



BALTIC NEWS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF HELP THE ESTONIAN, LATVIAN AND LITHUANIAN PEOPLES ASSOCIATION (HELP)
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10th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

March, 1985

Baltic News is 10 Years Old

by Rod Boucher

Happy Birthday, *Baltic News*!

In 10 short but challenging years you have truly come of age.

March 1, 1985, marks the end of an era and the start of an exciting new decade for the newsletter.

The past decade has seen the growth of *Baltic News* from a fairly crude two-page news sheet to a highly professional, commercially printed newsletter.

And it is now mailed to English speaking readers in all States of Australia and 25 countries abroad.

Despite this, the newsletter is still produced by a group of unpaid volunteers in Hobart.

Its headlines have read like the pages of history. "Unwilling soldiers in Afghanistan: Russia's Foreign Legion," and "Baltic deportations: An eyewitness tells," are just two of the many front page stories covered during the last half of the seventies and the first part of the eighties.

Baltic News has focused world attention on such issues as political persecution, psychiatric abuse and the true story behind the Soviet labour camps.

In March last year, the Australian Prime Minister, Mr Bob Hawke, praised the Lithuanian, Estonian and Latvian people for their role in creating Australia's multi-cultural society. In his page one message to the Baltic community printed in *Baltic News*, Mr Hawke reaffirmed the Australian Government's position in not recognizing *de jure* the incorporation of the Baltic States in the Soviet Union.



● Some of the volunteers who edit, produce and distribute *Baltic News*. This periodical has no regular income and has existed on its readers' donations for the past ten years.

— Photo: Beattie's Studio.

This was a far cry from the situation when *Baltic News* started publication in 1975.

During the brief period (1974-75) when Australia recognized Russian sovereignty over the Baltic States, it became evident that the average Australian knew very little about the Baltic States. This hampered an informed discussion of the issue.

Filling information gap

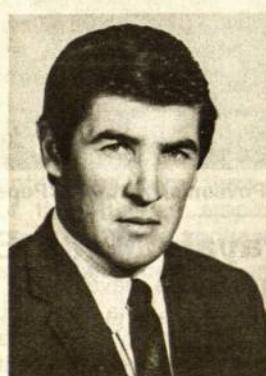
Baltic News was started to fill this information gap. It gradually built up reliable sources and is now accepted as the leading English-language Baltic periodical in the Southern hemisphere.

Keston College, Amnesty International headquarters, and human rights organisations in Germany and the US use *Baltic News* materials and so do many newspapers and periodicals in Australia and abroad.

Baltic News has no paid staff. Editing, pasting up and circulation are done by enthusiastic amateurs who had to learn the "tricks of the trade" the hard way. In this process of growth, they have always enjoyed the encouragement and expert advice of Hobart's professional journalists and printers.

Perhaps the most unique feature of *Baltic News* is its financial side. *Baltic News* carries no paid advertisements, receives no government grants, is not backed by any financial group — and is distributed *free* of charge to anyone who cares to read it.

● More on Page 2



● Fred Aiken, foundation Assistant Editor of *Baltic News*. Fred worked hard on this newsletter's early development, until his untimely death on September 28, 1975.

NEWS FROM BALTIC STATES

Private Boost to Economy



29 per cent of the total value of last year's Latvian farm output came from private plots that occupy less than one per cent of Latvia's agricultural land area.

The maximum permissible size for each plot is half a hectare (one acre). Most plots are worked by collective farm employees in their spare time. Child labour and old-fashioned horse-power are used widely (see photograph above).

Since the forced takeover of the three Baltic States in 1940, this last vestige of private enterprise has markedly propped up the Soviet economy.

The Soviet private plot arrangement is similar to the medieval serfdom system, where serfs could work their own plots after meeting the lord's needs.

— WFFL/Hedrick Smith.

10th Anniversary . . .

● From Page 1

Over the past 10 years, this has been made possible by *Baltic News* readers whose private donations have covered all costs. *Baltic News* believes in open accountability: a full list of donations is published in each issue.

