



BALTIC NEWS

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

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April-May, 1980

Distributed Free

Simas Will Speak in Hobart

Afghanistan's defences are collapsing. Soon it will become the 99th non-Russian nation under Moscow's control. And, as the modern Russian empire goes on expanding, more people are starting to ask, "What is life really like under the Russians? Does it differ much from our own way of life here in Australia?"

The man who knows the answers is coming to Tasmania and will give a public talk in Hobart Town Hall (Conference Room) on Tuesday night, June 24. Please keep this date free.

He is Simas Kudirka (50), a former Lithuanian sailor, who had to pay dearly for his wish to live in freedom. Ten years ago, in a desperate attempt to reach the West, Simas leapt from his Soviet fishing ship to the deck of a US Coast Guard cutter. The American authorities handed him back to the Russians who beat him unconscious, then sent him to concentration camps in the depths of Russia.

Ordinary Man

Simas Kudirka was released in November, 1974, thanks to the relentless campaign by two American housewives and their letter-writing supporters. Kudirka now lives with his wife and two children in the United States of America.

"Simas is not a politician or a stirrer", a spokesman for HELLP (Help the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian Peoples Association) said in Hobart today. "Simas is a very ordinary man who had to suffer because he was born in Lithuania, a small peace-loving nation at the crossroads of the East and West. Simas saw it all with his own eyes: the ruthless elimination of his people, psychiatric prisons, mass deportations and the influx of Russian settlers . . . Simas lived through it all, and now he can tell us the truth."



• Mrs. Gene Kudirka (pictured) will accompany her husband Simas, on his Australian tour in June.

• More Details, Back Page.



• Simas Kudirka: "In my four years in prison they let me have only two visits from my wife and one from my mother. Why? Because they wanted to break me."

All Welcome

Simas Kudirka's talk in the Conference Room of Hobart Town Hall will start at 8 pm on Tuesday, 24 June. Admission will be free: all are welcome to come, and to ask questions afterwards.

Simas will also give a lunch-hour talk to students at the University of Tasmania, at 1 pm.

During the same afternoon (Tuesday, 24 June), the annual Baltic vigil will be held in Franklin Square, from 4.30 pm to 7 pm, followed by a candlelight procession through the streets of Hobart at 7 pm. The vigil commemorates the first wave of mass deportations from the Baltic States which started in June, 1941.

Simas Kudirka will be accompanied by his wife. They are planning to visit other major Australian cities, too: Adelaide, June 13-16; Perth, June 17-18; Melbourne, June 19-22; Canberra, June 26-27; Sydney, June 28-30.

BALTIC PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

The first list of Estonian prisoners of conscience was published in the September-October 1979 issue of Baltic News.

Further lists of Latvian and Lithuanian prisoners of conscience inside the U.S.S.R., will appear in the next two issues of this newsletter.

NEWS FROM BALTIC STATES

Student Paper Banned

Seven issues of an underground publication titled *Poolpaevaleht* ("Half-Day Newspaper") have appeared in Tartu, the university town of Russian-occupied Estonia. It was intended to be a semi-monthly periodical, and the first edition was published in October 1978. Five issues, each consisting of 8-10 typewritten pages, have since been smuggled abroad. The publishers were a group of university students who, in the first issue, outlined their editorial orientation as "cultural, factual and religious-philosophical."

The journal had to cease publication in April 1979 when the Russian colonial police in Tartu started investigations against the publishers and distributors. They were summoned to an "interview" for which the university administration provided rooms where questions could be asked without disturbance from outside, and where some university staff helped expose those suspects whom the Russian authorities had been unable to trace.

The investigations were conducted by Viktor Kozlov, a captain in the Colonial Secret Police. He was assisted by a man who held the rank of major and has not yet been identified.

No official charges were laid. In spite of this, Mr Hubert Jakobs — a student in the department of philology and the editor of *Poolpaevaleht* — was expelled from the university and from the Komsomol (Young Communists' League). He was also removed from his position as chairman of the Young Authors' Union in Tartu.

