



BALTIC NEWS

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

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November-December 1979

Distributed Free

Man Freed After Long Campaign

Lithuanian prisoner of conscience Sarunas Zukauskas (29) has been released from a Russian prison, six months before the end of his six-year term. This marks the climax of a long, but successful, campaign which had its beginnings in Tasmania.

Zukauskas, a former medical student, and four other Lithuanians were arrested by the Russian colonial authorities in 1973 because they were amateur ethnographers. (This hobby was the study of the classification of races, with particular reference to the history of the three Baltic States and other non-Russian nations).

The five men were kept in solitary confinement for a year before being brought to trial. Then they were charged with distributing literature which had called for independence from Russia; and with anti-Soviet activity, such as giving financial help to the family of a convicted man. In a closed court, Zukauskas was sentenced to six years hard labour, away from his native Lithuania. The others were sentenced to gaol terms ranging from two to five years, also to be served in Russia.

Tasmanian Report

A Tasmanian journalist, Mr Rod Boucher, was the first Western newsman to report these arrests. Using the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* as his source, Mr Boucher described the five men's trial in SEM (Saturday Evening Mercury), Tasmania's leading weekend newspaper, on November 9, 1974.

Some four weeks later, on December 5, 1974, a large group of people gathered in protest, in Franklin Square, Hobart. They were addressed by Tasmania's Attorney-General, Mr Brian Miller, M.L.C., who called for public action over the imprisonments.

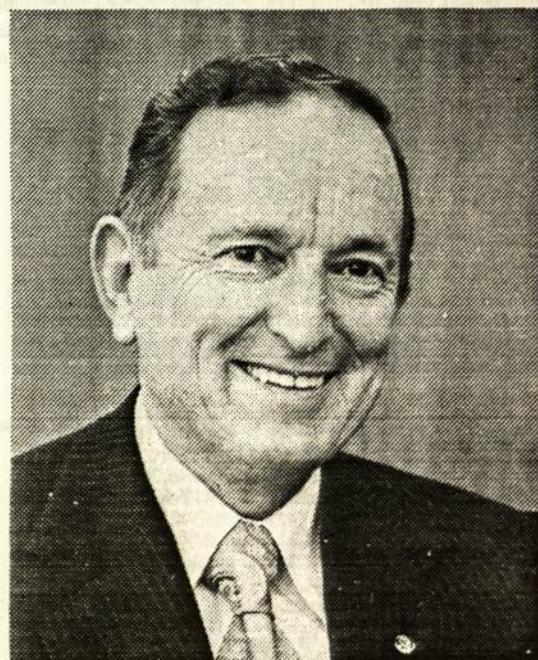
"Can we stand idly by, while people are imprisoned by men whose political philosophy differs from ours, but who are sensitive to world opinion?" Mr Miller asked.

Trade Union Support

A trade union leader (the late Fred Aiken) suggested that Australia's Prime Minister be asked to help, and his idea was unanimously endorsed by the meeting.

Moves for the prisoners' release gradually spread to the other States of Australia and to the rest of the free world. Protest meetings were held. Letters were written to the Western press, and to Soviet officials. Several of the prisoners were adopted by Amnesty International.

Finally, one by one, the men were freed. The oldest of the group, Dr. Rudaitis, came back to Lithuania ill and with all his teeth missing. Zukauskas was the last of the group to be set free. He returned home physically weak, and his family could hardly recognize him. But his spirit has remained unbroken, according to reliable sources in Lithuania.



● Five years ago, Tasmania's Attorney-General (Mr Brian Miller, pictured) launched a public campaign for the release of 5 Baltic prisoners of conscience. "Surely if we who are free remain silent, then something of freedom itself dies, and all mankind is the loser," Mr Miller pleaded. Tasmanians did not remain silent. They kept campaigning and pressing the Russian colonial authorities, until all five were released.

Baltic Consuls

Help the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Peoples Association (H.E.L.L.P.) in Hobart is currently taking the initiative to establish a Lithuanian Consulate in Tasmania.