Baltic News is not an "ethnic" paper. It is aimed at all Australians, irrespective of their creed or political persuasion, who are interested in East European history and current events. By concentrating on factual reporting and by not "pushing" any party-political line, *Baltic News* has many friends and supporters in all political camps in Australia.

The 10th anniversary of *Baltic News* will be celebrated on Saturday night, April 27, with a subscription dinner-dance at the Qld Vienna Restaurant, 112 Liverpool st, Hobart (upstairs), starting at 7.30 pm. Everyone is invited.

* Mr Rod Boucher is Special Projects Manager and former Chief-of-Staff of "The Mercury" (Hobart).

Don't Miss
BALTIC NEWS
Dinner — Dance
Saturday, April 27
 For more details, see page 7.

Comet in Latvian Song

A Latvian folk song has helped astronomers trace sightings of Halley's Comet back to May 16, 240 BC.

Janis Kletnieks, a surveyor and assistant professor at the Riga Polytechnic Institute, discovered a reference in a Latvian folk song to the fireball that passes near earth about every 75 years and is due to appear again next year.

What alerted Kletnieks to the early sighting of Halley's Comet was a stanza of a folk song that said, "the sun lashed the moon with a silver broom".

A computer check confirmed that the tail of the comet flashed between the sun and the moon — the location specified in the folk song — early in the morning on May 16, 240 BC. This showed that the songwriter did not take poetic liberties, but had accurately depicted a wonder of nature in a folk song which has survived for 2225 years.

There are almost 1,000,000 Latvian folk songs and their variants. The archives of Latvian folklore contain 12,000 original melodies and 8,000 variations.

LND Latvian Update/UPI.

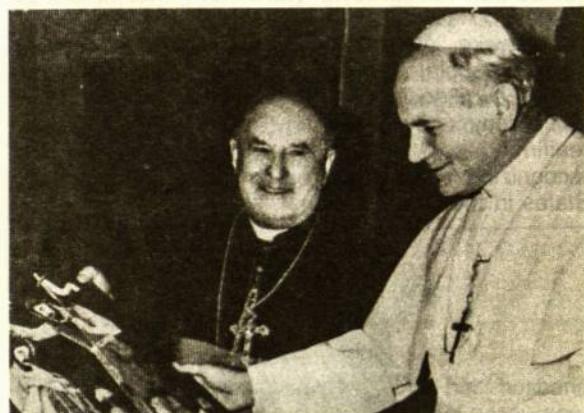
Archbishop searched

Soviet customs officials at Moscow airport embarrassed the Lithuanian Archbishop Povilonis when they subjected him to a body search last November. The Moscow officials also seized the Archbishop's religious books as well as Vatican Radio cassettes which contained recordings of St Casimir's 500th anniversary celebrations, held in Rome on March 4, 1984.

Archbishop Povilonis was returning from Rome after a month's visit.

The Soviet media remained silent on this incident.

— ELTA/SRT.



● Archbishop Povilonis (left) with Pope John Paul II.

Betrayals Made Easy

Police informer cards have been distributed to households in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania over the past 12 months. The aim is to encourage citizens to report to the police on the social and political behaviour of friends and neighbours.

The main difference between these cards and those used during the 1940s and 50s is that reports can now be filed anonymously.

— Help & Action (Paris).

Balts Need Australia's Help

Australia's Federal Parliament will soon play a key role in deciding whether the question of Baltic nations' self-determination is to be reviewed by the United Nations Organisation this year. On January 13, 1983, the European Parliament called upon the Foreign Ministers of all free countries to submit the Baltic States' issue to the Decolonization Subcommittee of the United Nations.

The three Baltic countries — Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania — have been occupied by a foreign power for the past 45 years. The conditions there, according to the European Parliament's resolution, are typical of colonized countries.

