



BALTIC NEWS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF HELP THE ESTONIAN, LATVIAN AND LITHUANIAN PEOPLES ASSOCIATION (HELP)
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December, 1986

Australian Appeal to Gorbachev

Australian Lithuanians have written to Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, asking for the release of the Bishop of Vilnius, Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius. Mr Gorbachev has been told that the release would be most appropriate because it would coincide with the 600th anniversary of Lithuania's final conversion to Christianity, to be celebrated next year.

Bishop Steponavičius has been exiled to Žagarė (Northern Lithuania) since 1961. He was never charged or tried; but the Soviet authorities do not allow him to carry out his episcopal duties. For more than two decades, the priests and lay people of Vilnius archdiocese have regularly pleaded with the Soviet rulers for Bishop Steponavičius' reinstatement — so far, in vain.

The Australian submission, signed by the national President of the Lithuanian Catholic Federation, Mr Vincas Žemaitis, and by Father Dr P. Dauknyas, has also asked Mr Gorbachev to:

- Free all Lithuanian prisoners of conscience.
- Return the ancient Cathedral of Vilnius to believers. (It is now used as an art gallery).
- Return other churches which were confiscated by the Soviets and turned into museums, concert halls and suchlike.

- Give all believers in Lithuania the religious freedom they experience in Australia.

Situated on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, Lithuania is about the size of Tasmania and has a population of 3.3 million. 85.5% of the country's people were Western-rite Roman Catholic when Lithuania was annexed by the Russians as part of their cynical deal with Nazi Germany at the start of World War II.



● Mikhail Gorbachev

Today, after more than 40 years of persecution, an estimated 66 per cent of Lithuanians are still practising Catholics. Lithuanian priests are now active in Siberia, Tadzhikstan and Moscow.

Christmas in Siberia



- In Siberia, as in the rest of the USSR, Christmas Day is an ordinary working day. Absentees are punished severely. But at the end of the day, Christian families gather in their homes and quietly celebrate the birth of Christ. — This Christmas Day scene was photographed at the camp of Valentinofka, in the district of Krasnoyarsk, Siberia. The site was cleared and all buildings erected by forced labourers, from Pilviskiai/Lithuania and other Baltic regions.

— Photo from the book, *Lithuanians in Siberia*, by Rev J. Prunskis, PhD.

NEWS FROM BALTIC STATES



● Tanks: a forceful reminder of the Soviets' presence in the Baltic States.

Conscript Gagged

Zaigis Balodis, a Latvian conscript, was sentenced recently to three years in a strict labour camp for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda". He was accused of carrying out agitation among the soldiers, writing anti-Soviet letters to his father and creating *Free Latvia*, an underground organization.

Mr Balodis's father, a former general in the Latvian national army, died in unexplained circumstances shortly after his son's arrest. His mother also is reported to have been arrested. — Help & Action (Paris).

Underprivileged

It's not easy being a young scientist in Estonia. As Ilmar Epik, Vice-President of the Estonian Academy of Sciences, revealed in an interview with *Izvestiya*, postdoctoral researchers and junior scientific workers are paid 20-30 roubles less than an average industrial worker. Moreover, the Academy doesn't even have a dormitory for postgraduate students. The majority of starting scholars live in especially difficult conditions in the critical years of their scientific growth and contribution to science.

"It's rare for a postgraduate student or starting scholar to get a separate apartment," Epik said. "Real possibilities open up when a family already has 2-3 children and the dissertation has been defended."

Talented scholars are leaving scientific institutions for other reasons as well. "Since the average age of the directors of our academic institutes is 55-60, young scholars quickly realize that their chances of promotion are virtually nil for about fifteen years. And who cares for those kinds of prospects?" asks Ilmar.

— Soviet Nationalities Survey.

You Can Help

● Lithuanian Helsinki monitor Balys Gajauskas (59) is now serving a fifteen-year sentence in the notorious Soviet special regime camp at Perm. He has spent much time recently in the punishment cell, ostensibly because the articles he has written in camp have been published in the West. His health has deteriorated sharply in recent months.