Three other Estonian students were interrogated by the police in June 1979 and cautioned in connection with *Poolpaevaleht* and *Sona* (The Word), another Estonian-language samizdat almanack. They were: Jaan Isotamm, Matti Milius and Viktor Niitsoo.

— FCI and East-West Digest.



• Romas Ragalsis (right) was arrested by the colonial police in Russian-occupied Lithuania and sentenced to six months' corrective labour, because he had declined to testify at the trial of Viktoras Petkus (see our report on "The Third Man in Soviet Trials", in the Aug.-Sept. 1978 issue of *Baltic News*).

New Russian Attacks

Documents recently received by Keston College in England include an article from the daily newspaper "Tiesa", published in Russian-held Lithuania. The newspaper accuses two members of the Catholic committee for the defence of believers' rights, Frs A. Svarinskas and S. Tamkevicius, of exploiting their position as priests to spread deliberately false fabrications about the Russian colonial authorities. It reported that the two priests had been officially warned by the procurator of the Lithuanian SSR that stricter measures would be taken against them if they did not cease their activities.

Two attached declarations from Frs Svarinskas and Tamkevicius describe their interviews with the procurator on 5 September, 1979 in detail. Fr Svarinskas rejects the charges made against him as baseless and gives details of methods used by the local authorities in Vidukle, his own parish, to harass the believers, hindering their services in the cemetery and intimidating would-be Pilgrims to the Shrine of Siluva. On 15 September, when the five members of the Catholic Committee celebrated Mass at Siluva, attempts were made by the local district executive committee to stop them. Later, other priests who had taken part were interrogated by the Russian Colonial police.

Fr Svarinskas assures the authorities that as long as discrimination against believers continues, the Catholic Committee will continue its activity.

The two declarations are accompanied by letters from 887 believers in Kybartai, 269 in Simnas and 1004 in Prienai, stating that they have regularly attended services conducted by Fr Tamkevicius and have never heard him slander anyone or tell any lies. They protest against false accusations made by "malicious persons who hate the faith".

— Keston News Service.

Death of Helsinki Monitor

Father Karolis Garuckas, a founding member of the Lithuanian Group to Further the Implementation of the Helsinki Accords, died on April 5, 1979, in Sventonis, Lithuania. He had been suffering from lung cancer. Garuckas was buried on April 10 at the cemetery in the town of Ceikiniai, where he served as priest during the last years of his life. Among the clergymen officiating at the funeral was Father Alfonsas Svarinskas, spokesman for the Catholic Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Believers.

With the death of Father Karolis Garuckas, only two of the group's original five members remain in Lithuania: Ona Lukauskaite-Poskiene and Eitan Finkelshtain (Eitanas Finkelsteinas). Tomas Venclova is residing in the West, having had his citizenship revoked while visiting the United States in 1977; and Viktoras Petkus, the group's original spokesman, is presently serving a fifteen-year sentence of internment and exile at a prison in Chistopol, Tatar ASSR.

— BATUN.

Why New Zealand?

New Zealand is now the only country outside Russian-controlled territories which still recognizes, *de jure*, Russian sovereignty in three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania). This startling fact has been revealed in a new study, just released in Australia.

Entitled *Baltic States: A domestic issue, an international problem*, the 32-page book has been written by two well-known Australian identities: Senator John W. Knight and Emils Delins (editor of *Latvian News* in Melbourne). After reviewing Australia's policies towards the Baltic States in 1974-78, the book describes the stand of a number of other countries. It shows that, contrary to the claims made by certain Australian politicians in mid-1970's, neither Switzerland, nor Sweden or Finland have given *de jure* recognition to the Baltic States' incorporation into the USSR.

This leaves New Zealand as "the odd man out in the West", co-author Delins concludes. "*De Facto* recognition of the (Baltic) incorporation (into the USSR) has been accorded, however reluctantly, by some," he states on Page 21, "*De jure* recognition has not been given, *expressis verbis*, by any government except that of New Zealand."

