers who are doing business with the Arab Emirates and Cyprus. There is no doubt,

according to the students, that such elites and the present destitute were a minority in the old regime but now there is an immense gap opening up between a new and crooked free market, free ethics, the elite and the rocketing numbers of unemployed and excluded.

On the basis that factories were publicly owned, now in an incomprehensible scheme vouchers were distributed for investment in the new private economy. Mafia held "auctions" and gained controlling possession. In my survey (of three), one engineer exchanged his share for two pairs of shoes, another for a bottle of perfume, and one actually invested in a factory and has earned \$1.25 interest in the year.

All shops were government-owned, but no longer. There are many abandoned stores. Suppliers and distribution have had to be reinvented. At first it seems that many people opened shops and lots of "parduotuves" in little front rooms, in booths, bars ("baras"), small trailers and in odd corners of office blocks. They sell motley collections of things and much liquor ("gerimai"). I think I keep repeating "things" ("prekes") because much is not recognisable, which makes my own shopping, of the point-my-finger variety difficult. Seems that many entrepreneurs raised a little capital at 12% a month and launched into free-market business. For a year all seemed OK as the capital was eked out but now bankruptcies mount and at 12% there are few takers.

Housing (like my apartment), once owned by the factory or the commune, is now sold off, but few understand their property rights and there are highly organised groups robbing people of their claim. Little has been done to organize common facilities so that maintenance and services have fallen apart.

It seems that under the Soviets no social problems were acknowledged. Those who under the regime were mysteriously found to be homeless were rounded up and "directed" to residential hostels and closed institutions by the police. Now there are no longer such hostels provided, so they are begging on the streets. (I was to see in the underpass of the road that bisects the old town the rag-bedecked nothing-in-their-bag ladies waiting for small coins, a man incessantly playing his one tune on the mandolin, indifferent to an old girl sprawled out asleep/dead? A man also sprawled on the pavement in the bitter cold, with the passers-by giving not a glance. I was surprised to see as I returned some time later that a stretcher arrived to pick up the old girl and stow her in an ambulance; the man was gone; the mandolin player seemed to be continuing his sole gay melody without interruption.

Heating is certainly a major problem. At the municipality they complain that the plight of the old is compounded by the unreal cost of fuel and power that has to be paid to Russia, presumably from those power stations which featured in old documentaries. Close to the border in Latvia (?) there is a nuclear plant which is of the same model as Chernobyl (our daughter informs me that an article in the Guardian says that the meat here in Lithuania remains contaminated by that disaster. This is bad news in this sausage-and-animal-fats consuming society – for those that can afford it, that is).

It is not clear how anyone earns enough for living. The crush on the bus is mysterious- where are people going to work? I discover a paper-making factory that had a Doric-fronted recreation centre on the main street. The factory was sold off, which included the recreation centre. To make money they have partitioned off strange pieces of the building for bars and stores (parduotuves) and hairdressing saloons (kripytla) and let out a bit of hall for anyone who would like to pay for karate lessons or watch mayhem on pirated videos (cost of heating added). Now everyone has to pay to be recreated and the former staff doesn't get paid at all except for what they can squeeze from enterprising events like a disco. The educated have government jobs and are paid virtually nothing as there are no identifiable revenues as far as I can make out (except perhaps cigarettes which are smoked prolifically and lead to smuggling and a black market). I am told that many doctors in the public hospitals seem to demand gifts and money before attending to the patients. There is a functioning shoe factory, cake-making establishments, some fertilizer producers, and some small lubricant manufacturer at Klaipeda on the Baltic coast based on imported oil and destined to fall to the powerful oil companies from outside.

What the future holds is unclear. The initial freedom political party has been voted out of office and many of the original ("50 years of subjugation") old-guard people are still in place. The International Monetary Fund is doing its structural adjustment thing which is the kiss of death for humanitarian activities in favour of unproven future prospects from free trade and market forces. It is the mark of our times that globally governments have, through the GATT agreements, embraced even more unbridled free trade. This especially, so it would seem, in armaments. Strange how even the powers that make massive "legitimate" military expenditures are unable to demonstrate that arms can be put to positive use in neutralising murderous (who armed them?) warlords in Bosnia, Rwanda, Angola and the like. Who then is the enemy? Boy! Is it a crazy world?

This time it was high and very pleasant summer. The leaves that I had with some desperation watched appearing from nothingness and turn to buds and delicate blossoming were now in green splendour in the little riverside resort of Birstonas. Meeting together now for the first time were the academics, people from the ministries and the NGOs. To get ourselves in context I argued that we should constitute ourselves as an on-going working commission to identify the priority social development needs of this newly emerging country. Such a commission was envisaged as beginning the work of outlining Lithuanian social policy, programmes, manpower, career scales for social workers, and related academic and training qualifications, all of which would place social work and schools in a national framework. This I thought would eventually open an informed debate in the circles where decisions needed to be made. There seemed to be some support for this and it was agreed to meet and apportion aspects of such work early in October. On my way home again I stayed overnight in Vilnius Old Town and wandered the streets with new friends.

So back to France and on again to Lithuania. This time it was for just five weeks in October to teach a course on "Social Development". This was in the main an opening up of the broad development issues extrapolated from the direct experience of the students from the traditional welfare field, and aspects of what I had become involved with since I first arrived.

I am fond of telling students that they must perceive their experience as theatre in which they are sitting in the best seats. No one sees and hears what they will, and within this theatre they must become an actor themselves, creating their own script and influencing the action. The students had provided many scenes.

Literally to come in from the freezing cold, all kinds of people with all kinds of general problems are being admitted to the specialized psychiatric hospital and get no specialized attention there. I am told that under the former regime, doctors were not allowed to diagnose "alcoholism" and had to give other fancy names to the condition, which is endemic. Now it is OK and there is accommodation for some in the relative warmth of the narcosis centre. (In class I wondered whether we could set up a charity to provide vodka for the homeless so that we can get them qualified to obtain a roof and some kind of care. Social Development!)

Rape, it seems, is a national sport. People are reluctant to seek protection from the law, as the law in the past was used against people rather than for them.

Physically institutions such as the Infants Home are not too awful, but I had forgotten the impact of large numbers of malformed and slobbering scraps of humanity running to hug one's legs or rocking, totally absorbed in some silent capsule of a world of their own. The difficulties here include the rejection of parents and society of such youngsters; no provision for fostering or adoption of even the best endowed; the remoteness of the people in the surrounding neighbourhood, who are very much uninvolved except in helping themselves to what might be around in the playgrounds; the staff's no-incentive weary attempts to deal with the hyperactive, the screamers and the hunched-up lost ones.

The municipality in theory has an enormous range of responsibilities, but with few resources, no social work trained workers or adequate social support systems (pensioners if they are lucky get \$5 a month). In the hospice for the terminally ill and the dying, here too fortunate elderly are taken in to save them from dying earlier at home in the cold. I suppose the pungent air of urine is inevitable? Among the occupants are the old priest with a lined face as if sculptured in pale wood who lives only to publish his book on evolution and the place of God; the patriot, one of the first, dating back to the freedom movement in 1918; the old lady proud to show how she had been "decorated with clothes from many countries... but not from England" she admonished me when she learned where I had come from. (I offered my jacket, which was fortunately graciously refused, but earned I think a lot of goodwill and seemed to help my credentials all round. A ham as always! Some of the students are nuns emerging from hiding and the Director had the idea that as social workers they "could prepare them for confession and..." "How

about helping to feed the patients when we are shorthanded?" This needed to be handled with some delicacy, softly, softly.

The "Shelter" for delinquents and runaways is primitive and punitive. (A three-year old abandoned at the bus station is taken into custody by the police. The bigger children are aggressive to the little one even when he is being protected on the lap of one of the students. Why not to the Infants Home? "I think they don't take over threes"; not true. Then why not the Children's Home? "Well, infants are Ministry of Health, children are Ministry of Education, Police Ministry of the Interior". No one talks to nobody.

What do you do with prisoners released with a grant of 75 cents and no accommodation because they lost their housing rights on conviction, no winter clothes...etc?. What do you say to those who tell how as children they were made to file past the executed and not show a twitch of recognition of their kin (some still in the throes of dying) lest they themselves be liquidated also? Or to him who had fled as the Nazis advanced and crossed the scorched-earth burning bridge as the Russians retreated, upon which he was drafted into the Russian Army. Quite how and why with the killing of his brothers he returned to Lithuania I could not follow and now he says, with many of the collaborators back in power, he goes armed with his evil-looking black pistol in case there will be revenge on would-be avengers.

Before returning to Lithuania I had hunted around here in Geneva and learned rather more about the country and what was going on in Kaunas itself than had been possible to hear while there. For example, there had been some United Nations assistance for preparing for the Status of Women' Conference to be held in Beijing, including a service in the Kaunas Municipality (which later I was to discover the Department Chief of Social Service in Kaunas knew nothing about!). Nor, as far as I could tell, had any national committee with the requested participation of non-government organisations been formed by the government to prepare for the upcoming World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in the spring.

One must have some reservations on the value of these global jamborees. For example, the Summit on the Environment in Rio was a fiasco but nevertheless it put the environment firmly on the world's agenda (which it certainly had not been a decade ago). A number of important initiatives have taken place nationally and through NGOs and have brought about international support. There is in process work on "greening" national budgets to identify the financial loss of non-replaceable resources, environmental destruction, and required expenditures on protection etc.). The nature of this social development theme is potentially of immense importance; the preparatory work is addressing quite revolutionary ideas even if they are 40 or 50 years late and come at a time when governments everywhere are abdicating social responsibilities.

Although in the preamble and article 55 of the United Nations Charter social objectives are prominent, the experience of the last 50 years has shown that development has been conceived predominantly as economic. "Social" was the area of welfare services ordinarily seen as requiring expenditures draining economic resources and were provided out of extreme necessity by charities or reluctantly by government from their revenues. 'Social' could wait, it was thought,

for the "trickle down" effect from the wealth that followed in the footsteps of industrial development as it had, historically, for the present industrialized nations. Meanwhile, ministers for social welfare were low down in terms of political influence in government, and had very little available to them in the way of budgets, staff and resources. They were often also responsible for much else (e.g. sport, culture, labour etc.).

