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Latvia and the USA: From Captive Nation to Strategic Partner.
Editor: Daunis Auers

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Introduction

Daunis Auers and Nils Muižnieks

America and Latvia have an asymmetric relationship. The USA stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, and its 300 million inhabitants drive the world's biggest economic and political power. In contrast, Latvia is a small country of 2.3 million people on the eastern littoral of the Baltic Sea. While Latvia hardly intrudes on the American consciousness, the US looms large in the contemporary Latvian narrative. It has been Latvia's primary political patron and bulwark since 1940, first through its principled non-recognition of Soviet occupation of the Baltic States, and then through its consistent and continuing support for Latvia's accession to NATO. In Latvian foreign policy discourse, America is Latvia's only 'strategic partner'.

However, things were not ever thus. In the first part of this volume Aldis Purs depicts the tentative initial contacts between the US and Latvia after the First World War. At this time, the US was represented in Latvia primarily at the non-governmental level. These non-governmental representatives worked at easing the dire humanitarian situation that Latvia found itself in at the end of the war, as battling bands of Reds, Whites, and German irregular forces swept back and forth across Latvia's territory. In those pre-global communication days, the US was as much an ideal as a reality to Latvians, symbolising freedom and prosperity, the twin aspirations of the new Latvian state. By the 1930s, relations had normalized to the extent that the US had opened a substantial diplomatic mission in Rīga, albeit primarily as a 'listening post' to eavesdrop on the Soviet Union. At the same time, Latvia had re-opened its legation in Washington, DC in the mid-1930s, and under the enthusiastic tutelage of its head of mission, Minister Alfreds Bilmanis, set about publicizing and lobbying the interests of the Latvian state.

Nevertheless, despite these efforts, Latvia had barely entered the American perception at the outbreak of the Second World War. As a result, it is remarkable that the US, as a point of principle, adopted the Sumner Welles declaration of non-recognition of the Soviet occupation of Latvia in 1940, and maintained this policy right up to 1991. Pauls Raudseps describes the many different pressures that the non-recognition policy came under during changing presidencies and international conditions during the Second

World War and the Cold war era. However, despite detente, George H.W. Bush's hesitance in immediately recognizing Latvia's renewed independence in 1991, and other bumps along the road, the US's principled stance against the Soviet occupation eased the road to Latvia's international recognition in 1991.

Daunis Auers and Ojārs Celle focus on two particular Latvian actors in the US during the Cold War – the Latvian Legation in Washington, DC, and the Latvian-American exile community. Auers tells the story of the Latvian diplomats left in diplomatic limbo after the Soviet invasion of Latvia. The Latvian Legation had an unusual existence during the near half-century of the Cold War. On the one hand, it was recognized as a diplomatic mission by the State Department's consular list, but on the other it was marginalized by Washington, DC's wider diplomatic community. However, the legation, and particularly Anatols Dinbergs, who served in Latvia's diplomatic corps for sixty years, was a living link to the government of independent, inter-war Latvia, and was thus of huge symbolic importance. Celle focuses on the Latvian exile community's development as a political actor. As the tens of thousands of Latvians that had fled the Soviet army at the end of World War Two settled in communities across the USA, they grew in wealth and confidence and became increasingly organized. Indeed, Latvian culture thrived in the US, with hundreds of choirs and folk-dance groups, as well as Latvian-language newspapers engaging exiled intellectuals in spirited debate, and producing many thousands of novels and non-fiction volumes. By the 1980s American-Latvians had established a network of cultural, social and political organizations across the length and breadth of the USA, and had grown increasingly activist. Moreover, Latvian exile groups co-operated with their Estonian and Lithuanian counterparts to create an effective and activist Washington, DC lobbying machine that continues to serve the interests of the Estonian, Lithuanian, and Latvian governments in the US to this very day.

The second part of this volume addresses issues of contemporary importance. Žaneta Ozoliņa and Atis Lejiņš, two of Latvia's leading foreign affairs analysts, look at the international dimension of Latvian-American cooperation. Ozoliņa considers the critical role of the American government in consistently supporting Baltic aspirations to rejoin the international community, particularly the European Union and NATO. Lejiņš compares the Baltic policies of the three post-1991 American Presidents, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, arguing that all three have consistently supported Latvia at both the domestic and international levels.

The US has also played a role in shaping Latvia's domestic policy. Ieva Morica analyses American-Latvian cooperation in the civil society arena. The unhappy forced voluntarism of the Soviet era, as well as the economic crisis

of the first half of the 1990s, contributed to low levels of civic participation in Latvia. Both the US government, through the USAID program, and independent donors, such as the Soros Foundation – Latvia, partially filled the financing gap, and provided much-needed NGO management and organizational training. Many of the most active civil society actors in contemporary Latvia have benefited from US-funded grants and programs.

George J. Viksniņš provides an insider's account of the development of the Latvian economy in the early 1990s, spotlighting the role and influence of the 'Georgetown University Gang' in the transition from the Soviet command economy to the market. Viksniņš, a Latvian-American Professor Emeritus at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, was instrumental in bringing talented young Latvian economists to the US, and also provided advice to the nascent Bank of Latvia. His chapter addresses both the successes and failures of the early economic reform era.

Nils Muižnieks and Pēteris Vinķelis turn their attention to anti-Americanism in Latvia, a phenomenon that has begun to find expression only in recent years. Recent manifestations of anti-Americanism are not only the result of a tarnishing of the American image in the 'Global War on Terror', but also of resentment at foreign influence that could be voiced for the first time only after accession to the European Union and NATO. Several influential individuals and business groupings, faced with anti-corruption investigations, have used anti-Americanism opportunistically, to portray themselves as the victims of an international conspiracy against the 'national bourgeoisie'. The growth of anti-Americanism is constrained by human ties and common values, as well as security concerns regarding Russia.

One underlying theme in this volume is the critical importance of individuals in determining the nature of US-Latvian relations. From Loy Henderson to George W. Bush, and Kārlis Ulmanis to Vaira Viķe-Freiberga, politicians have combined principle with personal conviction to shape Latvian-American relations. The final section of this book contains the personal reflections of contemporary political actors from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Strobe Talbott and Dan Fried provide American insights into the bi-lateral relationship. Strobe Talbott reveals Bill Clinton's principled defence of the Baltic States in bruising encounters with Russian President Boris Yeltsin. Ojārs Kalniņš provides an insider's perspective on US-Latvian relations in the critical 1980s and 1990s, when he served as, first, a lobbyist for the American-Latvian Association and then later as Latvia's Ambassador to the US. Finally, the volume closes with Ints Siliņš abridged diaries covering 1993-1995, the years he served as the first post-Soviet era US Ambassador to Latvia. The diaries capture the sense of uncertainty that marked the early years of the transition to democracy, and America's concern to firmly root Latvia in the western democratic world.

The final part of the book brings together the most important documents, declarations, and speeches that have shaped US-Latvian relations.

This is the first volume that has attempted to chart the development of Latvian-American relations over the first ninety years of Latvia's existence. Over this period, Latvia went from being a listening post on the Soviet Union, to being one of many captive nations, to its current status as 'strategic partner' and friend of the US on the northeastern edge of Europe. While US non-recognition policy and the role of Latvian émigrés in assisting Latvia have both merited some scholarly research, most of the other topics in this volume break new academic ground. We hope that this book will encourage other researchers to continue this important work and that the insights in this volume will serve as a useful point of departure for more in-depth treatment of various aspects of the US-Latvian relationship.

The Advanced Social and Political Research Institute (ASPRI) at the University of Latvia is quite proud to have undertaken the organization and writing of this book, which was commissioned by the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the initiative of the Latvian Ambassador to the USA, Andrejs Pildegovičs. Thus far, ASPRI research on foreign policy issues has focussed on the East – on Latvian-Russian relations, Georgian security from a Latvian perspective, Moldova's relations with its minorities and its neighbours, and Russian media portrayal of Latvia. This volume corrects that geographical imbalance and serves as a healthy reminder that Latvia's relations with its Eastern neighbours require a strong rooting in Western institutions and partnerships.

We would like to express our gratitude to the authors and contributors of this book, who were all enthusiastic about the project and professional in sharing their insights. Many thanks must go to Agnese Kalniņa at the Latvian Embassy in Washington, DC, who has been an invaluable liaison between the University of Latvia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to Ieva Zlemeta, the skilled and experienced project manager at ASPRI. Any errors, misrepresentations or omissions are the sole responsibility of the editor.

Rīga and Washington, DC: An Alliance of Common Values, Principles and Aspirations

Ambassador Andrejs Pildegovičs

As a Latvian representative to Washington, DC, I am truly delighted to share a few thoughts for the introduction to this timely publication on the past, present and future of Latvian-American relations. The transatlantic link has a fundamental, even existential importance for the security, stability and prosperity of the Baltic States and the entire European continent. This publication is a very relevant contribution to the debate on pressing political, security and economic challenges in the region.

I would like to pay tribute to the significant investment of those who have laid the foundation for the dynamic partnership between our countries: Presidents Guntis Ulmanis, Vaira Viķe-Freiberga and Valdis Zatlers of Latvia, as well as my predecessors – Ambassadors Anatols Dinbergs, Ojārs Kalniņš, Aivis Ronis and Māris Riekstiņš. I would also like to express gratitude to the American Latvian Association (ALA) and other Latvian organizations in the United States for their enduring, selfless efforts to strengthen the ties of friendship, kinship and mutual support across the Atlantic.

As we celebrate our burgeoning Latvian-American relationship and applaud the progress we have made, we should also reflect on and evaluate this partnership in light of a complicated international background and, most recently, the war in Georgia.

Celebration

This year Latvia and the other Baltic States celebrate a joyous occasion. 18 November 2008 marks the 90th anniversary of Latvia's first independence, and the seventeenth anniversary of its regained liberty. But this November, the people of Latvia will not only honor their freedom; they will also celebrate their reintegration into European and Transatlantic structures, their freedom of movement, including visa-free travel to the United States, and Latvia's impressive economic development. This anniversary is a culmination of the efforts by succeeding generations of Latvians to achieve their own statehood and protect the Latvian language, culture and identity.

It is a triumph of the ideals of freedom and democracy over foreign tyranny and totalitarian rule.

On this festive occasion, Latvia will express its gratitude for the unwavering support of its true friends like the United States of America, which has played a leading role in supporting our nation throughout times of great trials and tribulations. American leaders kept Latvia's flame of freedom alive after World War Two, when Latvia lost its political sovereignty and a large portion of its population. The American government has never recognized the Soviet occupation of Latvia or the other Baltic nations, as a result of which our nations have enjoyed uninterrupted diplomatic relations since 1922. America's ideals have even inspired waves of independence movements in Latvia.

The United States has left a deep impression on the people of Latvia. During the long decades of foreign occupation, the United States was seen as a promised land, as a safe haven, as the last best hope. It offered refuge to thousands of people from different backgrounds fleeing the persecution of Czarist Russia, Stalinist Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Even the first Latvian Prime Minister, Dr. Kārlis Ulmanis, spent several years at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln following the bloody revolution of 1905. After World War Two, the United States also opened its doors to many Latvian refugees, refugees who kept ties to family in Latvia in spite of the many barriers put up by the Soviet regime.

Many Latvian-born Americans have acquired world-wide renown and positions of responsibility. I would like to mention just a few of them – the acclaimed painter Mark Rothko of Daugavpils, the legendary ballet dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov of Rīga, and respected architect Gunārs Birkerts, who designed the new Latvian national library.

Over the last seventeen years, Latvia and the United States have developed a multi-faceted and truly privileged relationship. Our partnership has matured as the United States has helped solve vital challenges for the newly reestablished Republic. During President George H.W. Bush's administration, a few months prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, in September 1991 Latvia became a member of the United Nations. In 1994, President Bill Clinton played a leading role mediating the withdrawal of the former Soviet troops from Latvia. In 1998, President Clinton also initiated the US-Baltic Charter, paving the way for Baltic membership in the Transatlantic institutions.

Reflections on the Current Partnership

This year Latvia's Independence Day coincides with the conclusion of the administration of President George W. Bush. Looking back on the President's two terms, we can reflect on our remarkable joint endeavors and achievements. Let me mention a few highlights that have left a lasting influence on our partnership.

During the Prague Summit in 2002, President George W. Bush made the historic decision to invite Latvia and six other former captive nations of Central and Eastern Europe into the NATO Alliance. Since 2004, the United States and Latvia are political and military allies within NATO, bound by the obligations of the Washington Treaty. The commitment of the United States to the defense of Latvia's independence and territorial integrity is the solid bedrock of our friendship. In the 21st century, the alliance remains of paramount importance to the overall stability and prosperity of the Baltic Sea region and the European continent as a whole. Over the last decade, the strength of our partnership has been tested and proven through joint operations in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. Common sacrifices in these conflict regions have created a common spirit of brothers in arms.

President George W. Bush has shown his commitment to our partnership by visiting Latvia in 2005 and 2006. President Bush's first visit to Rīga in May 2005, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War Two, emphasized Latvia's particular historic view of this event – that the end of the war did not bring liberation from totalitarianism to the people of the Baltic States and Central Europe. In October 2006, President Bush attended the Riga NATO Summit, signaling the irreversibility of Baltic integration into NATO. That same year, the United States returned Latvia's hospitality when President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga was given the opportunity and tremendous honor of being the first Baltic leader to address a Joint Session of Congress.

But camaraderie is not limited to our countries' statesmen. From November 2008, the people of the United States and Latvia will be closer than ever before – visa free travel between the United States and the Baltic countries will become a reality. Clearly, the United States of America and Latvia are bound not only by common security, but mutual trust and close cooperation in most fields.

Future Relations: An Evaluation

In diplomatic terms, Latvia's relations with the United States are known as a 'strategic partnership.' This means that these relations are based on common values, principles, and aspirations. These relations have a solid foundation across the broad spectrum of political, military, economic and social issues. Most importantly, these relations are being cultivated by contemporary leaders and governments.

Over the decades, the Baltic countries have enjoyed bipartisan support from the US Congress. The presidential and congressional elections in the United States on 4 November 2008 will inevitably bring a new dynamic to international affairs, but we have strong reasons to believe that US-Baltic relations will prosper. Both presidential candidates, Senator Barack Obama and Senator John McCain, have pledged firm support to Latvia. On 16 September 2008, both senators helped the US Senate unanimously pass a resolution congratulating Latvia on its 90th anniversary.

Our success is also the success of our partners. Euro-Atlantic support motivated us to implement far-reaching reforms, and now it is our duty to contribute to the development of others. We stand ready to share our know-how on the pressing issues of democratization, legal reform and regional cooperation. Latvia's experience could be inspirational and relevant to the countries of the Black Sea region. In particular, Latvia can support Euro-Atlantic aspirations and comprehensive reforms in Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova. Although Latvia is still working on its own progress, we have proved that transformation is possible. Change can bring tangible results. Reforms can be translated into economic development.

Our experience in dealing with our big neighbor, Russia, is also significant. In 2007, Latvia and Russia concluded a border treaty, which laid the foundations for further dialogue and regional cooperation. However, Russia's recent invasion of Georgia has raised a number of serious issues that will have to be addressed in the future.

We in the Baltics are strong believers in regional cooperation. Regional thinking has had a significant impact on economic development, competitiveness and business strategy in the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea. In the short seventeen years since the fall of the Soviet Union, the face of the Baltic Sea region has changed enormously. From a divided, fragmented, heterogeneous area, the Baltic Sea has emerged as an internal EU sea and a part of the growing EU-US dialogue. The Nordic-Baltic partnership with the United States on the issues of energy, transportation, environment and education has a tremendous potential for success. As a result, the Baltic Sea region is increasingly perceived globally as an integrated geo-economic unit.

Conclusion

I come from a generation that started adulthood during the emergence of the peaceful independence movements collectively known as the Singing Revolution. My generation has benefited the most from the miraculous transformation of Latvia from a captive nation fully integrated in the Soviet system to a full-fledged member of the European Union and NATO. When I came to the United States as an exchange student to the Hoover Institution at Stanford University in 1995, the Latvian people were still struggling with the aftermath of Soviet rule. As a student of history I was very impressed by the vast archives of the Hoover Institution on the history of Eastern and Central Europe. There I developed a strong conviction that we can and should learn from the mistakes of the past and that any nation large or small should have the right to free and independent development. The United States has contributed a lot to our success, so it is a very special privilege and immense honor for me to represent Latvia to such a vital partner. Now it is my generation's responsibility and duty to, as Secretary Schultz has put it, 'garden and cultivate' these relationships.

The Price of Freedom

Ambassador Charles W. Larson, Jr.

Ninety years ago the people of Latvia rose from the ashes of World War One, and declared a free and independent nation. Since that time Latvia has paid a high price for this freedom. The long years of struggle against an array of foreign enemies taught Latvians young and old the truth of the saying that 'freedom isn't free.' From the First World War, through the days of foreign occupation, Latvians of all ages began a tradition of sacrifice that has been carried through many years that have passed, both bright and dark.

Each morning on my walk to work I pass the memorial plaque on Brīvības Street that commemorates the First Latvian Student Company, which was raised on that spot in 1918. From my office, I look out on the stones honoring the martyrs of 1990, killed by the Soviet Special Services who had taken over the Interior Ministry. Not far from our Embassy stands Rīga's Freedom monument – the scene of one of the remarkable protests that led to Latvia's renewed independence.

It was at the Freedom Monument in August 1989 that hundreds of thousands of people held hands to form a human chain that stretched across the Baltic States. Together, they changed history as they stood up, and stood together against the repression of the Soviet Union. They did so in the face of difficult odds. Many Latvians risked their lives, and some lost them, in defense of freedom.

The Freedom Monument, inscribed with the words 'For Fatherland and Freedom', remained standing during the years of Soviet occupation, but those who dared to lay flowers at its base faced criminal penalties handed down by communist authorities. The monument serves as a reminder to me, each day, of the great sacrifice of those who fought and died, in the pursuit of freedom.

In the years since the restoration of independence, Latvia has undergone an amazing transformation from captive nation to NATO partner. A market economy and free enterprise now exist where the state once controlled commerce. Free and fair elections are held to elect members of the Saeima, and local government leaders. Latvia took her place as part of Europe and the Transatlantic community when it joined NATO and the European Union in 2004.

Partners in Security

In NATO, Latvia continues to show the kind of strong leadership that helped make the organization the most successful defensive alliance in history. Latvians know that, as NATO allies, they will never again stand alone in defense of their independence. And with the NATO assurance of Article 5 of the Treaty of Washington, Latvia will never again be occupied by a foreign power.

But freedom is not without its costs even today. Earlier this year I shared in the grief when Latvia experienced its first loss in the struggle to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan. Having served in the Army in Iraq, I was deeply moved when I learned that in February 2003 President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga had stood next to President Bush in the Oval Office as one of the first foreign leaders to support Operation Iraqi Freedom. She knew that the road would be hard, but she joined with us because she understood that free peoples everywhere have to take a stand against tyranny.

Like those many Latvians who held hands in solidarity with their Lithuanian and Estonian neighbors, Latvia today reaches out to other nations to share its experience. Latvia is a model for other states, especially those from the former Soviet Union, now making the difficult transition to freedom and democracy.

In the Balkans, in Iraq and in Afghanistan, Latvia has demonstrated beyond measure that it understands the value and the cost of freedom. It is this understanding, this special knowledge that resides in the hearts of those who have fought for their own freedom that makes Latvia such an important ally for the United States.

Economic Independence

But the great Latvian success story is not simply one of politics. Latvia has moved quickly to develop a full and vibrant market economy, and has achieved phenomenal economic progress in recent years. Since joining the EU in 2004, Latvia has seen annual GDP growth rates above 10% – a remarkable accomplishment.

One of the keys to Latvia's success has been the attractive investment climate. Latvia has created a very business-friendly environment and many see it as one of the best places to do business in eastern and central Europe. Companies in Latvia benefit from a thriving entrepreneurial culture and an educated, reliable workforce. As of the end of 2007 American companies had invested well over 500 million dollars in Latvia. These investments range from the hospitality industry to finance to high-tech manufacturing. Latvia's total exports to the US in 2007 were \$119 million, and imports from the US constituted about \$190 million.

- ♦ In 2006, Jeld-Wen opened a wood fiber plant near Aizkraukle. This represented a 60 million dollar investment, and is the single largest foreign investment in the manufacturing sector in Latvia in the past decade.
- ♦ New Century Holdings constructed a new glass-manufacturing facility called GroGlass. This facility uses cutting edge technology to produce a special type of glass that has increased transparency.
- ♦ GE Money entered the Latvian Market in May of 2004 and its business here has grown quickly.

Citizen Exchange

Even before arriving in Latvia, I learned first hand about the struggles of Latvians during the years of occupation; not only from history books, but from Latvians themselves.

I have always believed that the best way to learn about a people is to travel to the place they live, and speak with them face-to-face. The friendship of those who have studied, worked, or traveled in the United States is perhaps the most effective diplomatic tool. That is why we encourage Latvian students to study in the United States.

Those who choose to study in the US have an impact beyond the time and place of their studies. They often return to their home countries changed, ready to accept the responsibility of leadership in their communities, their nations and the world. They carry with them the belief that they can make a lasting difference—and they do.

The US and Latvia have worked closely together to make it possible for Latvians to travel for business or pleasure to the United States – without visas. President Bush signed legislation last year that permits consideration for the Visa Waiver Program and we look forward to Latvia joining that program in the near future.

Conclusion

The situation in Latvia is not without its challenges. Relations with Russia will likely remain complicated, as recent events in Georgia have reminded us. On the economic front, the successful reform drive that took Latvia from occupied Soviet republic to NATO and EU member in less than 13 years has slowed. Like many countries, Latvia is currently facing an economic downturn. In addition, Latvia continues to suffer from the legacies of the Soviet past and is now moving to eradicate corruption from everyday life and firmly establish an environment where the rule of law is embedded in the foundation of Latvian politics and society.

Fortunately, Latvia will not face these challenges alone. In cooperation with the United States and European partners, Latvia has the talent, the

drive and the will to overcome the hurdles that stand in its way. In particular, the United States remains committed to ensuring that Latvia's security and its way of life remain intact and healthy. We both understand what it means to sacrifice and struggle for freedom and peace. Working together we can ensure that the strong friendship that exists between our two peoples will endure and grow. While we have achieved much together, much remains for us to do. I am confident, however, that as we remember our basic, shared values, we can do anything that we set ourselves to.

Latvia and America in the Twentieth Century

‘Weak and Half-Starved Peoples’ meet ‘Vodka, Champagne, Gypsies and Drozhki’: relations between the Republic of Latvia and the USA from 1918 to 1940

Aldis Purs

Artis Pabriks, well before he became Minister of Foreign Affairs, divided Latvia’s foreign policy into vital, essential and general interests. He identified the first two as ‘international events that have an immediate and radical influence on a country’s security perspectives and political, economic or social well-being’ and ‘international developments that might radically influence the political environment around the particular country, undermine its international position and have reasonable influence on domestic policies’ respectively. Pabriks defined Latvia’s general interests as those events that have ‘either long-term or minor effects’ upon the state.¹ Latvia’s foreign policy from 1918 until 1940 also fits neatly into this schema. Relations with Germany and the Soviet Union were almost always vital interests. Latvia’s participation in the League of Nations, in European economic and security developments, and in regional alliances was essential interests. Relations with the United States of America, although symbolically important, seldom rose above the state’s overall general interests. Similarly, the USA’s foreign policy interests barely included Latvia. Nevertheless, in this apparent diplomatic desert the seeds for closer, and vital (for Latvia) relations slowly germinated.

This chapter is not intended to be a comprehensive overview of the diplomatic relations between Latvia and the USA between 1918 and 1940. Nor will it chronicle governmental treaties and agreements nor re-examine in fine detail the Ulmanis regime’s decision of 17 May 1940 to grant extraordinary powers to Latvia’s diplomatic representatives in London and Washington, DC. Likewise, US Secretary of State Sumner Welles’ 23 July 1940 policy statement that codified the American non-recognition of Soviet occupation and annexation falls outside of the chronological scope of this chapter. Instead, this chapter will present the spirit of Latvian-American relations through the

¹ Artis Pabriks and Aldis Purs (2001), *Latvia: The Challenges of Change*. London: Routledge, p.125.

interwar years. The most striking point is that these relations never rose above the aforementioned general interests of a state either for the US or for Latvia. Nevertheless, these cordial, but limited relations would radically transform after Soviet occupation and on through the Cold War.

Latvia and the USA before 18 November 1918

When Woodrow Wilson outlined the fourteen points behind US involvement in World War One on 8 January 1918 to both houses of Congress, neither he nor the assembled members intended that a nation's right to self-determination extended to Latvians in the midst of war and revolution in post-tsarist Russia. The very existence of a Latvian nation, let alone any sense of the material conditions on the ground, was far from the minds of most American politicians and diplomats even when they later arrived in the newly declared Republic. Before World War One, Latvian interests did not matter to American foreign policy. Even after Soviet Russia's and most of Europe's recognition of Latvia's independence, US foreign policy continued to treat the Republic of Latvia essentially as one of the Baltic provinces and deferred formal recognition pending a final settlement to the Russian Civil War.

If Latvia meant little to the USA, the inverse did not hold. The USA acquired an almost mythic veneer of freedom and prosperity to many of Europe's most downtrodden, Latvians included, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The idea of the USA played a limited cultural role in turn of the century pulp fiction, but more importantly inspired waves of migration, political and economic. Early economic migrants remain some of the hardest to track and identify because they were at times misidentified and frequently attempted to assimilate quickly. In other cases, they melded into other immigrant communities. Jews from Latgale, including the young Mark Rothko and his family in 1913, were easily mistaken for Litvaks or Lithuanian Jews.² Nonetheless, migrants from Latvian lands did not leave much of an organizational footprint until after the tsarist repression following the Revolution of 1905. These events propelled the first waves of political migrants, mostly social democratic activists fleeing potential arrest. They published some short-lived Latvian language newspapers, but mostly became subsumed within turn of the century American radical workers organizations. As a whole, they greeted the declaration of the Republic of Latvia skeptically and played little part in lobbying American foreign policy goals.

A few political migrants deserve particular mention, including Karlis Ulmanis. Ulmanis played a minor political role in 1905, but nonetheless felt

² On Litvaks see Dov Levin (2001), *The Litvaks: A Short History of the Jews in Lithuania*. Yad Vashem Publications; on Mark Rothko, see James E. B. Breslin (1993), *Mark Rothko: A Biography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

compelled to leave for the USA. He famously studied at the University of Nebraska and managed a dairy farm before returning to greater things in Latvia. Ulmanis left scant traces on US soil, but in later years (particularly to American audiences) spoke frequently and fondly of the USA.³ American institutions that Ulmanis later emulated included, among others, the 4-H Club and the 'See American First' tourist campaign.⁴ Ulmanis, however, was not alone in living in the US before World War One. The Social Democrat activist Voldemārs Salnais, for example, escaped from exile in Siberia and reunited with his activist wife, Milda Salnais, in the USA. They remained politically active in the USA and used this experience and these contacts in their work for an independent Latvia from Vladivostok in 1918.⁵ They would continue to cultivate and return to American connections throughout their lives including their political activism in Stockholm during World War Two. These notable exceptions, however, did not influence American policy regarding Latvia before or during World War One. The Latvian cause had no Ignacy Paderewski, the famed Polish pianist with an ear to the US president.

Informal Diplomacy and Relations

After the formal declaration of the Republic of Latvia on 18 November 1918, the new state's existence hung on the outcomes of local fields of battle and faraway backrooms, such as those at Versailles where the map of Europe was radically redrawn. In neither of these arenas, in regards to Latvia, did the US play a prominent role. On the battlefield, Latvia's troops, German soldiers, the Red Army, Estonian and Polish forces, and British and French ships played decisive roles. Twice, Latvia's fate rested on the tentative naval support of the French and English (giving refuge to the Ulmanis cabinet in Liepāja in April of 1919, and providing naval support fire in lifting the siege of Rīga in November of 1919). The US had little military presence in the region and even if so desired could not provide immediate and decisive military aid.⁶ Likewise in the meeting rooms of the Versailles Peace Conference, the United States did not become a champion of the Latvian cause. Wilson's idealistic national self-determination had its own limits with support for a non-Bolshevik Russia. US engagement in post-war Europe collapsed as

³ Particularly with the *Chicago Tribune's* odious reporter Donald Day as related in Day's (2002), *Onward Christian Soldiers: An American Journalist's Dissident Look at World War II*. Noonide Press.

⁴ Aldis Purs (2006), "'One Breath for Every Two Strides': The State's Attempt to Construct Tourism and Identity in Interwar Latvia' in Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker (eds.) *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist Under Capitalism and Socialism*. Cornell: Cornell UP, p.115.

⁵ Aldis Purs (2007), 'Working towards "An Unforeseen Miracle" Redux: Latvian Refugees in Vladivostok, 1918-1920, and in Latvia, 1943-1944' in *Contemporary European History*, 16(4), pp.482-83, 487, 492.

⁶ For the initial US foray into Latvia led by Colonel Greene, see Alberts Varoslavans (1993), 'Rietumu politiskais factors Latvijā: 1919 gads' in *Latvijas vēsture*. 2(9) pp.11-17; or Edgars Andersons (1967), *Latvijas vēsture: 1914-1920*. Stockholm: Daugava.

Wilson lost control of congress and suffered a series of debilitating strokes. Not surprisingly, Latvia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs expended more of its energy and resources on the United Kingdom and France. Latvia did send periodic requests for loans, humanitarian and military aid to the US, and also formally and informally canvassed US opinion on whether Latvia should sign an armistice and/or peace treaty with Soviet Russia. These requests, however, were blanket requests of all the Allied powers and the US did not respond to most of them or did so only after a very long time and necessity had passed.⁷ The slow pace of the US's ultimate *de jure* recognition of Latvia proved a slight disappointment and embarrassment to Latvia's government (a precedent for 1991), but in light of the abovementioned events was readily understandable. Still, if official recognition came slowly, the US and Latvia developed close unofficial ties through the humanitarian American Relief Administration (ARA).

The ARA's roots were in an organization that was founded to deal with the humanitarian crisis in post-war Belgium and northern France. Headed by Herbert Hoover, the ARA moved eastward to provide food aid across Central and Eastern Europe and looked increasingly to provide aid to famine stricken parts of Russia. The port of Riga and the train network of Latvia were indispensable to providing aid to Russia, and Latvia needed aid as well. Humanitarian aid, however, is almost never devoid of political meaning and both the ARA and more importantly Latvia saw in humanitarian aid an opportunity to begin meaningful diplomatic contacts.

The ARA arrived in Latvia in the late spring of 1919. Several members of the team were fresh from western front battlegrounds and their diaries are filled with disdain and shock at the nature of war in the Baltic. Loy Henderson, who was deployed to Riga with the ARA and later returned to work in the embassy described Latvian soldiers:

'clad in rags, animal skins, and pieces of bark. Their footwear often made of the soft inner bark of trees, undressed skins, or makeshift wrappings secured with leather thongs. This lack of clothing, particularly boots, contributed a ghoulish note to the war. Before the bodies of the dead had become cold there was a scramble for their clothing. Practically all of the bodies that were strewn in the open fields, the meadows, and the forests, had been stripped.'⁸

Henderson's view of the war around him was of summary executions and the 'throes of a social revolution.' He and the other members of the ARA team knew nothing of the political alliances and rivalries around them. Of the Latvians, they knew even less. Thomas J. Orbison, who headed the

⁷ US Department of State (1937), *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: 1919, Russia*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, pp.666-745.

⁸ From Loy W. Henderson's unpublished memoirs, p.104, 106-108, 110 in Box 1 of Loy Henderson collection at the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University.

mission, for example, wrote in his diary in May of 1919: 'will leave Paris tomorrow for Libau, Latvia. Where is it?'⁹ He set foot in Liepāja on 2 June, and his first impressions were: 'horses are small and poor, drivers are rough looking, people are curious.' Similarly, Minard Hamilton, another ARA member, first approached Liepāja on 27 May 1919 and wrote in his diary: 'Russia! Land of caviar and czars, and Cossacks, and Kerensky!' The one bit of his early diary entries that he accidentally got correct was that 'the political situation is a terrible mess.'¹⁰

The Ulmanis cabinet, on the other hand, desperate for recognition and aid treated the ARA as official representatives of the US government. Their desperation, however, did not always translate to precision. Orbison wrote, for example, that a band in Liepāja played "Yankee Doodle" as the US anthem to mark Germany's signing of the Versailles Peace Treaty.¹¹ Still, each negotiated settlement about soup kitchens or health check points bore the weight of mutual state recognition. The ARA chief, Orbison, who happened to be in Rīga on the day of the Ulmanis cabinet's triumphal return from flight was even officially presented to Ulmanis during an intermission at the opera and immediately scheduled for an appointment the following day.

Orbison's experiences particularly highlight how an American on a humanitarian mission was feted and regaled in the new state. He arrived during the midst of political chaos and war, but nonetheless enthusiastically and efficiently traveled the Latvian countryside reviewing the work of ARA kitchens and evaluating their personnel (often complaining bitterly about incompetence or graft). Once in Rīga, his average day included dozens of medical examinations of children (even though by training he was a dentist),¹² reviews of ARA operations, making the rounds of local and national politicians, with time to spare for hunting and the opera. The aforementioned politicians saw in this flurry of activity an inroad to greater American involvement in Latvia and hopefully recognition. Orbison was usually greeted and treated as a foreign dignitary, not an aid worker. When Orbison was slightly injured in the shelling of Rīga by Bermondts forces, Ulmanis (in an unusually personal and affectionate letter) was quick to depict this as a German attack on American representatives as well as other innocent civilians in Rīga. In his diary, however, Orbison confided that he remained in Rīga to see how the Bermondts forces would receive him, and not out of loyalty to the Latvian government.¹³ Nevertheless, the

⁹ Box 1, Diary 1919-1920 in the Thomas J. Orbison collection of the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University.

¹⁰ Diary, p. 10, Box 1 of the Minard Hamilton collection at the Hoover Institution Archives.

¹¹ Ibid, '25 June entry.'

¹² The more questionable examinations included his baby experiments of 2 October, 1919 when he fed 25 babies with milk and left another 25 without food and monitored their measurements. Ibid, '2 October entry.'

¹³ Ibid, '10 October entry'.

significance that Latvia's government placed on Orbison's mission was clear in the grand parades, demonstrations and fetes organized for his departure. The official and unofficial farewells befit those of a grand statesman.

Orbison, however, was less kind to Latvia. He penned an autobiographical manuscript titled 'Children, Inc.' that referred to his 'responsible position on one section of the broad battleground against famine, disease and social demoralization which stretched across Central and Eastern Europe from the Baltic to the Dardanelles.'¹⁴ Throughout the manuscript, Orbison included considerable anti-Semitic invective and corresponding approval of anti-Semitic tendencies in Latvia. He ultimately concluded: 'In Latvia the vital question now is 'Has the Lett sufficient vision to govern?''¹⁵

After the initial euphoria of an ARA mission to Latvia wore off, and after Orbison's departure, the expectations of each receded. New ARA bureaucrats complained about graft in storehouses intended for further shipments to Russia. One report began by blandly stating that the 'problem of pilferage gave us no end of worry' and that 'it was practically impossible to stop this evil and the consequent loss of supplies.' The root of this theft from stevedores, police, and bureaucrats was 'not because they were hungry, or in need of food, but because they seemed to feel that they were expected and entitled to steal a portion of the cargo as their particular graft.'¹⁶ Ultimately, the ARA contracted to build a barbed wire fence measuring 6 feet tall around their warehouses, but with 11 rows of barbed wire!¹⁷ Theft and graft still continued.

Meanwhile Latvian bureaucrats internally complained about smug and self-righteous Americans that looked down on the Latvians. On at least one occasion (on 10 October 1921), Latvia's Ministry of the Interior even wrote an official letter to the ARA about the 'sad and entirely unjustifiable actions and rude behavior' of a James V. Foley toward the Latvian warehouse employees. The Ministry hoped that the ARA would discipline the official for his 'disrespectful behavior towards Latvia's organizations.'¹⁸ Likewise, Latvians may have been surprised to see how the ARA advertised its work back in the States. A photo of Dr. Orbison, for example, showed him with a severely starved and naked little girl with the caption: 'undernourished and unhappy Latvian girl whose plight is a pathetic appeal for our assistance – through work.'¹⁹ In a 1922 publicity campaign, the ARA wrote semi-fictional stories describing thousands of 'pale Latvian children' in 'dreary tenement rooms' deciding 'empty stomach or frozen feet' on a daily basis.²⁰ Latvia was

¹⁴ Box 3 of the Orbison collection at the Hoover Institution Archives.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.20.

¹⁶ Report from the American Relief Administration European Unit Collection, Box 463, Folder 12, Reports – Port Operations Riga, pp.7-8 at the Hoover Institution Archive.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Box 465, Folder 12 Warehouses Riga, Receipt of 19 September 1921.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 'Letter of 10 October 1921' from the Ministry of the Interior to the ARA.

¹⁹ Box 2 of the Orbison Collection.

²⁰ 'Bare Feet or Empty Stomach' by Nellie E. Gardner, 3 February 1922, p.1. in Box 465, Folder 3 – Publicity of the ARA collection.

portrayed as a land of unimaginable poverty and hardship 'more intense than any suffering from hunger, cold, and nakedness which Americans can imagine.'²¹ American charity, through the ARA, supposedly saved these children from 'constant hunger and slow but certain starvation.' As the Latvian state and countryside rebounded from war-induced destruction and poverty, they themselves were able to meet food supply issues. At that point, the ARA's charity began to seem superfluous or even comic. The author's grandfather, for example, always chuckled that the aid everyone in his village received were well-used army-issue collapsible trench shovels; hardly the salvation of ARA advertisements. By this later date, however, neither the US nor the Latvian state needed the proxy of a humanitarian organization for early contacts, and rapport. After a long delay and with still some mention of conflicting interests in an insoluble Russia, the USA extended *de jure* recognition to Latvia on 28 July 1922.²² Still, even with formal diplomatic recognition, neither country's foreign policy attached considerable importance to the other.

A Slow Beginning to Official Relations

Once the Republic of Latvia and the USA opened official, mutual relations little else happened.²³ The USA procured an embassy centrally located among the other most powerful nations' embassies, but did not engage in actively developing US-Latvian relations. Likewise, Latvia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs strapped by financial considerations in Europe's capitals and at the League of Nations left Latvia's official representation in the USA to honorary consuls, consuls and a general consul in New York, not even in Washington, DC. Artūrs Lule, who had a banking and book-keeping background in Vidzeme before the war and for various refugee organizations during the war, was appointed Latvia's consul in New York on 1 January 1922, primarily because of his experience editing the English language *The Latvian Economist*.²⁴ By the end of 1925, he was appointed General Consul to the USA and together with vice-consul Nikolajs Āboltiņš presided over a New York staff of three. Lule was nominally in charge of seventeen honorary consuls and vice consuls in cities across the USA.²⁵ Most of these did not even warrant cursory identification in the mammoth 1929 version of *Who's Who in Latvia (Latvijas darbinieku galerija, 1918-1928)*. Many of the honorary counsels in the

²¹ Ibid, p.3.

²² In his unpublished memoirs, Loy Henderson blamed the delay of recognition on a US State Department dominated by 'Old Russia' hands.

²³ For more on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' difficult first years see: Ainārs Lehris (1998), 'Latvijas ārpolitiskā dienesta un ārlietu ministrijas pirmie darbības gadi (1919. gads – 20. gadu pirma puse)' in *Latvijas vēstures institūta žurnāls*, 2, pp.100-128.

²⁴ 'Artūrs Lule' in Pauls Kroders, ed. (1929), *Latvijas darbinieku galerija, 1918-1929*, Rīga: Gramatu Draugs, p.94

²⁵ 'Latvijas diplomātiskās pārstāvības ārzemēs' in Alfreds Bilmanis *et al* eds. (1929), *Latvijas Republika Desmit Pastāvīšanas Gados*. Rīga: Golts un Jurjan, pp.88-89.

American Midwest were tied to the Svengali-like, self-promoter Dr. Marcellus Donald de A. Ritter von Redlich, Latvia's honorary consul in Indianapolis as well as legal counsel to the General Consul, who claimed great successes in promoting Latvia's interests, although few results followed.²⁶

The US embassy in Rīga, in the larger scheme of American foreign policy goals, acted as a listening post to the USSR or tracked legal cases that involved US citizens such as the 1922 fraud trial surrounding the questionable business activities of former government ministers and a relatively unheard of American business (U.S.A. International Corporation) or reported on the murder of a Soviet courier on a Latvian train in 1926.²⁷ Other embassy personnel, including Ambassador Frederick Coleman, were most concerned with developments back home. Coleman was a Republican Party boss who was appointed for his loyalty to the party. He remained heavily involved in party politics through constant correspondence with his brother, an Assistant Post Master General, about Republican Party benefices. Coleman's own diaries of his time as Ambassador are entirely filled with minutiae and social engagements. He arrived in Rīga, for example, at 7:15 am on 27 January 1923. Coleman noted frequent teas and lunches with Latvian politicians, considering Prime Minister Pauluks a 'fine chap', but recalled these meetings with no political content or analysis of Latvian events. He was even surprised to hear of Zigfrīds Meierovics' death two days after the fact even though the catastrophic accident gripped the capital and the country. Instead Coleman's diary recorded his life in Rīga as sleeping late, dining out, enjoying wine, song, and the company of women, trips to the Strand (Jūrmala) and constant games of bridge. He also purchased considerable amounts of furniture, icons and samovars and shipped them back to the US.²⁸ Coleman's concerns were with the party pork barrel at home and enjoying his working vacation as an ambassador.²⁹

While some of the embassy staff used Latvia to understand the USSR, others produced fairly accurate and astute descriptions of politics and society in Latvia. In a confidential report of 1929, for example, ten years of political developments were thoroughly covered and considerable attention was placed on economic recovery. The report stated the 'first two years of independence were a period of danger and difficulty, of chaos and incompetency due to a total lack of experience in self-government and administration' and added that 'only the paralysis of Russia and the disintegration of the other European states allowed these weak and half-starved peoples the time necessary to bring their affairs into some semblance of order.' Still, the report missed on

²⁶ 'M. Redlichs (Dr. Marcellus Donald de A. Ritter von Redlich)' in Pauls Kroders, p. 98-99.

²⁷ 'Embassy Report of April 1923' (microfilm roll 7).

²⁸ Frederick W. Coleman diaries 1909-1938, 'Diary of 1919-1923' at the Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.

²⁹ Box 1 of Loy W. Henderson collection at the Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University.

other conclusions including a hope for a customs union with Russia to revive Riga and an odd tangent on Lithuania as a 'backward country, her people listless, uninterested and uninteresting.'³⁰ By 1931, embassy staff compiled detailed and fairly accurate snapshots of Latvia's political environment. The charge d'affaires Felix Cole cogently summarized the elections to the 4th Saeima as bittersweet. He argued that general US interests were best served by a 'marked trend to the middle,' but bemoaned that the middle used ethnic mobilization around the Doms Cathedral controversy to garner votes. Cole waxed that 'the result shows how powerful a nationalistic spirit... under the stimulus of prolonged chauvinistic agitation can become.'³¹ Still, Cole did not foresee political crisis and claimed in a later report that 'popular faith in the efficacy of the Saeima' was strong and that its 'legislative work has been regarded as sacred and above criticism.'³²

The USA's immigration reforms in 1921 and 1924, which introduced national quota systems that drastically curtailed migration, and the ascendancy of isolationism in American foreign policy through most of the 1920s and 1930s limited the USA and Latvia to cordial and perfunctory relations. Latvia's continued delay in maintaining an embassy in the USA was only in part a result of the tightening financial crisis of the Global Depression. With fewer resources, foreign missions had to produce some return on investment, and the USA's prospects seemed very limited. Still, the USA remained a staple of Latvia's popular culture. American films competed with German films for the top spot among Latvia's viewers. Marketing campaigns used American stereotypes, and in literature, the character that had been to the US, appeared often.³³ Through the 1920s and early 1930s, the US and Latvia entered a diplomatic period of cordial relations, but with very little real diplomatic activity between the two states. Latvia's presence in the USA was negligible and the US's presence in Latvia was focused further East.

Alfreds Bīlmanis goes to Washington

In 1935, Latvia finally sent a diplomatic head of mission to open a legation in Washington, DC. Alfreds Bīlmanis, a career diplomat who had recently been appointed ambassador to the USSR became Latvia's first and arguably most important ambassador to the USA. Bīlmanis proved to be a near

³⁰ 'General Observations of November 21, 1929 – Confidential' No. 6592, (1177.1 Microfilm Roll – 860p.00, Roll 1) Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

³¹ 'Review of *Saeima* vote, 21 October 1931' No. 8162, (1177.1 Microfilm Roll – 860p.00, Roll 7) Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

³² 'Report of 18 December 1931' No. 8334, 1177.1 Microfilm Roll – 860p.00, Roll 11) Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

³³ Most popularly in the character Fredis in Vilis Lācis (2002), *Zvejnieka Dēls*. Rīga: Jumava, beginning with Chapter 8, 'The American', pp.159-203.

perfect candidate for the post. He was well established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and excelled as a publicist for Latvia. He helped edit the massive and impressive ten-year anniversary tome of the Republic and continued to publish on behalf of Latvia throughout his life. His time in Moscow, one of independent Latvia's most difficult and crucial diplomatic postings, attested to how highly the post-coup Ulmanis regime regarded his skills.³⁴ The decision to place him in Washington, DC proved to be one of the Ulmanis regime's best foreign policy decisions.

Bilmanis almost immediately began a hectic pace of publishing about Latvia in the English language. He also reached out to Latvians living in the US by organizing commemorative events for Latvia's independence day. These small steps did not specifically raise Latvia's profile in the US nor was Bilmanis' published output of the highest quality, but each fit the duties of an ambassador. This would continue to be the case throughout Bilmanis' career. His *A History of Latvia*, for example, is tragically flawed (often consciously flawed) as a serious academic study, but it is the kind of book a diplomatic mission would produce: it presents the state in the most favorable light possible in the service of the state's interests.³⁵ These tools and sensibilities as well as a somewhat established presence in the Washington, DC diplomatic community became invaluable to Bilmanis and his state after the Soviet occupation of June 1940.

If during the second half of the 1930s, Latvia made a concerted effort to increase its diplomatic presence in the USA, there was no grand reworking of Latvian security or economic arrangements to include a larger place for the US as well. In fact, such a larger role was almost impossible as long as the US could not and would not provide any security guarantees anywhere in Europe. Similarly, Latvian-American economic ties remained weak: bacon and butter never became crucial exports to the US nor did many American goods arrive in Latvia.³⁶ The Vairogs, a Ford model partially assembled in Latvia, was more a symbolic gesture than a retooling of Latvia's economy.