Last month, the Australian Government also accepted the appointment of Mr Emils Delins, as honorary Latvian Vice-Consul in Melbourne. Mr Delins is the publisher and editor of Latvian-language weekly, *Australijas Latvietis*.

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- Daring demonstration in Moscow — Page 3.
- Editorial: Have a heart for refugees — Page 4.
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Churches Endorse BALTIC NEWS

The Tasmanian Council of Churches Executive at its last meeting adopted the following statement:

"The Executive of the Tasmanian Council of Churches is glad to commend the reading of BALTIC NEWS to Christians in Tasmania and hopes that it will stimulate prayers and action in support of those suffering abridgement of human rights in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania."

The editor of *Baltic News* was notified of this encouraging decision on November 27, 1979, in a letter signed by the Rev. David Webster, B.A., M.A.C.E. Rev. Webster is the General Secretary of Tasmanian Council of Churches.

Growth Continues

The number of *Baltic News* readers is still rising, with each new issue. We also receive many letters from people who are not on our mailing lists. This suggests that *Baltic News* is often passed on, from hand to hand — in much the same way as the underground newspapers are circulated behind the Iron Curtain!

Now in its fifth year of publication, *Baltic News* addresses itself to the general Australian readership of all political and religious convictions (rather than to any ethnic or minority groups). The emphasis is on carefully validated facts about the people of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania: a news area that is rarely covered by the daily papers and other mass media.

Free Distribution

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the *Baltic News* is that it is mailed, FREE OF CHARGE, to all who ask for it. Much of the production and distribution work is done by a small group of Tasmanian volunteers. The unavoidable costs are paid for, out of donations.

We therefore thank our supporters, for their continuing help. The following contributions have been received since the last issue of *Baltic News*:

Latvian Federation of Australia and N. Zealand, \$150; P. Lazdauskas (Tas), P. Morkunas (Vic), R. Watling (Tas), \$20 each; Estonian R.S.L. Sub Branch (N.S.W.), \$15; C. Ford, V. Simniskis, T. Salasoo (all N.S.W.), F. Jurevics, K. Lowrie, S. Domkus, M. Hodgman (all Tas), A. Bagunberzins (Vic), \$10 each; M. Kozikas, M. Slugocki, M. Modelewski, O. Miezitis, A. Andrikonis, B. Sikanis, J. Paskevicius, K. Paskevicius, M. Kaitinis (all Tas), H. Semenow (S.A.), M. Mukans (N.S.W.), \$5 each; P. Siauciunas (Tas), \$4; Pensioner (Tas), \$3; A. Vilknius, E. Dawson, Krause, I. Andrikonis, J. Ola, Pensioner (all Tas), L. Nobelius (N.S.W.), Sister Josephine (U.S.A.), \$2 each. Proceeds from Baltic Dance in Hobart, \$79.40.

Many thanks!

Baltic News is

FREE

to all who ask for it.

Order it for your clergymen, teachers, community leaders and opinion-shapers!

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.

BALTIC CONTRIBUTIONS TO AUSTRALIA

Fine Record

Baltic settlers have an excellent citizenship record in Australia.

Long term arrivals between 1945-1976 were from -	
Lithuania	10,194
Estonia	6,297
Latvia	20,122
TOTAL	36,613

Of these, 91.5% were granted citizenship between 1945-1976. The comparative figures are:

Lithuanians	8,863
Estonians	6,185
Latvians	18,497
TOTAL	33,545

Nationally, 16.9% of the Australian workforce are in Professional, Technical, Administrative, Executive and Managerial occupations. In comparison, 20.5% of persons of Baltic origin in those occupations. The figure break down as follows:

Total Workforce of the Three Groups

Lithuanians	4,753
Estonians	3,181
Latvians	9,488

Working in the Above Occupations

Lithuanians	761
Estonians	730
Latvians	2,072

These figures, based on the 1971 Census, were quoted by the Federal Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (the Hon. M.J.R. MacKellar, M.H.R.), at the 1978 annual general meeting of the Help Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Peoples Association in Hobart.

Baltic News acknowledges the help of Mr Max Burr, M.H.R. for Wilmot, in obtaining the details.