Responding to the European Parliament's call, Senator Baume moved in the Australian Senate on October 9, 1984,

- that Australia, as a member of the United Nations, should fulfil its obligations to promote and encourage respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and should support the European Parliament's Resolution in respect of the Baltic States.
- that, in order to do so, the Australian Government should, on its own initiative and by seeking the support of like-minded governments, bring the question of human rights and self-determination for the Baltic States before all appropriate forums of the United Nations, and especially before the United Nations Human Rights Commission as a priority topic under the agenda item 9 entitled 'The Rights of Peoples under Colonial or Alien Domination'; and
- that the Department of Foreign Affairs should be directed to take all necessary steps in order to implement this Resolution.

Sympathetic

This motion lapsed with the dissolution of Parliament last October, but will be revived this year. Meanwhile, Australia's Prime Minister (Mr Hawke) has given assurances on several occasions that his Government "would take whatever action is possible, both bilaterally and multilaterally, to promote the cause of human rights in the Soviet Union". In his letter to the Baltic Council of Australia (14 The Boulevarde, Strathfield, NSW 2135) on November 23, Mr Hawke indicated that Australia's membership of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights could be one possible avenue for such action.

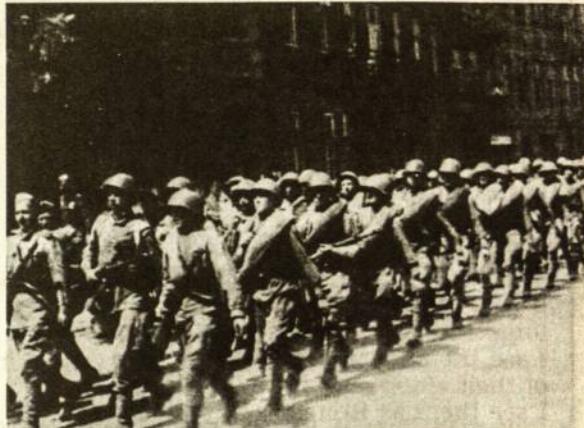
On November 16, the Minister for Foreign Affairs (Mr Hayden) stated that "the (Australian) Government would take a sympathetic attitude towards an initiative to bring the concerns of the Baltic community before the new Parliament".

"We hope all Australian parliamentarians will treat the Baltic Resolution objectively and will not turn it into a party-political football", a spokesman for HELLP (Help the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Peoples Association) said in Hobart this week. "All three Baltic States were neutral in World War II. They were annexed to the USSR as a result of a secret Hitler-Stalin agreement. Since then, the Soviets have worked hard to kill the Baltic people's national identity and turn their lands into an extension of the Russian empire. If this isn't colonialism, what is?" the spokesman said.

Australians of Baltic descent and their friends, scattered all over Australia, will be watching their local members' performance when this important issue comes up in Parliament.

Human Rights Submissions

Encouraged by Mr Hawke's statements, the Australian Lithuanian Society for Human Rights (c/o 55 Riverview Rd, Earlwood, NSW 2206) has also pre-



- Without declaring war, Soviet armies invaded Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in June 1940 — and are still there today. Australia now has an opportunity to report this injustice to the United Nations.

pared an urgent brief, highlighting specific cases of denial of human rights in Russian-occupied Lithuania. The document was forwarded to Prime Minister Hawke on January 25, in time for the February meeting of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights.

In Hobart (Tasmania), the national president (Rev Greg Jordan, S.J.) and the national secretary of Friends of the Prisoners (Miss Maureen See) met Prime Minister Hawke on November 9. They asked Mr Hawke to intervene on behalf of all prisoners of conscience in the USSR, but especially on behalf of Viktoras Petkus who is desperately ill. Mr Hawke was handed a cutting from *Baltic News* (June 1984) which described this Baltic prisoner's case in detail.

As a member of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, Australia has a great opportunity this year to emerge as a genuine defender of human rights.

Baltic people are suffering a grave injustice now — they need Australia's help.

Self-Determination

The right of self-determination is "inextricably tied to the right of persons freely to determine their political status", the United States' representative told the United Nations on October 18.

During a debate on self-determination, in the UN General Assembly's social committee, US Ambassador Richard Schifter asked, "When did the independence movement of Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania . . . last have a chance to test the strength of their respective independence movements at the ballot box?"

