



BALTIC NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF HELP THE ESTONIAN, LATVIAN AND LITHUANIAN PEOPLES ASSOCIATION (HELLP)
P.O. BOX 272, SANDY BAY, TAS. 7005 (AUSTRALIA).

Vol. IV, No. 1 (17)

February 11, 1978

LITHUANIAN DISSIDENT TELLS:

Real Russian Power is Weakening

Australians and other Western nations seem to be frightened, or in awe, of the Soviet Communist power — without realizing that the Russians themselves are having immense problems, Mr Tomas Venclova (a prominent Lithuanian dissident) claimed in Hobart recently. 'Externally, the Russians rely on the West for food, technology and precision instruments. This makes the Russians very vulnerable. If Western nations threatened them with economic sanctions, the Russians would back down,' he said.



● Tomas Venclova, Lithuanian dissident
— Photo by courtesy of 'The Mercury' (Hobart)

'Inside the Soviet empire, the proportion of Russians has now dropped to less than 50% of the total population, and other ethnic groups are beginning to demand their basic human rights and independence from Russia,' Mr Venclova said. 'Nobody in the Soviet Union today believes in Communism as a workable doctrine — it is now used solely for "export" to the gullible West. Even among the Soviet ruling class, the opportunists and professional conformists have taken the place of the former Communist idealists.'

Mr Venclova (40), a writer, translator and literary scholar from Soviet-controlled Lithuania, visited Hobart on December 28, 1977 at the invitation of HELLP Association. He gave a lecture on human rights in the Soviet Union to a packed audience in the Polish Hall.

Mr Venclova appealed for everyone in Australia to remember those who were risking their lives to secure human rights in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe. 'I simply ask you to talk widely about the dissident movement in the Baltic States and other parts of the USSR, and to name the human rights workers at every opportunity. Publicity in the Western press is the best form of protection for the Baltic freedom workers,' he said.

Disenchanted

Tomas Venclova is the son of an ardent communist who was Education Minister after the Russian armed takeover of his native Lithuania in the forties. Young Tomas became disenchanted in 1956, after the cruel suppression of the Hungarian uprising.

In November 1976, he became co-founder of Lithuania's Helsinki Group to monitor the observance of human rights. Soon after, Soviet authorities summoned him and told him to accept an invitation from a Californian university to lecture there.

'I understood at once,' Mr Venclova said. 'It was just an attempt to weaken our group.' After speaking to other members of the group, however, he accepted their suggestion that he represent them abroad.

Continued on next page

New Ministry Established

On December 1, 1977, Mr Brian K. Miller, M.L.C., was appointed Tasmania's first Minister for Ethnic Affairs.

Mr Miller is also the Attorney-General and Minister for Consumer Affairs.

In the feature article published in the *Baltic News* on October 25, 1977 ('Responding to the challenge of a multi-cultural society'), the Tasmanian State Government was urged to establish a Department of Ethnic Affairs.

'We are pleased that Tasmania's new Premier (Mr Lowe) has responded so promptly and positively to this community need,' a spokesman for HELLP Association said in Hobart today. 'We welcome the appointment of Mr Miller — the Premier could not have chosen a better man for the job.'

H.E.L.L.P. ASSOCIATION'S 1977 ANNUAL REPORT

The outgoing Chairman of HELLP Association (Dr K. Kruup) presented this report, at the Annual Meeting held in Hobart on November 12, 1977. Mr R. Tarvydas has been elected the Association's Chairman for 1978.

During the recent year, HELLP Association has continued to publicize matters concerning the Baltic States, with *Baltic News* being its major undertaking. So far five issues have appeared this year, and the sixth one is in planning. Circulation of *Baltic News* has increased and about 1300 copies of each issue have been distributed. The increased cost of production and postage has placed a heavy financial burden on the Association, but fortunately donations have increased accordingly. During the year some discussions were held with publishers of the *Baltic Herald*, and a merger of the two publications was considered. Inclusion of local content in *Baltic News* and the differences in the approaches of the two, however, led to a conclusion to continue separate publications.