You can help by writing for Gajauskas's release to: CCCP, Moskva, Generalnomu Sekretaryu KPUSSR i Predsedatelyu Presidiuma Verkhovnovo Soveta USSR. M. Gorbachev.

— Help & Action (Paris).

Anti-Jewish Campaign

It's official now!

In the Russian-occupied Baltic States as well as in other parts of the USSR, the Soviet government is openly sponsoring anti-semitism — albeit under the guise of "anti-Zionism."

A recent Soviet publication, *Yad Sionizma* (On Zionism), is replete with cartoons and symbols which seem to have been lifted from the pages of Nazi leaflets: a spider emerging from the Star of David; a wad of hundred dollar bills and the Star of David, again, entangled in a spider's web; and so on.

The Zionists are described as "merchants of death" who control 165 arms plants in the US.

The hate campaign is spearheaded by Soviet government-appointed regional anti-Zionism committees. They are active in the three Baltic States, too. Jewish fellow travellers are featured prominently among the office holders. For example, A. Bermanas, member of the Communist Party since 1927, and the late Genrikas Zimanas (both Jews) have been in the forefront of this "anti-Zionist" drive in Russian-occupied Lithuania.

— Insight SUEELND/ELTA.

Home — At Last



● Young Lithuanian Julius Sasnauskas has completed his sentence in Soviet prisons and is back in his native country (pictured).

Pentecostals Harassed

KGB officers have searched the homes of two members of the unregistered Pentecostal church in Vilnius, capital of Russian-occupied Lithuania. The searches took place on July 2 at the homes of Pyotr Grigalchik in Keliai, a village about 30 miles from Vilnius, and Pavel Romanchik, in Vilnius.

The search at Grigalchik's home lasted five hours. His Bible and hymnbook were confiscated, as well as copies of the journal of the Baptist Union in the USSR, *Bratsky vestnik* (Fraternal Herald), photographs of family and friends, including friends abroad, and notebooks containing poetry. At the Romanchiks', larger quantities of Christian literature were confiscated, including several Bibles.

Both men are active in the Pentecostal emigration movement. Most of the members of the Vilnius congregation wish to emigrate from the Soviet Union on religious grounds. Grigalchik's wife, Tamara Boyarovskaya, has an uncle in England, but the couple was earlier this year refused permission to emigrate on the grounds that Tamara's uncle is not a close enough relative to justify an exit visa for family reunification.

— Keston News Service.

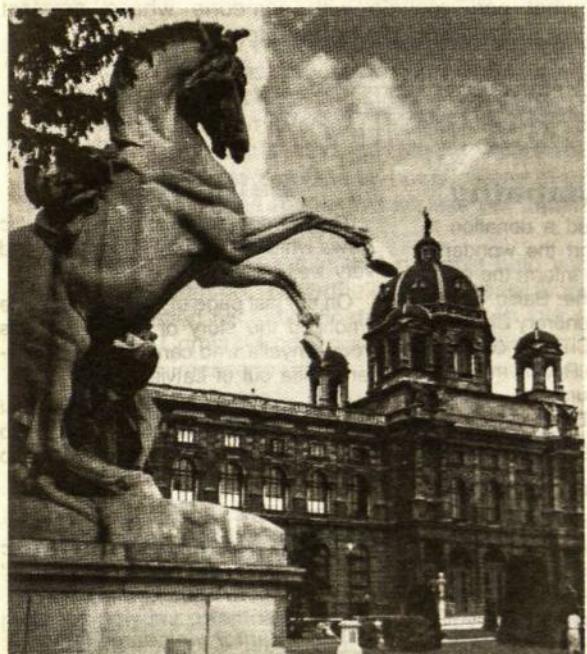
Vienna Protest

Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians from all over the free world, including Australia, gathered in Vienna recently, on the occasion of the Third Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), held on November 4. They and other national groups from behind the Iron Curtain were there to point out to the conference participants and the rest of the world that the Soviet Union and its satellites are not honouring their promise of restoring human rights in their countries, in exchange for the West's agreement to accept the present borders in Europe, an agreement signed originally in Helsinki in August, 1975, between the Soviet Union and 34 other countries.

