



BALTIC NEWS

QUARTERLY NEWS REPORT FROM ESTONIA, LATVIA AND LITHUANIA (THE BALTIC STATES)
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Psychiatric Abuse Exposed

by ERIS SMYTH

A fierce determination to realise his vision of a free and independent Lithuania sustained physician and psychiatrist, Dr Algirdas Statkevičius, during his fourteen years of imprisonment, first in the Gulags of Siberia and then in the notorious psychiatric prisons of the Soviet Union.

It was a privilege to be one of the hundred strong audience at the University Centre Hobart on the hot Hobart Cup night of February 8th, to listen to the calm, composed human rights advocate, recalling the brutal assaults on his property, person and professional integrity by the discredited and vicious Soviet regime.

In 1951, when he was 28, Dr Statkevičius served nine years of a twenty-five year sentence in the Gulag. A second arrest in 1970 resulted in two and a half years in a psychiatric prison. His third arrest (well documented in the December, 1981 issue of *Baltic News*) followed his advocacy of the implementation of the Helsinki Agreements of 1979. Diagnosed as a schizophrenic, he was sentenced to indefinite detention and compulsory treatment in a psychiatric hospital.

Dr Statkevičius told us of the two types of psychiatric institutions in the Soviet Union: the accepted type where people needing care receive it; the second, where people declared "dangerous" are kept.

Dr Statkevičius was himself in the "dangerous" category. He spoke of the total dehumanisation of a person in such an institution, the powerlessness of the individual, the need to submit to every indignity simply to survive, the arbitrary and instant punishment for an imagined transgression. He spoke of the degrading physical conditions, the terrible stench, the roughness of the staff, the use of drugs not to assist but to terrorise.

The mind-bending and mind-destroying drugs are



— Photo by courtesy of *The Mercury*.

On the outside, looking in: During his Tasmanian visit, former Soviet prisoner Dr Statkevičius went to the local jail at Risdon. He was amazed to find just one person to a cell. "In the Russian prison of Smolensk, they had 15 people in a cell that size", he said.

given not to cure but to control. Treatment is compulsory: not prescribed by the medical staff but by the KGB as a vehicle of punishment.

He spoke of the incredible pain experienced at the time of the compulsory injections and afterwards, some drugs would raise the body temperature to over 40 degrees Celsius. Other drugs were given deliberately to lower the blood pressure of individuals with a naturally low pressure. Labour was compulsory at the "hospitals" and if one could not work then punishment was meted out by injection.

It was very difficult for a political prisoner to be released. Three years was the minimum time before a review could be undertaken. In Dr Statkevičius' case, the doctors reported that he was no longer a socially dangerous man, but the Court of Justice repeatedly rejected their recommendations.

His wife finally made a special request and he was to be released provided he made a statement condemning those people in the West who had supported him and asked for his release. This Dr Statkevičius refused to do stating that he could not condemn unknown, unseen people for writing what he had never been allowed to read. After further delaying tactics, he was suddenly released and expelled to the USA.

The determination of Dr Statkevičius to rid his country of the Soviet over-lords is stronger than ever. He is now travelling the world revealing the hideous secrets of Soviet control, the persecution of those fighting for freedom and independence.

Don't Miss This Talk!

What is it really like to be a Soviet prisoner? A man who spent a third of his life in Soviet prisons will talk about his experiences in Hobart this month.

Father Alfonsas Svarinskas, 63 (pictured), will give a public lecture, *I was a Soviet prisoner*, at the University Centre, University of Tasmania, Churchill Avenue, Sandy Bay, on MONDAY, MARCH 13, at 8 pm.



Born in Lithuania, Svarinskas has served three terms of imprisonment: 10, 6 and 5 years. He was sentenced on the charges of having connections with Lithuanian nationalists; owning books published before 1940; and preparing "slanderous anti-Soviet materials" that were sent abroad.

Prisoners Return

Several prominent Baltic prisoners of conscience were released last October and November. They were: Enn Tarto (Estonian), Balsys Gajauskas, Gintautas Iešmantas, Voldemaras Karaliūnas, Viktoras Petkus, Father Sigitas Tamkevičius, Jonas Pakuckas, and Petras Gražulis (Lithuanians).