Unexplained

New Zealand government's strange attitude towards the Baltic question has so far remained unexplained. Mr Delins offers a few guesses (e.g., "New Zealand's remoteness — both physical and mental — from the world political scene"). However, there is no official explanation from New Zealand's elected leaders. This is particularly enigmatic now, as the present Prime Minister, Mr Muldoon, seems to have become aware of the true face of Russia. The Soviet ambassador to New Zealand, Mr Vsevold Sofinsky, was expelled in February, because he was said to have given money to the Socialist Unity Party (a small group of Moscow-aligned local communists).

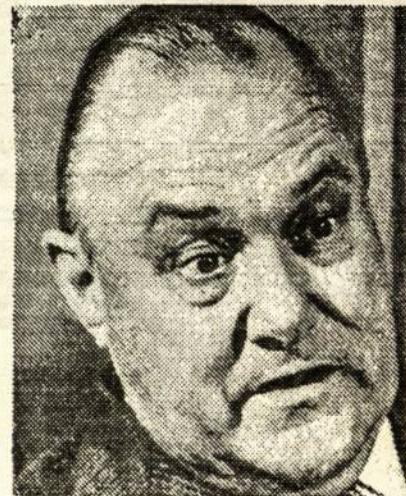
Historical Relic

New Zealand granted its *de jure* recognition of the Russian rule in the Baltic States in 1974, shortly after Australia's Labor government had taken a similar step. By the end of 1975, however, Australia reversed its stand and revoked its *de jure* recognition. New Zealand, on the other hand, failed to follow suit and is still clinging to its unexplainable endorsement of the Russian colonial reign in the Baltic, to the present day.

The Help the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Peoples Association in Hobart (HELP) has written to Mr Muldoon, asking him to give the true reasons for his Government's unsympathetic policy towards the Baltic States.

In the meantime, all *Baltic News* readers are urged to write to the Prime Minister of New Zealand (Mr Muldoon) directly and request him to withdraw his country's *de jure* recognition of the incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union. A copy of each letter should also be sent to Mr A. Malcolm, M.P., together with a covering note. The address of both these politicians is: Parliament Building, Wellington, New Zealand.

Letters to the Editors of New Zealand newspapers, not exceeding 150 words, could also help explain the Baltic plight. "N.Z. Truth", 82-8 Willis St.,



● New Zealand's Prime Minister, Mr Muldoon (pictured): having expelled the Soviet Ambassador, why is he still recognizing, *de jure*, Russia's colonial reign in the Baltic States?

Wellington has been shouting the Moscow Games boycott message loud and clear, for some time now. The Wellington daily paper "The Dominion" is published from the same office, and has a daily selection of letters. Another paper that welcomes letters on human rights is "The Press", Cathedral Square, Christchurch.

The 32-page booklet on *Baltic States* (mentioned at the start of this report) is available from BALTIC NEWS, PO Box 272, Sandy Bay, Tas, 7005, at \$3 plus 50c postage and packing. It may also be ordered from Mr G. Bogdanovics, Secretary, Baltic Council of Australia, 81 Ingrid Rd, Kareela, NSW, 2232.

Attack on Latvia's Quisling

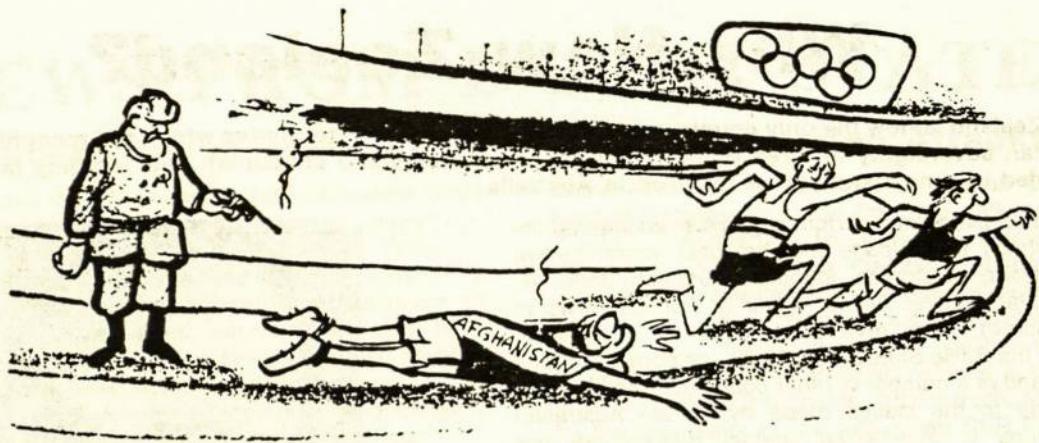
Augusts Voss, 64, the Russian-born First Secretary of the Latvian CP, escaped with minor injuries when six shots were fired at his motorcade near an underpass in the suburbs of Riga, last March.

