



THE CENTENARY OF LATVIA'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS ACTIVITIES AND PERSONALITIES

Edited by:

Andris Sprūds,

Valters Ščerbinskis,

Dīāna Potjomkina

**THE
CENTENARY
OF LATVIA'S
FOREIGN
AFFAIRS**

ACTIVITIES AND
PERSONALITIES

**THE
CENTENARY
OF LATVIA'S
FOREIGN
AFFAIRS**

ACTIVITIES AND
PERSONALITIES

THE CENTENARY OF LATVIA'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS ACTIVITIES AND PERSONALITIES

Much has been written about the international events in which Latvia participates. However, has sufficient attention been paid to Latvia itself – how we adopt foreign policy decisions, who participates in this process and with what powers, how we order different priorities, why we react to international challenges in a specific way and not otherwise, how we defend our interests and why we use specific strategies to do so? The aim of this book is to analyze Latvia as a subject of international relations – a country that actively shapes the world around it. We also pay attention to the actors who worked on these activities.

Authors: Kristiāns Andžāns, Māris Andžāns, Kristīne Beķere, Edijs Bošs, Ilvija Bruģe, Kārlis Bukovskis, Justīne Elferte, Inesis Feldmanis, Ilze Freiberga, Ivars Ījabs, Jānis Ķeruss, Ainārs Lerhis, Diāna Potjomkina, Gunda Reire, Toms Rostoks, Andris Sprūds, Valters Ščerbinskis, Jānis Taurēns

Editors: Andris Sprūds, Valters Ščerbinskis, Diāna Potjomkina

Scientific reviewers: Daina Bleiere, Andres Kasekamp

This publication and public debates have been supported by
the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia and
the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia

The respective authors are accountable for the content of individual articles.
The opinions expressed by the authors should not be construed as representing
those of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs, project supporters or partners,
other government institutions or entities.

Cover design: Līga Rozentāle

Layout: Oskars Stalidzāns

Translations from Latvian: Ingmārs Bisenieks, Alise Krapāne, Diāna Strausa

ISBN 978-9934-567-16-2
UDK 327(474.3),20”
Ce565

© Authors, 2017
© Translations: Ingmārs Bisenieks, Alise Krapāne,
Diāna Strausa, 2017
© Cover design: Līga Rozentāle, 2017
© Layout: Oskars Stalidzāns, 2017
© Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2017

Contents

ANDRIS SPRŪDS, VALTERS ŠČERBINSKIS, DIĀNA POTJOMKINA	
Introduction	7

AINĀRS LERHIS	
Foreign Policy Mechanisms During Interwar Period, the Occupation and Nowadays	16

1. ACTIVITIES DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD

INESIS FELDMANIS	
Achieving International Recognition of Latvia	39

VALTERS ŠČERBINSKIS	
Neighborly Matters. Resolution of the Borders Issue in the Relations of Latvia with Estonia and Lithuania	53

ILZE FREIBERGA	
Economic Negotiations in Moscow in 1932–1933: Negotiators, the Process of Negotiations, Agreements Reached	69

JĀNIS TAURĒNS	
Latvia at the Helm of the League of Nations: The Election of Latvia to the League of Nations Council	89

JĀNIS ŅERUSS	
Searching for Security: Neutrality Policy of Latvia in 1938–1939	105

2. ACTIVITIES DURING THE PERIODS OF EXILE AND AWAKENING

KRISTĪNE BEĶERE	
The Diplomatic Service in Exile: Champions of Latvia's Independence and International Challenges	121

GUNDA REIRE

Latvia's Starlit Road: *De iure* Recognition
of the Restoration of Independence 136

3. ACTIVITIES DURING THE MODERN PERIOD

EDIJS BOŠS

Justice and Opportunities: The Collision of Foreign Policy
Ideas in Discussions regarding the Withdrawal
of Russian Troops from Latvia, 1993–1994 167

KĀRLIS BUKOVSKIS, JUSTĪNE ELFERTE

Latvia's Path to the European Union:
In-between the Backstage and the Spotlight 191

ILVIJA BRUĢE

Careful Approachment: The Official Visit
of Valdis Zatlers to Moscow in December 2010 212

TOMS ROSTOKS

Latvia's Reaction to the Crisis in Ukraine
and Reinforcement of NATO Security Guarantees 233

MĀRIS ANDŽĀNS, KRISTIĀNS ANDŽĀNS

Rail Baltica – the Railroad Back to Europe 251

IVARS ĪJABS

But the Next One is Already in the Pipeline:
Latvian Foreign Policy – With View into the Second Century 265

About the Authors 281

Personalities 285

Introduction

ANDRIS SPRŪDS, VALTERS ŠČERBINSKIS,
DIĀNA POTJOMKINA

The book *The Centenary of Latvia's Foreign Affairs. Activities and Personalities* continues the effort of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs (LIIA) to review the development of Latvia's foreign affairs and look for new ways to approach both the seemingly well-known and forgotten pages of Latvia's history. Much has been written about events in Latvia's foreign policy, including within LIIA's own publications. We understand how our relations with our main allies and new partners have developed, how Latvia defends its interests in the European Union, how it takes part in NATO's decision-making and even co-designs the agenda of the UN. We also know which international factors impact Latvia's foreign policy and actively debate how to find our place in the changing world. However, have we paid sufficient attention to Latvia itself – how we adopt foreign policy decisions, who participates in this process and with what powers, on what factors we rely, how we order different priorities, why we react to international challenges in a specific way and not otherwise, how we defend our interests and why we do it in this exact way? In 2016, LIIA published the book entitled *The Centenary of Latvia's Foreign Affairs. Ideas and Personalities*, which examines the main ideas in Latvia's foreign policy and people who developed and tended to these ideas. This year, we turn to activities – to how major and important foreign policy decisions are made in Latvia – and to authors of the activities – people who stood behind these major decisions. The aim of this book is to analyse Latvia not as an object of international relations, to which something “happens” without our participation, but as a subject, a country that actively advances its foreign policy, makes decisions, shapes the world around it, sometimes makes mistakes, and at other times scores great achievements.

Until now, research on specifically how foreign policy is made within the country – the main institutions involved, their priorities and goals, how and where decisions are made, who have been the most influential individuals implementing Latvia's foreign affairs in practice and what lessons can be

drawn for the future – has been scarce in Latvia. Our task is to correct this shortcoming by providing an in-depth analysis of twelve major activities in Latvia's foreign policy from the Interwar, Awakening and modern periods, as well as to look at how independent Latvia's foreign policy was developed during the time of Latvia's occupation. While our authors do not ignore the international context in which every specific decision was made, they focus on the internal processes – the things that depend on ourselves. And this is a particularly important statement. Latvia's foreign policy-makers have strived to act in their country's best interests since 1918, in times of hardship and in times of peace, and our achievements have not just "happened" to us without our participation; they are also our own accomplishment. Similarly, losses are not solely determined by global factors; we should also look at them as lessons for the future.

What we study and how

What is the best way to analyse Latvia's foreign policy-making? Developing a general overview applicable to all cases seems virtually impossible. Each case has its own specifics and historical context, and the modalities of decision-making and institutions at play also depend on its content. An overview of Latvia's relations with specific countries or international organisations also does not seem appropriate, as this line of research has been well-explored already and such research would logically focus on interstate relations and not specifically on mechanisms of foreign policy-making in Latvia. Therefore, in this book we focus on a select number of events and the corresponding decision-making process. The authors analyse specific cases with consideration of their international context and background, though focusing mainly on specific – and very engaging and important – details of internal processes.

The cases researched in this book are also compelling in and of themselves. Many decisions in Latvia's foreign policy have received conflicting appraisals or have been unclear to society. Why was a specific decision made and implemented rather than a multitude of other possible options? What influenced decision-making – a pressing international situation, the perceived national interest, the interests of specific groups, perhaps an accident? What would have happened if the policy were different? What did society not know about when the decision was made? The authors of

this book turn to some of the most discussed and most nationally important foreign policy decisions in an attempt to answer these questions. They also look at the personalities who made these decisions. “Foreign policy-makers” in this book are understood very broadly – while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the main state institution responsible for foreign affairs, often foreign policy is teamwork in which representatives of other institutions and of broader society also play a major role.

The decision on what constitutes an important foreign policy event and corresponding decision is inevitably subjective. Each of us may have different opinions on what is truly important and on how specific activities should be evaluated. **This book is not a definitive guide on Latvia’s main foreign policy decisions, nor is it a summary of the country’s most illustrious achievements**, although many of these activities undoubtedly helped Latvia to become the country we know now – free, democratic, prosperous and well-respected internationally. Rather, this book should be read as an anthology of episodes that are important for Latvia’s centenary. Each of them is relevant and valuable, but if discussion arises about which other episodes and tales we should bring to light – they are most welcome!

The topics reviewed in the book are, however, not accidental. Before we started developing the book’s structure, an opportunity was given to more than 100 experts and practitioners – historians, experts on international affairs, decision-makers and civil society activists dealing with international issues – to voice their opinions on the main events in Latvia’s foreign policy. We also took into account the main vectors of Latvia’s foreign policy in each period and attempted to the best of our ability to reflect them in their book. The result is twelve chapters on twelve activities during the Interwar period, the time of occupation, the Awakening and the modern day. Each of them offers a detailed account of the process through which each respective decision was made and which personalities, in the authors’ opinions, played a main role in this process. Additionally, the introductory chapter offers a general overview of the development of Latvia’s foreign policy guidelines and institutional framework.

Key activities in Latvia’s foreign policy

This book includes articles on some of the most significant and also most difficult decisions in Latvia’s foreign policy. Some of them were adopted

and implemented within a relatively short timeframe – for instance, the visit of Latvia’s president, Valdis Zatlers, to Russia in 2010, or the struggle for Latvia’s international recognition after the First World War. Other activities were accomplished over a longer period of time and were more complex – for instance, the decision to construct the *Rail Baltica* railway or Latvia’s reaction to the Ukraine crisis and enhancement of NATO’s security guarantees. This book also contains chapters on several key processes lasting multiple years – for instance, the continuity of Latvia’s foreign service in exile and accession to the European Union.

We divided the hundred-year long history of Latvia’s foreign affairs into four periods:

- 1) **The Interwar period** from the proclamation of the state in 1918 until the Soviet occupation in 1940,
- 2) **The exile period** from the moment of occupation in 1940 until the complete *de facto* restoration of national independence in 1991. In this volume, we specifically analyse the foreign service of independent Latvia – it has been the only state institution that has continuously operated until today,
- 3) **The Awakening period** from 1987 until the complete *de facto* restoration of national independence in 1991 – during this period, foreign policy thought that was independent from the communist regime already appeared in the territory of occupied Latvia,
- 4) **The modern period** from 1991 until the present day.

We have included five events from the Interwar and five from the modern period and selected them in such a way that also reflects the main vectors in Latvia’s foreign policy. Geographical and thematic balance is important. Of course, Latvian foreign policy thinking has been markedly Western oriented from the very beginning, especially after the complete restoration of independence in 1991. Politically, security-wise, economically and with regard to values, Latvia chooses to primarily look to the West. In the opinion of the surveyed experts, the main achievement in this sphere has been accession to the European Union and NATO – there is virtual unanimity on these two decisions. However, both historically and today, Latvia’s foreign affairs have been complex and multifaceted, including both a broad network of bilateral contacts and the participation of such international institutions as the UN. Therefore, this book consciously attempts not to limit itself only to the Western vector of Latvia’s foreign affairs.

We highlight the following activities in the **Interwar period**:

- 1) **The international recognition of Latvia's independence**, described by Inesis Feldmanis. This chapter clearly shows the fundamental role played by the Western states in Latvia's foreign policy from the very beginning: it was a Western state, Great Britain, that first recognised the Latvian Provisional National Council *de facto*. *De jure* recognition required much more effort from Latvia's diplomats who had to build the diplomatic service from scratch while preserving the idea of independence after initial misfortunes and fighting, despite the complicated international situation. However, recognition was successfully achieved in 1921.
- 2) **The resolution of the border issue in Latvia's relations with Estonia and Lithuania**, analysed by Valters Ščerbinskis. This article looks at one of the first questions that was discussed in Latvia's relations with its neighbours since 1919. Although Estonia and Latvia had been Latvia's closest allies, the process of opening borders did not proceed smoothly. However, this case proved that even a difficult issue could be successfully resolved with some goodwill and readiness to compromise.
- 3) **Economic negotiations with Russia**, analysed by Ilze Freiberga. Soviet Russia, later the Soviet Union, was a notable partner of Latvia in the Interwar period. Cooperation with this Eastern neighbour gained the most support among Social-Democrats, but was also used by representatives of other political forces. Although 20 years earlier, it would have been difficult to even imagine that Latvia would ever become independent from Russia and start developing *interstate* relations with it, Latvia and the USSR concluded a trade agreement in 1932–1933. In this volume, the agreement serves as a demonstrative case for analysing Latvia's relations with the totalitarian great power.
- 4) **Latvia's membership in the Council of the League of Nations**, described by Jānis Taurēns, was its long-term goal from the moment the country joined this organisation. Latvia dedicated significant attention to multilateral cooperation, supported the organisation's values and goals and took active part in its operations. Through a targeted and sustained campaign, and masterfully using circumstances such as Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations, in 1936, diplomat Jūlijs Feldmans achieved Latvia's membership within the Council. Unfortunately, the opportunity came too late – at a moment when the League of Nations was already nearing its demise.

- 5) **The declaration of a neutrality policy in 1938–1939**, as described by Jānis Ķeruss, was a policy dictated by international circumstances. However, even in this case it is important to examine how Latvian policy-makers approached the issue. Latvia, during this period, actively searched for the best ways to declare neutrality while not losing ties with the other Baltic States and Germany, the latter being a potential counterweight to Soviet aggression. While the policy itself was not wrong, it unfortunately proved unsustainable for Latvia's foreign policy-makers who eventually, in the words of Ķeruss, demonstrated "excessive submission to the USSR."

A slightly different approach has been chosen to the **exile period**. Kristīne Beķere writes not about a single isolated case in Latvia's exile diplomacy, but rather looks at how exactly and with what techniques Latvia's foreign service preserved its continuity and Latvia's independence during the long occupation period. This was not an easy task politically, financially or personally, but the appropriate strategy and the moral stand of Latvia's diplomats made it a success story.

The **Awakening period** is described by Gunda Reire, who analyses how the leaders of the Third Awakening fought for *de jure* recognition of renewal of Latvia's independence under the conditions of Soviet occupation. Even though at the beginning of the Awakening, Latvia's freedom only a remote hope, by 1991 Latvia had already not only renewed its independence but also joined the UN. Teamwork, quick learning and resourcefulness, active international reporting on the Baltic question, the work of Latvia's journalists and solidarity were all factors that enabled Latvia's freedom champions to promptly regain the country's equal standing among the other members of the international community.

In turn, we have chosen to analyse the following five decisions in the **modern period**:

- 1) **The withdrawal of Russia's military from Latvia** in 1993–1994, described by Edijs Bošs. This was a crucial step that strengthened Latvia's independence. It also allowed Latvia to take relations with the West to the next level (after withdrawal of the military, Latvia began its road to EU and NATO accession) and to define clear borders in relations with Russia (figuratively speaking; the border treaty with this country took many

more years). It was one of the most difficult and hotly debated decisions, and the successful outcome of the negotiations demanded some onerous compromises.

- 2) **The construction of the *Rail Baltica* railroad**, analysed by Māris Andžāns and Kristiāns Andžāns, has been a lengthy process. It exemplifies not only our relations with the other Baltic States but also a “return to Europe” (we should remember that in the Interwar period, Riga enjoyed regular railroad connections to Western European cities), as well as the influence of international factors on the development of our economy. The idea of *Rail Baltica* – a railroad that would connect Latvia to European, not Russian, infrastructure – originated already in the early 1990s and, over time, provoked many discussions among Latvian politicians and in society. While Latvia’s support to this project cannot be considered unwavering, it can be expected that within ten years, Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius will acquire their own railroad connection to Warsaw.
- 3) **Latvia’s accession to the EU** officially started in 1995 and was completed in 2004. As the authors of this chapter, Kārlis Bukovskis and Justīne Elferte indicate that “the road to the European Union was an adjustment of the entire state, all of its administrative apparatus and society” (including exile Latvians), where the Foreign Ministry played the central role. It demanded serious administrative resources, including the creation of new structures, strong political will, sturdy diplomacy, active international lobbying, counteracting certain opposition on the Russian side, as well as raising the self-confidence of Latvian society in which Latvians themselves had to maintain and nurture the idea of belonging to the Western community of values. The effort did not end in 2004, either – today, Latvia’s task continues to be growing alongside the European Union.
- 4) **Valdis Zatlers’s visit to Russia** in 2010 is described by Ilvija Bruģe. Throughout almost the entire existence of independent Latvia, relations with Russia have been complex, but have also included a strong constructive component. After joining the European Union and NATO, Latvia’s policy-makers tried to improve this relationship, inter alia by resolving the painful border treaty question and organising a presidential visit in 2010, the latter of which this chapter’s author considers to be “the highest and most positive point in both countries’ relationship.” Although a notable part of politicians, foreign service officers and society doubted this decision, an internal compromise was reached in Latvia. The visit was

not perfectly smooth, though it resulted in the signing of several important documents.

- 5) **Latvia's reaction to the Ukraine crisis and enhancing NATO's security guarantees**, described by Toms Rostoks, is not a single decision but rather a series of interlinked decisions and events that, to a large extent, still defines Latvia's foreign policy. Of course, Latvia's decisions were not the sole factor that determined enhancing NATO's guarantees. However, the teamwork of the Foreign and Defence Ministries and the Parliament was indispensable for finally increasing NATO's military presence in Latvia – something that Latvia had aspired to for quite a long time.

While many important activities remain undiscussed and could not be discussed in one relatively thin book by any means, this publication demonstrates how complex, onerous, but at the same time productive Latvian foreign policy-makers' decisions were over the hundred years of the country's existence. As Ivars Ījabs notes in the conclusion, these and other activities helped to ensure the “internationalization of Latvia's independence – an approach wherein the country's sovereignty and security becomes not anymore a local problem, which is resolved at the neighbours' will, but rather a broad question on the international agenda.”

* * *

The period when the state of Latvia was established was a very interesting time for international relations. After the First World War, multiple empires dissolved. The League of Nations appeared as the first formal international organisation tasked with maintaining peace in the world. Ideologies aimed at broader societies gained prominence (unfortunately, these included not only liberalism but also communism, Nazism and fascism), the world saw continued industrialisation and globalisation, as well as many other fundamental changes compared to the Europe that existed at the time of the Vienna Congress. In these complex and changing circumstances, the newly established state, which built its foreign service from scratch, not only had to gain *de jure* recognition or an equal standing among the world's nations, but also had to develop relations with other states near and far in a way that would allow Latvia to increase its security and prosperity. The relatively calm Interwar period was followed by a long time of darkness during which both

the residents who remained in occupied Latvia and the independent foreign service of Latvia that survived abroad had to remain hopeful and work towards the renewal of independence. The preservation and full restoration of Latvia's *de jure* independence during this period was an illustrious achievement which ensured Latvia's legal continuity, though it did not resolve all of the problems that Latvia had to face in and of itself. During the more than 50 years of occupation, the world developed rapidly. Latvia's foreign policy-makers, who in the autumn of 1991 had to write the first accreditation letter to the ambassador at the UN on a Supreme Council's form, had to quickly identify and secure Latvia's place in the globalised, politically, economically and socially integrated, modern, but still troubled world. As the chapters of the modern period show, when a broader the range of topics is discussed on the interstate level, the circle of involved parties becomes wider – these are no longer just diplomats and highest officials, as the modern world demands teamwork by representatives of different fields.

We have to know and remember this context in order to duly appreciate the work of many of Latvia's foreign policy-makers – many more than it is possible to mention in one book. Were all decisions successful? Interpretations can differ. Sometimes mistakes were made, sometimes decisions were made that perhaps were supported by one group of society and denounced by another. An ideal that would appeal to everyone is hardly an achievable goal in a democratic and pluralistic society. However, if we give it some further thought and probe into the situation deeper than newspaper titles and short television news allow, look behind the scenes, see what was in fact necessary for a certain decision to be executed and what resources actually were at Latvia's disposal, we can appreciate the enormity of the task. Latvia now has competent and experienced international affairs experts – not only in the foreign service but also elsewhere in the government and public sectors. Many challenges await in the next century, but we will always be ready as long as we can boast a proactive approach, teamwork and an engaged and supportive society.

The Latvian Institute of International Affairs is grateful to the Saeima (Parliament) and the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Latvia for their support for this publication, promoting independent, creative thinking and society's engagement in discussions on Latvia's foreign affairs.

Foreign Policy Mechanisms During Interwar Period, the Occupation and Nowadays

AINĀRS LERHIS

Latvia's foreign policy in general but also its implementers and functioning of the foreign policy mechanism itself has always played an important role in the struggle of prominent Latvian public figures establishing an independent state and ensuring its continued existence and preservation of *de iure* status (according to the doctrine of the continuity of the Latvian state). This process was similar to that of a number of other nations emerging from the ruins of empires after World War I, who identified their national interests and created their own foreign services. The experience of the collapsed empires was largely useless here, and the times when diplomacy was primarily a business of nobles were in the past. The general prestige of the diplomats in European society has also diminished as the diplomats of the great powers were not able to prevent the First World War. Contrary to this, there were hopes for economic cooperation among nations, so in the first post-war years slogans like: "Down with diplomats – long live consuls!" were often chanted. However, the old Western European countries by no means had abandon foreign policy and diplomacy.

Beginnings and development of Latvia's foreign policy during the first period of national independence (1918–1940)

After the First World War, foreign policy and diplomacy were urgently needed for the emerging countries of Eastern Europe, too in order to win and strengthen their international positions. In case of Latvia, the Latvian Provisional National Council (LPNP) was founded in Valka on November 17 (30), 1917, the first session of which took place on the November 16–19 (November 29 – December 2 by modern calendar). The Council decided to establish 7 divisions, including

the Foreign Affairs Division, in association with the Information Office in Petrograd.¹ The Foreign Division promoted the proclamation and creation of an independent state, it operated until the proclamation of the Latvian state and the establishment of the Provisional Government of Latvia. The LPNP was the first Latvian organisation that was also responsible for establishing foreign policy contacts. The Foreign Affairs Division was the first foreign body, but offices with diplomatic status still lacked.

The rise of youngish Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics was furthered by his great work abilities and social activity, the skill to reconcile originally opposite views, a gift for public speech and so on. The joint meetings of the LPNP Foreign Affairs and Finance Divisions became the actual LPNP managing centre in Russia, while foreign policy after Meierovics left for Britain remained under the Foreign Affairs Division. Since the end of July 1918, the division started to gain diplomatic quality. The British government, accepting Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics as an informal diplomatic representative and the LPNP he represented as *de facto* independent institution, enabled the first Latvian diplomatic mission to function even before the proclamation of the state. The British *de facto* written recognition (November 11, 1918) gave this representation features corresponding status of a state.

The proclamation of the State of Latvia on November 18, 1918 brought about a whole new situation. After the proclamation, the burgeoning Foreign Service gradually developed into an official national service. During this time, the diplomatic service of the Provisional Government was operating abroad; the foreign policy activities of the new state on the territory of Latvia were hindered by both German and later Soviet occupation. Starting from the first days of the country's existence under complicated internal and external conditions foreign policy activities gradually expanded. The diplomatic struggle for the State of Latvia was no less important than the armed fighting.

From the very beginning, the formation of the Latvian Diplomatic Service took place in an intensive and complicated range of activities, carrying out important foreign policy tasks, as well as creating and improving the organisational structures of the service at the same time. Until July 1919, the control centre of the Foreign Service was located abroad (in London and later in Paris). In May 1919, the role of the Provisional Government's continued foreign policy activities increased in all the countries where the first representations (diplomatic missions) of Latvia were located at that time. An important step in the diplomatic struggle for the future existence

of the Latvian state was the work of the Latvian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919–1920. At the same time, this was the first diplomatic “school” for the future group of prominent Latvian statesmen and diplomats. Similarly to other new countries, the Latvian Foreign Service was striving for a more extensive *de facto* recognition of the government and later *de iure* recognition of the state.

As Foreign Minister Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics left for London, the leadership of the Latvian Diplomatic Service moved to Paris, too, which temporarily became the centre of the global political life. Paris became also the political centre of Latvia abroad.² In the case of Latvia this applies, firstly, to Jānis Čakste and Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics. Čakste performed mostly representative functions, while Meierovics used his great working capabilities and was the “engine” of the delegation, for example, in setting up various contacts and preparing documents. Creation of new diplomatic missions and their staffing was not least important. Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics discussed it in correspondence with heads of missions throughout the entire “Paris epoch.” Meierovics quickly identified and appointed a number of employees for the representations, who later formed the core of the Diplomatic Service of the Republic of Latvia. Based on several information offices, the first diplomatic and consular representations (missions) of the Provisional Government was formed in 1919.

In the second half of 1919 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) was being developed in Riga in accordance with the topical tasks set by the internal political and foreign policy situation of the country. One of the most difficult tasks in organising the Ministry was the choice of suitable and competent employees. Latvian intellectuals in the past did not have the opportunity to work in diplomacy. The view widely expressed in the historical literature was that in general Latvians were not interested in foreign policy. Mrs Milda Salnāja, spouse of the Envoy Voldemārs Salnājs (Salnais) later complained about negligence of the Latvian people about foreign policy, but also acknowledged that before the establishment of the Latvian state, experienced diplomats could not appear.³ The work in the field of diplomacy and information required staff loyal to the idea of Latvia, educated, experienced in organisational and technical issues with knowledge of foreign languages. The most suitable ones for the diplomatic work turned out to be people with an experience of socially–political activity and good education. Knowledge of foreign languages in itself did not guarantee suitability.

During the parliamentary stage (from 1920 to May 1934), the Foreign Ministry was directly responsible to the parliament. Latvia's foreign policy was shaped by the influence of several political forces and state structures. Inside the service decisions were discussed among colleagues. Initially, a broad, branched and detailed structure of the Diplomatic Service was planned with further possibilities to expand. Unfortunately, already on October 1, 1920 due to limited financial reasons, the Ministry was reorganised, the number of departments and personnel was reduced. Only the Cabinet of the Foreign Minister and two departments were left. One of them was the Administrative Legal Department (General Functions). The other was the Political and Economic Department (territorial principle) for establishing and maintaining relations with foreign countries and the League of Nations. The two departments remained until November 1938.⁴ This proves that the structure of the Latvian Foreign Ministry had stabilized. The structure was built largely in accordance with the common structure of the foreign ministries adopted by the European countries at the time. A new international trend in this regard was the formation of legal and consular departments separate from territorial ones. The initial structure of the Ministry was determined by the main directions of activity, including the promotion of economic contacts and information work, since in the beginning Latvia was not yet known on the map of the world. Latvia, as a country with small financial resources, was widely using the institution of the honorary consuls.

As the ministerial apparatus stabilized, further structural changes, mainly for budgetary reasons, occurred within the departments. Restricted finances were a permanent obstacle to the expansion and development of the foreign affairs sector, largely because parliamentarians did not understand the specifics of foreign affairs. The influence of the Parliament (the Constitutional Assembly, later the Saeima) on foreign affairs was mainly expressed when discussing the budget allocated for Foreign Service.

On November 2, 1922, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the Regulations on the service at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵ In the 1920s and 1930s, the development of various regulatory acts on activities of the Foreign Service was underway. Particularly detailed regulation was necessary for successful consular activities. The division of functions of senior officials was also changing and inconsistent.

Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics established the tradition of the Ministry to cooperate with the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament (the

Constituent Assembly, later the Saeima) and to report to the Parliament. At the same time, one has to agree with the assessment that by the year 1934 foreign affairs decisions were to a large extent the prerogative of the Foreign Minister: the President did not exert much influence on foreign policy and the effect of the Saeima Foreign Affairs Committee was relatively small, mostly related to the selection of persons for envoy's appointment and budgetary discussions.⁶

At the time of Meierovics, the Ministry was a collegiate body, with the Council of the MFA (in 1920s its work was largely dependent on the minister's own personal interest). The minister made the final decision, but the teamwork was evident. Meierovics contributed to the development of the debate, often after outlining his plan for solving the problem, he had invited: "And now, please criticize me!"

Also during the two prime ministerial terms, Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics retained the post of Foreign Minister and continued to pay close attention to the foreign affairs. Even his critic the Social Democrat foreign expert Fēlikss Cielēns spoke with appreciation of Meierovics.⁷ Meierovics's popularity in both foreign affairs and domestic politics continued to grow, despite his recent failures in resolving border issues. Cielēns left the post of deputy minister at the end of June 1923, but even then he acknowledged the quantitative and qualitative growth of the work of the envoys and other employees of the MFA compared to 1919.⁸

The activity of Foreign Service under Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics was intense. The minister's work expressed certainty, clear plan and strong tactics. Unfortunately, foreign policy issues were debated relatively little in the Saeima and in the press. The Latvian public and also the parliament understood little about the necessity and specifics of the foreign policy. In the public domain, foreign affairs was often perceived as a very specific and mysterious field of state activity. Meierovics tried to overcome it.

During the tour of Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics to Western Europe in summer 1925, it became apparent that he had become one of the most prominent figures in the new European countries, well noticed as a promising, young leader of a diplomatic service of a small nation, with many successes foreseen in the future. Meierovics has greatest merits in the international recognition of Latvia and setting of the main directions, goals and principles of Latvia's foreign policy.⁹ Although the concept of the country's foreign policy was not developed in the form of concrete

formulations and accepted as an official document, in practice the general foreign policy line developed by Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics would be applied in the future as well as the main directions of action: the establishment of political and economic relations with foreign countries; defending the interests and rights of Latvian citizens (consular work); drafting and conclusion of inter-government treaties, as well as accession to international conventions; ensuring the activities of Latvian diplomatic and other representatives in international organisations, information and propaganda work. However, some Latvian historians believe that the fact that Latvia did not have a written foreign policy concept aimed at guaranteeing the country's external security was a big mistake. Thus, Latvia's foreign policy was seeking security guarantees often in several, sometimes even completely opposite directions and did not produce the desired results.

The effectiveness of the Ministry's activity fell for a period of several years after the tragic death of a European scale diplomat Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics. The temporary appointment of the MFA manager from 1925 to 1926 serves as a confirmation of the following uncertainty. Actions in the branch were affected by frequent shifts of government and ministers. There was no distinct leader in foreign policy issues after the death of Meierovics; the foreign ministers changed frequently. However, they all were more or less outstanding personalities.

A relative idleness in foreign policy continued until 1927, when Fēlikss Cielēns was acting as Foreign Minister in the left wing and centrist coalition government led by Social Democrat Mārgers Skujenieks (December 1926 – January 1928). When he took the post of Foreign Minister, he wanted to show that he was able to fill the slack in Latvian diplomacy that followed the death of Meierovics. At the 8th Assembly of the League of Nations on September 7, 1927, Fēlikss Cielēns spoke and extended diplomatic activities to reinvent the ideas of the “Baltic Locarno.” However, he overestimated the extent of Latvia's potential influence in European politics; some listeners had got the impression that Latvia was trying to give lessons to the great powers. Cielēns claims in his memoirs that the Foreign Ministry did not have any staff members who could give him political advice.¹⁰ Due to the features of his own character, he was the most ambitious Foreign Minister in the parliamentary period.¹¹ Later Fēlikss Cielēns did not hesitate to praise his own achievements, resulting in Latvia's leading positions among the Baltic States as in the times of Meierovics.¹²

Officials who led the work of Foreign Service and its departments and made everyday decisions were undeniably important for foreign policy decision-making. They were autodidacts who learned diplomacy in practice.¹³

The rich experience of life and struggle allowed the “pioneers” of Latvian diplomacy to compensate some of deficiencies in the theory of diplomacy and quickly grasp the difficult situations. They did a lot, although they did not have special education. Later, in the second half of the 1920s, younger employees began to enter the Ministry, who had to move up the career ladder from the lower step, as the traditionally characteristic hierarchy of the Diplomatic Service had already begun to strengthen.

From the end of March to December 1931, the Foreign Minister was Kārlis Ulmanis. He was more interested in Baltic cooperation and economic agreements. However, he focused on his duties as the President of Ministers. During the period of the parliamentary republic, the Prime Minister was often at the same time the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Although this probably gave some advantages to the negotiator from the prospective of the State Protocol, this merger was successful, presumably, only in the case of Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics. On the other hand, it showed the role of the Foreign Minister in the hierarchy of the Latvian executive power.

During the first independence period of Latvia Antons Balodis, Kārlis Zariņš (Charles Zarine) and Vilhelms Munters ascended to the post of foreign minister from the ranks of carrier diplomats. After the death of Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics such diplomats as Hermanis Albats, Roberts Liepiņš and Alfrēds Bīlmanis had a good deal of influence in the Ministry; at a later stage Vilhelms Munters started to overshadow the Secretary-General of MFA Albats.¹⁴ Munter’s influence in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs grew rapidly since he was appointed Secretary-General of the MFA. Soon he emerged as the actual leader of the service. Jānis Seskis and Hermanis Albats were gradually losing their initial influence in the Ministry. The first and long-serving director of the Press Division, Alfrēds Bīlmanis, greatly contributed to the work of the Ministry.

Several Latvian diplomats have become known in the wider global diplomatic circles (ZigfrīdsAnna Meierovics, Fēlikss Cielēns, Miķelis Valters, Voldemārs Salnājs); Latvia was respected for its earnestness in international cooperation. Jūlijs Feldmans, Permanent Representative to the League of Nations, was very active in the committees of the Assembly of the League of Nations.¹⁵

The appointment of envoys and diplomatic representatives in addition to the relevant criteria of competence was also affected by political parties seeking to appoint their representatives to these positions. The envoys were appointed by the Saeima on the proposal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and with the consent of the Saeima Foreign Affairs Committee. At the parliamentary stage, however, the intervention of political parties in the approval of the envoys was rather minuscule. The steering of the service was almost always in the hands of the Latvian Farmers' Union, and a major part of the envoys were also members or supporters of this party (Miķelis Valters, Oļģerds Grosvalds, Ēriks Feldmanis, Vilis Bandrevičs, Jānis Seskis); however, several social democrats were holding the positions, too (Georgs Bisenieks, Fēlikss Cielēns, Voldemārs Salnājs).¹⁶ There was no broad debate on foreign affairs in the Saeima except for the ratification of certain treaties.

In the years of parliamentary system single-minded decisions were impossible in the field of foreign affairs, an extensive control was present, which sometimes even hindered the development of the service, for example, when there was a lack of understanding about the specifics of the service activity and its needs, as well as in the case of different political interests. Decisions made in the middle of the 1920s to close legations in Stockholm and Washington for several years should be regarded as erroneous.

During the period of authoritarianism (1934–1940), Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis concentrated in his hands all state authority. In 1934–1936 he officially retained the post of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but could not devote much attention to these matters. The actual head of the Ministry was Vilhelms Munters. The Foreign Ministry was topped by a “permanent, stable but narrow” political leadership. The activities of the Diplomatic Service were increasingly negatively affected by a narrowing circle of foreign policy makers, lack of foreign policy discussions and democratic scrutiny, reduction of the role of legations, arbitrary restriction of available information sources, etc. Prime Minister Ulmanis continued to be the Foreign Minister, unable to devote enough time to these duties. Only those two officials were the country's foreign policy leadership, but the MFA's senior officials were excluded from the decision-making process in crucial issues. The approach of Latvian foreign policy management during the authoritarian period coincided with the practice of most European countries with authoritarian regimes at the time to leave the management of the foreign affairs to a very limited group of decision-makers. Kārlis Ulmanis continued to control

Latvia's foreign policy until 1940.¹⁷ It was foreign policy proposed by Ulmanis that Munters implemented. Latvia no longer had parliamentary control over the foreign affairs. Foreign policy decisions were further developed in a very narrow circle and adopted single-handedly. There was no systematic approach, such as working with envoys' reports.

During the period of authoritarianism, there was no longer debate on foreign policy issues. The personal opinions of diplomats had a lesser, secondary importance. Years later historian Edgars Dunsdorfs estimated that Kārlis Ulmanis had really narrowed the competence of Latvian envoys in the direction of foreign policy, in the sense that he had devoted less and less attention to the reports by envoys.¹⁸ Despite this fact the envoys tried to do their best in good faith and in full respect of their authority and competence, first of all in obtaining information and informing the ministries and the government. As Head of Government and later President of State, Kārlis Ulmanis, had become completely "immovable" in the sense that he paid no official visit to a foreign country until 1940.

Vilhelms Munters was appointed as Foreign Minister on July 14, 1936. His appointment as Minister under the sole will of Ulmanis was a characteristic phenomenon of the period of authoritarian rule. The Cabinet of Ministers did not discuss foreign policy issues, but Munters reported them directly to Ulmanis. The MFA Council meetings were no longer held to analyze the international situation. It seems that the last meeting took place on August 27, 1934.¹⁹ The authors of memoirs underline that the main condition was Munters's personal loyalty to Ulmanis, who had selected him on this basis.

An attempt was made still in 1935 to exchange views on trends in the international situation; as evidenced by the convocation of the II Conference of Latvian Envoys. Unfortunately, in the later years when the international situation further aggravated, it was not deemed necessary to host new conferences. The head of Foreign Service was not interested in a genuine foreign policy debate. This was revealed when the Latvian Envoy to Brussels Miķelis Valters in the spring of 1939 offered a conceptually completely different view of Latvia's foreign policy tasks, encouraging at least demonstrative support for Western democratic values. Under the circumstances of censorship, foreign policy debate in press was in fact banned.

Although Kārlis Ulmanis was a kind of person who did not tolerate long hesitation, but stood for deciding and acting, this cannot be said about foreign affairs. Wilhelm Munter often tried to delay Latvia's foreign policy decisions

until the Great Powers made their decisions. To some extent, this approach can be understood, but Latvia risked passing a favorable moment for adopting its foreign policy decisions (perhaps the most illustrative example is Latvia's biding time position on the idea of the "Eastern Pact" from 1934 to 1935). On the one hand, Latvia tried to avoid engagement in the military-political alliances created by the Great Powers; on the other hand, since Latvia did not fit into any of the alliances, it was quite difficult to expect other countries to take into account its international stand and foreign policy positions.

Under the conditions of an authoritarian regime, the country's foreign policy leadership was not ready for a clear assessment of its previous foreign policy and for an analysis of the new trends in the international situation. The country's foreign policy leadership did not realise the seriousness of the situation, delayed decision-making on national security and was not interested in hearing independent evaluations of foreign policy specialists. This was demonstrated by the delay in preparing extraordinary powers for legations in a crisis situation, deficiencies in their content and presentation. On May 17, 1940, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, in view of the war-time circumstances, decided to grant the Envoy to the United Kingdom, Kārlis Zariņš, extraordinary powers to protect Latvia's interests in the Western countries.

Continuation of activities of the Foreign Service of the Republic of Latvia and its main lines (1940-1991)

In June 1940, the Government of Latvia did not give a specific task to the missions abroad to protest internationally against the occupation by the USSR and to inform the world about the true course of events. Kārlis Ulmanis obviously did not understand the far-reaching consequences in the meaning of international law of a diplomatic protest that would not make a difference at that particular moment. During the days of occupation, Ulmanis continued to act in the spirit of authoritarianism – he coordinated his position on foreign policy only with Munters.²⁰ The circle of persons involved in the foreign policy decision-making did not expand at the moment of occupation. Even under extraordinary circumstances there were no collective discussions.

Latvia's national independence was *de facto* destroyed. Diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Latvia accredited in several Western countries in mid-July 1940 launched a diplomatic battle against aggression.

The envoys took the initiative and submitted protests against Soviet occupation to the governments of the countries they were accredited to. In these diplomatic protests they as official representatives of the state of Latvia called on these governments not to recognize the political changes that took place in the Baltics. Subsequently, the envoys telegraphically informed Kārlis Zariņš about the diplomatic demarches they carried out.

The protests of the diplomatic representatives of the Baltic States contributed to the fact that the leading Western countries in the summer of 1940 extended the principle of non-recognition of the violent conquests to the Baltic States and initiated the *de iure* non-recognition of the occupation and annexation of Latvia and the rest of the Baltic States.²¹ During 1940–1991 Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania *de iure* continued to exist, as many countries continued to recognize them. The maintenance of the issue of renewal of independence of the three Baltic States, which lasted for more than fifty years, had no precedent in international politics and law.

July 1940 started a new period with new tasks in the history of the diplomacy of the Republic of Latvia. Although most of Latvia's foreign missions were transferred to the USSR embassies in the respective countries, several missions and a large number of consulates in Western countries refused to submit the seizure and continued to operate in the interests of the Latvian state. Despite the liquidation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in its homeland, the Latvian Diplomatic Service abroad continued to exist in a very limited scope without the support of the Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Some of the functions performed by departments so far ended, while others, especially consular and information work, increased significantly. The status of the Foreign Service remained unchanged, it did not transform to an exile organisation.