Two other Lithuanian prisoners have been permanently exiled to the West: Dr Algirdas Statkevičius and Father Alfonsas Svarinskas. (Dr Statkevičius visited Australia earlier this year, Fr Svarinskas is here now — See Page 1).

After 27 years' exile in Žagaré, Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius, now 77, was recently allowed to return to Vilnius, the seat of his diocese.

Broken Promise

However, the Soviets have failed to keep their promise to release all political prisoners by the end of 1988. Mr Gerassimov, a spokesman for the USSR Foreign Ministry, claimed last October that there were only "about two dozen" political prisoners left in Soviet



● Enn Tarto

gaols. The minister for justice, Mr Kravtsov, set the figure at "ten or eleven".

Unfortunately, the most recent evidence offers no support for such optimism. One hundred and fifty prisoners are known by name to Amnesty International (London) and to the International Helsinki Federation (Vienna). Dr Lubarski in Munich has a list of 225 prisoners of conscience. And the International Human Rights Society (IGFM, Frankfurt) holds the names of 503 religious or political prisoners currently incarcerated in Soviet prisons, concentration camps and psychiatric institutions or in exile.

In Lithuania, the **Save the Political Prisoners Committee** made a submission to the Soviet authorities on December 7. The unofficial Committee, chaired by former prisoner Povilas Pečeliūnas, has asked for a review of three political prisoners' cases: Boleslovas Ližūnas, Gintaras Muzikevičius and Arūnas Dainauskas. All three are still in gaol.

Former Soviet prisoners now living in Vilnius, Lithuania's capital, have banded together into a mutual support group. Formed on December 13, 1988, this public society is co-ordinated by Mrs Jadvyga Bieliauskienė, herself a former prisoner of conscience.

— G2W/ELTA/EL/USSR News Brief/The Dove.

The Battle of the Booze

by Scott Shane

The official Soviet battle against drunkenness is in serious trouble. Launched with fanfare by Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev two months after he took office in 1985, the sobriety campaign is under bombardment in the press as a costly failure.

Molodyozh Estonits, a Soviet youth paper in Estonia, has reported grim cases of poisoning by alcoholics desperate for a drink. Doctors had recently saved the lives of a 32-year-old woman who took some gulps of a cleaning solution to cure her hangover and a 50-year-old who spiked his vodka with acetone. There was a report of a married couple who drank a cattle growth stimulator; the wife died and the husband barely survived, the article said.

So far, authorities have responded to the complaints by permitting liquor sales at more locations to shorten lines. But the intensity of the press debate over problems caused by the sobriety campaign suggests that the Soviet leadership may be having second thoughts.

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"Stalinist Terror"



● The conditions in the geriatric infirmary of Laugaliai (in Russian-occupied Lithuania) have been described as "Stalinist terror" by Father Antanas Šeškevičius, the parish priest of nearby Gargždai (pictured).

Patients are prevented from seeing a priest. Anyone wishing to receive the sacraments is threatened with fines. A nurse beat up a woman patient because she had called a priest for a seriously ill fellow patient.

Father Šeškevičius has published these disclosures in the underground journal, *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, Nos 71 and 78.

— G2W.

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Balts Want Soviet Troops Out

After almost 50 years of foreign occupation, the Baltic peoples — Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians — are still refusing to accept the Russians as their masters. In recent months, the Balts have repeatedly called on the Soviets to withdraw their troops from the occupied Baltic territory.

Open opposition to foreign occupation emerged at a joint conference of Baltic representatives in Riga on November 19-20, 1988. Without mincing their words, the delegates passed a resolution demanding an end to Soviet occupation of the Baltic republics. The delegates represented the Movement for the Independence of the Latvian Nation, the Estonian Party for National Independence and the Lithuanian Freedom League. They also endorsed a proposal to create a Northern European nuclear-free zone.

In Latvia, three young men — Atis Sevizko, Janis Klavins and Janis Legatins — started a hunger strike in the city of Riga on December 4, 1988. They sought public recognition that Latvia was occupied by Soviet troops in 1940 and urged that these troops now be removed from Latvia.