The significance of the World Summit is that "social" is now to be conceptually recognized and elevated to the mainstream development agenda. This has come about by the growing concern that economics, despite the current euphoria for free market forces, has had no decisive trickle-down effect and has done little for the massive populations of the rural and burgeoning numbers of the urban poor. Economics-powered development strategies, it is becoming clear to some, have failed to address the critical problems which ail our planet.

Social development, it is therefore argued, should no longer be circumscribed by welfare alone but is to be conceived as at least equal to and inseparable from economics, and a requirement, if not a prerequisite, for the main-line development processes to attain overall national and international development goals. At the World Summit, international stimulation, support, and hard resources are planned to actively acknowledge this growing perspective.

Now at our second "Birstonas" meeting, it proved to be too ambitious to establish a "commission" to examine the direction of desirable social policy and necessary programmes over the coming decade. However, I had prepared from what I had learned a "Did you know" document to introduce Lithuania to itself and to what was happening that would interest it in the outside world. Of course Lithuania had been cut off from the Western world and was represented previously, if at all, at global forums by Moscow. On investigation it seems that the President of Lithuania is going to attend the Social Development Summit, but to contribute what?

I took steps to see what could be done about getting Caritas, as the lead NGO, invited to the NGO Forum to be held in parallel at Copenhagen; subsequently I managed to set in motion the possibility of a UN package of support for a Citizen's Information, Advice and Referral Service, to be mainly manned by volunteers (which I had proposed and may well involve me and the students in setting it up next year); the financing of an Australian/Lithuanian supervisor for the fieldwork management; and a number of research projects.

In addition it was possible to recruit a handful of the first batch of graduates to serve in various agencies and institutions and to begin to supervise the current students. Of course, this is a lifting-up-by-the-shoe-laces operation and supervisory and teaching skills have to be learned as they go, with the support of a supervisor development group I initiated.

As in romantic movies, when I departed in November the days had taken on an autumnal melancholy. The sun emerged wanly out of the morning mist into a perfect blue sky. The trees which I knew as budless dead black trunks were now gorgeous with an almost New England

autumn intensity. The tree-lined streets and spaces were beautiful and erased the memory of the ice-bound city I had first encountered. Super!

Erika came to Lithuania for a month in May, when for me it had already emerged into relatively tropical weather - I have a picture of her wrapped up in three (five?) layers of clothing as others bikined on the Baltic beach where we natives rode horses through the newly blossomed woods and along the dunes. During her stay she also initiated the establishment of the donated social work library at the University.

1995

For me, this has been for me another Lithuania-focused year. When I left Lithuania in November of last year I had hoped that the discovery that the President of Lithuania would be attending the UN World Summit on Social Development would provide some perspective of where Lithuania was planning to move in relation to its social conditions. I had previously urged that Lithuania's self-declared schools of social work would develop such a perspective by establishing an on-going working commission to identify the priority social development needs of their newly emerging country. Such a commission I envisaged as beginning the work of outlining Lithuanian social policy, programmes, manpower, career scales for social workers, and related academic and training qualifications, all of which would place their social work and schools in a national framework. This commission I thought would stimulate an informed debate in the circles where crucial decisions needed to be made. However, this proved to be too ambitious and the social work schools in the universities have been slow in becoming a constituted and effective organization.

I began to think that something of this purpose might be accomplished by NGOs who were expected by the UN to be invited to help formulate governments' presentations at the Summit. However, I could find no national committee where the internationally requested NGO participation had been formed by Lithuania to prepare the Lithuanian position at the upcoming World Summit. The least I could do in the circumstances was to find ways to see what could be done about getting Caritas, as the lead dynamic NGO I worked with in Kaunas, invited to the Summit and the NGO Forum to be held in parallel with the Heads of State at Copenhagen. This actually worked out and Sister Albina (a wise and effective energetic organiser) along with Regina Kulys (the Chicago-based moving spirit of the Lithuanian University Social Welfare Centre in Kaunas) attended. Sister Albina insisted that I join them officially.

So come early March I arrived in Copenhagen. The great international jamboree was held at two locations: one for the politico Heads of State at the "Bella Centre" (where they swirled around, drowned in resounding statements and gloriously obscure concepts and words, and the other, a swarming NGO event held in the ex-naval workshops at Holmens, made familiar to me in Hoeg's excellent novel, "Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow". (Did you know the Inuit –Eskimos - had 40 different words to describe the qualities of snow?).

Thousands of people milled around the hundreds of meetings at the NGO Forum, meetings about everything and sometimes nothing much. There emerged the complaint that between the politicians and the NGOs there existed a "Berlin Wall" - an analogy strengthened by the powerful security measures and the speeding glass-tinted official stretch limousines flanked with police outrider escorts. (Four of the Security Council's five permanent members are not represented here by heads of government (Russia, China, the USA and of course, the UK, who don't even accept the European Union social charter). Meanwhile, Mrs. Hilary Clinton declares governments must have responsible economic policies - just as the dollar plunges and makes everything in Copenhagen madly expensive. The Danes outdo themselves with "cultural events" including the out of season opening of the Tivoli Pleasure Gardens over the bitterly cold weekend at enormous cost. Voices are heard questioning the cost of the whole Summit operation. Boutros Ghali points out that the costs are equal to the purchase of ten military tanks. Many NGOs - the devoted stretcher-bearers of the world - are advertising themselves with colourful and cluttered stands, African drummers, gospel singers (excellent). The World Bank and its "structural adjustment" disasters are the target of many; one of their speakers is prevented from speaking and a group breaks up the meeting, scattering documents all over the floor. Politicians are drafting words - the USA fighting to keep words, previously agreed to at the Cairo conference "reproduction health" (euphemism for family planning), being obliterated now; drafting committees, translators, editors up all night, NGOs drafting alternative declarations taking quite different stands to those of the "privatize everything in sight" governments....

There is a formal banquet with the Queen of Denmark, with seating arranged next to her according to seniority in years as Head of State. It turns out that Fidel Castro is the longest serving, and Nelson Mandela way beyond the salt. Apparently Castro has given up smoking, his Havana cigar caricature a thing of the past. The Queen chain smokes like a chimney. Speculation as to whether Castro would provide aid to Denmark by teaching her how to give up the weed. Is this is the way the world goes??

The UN Research Institute for Social Development continues to impress me. They host a top-level two-day conference in the banqueting hall of Copenhagen University, all pomp and circumstance murals down the centuries and a pulpit suitable for a papal address. The Rector extols the virtue of the conference - the bringing together the many minds and the fruits of interdisciplinary exchange. As an example he explains that he as a biologist slowly came to see that AIDS/HIV had a social dimension. Slowly! The Nobel Prize Nigerian WoleSolyinke makes a powerful speech and Rolf Daerendorf, a German (now Lord Rolf, thanks to being ex Director of the London School of Economics and now at Oxford) gives a learned and dry academic rendering of "Economic opportunity, civil society and political liberty", explaining the difference between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, with a hint that perhaps the latter as espoused by Asians is necessary. He is followed by Madame Tolstoya a Russian lady who climbs the papal pulpit and provides the most marvellous and humorously insightful account of the shifting loves and admirations of "The self-image of the Russian intelligentsia" from pre-

revolutionary to the present Yeltsin days. I can't resist asking, in the interest of "interdisciplinary fruition", whether she would comment on Daerendorf's presentation and vice versa. He chickens out, declaring it isn't his field. She begins similarly but then warms to the theme that she hasn't the slightest clue of what he was talking about. The audience enjoys this immensely and the Director of UNRISD assures me that I am a kindred spirit. So where will my next assignment be?

I meet many people and sniff out ways of helping Lithuania, introduce Sister Albina and Regina to the Director of UN Volunteers, who seems interested to assist on the basis of the merit of the programme and not just in appreciation of the two Druckers (son and father) who are known to UNV. And so it goes.

One needs Olympic-type training for these jamborees, I suppose. I return for some planning to Lithuania. Sister Albina returns to Lithuania from Copenhagen with pneumonia from its draughty wind-chilled environment and is in hospital. I feel worried - if my effort to bring her into the international world precipitates her into the next, my present path to beatitude will end badly.

In March there is a full contingent of American faculty members here to plan for the future. Oh dear! The struggle with the Kaunas University straightjacket of hours and credits and lunatic pseudo-standards invented for control of disciplines (indisciplines?) which have no mandate or even much interest in the realities outside of academia in Lithuania! There is a certain fascination for some of my colleagues in trying to put the non-interlocking pieces of the jigsaw together in order to satisfy, or seem to, more or less incompatible incomprehensible objectives.

After these meetings I stayed over as requested for a couple of weeks and things began to happen rather faster than it is easy to keep up with. A major disease in Lithuania is that information is considered a matter of top secret capital (a source of power, I suppose), which you don't spread around and nobody conveys anything to anybody; you simply stumble over information by sheer chance. I had until now only fed my Kaunas Lithuanians with materials about, and urging their approach to, the United Nations. I took the view that they must make the contacts for themselves because if I made the running nothing would outlast my being around. However, they had since November at last made good contact and been very pleased to have done so. This freed my hand somewhat and so I now went to Vilnius to see what was happening with UNDP's intention to support the return next semester of our Australian/Lithuanian colleague, Lucija, for the coming year and to try to hasten and nail down the UNDP paper work.

Now in Vilnius, in keeping with the usual absence of information flow, I made the "discovery" that already some such preliminary work had been done on social security and public information processes; something on children; the aged; the printing of a directory of 126 Lithuanian NGOs (not including Caritas Kaunas but including such as an NGO for those "commandeered" for work on Chernobyl at the time of the meltdown), none of which we in Kaunas had heard anything about. The social agency directory, which had been one of my pet insistences, was something of a leap forward. Now how about my proposals for an NGO support centre staffed by volunteers, and much else, which might well finance posts for our graduates?

The UN Resident Representative greeted me with an "Ah, we meet at last" and made a totally unexpected proposition. It was intended that a wide-ranging package of UN support in the social field be presented to the Government (to include Lucija's position I had initiated and a proposed women's crises centre). The UNDP Representative requested me to head up (which I declined as it should be a Lithuanian) but at least be available to serve on a team of five or six to prepare the documented proposals in 10 working days in April and asked me to suggest other members for the team. Suddenly it seemed if it actually worked out, I would be back again in a couple of weeks on a consultancy assignment with UNDP and the government. Of course a ten-day UNDP teamwork document to support such far-ranging developments was wildly ambitious but I reckoned that if I and Kaunas did not do it with them, they would do it without us and if we did not get more firmly into the act we would become something of a backwater. The worrying thing was that here in Kaunas we had, as usual, so little idea of what was going on at the Vilnius level.