Latvia, at least, attempted such symbolic gestures. At the US embassy in Rīga, many remained mostly unaware of their surroundings. Up until Soviet occupation, many at the embassy were most concerned with listening to the USSR from the safe haven of a neighboring state. Despite Karlis Ulmanis' affection for the US and attention to its details, the reverse did not apply. George F. Kennan, who would later largely define US-Soviet relations in the early cold war, for example, was stationed in Rīga in 1929.³⁷ In his memoirs, he wrote fondly of his time in Rīga but experienced

³⁴ 'Bilmanis, Alfreds' in Arveds Švābe, ed. (1950), *Latvju enciklopēdija*. Stockholm: Trīs Zvaigznes, p.268.

³⁵ Alfred Bilmanis (1951), *A History of Latvia*. Princeton: Princeton UP.

³⁶ Aivars Stranga (1995), 'Latvijas ārējā tirdzniecība 30. gadu nogalē' in *Latvijas vēsture*. 1(16), pp.29-30.

³⁷ Kennan's 'Long Telegram' from Moscow in 1946 inspired the Truman doctrine of containment.

the city as a twilight apparition of the tsarist world. He commented specifically on the 'vigorous night life, much in the Petersburg tradition: vodka, champagne, gypsies, sleighs or *drozhki* with hugely bundled coachmen waiting at the door, a certain amount of gaiety, but even more of a nostalgic, despairing, shoot-the-works sentimentality – a mood... which had a tendency to prove highly irrelevant and unhelpful the next day.'³⁸ He took the comparison with Petersburg beyond the nightlife and concluded:

'Rīga was in many respects a minor edition of Petersburg. The old Petersburg was of course now dead...but Rīga was still alive. It was one of those cases where the copy had survived the original. To live in Rīga was thus in many respects to live in Tsarist Russia – it was, in fact, almost the only place where one could still live in Tsarist Russia.'³⁹

Kennan's own work in the embassy was initially studying Latvia's politics, which he deciphered from the Russian language press. Later he worked for the Russia section of the embassy analyzing the Soviet economy. He remembered that among the embassy staff 'Trotsky's expulsion, or Stalin's struggle with the Right opposition, and of the beginnings of collectivization and the first Five Year Plan, overshadowed our Baltic world and dominated our thoughts and discussions.'⁴⁰ In short, Kennan and much of the staff of the American legation in Rīga saw little of independent Latvia in their 'minor edition of Petersburg,' and focused instead on 'adjacent Soviet Russia.'

Kennan ultimately expressed regret at Soviet occupation, but simultaneously passed a damning judgment on Ulmanis' 'renewed Latvia,' which erased much of the cosmopolitanism of his 'little Petersburg.' He concluded:

'The politically dominant Letts, becoming increasingly chauvinistic as the years of their independence transpired, were concerned to put an end as soon as possible to all this cosmopolitanism and eventually did succeed, by 1939, in depriving the city of much of its charm. Their efforts in this direction were of course completed in 1940, in a manner they had neither foreseen nor desired, when the country was occupied by the Russians and incorporated into the Soviet Union. With this development the genial mingling of tongues and faiths that had once given Riga the proud title of 'Paris of the Baltic' gave way all at once to the gray, dead shabbiness of isolation behind the impenetrable walls of Stalin's Russia; and national chauvinism was punished in a degree beyond its greatest deserts.'⁴¹

³⁸ George F. Kennan (1967), *Memoirs, 1925-1950*. Toronto: Atlantic Monthly Press Book, p.29.

³⁹ *Ibid*, pp.29-30.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p.30.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 29.

Still, outside of the Russia section, the US embassy continued to produce thorough studies of Latvia under Ulmanis as well as document myriad requests, rumors, and news items. For example, in 1939 the embassy reported on a proposal from the mayor of Rīga for US dental clinics for children, while also relaying a strictly confidential request from the Army Chief of Staff for 105mm howitzers, 3-inch anti-aircraft guns, and light tanks.⁴² Latvia received neither dentists nor arms. Through the Ulmanis years, these embassy reports disapprovingly described greater press censorship, an increasing cult of personality around Ulmanis, and the apparent adoption of 'anti-Semitism' as 'the policy of the Latvian government.'⁴³ As Soviet ultimatums and outright military occupation was about to overtake the Republic of Latvia, the US embassy concluded, 'the Latvian regime may be described as an authoritarian state in peasant garb.'⁴⁴

Bilmanis after occupation⁴⁵

For the staff of the US embassy in Rīga, Soviet occupation in June 1940 meant reassignments. Some slipped out of government work, while for others such as for George F. Kennan, the time in Rīga even if half-blind to the events around him, solidified his understanding of the USSR and of the US' role in the world. For Latvia's diplomatic corps occupation included a macabre twist of fate. Before his assignment in the USA, as mentioned, Bilmanis was Latvia's ambassador to the USSR. He would have undoubtedly been arrested in June or July of 1940. Instead, Bilmanis championed Latvia's cause from the safety of the USA. Arturs Lule, Bilmanis' predecessor as representative in the US, returned to Rīga to share the fate of many one-time Latvian diplomats. 'Diplomatic work on behalf of Latvia was construed to constitute counter-revolutionary activity' by the Soviet regime and at least 51 diplomats and foreign service personnel suffered political persecution for their prior service to their state.⁴⁶

⁴² 'Report of 22 March 1939' and 'Strictly Confidential from 23 April 1939' respectively in 1177.1 Microfilm Roll – 860p.00, Roll 10) Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

⁴³ 'John C. Wiley's "Strictly Confidential Report, Subject: Anti-Semitism in Latvia" of 27 May 1940' in 1177.1 Microfilm Roll – 860p.00, Roll 17) Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

⁴⁴ 'John C. Wiley's undated report from 1940' in 1177.1 Microfilm Roll – 860p.00, Roll 16) Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

⁴⁵ For Alfreds Bilmanis' diplomatic activity after occupation see: Jānis Taurens (2003), 'Baltijas valstu statusa problēma PSRS un Rietumu sabiedroto attiecībās (1940.g.-1942.g. maijs)' in *Latvijas vēsture*, 2, 50, pp.62-75; Antonijs Zunda (2005), 'Baltijas jautājums Otrā pasaules kara gados (1940-1945)' in *Latvijas vēsture*, 2(58), pp. 72-81; and the other contributions in the present volume.

⁴⁶ Exhibition 'Political Persecution of Latvian Foreign Service Personnel in the Wake of the Soviet Occupation of Latvia' 14-21 June, 2001 at the Riga City Hall, K. Valdemāra 3, Rīga, Latvia. Available online at: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/ministry/4300/>

For Bilmanis, his greatest accomplishment was reshaping the image of Latvia to match the interests of American foreign policy experts during World War Two and into the Cold War. As a successful diplomat, even before Soviet occupation, he was experienced at selling the Latvia that the US most wanted to imagine. After occupation, he expunged all of the authoritarianism and statism from the regime that he was a part of. Bilmanis succeeded in countering the American embassy's view of an authoritarian regime in peasant garb with tinges of anti-Semitism and national chauvinism. Instead, Latvia became a bastion of democratic and Christian values with an unwavering commitment to private property and capitalism. As such, Soviet aggression became more appalling and the innocent democratic, western nation of Latvia more deserving of American support. This transformation legitimized American non-recognition and cast Latvia's fate into the emerging Cold War narrative. If some of this was a construct, the end result was successful. Latvia's lasting legal status in Washington, DC eased the way for the de facto return of an independent state in 1991 and its ultimate inclusion into the twin pillars of 21st century Europe: the EU and NATO.

The Long Vigil: US-Latvian Relations, 1940-1991

Pauls Raudseps

Since its founding, the United States of America has aspired to embody an idea formulated by John Adams: that America should have 'a government of laws and not of men.' There is perhaps no better example of the US living up to this ideal in its dealings with other countries than the policy of non-recognition, America's principled refusal to accept the legality of the incorporation of the three Baltic States, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, into the Soviet Union. This policy, which for many years seemed to be only of symbolic importance, turned out to have a profound effect on Latvian history and played a fundamental role in the renewal of Latvian independence and Latvia's international and domestic politics after the restoration.

It is quite astonishing that the United States held to this policy so firmly and for such a long time, from Latvia's occupation in 1940 to its restoration of independence in 1991. In 1940 Latvia was the very definition of a small, far-away country of which we know nothing. It had only recently emerged on the international scene, the US had no vital interests at stake regarding its being independent, and on many occasions there were powerful pragmatic arguments for letting the Soviet Union have its way by accepting the incorporation of Latvia into the USSR.

Yet the US commitment to democracy and the rule of law made such a course impossible. Backed by the force of American public opinion, these were principles that even US presidents – the most powerful men in the world – could not disregard.

Almost inevitably the history of US-Latvian relations during this period is subsumed in the common US policy toward all three Baltic States. Nevertheless, there were special Latvian accents to the story and this chapter will highlight them as best as possible.

As the attention of Americans and Western Europeans was concentrated on the collapse of France in the face of the German blitzkrieg, Stalin moved to secure control of the Baltic States, which had been allotted to the Soviet Union in the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. On 17 June 1940, Soviet tanks crossed the Latvian border and in less than two months the Latvian state was

dismantled and absorbed by the USSR. At the same time a practically identical process of annexation was taking place in Lithuania and Estonia.

After 17 June almost the only thing that remained of the independent Latvian state were two legations, one in Great Britain, the other in the United States. However, the Latvian ministers in Washington and London refused to accept what was happening in their country.

Alfreds Bilmanis, the Latvian representative in the United States, took the lead in protesting against the Soviet aggression. Loy Henderson, a State Department official who knew Bilmanis since having been stationed in Rīga in 1927, describes his activities: 'The Latvian Minister protested, appealed, and argued, issued statements and gave interviews to the press, wrote numerous books, pamphlets and articles, and defended the rights of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania in countless hard-hitting and eloquent letters to the editors of American newspapers. In his dynamic zeal and feverish energy Dr. Bilmanis was indeed a personification of a brave small nation struggling desperately against the greatest odds for the right to be free.'¹

Bilmanis' activities almost certainly contributed to the growing US apprehension at what was happening in the Baltic States. Even before it had announced an official response, the US government took steps clearly indicating that it did not consider the Soviet occupation legitimate. Thanks to the initiative of the Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle, on 15 July the US Treasury Department blocked all bank accounts belonging to Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania.² In effect, the US government became the guardian of Baltic property in America, and all subsequent attempts by Soviet representatives to get their hands on Latvian assets – be they ships, money, or diplomatic representations – were rebuffed.³ It should be noted that the value of this property was not negligible – Latvian gold alone was worth almost eighteen million dollars at the time,⁴ equivalent to over

¹ Loy W. Henderson (1968), 'Preface.' In Adolf Sprūdžs and Armins Rūsis, eds. *Res Baltica: A Collection of Essays in Honor of the Memory of Dr. Alfred Bilmanis*. Leyden: A.W.Sijthoff – Leyden, pp.8-9. Henderson is only one of a number of influential State Department officials whose early experience included a posting in Latvia. Among the others are Robert F. Kelley, the long-serving head of the Division of Eastern European Affairs, Charles Bohlen, close advisor to President Roosevelt and later ambassador to the Soviet Union, and George Kennan, author of the policy of containment. Some scholars have even dubbed them the 'Riga Group.' (See Eero Medijainen (2008), 'The USA, Soviet Russia and the Baltic States.' In John Hiden, Vahur Made and David J. Smith eds., *The Baltic Question during the Cold War*. New York: Routledge, pp.29–30) However, it seems that Henderson was the only one who played a significant role in defining policy toward the Baltic States after 1940.

² Edgars Andersons (1984), *Latvijas vēsture. 1920 – 1940. Ārpolitika*, vol. 2. Stockholm: Daugava, p.504; 'US Freezes Funds of Baltic States,' *New York Times*, 16 July, 1940. Executive Order 8484 authorizing this action was signed by Roosevelt on 10 July (see Jonathan L'hommedieu (2008), 'Roosevelt and the dictators: The origin of the US non-recognition policy of the Soviet annexation of the Baltic States.' In John Hiden, Vahur Made and David J. Smith eds., *The Baltic Question during the Cold War*. New York: Routledge, pp.34–35).

³ Adolf Sprūdžs (1968), 'Dr. Alfred Bilmanis and His Struggle for Freedom of the Baltic States.' In Adolf Sprūdžs and Armins Rūsis, eds., *Res Baltica: A Collection of Essays in Honor of the Memory of Dr. Alfred Bilmanis*. Leyden: A.W.Sijthoff – Leyden, p.18.

⁴ Edgars Andersons, ed. (1983), *Latvju Enciklopēdija*. vol. 1. n.p.: Amerikas Latviešu apvienības Latviešu institūts, p.44.

266 million dollars in 2008. Eight of the nine Latvian cargo ships in US waters at the time of the occupation were placed at the disposal of the US government by Bīlmanis. They sailed under the Latvian flag, and six of them were sunk by German or Italian torpedoes during the conflict while serving in the Allied cause.⁵

On the same day that the Treasury took Baltic assets under its wing, Loy Henderson, who was at the time the State Department's Assistant Chief of the Division of European Affairs (and whose wife, incidentally, was Latvian⁶) submitted a memorandum to the Assistant Secretary of State, laying out the questions of principle involved in the case of the Baltic States:

'Is the Government of the United States to apply certain standards of judgement and conduct to aggression by Germany and Japan which it will not apply to aggression by the Soviet Union... Is the United States to continue to refuse to recognize the fruits of aggression regardless of who the aggressor may be, or for reasons of expediency to close its eyes to the fact that certain nations are committing aggression upon their neighbors.'⁷

The refusal to recognize the forcible seizure of territory, which became known as the Stimson Doctrine, had been established as official US policy in 1932 by then US Secretary of State Henry Stimson as a response to the Japanese occupation of Manchuria. Subsequently it was also recognized by the League of Nations⁸ and had been applied on a number of other occasions, such as Italy's occupation of Albania in 1939.⁹

On 23 July, two days after the Soviet-controlled Latvian 'People's Parliament' had announced its intention to see Latvia incorporated into the USSR, the US Acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles issued a statement making the United States the first country to formally declare that it did not recognize the legitimacy of the Soviet aggression against the Baltic States. Because of its critical role in Latvian history, it is worth quoting Welles' statement in full:

'Statement by the Acting Secretary of State, the Honorable Sumner Welles:

During these past few days the devious processes whereunder the political independence and territorial integrity of the three small Baltic republics – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – were to be deliberately annihilated by one of their more powerful neighbors, have been rapidly drawing to their conclusion.

⁵ Andersons, *Latvijas Vēsture*, p.504.

⁶ Ibid, p.504.

⁷ Sprūdžs, 'Dr. Alfred Bīlmanis,' pp.17-18.

⁸ William J.H. Hough, III (1985), 'The Annexation of the Baltic States and its Effect on the Development of Law Prohibiting Forcible Seizure of Territory.' In *New York Law School Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 6(2), pp.327-328.

⁹ Ibid, p.345.

From the day when the peoples of these republics first gained their independence and democratic form of government the people of the United States have watched their admirable progress in self-government with deep and sympathetic interest.

The policy of this Government is universally known. The people of the United States are opposed to predatory activities no matter whether they are carried on by the use of force or by the threat of force. They are likewise opposed to any form of intervention on the part of one state, however powerful, in the domestic concerns of any other sovereign state, however weak.

These principles constitute the very foundations upon which the existing relationship between the twenty-one sovereign republics of the New World rests.

The United States will continue to stand by these principles, because of the conviction of the American people that unless the doctrine in which these principles are inherent once again governs the relations between nations, the rule of reason, of justice and of law – in other words the basis of modern civilization itself – cannot be preserved.¹⁰

It is worth noting that, according to Henderson, who wrote the first draft, 'President Roosevelt was indignant at the manner in which the Soviet Union annexed the Baltic States and personally approved the condemnatory statement issued by Under Secretary Welles on the subject.'¹¹

Before the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 and the US entry into the war that December, Roosevelt continued to be firm in his support for the Balts. Meeting a delegation of Lithuanian-Americans on 15 October 1940, he said: 'Lithuania has not lost her independence; Lithuania's independence has only temporarily been put aside. Time will come and Lithuania will be free again. This will happen much sooner than you may expect.'¹²

In August 1941 Roosevelt and Churchill signed the Atlantic Charter, which declared that 'they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned' and that 'they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.' The implications for Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania were clear. The Atlantic Charter was the basis for the subsequent US policy that all border issues were to be resolved only after the war had ended, and the United States held firmly to this position throughout the war.

¹⁰ A facsimile of the original press release can be found in John Hiden, Vahur Made and David J. Smith eds. (2008), *The Baltic Question during the Cold War*. New York: Routledge, p.40.

¹¹ Available at: <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/henderson.htm>, last accessed 28 July 2008; Henderson, 'Preface,' p.8.

¹² Adolfs Sprudžs (1954), 'The Baltic States and American Policy, 1940 – 1953.' Memoire presente pour l'obtention du grade de Licencie en Sciences Politiques et Sociales: Groupe: Relations Internationales, Universite Catholique de Louvain, p.65.

US support for the Baltic States went beyond declarations and words of encouragement. When Great Britain was negotiating a cooperation agreement with the Soviets after the German attack on the USSR, Stalin insisted that the treaty recognize the Soviet annexation of the Baltic States. Desperate for help in their fight against the Nazis, the British government quickly showed its readiness to cave in to the Soviet demands. But American support was even more important for Britain, and the United States strongly opposed any British recognition of the Soviet annexation. As President Roosevelt noted at the time, the treaty 'contained nothing in the nature of any safeguard for the peoples of the Baltic Republics.'¹³ US objections, fully supported by Roosevelt, and expressed particularly forcefully in the spring of 1942, prevented the British from acceding to Stalin's demands, and no recognition of the incorporation was included in the British-Soviet treaty signed 26 May 1942.¹⁴

US support for the principle of non-recognition did not, however, extend so far as to recognize the Latvian diplomats in the West as a government in exile. This not only left the Latvian legation in something of a gray zone with regard to the legal basis for any actions it took on behalf of its country,¹⁵ but it also meant that Latvia could not formally declare itself to be on the side of the Allies in the war against Germany, something Bilmanis tried to do in January 1942.¹⁶ Clearly, a formal recognition by the US of Latvia as an ally would have caused frictions with Moscow, and even at the beginning of 1942 this was further than Washington was willing to go.

By 1943, as the tide of the war turned on the Eastern Front, Roosevelt had started to waver in his commitment to the policy of non-recognition. At a meeting with Roosevelt on 15 March 1943 regarding future negotiations with Moscow, British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden told the US president that Stalin's first demand would be the recognition of the annexation of the Baltic States. Roosevelt said 'that the United States would urge Russia not to take [the Baltic States] into the USSR without a new plebiscite but agreed that they would have very close economic military arrangements with the Soviet (sic) pending a plebiscite... The President said he realized that we might have to agree to [the absorption of the Baltic States into the USSR], but if we did, then we should use it as a bargaining instrument in getting other concessions from Russia.'¹⁷

¹³ Hough, 'The Annexation of the Baltic States,' p.395.

¹⁴ I.Vizulis (1968), 'The Diplomacy of the Allied Powers Toward the Baltic States (1942-1945),' In *The Baltic Review*, (35), pp.50-54; Sprudžs, 'The Baltic States and American Policy,' pp.68-72.

¹⁵ Thomas D. Grant (2001), 'United States Practice Relating to the Baltic States, 1940 – 2000,' in *Baltic Yearbook of International Law*, vol.1, pp.43–44.

¹⁶ I.Feldmanis, A.A. Freimanis, A.Lerhis, I.Ziemele, (1999) 'Latvijas valsts okupācijas gados (1940 – 1991),' In Alberts Sarkanis, ed., *Dokumenti par Latvijas valsts starptautisko atzišanu, neatkarības atjaunošanu un diplomātiskajiem sakariem, 1918 – 1998*. Rīga: Nordik, p.141.

¹⁷ Robert S. Sherwood (1948), *Roosevelt and Hopkins. An Intimate History*. New York: Harper & Brothers, p.709.

At the Teheran conference, during a separate meeting with Stalin on 1 December 1943, Roosevelt told the Soviet leader that 'he fully realized that the three Baltic Republics had in history and again more recently been a part of Russia and added jokingly that when the Soviet armies reoccupied these areas, he did not intend to go to war with the Soviet Union at this point... He said he thought that world opinion would want some expression of the will of the people, perhaps not immediately, after their re-occupation by Soviet forces, but some day, and that he personally was confident that the people would vote to join the Soviet Union.'¹⁸

A charitable interpretation of Roosevelt's suggestion that the Balts would be happy to remain in the USSR might be that it was simply a bit of diplomatic flattery to make Stalin more amenable to the idea of a plebiscite. However, a previous suggestion by Roosevelt that 'various vocal minority groups in the United States were sure to be unhappy about [the occupation of the Baltic States],' but this issue could be resolved if the Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians dissatisfied with Soviet rule were allowed to leave,¹⁹ belies this interpretation. Even the president's readiness to have the fate of the Baltic States decided by referendum was a concession to the Kremlin in that it recognized at least the possibility that Soviet claims were justified. Proposing a plebiscite was Roosevelt's way of squaring the circle, acknowledging Stalin's demands without violating the US policy of not agreeing to any territorial changes before the end of the war. In any case, the president's hope that the issue could be neatly solved by a Soviet promise to hold plebiscites was rejected out of hand by Stalin.²⁰

President Roosevelt's waning interest in defending the Balts upset even his wife Eleanor, who later told Gore Vidal that when the president returned from the Yalta conference in March 1945, 'she chided him for making no fuss over leaving Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia in Russia's hands.'²¹ Her remonstrances came much too late. The fate of the Baltic States had been sealed at Teheran.

As the war was coming to a conclusion in 1945, the fate of the millions of refugees from the parts of Europe claimed by the USSR became a pressing policy problem. Britain and America had agreed to Stalin's demand that all Soviet citizens should be repatriated. The result was horrific: one fifth of the 5.5 million people returned to the Soviet Union were immediately shot or sent to the Gulag, most of the rest ended up in Siberia or labor battalions.²² It was the great good fortune of the hundreds of thousands of Baltic refugees that the non-recognition policy shielded them from the consequences of this

¹⁸ Vizulis, 'The Diplomacy of the Allied Powers,' p.55.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.53.

²⁰ Ibid, p.57-58. See also Mirdza Kate Baltais (2000), 'Latvia at the Teheran and Yalta Conferences – Issues and Sources.' In Andris Caune, Daina Kļaviņa, Inesis Feldmanis eds., *Latvija otrajā pasaules karā: Starptautiskās konferences materiāli 1999. gada 14.–15. jūnijs, Rīga*. Rīga: Latvijas Vēstures institūta apgāds, pp.330–335.

²¹ Gore Vidal (1995), 'Love on the Hudson.' In *New York Review of Books*, 42(8), 11 May.

²² Tony Judt (2005), *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*. New York: Penguin, pp.30-31.

tragic decision. As early as 9 March 1945, in a memorandum to the Secretary of State, the Chairman of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee James Clement Dunn proposed that Latvians, Estonians, and Lithuanians 'cannot be repatriated to the Soviet Union unless they affirmatively claim Soviet citizenship.' This policy was approved and implemented in an order issued 12 May 1945 by Supreme Headquarters to all allied forces²³ and reaffirmed on 30 October 1945 by the General Staff of the Allied Armies.²⁴ In human terms this was the single most important result of the US policy of non-recognition, saving tens if not hundreds of thousands of lives.

Soon after the end of the war, on 26 July 1946, Alfreds Bilmanis, one of Latvia's most distinguished diplomats, died. He was succeeded in 1949 by Jūlijs Feldmans, previously Latvia's representative in Switzerland, who served until his death in 1953. In 1954 Arnolds Spekke, previously minister in Italy, became the Latvian representative in Washington and remained in this post until his retirement in 1970. Both Feldmans and Spekke were not full ambassadors or ministers, but *chargés d'affaires*, as they had not been appointed by their government but by Kārlis Zariņš, the Latvian representative in Britain who had been granted special emergency powers by the Latvian government shortly before the occupation. Nevertheless, all Latvian representatives were given full protocol treatment by the State Department and their names appeared on the Diplomatic List.²⁵

As the cold war became ever chillier, the US government's stand on the issue of Latvia's illegal incorporation into the Soviet Union hardened. On 28 May 1947, Secretary of State George C. Marshall signed documents emphasizing that the non-recognition policy was still in force.²⁶ In light of Soviet efforts to gain possession of Baltic property in the US through the courts, on 12 March 1948, the State Department sent a circular to the governors of all the states, emphasizing that because the US had not recognized the annexation of the Baltic States, US courts should not recognize powers of attorney supposedly given to Soviet consular officers in the name of citizens of the Baltic States and requesting that the governors advise the courts of their state on the US policy of non-recognition.²⁷ On 3 June 1951, the Voice of America, a government-sponsored radio station, began broadcasting two half-hour reports in Latvian aimed at the inhabitants of the occupied country.²⁸ In a strong symbolic gesture of support President Truman met with the Latvian *chargé* Feldmans on 30 January 1952.²⁹ In a conference of foreign ministers in Berlin in November 1953, Secretary of

²³ Sprudžs, 'Dr. Alfred Bilmanis,' p.25.

²⁴ Sprudžs, 'The Baltic States and American Policy,' p.90.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p.103.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.101.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p.101-102.

²⁸ *Latvju Enciklopedija*, vol. 1, p.27.

²⁹ Sprudžs, 'The Baltic States and American Policy,' p.116.

State John Foster Dulles mentioned the Baltic States repeatedly to illustrate Soviet violations of treaties and international law.³⁰

The Baltic question began to attract attention in American domestic politics as well. The appearance of senators and congressmen at rallies organized by Baltic émigrés became increasingly common, the Baltic States were mentioned in the platforms of both the Democratic and the Republican parties in the presidential election campaign of 1952, and on 14 June 1952, President Truman sent a message to the Baltic States Freedom Rally outside New York Town Hall in which he underlined the fact that the US had never recognized the forcible incorporation of the Baltic States and promised that 'we will never forget our Baltic friends.'³¹

In 1953 the US House of Representatives created a select committee headed by the Republican from Wisconsin Charles Kersten to investigate the forcible incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR. The committee heard testimony from, among others, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and former US President Herbert Hoover, and compiled a detailed report on the way in which the Baltic States were occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940. In 1959 President Eisenhower proclaimed the third week of July to be Captive Nations Week, a tradition continued by every US president down to the present day. Official government maps contained disclaimers indicating that the United States did not recognize the incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union.³² A painting of the Rīga skyline by the Latvian artist Lūdolfs Liberts, presented to President Eisenhower by American Latvians, hung on the wall in the Oval Office.³³ US Presidents Truman and Eisenhower and their Secretaries of State frequently referred to the plight of the Baltic States, with Eisenhower even mentioning them in his 1957 State of the Union address.³⁴

Nevertheless, with the death of Stalin and the following 'thaw' in Soviet domestic and foreign policy, the unbending anticommunism that had injected a good deal of vigor into US policy toward the Baltic States since the end of the Second World War began to go soft around the edges. In 1957 the USSR allowed Westerners to visit Rīga for the first time since the war, and in August 1958, four members of the US embassy staff in Moscow, including the first secretary, made an unofficial visit to the Latvian capital. A few years later, in 1964, the US and the USSR signed a consular agreement in which Latvia became part of the territory overseen by the US General Consulate in Leningrad. The US consul general began to make frequent trips to Latvia.³⁵

³⁰ Ibid, p.124.

³¹ Message of President Harry S. Truman on June 14, 1952. Available at: www.letton.ch/lvx_asv2.htm, last accessed 31 July 2008.

³² Grant, 'United States Practice,' p.39.

³³ Editor's note, *Time*, 4 March, 1957, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,862436-2,00.html>, last accessed 29 August 2008.

³⁴ I.Feldmanis, et. al., 'Latvijas valsts okupācijas gados (1940 – 1991),' p.150.

³⁵ *Latvju enciklopēdija*, vol. 1., pp.45-46.

These seemingly small steps could not but concern Latvians. Even though American officials visiting the country avoided meeting with government officials and the US ambassador and Cabinet level officials were not allowed to go there, small concessions to 'realities on the ground' such as the consular agreement could be seen as the first steps down a slippery slope that might eventually lead to the recognition of Latvia's incorporation into the USSR. How long would the US continue to recognize a state that led at best a virtual existence in its legation in Washington? It was something unprecedented. Before the occupation of the Baltic States, the longest period that the policy of non-recognition had ever been in force was eight years.³⁶

The greatest danger to the non-recognition policy arose after May 1972, when, meeting in Moscow, US President Richard Nixon and the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev agreed to convene the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Soviet goal in this conference was quite clear: to gain official Western recognition of its postwar borders. The threat to the legal continuity of the Latvian state was equally clear.

Baltic exile organizations quickly mobilized to mount a concerted counterattack against any dilution of the non-recognition policy.³⁷ However, as the negotiations leading up to the conference in Helsinki progressed, suspicions grew that some high-level US officials were ready to accept Soviet demands that the conference recognize the incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR. On 27 February 1975, President Ford met with representatives of the US Baltic community in the Oval Office, the first time a sitting president had met with these organizations since 1962. The Balts asked Ford to make a formal declaration before signing the Helsinki accords that the US does not recognize the incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union. Yet afterwards, at the orders of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the architect of the policy of détente with the USSR, the Baltic-language services of the Voice of America were forbidden from broadcasting information about this meeting, and it emerged that Kissinger had tried to prevent the meeting altogether.³⁸ During the spring of 1975 the State Department, despite private assurances, avoided any public reaffirmation of the non-recognition policy.

At this point the role of Congress in guarding the principles of the non-recognition policy asserted itself. Baltic-Americans had become increasingly adept at lobbying Congress, and in previous years the House and Senate had passed resolutions in support of the Baltic States. Now, urged on by their constituents, members of Congress began writing to the State Department, asking for a clear statement of US policy toward Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Congressional interest was so great that the head of the State Department's Baltic desk even complained that he was overloaded with work, answering letters from Congressmen.³⁹

³⁶ Hough, 'The Annexation of the Baltic States,' p.467.

³⁷ See Ilgvars Spilners (1998), *Mēs uzvarējām*. Rīga: Elpa.

³⁸ Ibid, *Mēs uzvarējām*, pp.35-36.

³⁹ Ibid, p.37.

On 25 July, the day before leaving for Helsinki, Ford met once again in the Oval Office with seventeen representatives of thirteen different organizations representing Americans of Eastern European background. In the presence of Kissinger, Ford stated that the United States had never recognized the incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union and was not doing so by signing the Helsinki accords: 'Our official policy of non-recognition is not affected by the results of the European Security Conference.' Moreover, he emphasized that the Helsinki accords allowed for 'peaceful adjustments of frontiers' and that they included in the declaration of principles the provision that 'no occupation or acquisition of territory in violation of international law will be recognized as legal.'⁴⁰ However, he did not repeat this statement at his press conference before departing for Helsinki or during his address to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the House and later the Senate (unanimously) passed resolutions emphasizing that the Helsinki accords did not mean a change in the US non-recognition policy.⁴²

The fears aroused by the Helsinki Conference were sharp and focussed, but the increasingly questionable viability of the Latvian diplomatic representation in the US was almost equally dangerous. In his memoirs written during the sixties the Latvian Chargé d'Affaires Arnolds Spekke notes that it is a mistake to assume that the legation's existence is 'an axiom, an untouchable and immovable base... To keep the legation is a constant struggle.'⁴³ Since diplomatic representatives can only be appointed by sovereign governments, the passing of time inevitably meant that at some point there would no longer be any living Latvian diplomats who could work in the legation. It seems that during the Nixon administration Kissinger, at that time the National Security Advisor, wanted to let the Baltic representations fade away with the passing of their diplomatic staff, removing an uncomfortable impediment to the achievement of détente with the Soviet Union. Thus, when Arnolds Spekke retired in 1970, Anatols Dinbergs, who had been at the legation since 1940, was recognized as chargé d'affaires only because he had been appointed a diplomat before the war.

The situation of the Lithuanian legation in Washington was even more precarious. By the late 1970s it had run out of money and had only one diplomat left to keep the legation going. However, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, made the US government look more

⁴⁰ *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Gerald R. Ford, 1975, Book II – July 21 to December 31, 1975.* Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1977, p.1032, at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=ppotpus;cc=ppotpus;rgn=full%20text;idno=4732052.1975.002;didno=4732052.1975.002;view=image;seq=102;page=root;size=s;frm=frameset;> (last accessed 31 July 2008).

⁴¹ Spilners, *Mēs uzvarējām*, pp.43-44.

⁴² I.Feldmanis et. al., 'Latvijas valsts okupācijas gados,' p.160; Hough, 'The Annexation of the Baltic States,' p. 408-409.

⁴³ Arnolds Spekke (2000), *Atmiņu brīži*. Rīga: Jumava, p.235.

favorably on the Baltic cause, and in 1980 the Latvian legation allowed the money that had come under US stewardship in 1940 and been used all these years to maintain the Latvian representation to serve as a source of funds for the Lithuanian legation as well. Equally important from the point of view of maintaining the Baltic legations was the State Department's November 1980 decision to let the Baltic *chargés* name their own successors as long as they held the citizenship of the country they represented.⁴⁴ This was a lifeline thrown to the Baltic representations, giving them confidence that they would not simply fade away.

President Jimmy Carter's emphasis on human rights, the influence of his National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, and the worsening of US-Soviet relations after the invasion of Afghanistan had all served to strengthen the Baltic position in Washington, but the election of the committed anticommunist Ronald Reagan in 1980 meant that the Baltic question would once again receive a good deal of favorable attention in the US administration.

Reagan's most significant symbolic act was the establishment in 1982 of an annual Baltic Freedom Day to be observed on 14 June, the anniversary of the 1941 mass deportations by the Soviets from all three Baltic States. Reagan's first Baltic Freedom Day proclamation had many precedents. As early as 1941 the Governor of New York Herbert H. Lehman proclaimed 15 June Baltic States Day and expressed the hope that their independence would be restored.⁴⁵ Truman had sent a message to the Baltic States Freedom Rally on 14 June 1952, and Vice-President Hubert Humphrey proclaimed 12 June 1966 Baltic Freedom Day.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, an annual reaffirmation of the non-recognition policy by the US President himself established a clear point of reference for anyone who might doubt US commitment.

The Reagan administration also raised the Baltic question in international fora. For instance, on 27 July 1983, the American Ambassador to the United Nations entered a statement on the record of the General Assembly in connection with the debate on decolonization and specifically cited the occupation of the Baltic States as a violation of international law and the principles of self-determination set out in the UN Charter and the Helsinki Accords.⁴⁷

Mikhail Gorbachev's ascension to the leadership of the Soviet Union in 1985 had a fundamental, if sometimes contradictory effect on US-Latvian relations. Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* opened the door for Latvian dissatisfaction with Soviet rule to become an important political factor both within the USSR and in the international arena. Moreover, there is no question that the US non-recognition policy contributed to strengthening

⁴⁴ Hough, 'The Annexation of the Baltic States,' p.412.

⁴⁵ Sprudžs, 'The Baltic States and American Policy,' p.65.

⁴⁶ Hough, 'The Annexation of the Baltic States,' pp.406-407.

⁴⁷ Grant, 'United States Practice,' pp.59-61.

Latvian demands for self-determination. As early as September 1986, when the degree of liberalization within the Soviet Union was still quite limited, the Kremlin allowed an international conference to take place in the Latvian resort town of Jūrmala at which US diplomat and later ambassador to the USSR Jack Matlock publicly declared that the United States had never recognized the forcible incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR. Matlock's speech undoubtedly helped prepare the way for the demonstrations against Soviet rule which began in Latvia in the summer of the following year.⁴⁸

However, Gorbachev's initiatives to lower international tensions, which eventually led to the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the reunification of Germany, were wholeheartedly welcomed by the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations. But despite his willingness to let go of the Soviet 'external empire,' Gorbachev never publicly acknowledged the Baltic States' right to independence, making the US non-recognition policy one of the most vexing issues in relations between the two superpowers.

The significance of the Baltic question in US foreign policy from 1989 to 1991 is clearly reflected in the memoirs published by President Bush together with his National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft as well as in those by Secretary of State James Baker.⁴⁹ In their book Bush and Scowcroft characterize the US administration's attitude as follows: the fate of the Baltic States 'symbolized for us the worst in the treachery and perfidy of the Kremlin. We had never recognized their incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1940 and there was no way we could react in a "normal" way to events which might, at long last, vindicate the long vigil we had held on their behalf. There was as well a powerful lobby, of conservatives in general and Baltic-Americans in particular, which was anxious to discomfit the Soviets on this issue. They wanted not just freedom for the Baltics, but freedom *now* [italics in the original]. The result was a special sensitivity on the part of both Washington and Moscow as to what was happening in the Baltics.'⁵⁰ At the same time Bush and Baker both emphasize how important it was to maintain good personal relations with Gorbachev. As a result the Balts had no hope of hearing what Bush contemptuously called 'hot rhetoric.'⁵¹

⁴⁸ See the chapter in this book by Ojārs Kalniņš; Jack F. Matlock (1995), *Autopsy of an Empire*. New York: Random House, pp.102-104.

⁴⁹ See Pauls Raudseps (2005), 'The White House and the Baltic Way: The Baltic States' Struggle for Independence in 1989 and 1990 as Reflected in the Memoirs of US Statesmen.' In Jānis Škapars ed. *The Baltic Way to Freedom*. Rīga: Zelta grauds, pp.347-357, for a detailed overview of what the memoirs of Western leaders have to say about the Baltic question. Portions of the following analysis are taken from that study.

⁵⁰ George Bush and Brent Scowcroft (1999), *A World Transformed*, 2nd edition. New York: Vintage, p.141.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.115.

Despite the fact that the first public protests against Soviet rule took place in Latvia on 14 June 1987, the Baltic issue seems to have appeared on the White House agenda only after 23 August 1989, when over two million Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians attracted world-wide attention by joining hands in a human chain stretching from Tallinn to Vilnius. This massive demonstration of the desire for independence, named the Baltic Way, was followed on 27 August by an unexpectedly harsh announcement from the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party: if the 'nationalists' achieve their goals, the very existence of the Baltic peoples could be endangered.

Up until this point the US had been reserved in its statements about the increasingly open ethnic conflicts in the USSR. When Soviet troops attacked a peaceful demonstration in Tbilisi on 9 April 1989, killing at least twenty people and injuring hundreds, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze indirectly asked Baker what the US reaction would be to similar violence elsewhere. Baker answered that the US would understand 'if the Kremlin had to use force to deal with "irrational bloodletting and national hatreds."' ⁵² In this context it is no surprise that Washington remained silent as Soviet troops crushed the Azerbaijani Popular Front in January 1990, even as the issue of Baltic independence was gaining unprecedented international attention.

As far as can be determined from the memoirs, the first time the Baltic question was touched upon in high-level negotiations was when Baker met Shevardnadze at the end of September 1989, a month after the Baltic Way. On the flight from Washington to Baker's ranch in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, the secretary of state told Shevardnadze that for reasons of history and domestic politics the issue of the Baltic States was very important and it would be difficult to maintain good relations with the USSR if violence were employed there: 'Let me just say to you that a strong reaction by us would be a given.' Shevardnadze ruled out violence but tried to convince Baker that the majority of those living in the Baltic States did not want to secede. 'If you're so sure of that, why not let them hold a referendum on secession?' Baker asked. 'Cut the Baltics loose! You'd be better off with three little Finlands.' Shevardnadze started to talk evasively about constitutional limitations and Baker understood that the conversation was going nowhere. ⁵³

The Lithuanian Declaration of Independence of 11 March 1990 created the first real US-Soviet crisis directly caused by the Baltic States. The declaration put US President Bush in a quandary: 'We could not be in a position of opposing an independent Lithuania. On the other hand, if we pledged support the minute it declared independence, that might cause

⁵² Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott (1993), *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., p.95.

⁵³ James A. Baker (1995), *The Politics of Diplomacy*. New York : Putnam's, pp.146-148; Beschloss and Talbot, *At the Highest Levels*, pp.110-111.

Gorbachev to fall, or the Soviet military to act on its own. If there was violence, realistically there was not a thing the United States could do about it, and we would have blood on our hands for encouraging the Lithuanians to bite off more than they could chew.⁵⁴

But pressure was growing in Washington to recognize Lithuania's independence. New York Times columnist William Safire wrote that 'we are playing out one of the great moral moments in modern history.' On 21 March Senator Jesse Helms submitted a resolution to the Senate in support of recognizing Lithuanian independence. Even though this resolution was rejected by 59 votes to 36, not long afterwards the Senate voted 93 to 0 to condemn the growing Soviet pressure on Lithuania.⁵⁵

On 29 March Bush sent Gorbachev a letter urging him to refrain from ultimatums and start negotiations with Vilnius.⁵⁶ But on 13 April Gorbachev threatened to cut off Lithuania's oil and natural gas supplies, and Bush started looking for ways to influence Moscow. 'Selecting economic initiatives to suspend, short of sanctions, was attractive. It created incentives for the Soviets to lift the energy embargo without us resorting to threats that could make it difficult for Gorbachev to relent without losing face at high political cost. I decided we should halt our efforts to obtain a trade agreement and MFN [most favored nation status] until the Soviets began to work for a negotiated solution.'⁵⁷ On 29 April Bush wrote Gorbachev a second letter concerning Lithuania in which he stated that work on a trade agreement could not be concluded until a dialogue with Lithuania began.⁵⁸ In any case it was clear that as long as the blockade of Lithuania continued the Senate would not agree to any new treaties with the USSR. On 1 May it voted 74 to 24 that the USSR would not receive any trade concessions until the Lithuanian embargo had been lifted.

Even though Bush may have seen these steps as relatively moderate, in fact they hit Gorbachev where it hurt. By the beginning of 1990 Gorbachev had realized that the Soviet economy was collapsing. His only hope was Western aid.

On 30 May Gorbachev arrived in Washington for the second summit meeting between the two leaders. Bush had decided not to sign the trade agreement, but there were many other important items on the agenda, including the difficult negotiations on the reunification of Germany. Although in theory the USSR had agreed to the absorption of East Germany by its western sister, it was firmly opposed to the idea that the new, enlarged Germany would become a member of NATO. Bush found the idea of a neutral Germany outside of NATO equally unacceptable. Nevertheless, on

⁵⁴ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p.215.

⁵⁵ Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p.240.

⁵⁶ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p.219.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.225.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp.226-227.

the first day of the summit Gorbachev indicated that he would not object to a reunited Germany being a member of NATO.

That evening, after the state dinner, Gorbachev came up to Bush and told him that it would be a catastrophe if he did not get the trade agreement. This issue would determine whether the summit was a success or not. Bush writes that Gorbachev 'was very agitated... I didn't sleep too well afterward. I woke up very early thinking about a way to break the impasse, but I could do nothing unless the Soviets acted on Lithuania.'⁵⁹ On the second day of the summit Bush once again explained to Gorbachev that in the present situation he would not be able to get the treaty ratified by the Senate. Gorbachev replied wearily: 'I can't force you to agree with my points. You have chosen the Baltics over me, and let's leave it at that.'

Afraid of the impact of this failure on the chances for German reunification, Bush worked out a new proposal: he would sign the trade agreement, but wouldn't send it to the Senate for ratification until the USSR passed a new, more liberal law on emigration and until the Lithuanian embargo was lifted and negotiations begun. Moreover, the conditions concerning Lithuania would not be made public.⁶⁰

With this understanding the agreement was signed at the last minute and in the following weeks the situation in the Baltic States seemed to stabilize. The Baltic question disappeared from the White House agenda until the bloody events at the beginning of 1991.

In January of that year the eyes of the world were on the imminent war in the Persian Gulf. Gorbachev had accommodated the Bush administration's readiness to use force to get Iraqi troops out of Kuwait, yet, as the 15 January deadline for war approached, there were serious concerns in the White House that Gorbachev still might come out against military action, significantly complicating Bush's goal of building broad international support for the war.

Just one week before the deadline was to expire, Soviet special forces started moving into the Baltic States. State Department officials sent personal warnings to their counterparts in the Soviet Foreign Ministry, but on 11 January the special forces swung into action in Vilnius, seizing strategically important buildings, and in the early morning hours of 13 January they killed thirteen unarmed people who were trying to block their way to the main TV broadcasting tower. Publicly Bush condemned the violence and said that a reversal of reforms in the USSR could not avoid having an impact on US-Soviet relations, but he refused to be drawn on specific steps the United States might take.⁶¹

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.284.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, pp.284-285.

⁶¹ 'Remarks on Soviet Military Intervention in Lithuania...', 13 January 1991. Available at: www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=19216 (last accessed 1 August 2008).

On 20 January there was more violence by Soviet special forces, who killed five people outside the Ministry of the Interior in Rīga. As domestic political pressure increased, Bush wrote Gorbachev a private letter threatening to cut off economic aid and not to support special associate membership for the USSR in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.⁶² To ward off US sanctions, Gorbachev authorized his new foreign minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh to tell the US administration that the Soviet special forces had already left the Baltic States and that two-thirds of the Ministry of the Interior troops would be withdrawn in a few days.⁶³ Despite the crisis in the Gulf, the administration had managed to get the Kremlin to back down. Once again, tensions eased in the Baltic States, but only for a while.

The renewal of Latvian independence and with it the end of the US policy of non-recognition was sudden and dramatic, an exclamation point at the end of the fifty-year-long ellipsis of occupation. On 19 August reactionary forces in Moscow staged a short-lived coup against Gorbachev, but instead of saving the Soviet Union, they destroyed it. Immediately after the collapse of the putsch, the countries of Europe began recognizing the independence of the Baltic States and their long twilight existence as 'virtual' countries came to an end.

Yet the United States, which for fifty years had been the staunchest supporter of the policy of non-recognition, was the last of the Western democracies to recognize the reemergence of Latvia and its neighbors as full members of the international community. Twelve days passed between Latvia's declaration of full independence on 21 August and the announcement by the US President on 2 September that America had reestablished diplomatic relations with it. The long delay was due to Bush's overriding concern for stability and his personal sense of loyalty to Gorbachev, whom he calls 'my friend' in his memoirs.⁶⁴

Even during the coup Bush was well aware that the situation in the Baltic States would be at the top of the US domestic agenda. As Bush wrote in his diary, he was very worried about possible pressure to offer military assistance to the Baltic States, which 'is the last damn thing we need.'⁶⁵ After the coup collapsed, Bush noted in his diary that 'we are going to have problems with the Baltics... The best thing that Gorbachev could do [is release them],' but he didn't think Gorbachev was going to do that.⁶⁶ In his memoirs he writes that 'I wanted to avoid the international and domestic political pressure on Gorbachev that immediate US recognition would bring, and the perception

⁶² Bush and Scowcroft (1997), *A World Transformed*, p.497; Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows*. New York : Simon & Schuster, p.529.

⁶³ Beschloss and Talbot, *At the Highest Levels*, p.323.