Students' Demonstration

Four days later, about 1,000 students and school children demonstrated in Riga, demanding "democratization" of the compulsory military training in higher education institutes. Posters declared, "Military training should be voluntary for students who have served their two years already".

Pacifist committees have been set up at the University of Riga and in Latvian medical and polytechnic institutes.

A call for the de-militarisation of Lithuania was made at the first congress of *Sajūdis*, the Lithuanian Restructuring Movement, on October 22-23, in Vilnius. Speaking before 1127 delegates, Antanas Terleckas (representing the Lithuanian Freedom League) urged the Russians to take their troops home and to allow the Lithuanian nation to determine its own fate.

Spread of Pacifist Groups

Within a few weeks of Terleckas's appeal a Pacifist Movement sprang up in Lithuania. It called for the occupation forces to be pulled out of Lithuania, military



On October 22-23, 1988, Lithuanians staged demonstrations in the streets of Vilnius, the country's capital. The poster on the right reads, "Get the occupation army out — Lithuania will be free."



● Soviet soldiers on parade. Unwanted in the Baltic States, when will they go home?

bases to be abolished, the Baltic countries to be declared a nuclear-free zone, and the introduction of alternative service for conscientious objectors.

The movement is co-ordinated by Mr Eugenijus Mičiūnas. His address is:

CCCP
234520
LitSSR/Lithuania,
KAPSUKAS,
Venclovos gatvė 33
Mičiūnas, Eugenijus.
USSR.

On November 27, the *Globus* club convened a meeting in Kaunas, Lithuania's second-largest city. Representatives of the Lithuanian Freedom League and various community organisations discussed various proposals for a pullout of the Soviet occupation forces.

A group of Lithuanian conscripts who had served in Afghanistan published a bitter protest in the Russian-language Soviet newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, on November 22. The draftees objected strongly to being described as "internationalist troops" in Kremlin's official terminology. "We do not consider our participation in the Afghan events as a fulfilment of our internationalist duty, but as yet another sacrifice for the Stalinist monster," the authors wrote.

Estonian Threatened

Tomas Kalvet, a member of the Estonian Party for National Independence, told Finnish TV viewers on November 8 that Estonian youth are prepared to defend their homeland even today, should this become necessary. On November 28, the KGB office of Tallinn warned Kalvet to refrain from "calls inciting people to use arms."

● The Soviets do not publish their own military statistics. It has been conservatively estimated, however, that 500,000 Soviet troops and their families are now stationed in the three Baltic States. With the civilian population totalling 7½ million, the ratio of the occupation forces to the occupied is 1:15. — USSR News Brief/ELTA/JBANC/LIC.

Latvian Groups Team Up

On January 10, the Rebirth and Renewal movement founded by Lutheran clergymen in Latvia issued an announcement stating that it was joining the Latvian Popular Front as a support group. The LPF, an umbrella organisation which includes delegates from various unofficial and official groups, is probably the movement which represents Latvian public opinion most accurately.

One of the most influential clergymen in Rebirth and Renewal — Juris Rubenis — already belongs to the Latvian Popular Front and in 1988 was elected a member of its organising committee.

The reason given by Rebirth and Renewal for its increased support for the LPF was the "disrespect shown for religious feeling" by the recently created International Front, a group that has the support of the authorities and consists largely of neo-Stalinists and Russians living in Latvia.

However, the LPF's defence of the Latvian language and culture against russification has alarmed many of the Russians who have moved into the republic since the war. Their fears have been instrumental in the creation of the International Front, which has attacked various aspects of the Latvian national revival. The

Front has just called on the government to ban the Latvian Helsinki '86 group and the Movement for Latvian Independence, both of which are represented within the Latvian Popular Front.

On January 5, Janis Vagris, the First Secretary of the Latvian Communist Party, publicly attacked these two groups as "aggressive" and "anti-Soviet", which may well be a prelude to banning them. The language used by the First Secretary and the International Front has in turn alarmed supporters of the Latvian Popular Front, who fear that the recent improvements in the national and religious sphere may be in danger. The action taken by the Rebirth and Revival movement in officially joining the LPF probably reflects the general feeling among Latvians that the Popular Front needs more open support

— Keston News Service.

