

NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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SENTENCES SHOW SOVIETS' CONTEMPT FOR DECENCY AND JUSTICE, DOLE SAYS

WASHINGTON -- Following is a statement by Sen. Bob Dole on the sentences of Russian Alexander Ginzburg and Lithuanian Viktoras Petkus:

It is with great sadness and revulsion that I note the sentencing of two great men, Viktoras Petkus and Alexander Ginzburg. Enough has been said about the contempt the Soviet Union has shown the Helsinki Agreement, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its own constitution. This latest action only confirms their attitudes toward those documents. But even more shocking is the Soviets' contempt for human decency and standards of justice.

Viktoras Petkus stood up to defend the rights of the Lithuanian people to speak their own language and enjoy their ancient culture. For some reason that is practically incomprehensible to me, the Soviet Union seeks to destroy the identity and culture of the Lithuanians and other peoples and turn them into extinct nations.

It is only natural that a person should speak out in defense of those values and principles taught by his parents. This Viktoras Petkus did in a most courageous fashion, waging a struggle in defense of his people against the onslaughts of Soviet Russification policies.

Every human rights document in the world upholds his right to do so. Any standard of decency applauds him for his actions. Yet the Soviet regime chose to punish him for his noble efforts by trying him in a closed court away from the eyes of the world press and finding him guilty of a specious charge of "anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation." If love of one's heritage and culture is anti-Soviet, God grant us more of this type of propaganda and agitation.

I protest most vigorously the inhuman sentence of three years in prison, seven in a labor camp and five in exile, all away from Mr. Petkus's beloved Lithuania. I pray he will have the strength to endure his ordeal and that we will have the courage and wisdom to take the proper actions to aid and support him.

If we needed any more proof that the Dark Ages have descended on the Soviet Union, we would have to look no further than Kaluga where another man of monumental stature stands convicted for having the integrity and courage to defend what he knows to be true. Alexander Ginzburg did not need to prove to anyone his commitment to human values and individual liberty.

The two sentences he has already served have undermined his health and aged him prematurely. He suffers from a gastric ulcer and incipient tuberculosis, two methods with which the Soviet government tortures people who have a clear vision of what is valuable and are brave enough to say it. The sentence of eight years in a labor camp will probably kill this great man.

Words cannot express the horror I and my colleagues feel at the barbarity of this latest Soviet action. Let us dedicate ourselves to work to realize the values for which these men have sacrificed their health and freedom. Words on a document are meaningless unless they are lived by people for whom they are intended. Viktoras Petkus and Alexander Ginzburg showed the world how to make bold statements living deeds. Let them serve as an example to all people who love and respect truth and liberty.