

In Memoriam

Zum Gedenken an Dr. Laszlo Benyei (1920 – 2006)

Laszlo Benyei was the Australian correspondent of AWR from 1977. The following short biography of his work and life was compiled by Laszlo's son, Jamie Laszlo Benyei. Laszlo contributed to the work of AWR for almost 30 years. His work was much appreciated by AWR and he will be sadly missed.

Laszlo Benyei was born 26 July 1920 in Budapest where he obtained his Doctorate in Law and in 1946 became one of Hungary's youngest civilian Judge and Advocate diplomates. Laszlo spent his youth travelling the Danube with his father who was a shipping Captain, as a church organist from the age of 14 and as a tourist guide in the mountains of Hungary. A love of geography, demography, law, music and church history were the foundations of Laszlo's life of service.

After leaving Hungary as a refugee in 1948, Laszlo worked in Vienna as Eligibility Registrar for the International Refugee Organization and in 1950 sailed to Australia on the refugee ship Skaugum. After two years under bonded contract working for the South Australian Railways, Laszlo moved to Melbourne where he worked briefly as a law clerk.

In 1954 Laszlo was appointed as assistant to Margaret Holmes, founding Director of the World Council of Churches Resettlement Department in Melbourne. In 1968 he was appointed Director of Resettlement in the Division of Inter Church Aid, Refugee and World Service of the then Australian Council of Churches, a position he held until his retirement in 1985. This work perfectly suited Laszlo's legal training, fluency in several languages, compassion and abiding faith in God.

During his 31 years with the Resettlement Department, Laszlo was directly involved with the sponsorship and resettlement of over 100,000 refugees, their families and other migrants in need who were not eligible for government assistance. With a skilled, willing and selfless staff, Laszlo managed an interest-free travel loan program from UN, non government and church funds which provided around \$20million to assist migrants in need to establish new lives in Australia.

Laszlo worked tirelessly for refugees and developed strong networks with immigration departments and non-government organisations both in Australia and overseas. He researched and fostered integration of communities whilst promoting continuity of international cultural ties. Australian churches played a vital role in sponsoring, welcoming and resettling refugees. This work and Laszlo's dedication to nurturing migrant churches saw the formation of the Victorian Inter-Church Immigration Committee which brought together twenty-two churches to focus on that which they shared, rather than liturgical and cultural differences.

Laszlo was a member of the Advisory Council of the International Institute for Ethnic Group Rights and Regionalism (Munich). He held executive positions with the Good Neighbour Council, the United Nations Association and the Australian Council for Overseas Aid as well as being active in many other government & non-government

committees. His work was often politically delicate, but he was fiercely impartial in upholding the UN Refugee Convention, the rule of law and a vision of a better world.

In retirement Laszlo continued his interests in theology, liturgy, church history and demography. He maintained active involvement with international humanitarian concerns, interfaith dialogue and local activities, including the Hungarian Reformed Church and the Kew Historical Society. He received honours from the Patriarch of Antioch and the Archbishop of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.

In 1989 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia and was elected into Membership of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo Italy. In 1996 he was awarded the Austcare Paul Cullen Humanitarian award.

In September 2005 Laszlo celebrated the 50th anniversary of his marriage to Dorothy who also worked with the Resettlement Department. On 22 May 2006 Laszlo Benyei died peacefully in his sleep at home in Melbourne, survived by his wife, sons Jamie and Jonathan, their wives Begona and Christine and two granddaughters Petra and Andrea.

Ever mindful of the need to be vigilant against complacency, totalitarianism and erosion of freedom, Laszlo's selfless, humble and compassionate work will long be remembered by many and diverse churches, communities and individuals who have helped create the intricate cultural tapestry of Australian life.

Mark Inston

Zum Gedenken an Dr. Alla Ludwig, geb. Goloubeva

Alla starb am Ostersonntag, dem 8. April 2007. Wenige Tage vorher, am Tag, bevor sie letztmalig das Krankenhaus aufsuchen musste, hatte ich noch mit ihr telefonieren können. Aber an Ostern hat sie, nicht einmal 44 Jahre alt, wie ihr Mann schrieb, ihren langen Kampf gegen den Krebs verloren.

Im Juni 1963 im damaligen Leningrad als Tochter eines Universitätsprofessors geboren, verbrachte sie dort ihre Jugend und studierte an der Universität Völkerkunde und Kunstgeschichte.

Mit vorzüglichen Deutschkenntnissen kam sie 1991 nach Deutschland. Kurz danach lernte ich sie in Bad Homburg kennen. Sie war auf der Suche nach passender Arbeit, um aus eigener Kraft in Deutschland bleiben zu können. Zugleich studierte sie an der Frankfurter Universität in Bereichen wie Geographie und Soziologie.

In meinen Ehrenämtern als Vizepräsident der internationalen Forschungsgesellschaft für das Weltflüchtlingsproblem – AWR – und zugleich ihrer deutschen Sektion gewann ich sie als meine Mitarbeiterin für die AWR. Das war viel mehr als Schreib- und Computerarbeit. Dank ihrer hohen Intelligenz und ihres Interesses wuchs sie hinein in unsere Arbeitsthematik und wurde zum konstruktiven Gesprächspartner. Das wurde sie für uns alle als aktives Mitglied der Deutschen Sektion. Nach Überlegungen mit dem Präsidenten des Wissenschaftlichen Beirates, Prof. Wollenschläger, wurde aufgrund ihrer Vorschläge ihr Vater, Prof. Goloubev, dessen wissenschaftliche Arbeitsgebiete an der Universität St. Petersburg gut zu den Themen der AWR passten, mehrfach zu Referaten auf unseren internationalen Kongressen eingeladen. Er sprach russisch und Alla übersetzte abschnittsweise auf Deutsch. Zur Gestaltung der fundierten Referate von Prof. Goloubev hat sie vorher aktiv ihren Teil beigetragen.

So lernte die AWR in wissenschaftlicher Präzision die völkerkundliche Thematik im Bereich der früheren Sowjetunion und die russische Migrationsproblematik kennen.

Wenn Prof. Goloubev seine Tochter in Bad Homburg besuchte, trafen wir uns zu dritt. Er redete russisch, ich deutsch, und Alla übersetzte den ganzen Abend. So erstreckte sich meine freundschaftliche Verbindung mit Alla auch auf ihren Vater.

Alla wollte in Deutschland bleiben und einen Deutschen heiraten, was sie 1999 auch getan hat. Sie ist für mich ein positives Beispiel für einen Menschen, der bewusst zwei europäischen Kulturen zugehörig war. Am 16. Mai – mit der Seebestattung in der Ostsee – wird diese doppelte Zugehörigkeit noch einmal symbolisch bekräftigt.

Karl Heinz Schaefer