"Rebirth and Renewal" in Latvia

Since the annexation of the Baltic states by the Soviet Union in 1940, Latvia has not been a centre of religious protest — even in the Latvian Baptist Church, for example, the "unregistered" wing has hardly any members. The Latvian Lutheran Church in particular has always remained quiet, subdued and willing to cooperate with Soviet laws on religion.



● Rev Modris Plate, a leading figure in the Latvian "Rebirth and Renewal" movement. Plate completed a degree in nuclear physics at the University of Latvia, before choosing ministry as his career.

— Photo © Keston College.

In the last few years, however, an unofficial revival movement has been growing up among Latvian Lutheran clergy. In 1987 it developed into a religious rights movement, thus coming into open conflict with the Soviet authorities, as well as its own church leadership.

This group of clergymen probably began to take shape as early as 1983 under the influence of certain lecturers at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, most of whom also work as pastors in ordinary parishes. The seminary rector, Dr Roberts Akmentiņš, was sympathetic to their aim of bringing new life into the church, but perhaps the most active personality was one of the lecturers, the Rev Modris Plate. At 36, Plate

is one of the youngest Lutheran deans and probably one of the best-known clergymen in Latvia.

On June 14, 1987, Modris Plate and 14 supporters founded a group entitled *Rebirth and Renewal*, whose declared aim was "to defend openly the right of Latvians to lead a Christian life."

In their founding document they included alternatives to military service for religious believers, religious instruction for children, legal rights for the church, the possibility of religious radio and television programmes, the publication of more religious literature, and the authorisation of religious activities in hospitals and old people's homes.

As the founders of the *Rebirth and Renewal* group themselves state, one of the main reasons for its formation was their wish to end the decline of their church and to renew its appeal to Latvians. Lutheran church membership had declined greatly from the pre-war figure of just over a million to about 350,000 in 1980. Although a number of churches have been closed by the Soviet authorities (in 1940 there were 311 Lutheran parishes, compared with 214 in 1980), what the church really lacks is clergymen. Before the war there were 280 Lutheran pastors in Latvia; in 1980 there were about 100.

The rise of *Rebirth and Renewal* within the Latvian Lutheran Church was not merely a religious phenomenon, however, but formed part of the national revival which was taking place in Latvia in 1986-88. The hopes aroused by Gorbachev's *glasnost* policy had led to an unprecedented expression of dissent and to discussion of national issues in a republic where the native Latvian population fears the suppression of its own language and culture.

This has given rise to "unofficial" groups of all kinds — not only the Helsinki '86 group, but also groups for the defence of the environment and national-religious youth groups, most of which are interested in greater national autonomy and a more truthful portrayal of history.

— MARITE SAPIETS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Australian Politicians Speak Out

Last year's freedom moves in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have found their echoes in Australia. The Federal Government has reaffirmed its non-recognition of Russian rule in the Baltic States. Well-known political figures have started actions to help the Baltic people. For example:

- On February 19, 31 Australian Senators asked Soviet leader Mr Gorbachev to allow the Balts to celebrate their independence days freely.
- On April 15, Hon Neil Brown, QC raised the Baltic issue at the 79th Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Guatemala City.
- On April 20, Senator Short (Victoria) spoke at length on the Baltic States, in the Australian Senate.
- There was another discussion on November 10 when Senator Short presented a reply from 4 Soviet Lithuanian deputies.
- On August 23 (Black Ribbon Day), Senator Chapman (South Australia) gave notice of motion expressing concern at the continuing occupation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and urging the Soviet Union to allow freedom for the Baltic peoples.

Here are extracts from a few of the letters we have received recently:

I, like you, am watching developments in the Soviet Union with a fair degree of excitement. There can be no doubt that the possibilities of change for the better are greater today than at any other time since the Stalin-Hitler Pact delivered the Baltic nations into the Soviet sphere in 1939.

All I can comment with any confidence is that, regardless of motives, Mr Gorbachev has provided an opening for greater self-expression and flowering of national sentiment than ever before. To ensure that the gains made today are not lost tomorrow will require great caution and great courage. I look forward to your future reports.

Senator the Hon Robert RAY,
Minister for Immigration, Local
Government and Ethnic Affairs.

The continuing occupation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania by the Soviet Union is a matter of serious concern.

