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English Section



From left: Escapee Vldas Šakalys, Simas Kudirka, Daiva Kezienė. Photo by V. Mazelis

LITHUANIAN ACTIVIST ESCAPES TO FREEDOM

Vldas Šakalys Signs Baltic Memorandum Against Hitler-Stalin Pact

Vldas Šakalys, one of the prominent members of the Lithuanian patriotic movement, escaped and reached Sweden on July 19. The daring flight against almost impossible odds was first reported by the *Agence France Presse*. The Parisian daily *France Soir* declared that Šakalys' feat was worthy of an olympic gold medal. (Earlier reports spoke of Šakalys' arrest on June 1 or 2. It appears now that his friends might have interpreted his disappearance as an arrest.) His wife Genė, five year old daughter Indra, and nine-month old son remain in Vilnius (232007), Užupio g-vė 19, but. 33, teleph. 61 42 76. (Disconnected in June, 1980, by KGB).

Šakalys, born in 1942, was sentenced the first time for "anti-Soviet activity" back in 1961, and spent six years in prisons and camps where he participated in various protest activities. Subsequently, Šakalys was arrested a few times again for so-called "criminal trespasses", which are often fabricated to harass oppositionists. On his return from the labor camps late in 1978, he lived in Vilnius where he was kept under surveillance. He immediately joined the Lithuanian patriotic movement and signed several protest statements: against the invasion of Afghanistan as well as against the persecution and the arrests of Terleckas, Skuodis, Pečeliūnas, and others. Šakalys was one of the 45 (or 50) signatories of the Baltic Memorandum, condemning the Stalin-Hitler Pact and demanding the right of self-determination for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. His protest statement dated October 26, 1979, and addressed to the Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian CP, was published in the underground journal *Aušra* (No 20, January, 1980).

STATE DEPARTMENT PROTESTS SOVIET PROPAGANDA ON BALTIC STATES

The following statement was issued by the State Department on October 15:

"In early October, the State Department lodged a protest with the Soviet embassy about the August, 1980 issue of 'Soviet Life' magazine. That issue was dedicated to the subject of 40 years of the Baltic republics under Soviet rule.

The Department informed the embassy of the impropriety of using the supposedly non-political 'Soviet Life' medium for the dissemination of distinctly political views. The Department reminded the embassy that the United States position with regard to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania remains unchanged".

The August, 1980 issue of "Soviet Life" was exclusively devoted to the Baltic States, with an abundance of political commentary on the "benefits" of Soviet rule, the standard castigations of the 1918-1940 Baltic independence period and

Šakalys described his escape in some detail to a correspondent of the Swedish daily *Ekspressen* (August 2, 1980). He said that eight of his friends were arrested shortly before his escape for signing a protest against the staging of certain olympic events in the occupied Baltic states. Šakalys did not want to wait for his own arrest. He estimated that he would have been sentenced to at least ten years; if he was caught while trying to escape, he might have received 15 years. "Not much difference," he said, "I had nothing to lose by attempting to escape, except my life."

Šakalys' odyssey from the Soviet Union to Sweden took 20 days. After enormous hardships he managed to swim, climb and crawl across the very strictly guarded Soviet-Finnish frontier. Realizing that he was already in Finland, he looked at his pocket mirror and saw a bearded, dirty, bloodied face, covered with insect bites. However, Šakalys knew that he could not yet feel free in Finland because the Finnish authorities routinely extradite political refugees to the Soviet

Union. He was at the edge of starvation, but was afraid to approach people and did not want to steal. He finally found a helpful old Finnish citizen in a sparsely populated area. "This man saved my life," Šakalys relates. Realizing that the stranger had fled from the Soviet Union, he fed and sheltered Šakalys, provided him with a map, and gave him food for the rest of the journey. The food lasted ten days — until Šakalys reached the Finnish-Swedish border. He did not dare to cross the bridge at a border town, but walked 12 kilometers north and then swam across the turbulent mouth of the border river, setting foot on Swedish soil.

Once in Sweden, Šakalys continues, the authorities briefly imprisoned him. He was released on August 1st. "I still cannot believe that this is true," he says. "If only I had my family with me, my happiness would be complete." The correspondent of *Ekspressen* says in conclusion, that Šakalys is entitled to stay in Sweden for the time being, but must register with the local authorities until the immigration authorities make a final decision about his fate.

Vldas Šakalys arrived in New York on August 28, 1980.

AMERICANS OF EAST EUROPEAN ORIGIN DISAPPOINTED WITH U.S. RESPONSE TO POLISH EVENTS

AEEEC Telegram to U.S. Secretary of State

The American East European Ethnic Conference is greatly disappointed in the passive and limited response of the State Department to the current developments in Poland. We realize that such situation has great risks but it also affords great opportunities for the advancement of the cause of human rights, especially economic and social justice.

We believe it is vital to the credibility of the United States with regards to its human rights policies and its commitments to the Helsinki accord for the

United States to publicly support the reasonable request of the Polish workers. We also realize that such encouragement must be balanced with strong words cautioning all interested parties to refrain from using force and violence, and encouraging the Polish workers and authorities to peaceably negotiate their differences. In addition, the United States and its allies should explore ways to help Poland out of its economic difficulties so that our interest is not perceived as totally abstract.