New Call for Freedom

On August 23, 1979, forty-five people travelled from the Russian-held Baltic States to Moscow, and staged a public demonstration in the Russian capital. They called for immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from their countries.

They also demanded self determination for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on the grounds that they were annexed illegally by the Soviet Union under the terms of the 1939 non-aggression treaty between the U.S.S.R. and Nazi Germany. This treaty is also known as the Hitler-Stalin Pact, or as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

Nazi Treaty Still in Force

In the secret protocols of this 1939 treaty, Nazi Germany gave the Soviet Union a free hand to occupy the sovereign nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The Russian occupation is continuing to the present day without any legal or moral justification. This means that the Hitler-Stalin Pact is still effective, the demonstrators said.

The 45 Balts issued a written statement, appealing to the present governments of the Soviet Union and of East and West Germany to renounce the pact. In addition, they called upon the signatories of the Atlantic Charter (including Australia) and on the United Nations General Assembly to ensure freedom and self determination for the people of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The Russian authorities hushed up the whole incident, and the party-controlled media remained totally silent. However, the full text of this appeal has been smuggled out and has since reached the Baltic News. It bears the signatures of 37 Lithuanians, 4 Latvians and 4 Estonians:

Romas Andrijauskas	Liutauras Kazakevičius
Stasė Andrijauskienė	Leonas Laurinės
Alfonas Andriukaitis	Rimas Mažukna
Edmundas Bartuška	(Rev.) Mocius
Vytautas Bastys	Mart Niklus
Vytautas Bogušis	(Rev.) Napoleonas Narkūnas
(Rev.) Vladas Bobinas	Sigitas Paulavičius
Romas Vitkevičius	Angelė Paškauskienė
Jonas Volungevičius	Kęstutis Povilaitis
Jonas Dambrauskas	Jadvyga Petkevičienė
Jonas Eišiškis	Jonas Petkevičius
Rimas Žukauskas	Jonas Protusevičius
Ivars Žukovskis	Sigitas Randis
Alfredas Zeideks	Endel Ratas
Juris Ziemelis	Henrikas Sambore
Julius Sasnauskas	Petras Cidzikas
Leonoras Sanauskaitė	Arvydas Čekanavičius
Algis Stakėvičius	Vladas Šakalys
Kęstutis Subačius	Jonas Šerkšnas
Enn Tarto	Zigmas Širvinas
Antanas Terleckas	Mečislovas Jurevičius
Erik Udam	(Rev.) Virgilijus Jaugelis
Ints Calitis	

Sakharov and four other Russian dissidents have also added their signatures, in support of this daring move.

Full text of the Baltic demonstrators' Moscow Declaration is now available, in English translation, from BALTIC NEWS. Please send a stamped, addressed envelope to P.O. Box 272, SANDY BAY, Tasmania, 7005 (Australia).

Meanwhile 35,000 residents in Russian-held Lithuania have signed another petition, seeking sovereign rights and free elections in their country.

1939



● Nine days before the start of World War II, on 23 August 1939, the Foreign Ministers of Nazi Germany and U.S.S.R. (pictured) signed a secret treaty of friendship and non-aggression. The Nazis handed over Estonia and Latvia to the Russian "sphere of influence." Later on, the Russians paid the Nazis \$7½ million in gold and, in return, were "allowed" to invade Lithuania, too.

1979



● Hitler has been dead for 34 years now, but his secret contract with the Russians is still alive. The Russian troops remain in the three Baltic States, to protect the Moscow-oriented puppet regimes.

The photograph above shows former Baltic prisoners of conscience, Viktoras Kalnins (centre) and Helena Celmins (on his left), demonstrating outside the United Nations building, New York, earlier this year.

EDITORIAL

It is a terrifying feeling to be on the run from your killer — and to have no one to turn to, for help. That is the trauma of the present-day refugees, the boat people. Alone on the open seas, they are clinging to the hope that the free world's citizens will share their freedom with them. The Balts know this feeling only too well; they were in the same predicament some 35 years ago.