Activities were undertaken to distribute information about continuing political and religious persecution, lack of family reunifications, and abuse of national, social and cultural rights of individuals.

Two other full-scale conferences of review have been held since the signing: in Belgrade in 1977, and in Madrid in 1980 (see *Baltic News* No 22, March-April 1979). In addition, there were a number of smaller meetings between the main conferences. At all of these, as at Helsinki in 1975, there have been protests by Baltic people. Not only have they pointed out the continuing abuse of the rights of the Baltic people in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, but also to the illegal occupation of those countries by the Soviet Union, an occupation not recognised by most of the countries in the free world, including Australia.

An indication of Russia's indifference to the obligations of the Helsinki Agreement of 1975 is the way it has treated individuals and groups monitoring the observance of that agreement in the Soviet Union. Such people have been harassed, then arrested and finally imprisoned. For example, the Lithuanian Helsinki Monitor Group, established in 1976, was effectively silenced by 1984. Six are imprisoned, three have died, and two have been exiled to the West (see *Baltic News*, March 1984). Another kind of protest, the Baltic Peace and Freedom Cruise, took place in the Baltic Sea in 1985, on the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Agreement.



● Vienna, where the Third Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe was held on November 4, 1986.



● When the then Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev signed the so-called Helsinki agreement in 1975, it gave the oppressed people of Eastern Europe new hope for freedom, or at least for basic human rights. These hopes have remained unfulfilled to the present day.

Baltic Resolution Accepted

The Debate on the Baltic Resolution was resumed in the Australian Federal House of Representatives on 25th September, 1986. Dr Klugman (ALP) moved the earlier motion, with certain additions, that made it more similar to that accepted in February, 1985, by the Australian Senate. In particular, the amended motion pointed out that 'as a result of existing Soviet policies . . . the very survival of the Baltic peoples as separate ethnic and cultural entities is endangered.'

Mr Ruddock (Liberal) seconded the motion, and noted with satisfaction that the motion, besides a notation of the intensive Russification of the Baltic States, called upon the Australian Government to raise the Baltic question formally before appropriate international forums.

The Baltic Resolution was thus supported by all political parties, and the question was resolved in the affirmative.

● A full transcript of the motion and speeches has been published in the Daily Hansard of September 25, 1986, pages 1,415-1,418.

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NEWS FROM BALTIC STATES

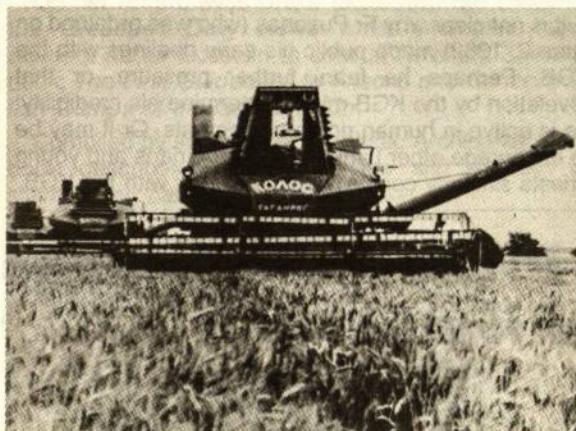
Jailed for Saving Money

There are two kinds of managers: those who should be immediately put in jail and those who should be immediately fired; those who do nothing should be fired, those who do something should be put in jail.

Rahva Hääl, April 16, 1986.

In a surprisingly frank article, the Estonian party daily *Rahva Hääl* has strongly criticised economic constraints and legal procedures in Soviet Estonia. The criticism was in connection with a recent court case in which an agronomist was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for illegally hiring contract migrant labour for the farm with state farm funds, thereby saving it more than 100,000 roubles.

