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BALTIC NEWS

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Newsletter of the Help the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Peoples Association (HELLP) - P.O. Box 272, Sandy Bay, Tas. 7005 (Australia).

Vol. I, No. 1.

March 1, 1975.

* * * "HELLP" COMES TO TASMANIA * * *

During the past few months, the name of HELLP has been linked with number of public events in Southern Tasmania:

- * An ecumenical service of prayer in St. Mary's Cathedral, Hobart on 18th November, 1974, - when the representatives of nine Churches prayed for persecuted Christians in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The Anglican Bishop of Tasmania, Dr. R. Davies, was among the participants. The service was led by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Hobart, Dr. G. Young.
- * A public meeting in Franklin Square, Hobart, on 5th December, 1974 - at which the Hon. B.K. Miller, Minister for Tourism and Immigration and Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council of Tasmania, was the principal speaker. All present deplored the continuing acts of tyranny in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It was resolved to ask the Prime Minister of Australia (Mr. E.G. Whitlam) to press for immediate restoration of civil liberties in the Baltic States; and for the release of five Lithuanian prisoners of conscience.
- * Stalls in Salamanca Market, selling Baltic cakes, handcrafts and general items (on 23rd and 30th November, 1974). More than 1,000 copies of recipes for "Pirags" and other Baltic dishes were given away, free of charge.
- * A silent demonstration against the "sellout" of the Baltic States to Russia, during Mr Whitlam's last visit to Hobart, on Saturday 15th February, 1975.

What is HELLP?

HELLP is an abbreviation for: "Help the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Peoples" Association. Formed in Hobart in September, 1974, HELLP Association is non-denominational and non-party political. The Association's objectives are to take the necessary action -

- (1) to make all people aware of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian nations' continuing struggle for survival and self-determination; and
- (2) to press for a reversal of the Australian Government's recognition of Russian sovereignty over Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Membership is open to anyone who agrees with the objectives of HELLP Association and pledges not to recognize Russian sovereignty over Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. There are no membership or joining fees; for its running expenses, the Association relies on voluntary donations and on income from social functions (such as dances).

Don't miss the...

* * * BALTIC DANCE * * *

Saturday March 15, 1975 - Polish Hall - see next page for details.

* * * COMING EVENTS. * * *

All members and friends of HELLP Association are asked to support and participate in, the following events:

Saturday 8th March, 1975, 8.30a.m.- 1.0 p.m.:

SALAMANCA MARKET (Stall No.43)

HELLP Association will run Stall No.43 (just past the Band Stand) on Saturday 8th March, 1975, from 8.30 a.m. to 1.0 p.m.

The aim is to show and sell articles of national interest from the people of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, to the Australian public as well as the things that are always of interest on selling stall.

Donations of cakes, embroidery, weaving, other handcrafts, books, records and similar articles will be much appreciated.

You may bring your donations to the stall (a) before 8.30 a.m.; or (b) at any time during the morning; or (c) ring one of the organisers and have your donations collected from your home:

Mr & Mrs Celmins 72 5780

Mr J. Paskevicius 72 6360

Mrs Kruup 278726

Mr Al Taskunas 25 2505

Saturday 15th March, 1975, 8.30 p.m. - 1.0 a.m.:

BALTIC DANCE

This season's first Baltic Dance will be held in the Polish Hall (on the corner of Augusta and Main Roads, New Town), on Saturday 15th March, 1975, from 8.30 p.m. to 1.0 a.m. All welcome.

Bring your own refreshments. A good band, hot supper and other usual attractions.

For further information and table bookings, please telephone:

Mr. A. Celmins 72 5780

Mr. J. Paskevicius 72 6360

Mr. Alex. Kantvilas 23 6836

March/April, 1975 (date to be announced later):

PUBLIC LECTURE

Emeritus Professor E. Dunsdorfs, of the University of Melbourne, will visit Hobart in the near future. He will deliver a public lecture on "Australia and the Baltic States".