Soviet delegate Igor I. Yakovlev responded on the same day. He claimed that "the republics of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania were freely associated with the Soviet Union and had the right to leave it. It was not for the United States delegation to teach them how to exercise the right to self-determination".

A Poem from Estonia

This allegoric cry for freedom was written by JAAN KAPLINSKI, a former professor at the University of Tartu in Russian-occupied Estonia. Kaplinski was dismissed from his academic post because the Russians reportedly objected to one of his speeches. He is now employed as a manual labourer in a botanical garden in Estonia.

Said Vercingetorix: Caesar, you take from us
the land where we live,
but the land where we died
you cannot take from us.

I've thrown down my sword at your feet.
All those are dead who deserved
living in the Arvernian land;
and with those who are left
I have no desire to live.

They will, I know, go on living. I can see them
learning their masters' tongue,
forgetting the speech of their fathers.

I see them ashamed of the blueness of their eyes,
of their elders and of the uncouth talk;
I see them as Romans, clutching
citizens' papers to their breasts.

So be it, Imperator: in your realm let there be
one language, one faith, one people.

Your state will come and go.
Wheat will grow in your public places
and goats will graze in the Forum.
It is my hand and the hand
of my slaughtered people
that will strike you down —
my hand with the Vandals' sword.
Do then whatever you will.
I know the cudgel and sword await me,
for all those are dead who deserved
living in the Arvernian land.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Information Welcomed

Please send me copies of *Baltic News* in the future.

I admire the work that you are doing to popularise the plight of the Baltic States with the Australian public and Latvians. I also want to be more informed about what goes on in Latvia. Bellevue Heights, SA.

Astra KRONITIS.

Prior to receiving the *Baltic News* I had no idea what the current socio-political situation of the Baltic countries was. Your newsletter inspires in me a very deep longing to do something, to at least feel the suffering of those brave enough to stand up in protest.

Springwood, NSW.

Andrew MALLAS.

Local Traitors

I've noticed that, in the captured Baltic States, local traitors (Latvians, Lithuanians, etc) act as judges and officials, to serve the Soviet state and the Russians — against their own people.

Kingston (Jamaica).

William BRICE.



Disturbing

It is most disturbing to read of the continuing plight of Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians under Soviet occupation. But this helps remind the rest of us just how fortunate we are, and it helps spur the rest of us on to help in whatever small ways we can. Enclosed is a small donation.

Winnipeg, Man (Canada).

Vern FOWLIE.

Subsidising the Soviets

As an Australian taxpayer, I am fed up with subsidising Soviet misdeeds, such as the war in Afghanistan or the persecution of Baltic people.

According to the OECD, the Soviets owed the West more than \$28.7 billion, as of last June. Since then, West European banks have lent the Russians at least another \$250 million.

This made the Soviet Union the third-largest hard-currency debtor in the world, behind Brazil and Mexico. More startlingly (see table below), the Soviets ranked first in the world on loans subsidised by Western governments, a total of \$17.67 billion:

	Total Debt Owed to the West (\$ Million)	Part of the Total Subsidised by Western Taxpayers (\$ Million)	Proportion of the Total Subsidised by Western Tax- payers
Brazil	\$66,998	\$12,494	19%
Mexico	65,090	6,667	10%
USSR	28,772	17,671	61%
Spain	25,295	3,198	13%
Venezuela	24,221	1,805	7%
S. Korea	24,000	7,039	29%
S. Africa	16,828	4,286	26%
Poland	15,897	6,080	38%
E. Germany	?	?	?

Is it too late to stop this suicide of the West?

Sydney, NSW

J. RICHARDSON.

Prisoners' Mail Blocked

Soviet authorities have escalated the blockage of mail to prisoners of conscience in the USSR, as documented by the most recent underground *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*.

In a letter from Perm labour camp, reprinted in issue No 64 of the *Chronicle*, Father Alfonsas Svarinskas writes that his letters have been returned. "Ask the post office why this is happening," he says, "since otherwise, we all suffer. You don't receive my letter, and I waste my quota . . . After all, they only allow me two letters a month." Father Svarinskas is one of two Lithuanian Catholic priests serving a 10-year sentence for pastoral activity. A third is awaiting trial (see separate report, Page 8).