⁶⁴ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p.559.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.525.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.534.

that he and his associates were acting under duress. I thought it should be said (and understood) in the Soviet Union, and in whatever it became, that we gave them time, a lot of time, to release the Baltics... I also did not want the Soviet central leadership to feel backed up against a wall, or pushed into some final, grandstanding, military action.⁶⁷ Bush and Scowcroft were very worried about the USSR breaking up in a bloody mess like Yugoslavia and didn't want to precipitate such a crisis.⁶⁸ What happened in Yugoslavia was bad enough, and it didn't have nuclear weapons like the Soviet Union.

So in a press conference on 26 August, by which time most Western countries had already recognized Baltic independence, Bush responded to a question about the US delay by emphasizing that America has 'different responsibilities than other countries around the world in a matter of this gravity and in a matter of dealing with the Soviet Union generally... I don't want to be a part of making a mistake that might contribute to some kind of anarchy inside the Soviet Union.'⁶⁹

Bush wanted to give Gorbachev time to accept the inevitable, but as usual the Soviet leader continued to avoid recognizing Baltic demands. Even Bush's patience had limits, and finally he sent Gorbachev a cable that the US would recognize Baltic independence on 30 August. Gorbachev asked him to wait until 2 September, saying that the Soviet State Council would act that day, but, when the State Council put the matter off again, Bush went ahead and announced that the United States was reestablishing diplomatic relations with Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.⁷⁰ On the same day he called the Chairman of the Latvian Supreme Council Anatolijs Gorbunovs to tell him of the US decision. Significantly, in view of Bush's promise to Gorbachev to wait a few more days before making the announcement, the letter to Gorbunovs confirming the US decision is dated 31 August 1991.⁷¹

Despite having been the firmest supporter of the Baltic States following their occupation in 1940, in 1991 more than thirty countries recognized the reestablishment of Latvian independence before the United States. Clearly, Bush did not enjoy being criticized for the delay and at his 2 September press conference he noted with some pique that 'when history is written, nobody is going to remember that we took 48 hours more than Iceland or whoever else it is.'⁷² To be precise, the US took eleven days more than Iceland, which was the first Western country to recognize Latvia's renewed independence.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.538.

⁶⁸ Beschloss and Talbot, *At the Highest Levels*, p. 443.

⁶⁹ 'The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Mulroney of Canada in Kennebunkport, Maine, August 26th, 1991.' www.presidency.ucs.edu/ws/?pid=19928 (last accessed 1 August 2008).

⁷⁰ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 538-539.

⁷¹ Alberts Sarkanis, ed. (1999), *Dokumenti par Latvijas valsts starptautisko atzīšanu, neatkarības atjaunošanu un diplomātiskajiem sakariem, 1918 – 1998*. Rīga: Nordik, illustration between pp.160 and 161.

⁷² 'The President's News Conference in Kennebunkport, Maine, September 2nd, 1991.' www.presidency.ucs.edu/ws/?pid=19931 (last accessed 31 July 2008).

In thinking about this delay, perhaps it is worth reflecting on a parallel with the situation after 1918. The United States only recognized Latvian independence *de jure* in 1922 and was the last major power to do so. Yet afterward it became the most reliable defender of Latvia's existence as a nation. The same can be said of American support for the strengthening of Latvian security after 1991, which is described in following chapters.

This should not come as a surprise. The United States has taken its commitments toward Latvia seriously. At times short-term pragmatic interests or personal inclinations affected aspects of the relationship. Roosevelt may have wavered, Kissinger schemed or Bush been cautious to a fault. Yet in the end none of them could ignore the fundamental US commitment to democracy and the rule of law, the principles which were at the core of its policy of non-recognition. The history of this relationship should be a source of pride to Americans, of gratitude to Latvians, and an example to the rest of the world how patience and a commitment to principle can, in the end, be rewarded.

Salmon, Rissoles and Smoked Eel: The Latvian Legation in the Cold War

Dauris Auers¹

For half a century Latvia was occupied, sovietized, and stripped of its national institutions. By 1991, one of the few living links to the government of independent inter-war Latvia was 4,400 miles across the Atlantic Ocean at 4325 Seventeenth Street in Washington, DC, in the cramped, musty offices of the Latvian Legation, and in the person of Anatols Dinbergs, its dapper octogenarian head of mission.² Any narrative of relations between Latvia and the United States in the twentieth century would be incomplete without noting the Legation and its head of mission who served a gruelling sixty years in the Latvian diplomatic corps.

To the unconcealed irritation of successive generations of Soviet diplomats (who condescendingly called them 'fascist Latvia's diplomats'³), the Baltic diplomatic Legations in Washington, DC were recognized on the diplomatic list and functioned throughout the Cold War. Indeed, for half a century Dinbergs personally met with US presidents from Franklin D. Roosevelt to George H.W. Bush. The precise legal nature of the Legations during the Cold War is disputed. Thomas D. Grant concludes that successive US governments fell far short of recognizing the Legations as governments-in-exile, but 'there remained in the Legations some form of residual authority, emanating, as it were, from the last recognized governments of the Baltic

¹ The Latvian Historical Archive contain the papers of the Latvian Legation in Washington, DC from 1921 to 1991. In addition, Ojārs Kalniņš, Liāna Eglīte, and others too numerous to mention have kindly shared their personal insights into the work of the Legation and the character of Anatols Dinbergs.

² Prior to the Second World War, smaller states were represented with Legations rather than embassies in the US. The heads of mission held the rank of 'Minister'. After the war, most countries, regardless of size, upgraded their representations to embassies. However, the Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian Legations were unable to do so. As a result, throughout the Cold War the heads of the Baltic missions were of a lower diplomatic rank than their counterparts. As well as certain protocol implications, this also enhanced their curiosity value.

³ Uldis Neiburgs (2005), 'Latvijas Republikas diplomāti Rietumos un nacistu okupētā Latvijā (1941-1945): Avoti un izpētes iespējas.' pp.154-170 In: Latvijas Vēsturnieku Komisijas Raksti [Symposium of the Commission of Historians of Latvia], 15. Sējums. *Totalitārie Režīmi Baltijā: Izpētes rezultāti un Problēmas*. Rīga: Latvian Historical Institute, p.156

States.⁴ As such, they 'retained legal authority to represent their States', and were recognized by the US from 1940 onwards.⁵

After the exhausting whirl of diplomacy during the Second World War, particularly between 1943 and 1945 when the non-recognition policy 'hung in the balance',⁶ the Baltic Legations eased into four dull decades of repetitive minor diplomatic and consular tasks. However, they retained significance as defiant symbols of the non-recognition of Soviet authority in the Baltic States. Indeed, as the Baltic popular movements gained ground in the late 1980s, the Legations' tired limbs sprung into action, providing the independence movements with financial, moral, and political support. And while the Legations did not play decisive roles in the collapse of Soviet authority, their continued presence in Washington, DC throughout the cold war ensured uninterrupted US support for Baltic independence.

As Aldis Purs details elsewhere in this volume, US-Latvian bi-lateral relations in the 1920s provided no inkling of the important role that America would play in keeping alive the idea of an independent Latvian state during the half-century of the Cold War. A Latvian Legation had opened in Washington, DC in 1922, following the USA's *de jure* recognition of the Republic of Latvia, but was closed just five years later during a period of budgetary belt-tightening, only reopening in 1935.

The incoming Minister in 1935 was the scholarly Alfreds Bīlmanis. A demanding head of mission, Bīlmanis threw himself into Washington, DC society, establishing a network of diplomatic and government contacts, which were called into action in 1940 as Soviet troops crossed into Latvia. Ignoring the newly established Soviet-Latvian government's demands to return to Latvia, Bīlmanis and his remaining staff (a few had heeded the Soviet call to return) cajoled and harried the US towards non-recognition of the new Soviet government of Latvia. His authority came from a 17 May 1940 Latvian government instruction to Minister Kārlis Zariņš at the Latvian Legation in London. Zariņš, the instruction stated, 'was authorized, should contact with the home country be broken, to exercise full authority over Latvia's resources and representatives abroad and to liquidate all diplomatic missions save that in the United States' if he saw fit.⁷ It is impossible to evaluate the extent to which the Legation's exhausting lobbying efforts

⁴ Thomas D. Grant (2003). 'United States practice relating to the Baltic States 1940-2000' pp. 23-110 in Ineta Ziemele (ed.), *Baltic Yearbook of International Law*, London: Kluwer Law, p.44

⁵ *Ibid*, p.45

⁶ Eero Medijainen (2008). 'The USA, Soviet Russia and the Baltic States: from recognition to the Cold War'. P.21-32 in John Hiden, Vahur Made, and David J. Smith (eds) *The Baltic Question During the Cold War*. London: Routledge, p.28

⁷ Romuald Misiunas and Rein Taagepera (1993), *The Baltic States. Years of Dependence. 1940-1990*. Hurst & Co: London. p.17 These powers were inherited by successive peer-elected heads of the Latvian diplomatic corps, finally coming to rest with Dinbergs in 1971.

contributed to the adoption of the Sumner-Welles non-recognition policy (recounted in Pauls Raudseps' chapter in this volume), although Jonathon L'hommedieu convincingly argues that it was 'minimal at best'.⁸ From 1940 onwards, the Baltic Legations' core task was to ensure continuance of US non-recognition policy.

As the Legation lobbied the US government, Anatols Dinbergs, then a youthful Counsellor at the Latvian Consulate in New York, was charged with tracking down and claiming Latvian government deposits in US banks. Measured, methodical and thorough, Dinbergs was well-suited to the task. He had arrived in New York in 1937 tired after a seven day cruise from Bremen, but thrilled with the most exotic posting open to a 1930s Latvian diplomat (at this time Latvia had only eleven, primarily European, diplomatic missions). Dinbergs was born into a middle-class family (his father was an engineer, then later a deputy in the Latvian parliament), and studied law at the University of Latvia, graduating in 1931. He entered the Latvian diplomatic service in the following year, just after his twenty-first birthday. His first diplomatic posting was the Latvian Consulate in Lodz, Poland from 1933-1934. In addition to the typically dull duties of a junior Foreign Ministry officer, Dinbergs occasionally couriered diplomatic mail to the Latvian mission in the Soviet Union. His more crucial work searching for and claiming Latvian accounts in the US would yield the interest that financed the operation of the Legation throughout the cold war, and further contributed a significant part of Latvia's foreign currency reserves in 1991.

Initially, it took some time to negotiate the release of these funds with the US State Department. In the meantime, an inevitable financial crunch in late 1940 forced the Legation to move to smaller premises and shutter the New York consulate. Dinbergs was ordered to Washington, DC where, in time, he would marry, raise a family, and spend a half-century serving as the Legation's first secretary, counsellor, chargé d'affaires and, briefly in 1992, Ambassador.

Latvian diplomats tensely continued to lobby support for non-recognition in the war years, especially as Soviet pressure to reverse this policy accelerated following US entry into the war in Europe on the allied side. At the same time, Minister Bilmanis, a prodigiously productive author, kick-started an information campaign designed to both raise Latvia's hitherto low profile in the American consciousness and counter Soviet propaganda. Books were authored, documents collected, edited and published, and letters whipped out to editors, congressmen, senators and opinion-makers across the length and breadth of the US. Designed to challenge the half-truths of Soviet misinformation, much of the Legation's material bordered on propaganda

⁸ Jonathan L'hommedieu (2008), 'Roosevelt and the dictators: the origin of the US non-recognition policy of the Soviet annexation of the Baltic States.' In John Hiden et al, *The Baltic Question during the Cold War*. Routledge. New York, pp.33-44

as well, skipping lightly over the authoritarian 1930s and the war-time holocaust in Latvia.⁹ Towards the end of the war in Europe, the Legation, in tandem with its counterpart in London, threw itself into defending the interests of Latvian refugees in Europe. At this point, the Latvian diplomatic corps, the only institution with both the necessary resources and legitimacy to represent the interests of Latvia and Latvians across the non-communist world, filled an administrative vacuum and began to operate as a de-facto hybrid government-bureaucracy. The Legation successfully walked this precarious diplomatic tight-rope, as the US government (the Legation's single political and financial prop) had made it clear that it would not countenance a Latvian government-in-exile in the US.

The Legation's financial situation had stabilized by the end of the war. The State Department had approved funding of the Legation through interest gleaned from the non-sovereign Latvian government deposits held by US banks retrieved by Dinbergs in 1940, although it maintained an element of leverage by demanding pre-approval of every annual budget. However, this did not lead to conflict, largely because the Legation kept its budgetary demands rather modest (in contrast, interest from frozen Lithuanian assets paid for 'a Lithuanian Information Centre, summer camps, language schools, and other cultural and political activities' in addition to diplomatic expenses.¹⁰ However, it should be noted that the Lithuanian Legation did run out of money by the late 1970s).

The Legation's budgets were initially small (a modest \$45,720 in 1945¹¹), although their size and scope grew as the Legation gained in confidence and experience. By 1949 it was \$73,500, covering the salary of a chargé d'affaires and secretary in Brazil, a liaison officer with the International Refugee Organization in Geneva, as well as the DC Legation's staff of a chargé d'affaires, attaché, two clerks and press relations officer. A special budget line in 1953 allowed the Legation to purchase its own premises at 4325 Seventeenth Street in Washington, DC. Although several miles from the diplomatic quarter, and a cramped 260 square metres with a meeting room holding no more than ten, it proved to be a sound financial investment (it was placed on the local property market at \$800,000 in 2008). By 1963 the budget had grown to \$165,785, additionally covering the expenses of the

⁹ For example, Bilmanis (1950) only passingly mentions the Holocaust ('The early advent of the Gestapo in the Ostland satrapy presaged the program of persecution for the Jews; and for Latvian patriots the confiscation of property, illegal arrests, killing of hostages, executions without trial, mass deportations, and the mass extermination of the population of certain provincial cities where German looters had been killed') in the posthumous *A History of Latvia*. Princeton: Princeton UP, p.405. This trend would continue, as Valdis Lūmans noted that the Legation's 1962 volume, 'Latvia' only mentions the Holocaust in Latvia once. Valdis Lūmans, *Latvia in World War II*, New York: Fordham University Press, p. 211.

¹⁰ James T. McHugh and James S. Pacy (2001). *Diplomats Without a Country: Baltic Diplomacy, International Law, and the Cold War*. London: Greenwood Press. P.109.

¹¹ The balance in October 1947 was \$4,416,181.78, and the bulk of the account (\$4,000,000.00) was eventually converted into US Treasury bonds. 293/1/4908. Latvian Historical Archive.

Legation in London, Latvian diplomatic and consular officers in Brazil, Spain, Switzerland, Australia and Canada, as well as the representatives of Latvian refugees in France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Belgium. The budget also left some elbow room for currying the favor of American politicians – the \$50 donated to the creation of the ‘LBJ Memorial Grove on the Potomac’ in April 1975 is a typical example.¹² 1963 was also the year of Kārlis Zariņš death. His powers as the head of the diplomatic corps were transferred to Arnolds Spekke, the then chargé d’affaires in Washington, DC, making the Legation the focal point of the Latvian diplomatic service.

Accountable to no government or foreign ministry, the Legation’s diplomatic agenda was controlled by the serving chief of mission and head of the Latvian diplomatic service.¹³ While guided by the general provisions of the 1938 Civil Service Law of Latvia (chapter ten covered service in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, setting salary grades, representation expenses, and order of diplomatic promotion), the head of mission had a great deal of leeway in setting the diplomatic agenda.

Moreover, the Legation’s daily tasks were rather different to the core functions of a diplomatic mission as laid out in the Vienna Convention.¹⁴ With no state to represent, the Legation was limited in the scope and type of agreements that it could sign with the US. There was no point in gathering information and reporting on conditions in the US, nor could it promote further commercial, cultural or scientific relations between Latvia and the US. The public service function was also limited, with no voter registration and an average of just fifty passports issued every year. There were few Latvian economic interests in the US. As a result, the Legation focused on keeping alive the *idea* of a Latvian state within the diplomatic and US government community through persistent lobbying and public diplomacy.

The lobbying load was shared with the Estonian and Lithuanian Legations. Regular lunches allowed the heads of mission to coordinate their diplomacy. They authored regular joint notes to the US Secretary of State to ensure continuation of the non-recognition policy (particularly at historically crucial junctures, such as detente and the CSCE treaty negotiations in the early 1970s), and aide memoires criticizing Soviet policies (such as a 1972 Soviet arts exhibition in the US – ‘Arts and Crafts in Ancient Times and Today’ – which presented the work of Baltic artists as those of the Soviet Union¹⁵). While political cooperation between the three Baltic States

¹² A. Dinbergs, letter to Angier Biddle Duke, April 16 1975, 293/1/979. Latvian Historical Archive.

¹³ Minister Alfreds Bilmanis (1935-1948), and three chargé d’affaires: Jūlijs Feldmans (1949-1953), Arnolds Spekke (1954-1970), and Anatols Dinbergs (1970-1992). In September 1971, Dinbergs followed Spekke as head of Latvia’s diplomatic service.

¹⁴ Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961). Available at http://untreaty.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_1_1961.pdf. Last accessed 18th August 2008.

¹⁵ Note to Cyrus Vance, secretary of State, 7 June 1977. 293/1/886. Aide-Memoire to US State Department January 14 1972. 293/1/886. Latvian Historical Archive.

in both the inter-war and contemporary eras has been fitful at best, the three Legations proved solid partners, united by a common purpose.¹⁶

However, this discreet, diplomatic lobbying was increasingly criticized by exile organizations that had grown more affluent and confident as the Latvian exile community had grown roots in the USA. The Legation had a level of regular formal access to the state department (via the Baltic desk), and even the president (via diplomatic events), denied the exile organizations. This disagreement over lobbying techniques was rooted in the Legation's core mission of upholding the Sumner Welles non-recognition policy, and thus ensuring its own continued existence as an embodiment of the Latvian state. This entailed maintaining distance from the exile community in order to avoid any hint that it was a government-in-exile.¹⁷ Moreover, preserving the Sumner Welles policy entailed a quiet diplomacy that was anathema to the increasingly brash and confident exile community that had begun to organize raucous anti-Soviet demonstrations and forcefully lobby state delegations to the US Congress.

Dinbergs also maintained personal distance from the exile community, having in 1949 married Ruth Bauer, a Swiss history professor, with whom he raised a family of two sons. Indeed, the Legation purposefully avoided employing members of the Latvian exile community as technical staff (despite the strong exile tradition of voluntarism), rather employing Americans and other nationals (such as a long-serving Filipino driver and secretary).

Ironically, this remoteness only served to give the Legation the distant air of a pseudo-government. Typically only the exile community's leadership had direct contact with the Legation. Latvian diplomats were invited to read keynote addresses to exile audiences on national holidays, song and dance festivals, and other notable events on the calendar and give stirring New Year messages on the US funded Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty network, targeted at audiences in Soviet Latvia. On these occasions, Dinbergs, like his predecessors, spoke with a tone, authority and optimism usually reserved for heads of state.¹⁸

Despite this seeming chasm in relations, the Legation was actually an early and enthusiastic supporter of the exile community, playing a key role in the creation of the American Latvian Association in 1950, as well as the Australian

¹⁶ Dinbergs seemed particularly annoyed by the Lithuanian diplomats, complaining in 1958 that, as per usual, they were proving difficult in the wording of a joint note on the USA's *de jure* recognition of Latvia's independence on 28 July 1922. Letter to Arnolds Spekke. 25 July 1958. 293/1/56. Latvian Historical Archive.

¹⁷ The State Department worked to maintain a divide between the Legation and the exile community. In a 1955 letter to chargé d'affaires Arnolds Spekke, holidaying in Europe, Dinbergs explained that the State Department had asked the Legation to ignore exile queries about the status of Latvian state deposits in US banks. Letter to Arnolds Spekke. 24 May 1955. 293/1/56. Latvian Historical Archive.

¹⁸ The speeches of Anatol Dinbergs and his predecessors are available in the Latvian Historical Archives. 293/1/205.

Latvian Association and similar national and transnational organizations across the world. The Legation was frequently consulted on both major and minor issues touching the exile community around the world, and quietly supported both loud and small demonstrations against Soviet authority.¹⁹

Latvian diplomats were active on the Washington, DC cocktail diplomacy circuit. The Legation organized a modest annual salmon, rissole, and smoked eel reception for around 100 people on the Latvian independence day of 18 November.²⁰ Invitations were much prized in the exile community, but the sparse diplomatic attendance can only be partially explained by an aversion to smoked eel. Rather, the Baltic Legations lived a shadowy half-life in the diplomatic community, with regular invitations to White House functions, but little engagement with the foreign diplomatic community. Nevertheless, Dinbergs made the best of the situation, attending the launch of the Apollo 8 mission at the John F. Kennedy space centre on 21 December 1968, as well as a presidential dinner honouring the Apollo 11 astronauts at the Century Plaza hotel in Los Angeles in 1969, following their successful return from the first human landing on the moon earlier that year. Indeed, the Apollo 11 astronauts had taken a carefully drafted message from the 'Latvian nation' to the moon. The note optimistically hoped that 'their achievement contribute to world peace and restoration of freedom of all nations'.

Nevertheless, these occasional forays into diplomatic and government high society were not the norm. The Legation's seclusion from the diplomatic mainstream was undoubtedly disheartening for Dinbergs, whose 1930s diplomatic training had placed great emphasis on appearance, style and manners. When advising the younger generation of Latvian diplomats in the early 1990s, Dinbergs, always smartly attired (even when popping out for a carton of milk), stressed the importance of appearance and diplomatic comportment, arguing that a diplomat was the living embodiment of the country that he represented. Dinbergs partially compensated for these diplomatic slights through membership of the elite DC University Club (a club so stuffy that women were only admitted as members in the eighties, ending, the club's website laments, 'the tradition of nude sunbathing on the roof'²¹), where the staff deferred to him as the head of a diplomatic mission.

This was a welcome diversion from the Legation's largely dull correspondence. The Legation's skeleton staff meant that Dinbergs (surprisingly a trained touch-typist) often personally dealt with exasperatingly petty requests for information on Latvia from the 'Pheasant Fanciers, Game

¹⁹ The Latvian historical archives contain twenty-plus years of correspondence between Dinbergs and Elmārs Rozītis, a Latvian Lutheran priest based in Eslingen Germany, as well as 30 pages of correspondence with Latvian organizations in Melbourne, Australia on issues as minor as book purchases and Sunday school programs. 293/1/1691 and 293/1/1569. Latvian Historical Archive.

²⁰ 293/1/5071. Latvian Historical Archive.

²¹ The University Club of Washington, DC. Available online at www.universityclubdc.com. Accessed on 19 September 2008.

Breeders and Aviculturalists Gazette', the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Memorial Museum (requesting a list of 'known memorials honouring the late President John F. Kennedy located throughout' Latvia), inmates at the Lebanon Correctional Institute enquiring about black culture in Latvia, and queries about Latvian pop-corn, cheese, bread, a typical Latvian breakfast (although most culinary requests, in those pre-women's liberation days, were directed to the Latvian Women's Club in Washington, DC), guide-dog regulations, national sports, flags, heraldry and other trivia.²²

A more serious task involved responding to misrepresentations of Latvia in the American media. The Legation subscribed to the major US newspapers, poring over any articles about the Soviet Union, and received cuttings of contentious articles from the wide-slung exile Latvian community. A typical letter to the editor of the Pennsylvania Evening Star sent on 12 January 1951 by the then chargé d'affaires Jūlijs Feldmans, complained about an obituary stating that 'Ida Yevens came here from Latvia, which is now part of the Soviet Union...' Feldmans replied that Latvia was not a 'part of the Soviet Union' because the US government did not recognize the occupation of Latvia. More than thirty years later, on 6 August 1982, Dinbergs wrote to the editor of the Los Angeles Times complaining about an article that referred to the three Baltic States as 'the three former countries'. The bulging folders of the Legation housed at the Latvian Historical Archives testify that the intervening years were filled with similar letters. The Legation was occasionally over-zealous in its defence of Latvia and the Latvians. One particularly lively spat took place in 1948 between Bilmanis and the New York Herald Tribune columnist, William L. Shirer (later famous as the author of 'The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich'). Shirer had called the authoritarian inter-war Latvian President Kārlis Ulmanis a 'dictator' in his op-ed column. Bilmanis responded that Ulmanis had actually 'saved the republic from rightist and leftist fascists... by establishing a government of national unity and of constitutional reform,' and labelled those that disagreed as 'fellow travellers' (a term then used to dismiss communist sympathizers). The dispute fizzled out as Shirer responded that this would also make Sumner Welles and other prominent American politicians 'fellow-travellers'.²³ The Legation similarly fired out letters of complaint if graphics identified Latvia as a Soviet Socialist Republic or an integral part of the Soviet Union. Likewise the Legation blamed high crime rates and other social problems in the Baltic States on Soviet immigration policy, often arguing that much of this violence came from Russians assaulting ethnic Latvians.²⁴

²² Letter from George. A. Allen, Publisher of the 'Pheasant Fanciers, Game Breeders and Aviculturalists Gazette' on 1 May 1954. 293/1/4345. Also see 293/1/4436. Letter from Gerald Steinberg re JFK Museum 14 January 1969, 293/1/979. Latvian Historical Archive.

²³ Exchange of letters between Bilmanis and Shirer in February and March 1948. 293/1/4345. Latvian Historical Archive.

²⁴ 293/1/4345. Latvian Historical Archive.

The Legation's publishing output burgeoned. Dinbergs, no doubt equally inspired and intimidated by the harsh, bookish Bilmanis, studied political science at Georgetown University in the mid-1940s, eventually defending his PhD in 1952, with a dense tome outlining 'The Incorporation of Latvia into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1940-41.'²⁵ Unsurprisingly, books and pamphlets flowed from the scholarly Legation where three of the four post-1940 heads of the Legation held PhDs. The Legation also republished historical documents, such as 'The Minutes of the Baltic Conference at Bulduri from August 6-September 6 1920', which, as Spekke wrote in 1960, 'represent the first attempt to organize a western civilization front against the new-born imperialistic communism'.²⁶ This also reveals the underlying publication strategy of portraying Latvia as a solidly anti-communist (important in the fevered communist witch hunts of the 1950s), traditional West European state unhappily occupied by an aggressive empire-building Soviet Union.

By the 1980s the Baltic Legations were ripe for ridicule. The missions were staffed by courtly old-fashioned diplomats, geographically and socially distant from the Washington, DC diplomatic set, and working at a pre-modern pace in an uncomfortably poky building in an unfashionable part of town. Indeed Dinbergs, ever sensitive to personal and professional slights, had begun refusing newspaper interviews in the 1980s following an unflattering newspaper article (probably a 1987 Washington Post story that treated the Legation as a historical curiosity).²⁷

However, the Legation cast off the cobwebs and sprung into action in the late 1980s as the independence movement in Latvia grew in momentum. The Legation used exile organizations, with their deep and varied links to Latvia, to gain information on what was happening across the ocean, and gradually began to channel funds to the independence movements. By 1990 the Legation had its first computers and faxes (brought in by Ojārs Kalniņš, the newly appointed press and information officer, and Dinbergs' eventual successor) and was once again filled with the buzz of important diplomatic activity. In 1990 the Legation paid for the US flights, accommodation and other incidentals of Foreign Minister Jānis Jurkāns and Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis. Although Dinbergs had not officially recognized this government, he had decided that the Legation would indirectly support it. However, observing diplomatic protocol, the Legation took a back seat as American Latvian Association officials guided the representatives of the nascent Latvian government around the capital. Later, at a meeting of

²⁵ Anatols Dinbergs (1952), 'The Incorporation of Latvia into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1940-41.' PhD thesis at Georgetown University, 30 October 1952. Latvian Historical Archive.

²⁶ Letter from Arnolds Spekke to Foy D. Kohler, 9 August 1960. 293/1/4342. Latvian Historical Archive.

²⁷ Eugene L. Meyer (1987), 'Diplomats without a country; Latvian Legation strives to keep legacy of Baltic States alive'. *Washington Post*. 12 December 1987, p.15.

the Latvian diplomatic service called in DC in April 1991, Dinbergs quietly deferred to Jurkāns. At the same time, the Legation's journalistic output moved from a defensive to an offensive position. Jānis Lūsis, the Legation's first secretary, sent a letter to the *Washington Times* not defending the right of the Baltic States to exist, but outlining how they could go about seceding from the Soviet Union.²⁸

Following independence, the Latvian government recognized Dinbergs' lifetime of diplomatic service by appointing him Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the US. He presented his credentials to President George H.W. Bush in 1992, and retired from diplomatic service in December of that year. He passed away in November 1993.

The Latvian Embassy in Washington, DC has relocated to more appropriate new premises in the diplomatic quarter, and the background hum of computers, printers, and office activity has replaced the hushed tip-tap of typewriters. Much of the quiet old-world diplomacy that Dinbergs prized has been replaced by direct electronic communications between states, and the contemporary culture of political summitry. However, the memory of the Legation and Dinbergs' selfless exile lives on in the young diplomats that he nurtured and advised as Latvia headed towards independence, as well as the scholarship set up in his name at the University of Latvia.²⁹ Indeed, it is apt that after a half-century of diplomatic obscurity and derision, Dinbergs is now held up as one of the three spiritual fathers of the modern Latvian diplomatic service – when opening the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' sparkingly refurbished building in late 2007, the Latvian Foreign Minister remarked that 'this building embodies memories of both the founder of the Foreign Service of Latvia, Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics, and the legendary envoy Kārlis Zariņš... [and] Ambassador Anatols Dinbergs, who as a young diplomat was stationed in New York, declined to return after the events of 1940, and worked during the many long years for our diplomatic service in exile, living to witness the renewal of independence in 1991.'³⁰

²⁸ John Lūsis. 'Baltic Secession shouldn't go on Moscow's terms'. *Washington Times*, April 12, 1990. 293/1/4345. Latvian Historical Archive.

²⁹ He also has the ultimate modern accolade of an English language wikipedia entry: Available online at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatols_Dinbergs. Last accessed 19 September 2008.

³⁰ Speech by Foreign Minister Māris Riekstiņš, 17 November 2007. Available online at: <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/news/speeches/2007/November/17-1/>. Last accessed 16 September 2008.

The Latvian Exile Community and US-Latvia Relations

Ojārs Celle

In June 1940 the military forces of the Soviet Union overran the Baltic States in three days and sealed them off from contacts with the rest of the world. The most important and influential power in the world at that time, the United States of America, responded to the Soviet takeover with a statement of non-recognition set forth in a declaration signed by Under-secretary of State Sumner Welles on 23 July 1940. According to historian Edgars Andersons, the declaration was composed by Loy Wesley Henderson, the former Secretary of the US Legation in Rīga.¹ This declaration became the basis of US foreign policy regarding the occupied Baltic States.²

In the summer of 1944, the Allied War Refugee Assistance Committee provided 50,000 Swedish kroner to assist the refugee evacuation from Courland to Sweden. By the end of the Second World War, approximately 120,000 Latvian refugees had found their way to the American, British and French occupation zones in Germany and Austria. A system of Displaced Person (DP) camps was established to house these and other refugees that had fled from the Soviet occupied territories of Eastern and Central Europe. While located in the DP camps, Latvian and other Baltic refugees formed their own internal governing structures. The DP camp period allowed them to organize their social, cultural and political life, and gave great impetus to continuing their future ethnic existence in exile.

In the ensuing emigration from Europe to overseas countries of settlement, the largest Latvian community abroad was established in the United States, with smaller communities forming in Canada and Australia. Between 1949 and 1951, more than 300 different Latvian associations or smaller organized units flourished throughout the United States.³ By the time the former refugees had finally settled, this number had somewhat contracted. The American Latvian Association (ALA) was founded on 24 February 1951 in Washington, DC. Jūlijs Feldmans, the then Latvian

¹ E. Andersons (1984), *Latvijas Vēsture 1920-1940 Ārpolitika I*. Stockholm: Daugava. p.504.

² Inesis Feldmanis, ed. (2008), *Latvija Otrajā Pasaules karā (1939-1945)*. 26. dok., Rīga: Jumava. p.554.

³ B. Albāts and V. Klīve (1986), *Amerikas Latviešu Apvienība 1951-1986*. p.3.

Charge d'Affaires in the United States, was the chief initiator in promoting the establishment of a central organization that would unite the numerous local Latvian communities in a strong body with common goals and aspirations. Since then, ALA has been the chief organization representing the Latvian ethnic community in the United States.

The Latvian community consisted primarily of refugees who had left their homeland to escape the terror of the returning Soviet occupation forces. The community was united by a common tragic experience that not only overshadowed their past, but had a certain place in their present lives. Their relatives, their possessions, their previous experiences were closely tied together and still vivid in their memories. One common denominator – concern about Latvia and its future – was still very important in their minds. The Latvian community in the US was mainly composed of the former middle class of Latvia. This was the class of society that the Soviet state under Stalin had attacked – in the first year of Soviet occupation, from the summer of 1940 to the summer of 1941, thousands from their ranks had been arrested, deported to Siberia or shot.

Because of the experience of Soviet occupation, Latvian society in America had serious concerns about the fate of their relatives in their occupied homeland and had very strong anti-communist feelings. The membership expected ALA to reflect their concerns to the political leadership of their new homeland. In other words, ALA was expected to lobby their interests, concerns and wishes in Washington, DC. ALA held its first annual congress from 7-9 March 1952 in Washington, DC. Symbolically, this was also the first time that a US Congressman, O.K. Armstrong, greeted the session, establishing a bridge between ALA and American politicians. Moreover, Latvians made common cause with refugees from Estonia and Lithuania in the United States, coordinating their actions in order to achieve their common goals. A year earlier, in 1951, a link had been established to Latvia as Voice of America (VOA) began broadcasting twice daily in Latvian to occupied Latvia. The Latvian section of VOA employed eight fulltime workers.

In 1953, the Select Committee to Investigate the Forced Incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR was formed by the US Congress. The committee consisted of seven representatives under the leadership of C.J. Kersten, a congressman from Wisconsin. The committee held a series of hearings in which eye-witnesses gave depositions about the tragic events under Soviet occupation. The Kersten committee published its findings which became an important source of information about Soviet atrocities in the Baltic States and elsewhere.⁴

⁴ *Hearings*, 1st Interim Report. United States of America, 3rd Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives, Select Committee on Communist Aggression, 1st Interim Report, *Baltic States Investigation, Hearings Before the Select Committee to Investigatge the Incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR...Under Authority of H.Res. 346*, Part 1. November 30, December 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 11, 1953. US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 1954.

New and more ambitious endeavors evolved as Latvians and other Balts became more politically experienced and a younger generation, with a better command of English, joined their ranks. In 1954, a new organization – the Assembly of Captive European Nations (ACEN) was formed, in which Latvians were represented by a delegation of five members. This was an attempt to unite Eastern European political refugees with a common political effort mostly at the United Nations and in Europe. The organization ceased to exist as American support diminished and the Eastern European politicians aged. The passivity of the Western powers during the Hungarian revolution in the fall of 1956 further demoralized anti-communist activists.

In 1961, the Joint Baltic American National Committee (JBANC) was formed in Washington, DC to unite and coordinate Baltic political activities. In succeeding years, JBANC became a successful Baltic lobby in Washington and still continues its work.

Balts also became more active on the international stage in the 1960s. Baltic activists organized a large November 1965 demonstration in Madison Square Garden and at the United Nations building in New York. In February 1966, a new organization, the Baltic Appeal to the United Nations (BATUN) was formed to continue the effort that had begun with the proclamations and manifests sent to the UN the previous year. BATUN evolved into a large Baltic effort to inform the United Nations of the situation in the Baltics and express Baltic aspirations for freedom in their occupied homelands. BATUN activities continued until 1991 when the re-established Baltic countries themselves became members of the UN, and BATUN personnel blended with the native delegations to the UN.

An important step in promoting the unity of the Latvian exiles was achieved with the establishment of the Free World Latvian Association (BPLA) in 1956, which included the Latvian central organization in Western Europe (LAK-EC), the Latvian National Association in Canada (LNAK), the Latvian Association in Australia and New Zealand (LAAJ), the American Latvian Association (ALA) and the Latvian Association in Brazil, later the South American Latvian Association (DALA). After 1981, it was renamed the World Association of Free Latvians (PBLA) and reorganized. Its executive board consists of 16 members (5 from ALA, 3 from LNAK, 3 from Western Europe, 3 from LAAJ, one from DALA and, since 1997, one from the Latvian

Hearings, 3rd Interim Report. United States of America, 83rd Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives, Select Committee on Communist Aggression, 3rd Report. *Hearings Before the Select Committee on Communist Aggression...Under Authority of H.Res. 346 and H.Res. 438*. „The Baltic States; a Study of Their Origin and National Development, Their Seizure and Incorporation into the USSR”. US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 1954.

Hearings, 4th Interim Report. United States of America, 83rd Congress, 2nd Session, House of Representatives, Select Committee on Communist Aggression, 4th Interim Report. *Hearings Before the Select Committee on Communist Aggression...Under Authority of H.Res. 346 and H.Res. 438*. 2. vol. Chicago, IL – May 3-4 1954; New York, NY – May 7-8, 1954; London, England – June 14-19, 1954; Munich, Germany – June 23-25, June 28-30 1954. US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 1954.

exile community in Russia).⁵ PBLA has a main office in Washington, DC and a representative office in Riga. It is financially supported by the Freedom Fund. This Fund was started in 1973 and quickly grew in size, initially through individual and organizational support, but later through endowments.⁶

Parallel to the central organizations, smaller groups of activists formed their own political organizations, such as Balts for Congressional Action to Free the Baltic States (in Los Angeles) which later became the Baltic-American Freedom League (BAFL), a strong and effective privately supported Baltic American voice working in tandem with JBANC in Washington for Baltic causes.

In addition to the central Latvian and Baltic organizations, in the 1980s a network of local Baltic activists formed with the aim of directly contacting and lobbying US Congressmen and Senators at their home offices, in areas of active Baltic communities. Local activists also organized letter writing campaigns in order to reach the readership of the local American press. These local activities proved a great success to further the Baltic cause, especially during the critical period in the late 1980s when the Baltic countries experienced their national awakening and began their struggle to regain independence.

In the conclusion of his extensive historical discussion of the foreign policy of Latvia and the consistency of the US position of non-recognition of the takeover of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union, Edgars Andersons observes that: 'The only major power in the world that has steadfastly defended the rights to independence of the Baltic States, remains the United States of America, although even its moral stand at times has swayed and disappeared.'⁷

Latvians in exile concentrated their political efforts in the United States, the leader of democracies during the Cold War period. Balts believed that a positive outcome to the Baltic question largely depended on the attitude of the United States. Thus the political lobby for the Baltic cause was concentrated in Washington, DC. Work began immediately after the occupation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union in June 1940, and lasted for more than 50 years, until the Baltic States regained their freedom in August 1991. During this period Latvian and Baltic political activities in Europe, Australia and elsewhere were ongoing, were important and did achieve positive results.

This period of hope and struggle spanned several generations. It started with the generation of Latvians and other Balts who had grown up in their free homelands and had been part of an active class of professionals at the

⁵ *Pasaules Brīvo Latviešu Apvienības Darbības pārskats 1956-2001*, pp.8-16, Latvian National Archives, 2001.

⁶ *Ibid*, Latvian national Archives, 2001. pp. 62-63.

⁷ E. Andersons (1984), *Latvijas Vēsture 1920-1940 Ārpolitika I*, Stockholm: Daugava, p.540.

height of their careers. This generation carried the burden of spreading the Baltic message in exile. The majority of Latvians emigrated to the United States and other countries that traditionally accepted and assimilated a large number of emigrants. However, the Balts considered themselves to be first political, rather than economic, emigrants. Their society in exile managed to pass on the burden of injustice to their former homelands to the next generation, which had left their homeland as children, begun their education in refugee camps, and later continued it in their new lands of settlement. A surprisingly large number from the second generation were willing and able to assume the responsibilities of carrying on the Baltic cause. They entered the political and cultural scene of their ethnic societies well prepared for the task of dealing with the politicians and press in Washington, DC, Ottawa, Canberra or London. In fact, the succeeding generation was properly assimilated in the new environment, except in one respect: politically they continued to remain exiles and promoters for the cause of their fathers. To some extent it was also passed on to the generation born abroad. Thus the Baltic cause survived its transition through three generations. Although the rate of attrition by assimilation was high, a sufficient number remained at the core of the ethnic community to carry on political, social and cultural activities in the free world.

From the years when the refugee camps in Germany and elsewhere began their existence, Latvian newspapers became the uniting force for the scattered refugee communities. Many inter-war journalists had fled Latvia, and there was an ample supply of editors, columnists, reporters, correspondents and technical help in the refugee community. Several Latvian newspapers started their existence in post-war Germany. As the bulk of the refugee community emigrated to distant lands, native language newspapers also sprung up in the United States, Canada and Australia. They already existed in Great Britain, Sweden and Germany. The exile press was instrumental in keeping the Latvian communities abroad informed of current events in Latvian politics, culture, society and other areas. They helped individuals maintain and re-establish contacts with acquaintances and relatives. They also boosted the feeling of security in the ethnic community and strengthened its communality. Latvian language books and press attained their largest circulation approximately two decades after emigrants had settled in their new environment.⁸

This indicates that thanks to a well-developed system of communications, the exile community peaked in its collective awareness of ethnicity some twenty years after leaving Latvia. This coincides with its growing material affluence. Thereafter, attrition due to assimilation slowly began to erode the strength of the exile Latvian communities in spite of the fact that the great

⁸ Edgars Dunsdorfs (1970), *Archīvs X, Avīzes un Grāmatas*. Melbourne: LAA Zinātnes Nodaļa.

majority of the exiles still considered themselves political and not economical emigrants.

The Soviet Union gradually softened its attitude towards its bourgeois capitalist enemies in the West and began to promote limited tourism to Russia and the captive Baltic States. A growing number of Latvians and other Balts in the West took advantage of this opportunity to visit their relatives and take a look at the occupied countries. The Cold War rhetoric by the Soviets was replaced by much milder language. It was now more important to obtain foreign currency from tourists than argue about the shortcomings or benefits offered by other political systems.

As more contacts and interchanges developed between the free world and the occupied Baltic countries, the Western influence undeniably promoted the rebirth of thoughts of freedom and democracy among the people suffering under the Soviet yoke. It also enlivened the discussion in the exile community about the negative aspects of mingling with official contact persons on the Soviet side. The solid anti-communist front among Western Latvians maintained that there should be no friendly relations between the Latvian population in exile and the Soviet functionaries that supervised tourist contacts with the population in Latvia. An especially difficult situation arose regarding cultural exchange between Latvia and the West. The prevailing view was that there will be no harm done to the people of the West, and that the real losers will be the Soviet supervisors under whose scrutiny artists and other individuals from Latvia would become exposed to the ways of the free world.

In 1968, scholars of Baltic descent organized the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS). AABS promoted studies about the Baltic States in all suitable fields of research. AABS organized periodic conferences in different universities in the US and other countries, and continues to publish the *Journal of Baltic Studies*. Baltic studies cannot avoid questions on the occupation of the Baltic States, thus the entire enterprise is political, especially in the East-West clash of opinions about the fate of the Baltic States and its people. AABS and its Journal inevitably became part of the scientific research concerning all aspects of the past, present and future of the Baltic countries and its people.

When Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania regained their independence on 21 August 1991, the members of the Latvian community in the West ceased to exist as exiles, and became Latvians abroad. However, their main role as individual ambassadors of Latvia, now a free country, continued. From promoters of the re-establishment of a free Latvia, they now became supporters of independent Latvia. Their organizations and lobbies continue to exist, but now work as needed by Latvia. They have already demonstrated their value as promoters of Latvia's membership in NATO and the European Union, and continue to work for a visa-free regime between the USA and the Baltic States.

The Latvian community in the US has lost those members who returned to live in Latvia, but has gained many new economic emigrants since 1991. Although the new arrivals have entirely different reasons for leaving Latvia, at least some of them have become members of ALA and other exile organizations.

In conclusion, the role of the Latvian exile in the second half of the 20th century in America has been successful. The goal – a free, democratic Latvia, after 51 years of occupation, has been attained and the US-Latvian community played a major role in promoting this goal. It will never be quite clear as to how the influence of Latvians and other Balts in this accomplishment can be measured. But most achievements are visible and can be counted. The growing importance of the Baltic lobby in Washington, DC, the resolutions passed by Congress on behalf of the Baltic States, proclamations signed by US Presidents and, in general, the Baltic ethnic representatives serving in various committees and delegations at international conferences and gatherings attest to the successes of the past decades. It is a chapter of history that still needs to be studied in detail, documented and evaluated for its importance and influence.

The less than one hundred thousand members of the US-Latvian community can proudly look back at their expended effort to a worthy cause. Let future historians weigh and evaluate this effort. It now belongs to history.

Anatols Dinbergs, who served in the Latvian Diplomatic Corps from 1932-1992 meets with President Richard Nixon (above; 8 February 1971) and President Ronald Reagan (below; date unknown). Dinbergs served at the Latvian Legation in Washington, DC from 1941-1992, and met all US Presidents from Franklin D. Roosevelt to George H.W. Bush. (Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive)





The Latvian Legation (Embassy from 1991) in Washington, DC was based at 4325 Seventeenth Street (above) from its purchase in 1953 until 2005, when the Latvian Embassy relocated to 2306 Massachusetts Avenue (below). (Images courtesy of the Latvian Embassy in Washington, DC)





Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs Georgs Andrejevs, Latvian Ambassador Ojārs Kalniņš, US Ambassador to Latvia, Ints Siliņš, and heads of the Latvian Parliament's party fractions meet with President Bill Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore, 4 February 1994, White House, Washington, DC. (Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive)



Latvian Ambassador Ojārs Kalniņš passes on gift of 10 kg loaf of Latvian rye bread from Aina Ulmanis, wife of Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis, to Hillary Clinton, wife of US President Bill Clinton, 15 July 1994, White House, Washington, DC. (Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive)



US President Bill Clinton, accompanied by (from left to right) Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis, Estonian President Lennart Meri, Hillary Clinton, Aina Ulmanis, and Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas, gives an address at the Latvian Freedom Monument, 9 July 1994, Riga, Latvia. (© Jānis Buls, *Diena* photo archive)



Latvian President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga addressing a joint session of the US Congress on 7 June 2006. (Getty Images/All Over Press)



US President George W. Bush announcing the extension of the US visa waiver program to Latvia, and six other countries, at the White House on 17 October 2008. Latvian Ambassador, Andrejs Pildegvičs, stands third from left. (Image courtesy of Agnese Kalniņa)



Latvian President Valdis Zatlers meets with US President George W. Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney in the Oval Office. 24 April 2008. (Image courtesy of the President of Latvia's Press Office)

Contemporary Relations

The United States and Latvia: Standing Shoulder to Shoulder in International Organizations

Žaneta Ozoliņa

The bilateral relationship between the United States and Latvia is just one dimension of foreign policy and diplomacy. It is comparatively easy for two countries to agree on the priorities and directions of co-operation if they have a similar world view, hold the same values, and the relationship is based on mutual trust and understanding. However, the situation can change when the bilateral relationship is complicated by the addition of multilateral relations that involve conflicting national values, interests and policies. As a result, the United States' support to Latvia in international organizations following the restoration of its independence has been invaluable. In the early 1990s, Latvia was unknown in the international system. Its activities were opposed by Russia. Moreover, many countries were prepared to listen to Moscow's opinion. As a result, the support of trusted and reliable friends in Latvia's attempt to reach its foreign and security policy goals represented an important political investment in its emergence on the global stage, as well as in the enhancement of international stability.

