

THE ORLOV TRIAL

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'THE CHRISTIAN FAITH'

In May this year Yuri Orlov was sentenced in Moscow to seven years strict regime labour camp and five years exile. He was a Russian dissident who had spoken up for freedom in accordance with the Helsinki agreement. This month two more human right campaigners, Mr. Ginsburg and Mr. Shcharansky were put on trial in Moscow, rigged trials, according to the London based newspaper 'The Economist'. Orlov was a scientist. In his speech in court, which was frequently interrupted by the judge, he underlined the enormity of the Soviet crime of using psychiatric hospitals to imprison people indefinitely. The press was excluded from the courtroom and his wife's notes taken from her as she left. But she reports that amongst his statements which she jotted down when she got home was that Orlov told the court that the worker Fedorov who was imprisoned for criminal offences, had become a Christian believer in prison. Addressing the judge, Orlov said "faith helped him and made him a person. Why then", he asked her "was Fedorov declared insane and confined to a psychiatric hospital". At this point he was again cut short by the judge.

At the present time western European scientists are co-operating with Soviet scientists but some of them have said they ought not to do so as a protest to the imprisonment of their brother scientist in Russia. But no action has come from this. We find it so difficult to translate into right action our moral indignation. You will remember in 1956 just on the eve of the Olympic Games in Melbourne, Russia invaded Hungary and put down with violence the Hungarian

uprising for liberty. However Australia went on with the games. At that time only one country, Holland, refused to play sport with representatives from the Soviet Union. We find it so difficult to translate into action our moral indignation, yet those who have recently been sentenced to prison in Russia were doing just that. On behalf of other people they were protesting against the infringement of human rights.

In America scientists have cancelled planned delegation visits to Russia as a consequence of Orlov's imprisonment. This is right, for we should support the Helsinki group in Russia with our sympathy, our prayers and such action as we can persuade our government to take. But if we are going to translate moral indignation into right actions we need a stronger sense of rightness than we as an Australian community have at present. While we spend our time with gambling or alcohol or other forms of self centred pleasure seeking, we will remain too self-centred to do anything on behalf of other people who may be suffering wrong. It is by reverence and fear of God that we can rise above the fear of man.

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