Recently, scores of Christmas greetings to Lithuanian prisoners of conscience in the USSR were returned to their senders in the US. Despite the fact that the letters were personal, clearly not of any political nature, 90% of the cards sent last December from greater New York were not delivered. Most of the returned mail was stamped "retour inconnu" (addressee unknown).

Deliberate Obstacles

"This is a deliberate attempt to cut the lifeline of communications between those living behind the Iron Curtain and friends or relatives on the outside," said Mrs Emilia Sandanavicius of Brooklyn, whose cousin, Father Sigitas Tamkevicius, is imprisoned in Perm labour camp.

Julius Sasnauskas' pen-friend in Italy has just informed the Lithuanian Information Center that personal correspondence with the prisoner has ceased altogether. Sasnauskas is completing a 6½-year sentence in exile for underground publishing activity. Responses are not forthcoming and the return receipt no longer bears the signature of the addressee, reports



● Young Lithuanian prisoner of conscience Julius Sasnauskas: no more letters from his pen-friend in Italy.

the pen-pal. According to the testimony of former prisoners, registered letter receipts are methodically signed by Soviet agents and letters are rarely forwarded to the addressee.

The non-delivery of mail which is properly addressed is an interference by the Soviet Union with internationally recognized human rights agreements. The systematic exclusion of certain persons from international mail service also violates the general regulations of the Universal Postal Union and the Constitution of the USSR. — Lithuanian Information Center.

Please complete, cut here and mail to: BALTIC NEWS, PO Box 272, Sandy Bay, Tas 7005



Australian Questionnaire

YES NO

- Are you willing to make those documents available to investigators from the departments of Foreign Affairs and Communications?
- Do you believe that current practices by Australia Post effectively respond to your needs in tracing your mail?
- Have you offered an invitation to anyone in the Soviet Union to join you in Australia?
- Have you received confirmation that your written invitation was received?
- Please specify any problems you have experienced in sending packages and parcels to the Soviet Union:

.....
.....
.....

YES NO

- Do you regularly mail letters to the Soviet Union?
- Do you usually send them by registered mail?
- Does the cost of registration (\$3.30) affect whether or not you use this service?
- Do you have documents in your possession (eg, letters or parcels returned.....); or do you have knowledge of documents that would indicate interference with Australian mail directed to Soviet citizens?

If so, please specify:

.....
.....
.....

- Are you willing to further discuss your experiences with representatives of the Australian Government?

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

Post Code.....

Phone.....

EX-SOVIET OFFICIAL SPEAKS ON

Life Behind Iron Curtain

"Communism is dead as an ideology in the Soviet Union. It's only alive in the West. The only real communists are found in the West. However, they would change if they had to live in the Soviet Union for two years." Valdo Randpere (whose escape from Russian-occupied Estonia was reported in our last issue) said this at a recent press conference in Boston, USA.

Randpere stated, "The Soviet system does not work. It is only kept going by the help it gets from the West. All the Western countries have to do is unify and refuse to do business with them — impose a programme of united sanctions and the system would come crashing down in a few years. People are not hungry now, thanks to Western help. This is unfortunate. If people get hungry enough, they would cause a revolution."

Valdo Randpere, 26, was the Deputy Minister of Justice, Estonia SSR, and is believed to be the highest ranking defector from Soviet-occupied Estonia. He was a member of the Estonian Komsomol Central Committee, member of the Communist Party, and an instructor in the Department of Culture and Propaganda. He was also associated with his wife, as a singer in the Estonian State Philharmonic.

It was this connection which enabled the couple's flight to freedom.

After participating in a concert in Kotka, Finland, they booked passage on a Swedish passenger ship. He and Leila have now been engaged by Artist Video of Stockholm as musicians.

Randpere thinks that "it is essential for the Western people to know about the complete opposition of the people in the Baltic countries to Soviet occupation, that the people of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania want to be free."