The story concerns Peeter Alb, the chief agronomist of the Nõmme State Farm. A member of the party and several times the winner of competitions in economics in Estonia, Alb seemed the prototype of the young and promising technocrat; but it was his innovativeness that led to his skirting Soviet law and, ultimately, to his trial and conviction.



Alb had apparently engaged the services of a labour brigade from the trans-Caucasus to go to Estonia to clear the state farm's fields of stones. In so doing, he had, it was claimed, misused enterprise funds by not employing local labour and by paying the trans-Caucasian brigade two roubles an hour, instead of the State-fixed rate of one rouble five kopeks per square metre.

The Soviet court was told that no local help was available in Nõmme. Nevertheless, Alb was found guilty of cheating his subordinates (Paragraph 168 of the Estonian Criminal Code, punishable by between 2 and 10 years imprisonment).

— RFE/RL.

Russification

Year 11 students in Latvian high schools now have to pass Russian language examinations at the end of the school year.

B. Kublina, the Deputy Minister of Education in Russian-occupied Latvia, has justified this move by claiming that the Russian language is becoming increasingly important. "You need it in the Soviet army and in multinational jobs," she said. "Besides, final-year students in all other non-Russian schools will have to sit Russian exams, too."

— Newsletter from behind the Iron Curtain.



● Headquarters of the KGB (Soviet secret police) in Riga, Russian-occupied Latvia. Note the closed-circuit TV monitor, perched outside.

Inflation

The word "inflation" does not have an equivalent in the Russian language. Apparently, the Kremlin is determined to convince the world that there is no inflation in the Soviet Union.

But prices have been rising steadily, in the Baltic States as well as in the other parts of the Soviet Union. A small tin of fish in tomato sauce which cost \$1.26 last year is now \$2.71. Vodka, which was \$14 a litre, has jumped to \$17.74. A pair of winter boots that retailed at \$84 twelve months ago is now \$168.

All this would be all right if the average monthly wage had doubled as well; but that is not the case. The average wage in the Soviet Union today is 175 roubles per month (\$333 Aust. per month, or \$78 Aust per week). This is an increase of only 34% on the 1970 average wage, and has taken 15 years!

To camouflage inflation, brand-swapping is practised widely by Soviet management. Before increasing prices, all labels are removed from the goods in stock and are replaced with different brands. Similarly, new models of cars and other consumer goods are announced which do not differ from the previous model — except in name and price.

— Bridges.

Drug Addicts Converted

In the Lithuanian capital city of Vilnius, a number of drug addicts have been converted over the past few months during Pentecostal services, and healed of their addiction, reports Keston College. The ex-addicts, in turn, are now seeking out friends who are still on drugs, telling them of their own deliverance from addiction and bringing them to services.

The unregistered Pentecostal church in Vilnius consists mainly of Russians and Belorussians, while the converted addicts are Lithuanians. They are said to be mostly young people who have been well-educated and who had good jobs before they became addicts, or the children of well-paid officials. As a result, the Pentecostals are now holding services conducted partly in Russian and partly in Lithuanian.

— Keston News Service.

“I Was a Soviet Mole ...”

Stories about KGB infiltration into churches are generally dismissed as fiction. Some of them may not be.

Lithuanian Fr Rokas Puzonas told the Lithuanian State Security Committee his own story on Christmas Day, 1984.

After high school and army service, Rokas applied in May 1977 for admission into Lithuania's last surviving seminary at Kaunas.

A month later, he was contacted at work by Vincas Platinskas, a State Security official. He told Puzonas that there were very many candidates, but co-operation with the KGB would smooth his way. Under pressure, Puzonas agreed to report any anti-Soviet activities in the seminary.

During later meetings, he received a code name, and Platinskas paid him expense money — asking for receipts, and threatening him with imprisonment if he told anybody about it.