Latvia is today a member state of the world's most influential and important international organizations – the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and others. However, only two of these organizations – the UN (17 September 1991), and the OSCE (then CSCE 10 September 1991) – immediately opened their doors after the restoration of independence. Latvia struggled to gain entry to the other organizations, either alone or in co-operation with its partners. Throughout the lengthy process of Latvia's accession to these international organizations, the United States was a trusted ally with clearly defined collaborative priorities. These helped democratize Latvia and its society, and develop Latvia into an active participant in the work of international organizations. The ability of the two sides to reach quick agreement on priorities – democratic institutions, a consolidated society, a functioning

market economy and the rule of law, as well as the ability to ensure security and stability in an independent way – allowed Latvia to achieve its foreign and security policy goals and become a global example of democratization.

The UN: From a meeting at East River to the election of the UN Secretary-General

Latvia placed great store on the United Nations after the restoration of independence. The UN is the only global organization that discusses and resolves issues of critical importance to newly restored states. It holds key initiatives in international law relating to the restoration of historical justice. The UN brings intractable national and regional problems to international attention, and helps countries search for solutions to global problems, irrespective of their size, resources and partners.

When Latvia joined the UN in September 1991, US diplomats were directly involved in helping pursue its primary goals. The first and most important task was to ensure the withdrawal of Russian armed forces from Latvian territory. Latvia could have pursued this aim alone, and tried to ensure the adoption of the relevant UN resolution by itself, but this would have taken longer. It was in the interests of all three Baltic States to ensure the withdrawal of Russian forces as quickly as possible, so as to be able to formulate and pursue foreign and security policy goals (including full membership of the EU and NATO) without fear of Russia's reaction. US diplomats were involved in drafting and then lobbying for the resolution from the very first day. As a result of this co-operation, the UN approved an historically important resolution ('The Complete Withdrawal of Foreign Military Forces from the Territories of the Baltic States') for Latvia on 25 November 1992, during the 47th session of its General Assembly.¹ Far more important, however, was the involvement of US diplomats and their Latvian colleagues in getting the UN to review Russia's failure to implement the terms of the resolution at two subsequent meetings. This increased international pressure and called upon Russia to fulfil its international obligations.

Latvia's second priority was human rights. US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright played a particularly crucial role. Indeed, it is impossible to overstate Albright's achievement in defending Latvia and its two Baltic neighbours. Russia had been placing enormous pressure on Latvia, accusing it of 'massive human rights violations.' Without US support, resolution of the matter would have been far more difficult and distant. After all, Latvia's mission at the UN had three employees, while the Russian Federation had 300. Latvia's first ambassador to the UN, Aivars Baumanis, recalls that there was an unofficial division of roles between Latvia and the US, in order to

¹ Available at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resa47.htm>. Last viewed 14 July 2008.

ensure that the human rights issue in Latvia was stricken from the UN agenda.² After this was achieved in 1996, Latvia became actively involved in various UN structures. That same year, for instance, Latvia was elected to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which was an enormous achievement for a country which had been a member of the organization for only five years. Madeleine Albright took a personal interest in this process, convincing countries in Africa and Asia to support Latvia's election to the council. Latvia also joined the Human Rights Committee in Geneva in 1997.

During the early years of independence, a great deal of work was invested in changing the methodology that calculated membership fees. A mechanical reckoning of membership fees had been implemented for countries which had restored their independence or emerged anew, but without any consideration of each country's specifics. Latvia's contribution was calculated as \$2 million a year – an unrealistic sum for a country that had only recently recovered its independence. With US support, the issue was reviewed. It took four years for Latvia, with the help of the United States, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, to prove that it was a 'victim of statistics' and that the membership fee methodology had to be reviewed.

There were also efforts to use regional and international resources to enhance national security during the first few years of Latvia's membership in the UN. Security co-operation between the US and Latvia has never been the exclusive privilege of bilateral relations, but rather been viewed in a broader context. Latvia has thus far had only one opportunity to speak at the UN Security Council, and the emphasis was on those issues in which Latvian and American interests coincided: 'Latvia welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General, in Paragraph 44 of document S 1995 1, for a rapid reaction force that can be deployed when there is an emergency need for peacekeeping troops. Latvia and its Baltic neighbours, Estonia and Lithuania, have demonstrated the importance which they attach to peacekeeping through the establishment of a joint peacekeeping force called BALTBAT. This battalion is currently being trained and equipped. Latvia is grateful to all those countries that have and will offer assistance with training and the supplying of equipment. Subject to legislation in the three Baltic States and to agreement at the United Nations, the BALTBAT could become a part of the rapid reaction force.'³ As the statement indicates, Latvia positioned itself as a country prepared, alongside other partners, to make a contribution toward regional and international security. At this time Latvia was preparing to integrate into NATO, and the resolution was important in showing that Latvia was not just a security consumer, but also

² Here and elsewhere, Latvian diplomats are quoted as responding to this question: 'How do you judge co-operation between the United States and Latvia?'

³ Address delivered by Ambassador Aivars Baumanis, 18 January 1995 at a Security Council debate on an agenda for peace. Archives of the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

a contributor to enhancing international stability. Aivars Baumanis recalled his exciting first few years at the UN:

‘Entering the huge UN building on the banks of the East River without any diplomatic experience, but as the Republic of Latvia’s Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary – that seemed akin to scaling a glass hill. The fact is, however, that back in 1991, immediately after the restoration of Latvia’s independent statehood, many people had to undertake what seemed to be impossible missions. I am proud that the three beginners in diplomacy who worked at the Latvian mission managed to achieve the resolution of issues that were important to our country at that time at the UN. We were dedicated and purposeful, we had excellent foreign language skills, good and reliable allies, and we were able to learn new things every day, as well as convince diplomats from four continents to support us. We understood how decisive this was for Latvia’s future. That can only be experienced once in a lifetime, and I will always remember my six years in New York.’

Once the two serious issues of the withdrawal of Russian troops from Latvia and the removal of the human rights issue from the UN agenda were resolved, Latvia’s relationship with the US began to focus on security policy and support for NATO. Latvia, in turn, received the necessary external support for integration into the EU. In other words, the UN was no longer the only organization within which the US and Latvia actively maintained relations. After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, UN debates on issues important to both the US and Latvia intensified. These included international security, as well as debates on the resources and policies which the UN and its member states could offer in order to enhance international security. Latvian Ambassador Gints Jēgermanis took up his post at the UN just three months after this event. He recalls that:

‘In 2002, Latvia was still preparing to join the EU and NATO, and it became clear that the UN system was at a crossroads in terms of its very existence. Many people, myself included, thought that the US would take a leading position to transform this universal international organization to serve the needs of the 21st century. Instead, the US chose to overthrow the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein, thus implying that the UN system could not deliver solutions to many important international security issues. Latvia largely agreed with the US decision – we can look at the position we adopted vis-à-vis the crisis in Iraq and the efforts of Kosovo toward independence in the context of the UN Security Council. At the same time, however, we worked with other EU countries to continue the discussion on UN reform. We wanted to find a balance between the interests of the

EU and those of the transatlantic community. While I was in New York, Latvia was busy with its accession to, and integration with, the EU and NATO, and it was also undergoing systemic changes in its system of governance. As a result, it was not prepared to become a dynamic player in those issues of interest to the US in the context of the UN. This means that co-operation between Latvia and the US at that time was collegial, but fragmentary. Sometimes our interests coincided, but at other times they differed.'

Debates about UN reform once again placed Latvia into the group of active countries when the then president of Latvia, Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, was nominated by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to become special envoy for UN reform. One year later, she became the first woman, and the first East European candidate, for the post of Secretary-General. The Latvian ambassador to the UN, Solveiga Silkalna, recalls that:

'Inspired by the ideas of the then Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, diplomats spent the summer of 2005 in New York preparing plans for UN reforms which were supposed to be approved at a scheduled meeting of heads of state in September. The US was basically invisible in this process until August, when the new US Ambassador, James Bolton, turned up in New York with literally hundreds of proposals as to how the fragile agreement that had been developed with a great deal of difficulty could be improved. The ambassador's attitude toward the UN was openly scornful, and he was a confrontational person. This created tensions in meeting rooms throughout his entire term in office. True, in background conversations with colleagues, Bolton was more diplomatic. He was responsive to the Latvian delegation and was happy to discuss the possibility that Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga might stand for election as UN Secretary-General. It is clear that his support for the Latvian candidate was also based on important tactical considerations, but the relevant risks were justified both by the fact that Vīķe-Freiberga enjoyed success in the first vote (third place among seven candidates), and by the fact that her candidacy ensured extensive and positive publicity for Latvia. In 2007, James Bolton was replaced by Zalmay Khalilzad, whose style was more in line with accepted practice at the UN – to avoid open attacks and listen to what others have to say. The atmosphere at the organization has improved accordingly, but fundamental aspects of US policy have not changed. Since the election of the new Secretary-General, Latvia has not had any specific areas of co-operation with the US, and so I could say that the relationship between the two countries in the framework of the UN is friendly, but not intensive at this moment in time.'

Support from the non-governmental sector has always been important in terms of Latvia's ability to begin work at the UN and to pursue successful policies therein. In this regard, the most important organization has been the Baltic Appeal to the United Nations (BATUN).⁴ Its operations can be divided into two parts. During the long years of the Soviet occupation of Latvia, BATUN representatives relentlessly reminded the world of the illegality and consequences of the Soviet presence in the Baltic States. BATUN represented Baltic interests at a time when official representation at the United Nations was impossible. The experience that BATUN accumulated was such that one of its representatives, Māra Treimane, became the first employee of the Latvian mission at the UN. After Latvia regained its independence and joined the UN, BATUN shifted its priorities. Today it focuses on issues such as Russia's attempts to smear Estonia and Latvia, explanations of history, and other relevant UN debates. BATUN worked ceaselessly to support Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga's nomination to become Secretary-General of the UN. Indeed, Latvian diplomats can still count on loyal and active BATUN support when needed.

Over the next few years, co-operation between the United States and Latvia at the UN will undergo several shifts. Global processes will expand the international political agenda, and the potential of bilateral and multilateral relations will help deal with this agenda. Much attention will be devoted to climate change, the battle against poverty and inequality, international conflicts, and international security. While there is no unanimity of opinion between the US and Latvia on these matters, Americans and Latvians do have many years of mutual relations, and experience in seeking out joint positions on problems important to them and the international community. The positions that Latvia takes on these issues will influence its ability to work together with the US in shaping effective and sustainable policies that benefit both them and the global community.

NATO: A Test of Loyalty

While Latvia's accession to the UN involved no particular requirements, and was not opposed by other countries, accession to NATO was a serious challenge for Latvia and its partnership with the community of democratic countries. The alliance's new co-operation policies at the end of the Cold War started with the establishment of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC). All post-Communist countries were invited to establish firm and sustainable links with NATO in pursuit of greater international security. Latvian Defence Minister Tālav Jundzis, who held the post from November 1991-August 1993, and then again from June 1997-October 1998, signed Latvia up to the NACC in 1991. The launch of co-operation, however, did not initially mean preparing for NATO membership, because Russian armed

⁴ Also see the chapter in this volume authored by Ojārs Cella.

forces and their strategically important radar facility at Skrunda were still present in Latvia. As a result, discussion of NATO membership did not take place in the public arena, but in a narrow circle of politicians and experts.

Valdis Pavlovskis, Latvia's defence minister from August 1993-September 1994 and before that an active participant in the Latvian émigré movement, and eager lobbyist of Latvia's interests at US government institutions, recalled the complicated situation in the early 1990s, as well as the decision to seek membership in the alliance:

'When I arrived in Latvia in 1992, I initially didn't support Latvia's desire to join NATO, because that would have caused even greater tensions with Russia, and could have delayed the withdrawal of Russia's armed forces from Latvia – something which at that time was a key priority. I didn't think that the Russians would attack Latvia with armed force during my term in office, as they did in 1940 and 1945. However, what kept me awake at night was the presence of the occupant's armed forces in Latvia – something that was a serious threat against Latvia's sovereignty. The Russian government then, as now, still coveted Latvia, and tried to keep it in its sphere of influence. Any accident or Russian-organized provocation of the type that occurred in Estonia in the spring of 2007 could have encouraged disloyal groups of Russian residents in Latvia to riot, to engage in terrorism, or lead to armed conflicts which the Latvian government may not have been able to control. If such a situation had occurred, Russia might well have announced that the Latvian government was unable to control matters, and that it was unable to protect Russian residents from the Latvian police, Home Guard and army, and so Russian army units in Latvia would simply have to take power. It was only after 1 September 1994, when the last Russian military units left Latvia, that Latvia could feel secure about its move toward NATO membership.'

Latvia officially declared its intention to join NATO in 1995, but preparations actually began far earlier, in 1992 and 1993.⁵ Latvia positioned itself as a country focused on co-operation in national security and defence documents and policies. This created a solid foundation for assistance to the defence sector, which was essentially being created anew. International security projects which attracted the attention of future allies included BALTBAT, as well as, later, BALTNET, BALTRON, BALTDEFCOL, BALTSEA, E-PINE, and others.⁶ The next step was membership in the 'Partnership

⁵ A memorandum on co-operation in the defence and military sector was signed by the Defence Ministry of the Republic of Latvia and the Department of Defence of the United States of America in 1995.

⁶ The full names of these projects are: BALTBAT (Baltic Battalion), BALTNET (Baltic Air Surveillance Network), BALTRON (Baltic Naval Squadron), BALTDEFCOL (Baltic Defence College), BALTSEA (Baltic Security Assistance Group), and E-PINE (Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe).

for Peace' programme This made co-operation in the defence realm more substantial. The United States helped to finance all of these projects. Indeed, total US military aid to Latvia since 1992 has amounted to \$80 million.⁷

The state secretary of the Latvian Defence Ministry, Edgars Rinkevičs, remembers this tense early period in the assistance programmes:

'I think that there were two distinct things that made a real difference in the development of Latvia's defence system. First, there were extensive materials and training programmes to help in the establishment of Latvia's Armed Forces. Second, in 1998 the US Department of Defence offered assessments and recommendations to the Latvian Ministry of Defence, helping Latvia develop defence policies and plans during the most critical period in the build-up of its defences and the process of NATO integration. We will always be thankful to the US for this advice and assistance.

'There have also been a few lighter moments in this rather serious business of national defence, and that was particularly true at the beginning. For instance, one Latvian defence minister who was discussing US assistance to the Latvian National Armed Forces said that he had asked the Americans for several thousand F-16s, which are fighter planes, as opposed to what he really meant – several thousand M-16s, which are automatic rifles. It is hard to imagine what would have happened if this misunderstanding had not been cleared up, because surely the Americans would have pointed out that even they don't have that many F-16s. It is also true that it took some time before our American friends could be counted on to differentiate between the Baltics and the Balkans. I remember an incident in the 1990s when I introduced myself to a representative of the US Department of Defence. He was very gracious and told me, 'I know about Latvia – it's a cute little country in the Balkans.' That was then. Today we have much better knowledge about many things. We are allies pursuing a similar vision, values and goals.'

US support has certainly been significant in quantitative terms, but political support in the NATO enlargement process was equally valuable. Before the Latvian flag was raised at NATO headquarters in Brussels in 2004, more than one serious battle was waged on the expansion of the alliance into territories that were formerly part of the USSR. These battles were fought in both Western countries and Russia.

Among the first to violate the taboo of mentioning the Baltic States as potential NATO members were two well known US analysts at the influential RAND Corporation think tank. Ronald D. Asmus and Robert

⁷ Data from the Latvian Defence Ministry.

C. Nurick published a paper on 'NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States' which argued that rejection of Baltic membership in NATO would mean the drawing of a new border between the West and Russia, which could, in turn, create conditions for entirely new future conflicts.⁸ As the first article to address this issue, the paper had a great deal of resonance among international scholars and experts. Asmus later went to work for the Department of State and drafted America's strategy on the accession of the Baltic States to the NATO alliance. He and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright were good friends of the Baltic nations, and were responsible for the historic decisions taken on the alliance's enlargement. This ensured that political pressure would not cause Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania to be struck from the list of potential NATO member states. This position was described in Asmus' elegant tome 'NATO Enlargement,' which discussed the anatomy of NATO enlargement. Asmus quoted Albright as saying: 'This problem [the Baltic issue] cannot be ignored. It is an examination of whether we will be able to change people's minds about politics in Europe in the wake of the Cold War. We must not avoid this. I want to try to resolve the matter. I want to make this a Litmus test for our entire strategy.'⁹

The ability of the Baltic States to overcome the complicated and contradictory aspects of their move toward NATO membership was not based on any short-term or sudden political decision by the US. Rather, the important factor was consistent and long-term strategic political commitment. One of the most critical challenges for US policy vis-à-vis the Baltic States occurred at the 1997 Madrid NATO summit. Agreement had to be reached on the specific countries that would be invited to join the alliance. As the summit approached, Russia ramped up its opposition to any further NATO enlargement, and questions about whether the alliance's policies in this regard were truly acceptable began to be raised by an increasing number of countries.

The Madrid summit was one of the most contentious gatherings in NATO history, with members conflicting over goals and national interests, as well as geographic preferences. The US and its trusted allies failed to ensure a mention of the Baltic States in the summit's final declaration. The political compromise that was achieved, however, did indicate that the enlargement process would be launched and continued, and that this would also apply to the countries of the Baltic Sea region. This was one of the most critical moments in the development of Latvia's security policy, because its ability to join the alliance was by no means clear. The then Latvian foreign minister, Valdis Birkavs, speaking about NATO's open-door policy in a discussion with journalists prior to the summit, famously characterised the atmosphere

⁸ Asmus, R.D. and R.C. Nurick. (1996), 'NATO Enlargement and the Baltic States.' *Survival*, No. 2, pp.121-142.

⁹ Asmus, R.D. (2004), 'NATO Enlargement.' Rīga: Jumava, p.227. (Latvian translation)

at that time: 'NATO claims that its door is open, but the Russian dog is guarding the door and barking so as to keep us far away from it.'

The US-Baltic Partnership Charter, signed by the Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, and the US on 16 January 1998, in Washington, was crucial in countering Russian opposition to Baltic NATO membership at that time. After the Madrid summit, it became clear that Latvia had only a few reliable friends. The US, as the most influential country in the world, was the first to offer both symbolic and real assistance to the people of all three Baltic States. The Charter was an all-encompassing political document, defining a number of major areas of co-operation, but with the security sector front and center. The US clearly stated that it considered Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania as NATO candidate countries:

'The United States of America welcomes the aspirations and supports the efforts of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to join NATO. It affirms its view that NATO's partners can become members as each aspirant proves itself able and willing to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership, and as NATO determines that the inclusion of these nations would serve European stability and the strategic interests of the Alliance.

'The United States of America reiterates its view that the enlargement of NATO is an on-going process. It looks forward to future enlargements, and remains convinced that not only will NATO's door remain open to new members, but that the first countries invited to membership will not be the last. No non-NATO country has a veto over Alliance decisions. The United States notes the Alliance is prepared to strengthen its consultations with aspirant countries on the full range of issues related to possible NATO membership.'¹⁰

The historic moment of accession was not long in coming. Latvia was officially named as a candidate country in April 1999, demonstrating to the international community that transatlantic involvement was the only possible direction for its security policy. Latvia was invited to join NATO at the Prague summit in 2002. The leaders of the future member states were invited to address the NATO Council during the Prague summit. The then Latvian President Vaira-Viķe-Freiberga delivered a celebrated emotional address that has subsequently been referred to by both US President George W. Bush and by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. Both men noted that the president's address reflected the motivation behind the thinking of both the alliance and the post-Soviet countries when it came to NATO enlargement (see box).

¹⁰ <http://www.latvia-usa.org/usbalchar.html>. Last accessed 11 September 2008.

'On behalf of the people of Latvia, I thank the leaders and the governments of NATO's 19 member states for making a truly historic decision, and for inviting Latvia and six other European democracies to join them as full members of the Alliance. This decision represents a significant step forward in righting the wrongs of the past and in realizing our common dream of a united, stable and prosperous Europe. Latvia's candle of freedom, along with those of Estonia and Lithuania, was brutally extinguished in 1940. For five long decades, our nations had to endure the nightmare of Nazi and Soviet totalitarianism. Other countries in Central and Eastern Europe were also subjugated by these same foreign powers. Now Latvia and her neighbours have re-emerged as stable democracies and as reliable partners that are ready to assume their rightful place among Europe's family of free and prosperous nations.

'We stand ready to contribute in a meaningful manner to Europe's stability and security, and to maintain the commitments that we have already undertaken with our NATO partners, including participation in NATO-led peacekeeping operations. (..) We welcome the leadership role taken by the United States on the issue of NATO enlargement. I am sure that the close Transatlantic partnership between North America and Europe will be reinforced in the years to come. I invite your legislatures to proceed with the ratification process and to ensure that today's decisions receive swift final approval.

'This is a momentous day for all Europeans. The divided Europe of the last century is being re-united. No more walls, no more curtains. Thank you again for today's memorable decision, and for contributing to the realization of a Europe whole and free.'

When the Latvian flag was raised outside NATO headquarters in Brussels in April 2004, a key phase in Latvia's political life, and in the alliance's policies of adapting to the realities of the post-Cold War era, had come to an end. Indeed, NATO membership brought the historical injustices of earlier years to an end. The Transatlantic security space was re-established without dividing lines, and conditions for new international security constellations were put in place. This was the result of consistent progress by Latvia and support from the United States as a trusted ally. The then defence minister, Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis, who held office from November 1998 until March 2004, recalls:

'Latvia's move toward NATO membership was full of challenges and required a great deal of patience. We had to accumulate experience, overcome challenges, and improve our system of

national governance, including our security and defence system, in a purposeful and targeted way. The United States of America was an outstanding ally during this period in time. It was a period of magnificent co-operation. The era was characterized by favorable attitudes, professional advice, and friendly personal relationships. These were Americans in the best sense of the word. Ambassadors, politicians, diplomats, lobbyists, representatives of the military, advisors from the USA – they all worked not only on behalf of their own country, but also on behalf of Latvia! This allowed us to believe that with hard work, we, the state and people of Latvia, would be able to reach the level of military capacity that would allow us to become a NATO member state and an ally of the United States. We achieved this, because we all believed that we could.'

Has the relationship between Latvia and the US changed since NATO enlargement? In a certain sense, yes. Before Latvia's accession to the alliance, the US represented and defended Latvia's security interests at the NATO negotiating table. Today the two countries sit shoulder-to-shoulder at the NATO top-table, and share equal responsibility in taking decisions on aspects of international security. However, it is not possible to change the essential network of co-operation and development of policy goals and missions that have been established over the course of almost 20 years. NATO membership means that co-operation in the security arena is more focused, consolidated and targeted. There are ongoing programmes such as Foreign Military Financing, which granted \$3.9 million to Latvia in 2008, International Military Education and Training, which allows young people from Latvia to attend US military academies, and the State Partnership Programme, which involves co-operation between the Latvian Armed Forces and the National Guard of the US state of Michigan. There are constant consultations on co-operation in Afghanistan, and new forms of collaboration have been developed covering assistance to countries still on the road toward NATO membership – Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

There are no foreseeable future moments of historic triumph to rival the day when Latvia's flag was raised at NATO headquarters, or when a NATO summit was organized in Riga. Much, however, remains to be done in the area of international security. Over the last 20 years the US has proven itself to be a loyal ally. In time there will be new co-operation challenges between the US and Latvia. These will concern NATO's military and political transformation, the possible enlargement of the alliance, and the handling of international threats and risks. All NATO member states, Latvia among them, will have to keep the faith.

US Policy Toward the Baltic States During Three Presidencies: An Essay

Atis Lejiņš

US policy toward the Baltic States after independence was restored in 1991 is an impressive example of successful bipartisan foreign policy. This essay will reflect on the highlights of this policy, touching upon the main principles and interests anchored in western common values under the three successive administrations of George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

The years between 1991 and 2004 were epochal. The process of Europe's unification, which began in the western part of Europe after the end of the Second World War, was extended to its eastern part through the twin EU and NATO enlargements. From today's vantage point, this seems natural and even logical, yet it was not until 1999 that the Baltic States' 'return to Europe' became a distinct possibility. Each Baltic State was offered a MAP (Membership Action Plan) at NATO's 50th anniversary summit in Washington in April of that year, and the EU extended accession negotiations to Latvia and Lithuania in December at the Helsinki summit, having earlier done so only with Estonia.

The NATO war against Serbia, which threatened to split NATO and the EU, was a sharp reminder that these esteemed organizations should themselves not contribute to splitting Europe. The intense debate and various schemes on how to admit the Baltics into the European family without provoking Russia evaporated as the bombardment of Serbian factories and bridges did not achieve its desired effect for almost three months. Up until 1999, a piecemeal strategy of first getting Estonia into the EU, and then Lithuania into NATO, enjoyed wide circulation. Latvia, considered the weakest link in the Baltic rim, would be slipped through the Western door by being the first admitted to the World Trade Organization (WTO), together with the establishment of a NATO Information Office in Riga. The unintended consequence of the NATO aerial bombardment was to catapult the three Baltic States as a group into the EU and NATO. It only took three years for each Baltic state to meet the strict EU and NATO accession criteria.¹

¹ Atis Lejiņš (1999), 'Joining the EU and NATO: Baltic Security Prospects at the Turn of the 21st Century.' In Atis Lejiņš (ed.), *Baltic Security Prospects at the Turn of the 21st Century*. Helsinki: Kikimora Publications, pp.33-37.

This piecemeal Western approach arose because there was no ready answer to the question: Who would defend the Baltic States? No-one had been ready to defend the Baltics previously, except following Lenin's seizure of power in a coup in 1917, when the British and French had sent warships to help the Latvian army in the war of liberation in 1919. However, no assistance was forthcoming when the Baltic States were occupied by the Soviets in 1939/40, or at Yalta.

The predicament of the Baltics was pin-pointed by the then British Foreign Minister, Sir Douglas Hurd, at the EU foreign ministers meeting in Luxembourg in October 1994. According to diplomatic sources, Hurd stated that the proximity of the Baltic countries to Russia gave rise to security problems which make their membership in the EU hard to accept '...we all have great sympathy for the Baltic states, not only in word. But we do not know how the security arrangement will be solved.'²

The 'security arrangement' was eventually resolved, and the new century could open a new and promising chapter for the Baltic States in a united Europe. However, for this to happen, the US needed to play a leading role in tandem with the Nordic countries. They formed the vanguard for the other, larger European states to accept the Baltics as members of the European family. The promise made by President Bill Clinton at the foot of Latvia's Freedom Monument in Riga on 6 July 1994 '...and as you return to Europe's fold, we will stand with you' was kept. The next few pages will focus on how this was done.

The First Bush

George H.W. Bush will go down in history as the American president on whose watch the 'Evil Empire' crumbled into dust. Yet why did he hesitate to restore diplomatic relations with the Baltics?

The US had a distinct advantage over other countries when the Baltic States finally broke free from the Soviet Union after the failed 1991 August putsch. The Soviet counterrevolution lasted only three days and Boris Yeltsin, the President of Russia, and ally of the Baltics against Gorbachev, emerged triumphant. All through the long Cold War years successive US administrations had resisted the temptation to acknowledge the 'facts on the ground', and recognize the *de jure* incorporation of the Baltics in the USSR. Yet when Russia recognized the independence of the Baltic States on 24 August and the West quickly followed suit, Washington did not lead the way. James Baker, Bush's Secretary of State, explains:

'Until we had a better sense of how Gorbachev-Yeltsin and Center-Republic relationships were going to play, I was wary of writing Gorbachev off completely. I also thought it premature to take a host

² Ibid, pp.16-17.

of new initiatives to the President before I had a chance to go back and take stock directly of how events in Moscow, and elsewhere in the Soviet Union were evolving.

‘In any case, the President’s initial priority was the Baltics ...several Scandinavian countries had moved quickly to recognize them, too and there was growing pressure for us to follow suit. Since we had never formally recognized incorporations of the Baltics in the US, the President simply announced on 2 September that we would establish diplomatic relations with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and would work to make independence a reality.’³

This, in fact, is how the roll-call of countries rushing to recognize or restore diplomatic relations with the Baltic states looked: Finland and Denmark on the same day as Russia; France, Germany, Great Britain, Sweden and Australia on 27 August; and the United States on 2 September – just four days before the USSR. But then the Soviet Union had only four months left to pretend it existed. On 25 December Mikhail Gorbachev announced in a dramatic speech on Russian TV that he had relinquished his post as president of the USSR, since there was, in fact, no longer such a post.

The US President’s version is the following:

‘I asked Allied leaders for time before they acted, and then contacted Gorbachev, telling him we could not wait much longer. I cabled him that we would recognize the Baltics on August 30. He asked if we could wait until September 2, because the new Soviet Council was to act on that matter that day. I agreed. It seemed to me much better to have encouraged them to take the action, rather than to unilaterally recognize the Baltics, which everyone knew we were going to do anyway. That would only bludgeon Gorbachev one more time in the public arena, and add one more discordant note for an already weakened USSR.’⁴

His national security advisor Brent Scowcroft explains the theoretical underpinnings of this approach:

‘We were striving for a permanent solution of the issue. That could best be achieved only through voluntary Soviet recognition of Baltic independence. Otherwise, should the nationalist right ever come to power, they could more easily reverse the situation, claiming the USSR acted only under duress in a weakened situation. In other words, they could allege that the independence was not valid. By being patient for

³ James A. Baker (1995), *The Politics of Diplomacy.: Revolution, War &Peace, 1989-1992*. New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, p.524.

⁴ George Bush and Brent Scowcroft (1999), *A World Transformed*. New York: Vintage Books, pp.538–539.

a few days until Moscow acted on its own volition, we prevented the possibility of anyone successfully asserting that claim.⁵

Three highly significant points emerge from these explanations: the US did not expect the USSR to collapse, and it wanted to see what a reconstituted Soviet Union would look like under the terms of the new Union Treaty then being hammered out by Gorbachev. Except for the Baltic States, this new treaty would transform the USSR into a voluntary association of republics, and, if this was to happen, and right-wing reactionaries eventually consolidated power, it could not advance arguments to re-take the Baltic States. This third point will be revisited in the conclusion.

It must be remembered that the August coup was an attempt to save the disintegrating Soviet Union by forestalling the new Union Treaty from coming into force. As the rapid subsequent development of events showed, nothing came out of the Union Treaty and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) that was eventually established under the tutelage of Boris Yeltsin actually has very little 'commonwealth' in it, and cannot be compared even with the British Commonwealth that replaced the British empire.

Can a strain of pro-Russian inclination or *realpolitik* be detected in the American attitude? This could even be dated back to the end of the First World War when the US did not recognize the hard-won independence of the Baltic states until 1922. George Kennan, the father of America's containment policy, is a representative of this school of thought and argued that the Baltic States should not become members of NATO because they had been 'part of Russia longer than they were part of anything else.'⁶

Even though Kennan had lived in Riga before the war, he had not studied Latvian history, or, if he had, he preferred not to show it. Latvia and Estonia were de facto members of the Holy Roman Empire for some 300 years, after which followed Polish and Swedish rule. Russia partially conquered the Baltic States in 1721, and only completed the take-over in 1795, when the Polish-Lithuanian state was partitioned. However, even under the czars, Estonia and most of Latvia kept a separate identity under Baltic German rule, comparable to the autonomy enjoyed by Finland. Russification only set in at the turn of the twentieth century.⁷ This was the reason for the more enlightened czars experimenting with reforms first in the Baltic provinces. Gorbachev also had this in mind, but he forgot that man does not live by bread alone.

Jack Matlock, the American ambassador to the USSR at that time, writes that initially the Bush team, ignoring the CIA, thought the coup-makers might succeed, which explains the neutral presidential statement on the first

⁵ Ibid, p.538.

⁶ Atis Lejiņš (2001), 'Baltic-Russian Relations: A Reassessment,' in Talavs Jundzis (ed.), *The Baltic States at Historical Crossroads*, Riga: Latvian Academy of Sciences, p.509.

⁷ Ibid, pp.509-510.

morning of the coup. The second statement later in the day condemned the coup outright and things began to move in the right direction. The basic explanation for this, according to Matlock, is that Bush was uncomfortable with change, even when it was for the better.⁸ His son was to have a markedly different attitude toward the Rose and Orange revolutions a decade later in Georgia and Ukraine.

An example of unabashed *realpolitik* was France's recognition of the coup-makers. This has been forgotten for obvious reasons, but one of the curious events in the August coup in Latvia was that despite the storming and occupation of the radio and TV buildings by Soviet elite troops, CNN could still be seen for a while in Latvia – and on state television! And there, to the horror of the entire population glued to the TV screens, President Mitterand congratulated the new Soviet rulers!

There was, of course, furious backpedaling immediately after the failure of the coup, and, as already mentioned, France beat the US to the draw in once again recognizing the Baltic states, as it had done in 1919. Mitterand flew to the Baltic capitals and let slip a remark that he was surprised at the number of Russians in Riga. For this he was awarded Latvia's highest state order, but it took many years of hard bargaining to wrestle compensation from France for handing over the Latvian embassy in Paris to the USSR.

When the Popular Front government in Latvia seized the Communist Party's Central Committee building in Riga, a list of 200 people, compiled by the local coup-makers, was discovered. These made up the top levels of the Popular Front and National Independence Movement and were to be shot immediately. Another list of 400 were to be deported as quickly as the first list of people were to be liquidated. These lists 'disappeared' soon after in the tumultuous days of restoring Latvian state power. Still, Latvia was saved and could begin the arduous task of picking up the pieces after two occupations, one of which took 47 years of her national existence.

Bill Clinton

The Clinton administration could make or break restored Baltic independence. The decision to make it a reality was reached after deliberations in the National Security Council at some time early after Clinton took office. America decided to follow its ideals and steered a steady course in implementing the very exacting policy of uniting Europe, 'free, and at peace with itself.' This could not be achieved by excluding the Baltic States.

The Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt wrote a striking article in *Foreign Affairs* where he called the Baltic States the litmus test both for Russia and the West, and this, either by design or similar thinking, became the leitmotif

⁸ Jack F. Matlock, Jr. (1995), *Autopsy on an Empire*, New York: Random House, pp.587-591.

of the Clinton administration.⁹ The policy was exacting because, with regard to NATO enlargement, where Washington was the main player, resistance, indifference, and hesitancy had to be overcome first at home in the State Department, and especially in the Pentagon, and then in Paris, Berlin and London, while, at the same time, working with Russia in order to not create new spheres of influence or dividing lines.¹⁰ Without NATO, it seemed hardly conceivable that the Baltic States would have been accepted in the EU because the 'security arrangement' would have remained unresolved.

America made its commitment to the Baltic States in 1996, when Warren Christopher, the Secretary of State in the first Clinton administration, publicly stated in Prague that the US viewed the Baltic States and Ukraine as eligible candidates for NATO.¹¹ Then came the 'Charter of Partnership and Cooperation between the United States of America and the Republics of Estonia Latvia, and Lithuania' signed by President Clinton and the three Baltic presidents in Washington on 16 January 1998, when it became clear that the Baltic States would not be included in the first NATO enlargement round.

The Baltic-American charter stated that 'Europe will not be fully secure unless Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania each are secure.' With this statement a chapter was closed on residual Cold War thinking based on the Yalta line that had divided Europe since the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939.¹²

Work on the charter began a year earlier and involved committees from each Baltic State writing the text with their US counterpart. This also involved the US in keeping the Baltic States united, as Estonia and Lithuania

⁹ Carl Bildt, (1994), 'The Baltic Litmus Test,' *Foreign Affairs*, 73(5). It must be remembered that Sweden was the bridge between the Baltics and the Clinton administration, and as the advocate of the Baltics, must have influenced Washington. See the memoirs of Lars Peter Freden, the first western diplomat in the Baltic states since 1940 (he served between 1989 and 1991, and was later an advisor to Carl Bildt in talks with Washington): *Aaterkomst: Swedish saekerhetspolitik och de baltiska laendernas foersta aar I sjaelostaendighet 1991-1994*. Stockholm: Atlantis, 2006. (The Return: Swedish Security Policy and the Baltic states' first years of Independence 1991-1994). Bildt met Baltic politicians already in 1989, when in March he held talks with leaders of the Latvian Popular Front who visited Stockholm to establish the Latvian Popular Front Chapter in Sweden headed by the author; Undersecretary of State Strobe Talbott notes '...we were less focused on trying to anticipate what the attitude of Russia would be to enlargement than on figuring out what the American policy should be.' Strobe Talbott (2002), *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy*. New York: Random House, p.97. The author of this chapter had occasion to query a former member of the NSC at a think-tank conference in Europe over coffee in the early 2000's why the US chose the difficult path of accommodating the Baltic states when it would have been much easier to have a meeting of the minds with the Russians. The answer was that it was a matter of principle.

¹⁰ The definitive study of NATO enlargement is by the analyst and practitioner Ronald D. Asmus (2002), *Opening NATO's Door: How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era*, New York: Columbia University Press. A Latvian language edition appeared in 2004.

¹¹ Ibid, 145.

¹² See note 1. 39. A cited example of residual Cold War thinking was advanced by Colin S. Grey, the former assistant director of the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) in London who wrote in 1997: 'For the time being at least, the Baltics, and other former republics of the USSR must be regarded within Russia's security space, or sphere of concern (rather than influence).'

wanted separate charters with Washington. Latvia, feeling vulnerable as the middle Baltic State with no Finland or Poland at her side, was more than happy to have a joint Baltic-American endeavor. Estonia's bid to join the EU first and, likewise Lithuania's strenuous efforts to be the first Baltic State to join NATO, did not find favor in Rīga.

American promotion of Baltic unity was the guiding principle in the Baltic Action Plan, an internal policy document preceding the Baltic Charter and involving support to the joint Baltic battalion, (BALTBAT), and the Regional Airspace Initiative, (RAI), which led to the formation of BALTNET linking surveillance of Baltic airspace with that of NATO.

Clinton also played a decisive role in the Russian troop withdrawal from the Baltic States and particularly in reducing the length of time Russia wanted for holding on to her three military bases in Latvia: the Liepāja naval base, the electronics listening station in Ventspils, and the ABM Skrunda radar base. One can hardly point to a better example of successful American diplomacy: only the Skrunda site was allowed to linger on with Moscow paying a decent fee, and in the end, asking Latvia for permission to terminate the lease ahead of time. Rīga was a vulnerable city during the Cold War, as the headquarters of the Soviet Baltic Military district. Hence Latvia's capital city, where one-third of the population of the country lived, was on the US missile hit-list.

Membership in the EU and NATO made Baltic independence a reality, and it is thus likely that the first Bush administration, if it continued for a second term, would have followed a similar path. Yet membership may not have become a reality if it had continued to insist on automatic citizenship for the mass of immigrants that had arrived in Latvia (and Estonia) during the years of occupation.

The saving grace of the Clinton administration was that he and his team understood what had happened, and opted to support the OSCE which recommended that Latvia and Estonia adopt liberal naturalization laws for those immigrants who chose to stay, which included passing tests in basic Latvian and history.

This was very hard to accept for a restored independent Latvia, which, in less than fifty years saw the share of the ethnic Latvian population drop from 75% to barely above 50%. Moscow had followed a policy of russification similar to that of the last Russian tsar Nicholas the second. Secretary of State Albright played a key role in convincing the Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis to support the liberal naturalization law, which the majority of the Latvian population eventually voted for in a referendum.¹³ Although the

¹³ The author of this chapter was among many NGO's gathered by the President in debating the controversial issue of a liberal naturalization law. He referred to a letter he had received from Albright in support of a multiethnic democracy for Latvia. Subsequently the Latvian Russian language press followed Moscow in agitating against both membership of the EU and NATO.

context is totally different, the issues of illegal immigration and English as an official language in the US today may give Americans a glimpse into the Latvian and Estonian predicament, even though most Americans have no idea what deportations and subversion of a national culture and language can be since they have no experience of this.

The Second Bush

Despite the 9/11 attack on America, and Baltic fears that this would derail their NATO aspirations, George W. Bush approved Baltic NATO membership. All three Baltic States joined NATO several months before they became full members of the EU in 2004.

After 9/11 there was a meeting of the minds between the US and Russia. For example, Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell proclaimed that the US and Russia could fundamentally realign relations and that there was no problem that could not be discussed between both countries.¹⁴

Yet these pronouncements were followed by statements that the US continued to uphold its main principles and that there could be differences of opinion between the US and Russia. Already on 22 September 2001, Colin Powell wrote to the Baltic foreign ministers to plan for a new meeting under the auspices of the Baltic American charter. The scheduled meeting on 12 September had, for obvious reasons, been cancelled. The agenda would include the fight against terrorism and proposals on how to cooperate with Russia.¹⁵

A year later in November at the Prague NATO summit, the Balts were included in the list of countries invited to join the alliance in its second round of enlargement. Sandra Kalniete, Latvia's foreign minister and former secretary of the Popular Front, could not contain herself and jumped up with joy upon hearing the good news, hugging and kissing each and every member of the Latvian delegation. At the same time Russia strengthened its position at the NATO-Russia Council and in the EU, gaining access to the Political and Security Committee that had been set up to develop the European Security and Defense Policy.

There is no need to give an account of how Iraq split Europe and how the 'new Europeans' sided with the US. The 'old Europeans', had it not been for Washington's insistence in the initial phase of NATO enlargement, would have preferred to accommodate Russia rather than fight for their central and eastern European cousins.¹⁶ Still it must be noted that Latvians as a whole were not enthusiastic in their support for the Iraq war since their collective

¹⁴ Atis Lejiņš, (2001) 'Jauna NATO? Jauna Krievija? (A New NATO? A New Russia?)' *Diena*, Rīga, 8 October 2001.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Note 9. If Helmut Kohl had not swung around to supporting Clinton, it is doubtful if NATO enlargement would have taken place because of resistance for states south and west of Germany.

memory did not tell them anything good about wars, except for one – the War of National Liberation 1918-1920.¹⁷

Afghanistan was seen in a completely different light, but it did cause unease when the US turned down the NATO offer of activating Article 5 in response to the terrorist attack. It was feared that a precedent that could damage the credibility of Article 5 in the future had been set.

There was, however, a hiccup that stunned Latvia and the two other Baltic States with regard to the uproar surrounding the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Except for Romania, every European country (including Great Britain) signed up to it. States that had still not joined NATO, like the Baltic States, and which had declined to sign up with the American position, were cut off from American military aid. Fortunately, before this could enter into force for the following fiscal year, the ban was lifted.

President Bush gave a very significant speech in Rīga on 7 May 2005, just before his visit to Moscow to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany. Talking about a united Europe and the advance of freedom, he condemned the Yalta agreement ‘which followed in the unjust tradition of Munich and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.’ He angered Moscow by mentioning that the Baltic States had been occupied. There is the rub. Moscow does not agree on the most basic premise that the Soviet Union occupied three small countries at the very moment when Paris fell to Hitler’s armies! This is a huge step backwards compared with the closing years of the Soviet Union, when the Supreme Soviet, and hence the majority of the Russian people, officially condemned the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

Conclusion

The greatest challenge for all post-Soviet and post-communist countries in Europe was, and still is, overcoming the cycle of repeated authoritarian rule, occupation, and valiant struggle for freedom and revolution against tyranny. These cycles are often dubbed the ‘East European Syndrome’ (EES). Today’s Russia is a prime example of slipping back into authoritarian rule. Bulgaria and Romania were held back from becoming full member states of the EU because of institutionalized corruption, bad governance and a weak civil society, the very hallmarks of the EES.

Few realize that America’s ‘tough love’ for Latvia has helped her greatly from falling back into the EES trap. In less than 100 years Latvia has, for the third time, had to undergo the formation of her political, economic, and

¹⁷ Latvia defeated both Germany and Russia. Military aid came from Estonia and Poland, and some British and French gunships used against the revanchist German volunteer army marching through Latvia ostensibly aiming to overthrow communism in Russia. The battle for Riga in November 1919 against the German ‘Free Corps’ formally headed by a Russian count has been made into a movie *The Guards of Riga*, a box office hit. Latvia, like Estonia and Lithuania, but unlike Finland, chose to capitulate to the Soviet Union in 1939, considered by many to have been a tragic mistake.

intellectual elite, which two world wars and a long occupation decimated. This is not easy, particularly under conditions of 'robber baron' capital formation, which began after 1991 with the crash privatization program.

During an international conference devoted to NATO enlargement in Rīga in 2002, Nick Burns, the American ambassador to NATO, worked behind the scenes pressing upon the Latvian government the need to establish the Crime Prevention and Combating Bureau (Latvian acronym KNAB). The Latvian government agreed, because joining NATO was a matter of national survival. The Bureau, however, has come under pressure from successive governments almost from day one. In most post-communist countries similar bureaus are 'reorganized' whenever they get too uncomfortable for certain vested economic interests with undue political influence. In Latvia's case, presidents, opposition parties, civil society, and continued American support have been strong enough to defend the Bureau's independence in a particularly vulnerable transition stage from 'primitive capitalism' to 'capitalism with a human face.'

In the struggle against relapsing into authoritarianism and corrupt governments, the Latvian-American connection with regard to 'soft power' promotion and hence strengthening of democracy is a robust example of success for Washington to build upon not only in its relations with other post-communist countries, including Georgia and Ukraine, but also for Cuba in the not too distant future.

With regard to Russia, it is clear that a right-wing reaction has set in. By not exorcising the ghosts of her past after 1991, as Germany did after 1945, Russia is relapsing into the iron logic of the East European Syndrome and, consequently, reverting to the previous centuries of *realpolitik* in Europe. High-powered conferences in Moscow today demand that the US and Great Britain should be excluded from Europe, and the Old Continent should be ruled by the major powers Russia, France and Germany. This arrangement, according to influential circles in Moscow, would correspond to the newly emerging multi-polar world, where both the EU and the US are considered to be declining world powers.

Brent Scowcroft worried that a reconstituted USSR could press claims that it lost the Baltic States under duress, but if Moscow was allowed to recognize Baltic independence of her own volition, this claim could not be made successfully. The problem with this reasoning is that Russia has not recognized that the Soviet Union occupied the Baltic States – any reference to this fact brings a reaction from Moscow that fascists are 'rewriting history.' This stance theoretically would allow a resurgent Russia to reclaim the Baltic States since they would only be rejoining Russia of their own free will.

The next US president will have to work hard on not just adopting a new Transatlantic bargain in the new century, but also in promoting European unity to withstanding Russia's soft (gas and oil money) and hard power. A 'return' to the Baltic Sea Region by the US may well become a strategic imperative.