Professor Dunsdorfs is the author of the book, The Baltic Dilemma to be published this year by Robert Speller and Sons, New York. The 320-page book deals with the de jure recognition of the incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union, by Australia.

Friday 25th April, 1975:

ANZAC DAY.

Let us remember, with respect and gratitude, the sacrifice made by those men and women who so willingly accepted the call to arms - in defence of Australia and the preservation of freedom throughout the world.

The Tragedy of The Baltic States



14.6.41

The 14th June marks the anniversary of one of the most vicious crimes against humanity in modern history - the forced deportation, in one night, of about 40,000 Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians to slave labour camps in Soviet Russia. To the Baltic people all over the world, it is a day of mourning and sorrow, because almost every one of them suffered the loss of a relative or friend. Many of them found afterwards that their own names were on the lists of deportees. The Baltic people's only crime was that they lived in an area wanted by the Russians.

The 40,000 deported on 14th June, 1941 were only a small fraction of the hundreds of thousands of Baltic victims. In the first year of the Russian occupation alone (from June 1940 to June 1941), the population of the Baltic States was reduced by about 150,000. There were later waves of deportations and the 1948-49 period is reported to have been worse than 1940 - 41.¹ Mass arrests continued to take place as late as 1954.



*Moscow, August 23, 1939
(one week before the
start of World War II):
Soviet Foreign Commissar
Molotov signs the Stalin-
Hitler pact of friend-
ship and non-aggression,
as Premier Stalin and
Hitler's Foreign Minister,
Ribbentropp, look on.*

*This agreement sealed
the fate of the Baltic
Republics.*

Even now, the peoples of the Baltic States are being subjected to a form of genocide which is subtler, but, in the long run, may prove to be more effective. Many Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians are being denied opportunities in employment and housing in their own countries and are thus forced to seek work in remote parts of Soviet Russia. At the same time, new industries are being established and worker's accommodation is built in the Baltic States which is only available to the Russians.

While everywhere else in the world colonialism is being condemned, the Russians are engaging in the most blatant form of colonisation: economic exploitation of subjected people and deliberate destruction of their national identity.

That is why this day is still remembered by all Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians, particularly those who still suffer the consequences of the events which are symbolised by the tragedy of 14th June, 1941.

RUSSIAN COLONIZATION POLICIES

It is the declared purpose of the Russians to wipe out national differences, chiefly the linguistic ones. A culture common to all Soviet people shall develop, which encourages the general knowledge of the Russian language as a common language for the co-operation of all peoples of the U.S.S.R. Thus Russian should become the second mother tongue of all non-Russians and serve to pave the way for the disappearance of non-Russian cultures and traditions. The permanent contact should thereafter lead to final merger of the non-Russian peoples.²

In practice, Russian colonization is designed to gradually change the national composition of the non-Russian republics and to turn the native people into a minority in their own countries.

This is achieved by various means of which the following are the most effective: Russian Communist Party officers and administrative civil servants are permanently stationed in these countries in order to carry out political supervision over the non-Russians. Soviet military forces (particularly officers and their families) are overwhelmingly Russian. This is meant to strengthen security in border territories.

Russian colonization is encouraged by rapid industrialization. This is carried out by the Central Ministry of Industry in Moscow, which decides on the establishment of any new factory in the various republics. The Ministry then appoints the plant managers and technical staff - mostly Russians. Workers are also transferred from Russia to the new factories and their families follow soon after. Local people usually form only a small part of the work force. This is partly because Moscow often builds industries that are not essential to the economy of the republic in which it is situated. The result of this systematic channelling of Russian workers to non-Russian factories is that many non-Russian towns and cities have predominantly Russian population. This is particularly noticeable in the Baltic States and the Ukraine, in cities such as Tallin, Riga, and Kiev.