Admitted to the seminary, Puzonas avoided meeting Platinskas. Finally, he let him know he would have nothing to do with the KGB.

He was summoned by the local KGB on May 28, 1980 and interrogated for five hours. During the questioning, it became clear that there were other informers in the seminary; for he was accused of 1) giving a 14-minute talk about two underground papers; 2) writing letters to Lithuanian political prisoners; and 3)



● Even the seminary is not a safe place in Russian-occupied Lithuania. Young men studying for the priesthood in Kaunas (pictured) are constantly watched by Soviet spies, and reported on to the authorities (see article on this page).

visiting two priests, Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius — who were later sentenced to 10 years imprisonment.

It is not clear why Fr Puzonas (who was ordained on June 6, 1982) made public his early dealings with the KGB. Perhaps he fears further pressure, or that revelation by the KGB might undermine his credibility: he is active in human rights movements. Or it may be to encourage other Lithuanian seminarians and young priests similarly compromised to break with the KGB.

Author's Labour of Pride Strengthens Ties to Latvian Homeland

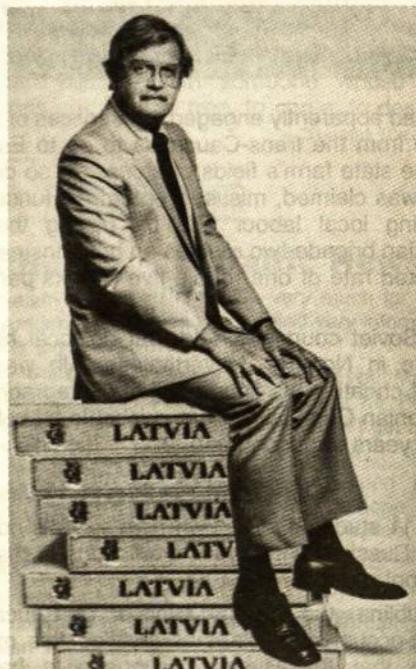
Vito Simanis and his family fled Latvia during the war, finally ending up in the United States. He is now a design director at an advertising firm in Chicago. In a response to people who would always say, 'Show me a book or something about Latvia,' Simanis set out to publish his own book on his homeland. It is an enormous, colourful and sophisticated tome with everything anyone could wish to know about Latvia.

Simanis, of course, had no idea how his project would be received. But even before he began to put it together, news of his project spread, and he was flooded with 2,000 advance orders from homesick, displaced Latvians. Those advance orders gave him seed money to have the book printed in a quality far superior to the run-of-the-mill press. In the end, his painstaking project ended up taking more than 10 years.

He used his skills as a graphic artist to make a dummy of the book, and he planned its pages before he had material to fill them. For the contents, Simanis contacted Latvians in the United States, Canada, Sweden, Germany and England and invited them to contribute chapters to his book.

None of Simanis' authors lives in Latvia — for a good reason. The book is vehemently anti-communist. The slick pages that deal with the Soviet occupation are grey stock (the rest of the book is white), and the language is dramatic.

"You would get arrested if you participated in this



● Vito Simanis and his labour of love. "This book from Latvia," Simanis says. "There are some photographs of resistance fighters in the book, but I do not want to know who took them," he adds.

—Laura Kavesh in Chicago Tribune.

Sorry: Wrong Address . . .

When the Greenbelt Peace Committee, of Greenbelt, Maryland, sought help from another peace group, Ground Zero, to find a potential "sister city" in the Soviet Union, it was recommended a similar place: relatively small, with a lake, near a major railroad line.

The town, in Russian-occupied Latvia, was Rezekne.

Greenbelt City Council issued the invitation, but no reply was received for two years.

When in Moscow with a delegation of US physicists, the group's co-ordinator, Gail Drake, sought out the Soviet secretary of relations between the Soviet and foreign cities, Yuri Menshikov.

The Soviet official told the US peace activist that it was against Soviet policy to establish sister-city relations with places having populations under 50,000, and that Ground Zero had failed to clear the choice first with his directorate.