Baltic News does an excellent job of bringing the plight of the captive nations to the attention of all Parliamentarians and it is most interesting and informative.

Austin LEWIS,

Senator for Victoria,
Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate.

I personally feel it is time for the Baltic States to attain self-government. Gorbachev and his colleagues should be considering the impact the Russian presence in these countries is having on peaceful relations with the other big nations of the globe.

Please accept my congratulations on your magazine — I look forward to receiving each issue.

Michael PRATT, MP,
Federal Member for Adelaide.

One must admire the people of the Baltic States for the courage they have shown in their public utterances and demonstrations.

We in Australia must continue to support the cause of justice for the Baltic States and for their people. During all my 14 years in the Parliament I have continuously promoted the cause of the Baltic people and the cause of the independence of the Baltic States.

I will continue to do so.

Peter BAUME,
Senator for New South Wales.

May I congratulate *Baltic News* for all that it has done, and continues to do, to inform Australians on events in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It makes a very valuable contribution. I, and I know many of my political colleagues in the Liberal Party, draw on it regularly as a source of reference.

There is no way in which Russia can justify its continuing presence in the Baltic States by clinging to the secret clauses of the infamous 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop secret pact.

Senator Jim SHORT,
Liberal Senator for Victoria.

The convening in October of the congress of the popular movements in each of the Baltic republics, without official opposition, is a positive indication that the Soviet Government is taking a more tolerant approach to the legitimate aspirations of the Baltic peoples.

Thank you for keeping me informed with your publication and the assistance it gives to my research staff.

David BROWNHILL,
National Party Senator for NSW.



For a long time now, I have had a very deep admiration for the people of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The spirit of separate national identities has survived despite the history of the last couple of centuries, and I can only express the hope that we ourselves will live to see the day that the countries in question will re-emerge as entities in their own right.

DON CAMERON, MP,
Federal Member for Moreton.

Congratulations to the Lithuanian community in Tasmania for its letter-writing campaign which has helped to bring the case of Viktoras Petkus forward.

Shirley WALTERS,
Senator for Tasmania.

I believe that the Western countries should give Glasnost all the support they can, but that we must be very wary of the Soviet's real intention.

Be rest assured the Baltic people will have my support in all their endeavours. I hope and pray that they will be successful.

David JULL M.H.R.,
Member for Fadden.

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Please remember *Baltic News* in your will. Your bequest will extend the life of this newsletter, and the Baltic message will continue to be spread.

At present, *Baltic News* has no financial reserves for its future. Will you please help, through your will?

NEWS IN BRIEF



● Ingrida Mikelsonyte, above, who won the Miss City of Vilnius crown last year, will compete in the nationwide Miss Lithuania '89 Quest on March 8. For the first time since the Soviet invasion in 1940, the contest will have commercial sponsors.

Many Thanks

Subscription to *Baltic News* is by donation. We thank our readers who remember to renew their subscriptions and enclose generous donations.

We are also indebted to several societies and individuals who have conducted special fund drives for *Baltic News* in recent months. Their valued contributions are acknowledged with thanks below.

Have YOU remembered *Baltic News* in your will? Even one per cent of your estate will be of great help to *Baltic News*, while it will hardly be missed by your main beneficiaries.

Baltic News is now in its 15th year of publication. It has 9,000 subscribers in all States of Australia and in 25 overseas countries. We thank you for the following donations received since the last issue of *Baltic News*; it is your support that enables this newsletter to continue:

NSW and ACT: Lithuanian Co-operative Credit Society TALKA, Sydney Branch, \$200; Aust Lithuanian Society for Human Rights Sydney, \$150; Sydney Lithuanian Pensioners Assoc, E. G. Roland, \$100 each; Rev L. J. Breslan, \$50; F. Borumas, Mrs C. Jurkis, Mrs G. Stefanovic, \$30 each; T. Amber, G. Garda, \$20 each; E. Baueris, A. Savickiene, \$10 each; V. Miezis, \$2.