Russification

The Soviet government is continuing its pell-mell effort towards the complete Russification of the former Baltic republics. "They plan the Russification of our culture and language. Russian is required in the schools. All research work is in Russian. College classroom work is in Russian. They want to destroy all our traditions."



According to refugee Randpere, the Soviet rulers in the Baltic countries are enjoying special shops, cars and other privileges — while ordinary people have to queue up daily for their staple needs (pictured). Nearly one million Balts have been so far killed in the name of equality, but class distinctions are greater today than ever before.

He said that Russian workers have been brought in to work on harbour renovations and improvements in Tallinn. They have been granted housing, and they will continue to live there.

Morale is very low everywhere, even among the elite of the Communist party. "Everyone leads a double life. While at work, you work as a Communist and when you go home, you try to become a normal person."

Valdo Randpere was among the privileged class. "We could go to the state shops; we had a car, better housing. The average young couple must wait 10-15 years for an apartment. By that time they are no longer young."

Active Opponents in Prison

Resistance to Soviet oppression boils under the surface. "Most of the active resisters are in prison. The last demonstration was held in 1981. The Latvians have shown the most courage in their resistance. Political and criminal prisoners are treated the same.

"There is no religious freedom in Lithuania," said Valdo. In reference to Rev Billy Graham's recent pronouncement that there are 350 churches in Estonia, Randpere said, "there are 50 at the most. There are only eight churches in Tallinn and 2 in Tartu. If you attend church, you can be sure you will have problems. Graham went to a 'Ptomkin Church'."

Regarding VOA and Radio Liberty, Valdo said, "The programming on Voice of America is not anti-communist enough. Further, it is jammed and difficult to receive. Radio Liberty comes at difficult hours. The anti-communist message is not getting to the people of Estonia."

High Price To Pay

The decision to leave their native land was not made on the spur of the moment. The young couple planned for two years, knowing full-well the repercussions their flight would cause, the certain heart-ache among their relatives, and the separation from their child.

Valdo's father, Heino, a senior mechanic with the Estonia Merchant Marine and a recipient of the Order of Lenin for his service to the Soviet State, has lost his job. The home of Valdo's parents has been searched and Leila's parents have been interrogated. Daughter Kaisa is a hostage of the state in the custody of Leila's mother.

The Randperes believe, this is all part of the price they must pay to try to give the Western world a picture of disregard for human rights in their homeland and of the Russification of the three former Baltic republics, a process which threatens with extinction the national cultures of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. — the truth.

* This was in reference to the 'Ptomkin Village' set up in the days of the Czars to give a false picture of Soviet life to dupes the authorities were trying to impress. The Soviets have been very adept at creating illusions.

COMING EVENTS

Baltic News Dinner-Dance

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of Baltic News, a dinner-dance will be held in Old Vienna Restaurant, 112 Liverpool Street, Hobart (upstairs), on Saturday, April 27, 1985, starting at 7.30.

This social event is open to everyone: media workers, *Baltic News* supporters and the general public. However, it is essential to book early, because the number of places is limited.

The admission charge of \$16 per person includes a four-course meal and music. Drinks are extra — obtainable at the Restaurant (Old Vienna is fully licensed).

Don't miss this special occasion — book now: telephone (002) 30 5789 or (002) 72 6360.

Friends of the Prisoners

The annual general meeting of Friends of the Prisoners will be held in Migrant Resource Centre, 222 Elizabeth St, Hobart, on Wednesday, March 20, at 8 pm.

Lithuanian bishop P. Baltakis has been invited to address the meeting. Non-members are welcome.

Friends of the Prisoners is a Christian ecumenical group of friends and correspondents who support prisoners of conscience suffering in the Soviet or its satellite countries.

Enquiries to: Post Office Box 12, Sandy Bay, Tas, 7005, or telephone (002) 34 8955.

June Deportations

The start of mass deportations of the Baltic people 44 years ago will be commemorated in Hobart on Friday, June 14, 1985. Please keep this evening free.