We therefore congratulate our Federal Minister for Immigration (the Hon. M. J. R. MacKellar, M.H.R.) for

opening Australia's doors to thousands of Vietnamese and other Asian refugees. We hope, he will see his way clear to admitting many more.

As for those amongst us who are selfish or fear for their jobs, let the fears subside. Freedom and a grain of empathy is all that genuine refugees need. They can create everything else with their own willing hands — and still have plenty left over, for us, too.

The former Baltic refugees are the best proof of this economic fact. Since coming to Australia over a quarter of a century ago, they have contributed to Australia far more than they have ever taken from it.

LETTERS

Wider Scope for HELLP?

Whilst wholeheartedly supporting HELLP in its present context I for one believe this organization should broaden its scope and take in the Soviet occupation of the Iron Curtain countries as well; and also the Red Chinese occupation of the Bamboo Curtain countries.

I mean, why restrict our opposition only to the Baltic States? More effect could be achieved by making a concerted attack on all Communist oppression, conquest, annexation, and occupation.

Russia and Red China now have the biggest empires in the world, yet they still have the audacity to call Britain, USA, etc. imperialists. What sheer hypocrisy.

Randolph WAINWRIGHT

Help for Prisoners

You will be pleased to hear that a local Protestant church group will be writing, within the next few days, to all the Estonian list of prisoners (published in the last Baltic News). I shall now try to get Catholic groups to write to the Lithuanians, whilst we at Massey University will start on the Latvians. By this means, every prisoner will be sent a letter, if all goes well. I have already written 10, ready to mail over the next week.

Praying that our efforts may be rewarded with some measure of success, even if it is only lessening these prisoners' sufferings.

P.O. Box 1161,
Palmerston North, N.Z. James J. READ.

Unconstitutional Jailings

It seems to me that nations in vital dispute should not terminate *de jure* and/or *de facto* recognition or diplomatic relations. It should be better to increase communications.

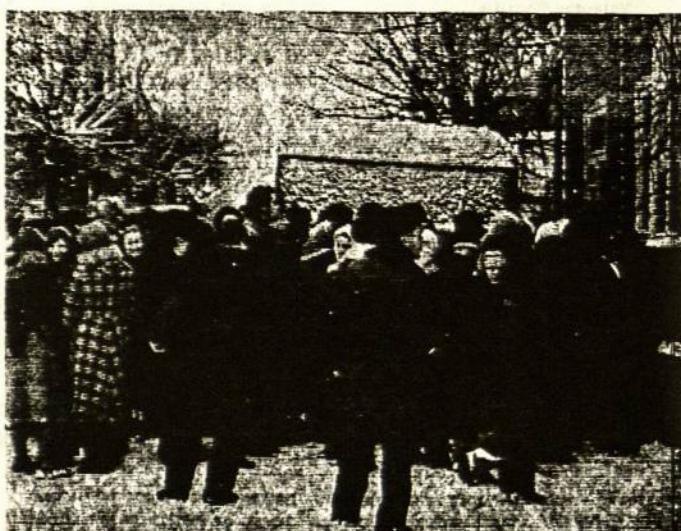
The alternative seems to be an arms race wherein less and less can be done towards a just outcome for oppressed minorities.

The charges you mention of 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda' seem to me to be unconstitutional since Khrushchev announced the end of the category of crimes against the State. Perhaps this fact should be linked with the Helsinki accords in demands for civil rights in the Soviet Union.

Rockhampton, Qld.

Doug EVERINGHAM
MHR for Capricornia

The Editor welcomes letters, especially brief ones, at P.O. Box 272, Sandy Bay, 7005, and reserves the right to condense.



- People gathered outside the District Court of Vilkaviskis (in Russian-held Lithuania) recently, but were not allowed to be at the trial of Father Jouzas Zdebas. The priest was charged with having given religion lessons to children.

BOOK REVIEW

Wheeldon Report indicts Soviet Union on human rights

N ALL-PARTY report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, tabled in Federal Parliament last week, contains a damning indictment of the violation of human rights in the USSR since the Soviet signed the Helsinki Accords guaranteeing those rights.