The Latvian-American Partnership in Building Civil Society in Latvia

Ieva Morica

Introduction

This chapter will give a brief overview of the role of American players in helping to build civil society in Latvia, and trace the legacy of the extensive support that has been provided by many American and Latvian institutions and individuals over a period of eighteen years.

America's role in the development of Latvian civil society goes beyond the US government's engagement. Although the government, through its Agency for International Development (USAID), has been one of the major donors in building civil society in Latvia, the picture would be incomplete without mentioning the work of a variety of private foundations, committed individuals in the US and Latvia, American-Latvians, as well as ideas and concepts that originated in the US and were taken over to Latvia. In retrospect, the eighteen years are marked by diverse and rich relationships between many players, successes and learning, the emergence and closing of various institutions, and a rise in, and exchange of, ideas. Given that civil society is a broad concept and goes beyond the notion of institutionalized NGOs¹, the task of noting the impact of these rich and diverse issues and relationships is challenging. However, I will attempt to select the key institutions, individuals and ideas that characterize the role played by many American institutions in building of civil society in Latvia.

American support did not create civil society in Latvia. Just as in other Baltic countries, Latvia had dissident groups during the Soviet era, people

¹ The London School of Economics Centre for Civil Society refers to civil society as an arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups. http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm (Last accessed on 20 August 2008).

mobilized in protests over environmental issues and many were members of various interest groups, choirs, folkdance groups and sport clubs. However, the US has had a tremendous influence in developing a Western-style civil society that values individual freedoms, encourages individual activism and stimulates public pressure and participation to influence public institutions to become more open and accountable.

The former US Ambassador to Latvia, Catherine Todd Bailey clearly captures this idea in her speech, now famous in Latvia, given on 16 October 2007 at the University of Latvia:

‘What we have learned in the United States, is that to address these challenges [scandals and corruption that are part of political life] effectively you need a free and active press, strong and independent law enforcement agencies, a credible judiciary free from interference, a legislature able to conduct effective oversight but, most importantly, informed, engaged and active citizens. All of these institutions and groups are vital to ensure that a vibrant and healthy democracy can flourish and can grow. However, the last of these, active and engaged citizens, is the most critical, as it is the people who must be ever vigilant to the actions of their elected officials so that they can be ready, as President Thomas Jefferson once wrote, “to ring the fire bell in the night” when they see a threat to their democracy.’²

As in other other post-communist countries, the idea of enhancing opportunities for the people of Latvia to develop a vigorous civil society, and to take an activist role in shaping democracy, was at the core of the philosophy of engagement of most US public institutions and private foundations.

Overview of the main institutions, donors and actors building civil society

What follows is a brief overview of the activities of the main US institutions that supported development of civil society in Latvia – USAID and its sub-contractors; US private foundations, primarily the Soros Foundation–Latvia and the Baltic-American Partnership Fund;³ American-Latvian organizations and committed American-Latvian individuals.

² This speech, ‘Preserving Our Common Values’, which drew tremendous publicity, was delivered at a time when the Latvian government was attempting to dismiss the head of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau. The Bureau enjoyed extensive popular support and sought to sever the corrupt nexus between influential ‘oligarchs’ and political parties. While critics of the speech denounced it as interference in Latvia’s internal affairs, others viewed it as a friendly and timely reminder to Latvians to observe the principles of democracy and justice. http://riga.usembassy.gov/pr_10162007c.html (Last accessed on 18 August 2008).

³ Unlike other countries in Central and Eastern Europe, other private American foundations were not active in the Baltics.

USAID

The US government's role in building civil society in Latvia has been particularly visible, especially in the early to mid 1990s. USAID was among the first international donors in Latvia. Through its institutions, sub-contractors and partnerships, it started to provide a significant amount of funding and capacity building to a varied group of civil society players from 1991-92.⁴

In its early years, USAID provided support to Latvia's economic transition to open market reforms and re-establish its democratic institutions.⁵ While NGOs were not a target group in the early assistance programs, USAID provided support and capacity building to many institutions and individuals vital for democracy. From 1992 to 1995 USAID provided support to the emerging political institutions, including the Latvian parliament and political parties, to assist in establishing democratic political procedures and governance. The National Democratic Institute and International Republican Institute provided training in these areas. Through the work of the US Information Service, training, equipment and reference materials were provided in support of the establishment of independent media, with a view to help establish an open, pluralistic Latvia.

Over the years, USAID's assistance shifted from strengthening the legislature and political parties to helping individuals organize in order to create dynamic solutions to the problems facing Latvia,⁶ ranging from inter-ethnic relations to addressing the needs of the poor and marginalized. In 1995 USAID initiated a Democracy Network Program in Central and Eastern Europe.⁷ In Latvia USAID worked with a number of partners and intermediaries – the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)⁸, the National Forum Foundation, the National Democratic Institute, the Christian Children's Fund and the US Baltic Foundation (USBF). These subcontractors mostly provided training and capacity building, while USBF acted as an intermediary in running USAID's grant-making programs. Between 1995 and 1998 USBF was granted \$800,000 in funding. From this money USBF supported 36 public-policy-oriented NGOs by providing training, technical assistance and small program grants, as well as capacity building on public advocacy and monitoring government activity, influencing development of laws and regulations, organizational development and coalition building.⁹

⁴ Through its shrinking endowment to the Baltic American Partnership Fund, USAID's financial support is still present in Latvia.

⁵ American Embassy in Riga (1993), *US Seed Act Assistance Strategy for Latvia 1993-1995*. Available at: http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNABU143.pdf (Last accessed on 18 August 2008).

⁶ USAID (1998), *Latvia FY 2000 Results Review*. Available at: http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDABQ464.pdf (Last accessed on 18 August 2008).

⁷ http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/countries/lt/demnet.html (Last accessed on 18 August 2008).

⁸ A comprehensive overview of ICNL's work in Central and Eastern Europe, including Latvia, is available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDABZ733.pdf (Last accessed on 18 August 2008).

⁹ USAID, *Latvia FY 2000 Results Review*, released by USAID on July 1, 1998, available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDABQ464.pdf (Last accessed on 18 August 2008).

Over the years ICNL has regularly made key contributions to its partner organization in Latvia – at that time the NGO Center – in enacting a new legal framework for NGOs.

The purpose of the Democracy Network Program clearly reflected the spirit of the US support that runs through all of the USAID's funded programs – to strengthen NGOs so that they become effective advocates capable of promoting solutions to social problems. As Elita Sprōģe, then head of the USAID-Latvia Office notes, USAID's support was always about 'teaching a man to fish', and financial support to NGOs was coupled with certain principles and ideas, such as an invitation to engage in advocacy so that people would become active players in shaping matters that affect their lives.¹⁰ At that time NGOs didn't comprehend this concept and 'it often felt that the ideas we promoted ran ahead of the times.'¹¹ As a result, NGO training and capacity building programs were a necessity to achieve program goals.

USAID's direct support to Latvia ended in 1998. However, it is still indirectly continuing under the auspices of the Baltic American Partnership Fund (BAPF).

Soros Foundation–Latvia

The Soros Foundation–Latvia (SFL) was founded in 1992 by US investor and philanthropist George Soros, alongside other foundations set up in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to help these countries make the transition from communism. Similarly, as with other foundations set up by Soros, SFL works towards creating an open society. This concept envisions that societies can only flourish when they allow democratic governance, freedom of expression, a diverse range of opinion, and respect for individual rights.¹² With this in mind, SFL designed and implemented many programs to support the development of civil society in Latvia at a cost of more than \$65 million over fifteen years. SFL's work evolved over time, and can be divided into three broad phases.¹³

In its early years of operation, SFL's chief aim was to empower the individual. Accordingly, it supported a broad range of activities in many different areas of human endeavor, often supporting even small projects, to foster the realization that only by individual civic engagement is it possible to ensure a humane environment for oneself and others. Support provided at that time ranged from funding for contemporary arts and publishing

¹⁰ Personal communication on 10 July 2008.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Further information about the vision of G. Soros is available at http://www.soros.org/about/bios/a_soros (Last accessed on 18 August 2008).

¹³ This and the below information about the work of the Soros Foundation can be obtained from SFL's annual reports, available at the SFL office.

translations of classic works of humanities and social sciences to providing grants to scholars to attend international academic conferences and to students for studies abroad. Thus, for many, SFL served as a gateway to the West. At that time, the role of the Soros Foundation went far beyond that of a donor. As Guntis Ulmanis, President of Latvia at that time, notes 'we feel this support in the form of active interest taken by the leaders of the Soros Foundation in everything that happens in Latvia, and the true desire to facilitate the country's pace of development.'¹⁴

In later years, starting from the mid-1990s, SFL developed multifaceted and longer-term programs to influence systemic change, develop the institutions of civic society and establish long-term partners ready to seek solutions to many different problems. This is the time that NGOs in Latvia remember as the 'golden era', when international donors, including SFL, ran many well-funded aid programs aimed at providing capacity building to NGOs, developing NGO infrastructure and nurturing NGO activity in a wide spectrum of issue areas. At this time, many NGOs were created and the issues they covered varied from environmental protection to women's and youth associations, and from tenants associations to social care providers. Together with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Danish government, SFL supported the set up of a network of NGO support centers in regions of Latvia and a NGO center in Riga, a body that was central to developing a favorable environment for NGO activities in Latvia.¹⁵ Internet access points were set up across Latvia, and foundations were laid to establish the Riga Graduate School of Law to create a legal community based on Western traditions. Several SFL programs were spun off and established as separate NGOs broadening the issues covered by the NGO sector.

At the beginning of the new millennium, SFL phased out running wide-spectrum grant competitions, and defined public policy development as its priority issue for the years to come. SFL sought to improve the quality of the decision-making process in Latvia by developing the capability of individuals and independent institutions to offer quality alternative solutions to problems, to analyze the financial, social and political consequences of decisions, and to broaden the participation of an informed public in the decision-making process. In more recent years, SFL has worked towards promoting the rule of law, tolerance and human rights, and has engaged in helping strengthen the European perspective of new European Union (EU) neighbors such as Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus.

In its first decade of operation, SFL enjoyed wide support of its ideas among the public, politicians and government officials. Since Latvia's entry

¹⁴ Soros Foundation Latvia (1994), Annual Report 1992-1993, address of G. Ulmanis. Riga: SFL.

¹⁵ Upon closure of the NGO center, some of its work is being continued by Civic Alliance – Latvia, a membership NGO advocating on behalf of the common interest of NGOs and charitable foundation "Ziedot".

into the EU, an anti-liberal trend has been evident in certain segments of Latvian society. It has manifested itself in shrinking support for liberal democratic ideas, and political and media attacks on advocacy organizations and their foreign donors, including SFL. In this respect Latvia seems to be following a broader trend observed in Central and Eastern Europe, whereby 'EU tutelage works until you get in, but once you have joined, there are few incentives or means to induce further reforms or the observance of democratic norms.'¹⁶ On a societal level, values such as tolerance and non-discrimination do not appeal to voters and, consequently, do not drive party agendas. Highly visible symbols of the liberal democratic agenda (such as SFL and its partner organizations, key players in advocacy against corruption, good governance and tolerance) are anathema to the political interests of the business elite.

Baltic American Partnership Fund

At the end of the 1990s, as USAID was phasing out its assistance from the region, together with the Open Society Institute it recognized that another decade of foreign assistance was needed for the longer-term process of strengthening civil society and non-profits in the Baltics. As a result, USAID and the Open Society Institute jointly funded the Baltic-American Partnership Fund (BAPF). BAPF is a US-based public-private partnership, and its mission is to strengthen and sustain civil society in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.¹⁷ Capitalized at \$15 million for a lifespan of ten years, the Fund became functional in 1999 and was operated through the network of Soros foundations that acted as local intermediaries in the Baltic States. Local Baltic American Partnership Programs (BAPPs) had their local expert councils and staff to advise and direct the expenditure of funds. The institutional set up of the program and the considerable level of autonomy granted to local intermediaries ensured that the programs designed were sensitive to local conditions. At the same time, the overall mission provided by both donors was followed. As noted by an external assessor, BAPF has been an example of 'adaptive work', meaning that solutions have often been invented by the stakeholders in the context of local conditions, rather than imported ideas,¹⁸ and programs in the Baltic States had an image of indigenous institutions, rather than branches of a foreign donor.¹⁹

¹⁶ Jacques Rupnik (2007), 'From Democracy Fatigue to Populist Backlash', *Journal of Democracy*, 18(4), p.22.

¹⁷ Information about BAPF is available from its annual reports at www.bapf.org (Last accessed on August 18 2008).

¹⁸ Stephen McCormick (2006), *Assessment of the Effectiveness of BAPF/BAPP and of the state of civil society in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania July-August 2006*, page 7. http://www.bapf.org/BAPF_BAPP%20Assessment.pdf (Last accessed on August 18 2008).

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.3.

Throughout its existence, the overall strategic objectives for its grant making remained unchanged: 1) a clear, supportive legal and regulatory environment for civil society; 2) the institutional development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and 3) financial sustainability of the NGO sector.

After almost ten years of operation in Latvia, BAPF's legacy is quite visible. Work to improve the legal environment of NGOs that was started with USAID's support in the mid-1990s was successfully completed with grants to the NGO Center and, later, to the Civic Alliance–Latvia, as a result of which a set of primary and secondary laws regulating NGOs was passed between 2004 and 2006. These laws include the definition of public-benefit status for non-profits and the accompanying designation of tax benefits to qualifying organizations. Owing to the work of grantees, appropriate mechanisms and procedures have been set up for NGOs to provide input in the legislative process.

Through the NGO institutional-development program, BAPF has brought a new mentality to the NGO sector, promoting professionalism and long-term development of NGOs. A core group of NGOs with financial support and technical assistance has gone through a serious process of organizational learning and growth, with important skills gained and capacity built in areas of strategic planning, fundraising, governance, and advocacy (ranging from national-level organizations such as WWF-Latvia and the 'Papardes Ziedis' Association for Family Planning and Sexual Health, to organizations of regional significance, such as the 'Baltā Māja' Association in the town of Līvāni). It is hoped that these organizations will continue playing a leading role in further civil society development efforts after BAPF will be closed down at the end of 2008.

Although significant support has been provided to promote the advocacy capacity of NGOs, the advocacy tradition is not yet fully rooted (either financially or mentally) in Latvian society. Civil society organizations, especially advocacy organizations, whose primary sources of funding were international or bilateral support, are now undergoing a difficult period of insufficient funding made worse by high inflation and a brain drain to the private and public sectors. Even the strongest and best known NGOs are struggling, as insufficient funding and management problems lead to decreasing efficiency. BAPF has paid a lot of attention to fostering a culture of public-benefit advocacy, and extensive support was provided to projects that promoted the NGO advocacy role vis-à-vis the state. As a result, advocacy NGOs are skillful and competent in talking about their issue areas with government and EU officials, but it is challenging for them to explain their added value to businesses and individuals in Latvia. Thus, more proactive strategies to help NGOs with fundraising and constituency building might have been helpful for rooting civil society in Latvia.

Nevertheless, indigenous philanthropy is growing, albeit slowly. With BAPF's engagement, six community foundations in Latvia have been set up since 2002 in various towns in Latvia. A private foundation, 'Ziedot' ('Donate'), set up on the basis of BAPF's long-term grantee NGO Center in cooperation with Hansabank (now renamed Swedbank), has attracted more than 1.2 million lats (over \$2.5 million) for various charitable projects in four-and-a-half years of operation. The Partners in Ideas Fund – one of the most direct BAPP-Latvia legacies – promotes the practice of venture philanthropy by applying business solutions to societal problems and joining together socially responsible companies and individuals. Many BAPF grantees are starting to engage and nurture relationships with businesses in the hope for fundraising.

Although BAPF will close down at the end of 2008, Stephen Del Rosso, BAPF's chair, stated that 'traces of BAPF's DNA can be found in scores of civil society organizations throughout the region that will work to strengthen the democratic process for decades to come.'²⁰

American-Latvians

Having dreamed of Latvia's freedom while in exile, many American-Latvians moved to Latvia in the early 1990s. Many took up leadership positions in various governmental and non-governmental structures, pursuing ideals of freedom and democracy. Individuals such as Vita Matīsa and Vita Tērauda, both of whom served as directors of Soros Foundation – Latvia; Kaija Gertnere, former director of the NGO center in Rīga; Ilga Bērzkalns, who has consulted many NGOs and businesses in Latvia; Pēteris Elferts, former Head of Rīga's Office of World Federation of Free Latvians and Member of Parliament; Māra Sīmane, who works to promote development cooperation in Latvia and many others are well known in civil society circles and have left their legacy in shaping the current civil society.

As Vita Tērauda notes, besides contributing to ideas of liberal democracy, exile Latvians believed that the way in which Latvian society was organized in the US should be put into practice in Latvia.²¹ The tradition of volunteerism, community building and, above all, the sense of Latvian identity that was at the core of organizing formal and informal gatherings of Latvian people in the US was brought over to Latvia. American-Latvians promoted summer camps (e.g., 3x3), the tradition of celebrating national holidays (such as the Proclamation of Independence on 18 November, commemoration of freedom fights on 11 November, deportation of Latvians on 25 March and others), renewal of student sororities and fraternities, etc.

²⁰ Stephen Del Rosso (2008), *Border Crossing and Boundary Breaking: Reflections on the Baltics and a Rewarding Association with the Baltic American Partnership Fund*, BAPF Closing Report, to be released in October 2008. Will be available at www.bapf.org.

²¹ Personal communication on 7 July 2008.

The active engagement of the US Latvian community has occasionally served as a source of inspiration to Latvians. Liesma Ose, current program director at the SFL, remembers her 1996 visit to the Latvian congregation in Indianapolis, where she was struck by the engagement of the parish in contributing in cash and kind towards the building of social care houses for a community composed of various nationalities and religions, in the belief that as a result of this work the community will be a more pleasant and secure place to live.²² This meeting inspired her to devote much of her professional life towards promoting concepts of civic education and engagement in Latvia.

On the other hand, it would be fair to note that local Latvians were not always eagerly receptive to ideas promoted by American-Latvians and have occasionally showed a tendency to reject the notion of 'being taught' by Westerners. Assistance has always been most effective when foreign organizations and individuals have been able to strike an effective balance between providing effective know-how and being respectful of Latvians and their local knowledge.

American-Latvian institutions, such as the American Latvian Association (ALA) and American Latvian Youth Association (ALJA), with the World Federation of Free Latvians (PBLA) acting as an umbrella organization, were also very active in supporting the renewal of Latvia's freedom. Pēteris Elferts recalls that the lobbying role of PBLA in the early 1990s, in terms of shaping the transition to a constitutional democracy in Latvia, was unprecedented, as PBLA leaders worked extensively with Latvia's politicians in establishing the foundations of the newly re-established republic.²³ Since 1993, PBLA has provided around \$500,000 in grants to institutions and projects (including civil society organizations) in Latvia from the resources of the Latvian Freedom Fund.

While funding provided by US public sources and the Soros Foundation was clearly targeted at promoting the ideas of liberal democracy, the engagement of American-Latvian organizations tended to include more conservative ideas targeted at preserving the identity of the Latvian nation, protection of the Latvian language and otherwise addressing the legacy of the Soviet occupation of Latvia. Although on a much smaller scale, American-Latvian organizations still provide support to charitable projects that contribute to preserving Latvian identity and culture.²⁴ For instance, ALA provides support for children in Latvia – those in large, poor families, abandoned children, and orphans – with a view to preserving the Latvian nation. In addition, many American-Latvians are generous supporters of various charitable causes on an individual basis.

²² Personal communication on 18 August 2008.

²³ Personal communication on 29 July 2008.

²⁴ http://www.alausa.org/read.php?p=sadarbiba_ar_latvijju, (Last accessed on 18 August 2008).

Conclusions and the road ahead

The building of civil society in Latvia has been marked by many influences. Besides the support coming from the US, there were other bilateral and multilateral donors, including the United Nations Development Office, pre-accession and post-accession funding from EU structures and European governments, Latvia's government and many other institutions, events, and personalities have shaped the current state of civil society in Latvia.

Nevertheless, some features can be attributed as forming a legacy of support from US public and private foundations. Funding and ideas that have been provided by USAID, BAPF and SFL have certainly contributed to building a more Western-type civil society with elements of civic activism, watchdogs, the monitoring role of NGOs and the tradition of philanthropy. These concepts have become part of the multifaceted civil society in Latvia. Though the general level of citizen engagement in Latvia is still low, there have been a number of examples of successful civic mobilization as a response from the most active part of the population to murky, ill-explained and seemingly corrupt decision-making. By no means implying that this has been a direct legacy of American support, calls from civil society to withdraw the candidacy of Ingrida Ūdre for Latvia's European Commissioner in 2004, and the so-called 'umbrella revolution' led by liberal intellectuals in the autumn of 2007, are some of the most visible examples illustrating that civil society activists are safeguarding the principles of democracy and good governance. As *The Economist* magazine's Edward Lucas notes, the promotion of good governance is a remaining challenge for Baltic civil society, thus this kind of mobilization is a positive sign.²⁵

At the same time, the public image of this type of activism is not uniformly positive. Despite the publicly declared ambition of both government and parliament to engage in a dialogue with NGOs as part of decision-making,²⁶ there have been instances when high-level public officials have undermined NGOs by asking them to refrain from criticizing Parliament's decisions and denounced NGOs as troublemakers.²⁷ The conservative media have over the years been critical of NGOs promoting liberal values, and have created and promoted the image of NGOs as foreign agents implementing the secret plans of their donors against traditional Latvian values and the nation

²⁵ E. Lucas, *Civil Society in the Baltics: An Assessment*, http://www.bapf.org/BAPF_BAPP%20Assessment.pdf (Last accessed on 18 August 2008).

²⁶ Cooperation Memorandum between Non-governmental Organizations and the Cabinet of Ministers signed on June 15 2005 by the Prime Minister and NGOs available in English at <http://www.mk.gov.lv/en/sabiedribas-lidzdaliba/sadarbibas-memorands/> and the "Declaration on Cooperation with NGOs" adopted by Parliament on 30 March 2006, available in Latvian at [http://www.nvo.lv/files/1139_SaeimasNVOdeklaracija_pedvar\(linkam\).doc](http://www.nvo.lv/files/1139_SaeimasNVOdeklaracija_pedvar(linkam).doc). (Both last accessed on 18 August 2008).

²⁷ USAID, 2007 NGO Sustainability Index, Latvia http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/dem_gov/ngoindex/2007/latvia.pdf. (Last accessed on 18 August 2008).

state.²⁸ Nevertheless, most people believe in the role of active citizenship in promoting the country's further development.

The tradition of volunteerism and sense of community that was highly valued among the Latvian community in the US still has a long way to go in Latvia. Although individual philanthropy is slowly growing, issues that are popularly appealing are limited to sports, children and animal welfare. Hopefully, over time volunteerism will become culturally accepted in Latvia. On a more positive note, community philanthropy and community foundations, which were completely new ideas in early 2000, with just a few people in Latvia having vaguely heard the terms, have proven themselves as working concepts in six communities across the country, and also serve as sources of continuous inspiration for other communities in Latvia.

Despite the ups and downs on the road, civil society has been largely developed in Latvia. The task ahead is to root civil society culturally and financially in the local context, and to benefit in the long run from the energy, talent and ideas coming from the diverse and multiple civil society actors.

²⁸ Ibid.

The Georgetown University Syndrome and Latvian Economic Reforms

George J. Viksniņš

What is the ‘Georgetown Consensus’, the term suggested by the editor of this volume? We can also find various references to a ‘Georgetown University Syndrome’ – a concept apparently invented by a Moscow-educated historian/archivist at the time when the Valdis Birkavs government was being re-organized in the summer of 1994. In addition to the resignation of the Prime Minister, Valdis Birkavs, several other ministers also stepped down, including the deputy Prime Minister in charge of economics (Ojārs Kehris), the Minister of Finance (Uldis Osis), and a deputy in the Finance Ministry in charge of revenues (Jānis Platais). All three had studied at Georgetown University in the previous two years, and were identified as ‘the Georgetown gang’, and the left was apparently happy to have them leave. This change of government, the first of many, was widely interpreted as signifying a ‘turn to the left’, although it may have been more of a re-alignment of influential political forces, especially providing greater benefits to the farmers.

As noted above, the policy-makers who left their government posts had attended the Pew Economic Freedom Fellows Program (PEFFP) at Georgetown University, about a half-year long, in the US, mainly in Washington, which consisted, first, of about three months of academic training in economics, business, and computer use, taught by Georgetown University faculty. The second part provided practical work experience, often with the IMF and/or the World Bank. The program, which began in 1992 and lasted for ten years, was financed by an influential American foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts. The Pew program was designed to provide mid-level promising policy-makers with a theoretical background in market-oriented economics, which had generally been absent from the economics curricula of the so-called Comecon (or CMEA) countries.¹ During the first few years of the program, in the early 1990s, it was difficult to find suitable candidates to fill the twenty slots in the planned course of

¹ For more background, see Ch.VII, ‘What Comes After the CMEA’, in George J. Viksniņš (1997), *Economic Systems in Historical Perspective*. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company. The Comecon trading system, establishing the rules of the game for Moscow and the satellites, came apart in January 1991, even before the USSR itself imploded.

studies, in large part due to language problems. In the first class the three Baltic countries sent six participants, who played important roles in the transition process in their countries, especially in Latvia. In addition to the Pew program for potential government leaders, Georgetown University has also sponsored (and continues to do so annually) an intensive seven-week program of summer courses and internships for college students, called the Engalitcheff Institute for Comparative Political and Economic Systems, which has had quite a number of Baltic representatives, beginning with one Latvian student in 1989.

Two of the PEFPP class of 1992 were among the leaders of a Latvian political party called *Latvijas Ceļš* (Latvia's Way), which was formed at a private conference at the Hotel Jūrmala in February 1993. About one third of the membership of the organizing group consisted of representatives of the Supreme Council of the Latvian SSR, but also incorporated quite a few representatives of the World Federation of Free Latvians (the Latvian acronym is PBLA). Already in the latter part of the 1980s, that organization had commissioned a number of position papers to help in the transition process. These position papers, discussed at several conferences organized by a group of Latvian business-people and academics, convened by Aristids Lamberg, included the following. (It might be noted that several of the papers were originally written in English, but then hurriedly translated, reportedly with the involvement of the Hudson Institute, a conservative 'think tank' in Indiana seeking to help in the transition, especially in the Baltic States.)

- ♦ Juris Viksniņš, 'Latvia's Independent Economy';
- ♦ Gundars Kēniņš Kings, 'How to Bring Latvia into the International Economy';
- ♦ Vilnis Vītols, 'Economic Suicide: Venezuela from 1977 to 1990';
- ♦ Juris Viksniņš, 'Money and Banks in Independent Latvia';
- ♦ Andris Trapāns, 'Regulation of Foreign Direct Investments in Latvia';
- ♦ Juris Neimanis, 'What Needs to Be Considered in Creating a New Tax System for Latvia';
- ♦ Jānis Muchs, 'How Latvia Can Develop in Connection with the European Common Market?';
- ♦ Ivars Bārs, 'Foreign Economic Assistance for Independent Latvia';
- ♦ Ivars Bārs, 'Steps to be Taken to Counter a Soviet Economic Blockade Against Latvia';

It is difficult to ascertain whether any of these position papers were actually used by the governments in the early years. The two papers by Viksniņš were ostensibly read carefully by Einars Repše, who became the President of the central bank (but had only had training in physics), and Neimanis became an adviser to the Supreme Council in 1991 and the Rīga Business School's MBA program subsequently (with USAID funding).

In addition to Neimanis (a professor at Niagara), the Latvian-American founding fathers of that program included Gundars Ķēniņš Kings, dean of the business school at Pacific Lutheran University, and Voldemārs Innuss, an administration official at the University of Buffalo. (Professor Neimanis has published a book about the final days of the Soviet system, but unfortunately does not discuss the bureaucratic infighting that was taking place in Latvia in those days).²

Several people, including myself and Uldis Klauss, worked as experts at the central bank of Latvia under the sponsorship of the US Treasury Department; others were detailed to the Ministry of Finance. Klauss continued to work full-time at the Bank of Latvia, initially financed by the US Treasury, but later as a division chief on the Bank's payroll. I ended my relationship with the US government after one year, but continued to work for the Bank as Senior Adviser to the President (initially Repše, but later Ilmārs Rimševičs, who had studied at Georgetown in 1989).

A very important role at the Bank was also played by Bruno Rubess, a Latvian businessman from Canada (with ties to Volkswagen), who had been elected to the Board of the Bank. Rubess introduced a number of innovative management techniques at the Bank, transforming the hierarchical decision-making process inherited from the old structures with democratic and participatory planning sessions (devoted to discussions and arguments, and divorced from the more formal decision-making meeting that followed, usually after several days). It was interesting to see quite junior economists casting votes of the same weight as senior consultants and upper management at the brain-storming meeting.

The essence of the Georgetown contribution to Latvian economic reform in the early years of the restoration of independence after 1991 can be found in the 'Latvia 2000' document. This was developed for the *Latvijas Ceļš* party by a team formed in Washington, DC, in January 1992, led by Ojārs Kehris, Uldis Osis and myself. 'Latvia 2000' held eight meetings in Washington and in Riga, and solicited input from at least a couple dozen friends and colleagues. In addition to the above-named three, the document also listed Aina Bataraga, Inesis Feiferis, Dzintars Kalniņš, Uldis Klauss, Juris Neimanis, Ilmārs Rimševičs, and Uldis Vītoļiņš as co-authors. In the presentation of the program, great emphasis was placed on popular participation – 'the citizens of Latvia have to be well-informed about each step of the economic reform.' Also, 'the reform has to continue despite changes in government' – although the framers of the reform program probably did not envisage as many as a dozen different governments since the early 1990s... It was pointed out, moreover, that Latvia does not need external pressure, for example, from the IMF, but can be trusted 'to do the right things.' The elections in June 1993

² George J. Neimanis (1997), *The Collapse of the Soviet Empire: The View from Riga*. Westport: Praeger.

led to a clear-cut victory for with thirty-six delegates in the hundred-seat unicameral legislature.³

The ruling coalition was led by the LC and included the *Zemnieku Savienība* (Farmers' Union) as a partner, but a couple of other parties also garnered administrative posts in the Saeima. As mentioned earlier, the coalition disintegrated in July 1994, with the *Zemnieku Savienība* withdrawing over the issue of protective agricultural tariffs, and the Birkavs government resigned. The opposition parties tried to form a 'credible alternative government,' but failed to do so. In the meantime, *Latvijas Ceļš* managed to entice some new partners into a coalition, but Valdis Birkavs himself stepped down from being Prime Minister to take on the foreign affairs portfolio, and was replaced 'by one of the more popular ministers, Māris Gailis.' As noted earlier, three members of the Georgetown Gang were also replaced.⁴ One of the principals in this case argues that the present low productivity of Latvian agriculture has its roots in the short-term thinking about protective tariffs on farm goods, which drove agricultural activities back to the 19th century.

While the state farms (*sovkhози*) and the collectives (*kolkhozi*) were largely destroyed in the early years of the reform, plans to replace them with farmers' cooperatives and marketing organizations, such as had existed in the 1930s, were not made. Individual farmers were left to bargain with monopsonists, who paid very low prices at the farm gate (and, in a number of cases, did not pay at all, conveniently going out of business).

Five key aspects of economic reform were discussed. First, the contrasting objectives of the reform and the existing environment and a list of specific areas to be addressed. The basic principles of private property and the profit motive, market prices, a freely convertible currency and limited government regulation were all mentioned, in addition to a social welfare network, to respond to political pressures. Second, property rights and privatization were to be part of an overall structural policy (including foreign ownership of land, always a sensitive issue in developing countries, but avoidance of 'foreign capital monopoly'). Third, monetary and fiscal policy goals were suggested, bringing the inflation rate down to 7-10 percent annually by 2000 and the development of financial markets (although a good deal of emphasis was put on 'regulation' by the Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Latvia). Considerably more attention was paid to the principles of developing

³ Further information may be found in an article by I. Mednis (2003), 'Politiskās partijas "Latvijas Ceļš" izveidošanās un darbība 20.gs 90. gados,' in Daugavpils Universitātes Humanitārās fakultātes XII Zinātnisko lasījumu materiāli. Vēsture. VI sējums, I daļa, Rīga: Saule, as well as Juris Dreifelds (1996), *Latvia in Transition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Ch.III.

⁴ See Juris Dreifelds, *op. cit.*, pp.94-97. Dreifelds describes Birkavs as being 'low-profile and rather stiff.' See also, Andris Runcis (2005), 'Parties and Politics in Latvia: Origins and Current Development,' in Anatoly Kulik and Susanna Pshizova (eds.), *Political Parties in Post-Soviet Space*. Praeger, pp.161-182.

a market for government debt than to the need to design a serious and effective tax system, alas. Fourth, promotion of foreign trade and export policy was discussed, including a mention of free trade zones. The fifth part of the program was to be a work in progress – like Rīga itself, no completion date was envisaged (to foil the devil, in a well-known Latvian fairy tale, Rīga will never ever be quite finished).

In general, the key ideas incorporated in ‘Latvia 2000’ were quite similar to those of the so-called Washington Consensus, which was popular with the IMF and the World Bank in the early part of the 1990s – and which was closely related to the experience of those two institutions in Latin American and also Africa in earlier decades. While there were quite a few lists of necessary changes associated with the Consensus, they were likely to include recommendations for privatization, liberalization of foreign trade and payments (reducing the scope of prebendal payments to bureaucrats), market-guided resource allocation (including labor income and rents), and conservative fiscal and monetary policies

The applicability of these guiding principles to the transition process in Central and East Europe, as well as to the Asian financial confidence crisis is debatable. This set of recommendations can be described as ‘neocon conventional wisdom’, which might be enough of a damaging label to sink any proposals associated with it.⁵

The leftist critique was led by Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel laureate and Democratic Party activist, but he was not the only one.⁶ Still, supply-side ideas survive and demand management (or Keynesianism) does not appear to be the main concern of policy-makers in the developing countries.

Many of Latvia’s economic and political elite, some of whom were educated in Georgetown in the early 1990s, to some extent became imbued with these right-wing, conservative ideas, and tried to apply those theories to the practical economic policy-making of Latvia. Of course, every country is unique in its own way, and the particular path of transition of Latvia is as much a product of path dependency as it is a product of the particular circle of policy-makers.

Clearly, in the early years of the transition, in the 1991-1995 period, before the Latvian banking crisis, the vision derived from the Washington Consensus was the leading economic ideology. While populists were abundant, the right-wing free marketers were able to gain the upper hand, and managed to steer Latvia towards the path of privatization, liberalization and opening up to foreign direct investment (mostly from Scandinavia and the rest of the EU, remarkably little from the US and Canada).

⁵ A large literature exists on the political-economic nexus of the transition. See, for example, Oleh Havrylyshyn (2006), *Divergent Paths in Post-Communist Transformation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, as well as his ‘Fifteen Years of Transformation in the Post-Communist World.’ *Cato*, Nov. 2007.

⁶ Joseph Stiglitz (2002), *Globalization and Its Discontents*. New York: W.W. Norton.

If contrasted with the experience of neighboring Estonia, often a favorite example of the most successful transition, which has a similar scale, historical experience, base conditions, and geographical proximity to Latvia, it could be argued that the Washington Consensus should have been used in Latvia even more rigorously. Estonia was able to undertake some key reforms sooner, and to mobilize the public in support of these reforms better. As a consequence, they were able to weather the Russian ruble crisis a bit better, to better identify their key comparative advantages (such as IT), and to privatize more equitably.⁷

The references to Georgetown in the early part of the 1990s basically involved the area of fiscal policy, where the ministries of finance and economics were the main carriers of such ideas, but it might be argued, perhaps even more strongly, that the Bank of Latvia was greatly influenced by external definitions of monetary operations. If the author of this chapter may be allowed a few self-serving observations, I met with Repše in 1992, shortly after independence (of both the country and the central bank) to discuss the path to be taken to establish a stable currency. I became a US Treasury Department consultant to the central bank in the summer of 1992, at the time that the temporary currency, the Latvian ruble (LVR) was introduced, at par with the Russian ruble, against the advice of most Soviet-era finance specialists, academic experts, and also the press.⁸

In early 1992, Latvia was still a part of the ruble zone. The financial and payments system operated under the existing plan guidelines dictated by the Gosbank in Moscow – credits continued to be issued and cash was supplied as part of the centralized plan. However, currency exchange shops were opening for business even before independence in both Latvia and Estonia, establishing the important principle of consumer choice in currency substitution very early in the game – and providing a concrete step in the separation process. Although a new Bank of Latvia had been created in July 1990, it was not able to accomplish much until September 1991, when it was merged with the Latvian branch of the Gosbank. Einars Repše, a member of the Parliament, was appointed President of the Bank, which was authorized at that time to take over the 48 branches of the various specialized state-owned banks.

⁷ The struggles in the larger neighbor to the East may be equally relevant. See Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Treisman (2000), *Without a Map: Political Tactics and Economic Reform in Russia*. Cambridge: MIT Press. Another possible research topic suggests itself – the Georgetown system and Russian economic reform – since a few influential Russians in policy-making circles were also PEFPP graduates.

⁸ Some of the details of this process can be found (in Latvian) in Juris Viksninš (1993), 'Makroekonomijas stabilizācija,' *Universitāts*, 71(234), but in English, in an equally difficult-to-find source: George J. Viksninš and Jānis Platais (1996), 'Money and Banking in the Transition: The Case of Latvia, 1991-1995.' GU Economics Department, Pew Case Study, March 1996. An easier-to-find, but less detailed overview is in George J. Viksninš, 'Baltic Monetary Regimes in the XXIst Century', *Intereconomics*, Sept./Oct. 2000.

The newly independent central bank was established at an extraordinarily difficult time. Prices in 1991 had more than doubled, while nominal interest rates had remained very low. Deposit rates paid by the new private banks were about 10 percent per year, but loan rates averaged 17-24%. The Gosbank charged only 8% at its rediscount facility. The Soviet government usually required the surrender of a part of earnings in convertible currencies at a commercial exchange rate, well below the market rate. Taxpayers having foreign exchange earnings had to pay part of their taxes in foreign exchange until the end of 1992, though the surrender requirement was lifted earlier.

After Einārs Repše became President of the Bank of Latvia, two developments moved forward quite rapidly – he continued the liberalization of foreign exchange regulations, and technical preparations for leaving the ruble zone were accelerated. At the end of 1991, the Monetary Reform Committee was established consisting of three members: Bank of Latvia President Repše, Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis (who is now back in that post in 2008), and Chairman of the relevant Parliamentary Commission, Ojārs Kehris. There were no quantitative restrictions on how much the exchange rate could change or how much money could be exchanged (I had to argue long and hard to have the Committee agree to that position). Initially, the buy-sell spreads were quite wide, but they narrowed quite quickly. In the second area, in order to overcome a serious cash shortage, a temporary currency, the Latvian ruble (LVR, known as ‘repsīši’) was introduced on 7 May 1992.

The LVR was introduced at par with the Russian ruble. At that time various Soviet financial ‘experts’ in Rīga forecast a dire outcome for this new currency – after all Repše was a physicist and not a ‘finansist’, the new money had no backing or ‘cover’, Latvia was too small to have its own money, and so on. A few ‘authorities’ in the old banking sector likened the issue of the new money to economic suicide, and initially the market value of the LVR as well as the Russian ruble declined steadily against major currencies. However, on 6 July 1992, the Monetary Reform Committee decided to make the LVR the only legal tender in Latvia from 20 July onward. All ruble deposits, including those of individuals, enterprises, and institutions, had already been denominated in Latvian rubles, but now all depositors were free to withdraw either Latvian or Russian rubles from their accounts during the 6-20 July period.

During 1992 monetary policy was guided by the objective of stabilizing the economy and reducing inflation. During May-July 1992, when the Latvian ruble circulated alongside the Russian ruble at par, the Bank of Latvia coordinated its policy with that of Russia, but tensions were beginning to develop. The decision to float the Latvian ruble against all foreign currencies, including the ruble, after 20 July 1992, created the necessary conditions for the pursuit of an independent monetary policy by the Bank of Latvia, and

an ambitious stabilization program was adopted for the second half of 1992, with the objective of reducing inflation as quickly as possible.

As the LVR divorce from the ruble zone was becoming finalized, and the Latvian currency was rising (against FSU monies), it became obvious that the old payments system had disappeared. For a while, the Bank of Latvia continued to function as a 'buyer of last resort' for FSU monies, but – after acquiring more than five billion of various FSU rubles by the end of the year – a decision was made to suspend such purchases as of 22 January 1993. The economic and psychological consequences of this final divorce were troublesome for many. The Minister of Finance at that time, Uldis Osis, recalls:

'Representatives of big enterprises were opponents to the introduction of the Latvian ruble. They had close economic relationships with suppliers and consumers from the former Soviet Union and were interested in a united economic area.'

During 1992, the foreign assets owned by the Republic of Latvia before the Soviet occupation were slowly returned to its successor institution, and Latvia joined the International Monetary Fund on 19 May 1992, with a total quota of SDR 61 million (at the time, approximately \$85 million). In 1991, Latvia had recorded a substantial external current account surplus – largely because prices of finished goods in the ruble zone had been freed first, while the prices of energy and other raw materials continued to be held at very low levels (a nickel for a gallon of gasoline?). There was also a surplus in the government budget, though that did not last long – with calendar-year 1992 showing a small deficit. Still, the payments picture in 1992 continued to be positive. There was a merchandise trade deficit, but that was more than offset by a services (mostly transport) surplus – netting to a current account surplus of about \$43 million. By the fourth quarter of 1992, the LVR exchange rate began to rise against the dollar, and capital began flowing in and not out.

There were signs at the beginning of 1993 that the stabilization of the economy was beginning to show positive results, with monthly inflation at low single digit levels since December 1992. Discussion about the introduction of the permanent Latvian currency (the lat) and strong statements from the Bank of Latvia about the present serious undervaluation of the Latvian ruble, caused a strong increase in the demand for Latvian rubles. The Latvian ruble sharply appreciated in nominal terms, despite some significant intervention by the Bank of Latvia to slow down its rate of increase. During February and March 1993, the Latvian currency appreciated by 25% against the US dollar. After some stabilization of the lat/dollar exchange rate in the second quarter of 1993, the rate was allowed to appreciate by another 10%. Thus, in December 1993, an individual holding a unit of Latvian currency could purchase about 40% more dollars than

one year earlier. Nevertheless, despite this appreciation, the convertible net international assets (in lats) of the BoL increased 2.38 times during 1993. Gross reserves were also boosted by loans from the IMF, amounting to almost six months of merchandise imports at the end of 1994. After some outflows of foreign exchange in February 1994 the Bank of Latvia fixed the exchange rate of 1 lat to 0.7997 SDR. More on the evolution of monetary policy after the successful stabilization of the lats (LVL) can be found in the documents produced by the Bank including detailed annual reports.⁹ Somewhat more academic analysis is provided by Helmut Ancāns, the erstwhile chief of the Bank of Latvia Monetary Policy Division.¹⁰

To bring this chapter to a conclusion, it is clear that the Georgetown consensus involved the following themes: A market economy with private ownership of the major means of production; Entrepreneurial activity at the heart of economic development; Minimal government involvement in business activities; An independent judicial system, and governmental checks and balances.

While all of these market-oriented ideas certainly did not rule Latvia's economic reform, the most significant contribution was probably the setting up of the goal of membership in the European Union very early in the restructuring process. That enabled the center-right governments to survive a couple of dangerous populist challenges and to dismiss most of their radical proposals as dangerous to EU entry. Of course, it was also helpful that both neighbors as well as all of the former members of the Comecon had their sights on EU membership, and that there was strong popular support for a reorientation to the West and rapid integration into the world market economy.

⁹ Bank of Latvia, *www.bank.lv*.

¹⁰ Helmut Ancāns (2000), 'Monetary Policy and Banking System' in Roberts Zile (ed.), *Latvia Entering the XXIst Century*. Rīga: Nacionālais Medicīnas Apgāds.

Anti-Americanism in Latvia: An Exploratory Essay

Nils Muižnieks and Pēteris Viņķelis

Latvia has the well-deserved reputation of being one of the more Atlanticist members of the European family of nations. Membership in NATO has enjoyed strong popular support among the Latvian political elite and the (ethnic) Latvian public.¹ Latvian foreign policy documents and high officials regularly term America Latvia's 'strategic partner', a label no other country merits. Since Latvia regained independence, Latvian presidents have had regular access to the White House, while several American presidents have visited Latvia. Latvia gave immediate support to the United States in its war against Iraq. All of this would appear to suggest that anti-Americanism should be negligible in Latvia, which was the case until recently. This essay explores how and why anti-Americanism has begun to manifest itself in contemporary Latvia.

As the survey data presented later in this essay demonstrate, anti-Americanism – antipathy towards the American people, American culture or American policy – is not very pronounced in Latvia. Latvian public opinion towards the US is in line with the European mainstream. Moreover, a full-fledged anti-Americanism as a coherent ideology in the social, cultural or political fields is practically non-existent in contemporary Latvia. However, a diffuse anti-Americanism as a broad range of attitudes and actions critical of or opposed to the US is a phenomenon that has become more common in recent years.

Sociological survey data in Latvia about popular and elite attitudes towards Americans and the US are fragmentary. However, there is much anecdotal evidence to suggest that Latvia has witnessed a rise in anti-Americanism, at least public expressions thereof, over the last five years. This is nothing unique to Latvia, as surveys the world over suggest a similar trend elsewhere as well. One of the primary reasons globally has been the war in Iraq and the associated tarnishing of America's image as a beacon of democratic values. However, this factor does not appear to be decisive in

¹ On differences in foreign policy orientation between Latvians and Russians in Latvia and the latter's anti-NATO stance, see Aivars Tabūns (2006), 'Attitudes Towards the State and Latvian Foreign Policy', in Nils Muižnieks, ed., *Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions*. Rīga: University of Latvia Press, pp.22-32.

Latvia, as factors related to post-EU and NATO accession, domestic Latvian politics and Russia have played an even more important role.

In Latvia to date, one encounters a mild version of anti-Americanism derived primarily from:

- ♦ the decline of American prestige associated with failures in the Iraq war;
- ♦ an overall rise in anti-liberalism characteristic of Central and Eastern Europe after accession to the European Union and NATO, with the attendant dissipation of the 'taboo' on expressing anti-Americanism;
- ♦ anti-corruption investigations which have directly impinged upon the interests of influential business groupings and individuals, who have used nationalist anti-American rhetoric to deflect criticism; and
- ♦ the increase in Russia's 'soft power' in Latvia and growing anti-Americanism in Russia's media and political discourse.