Although the extraordinary powers given to Envoy Kārlis Zariņš had significant deficiencies and they were limited, besides no financial resources were allocated to their implementation, they still continued to play an important political role in the struggle for the continuance of the State of Latvia *de iure* and as the basis for a further work of the Latvian diplomatic and consular service. Diplomats of the Republic of Latvia who stayed abroad began to establish more active mutual contacts and exchange reports directly among themselves (formerly it used to be done through the Foreign Ministry). Absence of further follow-up instructions did not lead to the termination of diplomatic activity.

After the proclamation of Soviet power in Latvia (July 21, 1940), Kārlis Zariņš started acting under extraordinary powers. The envoys decided to continue their work in accordance with the earlier orders of the last independent government and, as far as possible, the legislation of the Republic of Latvia (which remained in force), especially on consular matters. The Latvian Diplomatic Service abroad recognized the powers and subjected to them.²² The Foreign Service respected Zariņš's decisions and orders. In a few cases, Zariņš criticized his colleagues if they had been uncoordinated. In the decision-making process, he consulted with his colleagues in the Western countries. The cooperation with former colleagues who had transited to private status and did not enjoy diplomatic immunity any longer was much lesser. Heads of missions continued to make decisions within their legations. They expressed the official position of the Republic of Latvia against the two occupation powers.

In the absence of a Head of State and an independent or exiled government to represent, the remaining envoys in the West appeared to be the highest and the only officials of the State of Latvia. Because of the lack of the Head of State and government, the Foreign Service had more limited functions. The diplomats were by no means allowed to and practically could not take government functions in any way. Many years later, Kārlis Zariņš expressed the opinion that extraordinary powers had played a major role in ensuring the later functioning of the Foreign Service. The mandate was mainly used for the appointment of representatives.²³ On some issues, extraordinary powers proved to be very limited, for example in the areas of management of financial resources and ships belonging to the State of Latvia.

Only the Head of the Diplomatic Service of the Republic of Latvia and the heads of diplomatic missions retained the right, opportunities and responsibility to express the official opinion of Latvia on any issues and events of international politics that affected the interests of the State of Latvia and its citizens.²⁴ Latvian diplomatic representatives elaborated and expressed official opinions of the state on various issues (Latvia's gold reserve, ships, property; consular issues: protection of rights of natural and legal persons, and many other issues), continued to conduct diplomatic correspondence with the governments of the countries of residence.²⁵ The diplomats addressed specific issues, regularly reminded of the situation in Latvia and the right to restore national independence, provided information on violations of international law against the State of Latvia and its citizens.

The political work at the Latvian legations in London, Washington, Geneva and Buenos Aires, after the occupation of 1940 focused mainly on informational activities and the struggle for the existence and rights of Latvia. Work with Latvian citizens, ships, etc. was concentrated in the consular sector and was recognized as very important. The development and expression of the official position of the State of Latvia took place in consultations and correspondence between envoys, in a more collegiate than a directive way, consulting and coordinating with each other the necessary actions, in order to respond in an appropriate and precise manner to changes in the international situation and the emergence of new issues to be solved. The development and expression of the official opinion of the Republic of Latvia was particularly noticeable and intense in the first year after the loss of Latvia's sovereignty during and after the German–Soviet war. During these years, the basic principles of a position were developed, which the Latvian Foreign Service adhered to all subsequent years until the restoration of state independence.

Fifty years of occupation by foreign powers (the USSR, Nazi Germany and again the USSR) created a complicated and specific era in the history of the Latvian Foreign Service, different from the story of the foreign services of the independent states. The diplomats from the Baltic States gained a special experience that diplomats from independent countries did not need to acquire. Indeed, the situation of a country which lost its independence was radically different from that of independent sovereign states: there was a shortage of many foreign policy instruments readily available to diplomats from independent countries. However, the task was more difficult – it was necessary to defend many of the fundamental questions of the *de iure* existence of the State, which under conditions of national independence usually was not endangered. Latvian diplomatic representatives had to take into account the capacity they were recognized by the country of residence.

Some of the decisions were taken after the consultations of the Latvian Foreign Service with the Lithuanian and Estonian foreign services. However, the level of cooperation between the diplomatic representatives of the Baltic States in different capitals was different (for example, it was not very successful in Buenos Aires). The duty of a diplomatic mission of the Republic of Latvia abroad was to resist any foreign domination in Latvia. The Baltic envoys in London and Washington agreed not to recognize any foreign government appointed by their countries.

The Foreign Service of the Republic of Latvia continued to operate in Western countries after the end of the Second World War. The work of the structures of the Latvian Foreign Service to protect the interests of the Republic of Latvia and its citizens and to support the organisation of exiles in the new countries of residence was of great significance, especially at an early stage, until the establishment of strong central political organisations in exile. When the first exile organisations were formed in the second half of the 1940s, there was virtually no issues about the rights and interests of Latvia the Foreign Service of the Republic of Latvia would not have been addressing since the summer of 1940 or when the specific problems arose. The diplomats did not stay tacit when the activities of Latvian refugee and exile organisations could threaten the status of the Foreign Service of the Republic of Latvia, the existence and possibilities to continue representing the State of Latvia internationally or to impede the prospects of protection of the interests of the state and citizens of Latvia (and hence the representatives of the exile themselves) in their countries of residence. By the end of the 1950s, the activities of the Latvian exile organisations in the new home countries increased, as well as their lobbying in the governments there and this activity was more prominent than that of the Foreign Service, which had limitations by the specifics of diplomacy.

Since the second half of the 1940s regular meetings of the Latvian Foreign Service staff took place. Collegiate discussions took place, but the decisive opinion belonged to Kārlis Zariņš (London) and later to his followers – the heads of the Foreign Service, Arnolds Spekke and Anatols Dinbergs (Washington DC). Heads of the Foreign Service set out guidelines for foreign policy issues and appointed representatives of the mission.

On May 4, 1990, the Latvian parliament democratically elected in March 1990 adopted the Declaration on the Restoration of the Independence of the Republic of Latvia. The parliament created a new Council of Ministers with the aim of gradually dismantling the Soviet structures and restoring the 1922 Satversme (constitution) of the independent Latvia. There was a need to re-establish the central foreign office – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia. The main task of the MFA was the implementation of the Latvian government's foreign policy line in order to achieve a real renewal of Latvia's independence during the transition period. On May 22, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia appointed Jānis Jurkāns as Foreign Minister.

From May 1990 to August 1991, the Foreign Service of the Republic of Latvia led by Anatol Dinbergs in the Western countries was still not

subordinated to the newly established Foreign Ministry within the government of the Republic of Latvia in the period of transition. However, both institutions cooperated in the process of regaining independence, for example by harmonizing the appointment of honorary consuls. In the course of development of the Latvian Foreign Service during the “transitional period” of 1990–1991 two parallel processes took place – the renewal and expansion of the Latvian Diplomatic Service led by the Legation in Washington and the formation and development of the Latvian Foreign Ministry and the network of its representations.²⁶ According to an anonymous respondent, Anatols Dinbergs did not involve in the matters of Latvian exile organisations, but on international issues the most active members of these organisations were Gunārs Meierovics, Aristids Lambergs, Ojārs Kalniņš, Uldis Grava and others.

LEGATION OF LATVIA
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Papildinot Latvijas sūtniecības 1990.g. janvārī izteikto viedokli Latvijas neatkarības atjaunošanas jautājumā, Latvijas Republikas diplomātiskā un konsulārā dienesta darbinieki brīvajā pasaulē, pulcējušies savā gadskārtējā sanāksmē 23. un 24. aprīlī Latvijas sūtniecībā Vašingtonā, atzīst, ka:

- (1) Molotova-Ribentropa pakta rezultātā 1940. gadā izdarītā Latvijas militārā okupācija un tai sekojošā inkorporācija Padomju Savienībā ir starptautisko tiesību pārkāpums un tamdēļ nelikumīga.
- (2) Latvijas republikas pastāvēšana joprojām balstās uz:
 - (a) 1920. gada 11. augusta Rīgā parakstīto Latvijas Republikas un Padomju Krievijas miera līgumu, kurā Padomju Krievija “bez ierunām atzīst Latvijas valsts neatkarību, patstāvību un suverenitāti un labprātīgi un uz mūžīgiem laikiem atsaņķs no visām suverenām tiesībām, kuras piederēja Krievijai uz Latvijas tautu un zemi...”;
 - (b) uz Latvijas republikas 1922. gada 15. februāra Satversmi.
- (3) Latvijas republikas de facto atjaunošanai ir nepieciešama Latvijas 1922. gada Satversmes atjaunošana visā pilnībā, līdz ar ko Latvijas republika atkal kļūtu par starptautisko tiesību objektu. Eventuālus grozījumus Latvijas republikas Satversmē var Satversmē paredzētā kārtībā (skat. Satversmes 76., 77. un 79. pantus) izdarīt vienīgi Latvijas Saeima. Latvijas PSR Augstākā padome tāda nav, bet ir vienīgi pārejas laika orgāns.
- (4) Izstrādājot jaunu Latvijas Satversmi un radot jaunu Latvijas valsti, nebūs iespējams izmantot Latvijas republikas starptautiski atzīto eksistenci, kuru būtu iespējams pat pazaudēt. Nedrīkstētu pieņemt kādu kondicionālu neatkarību un tās atzīšanu. Latvijas sūtniecība un Latvijas konsulāti ārzemēs reprezentēs Latvijas republikas de jure neatkarību, ko ir jāsauglabā Latvijas tautai.
- (5) Savās prasībās atjaunot de jure pastāvošo Latvijas republiku arī de facto, mēs nedrīkstam piekāpties. Tiem, kuri domā, ka sākumam varētu apmierināties arī ar ierobežotu neatkarību, ar kādu “jaunu Latviju” kura iederas PSRS sastāvā, mums jāatgādina, ka ierobežota neatkarība var viegli novest atpakaļ pie atkarības. Tad, kad būs atjaunota pilnīgi neatkarīga Latvija, tad tās suverenā tauta pati lems par iekļaušanos neatkarīgo valstu kopībā, bet ne pirms tam.

1990.g.24. aprīlī

Press release by the Legation of Latvia in Washington about the meeting of the Latvian diplomatic and consular staff in the free world on April 23-24, 1990, adopting the rules, which have to be consistently followed in *de facto* restoration the *de iure* existing Republic of Latvia. Washington DC, April 24, 1990.

Source: Latvian State Historical Archives of the Latvian National Archives (LNA LVVA), 291. f., l. apr., 721. l., 98.

Some features of the development of foreign policy decision-making mechanisms in the second period of renewed independence (1991–2017)

The Constitutional Law on the Statehood of the Republic of Latvia, adopted by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia on August 21, 1991, terminating the transitional period had the decisive role in restoration of full independence of the State of Latvia. The second era of independence of Latvia began. A new foreign service was not established, but the legations of the Foreign Service in the Western countries were upgraded to embassies subordinated to the Foreign Ministry and merged in a joined Foreign Service.

The rapid changes in the domestic and foreign policy situation and the end of the transition period in Latvia led to the need to implement radical changes in the activities of the Foreign Service, in order to carry out the functions typical for foreign affairs establishment of an independent state. Like several times earlier in the history of the State of Latvia, changes in the statehood of Latvia have largely influenced the further development of the Foreign Service. After August 21, 1991, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia began full operation. By the end of August, within just a few days, inexperienced Foreign Ministry team of only a few dozen employees had to deal with a wide range of issues, including the establishment or renewal of diplomatic relations, the accreditation of the first foreign diplomats, the deployment of staff and the formation of embassies, the introduction of the visa regime for foreign citizens, reception of high foreign officials, etc. As the first Ambassador of Latvia to France, Aina Nagobads-Ābola, later recalled: “It was 1991 and we all started to work from scratch, some of us had a bigger “backpack,” others a smaller one, the rest no experience whatsoever. But those days we were all working together, doing everything we could and were capable of. And we did it with joy and faith.”²⁷

Along with practical foreign policy work, the national legal base and internal regulation were formed. During the first years after the restoration of independence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was governed by the Statute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, approved by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia on October 30, 1992. In accordance with these regulations, the main task of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to ensure with political and diplomatic means the implementation of Latvia’s foreign policy concept in order to create the most favorable

conditions for Latvia's international security and internal political stability, as well as to facilitate the integration of Latvia into the international community.

From the time of the Minister Jānis Jurkāns management meetings in various formats were held in the Ministry with the participation of the Minister, the Secretary of State and the heads of units. Gradually, the cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the President of the State, the Cabinet of Ministers, the Parliament (the Supreme Council; since 1993 – the Saeima) and its Foreign Affairs Committee gradually evolved.

Currently, the activities of the Foreign Service are regulated by a series of international and national laws. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia is responsible for the implementation of sovereign rights of Latvia in the field of international relations and protection of the interests of natural and legal persons of Latvia abroad. At the end of October 1992, the first conference of Latvian ambassadors was held in Riga after the restoration of independence. Subsequently, the ambassadorial conferences became annual. Gatherings of honorary consuls have also taken place in recent years. Over the years, changes have taken place in the structure of the ministry – remarkably more often than in the first years of independence of Latvia.

During the interview with two anonymous MFA officers, they expressed the opinion that among the many things that were being addressed in the 1990s, the most important issues were the withdrawal of the Russian army and the conclusion of a border agreement with Russia, also the foreign policy aspect of the issue of citizenship of the Republic of Latvia. Thus, issues related to the departure of Latvia from the Russian (Soviet) geopolitical space were topical both in 1920s and 1990s.

The foreign policy decisions of 1990s were closely linked to the domestic political agenda of Latvia, and the Foreign Ministry was largely a position developer and coordinator among representatives of various parties and institutions; the layout of priorities was clear-cut. The fact that national independence was recently renewed and had to be strengthened influenced the mindset. When one of the leaders of the party Latvia's Way Valdis Birkavs became Foreign Minister, a significant internal political support for foreign policy decisions was provided; in the following years the situation gradually changed. It was not easy to make decisions under sensitive conditions, because there was a pressure from the West in addition to Russia's pressure along with the domestic situation of Latvia that had to be taken into account. In the first years the most active generators of ideas and foreign policy

advisers were Jānis Ritenis, Mavriks Vulfsons, Gunārs Meierovics. Later in 1990s Māris Riekstiņš, Aivis Ronis, Mārtiņš Virsis, Aivars Vovers and others were involved in solving important issues. Many young people began to work at the Ministry, so there was no balanced generation structure as in foreign ministries of the “old” countries (henceforth now, after more than 25 years of independence, there are many same-age competitors for ambassadorial positions). On the other hand, there were also pros: people were young, enthusiastic, there was a sense of mission, the desire to use the historical opportunity to cope with complex issues, including those inherited from the Soviet era. Solutions were proposed and scenarios elaborated, followed by political decisions.

In the following years not only the foreign ministers but also the Secretary of State played an important role. According to the same respondents, by the turn of the millennium, the Foreign Ministry was the main “engine” for the Euro-integration issues. On domestic scene the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had to work a lot with the parliament, diplomats often had to explain and clarify various statements made by parliamentarians. The strategic decisions on the EU and NATO membership were prepared in 1998–1999. Until 2005 several structural changes were implemented in the ministry due to Latvia’s accession to the European Union and NATO. Nowadays, the search for an optimal structure of the Ministry and the improvement of decision-making mechanisms is continuing. In recent years a large foreign policy debate takes place in the Saeima at the end of each January.

Conclusion

In general, the evolution of the Latvian foreign policy has been closely linked to different developments of Latvia’s nearly one hundred years of *de iure* existence and has included all three main periods: the first period of independence (Interwar period 1918–1940), the second epoch (occupations and annexation 1940–1990/1991) and the era of renewed independence (second period of independence, since 1990/1991). The tasks of foreign policy during both periods of independence are characterized by the goals of developing and implementing policies of promoting national interests, taking into account scarce resources. During both periods of independence, as well as in the era of occupation, the foreign policy of great powers and

their balance have been closely followed. The foreign policy during the occupation and annexation era protected *de iure* status of the Republic of Latvia and preserved the prerequisites for the restoration of Latvia's national independence and the international recognition of the restored independence in 1991. During both periods of independence, Latvia has sought to work actively in international organisations aimed at maintaining peace and collective security and economic cooperation. Efforts have been made to build and maintain good relations with neighbouring countries. The cooperation with the Western democracies can be considered as an element of continuity in all three epochs. Unlike the first period of independence Latvia has succeeded in joining NATO's collective security alliance in the second era of independence, but our country must continue its active role in resolving security and defence issues and strengthening its capabilities. The foreign policy of the renewed independence period has ensured Latvia's integration into Euro–Atlantic structures, influential political and economic organisations.

Several of the above–mentioned events and developments in Latvia's foreign policy are analysed in more detail by other authors of articles in this volume.

Endnotes

- ¹ Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture. 1914–1920* ([Stokholma]: Daugava, 1967), 254–255.
- ² Jarosław Sozański, *International Legal Status of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in the Years 1918–1994* (Rīga: [Poligrāfists], 1995), 60.
- ³ Jānis Lūsis, “Latvijas diplomātu darbs,” *Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts*, Nr. 3 (1990), 10.
- ⁴ For an overview of the units of the Foreign Ministry, as well as changes, functions and leadership, see also Ēriks Jēkabsons un Valters Ščerbinskis, “Latvijas ārlietu resors un tā darbinieki 1918.–1991. gadā” no *Latvijas ārlietu dienesta darbinieki 1918–1991: Biogrāfiskā vārdnīca*, sast. Ēriks Jēkabsons un Valters Ščerbinskis (Rīga: Zinātne, 2003), 15–18.
- ⁵ *Valdības Vēstnesis*, 1922. gada 2. novembris, 4; “Noteikumi par dienestu Ārlietu ministrijā” [Rīga, 1922.]
- ⁶ Ēriks Jēkabsons and Valters Ščerbinskis, “Latvijas ārlietu resors un tā darbinieki 1918.–1991. gadā,” 19.
- ⁷ Alfrēds Bērziņš, Kārlis Ulmanis. Cilvēks un valstsvīrs ([Nujorka]: Grāmatu Draugs, 1973), 140; Aivars Stranga, *Latvijas–padomju Krievijas miera līgums 1920. gada 11. augustā. Latvijas – padomju Krievijas attiecības 1919.–1925. gadā* (Rīga: Fonds Latvijas Vēsture, 2000), 85, 94.
- ⁸ Latvian State Historical Archives (LVVA), 2570. f., 14. apr., 984. l., 108; Fēlikss Cielēns, *Laikmetu maiņā*, 3. grām. (Stokholma: Memento, 1998), 166, 168–170; Edgars Dunsdorfs, *Kārļa Ulmaņa dzīve. Ceļinieks. Politīķis. Diktators. Mocekļis* (Rīga: Zinātne, 1992), 168; Rihards Treijs, *Latvijas valsts un tās vīri: Latvijas Republikas valdības. Ministri savos darbos, 1918.–1940. g. Ar Pirmās Republikas un Otrās Republikas Saeimas un Valdības locekļu sarakstiem pielikumā* (Rīga: Latvijas Vēstnesis, 1998), 48.

- ⁹ Ainārs Lerhis, "Latvijas ārpolitikas veidošanās (20. gadu pirmā puse)," *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, Nr. 4 (2000), 84.
- ¹⁰ Fēlikss Cielēns, *Laikmetu maiņā*, 4. grām. (Stokholma: Memento, 1999), 85–87.
- ¹¹ Aivars Stranga, *Latvijas–padomju Krievijas miera līgums 1920. gada 11. augustā...*, 219–220, 223.
- ¹² Fēlikss Cielēns, *Laikmetu maiņā*, 4. grām. (Stokholma: Memento, 1999), 88.
- ¹³ For more on diplomats' previous public and professional experience, see: Ainārs Lerhis, "Latvijas ārpolitiskā dienesta un Ārlietu ministrijas pirmie darbības gadi (1919. gads – 20. gadu pirmā puse)," *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, Nr. 2 (1998), 122–123.
- ¹⁴ Aivars Stranga, "Brīvmūrnieki un "Jāņuguns loža" Rīgā," *Latvijas Vēsture*, Nr. 3 (1991), 70.
- ¹⁵ Zigurds L. Zīle, "Baltijas klātbūtnē Tautu Savienībā" no *Baltijas valstis liktengriežos. Politiskas, ekonomiskas un tiesiskas starptautiskās sadarbības problēmas uz XXI gadu simteņa sliekšņa. Rakstu krājums*, red. Tālavš Jundzis (Rīga, 1998), 383–386; Ārlietu ministrija, "Ārlietu ministrija" no *Latvija desmit gados: Latvijas valsts nodibināšanas un viņas pirmo 10 gadu darbības vēsture*, red. Matīss Ārons (Rīga: Jubilejas komisija, 1928), 73.
- ¹⁶ Ēriks Jēkabsons un Valters Ščerbinskis, "Latvijas ārlietu resors un tā darbinieki 1918.–1991. gadā," 24.
- ¹⁷ Edgars Dunsdorfs, *Kārļa Ulmaņa dzīve. Ceļinieks. Politīķis. Diktators. Mocekļis*, 287.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 287.
- ¹⁹ Edgars Dunsdorfs, *Kārļa Ulmaņa dzīve. Ceļinieks. Politīķis. Diktators. Mocekļis*, 304, 322; Arturs Stegmanis, "Atmiņas" no "*Neatkarīgā Latvija – kāda tā bija*", sast. Pāvils Ducmanis, Helmuts Kreicbergs (Rīga: Avots, 1987), 163; Inesis Feldmanis, Aivars Stranga, Mārtiņš Virsis, *Latvijas ārpolitika un starptautiskais stāvoklis (30. gadu otrā puse)* (Rīga, 1993), 352.
- ²⁰ Žanis Unāms, *Neatkarības saulrietā. Latvija pēc 17. jūnija* (Oldenburga: A. Ziemeņa apgāds, 1950), 33.
- ²¹ Inesis Feldmanis, Astra Aleksandra Freimanis, Ainārs Lerhis, Ineta Ziemele, "Latvijas valsts okupācijas gados (1940–1991)" no *Dokumenti par Latvijas valsts starptautisko atzīšanu, neatkarības atjaunošanu un diplomātiskajiem sakariem. 1918–1998* (Rīga: Nordik, 1999), 134–135.
- ²² For details see: Ainārs Lerhis, "Pārmaiņas Latvijas diplomātiskā dienesta darbībā (1940. g. jūnijs – 1942. g. augusts)" no *Vēsturnieks profesors Dr. phil., LZA ārzemju loceklis Andrievs Ezergailis: Biobibliogrāfija, darbabiēdru veļtījumi 70 gadu jubilejā* (Rīga: Latvijas Vēstures institūta apgāds, 2000), 269–270.
- ²³ "Sūtniecība Londonā" no *Latvju Enciklopēdija*, red. Edgars Andersons, 4. sēj. (Rockville, 1990), 505; Arturs Bērziņš, *Kārlis Zariņš dzīvē un darbā* (Londona: Rūja, 1959), 227–228; "Pilnvaras, ārkārtējās" no *Latvju Enciklopēdija*, red. Arveds Švābe, 3. sēj. (Stokholma, 1953.–1955.), 1942; Kārlis Zariņš, "Latvijas valsts darbā" no *Latviešu Almanachs 1954*, red. Arturs Bērziņš (Londona: Latpress, 1953), 91.
- ²⁴ Inesis Feldmanis, Astra Aleksandra Freimanis, Ainārs Lerhis, Ineta Ziemele, "Latvijas valsts okupācijas gados (1940–1991)," 132–133; Ainārs Lerhis, "Pārmaiņas Latvijas diplomātiskā dienesta darbībā..." 280.
- ²⁵ See: *Latvijas Republikas oficiālā nostāja Latvijas diplomātiskā dienesta dokumentos 1940.–1991. gadā. Dokumentu krājums*, sast. Ainārs Lerhis (Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2015).
- ²⁶ [Ainārs Lerhis], "Latvijas Republikas ārlietu dienesta vēsturē (1917–1997)" no *Latvijas ārlietu dienesta rokasgrāmata* (Rīga: Latvijas Republikas Ārlietu ministrija, 1997), 23–24; Inesis Feldmanis, Astra Aleksandra Freimanis, Ainārs Lerhis, Ineta Ziemele, "Latvijas valsts okupācijas gados (1940–1991)," 167–168, 173–174.
- ²⁷ "Zelta vērtais franču šarms Latvijas diplomātijā" [Līgitas Kovtunas intervija ar Ainu Nagobads Ābolu], *Eiropas latviešu laikraksts Brīvā Latvija*, 2012. gada 24. maijs, <http://www.brivalatvija.lv/aktuala-intervija/zelta-vertais-francu-sarms-latvijas-diplomatija?gads=2012>

ACTIVITIES DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD

Achieving International Recognition of Latvia

INESIS FELDMANIS

World War I changed the good, old Europe we knew beyond recognition. It turned pacifistic, democratic, nationalistic and revolutionary. Empires collapsed, longstanding and prominent dynasties, which had ruled for centuries, disappeared. The most drastic changes were experienced by the part of our continent usually referred to as East–Central Europe, where vacuum zones emerged and several new states sprung up like mushrooms after rain. Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs gained independence. A nation state became the most characteristic feature of the East–Central Europe and simultaneously of the whole continent.

The emergence of new countries on the political map of Europe was a logical process, which affirmed the strong power of pull and unusual attraction of the idea of self–determination of nations. However, the claim to independence and its proclamation were only the first step. The new countries had to achieve that the international community recognizes it. This was achieved by the outstanding leaders of the new countries. In the case of Latvia, we must mention the first President of the State Jānis Čakste, the first Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis and the first Foreign Minister Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics. After his tragic death in August of 1925, the press of Latvia likened Meierovics to the Czech diplomat Edvard Beneš, who had gained general acclaim in Europe.

First achievements

For the purposes of international law, Latvia was recognized before the proclamation on November 18, 1918. By taking advantage of the favorable situation, Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics, the authorized representative of the Latvian Provisional National Council (LPNC)¹ established in November 1917, managed to convince the government of the United Kingdom on the need of establishing the State of Latvia. The determinant factor was the deep hatred of the British

towards Germany and Bolshevism. During the talks with Meierovics, which took place on October 23, 1918, the head of British diplomacy, the Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour announced that the British government had decided to provisionally recognize the “Latvian National Council as the government of Latvia,” until the Peace Conference finally decides on the status of Latvia.²

The LPNC politicians perceived this statement of Balfour as *de facto* recognition of Latvia.³ Meierovics received a written confirmation from Balfour two and a half weeks later on November 11, 1918. It was reiterated in the official letter that the British government “gladly reaffirms the readiness to provisionally recognize the Latvian National Council as *de facto* independent authority” and accepts Meierovics “as the unofficial diplomatic representative of the Latvian provisional government.”⁴ From the text of the letter it derives that the United Kingdom reaffirmed the recognition of the National Council as the provisional government of Latvia. From the British perspective, this institution was the legitimate supreme representation of Latvia. This was what other Western countries had to reckon with, too.

In the fall of 1918, the Latvian national political powers also tried to gain and secure the support of Germany to the independence of Latvia. This was the course of action embarked upon by the so-called Democratic Block, which had formed already in the second part of September 1917 in the German-occupied Riga. Thus, on October 19, when the first parliamentary government was in power in Germany with Max von Baden at the helm, which had started exercising Eastern policy (*Ostpolitik*) focused on granting the recognition of self-determination rights of nations, representatives of the democratic bloc Miķelis Valters and Edvards Traubergs lodged a submission with the German Chancellor, in which it was emphasized that the Latvian nation is strongly determined to achieve that “national independence within the territory of Latvia is internationally recognized.” The document clearly states what Latvians expect from the new Germany, namely, that “it will not put obstacles in its path to immediate commencement of building an independent state.”⁵

One week later – on October 25 – a letter to von Baden was sent by the Board of the Latvian National Council (the first signatory of the document is Voldemārs Zāmuels, who in the opinion of the well-known social democrat Fēlikss Cielēns “looked like a smart, reserved professor”⁶). The German Chancellor was informed that the LPNC and the Democratic Bloc, by inviting representatives of Kurzeme, have combined forces, thereby “turning into” the Latvian National Council.⁷ It would not be undue to add in this regard

that the contents of the said document, however, constitute wishful thinking. The unification of both political centers did not actually happen. The leading politicians of Latvia decided to form, on a broader base, a new provisional parliament – the Latvian National Council, which was formed of representatives of political parties. In the first session, it elected Kārlis Ulmanis to the post of the first Prime Minister of Latvia, and he was entrusted with the formation of the Provisional Government. It was difficult to imagine that any other politician could have assumed this post. Nobody else had the admirable energy and perseverance of Ulmanis. There was no one, who doubted his entitlement to become the first head of government of Latvia. The mind of Ulmanis at that time was fully overtaken by the aspiration towards an independent state, which over the course of time turned out to be the decisive factor.

The first country to recognize the Provisional Government of Kārlis Ulmanis was Germany. Without delay, Germany decided in favor of establishing relations with Latvia. At the government session, chaired by the well-known German Social Democrat, later the President of Germany Friedrich Ebert, which took place only a few days after the proclamation of the State of Latvia, it was decided to recognize the government of Ulmanis as the provisional supreme power “in the ethnographic territory of Latvians” and the National Council as its “governing institution.”⁸ On November 25, Ulmanis received from the German Plenipotentiary to the Baltic lands August Winnig the following statement: “I am honored to inform Mr. President that the German Government agrees to provisionally recognize the Latvian National Council as a permanent power and the Provisional Government as its executive commission until such time when the Peace Conference decides on the future of Latvia pursuant to the right of people to self-determination.”⁹

On November 26, 1918, Winnig issued a statement to the Provisional Government, which perceived and defined it as a statement of recognition of Latvia. This document contained two important messages. Winnig pointed out that the Provisional Government is exercising the supreme power within the ethnographic territory of Latvia. He also proclaimed that the German civil administration was handing over the administration of land to the Latvian Provisional Government pursuant to an agreement that was yet to be reached.¹⁰ The Latvian historian Edgars Dunsdorfs put forth a rather unconvincing claim, namely, that “the recognition by Germany had a covert intention to engage Latvia in the sphere of influence of Germany.”¹¹ This step of Germany should rather be considered as a logical consequence of its new eastern policy.

At this time, the domestic policy positions of the Latvian Provisional Government were very unsteady and under threat. On January 3, 1919, the Bolshevik forces entered Riga and, as they advanced, they quickly occupied nearly the entire territory of Latvia. The Provisional Government retained control only of the regions of Liepāja, Grobiņa and Aizpute. Latvia found itself under the rule of the government of Pēteris Stučka, who formally represented the independent Socialist Republic of Latvia. This state, which was proclaimed in December of 1918 was intended as a tactical maneuver for the part of the Soviet Russia in response to the Latvian national liberation movement, which had resulted in the foundation of a national state.

In the fight against Bolsheviks, which were active in Liepāja, Germany, who was concerned about the offensive of the Red Army in the vicinity of the Eastern Prussia frontier, gave important, but – at the same time – dangerous help. The 1st Guard Division was moved from the area of Berlin to Kurzeme. The command over Baltic Landwehr (this military formation was created on November 11, 1918 as the envisaged, but never established Home Guard of the Baltic state, where the determinant positions were granted to local Baltic Germans), within which the Latvian battalion fought under the leadership of Oskars Kalpaks, was assumed by experienced officers with unfriendly inclinations towards Latvians. In February, the “political general” Rüdiger von der Goltz, who had previously helped the independent Finnish government to defeat the Bolsheviks, thereby earning undivided praise and the honor of a national hero of the Finnish people, was appointed the commander of the German armed forces in Kurzeme and Northern Lithuania, as well as the governor of Liepāja. He managed to swiftly stabilize the situation and start a successful attack in Kurzeme.

The “issue of Latvia” at the Paris Peace Conference

The developments and predominant trends in the international arena, which could determine the fate of the Latvian state, also imparted certain hopes. Namely, in January 1919, the Peace Conference convened in Paris; it was expected to end World War I *de iure*, namely, to enter into peace treaties and define the new international order in Europe. The key “architects of peace” and decision-makers were “The Big Four,” later “The Big Three”: the US President Woodrow Wilson, the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and the French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau. All these politicians were exceptionally outstanding individuals.

Latvia as a new country having gained provisional, though not irrevocable or comprehensive, international recognition could not directly participate in the work of the Paris Peace Conference. However, in January 1919, a delegation of the National Council, which was initially led by its chair Jānis Čakste until May 21, but then, until July, it was led by the Foreign Minister Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics, headed to Paris, which at that time had become the center of political life of the world. It was none other than Meierovics, who was considered by his peers as the true soul of the Latvian delegations. Fēlikss Cielēns, who arrived in Paris on April 12, spoke very highly of the Latvian Foreign Minister: “The main man at work was Zigfrīds Meierovics, who quickly grasped everything and swiftly sorted it out. He was our central figure in the diplomatic representation. There, he combined good sense of tact and fine posture with bravado-like courage... The first Foreign Minister of Latvia gave wings to the delegation in its hard work.”¹²

The main task that the delegation of Latvia had set for itself was to achieve the recognition of sovereignty of Latvia, as well as to ensure food supplies, loans and military aid in the fight against the Bolsheviks. The main forms of activities of the delegates included meetings and keeping in touch with the conference leaders and representatives of member states, as well as lodging submissions to the conference commissions. Throughout the period of activity (January 23 – December 15, 1919), the delegation of Latvia submitted 34 various well-founded applications to the governments of Entente members and the Peace Conference.¹³

The delegates of Latvia, who took every opportunity in Paris to promote the matter of recognition of Latvia, did not manage to achieve the satisfaction of their main request and the set outcomes were not achieved. In June 28, 1919, the Peace Treaty with Germany signed in Versailles contained conditions for the Baltic countries and indirect guarantees for their independence. Thus, Article 116 of the Treaty provided that Germany promises to respect independence of their territories, which up until August 1914 formed a part of the Russian Empire. Article 292 provided for Berlin withdrawing from all agreements entered into with Russia or its former constituents, but pursuant to Article 433, Germany undertook commitments to keep the troops in the Baltic countries, while not interfering with the work of provisional governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the sphere of state defence, as well as to pull the troops back upon a request of the Entente powers.¹⁴ In the view of a number of Latvian diplomats, all countries, which signed the Versailles Peace Treaty,

recognized the Baltic countries as *de facto* existing countries. This fact was of utmost importance, as the Versailles Peace Treaty was signed by 32 countries, while only the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan and Haiti had recognized *de facto* the government of Latvia with official documents.

Certain progress towards the recognition of independence of Latvia occurred in the second half of 1919. On July 21, Latvia and Lithuania entered into an agreement on the arrangement of loans, defining borders, among other matters, which meant mutual *de facto* recognition. In the fall, several countries recognized Latvia *de facto* with formal written statements. In this instance, it was Finland, Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine.¹⁵ In the view of some Latvian diplomats, the memorandum of Lithuania (of October 23, 1919) in essence contained *de iure* recognition of Latvia. This, however, can still be disputed, as the wording was rather vague: “The government of Lithuania recognizes “the independence of a free Republic of Latvia and the Provisional Government, which holds the supreme power in Latvia.”¹⁶

When reviewing the achievements made in the struggle for international recognition of Latvia, the Foreign Minister Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics at the National Council session of October 6, 1919, was rather optimistically disposed. He pointed out: “The first stage in the interests of Latvia was that its status had to be made international. This has been achieved by the fact that Latvia is considered a country existing *de facto*... The second stage will be the one which ends with *de iure* recognition of the State of Latvia.” In the opinion of the Foreign Minister, there was only one path to reaching that goal – to strengthen the country in terms of domestic and foreign policy alike, “also by consolidating its good relations with favorably inclined neighbors to the north and south.”¹⁷

In the matter of recognizing independence, Latvia’s success at this time was objectively hampered by the very complicated and unclear situation in domestic politics. In the spring of 1919, Latvia had three governments: the government led by Kārlis Ulmanis and supported by the allied powers, in particular the British; the government of Andrievs Niedra supported by Germany and the local Baltic Germans; and the government of Pēteris Stučka, supported by the Soviet Russia. Each of these governments was supported by some military formations. The government of Ulmanis retained the loyalty of the Latvian armed forces, the government of Niedra was supported by the forces of Baltic Germans and Germany, whereas the government of Stučka was backed by the Red Army. Up until the invasion of Riga, carried out by the German forces on May 22, 1919, the armed forces loyal to Ulmanis and to Niedra worked

together against the Bolsheviks. However, the situation changed after this event. The Estonian and the Latvian forces, which had been formed in Estonia and who were proponents of Ulmanis, but did not recognize the government of Niedra, were advancing from Estonia towards the north of Latvia, which was abandoned by the army of the government of Stučka due to the impending siege. The Germans, who wanted to increase their influence in Latvia were eager to prevent that these units take over, a relatively substantial part of the territory of Latvia, because that would strengthen the positions of Ulmanis and their supporters. This is why the army loyal to the government of Niedra moved towards Cēsis to occupy Vidzeme. The decisive armed conflict on June 19–23 near Cēsis (the Battle of Cēsis) ended with the defeat of the Germans. The government of Niedra were forced to retreat from the political stage.

Declaration of war to Germany

After the Battle of Cēsis, on July 3, 1919, the Latvians and Estonians, on the one part, and the Germans, on the other part, signed the Ceasefire of Strazdumuiža, which put forth the condition that the German army leaves the territory of Latvia. Later, from time to time, the Entente states reiterated this condition. Out of German officials, it was the Foreign Minister Hermann Müller who was most adamant about meeting this condition – he was a leading German politician, who in the 1920s assumed the post of the Chancellor twice. However, his influence was not strong enough. Berlin was not in a hurry to pull out the troops. Quite the contrary – von der Goltz continued to receive reinforcements from Germany. In addition, Russian army units, which were formed in Russian war prisoner camps in Germany, were dispatched to Kurzeme. The allies (the Entente) had planned to use them in military operations against the Soviet Russia. Since this Russian army in Kurzeme was maintained by Germans, politically, it depended on Germany. The German troops were not favorably disposed towards Latvia. Many of them felt tricked. On August 25, 1919, the delegates put forward by the German soldiers made a statement, which included an unreasonable request, namely, that the Provisional Government of Kārlis Ulmanis delivers on its promise given on December 29, 1918 and grants the German soldiers Latvian citizenship with rights to land acquisition.¹⁸

In August and September 1919, in order to avoid having to leave Kurzeme, the German troops joined the army led by Pavel Bermondht – to the so-called Western Russian Volunteer Army. Initially, the Entente states did not particularly

object to it, because Bermondts declared that his units will engage in the fight against Bolsheviks in Russia. On August 14, he announced to the commander of the White Army Admiral Alexander Kolchak that he would be advancing his troops in the direction of Daugavpils–Velikiye Luki–Vyshny Volochyok–Vologda to interrupt the movement between Petrograd and Moscow.¹⁹ If this intention of Bermondts was realized, it would mean that he would occupy nearly or wholly the entire territory of Latvia. The government of Kārlis Ulmanis considered this possibility a very dangerous one and wanted to prevent it.

Pavel Bermondts linked his immediate plans with the take-over of the Baltics. At the meeting of army officers of the Western Russian Volunteer Army on October 1 in Jelgava, it was decided to attack Riga, topple the governments of Latvia and Estonia, and turn both of these countries into provinces of Russia with limited autonomy and without the authority to keep their own armies, as well as to fully reinstate all privileges of the German landed gentry. Two days later, when Bermondts assumed command over the entire army present in Kurzeme, he promised to provide the German soldiers with Russian citizenship and the possibility of acquiring land.²⁰

The cooperation between Germans and Russians proved very dangerous to the independence of Latvia. On October 8, the Bermontian army started the attack on Riga, which was cut short by the Latvian forces in Pārdaugava. The main and determinant events took place in November. The army of Latvia, which at that time was rapidly growing, managed to gain the upper hand and defeat Bermondts.

This venture of Bermondts and the subsequent developments triggered major changes in the international situation of Latvia and in its relations with Germany. On November 18, 1919, the Commander-in-Chief of the Latvian Army Jānis Balodis received notification from the Lieutenant-General Matthias Eberhard, informing that Bermondts's army was to be subordinated to the German high command. In response to the inquiry by the Latvian Foreign Minister Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics as to whether the government of Germany approved of this conduct by Eberhard, the Foreign Minister of Germany Hermann Müller replied affirmatively.²¹ Having received this answer, the government of Latvia found that Germany had attacked Latvia and that both countries were now at war. On November 25, Meierovics sent a memorandum to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany, stating that Latvia was terminating diplomatic relations with Germany, "recalling its representatives to the German government" and entrusting "the representation of the interests of

citizens of Latvia to the government of Estonia.”²² However, after this step on the part of Latvia, neither counterpart followed up with military response.