In some non-Russian republics, particularly in the Baltic area, special circumstances play an important part; in these areas the standard of living is much higher than in other republics. The atmosphere and way of life is West-European. They are often referred to by Russians as "Soviet foreign countries". They attract many Russians who move into the Baltic area on their own initiative. Apart from the huge Russian occupation army which is stationed in the Baltic States, at least 1,000,000 civilian Russians have settled in these small countries. The result of this mass colonization is reflected in the 1970 census³:

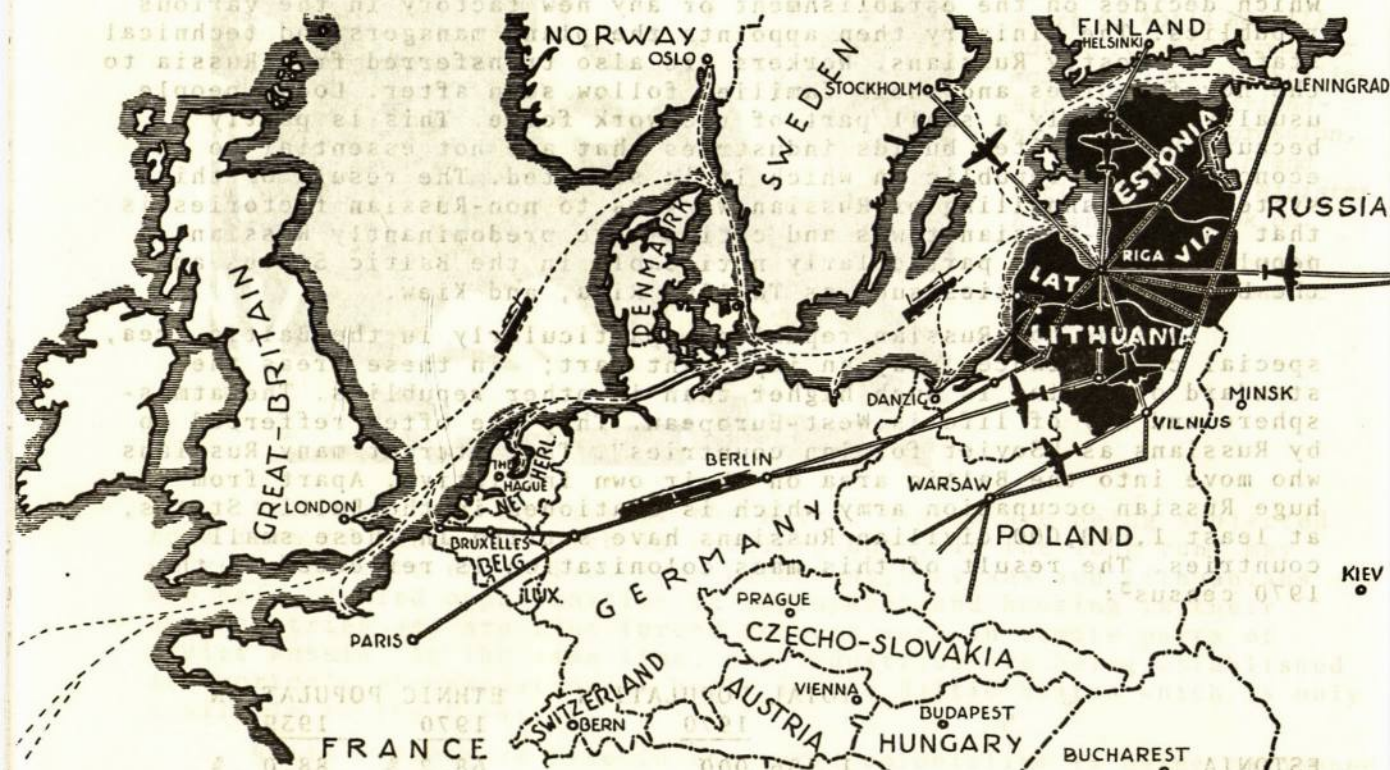
	TOTAL POPULATION 1970	ETHNIC POPULATION	
		1970	1939
ESTONIA	1,356,000	68.2 %	88.0 %
LATVIA	2,364,000	56.8 %	76.0 %
LITHUANIA	3,128,000	80.1 %	85.0 %

If this trend continues unabated, it will lead to the situation that exists in Soviet Karelia, which the Russians captured from Finland in 1939. The population in this area today comprises only 12 % Karelians.