There has been no official confirmation of the incident from the Russian government in Moscow.

The assailant was captured by Soviet militia officers immediately after the attempt, according to private sources, and taken to the main Colonial Police Headquarters in the Latvian capital. He was said to be a student, but it was not clear whether he was Latvian or of another nationality.

Voss was born in Tobolsk, Siberia. He was educated as a teacher and joined the Russian Communist Party in 1942. After serving in World War II, he became a member of the Latvian Communist Party Central Committee in 1945 and was named First Secretary of the Latvian Communist Party in 1966.

—BATUN.



LETTERS

Dual Citizenship

Afghanistan and "Baltic Prescription"

Your February-March editorial should be embazoned in neon lights, so that all politicians could read it — again and again.

Had the leaders of the West followed the "Baltic prescription" three decades ago, the tragedies of Afghanistan, Czechoslovakia and Hungary would have never occurred. And our world would be a much happier place to live in.

T. CAMPBELL.

Brisbane, Qld.

I sent your editorial to the Prime Minister. Whether it's passed on to him or not, is another thing, of course. One can only hope he gets to read it. I enclose a small donation.

C. FORD.

St. Peters, N.S.W.

Expel Russia from IOC!

Thanks for revealing the facts about IOC membership (*Baltic News*, Feb.-March, page 1). I am appalled.

Russia must be expelled forthwith, and their victims (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) re-admitted to the Olympic Federation. Otherwise, all this talk about keeping politics out of sport will be but a farce.

Mary SHEPHERD.

Melbourne, Vic.

The Russians did not take part in the Olympics from 1912 until 1952 (Helsinki). They missed, much to their sorrow, the Olympic Games in London in 1948 as they were not affiliated to the IOC.

They refused to play Israel in the Chess Olympiad, on the pretext that they will not sit with aggressors.

The USSR should have been expelled from the IOC in 1956 for the invasion of Hungary, and not permitted entry again.

John C. VESZELY.

Nollamara, W.A.

I found your article on Dual Citizenship (*B/N*, Feb.-March 1980) to be an exceptionally clear exposition of a case. I think most people in Australia today would agree that the consequences for many Australian citizens, of World War II are very sad, particularly where families have been separated.

(Dr.) W. W. BOSTOCK.

Hobart, Tas.

The University of Tasmania is to be commended for encouraging research into topical community issues, such as dual Soviet/Australian citizenship.

I hope to hear more about this in the months to come.

TAXPAYER.

Adelaide, S.A.

(Name and address supplied).

Another "Convert"

For years, my next-door neighbour used to give me *Baltic News* — and I used to throw it away, without even bothering to open the front page. Why should I care about countries thousands of kilometres away which lost their freedom years ago, I used to say.

Not any more. A few weeks after the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, I came across the following words of Pastor Martin Niemoller:

"In Germany, the Nazis came for the Communists and I did not speak up because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak up because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics — I was a Protestant. Then they came for me. By that time there was no one to speak up for anyone."

Please put me on your mailing list. I want to start speaking up for the Balts while I still can.

Rosetta, Tas.

TRADE UNIONIST.

NEWS FROM BALTIC STATES

New Appeal in Lithuania

The Catholic Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights has appealed to "the Bishops, Priests and the intelligentsia of Lithuania and to all our brethren in our homeland and abroad." It calls upon Lithuanians to prepare for two important jubilee dates. 1984 will mark the 500th anniversary of the death of St Kazymer and 1987 will be the 600th anniversary of the Christianization of Lithuania.