The occurring situation was unusual and even unprecedented in some respects. A small country was challenging a great one, which had helped the former in the struggle against Bolsheviks. Latvia was lucky that Germany did not take the declaration of war seriously. Nevertheless, it left a negative impact on further development of relations between both countries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its diplomats had to invest plenty of effort to normalize the relations and to ensure that diplomatic connections with Germany were restored. The interim agreement on the reinstatement of relations between Latvia and Germany was signed on July 15, 1920. It ended the formal state of war between the countries and envisaged that Germany will recognize Latvia *de iure* after it will be done by the Entente members. Equally important for Latvia was the commitment contained in Article 3 of the agreement, portraying the commitment of both counterparts “not to support and not to allow within their respective territories any attempts aimed at the legitimate government of the other country.”²³

***De iure* recognition of Latvia**

Owing to the thoroughly considered strategy and energetic endeavors of the Foreign Minister of Latvia Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics, in the first part of 1920s, Latvia managed to achieve noteworthy success. Two of the big European countries – Italy and France – recognized Latvia *de facto*, whereas the Soviet Russia agreed to conclude peace and recognize Latvia *de iure*, which was an important pre-requisite for Latvia to be recognized at the same level by the great powers of Entente. On August 11, 1920, the parties signed the politically deeply symbolic Peace Treaty with Russia, which was among the most important treaties entered into by Latvia. Until 1934, that day was commemorated in Latvia. For the part of Latvia, the Treaty was signed by Jānis Vesmanis, Pēteris Berķis, Eduards Kalniņš and Kārlis Pauļuks. For the part of Russia, it was accepted by Adolphe Joffe and Jacob Hanetski.²⁴

The Treaty consisted of 23 articles. Of those, conceptually the most significant was the second article. It stated that “Russia unconditionally recognizes the independence, permanence and sovereignty of the State of Latvia and voluntarily, in perpetuity, give up all sovereign rights pertaining to Russia with regard to the nation and land of Latvia on the grounds of the former

legal system of the state or international treaties, which for the purposes hereof are rendered invalid for the time to come.” The final part of this article was significant, prescribing that Latvia, as it leaves its former affiliation with Russia, has no obligations or commitments towards this country. This implied that Russia will no longer aspire to reinstate its sovereign power within the territory of Latvia. The Treaty defined the borders of both countries, as well as resolved economic matters and matters of other nature.²⁵

Latvia, which, besides Russia, at that time had been recognized *de iure* only by Lithuania and Estonia, planned to achieve this goal by joining the League of Nations – the first trans-national organisation in the history of the world, which was formed at the Paris Peace Conference. The Assembly of the League of Nations discussed the possibility of accepting the Baltic countries and Georgia on December 16, 1920. However, neither of the candidates became a full-fledged member state of the League of Nations. Five countries (Italy, Columbia, Paraguay, Peru and Portugal) voted in favor of Latvia joining, 24 voted against it, but 13 abstained or did not take part in voting. However, Latvia, as well as Lithuania, Estonia and Georgia, were allowed to work with international non-governmental organisations affiliated with the League of Nations, such as the Red Cross. Diplomats in Geneva (this was the Headquarters of the League of Nations) believed that the said countries after this decision were half way between the obtained *de facto* and desirable *de iure* recognition.²⁶

Following the unsuccessful attempt to join the League of Nations, the government of Latvia decided to dispatch the Foreign Minister Zigfrids Anna Meierovics to Italy, France and the United Kingdom, so that he would reiterate the necessity of *de iure* recognition of Latvia. In Italy and France, where Meierovics met with the leading politicians, he managed to gain support for international recognition of Latvia. He was not quite as successful in London, where in early January 1921, he was not assured of that the British will be in favor of recognition of the State of Latvia. The British Foreign Secretary George Curzon was against it, whereas the Prime Minister David Lloyd George was hesitating in his stance towards the matter. He did not want to leave the Baltic countries adrift, but at the same time claimed that Russia needs them to have free access to the Baltic Sea.²⁷

The matter of international recognition of Latvia was decided on positively at the Entente Supreme Council session, which took place on January 26, 1921. The news of the decision reached Riga in the afternoon of January 27, and on the following day, the counterpart of Latvia received the

CONFERENCE INTERNATIONALE

Le Président

PARIS, le 26 Janvier 1921.

Monsieur le Président,

Le Conseil Suprême des Puissances alliées, prenant en considération les demandes présentées à diverses reprises par votre Gouvernement, a décidé, dans sa séance d'aujourd'hui, de reconnaître la Lettonie comme Etat de jure.

Les Puissances tiennent à marquer par là la sympathie qu'elles éprouvent pour le peuple letton et à rendre hommage aux efforts qu'il a accomplis, afin d'organiser dans l'ordre et la paix sa vie nationale.

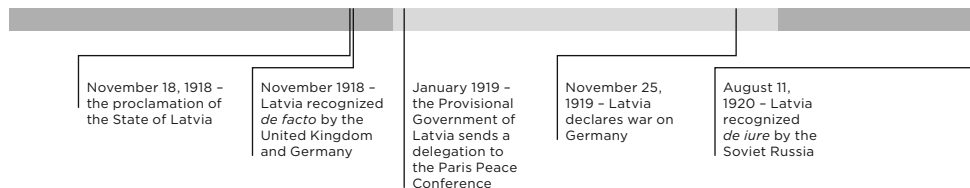
Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Président, les assurances de ma haute considération,

Monsieur le PRÉSIDENT de la
Délégation de LETTONIE,
PARIS.

Note on the *de iure*
recognition of the
State of Latvia signed
by Aristide Briand,
January 26, 1921.

Source: LVVA, 2570. f., 3. apr.,
1148. l., 27.

memorandum of January 26, signed by the chair of the session of the Entente Supreme Council (United Kingdom, France, Italy, Japan and Belgium), the Prime Minister of France and the Foreign Minister Aristide Briand, on *de iure* recognition of Latvia, stating that all five of the aforementioned countries have recognized Latvia without any restrictions or conditions.²⁸ In this regard, during the address at the Constitutional Assembly of Latvia on February 18, Meierovics stated: "We have achieved *de iure* recognition without any conditions, and now we can build our future as a full-fledged country according to our best interests."²⁹



Following the decision of the Entente powers on January 26, which was largely determined by the attempts of these countries to recognize and consolidate the band of independent countries that had emerged on the western frontier of Russia as a guarantee against any expansion of Soviet Russia, general *de iure* recognition of Latvia commenced. First to do so retroactively were the potential allies of Latvia – Finland (January 26, 1921) and Poland (December 31, 1920).³⁰ Germany, too, did not forget its commitment to recognize Latvia *de iure*, after other Entente powers had recognized it. On behalf of the government, the Foreign Minister Walter Simons did just that on February 1, 1921.³¹

In February 1921, seven countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Persia, Austria, Portugal and Romania) followed in the footsteps of Germany and recognized Latvia,³² whereas the Netherlands followed suit in March.³³ Tokyo opted for peculiar tactics. Even though Japan was represented in the Supreme Council of Allied Powers, on March 8, it sent a separate memorandum of recognition.³⁴

The last of great powers to recognize Latvia (and the other Baltic countries) *de iure* was the USA – on July 28, 1922, when the Republican Warren Harding was at the helm in Washington. Recognition was promoted by the pressure from American society and press (prominent American scholars, intellectuals and public figures wrote petitions supporting Latvians, Estonians, and Lithuanians, and activities carried out by Baltic people, in particular Lithuanians, living in the States facilitated the decision). The relevant US declaration, though, contained a minor, but important disclaimer, namely, that the US government had always been against “the severance of territories of Russia.”³⁵ A total of 42 countries recognized Latvia in the Interwar period.

There were no difficulties for Latvia to join the League of Nations. On September 1, 1921, Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics once again lodged a request to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations Eric Drummond asking that Latvia be accepted in the Geneva organisation, at the same time informing that

December 16, 1920 – at the General Assembly of the League of Nations 5 countries (Italy, Columbia, Paraguay, Peru and Portugal) voted in favor of accepting Latvia, 24 voted against, but 13 abstained

January 26, 1921 – the Supreme Council of Allied Powers recognized Latvia *de iure*

February 1, 1921 – Latvia recognized *de iure* by Germany

September 22, 1921 – Latvia accepted to the League of Nations

July 28, 1922 – the USA recognizes Latvia *de iure*

already 22 countries have recognized Latvia and that it had participated in the international Barcelona Transport and Transit Conference. 38 countries voted in favor of accepting Latvia, no country voted against it, but 10 countries either abstained or were absent.³⁶ Now, Latvia was free to function as a recognized, free and independent country, it had gained greater security, because the Covenant of the League of Nations provided for shared guarantees towards political and territorial independence of each member state.

The successful functioning of Latvian diplomacy following World War I ensured and guaranteed the possibility of further existence of the State of Latvia – it had become a country governed by international law. Furthermore, it was internationally recognized at a time, when “democracy was ripe” in Europe, which determined the overall orientation and fundamental values of the foreign policy of Latvia. It entered the international arena as the proponent of the new fixed order (the Versailles System) established in the Paris Peace Treaty and a supporter of principles of collective security and trans-national cooperation. Together with many other countries, Latvia strengthened the potential of democracy in Europe, which was the best guarantee of consolidating peace.

Endnotes

- ¹ The LPNC combined nearly all of the most influential Latvian public organizations and political parties. The founding meeting was attended by the councils of Kurzeme, Vidzeme, and Latgale lands, the Latvian Refugee Provision Central Committee, the Baltic Refugee Provisions Committee, the Latgale Aid Committee for Victims of War, the Riga Society of Agriculture, the National Union of Latvian Soldiers Vidzeme Land Survey Committee, the Latvian Farmers' Union, Latvian National Democratic Party, Radical Democrats and the Democratic Party representatives. Seven of the invited parties, including also the Social Democrats, refused the cooperation and did not engage in the work of LPNC.
- ² Latvian State Historical Archives of the Latvian National Archives (LNA LVVA), 2798. f., 1. apr., 22. l., 88, 89.
- ³ We must distinguish between *de facto* and *de iure* recognition. *De facto* recognition means conditional, incomplete, preliminary recognition, namely, a state or a government is recognized

as a legal fact and normally consular and trade relations, but not comprehensive diplomatic relations are established. *De facto* recognition can be annulled.

⁴ LNA LVVA, 2570. f., 3. apr., 1148. l., 3, 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 6033. f., 1. apr., 35. l., 57.

⁶ Fēlikss Cielēns, *Laikmetu maiņā. Atmiņas un atziņas*, 2. grāmata: *No bezvēstures tautas līdz piltiesīgai nācijai* (Stokholma: Memento, 1998), 148.

⁷ LNA LVVA, 2798. f., 1. apr., 22. l., 39.

⁸ Hans Erich Volkmann, *Das Deutsche Reich und die baltischen Staaten 1918 bis 1920. Von den baltischen Provinzen zu den baltischen Staaten 1918-1920* (Marburg/Lahn: Johann-Gottfried-Herder-Institut, 1977), 38.

⁹ LNA LVVA, 2574. f., 4. apr., 90. l., 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Edgars Dunsdorfs, *Kārļa Ulmaņa dzīve: Ceļinieks. Politīkis. Diktators. Mocekļis* (Rīga: Zinātne, 1992), 103.

¹² Fēlikss Cielēns, *Laikmetu maiņā. Atmiņas un atziņas*, 3. grāmata: *Latvijas neatkarīgās demokrātiskās republikas lielais laiks* (Stokholma: Memento, 1998), 39.

¹³ Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture. Ārpolitika*, 1. sēj. (Stokholma: Daugava, 1982), 476.

¹⁴ Juris Vigrabs, *Valsts tapšana un starptautisko attiecību izveidošana. Latvija divdesmit gados* (Rīga: Leta, 1938), 13.

¹⁵ *Dokumenti par Latvijas valsts starptautisko atzīšanu, neatkarības atjaunošanu un diplomātiskajiem sakariem 1918–1998*, sast. Alberts Sarkanis (Rīga: Nordik, 1999), 75.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁷ *Latvijas Tautas padome: Ipuse* (Rīga, 1920), 352.

¹⁸ On December 29, 1918, the Provisional Government of Kārlis Ulmanis signed an agreement with the Plenipotentiary of Germany August Winning, committing to grant the rights of Latvian citizens to the German volunteers in exchange of at least four weeks of fighting against the Bolshevik army. Later on, the German counterpart frequently interpreted this agreement to mean that after the battles with the Bolsheviks were over, the German volunteers would be awarded with land in Latvia.

¹⁹ Elmārs Pelkaus, *Bermontiāde. Latvijas likteņgadi III* (Rīga: Avots, 1988), 18.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

²¹ LNA LVVA, 2574. f., 4. apr., 93, 113.

²² Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (PA AA), R 21810, 30586.

²³ LNA LVVA, 2574. f., 4. apr., 91. l., 6.

²⁴ *Latvijas okupācija un aneksija: 1939–1940: Dokumenti un materiāli*, sast. Ilga Grava-Kreituse, Inesis Feldmanis, Jānis Goldmanis, Aivars Stranga (Rīga: Preses nams, 1995), 36.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 36–49.

²⁶ Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics, “Par ceļojumu Latvijas tiesiskās atzīšanas panākšanai” no Z. A. Meierovics, *Latvijas pirmā ārietu ministra darbībai veltīts rakstu krājums*, sast. Edvarts Virza (Rīga: Z. A. Meierovica piemiņas fonds, 1935), 340.

²⁷ Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture. Ārpolitika*, 1. sēj., 63.

²⁸ LNA LVVA, 2570. f., 3. apr., 1148. l., 27.

²⁹ *Latvijas Satversmes sapulces stenogrammas, 3. burtnīca* (Rīga, 1921), 204.

³⁰ LNA LVVA 2570. f., 3. apr., 1148. l., 31–33.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

³² *Ibid.*, 46–60.

³³ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1307. f., 1. apr., 328. l., 7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2570. f., 3. apr., 1148. l., 156.

³⁶ Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture. Ārpolitika*, 1. sēj., 64.

Neighborly Matters. Resolution of the Borders Issue in the Relations of Latvia with Estonia and Lithuania

VALTERS ŠČERBINSKIS

Often, in academic and popular science discussions, the question of mutual interaction between foreign affairs and domestic policy is raised. There is no doubt that foreign affairs are linked to domestic policy, however the question remains of how closely and of how important is the collaboration with public figures in the making of foreign policy decisions, relatively speaking, with people outside the traditional circles of foreign policy makers.

The resolution of the issue of borders of Latvia in 1919, 1920 and beyond with the neighbors Estonia and Lithuania offers an occasion, which allows us to clearly analyze the activities of foreign policy makers of Latvia in intensive collaboration with the widest variety of state administration bodies and the community. This occasion offers an insight into a dimension of making foreign policy decisions of Latvia that has not been frequently considered. On the other hand, the resolution of this issue is also an important element in the formation of the foreign policy of Latvia, in the discussion of gains, losses and necessary compromises. Without the agreement on borders, a successful, positive, long-term cooperation with the neighbors would not have been possible. The Provisional Government and the National Council of Latvia considered both Estonia and Lithuania to be the closest allies in contributing to regional security and guaranteeing sovereignty. Therefore, the resolution of the border matter in a mutually beneficial way was considered principally one of the key matters in the early stages of formation of the state.

Relations with the Baltic neighbors and the matter of borders

Even though the activities of the governments of Latvia and the other Baltic countries, seemingly, already since late 1918 were fully harmonized, it was

only in the spring of 1919, when the relations were made official. In a telegram of April 16, 1919, the leader of the Provisional Government Kārlis Ulmanis wrote to the Foreign Minister Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics that “we are ready to recognize Estonia and accept their representative, and ask the same of them.”¹ Mutual recognition of national sovereignty transpired quickly and easily, however it was merely a half of a step towards forming bilateral relations and achieving international recognition.

Latvia and Estonia considered each other to be close allies and equal partners, however the circumstances differed greatly between both countries in the first part of 1919. The status of the Provisional Government of Latvia was under threat and uncertain, as the Provisional Government, unlike the Estonian Provisional Government, was not in control of the state’s territory, and the armed forces at its disposal in early 1919 were negligible. Therefore, it was essential to achieve successful collaboration primarily in this sphere. And, an additional incentive for a close cooperation – in the views of Latvian politicians already at that time – was the fact that national sovereignty and stability of internal policy were crucial not only for Latvians, but nearly to the same extent also for Estonians.

The first attempt to resolve relations between the countries with the help of an agreement was made on February 18, 1919 with the agreement that the representative of the Latvian Provisional Government Jānis Ramanis and Captain Jorģis Zemitāns concluded with the Estonian government, whereby the Estonians allowed to form Latvian army units (mobilize new recruits, train them, set up provisions, etc.) in the territory of Estonia, thus giving military and material assistance in achieving this aim; however, giving the excuse of strategic needs, the railway line Valka (Valga)–Mõisaküla was kept entirely for the use of the high command of Estonian Armed Forces. The more disputed rural municipalities and the city of Valka (Valga), pursuant to the agreement, fell within the territory of Estonia until “the final demarcation of the border.”² Later on, the Provisional Government of Latvia refused to recognize the said agreement as neither Jānis Ramanis nor Jorģis Zemitāns had the necessary mandate to sign it. At a later point, after having received criticism, Jānis Ramanis explained that Estonians in Valka (Valga) and the surrounding area “acted as if on their own land,” irrespective of whether or not the agreement was signed; furthermore, along with the signing of the agreement, Latvians were given the opportunity “to participate,” to control Estonians’ activities in these regions. Thus, by choosing the lesser of two evils, Jānis Ramanis deemed

his conduct adequate.³ Nevertheless, the said agreement was treated as illegal in Latvia, and it was viewed as one of the subsequent Estonian territorial gains – which, in the opinion of Riga, were unfounded – at the expense of Latvia. It must be added that today it is difficult to give an unequivocal answer regarding the mandate of Jānis Ramanis – officially, being “a representative of the Provisional Government,” he carried out consular and diplomatic duties alike. Even though later, in some documents, his consular functions are emphasized, undoubtedly, he essentially could and did carry out other tasks, too. Jānis Zemītāns, in turn, on February 2, was appointed the proxy of the Latvian Armed Forces in Northern Latvia and Estonia.⁴

After the Battle of Cēsis, a new and, on this occasion, legitimate agreement was entered into on July 21, 1919, approved by the Provisional Government and signed by the Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis and by Konstantin Päts; the agreement defined the demarcation line, which was held by the Estonian Army, elaborated in detail the subordination of the Estonian Armed Forces and its capacity to act within the territory of Latvia. Of great importance were also the clauses, which determined that all costs – material and military alike – would be borne by Latvia. This agreement served as the grounds for legally keeping the Estonian forces in the country. To resolve matters concerning the disputed territory, where the Estonian army was stationed, to the north of the demarcation line, a special trans-national commission was formed.⁵ Within several weeks, following long discussions, which mainly dealt with the matter of railway sections being under the control of either Estonian or Latvian authorities, the Commission prepared the next draft agreement.

On August 16, an interim agreement was signed on the arrangements of relations and transport between the part of Northern Latvia defined in the agreement of July 21 and the rest of Latvia and the border between both countries. The said document once again touched upon the possible conduct of the Estonian Armed Forces and cooperation with the local civilian authorities.⁶ The border issues, however, still remained unresolved. The additional clause of Estonia in the final version prescribed that the border between both countries, until further resolution of the matter, shall run along the line established in the agreement of February 18, by also including the southern borders of the rural municipalities of Ainaži, Ipiķi, Ērgeme, Omuļi, Lugaži and Veclaicene in the territory of Estonia. The Latvian section of the Commission, however, emphasized in the addenda that it recognized the line established pursuant to the parameters of 1917 and the line, which existed

before the invasion of Germans and Bolsheviks and which is situated further to the north, as the temporary border.

Besides cooperating at the supreme level, in 1919, it was also essential to establish harmonious cooperation between the civilian authorities of Latvia and the Estonian Armed Forces command in the Northern Latvia. In practice, the circumstances considerably differed from what was prescribed in the agreements. Many complaints were received from the local residents and civilian authorities about the conduct of Estonian troops, pointing to arbitrariness of the servicemen. Worth noting was the complaint of November 1919 by the farmers of Vecgulgbene to the Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis: the local residents were complaining of the terrors of the Estonian troops – illegal requisitions, beatings–up.⁷

It was only beginning from the summer of 1919 that we can start speaking of a normalization of intercountry relations with Estonia in Northern Latvia. “After a longer time, it is pleasant to remark that we are finally seeing the beginning of matters being sorted out. The work here in the north together with foreign people, with which it is rather difficult to find common grounds, is quite hard. Irrespective of many protests, the Estonian troops still refuse to understand the concept of military plunder; they just grab, what they can get, and take it beyond the borders of Latvia. I, and equally Mr. Gailītis, have ordered to record in protocols when our people’s property is taken beyond our borders. We will be the ones indebted to the Estonians, at last we will be able to settle accounts with them. I am certain that if we were in their place, we would not be acting this way. In the government circles, the removal of our people’s property is gravely decried, but the army keeps carrying on. Seeing as the Estonians and we ourselves have an important task to perform together, we must try to find common grounds, and, I am certain, afterwards, the less important matters can be resolved only on good terms,” so reported the representative of the Provisional Government of Latvia in Estonia Jānis Ramanis to the Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis on June 29, 1919.⁸

The early stages of relations between Latvia and Lithuania developed similarly. On the one hand, Latvia and Lithuania were well aware of their interdependence, as well as of the great benefits of close ties and friendly cooperation, thereby strengthening security in the region. On the other hand, however, the individual relations of each country sometimes were at the forefront. The political development of relations between Lithuania and Latvia was largely influenced by the Polish factor. After the Red Army pushed the

Polish army back as far as Warsaw in August 1920, the Polish army should have left Latgale (regions of Daugavpils and Ilūkste), which were liberated from the Bolsheviks. In this particular condition, the Lithuanians saw the opportunity to claim the predominantly Catholic-inhabited territories, by bringing forward claims, which were contrary to the ethnographic principle. In September, the Polish troops embarked on a counter-attack against the Bolsheviks. At that time, events threatening for Lithuania were taking place in the region of Vilnius, where in October 1920, the armed forces of the Polish General Lucjan Żeligowski occupied Vilnius. As a result, it was in the interests of Lithuania to find an ally in Latvia. Possibly, due to this factor, the matter of defining the border between Latvia and Lithuania was comparatively easier than in the case of Estonia. Unlike in the case with Estonia, Latvia had not entered into any such agreements with Lithuania which could have an impact on the border matters.

Border policy and its key features

The process of agreeing on borders did not transpire as smoothly as mutual diplomatic recognition. The delimitation was greatly complicated by three circumstances: first of all, these circumstances were linked to the difficulty of defining and accurately determining the boundaries. In many cases they were relative, vague, and as a result – very difficult to demarcate and could nearly always be disputed. Secondly, the delimitation was affected by the presence of Estonian and Lithuanian armed forces and authorities in the territory of Latvia. And, finally, the volatile geopolitical situation and the influence of external factors (such as the activities of Polish armed forces) defined the tactics of the disputants.

Irrespective of the close cooperation with the northern neighbor Estonia and the southern neighbor Lithuania, already in 1919, it became clear that a bilateral agreement on the border would not be a simple one. To achieve a mutually satisfying resolution of the border matter, in 1920, Latvia with Estonia and with Lithuania created joint border commissions, which were led by unbiased third-country representatives: the head of the British military mission in the Baltics, the Lieutenant-Colonel Stephen Talents in the Estonian border commission, and James Simpson in the case of the Lithuanian border commission. The task of the border commissions led by the two Brits was to demarcate borders accepted by the respective countries. The head of the commission held the decisive vote in cases when

the parties could not reach an agreement. Latvia was represented in the joint commissions by representatives of various levels of state administration, and designated representatives of foreign affairs agencies played a particularly important role. In effect, the organisation of work in border commissions was carried out by the diplomat Jūlijs Feldmans, who was the key official in the communication between the border commissions and the Foreign Minister Zigfrīds Meierovics. Jūlijs Feldmans was also the Lithuanian arbitration member institute. The Foreign Minister, in turn, was in charge of publishing the decisions of the border commissions and furthering them for approval at the National Council, and thereafter, at the Constitutional Assembly. At the same time, other members, too, played an important role in the work of border commissions. At the Estonian border commission, the lawyer and politician Voldemārs Zāmuels performed the duties of a co-chair, and the representatives of Latvia Markus Gailītis, as well as the public figures Jānis Libietis and Jānis Īverts were actively involved, while Arveds Kundziņš performed the functions of a secretary. In the other border commission, the politician and entrepreneur Andrejs Bērziņš was the head of the Latvian counterpart, and Vilis Siliņš, Jēkabs Čikste, Oto Kučelis, Eduards Brikovskis were also participating in the commission discussions – they were various officials without real commitments towards foreign affairs agencies. The composition of the commission changed over time, and the duties of the co-chair were also performed by Juris Bandrevičs. People who had certain experience in administrative matters, but also had at least general knowledge of border circumstances were taking part in the commissions.

Commission sessions were summoned periodically, as materials were collected and analyzed to suggest that a territory belongs to one country or the other. Members of the border commissions not only examined general statistical materials, but, upon analyzing the circumstances, made site visits to the border. The disputed territories were surveyed on site, locals were interviewed, and opinions of various local organisations were heard out. The conventions agreed between Latvia and Estonia and between Latvia and Lithuania granted a broad mandate to the arbitration court. It was clear that the international situation dictated the willingness to resolve this matter as quickly and favorably as possible. Doubtless, the extensive press coverage of the events was another factor contributing to the unyielding position of both parties. The assumptions of the press regarding the demarcation reflected the most demanding requests of society. Rural municipalities, where Latvians

lived or which were at least seemingly linked to Latvians, had to be included in Latvia. The press would not allow the members of the border commissions and the arbitration courts to slacken off.

The problems of precise delimitation of borders at transnational level were most visibly illustrated by the cases of the most disputed cities of Valka (Valga) and Palanga and the town of Aknīste, but the somewhat curious case of the unsuccessful attempt to include the island of Ruhnu in Latvia clearly demonstrated the foreign policy makers' methods.

In the arbitration court discussions and in the border commission sessions alike, the most significant apple of discord was the issue of Valka (Valga). No other Estonian and Latvian or Lithuanian and Latvian border matters were as significant or complicated. Possibly, the decision of the matter in favor of the Estonian counterpart was rendered particularly emotionally painful to Latvians by the fact that in 1917, when public figures (among them also Voldemārs Zāmuels) participated in discussions on the division of the Vidzeme province in the Estonian and Latvian parts, the matter of Valka (Valga) in these discussions was decided in favor of being a part of Latvia. However, this decision had no legal effect. In 1919, when military and political circumstances had substantially changed, disputes resumed.

Similar to some other cases, when a settlement is situated on a border between two ethnic groups, also in the case of Valka (Valga) the ethnic composition of the population (and that was the key feature in defining borders) was very mixed. Unlike rural regions, where even in the frontier area you could find settlements where Estonians and Latvians lived in close proximity, in an urban environment, both ethnicities might live next door to each other in an apartment building. Therefore, the division of the city, based on ethnic principles (also taking into account the fact that the numbers of Latvians and Estonians in Valka (Valga) were similar), was nearly impossible. Thus, when deciding on who should keep Valka (Valga), reasoning was based on economic ties of the city and the region and access roads to it. The deputy chair of the arbitration court Henry Robinson's calculations suggested that 64 % of properties and built-up land lots in Valka (Valga) belonged to Latvians.⁹ At the same time, the significance of these potential Latvian arguments was substantially reduced by the active work carried out by the Estonian administration, as well as by the decision of Estonian central authorities (the Estonian Parliament had hastily adopted the decision on Valka (Valga) pertaining to Estonia, before it was decided by the arbitration court) regarding a positive resolution in the matter of Valka (Valga).

Despite the occasionally antagonistic rhetoric in the press, members of the border commission and members of the arbitration court representing Latvia were considerably more moderate and down to earth in internal communication. In mid-1920s, upon realizing that the ultimate goal (i.e. getting the city of Valka (Valga)) is unlikely to be reached, it was none other than the representative of the foreign affairs authorities Feldmans in communication with the Foreign Minister who signaled of difficulties and outlined the further moves: "Here, we find ourselves in a rather complex situation. The last item [of division of the city: if the city is included in Estonia, then the supply to the surrounding Latvian rural municipalities will be encumbered] is a good bargaining chip to get the whole city. However, we cannot insist on that, because it is more likely that Valka is divided up, and in that case Clause 4 would mean that we would have to give up a larger part of the Kāģeri (Kaagjärve) and Valka (Valga) rural municipalities, which, in turn, is not acceptable at all. Let us try to reach a balance!"¹⁰

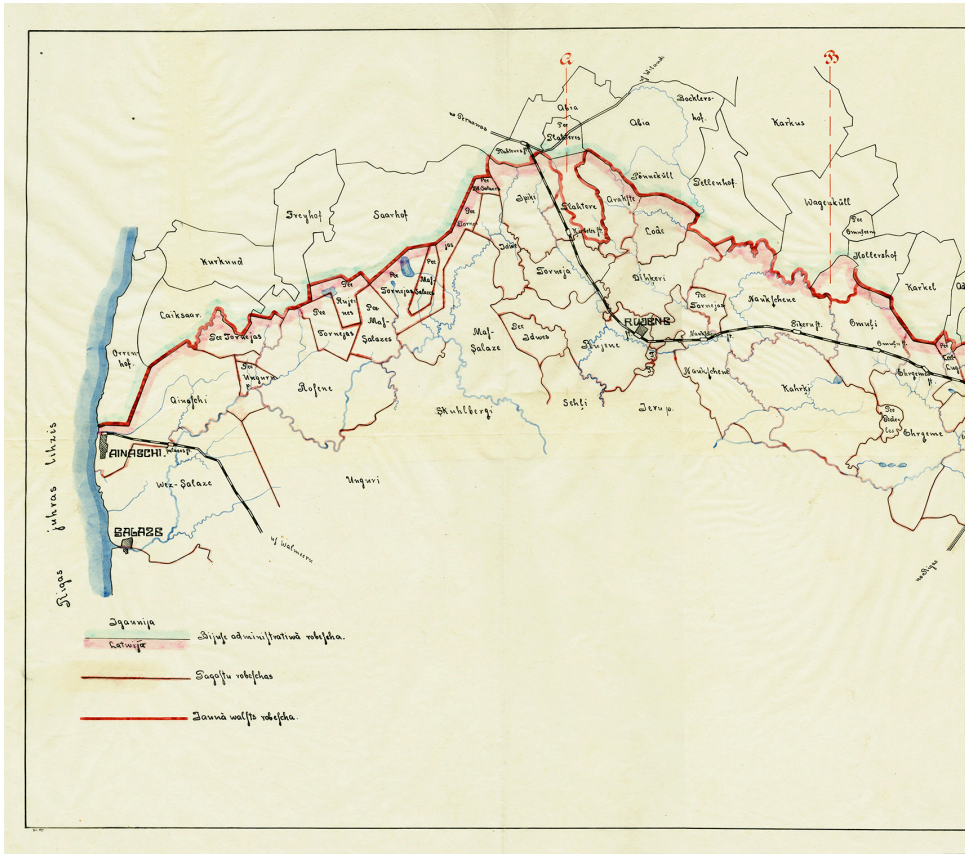
Attempts to achieve balance meant that for Latvia it was more important to ensure close and good neighborly relations with the only ally of Latvia than to get one or another minor settlement or inclusion of a land lot in the territory of Latvia. On June 29, 1920, at the Constitutional Assembly session, Meierovics urged: "Estonia is our neighbor to the north. We want to ensure that our great neighbors to the east and west are friendly to us, but they are so large that we can establish and consolidate this friendship only subject to establishing complete understanding and harmony with our neighbors to the north and south [...] The matter of borders is among the most difficult ones." He stressed that theoretically both countries recognize the principles of self-determination of people and ethnographic features in the border matter, "however, as soon as we started working practically, we saw that our neighbors attribute different meanings to these principles. [...] All the roads that were taken led to Valka."¹¹ It must be added that the Talents' "Solomon decision," by dividing Valka (Valga) into two parts, did not fully satisfy either Latvian or the Estonian society.

In the case of Lithuania, the most significant issues concerned the ownership of Palanga, which, being a part of the former Kurzeme province, originally fell within the territory of Latvia. While Latvians lived in the northern part of the Palanga region, in the city itself and in the bigger part of the region, Latvians were a minority. Even though some politicians and diplomats emphasized the importance of Palanga for Latvia (direct economic relations with Germany, a resort, fishing, the Jewish population of Palanga expressing their will to join Latvia), these considerations did not carry sufficient

weight. While Palanga could be considered a predominantly Lithuanian territory, another region – the region of Aknīste – in Augšzeme definitely was not one. Taking advantage of the fact that the Polish army retreated, the Lithuanian army had occupied territory in the region of Ilūkste and Daugavpils, demanding that this area is added to Lithuania. To resolve the occurring situation, the 12th Bauska Infantry Regiment was dispatched to this territory, forcing the Lithuanian army to withdraw behind the demarcation line.

Similar to the case of the border between Estonia and Latvia, also in the case of Lithuania, even before the arbitration court started work, the border commission surveyed the composition of villages and ethnic affiliation of their population. Taking into consideration the fact that Latvia was interested in retaining Augšzeme (the region of Aknīste), it understood all too well that it is unlikely to keep Palanga, but the issue of Mažeikiai was soon rendered irrelevant (Mažeikiai was a railroad hub, the importance of which became immaterial after the Saldus–Liepāja line was constructed). Thus, the work of the border commission was defined by bargaining: in the sessions of February and March of 1920, the Latvian counterpart offered to hand over Palanga to Lithuania without examination (i.e. without meticulously examining the composition of population), in return having Lithuania give up any claims to the rural municipality of Rucava. Furthermore, Lithuania submitted a statement that, should the government of Latvia deem it possible to hand over the district of Palanga to Lithuania without a plebiscite, then Lithuania “would offer a compromise” regarding the region of Ilūkste. Having considered the potential gains and losses, the government of Latvia gave up Palanga and in return received the territories in Augšzeme. In 1921, when Palanga was later handed over, newspapers reported that on March 31, at 12.00 o'clock, Lithuanians officially took over Palanga, and the local representatives had “enthusiastically congratulated” them.”¹² It must be noted that in the case of Lithuania, Lithuanian activists carried out very intensive work in the frontier zone, striving to convince the local residents not to agree to joining Latvia. Expressive appeals of “the Lithuanian Defence Committee in the North” can be found in the materials of the border commission contained in the Latvian State History Archives, such as “Do you want to see serfdom return? If you do, then join Latvia. ... THERE IS NO BREAD in Latvia, all sorts must be smuggled in from Lithuania...”¹³ Passions were also running high in the press, among politicians and among locals alike.

Possibly, the resolution of the Lithuanian border matter was less painful than the resolution of border issues with Estonia. In the case of Lithuania,



Boundary map. Source: LVVA, 3725. f., 1. apr., 339. l.

it did not concern a regional center of the same importance as that of “Valka” for both nations. Palanga was predominantly Lithuanian, while the region of Aknīste was more Latvian. Both counterparts were well aware of it. Especially, the Lithuanian counterpart, which was very consistently taking every chance to ensure that by reaching a compromise and giving up a territory, it would come out on the winning side. It is clearly demonstrated by the correspondence between the foreign ministers, the contents whereof at times were uncharacteristically harsh for the diplomatic practice. In February 1920, in response to reproaches regarding the tone used in memoranda, Meierovics

LATVIJAS - IGAUNIJAS

ROBEŽSĒHU DĒRĒJA.

Samchro & Wertis zollā.



wrote to the Lithuanian Foreign Minister: "...Further, you complain about the tone used in some memoranda sent to you from the government of Latvia and you remark that this is a tone used towards an inferior. It depends solely on the government of Lithuania to avoid excessively categorical wording, which, due to my utter regret, I was forced to employ. It could be achieved by paying greater attention to our fully legitimate requests, which correspond to the principles of loyalty and complete cordiality which you are so fervently recommending. At this time, I feel compelled to suggest that you rethink these honorable principles and I express expectation that you will endeavor to avoid all that might

introduce changes in the genuine sense of friendship, which our land has always felt towards the Lithuanian people.”¹⁴

Despite the occasionally acrid relations and difficulties in the work of the arbitration court, Latvia was inclined to resolve the border issue. Another reason why Lithuania relatively easily gained the region of Palanga, which was so essential to it, was the fact that Meierovics and Latvian decision-makers were well aware of that a friendly and loyal neighbor is a more significant gain than a small territory or uncertain relations.

As regards the island of Ruhnu, there was neither military nor economic, nor ethnic justification to include this island, which is situated in the Gulf of Riga, in the territory of Latvia. Nobody was publicly voicing the claim “the Estonians have many islands, but we have none,” however it was clear that the reasoning of Riga was weak. The island of Ruhnu is situated relatively close to Riga and the border of Latvia, it was inhabited by Swedish and not by Estonians (the rest of the Baltic Swedish minority lived on the Estonian coast of the region of Haapsalu). As regards the ownership of the island, Tallinn was acting with determination. In the fall of 1922, Estonians set up a commandant post on the island to keep order on the island and to manage the lighthouse.

The matter of ownership of the Ruhnu island was publicly brought forward already at the Paris Peace Conference in May 1919. In discussions with Estonians, the delegation of Latvia stressed that the matter of the island of Ruhnu (and that of Valka (Valga)) cannot be resolved with a plebiscite and therefore, if the Estonians do not step back, then the resolution of the matter shall be entrusted with the Peace Conference or the League of Nations.¹⁵ Later on, even though the matter of the Ruhnu island did not appear at the top of agenda in discussions on borders, it re-emerged from time to time. The representative of Latvia in Tallinn Jānis Seskis wrote in the political review of April 1922 that the Estonian newspapers regard Latvian claims to the Ruhnu island and the Lauri colony as “poorly founded” and “they, the Estonians, struggle to understand them.”¹⁶

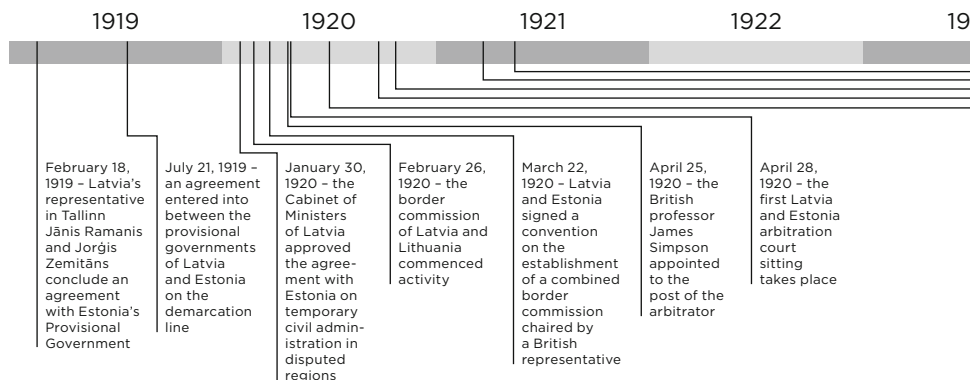
A year later, in the regular political report, Seskis returned to the matter of the Ruhnu island. Giving a summary of Estonian press coverage and their interest in the ownership of the island, he wrote: “The Estonian press and the government, too, have lately paid some attention to the Ruhnu island. The reason, though, seems to have been the trip of Rigans [an excursion of approximately 120 teachers – V. Š.] to the Ruhnu island, which had triggered gossip of plebiscite among the locals, which would finally decide whether

the island pertains to Estonia or to Latvia. This is why the [Estonian – V. Š.] Minister of the Interior visited the Ruhnu island, where he heard out the islanders' wishes. It was promised to the islanders to provide them with firewood and construction materials, as well as to offer them the option of completing the military service right there on the Ruhnu island, by serving in the seashore defence cordon." Further on: "If the island of Ruhnu were to be included in Latvia, then the islanders of Ruhnu would face the same fate as the Livs. The handing over of the Ruhnu island would only leave a bad impression on Sweden, because the Swedish inhabitants of the island would end up with a different citizenship. Perhaps this is why Latvians have raised the issue of the Ruhnu island, in order to thereby eliminate other matters."¹⁷ It was only in November of 1923, when the Cabinet of Ministers decided not to request that the island is included in Latvia, but rather ask for a permission to set up a radio station on it thereby giving up claims to it.

Despite the very extensive involvement of various institutions, it was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that was the central authority, whose was responsible for communicating regarding border matters with the other country. It was none other than the Foreign Minister, who was the official figure representing the progress of deciding on the matter, and it was also the main party in charge of the resolution of border matters. Thus, it can be concluded that, perhaps, Meierovics, in capacity of a key figure in the initiation of various forms of cooperation between the Baltic countries, was the determinant factor in Latvia's generally tactically harsh, but strategically well considered discussions, which also respected the neighbors' interests, regarding border matters.