* The Sub-Committee on human rights in the USSR was chaired by Senator John Wheeldon, a Labor Senator from WA, who in the past has been on the left of the Labor Party.

Many sources

The inquiry received submissions and heard evidence from many sources, including some of the most prominent dissidents now in the West, including Vladimir Kalinin, Lyudmila Plyushch, Evgeny Vagin and others.

In addition, it received submissions from a variety of sources, including Keston College (the Centre for the Study of Religion and Communism, UK), Ukrainian and Hungarian community leaders and Baptist, Lutheran, Catholic and Jewish spokesmen.

The report examined a number of major questions, including the rights of minority nationalities, the citizen's position in the Soviet Union, religious freedom, anti-semitism, emigration, freedom of communication, emigration, the dissident movement, the treatment of prisoners and use of psychiatric hospitals and Western involvement with human rights in the USSR.

Major findings

Among the major findings of Senator Wheeldon's inquiry were the following:

* "The Soviet Union has failed to enter into the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and has failed to implement many of its formal commitments in such documents as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Final Act of the 1975 Helsinki Agreement..."

* "The widely proclaimed 1977 Constitution is at best an expression of hopes and desires, not an instrument whereby basic rights may be protected.

* "The civil rights and free-



SENATOR WHEELDON

doms of Soviet citizens are very much subordinate to the interests of the Soviet State; this is made clear in the Soviet Constitution.

* "Soviet citizens may not engage in independent political activity, nor form or belong to political parties other than the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU); nor do the Soviet people have an opportunity to effect a change in their government representation through the ballot box.

Monopoly of power

* "This monopoly of power has been enshrined in the 1977 Constitution and the CPSU's influence is strongly felt at all levels of Soviet society.

* "Soviet policy and law on religion, as well as unpublished directives, place limitations on religious freedom and discriminate against religious believers, including:

(a) acts of harassment against individual believers, leading in many cases to imprisonment; (b) a high degree of control over, and direct State interventions in, the affairs of religious congregations and the appointment of clergy (this is not in accordance with the principle of separation of Church and State as proclaimed in the Soviet Constitution); (c) severe limitations on religious instruction, particularly

to the young;

(d) the enforced closure of houses of worship; also whole denominations have been forced underground or forced to merge with "approved" denominations; and (e) widespread anti-religious propaganda in the State-controlled media and publications, without any right of reply.

* "Despite the repression of religion in the USSR, and of the shortage of clergy and religious publications, there is a continuing interest in religion among a sizeable proportion of the population.

* "In the case of Soviet Jews, national and cultural institutions have been virtually non-existent since Stalin's purge of Jewish national culture in

1948.

* "The Soviet Government finds it necessary to impede seriously the work of foreign journalists, so that the outside world does not become aware of Soviet human rights infringements.

* "The democratic movement in the Soviet Union has received some severe setbacks in recent years.

* "There is a continuing need to expose the unjust conditions endured by the people who are imprisoned in Soviet penal and psychiatric institutions merely because of their political or religious convictions.

"Wide publicity tends to act as a security against greater Soviet excesses against these people," the report found.

— NEWS WEEKLY, NOVEMBER 14, 1979

Child Abuse

The leaflet on child abuse in Soviet-occupied Lithuania has been reprinted. A copy is enclosed to this issue of BALTIC NEWS; further copies are available from P.O. Box 272, SANDY BAY, Tas., 7005 (Australia).

This leaflet has been produced in connection with the International Year of the Child 1979. It lists factual case histories of discrimination against Lithuanian youngsters who practice their religion and attend church. For example:

Kindergarten teachers training in Vilnius, Lithuania, were told to summon parents and to reprimand them if a child mentioned God. If the conference brought no results, the teachers were encouraged to take matters up with the parents' employers. (CCCL No. 9)

The father of Leonas Sileikas was threatened, "We will make your child an atheist yet!" when he went to a conference with his son and school personnel, to consider the boys' religious beliefs. (CCCL No. 12)

In October, 1974, children of the City of Kaunas were accosted by Security police and Communist Party members as the children gathered at a private home to pick up their First Communion photographs. Photos were confiscated, and the children's names were noted. Parents and children were terrorized as a result. (CCCL No. 14)

In the beginning 1975, the juvenile inspector of the Jurbarkas Security Police summoned a nurse, (Mrs.) Kleiniene, and warned her that if she allowed her son to go to church and to serve at Mass, she would be deprived of her rights as mother. (CCCL No. 18)

New Baltic Refugees

Hundreds of Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians had crossed the Baltic Sea in small boats before the end of World War II, in order to escape the Russian occupation of their homelands. Since then, quite a few Balts have tried to emulate these original "boat people".