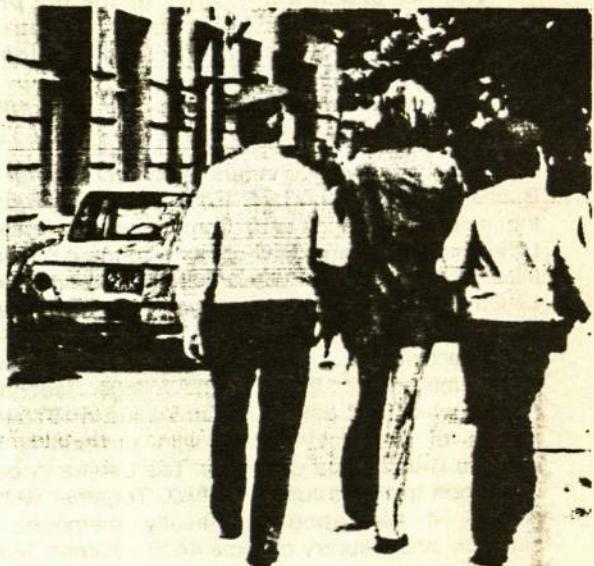
According to Keston College (England), the appeal asks all Lithuanians to prepare for these two feasts through religious education of young people and striving to lead a more Christian way of life. Priests as well as laymen are called upon to hold retreats, preach sermons and prepare people in similar ways for the forthcoming anniversaries.

Young people are writing to the Catholic Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights asking for help and stating that the rapid increase of alcoholism has the most detrimental effect on youth and on family life. A move by Lithuanian intelligentsia to found a temperance society was vetoed by the Soviet Government. The Church therefore suggests that 1980 be proclaimed a year of Temperance.

The appeal also calls upon the authorities to return the churches wrested from the believers in Lithuania: the Vilnius Cathedral, the Church of St Kazymer, the Igulos Church in Kaunas and the Church of Our Lady Queen of Peace in Klaipeda. The Committee further demands the return to their dioceses of the Bishop of Vilnius, Julijonas Steponavicius and the Bishop of Kaisiadorys, Vincentas Sladkevicius who have spent twenty years without trial in exile.

The document ends on a hopeful note: "Witnessing the religious revival taking place in Lithuania now, we look to the future with confidence," and is signed by: Members of the Christian Committee, Fathers

Jonas Kauneckas
Alfonsas Svarinskas
Sigitas Tamkevicius
Vincas Velavicius
Juozas Zdebskis.



● Liudas Kazakevicius (above) is detained by the Russian colonial police, outside Ragaisis' trial. The incident has been documented in the underground journal *Ausra* (The Dawn), No.14 (54).

Demonstration in Tartu

Several hundred Estonians, many of them high school students, staged a public demonstration in the university city of Tartu, last Christmas Eve. They lit candles, sang Estonian patriotic songs, and called for independence from Russia.

The freedom demonstration followed a Lutheran Christmas Eve service at St. Peter's Church in Tartu, a city of 90,000 people (one in four of them students). Sources say that at least 400 people from the congregation gathered in the church cemetery to pay homage at the monument of Julius Kuperjanov, an Estonian hero killed in 1919 in the independence fight against Russia.

—The Christian Science Monitor.

New Soviet Base

A massive construction project is currently under way in the Gulf of Riga, near the mouth of the Daugava River, in Russian-held Latvia. Western defence experts judge that the naval installation under construction will be the largest Soviet military naval base in the Baltic.

The project encompasses a port and extensive storage and repair facilities. It is expected to be completed within the next three years and will markedly increase Soviet naval manoeuvrability in the Baltic, the adjoining North Sea and the English Channel.

It is surmised that Soviet submarines in the Baltic carry nuclear warheads, despite official assurances to the contrary. According to Soviet Latvian Press, the construction project is meant to improve existing commercial shipping facilities.

—ALA Latvian News Digest.