Shock

On her return, Miss Drake expressed her shock in the *Greenbelt Daily News* which prompted local resident Arthur Eckstein to consult Avraham Shifrin's book, *The First Guidebook to Prisons and Concentration Camps of the Soviet Union*.

Compiled by survivors of the Gulag Archipelago, the book describes Rezekne as the site of both a slave-labour camp and a KGB prison.

COMING EVENTS

Estonian Festival

The 13th Estonian Festival will be held in Sydney from December 26th to 31st, 1986. Further information and tickets are available from the Organising Committee, PO Box 147, Darlinghurst, NSW, 2010. Telephone enquiries: (02) 652 1419, (02) 875 1132, (02) 212 2373.

Thank You!

BALTIC NEWS is still sent, free of charge, to anyone who wishes to read it. Currently we have about 8,000 subscribers. This free distribution has been made possible only by our readers' continuing financial support. We thank you for the following donations received since the last issue:

NSW: Council of Lithuanian Community — Sydney, \$200; Mr and Mrs J. Laurinaitis, \$50; Mr and Mrs A. Leveris, \$25; J. Reisgys, P. Armonas, S. Zablockis, A. Jakstas, A. Pomerigas, \$20 each; R. Cameron, \$10; D. Sumskis, V. Miezis, A. Zilis, \$5 each.

Various: Lithuanian Co-op Credit Society "Talka" (Vic), Australian Latvian Information Centre (SA), \$500 each; Council of Estonian Societies in Australia (SA), Anonymous (NSW), \$200 each; Daugavas Vanagi — Melbourne Branch, \$150; Rev Fr F. Carroll (Japan), \$100; K. and J. Simkunas (Vic), A. and E. Varkalis (NZ), \$30 each; A. K. Serelis (Vic), Senator B. Harradine (Tas), \$25 each; B. and A. Van Gerven, J. Paskevicius, Sr Carmela, P. Lazduskaus (Tas), Wollongong Estonian Society, R. Tursi (Vic), D. K. Hancock (SA), K. Kaldma (ACT), \$20 each; Dr O. G. H. Gratz (Tas), Anonymous (NSW), \$15 each; D. Hogan, Sr M. Reginald (NZ), W. Craig, J. Krutulis, K. Rand, A. Slaidins



It is part of the Soviet Gulag's Latvian section, which is renowned for its brutality.

— News Weekly.

* * *

Instead of cancelling the offer to Rezekne, the peace committee is turning its energies to arranging a sister-city relation with a suburb of Moscow.

Miss Drake said that Shifrin's *Guidebook to Concentration Camps* will be consulted before the peace committee makes any further recommendations.

Fishathon

The first *Baltic News* fishathon, held in Victoria last June, was voted great fun by all who went.

Encouraged by this success, similar fishathons will now become an annual event, and will be held over the Victorian Labour Day long weekend.

Please mark these dates in your calendar now: March 7, 8, 9, 1987 — *Baltic News* fishathon at Stratford (Vic).

For further information phone Mrs Mature (051) 45 6479.

(Tas), D. Bieri, C. Ford (NSW), A. P. Surna, G. Maleckas, T. J. Walsh, V. and B. E. Putnins, F. P. Morgan, P. Petrus (Vic), J. K. Faulkner (WA), P. Dardzans (USA), P. Eizenbergs (Qld), J. Velins (ACT), \$10 each; J. Kuncas (USA), L. Braniska (Vic), \$5 each; D. and E. Madden (Tas), A. Vitkunas (SA), J. Bernotas (Qld), \$2 each.

Vic: Latvian Federation of Vic, \$300; Baltic Council of Australia, \$100; Q. King, \$50; Rev W. M. Butler, \$20; L. Nobelius, \$2.

To: H.E.L.L.P. (Help the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Peoples Association),
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More Balts in Sport

In September 1986, the *Baltic News* pointed out that since World War Two the Soviets have depended heavily on Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians to make up their world-competition teams.