Constraints on the Growth of Anti-Americanism

A strong pro-American sentiment among most of the Latvian political elite and significant portions of the public was (and still is) linked with the restoration of independence and security concerns. The Latvian elite and (ethnic) Latvian public see the US as the main bulwark of Latvian independence, a counterweight to Russia, and the primary guarantor of security before and after NATO accession. Latvian pro-Americanism, especially among the elite, has often been driven by pragmatic security considerations and has been a function of Latvian concern about Russia's intentions.

The growth of anti-Americanism has been constrained by tactical considerations, as well as myriad human ties and common values. As noted elsewhere in this volume, tens of thousands of political refugees found asylum in the US after World War II, and cooperation and contact between Latvian-Americans and Latvia blossomed in the late 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, after independence (in some cases, prior to it) many Latvian-Americans returned to Latvia not only to visit, but also to live and work.

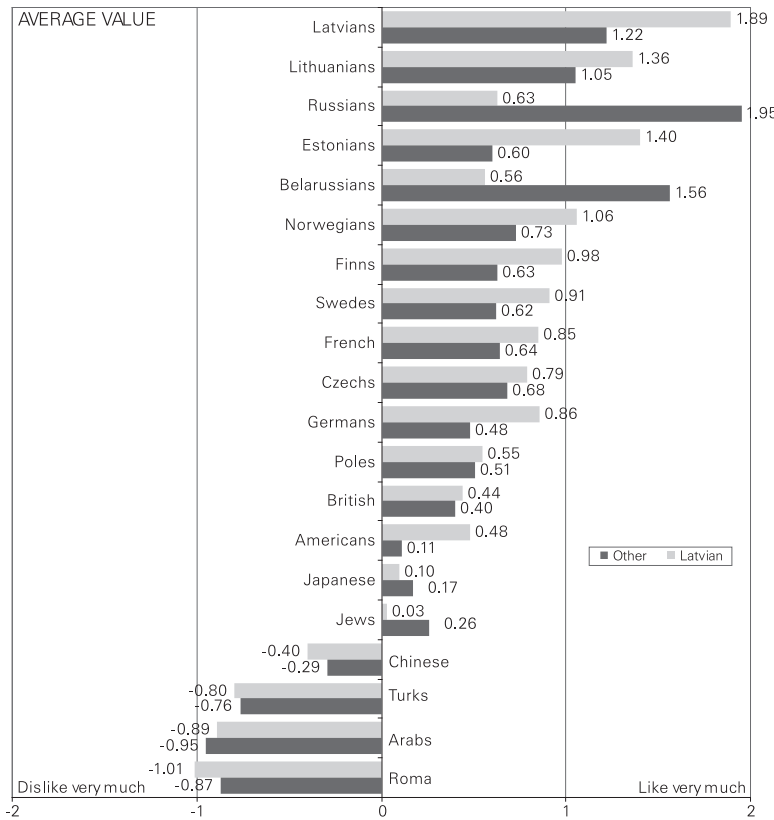
Not only were Latvians in Latvia able to visit their relatives in the US for the first time, many in Latvia seized the opportunity to study or work in the US, returning with a deeper understanding about the American people and system (see George Viksniņš' chapter in this volume). The image of America as a land of opportunity was reinforced by a 2003 Latvian documentary film called 'Found in America' about the fate of youth from Latvia who had emigrated to the US. This film continues to hold the record as the most viewed documentary film in Latvia. More generally, American popular culture, especially cinema and pop music, has found a broad audience in Latvia that cuts across ethnic lines. At the same time, Fulbright and other fellowships continue to expose many members of the emerging Latvian elite to America.

Popular Attitudes towards Americans and the US

While the aforementioned factors constrain the emergence and growth of anti-Americanism, people in Latvia are reserved in their attitude towards Americans as people, possibly because of a lack of regular or intense contact. Sociological surveys suggest that the inhabitants of Latvia do not rate Americans as a people very highly compared to other groups, though answers suggest a significant ethnic difference between ethnic Latvians and minorities. Asked in March 2008 to rate on a scale from -3 to +3 twenty different groups, Americans came in 14th place overall, with Latvians giving an average rating of 0.48 and minorities a rating of 0.11 (see Diagram 1 below). This marks a slight decline since a similar survey was conducted in

Diagram 1: Attitudes in Latvia towards Americans and Other Groups

Answers to the question "Please rate on a scale from -3 to +3 your attitude towards the following nations, where +3 means that you like the group very much and -3 means you dislike it very much!" Answers according to the respondent's ethnicity (March 2008)



Respondents who gave a concrete evaluation (no response or "hard to say" not included),

Source: SKDS, March 2008

February 2004, when the Latvian and minority ratings of Americans were 0.55 and 0.15, respectively.²

While reserved towards Americans, attitudes towards America are generally positive, though the same cannot be said about US influence in Latvia. In July 2008, respondents in Latvia were asked several questions that are regularly posed in surveys conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Project, but for which no Latvian data have heretofore been available. As can be seen in Table 1 below, attitudes towards the US in Latvia are significantly cooler than those in Poland and the United Kingdom, but similar to those in France, Germany, and surprisingly, Russia. Again, one notes a significant difference in evaluations made by ethnic Latvians and representatives of other groups in Latvia, with Latvians more favorably disposed towards the US. One striking feature is the high share of those answering 'don't know' or refusing to answer.

Asked to evaluate US influence on processes in Latvia, 47.6% of respondents thought it was large, 28.2% deemed it small, and 24.3% found it difficult to say. However, only 14.4% (16.0% among Latvians, 12.1% among others) thought that influence was a good thing, while 48.5% deemed it a bad thing, and 28.8% thought it was neither good nor bad. This probably reflects resentment at foreign influence in Latvia in general, which appears to have emerged with the intense international monitoring (and arm-twisting) Latvia was subjected to during the accession process to the EU and NATO.

**Table 1: Attitudes towards the US in 2008:
Latvia Compared to Other Countries**

'Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of the United States of America?'

| | Favorable | | | Unfavorable | | | Don't know/ Refuse |
|------------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| | Total | Very | Somewhat | Total | Very | Somewhat | |
| Latvia | 39.3 | 3.4 | 36.0 | 36.8 | 27.1 | 9.7 | 23.9 |
| Ethnic Latvians | 44.2 | 3.8 | 40.4 | 32.5 | 24.3 | 8.1 | 23.3 |
| Other ethnicity | 32.9 | 2.8 | 30.1 | 42.6 | 30.7 | 11.8 | 24.5 |
| Poland | 68 | 6 | 62 | 24 | 20 | 4 | 8 |
| United Kingdom | 53 | 8 | 45 | 37 | 25 | 12 | 10 |
| France | 42 | 4 | 38 | 57 | 39 | 18 | 0 |
| Germany | 31 | 3 | 28 | 66 | 53 | 13 | 4 |
| Russia | 45 | 12 | 34 | 48 | 28 | 20 | 7 |
| Spain | 33 | 2 | 31 | 55 | 33 | 22 | 12 |
| India | 66 | 23 | 43 | 25 | 10 | 15 | 9 |
| China | 41 | 5 | 36 | 48 | 37 | 11 | 11 |

Sources: For Latvia, SKDS, July 2008; for other countries, the Pew Global Attitudes Project, 'Global Economic Gloom – China and India Notable Exceptions,' p.21, available at: <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/260.pdf>.

² The survey data are from the reputable SKDS company, which conducted the polls in February 2004 and March 2008 in a stratified random sample of 1001 residents of Latvia in direct interviews.

Post-2004: A New Context for the Expression of Anti-Americanism

Until 2004 an unwritten taboo against the public expression of anti-Americanism prevailed among the Latvian political elite. This taboo was dictated by pragmatism and derived from the imperative of maintaining American support for NATO enlargement and Latvian membership in NATO. This unwritten taboo remained operative as late as 2003, when the Latvian government took the decision to join the 'coalition of the willing' in the Iraq war. Though the decision was not popular, it garnered an absolute majority of parliamentary votes and was met with broad popular acquiescence at a time when massive anti-war protests were common elsewhere in Europe.

Latvian politicians and opinion-makers had frequently justified Latvia's participation in the wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan with reference to 'common democratic values'. However, global criticism of US policy towards suspected Taliban combatants in Guantanamo Bay was amplified in early 2004 by revelations about American abuse of inmates in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. The discourse of 'common values' became seriously compromised, the credibility of its messengers in Latvia was undermined, and America lost the moral high ground (or at least the benefit of the doubt) it had enjoyed following the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Illustrative of the new more critical attitude towards the US was the change in reception accorded to a visiting American president. When Bill Clinton visited Latvia in 1994, he gave a rousing speech to cheering crowds at the Freedom Monument and the center of Rīga resembled a big party. When George W. Bush visited Latvia in May 2005, the center of Rīga was cordoned off, the city appeared deserted, and Latvia's best-known advertising guru organized anti-Bush protests and an on-line campaign against the Iraq war.

Once Latvia gained full membership in NATO, the necessity of moderating criticism of America weakened. At the same time, entry into the European Union exerted a certain liberating effect on the political elite as well. After several years of following the dictates of Brussels conditionality on sensitive domestic political issues such as combating corruption, liberalizing minority policy, and strengthening the judiciary, Latvia was suddenly free of European Union pressure and threats of non-membership.³ Elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, accession to the EU has been followed by democratic backsliding – electoral gains by populist parties, political instability and anti-liberalism.⁴

While Latvia has not witnessed serious democratic backsliding,⁵ the elite has felt less constrained in both its expression and its behavior than during

³ For the role of conditionality in affecting minority policy, see Nils Muižnieks and Ilze Brands Kehris (2003), 'The European Union, democratization, and minorities in Latvia', in Paul J. Kubicek, ed., *The European Union and Democratization*. London: Routledge, pp.30-55.

⁴ On democratic backsliding, see the articles under the rubric 'Is East-Central Europe Backsliding?' in *Journal of Democracy*, 18(4), October 2007, pp.5-63.

⁵ Freedom House gave the same high score to Latvian democracy in 2006, 2007, and 2008. See http://www.freedomhouse.hu/images/fjdh_galleries/NIT2008/NT-Latvia-final.pdf.

the accession process. A project monitoring political and media discourse in Latvia in 2007 found that both the media and politicians frequently attacked NGOs, ethnic and sexual minorities and sought through various discursive strategies to exclude them from the public space.⁶ These attacks against NGOs and minorities have often been accompanied by criticism of the US and those associated with the US or the American Embassy in Rīga, which has been an active supporter of NGOs, liberalizing policy towards minorities and combating corruption.

Here, a specific feature of the Latvian political landscape should be mentioned. Several powerful individuals or 'oligarchs' have played a critical role in Latvia's politics over the last fifteen years. The two top figures for many years were Aivars Lembergs, multi-millionaire long-time mayor of the oil transit port city of Ventspils, and Andris Šķēle, multi-millionaire former prime minister and founder of the People's Party. After accession to the EU and NATO, they and their associates came under investigation for corruption and financial malfeasance. One diversionary tactic of the 'oligarchs' and their associates has been to voice an opportunistic anti-Americanism, stressing outside interference in Latvia's affairs and claiming to represent the 'national bourgeoisie' against 'anti-national foreigners' and their stooges in Latvia.

The flagship newspaper of Lembergs' business group, ironically misnamed *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* (The Independent Morning Paper), has railed against alleged interference by American diplomats in Latvia's internal affairs.⁷ It has also regularly given a platform to Gundars Bērziņš, former Šķēle advisor and current People's Party election campaign organizer, who has criticized the head of Latvia's intelligence services for spending too much time at the US embassy and claimed that 'People's Party ministers will not go to bow to the US embassy'.⁸

The media owned by Lembergs' business grouping have engaged in a sustained campaign aimed at vilifying 'Sorosites', a catchall category including liberals, Latvian-Americans, and anyone loosely linked to the foundation created by American philanthropist George Soros.⁹ Recently, after the US ambassador to Latvia gave an interview in which he commented favorably on the Soros Foundation's anti-corruption work, the newspaper attacked both the US ambassador and the Foundation for

⁶ Marija Golubeva, Iveta Kažoka, Anda Rožkalne (2007), 'Izaicinājums Pilsoniskai sabiedrībai' [A Challenge to Civil Society], Providus, available at http://www.providus.lv/upload_file/Publikācijas/monitoringa_zinojums_17012008.pdf.

⁷ Ritums Rozenbergs and Uldis Dreiblat (2007), 'Apliecina ASV diplomātu iejaukšanos Latvijas iekšpolitikā' ['Acknowledge US Diplomats' Interference in Latvia's Domestic Politics'], *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* 3 November 2007, p.3.

⁸ This quote is from the interview with Bērziņš in *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* 2 June 2008.

⁹ For a discussion and analysis, see Deniss Hanovs, 'Raganu medības' ['Witch Hunt'], published on the public policy portal politika.lv on 30 October 2007, available at <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=14805>.

'trying to undermine democracy' and to 'discredit and demonize politicians and officials who are patriots'.¹⁰ In an oblique reference to an anti-Semitic stereotype that Jews welcomed Soviet tanks in 1940, Bērziņš has even claimed that 'Sorosites' 'kiss foreign tanks, in a word, foreign ideas'. 'They are ready to serve foreign money bags for a pittance, to exterminate national entrepreneurs, or as they call them, oligarchs'.¹¹ Interestingly, this opportunistic anti-Americanism is often hedged with the acknowledgement that America is still Latvia's 'strategic partner' or suggestions that the US ambassador was expressing his own view, not that of the US government.

While segments of the Latvian media have increasingly featured expressions of anti-Americanism, a similar trend has been evident in the Russian language 'media space' in Latvia, which is heavily influenced by television broadcasts from Russia. Russia's brief honeymoon with the West following 9/11 ended as the Rose Revolution in Georgia in late 2003 and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in late 2004 rekindled Russian officialdom's suspicion of the West in general and the US in particular. Russia's media often took a strong anti-American line with regard to NATO expansion, particularly regarding accession by Latvia and the other Baltic States.¹² A spike in negative Russian media coverage came during US President George W. Bush's May 2005 visit to Latvia on the way to the Victory Day commemorations in Moscow. Russia's 'TV-Tsentr', for example, claimed that 'Latvia is submissive to the US, idolizes Chechen terrorists and dreams about "Orange uprisings" in the CIS states'.¹³

Conclusions

As the title of this chapter suggests, this is an exploratory essay and anti-Americanism in Latvia still awaits in-depth sociological, communications and political science analysis. Despite the paucity of available data and secondary sources, it is possible to draw a few tentative conclusions. The most important conclusion is that pro-American attitudes have been directly proportionate to fears of Russia. When those fears waned, as they did briefly after accession to NATO and the EU, anti-Americanism could emerge into the public sphere. Anti-Americanism has generally been far more pronounced

¹⁰ Māris Krautmanis (2008), 'Larsons no Karlsona tālu nekrit' ['Larson Does Not Fall Far from Karlson'], *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* 1 October 2008, p.2.

¹¹ Interview with Gundars Bērziņš conducted by Ritums Rozenbergs and Uldis Dreiblat, 'Nebučojiet Sorosa tankus!' ['Do not Kiss Sorosite Tanks!'], *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze* 30 July 2008.

¹² See Toms Rostoks (2008), 'Russia's Media on Latvian Accession to the EU and NATO' in Nils Muižnieks, ed., *Manufacturing Enemy Images? Russian Media Portrayal of Latvia*. Rīga, University of Latvia, pp.127-144.

¹³ Cited in Ainārs Lehris, Andis Kudors and Ivars Indāns (2008) *Outside Influence on the Ethnic Integration Process in Latvia*. Rīga, Centre for East European Political Studies, p.75.

among minority Russian-speakers, who are more subject to media influence from Russia than ethnic Latvians.

Anti-Americanism is not very deeply rooted or well-articulated in Latvia. Insofar as most inhabitants do not have any contact with Americans, attitudes towards Americans as people remain reserved. Overall, attitudes towards America are positive and in line with those in many European countries, but opportunistic political entrepreneurs have exploited resentment towards foreign pressure in general and American pressure in particular.

Carriers of a pro-American message in Latvia were undermined by revelations of human rights violations in Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. At the same time, the Russian government and national television stations beholden to it broadcast an increasingly anti-American message in the wake of NATO expansion and the 'color revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine. Hard data are not yet available, but it appears likely that this negative portrayal contributed to anti-American sentiment among Russia's media consumers in Latvia.

The constraints on the growth of anti-Americanism remain largely in place: continued threat perceptions of Russia that drive many in Latvia to seek American protection, significant human contacts involving émigrés and visitors from Latvia to America, and a common understanding of the workings of a market democracy. However, much depends on the extent to which influential politicians, business groupings and media outlets play the anti-American card in an attempt to fish for nationalist votes, deflect attention from corrupt practices, and compromise those seeking to combat such practices in Latvia.

Personal Reflections

Lessons of Latvia

Dan Fried

Once upon a time in the last century, I, a young Vice Consul in the U.S. Consulate General in Leningrad, occasionally visited a strange creature called the 'Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic.' Rīga was a gray place, as were most cities of the Soviet Bloc in those years. While the United States never recognized the Soviet annexation of Latvia, we held this position of principle more in hope than in expectation that the tragic verdicts of history – 1939, 1940, and 1944-45 – would be reversed soon. The fact that they were reversed and that within less than a generation we witnessed the re-emergence of a sovereign Latvia, prospering and securely part of a united Europe and NATO, holds profound lessons.

Lesson one: Think big. Too many politicians and diplomats for too many years sought merely to 'manage' the consequences of a divided Europe. It took visionary Latvians – like former President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga – and the Latvian people themselves, to remind us of the potential for freedom for Latvia and for all of Europe. This mental leap by Latvians (and by Estonians, Lithuanians, Poles and others) preceded the policy consequences of NATO and EU enlargement and helped make those consequences possible.

Lesson two: Freedom is ultimately indivisible. A world in which democracy, the rule of law, and collective defense are ascendant will be more secure and more prosperous than a world in which autocracy, rule by threat and violence, and aggression are ascendant. We learned – and Latvians learned the hard way – that a divided Europe was neither free nor secure. Free nations, Latvia now among them, are already working together to advance freedom in the world. And we have more to do.

Lesson three: Be ambitious in the long-run, but realistic about the short-term. History does not move, and freedom does not advance, to suit our timetables or desires. Latvia regained sovereignty, but not without decades of darkness. Patience, care, and incrementalism are frequently the tools with which we realize bold ideas.

Lesson four: Never rest (for long) on past successes. Latvia's story in the 20th century was one of pain, terrible choices, and ultimate success. But the younger generation will soon tire (and may have already tired) of the tales of the generation of liberation. There is always more to be done at home as

well as abroad, in Latvia and in every country, including my own to help make the economy work better, combat corruption, and strengthen all of the institutions that are essential for a modern nation.

We can all learn from Latvia.

The Baltic Model¹

Ron Asmus and Māris Riekstiņš

It is difficult to recall today the West's hostility in the early 1990s toward Baltic membership in NATO and the European Union. At a time when even embracing Poland was controversial, the aspirations of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were considered nutty if not outright dangerous. Moscow's reaction was even worse.

Luckily, though, the West's sense of moral commitment and strategic needs prevailed. Just imagine what the region would look like today if Vilnius, Rīga and Tallinn had not been allowed to join NATO and the EU in 2004? No doubt, there would be far less stability, security and prosperity.

One key stepping stone in that process was the US-Baltic Charter signed ten years ago today. As two of the negotiators of this document, we know how critical it was in securing NATO membership, which in turn was instrumental for EU accession.

The Charter was an act of creative diplomacy when the Baltic states needed reassurance but the consensus to integrate them had not yet jelled in the West. While it didn't guarantee membership, it committed the US to helping the Baltics integrate with the West. Washington's message was: You need to run this marathon, but we will coach and support you along the way. Above all, we will make sure that no one will be allowed to trip you up or prevent you from crossing the finish line.

In plain English (or Latvian), this meant that performance mattered and that neither Moscow nor Western skeptics could veto the process.

In return, the Baltic states made their own commitments – to Western values, to political and economic reform, to minority rights and regional cooperation. Liberated from the fear that some new kind of Yalta might be secretly negotiated behind their backs, all three countries got down to the hard work of meeting NATO and EU criteria. The Charter helped unleash creative energy in these former Soviet republics. Seeing the Americans engaged on the ground made it also easier for many Europeans to beef up their presence and assistance. Another result of the Charter was that the Balts' historical distrust toward global security organizations, such as the UN or OSCE, started to melt.

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The negotiation process for the Charter itself brought a new level of mutual trust and confidence. We witnessed this personally in the final negotiating session in an ornate room at the State Department. We had to finalize a sentence describing US interest in and commitment to Baltic security. The Americans were nervous that this could be misinterpreted as a security guarantee. The Baltic side, in turn, was afraid the US would go back on its promise. A group of delegates went down the hall and got a thesaurus to look up the right words. In the end we agreed that the United States had 'a real, profound and enduring interest' in the Baltic States. It wasn't going to win us any literary prizes but it did the trick. The signing of the US-Baltic Charter in the White House was a special moment. It led to NATO enlargement and thus undid the historical injustice of Yalta as the US advanced the cause of freedom.

We tell this story because it contains an important lesson. The West again faces major questions about how to reach out to young democracies striving to join our institutions – in the Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. The challenge is to tie these countries to the West and its values at a time when enlargement fatigue is setting in and Moscow's opposition is growing. Once again we are in need of creative diplomacy that could bridge the gap between what some of these countries seek and what the West can offer right now. We need Transatlantic unity to provide a framework that can unleash the forces of reform in these transitional countries. It happened ten years ago in the Baltics; it can happen again.

The Jūrmala Opening

Strobe Talbott

‘A long, long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away....’

That opening line from the *Star Wars* saga comes to mind when I think of Jūrmala 1986. There was still a U.S.S.R. and a Cold War. The Baltic States were illegally occupied by Soviet troops and ruled from Moscow. ‘Star Wars’ was a phrase that had been expropriated from Hollywood and applied to Ronald Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). That was one of many subjects (along with the Berlin Wall) that President Reagan debated with Mikhail Gorbachev, who had been in office as General-Secretary for less than a year and a half.

Yet there were already signs of change. One was an invitation from the Chautauqua Institution for a group of Americans to attend a conference on US-Soviet relations in Jūrmala. I was intrigued by the development and eager to participate for several reasons, including the venue. Rīga had played an important part in the career of George F. Kennan—a hero of mine. He had been posted there in 1929 when it was a listening post for Americans trying to figure out what was going on in the USSR before the establishment of diplomatic relations between Moscow and Washington. Even though I had traveled many times to the USSR since my first visit as a student in the 1960s, I had never been able to get permission to travel to the Baltic coast. There was clearly unease among Soviet officials about the irrepressible aspirations for independence there. Why, I asked myself, would some of those officials—and they must be at a high level—agree to let the Chautauqua conference go there? Could it be connected with rumors that Gorbachev was thinking about making the Baltics ‘a laboratory for perestroika’?

The Chautauqua Institution struck me as exactly the right organization to be engineering this potential breakthrough in people-to-people diplomacy. It had a long history, going back to the nineteenth century, for championing the institution of town meetings, the values of civil society, and, in particular, the utility of free, open—and civil—debate as a component of democracy.

The guest list was intriguing too. It included names that resonated with America’s crucial part in the victory over fascism in World War II and its emergence as the master-architect of the postwar peace—names like Susan Eisenhower, the late president’s granddaughter. (The Eisenhower Institute was a co-sponsor of the conference.) Ronald Reagan’s principal White House

adviser on Soviet Affairs, Jack Matlock, would also be attending. In my work as a *Time* reporter, I had for several years relied on him for common sense and insight. Then there were some Baltic-Americans, including Ojārs Kalniņš of the American Latvian Association. Would they actually be allowed to attend the conference? That in itself would be a litmus test of whether Moscow—and that meant Gorbachev—was really opening a window to the West.

The conference was very nearly a casualty of the Cold War. An American journalist I knew well and respected highly—Nicholas Daniloff of *U.S. News and World Report*—was arrested and jailed on trumped-up espionage charges. As his name suggested, he had Russian blood, so his detention underscored the special perils for émigrés from the Soviet empire.

Several Americans who were supposed to travel to Jūrmala pulled out in protest over the Daniloff affair. They included Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Pearle and former US Ambassador to the United Nations Jeanne Kirkpatrick, both vigorous cold warriors associated with the ‘neo-conservative’ movement. Caspar Weinberger, the leading hard-liner in the Reagan administration, was against the conference taking place, while George Shultz, who believed in diplomatic engagement with America’s ideological and geopolitical adversaries, argued—successfully—for a White House go-ahead.

As it turned out, the Kremlin used the presence of the 220-strong Chautauqua delegation to highlight their release of Daniloff and the defusing of the tensions his arrest had caused. That subplot, along with the five day conference in Jūrmala itself, constituted concrete evidence that Gorbachev was—in the language of a debate among Kremlinologists—‘for real’: he was a new sort of Soviet leader.

That doesn’t mean that Gorbachev intended for the Soviet Union to come apart at the seams. Quite the contrary: he was hoping that his reforms would save the USSR from the ash heap of history. But the essence of his reforms was a combination of less reliance on the iron fist of raw, repressive power and less reliance on the Big Lie. What he did not realize was that without those two ingredients, the Soviet system could not survive.

Later in the 1980s and in the first two years of the 90s, I returned to the Baltic states several times. It was clear that they were positioning themselves for a quick exit from the USSR as soon as possible. In Tallinn, I was befriended by a strong-willed dissident filmmaker and ethnographer named Lennart Meri. When I joined the US government in early 1993 as president Clinton’s point man for dealing with what was by then the former Soviet Union, I found myself dealing with fellow veterans—or alumni—of what can be called ‘the Jūrmala Opening.’

Once Latvia gained its independence, Kalniņš went on to become the Latvian ambassador to the US. Throughout the eight years of the Clinton administration, my conversations with him and others were dominated by one subject above all others: what the United States could do to accelerate the three Baltic states’ membership in NATO and the European Union—and thereby assure their return or re-integration into the political (as opposed to purely geographic) West.

This goal was close to President Clinton's heart. When the US decided first to bring the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland into NATO, our Baltic friends could be forgiven for fearing that they had lost their chance—and that the door would close before they could cross the threshold.

That fear was palpable in a meeting I held on 28 May 1997 with Latvia's president at the time, Guntis Ulmanis, as well as my old friend Lennart Meri, who had risen to the presidency of Estonia. President Meri was in anything but a friendly mood on that occasion. He compared himself to Moses, saying he had been chosen, 'in a biblical sense,' to lead his people back out of bondage to freedom and to Europe. He accused me—and, more to the point, President Clinton—of keeping him and his fellow Balts out of the promised land of NATO-protected Europe.

As I was leaving the meeting, Eric Edelman, a State Department colleague who had been instrumental in designing our NATO-enlargement strategy, placed his hand on my shoulder and said, 'Remember what he and those people have been through. Besides, Moses was probably a pain in the ass too after forty years in the wilderness.'

Clinton was determined to keep faith with the Baltic states. So was Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, along with other key members of the administration's team like Ron Asmus and Dick Holbrooke. I'll never forget the eloquence and determination with which Clinton pushed back against Boris Yeltsin's effort to extract private assurances that the Baltic States would never be admitted to NATO. Here is the argument Clinton used in a closed-door meeting with Yeltsin in Helsinki, for which I was the note-taker:

'If we were to agree that no republics of the former Soviet Union could enter NATO, that would be a bad thing for your attempt to build a new Russia. I am not naïve. I understand you have an interest in who gets into NATO and when. We need to make sure that all these are subjects that we can consult about as we move forward. 'Consult' means making sure that we're aware of your concerns, and that you understand our decisions and our positions and our thinking. But consider what a terrible message it would send if we were to make the kind of supposedly secret deal you're suggesting. First, there are no secrets in this world. Second, the message would be, 'We're still organized against Russia—but there's a line across which we won't go.' In other words, instead of creating a new NATO that helps move toward an integrated, undivided Europe, we'd have a larger NATO that's just sitting there waiting for Russia to do something bad.

'Here's why what you are proposing is bad for Russia. Russia would be saying, "We've still got an empire, but it just can't reach as far West as it used to when we had the Warsaw Pact." Second, it would create exactly the fear among the Baltics and others that you're trying to allay and that you're denying is justified....

'Under no circumstances should we send a signal out of this meeting that it's the same old European politics of the Cold War and we're just moving the lines around a bit.'

Yeltsin went to his fallback position, pleading that Clinton tell him 'one-on-one — without even our closest aides present — that you won't take new republics in the near future. I need to hear that. I understand that maybe in ten years or something, the situation might change, but not now. Maybe there will be a later evolution. But I need assurances from you that it won't happen in the nearest future.'

'Come on, Boris,' said Clinton, 'I just can't do it. If we create a smaller version of the larger standoff that existed during the Cold War, there won't be the needed trust. This process of integrating Europe is going to take years. It's not going to happen overnight. But if we make a statement now that narrows our options in the future, it will be harder to do the other good things we want to do.'

'I know what a terrible problem this is for you, but I can't make the specific commitment you are asking for. It would violate the whole spirit of NATO. I've always tried to build you up and never undermine you. I'd feel I had dishonored my commitment to the alliance, to the states that want to join NATO, and to the vision that I think you and I share of an undivided Europe with Russia as a major part of it.'

Yeltsin, looking glum, went to his final fallback: 'Okay, but let's agree — one-on-one — that the former Soviet republics won't be in the first waves of enlargement. Bill, please understand what I'm dealing with there: I'm flying back to Russia with a very heavy burden on my shoulders. It will be difficult for me to go home and not seem to have accepted NATO enlargement. Very difficult.'

'Look, Boris, you're forcing an issue that doesn't need to drive a wedge between us here. NATO operates by consensus. If you decided to be in NATO, you'd probably want all the other countries to be eligible too. But that issue doesn't arise. We need to find a solution to a short-term problem that doesn't create a long-term problem by keeping alive old stereotypes about you and your intentions. If we do the wrong thing, it will erode our own position about the kind of Europe we want. I hear your message. But your suggestion is not the way to do it. I don't want to do anything that makes it seem like the old Russia and the old NATO.'

'Well,' said Yeltsin with a weary shrug, 'I tried.' He simply gave up. That conversation—rather than ending in the 'Second Yalta' that many in Central Europe feared—ensured that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania would indeed be eligible for membership in NATO in the second 'wave,' as Yeltsin put it.

Since leaving government in 2001, I've taken special satisfaction in seeing those countries consolidate their standing as good allies of the United States and solid members of the European Union.

On a visit to Rīga several years ago, I had a free hour in a busy schedule and jumped in a cab to drive across the bridge for a quick visit to Jūrmala, since that's where, for me at least, it all began—not all that long ago, and in a country no longer so far away.

Latvians and Americans

Ojārs Kalniņš

In July 1964, as a 14-year old Latvian émigré, I watched a Captive Nations parade solemnly move through the streets of downtown Chicago. The Balts were calling for independence, Eastern Europeans for freedom, and everyone for liberation from communists. Although the city of Chicago gave its blessing, and Mayor Richard J. Daley did take the time to have his picture taken with several attractive young Latvian girls in full Latvian folk dress, no one, other than the émigrés from the Captive Nations themselves, took the event very seriously. In 1964 it looked like the USSR was a permanent global fixture, and while Americans could sympathize with the woe of the émigrés whose homelands were under Soviet control, there wasn't anything much they could do about it.

Twenty six years later, on 30 July 1990, as a 40-year old lobbyist for the American Latvian Association, I found myself in the Oval Office of the White House with Latvia's Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis, Foreign Minister Jānis Jurkāns, and the President of the United States, George H.W. Bush. Latvia was still under Soviet control at the time, but Godmanis and Jurkāns were talking about independence, and the mere fact that the President of the United States was willing to listen, meant that the United States was now taking it all very seriously.

It took just another year for the Soviet Union to collapse and unleash a remarkable series of events in the fall of 1991: Latvia restored its independence, the United States re-established its relations with the Latvian government in Rīga, and the Latvian Legation, a modest brick 2-flat on the corners of 17th and Webster in Washington, D.C. became the Embassy of Latvia to the United States. After 50 years of Soviet occupation, the Republic of Latvia was back in business.

For me, and probably a lot of other Latvian émigré children in the United States, the establishment by the US Congress of Captive Nations Week in 1959 was the first indication that someone in the United States, other than Latvians themselves, cared (or even knew about) about the occupation of Latvia by the USSR. The Red Scare and McCarthyism had targeted communists as internal enemies of the American people, and Khrushchev's prediction that the USSR would 'bury' the West made the Soviets a direct

threat to US national interests. But until Captive Nations Week, the plight of this small country called Latvia on the Baltic Sea was a footnote in US foreign policy, not a priority.

That 'footnote' was, however, extremely significant for Latvia because it manifested itself as the so-called 'US non-recognition policy'. In international legal terms, it meant that the United States did not recognize the legality of the Baltic States' incorporation in the USSR. In practical terms, this gave Latvia an asterisk on US world maps, preserved pre-World War II Latvia's gold deposits in the vaults of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, allowed the Latvian Legation to continue functioning as a fully accredited diplomatic mission in Washington, and forbid high-ranking US officials from visiting 'Soviet Latvia'.

In ensuing years Latvian-Americans and their fellow Balts clung tightly to the non-recognition policy and used it to remind US politicians that Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia had a special political status. That status did seem precarious at times, especially when it was rumored that Henry Kissinger had proposed that the Nixon administration abandon the Baltic non-recognition policy as a good will gesture toward promoting détente with the USSR.

Latvia's special status, however, remained intact, and in every major US city or state that housed a sizable Baltic-American population, a handful of local politicians did support the Captive Nations movement. Some came to speak (or sent proclamations) on Latvian Independence day, and strongly supported the Latvian Language services at Voice of America and Radio Free Europe. On the Democratic Party side, Latvia's political friends in city hall or Congress were usually Americans of Eastern European descent (usually Polish). From the vigorously anti-Communist Republican Party, support usually came from the staunchest anti-Soviet politicians.

Latvian-Americans, like most Eastern European émigrés in the US, always voted overwhelmingly for Republican politicians, in part because of the conservative, anti-Soviet policies of the Republicans, but usually because of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In the minds of America's Latvian refugees, FDR sold out Latvia at Yalta, and since he was a Democrat, all ensuing Democrats were to blame as well.

What Latvian-Americans didn't know in the 1970s was that a Democratic Party president, Jimmy Carter, was the first to go beyond the proclamations of Captive Nation's Day and actually authorize funding and activities that directly supported nationalist sentiments in Latvia. As former CIA Director Robert M. Gates writes in his book, 'From the Shadows,' Carter's National Security Council Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski 'set forth an ambitious agenda of covert action to stir up trouble in the USSR.' This included strong support for Radio Free Europe and Voice of America, which greatly increased the flow of information into dissident movements within the USSR.

Ronald Reagan, however, took a more overt approach and established a new level of active ties between his Administration and the Baltic-American community. Reagan's 'Evil Empire' speech was the first by a US President to describe the Soviet Union in a way that Latvians (and other Captive Nations) had always understood it, but of even greater significance was the proactive manner in which his White House worked directly with the émigré community. When I began working as a Public Affairs Liaison for the American Latvian Association (ALA) in Washington, DC in 1985, my main contacts in the White House were a Lithuanian-American from California named Linas Kojelis, and a Chicago-born Ukrainian named Kathy Chumachenko. (Two decades later she would marry the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yuschenko.) Responsible for human rights in the Reagan State Department was another Ukrainian-American, Paula Dobriansky, daughter of Lev Dobriansky, the initiator of the Captive Nations Week proclamation in 1959. In the 60s the refugees of the Captive Nations could only take to the streets. Two decades later their children were taking jobs in the White House, State Department and Congress.

It was from Linas Kojelis that I learned about a Reagan Administration proposal in 1986 that would have a stunning impact on the Latvian people – not in America, but in Latvia itself. In 1985, in the spirit of glasnost, the Soviets had sent a delegation to Chautauqua, New York to participate in open town hall type discussions on US-Soviet relations. The Soviets liked the conference and invited the US to continue the discussions in 1986, but this time on Soviet soil. The soil the Soviets chose was in Jūrmala, the legendary beach resort outside of Riga, Latvia.

The Soviet selection of Latvia as a site for this conference was a bold provocation, since the US side was expected to bring not only average Americans, but also high-ranking Reagan Administration officials. But the Baltic non-recognition policy barred US officials from entering Latvia, especially since they had to get Soviet visas to enter the country. In May of 1986 Dr. Olgerts Pavlovskis, Chairman of the World Federation of Free Latvians (WFFL), and I were invited by Kojelis to meet with Mark Palmer of the State Department. Palmer explained why the Reagan Administration thought US participation in the Jūrmala US-Soviet Chautauqua Conference would not only protect the non-recognition policy, but actually strengthen it.

The State Department knew that they could not send an official delegation to Soviet-occupied Latvia without the blessing of the American Latvians, and thus made several proposals. Jack Matlock, Special Assistant to the President on Soviet Affairs at the National Security Council, would lead the delegation and make an opening speech where he would once again reiterate the longstanding US policy on the illegality of Soviet rule in the Baltic States. The American Latvian Association could include its hand-picked representatives in the 200-person US delegation, and would be free to raise whatever issues they chose during the US-Soviet debates.

Although many Latvian Americans were skeptical, and Lithuanian and Estonian-American organizations fervently opposed it, Aristīds Lambergs, Chairman of the American Latvian Association, took the courageous decision to support it. The decision was based on two factors: trust that the Americans would keep their word, and a belief that a proactive public relations incursion into Soviet-occupied Latvia could raise our issues to a new level. In September of 1986, I headed a group of seven young Latvian-Americans who joined the Chautauqua delegation to Jūrmala. Among others in the US delegation were *Time* magazine journalist Strobe Talbott, and a little known (to us) US diplomat of Latvian descent named Ints Siliņš. (Five years later Siliņš would become the first US Ambassador to Latvia.)

Matlock's opening speech in Jūrmala (which was broadcast on TV throughout Latvia) shocked the high-level Soviet audience for two reasons. He began the speech in fluent Latvian, and then, to make sure the Soviet audience clearly understood him, switched to Russian to reiterate the US non-recognition of Soviet rule in Latvia. Many Latvians had heard about the non-recognition policy from Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and relatives, but this came directly from the mouth of a White House official. And he was saying it on the soil of occupied Latvia!

While Matlock's comments angered the Moscow officials in the audience, the actions of the small Latvian-American delegation annoyed them even more. Working within the 'free speech' framework of glasnost and the Chautauqua Conference, we passed out pins depicting the banned maroon and white flag of independent Latvia and met with as many local Latvians as dared talk to us in the streets. When the KGB finally had enough and threatened our safety, the US journalists on the trip had the story they were waiting for. Thanks to Gary Lee (*Washington Post*), Amity Shlaes (*Wall Street Journal*) and Phil Taubman (*New York Times*), the KGB threat against our group made headlines across the United States. In 1986, the issue of Latvian independence became a real news story for the first time.

When I had begun my work as a Latvian American lobbyist in Washington, DC I got to know many knowledgeable and sympathetic US officials. They supported Latvia's legal and moral claims for independence, but as long as the only vocal proponents were émigré Latvians living in the US, one could not talk about a political movement of any real consequence in Latvia itself. Chautauqua changed that. The outpouring of emotion from local Latvians in response to Matlock and the Latvian-American delegation was the first indication to Washington that the people of Latvia still yearned for independence.

Open support for independence became even more pronounced in 1987, when a thousand Latvians marched to the Freedom Monument in Rīga on 14 June. Among the organizers of this unprecedented nationalist demonstration was a group from Liepāja, called 'Helsinki 86'. The group had tried but failed

to present a petition to the Chautauqua Conference in Jūrmala a year earlier, but now had grown bolder and larger.

Between 1987 and 1990, pro-independence movements grew in strength and numbers throughout the Baltic States. Demonstrations became frequent, culminating in the historic 'Baltic Way' manifestation, a 2-million person human chain stretching from Tallinn through Rīga to Vilnius.

In what can only be described as political schizophrenia, the Soviet authorities inexplicably allowed representatives of Latvian pro-independence groups such as the Latvian National Independence Movement (LNNK) and Popular Front to travel to the US. The American Latvian Association usually organized their trips and I was tasked with bringing the Latvian leaders to Congress, the State Department, think tanks and the media. US interest in them was genuine and growing. Whereas Washington's politicians had once met with US Latvians because they were voting constituents, the visitors from Latvia represented a major international development that directly affected US foreign policy interests, i.e. relations with the USSR.

During the George H.W. Bush administration, State Department Soviet experts such as Paul Goble met with the Latvian representatives, followed events closely, and seemed as thrilled by developments in Latvia as were the Latvians themselves. Nick Burns focused on Soviet and Baltic issues at the National Security Council and over the ensuing years would become one of Latvia's most important contacts and best friends in Washington. Unlike the government liaisons of the Reagan Administration, neither Burns nor Goble had any ethnic connection to the Baltic States. They were engaged because it was now a real issue, and as Burns put it, 'it was the right thing to do.'

Although the White House and State Department took a cautious but consistently supportive approach to pro-independence developments in Latvia, members of the US Congress had greater freedom to speak out and openly express support. Senators and Congressmen who were members of the Congressional Ad Hoc Committee on the Baltic States and Ukraine took the lead in issuing statements, organizing press conferences and participating in public rallies organized by the Baltic-American community. The diligent staffers on the Congressional Helsinki Commission did the work in the trenches, monitoring human rights violations, speaking out on behalf of dissidents and meeting with representatives of the Popular Front and LNNK, both in Latvia and Washington, DC.

Senator Don Riegle, a Democrat from the state of Michigan was one of the strongest and most active supporters of Latvia in the late 1980s. Although Riegle did have a modest Baltic-American constituency and the inside help of a Lithuanian-American staffer, his steady and consistent support of Latvia was primarily based on principle, and personal conviction. By 4 May 1990, when the Supreme Council of Latvia declared Latvia's intention to restore independence, the number of pro-Baltic Senators and Congressmen like Don Riegle had grown considerably. Americans love an underdog, and the tragic

tale of the three abandoned Baltic States was turning into a fairytale with an imminent happy ending.

Despite the Baltic American habit of seeking support from the more outspoken anti-Soviet politicians in the Republican Party, many Democratic Party leaders like Riegle proved to be extremely important friends. Ironically, the person responsible for getting Latvia's pro-independence Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis into the Republican White House in July 1990, was one of the Senate's oldest and most respected Democratic members, Senator Robert Byrd.

White House interest in what was happening in the Baltic States reached a new level on 11 April 1990 when President Bush, Secretary of State James Baker and National Security Director Brent Scowcroft met with the leaders of the major Baltic-American organizations in the White House. Bush was supportive, but expressed concern that a pro-active stance by the US would make things worse, not better.

A month later, on 4 May 1990, a newly elected Soviet Latvian parliamentary body openly declared its intention to restore Latvia's independence. Popular Front leader Ivars Godmanis was chosen as prime minister and he promptly formed a new Latvian government that began to act as if Latvia was independent, even though Gorbachev and Moscow had other thoughts on the matter. The Bush Administration also began to act as if Latvia was independent, quietly formulating a policy that later became known as 'creeping recognition'.

Working with the American Latvian Association and the Charges d'affaires of the Latvian Legation, Dr. Anatols Dinbergs, I organized a visit to Washington in July of 1990 for Prime Minister Godmanis and his Foreign Minister Jānis Jurkāns. As heads of a still 'Soviet' Latvian government, Godmanis and Jurkāns had no official diplomatic status in Washington. I greeted them with a rented car at Dulles airport and chauffeured the three of us around the city, to interviews with CNN, meetings at the State Department and Congress, and talks with leaders of the Latvian American community. At the end of a busy week we met with Senator Robert Byrd, who was one of the most powerful senators in Washington. Byrd was enthusiastic about what was happening in Latvia and asked if we had met with President Bush yet. We said no, the White House had not agreed to such a meeting. In fact, Godmanis and Jurkāns had been conspicuously left off of the guest list of a Captive Nations Week ceremony that took place in the White House while they were in Washington, DC. Byrd smiled and said he'd fix that; he'd call the President personally and recommend a meeting. Later that evening I received a call from Senator's Byrd's staff, informing me that the Latvian representatives had an appointment at the White House the following Monday. On 30 July 1990, I joined Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis and Foreign Minister Jānis Jurkāns in the Oval Office of the White House for a meeting with President George H.W. Bush. What was scheduled to

be a 15 minute courtesy call turned into a 40-minute discussion that made headlines the following day.

Bush had already met with Lithuania's pro-independence Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunskiene in May and met with Estonia's Prime Minister Edgar Savisaar in October. By the end of 1990, 'creeping recognition' was getting legs and starting to walk with a steady step.

In January 1991, at the urging of Godmanis and Dr. Dinbergs, I left the American Latvian Association to take a job as Public Affairs Liaison for the Latvian Legation. Latvian independence seemed imminent and it was felt that the Legation should increasingly handle contacts between Latvia and Washington. I was still a Latvian 'lobbyist' but I was now working for the Legation, which embodied the legal and diplomatic entity known as the Republic of Latvia. Although the US government recognized the Legation as such, it did not recognize the government in Rīga until the Soviet Union collapsed and Latvia declared the full restoration of its independence. When President George H.W. Bush announced the restoration of diplomatic ties with the Rīga government of the Republic of Latvia on 2 September 1991, the Legation was diplomatically reunited with its home government after a 50 year separation. The Legation became an Embassy, Dr. Anatol Dinbergs became the first Latvian Ambassador to the United States, and I gave up my naturalized US citizenship to become a fully accredited diplomat with the rank of Minister Counselor at the Embassy. After serving for one year, Dr. Dinbergs retired and I was appointed Latvia's Ambassador to the United States in January 1993.

I presented my credentials to President Bill Clinton on 14 April 1993 and quickly discovered that the Clinton Administration was keenly interested in the Baltic States. Perhaps more so than three countries of our size could ever have expected. If Carter, Reagan and Bush had distinguished themselves by actively supporting the restoration of independence in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, then Clinton was committed to making that independence irreversible. The major obstacle in this case was the successor of the former USSR, the newly independent Russian Federation. Our key concern was the continued presence of Russian (former Soviet) troops, retired military officers and military facilities on Latvian territory. Although it was up to Latvia and Russia to resolve it, it was Bill Clinton's personal diplomacy on both sides that made the difference.

These were the issues that Secretary of State Warren Christopher addressed when he came in Rīga on 26-27 September 1993. Accompanying him were two familiar Washington figures who had dealt with Latvia before: Nick Burns, Senior Director at the National Security Council, and Strobe Talbott, now Christopher's Ambassador at Large for the Newly Independent States. Both would play prominent roles for Latvia in the coming years; they not only steered the US policy that would rid Latvia of Russian troops

once and for all, but were also instrumental in paving the way for Latvia's membership in NATO 11 years later.

In the beginning of 1994, Latvia was at a stalemate with Russia. We needed to remove 17,000 Russian troops and personnel from Latvian territory, and close the former Soviet early warning anti-ballistic radar installation near the Western Latvian town of Skrunda. Russia, on the other hand, tried to link these two issues to its accusations that Latvia was violating the human rights of ethnic Russians who remained in independent Latvia.