Vic.: Federation of Latvian Organisations in Vic., Lithuanian Club Melbourne, \$150 each; Latvian Combined Sororities, Q. King, \$50 each; J. O'Brien, V. Beliauskas, V. Rekesius, M. Vilkelis, \$20 each; V. Sidabra, \$15; A. Raudys, K. Stoll, \$10; anonymous, \$5; L. Nobelius, \$4; L. Didzienie, \$3; P. Jokubaitis, \$2; E. Klupsiene, \$1.

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Latvian Woman Chosen

The Swedish Prime Minister, Ingvar Carlson, has chosen a Latvian woman, Laila Freivalds, as his Minister of Justice.

Mrs Freivalds was born in 1942 in Riga, migrated with her family to Sweden via Germany in 1948, and settled at Upsala. After graduating in Law at Upsala University, she became director-general of the Department of Consumer Affairs in 1976.

New Chief

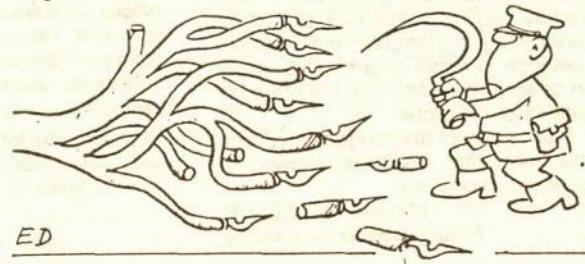
Vladimir Beriozov, a 59-year-old Russian, was appointed Second Secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party on December 9, 1988. He replaced N. Mitkin, also a Russian, who had held this high Lithuanian post for a number of years, but never learned the Lithuanian language. — EL

J. Janulioniene, B. Jurgelionis, K. Kaminskas, J. Langevicius, V. Lazauskas, J. Lenktys, B. Nemeika, V. Patasius, V. Patupys, C. Paulenas, J. Paskauskas, Fr J. Petraitis, L. Pimpe, V. Pranskunas, R. Sidabras, P. Smolskis, P. Stasaitis, O. P. Stimburys, A. Serelis, E. K. Varnas, Vac. Vasiliauskas, V. Vasiliauskas, V. Vencius, \$5 each; E. Dukas, J. Stankevicius, \$4 each; F. Damosevicius, B. Straukas, \$2 each.

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Various: Australian Lithuanian Community (The Federal Executive), \$400; Canberra LKVS Ramove, \$291; Adelaide Lithuanian Ladies Handcraft Circle, G. Kazokas (Tas), The Australian Lithuanian Community of Adelaide, Lithuanian Social Welfare Women's Assoc (Melb), \$100 each; Collection from members Brisbane Lithuanian Community, \$76; J. Miciulis (Vic), Paguoda — Lithuanian Pensioners Group (ACT), \$60 each; V. Minneste Jr. (USA), \$56.95; J. Kuncas (USA), \$56.81; Adelaide Lithuanian Sports Club — Vytis, Adelaide Lithuanian Society Incorp, Brisbane Lithuanian Committee, Rev Dr P. Daukrys (Vic), A. Grikepelis (Vic), Lithuanian House Administration (Brisb), N. J. Murray (SA), B. M. Prasmutaite (Vic), P. V. and N. J. Salkunas (Vic), The Australian Lithuanian Community of Geelong, The Father Bacinskas Lithuanian Cultural Assoc (Inc), (Brisb), Dr K. Trimakas (USA), \$50 each; M. J. L. Bean (SA), K. B. McPhee (Vic), \$40 each; G. Bracs (NSW), L. A. S. Adelaide Branch, D. Rumbergs (Vic), The Jurgens Families (NSW), \$30 each; O. J. and O. Loit (NSW), A. and S. Pacevicius (SA), \$25 each; anonymous (Can), \$24.49; J. Motiejunas (USA), \$22.98; E. and A. Apinis (NSW), D. S. Caune (Vic), C. Ford (NSW), V. and L. Janovs (Qld), S. Katinas (Qld), O. Liutikiene (WA), V. Priscepionka (Can), M. Sodaite (Vic), S. A. Stankunavicius (Vic), Dr I. R. Traill (NSW), J. Zalkauskas (Vic), J. A. Ziedars (Vic), T. Zukowski (SA), \$20 each; Sister Eileen (NZ), \$18.79; M. Sawyer (SA), A. Urneviciene (SA), \$15 each; Donations at ESTO (Melb), \$14; V. Skrolys (WA), \$13; F. Adamonis (SA), anonymous (Tas), anonymous (Vic), F. Bulger (NSW), Rev M. J. Crowe (NSW), A. Dataus (SA), G. Kariss (SA), J. Kutka (SA), O. Maciukasi (SA), A. and M. Mukans (NSW), Rev R. Poulsen (Vic), V. Putnins (Vic), L. Slaustas (SA), Mrs Sosnowski (Vic), V. Stalba (SA), J. Taunys (SA), Mrs Varkalis (Vic), I. R. and I. S. Zeibarts (SA), \$10 each; C. Hamel (USA), \$7.47; Sister Michaela (Germany), \$5.62; anonymous (Tas), S. Bernotas (Qld), E. Dawson (Tas), \$5 each; E. Davey (UK), \$4.67.