This year, being the year of the Belgrade Conference, naturally brought to the forefront a number of human rights issues. Our Association supported an appropriate meeting organized by the Polish Association in Hobart, and our own commemoration of June deportations in the Baltic States had a strong human rights emphasis. Following a commemorative gathering in Franklin Square, a public meeting was held in the Hobart Town Hall, with Professor Kabaila from Sydney and Mr McGlynn from Launceston as the main speakers. The meeting was chaired by Professor Roe from the University of Tasmania.

Professor Kabaila used this occasion to launch the Baltic Human Rights Campaign, and his initiative has been followed up through articles in the *Baltic News*, by demonstrations held in the City, and by showing of films which included scenes from Soviet concentration camps in Latvia.

It may be appropriate to mention here that at least some of the imprisoned persons whose cases have

been publicised by our Association over the last three years are now reported to have regained their freedom. For example, we understand that Dr Rudaitis came back to Lithuania from exile last year, and Gunars Rodze returned to Latvia this year. Thomas Venclova and Pastor Smits have been finally allowed to emigrate; they have since reached the West.

Another matter that concerned the Executive Committee of HELLP, and is of great importance to all Australians of Baltic origin, is the issue of Dual Nationality. This Committee has corresponded on this subject with the Department of Foreign Affairs, as well as with a number of politicians. Last month, the Committee organized a Dual Nationality Seminar at the Law School of the University of Tasmania. The seminar was chaired by Professor Dunbar. Mr Taskunas was the main speaker and Mr Goodluck M.H.R. and Mr Tate, an endorsed Senate candidate, made up the panel.

At the end of the seminar, two resolutions were passed unanimously

- (1) This meeting endorses the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence contained in its 1976 Dual Nationality Report; and urges the Australian Government to implement them as speedily as possible.
- (2) This meeting asks that the Government of Australia enter into immediate negotiations with the Government of the U.S.S.R., to seek agreement between the Governments of Australia and the U.S.S.R. that, if a person from Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania acquires Australian Nationality, the U.S.S.R. shall make no claim that such person holds U.S.S.R. citizenship."

Mr Goodluck supported both resolutions, and undertook to convey them to his Government.

Social events organized during the year included two dances which considerably helped to finance our activities. The third dance will be held here tonight following the Annual General Meeting. Part of the income from this dance will be used to pay the entry fee for Barbara Viknus, who will represent HELLP at the Festival Queen Quest in next year's Festival of Tasmania.

Although all financial details will be given in the Treasurer's report, it should be mentioned here that some income was derived from the sale of HELLP T-shirts and from the sale of books purchased previously.

Finally, I would like to thank all members who have supported various HELLP activities during the year, and I would like to include here members of the Executive Committee.

LITHUANIAN DISSIDENT TELLS

● *Continued from page 1*

According to Mr Venclova, the non-violent dissident movement in eastern Europe is gathering momentum and cannot be stopped by Russian authorities. 'It is spreading despite the arrest of dissident leaders, the attempted "Russification" of the Baltic nations, the indoctrination of young people, the oppression of national identity and other denial of human rights,' he said.

Mr Venclova said, he knew of at least 10,000 political prisoners in the Soviet Union, of whom 500 were Lithuanians. 'They are all imprisoned for their beliefs, not for any acts of violence. In other words, Soviet citizens today may suffer more if they abide by the Soviet's own Constitution than if they break the law.'

NEWS FROM BALTIC STATES

Nijole is out — but new arrests follow

In preparation for the 60th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, several better-known Baltic prisoners of conscience were released from Russian gaols. At about the same time, twenty-three new Baltic natives were arrested and detained by the KGB (the Soviet secret police).

Reliable Baltic underground sources have confirmed that Nijole Sadunaite (whose plight was reported in the *Baltic News* twice, on October 17, 1975 and August 30, 1977) has been discharged from the Russian strict-regime labour camp where she had been held for nearly 2½ years. However, she is not allowed to return to her native Lithuania and has been directed to spend the next 3 years in a remote city in the Krasnoyarsk region (Siberia).

Former medical students A. Cechanavicius (see *Baltic News*, October 25, 1977) and S. Zukauskas (*Baltic News*, April 5, 1975) were set free, after repeated representations by Amnesty International.