Meanwhile, back in Kaunas I had made another attempt to involve the municipality in my Citizens Information and Advice and Referral Service (CIARS). I had learned, the day before my departure, that the municipality had considered the outline proposal I had provided to them and the idea had taken official hold and was to be adopted by the "Healthy Cities Project of Kaunas". (The municipal elections that week-end had moved politics to the right - considering where the left has been this was no disadvantage - and removed some opposition to the University). I understood that the University wanted to be the co-sponsor of CIARS and thought that the University and the municipality would go the NGO route for it, and I urged that we plan sufficiently ahead to involve our students and not rush into instant political window-dressing.

Back at UNDP Vilnius in April, we were supposed to be a group of five or six covering the widest aspect of social affairs. In fact we were just two and a little bit. The little bit was an ex-Minister of Social Affairs now at UNDP and into statistics, charts, and policy formation...no time to get involved with us really, except to ask at one of my ideas, "Who is going to pay for it? The Ministry won't"....UNDP was in a hurry as the UN Representative was being transferred to Jordan next month so some of the material was being prepared by others in other ways and we were taking up a small portion of time. The idea proposed to me of my "providing an overall

conceptual framework” had shrunk, and therefore trying to incorporate the different initiatives into an interlinking operational package became somewhat of a lost cause. Meanwhile there was a "public information strategy....without intermediaries"? mainly media and "hot lines" for a cut-down social security system. The old system seems to have worked under the Soviets, but now without funds had fallen apart and was under much criticism. "Although we were under an occupying Russia, in fact we had a better standard of living than the Russians themselves". ... The information strategy, it would seem, was for the prospective targeting of beneficiaries ("some don't need it!") and to raise the retirement age (men to 65; current life expectancy for men 62! Well, it saves money.... Why not make retirement age 80 and really save?).

Meanwhile I push the idea of a grassroots, nation-wide information facility like the Citizens Advice Bureau, which I have prospects for actually breathing into life in Kaunas at least. However, opinion is sharply divided as to whether anyone will do unpaid work, even for a few hours. Mainly I have the brief for social work education and training throughout Lithuania, which seems to have sprung from the UNDP Representative's initiative although I can't see clues to the government's deep interest; even so, I produce project documents.

I decided I should have a word on the Vilnius UNDP activities back in Kaunas. The transport arrangements fell apart at the last moment. To get me there a taxi was hired and cost \$50; on the way back I caught an "express" train pleasantly chugging through the wooded countryside and occasional grubby areas of industrial activity for \$1.75. That day Boutros Ghali was quoted as saying the UN is bankrupt...it really wasn't my fault....the USA owes the UN \$3000 million.

I could not at UNDP really pinpoint Kaunas for special treatment as neither the Government nor the other Schools would have been enchanted. I pitched for the idea that the Schools must share scarce resources, with one exception: I tried to see that Lucija, with her Lithuanian background, would be supported on the grounds that the role of supervisor educator in the field was a new and essential innovation for Lithuania, in a Master's degree which was not being offered elsewhere yet. For much else I banked on an effective Association of Schools of Social Work and wrote in a salaried post for an organizing secretary ("Secretary General" would not do, as it had communist connotations) for the embryonic association which was mainly supported by Kaunas, at the moment anyway. Nevertheless, the Association would need to lead the way to review the current and future needs for social work in Lithuania and make sense of training, education and professional organization of social work within government and out.

I discussed this fully with the Vilnius and the Siauliai School people. I included in the proposal funds that would support UN national Volunteers, (our graduates?) and, if necessary, international and some consultancy funds. Assuming this proposal was accepted much would depend on the Association of Social Work Schools identifying “scarce resources” and being

willing to share appropriately. As for funding, my own role as Kaunas would like, there seemed no diplomatic way of ensuring this. Lissner, the UN Representative talked of perhaps my being in Lithuania at some point when the proposals were implemented. Perhaps I might be included as one of the resources which the Association of Schools might request, but I could not see this being an exclusively Kaunas-focused likelihood. (I reckon that by now I am one of the scarce resources myself (as well as modest!) and ought to be shared around too, even to the “social Work” School with a curriculum consisting largely of “church architecture, church music and morals and ethics...”). On balance, given the parameters of UNDP/government bureaucratic rigidities and the very limited time available without opportunity to test out possibilities either with the Government or all the Social Work School interests, the proposals were drafted as best I could imagine, given my limited appreciation of the political (big P) ins and outs... We shall see.

Located in Vilnius, I explore the old town and find a basement dive with reasonable food. There is a portrait of Henry Miller on the wall. Henry Miller of Paris "porn"? Yes, a club meets here each week to discuss the "eternal verities". I make contact with the professor at the University who greets me with a bottle of champagne and the information that this will be the first time either he or his wife will have been to a restaurant in nearly three years, since their eldest son was killed by four "hooligans" Ugh! We first go to what looks like a fairly closed-up office block, but enter through Rito's (ex-Soviet air-raid?) Shelter where a string of coloured lights leads us along a winding passageway to a surprisingly crowded restaurant decorated with neon signs like a mini-Broadway, really hopping, with only room at the bar. Somehow I am reminded of the Isherwood-like beer-hall tunneled below the rubble in Hamburg that I entered more than 40 years ago....

We are escorted to an equally unexpected restaurant nearby, all nouveau art chromium rails and black decor with a guitarist and trombonist performing somewhat mournfully... (this is Lithuania?) Quite by chance I discover at the next table that a large black man in a startlingly striped shirt is someone from Washington to whom I had drafted a letter for Kaunas perhaps a year ago (I think they never followed up). He is with the Central and Eastern Europe Law Initiative, CEELI, whose name I was given by a seat-mate on a flight from Frankfurt to Geneva. My interest has been the need for a course on Law for Social Workers and the establishment of an embryonic Citizens Advice Bureau type Free Legal Aid resource. I am introduced to his colleague who is here on a long-term assignment trying to stimulate the work of law schools and the drafting of post-Soviet legislation. It turns out that he lives in San Francisco and has strong family connections from the east end of London. His wife is an environmental scientist and hits it off with my Vilnius professor who is into animal protection, having been educated in Moscow in the field of thought processes of dolphins!!! A good grounding for social work? Strange world around here, around everywhere perhaps if there is life enough and time to get around.

We put the UN-stitched-together proposal document together, a salad of half-received ideas drowned in a turgid dressing of words and jargon. The UN Representative gives it his nod for presentation to the Government the following week. What a way to run a world...and then who knows? He is leaving, and his undoubted support for social work might not be continued with a new Rep. I get away to Kaunas for a few days. By and large I think I have earned my UN keep.

From Kaunas I travelled to Siauliai to the University where one of the professors was supposed to be supervising a student thesis. It took forceful action to get him to talk about this, as he was intent on providing all kinds of hospitality, including a visit to the Hill of Crosses, now a particular pilgrimage and tourist site.

..... In the middle of May after my departure, a dozen or more students successfully defended their Master's thesis. These theses or "research" have been the source of much tension. I am reminded of Stanton and Schwartz's The Mental Hospital, which evidenced that "pathological excitement required for its continuation a continuing covert disagreement between staff members in immediate charge of the patient". Disagreement here around "research" there is, and not too covert either. RESEARCH...is consumed with the idea that comparisons are of the essence and unless you have at least fifty of something to compare with fifty of something else, all manner of truth will not out, irrespective, it would seem, if such truths can be used for any practical purpose. Instead there is a demand for scientific rectitude and statistical proofs in a situation where descriptive observation of more or less everything is missing and the time allotted to the students constricted to make even good descriptive stuff, analysis and implications virtually impossible to achieve. Academia!

There is a parallel in the statistics being designed for the Ministry of Social Security by the ex-Minister at UNDP who knows that no matter what, there is little likelihood of expenditures for the fast greying population, now that the Soviet system has withered. It is likely that we may now get better numbers, at considerable cost, to tell us what we can't do anything about. (In fact the Human Development Report was provided for the UN very glossily produced with a reproduction of a painting by the national hero, Cariolonis, on the cover. "Good fiction", some Lithuanians declared).Paralysis by analysis is the phrase. Anyway our American contingent is vocal, especially as they are supervising some of the theses (although fatally not on the spot in Lithuania continuously). I stubbornly advocate anything better than guesswork leading to action, and we foreigners keep on insisting on all kinds of legitimacy for descriptive theses, conceptual discussion and implications, and where statistics are of importance, importing computer programmes that make students' analysis look as sophisticated as Einstein in contrast to the steam-age numeracy around the place.

Another source of problems (apart from the anticipated growing ambivalence to foreigners) is that against my advice the first-year students were placed en masse in the psychiatric centre..... Some concern has been expressed at my emphasis that of the Kaunas programme should be increasingly shifted from exclusively personal/clinical to programme and policy development.

I was back in Kaunas for the beginning of the academic year and managed to broaden the range of student placements which now covers not only agencies literally from the pre-natal to the hospice for the dying, but also NGO organization under UN auspices, the municipality services, Healthy Cities (social "mapping") including quality (my CIARS) as well as quantification etc. and provides a daily range of fascinating first-hand knowledge of unknown grass-root Lithuania, and what is and is not being done. Also we have managed to arrange placement continuity in such a way as to eliminate the need for panic planning every summer.

Once delayed at Vilnius airport as the freezing weather closed in there were encounters with a consultant from Kent County Council in the UK whose claim to fame seems to be that they no longer have children in institutions and have come to show Lithuania how to place their children in foster care - this in a situation where many families can hardly afford to care for their own children; Philip Morris business men making a big investment in Lithuania - a cigarette factory. (Did they know the lung cancer rate in the country and that young girls were now taking up smoking with a vengeance? "That's good" they responded gleefully); the delegation from the European Parliamentary Union who has been in Vilnius for a week regarding support for NGOs - another well-kept Lithuanian secret as far as we in Kaunas are concerned; and the ex-Minister of Social Welfare from Sweden, who had been involved with the inflow of refugees from Nazi Germany, now heading a commission on the pollution of the Baltic Sea (170 heavy metal and seriously destructive "hot spots", not to mention the more numerous relatively benign threats to the planet).