Further donations received this year will be acknowledged in the next issue.



BOOK REVIEW by Margery EAGLE*

The Gates of Hell

Rasa Mažeika (ed), *Violations of Human Rights in Soviet Occupied Lithuania: A Report for 1983-1986*, (Australian Lithuanian Community, Lithuanian House, North Melbourne, 1988. Recommended price, \$10 plus postage).

The title of this report, *Violations of Human Rights in Soviet Occupied Lithuania*, understates the seriousness of the issue concerning Lithuanians. Nowadays, at any rate in Australia, to assert human rights is to say to the State, "Satisfy all my needs, so that I may be fully human." In times past to assert human rights, or natural rights as they used to be called, was to say to the State, "Hold off! Keep out! Let me be a human being and not your slave."

Those rights currently violated in Lithuania are rights in the old-fashioned and now regrettably almost forgotten sense. This report is not about rights as the word is commonly understood today. It reports an attack on humanity, a disgraceful and vicious attempt to reduce human beings to slaves or even to beasts by trying to destroy their human capacities for self-respect and for shame, for compassion and for love and their ability to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil and truth and falsehood. Its title notwithstanding, the report urges us to stop thinking about rights and to resume thinking about human beings.

As far as it concerns Lithuania, Gorbachev's revolution is nothing other than an episode in a recurring pattern of Soviet policy the aim of which is to tighten the Party's control, if necessary by the savage application of terror. Repressive measures are no less intense than they were under Stalin. The "thaw" is a sham. Although some official measures have been abolished, other unofficial means have replaced them: loss of employment, eviction from homes, denial of higher education for children.

A few prominent dissidents have been released from prisons but other prominent dissidents have been mysteriously beaten or even murdered. Lithuanians are now permitted to enter seminaries to train for the priesthood but we read of a young man whose admission to a seminary was (unofficially) made conditional on his agreeing to become a spy in that seminary for the KGB. He resisted threats and bribes and suffered accordingly.

Indeed, in this benighted country, any thought of training for Holy Orders must demand quite extraordinary faith. Priests are constantly harassed, their priestly functions heavily curtailed, unofficially, but also legally (if that word can have any meaning in a system where law is the whim of the State and the State, notwithstanding *perestroika*, is still inextricably entwined with the Party.)

This report is the factual counterpart of Orwell's fiction, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. As fact it could be expected to evoke greater fear and deeper despair, but it does not. The excerpts collected here tell of the resilience of human souls, not their defeat. Humanity can be pushed to the limits of its endurance and sometimes it must break but that is not the point. Here is incontrovertible evidence that at times, even when pushed to its limits, the human spirit remains intact, protected by extraordinary surges of courage. Thus a



● A psychiatric hospital at No 5 Vasaros Street in Vilnius, Lithuania. Dissidents have been detained here and "treated" for their beliefs.

— Photo: Lithuanian Information Centre.

niece of an underground nun, scared almost senseless by yet another intrusion of militiamen, while she was alone in their apartment, was found by her mother, under a desk, a lamp beside her, doing her homework.

Although her eyes were filled with terror, she smiled at her mother and said, ". . . I'm not afraid of that militiaman. Let him bang on the door and shout outside."

The child was only nine years old.