Support for the Latvian position on troop withdrawal, and the rejection of Russian charges against Latvia concerning human rights was expressed personally by President Bill Clinton in a phone call to Latvia's President Guntis Ulmanis on 20 January 1994. The biggest obstacle was getting Russia and Latvia to agree on a timetable for the troop withdrawal.

The sticking point was the 'Skrunda Monster', a 17-story LPAR (large phased array radar) complex which the Russian government claimed was still an essential part of their early warning missile defense program. The Russian government insisted that the Skrunda LPAR remain fully functional for 5 years, and then be phased out in an additional 2 years. Latvia's counterproposal was 3 more years of operation and a 1-year phase out. At the end of January I was informed by Nick Burns that President Clinton had spoken to Russian President Boris Yeltsin at a meeting in Europe and had proposed a compromise on Skrunda: 4 years of operation and an 18-month phase out program. When I conveyed this to Latvia's Foreign Minister Georgs Andrejevs, he said this sounded reasonable, but feared that the Latvian parliament would not buy it – domestic public opinion would not let them back off of the 3+1 proposal.

Bill Clinton had already coaxed a compromise out of Yeltsin, now he needed the Latvian politicians to meet the Russians half way as well. On 31 January 1994, Latvia's Foreign Minister Georgs Andrejevs arrived in Washington, DC at the head of a highly skeptical delegation that included Latvia's top foreign ministry experts and the heads of all the major political parties in the Latvian parliament. The Clinton Administration pulled out all stops. The Latvians were briefed by Warren Christopher and Strobe Talbott at the State Department, Secretary of Defense William Perry at the Pentagon, and Tony Lake at the National Security Council. Talbott even brought them into the legendary Situation Room deep in the basement of the White House to receive highly classified information about the Skrunda radar. To show that Latvia's European allies also supported the US position, Swedish Ambassador to the US, Henrik Liljegren invited key Nordic ambassadors to his residence for an evening reception where the Latvians heard additional arguments in favor of the 4+18 compromise.

But the coup de grace came on 1 February, when the Latvian delegation returned to the White House once again to talk to NSC Director Tony Lake.

As the Latvians continued to express doubts about whether they could sell this deal at home, President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore walked into the Roosevelt Room, shook hands with each of the shocked Latvian politicians and congratulated them on their wisdom in considering this difficult compromise. Clinton's presence, not to mention his charm, persuaded the Latvian politicians. After a stop in Stockholm to meet with Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt, the Latvian politicians returned to Rīga and announced their decision to accept the 4+18 compromise.

In August 1994 the bulk of the Russian troops left Latvia, and on 4 May 1995 (the fifth anniversary of Latvia's 1990 declaration to restore independence) the Skrunđa monster was ceremoniously imploded to the cheers of Latvian crowds and the accompaniment of music specially written for the occasion by Latvian composer Zigmārs Liepiņš. American money paid for the spectacular demolition.

Many believe that Bill and Hillary Clinton's visit to Rīga on 5 July 1994 was partially a gesture of gratitude to Latvia for making the tough decisions that were necessary to reach an agreement with Russia on the issue of troop withdrawal. But it was also a clear signal to Moscow that Latvia, considered the weakest link in the chain of Baltic States with its large Russian population, had a powerful and attentive friend in Washington, DC.

US policy tended to group the Baltic States together and support was shared out evenly between Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Yet Latvia seemed to get extra attention at the White House. The Clintons' special 'friendship' toward Latvia was reiterated in another way on 30 June 1995 when First Lady Hillary Clinton invited Latvia's First Lady Aina Ulmane to the White House to announce a million dollar hospital partnership between American and Latvian hospitals. The idea for the partnership came from Irma Kalniņš (Johnson), who headed a Latvian-American humanitarian organization called *Latvian Renaissance*. Latvian doctors submitted a proposal and Mrs. Clinton enthusiastically supported it. In her remarks to the Latvian health officials and leaders of the Latvian-American community that had gathered in the East Room for the occasion, Mrs. Clinton said, 'As we all know, the march to democracy is not an easy one and there are many, many obstacles that have to be overcome. But the United States, now more than ever, bears a special responsibility for reaching out and assisting those brave people in nations throughout the world that are struggling to create their own democratic countries, their own market systems.'

In the ensuing years, both the Clinton and Bush administrations continued to display this 'special responsibility' toward Latvia. While scholarly studies are made to analyze the policies of administrations, my experience was with the people who made those policies and put a human face on the administrations. People like US Ambassador to Latvia Larry Napper, who conceived of the US Baltic Partnership that was signed in the White House in 1998. Men like Ron Asmus, Strobe Talbott, Dan Fried,

John Beyerle and Nick Burns, who played instrumental roles in various capacities to open the door to NATO enlargement in the late 1990s, enabling Latvia to enter that door in 2004. And journalists such as former New York times columnist William Safire, who persuasively poked and prodded the politicians and diplomats throughout it all, to make sure that 'the right thing to do' was indeed done. Bill Safire was no fan of Bill Clinton, but one of the rare times he ever praised him, was for his handling of the Baltic States.

Since that Captive Nations parade in Chicago 44 years ago, a lot of Americans have been engaged in developing strong ties between the United States and Latvia. I wish I could name *all* the Senators, Congressmen, Congressional aides, foreign policy advisors, international affairs analysts, political activists and journalists who helped us get to where we are today. In my mind, they are not only good friends, skilled professionals and valued colleagues. Because of what they did and how they did it, they showed that they were great Americans.

Rīga Journal

Ints Siliņš

Early in the second year of my assignment as US Ambassador to Latvia I began to record thoughts and observations in a personal journal. Excerpts, amounting to roughly a third of the original, are offered below. May they convey some of the excitement, anxiety and hope experienced by those of us who were privileged to be present at Latvia's rebirth.

My return to Rīga, where I was born, was a personal odyssey with a twist: it was now my mission in the first instance to advance American interests, not necessarily Latvia's. Happily, thanks in large measure to the benign influence of Nick Burns at the National Security Council, where policy formulation on key Baltic issues gravitated for much of this time, and the skillful work of Latvian Ambassador Ojārs Kalniņš in Washington, it proved possible to closely harmonize US and Latvian interests. A US policy of top-level engagement and support evolved, giving Latvia and her Baltic neighbors a superpower for a midwife at their rebirth.

*In the text, my wife Elizabeth is often referred to as 'E.'; 'Nico' is our son Nicholas. Portions of this material appeared in Latvian translation in the newspaper **Diena** and in English in the publication **Baltic Outlook**, both in early 2005.*

Ints Siliņš¹

August 1, 2008

Saturday, May 1, 1993

Ominous signs from Moscow, a return to the Big Lie. Yel'tsin issued a press release on April 25 accusing the Latvians of preparing for 'ethnic cleansing.' The next round of troop withdrawal negotiations was cancelled by the Russians shortly thereafter. Now the Russian accusation is being circulated at the United Nations. In the press, Deputy Foreign Minister Churkin menacingly (and falsely) accuses the Latvians of rendering further

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withdrawal talks pointless by unreasonably changing their negotiating stance, increasing their demands. Painting the victim as the trouble-maker: it reminds one of the Hitler-Stalin era. For the first time, these dark clouds on the eastern horizon stir in me a tangible dread that events here could take an ugly turn. Of course, the mood passes.

Sunday, May 2

A morning walk around the city. Rīga is busily putting on her spring dress of leaves and flowers. Groups of adults and children in folk costume can be seen strolling about, some singing as they go. Yet also everywhere in Rīga you still see rubble and decay that can only be described as the devastation of war – not just the Second World War, but the Cold War, also fought on Latvian territory.

Monday, May 3

Delegations from a number of European defense ministries are meeting in Riga to share ideas on how to rebuild a defense structure after the collapse of communism. Meantime, two of our own military delegations arrive, one to set up our Military Liaison Team and the other to survey Latvian needs for surplus military goods – non-lethal, of course – that we may be able to offer.

Wednesday, May 5

General Johnson, Commander of NATO's northern forces, meets with NATO Ambassadors in Rīga at Kerstin Biering's cozy Danish Embassy in Old Town, the former English Club and then Latvian SSR 'Foreign Ministry.' Kerstin has given her own touch to her office, where I remember meeting once or twice in the early 1980s with Nick Neilands, then Deputy Foreign Minister. It looked different then; certainly the *feel* of it was radically, utterly different then.

Thursday, May 6

I call on the Russian Ambassador, Aleksandr Rannikh, in his new embassy, recently the Latvian Ministry of Culture – a very nice building if you don't mind that it was from here that the appalling Vishinsky declared Latvia's incorporation into the USSR. It is still sparsely furnished; Moscow is slow with funds, Rannikh says. I assure him my embassy also is far from finished.

With his beefy frame, round face and long black moustaches, Rannikh has an uncanny resemblance to a walrus. He gamely defends Yel'tsin's statements at the start of our talk, accusing the Latvians of 'provocations.' Eventually he admits that points like those I have been making to him, about the need for Russia to avoid verbal excesses like 'massive human rights violations' and 'ethnic cleansing' and to take a more mature approach to Latvia, he has been trying to make to Moscow himself, but without much success so far.

Rannikh relates some of the difficulties of being a Russian ambassador to Latvia these days. Trouble sometimes springs from unexpected quarters.

First example. His press attache is driving along a Rīga street, Rannikh says, when suddenly another car veers alongside, forcing him to stop. The other driver accuses the press attache of speeding; the press attache denies it. The other driver punches him. The police are called; so is the Russian Embassy. The Russian consul arrives at the scene and protests the unauthorized detention of the press attache. The policeman takes the line that the other driver was simply making a perfectly legitimate citizen's arrest of a speeder. As the argument continues, the policeman, who like most of the former militia is ethnically Russian, takes the consul aside. 'I'm Russian, you're Russian,' he tells the consul. 'But because of what Russia did to Latvia, you're not going to get any help from me.'

I tell Rannikh he must at least have obtained some relief from the Russian comedy festival featuring Arkady Raikin that I noticed being advertised two weeks ago, just opposite the Russian Embassy. Rannikh pulls another long face. He tells me this comedy festival is held here each year because Arkady Raikin was born in Rīga, but this year it had a not-so-funny sequel. The festival coincided with the Russian referendum of April 25, so Raikin and some of his comic colleagues, a number of them also Jewish, came to the Russian Embassy to cast their votes. To their surprise and horror, the throng of voters angrily turned on them, shouting that Raikin and his kind represented the 'Jewish mafia' that ruined Russia and lost the Baltic Republics.

Rannikh did not say so, but chances are the people who vilified Raikin would apply the same epithet to Rannikh's boss, Foreign Minister Kozyrev. Figures released by the Russian Embassy show that 80 percent of the Russian citizens who came there to vote in the referendum (mostly retired military officers) cast their ballots against Yel'tsin and against reforms. It was the most negative turnout on any former Soviet territory.

I tell Rannikh about rumors that violence might take place during the May 9 demonstrations. Rannikh says he does plan to lay a wreath at the 'liberation' monument in Pārdaugava at 10 a.m., but he will make a quick withdrawal to avoid being drawn into a "provocation" – still a favorite word, evidently,

its meaning not too clear. Rannikh promises to do his best to damp down tensions. He tells me he does not expect real trouble.

Sunday, May 9

'Victory Day' passes peacefully in Rīga. Thousands of Russians lay flowers at the 'Liberation' monument but no one tries to provoke violence. Latvian security forces keep a low profile. It may be that even the Russian hot-heads don't want to foul their nest here while Russia itself is in such sorry shape.

Friday, May 14

The Russian Navy, what's left of it, is conducting exercises in the Latvian economic zone, apparently with live fire on one day. The Latvians protest, calling it an 'unfriendly act.'

Sunday, May 16

Last night with E. to Koknese, about an hour's drive upstream along the Daugava. It was the closing ceremony of 'Daugava Week,' a series of displays and performances commemorating the ancient sites and events linked with the river that winds through Latvia's heart.

The castle sits at the confluence of the Perse and the Daugava. It used to tower far above the river. Now, after the Pļaviņas hydroelectric station was built, water laps its walls. Even today it is a beautiful site but when we spoke to those who knew it as it was, their eyes clouded with sorrow and anger at the loss. Latvian protest over the Pļaviņas HES, I was told, was one of the key events that led to the subsequent purge of 'bourgeois nationalists' from the Latvian Communist Party.

Monday, May 17

The postponed troop withdrawal talks are under way again in Jūrmala but not much is expected. The Russians are waiting for the Latvian elections, Simsons says [Pēteris Simsons was then chairman of the Defense and Internal Affairs Committee of the Supreme Council].

Tuesday, May 18

We open the America Center Library in the attractive building on Smilšu Street near the Powder Tower that I picked out when it was under renovation by the Poles a year and a half ago.

Wednesday, May 19

Jackhammers shake the mirror as I shave at 7:45. Embassy renovation continues.

Sunday, June 6

Today is the second and final day of elections. In Rīga and the outlying precincts that I visited by car, the voting was taking place in a quiet and businesslike way with little stir to reveal that anything remarkable was going on. The only unusual event was a small demonstration by a few hundred Russians, mostly pensioners, complaining about not being able to vote.

Monday, June 7

The early returns show a plurality for Latvia's Way, the 'best and brightest of East and West' ticket, with Gorbunovs and Meierovics at the top. It wins about 32 percent of the votes, which translates to about 36 seats in the 100-seat Saeima. Next is the Latvian Independence Movement (LNNK), but they have less than half the votes of Latvia's Way, followed by Jānis Jurkāns' Concord for Latvia, the Farmers' Union, the Christian Democrats, the Democratic Center, For Fatherland and Freedom, and Equal Rights.

Poor Godmanis; the Popular Front is well below the 4% threshold, so he doesn't even get into the Saeima. I send him a letter and a biography of fellow physicist Richard Feynman, 'Genius,' to cheer him up.

Wednesday, June 9

With Imants Ziedonis to visit some of the 'sacred oaks' that he and his merry band started to preserve some 15 years ago. Near Sēja he shows us perhaps the biggest oak in Latvia, whose trunk it takes nine persons to span with their arms. It is about 800 years old, they say. The trunk is completely hollow; a hole has been cut in it in preparation for preservation work. I step inside. A strange sensation, like being in a savage cathedral. The hollow reaches all the way to the top, where you can see the sky through a large opening.

Saturday, June 12

Liepāja, city of lindens. A heartbreaking place, full of parks, trees and terribly run down old houses. For a long time it was a closed city, the preserve of the Soviet Baltic Fleet, and even the beaches were raked every evening to record the footprints of those entering or departing illegally by sea. The mayor,

Imants Vismins, tells me when he was in his teens, he and his friends used to go for illicit swims at night, backing carefully into the water and then walking normally when they exited again, leaving many footprints in the sand mysteriously coming from the sea to baffle the Soviet guards.

The Russians have done a lot to be ashamed of here, and they're not departing in style. There are still 128 ships in Liepāja's military harbor, but what's shameful is the number that are sitting on the bottom, both surface vessels and submarines. I'm on board the Gallatin, a Coast Guard cutter paying the first US ship visit since Latvia disappeared behind the Iron Curtain. From the bridge, we can see two submarines grounded, at an advanced stage of dismantlement, one with only the conning tower above water. Behind us is a once-formidable guided missile cruiser, the *Bezobrazniy*, being transformed into junk, but at least it's still afloat.

Thursday, June 24

To Valmiera yesterday for Jāņi – St. John's Eve, or Midsummer – on an outing organized for the diplomatic corps by the Foreign Ministry. We began with a tour of the Valmiera Church, then to a newly privatized farm to make the acquaintance of their cows, sheep and goats, and a very lovable kitten. They served the traditional midsummer snack: *piragi*, cheese, freshly brewed beer. Then to a lakeside restaurant/*dacha*, also brand new, for lunch. Ambassador Rannikh and I rode a large, spirited horse up and down a few turns. For me, it was the first time on horseback in twenty-some years.

We [took] our time driving back to Rīga through the lush midsummer countryside. While stopped by the roadside to take pictures of a field with haystacks, I was greeted by a woman I knew riding by on a bicycle. She invited us to her new country house, where she, her husband and two children were spending Jāņi. So we had a genuine Latvian midsummer night after all.

Friday, June 25

The bluster from Moscow, especially against Estonia, is now much sharper. Yesterday Yel'tsin put out a statement containing the following appalling language:

'... it seems that the Estonian Government has misjudged Russia's goodwill and, giving way to the pressure of nationalism, has 'forgotten' about certain geopolitical and demographic realities. The Russian side has means at its disposal to remind Estonia about these.'

This is not all. Foreign Minister Kozyrev, his deputy Churkin and other Russian officials have also jumped into the fray, indicating a coordinated attack. To its credit, Washington has already fired off a demarche to Moscow asking for clarification 'at the highest appropriate level' of the Yel'tsin statement.

The Russians making these statements are reported to be fired with sincere outrage. No doubt. The root cause, it seems to me, is the lingering ignorance of contemporary history in Russia. As Aleksandr Rannikh admitted to me, even many Russians in Latvia don't know what Russia did to the Baltic people. Most Russians seem to consider themselves either victims of the Soviet regime and/or heroes who helped topple it, thereby liberating the Balts. They naturally are outraged at the impudence of Estonians and Latvians for presuming to deny citizenship and other privileges to any Russians. Even military officers and their families are immune from eviction because the Russians refuse to consider that they were ever an army of occupation.

One can sense a natural tendency among Western policymakers to lean on the Balts in order to placate the Russians. I fear this course of action will exacerbate the problem by spurring the Russians on to bullying that will provoke the Balts to violence. Alternatively, and in fact more probably, the Russians will stage the violence themselves to excuse the show of force for which they have already rhetorically set the stage. Diminishing the West's leverage for dealing with this disturbing scenario is the economic recession and lack of clear leadership that has already caused the vaunted Western assistance package for Russia, at least the \$4 billion privatization fund, to shrink embarrassingly in the past few days.

Thursday, July 8

Senators Phil Gramm and John McCain arrive for a lightning visit, just in time to be the first foreigners to call on newly inaugurated Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis. Ulmanis makes a good impression, a bit rough-hewn and lacking English but unpretentious and straightforward. My guess is he has a firm backbone and will be an activist president.

Wednesday, August 11

Margaretha af Ugglas, now Swedish Foreign Minister, pays a lightning visit to Rīga; mostly, I think, to explore how the CSCE can help avoid a Narva-like crisis here. We talk briefly at the Parliament building between her meeting with Gorbunovs and her closing press conference. I express some

reservations about a CSCE presence along Estonian lines in Latvia; I fear it may exacerbate the situation rather than calming it.

Thursday, August 12

President Guntis Ulmanis is impelled by his own history (Siberian exile as an infant) and the pressure of his constituents to seek redress from Russia for Soviet wrongs. I tell him it is not enough to be right, to win the legal argument; that won't bring the West to Latvia's rescue should Russia turn ugly. Better to learn what one can from Finland's example. The important thing now is to get the rest of the troops out.

Saturday, August 21

Reading a magazine article, I come across this quotation from Cavafy:

'When you start on your journey to Ithaca, then pray that the road is long, full of adventure, full of knowledge.... Always keep Ithaca fixed in your mind. To arrive there is your ultimate goal. And if you find her poor, Ithaca has not defrauded you. With the great wisdom you have gained, with so much experience, you must surely have understood by then what Ithacas mean.'

Indeed I found her poor and I did feel defrauded. Experience I have; it is wisdom I must seek.

Sunday, September 26

New York. President Clinton's limousine, preceded by a staggering number of motorcycle police and other vehicles, passes me at Fifth Avenue and 63d as I am walking back to the Barbizon Hotel a little after 7 pm. There are two identical cars flying the American flag; he is in the second.

It is the closest I am likely to get to the President this trip. I am in New York because the President will meet tomorrow with the three Baltic Presidents, but his own ambassadors are not invited to the meeting. I came back to New York anyway, having other things to do. The most important is a meeting with George Kennan, set for 4 pm Tuesday at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Tuesday, September 28

In the afternoon, first a meeting at the Waldorf with, on the Latvian side, President Ulmanis, Foreign Minister Andrejevs, and Ambassador to the US Kalniņš. The American principals are Strobe Talbott and Nick Burns.

Ulmanis and Andrejevs, who have just received a report on the latest sessions of Latvian-Russian troop withdrawal talks, focus on the Skrunda early-warning radar, which the Russians say they need to hold on to for another ten years. Ulmanis says that, again, the Russians maintain there is an understanding between them and the US government that supports their continuing claim to the radar. Talbott and Burns categorically deny any such 'understanding,' saying the decision on what agreement to strike with Russia on Skrunda is entirely up to Latvia.

On to the Council on Foreign Relations, at 58 East 68th Street. Kennan arrived promptly, marvelously fit and alert for a man almost 90. He walks carefully and carries a cane and he told me one ear isn't much good, but his eyes are bright and his mind is sharp. I doubt I'll be as fit when I'm 70, should I live that long.

We talked for an hour, first about Kennan's life in Rīga, of which I knew the outlines from his Memoirs. When I asked if Russia would respect Baltic independence, Kennan without hesitation gave an optimistic reply. Russia, he said, had already given up the Baltic littoral at the beginning of the Soviet period; it was only Hitler that brought the Russians back. Nor did he think it likely that too much Baltic success, economic or otherwise, would attract Russian aggression; rather, Russia would seek to emulate it.

Kennan was worried, however, about a tendency he had witnessed during his own time in Rīga of Latvians taking too narrowly ethnic a view and shrinking their horizons, for example by insisting on the sole use of the Latvian language. (He mentioned as one minor but revealing example that opera programs, previously in French, came to be distributed only in Latvian). Kennan was not, as I had surmised from his memoirs, overly charmed by Latvians during his tour. It was the 'saving grace' of Rīga, he said, that it also had a rich store of German, Russian and Jewish culture to draw on.

In the evening, to the Hotel Pierre for the annual Appeal of Conscience awards dinner. Speakers are Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev and Strobe Talbott. One of the recipients, Aleksey II, Patriarch of Russia, has left New York early in an attempt to mediate the worrisome power struggle between Yel'tsin, his former Vice President Ruskoy, and the Russian parliament.

Monday, October 4

Rīga. This morning we watch television in amazement as tank shells slam into Moscow's White House, seat of Russia's retrograde, deluded parliament. Yel'tsin, rallying the military to his side, has decided that enough is enough; Khasbulatov [speaker of the parliament] and Ruskoy, by calling for mob assaults on the Ostankino TV station, have exceeded all reasonable

bounds. The hitherto peaceful standoff around the White House turns into a bloody assault. Flames and smoke pour out of the windows, blackening the upper floors of the huge white building. Soon the renegade parliament surrenders. Ruskoy and Khasbulatov, having received guarantees through two embassies that they will not be shot, file as prisoners from the burning building.

The spectacle of an armored attack by the executive branch on the legislature in the heart of Moscow is too bizarre to be real. I feel an odd sense of detachment. Apparently many Muscovites felt that way, too. As the tanks and soldiers drew up to encircle the White House and prepare their assault, women with shopping bags and men with briefcases continued to walk calmly through their lines, seemingly oblivious to this epochal struggle for Russia's political soul.

In Rīga, people are nervous but not panicky; there are no demonstrations. Once Yel'tsin's victory is clear, the chief worry here is about what Yel'tsin may have had to promise the military to win their support – and what that will mean for Russia's policy toward the Baltic States.

One indicator of confidence here is the currency exchange rate. Despite the crisis, the lat strengthens slightly, going from \$1.62 to \$1.63. In Moscow, on the other hand, the ruble, which had firmed somewhat after dropping well below 1000 to the dollar, takes another downward dip.

Monday, November 1

The Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, came through Rīga on a brief overnight visit October 26-27. It was our highest level visit since Vice President Quayle was here last winter.

Christopher, an introverted and indeed rather shy man, arrived in Rīga at a time when his media coverage had reached new lows. The day before his arrival, *The International Herald Tribune* carried Congressman Frank X. McCloskey's call for his resignation, significant since McCloskey is a Democrat and a Foreign Affairs Committee member.

Nevertheless, it was a successful visit because it underlined high-level US support for the Baltic States, including the President's personal and continuing engagement. The announcement of a further \$160 million for officer housing to support troop withdrawals from Latvia and Estonia made a positive impression.

The Secretary saw President Ulmanis, Prime Minister Birkavs and representatives of the various Russian and Jewish communities; he met with all three

Baltic Foreign Ministers. Russian troop withdrawals and Russian-Latvian relations were the chief issues; the Skrunda early-warning radar got a lot of individual attention. The Secretary denied any 'deal' between us and Russia on Skrunda and said the issue was one to be decided between Latvia and Russia – but he suggested a reasonable approach might be an interim period allowing Russia to plug the hole in its early-warning net that the loss of Skrunda would leave.

Tuesday, November 2

A quick trip to Tukums to see a gratis pollution-abatement project by Baltec [a company specializing in pollution abatement]. President Ulmanis was also there. It's at a fuel storage site but the real problem was caused by leakage from a fuel line carrying aviation fuel to the nearby Soviet military airfield. As a result, the ground is absolutely saturated with fuel. A test tube from a monitoring hole comes up with 80% fuel and just a little water. Scary. It will take years to clean up the soil and groundwater.

Sunday, November 21

Standing in the snow on the terrace of Rīga Castle, we watch fireworks across the Daugava celebrating the 75th anniversary of the declaration of Latvia's independence. At the reception afterward, President Ulmanis offers Elizabeth the first slice of Latvia's birthday cake.

Monday, January 17, 1994

I attend a meeting of Latvia's National Security Council chaired by President Ulmanis. The ostensible purpose is for Charles Kupchan of the National Security Council staff to brief on the Partnership for Peace, but I also use the occasion to brief on last week's summit discussion of Baltic issues. Yel'tsin agreed to reduce the length of time Russia asks to stay on at Skrunda – to four years plus 18 months for dismantling – but he voiced the usual concerns about the treatment of Russians in Latvia. The President said we would keep an eye on these, primarily through the CSCE mission in Latvia, and react appropriately if any violations are reported.

Sunday, January 30

I am winging toward Washington, escorting all eight political faction leaders from Latvia's Saeima plus Foreign Minister Andrejevs and three of his aides to top-level meetings in Washington. The point is to persuade not only the government but also the opposition that it is in Latvia's interest to seize

this opportunity to settle the troop withdrawal and Skrunda squabble with Russia. The offer may not meet every standard of justice and equity, but no better deal seems likely to present itself. The risk of leaving the matter unresolved is high as Russia stumbles toward another flirtation with easy answers, marked by nostalgia for the 'near abroad.'

Saturday, February 5

JFK Airport. On the way back to Rīga via New York and Copenhagen after a dazzling program for the Latvian delegation in Washington. We saw everyone. There were extended discussions with Secretary Christopher, Deputy Secretary-designate Strobe Talbott, Deputy Secretary of Defense (and Secretary-designate) William Perry and their immediate advisors, and a session lasting almost an hour and a half in the White House Situation Room with Nick Burns of the NSC. After a half-hour meeting with National Security Advisor Tony Lake in the West Wing's Roosevelt Room, President Clinton and Vice President Gore both dropped in for a few encouraging words and a photo. And, as they say, *much, much more*. A unique program in my experience for any parliamentary delegation. A convincing demonstration of the high interest in Latvia's problems at the top of the American leadership.

Monday, July 18

The fishing village of A, Moskenes Island, Norway. I'm sitting at the kitchen table of a "sjohus" overlooking the tiny harbor of this little village, above which tower the crags that make up most of the Lofoten Islands. Nico and I are on a trip that began in Riga on July 10.

This trip is something of a reward to myself for a tremendously busy spring and summer at the Embassy, culminating in a visit on July 6 by President Clinton. That visit was the first in history by a sitting American president to a Baltic capital; Nixon's visit last year for all I know was the first one by a former president.

The public highlight of Clinton's visit was a speech at the Freedom Monument, a punchy, supportive political act more than a policy statement. It seemed consciously designed to forestall any possible comparisons to what Safire and others have dubbed President Bush's ill-fated 'Chicken Kiev' speech. Clinton came out four-square for Baltic independence, albeit with a tactful reminder that 'freedom without tolerance is freedom unfulfilled,' an entirely acceptable way to make a point that will ease the political sting for Moscow of the speech's main thrust.

Sunday, February 12, 1995

Aboard a Lufthansa flight from Frankfurt to Rīga. Coming back from Strasbourg, where on Friday a ceremony marked Latvia's formal admission into the Council of Europe. It has been a long time in coming, delayed mostly by the COE's doubts over Latvia's hesitation about citizenship for Russians in Latvia, to call the problem by its simplest name. But with a naturalization law now being implemented and a law on aliens close to adoption, the moment was judged ripe. Latvia is now the 34th member state, its flag flying proudly, thanks to the alphabet, right in the middle.

I decided at the last moment to witness this culmination of a process that began while I was still Consul General in Strasbourg. Jānis Jurkāns, who made Latvia's first, tentative contacts in Strasbourg, was there too, as was Georgs Andrejevs, who resigned as Foreign Minister last year because of his collaboration, marginal though it was, with the KGB.

With [COE Parliamentary] Assembly President Martinez and Secretary General Tarschys I raised the question of coming to terms with the past: does Russia have any responsibility today for what happened in the Baltic States during the Soviet era? My conviction is that there will be no stable relationship between Russia and Latvia until Russia acknowledges that Latvia was annexed by force and assumes at least a moral, if not necessarily legal, responsibility for the consequences. Martinez, while interested, stressed the need to look forward, an emphasis with which in general I agree. Both, though, seemed willing to consider whether the "Baltic question" might be addressed in a COE-sponsored history project.

Thursday, May 4

The spectacular demolition, synchronized to New Age music, of the unfinished Skrunda large phased-array radar was the most visible US intervention in Latvia since President Clinton's visit to Rīga last July. The 19-story 'Skrunda Monster,' as most Latvians call it, collapsed in a huge heap under its tile-encrusted slanting receiver wall, sending a thick brown cloud of dust drifting slowly toward the apartments housing Russians who continue to work at the Skrunda Hen House radar. It symbolizes the end – or must we continue to say, the beginning of the end? – of the era of Soviet occupation.

Moscow is annoyed. There was last-minute pressure, mostly through the media, to delay the irreversible moment. Afterwards, the deputy speaker of the Duma sent President Ulmanis a telegram calling the demolition 'an act of state stupidity.' Kozyrev strikes a manful note, pointing out that after all the building belongs to Latvia.

Monday, May 8

The Latvian leadership and diplomatic corps dash back and forth across Rīga in Keystone Cops motorcades as we commemorate VE Day. Not an unambiguous event here, certainly not a liberation. That must be part of the reason why we went rocketing back and forth. First, with President Ulmanis and Prime Minister Gailis in the lead, we stand for an hour in a cold drizzle at the Brethren Cemetery. As acting dean, I lay flowers on behalf of the diplomatic corps. Then an unscheduled dash to the Jewish cemetery, probably because two nights ago an explosion went off at the Rīga synagogue, causing damage but not casualties. Then to the German and finally the Russian/Soviet cemeteries, all at top speed.

Saturday, May 13

In the morning I jog down to the old Legation, first taking a loop around the waterside restaurant in Kronvalda Park.

Grey skies, an intermittent light drizzle. Few people out. Exceptions are the very old and the very young, who have their different reasons for shrugging off the weather. Also to be seen are the inevitable young men carrying briefcases or bags. During my visit to Rīga in the Soviet era, some of those were focused on me, and they were carrying the tools of the KGB trade.

The topic calls up a memory of my visits to Rīga during the Soviet period and my first visit to Leningrad, when I shamelessly tried to shake my 'tail' in the subway. These days it's harder to tell what they're up to.

Pondering this point, I round a corner near the Swedish Gate and almost run into a young man with a bag. He passes to my right. I stand watching him. Half a block away, he stops and turns. We look at each other. He turns and walks off, as do I.

Thursday, May 18

The Latvian Government has the misfortune of facing simultaneously a budget crisis and a banking crisis. I meet separately with Latvian Bank President Einars Repše and Finance Minister Andris Piebalgs. To both I quote the old Chinese proverb, 'Every crisis is an opportunity.' (I first heard this in Vietnam, where it did not, apparently, apply.) What I mean is that Bank Baltija's vulnerability offers a chance to clean up banking practices as well as cleaning out some undesirable characters.

The banking crisis centers on Bank Baltija's liquidity problem triggered by the maturing of time deposits on which BB promised 90% interest. Most

suspect there is more to it than that, and estimates of the shortfall run as high as \$57 million. This is beyond the government's ability to cover, but neither can the government leave BB's 500,000 depositors entirely to their fate; elections are only four months off.

Saturday, June 10

Up until now the bank crisis has if anything only grown in scope, with the shortfall creeping toward 200 million lats (\$400 million). Uldis Klauss, the Latvian-American named to take over Bank Baltija, finds fresh horrors each time he digs deeper into the books. It's a classic Ponzi scheme, he says, which perhaps came to an unexpectedly rapid end because a small and impoverished country like Latvia can't provide enough gullible victims.

Tuesday, June 20

The tempo of [diplomatic] arrivals and departures quickens.

No relief yet on the banking crisis, with the government still dodging a decision. When I saw Einārs Repše at the Queen's Birthday reception, he seemed quite haggard, whether from fatigue or fear I couldn't be sure. To my chagrin, all the Western banking specialists – the senior IMF, EBRD and World Bank reps – have just left for vacation, as though the crisis were over.

Tuesday, July 4

Sunday we had our now-traditional Independence Day outdoor cookout, about 600 people and hamburgers, hot dogs, Tex-Mex, apple pie, salads, beer, soft drinks, and two bands, the Rīga Wind Orchestra and a small jazz group, both of them excellent. Splendid weather, cool and sunny just as during the President's visit. I use my short speech, in Latvian and English, to say goodbye, and E. makes some moving remarks, much appreciated.

Friday, July 7

My farewell call on President Ulmanis, fittingly, is in his new office in Rīga Castle. Much of the old building is still awaiting a facelift, but the President's office and the approaches to it have been attractively redone. At the President's request, E. accompanies me. During the meeting, she urges him to remain optimistic, look to the future, and put his hope in Latvia's children.

Wednesday, July 12

With packing now going full blast, I hold my last large staff meeting, then attend a G-24 meeting focused on legal education.

As I walk back to the Embassy and approach the Freedom Monument, an old lady springs up from a bench, thanks me for what I have done for Latvia during the past four years, and gives me a kiss. A nice ending: it was another old lady on the same bench who muttered 'traitor!' as I walked by not so many months ago.

Friday, July 14

At 8:15 a.m. E., Nico and I, accompanied by the Chief of Protocol and a small delegation from the Embassy, leave for the airport. We receive flowers before boarding the Baltic International flight, a Tupolev 134, for Frankfurt, where we change to Delta Airlines for Washington. So ends one story.

Documents and Speeches

The Announcement of the Government of the United States Concerning Recognition of the Latvian Government, 28 July 1922

American Legation Riga

July 28, 1922.

No. 1

Excellency:

In compliance with instructions received from my Government, I have the honor to inform you that the Government of the United States extends full recognition to the Government of Latvia.

The Government of the United States at the same time likewise extends similar recognition to the Governments of Esthonia and Lithuania.

In announcing its decision to recognize the Governments of Latvia, Lithuania and Esthonia, the Government of the United States has today made public the enclosed statement.

The rank of minister has been conferred upon Commissioner Evan E. Young and he will continue to represent the Government of the United States in Latvia, Esthonia and Lithuania.

Accept, Excellency, the renewed assurance of my highest consideration.

Consul in Charge

Enclosure.

His Excellency
The Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Rīga, Latvia.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES
July 28, 1992

The Governments of Latvia, Esthonia and Lithuania have been recognized either de jure or de facto by the principal governments of Europe and have entered into treaty relations with their neighbors.

In extending to them recognition on its part the Government of the United States takes cognizance of the actual existence of these governments during a considerable period of time and of the successful maintenance within their borders of political and economic stability.

The United States has consistently maintained that the disturbed conditions of Russian affairs may not be made the occasion for the alienation of Russian territory and this principle is not deemed to be infringed by the recognition at this time of the Governments of Latvia, Lithuania and Esthonia which have been set up and maintained by indigenous populations.

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Latvia and the Government of the USA Concerning Diplomatic Relations, 5 September 1991

September 5, 1991, Date-Signed
September 5, 1991, Date-In-Force

The Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Latvia,
Considering that they have entered into diplomatic relations,
Desirous of ensuring the effective performance of diplomatic and consular functions,
Hopeful of promoting enhanced relations between their peoples in economic, cultural and other fields,
Affirming their shared view of the importance of the Helsinki Final Act Principles and other CSCE commitments and their determination to fully implement such commitments,
Have agreed as follows:

Article I

1. Each Government shall send a diplomatic agent to the other with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, as soon as the necessary administrative and legal arrangements in the sending State so permit.
2. The Governments shall conduct their diplomatic and consular relations in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of April 18, 1961, and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of April 24, 1963. Pending the accreditation of the permanent staff of the U.S. diplomatic mission to the Republic of Latvia, the Government of the Republic of Latvia shall treat personnel initially assigned to perform diplomatic or consular functions as if they were members of the mission.

Article II

Following the establishment of relations, the two Governments, upon the request of either side, shall enter into negotiations for the prompt settlement of claims and other financial and property matters that remain unresolved between them.

Article III

The Governments shall meet promptly to review the status of treaty relations between them.

Article IV

This Memorandum of Understanding shall enter into force upon signature.
DONE at Rīga, this 5 day of Sept., 1991, in duplicate, in the English and Latvian languages, both texts being equally authentic.

Address by Bill Clinton, President of the United States of America, at The Freedom Monument, Rīga, Latvia, 6 July 1994

Today we celebrate a moment of renewal. Today we remember your courage. Today we rejoice; for one force rules in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and that force is freedom. Thank you, President Ulmanis, for your gracious words and your warm welcome to this beautiful capital. And my thanks, also, to President Meri and President Brazauskas for your contribution to this historic event.

To the people of these lands, to those gathered in this square, to those listening or watching from afar, to all who have kept the faith, I am deeply honored to stand before you, the first President of the United States to set foot on free Baltic soil.

Today we remember, we remember an August day just five years ago when the peoples of your nation joined hands in common cause from Tallinn to Vilnius, a million strong, you reached across the boundaries of fear. And here in this Square, sheltered by the Freedom Monument, that human chain found its center. You showed the peoples of the world the power of the Baltic way.

Now, today, I stand with you here. And on behalf of all Americans, I proudly take a place in that unbroken chain for freedom. The chain stretches back to your grandparents exiled to the wastelands of Siberia, many never to return; back to your fathers, men who took to the forests to resist the occupying troops and to you, who took up their cause, stood vigil over the bonfires of liberty and sang the songs of independence. And to those in all generations who gave their very lives for freedom. (President speaks in Latvian.) Freedom.

No matter what the language, it is the link that unites the peoples of our nation: Estonian, Lithuanian, Latvian and American, no matter the century, no matter the invader. You have proved that freedom never dies when it lives in the hearts of men and women. You have taught us never to give up. You have inspired the world. And America has kept faith with you. For 50

years we refused to recognize the occupation of your nation. Your flag flew in our capital.

Many of your countrymen and women sought refuge on our shores. Now some have returned to serve their homelands, while others remain to keep your spirit alive all across America. The chain that binds our nations is unbreakable. We marvel at your strength and your reborn independence. But we know, also, that many of you face hardship and uncertainty in your daily lives, for the path of reform is not always smooth. Yet America calls on you to hold fast to that path, to seize this moment of renewal, to redeem the struggles of your ancestors, to extend the chain of freedom so that it reaches across generations to your children and beyond.

And as you return to Europe's fold, we will stand with you. We will help you. We will help you to restore your land, to bring new markets to light, to find prosperity for all your people. And we will rejoice with you when the last of the foreign troops vanish from your homelands. We will be partners for peace. Our soldiers, the new Baltic battalion among them, will join together to bring security to a new Europe. We will be partners so that your nation can be forever free.

I come from a nation of people drawn from all around the world. A nation of many, many peoples who once were bitter enemies, but who now live together as friends. In your homeland, as in America, there will always live among you people of different backgrounds. Today I appeal to you to summon what my nation's greatest healer, Abraham Lincoln, called 'the better angels of our nation,' to never to deny to others the justice and equality you fought so hard for and earned for yourselves.

For freedom without tolerance is freedom unfulfilled. The shining figure of liberty stands guard here today and the spirit of your peoples fills the air and brings joy to our hearts. We hear the songs of freedom that have echoed across the centuries. We see the flames that let your way to independence. We feel the courage that will keep the chain of freedom alive. May the memories of this day linger. May the spirit of the Baltic souls soar. May the strong sense of freedom never fade. So, in the name of the free people of the United States of America, I say to the free people of the Baltic Nations: Let freedom ring. (The President speaks in Latvian.) Freedom.

A Charter of Partnership Among the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, Republic of Latvia, and Republic of Lithuania

January 16, 1998

Preamble

The United States of America, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia, and the Republic of Lithuania, hereinafter referred to as Partners.

Sharing a common vision of a peaceful and increasingly integrated Europe, free of divisions, dedicated to democracy, the rule of law, free markets, and respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people;

Recognizing the historic opportunity to build a new Europe, in which each state is secure in its internationally recognized borders and respects the independence and territorial integrity of all members of the transatlantic community;

Determined to strengthen their bilateral relations as a contribution to building this new Europe, and to enhance the security of all states through the adaptation and enlargement of European and transatlantic institutions;

Committed to the full development of human potential within just and inclusive societies attentive to the promotion of harmonious and equitable relations among individuals belonging to diverse ethnic and religious groups;

Avowing a common interest in developing cooperative, mutually respectful relations with all other states in the region;

Recalling the friendly relations that have been continuously maintained between the United States of America and the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Latvia, and the Republic of Lithuania since 1922;

Further recalling that the United States of America never recognized the forcible incorporation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the USSR in 1940 but rather regards their statehood as uninterrupted since the establishment of their independence, a policy which the United States has restated continuously for five decades;

Celebrating the rich contributions that immigrants from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have made to the multi-ethnic culture of the United States of America, as well as the European heritage enjoyed by the United States as a beneficiary of the contributions of intellectuals, artists, and Hanseatic traders from the Baltic states to the development of Europe; praising the contributions of U.S. citizens to the liberation and rebuilding of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania;

Affirm as a political commitment declared at the highest level, the following principles and procedures to guide their individual and joint efforts to achieve the goals of this Charter.

Principles of Partnership

The United States of America has a real, profound, and enduring interest in the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and security of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

The United States of America warmly welcomes the success of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in regaining their freedom and resuming their rightful places in the community of nations.

The United States of America respects the sacrifices and hardships undertaken by the people of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to re-establish their independence. It encourages efforts by these states to continue to expand their political, economic, security, and social ties with other nations as full members of the transatlantic community.

The Partners affirm their commitment to the rule of law as a foundation for a transatlantic community of free and democratic nations, and to the responsibility of all just societies to protect and respect the human rights and civil liberties of all individuals residing within their territories.

The Partners underscore their shared commitment to the principles and obligations contained in the United Nations Charter.

The Partners reaffirm their shared commitment to the purposes, principles, and provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent OSCE documents, including the Charter of Paris and the documents adopted at the Lisbon OSCE Summit.

The Partners will observe in good faith their commitments to promote and respect the standards for human rights embodied in the above-mentioned Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) documents and in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. They will implement their legislation protecting such human rights fully and equitably.

The United States of America commends the measures taken by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to advance the integration of Europe by establishing close cooperative relations among themselves and with their neighbors, as well as their promotion of regional cooperation through their participation in fora such as the Baltic Assembly, Baltic Council of Ministers, and the Council of Baltic Sea States.

Viewing good neighborly relations as fundamental to overall security and stability in the transatlantic community, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania reaffirm their determination to further enhance bilateral relations between themselves and with other neighboring states.

The Partners will intensify their efforts to promote the security, prosperity, and stability of the region. The Partners will draw on the points noted below in focusing their efforts to deepen the integration of the Baltic states into transatlantic and European institutions, promote cooperation in security and defense, and develop the economies of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

A Commitment to Integration

As part of a common vision of a Europe whole and free, the Partners declare that their shared goal is the full integration of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into European and transatlantic political, economic, security, and defense institutions. Europe will not be fully secure unless Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania each are secure.

The Partners reaffirm their commitment to the principle, established in the Helsinki Final Act, repeated in the Budapest and Lisbon OSCE summit declarations, and also contained in the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, that the security of all states in the Euro-Atlantic community is indivisible.

The Partners further share a commitment to the core principle, also articulated in the OSCE Code of Conduct and reiterated in subsequent OSCE summit declarations, that each state has the inherent right to individual and collective self-defense as well as the right freely to choose its own security arrangements, including treaties of alliance.

The Partners support the vital role being played by a number of complementary institutions and bodies – including the OSCE, the European Union (EU), the West European Union (WEU) the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), the Council of Europe (COE), and the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) – in achieving the partners' shared goal of an integrated, secure, and undivided Europe.

They believe that, irrespective of factors related to history or geography, such institutions should be open to all European democracies willing and able to shoulder the responsibilities and obligations of membership, as determined by those institutions.

The Partners welcome a strong and vibrant OSCE dedicated to promoting democratic institutions, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. They strongly support the OSCE's role as a mechanism to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts and crises.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania each reaffirm their goal to become full members of all European and transatlantic institutions, including the European Union and NATO.

The United States of America recalls its long-standing support for the enlargement of the EU, affirming it as a core institution in the new Europe and declaring that a stronger, larger, and outward-looking European Union will further security and prosperity for all of Europe.

The Partners believe that the enlargement of NATO will enhance the security of the United States, Canada, and all the countries in Europe, including those states not immediately invited to membership or not currently interested in membership.

The United States of America welcomes the aspirations and supports the efforts of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to join NATO. It affirms its view that NATO's partners can become members as each aspirant proves itself able and willing to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership, and as NATO determines that the inclusion of these nations would serve European stability and the strategic interests of the Alliance.

The United States of America reiterates its view that the enlargement of NATO is an on-going process. It looks forward to future enlargements, and remains convinced that not only will NATO's door remain open to new members, but that the first countries invited to membership will not be the last. No non-NATO country has a veto over Alliance decisions.

The United States notes the Alliance is prepared to strengthen its consultations with aspirant countries on the full range of issues related to possible NATO membership.

The Partners welcome the results of the Madrid Summit. They support the Alliance's commitment to an open door policy and welcome the Alliance's recognition of the Baltic states as aspiring members of NATO. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania pledge to deepen their close relations with the Alliance through the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Partnership for Peace, and the intensified dialogue process.

The Partners underscore their interest in Russia's democratic and stable development and support a strengthened NATO-Russia relationship as a core element of their shared vision of a new and peaceful Europe. They welcome the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the NATO-Ukraine Charter, both of which further improve European security.