1996

Soon, I was off again to Lithuania for a brief follow-up on activities. All was not well. The students as ever are a delight but the necessary on-going input to provide the creative atmosphere and enthusiasm and maintain the many vital activities to stabilize and develop the programme has fallen away. It was clear that the Centre now has to part company with the current Lithuania Director.

Astonishing obstacles began to be put in the way of carrying out the agreed programme. It came to light, that the Latvians, who were to convene the Baltic conference in which we were committed to play a vital part in establishing accreditation of the schools of social work throughout the three countries, within the European Union, had now cancelled this enterprise, as they had been told that our Centre was no longer interested and "had other priorities". This was absolutely not the case colleague. The Centre's relationships with other public bodies and agencies were also found to have been placed in jeopardy. This was very much my business.

I was asked to write "A personal perspective of events, March 1994 - October 1996" and contributed to this very painful situation being dealt with, at least for the time being. "Damage control" seems to be the jargon in vogue.

Meanwhile, time and energy for my community-based work was curtailed somewhat for I found myself unexpectedly having to teach an introductory course; in the previous year I had prepared a former graduate to take over this course. The University decreed that the graduate was unacceptable, (despite her excellent teaching at the medical academy), because she had no Ph.D. (in a country where PH.Ds in this discipline do not exist!).

Actually I like doing this course, the students are at a very eager stage and it is necessary to initiate them into an alien style of learning and teaching from the one that they have been used to. We take their own life experience as a valid basis for approaching human behaviour (especially as life experience in soviet Eastern Europe is something of which we have little first-hand experience in the West). My colleagues are collecting oral histories of our students' families and from survivors from the Holocaust site at the Ninth Fort outside Kaunas. I encourage/insist that students play a very active role in presentations and discussion in class, derived from their own backgrounds and from the experiences we provide for them in observing what is happening in Lithuanian services, agencies and institutions. This differs dramatically from the infantilisation that they are used to in diligently writing down what the professor declaims as universal theory and handing it back for his approval and pass mark. The demonstration of non-authoritarian, relationships between teacher and student, learning to learn together, is an essential primary matter in this post-communist world. It is also clearly the appropriate model for social worker/client. It is thrilling to see their initial disbelief and puzzlement turn slowly to something akin to enchantment and enthusiasm.

This year the introductory course was added to my "Social Development" sequence provided to the second-year students. Inevitably these students had picked up that all was not well at the Centre and were reacting accordingly. It made work with them in class unrelaxed and much less fun. I found myself occasionally haranguing them to show concern for the broader socially significant aspects of their narrower perspective of the situations in their field practice. I was therefore quite unprepared for the excellent quality of what they produced for me as part of the University compulsory exam that I set as providing a preliminary "Lithuanian social activity agenda" arising from their work. They wrote on the average about 20 pages, which made translation and assessment a long process for me. I aim to get, from their production, material for them to present to the first-year students and a basis for work plans which can be assigned, started or picked up, and followed through by students subsequently placed and by the staff of the agencies.

On my last week-end in Lithuania this time round I managed to get away to a brilliant autumnal village called Nida.... However, a new set of problems awaited me in Kaunas and needed to be dealt with. Information in Lithuania is treated like a precious personal and secret possession, as dangerous as nuclear material. Once discovered, it must immediately be placed in a concrete sarcophagus in case anything should leak out and consequently information is hard to extract from those who are supposed to know. (A public-financed service is reported to have declared: "It took us a lot of work and expenditure to collect together information. Why should we share it with the non-government organizations?") As for the public, they are, to put it mildly, bewildered at the new laws, rules and regulations, especially as implementation remains obscure. I have long seen the necessity for a Citizens Information, Advice, and Referral Service (CIARS). To this end I had initiated wide-ranging discussions with the agencies, services, and institutions, municipal, non-governmental and at the Ministry of Social Security and Labour in Vilnius; written a United Nations proposal, and required a mature student for the Masters Degree to assist an agency in the development of a proposal for such a service.

The approach proposed has a number of features, the most important of which is the process of establishing such a service, which would bring together government and non-government personnel in a joint operational activity (the intention and philosophy of which is constantly given lip-service in official Lithuanian declarations). This process consists of the donating of time (perhaps as little as three hours a month) to serve in an unobtrusive "shop front" where the public is invited to come and ask anything they wish to know. If at first the staff volunteering their time would not have at hand all the answers, they would ask the questioner to return within (say) 10 days or so. By then other such staff members would have done what was possible to find the appropriate information. The volunteers would have a dual identity, that of their parent agency and that of the CIARS, working on an intimate daily basis with other workers from the many other agencies. This would have the effect of eliminating the familiar rivalry in a situation where there a competitive spirit is engendered by the need to attract the very limited funding opportunities existing in Lithuania. The matter of seeking money has an unfortunate habit of undermining the oft-declared need for cooperation, coordination, integration, and collaboration.

Such a CIARS would truly put to the test whether the NGOs can, and will, be public-spirited enough, along with the municipality, to actively and operationally work together on a joint venture; their willingness to learn about, and from, each other in sharing existing information; to seek out what the public specifically expresses as its need to know; to cumulatively compile a commonly available data-base; and share with the appropriate authorities what the public brings to their attention and they discern as gaps and inconsistencies in policy and programmes which need to be addressed.

Against this background, I "discovered" (i.e accidentally fell over) the information that a potential donor had arrived in Lithuania from the United Kingdom (UK), for one or two days in

July and (a rarity, this) had actually got out of the capital, Vilnius, and visited Kaunas, the second city, where we are located. He had come to introduce the concept of the British Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and presented himself as a potential securer of funding from PHARE, an institution of the European Union. Of course, as is the way with information in Lithuania, immediately before I fell over this discovery I had been discussing CIARS with the Ministry in Vilnius and they had not mentioned their meeting with the UK man. Nor, I belatedly learned, had the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) formal proposal - that I had been commissioned by the UN to write - and the knowledge of promised substantial UN funding, ever reached that Ministry Of Social Welfare via their own Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Herein lies another story). I telephoned the CAB man in the UK and learned he was about to reappear again in Lithuania for a couple of days the following week. He expected that the Kaunas people would have by then set up a national organization and prepared his drafted funding proposal (including the three Baltic countries) for submitting to PHARE. Of course nobody had done anything since his departure nor did they seem to understand his proposal other than that maybe very large sums of money might somehow be conjured out of the sky.

Discussion with the UK man found us in total agreement in the need for an effective Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in Lithuania. However, his grasp of Lithuanian realities and mine derived from different planets. Nor, although he listened, did he seem to hear about the dead-end fate of many of the similar strategies he had in mind which had already been pursued. We had major differences of opinion in regard to the process and procedures for setting up such a service. He approached from a familiar Western sophisticated direction and presented the problems as one of funding and how to obtain it from PHARE. He had drafted a budget of Lithuanian mind-blowing proportions. (Professional salaries amount to about 300lt (\$100) a month!). He looked to find 765,000 ECU (say one ECU (\$1.5) = six Lithuanian litas), 4,590,000lt for the three Baltic countries "...because PHARE would respond more favourably to a multi-country proposal.." The time frame for applying was within five months. Bizarre, in the light of the fact that Lithuania, let alone Kaunas Municipality, was finding it impossible to get its own local act together.

Nevertheless for those ambitious vultures who could ignore reality, the possibility of money on this scale began to reactivate rivalries and outright hatreds and undermine much of the careful work already done in attempting to bring agencies together.

This scenario is typical, in my experience; all over the world there is a tendency for donors to look for a quick fix, irrespective of realistic local and national absorption capacities, time frames, and detailed bottom-up community work and organization. They hope all can be achieved by throwing enough money at problems, and they need to be able to show that they are actually doing something by creative bookkeeping cash flows to recipient "beneficiaries". Here in Lithuania, as everywhere, we were now experiencing the way in which projects are proposed

and designed to meet the ideas and procedures of international donor agencies, rather than donor agencies being invited to support genuine national and local needs and situations. (A good illustration of the subject matter for a professional paper). I shall try to get round to it, once I have provided some more local damage control and attempted to get things (another cliché in vogue) back on track.

By and large, despite all that has occurred, the frustrations and infuriating autocratic ambience at the university and outside, and the lost time and effort in getting the programme safely and solidly into Lithuanian hands and minds, the Centre has attained many goals. Its practicum programme is second to none; its mode of un-authoritarian teaching is unique in Lithuania; and the research theses of the 32 students who have already graduated have been acknowledged as being of a high academic standard. The Centre has already contributed much in these early years and has the potential, if it survives the current damage, of realizing so much more in the future.

Feb 1997

Lithuania? Too much reliance on the unreliable and too little vision/effort focused on broadening the potential constituency for support outside the university. Given the range of our fieldwork contribution to the agencies and with thirty-two existing graduates we should have been able to draw upon some pressure, protestation and support against the destructive forces aroused against the programme. The whole Lithuanian scene and our work there would make a very interesting case study of innocence in tackling the petty university micro politics of power and the necessity to build a countervailing power base (in a society historically consumed and now totally confused with the nature of power and personal aggrandisement). A story relevant not only in a place like Lithuania (where it is writ large) but perhaps in relation to any social action oriented programmes within tradition-bound mini and macro cultures anywhere.

A colleague, Bob Mullen (teaches at Swansea) is about to publish the book he has compiled from interviewing the elderly people including the surviving Jews in the Kaunas synagogue, The book "Visions of Pain, Lithuania in Transition" should be in the press soon. Also for some really depressing reading look at "Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno (Kaunas) Ghetto Diary" Avraham Tory, Harvard University Press. I have suggested to the Chicagoans and others the possibility of my making a working visit (lecture tour?) to the States. Something might come of it.

1997

The events of this year include a return to Lithuania for seven weeks at the beginning of the academic year in August; a follow-up meeting of the World Summit on Social Development;

Lithuania My UN assignments have dwindled away as the UN Volunteers headquarters moved from Geneva to Bonn but I returned again to Lithuania. There has been a real find - an educator, Njole, from the University of Technology who knew little of social work but a lot about how to organise things and to build good relationships with others. I also had exclusive access to my familiar translator, now a fully qualified psychiatrist. I found that my Social

Development work with the second year was reasonably well received again, but my introductory course with the new students was now in the hands of a former student of mine who was certainly OK but not one of the two I had had “apprenticed” with the view of taking over this sequence. However, I tried to be as helpful as possible, without grieving too much at the loss of the pleasure of getting to really know the freshly eager group at the beginning of things.