Two other well-known dissidents — Pastor Janis Smits (*Baltic News*, July 17 and August 26, 1975) and writer Tomas Venclova (see story, page 1 of this issue) — were finally allowed to migrate to the West.

NEW VICTIMS

In the meantime, reports of new arrests have reached the West from the three Baltic countries.

Viktoras Petkus, a member of the Helsinki monitoring group in Vilnius (Lithuania) has been detained for an indefinite term. Antanas Terleckas, a well-known peaceful campaigner for human rights, was arrested on August 24, 1977.

Vladas Lapienis, Jonas Matulionis and Ona Pranckaitė (whose arrests were reported in the last *Baltic News*) have since been gaoled for two to three years.

ART HISTORIAN BANISHED

On August 22 and 23, 1977, Jurgis Skulme, a Latvian artist and a member of the faculty of the Academy of Art in Riga, was tried at the Supreme Court of the Latvian SSR. After closed (but filmed) sessions, he was sentenced to 2½ years hard labour. The prosecutor had asked for 7 years.

At present, there exist at least three unconfirmed versions of Skulme's alleged 'crime': 1) sending three letters to the West in which he deplored a lack of concern on the part of authorities for the preservation of Latvian art; 2) sending a similar complaint to UNESCO, deplored destruction of monuments of cultural heritage in Latvia; or 3) sending to the West a report about a strike in Riga and subsequent punishment of the participating workers.

Skulme is now serving his sentence in concentration camp OC78-11 near Daugavpils, where he has to work at construction sites under strict supervision.

MART NIKLUS ARRESTED

According to dissident sources in Estonia, Mart Niklus was arrested at Põlva railway station on August 25 last year when he was on his way to Moscow. The KGB also confiscated some papers, several photographs and his camera. He was released after five days of interrogation.



Mart Niklus

Mart Niklus is a biologist and became known in the late 1950s, when, with the help of a Finnish scientist, he sent abroad 15 photographs depicting scenes of social injustice around Tartu. As a result, he was imprisoned for ten years, including three years of deportation. Since his release in 1966, his flat in Tartu has been searched several times. On October 8, 1976, he was arrested in the classroom while teaching.

The Swedish Branch of Amnesty International has shown interest in Mart Niklus' case. In April, 1977, his relatives in Sweden had invited him to visit them. Niklus applied for a permit, but this was refused by the Soviet authorities.

PROTEST BY SCIENTISTS

A lengthy memorandum written by eighteen Estonian scientists has recently reached the West. The scientists belong to the Soviet Estonian Conservation Society, the Soviet Estonian Academy of Sciences, the Polytechnical Institute in Tallinn and the University of Tartu. The authors draw the attention of their fellow scientists in Finland, Sweden, Denmark and West Germany to the blatant misuse of natural resources and to the extensive pollution of water, air and soil in certain parts of Estonia.

They point out that oil-bearing shale which is found abundantly in North-Eastern Estonia should be used as raw material for petro-chemical industry. Central planners in Moscow, however, have decided to use it mainly as fuel for thermal power stations. With an increased demand for electric power, the annual shale output had increased to 28.5 million tons by 1975.

Continued on page 7

LETTERS



HELP FOR NIJOLE

As Tasmanian Representative for Underground Evangelism, I was very interested in the story of Nijole Sadunaite (*Baltic News*, August 30, 1977) who was sentenced to three years of compulsory labour and another three years in exile. I will write to her, as requested by your paper.

We as a nation condemn South Africa and Rhodesia, but not a word against the host and growing host of countries being violated under Communism. May God forgive our silence. And may God soon give freedom and independence to the three countries of the Baltics.

Mountain River, Tas.

Reg. A. WATSON

Letters expressing concern about Nijole's plight were also received from Senator F.M. Chaney (W.A.), Mrs B. Rolls (Amnesty International), Mr J. Green, M.H.A., a Grade 5 boy from Waimea Heights School (Tas.), Miss E. Considine (Vic.), J. Carter (Qld), P.B. (W.A.), Endel S. (S.A.), L.R. (Qld), Sue Williams (Vic.), 'Fisherman' (Tas.), C. Kirkpatrick (U.S.A.), Dr J. Pecilionis (Switzerland), and eleven others. — For latest news on Nijole, see page 3 in this issue.