Further details will be published in the next issue of *Baltic News*.

THANK YOU — AGAIN!

When the first type-written issue of *Baltic News* appeared in March 1975, seventy-five copies were multiplied and mailed to readers at the total cost of \$18.

By the end of 1984, the circulation of *Baltic News* had jumped to 6,500, and the cost of printing and mailing one issue came to \$1,600.

Inflation and growing readership will continue increasing our unavoidable expenditure. However, we are pleased to report that our readers' generosity has kept pace with the rising costs.

We thank you, once again, for the following donations received since the last issue of *Baltic News*:

Lithuanian Community, Melbourne, \$170; Melbourne Estonian Society, \$160; Latvian Federation, Melbourne, \$150; Baltic Council of Victoria, \$100; T. J. Flanagan, Dr H. A. Johansons (Vic), \$10 each. Lithuanian Veterans "Ramove," \$206.50; Lithuanian Ass LAS, Adelaide, \$200; Lithuanian Ex-serviceman, SALE (Vic), \$163; E. H. Hanhiniemi, Fin Brother (Qld), \$106.25; Lithuanian Engineers and Architects, Canberra and Baltic Womens Ass, SA, \$100 each; J. Strazdas (USA), \$50; N. Murray (Tas), \$40; A. Grikepeli (Vic), \$35; F. Borunas, A. Alyta (ACT), Estonian Central Council, Canada, \$30 each; The Voice of Martyrs (NSW), P. Protas (NSW), J. Augstkalns (SA), \$25 each; C. Ford, J. Jurgens, E. Annuk, G. W. Courtney, J. Dirgincius (NSW) A. Apsenieks (Tas), H. M. Longnan (NZ), B. Prasmutaite, A. Bimba, A. Lacic (Vic), \$20 each; B. Lazauskas (USA), K. Moelder (Tas), V. Bieliauskas, O. Grinbergs (Vic), \$15



Baltic Cruise

This year's Baltic Peace and Freedom Cruise promises to be a major cultural and political manifestation.

The start of the programme will coincide with the Baltic Tribunal, to be held in Copenhagen on July 23-25.

Participants will then fly to Stockholm on July 26 and will board the cruise liner on the same evening. After crossing the international water adjoining the Baltic States, the ship will berth in Helsinki on July 28 for a few hours' visit to Finland, then return to Stockholm for a wide range of entertainment.

For Australian participants, Concord International Travel (541 King Street, West Melbourne, 3003) offers a special fare of \$1,450 from Melbourne to Copenhagen and return, flying Alitalia/SAS.

The 8-day cruise will cost from \$300US (youths under 30) to \$400 (private 1st class).

All enquiries and bookings to: Dr P. Darzins, 27 Aroha Tce, Black Forest, SA, 5035. Ph (08) 297 4242.

each; M. A. Sawyer (SA), \$10.50; Anonymous Tasmanian and S Australian, A. Olsauskas, Dr. H. Salasoo, L. Loover (NSW), J. Sirgunas (Tas), D. K. Hancock (SA), P. Dardzans (USA), E. Looritis, K. Rand, W. Craig, O. Mieziliis, E. Zilberts, E. Smyth, Prof J. H. Tisch (Tas), A. Lithuanian, V. Petkunas, Dr A. V. Stankevicius (SA), R. Ciuras (Qld), V. Kasputis (WA), N. Nikon, Fr Provincial SDB (Vic), P. Pullinen, B. Stasionis (NSW), O. Maciukas (SA), S. Augustavicius (Tas), M. Mukans (NSW), \$10 each; Hungarian Institute, Victoria, V. Iowlie (Can), \$6 each; B. Sabeckis, E. Matiukas (SA), L. Braniska, F. S. Reiljan (Vic), J. Luker, J. Watchorn, E. Dawson (Tas), A. Uzpurvis (USA), S. Ozols (Qld), \$5 each; E. Madden (Tas), V. Torpan, H. Kolm (Vic), \$2 each.

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.