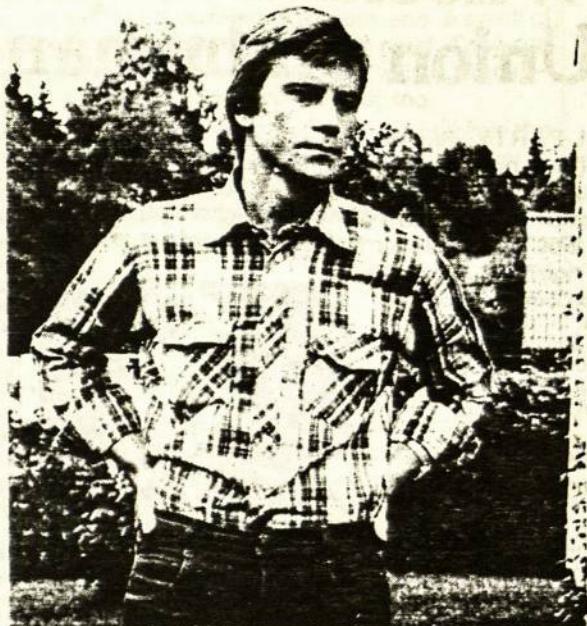
Last June, a young Latvian sailor, Juris Kalnins, escaped from a Soviet ship somewhere south of the Swedish island of Gotland. Kalnins (24) fought the raging seas for over seven hours, but was finally picked up by a Swedish fishing boat.

Kalnins was later granted political asylum. He is now studying the Swedish language and is receiving financial help from Sweden's Social Services Department.

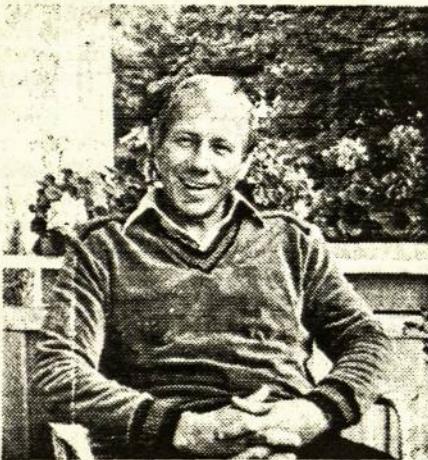
Kidnapped?

Not so lucky was Vladas Cesiunas, a 39-year-old Lithuanian canoeist and 1972 Olympic gold medalist. On August 17, he came to West Germany with a canoe team to take part in the world championships in the city of Duisburg.

He slipped away after only a few hours and was granted political asylum. Less than a month later, on September 13, Cesiunas disappeared.



• Juris Kalnins



• Vladas Cesiunas

A letter has since been published in the Soviet government-controlled press, bearing Cesiunas' name and claiming that he had returned to the Soviet Union of his own free will. Cesiunas himself is believed to be in hospital — either in Vilnius or Leningrad, — receiving treatment for a fractured skull.

During his short stay in Germany, Cesiunas was regarded as bitterly anti-Russian. Three days before his disappearance, he had told reporters of his plans to write a book about Soviet sport and sportsmen.

Two More

Another Lithuanian sailor, Vytautas Mackevicius (30) escaped while his ship was in port in Luebeck (West Germany). Three Russian officers tried to drag him forcibly back on board, but Mackevicius was rescued by German water police.