● Ragaisis (right) is led away from the court-room in Vilnius, the capital city of Russian-held Lithuania, September 14, 1978.

BALTIC HERITAGE:

The University of Vilnius

The two oldest universities inside the present-day USSR boundaries are in the non-Russian Baltic States: the Lithuanian University of Vilnius (established in 1579) and Estonia's Tartu University (est 1632). By contrast, Russia's oldest institution of higher learning, the State University of Moscow, was not founded until 1755.

This article briefly surveys the first 400 years of the University of Vilnius.

The University of Vilnius was founded in 1579 on the authority of two charters. The first charter was issued in Vilnius on April 1, 1579 by Stephen Bathory, the ruler of the united Commonwealth state of Lithuania and Poland. Bathory simultaneously held the titles of the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania. The second charter was a papal bull issued in Rome on October 30, 1579 by Pope Gregory XIII. The effect of these two documents was to allow the transformation of the Jesuit College (secondary school) which was established in Vilnius in 1570 to the stature of a full University with universally valid degrees ("ius ubique docendi"). The University began instruction in the autumn of 1580. Together with the college, it had about 60 faculty members, 500 students, and a library of some 4400 volumes. Most of the faculty consisted of Jesuit scholars from Western Europe, who firmly linked the new University with the European academic tradition.

During the first two centuries of its existence, the University of Vilnius served as the principal institution of higher education and a source of enlightenment for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which had existed as a sovereign state since early 13th century, and in 1569 had entered a union and formed a joint Commonwealth with the Kingdom of Poland that remained independent until 1795. While the fortunes of the University rose and fell in step with the political and military fortunes of the Commonwealth, it remained a viable institution and a unique link between Lithuania and the mainstream of European civilization throughout the first 216 years of its existence. The first seventy-five and the last fifty years of this period were the Golden Ages of the University, during which scholarship flourished; the intervening period was marked by a struggle for survival during frequent wars, invasions, and natural disasters.

Prototype for Russia's universities

After the final partitioning and annexation of the Commonwealth by Russia, Austria, and Prussia in 1795, the University of Vilnius continued under the rule of Czarist Russia, first as the "Scola Princeps Vilnensis" to the year 1803, and then as the Imperial University of Vilnius until 1832. As the oldest and largest university in the Empire, it served as a prototype for new universities being established in Russia. Following the suppression of the Polish and Lithuanian uprising against Russian rule in 1830-31, during which large numbers of students had joined the rebels, the University was closed by a special decree of Czar Nicholas I on May 1, 1832, and its functioning was interrupted until after the fall of the Russian Empire in 1918.

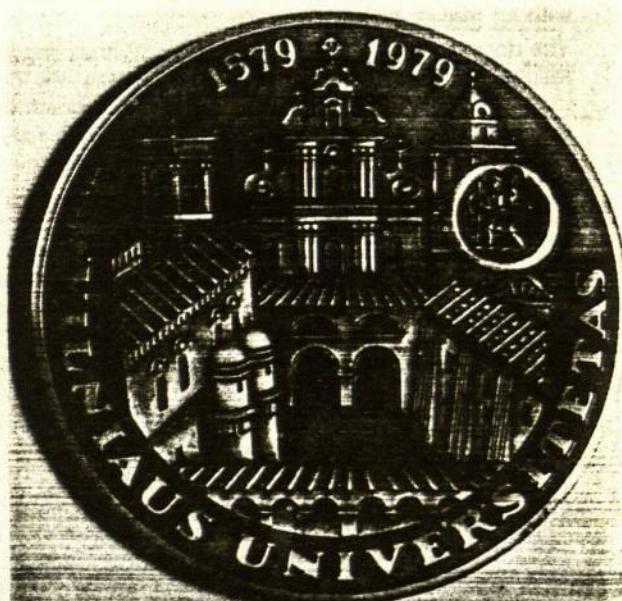
The re-establishment of an independent Republic of Lithuania was proclaimed in Vilnius by the Lithuanian National Council on February 16, 1918. On

December 5, 1918 the same Council declared the University reopened, and the resumption of operation was scheduled from January 1, 1919. The start of instruction could not take place because in mid-December of 1918 Vilnius was invaded by the revolutionary Russian Red Army, and the government of Lithuania as well as many members of the newly assembled academic staff, moved to the city of Kaunas. After two years of informal instruction in several academic disciplines, the transplanted University officially resumed operation in Kaunas on February 16, 1922.