Soviets Crack “Tip of Iceberg”

Father Jonas Kastytis Matulionis (pictured right), was arrested by KGB agents on November 9, 1984, just as he was administering the last rites to a dying man in Russian-occupied Lithuania. Fr Matulionis was not the first believer to lose his freedom in this remote part of the world. Thousands of Christians, Moslems and Jews have suffered and died for their faith since the forced incorporation of the three Baltic States into the Soviet Union 45 years ago.

What makes this case different, is that Father Matulionis was the visible tip of the Soviet Union's little-known "iceberg" — the underground church of the catacombs. In Lithuania, the church of the catacombs is not a separate church; it is merely the mirror image of the Roman Catholic church, catering quietly for the needs of those who cannot practise their religion openly.

Father Matulionis trained for the priesthood by correspondence and was ordained secretly. In this way, he avoided the KGB (Russian secret police) which controls the last remaining seminary in Kaunas (Lithuania). After his arrest, Matulionis was charged with being an impostor priest — the first official admission by the Soviets that the church of the catacombs does exist!

This incident is a severe setback for the Soviet rulers who were hoping to stamp out all religion in the Baltic colonies before the end of the 20th century.

Suffocation from Inside

Lithuania, the southernmost and the largest of the three Baltic countries, is predominantly Roman Catholic. When occupied by the Red Army in 1940, Lithuania had over 3 million inhabitants, 85% of whom were Catholic. There were 708 churches, 314 chapels, 73 monasteries, 85 convents, 3 archbishops, 9 bishops, 1,439 priests, 412 brothers and 950 nuns.

The Soviet colonial administration decided to suffocate the Church from inside. About 600 bishops and priests were gaoled or deported to Siberia. Some were tortured to death. The seminaries at Vilkaviškis, Telšiai

and Vilnius were closed. The last remaining seminary (in Kaunas) was allowed to continue on a limited scale, but candidates were screened by the KGB and by the State-run Commission of Religious Affairs.

The surviving priests had to obtain a Soviet State permit before they could minister to their congregations. Their movements were restricted; appointments were controlled by the Soviets.

All convents and monasteries were closed, their communities dispersed. Religious organisations and publications were outlawed. By 1947, Lithuania was left with one bishop, Kazimieras Paltarokas, of Panevėžys. By 1970, the number of working priests had dropped to 700; many of these were aged 60 and over. More and more parishes had no resident pastor.

Unexpected Revival

It looked as if the church in Russian-occupied Lithuania was about to die. But the Soviet colonial authorities underestimated the religious fervour of the native people. Unable to gain admission to the KGB-controlled seminary in Kaunas, increasing numbers of Lithuanian men started studying for the priesthood by other means.

Father Vytautas Merkys was one of the earliest new priests in this category. He was forcibly expelled from the officially-supervised Kaunas seminary in 1959, but was secretly ordained in 1960. Twelve years later (on April 4, 1972), while employed in Vilnius Botanical Gardens, Fr Merkys was summoned to the KGB and questioned about his priestly activities.

Most secret priests have full-time civilian jobs and minister in their spare-time. Some have occupations which blend well with priestly duties: doctors, farm workers, scientists, ambulance drivers. They are helped by a network of some 2,000 secret nuns — twice the number of nuns in pre-war free Lithuania.

Fr Matulionis came out into the open in mid-1982 when he became full-time assistant priest in the town of Kybartai. The parish priest of Kybartai, Fr Sigitas Tamkevičius, was gaoled in May 1983, and Fr Matulionis then took over his duties.

When Fr Matulionis was also arrested, he rejected the impostor charges. "I AM a priest," he said, "trained in the same way as our Pope John Paul II".

All Baltic News readers are asked to help this prisoner TODAY. Please send telegrams or letters of protest to the Prosecutor of the USSR: MOSCOW, ul. Pushinskaya 15a / Prokuratura SSSR, / Generalnomu Prokuroru, A. Rekunkovu, /USSR.



● Bishop Antanas Vaičius on a visit to Kretinga parish. This part of the Church in Lithuania is visible; but how extensive are its hidden catacombs?

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