WHORES OF DECEPTION

My people are dying out like flies, and you — people of the free world — are turning a blind eye to it all.

I can't really blame you, because you may never have a chance to hear the horrid truth. Many of the official visitors who come to Latvia from Australia these days seem to be dyed-in-the-wool Communists or lackeys of the Russian colonial authorities. All they see is a false, glossy image. They get whisked about in big black Chaikas (Government limousines), hear a pack of lies from the KGB 'translators' and are kept a safe distance from us, native slaves of the Kremlin.

Don't believe a word these Judases tell you on return to Australia, about the Soviet 'paradise'! We call them *whores of deception* here. For a free trip to Russia, they will sell their own grandmother; for a feast of vodka and caviar with the Soviet bosses, they will forsake whole nations — ours and yours!

Riga (Latvia).

Karlis R.
Ex-concentration-camp No. K3722



• RIGHT: A sample of Soviet-style 'freedom', witnessed by Tasmanians during a recent visit of two Russian ships to Hobart.

DUAL NATIONALITY AND BALTIC RECOGNITION

You will be aware of my support for the general aims of HELLP. In particular, I helped frame the dual nationality resolutions passed unanimously at the meeting held at the University of Tasmania on October 28, 1977.*

There is no A.L.P. platform policy on the question of recognition of the sovereignty of the U.S.S.R. over Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

I will be pressing the new leadership of the Labor Party to ensure that its policy should be not to grant 'de jure' recognition to such sovereignty. I believe this would not impair negotiations with representatives of the U.S.S.R. government to seek that government's agreement to the resolution of the dual nationality problem along the lines of the above motion.

MICHAEL TATE,
Senator-elect for Tasmania.

* The full text of these resolutions is published on page 2 of this issue.

OBVIOUS LIES

I strongly support your cause.

After witnessing the performance of the representative of the U.S.S.R. at the University recently, I was quite disgusted by the obvious lies being fobbed off on the audience regarding the U.S.S.R. and minority rights in that country.

Your national homelands are victims of part of what I see as a cynical global attitude of disregard on the part of large and powerful nations for the rights of smaller nations to self determination and independence.

In the case of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, there is the undeniable fact that they differ from Russia not only in cultural, linguistic and to a certain extent religious aspects, but that historically they are independent and sovereign states which should be granted complete autonomy and independence from Russian control.

Hobart.

Des G. SHIELD

Religious freedom is still under attack

Jerry Filteau

Religious rights are among basic human rights that Warsaw Pact (Soviet bloc) and Western nations agreed to respect when they signed the Helsinki agreement in 1975. At the Belgrade Conference on compliance with the Helsinki accords, Western delegates have generally taken a low-key approach to the human rights issue in Eastern Europe and Russia.

Yet reports filtering from those countries to the West outline a picture of continuing attacks on religious freedom as well as other basic freedoms.

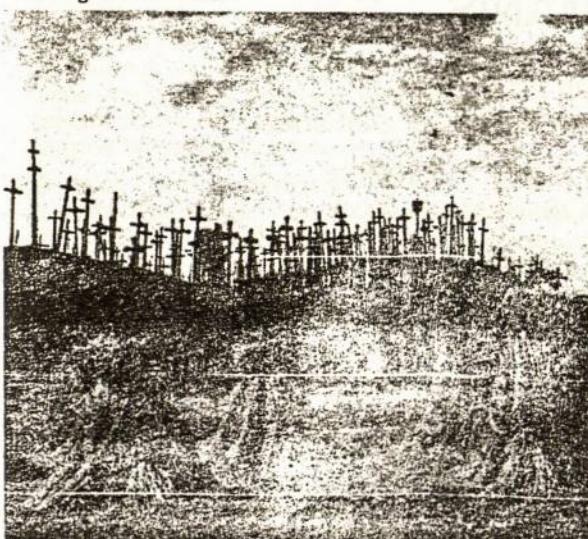
As Belgrade was opening the US-based Lithuanian Human Rights Commission issued an 18-page white paper titled, *Violations of Freedom of Religion in Soviet-Occupied Lithuania in Contravention of the Helsinki Final Act*.

