

For Relations
Latvia

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Gunars Rode

May 16, 1977

The Honorable Leonid Brezhnev
General Secretary of C.T.S.U.
The Kremlin
Moscow, Russia

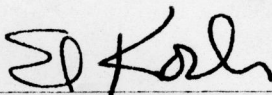
Dear Mr. Secretary:

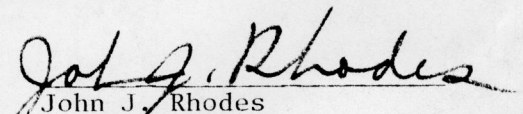
We, the undersigned Members of Congress, are writing to express our concern for Gunars Rode, a Latvian sentenced to 15 years in prison in 1962 for "nationalism and anti-Soviet agitation" because of his membership and participation in an informal student group known as the Baltic Federation, which we understand did nothing more than meet to discuss problems of cultural autonomy and human rights for Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians. Mr. Rode, whose sentence expires on May 20 of this year, was not permitted until last summer to see the 1962 court decision accusing him of "having poisoned drinking water, having gathered arms for an armed uprising, and of an intention to start a nuclear explosion or even war that would threaten all of Eastern Europe," charges which appear to have no basis in fact.


It has come to our attention that the Soviet Government may bring new charges against Mr. Rode which would result in another prison term after the current one expires on May 20, because of his persistent assertion of his innocence. When it was reportedly suggested by Soviet authorities in early 1976, for example, that he appeal for clemency, Mr. Rode refused on principle, because to request clemency would be to admit guilt to crimes he never committed.

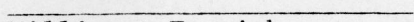
Because Mr. Rode is gravely ill, he may not survive another prison term; therefore, we appeal to you on humanitarian grounds to release him when his term ends this month. This would indicate that the Soviet Union takes seriously the human-rights provisions of the Helsinki Accord.

Sincerely,


Edward I. Koch


John J. Rhodes


Benjamin S. Rosenthal


Millicent Fenwick

Paul is co-signer