Some conclusions

Overall, it can be claimed that, even though the border matter of Latvia, in principle, was a foreign policy issue, a very large part of society was involved in its resolution. It would be rather difficult to find a different example of local society getting involved this energetically and actively, when the adopted decisions would affect daily lives to this extent. People living in the frontier area were forced to live in uncertainty and to hope that, by organising meetings, voicing public support, or persuading a neighbor of the other or mixed nationality to support, can achieve that their home and the vicinity is included in the country they felt they belonged to. Bearing in mind the fact that the arbitration court and the border commission carried out extensive



work in rural municipalities and towns, local governments played a crucial role in contributing to the mood of local residents.

Border matters were a problem of complex nature, in the resolution of which a large number of various agencies needed to be involved. Foreign affairs authorities, lawyers with references to the widest variety of laws, economists, whose considerations were of particular importance in discussions regarding Valka (Valga). The military structures were also of crucial importance under circumstances of the Independence War; authorized representatives of military structures, equally to the foreign affairs staff, took part in negotiations of both parties and in the signing of agreements, especially in the case of Estonia. It was the military personnel that offered certain security and order in territories of unclear ownership. Possibly, the greatest role in rural municipalities was played by the police, whose collected data were vastly employed in the work of the border commissions. The police officials not only tried to ensure peace and order, but oftentimes, they were the main mediator between regional authorities and local communities.

Even if in terms of figures we cannot see a very extensive involvement of foreign affairs authorities in the decision of the border matter, it can be explained by the vast involvement of other authorities. At the same time, it was none other than the representative of the foreign affairs department Feldmans who took central stage in discussions concerning diplomatic aspects of foreign policy and it was him, who informed the Foreign Minister of the developments. At the same time, at the decision-making level, it was Meierovics, who played

July 1, 1920 - the chair of the arbitration court Stephen Talents adopted the decision on the division of Valka (Valga)

September 28, 1920 - an agreement entered into between Latvia and Lithuania on the demarcation

October 19, 1920 - an agreement entered into between Latvia and Estonia on the delimitation of borders and demarcation on site, on the optation of citizens of both countries and further fate of real estate divided by the border line

March 20, 1921 - the arbitration court decision announced in the matter of the border between Latvia and Lithuania

May 14, 1921 - a convention entered into between Latvia and Lithuania on the delimitation and demarcation of borders on site, on the rights of frontier area residents and the fate of real estate divided by the border line

March 30, 1927 - the originals of the Latvia-Estonia border descriptions of the single border commission signed

October 15, 1927 - the originals of the Latvia-Lithuania border descriptions of the single border commission signed

the key role (and not the Prime Minister or another senior state official), who furthered the most significant matters and achieved that the decisions are adopted at the level of the parliament and the government. While the ministry official Feldmans carried out the practical work within the commissions, it was the Foreign Minister Meierovics, who at the conceptual level had most responsibility and must be seen as having achieved most results in the resolution of border matters. Lastly, the international dimension was of utter importance in the formation of Latvia's borders with the neighbors Estonia and Lithuania. The arbitration courts and the border commissions were led by third country representatives – the British. Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania alike trusted the British. At the same time, Latvia (and the opponents of Latvia) were forced to settle with the decision of a foreign representative.

It must be noted that the foreign policy situation was also important in the demarcation process. Neither of the Baltic countries could afford to ignore what was happening at the regional level. Lithuanian activities depended on the Polish activities, while Latvia and Estonia wished to gain a serious guarantee for ensuring their sovereignty. Therefore, mutual compromises, which, though a part of society unhappy, in a long-term proved to be acceptable solutions. Discussions on borders illustrate the first major experience of the Latvian foreign affairs authorities in the making of international compromises, bargaining tactics aiming to gain a higher advantage, as well as in the understanding of relativity of the “ethnographic” matter.

The arrangement of the Latvian border matter with the neighbors, from the perspective of today, offers an excellent example of how the newly established country's new administration structures, and primarily the foreign affairs authorities, successfully and in a long term managed to achieve noteworthy results. There are three major lessons to take away from this. Firstly, public relations, cooperation between departments and other tactical matters must be subordinated to strategic goals. Secondly, no matter how prosaically this might seem, sometimes, to reach a higher gain (good, long-term cooperation with the neighbor), something must be sacrificed (Valka). Thirdly, ethnic matters, ethnic background, historic justice in many cases are distinctly relative concepts, and, in resolving particular foreign policy matters, they often serve for the context of interests, but do not provide clear solutions to problems.

Endnotes

- ¹ LNA LVVA, 1313. f., 1. apr., 6. l. 37.
- ² LNA LVVA, 2574. f., 3. apr., 31. l., 81., 82.
- ³ LNA LVVA, 2574. f., 3. apr., 31. l., 84.-86.
- ⁴ He was authorized to organize an army and lead military operations, as well as to be in charge of civil administration at the already overtaken Latvian regions and those yet to be taken over.
- ⁵ LNA LVVA, 2574. f., 3. apr., 31. l., 4-6. An overview of resolution of the border issue is available for more detailed consideration at: Austra Mieriņa, "Latvijas valsts robežas (1918-1940)" no *Latvijas zemju robežas 1000 gadus*, sast. Andris Caune (Rīga: LVIA, 1999), 182-210.
- ⁶ LNA LVVA, 2574. f., 3. apr., 31. l., 34-36.
- ⁷ LNA LVVA, 5969. f., 1. apr., 375. l., 1.
- ⁸ LNA LVVA, 1313. f., 1. apr., 10. l., 71.
- ⁹ J. Feldmans ārlietu ministram, 12.05.1920, LNA LVVA, 1313. f., 2. apr., 149. l., 39.
- ¹⁰ J. Feldmans ārlietu ministram, 06.1920, LNA LVVA, 1313. f., 2. apr., 149. l., 16.
- ¹¹ LNA LVVA, 2574. f., 3. apr., 23. l., 7.
- ¹² *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 1921. gada 2. aprīlis.
- ¹³ LNA LVVA, 1313. f., 2. apr., 211. l., 136.
- ¹⁴ LNA LVVA, 2574. f., 3. apr., 6. l., 99.
- ¹⁵ LNA LVVA, 1313. f., 3. apr., 31. l., 10., 11.
- ¹⁶ LNA LVVA, 2575. f., 11. apr., 11. l., 307. The colony of Lauri was formed of a few hundreds of Latvians living compactly in the region of Petseri. Latvians started migrating to this area in 1860s. During the interwar period, a rather active public life of Latvians developed in this area with the support of Riga, but at the end of World War II, along with the entry of the Red Army, nearly all Latvians left the Lauri colony, but after the war, the area of Petseri, like Abrene, was included in Russia.
- ¹⁷ 10.09.1923, LNA LVVA, 2575. f., 11. apr., 13. l., 110, 111. An account of the excursion is published in *Latvijas Sargs* (August 10, 1923): "...The locals are very hospitable, dressed in traditional clothing, speaking Swedish and German, among them 10 Latvian speakers. The girls, whose numbers are limited (there are now only 20 adult maidens on the island), are all very healthy, bright, and clever-looking, although they hardly read any newspapers or books. The people are virtuous, they do not know theft or keys. They are more favorably inclined towards Latvians than Estonians, and they gladly accept our money."

Economic Negotiations in Moscow in 1932–1933: Negotiators, the Process of Negotiations, Agreements Reached

ILZE FREIBERGA

The role of Russia in the foreign policy of Latvia during the interwar period and economic relations as one of cornerstones of interstate relations

Mutual relations between two or more countries present a multi-faceted and often also rather complex system consisting of a range of different components. Their characterization, just like their formation, can be approached from a number of viewpoints, both by bringing a specific problem or only a single sphere of cooperation to the foreground and by integrating the mutual relations of two countries into a broader system and comparing them with the same type of relations between other countries. In this article, the author will attempt to elucidate the mutual relations between Latvia and the USSR, as well as the process of formation thereof through the prism of economic negotiations, which took place in Moscow in 1932–1933 with the objective of entering into a new trade agreement between the two countries. The article aims to examine and represent the way that economic negotiations were carried out and the roles that were played by the negotiators. An important object of study was particularly the way that these negotiations were carried out, the employed human and tactical resources, the way the delegation was formed and its operations. Since the aim of the article is to elucidate these matters rather than to study in detail and describe the key object of the economic negotiations – the trade agreement entered into between Latvia and the USSR – the main source used in the preparation of this paper is the diary kept during these negotiations by Vilhelms Munters, which offers an insight into the progress of negotiations and the role of participants, as well as the mechanisms used by negotiators.

Why trade? Economic contacts historically have been among the primary grounds, on which relations are built between two countries. Economic advantage allows not only to promote the growth of a country, but also to guarantee a certain level of security (why compromise relations with a trustworthy and beneficial partner?) and to attempt to create a favorable political situation for self not only in relations with the specific partner country, but also within a particular region.

Relations with Russia traditionally and well deservedly have been among the most important affairs when considering Latvia's foreign policy. It is this neighboring country, whose role cannot be denied throughout the history or today. In the 1920s and 1930s, it played a major role in the foreign policy of Latvia; the building of this policy was an essential task in the development of our country and also in the day-to-day political processes, which were governed by a number of factors. Firstly, it was the biggest neighbor of Latvia, and, as is generally known, it is preferable to maintain good relations with neighbors, especially if they are as menacing as the USSR was during that period. This is something that the foreign policy makers of Latvia were aware of, and the guarantee of security of Latvia became one of their main objectives. To achieve this, they tried to maintain a balance in policy between the USSR and Germany, all the while avoiding such agreements or activities that would "tie the hands" of Latvia and would enable great powers to treat Latvia as they please. Good cooperation in the economic sphere is considered one of the ways of how to create and maintain good relations with another country, while retaining the possibility of preventing it from getting too involved in the overall political processes. As regards the building of economic relations with the USSR in particular, it must be remarked that, besides the aforementioned, there were a few other reasons to strive for building relationships as successfully as possible. Firstly, it was the prior experience that had been accumulated while the territory of Latvia was a part of the Russian Empire, which left an imprint on the economic life and the mindset of those creating it. In these circles (or at least in a part of them), the USSR was considered a good market to sell the produced goods, a place to source raw materials, and, furthermore, there was a certain illusion that economically the cooperation with this country can be similar to what it was during the Tsarist Empire.

The Latvia–Soviet Russia peace treaty and the trade agreement of 1927 with the USSR – basics and examples of the economic negotiations of 1932–1933

If we consider the Latvia–USSR relations and their formation more closely, we must start with the mutual peace agreement entered into by both countries, because, only by concluding it, the building of full–fledged relations between both countries could commence, as this not only ended warfare, but, firstly, forced the Soviet Russia to recognize the statehood of Latvia, and, secondly, defined the guidelines and tasks for developing continued relations. This led to the fact that, in the absence of a peace treaty, the trade agreement of 1933 and the negotiations would not have been possible, which is why we will briefly look into it in more detail.

The resolution of relations between Latvia and the Soviet Russia was neither a simple nor a quick task. This peace treaty was a rather unique experience for the diplomats and foreign policy makers of the young Latvia. At the time of concluding the peace treaty, the foundations consolidated, on which subsequent foreign policy of the State of Latvia was built, in which the Soviet Russia (later, the USSR) played a very important role. On January 30, 1920, ceasefire was agreed on between both countries, which meant ceasing military activity, and the so–called security guarantees were given against hostile organisations, propaganda and enemy forces in the territory of the counterpart country. The ceasefire took effect on February 1, and now it was time to sign a peace treaty. This process proved to be complicated, allowing to draw certain parallels with the main topic of this article, namely, the economic negotiations in Moscow 1932–1933. The first similarity, though not deliberately caused, but rather imposed by circumstances, was the difficulties with the delegation, who was tasked with signing the treaty, or rather the change of delegation members during the negotiations. On April 10, 1920, the 34–people large peace treaty delegation led by Aurēlijs Zēbergs left for Moscow. The negotiations commenced on April 16, however they did not transpire as expected, which was why they were interrupted. On July 15, to continue the peace negotiations, the delegation of the Soviet Russia arrived in Riga, and Latvia continued the peace negotiations with a new composition of the delegation. On August 11, 1920, the peace treaty was signed in Riga, and on September 2, the Saeima of Latvia unanimously ratified it. Diplomatic relations between both countries were sorted out by October of 1920.¹ The peace treaty was a noteworthy achievement not only in the foreign policy of Latvia on the whole, but also in the economic policy and economics, as it regulated the

compensation of war losses, re-evacuation of properties and material matters of refugees. Furthermore, it envisaged that soon a trade agreement will be signed between Latvia and the Soviet Russia. Unfortunately, from the economic and financial viewpoint, the peace treaty was not favorable for Latvia.² This, however, was not its only shortcoming – there was a long way ahead to reach the trade agreement. Even though a range of various agreements, including those of economic nature, had been entered into between both countries (a refugee re-evacuation agreement, an agreement on direct passenger and cargo rail traffic, a temporary agreement on mail and telegraph communications, an agreement on the procedure of potation for the citizens of both countries, an agreement on the procedure of potation of citizenship of Latvia, a sanitary convention), the first trade agreement between the two countries was concluded only in 1927, following repeated attempts for the part of the State of Latvia over several years. This agreement was significant because it not only provided the long-awaited regulation in the field of economic relations, but it also formed the bedrock and understanding of what the trade agreements between the two countries potentially following at a later time should be like. The said agreement was signed on June 2, 1927, and it envisaged that each year over 5 years, the USSR will purchase goods from Latvia worth 40 million lats, as well as defined customs duty relief for some goods from the USSR. Likewise, each year, the USSR was to transport through ports and along railroads of Latvia at least 200,000 t of goods.³ The agreement was based on a system of annual goods list and contingencies and envisaged that Latvia is to export to the USSR twice as much as it is to import from it.⁴ Initially, the agreement fostered economic development of Latvia. From 1928 until 1933, the trade of Latvia developed an active balance. In 1929, export to the USSR increased from 1.2 % to 14.6 %.⁵ Nevertheless, the same year, the USSR started to disregard the agreement,⁶ by failing to procure the determined amount of goods.

The progress of economic negotiations of 1932–1933, their participants, objectives, process of negotiating, and tactics employed. Trade agreement concluded as a result of negotiations

On May 5, 1932, the USSR gave a notice of termination of the trade agreement,⁷ thereby rendering it imperative to start economic negotiations in order to reach a new agreement between the two countries. Up until then,

Latvia had been exporting goods to the Soviet country worth more than 120 million lats. This amount was sufficient to want the conclusion of a new trade agreement between both countries.⁸ Moreover, the termination of the agreement encumbered the operations of several industrial companies of Latvia, including such companies as “Fēnikss,” “Imanta,” “Rita,” who lost the possibility to export their products.⁹

Possibly, the eagerness of Latvia to enter into a new trade agreement was linked to the recent economic crisis. Even though the country was on its way to recovery, it needed markets to sell the produced goods. It must be borne in mind that Russia had played an important part in the economy of Latvia, to which many representatives of the economic circles made loud references, particularly urging the government of Latvia to build successful economic relationships between both countries in the early 20th century.

When considering the relations between Latvia and the USSR in early 1932, we must bear in mind that the trade agreement concluded in 1927 was followed by several agreements between both countries (Convention on arbitration in trade and civil law disputes, the Litvinov Protocol), including a non-aggression pact, therefore the relations between both countries can be regarded as relatively good. Hence, it can be considered that the termination of the trade agreement was not only unfavorable for Latvia, but also, to a certain extent, unexpected. In conjunction with the recent economic crisis, the plummeting volumes of industrial orders and the need to promote the export of Latvian goods, in particular agricultural goods, a situation developed, in which the trade agreement was essential for Latvia. Taking into account the aforementioned circumstances and hoping for at least the same level of economic benefits as offered by the agreement of 1927, work commenced on shaping a delegation, whose task was to carry out economic negotiations with an aim to conclude a new trade agreement in Moscow.

The economic negotiations in Moscow in 1932–1933 presented a complicated task for politicians and diplomats; in performing this task, with the objective of entering into a trade agreement (benefiting Latvia inasmuch as possible, of course), not only various skills and techniques were employed, but the guidelines of the leading policy and the skills and beliefs of the foreign policy-makers were demonstrated. It would be difficult to speak of such a multifaceted issue without a specific source base. In this case, the diary of Vilhelms Munters comes in handy. It was written during the economic negotiations. This diary is an interesting source allowing to

8.5.1932

76

Ar: gulis.
Gribu ar manim jēklas, doma, ka
bez maksim nēkas neizpauzēt.
Pretināšs būs šaurāks.
Kāma atbilst Cīemā. Esot divi, nesītas bijis
Jallimā.
Mā jūstotim mani šodā, jō grib apņemt.
Zōt šlaibā apņemē.
9.5.1932

Arīem vī glim. Pat apēlās.
Nāsar vakarā tikrošomā no Rīgas.
Mātar prasās 25,000,000 Ls un 200,000
Mārgāta samē oām.
1/2 m jūā nēvēta mēlāpārēpōmānas, bēl abelām
un lēdām jēlēmimā.
Pēnīmā pēkīmā nēvēka jēlāt 13, bēl tād
pērtimāimā mē 15.
Pēi pēkīmā gēvā blom pēvā. Pēlēmā,
bēl pēkīmā apjēvēkāmā. Tād pēnāji bēlēmā,
kā nākot 1935.
Rimāja 45 minūtes, mēš pēkīmā gēvāim.
Stoms pērtētād pēl apņētānāš pēlētiku
j mēš jēpērtāimā vāzā, un vāzomā j
Māximālā mēlā pēlētōmā bēlēt mēšā tē
dīmā pērtētōmā.
Pēdē gēvā dēvān vēi, kātēpōrēki un pāt asi,
kā kēlētōrēki. Mēlētāja t, 000, 000 rēl.
Pēā vēlēs jēnāim ar Rēgē, Opēlēm un
j, sēlētān pērtētā Mādamē Fārimē;
pēi tādā vāzomā mēlētā Sāmmēlētō
jōzomā komēijā. Tāmpātā bēlēt pērtētā
jōmā; Rēgā pērtā 300, 000 tōm, nēvē 200,

10

Esopērtō	40, 000, 000
Arjēpēmā jēvēlētā 40%	16, 000, 000
Sāmmēlētōmā mēlētā jēpēmā "clearing"	24, 000, 000
	2, 000, 000
	22, 000, 000

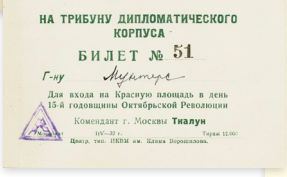
Kērtē mēximimāms -
1/2 m. L. kōmā + 1/2 jōm. kōmā 8, 000, 000
ā 9 mēš
Tāzomā jērtētōmā 14, 000, 000

korrektōmā jō pērtētā 16 m. L. mēlētēt
arjēpēmā
ā jōmā "clearing" nēvēkē.
ā jōmāssar!
ā jōpēmā tēvā 426 mēš



75
Звездающий проповокоальным оидсаоимес чесиб
передать Гму Мунтеру нелу лелити
ска дивичи по спор. переверди
приглашение ПРЕДСЕДАТЕЛЯ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОГО ИСПОЛНИ-
ТЕЛЬНОГО КОМИТЕТА СОЮЗА СОВЕТСКИХ СОЦИАЛИ-
СТИЧЕСКИХ РЕСПУБЛИК на прием по случаю XV годовщины
Пролетарской Революции, ивещения (день 7 ноября в 22 часа
в особняке ЦИК СССР (Спассо-Пусковский пер., 10).
Фирма оидсао-пидак.

76 of
Takarā pēi v. kōmānā ā kērtēpēmā apņēmē
Lai nēvēkōt pāt kōrtēmā sēkēm pēt
Tōrtēmā.
Arjēlētā vērtētōmā mēlētā pērtētāt jēlāt
tō kār jēpēmā mēlētā sēlētā kē
vākt. Lēkā tāzā jēpēmā kērtēpēmā.
Arjēlētā gēvā, kā pērtētāt ā jōmā
vērtētā; bēl, jō vākt bēl arjēlētā pāt
pērtētāt tērtētēmā.
Tōmē bēlētēt vērtētā mē kār kōrtēmā sēkē.



70.5.1932
Jēl dīmā labāk ar vērtētā.
Nō mēš tāzomā pēi pērtētā, kur pērtētā
jērtētā vēi komēijā, pērtētāt pāt sē
mā vērtētā mē vērtētā.
Pēi tādā sērtētā pāt dērtētā komēijā
vērtētā, kur pērtētā kērtē "kōmānā un
kōrtēmā". Arjēlētā vērtētā jērtētā pērtētā.
Tādā vērtētā pāt pērtētā vārtētā vērtētā
Pērtētā.
Takarā jērtētā un bērtētā pēi Tēllēmā
ar Nārtētāmā jērtētā sērtētā bērtētā.
Nēvēs bērtētā vārtētā nēvē.
Māzā pērtētā vērtētā. Nō Rēgā bērtētā,
pāt vārtētā pērtētā vārtētā.
Sērtētā mērtētā pāt sērtētā.
Tērtētā, kā mērtētā jērtētā 5 mērtētā
mērtētā un kā vārtētā bērtētā pērtētā
vārtētā jērtētā vārtētā un vārtētā
vārtētā.
Takarā vārtētā kōrtētā, kārtētā pērtētā
vārtētā jērtētā pāt vārtētā nō Tēllēpōlā.
Kār bērtētā jērtētā, ar vārtētā un vārtētā
pērtētā 157.

Diary of Latvia's Foreign Minister Vilhelms Munters on economic negotiations in Moscow in 1932-1933, Latvia's initial requirements for the treaty, tickets and invitations to events.
Source: LVVA, 2630. f., 1. apr., 4. l., 10, 73-76.

consider this event from several viewpoints. It gives detailed accounts of the delegation meetings, the draft agreement and amendments introduced over the course of negotiations, as well as official and private discussions with the Soviet delegation. It also presents the views of Munters himself of what the agreement should be like and how to achieve that it is signed, detailed scenarios of the planned dialogue, allowing us to have an even closer look at the progress of negotiations and the demands of Latvia; it also enables gaining a certain insight into the issues that the Soviet representatives were focusing on during the negotiations. The diary also offers a look at the activities of the envoy of Latvia to the USSR Alfrēds Bilmanis with regard to the agreement and his stance towards relations between the two countries. Furthermore, it outlines the plans of the government of Latvia and its activities during the drafting process. This partially official and official account of activities and events is intertwined with the experiences of the delegation itself in Moscow, the interpersonal relations between its members, leisure activities and entertainment during the official trip. Likewise, it offers descriptions of the USSR, with which Munters gives a detailed account of the people he has met and their living conditions, the streets of Moscow, theatres, factories and other places that he visited either privately or in organised tours. An interesting addition to the diary – the invitations to various events and letters received during the period of work of the delegation.¹⁰

Economic negotiators – formation and composition of the delegation

The economic negotiations in Moscow did not start straightaway – preparatory works were still needed, and one of the key tasks was to form a delegation for the drafting and signing of the agreement, which was not an easy endeavor at all. Initially, it was proposed to form the same composition of delegation as was in the 1927 negotiations with the USSR; however, later a decision was made to form a small delegation of professionals led by Ansis Petrevics. The former minister for finance of Latvia, who in 1932 did not hold any political posts, but rather worked in the field of advocacy, was not the first candidate to this post (originally, Hugo Dzelzītis and Gustavs Zemgals were put forth as potential leaders),¹¹ and, as we will see later on, he was not the only leader of the Latvian delegation during these economic negotiations either.

After Ansis Petrevics was appointed the leader of the delegation, work continued on the formation of the delegation itself. It was appointed by the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia on August 30, 1932. The Foreign Minister Kārlis Zariņš and the Committee on Economic Agreements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had a major influence in the formation and functioning of the delegation. The delegation of Latvia already included the aforementioned Ansis Petrevics, the Director of the Central Railway Administration Kārlis Bļodnieks, the Director of the Administrative Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Vilhelms Munters and the Director of the Bank of Latvia Ernests Ozoliņš. The delegation was accompanied by experts, the group of which were not only variable, but at times could be described as political, not as much professional. One of such experts, who deserve this description, was the social democrat, the Deputy Director of the Administration of Statistics Voldemārs Salnājs, about whom Skujenieks said during a delegation meeting that he should arrive in Moscow later, because otherwise the farmers might refuse to delegate Jānis Bokalders. At the same time, during the delegation formation work, it was emphasized multiple times that it must include social democrat representatives, confirming that the social democrat movement in Latvia played a significant role at times, when matters with the USSR were to be decided, as it was believed that the involvement of their representatives due to their left-wing views can have a positive impact on the progress of negotiations. Furthermore, it must be remembered that a part of social democrats had ties to the USSR communists, owing to their former collaboration, and this, too, gave hope of reaching more favorable decisions. This led to the tendency of including representatives from this political movement in the composition of the delegation. In reality, often an effect opposite to what the social democrats had expected was achieved. In any case, this power did not leave a permanent imprint on the trade agreement between Latvia and the USSR, which was signed as a result of the given negotiations.

Apart from the four people strong delegation mentioned before, also technical experts went to Moscow on September 9, 1932: Voldemārs Salnājs, the Vice-Director of the Ministry of Finance Alberts Zalts, the Head of the Industry Department Juris Vagels, the Head of the Shipping Department Kārlis Meinerts, the Director of the Ministry of Transport Roberts Garselis, the agronomist Bruno Plaudis, parliamentarians Jons Hāns and Verners Vestermanis, as well as manufacturers' and Riga Stock Exchange Committee's representatives.¹² These were the experts, who defined the provisions for the

agreement to be drafted. It was envisaged that other technical experts will be summoned to Moscow as needed.

As regards the formed Latvian delegation on the whole, it can be claimed that it was rather diverse in terms of the represented professional spheres and of the political affiliation, as it consisted of economists and professionals of various economic sectors, social democrats and those with right-wing inclinations. This caused certain difficulty in its functioning not only because of the differing approaches to the issue of how to achieve the utmost benefit for the Latvian counterpart in the agreement, but also because the interpersonal relations between the delegation members were not always at their best, which was particularly manifested during the time when the delegation was off duty. The mood was not helped by squabbles between certain delegates and the Envoy of Latvia to the USSR Alfrēds Bīlmanis. This article does not strive to analyze the moral stance, leisure activities or entertainment choices of the delegates of Latvia during the Moscow period, which, nevertheless, left an impact on the working abilities of delegation members. Suffice to say that today not only investigatory journalism, but also boulevard press would have plenty of material to ensure sold-out issues, if a country's delegation during a work mission were to engage in the same lifestyle activities. Vilhelms Munters in his diary entry of November 11, 1932 draws a conclusion that "the delegation has degenerated. The old Bļodnieks cannot take it any more – there is no chair, no mandate, no clarity. The living conditions are becoming unbearable."¹³ However, it must be borne in mind that it was not these human aspects that dictated the fact that the entering into the agreement dragged on for so long and that the agreement itself underwent major metamorphoses. The USSR was the one to blame, along with its real intentions, for the achievement of which it was willing to conclude a trade agreement in the first place. The uncertainty for the part of the Soviets and the long duration of negotiations, which not everybody could handle, were also detrimental, as had previously been demonstrated by the Latvian delegation, which concluded the peace treaty, and by changes in its composition during the negotiations. After the unsuccessful conclusion of the first stage of negotiations, the delegation meetings convened in Riga, with the participation of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, as well as other government members. At one of these meetings, it was decided together with the Prime Minister that only two people should go to Moscow to sign the trade agreement.

If we consider subordination and observing the subordination in the delegation work, it is worth noting that, at times, it is rather difficult to speak of a properly organised structure and activity arising from it, as is well illustrated by the personal conduct of the delegation members during the economic negotiations period in Moscow. As mentioned before, the delegation was appointed by the Cabinet of Ministers, however structures of not only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the Ministries of Finance and Agriculture also contributed. What is more, the Envoy of Latvia to the USSR Alfrēds Bilmanis left a great impact on the work of the delegation; he was not only dissatisfied with the fact that he was left out of decision-making about the composition of the delegation, but also insisted on his presence at the time of ratification of the agreement (the article shall return to the activity of Bilmanis during the economic negotiations further on).

It is peculiar that the delegation had only a leader, but the leader's deputy was only designated after Ansis Petrevics returned to Riga. It was Ernests Ozoliņš who assumed this post. However, as we will see further on, the delegation members often acted independently of one another.

To a certain extent we can speak of 3 delegations in relation to economic negotiations in Moscow in 1932–1933. The first to note was the delegation led by Ansis Petrevics, which initiated the negotiations. It officially announced its resignation in May 1933, however, in fact, already in late 1932, only two representatives of Latvia were heading to Moscow for negotiations – Vilhelms Munters and Roberts Garselis. In December 1933, however, a new delegation was on its way to Moscow, and it was the one to succeed in signing the agreement. The delegation included previously active participants: Vilhelms Munters, Ernests Ozoliņš and the Head of the Eastern Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Kārlis Freimanis.

Objectives and tasks of economic negotiations,
maneuvering between private and formal negotiations,
ambitions and unclear mandates

As regards the objectives of the formed delegation, initially the goals were set rather high. Latvia had already gained experience with the trade agreement with the USSR, therefore it was eager to achieve an equally valuable agreement as that of 1927. The first draft agreement, which can be found in the diary of Vilhelms Munters, envisaged a turnover of 40 million

lats, an advance of a fixed percentage of the agreement price before it is concluded, the provision that transactions must be entered into forthwith and the Latvian counterpart does not use a foreign currency for settlements. Likewise, the representatives of Latvia insisted that no credits shall be awarded to its Soviet counterpart. Additionally, Latvia was hoping for a sizeable transit volume along its railroads and through its ports, as well as to successfully implement its export policy and procure important goods and raw materials from the USSR. We shall see what was actually achieved along with the signing of the agreement.

The delegation of Latvia in Moscow in 1932–1933 were facing a daunting task – they had to agree with the USSR on a new trade agreement between the two countries and had to achieve that it gets signed. This task was not a simple one, therefore the negotiations and the delegation activities as such can be divided up in smaller parts. The delegation of Latvia planned to establish separate committees – for the exchange of goods and for transport–transit – thus structuring its activity. Later on, a team in charge of revising the agreement was formed, and it included Vilhelms Munters and Verners Vestermanis. Overall, we can look at two forms of delegation work – delegation meetings and private negotiations between specific delegation members and Soviet representatives. The latter were certainly more favorable to the Soviets, as they allowed more prevalent use of personal views of individual delegates and enabled influence over other persons in a self–benefiting way, thereby interfering with adequate functioning of the delegation. As a result, no meetings took place in Moscow for a longer period, therefore private responsibility for the progress of negotiations was to be borne by each of the representatives; moreover, it was not possible to inform Latvia of the progress of negotiations, and this encumbered further progress.

As mentioned before, sessions often did not take place due to personal and human circumstances (for example, on October 19, 1932, Vilhelms Munters wrote that a meeting is not happening, because “we are having drinks and playing bridge”¹⁴), however, overall, the source used in preparing this article gives a sufficiently well–based idea of that these circumstances did not particularly affect the duration of negotiations or the signed agreement itself.

With respect to the tasks and activity of the Latvian delegation, it must be pointed out that its main task was the elaboration of the substantive part of the agreement. This means that it was authorized to agree on the trade

turnover envisaged in the agreement between Latvia and the USSR, as well as on the transit volumes. However, all decisions should be finalized by the governments. The delegation mandate was not exceptionally extensive, and its work was also encumbered by the fact that the government of Latvia was not always clear in instructions regarding the action it expects. Overall, relations between the delegation and the government of Latvia could not be regarded as particularly positive. Even before the work started, Vilhelms Munters received a message that there are complaints regarding the funding requested by the delegation – about 10,000 lats (this sum included the delegates' remuneration, travel costs and backup funds for unexpected expenses). Still in October Vilhelms Munters wrote that there are no clear instructions from Riga regarding the negotiating process; the only clear instruction was not to mix trade talks with politics. The Cabinet of Ministers at that time was not ready to give written declarations. The main task of the delegation was the substantive foundations of the agreement; after completing that, Riga would be ready to carry on. Indisputably, it encumbered the work of the delegation and to a certain extent even “tied its hands” in negotiating with the adroit and demanding representatives of the Soviet counterpart. Vilhelms Munters also tried to find the best tactics of furthering the negotiations, and deemed it best to ask, insofar as possible, that the other party gives explanations, instead of asking explanations from own people, and to pretend that the delegation is not aware of the previous history of mutual relations. Under such circumstances, the delegates had to show initiative and assume ever higher personal responsibility. Thus, for instance, when on November 5, Jānis Zariņš pointed out that Riga believes that the delegation should be recalled from Moscow, Vilhelms Munters decided to offer 25 million to protect contingencies and reduce the customs tariffs. However, irrespective of any attempts, no agreement was reached in 1932, and the delegation was forced to go back to Latvia without having achieved their objective.

A major role in the economic negotiations was played particularly by the private talks between individual Latvian delegation members and representatives of the Soviet counterpart; during these talks, several important matters were also resolved. Usually, these types of talks involved Ansis Petrevics, Vilhelms Munters or Ernests Ozoliņš for the part of Latvia, and Boris Stomonyakov (the leader of the USSR delegation for economic negotiations) or Karakhanov for the part of the Soviets. Worth noting is the

case of Alfrēds Bīlmanis, who frequently, to the disapproval of the delegation, engaged in private talks with the Soviet representatives (delegation members, in particular Vilhelms Munters, believed that these private talks, which also cover political matters, delay the progress of economic negotiations) and convened with the USSR People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Maxim Litvinov. Alfrēds Bīlmanis made timely arrangements to visit M. Litvinov and initially received a refusal based on a false excuse, namely, that the latter was away on an official trip. During the conversation, Maxim Litvinov maintained that the USSR government wants the agreement, but that he personally is not well-informed on the matter. The resolution of the situation planned by Alfrēds Bīlmanis at his discretion was proven infeasible. However, he continued engaging in private talks, during which the Soviet counterpart attempted to influence Alfrēds Bīlmanis to achieve that he helps reach its political objectives within the framework of the trade talks. It cannot be claimed that nothing was done during such talks with regard to the conclusion of the agreement, because, for instance, Ansis Petrevis agreed with Boris Stomonyakov on the formation of a trade-political commission. It can be concluded that some diplomats were trying to reach an agreement, by using personal initiative. This, of course, unveils the lack of adequate communication between the government, diplomats and other members of the economic delegation of Latvia, but also demonstrates how major was the role of individuals in the formation of the foreign policy of Latvia.

Economic gains at the price of political matters – various negotiating tactics of the Latvian and the Soviet delegations

Undeniably, during the economic negotiations of 1932–1933, not only the economic interests of Latvia can be well observed, but also the tactics of both countries in the formation of mutual relations, along with political objectives and attempts in achieving them. One of the ways to resolve these matters is to involve high ranking individuals in the process. It is well demonstrated by the aforementioned regular visits of Alfrēds Bīlmanis with Boris Stomonyakov and other high ranking Soviet officials, which generated a rather opposite effect to what had been expected. This shows the importance of personalities and the desire “to sort out matters” in one's own, personal way, as well as the position of the other country towards the other counterpart via its

representatives. After all, it was not easy for Alfrēds Bilmanis to get a meeting with Maxim Litvinov, which suggests that in a way the Soviet counterpart, perhaps, wanted to show Latvia, which one is the more important one of both potential parties to the agreement.

The economic negotiations of 1932–1933 in Moscow is a good example of “cat and mouse” games, played by both delegations to achieve the most favorable outcome for the respective party – an utmost advantageous trade agreement for Latvia to achieve national goals, and in the case of the USSR, to reach political objectives. Clearly, the Soviet Union in the economic negotiations first saw the opportunity to resolve political matters in a way that benefits it (in principle, all Latvia–USSR economic agreements during the interwar period were based on this desire, however a more detailed analysis is not the purpose of this article). One of the ways to further a more favorable situation is to create an impression in the other party that it is dispensing more generosity towards the other. As a confirmation for this, Vilhelms Munters has mentioned in his diary how it was emphasized to the Soviet counterpart that the delegation of Latvia arrived in Moscow later than planned on purpose, thus giving more time and allowing the USSR to make a governmental decision. Obviously, the Soviets did not find it sufficient. It insisted that political matters should be resolved first, and then a good trade agreement can be signed. It can be suggested that in October the Latvian counterpart joined the game – the government pointed out to the delegation that the substantive part of the agreement, which will offer a political decision, must be resolved. However, all of that did not generate the expected result, as the USSR continued insisting on its own interests and deemed the Latvian trade agreement demands impracticable. Then, in the second stage of negotiations, Vilhelms Munters submitted his draft agreement, which corresponded more to the Soviet requests. Following multiple talks, during which the USSR stubbornly tried to achieve that Latvia makes political moves favoring the former in matters of the white guards and the newspaper *Сегодня*, also his draft agreement was rejected. Vilhelms Munters, for his part, rejected the Soviet proposals, instead of an agreement, to resolve the matter covertly, by using individual arrangements and memoranda, instead of entering into a full–fledged agreement. However, a certain derogation was allowed: for the part of the government of Latvia, a “gentlemen’s agreement” was promised not to wage a hostile campaign against the Soviet Union, if the tonnage provided for in the agreement is not reached. The USSR continued

pressing on political matters even after having been advised on multiple occasions that the delegation has no mandate to resolve those.

During the economic negotiations, the international relations card was also drawn. One of the Soviet arguments and simultaneously weapons was the notion of neighbors: “One of your neighbors would happily agree on the turnover of goods at a ratio of 2:1 favoring the USSR. The Finnish, the Estonians, the Polish offer low tariffs and do not request quantities.”¹⁵ This was a hint to Latvia suggesting it to give in if it wanted to conclude any trade agreement at all. Furthermore, the USSR emphasized that Latvia is a trade partner that is too small for the former to change its existing foreign trade policy. An agreement that is disadvantageous to the Soviets could serve as a precedent for other countries, which would then request the same from the USSR, and this is why it could not agree with the demands of Latvia.

An interesting episode of the economic negotiations worth noting was the conversation between Vilhelms Munters and the British representative regarding the Latvia–USSR trade agreement. The British representative pointed out regarding this agreement: “I only keep my eyes open,” which suggests that nothing can be realistically influenced, all the while insisting that the United Kingdom must envisage a sufficient part of the oil import that Latvia needs.¹⁶ This episode shows the leitmotif of external trade of Latvia (in fact, of the entire foreign policy on the whole), in which the United Kingdom was undeniably considered among the most important partners.

The Latvia–USSR trade agreement concluded as a result of economic negotiations – what was it like?

On December 4, 1933, the new Latvia–USSR agreement was finally signed. The economic negotiations leading up to it took more than a year. The first delegation of Latvia arrived in Moscow already in September 1932. Being unable to reach an agreement with the USSR representatives following a rather intensive work period and not being able to ensure full–fledged cooperation with its own government, the delegation of Latvia returned home, where work continued on the drafting of the agreement. In December, some members returned to Moscow, however the new draft agreement failed, too, therefore, in January 1933, work continued once again in Riga, until an announcement was made to the press that the delegation is resigning. At last, in December, the parties agreed on the agreement. What was it like? The

initial draft trade agreement of Latvia envisaged export worth 25 million rubles (the diary entry of Vilhelms Munters suggests a turnover worth 40 million) and a transit volume amounting to 300 thousand tonnes.¹⁷ On November 4, the USSR counterpart submitted their draft, which envisaged for Latvia export worth only 5 million rubles, but transit amounting to only 150 thousand tonnes. Latvia would have to purchase from the USSR 10 thousand tonnes of sugar, the same amount of wheat and rye, and grant reduced customs tariffs to the USSR.¹⁸ If compared to the original draft prepared by Latvia, the concluded agreement was an absolute loss. The bigger advantage therein was replaced by an equivalent balance, namely, exports and imports to the other country should be the same. Irrespective of the fact that it was referred to as a clearing agreement, the principle was different – the USSR sold those goods, which Latvia needed most, for a currency. Unlike the 1927 agreement, the agricultural products were now the main export goods.

The trade agreement was concluded for a period of only 2 years, which was a very short time. However, its lifetime was longer, because the agreement was extended twice: in 1936 and 1937. The trade agreement was followed by an agreement on transport by rail, which gave Latvia certain hopes for transit.¹⁹ On October 18, 1939, which was almost immediately after the signing of what was known as the framework agreement (which proved the aforementioned readiness of the USSR to enter into economic agreements at a political situation that favors it), “The agreement on trade turnover between the Republic of Latvia and the USSR” was concluded. Formally, the 1933 trade agreement remained in force.²⁰ It cannot be denied that both export and the procurement of raw materials at this time when war had broken out were of utter importance. As we know too well, this agreement was short-lived, because it was interrupted by the occupation of Latvia. At the same time, it can be concluded that the 1933 agreement remained in force for longer than other agreements of economic nature with the Soviet Union during the interwar period.

