



Knuts Skujenieks (1936) is a poet and translator who personally and painfully experienced what it meant to be a poet in Soviet Latvia: in 1962, he was accused of "anti-Soviet activism" (the accusation was fabricated, and the courtroom proceedings were used to frighten the uncompromising Latvian poet) and sentenced to 7 years in a prison camp in Russia. Skujenieks wrote many poems in prison, but because of his "non grata" status, his first book of poetry, "Lyrics and Voices", was only published in 1978.

Skujenieks productivity as a writer during his period of imprisonment is proof positive that a mind and spirit cannot be imprisoned. In the prison camp Skujenieks learned several languages from his fellow prisoners. As a result, he has translated into Latvian folk songs of most the European languages, languages as diverse as Swedish, Old Icelandic, Spanish, Russian and Greek.

Some of the many poets he has translated are Federico Garcia Lorca, Yanis Ricos, Gabriela Mistral, Desanka Maksimović and Inger Christensen. His translations from Croatian include Miroslav Krleža, Vesna Parun and Zvane Črnja. In addition he has translated 20 dramas from Russian, Spanish, Polish and Slovak languages.

Knuts Skujenieks has published seven volumes of original poetry and has been translated into 30 languages, with books of his poetry in Swedish, Ukrainian and Lithuanian. In 1998, Knuts Skujenieks, along with Vizma Belševica, received the prestigious Tomas Transtroemer Prize.