A prisoner, weakened by hunger, impossibly hard labour and terrible beatings, concluded his account:

They can do everything. It's just that they are powerless to turn me into a slave. At worst they can kill me. Death is not the worst end of a human being.

In the notoriously savage hard labour camp at Perm we are told that although a good number are brought to the point of dehumanisation . . . even in such hell they have not lost the desire to find in the world and in human beings at least a speck of goodness, love and nobility.

Is dissent worth such suffering? Those whose sufferings are here recorded have no doubt that it is. So writes one:

Gorbachev's greatest enemies are believers and religious literature; on these he has declared relentless war. May the good God be merciful to him. Many prayers and sacrifices are necessary for him to see the light.

He may never see the light but the fact that prayers and sacrifices persist is proof that thus far his assault on humanity has not succeeded in Lithuania. If the contents of this report have any meaning we must conclude, first, that *glasnost* is yet another ideological lie: Gorbachev has said that "criticism must be in the spirit of the Party"; the spirit of Lithuanians can never be assimilated to the spirit of a party committed to atheism and imperialism; secondly, that Reagan was right when he pointed to the Soviet Union as the "focus of evil" and the prisoners' recorded references to their "living hell" must be taken seriously by the West, especially by the Church because, thirdly, there is no doubt that the Church is the fortress protecting the humanity of dissident Lithuanians.

"And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

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NEWS FROM BALTIC STATES

Baltic Sovereignty

On November 16, 1988, occupied Estonia's parliament, also known as the Supreme Soviet, declared the tiny Baltic republic "sovereign", with the right to veto USSR laws. Communist Party deputies said too much Kremlin control had ruined the Estonian economy and environment.

The declaration of sovereignty stopped short of complete independence, but called for a treaty to be negotiated with Moscow that would "determine the further status of Estonia in the composition of the Soviet Union".

Edgar Savisaar, one of the leaders of the Popular Front, said on Estonian television that, according to opinion polls, 56% of the Estonian population and 10% of the Russian residents favoured Estonia's secession from the USSR.

The USSR Supreme Soviet resolved on November 26 that the laws adopted by the Estonians on November 16, were null and void.

The Lithuanian legislators backed away from proposals to declare Lithuania sovereign. The local Communist leader, Algirdas Brazauskas, said it would be pointless to adopt a resolution that would be immediately overruled by Moscow. The restructuring movement *Sajūdis* then made a declaration of "moral sovereignty".

— USSR News Brief/The Washington Times/Latvian Info Bulletin



● Open-cut mining for oil-shale, in Northern Estonia. "Too much Kremlin control has ruined our economy and environment", the Estonians claim.

Detour to Vilnius

Byelorussian youth groups met in Vilnius on January 14 and 15, after the Soviet authorities refused them a permit to gather in Minsk. The delegates discussed how to introduce *perestroika* in Byelorussia more quickly.

— Rupert Cornwell in *The Independent*.

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Nuclear Fear



● Inside a nuclear power plant : A world unto itself.

Citizen groups in Russian-occupied Lithuania have appealed to their own government and to Western agencies, to investigate the safety of the Ignalina nuclear power plant. Throughout last year, it was plagued by breakdowns, two fires and increasing environmental problems. People fear a repetition of the 1986 Chernobyl tragedy.

Located in north-eastern Lithuania, the Ignalina complex has been hailed as the world's largest nuclear power generator, which will eventually consist of four units, each of 1,500 MW capacity. The first unit went into service on October 4, 1983; the second one was commissioned in the mid 1980s. Construction of the third unit has been suspended.

Registration Suspended

Soviet authorities registered the Popular Front of Latvia as an official organisation on December 21, 1988. However, the registration was suspended seven days later when the State Procurator (Attorney-General) lodged a formal protest with the Latvian Council of Ministers.

The Procurator claims that the constitution and programme of the Popular Front does not comply with the laws under which this type of organisation is registered. The suspension will continue until the Procurator's objections have been heard.

— Cina/Baltic Review.

Mellow Yellow

Livija Saltanije, a dress designer in the Latvian capital of Riga, is producing yellow and orange overalls, to make poultry keepers more attractive to their hens.

Saltanije received the order from Soviet agricultural experts who believe that chickens find the colours appealing.

— Latvian News Digest.