The positive and negative aspects of economic negotiations and messages learnt to be remembered also today

Could the economic negotiations of 1932–1933 in Moscow be considered a success or a failure? Most probably, the answer to this question is not unequivocal. The process of negotiations was long and complex, and they

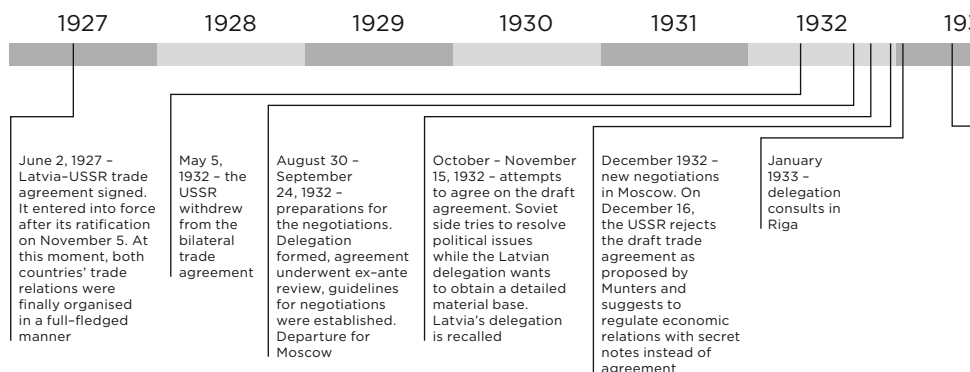
serve as a good illustration of the relations between both countries during the interwar period on the whole. During the economic negotiations, several high points could be observed at times when new offers were made and discussions were embarked upon, as well as low points, when the negotiations stalled completely. Here we can draw parallels with the 1927 trade agreement, when more than once it seemed that the negotiations might be about to begin or when Latvia had prepared a draft agreement, but no action followed for the part of the USSR.

If we consider negative features, worth noting is the concluded agreement itself – Latvia never managed to achieve an agreement version that would benefit it. From the economic viewpoint, it was a major step down in comparison to the 1927 agreement. It cannot be denied that the conclusion of a more successful agreement would not guarantee the desired economic gains (as had already been the case with the previous trade agreement, because the Soviet counterpart did not always consider it compulsory to honor the agreement), but it does not mean that Latvia had to yield to practically all Soviet demands.

Economic negotiations markedly demonstrate a certain negative phenomenon affecting the relations of Latvia with the USSR. It was the inability to agree on uniform policy and on how Latvia's goals should be achieved. It is well shown by the fact that the delegation was given a rather narrow and, in fact, an uncertain mandate, its members were not capable of fully agreeing amongst themselves or with the government of Latvia. Some individuals operated on the assumption that they knew better than others and were convinced that the resolution of matters they were interested in was to be achieved single-handedly. All of that not only delayed proper work of the Latvian delegation, but also helped the Soviet delegation, because it is easier to play against a divided team.

Another negative feature that emerged already during the peace talks and continued on during the economic negotiations was the lack of specialists, who would be able to work under the peculiar, and let us be frank, not particularly favorable circumstances in the Soviet state; this was demonstrated by the variable composition of the delegation when entering into the agreements. The Soviet counterparts, in turn, were used to this form of negotiations, which gave them a certain advantage in comparison to the Latvian representatives.

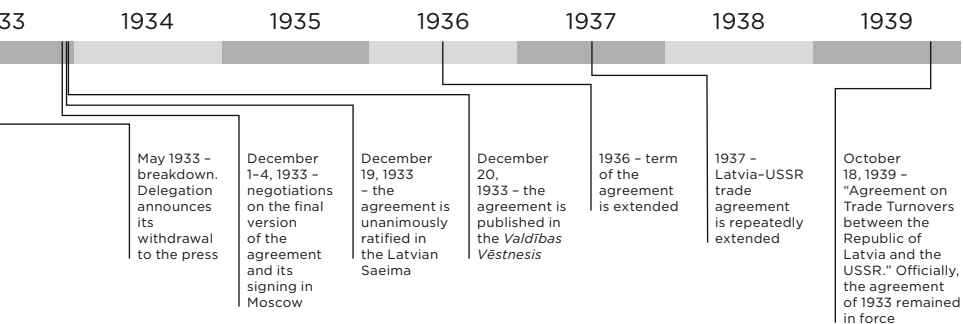
Certainly, the economic negotiations had positive features, too. Firstly, it was the ability to withstand the Soviet representatives' persistent attempts to resolve the economic matters at a price of political arrangements, thereby



demonstrating their resilience and sticking to one of the fundamental elements of the Latvian foreign policy during the interwar period, namely, not to allow such arrangements which would enable great powers – in this case the Soviet Union – to act in a way that leaves a lasting and negative impact on the development of Latvia or even make decisions on its behalf.

Undeniably, the economic negotiations in Moscow were a good lesson and a test of resilience for its participants. In addition, they unveiled the USSR from the unembellished side (the one that was usually shown during the organised excursions and trips), thus precluding the formation of erroneous perceptions and illusions of the Soviet Union and of its foreign policy and objectives.

Today, when the Soviet Union no longer exists and the economic order of the world, including that of Latvia and Russia, has changed, the Latvia-USSR trade agreement entered into in 1933 no longer holds any importance and only bears witness to history from the economic viewpoint. However, the negotiations that were necessary to conclude the agreement serve as a fine historic proof and illustration of how such a great power as the USSR during the interwar period took advantage of economic interests and needs of such a small country and tried to achieve a politically favorable situation. These negotiations also prove how important the role of individuals is in the work of diplomacy and their ability to build a strong and united team to achieve common goals; this is still relevant today, because, as we can observe in the recent history of Latvia, it is specifically individual persons' actions that are of major importance in foreign policy (in forming relations with Russia, in particular with regard to economic matters, it is not the foreign



affairs office staff or politicians who have a significant influence, but rather entrepreneurs and other representatives of economic sectors. In this sense, we can see similarities with the year 1932, when, as the delegation was formed for economic negotiations in Moscow, not only diplomats and politicians were selected, but also professionals of various economic sectors). We can also draw parallels to the 1932–1933 economic negotiations and the building of today’s economic relations between the two countries, because, already since the restoration of independence, certain similarities can be observed – the desire of specific circles to build extremely close economic relations with Russia on the foundations of the Soviet times and on illusions of that the role of Latvia in the economy of Russia will be an important one, which coincides with the view that was popular in some entrepreneurs’ circles during the interwar period, namely, that both countries’ economic relations could be built on the grounds of principles reigning and relationships built during the Russian Empire. Furthermore, it must be added that the great role of personalities in the building of economic relations of both countries, which often values economic gains higher than the formation of proper and stable relations, by forgetting that the USSR and Russia alike often offer economic gains at the cost of resolving political decisions; additionally, the decisions concern matters that can cause not only domestic policy problems, but also aid ethnic disagreements in Latvia (for example, the white guard issue during the interwar period and the status of Russian speakers in Latvia today). Therefore, it can be claimed that the process of economic negotiations of 1932–1933 and the agreements reached can serve as an example today, too, demonstrating that it is not necessary to nurture false illusions about a very

important role in the economy of Russia, and proving that economic gains at the price of political arrangements are short-lived. Moreover, it must be taken into account that Russia, just like the USSR, would rather reduce the importance of the Western inclination not only in the economy of Latvia, but in the politics on the whole. It seems that one of the key questions both during the interwar period and today asks how valuable is economic cooperation with the big Eastern neighbor and what political price can be paid for certain economic gains.

Endnotes

- ¹ Aivars Stranga, *Latvijas–Padomju Krievijas miera līgums 1920. gada 11. augustā. Latvijas–Padomju Krievijas attiecības 1919.–1925. gadā* (Rīga: Fonds Latvijas Vēsture, 2000), 30–35, 57–69.
- ² *Ibid.*, 30–67.
- ³ Rihards Treijs, *Latvijas diplomātija un diplomāti (1918–1940)* (Rīga: Latvijas Vēstneša bibliotēka, 2003), 183–184.
- ⁴ Aivars Stranga, *Latvijas ārējie ekonomiskie sakari. 1919.–1940. gads. Attiecības ar lielvalstīm (saimnieciskie, politiskie, diplomātiskie aspekti)* (Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, 2015), 128–131.
- ⁵ Rihards Treijs, *Latvijas diplomātija un diplomāti (1918–1940)*, 188.
- ⁶ Aivars Stranga, *Latvijas ārējie ekonomiskie sakari...*, 132.
- ⁷ Rihards Treijs, *Latvijas diplomātija un diplomāti (1918–1940)...*, 188.
- ⁸ Aivars Stranga, *Latvijas–Padomju Krievijas miera līgums 1920. gada 11. augustā...*, 224.
- ⁹ *Latvijas tautsaimniecības vēsture*, sast. Gatis Krūmiņš (Rīga: Jumava, 2017), 131.
- ¹⁰ LVVA, 2630. f. (Vilhelms Munters, Latvijas ārlietu ministrs), 1. apr., 4. l. (Dienasgrāmata par saimnieciskajām sarunām Maskavā 1932.–1933. gadā), 114. Facts given here and further on regarding the economic negotiations in Moscow in 1932–1933 and the concluded Latvia-USSR trade agreement have been obtained through analysis of this source, unless it is otherwise specified in the text.
- ¹¹ Aivars Stranga, *Latvijas ārējie ekonomiskie sakari...*, 188–189.
- ¹² *Latvijas Kareivis*, 1932. gada 9. septembris, 1.
- ¹³ LVVA, 2630. f., 1. apr., 4. l., 8.
- ¹⁴ LVVA, 2630. f., 1. apr., 4. l., 59.
- ¹⁵ LVVA, 2630. f., 1. apr., 4. l., 85.
- ¹⁶ LVVA, 2630. f., 1. apr., 4. l., 97.
- ¹⁷ Aivars Stranga, *Latvijas ārējie ekonomiskie sakari...*, 191.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 300–301.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 311–313, 317, 321.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 341.

Latvia at the Helm of the League of Nations: The Election of Latvia to the League of Nations Council

JĀNIS TAURĒNS

The situation of the League of Nations and the key processes in the foreign policy of Latvia in mid-1930s

A new system of international relations took shape at the Paris Peace Conference following the end of World War I. It was named the Versailles System after the Palace of Versailles, where on June 28, 1919 the allied powers and the defeated Germany entered into a peace treaty. The League of Nations, which was formed at the Paris Peace Conference, was an important part of the Versailles System and it was the most important international organisation during the interwar period. This was the first international organisation of this type, and it could be considered a precursor to the United Nations. Its main task was to preserve peace and to guarantee stable international relations. The initiator of the founding of the League of Nations was the US President (1913–1921) Woodrow Wilson. He believed that the world security needed “the protection of peace as a legal concept.” To find that peace had been broken, an international organisation was necessary, and Wilson saw it “in the form of the League of Nations.”¹ However, because of the strong opposition in domestic politics, the USA itself did not join the League of Nations, and this was the first major blow to its importance and operations.

The League of Nations Council was “the most important structure of the organisation, though formally the General Assembly of the organisation had the final say in the most important matters.”² The Council, which can be compared to the modern-day UN Security Council, was formed of permanent and non-permanent member states. Furthermore, even the composition of permanent members varied. Initially, they were the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Japan. Germany joined in 1926, but, as Hitler

rose to power, Germany withdrew. In the 1930s, the USSR joined as it strived to integrate with the system of international relations. Italy and Japan, however, withdrew due to violations of the peace policy. The number of non-permanent member states of the Council varied, gradually increasing from four to eleven, and they were elected for a three-year term.

In the 1930s, the League of Nations, just like the international relations system of Versailles formed after World War I, found itself in a crisis. One of the signs of the crisis was the inability to perform its key task – to prevent international conflicts. Among such conflicts was, for example, the invasion of Italy in Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in October 1935. In the crisis situation, the structures and member states of the League of Nations had to define their stance towards the League of Nations and its possible reforms, which were discussed during this time. The principle of collective security defined by the League of Nations was favorable specifically to the small countries, in particular, the Baltic States. For Latvia, being a new country, it was essential to strengthen its recognizability and prestige in the international community. Membership in the League of Nations Council also gave an opportunity to establish contacts with the diplomats of great powers represented at the Council.

The year 1934 was a turning point in domestic politics of Latvia, as the *coup d'état* of May 15 resulted in a switch to the authoritarian regime of Kārlis Ulmanis. It introduced significant changes in the foreign policy of Latvia, too. Nevertheless, the key priority of foreign policy of Latvia after the *coup d'état* of K. Ulmanis, just like before, was the strengthening of security of Latvia. In the foreign policy of Latvia, there was de facto continuity, which relied on the succession of interests and goals of Latvia. National Socialists rising to power in Germany changed the international situation in Eastern Europe on the whole, causing concerns about the security of the smaller nations. This made the USSR diplomacy become more active, which in turn was not a good sign for the small Eastern European nations. One of the indirect consequences of the formation of the National Socialist regime was the strengthening of cooperation between the Baltic States that had been envisaged already a long time ago.

Before Hitler came to power, relations between Germany and Poland were distinctly hostile. Lithuania, which desperately wanted to recover the Vilnius region occupied by Poland, based its foreign policy on siding with Germany and the USSR against Poland. The improvement of relations

between Berlin and Warsaw and the non-aggression pact between both countries meant the collapse of the existing Lithuanian foreign policy – what was known as the “horizontal line.” International isolation of Lithuania now forced it to seek new allies. This, for its part, facilitated the three Baltic countries to enter into a Treaty of Understanding and Cooperation on September 12, 1934, thus forming the Baltic Entente. This was a step taken by the Baltic States in the spirit of European peace diplomacy – the diplomacy which at that time was entering a decline. The signing of the Entente Treaty in Geneva during the League of Nations General Assembly especially underscored its inclination towards the League of Nations. Article 5 of the Treaty was important for the attempts of the Baltic States to consolidate their positions in the League of Nations, which prescribed cooperation between the signatories in international organisations.³ The historian Prof. Lilita Zemīte remarks that the election of Latvia to the League of Nations Council was possible owing to the cooperation between the Baltic States and long and persistent work of the Latvian diplomacy over several years.⁴

In 1934 and 1935, the diplomacy of the Baltic States was engaged in a quest for regional security in Eastern Europe or dealing with the issue of the Eastern European security treaty system (what was known as the Eastern Pact). The diplomacy of Latvia was striving to agree on a version of the Eastern Pact, in which the Baltic States’ security would receive international guarantees both from revisionist great powers Germany and the USSR and from democratic Western great powers. These concerns and, within their context, the relations with the USSR became, in fact, the central problem of diplomacy of Latvia in the spring and the summer of 1935. This foreign policy context focused the diplomacy resources of Latvia elsewhere, instead of focusing on the campaign for the membership at the League of Nations Council.

Attempts of Latvia to be elected to the League of Nations Council in early 1930s

Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were accepted to the League of Nations on September 22, 1921. It was one of the most important achievements of the young Baltic countries on the path to international recognition of independence after the formation of the new states. The USA was last to grant diplomatic recognition in July of 1922. Since the three Baltic States

had been accepted to the League of Nations, it became one of the most important foreign policy arenas of these countries. The exiled historian E. Andersons pointed out that they “started to fully base their foreign policy on the League of Nations.”⁵ Latvia and Estonia had, on multiple occasions, attempted to achieve being elected to the League of Nations Council in the status of a non-permanent member. In mid-1920s, the Foreign Minister of Latvia Zigfrīds Meierovics and the Estonian Foreign Minister Kaarel Pusta raced for their countries to be elected to the League of Nations Council, but to no avail. What is more, “such races did no good to the small countries in the international forum.” In 1926, the Baltic States put forth the candidacy of Estonia for non-permanent membership to the League of Nations Council⁶, however it only received the support of two countries at the election, which took place on September 2, 1926.⁷

The diplomacy of Latvia did not give up the idea of representation at the League of Nations Council. In the fall of 1933, an attempt for a place in the Council was made by the Foreign Minister Voldemārs Salnājs, but this did not yield the expected results either.⁸ Briefly before the General Assembly, Salnājs wrote that in communication with the neighbor states, it should be achieved that, in the light of the changing international circumstances, the Baltic States should be given the chance of being included in the Council.⁹ This announcement, coming merely a week before the General Assembly of the League of Nations, did not suggest that sufficient preparations for this election had been done.

After the *coup d'état* of May 15, Kārlis Ulmanis continued to combine the duties of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, but in fact the foreign policy of Latvia was in the hands of the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Vilhelms Munters. On July 16, 1930, the head of the Western Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Jūlijs Feldmans was appointed the Permanent Delegate of Latvia to the League of Nations.¹⁰ These three leaders made decisions that resulted in being elected to the League of Nations Council. There are claims that the biggest achievement of J. Feldmans, as he represented Latvia in the League of Nations for 16 years, was specifically his ability to enhance the prestige of Latvia in Geneva to a point that “made it possible for Latvia to be elected to the League of Nations Council.”¹¹

Since early 1930s, Feldmans campaigned for the election of Latvia to the League of Nations Council.¹² There were a number of important circumstances for the election to the League of Nations Council. It was

important that a country, which is aspiring to join it, did not have conflicts with other countries. Loyalty to the League of Nations and the principles of collective security were highly valued. Furthermore, such factor as the contribution of states to the budget of the League was mentioned in diplomats' negotiations. It was important who was to be individually representing their country. Latvia needed a solid representative for this post.¹³ The candidacy of the leader of the authoritarian regime Kārlis Ulmanis would not be supported; besides, he would not leave the territory of Latvia as a matter of principle. Vilhelms Munters was a logical candidate, but his appointment to the post of the Foreign Minister would be necessary. This, however, was faced with rather substantial opposition from domestic politics. In fact, already at the General Assembly of the League of Nations, Latvia was represented by Munters, who was well known in the diplomatic circles of the League of Nations, and his thoroughly considered speeches and steady position were received positively.¹⁴

Activization of the League of Nations policy of the Baltic States after the formation of the Entente

Already during the I Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Baltic Entente, which took place in Tallinn in December 1934, opinions were exchanged on the possibility of increasing representation at the League of Nations institutions. On November 13, 1934, Jūlijs Feldmans had suggested the leaders of foreign policy of Latvia to discuss more active joint efforts at the League of Nations.¹⁵ On February 6, 1935, the representatives of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to the League of Nations, by reference to the decisions of the conference in Tallinn, sent a submission to the Secretary General of the League of Nations, in which they pointed to the insufficient representation of the Baltic States in committees of the organisation and emphasized that "neither of the three Baltic States has been elected to the League of Nations Council." The Baltic States confirmed that they will be more active in these matters and will operate in utmost harmony.¹⁶ Feldmans wrote on February 12, 1935 to Ulmanis about the conversation with the Secretary General of the League of Nations Joseph Avenol, in which the latter pointed out that the isolated course of the Baltic States has delayed its election in the League of Nations Council.¹⁷ However, the diplomacy of Latvia was still doubtful of success, which was further aggravated by previous failures.

There were also counterarguments of more serious nature, the deterioration of the international situation, such as the foreign policy of Germany, which necessitated rethinking of whether it would be better not to get engaged in the resolution of these problems. The Envoy of Latvia to France Oļģerds Grosvalds believed that the election to the League of Nations Council could pull Latvia into the plots, conflicts and dangerous political games of great powers.¹⁸

In the spring of 1935, the Baltic States were rather determined. On March 27, 1935, they sent a telegram to the Secretary General of the League of Nations, voicing determination to stand in the next election of the League of Nations Council. This activity was triggered by the withdrawal of Japan from the Council and the hope that this vacancy could, in principle, be filled by one of the Baltic States. It was remarked that this document will not be released to the press.¹⁹

Jūlijs Feldmans felt disappointment about the insufficient activity for the part of diplomacy of Latvia as regards the candidacy for membership at the Council. On May 25, 1935, in a letter to Kārlis Ulmanis, he expressed surprise that “not a word was uttered” about the candidacy for membership at the Council at the Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Baltic States and asked whether the inquiry with the envoys of Latvia yielded such negative results that the diplomacy of Latvia refused to take steps in this direction? This particular activity of Feldmans was triggered by concerns that China wanted to assume the post left vacant by Japan for a year, but in the fall of 1936, China, being a significant country, could stand for the post of Portugal, which was what the Baltic States had hoped for. (The post of Portugal was created in 1933 to ensure representation of countries that do not belong to any regional group or bloc.)²⁰ Apart from the Baltic States, this category also included Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Luxembourg, Portugal, and others are mentioned.) Feldmans, rather courageously, urged Ulmanis to instruct “the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to inform me of your intentions” regarding this matter,²¹ thus, to a certain extent assuming a confrontational position towards Munters. Nevertheless, the disputes between both diplomats were more of tactical rather than principal nature.

The candidacy of Latvia for membership in the Council was discussed at the II Conference of Envoys of Latvia in the summer of 1935. At the conference meeting of July 3, Feldmans stated that Latvia has no prospects of joining the Council in 1935, when the mandate of Poland, Czechoslovakia

and Mexico in it ended. He believed that Latvia could become a member of the Council in 1936, as the mandate of Portugal ended, but extensive preliminary works are needed. Vilhelms Munters voiced his opinion that the election of Lithuania to the Council is not possible due to its diplomatic issues, whereas the diplomacy of Estonia will not want to stand. Munters claimed that nothing is lost yet and now one must simply wait and refrain from making decisions. The Envoy to the United Kingdom Kārlis Zariņš informed that he had spoken of this matter with the British Minister for League of Nations Affairs Anthony Eden, but the British diplomacy were hesitating to express support of this kind.²² In a private conversation, Vilhelms Munters had pointed out to Jūlijs Feldmans that he does not believe in success of his campaign and suggested to focus on the organisation of a general security system.²³

The decision of Latvia to apply for membership in the League of Nations Council and the subsequent specific action policy

The disappointment at the Conference of Envoys forced Jūlijs Feldmans to inform Chairman of the Council of the Bank of Latvia Ādolfs Klīve of this situation. Feldmans pointed out that he has ensured support for the candidacy of Latvia from about a half of the delegations of League of Nations member states, but another 12 to 15 would be willing to support Latvia. However, Vilhelms Munters was skeptical in saying that “when it comes to government decisions,” rather than confirmation of affections of diplomats, “the positive votes can be counted on fingers,” and instructed to stop working in this direction to prevent a diplomatic failure. Feldmans believed that Vilhelms Munters is afraid of failure and reprimands cast by Kārlis Ulmanis. Jūlijs. Feldmans managed to convince Klīve that there is real support to the candidacy of Latvia.²⁴ Ādolfs Klīve who possessed personal influence to Ulmanis visited Prime Minister, and in a rather heated exchange, in which Ulmanis initially insisted that it is impossible to be elected to the Council, achieved that the latter would promise to instruct Vilhelms Munters to get in touch with Estonia and Lithuania. Munters, however, later reproached the representative to Geneva for having gone behind his back. A few weeks later, Ulmanis informed Klīve that Estonia and Lithuania have confirmed their support to Latvia.²⁵ The statements of Klīve are an important contribution

to this episode, however they should be considered with certain skepticism. As explained before, the Baltic States had, already since February, taken joint steps to stand for the status of a member of the League of Nations Council, and Munters had no principled objections to this activity. Klive's utterances were not accurate in claiming that the Baltic States had never before aspired to a place in the Council.

Overall, the decision-making mechanism in this situation was rather controversial. Jūlijs Feldmans carried out systematic work to ensure the election of Latvia to the Council, and he obviously felt that his efforts were undervalued. On the other hand, the political leadership – Ulmanis and Munters – hesitated or at least were cautious, although, in principle, agreed with the politics of Feldmans. The decision-making approach illustrated in the memoirs of Ādolfs Klive cannot be viewed as an optimum route of policy implementation and it was specifically typical of an authoritarian regime. It is rather plausible that even without the intervention of Klive, given the authoritarian regime, the leader's objective to join the Council would have been put forth and subsequently achieved.

On August 28, Kārlis Zariņš wrote to Vilhelms Munters about his conversation with Anthony Eden, whom he tried to persuade that the Baltic States are ardent supporters of the international organisation and have, for fifteen years already, been meeting all the commitments. Zariņš informed of the decision to stand to become a member of the Council; the decision had been adopted in the Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Baltic States. Eden refrained from voicing support and suggested to negotiate with Nordic countries.²⁶

In September 1935, the attempts to be included in the Council intensified. In his address to the General Assembly of the League of Nations on September 14, Munters did not mention the candidacy of Latvia to the Council. However, while keeping in mind this option, he emphasized that Latvia has no conflicts with its neighbors and highly evaluated the role of the organisation in international politics.²⁷

On September 16, Munters met with Avenol and discussed the candidacy of the Baltic States to join the Council.²⁸ On September 20, the Envoy of Lithuania to Latvia Vytautas Vileišis informed that Lithuania is willing to support the candidacy of Latvia on the condition that after Latvia, this position could be assumed by the other Baltic countries. It was not actually possible to guarantee it. The road of Lithuania to the Council was

unsurpassably blocked by the conflict with regard to the Polish-controlled Vilnius and its region. In principle, the diplomacy of Estonia supported the attempts to achieve that the Baltic States are represented. On October 15, the Foreign Minister of Estonia Julius Seljamaa, without giving the name of a specific candidate state announced to the press that the Estonian delegation in Geneva has held negotiations regarding this matter, but it will only become relevant in 1936.²⁹

In late 1935, Jūlijs Feldmans continued intensive consultations on the candidacy of Latvia. The hopes of Latvia were linked to the position in the League of Nations Council, which was assumed by Portugal. He consulted with representatives of Nordic countries, but their opinions were not unequivocal. The Finnish representative Rudolf Holsti recommended that Latvia supports a representative of the bloc of Nordic countries. He believed that the place of Portugal should rather be allocated to other groups of countries. The Swedish representative Karl Gustaf Westman, however, pointed out that there is no such thing as a bloc of Nordic countries, and admitted that the prospects of Latvia to take over the place of Portugal are nearly certain.³⁰

The issue of the candidacy of the Baltic States, and in particular of Latvia, to a membership in the Council was included on the agenda of the III Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Baltic Entente in Riga, in December 1935. In a report to envoys regarding the progress of the conference, Vilhelms Munters informed that the Estonian delegation had been instructed not to support the candidacy of Latvia and that of Kārlis Ducmanis to the Permanent Court of International Justice that existed at the League of Nations. The stand-offish attitude of Estonia could be explained with the negative polemics of the Latvian and Estonian press regarding the battles of Cēsis in 1919.³¹ However, it was prescribed in the conference resolution that a representation of the Baltic Entente to the League of Nations Council would be preferable and it was envisaged to implement harmonized diplomatic activity to achieve the election of that representative.³²

The diplomacy of Latvia continued working intensively. In February 1936, Feldmans visited Avenol and informed him that the three Baltic States have decided to act to obtain “a Council seat.” Avenol responded elusively that the prospects of the Baltic States are unclear and that the opinions of the United Kingdom and France were still unknown. Jūlijs Feldmans suggested that Riga works with representatives of both great powers.³³ Meanwhile, back

in Latvia, it was not clear who will assume the post of the Foreign Minister, because on April 11, Kārlis Ulmanis took over the post of the President of State, while combining it with the position of the prime minister. For a brief period (from April 16 until July 16, 1935) the office of the foreign minister was filled by the Minister for Finance Ludvigs Ēķis, who continued pursuing politics focused on the election in the League of Nations Council.

Joint measures of the Baltic States and the election of Latvia to the Council

In May 1936, the Conference of Foreign Ministers of Baltics in Tallinn adopted a decision to support the candidacy of Latvia for the membership at the League of Nations Council.³⁴ In June, the activities of Jūlijs Feldmans and the diplomacy of Latvia intensified, which was reflected in reports to Ludvigs Ēķis. On June 9, he wrote about yet another dialogue with Avenol, during which the Secretary General of the League of Nations once again failed to voice considerations of the Baltic States' prospects. He believed that no country would promise anything still, and suggested to continue the work in the capitals of member states. In his opinion, the situation could only become clear, once the General Assembly of the organisation starts.³⁵ On June 17, Jūlijs Feldmans reported to Ludvigs Ēķis that he had been offered support from the British Dominion delegations, and promised to work with Irish representatives.³⁶ On June 29, a meeting of representatives of the three Baltic countries took place in Geneva, summoned by the Lithuanian Foreign Minister Stasys Lozoraitis, with Latvia being represented by Vilhelms Munters and Jūlijs Feldmans. The debates now touched upon purely practical matters, such as whether Latvia will be assuming the League of Nations Council post for a full term of three years, or could the Baltic States rotate on a yearly basis. This option seemed less plausible due to legal and political considerations. It would not be possible for Latvia to simply pass the seat on to a different Baltic state, but instead a new election at the General Assembly of the organisation would be required. During the meeting, it was found that the envoys of all Baltic countries had received instructions in their respective countries to back the Latvian candidacy.³⁷

On July 16, Vilhelms Munters assumed the post of the Foreign Minister of Latvia, while continuing on his mission to get Latvia elected. Ādolfs Klīve directly relates his appointment with the candidacy of Latvia for membership in the League of Nations Council.³⁸ Jūlijs Feldmans turned to ensuring



101st League of Nations Council Session, President Vilhelms Munters. Source: United Nations Archives at Geneva, http://www.indiana.edu/~librcsd/nt/db.cgi?db=ig&do=search_results&details=2&ID=598&ID-opt

the support of local community for the candidacy of Latvia, by publishing extensive articles in the Geneva press. He emphasized the loyalty of Latvia towards principles of the League of Nations and their importance in ensuring a comprehensive peace.³⁹

Vilhelms Munters is still considered among the most controversial Latvian politicians and diplomats of the interwar period. Being suspected of lack of patriotism, he was criticized already in the 1930s, and the criticism was particularly grave in the community of Latvian exiles. Munters largely embodied the inability of the entire diplomacy of Latvia to ensure the preservation of national independence. However, it would have been near impossible even for the most outstanding genius to change anything in the pre-war situation. The diplomats of the other two Baltic countries considered Munters to be the *de facto* leader of foreign policy of Latvia, and under circumstances, when neither Lithuania nor Estonia were aspiring to a seat in the League of Nations Council, his candidacy was not challenged. It must be noted that Munters and the diplomacy of Latvia had more disagreements on

a regular basis specifically with the leading elite of Estonia. Munters always bitterly reacted to, say, the Estonian criticism of the Latvian authoritarian regime or to the unfriendly statements of the Estonian officials.⁴⁰

The decisive events were expected already at the League of Nations General Assembly in Geneva. On September 23, the Estonian Foreign Minister Friedrich Akel summoned a meeting of representatives of the Baltic countries. Ministers of the three countries agreed to support the candidacy of Latvia for a three-year term. The idea proposed by the Foreign Minister of Lithuania, namely, that the Baltic countries during this period should replace one another in a rotational sequence was deemed legally infeasible. The proposal by the Foreign Minister of Lithuania Lozoraitis suggesting that the three Baltic countries should propose the candidacy of Latvia in a single document did not gain support either, as it could trigger the opposition of the Polish delegation.⁴¹ Poland was unfavorably inclined towards the participation of Lithuania in the Baltic Entente, believing that this diplomatic cooperation strengthened the position of Lithuania and hence it was undesirable for the Polish interests. Feldmans wrote that, in Poland's view, the election of Latvia may not "in any way benefit Lithuania."⁴²

On October 28, the first (constitutional affairs) committee session of the League of Nations was held, and during the session it became clear that the League of Nations Council seat, which was created in 1933 and intended for countries, which "do not belong to any group" and was now filled by Portugal, will be retained. At the session, Feldmans in his address emphasized that small countries have always been proponents of principles of the collective security system and have been adamant regarding "the protection of pact principles" of the League, therefore their representation in the Council would lead to strengthening of these principles and to "protection of peace."⁴³ On October 8, 1936, the election of Council members was held. The candidacy of Latvia was supported by 49 votes out of 52. Vilhelms Munters became the member of the League of Nations Council for three years.⁴⁴

The activity of Vilhelms Munters and of the diplomacy of Latvia at the League of Nations Council was controversial. For instance, Munters in 1937 was leading the organisation's Far East Committee, which worked with the conflicts between Japan and China.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the membership in the Council under international relations crisis circumstances necessitated Latvia to position itself in cases of severe problems. Historians have bitterly criticized the 101st session of the League of Nations Council in May 1938

which was chaired by none other than Munters. It was considering the matter of attitude towards Italy's occupation of Ethiopia, and its result – the sanction for member states to individually decide on their attitude – meant that the annexation was admitted. Edgars Andersons emotionally referred to it as the most shameful session in the organisation's history.⁴⁶ In December 1939, Latvia was forced to urgently notify that its mandate in the Council has ended in order to avoid the vote of condemning the USSR of its aggression towards Finland.⁴⁷ This step, though, was rather understandable under the circumstances, because there were USSR military bases in the Baltic States.

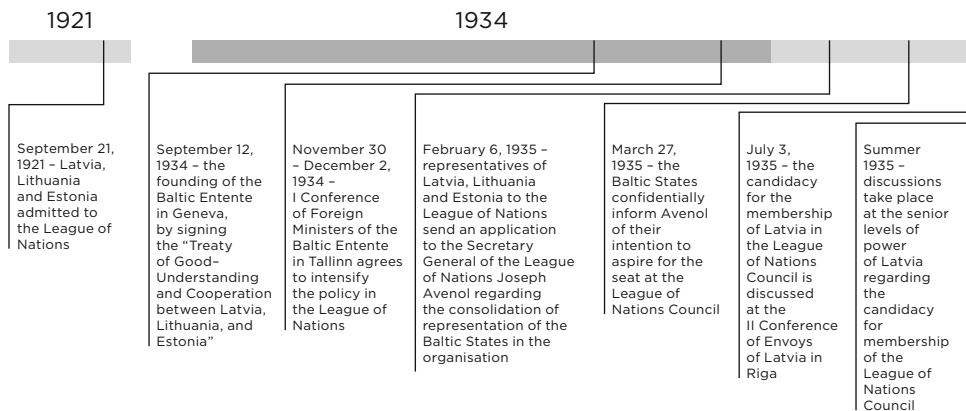
Conclusions

The policy of Latvia and the other two Baltic countries since the acceptance to the League of Nations was aimed at cooperation with this organisation. The League of Nations was one of the cornerstones of the Versailles international relations system, which was formed after World War I, and it was striving to preserve peace and stability, and this was vitally important for the small countries. The decision of Latvia to become a member of the League Council in this system was a logical and consequential one.

The process, whereby Latvia joined the Council, was swift and determinedly carried out, achieving this goal within approximately two years, counting from December 1934, when the Baltic Entente conference took place. However, it is doubtful that it would have been possible without the many years of consistent efforts of Jūlijs Feldmans aimed at the consolidation of authority of Latvia and its diplomacy.

The diplomacy of Latvia successfully and tactically managed to use the existing situation in the League of Nations, which resulted from Japan leaving the organisation and Portugal coming to the end of its mandate. The cooperation between the Baltic States throughout the process, as well as the fact of formation of the Baltic Entente and the positive response to it were of utter importance.

If we consider the shortcomings in the process, worth noting is the certain dissonance among the leading diplomats of Latvia and the hesitation of Munters. The disagreements, though, concerned rather the specific action policy instead of the strategy. Certain sullenness was also caused by the competitiveness and disagreements between the Baltic States observed since the very first years of the Baltic Entente.



Latvia undoubtedly would have benefited, had the international relations of the second part of the 1930s and the League of Nations itself managed to steer clear of a crisis.

The work of Latvia in the most important international organisation of that time transpired in a period of crisis of international relations systems and the League of Nations itself, and it was not viewed exceptionally positively. However, it was an achievement of the diplomacy of Latvia as a small nation, for which thanks are due to the cooperation between the Baltic countries and active diplomacy of Latvia. Its significant role in a respectable international organisation was highly evaluated, and it consolidated the influence of Latvia in the international arena. It is difficult to estimate the gains and losses of Latvia from the election to the Council. As has been mentioned before, Latvia in its foreign policy was leaning towards the Western great powers – a solid arrangement of international relations –, an important part of which was a strong League of Nations. The election to the Council meant the recognition of prestige and the positive role of Latvia and the Baltic States, as well as admitting the importance of their cooperation in the interwar diplomacy. Had Latvia been able to foresee the rapid decline of the Versailles system, the diplomacy of Latvia would have been more cautious towards the involvement in the work of the League of Nations, similar to how the Estonian diplomacy treated it and corresponding to the views of the experienced diplomat Oļģerds Grosvalds. However, nobody could have anticipated World War II as an unprecedented catastrophe, which ended the interwar period. The decision

1935

1936

September 1935 – concrete activities commence to achieve the election of Latvia

December 9–11, 1935 – III Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Baltic Entente in Riga adopt a resolution of the representation of the Baltic Entente at the League of Nations Council and harmonized action for the achievement of the set goal

December 1935 – the fall of 1936 – the permanent representative of Latvia to the League of Nations Jūlijs Feldmans campaigns for the support of candidacy of Latvia

May 9–11, 1936 – IV Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Baltic Entente in Kaunas backs the candidacy of Latvia for a seat in the League of Nations Council

July 16, 1936 – Vilhelms Munters appointed to the post of the Foreign Minister of Latvia

October 8, 1936 – election of Latvia to the League of Nations Council

of Latvia to use the possibilities offered by the existing international relations system was a correct and successfully implemented one.

The diplomacy of today's Latvia has not managed to secure election of Latvia to the UN Security Council, whereas the Lithuanian diplomacy reached this goal in 2014–2015, as it was faced with the necessity to position itself in the delicate matter of the Crimea and Ukraine crisis. If we hypothetically consider the attempts of Latvia to reach a similar goal today, it must be admitted that persistent and focused work of the Latvian diplomats would be of utmost importance. It would be essential to work with the group of Eastern European states, in which Latvia belongs, as well as with the Western powers. In terms of domestic policy, the mechanism of making decisions would differ greatly – it would be accompanied by discussions at the Saeima, public debate and press coverage, including a broad spectrum of opinions. However, just like back then, the political will would be crucial.

Endnotes

- ¹ Henrijs Kisindžers, *Diplomātija* (Rīga: Jumava, 2001), 235.
- ² Lilita Zemīte, *Latvia in the League of Nations* (Rīga: N.I.M.S Ltd, 2002), 55.
- ³ "Sapraššanās un sadarbības līgums starp Latviju, Lietuvu un Igauniju," *Valdības Vēstnesis*, 1934. gada 26. septembris, 1–2.
- ⁴ Lilita Zemīte, *Latvia in the League of Nations*, 55.
- ⁵ Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture 1920-1940: Ārpolitika I* [sējums]. (Stokholma: Daugava, 1982), 367.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 368.