Reliable sources have also confirmed that a young Lithuanian musician, Rimgaudas Kasiulis (22) has managed to break through the Iron Curtain and is hiding "somewhere in Europe." Russian officials are known to be searching for him, in the hope of inducing him to return to Russian-controlled Lithuania.

German Echoes

In our front-page feature 21 months ago, we published Lithuanian dissident, T. Venclova's disclosures on the gradual weakening of the real Russian power.

The same ideas have since been echoed by the influential West German periodical, *Die Welt*. In its February 22, 1979 issue, *Die Welt* reports on the problems caused by the current 51%:49% ratio of Russians and non-Russians inside the USSR. The influence of political ideology is fast diminishing, and opposition to the ruling class is smouldering among young Soviet intellectuals.

Die Welt asks, 'How come that, lacking in internal strength, the Soviets are behaving so aggressively towards other countries?' (E.L.)

Read
BALTIC NEWS
from cover to cover — then,

PASS IT ON
to your friends, work-mates
and neighbours!

"KASEMETS' SPEECH"

Surrounded by Rigid Rubber Wall

Following is part of a speech made by Joan Kaplinski, an Estonian poet, to a group of scientists and government leaders in Soviet-controlled Estonia. The speech was secretly smuggled out of the country. It was made about that time in the summer of 1978 when the notorious dissident trials were going on in Russia - and the world watched in horror as people such as Shcharanski, Ginzburg, Petkus and others were being sent away to long prison terms in Soviet jails.

To protect Kaplinski, he was originally referred to by the common Estonian name of Kasemets. However, the Soviet authorities have since deciphered his true identity, and Kaplinski's future is in jeopardy.

... We are a small nation and we are painfully aware of how little is known of us... We are separated from the world, not a part of it. We have even become accustomed to this artificial separation, yet it is anything but a normal situation. In reality, we are a part of the world even if we ourselves cannot perceive it as such. As the world's troubles are also our troubles even when we perceive them to be too big and instead busy ourselves with local problems. By our usage, the word "global" and "humanistic" have come to have a negative connotation.

... What prevents us from being involved in the spiritual life and the great universal ideas and concerns? Spiritually, we demand too little; we are self-satisfied; we lack interest for the great universal concerns.

We live in isolation, cut off from information. The blame for that goes to our (government) bureaucracy in all its complexity and stupidity.

Dividing our thinking from the great big world out there, is a multi-tiered, anonymous, and stupidly rigid rubber wall. It prevents the flow of information within the borders of Estonia and the Soviet Union, and between us and the outside world.

Scholarly works are often long delayed or are not permitted at all. Maybe censorship could improve, as some claim, the conditions of society, but it could under no condition improve the quality of literature and free information.

The "Times", "Guardian", "LaMonde", "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" - the great newspapers of the world - none of them is available in Tallinn. One cannot find a single book in our bookstores that was printed in the western world!

... Trips to the outside world by our scholars are rare. ... Passports are issued at the last moment... Notices of scientific conferences are never posted... Letters from the outside not received... We ourselves are partly to blame for this... For too long, we have allowed a narrow-minded, stupid government bureaucracy to plan and guide our intellectual life... People and their ideas are condemned through anonymous sources... Unknown superiors govern people's fates,

The situation is not much better with outsiders coming to visit us. Only one-half of one per cent of Soviet Estonia - the area around Tallinn - is accessible to them. Everything else is off-limits, even the cultural centre of Tartu... Outside Estonians whose ideas are incomprehensible or seem vaguely threatening to some bureaucrat here, are not allowed to visit this country.



Estonians demand freedom for their native land.
Estonians demonstrate in San Francisco, USA

Yet we have much to give to the world, more than just an Olympic regatta. We have achievements and capable people... yet they are stifled and crushed by our bureaucracy... Two Estonian poetic anthologies have appeared in the outside world - in Italy and Finland. Our people have yet to receive any copies of them.

Our system of mail censorship is like a theatre of absurdity; yet its effects are vicious. I have not been allowed to receive a single magazine from the United States where my articles have appeared.

