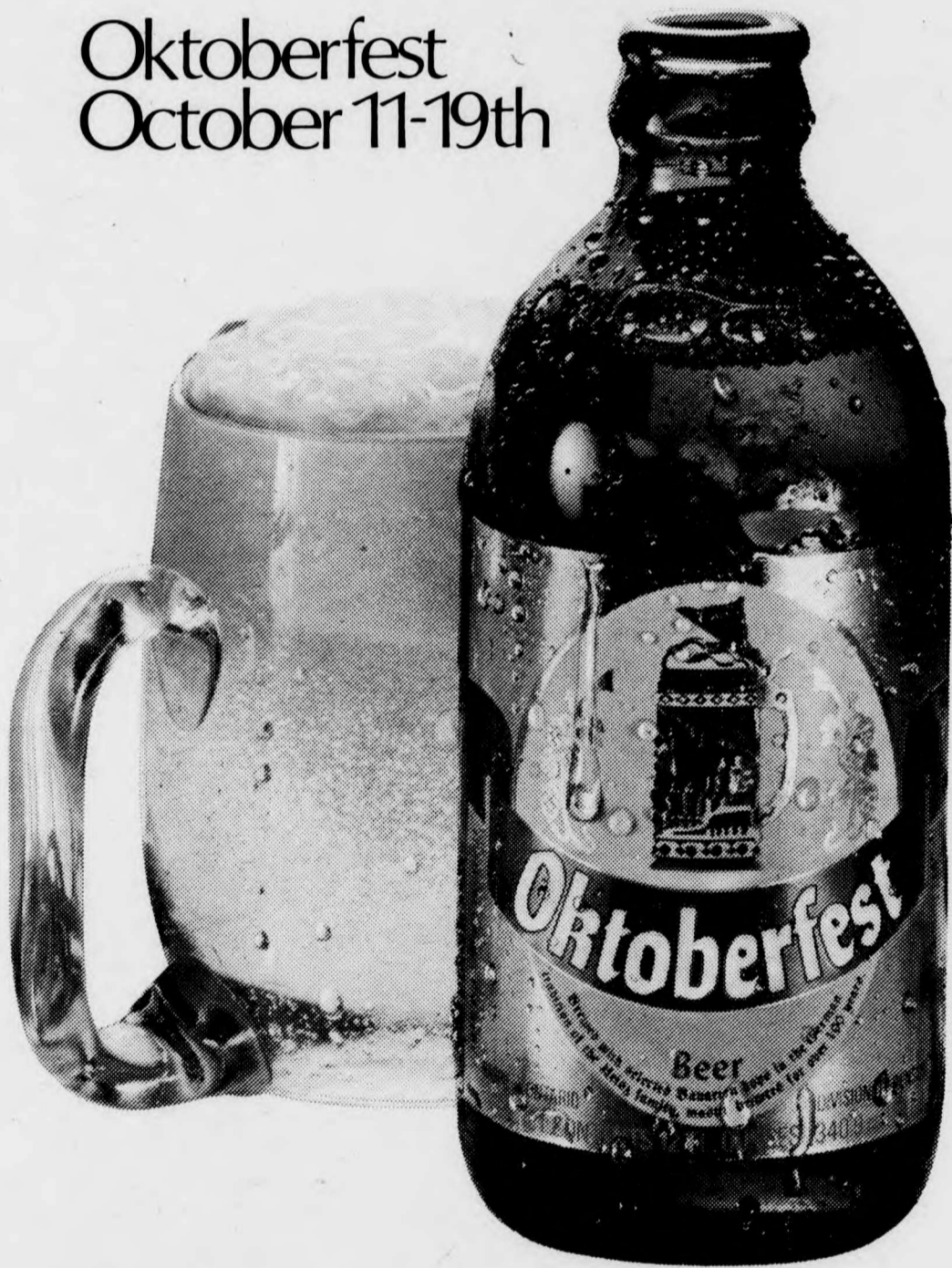


PASS THE WORD

Oktoberfest
October 11-19th



Oktoberfest

FROM
MOLSON'S

Excalibur

still needs photographers,
and writers at Room III Central Square

Struggle for rights a global concern

The York student Committee for the Defence of Soviet Political Prisoners presented a forum Monday in the Central Square bearpit on the topic of the struggle for civil rights in the USSR; one of the speakers was Professor Alexander Yassenin-Volpin, who obtained his doctoral degree in mathematics in the 1940s in Moscow just prior to his arrest "for expressing views unpopular with the Soviet leadership."

In 1972, Volpin was permitted to leave the Soviet Union, and now teaches at the University of Boston.