- ⁷ “Tautu Savienības padomes jaunais sastāvs,” *Latvijas Kareivis*, 1926. gada 3. septembris, 4.
- ⁸ Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture 1920–1940: Ārpolitika*, 1. sēj., 371.
- ⁹ Voldemārs Salmis, “Mūsu ārpolitikas tuvākie uzdevumi,” *Latvijas Kareivis*, 1933. gada 20. septembris, 1.
- ¹⁰ “Valdības darbība,” *Valdības Vēstnesis*, 1930. gada 17. jūlijs, 2.
- ¹¹ Benno Ābers, “Jūlijs Feldmans un Tautu Savienība” no *Jūlijs Feldmans* [rakstu krājums] ([Līnkolna], Vaidava, 1963), 143.
- ¹² Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture 1920–1940: Ārpolitika*, 1. sēj., 668, 670.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ Lilita Zemīte, *Latvia in the League of Nations*, 58.
- ¹⁵ Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture 1920–1940: Ārpolitika*, 1. sēj., 536.
- ¹⁶ “Latvijas, Igaunijas un Lietavas kopējā prasība Tautu Savienībai,” *Latvijas Kareivis*, 1935. gada 10. februāris, 1.
- ¹⁷ Benno Ābers, “Jūlijs Feldmans un Tautu Savienība,” 144.
- ¹⁸ Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture 1920–1940: Ārpolitika*, 1. sēj., 672–673.
- ¹⁹ Ārlietu ministrija – sūtņiem LNA-LVVA, 2575. f., 15. apr., 92. l., 264.
- ²⁰ See: Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture 1920–1940: Ārpolitika*, 1. sēj., 671, 675.
- ²¹ J. Feldmans – K. Ulmanim 1935. gada 25. maijā. LNA-LVVA, 2574. f., 3. apr., 3082. l., 86.
- ²² Latvijas sūtņu II konferences 7. sēdes 03.07.1935 protokols rokrakstā LNA LVVA, 2574. f., 3. apr., 3079. l., 303.
- ²³ Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture 1920–1940: Ārpolitika*, 1. sēj., 671.
- ²⁴ Ādolfs Klīve, “Sekmīga darba diplomāts” no *Jūlijs Feldmans* [rakstu krājums], 43–44.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 45–47.
- ²⁶ LNA –LVVA, 1313. f., 1. apr., 92. l., 492.–493.
- ²⁷ Lilita Zemīte, *Latvia in the League of Nations*, 59; see “Ģenerālsēkretāra V. Muntera runa Tautu Savienībā,” *Latvijas Kareivis*, 1936. gada 15. septembris, 6.
- ²⁸ “V. Munters apspriežas ar Aloisi,” *Rīts*, 1935. gada 17. septembris, 8.
- ²⁹ “Igaunijas ārlietu ministris par starptautisko stāvokli,” *Latvijas Kareivis*, 1935. gada 15. oktobris, 8.
- ³⁰ Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture 1920–1940: Ārpolitika*, 1. sēj., 671–672.
- ³¹ V. Munters – Latvijas sūtņiem 30.12.1935. LNA-LVVA, 2574. f., 3. apr., 3074. l., 69.
- ³² Ārlietu ministru konferences rezolūcijas [franču valodā] *ibid.*, 3.
- ³³ J. Feldmans – K. Ulmanim, 04.02. 1936. LNA LVVA, 2575, 7. apr., 1910. l., 171–172.
- ³⁴ Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture 1920–1940: Ārpolitika*, 1. sēj., 543.
- ³⁵ J. Feldmans – L. Ēķim 09.06.1936. LNA LVVA, 2575, 7. apr., 1910. l., 95.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.
- ³⁸ Ādolfs Klīve, “Sekmīga darba diplomāts,” 47. Lilita Zemīte in *Latvia in the League of Nations*, 59, has similar opinion.
- ³⁹ Lilita Zemīte, *Latvia in the League of Nations*, 59.
- ⁴⁰ As regards the disagreements between Latvia and Estonia, see: Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture 1920–1940: Ārpolitika*, 1. sēj., 542-549, arī Inesis Feldmanis, Aivars Stranga, Mārtiņš Virsis, *Latvijas ārpolitika un starptautiskais stāvoklis (30. gadu otrā puse)* (Rīga: Latvijas Ārpolitikas institūts, 1993), 82–99.
- ⁴¹ J. Feldmans – ĀM ģenerālsēkretāram J. Tepferam 07.10.1936 LNA LVVA 2575. f., 7. apr., 1910. l., 39–40.
- ⁴² J. Feldmans – V. Munteram 08.09.1936 LNA LVVA 2575. f., 7. apr., 1910. l., 55.
- ⁴³ “Tautu Savienības reforma,” *Brīvā Zeme*, 1936. gada 29. septembris, 6.
- ⁴⁴ “Latvija ievēlta par Tautu Savienības padomes locekli,” *Latvijas Kareivis*, 1936. gada 9. oktobris, 1.
- ⁴⁵ Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture 1920–1940: Ārpolitika*, 1. sēj., 677.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ Lilita Zemīte, *Latvia in the League of Nations*, 128–129.

Searching for Security: Neutrality Policy of Latvia in 1938–1939

JĀNIS KĒRUSS

The concept of neutrality and its background

Neutrality (*Latin ne-uter* – neither of both) is one of the most controversially regarded and traditionally most broadly interpreted kinds of means of foreign policy. Its content and construction can be vastly disparate. The neutrality concept is divided into two parts – law and politics.¹ The law of neutrality is a means of policy, but the extent, to which it is applied, depends on a number of circumstances. In Western Europe, we can speak of neutrality during peacetime only as regards to the so-called long-term or permanently neutral countries, which do not join any military blocs and demonstrate their readiness to remain outside such blocs in case of conflicts between other countries or enjoy international neutrality guarantees. In the interwar period, only Switzerland had this status. We can speak of neutrality of other nations within the scholarly understanding of the concept only in case of war.

The international Hague Convention (V) respecting the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land of 18 October 1907 can be viewed as a manifestation of fundamental principles of classic neutrality, according to which a neutral state should be completely impartial, but belligerent countries may not intrude on its territory.² World War I and the violations of laws of neutral nations, which were committed during the war, clearly showed the unsuitability of these principles for the reality of the 20th century conflicts.³ After the war, it could be observed that neutrality was generally given up as a means of avoiding a military conflict.⁴ Along with the formation of the League of Nations, neutrality as a means of foreign policy almost entirely lost its significance. Only Switzerland, pursuant to the 1920 London Declaration, obtained exceptional rights to implement the so-called differentiated neutrality – the rights not to engage in military sanctions of the League of Nations against a party infringing upon its covenants, and it

only had the duty to engage in economic sanctions.⁵ Failure to observe the main principle of classic neutrality, namely, impartiality, after World War I necessitated the use of such denominations of countries not participating in war as “non-belligerent,” “favorably neutral” to one country or another, and the concept “differentiated neutrality” was introduced.⁶ In Latvia of the interwar period, only the Latvian Social Democratic Workers’ Party considered neutrality as a serious means of foreign policy. It was only in mid-1930s that also the foreign policy leadership of Latvia started paying attention to neutrality.

Development of ideas of neutrality in Latvia from 1934 until 1939

After Adolf Hitler rose to power in January 1933, it was first mentioned in press and diplomatic circles that Latvia might again become a battleground for great powers or in some other way be dragged into a great power conflict. As the relations between the USSR and Germany deteriorated, the press of Latvia started writing about neutrality in early 1934 in relation to the December 14, 1933 USSR “Baltic Declaration” project for Poland.⁷ Not entirely certain of what kind of diplomatic proposal Moscow had voiced to Warsaw, the press of Latvia wrote about the USSR and Poland’s joint Baltic neutralization proposal.⁸ The Foreign Minister of Latvia Vilhelms Munters, however, from May 1936 until the end of 1938, held the opinion that the security of Latvia was linked to the formation of a versatile “neutral zone” between Scandinavia and the Mediterranean Sea.⁹ Up until December 1937, the foreign policy leadership of Latvia had not considered the traditional neutrality policy, i.e. a policy aimed at avoiding power conflicts, while remaining outside mutually benefiting unions, as a realistic alternative to the League of Nations or any other type of multilateral diplomatic security structures. Though, based on notions of “a neutral zone” formed of Central European countries between Germany and the USSR, in which both powers were allegedly interested in, Munters believed that the security of Latvia can be achieved not so much with the help of multilateral international treaties (incl. also the guarantees envisaged in Article 16 of the League of Nations Covenant) as by balancing between Germany and the USSR.

Even though the trust in the League of Nations as a realistic universal safety guarantee in mid-1930s was rapidly fading throughout the world,

it, nevertheless, did not mean that, in Latvia, the neutrality policy was immediately considered as an alternative. Thus, for instance, in the 2nd Conference of Envoys of Latvia,¹⁰ Alfrēds Bīlmanis, the Envoy of Latvia to the USSR, claimed that neutrality was seen as a last resort only, “*ultima ratio*,”¹¹ in ensuring independence, while priority should be given to various instruments of collective security.¹² Although the foreign policy leaders of the Baltic States exaggerated their importance in international politics, nevertheless, at least as regards Latvia, it can be maintained that the process of giving up the League of Nations commitments and hopes to a regional pact as a security guarantee was slow and reluctant, following suit of other countries.

To examine the development of Latvian political leadership, attention should primarily be focused on the speeches of the Foreign Minister Munters, although he never started anything without the acceptance of Kārlis Ulmanis, who spoke little of foreign policy.¹³ The seemingly slow change of attitude towards the League of Nations, dictated by the pressure of external developments, was well evidenced, for instance, in the annual addresses of Vilhelms Munters at the Chamber of Industry in 1937 and 1938. While in the April 6, 1937 speech, he stressed that the League of Nations “is one of the rare components that can aspire to leave behind a lasting legacy”¹⁴, that it was a guarantee that the tragedy of 1914 will not be repeated, then in the address of April 4, 1938, he already paid a lot of attention to the possibility of neutrality, interpreting it as a policy of distancing itself from the commitments towards the League of Nations, though not yet stating it explicitly that Latvia should embark on this course.

As the international crisis intensified, the use of the neutrality concept started taking on ever more concrete outlines – it was no longer linked to such abstract aspects as “a neutral position,” “not interfering in disputes between powers,” “neutral zone,” but it was rather considered an alternative and an extra guarantee to the ineffective League of Nations. In Latvia, serious discussions of neutrality – understanding it as giving up compulsory application of Article 16 of the League of Nations Covenant – started in December 1937. It was also the time when the downfall of the League of Nations pact started. Therefore, the time from late 1937 until December 1938 could be referred to as the period, in which the idea of that it was necessary to modify the League of Nations commitments matured. Two decisions were indicative of preparations towards neutrality: on September 19, 1938, Latvia and Estonia announced at the General Assembly of the League of Nations that they retain their rights

to decide on a case-by-case basis whether and to what extent the provisions of Article 16 are to be applied, and on December 13, Latvia passed the law on neutrality regulations. As it was getting ready to pass this law, on October 24, 1938, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia instructed envoys of Latvia to send various samples of other countries' neutrality declarations used in prior conflicts; the envoy of Latvia to Germany Edgars Krieviņš sent the neutrality declaration of Germany used in the Russia–Japan war in 1904 and in the Soviet Russia–Poland war in 1920.¹⁵

The declaration of Article 16 of the League of Nations Covenant as optional was made simultaneously with the other Baltic countries, and Estonia largely influenced Latvia to take this step, which had envisaged this declaration as a means, whereby to position itself at the same legal standing as Finland and Scandinavian countries, which had already previously declared their attitude towards Article 16. This is what the Estonians also emphasized – the declaration has no pro-German sentiments, but instead its objective is to gain Finland as an implicit ally. The stand of Estonia urged the other Baltic countries to voice their position towards Article 16, too.

The distancing of the Baltic States from the League of Nations was an inescapable policy necessitated by the international situation, which was prompted by the conduct of powers and Scandinavian countries alike.

Panākta vienošanās — par neitralitātes likumu

Lta. Tallinā, 3. novembrī. Oficiāli savās apspriedēs š. g. 2. un 3. novembrī panākuši vienošanos, izstrādājot attiecīgu neitralitātes likumprojektu. Šo likumprojektu konferencē dalībnieki iesniegs savām valstīm Baltijas valstu neitralitātes likumus.



Latvijas, Igaunijas un Lītuvas ekspertu konference Tallinā. No kreisās: Igaunijas delegācijas sekretārs K. Zirkals, vadītājs prof. A. Piips un dir. Dr. Knaaseks, Latvijas delegācijas dir. A. Stegmanis, mājās sūtītājam līdētājs J. Gilberts; Lītuvas delegācija — politiķa departamenta referents Šilovs un ārlietu ministrijas juriskonsults, dok. Dr. Krivickas.

Rīts, 1938. gada 4. novembris

LATVIJA apliecina savu neitralitāti

Anglijas un Francijas sūtņi iesniegusi savu valdību uzdevumā ārlietu ministram V. Munteram paziņojumu, kurā informē mūsu valdību, ka viņu pārstāvētās valstīs atrodas, sākot ar šī gada 3. septembri, kara stāvokli ar Vāciju.

Ārlietu ministrs sūtņiem atbildējis, ka saskaņā ar valdības 3. septembra vēstījumu, Valsts Prezidenta 1. septembra deklarācija par Latvijas neitralitāti attiecas arī uz karu starp Angliju un Vāciju, tāpat Franciju un Vāciju, un ka Latvija arī šīnē gadijuma ietvaros stingru neitralitāti.

Rīts, 1938. gada 7. septembris.

Press articles on Latvia's neutrality, 1938-1939.

Source: Academic Library of the University of Latvia.

However, the Baltic States had certain discretion as to how this distancing should transpire. One of the foreign policy mechanisms for reducing the significance of Article 16 of the League of Nations Covenant was the Baltic foreign ministers' conferences. Lithuania and Estonia were Latvia's only allies in late 1930s, which is why Latvia strived to cooperate with them in the making of foreign policy decisions. The decision on a declaration, which would declare Article 16 of the League of Nations Covenant non-binding, was made within the framework of mutual cooperation between the Baltic countries, and Estonia was the initiator in this matter. Already on June 11, 1938, at the 8th Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Baltic States, severe disagreements emerged as to whether it was appropriate to give up the commitments under Article 16, because they offered certain security guarantees for the Baltic States. The disagreements were most ardent between Lithuania and Estonia; the Lithuanian Foreign Minister Stasys Lozoraitis completely rejected the declaration of the optional nature of Article 16, while the Estonian Foreign Minister Karl Selter insisted on it at all costs. Munters concurred with Lozoraitis and reckoned that the declaration will be an anti-Russian step and as such "should be disregarded."¹⁶ The proposal of the Estonian Foreign Minister Selter "to draw up a declaration" regarding Article 16 generated astonishment and intense discussions among the other colleagues, who were not so much concerned about the potential declaration, as about the premise that "we must agree on such a crucial matter."¹⁷

It can be claimed that, from December 1938 until September 1939, the policy was focused on preparing to observe neutrality in case a war broke out, similar to what Scandinavia and some other European countries had done during World War I. Turning to neutrality, however, did not mean a significant and radical change of Latvian foreign policy; it was still to be regarded as a continuation of the balancing policy. This was evidenced by the non-aggression pact entered into with Germany on June 7, 1939. In Munters's views, this step consolidated the potential neutrality of Latvia in wartime, as it complemented the non-aggression pact entered into with Russia already back in 1932.

The fact that neutrality was a continuation of traditional foreign policy is also evidenced by Latvia's attempts to preserve one of the most enduring principles of foreign policy, namely, cooperation among the Baltic countries. Aspirations to cooperation with the neighbors were considered a part of the neutrality policy, even though this concept, in its essence, is contrary to

the collective security policy, in particular as regards military alliances. For Latvia, this problem was predominantly tied to the necessity of combining neutrality principles with the principles of cooperation between Baltic countries, which were rooted in the 1923 mutual cooperation agreement between Latvia and Estonia, and the 1934 Baltic Entente Treaty. The envoy of Latvia to the League of Nations Jūlijs Feldmans, by publishing a utopian concept in 1935, according to which Latvia would need to reach international guarantees of neutrality, believed that these guarantees should be received by all Baltic countries simultaneously, in order to avoid contradictions between the neutrality and mutual co-operation commitments.¹⁸ Certainly, no guarantees were possible, however co-operation was implemented in the sphere of harmonization of the neutrality policy, even though, in general, in late 1930s, the cooperation between the Baltic countries was experiencing tough times.

Neutrality policy at the beginning of World War II

As the war broke out, the government of Latvia proclaimed the enforcement of the law passed in 1938 on the neutrality rules. While skipping rather numerous matters, which are related to the foreign policy of Latvia at the onset of World War II, we must mention only those aspects, which we could link to the attempts of observing neutrality within a context of a broader avoidance of being pulled into a conflict between great powers. Among the first steps of the government in the implementation of the neutrality policy was the formation of a neutrality committee, which was comprised of specialists of law whose main task was to provide the government with advice prepared by international law experts with regard to particular matters that the Latvian administrative structures take interest in and that are related to Latvia's neutrality. The first committee session took place on September 29, 1939, and by January 1940, it had held 13 sessions and had given 8 replies to government offices.¹⁹ The highest number of requests were made by the Maritime Department of the Ministry of the Interior, which was suggesting that, perhaps, the neutrality law of Latvia should be enhanced similar to the Italian law. The committee rejected the proposal of the department to enhance the law and to specify the procedure of warships of the belligerent countries present in the territorial waters, or to declare special war ports, as was the case in the Italian law.²⁰

As regards the implementation of the neutrality policy at the beginning of the war, two main aspects are worth noting – whether and to what extent, given the circumstances of Latvia, was it possible to implement the neutrality policy, and to what extent the foreign policy of Latvia corresponded to the principles of neutrality policy, assuming that the 1907 Hague Convention framework formed its basis.

What concerns the first aspect, we must emphasize the relatively limited discretion available to the small European countries at the outset of the war. Economic instruments were among the few that the government of Latvia could use, in order to rouse interest about the preservation of independence of Latvia in the only power, which could, within a reasonable time, preclude the USSR from complete destruction of Latvian independence, and namely, Germany. This political direction of Latvia was very inconsistent and it did not promise any positive outcomes as a result of the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact either. The Director of the Treaty Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia Andrejs Kampe wrote on September 24 that “if anything at all can realistically deter Russia from invading the Baltic States, then it is the counter–force of Germany.”²¹ Kampe understood well that the main danger to Latvia is posed by Russia. He believed that the Soviet power is a bigger threat not only to the independence of Latvia, but also to the existence of the Latvian nation.²²

The government of Latvia made attempts at co–operation with neighbors in the field of neutrality policy also at the beginning of the war. They were aimed at harmonization of official neutrality norms. Already at the beginning of September Britain addressed the neutral nations urging to restrict trade with Germany and no longer supply it with goods more than in the preceding three years, in other words – maintain the level of “*courant normal*.”²³ The response of Latvia to the British was rather cautious and, as usual, it first awaited to see the reaction of the Scandinavian countries. Riga received the British memorandum on September 6, but replied only on September 23, after the contents of the Swedish reply had become known.²⁴

The Latvia and USSR Friendship Treaty of October 5, 1939 can be considered the end of the neutrality policy. With that, Latvia forcefully became the USSR ally, by accommodating Soviet Union military bases in its territory.

Assessment of the neutrality policy of Latvia

In writings of history so far, the neutrality policy implemented by Latvia has been assessed mostly negatively. However, it must be stressed that Latvia and other Baltic countries turning to neutrality was linked to the influences of external factors, and the Baltic countries – although Latvia not as much as Estonia – followed in the footsteps of countries in the region. Already in May 1935, Denmark, Sweden and Norway in Oslo declared “the commitment to modify the foreign policy towards neutrality.”²⁵

On July 1, 1936, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, Finland, Switzerland and Sweden announced that Article 16 of the League of Nations is no longer binding upon them. When the Baltic countries declared Article 16 of the League of Nations as optional, at that time, already 9 European countries had done it before them. On July 23, 1938, all four Nordic countries, as well as Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg, in a joint session in Copenhagen, declared that they no longer considered Article 16 compulsory. The Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia only in late August 1938 decided to approximate the so-called Oslo Group.²⁶ The move of Latvia towards neutrality was more affected by Poland and Germany, for whom the formal neutrality of the Baltic countries and their distancing from the League of Nations was beneficial.²⁷ Already in 1936, Latvia continuously emphasized that it prefers balancing between Germany and the USSR, which was the same policy as practiced by Poland.²⁸ The impact of Germany’s pressure on the Baltic States turning to neutrality was decisive, and it was manifested not only as a change of attitude towards the League of Nations affected by the Munich crisis, but also as a conclusion of a non-aggression agreement later on June 7 of 1939.

At the beginning of the war, plenty was written about the inconsistency of Latvian foreign policy with principles of neutrality – starting with the envoy of Latvia in Belgium Miķelis Valters, whose statements criticized the foreign policy of the government in the spring of 1939,²⁹ to the works by exiles and scholars of today.³⁰ The policy of Latvia at the outset of the war was not neutral, but rather, as soon as there was talk of “genuine neutrality or staying away from the war, the latter was opted for, thereby sacrificing neutrality.”³¹ Here, we primarily speak of the attitude of Latvia towards the USSR occupation of a part of Poland in the second half of September 1939 and the closure of the Polish embassy in Riga on September 21. Latvia was

1936

1937

July 1, 1936 – Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Spain, Switzerland, Belgium and Holland undertake to modify their commitments towards the League of Nations

May 27, 1938 – Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Finland in Stockholm commit to jointly draft laws on neutrality rules

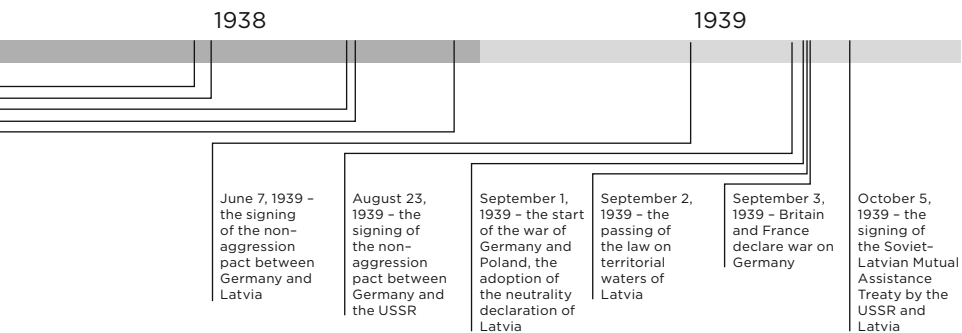
June 10–18, 1938 – 8th Conference of Foreign Ministers of Baltic States in Geneva, in which Estonia proposes a joint declaration regarding the modification of Article 16

September 19, 1938 – at the General Assembly of the League of Nations, Latvia and Estonia also declare that they no longer consider Article 16 as binding

September 29, 1938 – the signing of the Munich Agreement between Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy

December 13, 1938 – the passing of the law on neutrality rules

lacking three of the most important pre-requisites of neutrality, which are as follows: (1) the place of Latvia in international relations; (2) Latvia was not truly neutral and was not able to prove it; (3) the proclaimed neutrality could not resolve any of the essential foreign policy tasks of Latvia.³² Undoubtedly, it was not possible to speak of any genuine neutrality in the foreign policy of Latvia, interpreting it as showing certain attitude towards belligerent countries; however, equally, it cannot be denied that, at that time, “true neutrality” was not observed by any country, and a rather vague interpretation of neutrality was employed also in other countries, which were trying to steer clear of war.³³ Nevertheless, this condition, too, forces the evaluation of the conduct of Latvian foreign policy leadership as nearsighted and unnecessary, excessive yielding to the USSR, in particular because Moscow never instructed Latvia to close down the embassy of Poland. Here, we should not confuse real lack of alternatives, the neutrality policy opted for as a result of it, and the non-aggression treaty with Germany as an obedient and unnecessarily obliging attitude towards the aggressor countries in matters unrelated to the survival of Latvia. In the opinion of Miķelis Valters, the lowest “point in neutrality” of Munters was the congratulations expressed to the Polish Foreign Minister Jozef Beck regarding the occupation of the Czech province immediately after the Munich Agreement,³⁴ with that giving up genuine neutrality even with regard to that matter. Equally or, perhaps, even more so, the decision of September 21, 1939 by the government of Latvia to close down the embassy of Poland could be considered “the lowest point of



neutrality” exercised by Munters. He even wanted joint Baltic action in this miserable step of foreign policy.³⁵

In personal communication with Latvian diplomats, too, foreign observers, who were friendly towards the Baltic States, critically assessed their benevolent stance in the face of the USSR. Thus, for instance, a “well known Swedish professor, a proponent of cooperation of the Baltics and Scandinavia” told Salnājs, the envoy of Latvia to Stockholm, that he struggles to understand “why the current treaty with the Russians is presented almost as an expression of free will of the Baltic countries. The telegram of the former Estonian Foreign Minister Selter congratulating Stalin on his birthday was entirely unnecessary.”³⁶

It could be inferred that turning to neutrality due to international developments and the hope to survive the war, as several smaller European countries had managed during World War I, was an inevitable and rational course of action for the part of governments of the Baltic countries. There was minimum discretion in the matter of how the Baltic countries interpret neutrality because there were no strict rules. This policy was used as a smokescreen for unnecessarily and excessively indulging Berlin and Moscow in 1938 and in 1939. The proclamation of neutrality and the attempts to escape from being dragged into the war this way did not in any way strengthen the security of Latvia, because this policy was not related to actually readying oneself for defence or deepening the cooperation between the Baltic countries in the area of defence policy. Quite the contrary – in

September 1939, when the war had broken out and the law on neutrality had taken effect, the conference of Foreign Ministers of the Baltic countries, proposed by the Lithuanian government, did not even take place.³⁷ Wary of the response of Germany and the USSR, Latvia did not declare partial mobilization in September 1939. Even though in World War II the Baltic States had no chance of maintaining independence, the obliging attitude towards the powers, for whose geopolitical interests the existence of Baltic States was not desirable, in no way facilitated the strengthening of security.

Endnotes

- ¹ The rights and duties of a neutral state in case of war on land are prescribed in the Convention (V), and in case of naval war, in Convention XIII, as adopted during the II Hague Conference on October 18, 1907.
- ² The most significant in this Convention was the first article, which prescribed that territories of neutral powers are inviolable, whereas Article 5 provided that a neutral power must not allow the use of its territory for military purposes ("Convention (V) respecting the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land. The Hague, 18 October 1907," in *International Committee of Red Cross*, <https://ihl.databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/Treaty.xsp?action=openDocument&documentId=71929FBD2655E558C12563CD002D67AE>)
- ³ For example, Christine Agius, *The Social Construction of Swedish Neutrality: Challenges to Swedish Identity and Sovereignty* (Manchester University Press, 2006), 29.
- ⁴ Already, as the US engaged in World War I, for example, on April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson in an address to the Congress declared that neutrality is no longer acceptable as freedom of humanity was now at stake ("Wilson's War Message to Congress," 2 April 1917, https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Wilson%27s_War_Message_to_Congress)
- ⁵ Urs Loeffel, *Swiss Neutrality and Collective Security: The League of Nations and the United Nations*, Thesis of Dissertation (Monterey, California, 2010), 39.
- ⁶ Florian Henning-Setzen, *Neutralitaet im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Irland, Schweden und der Schweiz im Vergleich* (Hamburg, 1997), 11.
- ⁷ On December 13, 1933, the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the USSR Maxim Litvinov submitted the following draft of a Soviet-Poland joint declaration to Poland: "The USSR and Poland shall jointly commit to defend the peace in Eastern Europe. An integral part of such peace is the preservation of economic and political independence of former provinces of the Russian Empire. The protection of independence of these states is the foreign policy task of both countries. Should the Baltic States be under threat, then the USSR and Poland shall undertake to commence consultations on the occurring situation" (Документы и материалы внешней политики СССР, Том 16 (Москва, 1968), 747).
- ⁸ "Pacelts svarīgais Baltijas valstu neitralizācijas jautājums," *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 1934. gada 4. janvāris; "Neutralisierung der Baltischen Staaten. Litvinovs Versuchsballon geplatzt," *Rigasche Rundschau*, 1934. gada 5. janvāris.
- ⁹ Inesis Feldmanis, Aivars Stranga, Jānis Taurēns, Antonijs Zunda, *Latvijas ārpolitika un diplomātija 20. gadsimta sākumā*, 1. sēj. (Jumava, 2016), 341.
- ¹⁰ The II Conference of Envoys of Latvia took place in late June and early July of 1935.
- ¹¹ Last chance (*Latin*)
- ¹² LVVA, 2575. f., 14. apr., 7. l., 25.
- ¹³ Inesis Feldmanis, Aivars Stranga, Jānis Taurēns, Antonijs Zunda, *Latvijas ārpolitika un*

- diplomātija 20. gadsimta sākumā*, 342.
- ¹⁴ Vilhelms Munters, "Tautu Savienības autoritāte," *Brīvā Zeme*, 1937. gada 6. aprīlī; Vilhelms Munters, "Vienīgi nacionāla, stipra un vienota valsts var pastāvēt tais pārvērtībās, kas mūsu acu priekšā norisinās," *Brīvā Zeme*, 1938. gada 4. aprīlī.
- ¹⁵ LVVA, 2574. f., 3. apr., 3266. l., 157–159.
- ¹⁶ LVVA, 2574. f., 3. apr., 3267. l., 4.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.
- ¹⁸ Jūlijs Feldmans, "Baltijas valstu starptautiskā neutralizācija," *Tieslietu Ministrijas Mēnešraksts*, 1935. gada oktobris, 639.
- ¹⁹ LVVA, 1533. f., 1. apr., 2414. l., 46.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 17, 19.
- ²¹ Inesis Feldmanis, "Molotova-Ribentropa pakts un Latvijas–Vācijas attiecības," *Latvijas Vēsture*, Nr 2 (2005), 66.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 85.
- ²³ "Courant normal" – a level of trade relations existing between a neutral country with a belligerent country before the onset of the relevant conflict. LVVA, 2570. f., 13. apr., 1226. l., 20–21.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1227. l., 107.
- ²⁵ Mieczyslaw Nurek, *Britische Politik und die Politik der Neutralitaet im Ostseeraum. Beitrage uz Geschichte des Ostseeraumes* (Hamburg, 2002), 302.
- ²⁶ Aivars Stranga, "Latvijas ārpolitika un starptautiskais stāvoklis: 1934.–1938." no *Starptautisko attiecību problēmas. Profesoram Varslavānam 70* (Rīga, 2005), 70.
- ²⁷ Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture. Ārpolitika 1920–1940*, 2. sēj. (Stokholma, 1984), 113; Aivars Stranga, "Latvijas ārpolitika un starptautiskais stāvoklis: 1934.–1938.," 161.
- ²⁸ Aivars Stranga, "Latvijas ārpolitika un starptautiskais stāvoklis: 1934.–1938.," 98.
- ²⁹ Publicēti: Miķelis Valters, *Mana sarakste ar Kārli Ulmani un Vilhelmu Munteru Latvijas traģiskajos gados* (Westeras, 1957).
- ³⁰ Edgars Andersons, *Latvijas vēsture. Ārpolitika 1920–1940*, 2. sēj., 22; Inesis Feldmanis, Mārtiņš Virsis, Aivars Stranga, "Krustceļi un sānceļi" no *Pretstatu cīņā* (Rīga, 1990), 190; Aivars Stranga, "Latvijas ārpolitika un starptautiskais stāvoklis: 1934.–1938.," 161.
- ³¹ Aivars Stranga, "Latvijas ārpolitika un starptautiskais stāvoklis: 1934.–1938.," 347.
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ The German historian Florian Henning-Setzen wrote that during World War II, Switzerland, Sweden and Ireland exercised a policy, which was aimed at the support of one or the other belligerent power and which did not meet the principles of the 1907 Hague Convention (Florian Henning-Setzen, *Neutralitaet im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Irland, Schweden und die Schweiz im Vergleich*, 122).
- ³⁴ Author's correspondence.
- ³⁵ Aivars Stranga, "Latvijas ārpolitika un starptautiskais stāvoklis: 1934.–1938.," 360.
- ³⁶ LVVA, 2574. f., 3. apr., 3293. l., 25.
- ³⁷ Inesis Feldmanis, Aivars Stranga, Jānis Taurēns, Antonijs Zunda, *Latvijas ārpolitika un diplomātija 20. gadsimta sākumā*, 1. sēj., 383.

**ACTIVITIES
DURING THE
PERIODS OF
EXILE AND
AWAKENING**

The Diplomatic Service in Exile: Champions of Latvia's Independence and International Challenges

KRISTĪNE BEĶERE

The diplomatic service of the Republic of Latvia was in a unique and difficult situation after the end of the Second World War. As a result of occupation and annexation by the Soviet Union, the Latvian state represented by diplomats abroad existed only formally. In practice, diplomats no longer had any government to receive instructions from for further actions and to communicate with in order to fulfill their main function: representation of the interests of Latvia abroad. The diplomatic service remained the only institution of the Republic of Latvia, which also practically continued to operate throughout the whole era of occupation.

The internal structure of the diplomatic service and the decision to continue working abroad, despite the liquidation of the Latvian state *de facto*, were based on the extraordinary powers issued by the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia on May 17, 1940, to the Envoy of Latvia to London, Kārlis Zariņš. The mandate gave him the right to defend Latvia's interests in all countries (except Estonia, Lithuania, Finland, Sweden, Germany and the Soviet Union); to issue binding orders for all Latvian missions (except the above-mentioned countries); to manage state funds, movable and immovable property held by the respective missions; to temporarily withdraw envoys from office, remove or transfer all other mission staff; to close representations other than the United States; to appoint delegates to meetings and conferences and, in exceptional circumstances, hand over this mandate to Envoy to the United States Alfrēds Bilmanis.¹

Possibilities for diplomats after the occupation of Latvia to continue their work in their accreditation countries, of course, were most directly dependent on the attitude of these countries towards the annexation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union. Most of the world's democratic countries, including the

most important one – the United States, continued to recognize the existence of the Baltic States *de iure* and did not approve the rights of the USSR to their territories. The US policy on the issue of Baltic independence was created and defined also in later years by the declaration of US Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles dated July 23, 1940,² which clearly stated that the United States did not recognize the annexation and incorporation of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in the USSR. This position, in turn, was based on the 1932 Stimson doctrine that did not recognize the capture of another country's territory, if it was implemented through force or threat. The so called 'non-recognition policy', i.e. the non-recognition of Soviet jurisdiction over the Baltic States *de iure* was launched and this policy was implemented by most Western countries until the restoration of the independence of the Baltic States.

In these circumstances, the Latvian diplomatic service, its existence and the continuation of activities in the Western countries was a practical embodiment and symbol of this non-recognition policy. The role of this diplomatic service as the symbol of the existence of the Latvian state *de iure* is much emphasized, characterizing the diplomatic service during the exile period and its contribution to preserving the idea of independent Latvia. However, emphasizing the diplomatic service as a symbol leads to a false idea that it, like any symbol, once established, was a static, inactive and self-evident phenomenon. It might seem that the existence of a diplomatic service in the status of a symbol was self-evident, did not require particular efforts on the part of the diplomats and it everything happened as by itself. However, this was not the case with the diplomatic service of the Republic of Latvia. Although it can not be denied that, compared to the tumultuous years of the Second World War, the activities of the diplomatic service in the post-war years were carried out on a much smaller scale with incredibly smaller opportunities for action, however, behind the well-known "symbol of continuity," a thorough day-to-day work in constricting conditions took place in order to maintain the service and its symbolic status.

By the end of the Second World War, only four of the twelve prewar Latvian embassies were operating around the world: in Great Britain (London), the United States (Washington, DC), Argentina (Buenos Aires, the envoy accredited also to Brazil) and the Permanent Delegation to the League of Nations in Switzerland (Geneva); a large number of consuls and honorary consuls also continued to work. Other missions were closed, including those

where envoys obeyed the demands by the USSR and transferred the offices to the Soviet Union. Out of those remaining, only the missions in United Kingdom and the United States were operating for a long time. The mission in Switzerland was closed at the end of 1946. In Argentina, on June 30, 1946, the Government of Juan Perón closed all three diplomatic missions of the Baltic States, *de iure* recognizing the incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR. Ambassador Pēteris Oliņš continued to work in Brazil until March 11, 1961 when the Brazilian government also decided to no longer recognize the official activities of the diplomatic missions of the Baltic States, while retaining the personal diplomatic status of the existing diplomats. The order of the Brazilian Foreign Minister authorized the diplomatic missions of the Baltic States to continue issuing various types of documents, which were widely interpreted by the missions, covering practically all consular issues, continuing the issuance and extension of passports, certificates of birth, marriage, etc.³

The activities of the missions in South America practically ceased with the death of Pēteris Oliņš in 1962. The embassy in London after the departure of the holder of extraordinary powers Kārlis Zariņš in April 29, 1963 was further headed by Councillor Teodots Ozoliņš, in capacity of Chargé d'Affaires who remained in this position until 1981.

Latvian Mission in USA

The Latvian diplomatic mission in the USA during the Cold War had of particular importance because the United States was the main power in the world retaining the policy of non-recognition of the USSR jurisdiction over the Baltic States and, consequently, their existence in *de iure* status. Accordingly, the diplomatic mission of Latvia in the United States was not only symbolically more important; it was also in the most suitable position for defending the legal continuation of Latvia. The United States was the only country that completely preserved the status, diplomatic privileges and immunities of Latvian diplomats. After the death of Kārlis Zariņš in 1963, the embassy in USA also became the head office of the entire diplomatic service of the Republic of Latvia from the point of view of the internal hierarchy as Arnolds Spekke took over the leadership of the service. The role of the embassy in the United States was elevated by the fact that not only its own, but also the operation of the entire diplomatic and consular network was financed through Latvian state funds deposited in USA.

During the exile Latvia's Mission to the United States, were led by several diplomats: Alfrēds Bilmanis (Extraordinary Envoy and Minister Plenipotentiary) from 1935 to his death in 1948; Jūlijs Feldmans (Chargé d'Affaires) from 1949 until his death in 1953; Arnolds Spekke (Chargé d'Affaires) from 1954 until retirement in 1970 and, finally, from October 1970 – the long-term advisor to the mission and, in between the appointments of new envoys the Acting Head of Mission, Anatols Dinbergs. All these diplomats were professionals with significant foreign and diplomatic experience. Most (except Spekke) had been working for a shorter or longer period in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia during the Interwar period.

The Latvian Mission to the United States was located in Washington, DC, and operated in a building owned by the embassy (from 1952) at 4325, Seventeenth Street, N.W. Shortly after the purchase of the premises on May 17, 1952, Jūlijs Feldmans legally affirmed the inheritance of the management rights. Feldmans appointed Councillor Anatols Dinbergs as the second manager, giving him the same right to manage the building as the sole and full owner, including rental and sales rights in the interests of the embassy. If both Jūlijs Feldmans and Anatols Dinbergs for any reason could not manage the building, such a right would be transferred to the head of the Latvian mission or Chargé d'Affaires approved by the US Secretary of State. During transitional periods, when there would be no official head of mission, the right to manage the property would be with a bank designated by the US Secretary of State to manage the property until it could be handed over to the head of mission, provided that the building would always be used for the needs of the Latvian embassy or at least in the interests of the Latvian state.⁴ Thus, the issue of managing the building was solved and, outlining the necessity to harmonize decisions with the US Department of State, attempt was made to the extent possible to ensure that the premises remained in full ownership and control of the Latvian embassy. On April 16, 1955 Anatols Dinbergs appointed Arnolds Spekke as the second manager; according to requirement set by Jūlijs Feldmans, Spekke's right to manage the building was endorsed by a lower-ranking US government official on behalf of the US Secretary of State.⁵ The building remained in the ownership of the mission throughout the whole period of exile and, after the restoration of Latvia's independence, came into possession of the renewed Latvian state; in 2010 the building was sold.

The property of the mission consisted of a land plot of 309 square meters and a building of 260 square meters. The premises for the needs of the embassy were



Latvian legation in the USA: exterior and interior.

Source: LNA LVVA 293.f., 1.apr., 467.l. (interior), LNA LVVA 293.f., 1.apr., 469.l. (exterior).



relatively small and simple. Arnolds Spekke in his memories comparing it to the premises of the Lithuanian diplomatic mission, describes the Latvian embassy as “narrow poverty.”⁶ However, the premises still had capacity to accommodate up to 200 guests, for example, at the celebration of the National Day on November 18. Because of limited financial resources, it was also not possible to maintain perfectly looking rooms, often carrying out only the most necessary repair works.

The staff of the mission was also small. There were usually six employees in the embassy: the Head of Mission, the Counselor, a chief clerk, an archivist, and two clerks. A lawyer was also employed separately as needed.⁷

Although the US government gave the same status, rights and immunity to the diplomatic mission in Washington and its head as to all other diplomatic missions, the social status of the Latvian embassy among other diplomatic missions was, however, quite peculiar. A certain degree of isolation from other diplomatic missions is well characterized by the situation in 1954, when Arnolds Spekke took the office as the Head of Mission – less than half of the recipients replied to his letters sent on this occasion; from Europe only Ireland, Spain and the Federal Republic of Germany replied.⁸ A large portion of diplomatic missions from different countries in Washington did not formally communicate with the representations of the Baltic States and some other avoided informal contacts, too. Of course, the Latvian envoys met also these diplomats in various events organised by the US government or other diplomatic missions, but in some cases they did not actually have any communication with them.