The paper draws only from events since the Helsinki Conference that have been reported by the underground *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* — a publication that occasionally reaches the West, despite continued Soviet efforts to stop it, including arrests and harassment of those suspected of producing, distributing or possessing it.

DISMISSED FROM JOBS

The white paper says that despite the Helsinki accords:

- The KGB (Soviet secret police) controls the appointment of priests to parishes and the admission of seminarians to the only seminary allowed to operate in the country.
- Priests face fines or imprisonment if they are caught teaching religion outside of a church and are forbidden to urge children to attend church.
- Adults are dismissed from jobs or harassed for going to church or admitting that they are believers.
- Students who admit that they believe in God are harassed by teachers and some are refused entrance into higher schools.



The Mount of the Crosses, near Šiauliai.
The communists have destroyed the crosses.

- Religious periodicals are banned and only a limited number of translations of the Bible are allowed into circulation.
- Children are interrogated and ridiculed at school if they attend church.
- Building or repair permits for churches or presbyteries are regularly refused or strongly discouraged.
- Activists for human and religious rights who are not actually arrested and imprisoned frequently face long interrogations and searches of their property.

— Reprinted, with permission, from 'Catholic Leader' (Brisbane).

Full text of the 18-page white paper is now available in Australia. For your free copy, please send a large stamped, self-addressed envelope to: H.E.L.L.P., Post Office Box 272, SANDY BAY, Tas. 7005 (Australia).

THANKS!

Now in its fourth year of publication, *Baltic News* continues reporting on present-day violations of the basic human rights in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; and on other Baltic issues of current interest.

Copies of this factual bulletin are sent, free of charge, to libraries, colleges and organisations in all parts of the world — as well as to any individual who asks for the *Baltic News*.

We thank our supporters, whose continuing financial contributions have made the free distribution of *Baltic News* possible.

The following donations have been received, since our last issue:

Lithuanian Community in Hobart (Tas.), \$60. Rev. Dr P. Bacinskas (Qld), \$40; Lithuanian Community in Newcastle (N.S.W.), \$30; A & J. Kramilius (N.S.W.), \$20; J. Kniuipys (Calif.), \$17.65 [\$US20]; P. Morkunas (Vic.), L. Tidey, J. Ruzgys (Qld), P. Cekanauskas (W.A.), \$10 each; 'Varrak' C/- Mr Riga (Canada), \$8.85 [\$US10]; Mr & Mrs S. Valaitis (Vic.) \$7; Professor J.B. Polya (Tas.) R. Berzanskas (Vic.), L. Rupinskas (S.A.), 'Pensioner' (Tas.), A. & M. Mukans (N.S.W.), \$5 each, Mrs E. Madden (Tas.), \$4, Fr W.G. Smith, S.J. (Vic.), \$2.

Dr. from HELLP Dancer on November 12, 1977 \$1.90

TO: H.E.L.L.P. (Help the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Peoples Association),
Post Office Box 272,
SANDY BAY, Tasmania, 7005 (Australia).

I do not recognize the Russian sovereignty over the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania).

Please send me the *Baltic News*, free of charge and without any obligation.

Name

ADDRESS

..... POSTCODE

Optional:

I enclose my donation of \$ Cash/Cheque/M.O.

HOW IS YOUR WILL?

W.D. Craig*

The estates of members of the Baltic Community who die intestate with no near relatives in Tasmania are especially at risk.

Most deceased persons leave wills. However, some people put off making a will until it is too late.

A will is the means of providing for the transfer of property at death to those persons whom we wish to benefit. If a person dies without a will he or she is said to die 'intestate'. In this event, the law (in Tasmania, The Administration and Probate Act 1935) then provides for the method of distribution of the property of the deceased intestate.

The scheme set out in the Administration and Probate Act probably suits most people. It gives priority to the spouse of the deceased person and to children. In the absence of both spouse and children the property of the deceased goes to his or her parents (if any). If there are no parents living, then the estate of a deceased intestate goes to living brothers and sisters and to the children of deceased brothers and sisters by right of representation. In the event none of foregoing are living, then the Act proceeds to make other provisions for more remote relatives.