The following are excerpts from a lecture he gave at that university in August, which will be included in his forthcoming book. Excalibur presents the piece in the context of a studied and provocative opinion:

In the USSR all problems involving legal rights deal with freedom of movement, speech, press, association and assembly, access to information and the problem of justice.

These freedoms are theoretically acknowledged in the USSR within the confines of the law, but in practice these laws are paralysed by the dictatorship of the Communist party political leadership. It is proven by the fact that the overwhelming majority of legal cases involving dissenters are legally without foundation, stemming from the acute problem presented by the lawyers' position in the USSR, where lawyers can defend certain clients only with the permission of the CPSU (Communist party).

I know that many people will prefer to turn away from the legal approach to the problem of Soviet repression or from a discussion of the technical problems of Soviet jurisprudence, and to leave this rather unpleasant business to lawyers. But what can we do in the face of the fact of the Soviet lawyers' own inability to develop in their profession normally?

IDEOLOGY OF TRUTH

If the topic under discussion is connected to any ideology, I must say that I can recognize only that ideology which prohibits lying in every situation and most certainly in court. This extends to all discussions of any such ideology and particularly with respect to glossing over or hushing up a certain issue.

I proceed from this principle of the inadmissibility of lying much more than from any pragmatic considerations, and I call on everyone who is unjustly accused in any country not to plead guilty, even if this should be connected in individual cases to heavy personal losses. Concessions lead to widespread lying and dangerous injustices that should not be condoned to the slightest degree.

The most dangerous opponent in the struggle against lying is not the person who speaks or writes false words; rather, it is the very compulsion to lie.

The struggle for human rights is extremely complex and multifaceted in character; it promises to be long-lived and to take many victims. Measures directed at shortening the struggle will not be successful in the long run if they are aimed only at the release of a few individuals like Bukovsky, Chornovil, Silva Zalmanson and others, because tens of thousands of other innocent people will only take their places in prison.

This repressive Soviet system is based on quasi-legal lying and the universal tendency to condone such lying. Lying's tragic consequences, and the myth that they are unavoidable and impossible to expose, are convenient for those who prefer to leave the resolution of this grave and fundamental issue to the next

generation.

The Communist ideology completely ignores the interests of freedom of philosophical thought, problems of the essence of truth, and problems of death and eternal life, as though it possessed the complete and definitive solution to all of them. It is as though the whole of cultured society will, in the future, be obliged to look to Communist textbooks to find the answers to all the profound questions.

Because of the fear of being refused visas for travel as tourists to socialist countries, Western publicists who sympathize with the victims of repression in these countries refuse to speak out publicly in defence of their rights.

Because of the fear of being deprived of business contacts with some country named Hungary, Western publishers refuse to print materials they receive from the Soviet Union dealing with human rights.

Because of the fear of gaining a reputation as conservatives, university professors—in the West, no less—refuse to criticize the policy of the Soviet Union; and if indeed they do criticize, they do it with reservations that are to China's advantage.

WESTERN RADIO

Influential Western radio stations reduce the time span designated for broadcasts on Soviet repressions, and soften the tone of these broadcasts. Western newspaper articles on trials in the USSR are still more polite and imprecise. All of this depends upon the tide of talks between Brezhnev and (Nixon), or among circles active in both countries.

In the building of the United Nations in New York, Solzhenitsyn's book *The Gulag Archipelago* was forbidden to be sold in its bookstores. It seems that in a little while, Western publishers will consult with the censors of Glavlit without even inquiring into the legality of the status of censorship in the USSR. But this is not capitulation; this is only Western politesse in the expectation of the development of detente.

In this way, the whole world is entangled in intellectual stock phrases, blinders are put on people's eyes, and thanks to them, the subtle legal and judicial abuses of the Soviet authorities keep from being noticed or seem too insignificant. American society is not attentive to complex events unless they become dramatized, filmed, or translated into an aesthetic or sentimental language.

It appears that it is more willing to reconcile itself to the victory of the Communist threat than it is ready to spend the necessary number of hours and pages of newspapers studying and clarifying the rather tedious and casuistic features of Communist jurisprudence.

EYES WEST

It is evident that the Communist power in the USSR is trying to act circumspectly, and that it has a clear eye on Western reaction. It is thus even more incomprehensible why the difficulties present in the West have not yet been overcome—if only by those persons not directly touched by them.

I consider these problems to be surmountable, and I believe that the problems of human rights movements in Communist countries, though difficult and long-enduring, have solutions. The difficulties, however, are of an international nature and should be overcome through efforts on an international scale.

The West also cannot escape the dangers that threaten her, without carefully studying the problems of liberty in the East and issues which, for better or for worse, have become clear to the Soviet Human Rights Movements.