DIFFERENT FROM THE RUSSIANS

The Baltic peoples have their own distinctive traditions, a highly developed national consciousness and rich and varied national cultures. The Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians have lived on the east coast of the Baltic Sea for at least two thousand years. The Estonians belong to the Finno-Ugric group of nations. The Latvians and Lithuanians are the only surviving members of the Baltic branch of the Indo-European group. All three nations are thus ethnologically distinct from both the Slavonic and Germanic races. They are Western in their ideals, culture and way of life. The Soviet system is as strange to them as it is to the other Western nations. The Baltic people are Christians: the Estonians are almost entirely Protestant, Latvians are predominantly Protestant and Lithuanians are mainly Catholics.

The distinctive cultural features of the Baltic people are a living reminder of centuries of independence and greatness. During the Middle Ages, the Kingdom of Lithuania extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea. A part of Latvia, the Grand Duchy of Courland, possessed a considerable merchant fleet and bought territories in Gambia and the island of Tobago. However, the lands situated in such a strategic position on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea became the target of the more powerful nations, both to their west and east. The Baltic countries were the battleground of many campaigns, until they were all taken over by the Russian Empire by 1795. There were many uprisings against the Russian rule during the 19th century, culminating in the revolution of 1905.



This map of Europe in 1938 shows the main transport routes to, and from, the three Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania.

In 1918, all three countries regained their independence. They secured it only after long and hard fighting against the German and Russian armies. Fighting continued until 1920, when peace treaties were signed between the Baltic States and Soviet Russia. These treaties expressly said that: "Soviet Russia unreservedly recognises the independence and sovereignty of the State of (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and renounces voluntarily and forever all sovereign rights possessed by Russia over the (Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian) people and territory". The Baltic States were recognised "de jure" by the supreme Council of the Allies and were admitted into the League of Nations in 1921-22. The Baltic States had only been subjected to Russian rule for 123 years before independence and by present day standards this hardly constitutes the basis for any claim that the Baltic States belonged to the Russians and this has been acknowledged by the Russians themselves. There are many countries in various parts of the world which are making legitimate claims to independence after much longer periods under foreign rule.

PROGRESS DURING INDEPENDENCE

During the years of their independence (1918 - 1940), the peoples of the Baltic States made rapid progress in every sphere of activity. Agricultural and industrial development and expanding foreign trade increased national prosperity. By 1938, the Baltic countries and Finland shared 1.25% of the world trade, while the giant Soviet Union had only 1.1% of the total international trade⁵. Progressive social security legislation provided for the care of the children, the unemployed and the sick. Education was free and the number of schools, teachers and pupils rose sharply. The Baltic States ranked at the top among all European countries in the proportion of students receiving tertiary education; and they ranked 8th in the number of students attending secondary schools.

Baltic prosperity was reflected in the fact that the national debt of their respective governments was the lowest per head of population in Europe.⁶ During these years of independence, relations with Soviet Russia gradually improved. Agreements concerning the peaceful settlement of frontier conflicts were signed. Bi-lateral non-aggression pacts were concluded and good neighbourly relations thus seemed to be firmly established.



Latvian
national dress.