Funding of the Activities of Missions

A very important prerequisite for the existence and operation of the Latvian embassy in the USA and the entire network of diplomatic missions during the period of exile was the availability of financial resources necessary for the fulfillment of the main functions. In 1940 the extraordinary powers issued to Envoy Zariņš, who were apparently intended only to deal with situation in a shorter critical period of time, allowed the missions to spend only the relatively small amounts of money they currently had at their disposal, but did not provide for long-term solutions. Therefore, during the war years, the embassies had to tackle the issue of finances by themselves. Both Britain and the United States already began to allocate small amounts of money from the Latvian state-owned deposits in these countries, which were blocked after the occupation by to cover the expenses necessary for the essential functions of the missions. The United Kingdom had initially provided funds only for the operation of diplomats accredited in UK itself. Over time, the funding of the diplomatic service was increasingly concentrated in the United States, especially after 1961, when Britain gradually stopped financing the London-based embassy.⁹

Thus the budget of the Latvian embassy in the United States during the years of exile mainly derived from the interest of Latvian state funds deposited in the United States each year approved to a certain amount for the mission by the US Department of State; the budget was complemented by limited revenues from consular activities. The United States, in its annual budget allocations from the Latvian deposits, provided not only funds for the work of the embassy in Washington: salaries, representation expenses, rent of the apartments for the head of mission and counselor, office expenses, domestic and foreign travel expenses, but also for practically all Latvian diplomatic missions and consulates. For instance, in 1960, through the embassy in the United States the funds were allocated to the mission in Brazil, diplomatic representatives in Spain, Switzerland, the consulate in Montreal, Canada, representatives in France, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Belgium and the Netherlands, as well as to cover the representation costs, local travel expenses and salary for the secretary at the embassy in London. In addition to these costs, modest amounts were intended for benefits to Latvians living in the United States and through the Red Cross of Latvia to those residing in Europe. Benefits were granted to the widows of the envoys Bilmanis and Feldmans, as well as the widow of the former President of the Republic of Latvia, Alberts Kviesis in Australia.¹⁰

However, budgeting and receiving the necessary funds from the US Department of State was not an easy process. The head of the embassy in US started drafting the next year's budget usually in September–October of the previous year. First of all, it was necessary to draw up a draft budget plan for the coming year, balancing the desires and real possibilities of the various other further recipients (different consulates and the mission to London). The head of mission first unofficially coordinated the draft budget with the US Department of State officials, and, only when he received an unofficial confirmation, filed a formal request – which was usually approved by the State Department in December.¹¹ The amounts included in the draft budget were also necessary to be substantiated in face-to-face talks with department officials and to literally win each budget line with their arguments and persuasive skills, especially if it was to be increased in comparison with the previous year. In many cases, the Department of State refused to finance one or another budget line at all or in the planned amount. The amounts included in the final budget in all cases were a compromise solution, which was either more favorable or less favorable to the embassy from year to year. Budgetary

coordination was one of the most important tasks of the routine management of the mission, so the emotions of Arnolds Spekke when writing to Kārlis Zariņš are well understood: “I have the pleasure to announce to you that I have finally received an official note from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, which confirms our 1955 budget of \$135,800. So my first budget battle ended with victory. May God help me also in times to come.”¹²

The US Department of State closely followed each budget line and strongly emphasized that the frozen funds of the Baltic States could be used strictly to finance only the most necessary functions of the diplomatic missions. Otherwise, the Department of State might be forced to submit to political pressure to use frozen funds to cover the financial claims of American citizens against the Baltic States.¹³ In addition, the US Department of State did not rely solely on the information provided by the Latvian embassy, but also checked it through its information channels. In 1959, the Department of State instructed its diplomatic missions in Australia and Canada to collect and send information on the activities of the Latvian consuls in Melbourne and Montreal respectively, recorded in the budget, in order to ascertain the need for their financing.¹⁴

The budget of the Latvian embassy in the United States financing the whole network of the Latvian diplomatic missions has changed little over the time: from 157 thousand dollars in 1959 to 168 thousand in 1967.¹⁵ Accordingly, with the increase of the living costs the missions with their budget, which was a “survival” budget already in the early 1950s, with each passing year were able to cover ever less needs. One of the painful questions was the salaries of employees. In 1955 Kārlis Zariņš noted that the employees of the London mission still received salaries set in 1945, although the costs of living had grown several times over the decade.¹⁶ One more time later in 1963 the envoy had to conclude the same thing again: the cost of living increased threefold, but the salaries of the employees remained the same and were lower than those of low-skilled service personnel in USA.¹⁷

The situation of the embassy in the United States itself was quite the same, especially in the early 1960s, when it had to take over the entire financing of the mission in London in a few years' time. Arnolds Spekke writes: “In the past couple of years I've been in the department saying that we could no longer keep our embassy and operate effectively with the budget, as it was granted to us 12–13 years ago, I had to hear that once we need now to take London on our shoulders, it is also difficult to talk about raising our

own budget to a level that is somewhat appropriate to current prices. And so the paint on our house is flecking away both inside and outside, the stairs are collapsing, to put it bluntly, the scenery is not very impressive.”¹⁸ In financial terms the work of the embassy in USA and all Latvian diplomats in exile was an ongoing struggle for survival.

Changing Heads of Mission

The continuation of diplomatic mission in the United States were challenged by transitional periods when a new head of mission had to be chosen and appointed in the case of the death of the former one. There was no shortage of those willing to occupy the position among Latvians. There were comparatively many former diplomats in exile, and such a position was a unique opportunity to return to diplomatic service, which offered, albeit modest, but quite plummy remuneration and status for the exile conditions.

Therefore, it was no wonder that after the death of Jūlijs Feldmans in 1953, “a great “succession play” started” and “a great deal of excitement in the Latvian emigration was stirred up with all the awkward and reckless display of selfishness.”¹⁹

Kārlis Zariņš’ powers provided him with the right to make a choice and appoint a new head of mission (only to the rank of Chargé d’Affaires), and the US government respected his rights, but Zariņš had to comply with a number of US government requirements on this issue. For example, one of the basic prerequisites was that this position should be held by an experienced diplomat.²⁰ Given the specific situation of the Baltic States in general and the peculiar status of the diplomatic representation, this requirement is well understood. The US Government abandoned this requirement just October 25, 1980, announcing that it would continue to accredit as staff members at the diplomatic missions of the Baltic States also persons who had not worked in the diplomatic services of independent Baltic states.²¹

The situation with the appointment of successors complicated after the death of the mandate-holder Kārlis Zariņš, therefore the meeting of diplomatic representatives on May 5, 1963 in London decided that the service would be led by Arnolds Spekke,²² so the leadership of the Latvian diplomatic service was taken over by the embassy in Washington and, accordingly, its head inherited the powers exercised until then by Kārlis Zariņš. In the event of a change of Head of Mission the US State Department’s view and

its approval of the selected candidate was still crucial, and the process of harmonization could become quite complicated. When Arnolds Spekke left the post of Head of Mission because of health problems, a number of divisions within the US Department of State – Political, Protocol, and Legal Division were involved in the process for the appointment and approval of the successor, until September 23, 1970 to a great relief for the Latvian diplomats the US Secretary of State declared in writing that he had accepted Anatols Dinbergs as Spekke's successor.²³ At the conference of the Latvian diplomatic service employees in Paris in 1971, Dinbergs was also appointed as the Head of the Latvian diplomatic service.²⁴

The Latvian diplomatic representatives in exile met more or less regularly. At the first of such conferences after the Second World War on May 26, 1946 in Geneva, the diplomats set out the general principles for further work. Latvian envoys Kārlis Zariņš, Oļģerds Grosvalds and Jūlijs Feldmans agreed, among other things, that “the struggle for the restoration of Latvia's independence should be continued as intensely as possible and that the extraordinary powers granted to Kārlis Zariņš should be regarded as a continuation of the idea of the sovereign power of the State of Latvia and serve as the legal basis for the activities of the envoys.” Subsequent regular envoys meetings were also envisaged.²⁵

Such meetings of diplomatic staff took place – for example, in 1964 and 1980 in London, 1971, 1979, 1981 and 1983 in Paris, 1975 and 1977 in Geneva. At these meetings, the diplomats informed each other about the political situation of Latvia in their country of residence, the legal status of their missions and personal conditions of the representatives, their possibilities of operation, relations with Latvian exile organisations, etc. Diplomats also usually discussed changes and the situation in the network of Latvian diplomatic representations and exchanged information on Latvia's financial assets and property in different countries, what changes had happened in this respect.²⁶

Protection of Latvia's Interests

Possible actions of diplomats in the field of US political lobby, trying to achieve decisions favorable to the idea of independence of the Baltic States, as well as participation in organising the Latvian community in the United States was limited by the very status of diplomats. The Vienna Convention of 1961

(and also the rules of international law governing diplomatic activities before it) prohibited diplomats from intervening in internal affairs of the receiving State. The diplomats were free to participate in various organisations for the preservation of Latvian culture and ethnic identity, which they did to the extent possible during the exile period. Jūlijs Feldmans has the greatest merit in the founding of the American Latvian Association.²⁷ But the organisation of any political activity posed risks for the diplomatic status.

There were mainly two means left for the protection of Latvia's interests at the disposal of the diplomatic service. The first included various notes of protest against potential violations of the rights of Latvia and handing of aide-memoires to the US State Department, and the other – a general anti-communist informative activity enlightening the situation of Latvia and its history. The notes and various memoranda to the US Department of State were presented by Latvian diplomats on a wide range of issues that affected or could affect Latvia's interests. For example, in protest against statements by representatives of the USSR in international organisations such as the United Nations in 1952,²⁸ expressing gratitude for supporting the rights of the Baltic nations²⁹ or reminding about Latvia's situation on the occasion of the opening of the European Security and Cooperation Conference in Helsinki in 1975.³⁰ As the Latvian exile strengthened and organised itself, sending of different informative and protest letters and applications to the governments of the countries of residence from the middle of the 1950s onwards has been gradually taken over by the exile political organisations. Different exile organisations (as opposed to diplomatic service) involved a wide circle of people and their political activities were not restricted by diplomatic status, so they performed the role of a political lobby much more actively than diplomats could do. Still, the diplomatic service continued to inform the US Department of State on the official position of Latvia on various issues within its area of competence. The Head of Mission also maintained regular contacts with Lithuanian and Estonian diplomatic representatives and, where appropriate, presented memoranda to the State Department on behalf of all three Baltic States.

One of the best possibilities for the embassy to act in defence of Latvia's interests was the creation of knowledge and understanding about the unlawful occupation of Latvia in the United States, explaining the events in a manner favorable for Latvia in contrast to the story spread by the USSR about the voluntary accession of the Baltic States to Soviet Union. In particular, Envoy Bilmanis realized already during the war years that the

information function is one of the most effective operational tools left to the mission. Since 1941, the embassy created and printed a series of informative collections about the Baltic States, their history and events in Latvia from 1939 to 1942. Six books, several brochures and many articles were published in US periodical papers in 1943–1944. Among the publications, the collection of documents “Latvian–Russian Relations,” which summarized all documents available to the embassy (e.g., agreements) related to Latvia–Russia relations since 1721, deserves a particular attention.³¹ The publication was distributed by the embassy, among other addressees, to US public and university libraries.³² The Embassy also sent information about its activities to the exile press, and in the following years, this message was also transmitted to Latvia through Voice of America and Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty.³³

Since 1936, the Embassy also issued an informative newsletter about Latvia in English “Latvian Information Bulletin.” If initially the bulletin was intended observe more about Latvia’s economic situation, after the occupation of Latvia it largely informed about the events in illegally occupied Latvia, emphasized violations committed by the Soviet Union and reminded about the rights of Latvia and other countries.³⁴ The newsletter was released four times a year in more than one thousand copies (up to 1700 copies in the middle of the 1980s) and was sent to diplomatic missions of other countries, the US government and administration, media, etc. Due very constrained resources the compilation and publishing of this newsletter was not always easy. During the sixties, there was often lack of means for printing the bulletin and it had to be replicated on the rotator at the embassy.³⁵ The bulletin’s cover and print quality were therefore very simple and modest. However, it came out on a regular basis without interruption throughout the entire era of exile.

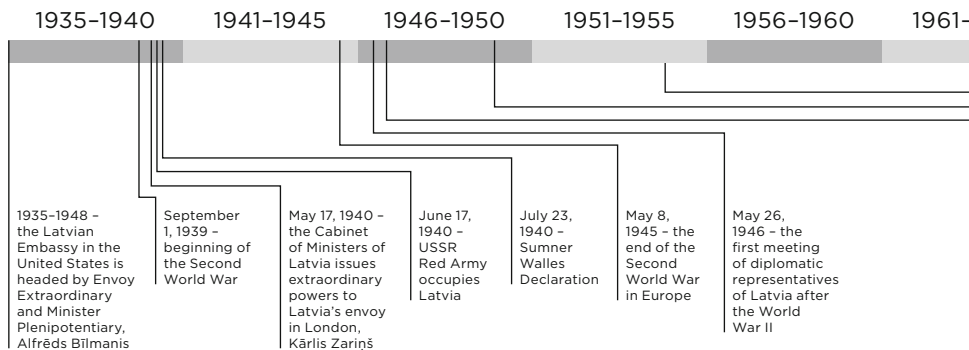
The embassy, in its limited scope, promoted information work in other countries as well. The mission regularly sent out its own prepared information about Latvia, the current political situation in relation to Latvia, events in the occupied Latvia, etc. for publishing in Latvian newspapers of other countries. Despite the very limited budget of the mission, the embassy found it possible to forward small funds to support informative publications about Latvia in other countries, for example, in 1960 to the newsletter *Noticiero de los Paises Bálticos* (News from the Baltic States) in Argentina to cover the costs of distribution.³⁶ This attests to the importance the embassy attached to the information activities.

* * *

The diplomatic service in its activities always had to keep in mind first of all the extraordinary importance of its existence as a continuation of the legal continuity of the Republic of Latvia, and the existence of diplomatic missions should in no way be compromised and subjected to risk by negligent behavior. Quite naturally, this led to certain restraint and prudence in the activities of the diplomatic service. The important status of the diplomatic service with its so precarious balance between possibilities and willingness to act at the same time was often not understood by exile organisations, accusing the diplomats of being inactive and not using their opportunities.

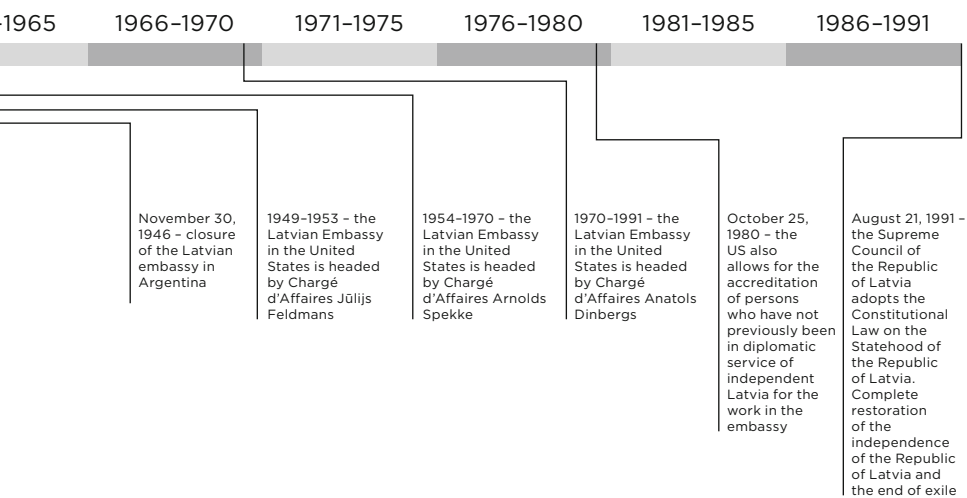
After analysis of the activities of the diplomatic service during the exile, it should be concluded that such criticism by exile organisations is not justified and it can rather be explained by the public incomprehension of the specifics of the diplomatic work and the incorrect understanding of the role of symbol and bulwark of legal continuity attributed to the embassies in exile, than by the lack of their activity. The diplomatic service of the Republic of Latvia had to deal with very difficult conditions – without operational guidelines and support from its own country, with very limited funding and opportunities to act, partly staying in isolation among other diplomats. Driven by the situation diplomats took the initiative, sought solutions for their own existence, and often took decisions on issues that under normal circumstances would be the responsibility of the government they represented.

The principled position of diplomats to stay committed to their state and active and selfless engagement in the interests of their country under difficult circumstances of exile is an inspiring example for us today. This is also an example of the great importance the cooperation and careful daily work has to overcome difficulties and crises, and also calls for not giving up even in seemingly unresolvable and almost hopeless situations. In order to ensure the ultimate goal of the legal continuation of the Republic of Latvia, Latvian diplomats in exile used their very few opportunities of action that the specific diplomatic status and the peculiar political situation of the Baltic States were offering to them. With thorough and unselfish work, the diplomats of the Republic of Latvia succeeded in ensuring the legal continuity of Latvia, which was symbolically confirmed by the very existence of their diplomatic missions, from the occupation of Latvia in 1940 until the restoration of independence.



Endnotes

- ¹ See more on the extraordinary powers in Ainārs Lerhis, “Latvijas valdības 1940. gada 17. maija pilnvaru jautājums,” *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls* 1 (2011), 48–79.
- ² “Statement by the Acting Secretary of State, Mr. Welles, relating to the incorporation of the Baltic States. Released to the Press July 23, 1940” in *Baltic States: A Study Their Origin and National Development; Their Seizure and Incorporation into the U.S.S.R. Third Interim Report of the Select Committee on Communist Aggression*, House of Representatives, Eighty-Third Congress, Second Session, 1954, Under the Authority of H. Res. 346 and H. Res. 438.
- ³ P. Oliņa 1962. gada 15. aprīļa vēstule K. Zariņam, Latvijas Valsts Arhivs (LVA), 2263. f., 1. apr., 84. l., 5.
- ⁴ Appointment of Successor trustee by J. Feldmans, May 17, 1951, USA National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), RG59, 1955–59 Central Decimal file, Box nr. 2333.
- ⁵ Office Memorandum from W.A. Crawford to Mr. Merchant, July 7, 1955, USA NARA, RG59, 1955–59 Central Decimal file, Box nr. 2333.
- ⁶ Arnolds Spekke, *Atmiņu brīži* (Rīga: Jumava, 2000), 238.
- ⁷ Latvijas Valsts Vēstures Arhivs (LVVA), 293.f., 1. apr., 4880.l.
- ⁸ See more: Arnolds Spekke, *Atmiņu brīži*, 241–247.
- ⁹ See correspondence of Kārlis Zariņš on this issue: LVA, 2263. f., 1. apr., 152. l.
- ¹⁰ Budget of the Latvian Legation in Washington for 1960, LVVA, 293. f., 1. apr., 4880. l., 18.
- ¹¹ J. Feldmaņa vēstule K. Zariņam, 1951. gada 22. oktobris, LVA, 2263. f., 1. apr., 152. l., 5.
- ¹² A. Spekkes vēstule K. Zariņam, 1955. gada 10. janvāris, LVA, 2263. f., 1. apr., 152. l., 36.
- ¹³ US Department of State, memorandum for the file, March 27, 1956, USA NARA, RG59, 1955–59 Central Decimal file, 601.600 11/3-2756.
- ¹⁴ USA NARA, RG59, 1955–59 Central Decimal file, Box nr. 2333.
- ¹⁵ LVVA, 293. f., 1. apr., 4880.
- ¹⁶ K. Zariņa vēstule A. Spekkem, 1955. gada 2. septembris, LVA, 2263. f., 1. apr., 152. l., 47.
- ¹⁷ K. Zariņa vēstule A. Spekkem, 1963. gada 21. janvāris, LVA, 2263. f., 1. apr., 152. l., 63.
- ¹⁸ A. Spekkes vēstule K. Zariņam, 1963. gada 24. janvāris, LVA, 2263. f., 1. apr., 152. l., 67.



¹⁹ Arnolds Spekke, *Atmiņu brīži*, 231.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 233.

²¹ Inesis Feldmanis, Astra Aleksandra Freimanis, Ainārs Lerhis, Ineta Ziemele, "Latvijas valsts okupācijas gados (1940–1991)" no *Dokumenti par Latvijas valsts starptautisko atzīšanu, neatkarības atjaunošanu un diplomātiskajiem sakariem. 1918–1998* (Rīga: Nordik, 1999), 151.

²² *Latvijas ārlietu dienesta darbinieki 1918–1991: Biogrāfiskā vārdnīca*, sast. Ēriks Jēkabsons, Valters Ščerbinskis (Rīga: Zinātne, 2003), 33.

²³ Latvijas diplomātisko pārstāvju 1971. gada 16.–17. septembra sanāksmes Parīzē protokols. LVVA, 293. f., 1. apr., 720. l., 86–87.

²⁴ *Latvijas ārlietu dienesta darbinieki 1918–1991...*, 34.

²⁵ *Latvijas ārlietu dienesta darbinieki 1918–1991...*, 32.

²⁶ LVVA, 293. f., 1. apr., 720. l.

²⁷ Pēteris Lejiņš, "Sūtņis Jūlijs Feldmans un Amerikas latviešu apvienība" no *Jūlijs Feldmans* (Grand Haven, MI: Apgāda VAIDAVA spiestuve, 1963), 11–18.

²⁸ See doc. nr. 173., *Latvijas Republikas oficiālā nostāja Latvijas diplomātiskā dienesta dokumentos 1940.–1991. gadā* (Rīga, LVI apgāds, 2015), 306.

²⁹ See doc. nr. 176., *Latvijas Republikas oficiālā nostāja...*, 310.

³⁰ See doc. nr. 201., *Latvijas Republikas oficiālā nostāja...*, 344.

³¹ Alfred Bilmanis, comp., *Latvian–Russian Relations: Documents* (Washington, D.C.: Latvian Legation, 1944).

³² Anatols Dinbergs, "Latvijas sūtniecības darbs ASV" no *Latviešu trimdas desmit gadi* (Astras apgāds, 1954), 21.

³³ Jānis Lūsis, "Latvijas diplomātu darbs," *Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts*, No. 3 (1990), 13.

³⁴ Anatols Dinbergs, "Latvijas sūtniecības darbs ASV," 22–23.

³⁵ Arnolds Spekke, *Atmiņu brīži*, 254.

³⁶ A. Spekkes 1960. gada 9. jūnija vēstule A. Gustam, LVVA, 293. f., 1. apr., 1185. l., 8.

Latvia's Starlit Road: *De iure* Recognition of the Restoration of Independence

GUNDA REIRE

Stories tell that in 1988 after a plenary meeting of the Latvian Writers' Union one of the leaders of the National Awakening movement went to an astrologist to find out the future of Latvia. The astrologist allegedly suggested that Latvia would become free in the year that looks the same from both ends, and back then it was interpreted as being the year 2002, because 1991, as a decisive turning point, seemed just as unrealistic as humans reaching the stars.

The process of *de iure* recognition of independence of Latvia was full of quests, learning, fortuities, efforts of selfless individuals and fateful coincidences. This presents a close synergy between geopolitical processes and specific individuals' activities, between personal relations and unquestionable principles of international law. It is impossible to estimate the extent, to which *de iure* recognition of Latvian independence is a direct result of collapse of a bipolar system and to which it is the achievement of an aim nurtured over many years by the National Awakening leaders and the people of Latvia. In all respects, geopolitics played in favor of Latvia, but the lasting and targeted attempts for freedom ensured that at the most decisive time – in August 1991 – the society of Latvia was deemed sufficiently independent, politically organised and able to control their territory, for an avalanche-like process of international recognition of statehood to commence.

This article is dedicated to the process of *de iure* recognition of independence of the Republic of Latvia, to the involved individuals and the circumstances of decision-making, and it is based on four interviews with leaders of the Third National Awakening – the Chairman of the Popular Front of Latvia and the First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council Dainis Īvāns, the Chairman of the Supreme Council Anatolijs Gorbunovs, his aide of the time and a close peer Karina Pētersone, and the first Foreign Minister of the Republic of Latvia Jānis Jurkāns. The article does not aim to

give a chronological account of events and, because of the memoir narrative, it can be subjectively selective in some nuances. Therefore, attention will be paid to the three main aspects, in the author's view, within the context of *de iure* recognition of restoration of independence of Latvia – the fact in itself of *de iure* recognition in August–September 1991, the decision on the internationalization of the Baltic issue for the building of a general base, so that at the most decisive moment, the matter of freedom and independence of Latvia will have widely resonated in the international forum, and the road to the concept of restoration of Latvia of 1918 by parliamentary means versus various other concepts of sovereignty of Latvia.

The road towards Latvia of 1918

The National Awakening leaders did not reach the concept of the restoration of Latvia of 1918 and the road to it right away. Quite the contrary – for a long time, there was “feeling the ground” and a process of seeking. “In 1988, we still had no idea of how to achieve independence. There were some, who believed that the Soviet Union will somehow evolve and that it will democratically offer the chance to its nations to regain freedom. The others were more radical and called for the restoration of the prewar republic, but the concept was entirely obscure. Civic movements had not yet formed, when some representatives claimed – now we will be waiting that the West recognizes us. Of course, nobody did. In the first occasions of interaction, the US, French, Spanish diplomats said – yes, you are entitled, you are an occupied country, but they believed that we would gain independence in negotiations with Moscow. Nobody was planning to recognize us, even though there was a non-recognition policy,” tells Dainis Īvāns.

The meeting that convened in Abrene in May 1989 between the leaders of the Popular Front of Latvia and the PBLA (The World Federation of Free Latvians), before the Baltic Way, was a crucial stepping stone on the road to Latvia regaining independence, – tells Dainis Īvāns. “Austris Grasis offered a meeting between our and the PBLA council in Abrene, France. There, Levits was the protagonist in the formulation of the independence idea, in wording the tactics, including moving towards international recognition. He worried that, as we went on our way, and we knew no other way, because we had no knowledge of international recognition of a state, we might lose the bargaining chip that we had at our disposal, namely, that the West does not

recognize our occupation. At the same time, Levits was sufficiently realistic to understand that we could not take the route of citizens' committees¹ because it was infeasible. He found the formula of how to combine it – we will be taking the parliamentary way to restore the prewar Republic of Latvia. Then, the election of the Saeima would take place, to be voted by the totality of citizens,” tells Dainis Īvāns about the decisive contribution of Egils Levits to the restoration of independence of Latvia.

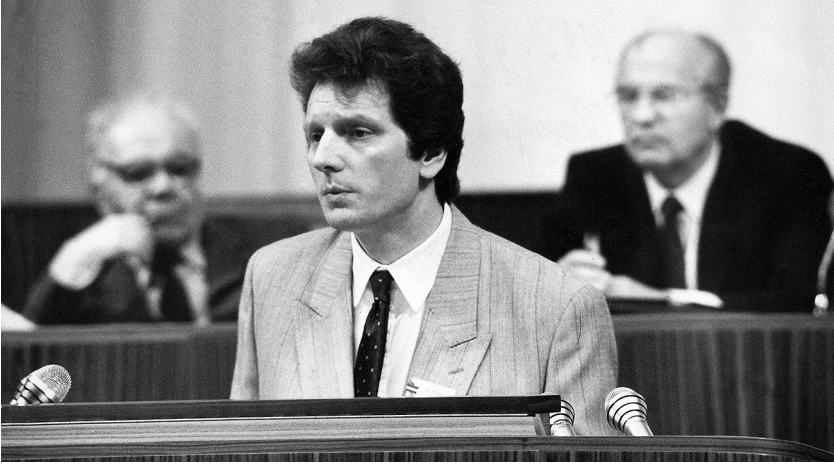
Back then, Egils Levits was a consultant of the PBLA and played a crucial role, by showing to the PBLA that they can and should cooperate with the only solid organisation, which can reach something and achieve changes in Latvia, and that it will not be a cooperation with the regime. Secondly, he proved that the most acceptable approach is by way of restoration of the prewar Latvia and that it is compatible with the parliamentary way. Later on, this approach was employed by the National Awakening leaders in negotiations with the West.

In October 1989, the second congress of the Popular Front of Latvia followed, where the independence program was adopted; the main idea of the program was the idea formulated by Levits on the restoration of Latvia of 1918 by parliamentary means. “The citizens of Latvia never gave up their independence in a referendum, therefore, from the viewpoint of international law, the Soviet occupation and annexation did not legally interrupt the existence of the Republic of Latvia which was proclaimed in 1918 – it only illegally liquidated its sovereign state authority. The Popular Front of Latvia (PFL) undertook its restoration.”² At the second congress of the Popular Front of Latvia, a new foreign policy program was also adopted regarding international recognition of Latvia, outlining the road from *de facto* recognition of independence towards *de iure* recognition of independence. In March 1990, at the Latvian SSR Supreme Council election, victory was anticipated for the Popular Front of Latvia, therefore the government decided on taking the parliamentary way to the restoration of independence – to participate in the Latvian SSR Supreme Council election, to try and get a two-thirds majority vote and to use the Supreme Council provided for in the Latvian SSR Constitution as the means to restore independence.³

The issue of the Molotov–Ribbentrop (the Non–aggression Pact between Germany and the USSR, August 23, 1939) or rather the issue of secret Additional Protocols were determinant in the restoration of Latvia of 1918; the protocols, among other things, classified Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia

as pertaining to the USSR sphere of interests, and as a result, the USSR army invaded and occupied the Baltic countries. Dainis Īvāns remarks that it was after the Gananouke Conference when the formula crystalized rather clearly of what the parliamentary way of restoring independence means and that the consideration of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact formed a part of it: “At the Baltic Assembly,⁴ we put forth three strategic goals to the Baltic group at the USSR Congress. The first was general democratization of the Soviet Union. The second was the abolition of Article 6 of the Constitution, namely, the abolition of the role of the Communist Party. This could untie our hands, because we were constantly told that everything that the Popular Front is doing must be agreed with the Communist Party, because that was what was prescribed in the Constitution. Thirdly, a review of the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact must be achieved, as it was international crime, and it must be deemed as void from the time of its signing.”

“The most important achievement of the USSR People’s deputies⁵ was the recognition of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact as unlawful, criminal, and void from the time it was adopted. This opened up a pathway to the restoration of independence,” stresses Īvāns. He tells: “At the First Congress of People’s Deputies of the Soviet Union, we requested that a parliamentary investigation commission is created regarding the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. Initially, this was not achieved, because only Baltic representatives were included in the commission. Since we threatened to leave the hall, and this was not to the benefit of Gorbachev, he tasked Yakovlev,⁶ a major proponent of our *Perestroika*, with forming the commission. Yakovlev rearranged the commission, and we remained the majority, but there were also others, and Yakovlev, a Russian, himself was in the lead; the Congress approved it. Then, targeted foreign policy action commenced, because Soviet Congress members, having the necessary mandate, travelled to the West and sought facts. Our objective was to achieve that the Kremlin admits it to the whole world that we – the Baltic countries – were illegally occupied.” Dainis Īvāns also tells about the circumstances, under which the idea to organise the Baltic Way was born: “The work of the parliamentary investigation commission stalled; we were deprived of a chance to voice our opinions, and the review of the matter was postponed, even though we had already gathered everything that was actually necessary. Then, an idea was born at the Council of the Baltic States that a largescale international campaign must be organised. The Estonians suggested forming a chain of people from the Baltics to Romania,



Dainis Īvāns at the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR at the Kremlin Palace of Congresses, Moscow, 1989. Mikhail Gorbachev in the background. Author: Boriss Kolješņikovs

stretching through all the countries that were affected by the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, in order to stir the Kremlin up to review the matter. We could not do it, as it was clear that between Poland and Lithuania we will not get very far. Then it was reduced to the idea of organising the Baltic human chain. In July, a memorandum was adopted on the Baltic Way.”

“The moment, when I felt that the balance had been shattered in international politics (instead of “speak to Moscow”), was after the Baltic Way. People in the West understood what is happening here. A process was triggered, whereby governments were pressured by societies, and these are emotions that cannot be portrayed in international documents. Following this pressure, Western governments realized that something had to be done. International communications intensified. The Baltic Way was one of the steps that caused a domino effect, thanks to which totalitarianism collapsed throughout Eastern Europe,” Dainis Īvāns outlines the crucial importance of the Baltic Way. He also points to an instrumental change in attitude towards Baltic countries: “The response of the Kremlin on August 26, three days after the Baltic Way, was – you are challenging your destiny, and you will have to blame yourselves if we let our tanks loose. Here, I am giving a simplified account of the politburo resolution.” Sandra Kalniete describes “The statement of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union regarding the situation in the Baltic

Soviet republics” published in the newspaper “*Izvestiya*”: “[...] without hesitation, the Baltic nations were referred to as separatists, extremists, nationalists, fascists, who on August 23 “tried hard to aggravate the mood reaching a genuine national hysteria”... We received threats: “This matter has gone too far. The fate of the Baltic nations is under a grave threat. The people must be aware of the abyss they are led to by the nationalistic leaders.””⁷ Dainis Īvāns continues: “We, the three Baltic countries together, wrote to Gorbachev and requested explanations. Dobrovenskis wrote a statement of the Popular Front to all nations of the world and to the UN that we are under threat, that we have been threatened to be destroyed with tanks. Later, Chernyaev,⁸ Gorbachev’s assistant, wrote that when they were watching the chronicles of the Baltic Way, those sitting with the suitcase with the red button, were overtaken by horror. Chernyaev says – we saw that everything in the Baltics was slipping away, we could not do anything, only tanks would help, but we could not set tanks on them. We found out only later that during a break Bush⁹ had told Gorbachev that we might turn a blind eye to other things happening in the Soviet Union, but we do not consider the Baltics your domestic matter. The fact that he had said it explicitly was of utter importance. Gorbachev, of course, did not admit it, even to me in conversations until the very last moment he kept saying – you will never get rid of us, you must stay with us, you – riflemen’s grandsons, and so on. We, in turn, were amazed that on August 31, when we met with Gorbachev after the Baltic Way, he had suddenly changed his tune, even though it was him who had signed the threatening politburo decision. He says – friends, forget that statement, it was necessary, but I need you and you need me, and let’s carry on working. The attitude had changed completely; perhaps he felt he could find a way out if he promised something. Moscow understood that, as it faced the West, they had to do something differently with the Baltics, and they offered two models. One similar to the status of Hong Kong within China – we are sort of in it, but we will have our free economic zone and self-dependence; in effect, they were starting to give in. The other – we will be like the inner Finland. We will not be let go. In the face of the West, they would show that they give us certain freedoms, but in fact it would be very advantageous to them, because the Baltics had at least some sort of economic level, working culture, we would be producing money for them, and the Soviet Union would exist on our account.”

Dainis Īvāns believes that it was the Baltic Way which achieved that in December 1989, at the II Congress of People’s Deputies of the Soviet Union, the report of the commission on the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact was

reviewed. He remembers: “At the first session, it was rejected; at the second session, Yakovlev tried some cunning. The generals shouted that we cannot vote, because there was no original of the document, that they were telling tales about the Baltic occupation. Yakovlev had saved for later and had not disclosed at the first session that he had been personally given a note by a Central Committee employee, where it said that the secret protocols to the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact had been in one office, but then were transferred to another office. The document is not there, but there is the note, which proves that the Pact had existed. In the second voting session, when the vote had nearly failed, he informed about the note, which was shocking. The speech by Mavriks Vulfsons, which is a textbook speech of the art of elocution, played a major role, too. And then, it was time to vote, and the Kremlin voted admitting that the Pact had existed, that it was a illegal agreement and that it had to be deemed void from the time of signing; and then, of course, following were but, but, but... I think that, at that time, they did not realize what they had voted for, they did not understand that they had legally untied our hands. We also told the westerners that we will do everything according to the Soviet laws. The election took place according to the Soviet laws, and with a constitutional majority, we toppled the Soviet power, and when Gorbachev told us that we must withdraw pursuant to the USSR Constitution, we told him – comrade Gorbachev, we have just voted at the congress that we never acceded!”

Internationalization of the Baltic matter

The main grounds for international recognition, taking into account the fact that the main role in *de iure* recognition of the restoration of independence of Latvia was plaid by the attitude of the powers and the neighbors, were formed by the so-called internationalization of the Baltic matter or the explanation of the Baltic matter internationally, using personal contacts and official statements, as well as mass media coverage, political campaigns and meetings with foreign officials. This was particularly emphasized by Jānis Jurkāns: “The primary task, while still working in the Popular Front, was the internationalization of the Baltic matter. We aimed to achieve that in international fora, in particular, in the OSCE summits, the Baltic countries were mentioned and to voice the thesis that World War II would end only when the Baltic countries are free. I must admit that this was a rather difficult

and slow process, but we very quickly gained the affinity of Scandinavian countries. Why Scandinavian? Because of the people they had. Iceland had Hannibalsson,¹⁰ who met with us already when we did not have the faintest idea that the Soviet Union might collapse. There was Ufe Ellemann-Jensen,¹¹ who, I believe, was our key supporter. And, of course, there was Russia. I had to work a lot with Kozyrev.”¹²

As soon as the Popular Front of Latvia was established in 1988, already in its first program, it was declared that it was an organisation with one of the aims being to restore and promote contacts with Latvians in exile, because the nation was divided. Dainis Īvāns remembers: “It was very important, because up to then contacts with Latvians in exile were forbidden. A Latvian on the other side was considered a bourgeois nationalist and hence dangerous. This was something unprecedented that an organisation would publicly declare it.” The program of the Congress of the Popular Front of Latvia also included a section on the promotion of sovereignty of the Latvian SSR, but at that time still within the USSR. Concurrently, in the congress address by Jānis Peters and in the program, the aim was included to gradually decentralize the foreign function, thus promoting national integration and relations with other countries. Dainis Īvāns points out: “At that same congress, Jānis Rukšāns was rather courageously speaking of certain Latvian independence, but he referred to a socialist Latvian SSR, independent within a union of Soviet republics. Back then, it was the highest level, because we were not yet speaking of the restoration of the Republic of Latvia, and nobody had any ideas of how it could be restored. However, the idea that we must promote integration with the West had already been born. The Foreign Commission of the Popular Front was functional, Jānis Jurkāns was accepted as the commission rapporteur, whereas the foreign relations of the Popular Front was organised more by Edvīns Inkēns, and to a certain extent, also by Mavriks Vulfsons.”

However, it was not only the speeches and program of the congress of the Popular Front of Latvia that entertained the matter of internationalization of Latvia; the congress generated immense international interest, because Latvia was entering the stage of world politics at that time. Dainis Īvāns recalls: “The congress was attended by all the diplomatic representatives that you could only think of, and also journalists from a range of foreign publications. This is why our foreign relations commenced with the day of the Popular Front founding congress. The fate of Latvia was a global issue that everyone wanted to know. Already a couple of weeks after the founding of the

Popular Front, the US Consul General to Leningrad visited us in November; immediately afterwards, we had a meeting with the Swedish Consul General, too. It was interesting that the Swedish diplomats were allowed to come, but the US diplomats only up to a certain rank, as they upheld the policy of non-recognition of occupation.”

Another important aspect of introducing Latvia to the international forum was the fact that certain Latvian expats participated at the Popular Front founding congress, who later, on the road to international recognition of Latvia, played a major role. “I remember that a few days after the Popular Front congress, I was rushing past the Writers’ Union, and Peters introduced me to Valdis Liepiņš from Canada, and he said that we should organise a trip of the Popular Front leaders to Canada, to the Gananoque Conference. At that time, I did not pay any attention to something of the sort, because an independent Latvia seemed to us more of an internal matter – that of resolving our relations with Moscow. But gradually and increasingly we started building foreign relations, too,” tells Īvāns.

Briefly after the founding of the Popular Front of Latvia, cooperation commenced between the Baltic countries, which in the subsequent struggle for independence grew ever closer, and, in the process of international recognition of independence, it definitely helped each of the Baltic countries separately and all of them together. “The program of regaining independence provided for developing extensive cooperation with Estonia and Lithuania, whose historic experience was similar to ours. This cooperation entailed the development of contacts with the democratic powers of Russia and building relations with the West, by bringing the Baltic cause to the forefront and informing the public opinion of the world about the legitimacy of claims of the Baltic nations.”¹³ Dainis Īvāns relates: “A week after the Popular Front congress, we met up with the Estonian and Lithuanian counterparts, and this caused an uproar in the Soviet Union, because our meetings were based on the premise that the three nations are embarking on the road of international cooperation independently of the Soviet Union, thus bypassing it. These were the first steps of forming international relations in line with rules of formation of international relations. Then the idea emerged right away that a body should be established for coordination between the three Baltic countries, which was done in May 1989, when the Baltic Assembly took place in Tallinn.¹⁴ It also established the Council of the Baltic States, which up to then was operating informally.”

Thus, the Baltic cooperation transpired at a parliamentary level, as well as at the Council of the Baltic States, which was comprised of chairs of the Supreme Councils, foreign ministers, and chairs of Councils of Ministers. Regular joint sessions took place at the parliamentary level, and joint reports were prepared, however the intensity was relatively low. The Council of the Baltic States, however, in fact reacted to every move of the USSR aimed at the Baltic countries. “Leaders of Western democratic countries were urged to consider the matter of the Baltic countries rather as a problem to be addressed internationally and not an internal matter of the USSR, and they were called upon not to delay the international recognition of the Baltic countries. Similar appeals were addressed at all of the most influential organisations.”¹⁵ “We regularly released statements to the governments and parliaments of the nations of the world. This was phenomenal that nearly every month we met in Vilnius, Tallinn or Riga. This made it look that we were very united, because we shared a goal. The three countries usually were also invited together to foreign receptions. Then Landsbergis¹⁶ once told us – Как долго мы будем ездить как тройнята? How long will we be going about like triplets? We must start living separate lives,” recalls Anatolijs Gorbunovs.

Jānis Jurkāns, too, points to the importance of Baltic cooperation and tells about the nuances of work back then: “In Paris, the three of us were thrown out from the OSCE conference,¹⁷ and the three of us convened thinking what should we say? When we went to meet with James Baker, too,¹⁸ we were discussing what was it that we can ask of him. I always held on to the principle, which I always tried to maintain – we do not ask for more than he can give. In this sense, we had some problems with Lithuanians, as Landsbergis meddled a lot in foreign policy, and he was extremely radical. In a serious meeting, he would not hesitate to shame the West saying – as you are sitting here in your soft lounge chairs and watching colour TVs, we were suffocating under the smothering Bolshevik rule! These types of things that did not generate sympathy towards us, but achieved a contrary effect.”