These concerns are not only ours, others such as the Pope, the Primate of Poland and the AFL-CIO have also expressed themselves in varying ways and we are exceedingly grateful for their support.

NIJOLĖ SADŪNAITĖ RETURNS FROM SIBERIA

Nijolė Sadūnaitė, one of the best known Lithuanian prisoners of conscience, returned from her Siberian exile to Vilnius on July 9, 1980. This news was widely reported by the Western press, including the West German Catholic news agency, KNA. The press emphasized the fact that Sadūnaitė spent three years in the camps and three years in exile for supporting the unofficial journal, the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*. The daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote that Sadūnaitė was well known in the West, especially in Austria and Germany. The liberal daily *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* reminded its readers about Sadūnaitė's "unusually courageous" stand in the court. *Deutsche Tages-*

RECENT ESCAPEE FROM LITHUANIA ISSUES DECLARATION

To the Supreme Committee for Liberation of Lithuania — Declaration by a citizen of Lithuania — Vldas Šakalys

Referring to the universally recognized right of self-determination for all nations, a group of citizens in the Soviet occupied Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania issued a statement on August 23, 1979, addressed to a number of governments in which it stated that a pact signed on August 23, 1979, between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, followed by secret protocols between these two contracting parties, assigned the spheres of influence in Eastern Europe thus infringing on the rights of the sovereign countries of Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. This predatory action greatly hastened the realization of the second World War.

The above mentioned document witnessed by the signatures of 45 citizens from the

occupied Baltic States demanded that such accords, as they pertain to the occupied Baltic States, be declared null and void since they were illegal acts contradicting principles of the right to self-determination. In addition, the same statement demanded the withdrawal of foreign military forces from their soil, i.e., forces of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a step in the direction of the restoration of the sovereign rights of said countries.

In support of said declaration and its demands, a group of eleven Soviet dissidents affixed their signatures to said document; among them world renowned academician — Sakharov.

At this time a number of citizens from the group of 45 have been arrested by the Soviet authorities (KGB). Among those are: Mart Miklus, an Estonian; Antanas Terleckas, Julius Sasnauskas, Algirdas Statkevicius — all Lithuanians, and a few others.

All arrested individuals during their initial interrogations were intimidated to retract their signatures from said document or to show proof that they never did sign such a document. The purpose of such intimidation by KGB, according to the witnesses was to declare this document a work of imagination, and thus prevent the raising of these facts at the forthcoming Madrid conference which is to review the compliance with the accords of the Final Act of Helsinki Conference among the signatory nations.

I testify to the fact that on May 29, 1980, in Vilnius, Lithuania, during interrogation by the officer of KGB — lt. col. V. Kazys, I was demanded to make a formal statement which would have said to the effect that I had never signed the above-mentioned document. Upon my refusal to comply with such demand, I was threatened with arrest and possible incarceration from 10 to 15 years because my lack of cooperation with the authorities meant my unwillingness to assist them and the Soviet government in their struggle against the western countries and the position they would take at the Madrid Conference. Lt. col. V. Kazys said that it is imperative by all means to stop dissemination of any statements of this nature, and the best way to achieve it is to withdraw my name from said document and declare

delivered an eloquent speech, rejecting any notion of guilt and demanding freedom of religion in Lithuania. World-wide protests and appeals to the Soviet authorities, asking for clemency or reduction of sentence, were ignored. In camps and exile Sadūnaitė was subjected to constant harassment; most letters were withheld from her.

it to be a figment of someone's imagination.

Some arguments by KGB were repeated to other arrested comrades who did go through the same process of interrogation.

Thus, first of all, I declare in the name of all 45 signatories from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania that the document of August 23, 1979, is real and does exist, and that it agrees with the will and demands of the majority of the people in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Secondly, there can be no question, notwithstanding any and all explanations by the Soviet authorities, about Baltic peoples determination to be own masters of their destiny which can be fulfilled only after the Soviet armed forces leave their countries, forces which entered Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania illegally as a result of a conspiracy between the Soviet government and Hitler's Germany.

As long as Lithuania is occupied, her citizens cannot truly and freely express their will. Thus each individual yearning for the freedom of his country and fighting for the restoration of Lithuania's sovereign rights, has a right to speak in the name of Lithuanian nation, because freedom and liberty are integral parts of every nation and these just rights could and should not be denied anyone.

Because Lithuanian Diplomatic Service is the continuation of a free institution of the Republic of Lithuania, and the Supreme Committee for Liberation of Lithuania is an organization seeking to restore the independence to Lithuania, together they represent the true interests of the Republic of Lithuania, and as such their existence should be unquestionable.

Addressing myself to the Supreme Committee for Liberation of Lithuania, I declare that the Lithuanian nation is fighting for the restoration of its independence, and your support in this struggle is not only necessary but all your efforts are in accord with the best interests of the Lithuanian nation.

I express my sincere thank you to the Supreme Committee for Liberation of Lithuania for all efforts in this behalf and plead with you to continue this fight by all possible means, fight which ultimately will lead to the restoration of Lithuania's sovereign rights.

As a person only recently forced to leave my homeland — Lithuania, I am well aware of the feelings of Lithuanian people. Therefore, I firmly believe that your efforts fully agree with the interests of the Lithuanian nation and her people.

(signed) VLADAS ŠAKALYS
August 28, 1980