This was my longest absence from the Baltic scene, 10 months. Much had taken place so I kept a low profile to begin with, but slowly Njole began to ask me about things and soon saw me as more or less as a long-term culture carrier and historian around there. We then set out to try and repair the serious damage that the programme had sustained despite the energies and commitment of very well-meaning colleagues in the face of Machiavellian dealings by a rigid bureaucracy and autocratic university government. Late it was, but we set about re-establishing the Association of Schools of Social Work in Lithuania: made contact with the Baltic group again; got stuck into the Dutch donors in the social work field who were steam-rolling on and wanted to have career structures, education and training written in concrete without seeking the participation of the schools (although to be fair the Association had become defunct); and tried to resurrect the Citizens Information Service prospects. There is a possibility that there will be some active follow-through this time. However, I fear the whole programme will fall into all shadow and no substance unless we can get a field work supervisor in place soon, to take over from our Australian/Lithuanian who feels it is time to depart after four creative hard pioneering years.

Lithuania: the economy and Europe There is a British MP, Paul Flynn, who is a signatory to an open letter to the European Union urging the inclusion of Lithuania. I wonder if he got any further than Vilnius the capital, and maybe the coast at Klaipeda. He seems to know a different planet from mine. Lithuania, as far as I can see, has little of international economic value to offer, other than very cheap labour and the prospects of exploiters destroying its forests.

Back to Lithuania. Apart from having one of the 10 most dangerous Chernobyl-type nuclear power stations in the world, which it can't afford to close down not because of the loss of power and revenue (mostly from Belarus, pace the lack of heating in my apartment) but the sheer cost of dis-assembling it safely. There are also in Kaliningrad, across the border, Russian nuclear submarines rotting away and no money to dis-assemble them and make them safe either (more costly than building them in the first place); and the 180 “hot spots” in the Baltic Sea where lies “the up-to-date harbour” of our British MP.

Lithuania has dairy agriculture and potatoes. Much of its former Soviet-serving industry is closed or in disarray. Russia has now a huge import tax, so potatoes can no longer go to the ex- Soviets. The EU insists on the upgrading of quality for export to the rest of Europe. This will mean huge loans for updated equipment (horses are still very common in the fields). When all this has been achieved, although Lithuania might have an edge as agricultural

wages are virtually non-existent (doctors, if they remain employed in public service, earn perhaps \$100 a month), what will subsidised Western farmers, with their mountains of butter and oceans of milk and payment for keeping land fallow, have to say about it? (A visiting expert declared that "...most of the population will have to leave the land...", much to the rage of one of my ex-students whose family lives in the villages and who had wanted to do social work there). Word is that the Lithuanian currency, 4 litas to the \$, is unreal and will have to be devalued . I sure can't understand the babble of global economics!

1998

Lithuania

At the end of August it was time to return to Lithuania for my seven-week session at the beginning of the academic year. I was met at Vilnius by a couple of graduates, Sniegole (Snow White), as devoid of English as I am of Lithuanian, and Violetta, an apple-cheeked young woman who now runs the Family Centre. We had visited her family in the country once on the way back from a student study week-end in Klaipeda. "My father sends his greetings. He always talks proudly of meeting someone from the United Nations"! They hugged me with smiles and laughter.

On the major highway (102 kms to Kaunas) our chatty eager exchanges are interrupted by an appalling accident just ahead of us. A BMW careers across the road and smashes into a high-wheeled Ranger. The BMW plunges off the road and rolls over a couple of times down the embankment. The Ranger spins across the middle grass barrier, collides and is reduced to a jagged tin can. Dust, steam and earth clods are everywhere. The BMW passengers ("Mafiosi" by BMW definition, I am told) emerge from their flattened upside down wreck seemingly unharmed ("They have been drinking", our driver says). The others are not so lucky; a youngster with blood streaming from head injuries is extracted inert.

Mobile telephones are newly in with a vengeance. Just as well, half a dozen in the backed-up traffic are calling the emergency services. Among the gawkers in the vehicles that inch slowly past, there turns out to be "Lithuania's most famous dancers, they are also doctors". I suppose they must dance to make a living.

Eventually I arrive in Kaunas up on the forested hill over the centre of the town. I am to stay in the little house of mother-and-daughter doctors. Waiting for me there is sylka (herring) and mushrooms, black bread, pickles and cheese, little cakes. My room is bright and has a little balcony overlooking the immaculately turned earth in the pleasant garden, strawberries and apples, flowers with sunflowers twice as tall as ours in France. A far cry from my Arctic and potato diet on first arrival in Lithuania. In the town below, "The Sound of Music" has taken the place of "West Side Story" and "My Fair Lady" in the repertoire of the Music Theatre (to which I am addicted) when it opens for the season. BoneyM is giving a one-night stand. There is a fancy OMNITEL building now on Leisves Aleija, there are new phone booths too. Local calls used to be free. No longer. Telephones are to be privatised, the

Economist tells me. There are new fancy shops and many others gone. Many more cars and now, development (along with McDonalds, Barbie dolls, Lego and the like) - parking meters.

University and Teaching

The University seems to have accepted the idea of Social Work as a discipline. However, still no decisions have been made by the “independent” universities regarding curricula and little agreement regarding fieldwork requirements in a country bereft of field teachers. Both academics and practitioners seem comfortable with suggesting, if only by omission, that staying with a variant of the current courses will lead eventually to some sort of comprehensive progress. This tendency is prevalent particularly in academia, where the development enterprise is tinged with a patina of hopefulness unjustified by experience. V S Naipul’s warning about how it is wrong to “corrupt (one’s) view by injecting optimism or hope into what (one) is seeing” obviously is given short shift by development specialists, possibly because we personally do not pay the price for disregarding a clear reality. The real cost is borne by other people, on whose behalf the development community works, and who remain consigned infinitely to misery and want.

There now seems to be a drive for quantity which will bring in finances. The matter of quality seems not to be a serious issue. Fifty students a year in a new Kaunas BA programme and 30 new ones this year on the Masters. Other establishments are setting up social work programmes. “Who is to do all the teaching?” I ask and am answered: “That’s why we are glad you have come!”

One of my problems in teaching in Lithuania is the cultural gulf between me, coming from the West, and the students born and raised behind the “Iron curtain”. I am challenged to find a common basis of books and novels we had read, theatre, songs, poems etc. that can be drawn upon to teach, as I habitually do, to illustrate all kinds of human situations. Such sources I find and use to capture essences of human and society’s behaviour in memorable ways that stodgy learned texts usually fail to do. (Surprisingly, eventually I found Jerome K. Jerome’s “Three Men in a Boat” had been translated into Russian and had been a favourite in Soviet times!)

Titanic

However, on my return this year to Kaunas I found that the three local cinema houses were screening “Titanikas”, “Armageddonas”, and “Godzilla”. One goes to most things available when in Kaunas and I at least went to Titanikas. By-passing comment on the disaster and mayhem of Armageddon and Godzilla, constant contemporary themes, Titanic - which most of the students had seen - gave me the opportunity to find a common illustration (including Titanic’s strong theme of class structure) for discussion of my psychological and sociological ideas of what has been happening in the human experience.

In relation to Titanikas, early this year we had crossed the Atlantic on a route that took us north of the St. Lawrence River over magnificently ice and snow-bound Canadian Labrador. From Frankfurt it had taken us about six hours flying time, which set me thinking again of that small cargo vessel in which I had first crossed the Atlantic, taking fifty times longer. Recently, when I had flown for 24 hours to reach Australia from Europe, I had mused how it

would have taken me perhaps seven or eight weeks in an ocean liner when I was young. This speeding up of journeys by a factor of 50 occurred to me as also symbolic of the rate of change that has been happening in our world over a period of just 50 years or so, within my lifetime. I had used this idea of qualitative changes as “Change: Time, Distance and Identity” in my introduction to a paper I had given in Darwin.

One can still remember vividly the departures of ocean liners - the dressing up, the pre-sailing shipboard parties, the brass bands, the streamers and the gaiety amidst the tears as the ship slipped away from the shore, its horn drowning the last shouted farewells of the crowds on the quay. Thereafter, on a long sea voyage, a sense of community emerged as the passengers shared the experience of living together at close quarters day after day and the growing consciousness of the immensity of distances and new awareness of forces of nature - the receding solid land, the sea in its many moods, the appearance of marine and bird life, the smells, the sounds, the tastes, the sight of the sun, clouds, moon waxing and waning, the crossing of the equator, the North star disappearing from the vast sky (a lifetime's point of reference), all these enhancing a new sense of the eternal flow of the universe. This would be enriched by hearing from one's fellows who they were and what has been their experience behind and in front of you, the traveller. There is time within these far horizons to live, dream, and contemplate the very nature of being, where one has come from and what one is going to, to consider anew who you are and who you might become. There is time for lifelong friendships to be made and in such closed environments even romances and liaisons leading to marriage. The possibilities, in fact, as in the title of Laurens van der Post's book, to dwell on “Yet being someone other” (also well described in Peter Carey's novel Oscar and Lucinda).

Contrast this with the “processing” on modern-day airliners. Little of all this takes place between airport take-off and landing. There is a parallel here, in the conditions of modern travel, with the accelerated rate and nature of change in society; an increasing tendency to encapsulate living in space with the absence of an embracing sense of community; the disappearance of points of reference and the disorientation that this brings to the inner and fundamental sense of identity; and the loss of what it really is that we are seeking and gives meaning to travel and to life. Journeys, real journeys, take place within oneself, as well as geographically. The Titanic example and far-reaching change in travel and journeying served me very well in a truly thrilling seminar this time round in Lithuania.

Ideas and Donors

What has not changed much in Lithuania is that donors still wind up in the capital city Vilnius, with no way of, or much interest in, assessing the absorption capacity of new ideas and of replication. There is an attitude that once outside funding has ceased after the common two years, everyone will be so impressed that Lithuania will find funding for itself. Wrong! We are constantly diminishing the so called “beneficiaries” if they have to dance around us and say and do the things that agree with us if we are to bring them all these “goodies”.

