

Dear ladies,

We are living in a modern society. We already have forgotten the times when the concepts WOMAN and POLITICS had been completely separated no matter that even in ancient Greece there were doubts about this dogma. Actually, in the beginning - with a false smile. A classical subject for comedies revealed by Greeks was „Women in Power“. Do you remember Aristophanes and his plays „A Woman in a Nation Meeting“ and „Lisistrata“?

The history of the Old Testament had been also developed by women or with their assistance. There appeared Delilah, having cut Samson's hair, and Judith – a figure of a winner.

Jeanne d'Arc - guided by Lord, the fox like emperor's favourite marquise de Pompadour and finally, „Freedom with Priggish Cap“ painted by Delacroix – the beloved figure of the French nation – these are images of European „womanlike“ politics.

Nevertheless, the historical excursus only gives us the proof that the actual politician had always been a man, as if naturally awarded by strength and power by predestination.

However we, Lithuanians, should be very grateful to our great-grandmothers who contributed a lot to the establishment of equal rights between men and women in the State Constitution of November 2, 1918, at the same time acquiring the equal rights to take part in elections and to be elected into structures of the State power.

In 1945 our country suffered a disaster – we were occupied by the Soviet Union. All democratic processes had been stopped. In the Soviet Union a propagandist burble was blowing out about unprecedented rights and freedoms for women, about the care for them. However during the whole period of the soviet regime there had not been any women in the highest structure of power of the occupied country – in the Political Bureau. At the same time there were plenty of women pulling ploughs in collective fields, carrying bricks at construction sites, digging trenches and breaking pavements on streets with heavy crowbars. More than often women of the soviet elite were taking part in politics only as wives of power men supporting their spouses on their way for higher positions.

After the restoration of independency of Lithuania, after the re-establishment of democratic management women acquired the possibility to make a career in politics and in governing the State.

Here I would like to mention three main points why we, women, have entered the struggle for elections. They are the following:

- benefit for the State
- benefit for women
- and, finally, women's right and duty to take part in matters of governing their State.

I have to admit that the presence of women in politics in Lithuania, same as in many European countries, still remains rather complicated due to a stereotypical attitude to the sex. Politics has always been considered as a matter of men, that is why we, women, have to do much more than men in order to be noticed and duly evaluated. We must constantly be active proving our abilities and competence.

It is still more difficult to a woman to coordinate career and care for the family than to a man. A part of women with stereotypical way of thinking do not vote for women during elections to the Parliament or to City Councils because the common view to a woman as to "a weaker sex" still remains unchanged in the mentality of the nation.

At the same time I wouldn't like you to be thinking about Lithuania as about a sad citadel of patriarchy. Women of today in Lithuania are more educated than men. My native town Alytus takes the second position after our capital Vilnius in the sphere of education of inhabitants. Women – graduates from universities – make 64 percent of the total number of graduates in Alytus.

At the moment women make 25 percent of the total number of members at Alytus City Council. This result is a little bit higher than in the whole Parliament of Lithuania. However due to a preliminary shaped image of a "good mother" in politics we, Lithuanian women, have a rather limited choice for the spheres of political activities. More than often we are pushed to the social or educational spheres. We enter politics through the leaders of parties, and mostly men are the leaders. They take over the matters of economics, domestic and foreign politics, because their slogan is: "Politics – that is war, hunting and sports – all together". Men say: "In war - as in war..." (A la guerre Comme a la guerre). And women do not like war...

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Women-politicians consider that it is very important to strive for goals and implement the set targets. Nevertheless – and it is rather different from the position of the majority of men – we women consider the means of striving for goals to be of great importance as well. As soon as we start talking about moral politics – men would try to convince us that images usually win in elections, and not political programmes. For this reason we might expect to win if we choose the image of "a

good mother” or “a care taker”, whilst men possess a lot of images: “a warrior”, “a fighter for truth”, “macho”, “don Juan”, etc. Values, ideas, programmes and at the same time – democracy – as if are stepping back into a shadow, giving way to a “journalistic” image of a politician: his sportsman-like body, his properties (houses, palaces, planes, yachts, cars, motorbikes...) Besides, the Lithuanian society is a fan of the slow nostalgia for “a hard leader”.

It is like a paradox. However this depressive longing for “a hard leader” and “a saver” has opened the possibility for strong women to come to power in a democratic way. This year we have 3 outstanding ladies in Lithuania: Dalia Grybauskaitė was elected the President of Lithuanian Republic, Rasa Juknevičienė – the Minister of State Defence and Irena Degutienė – the Speaker of Lithuanian Parliament.

In our country this might be considered not only as an evolutionary event – it is more likely a revolutionary event. Our women have become acknowledged and evaluated not as to their out-looking, rather as to their actual values and characteristics: competence, spiritual power, not-deniable logics. These are the characteristic features that correspond mostly to expectation of the nation and individual voters.

When entering the political activities in 1994 I also understood that in order to become a leader I should fight against my nature and – even – against the certain opposition of the society. I was thinking then: should I also learn and start to be fox-like as the most of men do?

Now I can see that is necessary to be neither a woman-like, nor a man-like. Sometimes it is extremely difficult to harmonise myself between positions of “a good mummy” and a “hard leader”, however I am trying to do my best in order to be guided by my own principles and experience.

Dear Ladies,

From here I would stop reading the report of Mrs. Rima Rakauskienė as it was prepared by her and would like to tell a few words about her personality and her career. It is a pretty good example what strong women can.

In 1995 Rima Rakauskienė entered the ZONTA club in Alytus. She said that being in ZONTA she understood that women’s organisations were giving to women a possibility to be closer to politics; they allowed us to approach to social processes and the life of our State. Work in women’s organisations contributes to developing characteristics of a leader within a personality.

In 1999 she was elected the President of Alytus ZONTA Club. The same year she was elected the Vice-president of Lithuanian women-conservatives. Being involved

into these social activities she learned how to be more organised and resolute, to take decisions that sometimes were not popular, how to plan her time.

In the same year she was elected into Alytus City Council first time. During the first cadence she had been just an ordinary member of the Council. In the end of 2002 she was elected into City Council again and became a Chairwoman of the Committee for Culture and Sports. In the third cadence - starting from 2007 - she was elected as a Vice-Meyer being responsible for economics, investments and inner administration.

At the same time and in the same year 2007 she was elected the Leader of Alytus Branch of the Conservative Party of Lithuania. She said that she had been working rather long before members of the Party gave her their trust. And she was sure that her career would have been quite different if she had not acquired the valuable experience of social activities in ZONTA “university”. She was very grateful to Zonta Organization.

Dear Zontians,

Let's love ourselves, let's work and educate ourselves, let's fight for our rights and equal possibilities! Only then everything would go ahead. I believe that some day women in Lithuania will achieve as good results in politics as our Scandinavian colleagues. The most important thing is not to be subordinated to the will and power of strangers.

It is not a secret that men know how to make use of their contacts; they can better escalate their actual and supposed deeds. Like kids, they need attention - as air. Let them be significant by their existence, by their chosen images. And we, women, - every day and with great patience - let's strive for our set goal: to change life for better, to make good jobs, to make life easier both to us and other people, to make their thoughts brighter.

I wish you all the best!!!!