Security Cooperation

The Partners will consult together, as well as with other countries, in the event that a Partner perceives that its territorial integrity, independence, or security is threatened or at risk. The Partners will use bilateral and multilateral mechanisms for such consultations.

The United States welcomes and appreciates the contributions that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have already made to European security through the peaceful restoration of independence and their active participation in the Partnership for Peace. The United States also welcomes their contributions to IFOR, SFOR, and other international peacekeeping missions.

Building on the existing cooperation among their respective ministries of defense and armed forces, the United States of America supports the efforts of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to provide for their legitimate defense needs, including development of appropriate and interoperable military forces.

The Partners welcome the establishment of the Baltic Security Assistance Group (BALTSEA) as an effective body for international coordination of security assistance to Estonia's, Latvia's, and Lithuania's defense forces.

The Partners will cooperate further in the development and expansion of defense initiatives such as the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BaltBat), the Baltic Squadron (Baltron), and the Baltic airspace management regime (BaltNet), which provide a tangible demonstration of practical

cooperation enhancing the common security of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and the transatlantic community.

The Partners intend to continue mutually beneficial military cooperation and will maintain regular consultations, using the established Bilateral Working Group on Defense and Military Relations.

Economic Cooperation

The Partners affirm their commitment to free market mechanisms as the best means to meet the material needs of their people.

The United States of America commends the substantial progress its Baltic Partners have made to implement economic reform and development and their transition to free market economies.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania emphasize their intention to deepen their economic integration with Europe and the global economy, based on the principles of free movement of people, goods, capital, and services.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania underscore their commitment to continue market-oriented economic reforms and to express their resolve to achieve full integration into global economic bodies, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) while creating conditions for smoothly acceding to the European Union.

Noting this objective, the United States of America will work to facilitate the integration of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania with the world economy and appropriate international economic organizations, in particular the WTO and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), on appropriate commercial terms.

The Partners will work individually and together to develop legal and financial conditions in their countries conducive to international investment. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania welcome U.S. investment in their economies.

The Partners will continue to strive for mutually advantageous economic relations building on the principles of equality and non-discrimination to create the conditions necessary for such cooperation.

The Partners will commence regular consultations to further cooperation and provide for regular assessment of progress in the areas of economic development, trade, investment, and related fields. These consultations will be chaired at the appropriately high level.

Recognizing that combating international organized crime requires a multilateral effort, the partners agree to cooperate fully in the fight against this threat to the world economy and political stability. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania remain committed to developing sound legislation in this field and to enhancing the implementation of this legislation through the strengthening of a fair and well-functioning judicial system.

The U.S.-Baltic Relationship

In all of these spheres of common endeavor, the Partners, building on their shared history of friendship and cooperation, solemnly reaffirm their commitment to a rich and dynamic Baltic-American partnership for the 21st century.

The Partners view their partnership in the areas of political, economic, security, defense, cultural, and environmental affairs as contributing to closer ties between their people and facilitating the full integration of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into European and transatlantic structures.

In order to further strengthen these ties, the Partners will establish a Partnership Commission chaired at the appropriately high level to evaluate common efforts. This Commission will meet once a year or as needed to take stock of the Partnership, assess results of bilateral consultations on economic, military and other areas, and review progress achieved toward meeting the goals of this Charter.

In order to better reflect changes in the European and transatlantic political and security environment, signing Partners are committed regularly at the highest level to review this agreement.

FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

FOR THE REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA:

FOR THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA:

FOR THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA:

Washington D.C. January 16, 1998

Address by George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, at The Small Guild Hall, Rīga, Latvia, 7 May 2005

Sveiki Draugi. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the warm welcome. Madam President, Laura and I thank you for your kind words of introduction, we thank you for your principled leadership, and I thank you for your friendship, and we thank you for the hospitality that you and Dr. Freibergs have shown us.

I want to thank the people of the Republic of Latvia for being such gracious hosts for my visit here. And I want to also thank the Prime Minister for joining us, and members of the government. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. Laura and I are so pleased to make this second journey to the Baltic States, and our first visit to the great land of Latvia. We're honored, as well, to be in the company of President Ruutel of Estonia, and President Adamkus of Lithuania – thank you both for coming. These are good friends to Latvia, and good friends to America.

The Baltic countries have seen one of the most dramatic transformations in modern history, from captive nations to NATO allies and EU members in little more than a decade. The Latvian, Estonian, and Lithuanian people showed that the love of liberty is stronger than the will of an empire. And today you're standing for liberty beyond your borders, so that others do not suffer the injustices you have known. The American people admire your moral courage in the cause of freedom.

This week, nations on both sides of the Atlantic observe the 60th anniversary of Hitler's defeat. The evil that seized power in Germany brought war to all of Europe, and waged war against morality, itself. What began as a movement of thugs became a government without conscience, and then an empire of bottomless cruelty. The Third Reich exalted the strong over the weak, overran and humiliated peaceful countries, undertook a mad quest for racial purity, coldly planned and carried out the murder of millions, and defined evil for the ages. Brave men and women of many countries faced that evil, and fought through dark and desperate years for their families and their homelands. In the end, a dictator who worshiped power was confined

to four walls of a bunker, and the fall of his squalid tyranny is a day to remember and to celebrate.

Causes can be judged by the monuments they leave behind. The Nazi terror is remembered today in places like Auschwitz, Dachau, Rumbula Forest, where we still hear the cries of the innocent, and pledge to God and history: Never again. The alliance that won the war is remembered today in carefully tended cemeteries in Normandy, Margraten, St. Petersburg, and other places across Europe, where we recall brief lives of great honor, and we offer this pledge: We will always be grateful.

The Baltic States had no role in starting World War Two. The battle came here because of a secret pact between dictators. And when the war came, many in this region showed their courage. After a puppet government ordered the Latvian fleet to return to port, sailors on eight freighters chose to remain at sea under the flag of free Latvia, assisting the United States Merchant Marine in carrying supplies across the Atlantic. A newspaper in the state of South Carolina described the Latvian crew this way: 'They all have beards and dressed so differently... They are ... exhausted, but full of fighting spirit.'

By the end of the war, six of the Latvian ships had been sunk, and more than half the sailors had been lost. Nearly all of the survivors settled in America, and became citizens we were proud to call our own. One American town renamed a street Ciltvaira – to honor a sunken ship that sailed under a free Latvian flag. My country has always been thankful for Latvia's friendship, and Latvia will always have the friendship of America.

As we mark a victory of six days ago – six decades ago, we are mindful of a paradox. For much of Germany, defeat led to freedom. For much of Eastern and Central Europe, victory brought the iron rule of another empire. V-E Day marked the end of fascism, but it did not end oppression. The agreement at Yalta followed in the unjust tradition of Munich and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Once again, when powerful governments negotiated, the freedom of small nations was somehow expendable. Yet this attempt to sacrifice freedom for the sake of stability left a continent divided and unstable. The captivity of millions in Central and Eastern Europe will be remembered as one of the greatest wrongs of history.

The end of World War Two raised unavoidable questions for my country: Had we fought and sacrificed only to achieve the permanent division of Europe into armed camps? Or did the cause of freedom and the rights of nations require more of us? Eventually, America and our strong allies made a decision: We would not be content with the liberation of half of Europe – and

we would not forget our friends behind an Iron Curtain. We defended the freedom of Greece and Turkey, and airlifted supplies to Berlin, and broadcast the message of liberty by radio. We spoke up for dissenters, and challenged an empire to tear down a hated wall. Eventually, communism began to collapse under external pressure, and under the weight of its own contradictions. And we set the vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace – so dictators could no longer rise up and feed ancient grievances, and conflict would not be repeated again and again.

In these decades of struggle and purpose, the Baltic peoples kept a long vigil of suffering and hope. Though you lived in isolation, you were not alone. The United States refused to recognize your occupation by an empire. The flags of free Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania – illegal at home – flew proudly over diplomatic missions in the United States. And when you joined hands in protest and the empire fell away, the legacy of Yalta was finally buried, once and for all. The security and freedom of the Baltic nations is now more than a noble aspiration; it is the binding pledge of the alliance we share. The defense of your freedom – in defense of your freedom you will never stand alone.

From the vantage point of this new century, we recognize the end of the Cold War as part of an even broader movement in our world. From Germany and Japan after World War Two, to Latin America, to Asia, and Central and Eastern Europe, and now to the broader Middle East, the advance of freedom is the great story of our age. And in this history, there are important lessons. We have learned that free nations grow stronger with time, because they rise on the creativity and enterprise of their people. We have learned that governments accountable to citizens are peaceful, while dictatorships stir resentments and hatred to cover their own failings. We have learned that the skeptics and pessimists are often wrong, because men and women in every culture, when given the chance, will choose liberty. We have learned that even after a long wait in the darkness of tyranny, freedom can arrive suddenly, like the break of day. And we have learned that the demand for self-government is often driven and sustained by patriotism, by the traditions and heroes and language of a native land.

Yet we've also learned that sovereignty and majority rule are only the beginnings of freedom. The promise of democracy starts with national pride, and independence, and elections. But it does not end there. The promise of democracy is fulfilled by minority rights, and equal justice under the rule of law, and an inclusive society in which every person belongs. A country that divides into factions and dwells on old grievances cannot move forward, and risks sliding back into tyranny. A country that unites all its people behind

common ideals will multiply in strength and confidence. The successful democracies of the 21st century will not be defined by blood and soil. Successful democracies will be defined by a broader ideal of citizenship – based on shared principles, shared responsibilities, and respect for all. For my own country, the process of becoming a mature, multi-ethnic democracy was lengthy and violent. Our journey from national independence to equal injustice [sic] included the enslavement of millions, and a four-year civil war. Even after slavery ended, a century passed before an oppressed minority was guaranteed equal rights. Americans found that racial division almost destroyed us, and the false doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ was no basis for a strong and unified country. The only way we found to rise above the injustices of our history was to reject segregation, to move beyond mere tolerance, and to affirm the brotherhood of everyone in our land.

Latvia is facing the challenges that come with ethnic diversity, and it’s addressing these challenges in a uniformly peaceful way. Whatever the historical causes, yours is now a multi-ethnic society – as I have seen on my visit. No wrongs of the past should ever be allowed to divide you, or to slow your remarkable progress. While keeping your Latvian identity and language, you have a responsibility to reach out to all who share the future of Latvia. A welcoming and tolerant spirit will assure the unity and strength of your country. Minorities here have a responsibility as well – to be citizens who seek the good of the country in which they live. As inclusive, peaceful societies, all of the Baltic nations can be models to every nation that follows the path of freedom and democracy.

In recent months, the Baltic governments gave assistance during the election in Ukraine, and the people of that country chose a wise and visionary leader. As President Yushchenko works to strengthen the rule of law and open Ukraine’s economy, the United States will help that nation join the institutions that bind our democracies. Later on this trip I’ll travel to Georgia, another country that is taking a democratic path and deserves support on its journey. My country will stand by Georgian leaders who respect minority rights and work to peacefully unify their country, and grow closer to the free nations in Europe. We’re also committed to democratic progress in Moldova, where leaders have pledged to expand freedom of the press, to protect minority rights, and to make government institutions more accountable.

All of us are committed to the advance of freedom in Belarus. The people of that country live under Europe’s last dictatorship, and they deserve better. The governments of Latvia and Lithuania have worked to build support for democracy in Belarus, and to deliver truthful information by radio and newspapers. Together we have set a firm and confident standard: Repression

has no place on this continent. The people of Minsk deserve the same freedom you have in Tallinn, and Vilnius, and Riga.

All the nations that border Russia will benefit from the spread of democratic values – and so will Russia, itself. Stable, prosperous democracies are good neighbors, trading in freedom, and posing no threat to anyone. The United States has free and peaceful nations to the north and south of us. We do not consider ourselves to be encircled; we consider ourselves to be blessed. No good purpose is served by stirring up fears and exploiting old rivalries in this region. The interests of Russia and all nations are served by the growth of freedom that leads to prosperity and peace. Inside Russia, leaders have made great progress over the last 15 years. President Putin recently stated that Russia's future lies within Europe – and America agrees. He also stated that Russia's democratic future will not be determined by outsiders – and America agrees, as well. That nation will follow its own course, according to its own history. Yet all free and successful countries have some common characteristics: freedom of worship, freedom of the press, economic liberty, the rule of law, and the limitation of power through checks and balances. In the long run, it is the strength of Russian democracy that will determine the greatness of Russia. And I believe the Russian people value their freedom, and will settle for nothing less.

For all the problems that remain, it is a miracle of history that this young century finds us speaking about the consolidation of freedom throughout Europe. And the stunning democratic gains of the last several decades are only the beginning. Freedom is not tired. The ideal of human dignity is not weary. And the next stage of the world democratic movement is already unfolding in the broader Middle East.

We seek democracy in that region for the same reasons we spent decades working for democracy in Europe – because freedom is the only reliable path to peace. If the Middle East continues to simmer in anger and resentment and hopelessness, caught in a cycle of repression and radicalism, it will produce terrorism of even greater audacity and destructive power. But if the peoples of that region gain the right of self-government, and find hopes to replace their hatreds, then the security of all free nations will be strengthened. We will not repeat the mistakes of other generations, appeasing or excusing tyranny, and sacrificing freedom in the vain pursuit of stability. We have learned our lesson; no one's liberty is expendable. In the long run, our security and true stability depend on the freedom of others. And so, with confidence and resolve, we will stand for freedom across the broader Middle East.

In this great objective, we need a realism that understands the difficulties. But we must turn away from a pessimism that abandons the goal and consigns millions to endless tyranny. And we have reason for optimism. When the people of Afghanistan were finally given the vote, they chose humane rulers and a future of freedom. When the people of the Palestinian Territories went to the polls, they chose a leader committed to negotiation instead of violence. When Iraqi voters turned out by the millions, they repudiated the killers who hate and attack their liberty. There's much work ahead, but the direction of events is clear in the broader Middle East: Freedom is on the march.

Recent elections have brought a tremendous catalyst for change, and more are on the way. Elections are set to start at the end of this month in Lebanon, and those elections must go forward with no outside interference. The people of Lebanon now have the opportunity to bridge old divides and build an independent government. Egypt will hold a presidential election this fall. That election should proceed with international monitors, and with rules that allow for a real campaign.

As in other parts of the world, the work of democracy is larger than holding a fair election; it requires building the structures that sustain freedom. Selective liberalization – the easing of oppressive laws – is progress, but it is not enough. Successful democracies that effectively protect individual rights require viable political parties, an independent judiciary, a diverse media, and limits on executive power. There is no modernization without democracy. Ultimately, human rights and human development depend on human liberty.

As in other parts of the world, successful democracies in the broader Middle East must also bridge old racial and religious divides – and democracy is the only force capable of doing so. In Iraq, the new Cabinet includes members of all of Iraq's leading ethnic and religious groups, who, despite their differences, share a commitment to democracy, freedom, and the rule of law. The new President of Iraq is a member of a minority group that was attacked with poison gas by the former regime. Democracy is fostering internal peace by protecting individual rights, while giving every minority a role in the nation's future. Iraq's free government is showing the way for others, and is winning the respect of a watching world.

In the Middle East, we are seeing the rule of law – the rule of fear give way to the hope of change. And brave reformers in that region deserve more than our praise. The established democracies have a duty to help emerging democracies of the broader Middle East. They need our help, because freedom has deadly enemies in that region – men who celebrate

murder, incite suicide, and thirst for absolute power. By aiding democratic transitions, we will isolate the forces of hatred and terror and defeat them before violence spreads.

The Baltic States are members of a global coalition, and each is making essential contributions every day. Lithuania is preparing to deploy a reconstruction team to western Afghanistan, and has troops in Iraq conducting patrols and aiding in reconstruction. Estonians are serving in Afghanistan, they're detecting and removing explosives, and Estonian troops serve side-by-side with Americans in Baghdad. Latvia has a team in Kabul, Afghanistan, clearing mines, and soldiers in Iraq providing convoy security and patrols. Your commitment to freedom has brought sacrifice. We remember Lieutenant Olafs Baumanis, who was killed in Iraq. We ask for God's blessings for his family, and we're honored that his wife, Vita, is here with us today.

It's no surprise that Afghanistan and Iraq find strong allies in the Baltic nations. Because you've recently known tyranny, you are offended by the oppression of others. The men and women under my command are proud to serve with you. Today I'm honored to deliver the thanks of the American people.

Sixty years ago, on the 7th of May, the world reacted with joy and relief at the defeat of fascism in Europe. The next day, General Dwight D. Eisenhower announced that "history's mightiest machine of conquest has been utterly destroyed." Yet the great democracies soon found that a new mission had come to us – not merely to defeat a single dictator, but to defeat the idea of dictatorship on this continent. Through the decades of that struggle, some endured the rule of tyrants; all lived in the frightening shadow of war. Yet because we lifted our sights and held firm to our principles, freedom prevailed.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, the freedom of Europe, won by courage, must be secured by effort and goodwill. In our time, as well, we must raise our sights. In the distance we can see another great goal – not merely the absence of tyranny on this continent, but the end of tyranny in our world. Once again, we're asked to hold firm to our principles, and to value the liberty of others. And once again, if we do our part, freedom will prevail.

Thank you, and God bless. (Applause.)

**Address by H.E. Dr. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga,
President of the Republic of Latvia
at a joint session of the United States Congress,
Washington, DC, 7 June 2006**

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, distinguished members of the House of Representatives, honorable Senators, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is with deep emotion that I stand before you within these august walls and thank you for the honor of addressing you on behalf of the Latvian people.

I believe this honor to be bestowed upon me in recognition of Latvia's strivings, sacrifices and extraordinary success in transforming itself from a captive nation under the yoke of a foreign totalitarian regime into a reestablished democracy with a flourishing market economy.

Fifteen years ago Latvia, along with neighboring Estonia and Lithuania, regained its independence after fifty years of Soviet occupation. The Baltic Singing Revolution achieved this by non-violent means, by the sheer courage and determination of the peoples of these countries. They were ready to face Soviet guns and tanks with nothing but their unarmed bodies and the deep conviction of their rights, knowing full well that, at any moment, these guns and tanks might crush them as they had crushed so many before.

After the collapse of the once powerful Soviet empire, Latvians at long last recovered their fundamental rights and freedoms. They regained the right to forge their own destiny; they recovered the freedom to shape their own future.

Far too long the Iron Curtain had kept Europe divided and the nations of the world confronted each other in two opposing camps. We thank the Lord that these times are behind us at last. Dozens of nations have gained or regained their sovereignty. For them, right has triumphed over might, courage has overcome fear, and dignity has replaced humiliation and oppression.

The wave of freedom and democratic reform has been spreading throughout Central and Eastern Europe, extending from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea

and into the Caucasus. One country after another, with the sad exception of Belarus, has been making a commitment to democracy, and has accepted the need for the rule of law and the respect of human rights.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice-President, distinguished Members of Congress,

It is an honor and a pleasure to be addressing you as the elected representatives of a great country; a mighty world power that has achieved its greatness by building its house on the solid rock of democracy. The United States of America has remained ever faithful to Lincoln's goal of having a government of the people, for the people and by the people.

Born 230 years ago, your great nation has grown strong by being a warm and welcoming Mother of Exiles as well as a land of hope and opportunity for its own sons and daughters. Among the exiles received in America, there were many Latvians who had fled their native land at the end of the Second World War.

Latvia remains grateful to the United States for opening its doors to a good many of these Latvian exiles, who gained the right to live here in peace, justice and liberty, while many of their relatives back home in Latvia suffered oppression and brutal persecutions. They quickly became loyal and patriotic American citizens and productive members of your society, many achieving positions of distinction and responsibility.

Latvia remains grateful to the United States for the firm refusal to recognize the illegal occupation of the three Baltic countries. Along with the other formerly captive nations of Central and Eastern Europe, we thank America for its steadfast and courageous stand on freedom and democracy.

You were instrumental in assisting Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania in the withdrawal of former Soviet troops from their territories. The US-Baltic Charter of Partnership of 1998 gave direction to our common goal and vision of the Baltic States joining Euro-Atlantic institutions. We recall the unanimous vote by the United States Senate in support of the latest enlargement of NATO. Since then the United States has helped to ensure the collective defense of the Baltic air space. For all this we are grateful.

Latvia has had the honor of receiving two American presidents since recovering its independence: President Clinton in 1994 and President Bush last year. We look forward to receiving President Bush again this fall, when the 2006 NATO Summit convenes in Rīga. We count ourselves fortunate to have the United States of America as a true friend and trusted ally.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice-President, distinguished Members of Congress,

I stand before you as a former exile, who has had the rare privilege of returning to her native land, free and independent again; a former exile who has had the deep satisfaction of helping her country rise like a phoenix from the ashes of oppression. I am the representative of a resilient and stubborn nation whose people have struggled against all odds to preserve their ancient heritage, maintain their language alive and remain true to their national identity. It has been indeed a privilege to lead this nation while it recovered its rightful place among the world community of free and democratic countries.

The road has not been easy. Renewing independence was just the first step. We still had to rebuild a country, not just starting from scratch, but only after clearing away the rubble left by the previous system. Just fifteen years ago we had to make the transition from a stagnant, state-planned, command economy to a workable, liberal free-market economy. It was a formidable challenge. While we were fortunate in regaining our independence without significant bloodshed, our inhabitants paid a heavy economic and social price for their freedom. They were ready to do so, because they understood that this was an investment in a better future.

Overcoming years of constant change, uncertainty and adaptation, Latvia has become a success story. An unfinished story by all means, especially as concerns the standard of living of our people, but a success story nevertheless. Last year Latvia's economy grew by more than 10 percent, and this year my country continues to maintain the highest economic growth rate on the European continent. We are on our way, ready to share our experience and pass it on to others.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice-President, distinguished Members of Congress,

What has helped Latvia and its Baltic neighbors succeed where so many others are failing, in spite of not just years, but decades, of help and encouragement of every kind?

It was above all the faith of the Baltic nations in the values of freedom and of democracy. It was their firm and irreversible determination to build a new and better future for their children and grandchildren. They wanted to rejoin the free world from which they had been cut off for half a century.

What urged us on was our ardent desire to make up for lost time, and to catch up to those Western European countries that had enjoyed the freedom of growing and thriving ever since the end of the Second World War. The desire to join NATO and the European Union became a force driving us forward, as strong as the force driving us away from the past under Soviet

dictatorship. This clear sense of purpose allowed us to transform our institutions and to reform our economy.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice-President, distinguished Members of Congress,

The challenge, ever since the fall of the Soviet empire and the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, has been to rebuild a Europe whole and free, a Europe free of dividing lines, of feudal dependencies, of imperialist spheres of influence; a Europe free from bloodthirsty ideologies and from murderous fanatics. We need a Europe without walls, barriers, exclusion or prejudice. A Europe in which every nation would be afforded equal dignity and would be treated with equal respect. All Europeans after all are part of the same Old Continent, and all of them need to work together to make it eternally new.

Such a Europe is not and must not be a counterforce to the influence of the United States. It is and must continue to be an ally and a partner. All Europeans share the fundamentals of the same broad cultural heritage, a heritage that is also shared by Americans.

This heritage includes outstanding achievements as well as resounding failures. A common European space of peace and stability, of economic growth and prosperity is the best guarantee that the Europe of the 21st century will never again repeat the errors and the horrors of the 20th. We have seen the depths to which Europe could sink as well as the heights to which it could rise. Never again should we allow such horrors as the Holocaust to be repeated. We need to aim for the heights and to help each other achieve them.

Yet it is perfectly true that Latvia, along with other Central and Eastern European countries, feels a special bond of friendship and affinity with the United States. We might again admit it. We, who had lost our liberty, look to those who are ready to defend it. But if the bond of trust and friendship between the US and the newer members of the EU and of NATO is to be deepened, strengthened and maintained, we do need more face-to-face contacts between our peoples, we need more possibilities of visits and of mutual exchanges. I trust that the US Congress will find a non-discriminatory solution for extending the Visa Waiver Program to all its allies in a united Europe. Such a step would be broadly welcomed as a signal of growing maturity in the alliance between our nations.

We are partners, even though we differ in size, in influence, in power, in resources. We are partners even while having different opinions on certain issues – that, after all, is the whole point of living in democracies. Any

disagreements must not steer us off our common course of consolidating peace and security in the world.

My country sees Europe's transatlantic partnership with the United States as essential for our common security as well as for maintaining security in the world at large. The US has been a trusted partner whenever European liberties were endangered and proved it through the sacrifice of the lives of its soldiers. Throughout the decades of the Cold War, Western Europe was kept safe under the protection of NATO and through the significant role of American military capability.

This coming November, Latvia will host the 2006 NATO Summit in its capital city of Rīga. This will be a Summit about the rejuvenation and the transformation of NATO, which remains the most powerful and effective military alliance in the world. We need a strong and vibrant alliance, able to face up effectively to the challenges of our age. The nature of threats may change, but the danger they pose does not.

NATO is not only about protecting its members within their own borders. We are ready to work closely with the United States and other willing partners to aid those strife-ridden countries whose fragility is a bane for their own people and a threat to the rest of the world. Right now Latvia is contributing to international peacekeeping operations in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Bosnia, in Kosovo and elsewhere. Latvia's contribution is proportionately one of the largest in the world, in terms of the country's size and available financial means.

From its very inception, NATO has been more than just a military alliance. That is why more and more nations are expressing their desire to join it. We support the strivings for freedom, democracy and the rule of law of countries struggling with the after-effects of imposed totalitarianism. Latvia supports Ukraine and Georgia in their endeavors to establish closer relations with NATO. We encourage the member states of the alliance to formulate concrete and enhanced forms of cooperation between NATO and these two countries at the Rīga summit. We firmly believe that an open door policy must be maintained for the admittance of future member states.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice-President, distinguished Members of Congress,

One nation, with which Latvia shares a common border, as well as a complicated history, is Russia.

Last year marked the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. This victory brought freedom to one half of Europe, but not to the other. After being Hitler's partner for two years, Stalin had joined the Allies in

riding Europe of this bloodthirsty tyrant. In recognition of that role and in homage to the immense losses and casualties that the Russian people endured during the Second World War, I accepted the invitation of the President of the Russian Federation and traveled to Moscow on May 9th of last year.

But I also pointed out that this victory over one despot still kept the other one in power. For the people of Latvia, one foreign occupation was only replaced by another. No one gained freedom under Stalinist tyranny and the oppression of totalitarian Communism.

This is NOT rewriting history. These are plain facts. The simple acknowledgement and recognition of them would go a long way toward strengthening trust, understanding and good neighborly relations between our nations.

Latvia, for its part, stands ready for developing a friendly, future-oriented and pragmatic relationship with Russia as an important neighbor of the EU and of NATO. We stand ready for an active and meaningful political dialogue, based on mutual respect, non-interference and the true respect for human rights.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice-President, distinguished representatives of the American people,

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the United States of America has a crucial role to play in the international arena. The United States has been a beacon of liberty ever since its foundation. The United States has become a world power by giving free rein to the creativity, the initiative and the energy of its people, by fostering the entrepreneurial spirit. But the United States has become a world leader only to the extent that it has not been indifferent to the fates, the aspirations and the opinions of other nations.

For if no man is an island, neither is any country alone and self-sufficient. All of us, large and small, we are interlocked, intertwined and interdependent. If we want peace in the world, if we want international cooperation, persuasion is as important as imposition by force. Smaller and weaker nations want to be meaningfully included in decisions that will affect us all. They want to be respected. When they clamor for multilateralism, nations are really saying: 'Listen to me! I too want to be heard!'

Of course among all this clamor, it may be hard to find a common denominator, it is not always easy to achieve a common purpose. We see this all too clearly in the difficulties that the United Nations are experiencing

in bringing about all the reforms agreed to in principle during the General Assembly of their 60th anniversary year.

As a Special Envoy of the Secretary General on the reform of the United Nations last year, I was pleased that the General Assembly managed to agree in principle on the necessity for sweeping and fundamental reforms. The new Peace-building Commission was created, which we need for diffusing long-lasting conflicts. Too often in the past, the UN has been unable to prevent genocide and lasting bloodshed: in the Congo, in Rwanda, in the former Yugoslavia and now in the Darfur region of Sudan.

One of the UN's fundamental roles lies in the defense of human rights. The newly created Human Rights Council must become more credible and more effective than the Commission that preceded it. Its best way to gain credibility would be by starting with a thorough and unbiased evaluation of the human rights record of its own newly elected Council members.

Only through a concerted international effort based on consensus and cooperation will the world community be able to overcome a number of other pressing global challenges. The degradation of our planet's environment is truly a global problem, as is the spread of epidemic disease. Most dangerous of all is the continuing and growing gap between the developing and developed nations. The great divide between North and South, between haves and have-nots is as dangerous as the divide between Eastern and Western blocs ever was during the Cold War. We have to do our utmost to reach the UN's Millennium Goals of reducing poverty in the developing world.

Brutal and unremitting poverty is a scourge, unsolved in spite of decades of massive international aid and countless well-meant programs. Clearly, the quality of governance in aid-receiving countries has a crucial role to play, as well as their readiness to foster reforms and start progress. But the quality of aid-providing efforts also needs to be improved. We need better international coordination of results-oriented programs, which should be constantly monitored for their effectiveness.

The world-wide spread of terrorism as well as the growing signs of intolerance and xenophobia in many countries underscore the urgent world-wide need for a meaningful and sustained Dialogue of Civilizations. As already recognized at the Millennium General Assembly of the United Nations, our common goal is to overcome the prejudice, misperceptions and polarization that stand as barriers to better understanding and consensus among the members of different races, religions and cultures.

Due to the enormous importance of nuclear non-proliferation, the world's democracies should maintain a coherent position regarding the nuclear program of Iran. We welcome the recent joint initiatives by the United States, the UN Security Council and the European Union to offer a constructive solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, and hope that the Iranian leadership will respond in kind.

The long-standing conflict in the Middle East remains a major source of world tensions. We fully empathize with the desire of the Jewish people to live on their ancestral land in security and at peace with their neighbours. We also wish to see a free and prosperous Palestinian state co-exist peacefully side-by-side with the State of Israel. For this to be achieved, the Hamas-led Palestinian administration must abide by previously signed international agreements. There is no other way.

Education could play an important role in immunizing our societies against the dangers of extremism and prejudice. Children should not be raised in hatred; societies should have more constructive goals than the endless cultivation of grievances and the stark division of the human race into 'us' and 'them.'

Every society has experienced some dark events in its history, at times as victim, at others as perpetrator or collaborator. We must inform our children of our past mistakes, so that these may never be repeated again. An objective evaluation of the legacy of the past will free us to address the challenges of the future. We in Latvia believe in the importance of research, remembrance and education, even on the most sensitive issues. This includes the crimes of the Holocaust while Latvia was under Nazi German occupation, as well as the crimes committed in the name of Communism under the Soviet occupation regime.

It is also the duty of each country to preserve its historic, cultural and religious heritage. Latvia is a country with a multiethnic and multi-religious mosaic. We are proud of our ethnic communities and of the contribution that their sons and daughters have made to Latvia's human, economic and cultural development. As a pluralistic and flourishing democracy, we enjoy freedom of religion and have been gradually renewing the houses of worship of different faiths, including the many in communist times desecrated Lutheran churches. Soon after recovering our independence, we received a visit by Pope John Paul II. Last month, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, Aleksey II, paid a historic visit to my country. Just recently, with the support of the US government and the family of the late, Latvian-born painter Mark Rothko, I attended the re-consecration ceremony of a reconstructed Jewish synagogue in the city of Daugavpils.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice-President, distinguished Members of Congress,

Fanaticism and extremism remain a scourge of humanity, as they have been for many centuries. Violence and hatred continue to plague many nations and block their road to achieving progress. Greed, opportunism and brute force oppress many peoples and deny them the most basic of rights. Yet, just as clearly, the world also knows charity, compassion and the desire for kindness. Human beings everywhere are capable of change and change for the better.

Again and again in history we have seen the victory of freedom over tyranny, exploitation and chaos. It may take decades, as it did for Latvia, but we did gain the freedom that is ours by right. We know the value of freedom, and feel compassion for those who are still deprived of it. We know the price of freedom, for we have paid for it, and would be ready to do it again and again.

Every nation on earth is entitled to freedom. It is a dream that must be kept alive, no matter how long it takes, or how hard it is to achieve. We must share the dream that someday, there won't be a tyranny left anywhere in the world. We must work for a future where every nation will have thrown off the shackles of injustice and of oppression, and every person on earth will enjoy the same rights and liberties that now are the privilege of the more democratic and the more developed countries. It will take time, it will take effort, but it must happen. And it will happen all the sooner, the better we learn to work for it and plan for it, all of us – large and small – together.

110th CONGRESS – 2nd Session S. CON. RES. 87 Congratulating the Republic of Latvia on the 90th anniversary of its declaration of independence

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES passed September 17, 2008

Mr. SMITH (for himself and Mr. DURBIN) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION Congratulating the Republic of Latvia on the 90th anniversary of its declaration of independence. Whereas, on November 18, 1918, in the City of Rīga, the members of the People’s Council proclaimed Latvia a free, democratic, and sovereign nation;

Whereas, on July 24, 1922, the United States formally recognized Latvia as an independent and sovereign nation; Whereas Latvia existed for 21 years as an independent and sovereign nation and a fully recognized member of the League of Nations;

Whereas Latvia maintained friendly and stable relations with its neighbors, including the Soviet Union, during its independence, without any border disputes;

Whereas Latvia concluded several peace treaties and protocols with the Soviet Union, including a peace treaty signed on August 11, 1920, under which the Soviet Union ‘unreservedly recognize[d] the independence and sovereignty of the Latvian State and forever renounce[d] all sovereign rights . . . over the Latvian people and territory’;

Whereas, despite friendly and mutually productive relations between Latvia and the Soviet Union, on August 23, 1939, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which contained a secret protocol assigning Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania to the Soviet sphere of influence;

Whereas, under the cover of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, on June 17, 1940, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania were forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union in violation of pre-existing peace treaties;

Whereas the Soviet Union imposed upon the people of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania a communist political system that stifled civil dissent, free political expression, and basic human rights;

Whereas the United States never recognized this illegal and forcible occupation, and successive United States presidents maintained continuous diplomatic relations with these countries throughout the Soviet occupation, never accepting them to be 'Soviet Republics';

Whereas, during the 50 years of Soviet occupation of the Baltic states, Congress strongly, consistently, and on a bipartisan basis supported a United States policy of legal non-recognition;

Whereas, in 1953, the congressionally-established Kersten Commission investigated the incorporation of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania into the Soviet Union and determined that the Soviet Union had illegally and forcibly occupied and annexed the Baltic countries;

Whereas, in 1982, and for the next nine years until the Baltic countries regained their independence, Congress annually adopted a Baltic Freedom Day resolution denouncing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and appealing for the freedom of the Baltic countries;

Whereas, in 1991, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania regained their de facto independence and were quickly recognized by the United States and by almost every other country in the world, including the Soviet Union;

Whereas, in 1998, the United States and the three Baltic nations signed the U.S.-Baltic Charter of Partnership, an expression of the importance of the Baltic Sea region to United States interests;

Whereas the 109th Congress resolved (S. Con. Res. 35 and H. Res. 28) that 'it is the sense of Congress that the Government of the Russian Federation should issue a clear and unambiguous statement of admission and condemnation of the illegal occupation and annexation by the Soviet Union from 1940 to 1991 of the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the consequences of which will be a significant increase in good will among the affected people';

Whereas Latvia has successfully developed as a free and democratic country, ensured the rule of law, and developed a free market economy;

Whereas the Government of Latvia has constantly pursued a course of integration of that country into the community of free and democratic nations, becoming a full and responsible member of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization;

Whereas the people of Latvia cherish the principles of political freedom, human rights, and independence; and Whereas Latvia is a strong and loyal ally of the United States, and the people of Latvia share common values with the people of the United States: Now, therefore, be it Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That Congress--

(1) congratulates the people of Latvia on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of that country's November 18, 1918, declaration of independence;

(2) commends the Government of Latvia for its success in implementing political and economic reforms, for establishing political, religious and economic freedom, and for its strong commitment to human and civil rights;

(3) recognizes the common goals and shared values of the people of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the close and friendly relations and ties of the three Baltic countries with one other, and their tragic history in the last century under the Nazi and Soviet occupations;

(4) calls on the President to issue a proclamation congratulating the people of Latvia on the 90th anniversary of the declaration of Latvia's independence on November 18, 1918;

(5) respectfully requests the President to congratulate the Government of Latvia for its commitment to democracy, a free market economy, human rights, the rule of law, participation in a wide range of international structures, and security cooperation with the United States Government; and

(6) calls on the President and Secretary of State to urge the Government of the Russian Federation to acknowledge that the Soviet occupation of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and for the succeeding 51 years was illegal.

Brief Chronology of US-Latvia Relations

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| 18 November 1918 | Latvia declares its independence. |
| 10 December 1918 | US Senate passes resolution No.379 supporting the secession of the three Baltic States from Russia: 'All these nations must be free and independent, since the Baltic Sea coast belongs to them and this makes their independence important for the future peace and freedom of the world.' |
| 11 August 1920 | Latvia-Soviet Russia Peace Treaty signed recognizing Latvia's independence. |
| 26 January 1921 | Allied Supreme Council (France, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Belgium) recognize Latvia's independence <i>de jure</i> . |
| 30 April 1921 | Latvian government delegation arrives in USA and starts to lobby for US recognition of the Republic of Latvia. |
| 22 September 1921 | Latvia admitted to League of Nations. |
| 15 February 1922 | The Latvian Constitutional Assembly adopts the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia. |
| 28 July 1922 | US recognizes the Republic of Latvia and establishes diplomatic relations. |
| 13 November 1922 | US opens Legation in Rīga. Frederick W.B. Coleman presents credentials as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. |
| 20 November 1935 | Alfreds Bilmanis presents credentials as Minister to USA. |

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| 23 August 1939 | Molotov-Ribbentrop pact is signed. In attached 'secret protocols,' Latvia is placed into the Soviet Union's 'sphere of influence.' |
| 17 May 1940 | Latvian government grants extraordinary powers to Latvian diplomatic missions in UK and US. |
| 17 June 1940 | Red Army occupies Latvia. |
| 23 July 1940 | Sumner Welles declaration on US non-recognition policy of the Soviet annexation and incorporation of the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. |
| 5 September 1940 | Soviet invasion forces the closure of the US Legation in Rīga. |
| 10 July 1941 | German forces occupy Latvia. |
| 13 October 1944 | Soviet forces re-take much of Latvia. |
| 28 June 1949 | Jūlijs Feldmans appointed chargé d'affaires at the Latvian Legation in Washington, DC. |
| 24 February 1951 | American Latvian Association (ALA) founded. |
| 30 May 1953 | First Latvian Song Festival in the USA gathers 22 choirs and an audience of around 5,000. |
| April 1954 | Arnolds Spekke appointed chargé d'affaires at the Latvian Legation in Washington, DC. |
| 1 October 1970 | Anatols Dinbergs appointed chargé d'affaires at the Latvian Legation in Washington, DC. |
| 7 November 1980 | US State Department allows Baltic chargés to name their own successors. |
| 23 August 1989 | Two million Balts join hands in a human chain stretching from Tallin to Vilnius on the 50 th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. |
| 18 November 1989 | 500,000 Latvians rally in Rīga on National Independence Day. |

- 4 May 1990 Latvian Supreme Council passes law renewing the Republic of Latvia and reinstating its constitution.
- 21 August 1991 Latvian Supreme Council votes to declare full and complete independence and sovereignty (following the collapse of the reactionary anti-Gorbachev coup in Moscow).
- 2 September 1991 President George H.W. Bush announces that the US 'is now prepared immediately to establish diplomatic relations' with the governments of the Baltic States.
- 5 September 1991 US and Latvia sign memorandum of understanding renewing diplomatic relations.
- 16 September 1991 US Secretary of State James Baker visits Riga.
- 17 September 1991 Latvia is admitted to the United Nations.
- 7 February 1992 US Vice-President Dan Quayle presides over a dedication ceremony for the new US Embassy building in Latvia, at 7 Raiņa Bulvāris.
- 11 March 1992 Anatols Dinbergs presents credentials and is appointed Latvian Ambassador to the USA.
- 10 April 1992 US Embassy in Rīga formally opens. Ints M. Siliņš presents credentials as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
- 10 November 1992 Latvia is admitted to the World Bank.
- 14 April 1993 Ojārs Kalniņš accredited as Latvian Ambassador to the USA.
- 6 July 1994 Visit of US President Bill Clinton to Rīga.
- 31 August 1994 Final Russian (formerly Soviet) troops leave Latvian territory.
- 16 January 1998 US Baltic Charter is signed by US and three Baltic States' Presidents.

- 17 May 2002 US Senate adopts the Freedom Consolidation Act that expresses support for further NATO enlargement, including Latvia and six other candidate countries.
- 29 March 2004 Latvia joins NATO.
- 1 May 2004 Latvia joins the European Union.
- 6-7 May 2005 Visit of US President George W. Bush to Latvia.
- 1 March 2006 New building of the Embassy of Latvia in Washington, DC is opened by Latvian President, Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga.
- 7 June 2006 President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga gives address to joint session of US Congress.
- 28-29 November 2006 NATO summit in Rīga, attended by President George W. Bush.
- 12 March 2008 Latvia and the USA sign a memorandum of understanding promoting Latvia's accession to the US visa waiver program.
- 17 September 2008 US Congress passes resolution 'Congratulating the Republic of Latvia on the 90th anniversary of its declaration of independence'.

Notes on Contributors

Ron Asmus is currently Executive Director of the Brussels-based Transatlantic Center and responsible for Strategic Planning at the German Marshall Fund of the US. He served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs from 1997-2000 and has been a senior analyst and fellow at Radio Free Europe, RAND and the Council on Foreign Relations.

Daunis Auers is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Latvia. He gained his PhD at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London, and his MSc at the London School of Economics. He was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley in 2005-2006.

Ojārs Celle was born in Latvia, but settled into exile in the US after the Second World War. He was awarded an Order of the Three Stars medal by the Latvian President in 2006 for his active work in Latvian exile organizations during the Cold War, and for his work at the Latvian Occupation Museum since 1991.

Ambassador **Daniel Fried** was confirmed by the United States Senate as Assistant Secretary of State (European Affairs) on April 29, 2005. From 2001-2005 he had served as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for European and Eurasian Affairs. Prior to this, he had been US Ambassador to Poland from 1997-2000.

Ojars Kalniņš represented the American Latvian Association in Washington, DC from 1985-1990, and joined the Latvian Legation as a press liaison in January 1991. He became Counselor at the Latvian Embassy in Washington, DC in September 1991 and served as Latvia's Ambassador to the United States from 1993-2000. Since 2000 he has been the Director of the Latvian Institute in Rīga, a state agency affiliated with the Foreign Ministry of Latvia.

Charles W. Larson, Jr. was sworn in as Ambassador to Latvia by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Monday, 7 January 2008. Prior to his appointment, Ambassador Larson served for fourteen years in the Iowa state legislature. He is a founding partner of Lincoln Strategies Group, a full-

service public affairs firm. As a major in the U.S. Army Reserves, Ambassador Larson served for a year in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics from the University of Iowa, and a Juris Doctorate degree from the University College of Law.

Atis Lejiņš is Director of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, which he founded in 1992 after returning to Latvia from exile in Sweden. He holds an MA in modern European history from UCLA and is an honorary member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. He is co-author of the documentary film 'Debt to Afghanistan' produced by Askolds Saulītis, Subjektīvfīlma studio, Rīga, 2008.

Ieva Morica is Director of the Baltic-American Partnership Program Latvia, and co-founder and board member of the Partners in Ideas Fund, a new venture-philanthropy foundation in Latvia. She holds an LL.M. in Comparative Constitutional Law from Central European University in Budapest, Hungary and a Diploma in Development Donor Practice from London Metropolitan University.

Nils Muižnieks is Director of the Advanced Social and Political Research Institute (ASPRI) at the University of Latvia. He received his PhD in political science from the University of California at Berkeley in 1993. He was director of the Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies (1994-2002), then Latvia's first Special Assignments Minister for Social Integration (2002-2004). He has published widely on Soviet disintegration, ethnic relations and human rights in Latvia, human development and racist extremism in the region. His current research interests include Latvia's relations with Russia, Georgia and Moldova.

Žaneta Ozoliņa is Professor of International Relations at the Department of Political Science, University of Latvia. Her key fields of expertise are European integration, the EU and NATO enlargement, international and regional security, as well as cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. She is the author of more than 70 publications.

Andrejs Pildegovičs became the Ambassador of Latvia to the US on 25 July 2007. Prior to this appointment, he was Chief of Staff and Foreign Policy Advisor to Latvian President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga. He has been in the Latvian diplomatic service since 1994. He graduated in Chinese history and language from the University of St. Petersburg, Russia in 1994, and has continued his education with a diplomatic studies course at Stanford University, Hoover Institution in 1995, and the Foreign Service Program at Oxford University in 1998-1999.

Aldis Purs received his PhD from the University of Toronto. He has worked at Vidzeme University College, Wayne State University, and Eastern Michigan University. He was a research scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Studies, Washington, DC. His most recent work includes collaboration on a research project at the University of Manchester.

Pauls Raudseps is editorial page editor of the Latvian newspaper *Diena*. He grew up in Boston, Massachusetts, and holds a degree in Russian and Soviet Studies from Harvard College. He moved to Latvia in 1990 to work for the Latvian Popular Front and is one of the founders of *Diena*.

The Latvian Parliament confirmed **Māris Riekstiņš** as Latvia's Minister of Foreign Affairs on 8 November 2007. In addition to a number of senior positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was Latvian Ambassador to the United States and Chief of Staff to former Latvian Prime Minister Aigars Kalvītis.

Ints Siliņš, a career US Foreign Service Officer, served as the US Ambassador to Latvia from 1992 to 1995. Since retiring from the State Department in 1997, he and his wife Elizabeth spend much of their time in Latvia, where he has been an active supporter of Delna, the Latvian chapter of Transparency International.

Strobe Talbott is president of the Brookings Institution. He was deputy secretary of state in the Clinton administration, where he was deeply involved in the conduct of US policy abroad and the management of executive branch relations with government. A former journalist, he has published several books on diplomacy and US-Soviet affairs.

Pēteris Viņķelis is a foreign policy expert. He has studied psychology and political science, worked as a diplomat at the Latvian Embassies in Moscow and Washington, DC, and been Head of the Latvian Foreign Ministry's Department of Security Policy.

George J. Viksniņš is a Professor of Economics Emeritus at Georgetown University, where he has taught since 1964. He served as a USAID Program Economist in Thailand, 1968-1970, where he advised the central bank. He was a visiting professor at the University of California, Irvine, 1986-1987. He has been a consultant to the Federal Reserve, the US State and Treasury departments, as well as the World Bank and the IMF. Since 1992, he has advised the Bank of Latvia and given numerous lectures in Latvia. Among other honors, he has received the Walter Judd Freedom Award and the Three Star Medal from the Republic of Latvia.

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