These frequently include professionally unfocussed travel-agent's-delight trips abroad. One of our graduates, who is now doing her doctorate, is exploited at the University and works her backside off. She earns at most \$80 a month. She goes off to an international meeting in Cairo and is housed in a five-star hotel. The room rate is \$80 a night and she enjoys the laid-on trip to see the sphinx. Who can begrudge her? But what is the conference about? It's about The Poor. I want to howl at all these agencies that home in, bearing gifts which are irresistible.

One such group whom I have howled at (based in Cardiff) is the British Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB). I have been working for four years to get an effective organisation of this kind going. The CAB saga is a long and painful how-not-to-bring-aid story. Tripping as usual over non-distributed information of what was happening in Vilnius, I launched one more attempt with the Kaunas Municipality to make multi-dimensional sense in launching such a Citizen endeavour. This met with an unexpected affirmative response. On my last day in October before departing probably until next August, I was told "We will start next week!" Oh dear. However, the students are as stimulating as ever and give me much pleasure and hope for change.

The UK

On to the UK. In Devon I gave a presentation on Lithuania to a distinguished group interested in what was happening in Eastern Europe, at the Centre for Social Policy at Dartington. It is intriguing to find that I could really say anything, as no one knows anything about the country. Others zip in and out of Russia and the like on lightning consultancies. My 20 months or so over a period of four and a half years is my claim to expertise!

1999

Procession 1999, 1939

On my return to Lithuania again this autumn, I found that my familiar long-sought and very satisfactory apartment of recent times was unavailable. I was in fact to be somewhat homeless for the time being. The prospective apartment in the Old Town might be "three days", "three weeks", who knows? Meanwhile I was to stay quite comfortably but intimately with an ex-student and her family, also in the Old Town, in one of their rooms.

Next morning was the first of September and the beginning of the school year: Re-entry. All the children were in their very best get-ups. Proud parents clutched the hands of the tiny new scholars. The little girls had shoulder-wide white lace collars over velvet frocks and long white stockings or party dresses of pastel hues, the boys smart pasted-down haircuts, jackets with collars and ties or waistcoats and bow-ties. Each one carried a flower for the teacher. All traffic was required to keep on their headlights for the day.

At the University everyone gathered under the new great bronze insignia of King Vytautas Magnus (from whom the University takes its name) hoisted up on the facade. The dignitaries in their rich coloured gowns led the faculties behind the banners and military brass band, followed

by a multitude of students, the young men tall and lean, with brutal brushed-cropped hair, suits and ties, the girls a sensation, on chunky very high heels, with skirts more for decoration than concealment or long dresses fit for the ballroom. Long also was their hair, groomed as in the most seductive commercial advertising. All were carrying floral tributes.

The procession flowed along the main pedestrian mall, Laisves Alaije (Freedom Way), lined with linden trees, stopping to pay floral homage to the statue of Vytautas the Great. **I** saw in the watching crowd the little man from the synagogue, a survivor, who has a steady clientele of tourists arriving “in search of their roots”. Roots mainly obliterated since the massive holocaust killings of the thriving pre-war population that took place at the Ninth Fort here in Kaunas.

(For me it was exactly 60 years to the day that **I** was in a different procession along the streets of London. There were many processions that Friday afternoon in 1939. We school children converged on the great London railway terminals, each stream joining the flood as three million youngsters were evacuated from the cities to rural destinations. For the first time the population of the industrial city heartlands would be encompassed by and live with rural communities, an event of such social magnitude that Britain would never be the same again. **I** related some of this to one of my procession partners and explained how we children, tired, bewildered, fearful and suddenly parentless and homeless, had straggled along the village and small-town streets and been distributed (billeted) to whomsoever as we were processed. Oddly, there is surprisingly little literature on this particular area of dramatic change.)

The University procession continued to the grounds of Caritas, where the Rector addressed the crowd from a balcony and a red-cloaked bishop gave his blessing before we proceeded to the Baroque cathedral. Mass was held with some ethereal singing as the wafer (no wine!) was placed on the tongue of the supplicants. If back in 1939 I had caught a glimpse of the future, what would I have made of myself and the procession on the way to a church in Lithuania in 1999 ??

Accommodation no. 11

The matter of my current homelessness was first tackled by viewing a very dreary apartment with a noisy highway outside, a small yapping dog and the fumbling of keys that took a long time to work. I have lived in more than 10 different places in Kaunas, each somewhat better than the last, but was I now to slip six years back?

However, I was then shown an astonishingly well-done one-room studio flat with a view over the city. First I had to negotiate my way through a fantastic dressmaking boutique of wildly awful clothes for dancers and up six flights of stairs with no elevator. The rent by any standard was to be fantastic also and well beyond the budget of the University even if added to mine!

Next came a reasonable apartment on a noisy corner but with rent just admissible if I made a modest contribution. This apartment I thought was acceptable, especially as I could move right in. But then I was advised that there was a newspaper advertising very good office

accommodation now to be rented as a dwelling. I found it situated just about the spot on Leisves where I had been reviving my sense of 1939 homelessness and dipping into the wells of a long-term buried neurosis in such matters. Wonderful, nearer to the University than even my last very good location, with a balcony over Leisves where I could watch the passing show and, if moved to it, deliver my lectures to an admiring host of upward gazers just like the Bishop at Caritas that morning! All with a modern bathroom which had to be considered a wonder here in Kaunas. A couple of hitches, which included a look at the original intended accommodation under construction in the Old Town that could be ready sometime, and an offer of a cheaper place if the landlady could live there with me sometimes. Without even viewing the landlady, who knows? It didn't sound a good idea. However, the owner of the super place actually turned up to negotiate as promised. I moved in as soon as the bed was installed (without the crack in the middle, the familiar Lithuanian variety), a great piece of good fortune.

Slovakia

I prepared to go back to Lithuania, although I had been allergic to conferences for some years, an allergy reinforced by recent experience in Helsinki. I had met a Freidrich Seibel from Koblenz, who seemed to know what he was about, and because of this I decided it was worth going en route to Lithuania to another conference in Slovakia. He and Lorenz from Ireland seemed to know what they were doing and had a better grasp of where Eastern Europe was at and what social work was struggling with. This conference looked as though it might provide real time for discussion and be seriously useful.

So I attended the ECSPRESS, "Building on Experience Evaluation" conference in Modra, near Bratislava ("Preparing the Social Professions for Tomorrow's Europe"). This conference was not set up in expensive hotels but in a very pleasant hostel for medical people among the hilly vineyards of a small hamlet 30 km above Bratislava. Consequently we weren't really in touch with Slovakia much but lived in an intensive talking community, wandering up to an inn in the evening for beers and more talk.

There is still a very decisive gap between those in Western Europe and "we" in the East, but some element of contact was made over the frontiers of divided perspective. The Westerners seemed full of the problems and achievements of arranging inter-cultural courses and exchange of students between the affluents - Britain, W. Germany, Denmark, Norway and Sweden (I am reminded that none of our Lithuanian students sent to the USA have yet returned and begun to show their stuff, either in the Centre or in the field). A Polish woman described (in French) how Poland, in returning to Western Europe after the collapse of the Soviets, thought that they would be "coming home" but found that instead it was "like having to pay hotel bills".

Personally some good contacts were made with the Swiss, Geneva etc., whom I did not know; we might do some things together. Danes and Hungarians also seemed interested in finding a way of involving me. One wonders if the conference camaraderie and all the great ideas and intentions will find their way into action.

I aired one of my hobby horses: There is a lot of social rather than work in social work conferences, excursions and courses. I advocated that all participants be required to write themselves a letter after these “good for travel agencies” sprees. The letter will say:

Dear myself:

These are the important things I have learned from this excursion/meeting/conference/training. Now this is what I will do when I get back to my job back home:

A copy is kept for the evaluators of the programme activities. One copy (they themselves having addressed and stamped the envelope) is sent to each of the participants some six months later, with a note asking what actually of their self-identified implementation of their learning have they actually done.

If they have done something, tell about it so that others may learn.

If they have not, why not?

Did they misjudge the reality of their situation?

Did they come up against unexpected barriers to action?

Something can be learned from that and might become the subject area for another programme.

If no reply is sent to this follow-up, then they are not likely ever to be invited again to spend public money on what apparently turned out to be a pleasure trip with no pay-off to society!!!

Kaunas, Lithuania

So on to Lithuania via Vienna and Frankfurt. Kaunas has changed a great deal since I departed last October. The parking meters had begun but now so many cars have protection against stealing that there is a constant chorus of bleeps and chirping as one walks by. Many very fancy stores have sprung up, some with expensive sports equipment, and there is an astonishing proliferation of shoe shops here on the main street. There must be some very affluent and multi-footed people around. Gone are the one-item stores and small booths and shops in private houses. Bars are mushrooming and mobile phones are definitely in. Trolley fares have jumped onwards from the 1994 ten centas to 60, but even at the overpriced litas of four to the \$ that is still just about 15 cents. However, there is now much competition from zooming mini-buses at one litas a ride and the public transport seems to have many more inspectors to make sure you have a ticket punched in the primitive cancelling device.

The greasy spoons where I had eaten to survive are giving way to normal-looking eating places and more street cafes in the unusually warm Indian summer. At one of my favourite haunts I was still able to have pineapple pancakes and ice-cream, a pint of beer and a cappuccino for the equivalent of \$2.25. Of course I am now mainly entrenched in the commercial consumer centre of town and have no idea of what is happening in my earlier location in the surrounding high-rise working or non-working estates. Zorba has been added to the repertoire of the Music Theatre. The violent blockbuster films of last year have been replaced by “Shakespeare in Love”, the splendid “Barber of Siberia”, “Notting Hill” and inevitably “Star Wars”. There is

also now an American-style bowling alley, and flowers are appearing in baskets from the buildings.

Our Centre at the University is almost unrecognisable, newly redecorated and remodelled. The very ancient men's toilet on our floor is now sealed: New toilets are on the floor below, although not going as far as to provide toilet rolls, but altogether a vast improvement.

There is no question that the ambience at the Centre is very much pleasanter and more positive, at least for us foreigners. The current Director is interested in understanding the ideas of experiential learning and listens to those from outside with much attention. Maybe too much so, for she is given to saying “up to you” to those of us that come her way from outside and offer their availability and this can make for a certain ad hoc-ness and lack of coherence in the overall curriculum. But the Director is certainly conscientious and works hard.