Temporary separation

A short-lived Communist "Lithuanian-White Russian Republic" was established in Vilnius under the leadership of Vincas Mickevicius-Kapsukas, and on March 13, 1919 its Council of Commissars declared the intention to found a "Labor University" in Vilnius. However, the "Labor University" never opened, since the Communist state lasted only until mid-April of 1919, when the Polish army occupied Vilnius. After a brief return to Lithuanian authority, Vilnius was again taken by Poland and remained under Polish rule until 1939.

An order of the Polish government, issued on August 28, 1919, declared the reopening of the University of Vilnius and named it the "Stephen Bathory University." The University of Vilnius, which



●This medal has been struck to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the University of Vilnius. The medal may be purchased from Mr A. Venckus, 603 14th Street, Santa Monica, Calif 90402, USA; or, in Australia: Mr A. Zilinskas, 37 Sunray Ave, Cheltenham, Vic 3192.

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

● From Page 6

had served students of Lithuanian, Polish, and many other national origins for over 250 years, now effectively existed as two entities — one in Vilnius, another in Kaunas — from 1919 to 1939.

At the beginning of World War II in 1939, the city of Vilnius and the Bathory University were captured by the USSR and turned over to Lithuania. Next year, the Red Army occupied Lithuania, to be succeeded by Hitler's German troops in 1941. After many repressions, the German occupation forces closed the Universities of Vilnius and Kaunas on March 17, 1943 because of growing resistance among the students and staff.

Academic freedom stifled

The current difficult chapter of the 400-year history of the University of Vilnius began with the return of the Soviet Red Army in 1944. The University was reopened and rapidly forced into the mould of a Soviet university, designed to serve Communist ideology and Russian economic and political goals. Academic contacts with the world outside the Soviet zone of influence are severely restricted and subject to approval by political and security authorities of the state. Visits by undergraduate students to non-Communist countries are not allowed at all. The straitjacket of central planning from Moscow inhibits imagination and initiative, and the Western concept of academic freedom is replaced by mandatory submission of all scholarship to Marxist-Leninist ideology, which is a required subject for every student at the University.

However, even under severe totalitarian constraints, the University and its offspring, the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, continue to perform vital functions of education and research for the benefit of the Lithuanian nation. Scholarly accomplishments in



● Part of the original 400-year-old campus of the University of Vilnius (Lithuania).

mathematics, the physical sciences, and medicine are widely known and respected in the Western world. Unique and invaluable studies are being performed in Lithuanian linguistics, ethnography, and literature. There is a continuing growth in the number of students and the scholarly qualifications of the teaching staff, and a gradual improvement is taking place in physical facilities. A modern new campus is being built outside the city to supplement the original baroque buildings of the old University, and the library will soon add the four-millionth volume to its collection.

Lithuanians, their descendants and their friends in the entire world celebrated the 400th anniversary of the University of Vilnius, last year. They are now looking forward to the day when the University will be able to rejoin the world's academic community as a member endowed with full academic freedom.

— Lithuanian Student Scout Association, Inc. (The Los Angeles Alumni Chapter)

COMING EVENTS

21st JUNE (Saturday)

8.30 pm-1 am
Australian Croatian Club,
336 Main Road, Glenorchy

MIDSUMMERNIGHT BALL

Good Band . . . Fancy Dress (Optional) . . . All Welcome

Admission \$6 single, incl supper
For table bookings please phone George Ruut 72 7755
on or before Wednesday, June 18.

Organised by Estonian Association in Hobart.

● 5th JULY (Saturday)

8.30 pm-1 am
Polish Hall, 22 Main Road, New Town

DANCE

in aid of

Lithuanian Folk Dance Group "Venta"

Good Band . . . Novelties . . . All Welcome.