Gunars Gubins confirms this in his brochure "Hollow Victory," and lists the following Balts in Soviet Olympic basketball teams:

- 1952, Helsinki: Kullam, Krus, Losov, Valdmanis, Butautas, Petkevičius, Stonkus, Lagunavičius.
- 1956, Melbourne: Valdmanis, Krumins, Muiznicks, Lauritenis, Petkevičius, Stonkus.
- 1960, Rome: Valdmanis, Krumins, Muiznicks, Ozers.
- 1964, Tokyo: Lipsoo, Krumins, Kalnins, Muiznicks.
- 1968, Mexico City: Lipsoo, Krikuns, Tomsons, Paulauskas.
- 1972, Munich: Paulauskas.
- 1976, Montreal: Rupšiene, Semjonova.
- 1980, Moscow: Semjonova.
- 1984, Los Angeles: boycotted by USSR.

Meanwhile, Valdis Valters, from occupied Latvia, has just collected his second medal as a member of the USSR basketball team competing in the European Championships.

Among the best ice-hockey players in the USSR is 33-year-old Latvian Helmut Balderis, of the Riga "Dynamo" team. He is often called to fill in when the Moscow "Dynamo" go overseas. He has played hockey for eleven months in every year since the age of nine.

Notwithstanding his advanced age, Balderis performed very creditably during the Canadian tour by "Dynamo" last winter, often dominating play.



Latvian vs. Latvian

Aldis Berzins is one of the finest volleyball players in the United States' national team. He was born in America, of Latvian parents who escaped from their Russian-occupied country with their lives.

Asked about facing Latvians when his team meets sides from the U.S.S.R., he says: "It feels strange playing across the net from men who were born in my father's country in the years after the war. However, we all speak Latvian, and we get together and talk about how things are in Latvia now."

Of facing Russian players, Aldis comments: "I try not to let things in the past affect my game . . . even though, when you think about it, their parents might have been the ones who were threatening to kill my parents."

Latvian News Digest.

Estonians Shot Dead in Chernobyl

Twelve of a group of Estonians, sent to clear up Chernobyl, were apparently shot dead after protesting against the conditions of work at the site of the atomic disaster. This shocking news was released to the West's media by Ants Kippar, head of the Estonian Refugees' Committee of Solidarity, based in Stockholm, Sweden. Mr Kippar received the information from a sympathetic Estonian officer in the Soviet Army.

The twelve were part of a group of some 4,000 Estonians mobilised on the night of May 7, fourteen days after the reactor failure. Work for the Estonians included clearing rubble, replacing contaminated earth with clean soil, and washing affected houses.

Harsh Conditions Admitted

Unbelievably, the protest and the reasons for it were reported in *Noorte Hääl*, the Estonian language daily of the Communist Youth League of Estonia. The articles were apparently intended to dampen widespread rumours in Soviet-occupied Estonia about the fate of the mobilised reservists.

One of the articles confessed that some of the recruits had been taken "often in the night," that they had to work from 6 am to 8 pm with only two days of rest per month. A number of reservists were reported to have become sick because of the radiation and because they were spending cold nights in makeshift tents.

Protest or Strike

The article in *Noorte Hääl* did not report any shooting, but it is interesting to note that hazardous and harsh working conditions were reported. The article also admitted that some time in June, when the Estonian recruits were informed that their two-month tour was to be extended to six months, the men angrily "gathered en masse to demand an explanation." Although this led to a vaguely described scuffle "in which someone was grabbed by the collar", the journalist claimed "otherwise no force was used". In order to minimise the protest, the rumours about the strike were attributed to the men's letters sent home.

—The Mercury-Hobart/The New York Times.

BALTIC NEWS is published four times a year, by HELLP (Help the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Peoples Association) in Hobart, Australia. HELLP 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 publicise the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian people's continuing struggle for survival and freedom. For membership enquiries, telephone (002) 43 5629.

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