

## **Berezovskaya, Alla (2026): Alla about Alla. A Self-Portrait.**

[Letter to Klaus Schittich on 21 February 2026]

Dear Klaus, good day!

Please excuse me for not replying immediately, but the number of political prisoners in the Baltic countries is growing every month. I try, to the best of my ability, to support and help them.

Why do I do this instead of resting and enjoying life?

I myself am the daughter of formerly exiled parents. My father was a journalist in Tashkent, a Jew. In 1937 he was arrested for “anti-Soviet activity.” He spent a total of about 18 years in Stalinist camps and in exile. In Siberia he met my future mother—a deported Volga German. My older sister was born there in 1953, and I was born in 1956 already in Kazakhstan, where our entire German family moved after the exile.

When I was 12 or 13 years old, I often asked my father about his life in the Stalinist camps. It made a very strong impression on me. To this day I vividly remember his stories about the ordeals he endured, about the terrible hunger and the cold. Back then, as a child, I often imagined sending my father a parcel to Siberia. In my thoughts I packed thick woolen socks, a scarf, apples, and onions (so that he would not get scurvy, which later caused him to lose all his teeth). I wrapped each apple in old newspaper so it would not spoil. He died when I was 15 years old.

I think that is precisely why, when I myself became a journalist, I began in the 1990s to write extensively about life in Soviet prisons, in order to continue his work. For about 30 years I worked for a youth newspaper in Latvia. In recent years, persecution of people with dissenting views has begun in our country. That was terrible, because at the time I had actively supported Latvia’s independence, democracy, and freedom of speech. Unfortunately, nothing of that remains today.

At present, dozens of people are behind bars in the Baltic countries—opposition politicians, journalists, civil society activists, whose only “crime” is having believed in freedom of expression. I correspond with many of them, write about their criminal cases, receive numerous letters from prisons, and publish everything on my online platforms: in the socio-political magazine \**Prison Courier*

A few years ago, I joined the international journalists’ organization “Reporters Without Borders” in order to fight within its ranks for the rights of journalists persecuted in their countries. I paid a membership fee of 100 euros and received a press card<sup>1</sup> from Paris. However, when criminal proceedings were initiated against me in Latvia because until 2020 I had published my articles on the Russian portal “Baltic News,” someone from among Latvian colleagues apparently sent a denunciation to “Reporters Without Borders,” labeling me a “pro-Kremlin journalist” facing trial. As a result, I was expelled from the organization and even accused of fraud, although I deceived no one—my press card proves this<sup>1</sup>. This, then, was the “support” for an opposition journalist from Latvia from an organization that sees itself as a defender of journalists and freedom of speech. Be that as it may—I have neither the money nor the time for legal proceedings against “Reporters Without Borders.” Besides, there are many people who need my help.

For example, two scholars whom I know personally are currently imprisoned in the Central Prison of Riga—the Doctor of Economics Alexander Gaponenko (72 years old) and the Doctor of History Viktor Gushchin (67 years old). Both are charged under absurd statutes, but in reality for their dissenting views. The first has already been sentenced—to 10 years in prison (at the age of 72) for a ten-minute academic lecture on genocide and ethnocide delivered during a video conference. He is an elderly, ill man—such a sentence amounts to a death sentence. The second, Viktor Gushchin, is a well-known historian and regional researcher in Latvia, the author of several historical

books about the country. His “guilt” lies in the fact that three years ago an article of his appeared on the Russian website “Rhythm of Eurasia,” which is allegedly under European sanctions. However, this is not true—the website does not appear on the sanctions lists. Nevertheless, the scholar, who suffers from diabetes, has been held in custody since 17 December 2025. Recently, he was attacked in his cell by a young, mentally unstable fellow inmate, who struck the elderly man on the head.

All of this is terrible. And I have dozens of such stories. Back then I could not help my father, so today I help political prisoners—I call them the “prisoners of the BaltLag”—and in doing so I also, in a sense, help him. Not only as a journalist, but also personally: I transfer money from my pension to them for the prison commissary, send them printed news and analyses every month (70–100 pages), as well as fresh newspapers and magazines. Under each of my articles in the “Prison Courier,” I provide the addresses and bank details of the prisons; my subscribers and readers also support those in need. Unlike “Reporters Without Borders,” I have never collected donations for my online platforms, nor requested any, nor received any funding. I regard my work as a kind of mission. Who, if not me?

That is, in brief, about me and my work. Tatjana Andrijeca is also one of the people I support, but at the same time my most important assistant—she also corresponds with prisoners, brings them parcels, and sends shipments. I am particularly worried about her.

Yours sincerely,  
Alla Berezovskaya  
21 February 2026

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[<https://www.facebook.com/groups/399341842413393/posts/1164724105875159/>](<https://www.facebook.com/groups/399341842413393/posts/1164724105875159/>)

Telegram channel “Prison Courier”:

<https://t.me/freedomtolinderman> .

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Note by the d.i.b. editorial team:

1 A copy is held by the editorial office.