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

BALTIC NEWS

News about Baltic people seldom appears in Australia's mass media (daily newspapers, radio and TV). To fill this gap, a small group of Tasmanian volunteers produces this newsletter, *Baltic News*.

Thanks to our readers' generous support, *Baltic News* is still mailed FREE OF CHARGE to all Australian and Tasmanian politicians, leading libraries, universities, major newspapers and 2,000 individual readers in this country and abroad.

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.

He leapt for freedom

WHEN a Lithuanian seaman was returned to a Soviet trawler in November 1970, after attempting to defect to a US Coast Guard cutter, the United States was deeply shocked at the realisation that the policy of detente must have a price in human suffering.

The seaman, Simas Kudirka was finally allowed to emigrate to the United States after serving 3½ years of hard labor in various Soviet prisons — some in Siberia.

Asked during his first press conference in the United States, what life in the Soviet Union was like, Simas Kudirka replied: "I do not want to defame that unhappy land."

But he added that his own experiences of Russia in the Seventies was well described by Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago*.

Just out of hell

He said fervently: "I wish every human being would read this book — not only read it, but realise the truth that is within it." And visitors to Russia, having read it, should ask to be allowed within these camps.

"I feel as if I had just left hell."

It was on November 23, 1970, when the trawler came alongside the US Coast Guard cutter *Vengeance*, to discuss fishing issues, that he made his bid for freedom.

Suddenly leaping across to the American ship, he begged the officers to give him political asylum.

To his horror, the American skipper refused his request, and returned him to the Soviet trawler, and ultimately, a sentence of 10 years' hard labor.

On being returned to the Soviet trawler, he was fully aware of the fate that was in store for him.

"I knew what was happening, and I knew what the consequences would be. I had defiled the face of the Soviet system, and I was aware of the torture I would face", he said.

Citizenship

He owes his early release, and eventual permission to emigrate, to the fact that his mother was born in the United States, moving to Lithuania when she was a child.

Kudirka, who served as a radio operator in the Soviet Navy for 20 years, said that, despite his spotless service record, he had never been given leave to go ashore in a foreign port, because his mother had been born in America.

TV Movie

A full-length film, "The Defection of Simas Kudirka" has been made in the US, and will be screened on Channel 7 in Adelaide on June 25. It was shown in Victoria and New South Wales earlier this year, but has not yet been seen in Tasmania.

COMING EVENTS

● 23rd JUNE (Monday), 7 pm H.E.L.P. SOCIAL

in Polish Club,
Corner Main and Augusta Roads, New Town.

Members and supporters of
HELP Association
are invited to meet
Mr and Mrs Simas Kudirka informally.

Please bring a plate

● 24th JUNE (Tuesday)

4.30 pm-7 pm:
Vigil in Franklin Square, Hobart City
to commemorate

39th ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST MASS DEPORTATIONS FROM THE BALTIC STATES

*If you cannot come for the whole of this time
join us when you can!*

7 pm

CANDLELIGHT PROCESSION

through the streets of Hobart.
Starting point: Franklin Square
(corner Elizabeth and Macquarie Streets).
*Please bring your own candles (in wind-proof containers)
or battery torches.*

8 pm:

Hobart Town Hall (Conference Room),
entrance from Elizabeth Street

PUBLIC TALK

by

SIMAS KUDIRKA

former Lithuanian sailor
and ex-Soviet prisoner
(as featured in the film,
The Defection of Simas Kudirka).

Admission free . . . All welcome

Tea and coffee afterwards

Sponsored by HELP Association in Hobart



BALTIC NEWS is published by HELP (Help the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Peoples Association) in Hobart, Australia. HELP is a non-denominational and non-party-political group of concerned Australians, who (1) do not recognise Russian sovereignty over the three Baltic States; and (2) are working to publicize the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian people's continuing struggle for survival and freedom. New members are welcome to join at any time. Postal address: P.O. Box 272, SANDY BAY, Tasmania, 7005 — Australia.

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