... The creative energies and real interests of our people are diverted by sham ceremonies and the silly hustling-bustling in preparation for the meaningless Olympics coming up... Why do I say things that our society does not allow us to say? Because for too long we have smugly played a very bad game... I believe great changes are in the wind in the future of our country... Take courage... If we continue to bow down and to take but the crumbs from the tables of our leaders, then the future leaders - who are about to come face-to-face with the very serious problems in our society - won't have to take us seriously either, and can dismiss us as simply people who have sold out their spiritual freedom and basic human rights and responsibilities for the sake of some material comforts and petty privileges.

Iron Curtain Irony

From PETER RISTIC in Belgrade

AFTER several days of talks with the Chinese Chairman, President Ceausescu of Rumania (population 20 million) finally summons the courage to pose a most sensitive question:

"Mr. Chairman, just how many political dissidents have you got in your country?"

"Twenty million, I should think."

"But what a coincidence. I have 20 million myself."

Political humour—like this joke that was circulating in Rumania during the Chinese Chairman's visit to the Balkans last year—is a common phenomenon in Eastern Europe.

With a tightly-controlled Press, plenty of official propaganda and an uncertain future for those who speak out, the political joke performs a special function: it enables people to talk about reality while risking little.

It is in Russia that the political joke sometimes seems at its best.

"What nationality were Adam and Eve?" one Soviet citizen asks another.

"Soviet, of course. After all, they had no clothes, there was only one apple between them and they thought they were in paradise."



Russia features prominently in Polish political jokes. Last year, when a Polish cosmonaut was rocketed into orbit with a Soviet space man, the coffee bar wits had this to deflate official pride:

"What did the flight prove?" one Pole asks another.

"That a Pole can get loose from earth—but not from the Soviet Union."

But not all political jokes are simply Russian bear-baiting—though these are the ones Western visitors might remember. The political joke is used to satirise everything from party privileges to the domestic economic situation.

One joke circulating in Moscow takes a hit at the generous perks for top party officials.

"Will it ever be possible to turn Switzerland into a communist country?" one enthusiastic young Russian activist asks a party functionary.

"Certainly—but wouldn't that be rather a pity?"

Then there is the Czech joke about the Frenchman, the German, the Russian and their cars.

The Frenchman says: "I use the Citroen for work, the Peugeot for picnics and the Renault for trips abroad."

The German says: "We use the Volkswagen for work, the Audi for picnics and the Mercedes for going abroad."

The Russian says: "We only have the Moskvich for work and picnics, but when we go abroad we take tanks."

There are many well-known jokes satirising the lack of freedom of speech. The East Germans—who have a slightly different style from the Russians—have a joke about two anglers.

"Why is it that you are catching all the fish?" the East German angler shouts to a West German fishing on the opposite side of a border river.

"It's simple," comes the answer. "No one on your side is allowed to open his mouth."

The so-called "Generation of Sacrifice" in Rumania, with the country left short of luxuries and even basic necessities, has produced this variation on the fish joke theme:

A worker goes out fishing and lands a big fish which he takes home to his wife.

"But what can I do with it?" she asks. "I don't have onions, oil—or anything—to prepare it with. Take it away."

The worker returns to the river and tosses the fish back.

The fish pops its head out of the water and shouts "Viva Ceausescu."

Hardly an event, even a religious one, passes without a quip. Pope John Paul was not spared last month during his visit to Poland. By the end of the Papal pilgrimage all Western journalists had heard this one:

Party chief Edward Gierek makes one final request before the Pope leaves for Rome: "Your Holiness, could you please arrange a divorce between Poland and the Soviet Union?"

"My son, of course I can. But I am afraid you will have to pay maintenance."



Yugoslavs—normally rather witty—seem to be short of political jokes these days, but they always have one at the expense of their pro-Soviet Bulgarian neighbours.

"Why are all the umbrellas up?" a Yugoslav visitor asks a Bulgarian during a heatwave in Sofia.

"Because it's raining in Moscow, of course."

And there is the well-known joke to end all jokes in Eastern Europe:

Marx is given 20 seconds by God to return to earth and speak on television.

He stands before the camera, pauses for a moment and then shouts: "Proletarians of all countries—forgive me."

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