* This article has been written especially for the Baltic News by Mr William D. Craig, J.D. (Stanford Univ., California), B.Sci. (U.S. Naval Academy), LL.B. (Tasmania).



In several recent instances, however, persons of Baltic origin have died intestate in Tasmania, either unmarried or possibly still married to wives or husbands behind the Iron Curtain whose whereabouts are unknown. In each of these instances a substantial amount of the estate has had to be spent on inquiries within Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia to locate relatives or to ascertain whether known relatives are still living. Most of this money spent on inquiries goes directly into the hands of the Soviet Government. The inquiry process also alerts the Soviets to the existence of a fund of foreign currency represented by the estate of the deceased intestate, and one might suspect that the maximum in taxation and discount of funds on conversion into Russian currency will occur.

In light of this, it seems especially important for persons of Baltic origin (and persons from any East European country) to ensure that their hard-earned

Continued on next page

(Advertisement)

THE NAME YOU TRUST FOR PERSONAL SERVICE

VIS FELDMANIS

UNDER THE ONE ROOF AT MAIN ROAD, GLENORCHY,
FELDMANIS AND ASSOCIATES PROVIDE THESE SERVICES:

- LAND AND HOME PURCHASE
- LEASING
- BRIDGING LOANS
- FACTORING
- PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT
- COMMERCIAL LOANS
- HIRE PURCHASE
- GENERAL FINANCE
- INSURANCES
- SUPERANNUATION
- INVESTMENT
- REAL ESTATE
- CARPET
- INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

YOU WILL BE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED AT THE TERMS WE CAN NEGOTIATE ON ALL THESE DAY-TO-DAY SERVICES.

PHONE 72 3188 OR CALL ANYTIME AT 337 MAIN ROAD, GLENORCHY.

... YOUR WILL?

• From page 6

money is applied at death in the way they want it to be applied, and not used to enrich the Soviet Union by neglect.

The way to help ensure that your estate at death is dealt with as you want it to be dealt with, is to make your will now, using the services of your own solicitor, the Public Trust Office, or a Trustee Company.

For the information of our readers, the Public Trust Office makes wills without charge, but does deduct a statutory fee for administration out of the estate after death. Its officers are ready to discuss your will with you. The address of the Public Trust Office is 446 Elizabeth Street, North Hobart. There is an office of the Public Trust Office in Launceston at 83 Cameron Street. Any person who has no near relatives should give serious thought to leaving his or her property to the Baltic organisation of his/her choice, or to H.E.L.L.P. Association in Tasmania (P.O. Box 272, Sandy Bay, Tasmania 7005).

PROTEST BY SCIENTISTS

Continued from page 3

A third large power station is now in the planning stages. Once it is completed, the volume of shale mining will increase considerably. Such use of shale simply wastes valuable raw material, the scientists say. Less than one third of the output from these thermal power stations is used in Estonia, the rest is fed into the power grid of other parts of the Soviet Union.

Due to such extensive mining, vegetation has been destroyed over a large area and many parts of North-East Estonia now look like the landscape on the moon with mountains of ash dumped all over the place. Because of insufficient anti-pollution measures, the air in these parts of land is full of dust and contains sulphurous and other poisonous gases. Rivers that once were full of trout and salmon are now completely lifeless and their poisonous waters affect marine life for miles offshore.

A second area of devastation is about fifteen kilometres east of Tallinn at Maardu. Here, phosphorous-bearing rock is being extensively mined and processed in a factory under the direct control of Moscow. It is ironical that the fertilizer produced there is ineffective, and agricultural users simply throw it away.

The authors hope that their memorandum will serve as a warning to other countries bordering the Baltic Sea and as a result frank discussions will take place at international conferences. They also hope that outside pressures will curb the ever increasing misuse of Estonian natural resources, practised by the colonial powers in Moscow. They stress that, for the safety and future of Estonian people, the level of pollution must be decreased and the destruction of natural environment must stop.