Characteristically of Lithuania having become newly open to the outside world, there is an influx of curious visitors and organisations bearing a variety of potential offerings. Inevitably these take up much time and provide the possibility of much prized international travel. It is not always the case that such exertion is directly related to social work or sits within a framework of priorities set by the Centre. Indeed the idea that the Centre establish priorities according to perceived need and available staff and resources is not strongly in place. Like so many such situations, there is a touching eagerness to follow opportunistic possibilities, so that priorities keep shifting and are set from outside.

It is true that where so much is lacking it is hard to turn down offers and difficult to suggest that assistance should be tied into the Centre's agenda and not that of the well-intentioned but self-serving fly-in-and-out potential donors. The attitude to my questioning of this going with the flow is well received but is explained by “yes, we are learning”. Still missing is anything like a Lithuanian Law and Social Provision course for Social Workers.

Our MSW graduates who are doing some of the teaching are not content with the style of leadership which leaves much in the air and uncertain implementation of what has been decided. They are also burdened with motley courses unrelated to social work to get a PhD in order to teach at all and are in the meantime exploited by the University for little pay with uncertain prospects. The university politics are wearying as per usual.

There are also external forces of confusion. The European Union, aiming to have Lithuania and the East share educational qualifications with Western Europe, has driven the Ministry of Education to try to “standardise”. This means that overall education curricula are being revised but little or no attention is given to the particular nature of social work learning and teaching. Not that Western Europe's social work organisations are giving strong and measured assistance. There is a growing number of institutions, especially in Scandinavia, who are seeking a nod of OK from Lithuania to find funding to do what Scandinavia imagines would be helpful. This includes a strong predilection for financing (much welcomed no doubt by travel

agents and air lines) for short-term student and staff exchanges. The recent conferences I have attended demonstrate how dismal is the thinking.

However, the lure of money means that the idea of social work is definitely IN in Lithuania, a mixed blessing. Pressures from outside and uncoordinated offers of “help” and programmes are bursting out all over. As the early attempt to set up a nation-wide Association of Schools of Social Work, which might have had a professional say, was sabotaged, there is no coherent voice other than those warmed close by the fire in Vilnius. Government in the capital, Vilnius (102 kms from Kaunas and light years away from Lithuania), and through it the municipalities, are much concerned with quick fixes for degrees for currently in-post Soviet-era personnel, by time-serving qualification “courses”. Disturbingly, until now our Centre at the University has had no on-going role in relation to the social services or the “training” activities in the Municipality or the County of Kaunas.

Generally, practice and field work are unavailable and thought to be unnecessary (our early experience with Municipality in-post students was disastrous). Thus at Vytautas Magnus we now have dreamed up for undergraduate students a social work option for them to take in their third and fourth year. Now in '99, 13 such students arrive at the Centre and next year and thereafter they will be added to by 50 a year! The MSW has 25 rising to 30 each year, so that by 2001 there will be a total of 160?

What then is to be done about field placements? What will be the employment opportunities and the situation in relation to the MSW, when a student has a bachelor degree in social work, which will undoubtedly be seen as a qualification? Field work is not properly recognised or organised anywhere else in Lithuania on the scale that is required at the Centre. Even at the Centre the field programme is lame, despite the field oriented efforts of one and a half graduate staff. By their reckoning there are currently only five satisfactory field placements. Reinforcement from some of the best graduates is not possible as they are sucked into the pseudo-academia of their Ph.D. and their limited practice experience and orientation are superseded. The influence and required impact on establishing and improving upon a social work presence in existing locations and innovating new services are not possible because of the insufficient staff resources of the Centre. I spent little time on this occasion involving myself with outside services, government and international agencies, not altogether because I had three programmes to teach, but because I felt that unless there were active follow-up, it made no sense to stir things further.

I also travelled less and never went to Vilnius at all.....

In my teaching I approach Social Development by examining students' experience of the field agencies in which they have been working for a year. This circumvents much didactic abstract theory and instead extracts and constructs from the basis of their recognisable Lithuanian reality. It also serves to give some back-up to field supervision beyond that which can currently be provided. I try to get them to identify what needs to be done by social workers in collaboration with appropriate others - not necessarily currently their responsibility while students - at the “micro” agency level, the “mezzo” inter-agency/network level, and the “macro”

national/international level. This should provide a working agenda for future field assignments, but I have had very limited success in establishing this kind of continuity so far. At the end of my course they are asked to look at the Centre itself and do a similar analysis.

The second-year students have confided that from their perspective there is a degree of repetition and particularly that the graduates who give classes offer a version of what has already been gone over, and add little of their own. What is troubling me is that the enthusiasm of this first group of Bachelors and the starting first-year Masters is not to be found among the present second year. What has happened to them, and what have we done or not done? They are certainly less fun!

Achievement?

Perhaps in these paragraphs I seem to have concentrated on the half empty glass rather than the half full. It is an achievement that the programme survives at all. There are many good people and improved personal relationships with the Social Science faculty and the University itself, who although thinking of us as an odd lot, do begin to listen. A bright spot is that under my colleagues' efforts the MSW theses are reflecting more of a practice-based content than the erstwhile statistics-of-anything as a concept of academic scientifically acceptable logic. There is to be a new attempt to get Klaipeda and Vilnius University people together for some co-ordinated thinking.

Overall, I think we lost momentum and have nowhere near achieved the over-grand hopes I nursed for really structuring our work at our Centre in order to influence the fundamental social in the developments in Lithuania (doing it "different", which was the way I was invited in the first place).

Nevertheless, it has been a worthwhile endeavour professionally and personally. The students always give one a good feeling and even express pleasure, appreciation, and a little loving beyond the exaggerated elitist respect of the University culture. For example, one student said, "I thought I would be brave and come for advice on my thesis". This despite what I believe to be my informality, availability, and lack of status posturing. She subsequently confided that she had been in an undergraduate language class some four years back when I had been asked by the teacher to come and speak English English and this had determined her to become a social worker. What a responsibility I must answer for!

Another very bright young women student, an active feminist (conspicuously carrying around the book Men are from Mars, Women from Venus) had a programme on Lithuanian television. She was always well-dressed, spoke very good English, having had opportunities to travel denied to most others, and sailed through her studies in a somewhat slapdash manner. She was mortified when I graded her well below her expectations and made an appointment to talk out her difficulties in making up her mind about her future in social work (not too enthusiastic); an American wanted to marry her but this would mean going to live in Chicago, she was much rooted in Lithuania and had an elderly mother that she could not easily leave alone. I let her talk it out and weigh up the prospects for herself.

I received an e-mail: "David, hope all is going well with you. Just wanted to say Hi from Chicago and. that I'll never forget your lectures and conversations we had. Thanks a lot! Lots of love". I answered: "I guess you decided. Best of good fortune. Should you need, I have a good friend and colleague in Chicago I could put in touch with you." She replied: "Decision. To be honest, still hesitating...!" Regarding contact with my good friend in Chicago, "Would appreciate it very much! Thanks a lot".

This year the young psychiatrist who had been interpreting for me for some time was no longer available and one of the graduates who was doing odd jobs took her place. She had seen that the Municipality was advertising for a chief of their social service department. Already in place was a graduate from the sociology department and it was possible that the Municipality was just going through the ritual of advertising. Our graduate was uncertain of herself and somewhat reluctant as the probability of some work at the Centre was in the offing. She talked out her reluctance to apply and to be rejected but I encouraged her, reminding her of how she had shown her capacities in other situations where she had had much self-doubt. She gave it much thought and decided she would apply.

Just now I heard from her as follows: "Dear David, I got the job... You were right. It was worth trying. Now everybody in University congratulates me with a hint of surprise. I have to confess that I feel rather funny now. I will start my new job next Tuesday. I will send to you a letter from there, if they have an e-mail. When I think about this new position, I realise how much help I will need from all of you. I think we will be able to talk more about the information centre now (what do you think?)"

The Information Centre is an ambition I have had for the past six years and have been urging the Municipality to set up along with the non-governmental organisations as a demonstration. It might well be that now at last we have a direct opportunity to do all kinds of things from the Centre for the whole city!

It seems that the funds which have financed my work at the Centre are coming to an end. Before I returned home I received a citation from the University and a framed one from the Archbishop! "...Be assured that you will be remembered by those whose lives you have influenced..." Assurances have been given that some project funding will be sought from who knows where for my return. But after the memorial tone of my ecclesiastical citation we shall have to wait and see.

2000

"Government Organisations now head for crises zones as fast as journalists do; a war, a flood, refugees, a dodgy election even a world trade conference will draw them like a honey pot..... In Kosovo itself the ground is now thick with foreign groups competing to foster democracy, build homes, and proffer goods and services".

From my own experience, our professionals are not to be much found in such situations nor do I see our learning from them embodied in our teaching. My new article, "Whither International Social Work 2000?", addresses such issues as:

How is it that the social work profession that professes an international relevance has failed to appear on these scenes in such numbers as to critically influence the humanitarian organizations in regard to people-centred bottom-up assistance and self-determined and directed development processes?

Can we still think of ourselves as being committed to such values as are emblazoned in the rhetoric of our national and international social work organizations?

Fascinatingly, one reviewer more or less advised the trashing of my article, another that it become the subject matter and lead article of a special issue of the journal. No middle ground! The article has been accepted and awaits publication.

Last year in Lithuania I unexpectedly was formally presented with a plaque from the university and a framed citation of thanks and gratitude from the Archbishop. I was inclined to interpret the sentiments expressed and the formality as perhaps a memorial ceremony. Later, having been told sadly that there was no longer money to be found for my poor token expenses, I was at the last minute invited to a conference to be held in Kaunas and to spend some of my usual time in teaching once again.

This time I found myself provided with housing in unexpected splendour. It was my twelfth different location in Kaunas, where I had gradually climbed from penury to up-market. But now I was a bit embarrassed to invite Lithuanian friends, as the relative luxury and space I had been given contrasted so startlingly with where most locals reside. Having arrived from a 5am start from Geneva, I went down for some household shopping opposite in the Old Town and failed on my return to be able to spring the last of the 15 turns of the keys to the three doors. My previous struggle with Lithuanian locks was already a saga in its own right. It was dark, wet, and bleak outside. I found myself on the stairs whimpering with frustration and tiredness, and of course had left my phone numbers inside. In desperation, I thought I could remember where a former student lived. She was not home but her husband welcomed me with his incomprehensible accented French, even worse than mine. However, their small son made me feel at home while I waited, by producing an English language booklet that described in appalling detail the bloodthirsty mottoes of the Lithuanian platoons and brigades set up at the time of Liberation. A bizarre return to Kaunas!