THE NAZI - SOVIET PACT

A new situation was created when, on 23rd August 1939, the Ribbentrop - Molotov Pact was signed between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, dividing Eastern Europe between them. The consequences of this Hitler - Stalin agreement were tremendous. Germany attacked Poland a week later, thus starting the Second World War. Soviet Russia proceeded almost immediately to put into effect her plan for the occupation of the Baltic States. By military threats the Russians forced the Governments of the Baltic States to sign pacts of "mutual assistance" with them, which provided for the establishment of certain military bases in the three countries. The Russians solemnly pledged to respect the independence of the Baltic States. In a speech on 31st October 1939, Molotov said: "The pacts with the Baltic States in no way imply the intrusion of the Soviet Union in the internal affairs of Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania, as some foreign interests are trying to have it believed. These pacts are inspired by mutual respect for the governmental, social and economic systems of each of the contracting parties... We stand for exact and honest fulfilment of agreements signed by us on a basis of mutuality and declare that foolish prattle of sovjetization of Baltic States is of use merely to our common enemies and to all kinds of anti-Soviet provocateurs."

In spite of these assurances, the forced destruction of independence of the Baltic States was to start a few months later.

DESTRUCTION OF FREEDOM

In June 1940, Russian troops invaded the three Baltic countries which found it impossible to put up any resistance against the invaders, because they already had large contingents of the Russian Army in the newly created bases on their own soil.

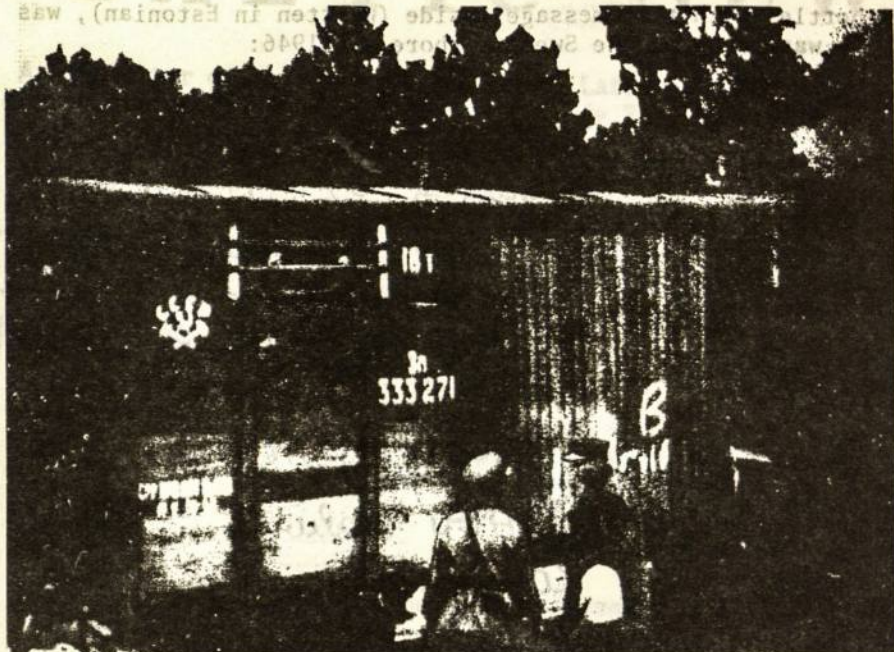
Puppet governments were set up by the infallible Soviet "electoral practice", which provides for only one candidate for each position to be filled. Although voting was not compulsory, the poll was reported to have attracted 99 % of voters. This was achieved by having every voter's "voluntary" attendance recorded in his passport. In the atmosphere of terror and uncertainty, which had been created by arrests and intimidation of political opponents of the new government, the absence of a voter's stamp in one's passport could only mean reprisals at a later date. Even so, the reports of the 99 % poll were more a figment of the Russian propaganda machinery than a fact. Expression of genuine and free will of the Baltic peoples became impossible and the so called "elections" were designed merely to mislead public opinion abroad, by adorning the intended annexation of the three states with a semblance of legality. Throughout the period preceeding the "elections", it was never revealed that the Baltic States were to become part of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, it was stressed that the new "elections" were merely to ensure strict fulfilment of the pacts of mutual assistance. Only when the "elections" were over did the surprised people learn, that they were being incorporated into U.S.S.R.