COMING EVENTS

18th FEBRUARY (Saturday)

8.30 pm—1 am

Polish Hall, New Town

BALTIC DANCE

Good Band All Welcome

Admission \$4 single, students and pensioners \$2

B.Y.O., or buy refreshments and supper next door.

For table bookings (optional), please 'phone Stan Keenan 48 9944, or Joe Paskevicius 72 6360.

* * *

Preceding the Dance, at 7.00 pm (also in Polish Hall):

60th COMMEMORATION OF LITHUANIA'S INDEPENDENCE DAY

Guest Speaker Musical Items

All Welcome Admission Free



17th—19th MARCH

(Friday eve. to Sunday afternoon)

LITHUANIAN FOLK-DANCING

WORKSHOP

For further details, 'phone 72 9797 or 25 2505

16th—18th JUNE (Friday eve. to Sunday)

Preliminary Notice

BALTIC CONFERENCE

in Adelaide, S.A.

Ethnic Concert — Lectures and Seminars — Exhibitions — Conference Dinner

Organised by Baltic Council of Australia

DON'T . . .

'Don't throw away *Baltic News* after you have read it —

**PLEASE
PASS IT ON!**

The Stake is Freedom

— A Man in Need of Backers

In November 1973, a couple of weeks after *Gala Supreme* won the Melbourne Cup, Petras Plumpa was arrested in Russian-held Lithuania. Predictably, the horse gained more publicity than the man.

By 1978, both have faded into relative obscurity, with one important difference. *Gala Supreme* is no longer running races, but Petras Plumpa is still in a Soviet gaol. And he is not the only one — there are hundreds, indeed thousands, of Baltic prisoners of conscience in a similar predicament.

Petras Plumpa was born in 1939, only 12 months before Russian tanks overran his native Lithuania and the other Baltic States. Petras grew up, and was educated under the Soviet system. But — like most native Balts — he refused to accept the Russians as his masters.



Petras Plumpa

At the age of 19, Petras was arrested. The Soviet authorities charged him with taking up and circulating petitions, and with having hoisted the Lithuanian national flag in Petrasiuai, a town in Lithuania. For this, he was sentenced to seven years gaol under strict security.

BLACKBALED FOR LIFE

In the Russian prison camp, Petras befriended a Jew and a Georgian. Through them, he became deeply religious. On his release in 1965, Petras returned to Lithuania, but soon discovered that he was a marked man.

The only job he could find was in a pre-cast concrete plant where he earned 40 roubles (\$50 Australian) per week. Petras married in 1968, but was unable to rise above the poverty line. Five years later, his wife was still without a winter coat.

On November 19, 1973, Petras Plumpa was arrested again and was held without trial until December 2, 1974. This time, he was charged with having printed the *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*, a factual newsletter which records Soviet officials' transgressions against the basic human rights guaranteed in the Soviets' own Constitution: the right of free speech, and the right to practise one's religion.

The trial was conducted behind closed doors, the charges were never proven and evidence was produced that the fingerprints on the *Chronicle* were not Petras's. Nonetheless, he was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment, to be served in strict regime camps.

'RIGGED' TRIAL

Petras told his judges, 'I was threatened during the pre-trial interrogations that my case would be "rigged", and that I would be gaoled for ten years. One can "rig" a cannon, not a court case,' Petras continued. 'The very word "rig" indicates that the case will be fabricated and the truth will not be sought.'

Petras also told the court that the Soviet security men had warned him, he would lose his parental rights and that the Soviet State would bring up his children as atheists. Petras begged the judges to leave his family alone, and not to punish them because of his alleged 'crime'. His appeal remained unheard, and Petras is still in a Russian prison today.

We are now asking EVERY reader of the *Baltic News* to show some human compassion for Petras Plumpa. Please write today to:

SSSR, Moskva, Kreml, Generalnomu
Sekretaryu Ysk KPSS, L. Brezhnevu

Mr L. Brezhnev, General Secretary of
the Central Committee of the Communist
Party of the Soviet Union, the Kremlin,
MOSCOW, U.S.S.R. —

and ask Mr Brezhnev to release Petras Plumpa immediately. Many letters are needed, but it could be YOUR letter that will eventually tip the scales in Petras's favour.