As usual, when rescue came, the key turned in the lock immediately and reinforced the symbolic legend of Drucker's recurring inability to unlock the mysterious barriers to getting inside Lithuania. I am thinking of field practice at the local prison to see if a burglar can teach me some entering skills. Ah well, thereafter all was well, I fed the cat downstairs that had adopted me and suffered CNN news and the Olympics on television!. (The whole of Lithuania came to a standstill as they watched how their team all but beat the USA at basketball.)

Suddenly here in Kaunas was this relatively instant conference. It appeared to me that speakers seemed to have been asked to lecture on apparently whatever they thought might be appropriate and did their best, but with discussion time glaringly inadequate to see whether what was presented had any meaningful resonance in the audience and for application. What it had to do with Lithuania and its situation was unfathomable. The great triumph seemed to be that the conference had been sponsored jointly by the University, the Technical University and the municipality, who usually were somewhat antagonistic to each other. (I suppose ECSPRESS had found unexpected European Union money for sexy countries of the former Soviet Union).

Ironically a grand reception was held in the baroque cake-like Town Hall in the very room where the fascinating spectacle of conveyer belt weddings takes place on Saturday mornings every 20 minutes. Ours was a strange and opulent union. A chamber quartet and a veritable banquet and drinks were laid on, but as far as I can discern not even a honeymoon, let alone on-going co-habitation, was in the minds of those engrossed and consumed by the busy activity and the display.

A host of pleasurable social events and receptions had also been provided, but no arrangements had been made for visiting field agencies. Classes and fieldwork were discontinued for the duration and time and effort were taken up to discuss sending Danish students for fieldwork to Kaunas, where we are seriously handicapped in providing adequate placements for our own students. Later brand-new bachelor student entrants were asked: "Who would like to go to Sweden for two weeks?". "It will give them new ideas to bring back." This despite our not knowing what ideas they would take with them or their capacity for perception and discernment in a foreign and affluent culture. Indeed, student exchange arranging seems to be one of the prides (and status perks?) of some of the British, Norwegian, Dutch, German and Swede academics. All this within the Lithuanian ambience of not being able to absorb or utilise the ideas that are already around....

One happy conference-goer (accommodated in the comfortable Neris Hotel and having walked along Laisves Aleija ("Freedom Way bears comparison with the Champs Elysées and Unter den Linden", says the blurb) with its burgeoning constantly changing expensive shop fronts, amazing number of unaffordable shoe shops (presumably Lithuania is populated by human centipedes), exotic cosmetics and designer optician stores), recited a litany of other countries he had visited and was moved to myopically praise Lithuania for its lack of beggars and its vigorous economic appearance. Oh cynical me, who actually enjoyed much of the partying, but can't quite disentangle it from the nagging awareness of students having to withdraw because they are not being funded with the necessary \$360 a year support, not to mention the miserably paid professionals and no funds for fieldwork or for supervisors.

Generally in the Lithuanian situation there is little setting of priorities and staying within them. There is an enchantment and magic in the expectation that those coming from outside, who "have project, will travel", will know best. It results in pretty flowers that are doomed to wilt, having no roots, and for which anyway there is no appropriate soil or climate prepared to receive them.

There is also the humiliation of being on the receiving end with a tin cup and smiling, while raging inwardly at the well- provided-for passers-by and their largesse. In Lithuania, as in the world over, it is very very rare to respond appropriately to well-meaning donors who come, consciously or otherwise, with their own agenda. Never do you hear: "Thank you very much for your kind offer, but could you find your way to assisting us with ...(our own worked-out priorities, plans and needs) ".

It is difficult to begrudge the foreign glitter, especially of offered expensive foreign tours of observation, for those such as in Lithuania, who have had so little opportunity to see the outside and need more or less everything. But a new elitism emerges. Nigerians have a name for them, "The Been-To's". Just one example: A young woman student in Kaunas taking Modern English Literature, mostly early USA, like Faulkner and Irish James Joyce, told me she had been able to take advantage of an offer to study her subject in a university in Japan! (This conversation took place through the thick haze from the many young female smokers. Phillip Morris, having established a big factory in Klaipeda, has logo-dressed Lithuanian blondes with blue-black wigs giving away cigarettes in the restaurants and the bars.) There is also the resentful longing of the "Me too's" who are not selected and the mindless aping of the worst of what goes for Western Kultur, which includes the internecine pettiness and pretensions of academia.

There is the instant response to whatever happens to fall literally from the sky (i.e. 35,000ft, from donors flying in). (A silly simple example: staff wearing white coats in a socially innovative institution, the "Generation House", set up to give unmarried mothers an opportunity for 12 months to sort out themselves and their future, while at the same time housing old people in an attempt to set up mutual caring of a grandparental kind. True, no stethoscopes peeking out of the pockets of the white coats, but in terms of what I teach as scenery in the theatre of social work, the medical message is unmistakable. "It helps the staff to keep their own clothes clean", says one of our very good graduates now running the show. "Blue, Red, Floral would not serve the purpose?" I ask. "They were donated, you see." "Ah, if someone donated funny hats, would the staff be wearing them?" Laughter of recognition rather than feelings of attack, I think, as they know me well). "How much would it cost to buy dyes?". "You know, we have never really thought about it". Later, at a meeting at the University, they and I laughed some more, some of it this time at my British eccentricity in the hallowed academic halls. The students give one hope in a very gray atmosphere.

Meanwhile another of our graduate students, D, a very committed Lithuania nun, returned from Loyola in the USA (students less attached than she clearly would not have come home again) "defends" her doctoral thesis. It is based on Lithuanian immigration in the Chicago

area. (Interesting distinction of motivation and adaptation between earlier migration and the more recent, and also between the mind-set of male and female migrants). This was brutally attacked by professors who insist that the dearth of statistical data rendered the material hopelessly "unscientific".

D (who had been a student of mine and whom I met up with again when I was in Chicago a couple of years ago) was stoutly defended by her thesis supervisor, a professor out of Loyola. Fortunately and happily present was a very small group prepared grudgingly to accept concepts of qualitative research. (Lithuania being a largely Catholic country, I cannot help thinking of the first book of Genesis, something like: "Darkness and chaos moved across the waters, and the Lord said 'let there be light', and there was light, and he saw that it was good!" Not a statistic in sight and the first piece of recorded qualitative research in history. I used this oddball reference once before when I wrote "People First, water and sanitation later" for WHO). But there is now a problem of actually hiring D despite the insistence that only those with doctorates are allowed to teach, and the rarity of such a social work and modern- oriented teacher as she. Worse, R, an outstanding graduate who has written her thesis based on her work here in Lithuania with deaf children and the problems and accommodation made by their parents, can find no place in the teaching at our Centre in the University. Mainly a matter of politics, personalities and, of course, money. Although God knows the staff are paid so little.

At staff meetings with dedicated, unpaid, overworked and weary dwindling numbers of supervisors, issues of an administrative kind arose once more. I recalled that I had written down in memos, way back in ancient 1994, the decisions, guidelines and rules agreed upon earlier on the self-same issues. I later did an archaeological dig among my diskettes and resurrected relevant material, and hope they will become frequently visited sites. The lack of continuity and building upon foundations is endemic. I must not continue this litany of the difficulties, there are good and hopeful things, but one fears, as the poet says: "Things fall apart, the Centre will not hold".

2002

Soon after my arrival in Czech Brno I received a very late request to come to a meeting in Kaunas. I agreed to attend for what I understood was a review of their first ten years and where the programme should plan to go now. "The time has come to evaluate the development of the VDU Centre and the profession". Well, I am the kind who protests that the glass is half empty and perhaps am not given to too much appreciation of the half full. I produced a paper for the discussion,¹ and discovered that the expected highly focussed meeting of us old hands had grown to become a large conference with continual addition of subjects and something/anything for everyone. Reasonable pride in such a programme slid over into much self-congratulation, glorification and advertisement by relative late-comers to its establishment. The conference provided little of "review", "evaluation", "outcome" or "impact", and climaxed without outlining anything concerning where the programme still needs to go and planning its future goals and direction.

¹"The search for compatibility between the cultures of academia and social work in producing practitioners in the context of a social development mission, and devising effective professional organisational linkage from social work experience to macro social policy issues", D. Drucker, 2002.

I was astonished to find that in the two years I have been absent from my 1994/2000 stint, large sums of money from somewhere had transformed the department's (now an "Institute") facilities in luxurious proportions by any standards. There has been an impressive restructuring of the building, new modern furniture and equipment. In contrast there was too little in the way of resources and funding for staff to support and supervise practice. Practice is where fundamental learning takes place, in the social reality outside of classrooms. It is in the laboratory of society that students come face to face in experiencing first-hand what ails Lithuania.

The main drag, Laisves Aileea, has also changed astonishingly, now with a new generation of superimposed fancy shop fronts (replacing the previous round of fancy shop fronts) and filled with luxury goods which I can't imagine anyone being able to afford. An unbelievable number of very expensive shoe shops have been spawned, along with cosmetic stores (money laundering devices for the Mafiosi?), all blatantly unrelated to the relative neglect of the bleak outer ring of the city.

My ex-student Daljia, now on the staff, managed to keep my brutal evaluation technique on the programme despite attempts to slide it away. ("Write yourself a letter ...what I am now going to do and implement when I get back to my job ...". In six or eight months time there will be a "Did you ?" follow-up) I have agreed to work co-jointly on a paper when, and if, and if not, the responses come in. She tells me that at least the students enjoyed and welcomed the idea. It was good to see some of our graduates struggling with the internal and external situation; the best presentation came from Ramuna on the situation of the burgeoning Social Work Schools' free-for-all uncoordinated chaos in Lithuania. The educational confusion is being added to by the replacement of our earlier USA personnel by an influx of Scandinavian donors; the outer rumblings of the European Union threatened imposition of common standards; and the newly concocted Western panacea of "evidence-based social work". It was, of course, good to meet up with our American and Lithuanian colleagues again (the best part of most conferences) and the sense of homecoming and welcome was heart-warming.