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AIZVESTO PIEMIŅAS DIENAS DIEVKALPOJUMS UN KONCERTS

12. jūnija pēcpusdienā Sv. Pētera luterāņu baznīcā mēs dzirdējām pēdējo laiku labāko un izsmelošāko uzrunu, pieminot visus aizvestos. Uzrunu teica mūsu pašu Adelaides Daugavas Vanagu priekšniece Gunta Rudzītis. Tāpēc, ka šis ir pasākums, ko mēs Adelaides baltieši atzīmējam kopā, tad saprotams, ka uzruna bija angļu valodā.

Publicēju visu runu oriģinālvalodā, jo negribēju tulkojot pazaudēt ne asumu, ne skaudrumu, ne sāpes, ne ciešanas, kas tik precīzi bija iztektas.

I.O.

BALTIC DEPORTATIONS 1941.

They came in the darkest time of night,

They tore us out of our beds, our homes, our land;

They tore us apart—men from women and children.

They herded us into cattle cars behind bars.

They gave us no food and no drink.

They drove us toward living death.

Lucky the child, the elder, the sick who died quickly

And was left by the wayside;

We, who were left were to die slowly in the barbed wire islands of the gulag;

We were no longer humans, we were numbers;

We were driven to work without rest, without bread;

Hunger was our brother, death our sister;

Our bones were stacked like logs on the frozen tundra.

Only a few, years later, could traverse the miles toward home that no longer was home;

Only a few returned, broken or saints, who had gone through hell

And had survived.

Honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Once again, the Baltic people of Adelaide, Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians come together to commemorate one of the darkest days in their history - the deportations to Siberia of the 14. June, 1941. I began with the words of a survivor of that horror. Because it

was something so unimaginably appalling, and our thoughts on this day are with the many thousands of victims, we tend to see it as an isolated event, remembered on one day of the year, then put to the back of our minds till next year. It is, however, important to see that event in context: how and why did it come about, and more importantly, what were the consequences for those who were deported, those who remained at home, those who managed to escape to the West, and their descendants. What were the consequences for three small, peace-loving nations, whose only crime was that they traditionally occupied some extremely desirable real estate by the Baltic Sea; what has happened in the 25 years since renewed independence, and what is happening even today, as we speak?

The night of 13 - 14 June 1941 was not an isolated event, but part of a carefully laid plan to enslave, disperse, and/or exterminate large parts of the populations of Eastern Europe and take over their territory. That territory was to be divided between the USSR and the German Third Reich as set out in the infamous Molotov - Ribbentrop (or Stalin - Hitler) Pact of 1939. A stroke of the pen assigned the Baltics and eastern Poland to the Soviet Union; in the summer of 1940, Stalin's Soviet army tanks rolled in to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and the arrests, murders, and dispossessions began. What we call "The Terror" was unleashed.

By 1941, with Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, the pact between two thieves and murderers was out the window, Hitler and Stalin were at each others throats and squabbling over the Baltics, but by that time, the horrific events of June 1941, with 94 000 people deported to Siberia and Arctic regions, had already taken place, and the genocide was in full swing. Another round of deportations, involving 92 000 people, took place in March, 1949, and we must not forget those victims. Some, who had served their sentences and had been allowed to return home from the first deportation, were deported again. Many were children under 16, condemned simply for being members of their families, as enemies of the Soviet

state. Many were very old, frail people who did not survive the long journey of many months. Backbreaking labour, sub-zero temperatures, and starvation ensured the deaths of many hundreds of thousands more.

In your programmes, ladies and gentlemen, you will find a list of the sad and doubtful "benefits" of being a member of the Soviet Union. That list is nowhere near complete, and I'm sure every person in this assembly could add something of their own to it. For instance, thirty years ago when the nuclear reactor in Chernobyl blew up, the first people conscripted to clean up the mess were Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians. No thought was given to their protection and safety; protective clothing was not provided, and much of the clean-up was done with bare hands. Those who did not die immediately of radiation poisoning went home as invalids, with no support or compensation from their governments.

The list on the right of the insert is likewise incomplete. It was pointed out to me by my now middle aged son, who was born in this country, that no matter who we are, or where in the world we live, all Baltic people are, in one sense or another, "damaged goods", because all our lives have been affected by the Molotov - Ribbentrop Pact and the resulting chaos. The health of the deportees, both physical and mental, was damaged forever. In Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, school history books were changed to suit the new order, and create a soviet citizen, who would accept the deportations and the presence of Russian troops in their country as not only normal, but normal and necessary.

We in the West are the lucky ones; we came to a good place, but we have always felt split between two places, two cultures, two emotional loyalties, especially those who came here as children, and who were raised in households surrounded by the language and paraphernalia of countries they remembered barely or not at all, countries that their parents had left in tatters, often not knowing the fate of loved ones left behind. For my son, the worst was being made to go to latvian school, which he hated; my parents made me go to latvian school, which I hated; never

mind—we survived, even came to appreciate it; others were not so lucky. A fifty year Soviet occupation has left deep scars on our languages, our cultures, our family lives, our economy, and on the actual land itself. One of the saddest things was that people were made to spy on and denounce each other to the KGB. Many personal scores could be settled by denunciation to the KGB.

It was not until the death of the tyrant Stalin in 1953 that it was possible (if not always safe) to write a letter home to ascertain if parents, spouses, or siblings were still alive. There was always the fear that your home address and all your possessions had been taken over by the family of a member of the Soviet army, and your family was dead or in Siberia. All recipients of letters from the West were viewed with suspicion, and contents of letters received were heavily censored. Writing home put your family at risk. It was a sad time for us here, but downright dangerous for them.

At the end of WW2, Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians believed that the West would come and liberate their countries from the USSR, and the refugees in German Displaced Persons' camps would be able to go home. Surely Britain and America would not allow the Soviet Union to remain in occupation in their homelands? Unfortunately, that is exactly what happened. We were badly let down by the West, and it was not until 1991 that the Evil Empire crumbled and the Baltic states were free once again. Fifty years of enslavement were over.

In hindsight after all disasters, it is usual to say, "this must never be allowed to happen again." So, what is happening now? The Baltics are now members of NATO and the European Union, which has enraged the heirs and successors of Soviet Russia. Vladimir Putin has rehabilitated Stalin, one of the twentieth century's greatest monsters, who had been toppled from his "great leader and teacher" pedestal after his death and with the breakup of the Soviet Union, and the Russian population is once more viewing him as a hero and their saviour from Fascism. Putin has even rehabilitated the Molotov - Ribbentrop Pact!

The state controlled media paint both Putin and Stalin as heroes, and the war in Ukraine is blamed on Western meddling. Russia's expansionist policies have been evident in Chechnya and Georgia, and most recently with the annexation of the Crimea and interference in the Ukraine, with the universal and convenient excuse of protecting the Russian minorities there from bands of homicidal, neo-nazi Ukrainians, who, unfortunately for them, were forcibly discouraged by Russia from becoming members of NATO and the EU.

Recently there has been Russian military activity in the Baltic Sea, Baltic airspace and near land borders; in April, an American warship in the Baltic Sea was repeatedly buzzed by a Russian jet fighter, coming as close as 9 metres, despite warnings of the danger. On the previous day, a Russian helicopter circled the ship, taking (*Turpinājums 3. lpp.*)



Foto: Agris Ezeriņš.