The consequences of the introduction of the Russian rule in the Baltic States were appalling. Not only was the old political and economic life of these countries ruthlessly destroyed, but the Communist system was forcibly introduced under a reign of terror. Arrests, tortures and executions became an everyday occurrence. Many leading personalities in government, education, arts, religion and the military disappeared without trace. Tens of thousands of other innocent people from all walks of life - farmers, workers, tradesmen, shopkeepers, students and their wives and children - were deported to distant parts of Asia and Arctic Russia, to work under unbearable conditions described by Solzhenitsyn.

Their only crime was to oppose Russia's rape of Lithuania



Political prisoners in Pravieniškiai (Lithuania) were shot down by Russians for failure to embrace the new political faith imposed on them.



One of hundreds of railway cattle-trucks in which 40,000 Balts were deported to Russia on June 14, 1941. Men were separated from their wives and children. The deportees were of all ages, all social groups.

MASS DEPORTATIONS

The extent of the early waves of deportations from the Baltic States is reflected in the following statistics. From Estonia alone, 60,910 people of all classes were deported and 1,800 were executed. In Latvia, more than 37,500 people disappeared (including 8,000 women and 4,000 children) and about 1,700 were tortured and executed. It is estimated that at least 50,000 people were deported from Lithuania and about 3,000 executed.

The head of the family was invariably separated from his wife and children. Children were often taken from their families and put into separate training camps for young communists.⁸ All these inhuman activities culminated in the mass deportations of 14th June 1941. The Russians were so intent on their task of eliminating the Baltic peoples that they used all available rolling stock for this and left most of their military personnel and equipment to the advancing Germans.⁹

According to the most recent information received, the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian peoples are still refusing to give up hope that the great democracies of the West will succeed in inducing Soviet Russia to abandon her unjustified hold on the Baltic States. The Communists have been unable to break the Baltic people's resistance. They have even failed to bring under their influence the younger generation, who was born long after Moscow had destroyed the independence of the Baltic States. The Balts still celebrate, in secret, the Day of Independence and other national days, that are forbidden by their rulers. Baltic crew members of Russian ships visiting Australian ports have spoken openly about their hatred of their Russian masters, the poor living conditions back home and their hopes for freedom. Let us not deprive these people of this mainstay of their existence. Join with the H.E.L.L.P. Association in trying to persuade the Australian government to reverse its de jure recognition of the annexation of the Baltic States by the U.S.S.R.

A bottle, with this message inside (written in Estonian), was washed up on the Swedish shore, in 1946:

Eesti tütar ja pojad välismaal,
Kodumaa tervet Tuld! Änge
tulge tagasi! Änge usunge
bolševike propaganda!
Meie olime hädas! Aidake
meid! Eesti peab elama!

Tallinnas 20 VII 46 a

ELAGU Kalvite
Kange soov!

Translation.

Estonian daughters and sons abroad. Your homeland sends you greetings. Do not come back! Do not believe the Communist propaganda! We are living under terrible conditions! Help us! Estonia must live forever. Tallinn, August 20, 1946. Long live the invincible nation of Kalev (Legendary Estonian hero) We are in grave danger!

REFERENCES:

- (1) SOLZHENITSYN, A.I., The Gulag Archipelago, Collins/Fontana, 1974, pp. 25 and 91.
- (2) The Baltic States, 1940-1972. Stockholm: The Baltic Committee in Scandinavia, 1972, p.112.
- (3) Ibid., p.114.
- (4) REI, August, Nazi-Soviet Conspiracy and the Baltic States. London: Boreas Publishing Co., 1948, pp.26-27.
- (5) The Australian Latvian, Vol.XX, No.957, November 15, 1968, p.2.
- (6) KALNINS, K., Do You Know that Latvia...? Ludwigsburg: Eichhorn Druckerei, pp.25, 29, 53.
- (7) REI, op. cit., p.45.
- (8) The Tragedy of the Baltic States. Sydney: Joint Baltic Committee, 1952, p.5.
- (9) SOLZHENITSYN, op. cit., pp.77-78.