“The cooperation and unity of the Baltic countries during the transitional period played a particularly important role in regaining independence. This cooperation, which was implemented at both “national diplomacy” and state level, exerted triple political pressure in relations with Moscow and drew attention of international community.”¹⁹

Cooperation with the Russian democratic powers was an important aspect in the internationalization of the Baltic issue, as well as with the

Chairman of the Supreme Council of Russia Boris Yeltsin, with whom the leaders of Latvia had formed a very special and personal relationship. “From the very start, Yeltsin understood that the road to the restoration of independence of the Baltic countries was an irreversible one, and he proved it through cooperation. While Gorbachev decried the Declaration of May 4, Yeltsin visited the Supreme Council in the summer of 1990 and addressed the deputies of the Supreme Council. He offered cooperation without any prior conditions, being fully aware of all the details of the Declaration regarding the withdrawal from the USSR, unlawful annexation, everything that was declared. When later, in relation with the tragical events of the barricade period, he attended the Baltic Council session in Tallinn, he signed the statement on the solidarity of the Russian Parliament and the parliaments of the Baltic countries. He also signed a petition to the United Nations, wherein he urged to summon an international conference for the resolution of the matter of the Baltic countries, as well as addressed Russian soldiers serving in the Baltics that they in no way engage in violent campaigns against legally elected parliaments,” relates Gorbunovs. He remembers Boris Yeltsin as “a very Russian man”: “He was a man of the heart, but at the same time also very decisive. My relations largely shaped within the context of his desire and liking of spending time in Jūrmala. To some extent, I took advantage of it. When after the putsch I had to see Yeltsin, I called him and he received us the following day. When we visited after the putsch, there were two key issues. One was the decree on the recognition of independence. The other was the elimination of effects of the putsch. Within half a day, he arranged that Kuzmin,²⁰ the commander of the Baltic military district, who had threatened to arrest me during the putsch, was replaced. He handled all matters very decisively and quickly. I had a direct contact with him, there was no need to resolve matters with the intermediation of assistants or ministries.”

The importance of personal relations on the road of Latvia to *de iure* recognition of independence is also remarked by Jānis Jurkāns: “Personal relations are of utter importance – when you can call Kozyrev and say, listen, could you communicate our recognition as quickly as possible? He responded, and on August 24, Russia very operatively recognized us. Afterwards, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen responded very fast. We arrived in Copenhagen at night, and he took us to the Queen’s Palace, where the reception took place. At night! This is why individual enthusiasm is important. It was more difficult with the Americans, as they waited until

Gorbachev would give his “yes.” Then Gorbachev said “yes,” and we signed the recognition with Pankin, the last Foreign Minister of the USSR.”

Cooperation with Latvians in exile was one of the cornerstones in the building of foreign contacts, and the exiles largely acted like foreign policy agents of Latvia in the West. Anatolijs Gorbunovs stresses: “We felt support and heartfelt willingness to help. Like when we went on a visit to America, Ojārs Kalniņš, Māra Freimane, Anatols Dinbergs... Dinbergs was the only diplomat of Latvia, he was holding the front. How much personal funds they invested to organise those visits!” Karina Pētersone points out that, without the exile lobby, international recognition of Latvia would, most likely, not be possible, and she mentions some of the most important players: “Such organisations like the World Federation of Free Latvians (PBLA) and the American Latvian Association (ALA), Gunārs Meierovics, Oļģerts and Astra Pavlovskis, Vaira Paegle, among others. All of these wonderful people had dedicated many years of their lives and resources to keep explaining historical injustices we had suffered.”

Dainis Īvāns tells about the formation of support groups of the Popular Front of Latvia abroad: “My first visit beyond the Iron Curtain was in early April of 1989 – a trip to Sweden, Stockholm, organised by the Swedish division of the Popular Front of Latvia. It was established at the Popular Front Congress. Latvians Kristīne Čakste, Imants Gross, Atis Lejiņš, Vilnis Zaļkalns and a few more – a small group – had been listening on medium frequency waves a translation of the congress, and they immediately established the Swedish division of the Popular Front of Latvia, although we did not have a status that would allow the Popular Front to have any foreign groups. After their precedent, support groups started forming across the globe. It must be added that the Popular Front support groups often were criticized by exile organisations. These organisations – the PBLA and the ALA – initially did not cooperate at all. They wrote that we are communists, “the Reds,” and that they cannot cooperate with such people. This is why Popular Front support groups were important to us.”

Dainis Īvāns recalls the conference in Gananoque (Canada) in April 1989 as a distinguishable turning point in foreign policy and cooperation with Latvians in exile. The conference was attended by 100 North–American Latvians and 23 representatives of Latvia, among them Dainis Īvāns, Ilmārs Bišers, Jānis Lucāns, Ojārs Rubenis and Ramona Umblija.²¹ “The conference gathered representatives of the Popular Front support groups from the USA

and Canada, as well as the Chairman of the PBLA Gunārs Meieirovics, but him and other PBLA representatives kept to themselves in their rooms and did not come out, so as “not to be soiled” by us. I was later taken to him, and he understood that they will have to support us. He later told it to me in an interview – that he had understood it, but could not say it right away, because the Canadian press were mostly referring to us – the Popular Front delegation – as the red chekist force. Speeches were given by Vaira Viķe-Freiberga, Visvaldis Klīve, and us, too. We had a real brainstorm session as to what should be done and how, but there was still no formula of how to disconnect the Republic of Latvia,” tells Dainis Īvāns.

While the barricade events transpired in January in Latvia, Dainis Īvāns together with the Lithuanian and Estonian colleagues in Europe and the USA were explaining the situation of Latvia: “In January, when the crisis occurred, I was in Helsinki, and the Supreme Council decided that I had to stay there and, in case of occupation, must, by employing all the authority of the Supreme Council, represent the resistance and the formation of an emigre government. Amidst it all, I stopped by in Latvia. At the very time of barricade rallies, when we thought that it will distract attention, Lars Freden²² rushed to the Supreme Council, right there on the spot gave me the visa of Sweden, and then, together with Bronislavas Kuzmickas²³ from Lithuania traveled to Tallinn, and there together with Lennart Meri²⁴ we were accompanied by the Swedish Council to the ship to see, just in case we are arrested, where we end up. We divided the spheres of responsibility. Lennart Meri went to Europe, but Kuzmickas and I – to America to persuade them of our recognition and support to us. Ojārs Kalniņš took me everywhere in America; we visited Dennis Ross, who was director of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, we visited nearly all senators, including Biden,²⁵ who was among the rare democratic senators, who fully supported us. Kalniņš then told me – now the White House doors are opening all the time, but once we are independent, we will no longer be able to open them as easily.”

Dainis Īvāns attributes great importance to contacts with Western media, because it was with their help that they had a chance to persuade societies to exert pressure on governments. He reckons: “Perhaps, even more important than meeting with US politicians was the fact that I was invited by *The New York Times* editorial board; they had these discussions, on the basis of which they formed their editorial policy. William Safire was a good friend of mine; I think he played a crucial role in persuading the people of America. On

January 24, he published a headline article in *The New York Times*, in which he made a reference to Jefferson's Independence Declaration and wrote that Jefferson had said that the tree of liberty must be watered from time to time with the blood of tyrants and freedom fighters. He wrote – remember, fellow Americans, that on this night – from January 19 to January 20, this tree of liberty has been watered by Latvian blood, and we must thank them for it.” Dainis Īvāns recalls: “I also spoke on the Washington State radio at six o'clock in the morning, right after the shooting; I could not tell much; I said that it is difficult to speak now because my friend Andris Slapiņš had been shot dead a few hours earlier. This, somehow, proved effective – so much so that Americans found me at the Congress or Senate, where I was at that moment, called on the regular landline and said – we support you, we will tell our Bush! Then I felt that Americans as a nation had some say, that they put pressure on politicians and that they are extremely interested. It coincided with the Kuwait war, and we thought that the Soviet Union, very likely, timed the attack on our Supreme Council to coincide with the Kuwait war, because they expected the whole world to be interested in it. But coverage of us equaled that of the Kuwait war.”

As regards practical steps towards *de iure* recognition of independence of Latvia, Anatolijs Gorbunovs emphasizes two main aspects: formation of independent institutions and explanations to foreign delegations and foreign journalists, who followed the events in the Baltic countries. “Basically, the determinant factor was that the Supreme Council formed independent state institutions, irrespective of the diarchy (because at the time of adopting the Declaration, Latvia ended up with diarchy – on the one hand, institutions formed by the Supreme Council, while on the other hand, USSR institutions in Latvia, and they had control over everything – financial resources, the large factories, armed forces, the Security Committee). This was what foreign parliamentarians saw, when they came to visit. They saw the situation on site, the decisions being made, they analyzed the laws we had passed. Likewise, journalists were observing the situation, participating in the Supreme Council work, and this way information about our work was passed on, and an opinion of us was shaped that we are ready for independence. This is just what we needed to prove. Not only that historically we had been unlawfully annexed, which everyone already knew, but that we were ready to develop our own country in the existing complicated situation,” Gorbunovs points out. He wants to emphasize, though, that the people of Latvia and the Popular Front of Latvia

as the driving force of independence contributed much more than the leaders of Awakening did. He says: “Twice the people of Latvia affirmed their love for freedom and desire to form an independent state. The first time it was the barricades, when the whole world tuned in to the non-violent resistance and the development of a democratic state. And the other time was the national plebiscite on March 3, 1991, when 75 % of inhabitants voted in favor of a democratic and independent Latvia. This was a strong argument that we could refer to in the democratic world as to what the nation wants.”

World in a nutshell: August–September 1991

We can speak of international recognition of the state as of an act, whereby another country recognizes that the specific political unit has all the signs of statehood. This way – through the process of recognition – the international community agrees that the new state becomes an international legal personality.

If we consider *de iure* recognition of restoration of Latvia’s independence chronologically, we can notice a process, where time and space seem to be compressed. Namely, this act, whereby another country recognizes that Latvia demonstrates all the signs of statehood, was so sudden and all-encompassing that it would be difficult to find a precedent to it in the history. “Nearly the entire past century of Latvia was concentrated in those days. It seemed physically perceptible how we travel across the river of time and leave the realm of serfdom for good.”²⁶ On August 21, 1991, in an exceptionally dangerous and tense ambience – under circumstances of the August putsch²⁷ – the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia adopted the constitutional law “On the statehood of the Republic of Latvia.” With that, full independence of Latvia was proclaimed and the transitional period prescribed in the May 4, 1990 Declaration “On the restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia” of the Supreme Council for *de facto* restoration of the Latvian state power was lifted. Already barely two months later – on September 17, 1991 – Latvia became a full-fledged United Nations member state, and that is generally considered as the logical concluding act of the process of international recognition of a state.

The Chairman of the Supreme Council of the time Anatolijs Gorbunovs, in response to the question of the moment, starting which we can speak of actual actions for *de iure* recognition of independence of Latvia, points to the

determinant nature and speediness of the process of the putsch in August. “In fact, the process really took off only after August 21. A day later, on August 22, I signed the letter from the Supreme Council to Yeltsin²⁸ asking to recognize the independence Latvia and the restoration of our statehood.²⁹ Another day later, on behalf of the Supreme Council, I addressed the governments and parliaments of nations to recognize the restoration of national independence of Latvia.³⁰ And then, the Supreme Council in my persona specifically addressed the USSR President Gorbachev with the request to recognize national independence of Latvia.³¹ This happened before the US recognized us,” tells Anatolijs Gorbunovs.

Jānis Jurkāns, too, stresses that the decisive moment for *de iure* recognition of independence of Latvia was the August putsch, and he is inclined to suggest that, even in case of a successful putsch, changes in the USSR would inescapably follow: “Had the putsch been successful, had it been professionally organised, I think that ... You see, it is difficult to guess what it would have been like, had it been like... because economically the USSR could no longer manage either. The USSR could no longer survive economically without Western technology.”

However, the first real attempt to start the process of *de iure* recognition of independence of Latvia was made already in early May 1990, however it stopped without having really started. Anatolijs Gorbunovs recollects: “In fact, the first step was made after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence,³² whereby we wrote a letter to Mikhail Gorbachev and asked to create a committee for the part of the USSR in order to carry out all the tasks related to practical withdrawal from the USSR. Gorbachev did not respond to the letter, but with his decree announced that the Declaration is anti-constitutional and void from the moment of adoption. Gorbachev’s policy was to reform the Soviet Union; his plans did not include supporting independence of the Baltic countries. He tried to reform the Soviet Union, as we all know, with the so-called *perestroika* – a reconstruction, with the key slogans being openness and public democratization. In the Western democratic world, it was perceived very positively, and Gorbachev was supported. This is why after this reaction of Gorbachev no actual steps were taken for the part of Western states for our support until August 1991. What is more – when we arrived in Stockholm, at the parliamentary level, we were met there by the USSR ambassador, and all discussions took place in his presence. In Norway, we were received at the parliamentary level; we were



Anatolijs Gorbunovs, the Chair of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia, immediately after talking to the US President George Bush. September 2, 1991.

Author: Uldis Pāže, Saeima Chancellery

received also by the head of the government and the king. Gorbachev reacted instantaneously, and he submitted a protest memorandum to the Norwegian government. On this background, the main thing recommended by Western partners, friends, who showed support, but still did not take any concrete steps (even though it seemed that countries, which had not recognized the unlawful inclusion of Latvia in the USSR, after the Declaration could recognize the restoration of national independence of Latvia), was to start negotiations with the President of the USSR Gorbachev. Actually, the main thing that everyone was interested in was whether meetings had taken place in Moscow. And, if meetings had taken place in Moscow, then everyone was satisfied.” These memories once again reiterate the disappointment voiced in relation to the Western position in the period of struggle for independence of the Baltic countries – even the countries, which had not recognized the occupation of the Baltic countries, “did not rush to show their support, but instead emphasized that independence of the Baltic countries is a matter to be resolved in negotiations with the USSR.”³³

As a result of the putsch of August 1991, in the further Riga–Moscow relations and in the decision of Western states to finally back the recognition of independence of Latvia, Anatolijs Gorbunovs attributes the most significant role to the leader of Russian democratic powers Boris Yeltsin: “Then it was the August putsch, when Yeltsin with his peers, with his, as Russians say *решительность*, with decisiveness, determination, managed to take the upper hand over the putschists. The putschists were arrested, and Yeltsin, even though he was not the President of the USSR, promptly dictated to Gorbachev, who should be appointed instead of the released ones. Already on the third day he also responded to our request regarding the recognition of independence of Latvia and signed the decree. The big powers, in turn, felt that power is actually being transferred into the hands of Yeltsin, and this was the key reason for a change of mood. While previously, the support was due to Gorbachev and his reforms of the Soviet Union, now, Yeltsin had put everything where it belonged, recognized the independence of Latvia and other Baltic countries and urged the USSR and other countries to do the same. Thus, there were no longer any obstacles that had existed for powers due to the need to support Gorbachev. Iceland was first to recognize Latvia’s independence,³⁴ but shortly after that, Russia followed, then the countries of the European Community, and the process snowballed.” By September 18, 1991, Latvia had been recognized by 79 countries around the globe.³⁵

Karina Pētersone and Anatolijs Gorbunovs emphasize that both domestic and foreign journalists played a crucial role in the restoration of independence of Latvia and its international recognition. Karina Pētersone speaks of the risks that foreign journalists undertook back then: “They risked to come here during the barricades. I also remember the session of May 4, which was attended by some 80 journalists. Firstly, their presence was a guarantee that no force will be exercised, there will be no shooting. Secondly, they ensured international publicity. They were risking, walking into dangerous circumstances.” Anatolijs Gorbunovs adds: “The same as our media. There is a reason why still today a special reception is organised at the Saeima for the journalists of the Awakening period. Furthermore, the Press Centre of the Supreme Council also played an important part. The situation back then meant that everything was dedicated to the restoration of independence, and journalists encouraged the deputies. There was no such situation – if there is no criticism, then there is no article.”

However, even though the putsch of August is considered as the most important breaking point in the process of *de iure* recognition of independence of Latvia, the rapid process of recognition would not have been the same without the work invested over the years to restore independence. Karina Pētersone stresses that “all objective circumstances had matured for *de facto* independence, and international society no longer saw any obstacles to it. On the other hand, had serious mistakes been made in the domestic policy situation of Latvia, this process would not have been as smooth. The political environment, the journalists, outside society felt our maturity through the media. Had narrowing of democracy occurred under the inter-ethnically complicated circumstances, the presence of army or infringements of democracy, violence, all could have been different. However, there was nothing of the sort. The political environment had been feeling the way, learning from mistakes and had taken the right path. Even though the push for the recognition of our independence came from the outside, the external circumstances were dominating, it would not have happened at that time without our own particular choices.” Karina Pētersone also points to those decisions, those choices, which, in her opinion, were determinant in demonstrating maturity of democracy to international society: “The national plebiscite of March 3, 1991 was the choice of the people.³⁶ Political choices were made very unmistakably and specifically during the putsch, too; this was the first condemnation of the putsch in the USSR environment, which came from our Supreme Council and the government, and Gorbunovs read it out on the television and radio. Also worth noting is the critical decision itself – APCs had arrived, but the Supreme Council voted for the full restoration of independence. It was a parliamentary way. The Popular Front had made the decision to take the constitutionally irrefutable road without violence, without bloodshed, with dignity, democratically and in line with parliamentary principles. If we had to go through the Balkan scenario, it might not have happened.”

Dainis Ivāns also admits: “The West were ready, but were waiting for a turning point in the Soviet Union. Had we not had the putsch, which helped us, I think that, perhaps, the recognition process from the West, from the braver countries, which were pressured by their societies, would have started anyway. Moreover, we had no alternatives to independence. We had a diarchy, the process could have been longer, perhaps there would have been bloodshed, but the process had already started. I think that at the time when the putsch

took place and an opportunity opened up, the West exhaled with relief that finally our independence could be recognized without any compromises.” He additionally points to the major role of swift and decisive action: “But it was also essential for us to act rapidly, because nothing happened on its own. I think that, had we waited, had we done everything carefully and upon due consideration, had we weighed our options of what is or is not good for us, the Kremlin would have recovered its breath, the West would have shied away, and nothing would have transpired. In the recognition process, our swiftness and agility were of utter importance. On the third day already, our delegation flew to meet with Yeltsin. We – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – started speedily organising mutual recognition. We also forced that the Soviet republics recognized each other mutually, because then the Soviet Union would have no other choice, if its constituents started recognizing one another. The fact that the USA was in favor of recognizing could be perceived, though externally it awaited. It was absolutely clear that the USA was ready and that this was a political victory for them.”³⁷

Along with international recognition, Latvia had to rapidly engage in national level international contacts, which was not particularly simple, because “in implementing foreign policy action, both the Popular Front and the power structures of the Republic of Latvia were lacking qualified staff, which could carry out diplomatic tasks. The specialists of foreign policy from the Soviet era – the international relations journalists and especially the employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the LSSR – could not be fully trusted. The logic of political activity as such forced any leader of the Popular Front of Latvia and of the Republic of Latvia to master the foundations of diplomatic activity and to resolve such elementary tasks as improve foreign language knowledge or even learn it from zero.”³⁸ However Anatolijs Gorbunovs admits that this new situation did not make him feel stressed: “I felt quite well. My aide did lots. Whereas, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, irrespective of the fact that it did not have many funds or experience, had established an information bureau in one state, a representation office in another, and a permanent secretary was working in yet another.”³⁹ This had already been achieved at the time, when we still did not have any diplomatic relations or recognition of independence. And these people, whom we met abroad, were patriots and genuinely interested in our visits, and therefore acted with utmost effort. When you see such commitment, such help, then you also start to feel safer.”

Jānis Jurkāns was the first Foreign Minister of the newly reinstated Latvia in the government of Ivars Godmanis, and one of his key tasks was to start building the diplomatic service. Right after *de iure* recognition of independence, Latvia had to be represented internationally, but Latvia did not yet have diplomatic corps. He says: “What were the principles? It was my privilege “to be in the world” since 1989. And I was quite attentive, I observed how things transpired over there, how the assistants worked, for instance, in the case of Jensen,⁴⁰ I observed protocols, and I learned from them. I quickly understood what I should look like, what an ambassador should be like. And I did not make many mistakes.” He also had his own principles in choosing personnel: “We announced a competition, people applied, and I always selected them myself. An applicant comes in, greets you, but their hand is moist, they are wearing white socks, and their trousers last saw an iron at the trouser sewing workshop. I understand that somebody like that cannot represent Latvia. Dinbergs⁴¹ taught me – look at the wives, too! They will have to go to receptions, and you have to see, what they are like. That was an interesting process!” However, these have not been the key principles; Jānis Jurkāns says that foreign languages were the most important aspect: “Primarily – languages. That was a major problem. Therefore, at the very beginning, there were many ambassadors from exile – Egils Levits, Imants Gross, Ojārs Kalniņš, Aina Nagobada–Ābola, among others. The criterion was the language.”

Jānis Jurkāns describes his team of the time as follows: “Sandra Kalniete was very swift, Mārtiņš Virsis – they were my deputies. A very good help was Guntis Valujevs. Then Aivis Ronis started working. It was important in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that I was backed by the people who were ready to work day and night, and not keep checking the time. Anita Prince, Jānis Peters, Aija Odiņa, Mārtiņš Perts, Kārlis Streips, Ints Upmācis, Andris Kešteris, Alberts Sarkanis, Normans Penke. The hierarchy is not important, it was a team. Then I started looking for people, who could work as ambassadors, and many of them are still working today.” Out of the exiled Latvians, he particularly emphasizes Anatols Dinbergs, Aina Nagobada–Ābola, Gunārs Meierovics, Egils Levits and the PBLA with its office in Münster, which was led by Jānis Ritenis. “He was the most knowledgeable of my aides; after every meeting, where he was present, he took notes of everything, and then we discussed everything later at night,” tells Jānis Jurkāns.

The aide of Anatolijs Gorbunovs of that time Karina Pētersonē recalls the practical work details immediately after *de iure* recognition of Latvia: “We wrote the first accreditation letter in mid-September of 1991, and it was still dispatched on a form of the Supreme Council to Aivars Baumanis to the UN. The second one was Aina Nagobada-Ābola, then Anna Žigure, Jānis Peters.” However, also this seemingly simple step – the preparation of an accreditation letter – for a country without the diplomatic service or diplomatic practice was a rather complicated task. Karina Pētersonē recollects: “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs instructed us to prepare an accreditation note for Baumanis. I called them asking if they have any samples or if they can recommend something. No, they had nothing of the sort. Then, I remember as if it were yesterday, on my desk I placed accreditation notes which the Count Lambsdorf and some others had come with. The President of France had written: “*My dear and precious friend...*” And I started the same way, on behalf of Gorbunovs, to all presidents on the other side. We also found some tracing paper among supplies of the Supreme Council, and in old safe-boxes we found a stamp device, and a seal that could press the coat of arms of Latvia into paper. And then I myself pressed all coats of arms, made accreditation notes. Likewise, we wrote replies to all regarding the recognition of independence. I remember receiving a letter signed by Carl. When translating, I put in brackets an explanation for Anatolijs so that he would understand who is this Carl, namely, that it was the King of Sweden Carl XVI Gustaf. Because he writes – *My dear friend...* and then signs underneath – Carl.”

Similarly, the first ambassador accreditation visits were organised without previous experience, by learning on the spot. “The first to arrive for accreditation was Otto Borch, the special plenipotentiary of Denmark. Before then, to prepare for the meeting, Sandra Kalniete came over to the Supreme Council from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and we simply drew a layout of who will stand where in the White Hall, as we had no guidelines or precedents, nothing. We simply decided that Mr. Gorbunovs would be standing on this side of the carpet, then the door would open, the plenipotentiary would be announced, a letter would be brought and so on,” Karina Pētersonē describes the first diplomatic steps of the Supreme Council. There were also some unexpected situations. Anatolijs Gorbunovs recollects: “I was surprised. The ambassador of Sweden arrived in full uniform, including a sword. I was looking at him and did not even know what to say.”

Karina Pētersone adds that the Swedish counterpart had called her three times, thinking that she will be able to advise on the diplomatic etiquette and the attire that the ambassador may arrive in. She had been thinking for a long time as what to advise, and the Swedish ambassador arrived in full uniform.

Karina Pētersone sums up the first diplomatic steps by saying: “We had to learn everything. We came up with everything on the spot. From incoming samples, we took notice of how others were doing things, what the letters said, what style they were.” Nothing human is alien – admits Anatolijs Gorbunovs about the accreditation visits: “We were tired from receptions, because all of it took time and major preparations. In addition, I was still the Chairman of the Supreme Council, and amidst it all was chairing the sessions.”

Conclusion

The process of *de iure* recognition of the independence of Latvia shows, as described by Dainis Īvāns, “an evolution of the public opinion, attitude and stance of the world, which had been influenced in our favor by the sometimes even intrusive appeals made by Latvian parliamentarians and our nationals abroad to the conscience of various governments, presidents and politicians, but even more so – by the just, democratic and non-violent battle for not more and not less than survival.”⁴²

The process of *de iure* recognition as such was a spontaneous and very fast one, however, in order for it to be such, many years of work had been invested to further international recognizability of Latvia and to explain the situation of the Baltics. We cannot speak of a clear plan of action created from the very start or of a decision-making mechanism, to which the leaders of the Awakening had adhered. Quite the contrary – the process is characterized by an evolutionary progress, where one idea leads to another, where one decision creates the grounds for adopting the next one, and all of that transpires in an ambience of searching and “feeling the ground,” instead of implementing an adopted plan. The concept of independence of Latvia evolved – from sovereignty within the USSR to a fully restored Latvia of 1918 –, along with the work of international recognizability of the Latvian matter – from the announcements of the Supreme Council Press Center to the nations and governments of the world, to active lobbying at the US Congress and elsewhere in the world. “Every smallest opportunity was seized to draw attention to the situation of the Baltic countries and their aspirations towards independence.”⁴³

In regaining independence, Latvia chose to take a legitimate parliamentary path, and it is one of the key reasons, why Western countries were looking favorably at the occurring processes. Thus, we can speak of two main decision-making centers – the Popular Front of Latvia and the Supreme Council (of the LSSR). However, also here, the decisions were made in a markedly evolutionary manner, as one idea led to the next one.

Several lobby groups were active in the process of *de iure* recognition of independence of Latvia. At the level of the whole nation, the diplomatic recognition of Latvia was facilitated by the Popular Front of Latvia with its Chairman Dainis Īvāns at the helm, while at the decision-making body level, it was the Supreme Council led by its Chairman Anatolijs Gorbunovs, including the Supreme Council Press Center, and at the executive power level, the first government of Ivars Godmanis with Jānis Jurkāns as the Foreign Minister. However, also the public level, which was effectively filled by specific exiled Latvians and the organised exiles – the PBLA and the ALA – as well as foreign press in Latvia and domestic press.

In reply to the question of what had been planned but was not brought to fruition, Anatolijs Gorbunovs states: “We had pinned too many hopes on the transitional period.⁴⁴ On that we will have a bilateral committee, which will resolve and decide on all the practical matters of Latvia’s withdrawal. This was a politically tactical move, but practically, it made little sense.” Karina Pētersone adds: “This process dragged on, and we resolved each matter on the spot, the best we could. It was concluded with a considerable delay, with a border treaty. In the transitional period, all institutions were formed, but all the core laws – on the bank, the border, the army, the national guard – were adopted only after August 21. Moreover, the relations with Russia as the successor of the USSR matured only when there was an institutional counterpart, and then everything was resolved intersectorally.”

Even though the entire process of restoration of independence of Latvia can be described by continuous learning and attempts to prove the truth, without any strong, established lobbying mechanisms, Karina Pētersone remarks: “I could not claim that there were any major mistakes in the process. There were no *faux pas*, no major mistakes. In the important and less important matters, we somehow “wriggled through,” whirled through in an impossible way, under impossible circumstances, thrown up in the air, but still managed to land on our feet.”

1988

October 1-2, 1988 – Founding Congress of the Popular Front of Latvia (founded on October 8)

April 7-9, 1989 – Gananogue Conference (Canada), where North American and Latvian representatives met

May 1989 – a meeting between the leaders of the Popular Front of Latvia and the PBLA in Abrene in France

May 14-15, 1989 – the Baltic Assembly took place in Tallinn. The Council of the Baltic States established

1990

March 18, 1990 – election of the Supreme Council of the Latvian SSR took place, whereby the list of the Popular Front of Latvia gained the absolute majority, thus gaining a legitimate chance to carry out the process of restoration of independence of Latvia by political means

May 4, 1990 – the Declaration of May 4, 1990 by the Supreme Council
“On the restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia”

March 3, 1991 – National plebiscite of Latvia or the poll of the population of the Republic of Latvia, where 75 % of people voted for a democratic and independent Latvia

The night from August 18 to August 19, 1991 – the August putsch: an unsuccessful coup d'état of the USSR took place

August 21, 1991 – the Supreme Council adopted the Constitutional Law “On the statehood of the Republic of Latvia”

August 22, 1991 – international recognition of the restoration of independence of Latvia started. The Republic of Iceland was the first foreign country to recognize the restoration of independence of Latvia

August 24, 1991 – the President of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic Boris Yeltsin issued the decree “On the recognition of national independence of the Republic of Latvia”. Denmark officially notifies on readiness to establish diplomatic relations with independent Latvia

Jānis Jurkāns reveals that he started feeling the sensation of having a free Latvia in a family of Western nations after the barricades of 1991, and it was to the highest extent facilitated by understanding of processes taking place in the West with regard to the Baltic countries: “In January 1991, when I had obtained more information than the newspapers revealed, I understood the instruments that were at the disposal of the West. I understood that it was the year of the Baltic nations. I remember that on January 13, the government dispatched me to spend two months living in Stockholm, and in case of occupation, to represent Latvia, and then I had many meetings with politicians. I returned home in March and said that the Baltic countries would be free that year. I believed to the extent of 75 % that it would happen. You know, it is, in a way, “politics of ducks” – nothing

1989

May 31, 1989 – an appeal by the Council of the Popular Front of Latvia, including a thesis on full political and economic independence of Latvia

August 23, 1989 – the Baltic Way

October 7–8, 1989 – the Second Congress of the Popular Front of Latvia

November 19, 1989 – Foreign Ministers of the Baltic countries were asked to leave the OSCE summit

December 24, 1989 – II Congress of People's Deputies of the Soviet Union recognized the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact as unlawful, criminal and void from the moment it was signed

1991

August 27, 1991 – the twelve European Community Member States adopted a Declaration on the Baltic States, congratulating on the restoration of independence and sovereignty lost in 1940

From September 1991 – accreditation of Latvian ambassadors abroad and in international organisations started

September 2, 1991 – the USA announced readiness to establish diplomatic relations with the Baltic countries

September 6, 1991 – the State Council of the USSR adopted a decision on the recognition of independence of the Republic of Latvia

September 10, 1991 – Latvia acceded to the Organisation of Security and Co-operation of Europe, back then CSCE

September 17, 1991 – Latvia became a member of the United Nations

By the end of 1991 – 93 countries had recognized restoration of independence of Latvia and national independence. International recognition of restoration of the independence of Latvia also continued in the subsequent years

seems to be happening on the surface, but in the water, there's plenty of paddling going on. When I saw how all those things were being paddled beneath the surface, I understood that there is no other possibility. This was what I believed in strongly.”

Endnotes

¹ As described by Gunārs Kusiņš, the year 1989 marked the beginning of attempts to identify and record the citizens of the former Republic of Latvia. Already in late 1989, with the help of community-based citizens' committees, about 700,000 citizens were recorded, and 233 delegates were elected in the election of the Congress of Citizens of the Republic of Latvia, which took place in April 1990. The Citizens' Congress consistently refused to cooperate with occupation authorities. It did make claims to power, however it failed to obtain real power. See Gunārs Kusiņš, *Latvijas parlamentārisma apskats* (Rīga: Latvijas Republikas Saeima, 2016), 54.

- ² Tālavš Jundzis, *Latvijas valsts atjaunošanas parlamentārais ceļš. 1989–1993* (Rīga: Latvijas Zinātņu akadēmijas Baltijas stratēģisko pētījumu centrs, 2010), 245–246.
- ³ Gunārs Kusiņš, *Latvijas parlamentārisma apskats*, 55.
- ⁴ This concerns the Baltic Assembly summoned on May 14–15, 1989 by the Popular Front of Latvia, *Sajūdis* and *Rahvarinne* in Tallinn. The Assembly adopted “The Declaration on the Rights of Baltic Nations,” “The Declaration on Economic Independence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania,” “The Resolution on Crimes of Stalinism” and “The appeal to the leaders of members of the European Conference for Security and Co-operation, the UN Secretary-General, and the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council.”
- ⁵ II Congress of People’s Deputies of the Soviet Union, December 24, 1989.
- ⁶ Member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, a scholar, at that time, from a party ideologist turned into a curator of international affairs, also referred to as Gorbachev’s “perestroika architect.”
- ⁷ Sandra Kalniete, *Es lauzu, tu lauzi, mēs lauzām, viņi lūza* (Rīga: Jumava, 2000), 160.
- ⁸ Anatoly Chernyaev.
- ⁹ US President George Bush (1989–1993).
- ¹⁰ Foreign Minister of Iceland Jón Baldvin Hannibalsson (1988–1995).
- ¹¹ Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, Foreign Minister of Denmark (1982–1993).
- ¹² Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Andrei Kozyrev.
- ¹³ Jānis Taurēns, Inesis Feldmanis, *Latvijas ārpolitika un diplomātija 20. gadsimtā*, 3. sēj. (Rīga: Jumava, 2016), 10.
- ¹⁴ Baltic Assembly summoned in Tallinn on May 14–15, 1989, by the Latvian Popular Front, *Sajūdis* and *Rahvarinne*.
- ¹⁵ Tālavš Jundzis, *Latvijas valsts atjaunošanas parlamentārais ceļš...*, 56.
- ¹⁶ Vytautas Landsbergis, Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia, the leader of the Lithuanian National Movement “Sajūdis.”
- ¹⁷ Jānis Jurkāns tells that on November 19, 1989, in Paris, the attempt ended unsuccessfully to participate at the OSCE conference. Baltic foreign ministers were present at the OSCE summit as guests of honor: “We were expelled! Gorbachev entered the hall with Vyazov, who was dressed in full army uniform, and gave an ultimatum – either them or we are going home. And then the French asked us to leave the hall, which was rather humiliating – you are a guest of honor, but the Russian says “no,” and we are thrown out.” After this event, in order to explain their position internationally, the three Baltic countries organized a joint press conference, which has a crucial importance in the history of diplomacy.
- ¹⁸ US Secretary of State.
- ¹⁹ Tālavš Jundzis, *Latvijas valsts atjaunošanas parlamentārais ceļš...*, 57.
- ²⁰ USSR Commander of the Baltic military district Fyodor Kuzmin.
- ²¹ Jānis Taurēns, Inesis Feldmanis, *Latvijas ārpolitika un diplomātija 20. gadsimtā*, 45.
- ²² Swedish Consul in Latvia in 1989–1991.
- ²³ Deputy Chair of the Lithuanian Supreme Council Bronislavas Kuzmickas.
- ²⁴ Foreign Minister of the Republic of Estonia (1990–1992).
- ²⁵ Joseph (Joe) Biden.
- ²⁶ The preface of the Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia of the time Dainis Ivēns “Laipni lūgti neatkarīgajā Latvijā!” from *Augusta hronika. Latvijas Republikas neatkarības atjaunošana de facto* (Rīga: Latvijas Republikas Saeima, 2016), 11.
- ²⁷ On the night from August 18 to August 19, 1991, when the Extraordinary State Committee established anti-constitutionally in Moscow attempted to take over power, coup d’état took place in the USSR. Only a few days later, it became clear that it had failed. See: Gunārs Kusiņš, *Latvijas parlamentārisma apskats*, 57.

- ²⁸ Chairman of the Supreme Council of Russia, in June 1991, in the first direct presidential election in the history of Russia, elected the President of Russia, the leader of democratic powers of Russia at the time.
- ²⁹ See document: *Augusta hronika. Latvijas Republikas neatkarības atjaunošana de facto*, 110–111.
- ³⁰ See document *ibid*, 114–115.
- ³¹ August 29, 1991. See document *Augusta hronika. Latvijas Republikas neatkarības atjaunošana de facto*, 152–153.
- ³² Declaration of May 4, 1990 “On the restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia.”
- ³³ Sandra Kalniete, “Rietumvalstu nostājas maiņa Baltijas valstu neatkarības atzīšanas jautājumā” in *1990. gada 4. maija Latvijas Neatkarības deklarācija: starptautiskie un iekšpolitiskie aspekti*, red. Inesis Feldmanis, Jānis Taurēns (Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, 2011), 115.
- ³⁴ A letter by the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Iceland on the recognition of independence of Latvia and restoration of diplomatic relations was received on August 22, 1991; diplomatic relations with Latvia were established on August 26.
- ³⁵ The documents are available here: “Latvijas neatkarības atjaunošanas starptautiskā atzīšana 1991. gadā,” Latvijas Republikas Ārlietu ministrija, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/ministrija/arlietudienesta-vesture/izstades/latvijas-neatkaribas-atjaunosanas-starptautiska-atzisana-1991-gada>
- ³⁶ National plebiscite of March 3, 1991 or the national vote was a poll of the population of the Republic of Latvia asking: “Are you in favor of a democratic and independent Latvia?” 1,666,128 (87.56 %) of Latvian inhabitants having the rights to vote took part, of which 1,227,562 (73.68 %) voted “yes,” but 411,374 (24.69 %) voted “no.” The permanent civilians of the Republic of Latvia registered in the USSR army units also took part in the poll. At the same time, it was the first referendum after the restoration of independence, however before *de iure* international recognition of statehood. See more: Jānis Taurēns, *1991. gada 3. marta referendums un tā nozīme Latvijas neatkarības atjaunošanā*, the website of the Central Election Commission of Latvia, https://www.cvk.lv/pub/upload_file/Konference_J_Taurens_1991_gada_3_marta_referendums.pdf
- ³⁷ The USA recognized the independence of Latvia on September 2, 1991.
- ³⁸ Jānis Taurēns, Inesis Feldmanis, *Latvijas ārpolitika un diplomātija 20. gadsimtā*, 3. sēj. (Rīga: Jumava, 2016), 16.
- ³⁹ Latvia had information offices in Copenhagen, Stockholm, Brussels, Bonne, etc. As stated by Tālavš Jundzis, later, after the establishment of diplomatic relations, these offices were a good base for the creation of embassies and consulates. See more: Tālavš Jundzis, *Latvijas valsts atjaunošanas parlamentārais ceļš...*, 53.
- ⁴⁰ Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, Danish Foreign Minister (1982–1993).
- ⁴¹ Authorized secretary of the Republic of Latvia and head of embassy to the USA, and the head of the diplomatic and consular service of the Republic of Latvia (1970–1991).
- ⁴² Preface by Dainis Īvāns “Laipni lūgti neatkarīgajā Latvijā!,” 9.
- ⁴³ Tālavš Jundzis, *Latvijas valsts atjaunošanas parlamentārais ceļš...*, 53.
- ⁴⁴ This refers to the transitional period stipulated in the May 4, 1990 Declaration “On the restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia.”

ACTIVITIES DURING THE MODERN PERIOD

Justice and Opportunities: The Collision of Foreign Policy Ideas in Discussions regarding the Withdrawal of Russian Troops from Latvia, 1993–1994

EDIJS BOŠŠ

In the first years after regaining independence, there was no more essential issue in Latvia's foreign policy agenda than removing troops from the former USSR from the territory of Latvia. The termination of the neighboring country's military presence was a prerequisite for reestablishing genuine independence and full sovereignty. The military presence – the consequence of occupation, annexation and all of the long years of violent cohabitation with the Soviet power – was seen as an obstacle to furthering the goals of integration into Western economic and defence organisations. Moreover, it was also an acute military security problem. More than twenty years of experience have shown that this threat was not solely theoretical, and that terminating Russia's military presence was indeed fundamentally important for the security of Latvia. In Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine, where the presence of the Russian armed forces after the collapse of the USSR was not eliminated in a timely manner, these resources have been involved in destabilising the internal political processes and in plundering the territorial integrity of these countries, especially after the changes in Russia's foreign policy behaviour during Vladimir Putin's presidency.

The main outline of the events of 1992–1994 are relatively well known. Following long, difficult negotiations between Latvia and Russia and the engagement of the US administration in formulating compromises, the relevant intergovernmental agreements were signed in the spring of 1994. Accordingly, the last Russian troops left the territory of Latvia on August 31, 1994; the new Skrunda radar station was demolished demonstratively on May 4, 1995, while the “old” part of the locator continued to operate until

August 31, 1998 and was then dismantled, though Latvia had to agree to over twenty thousand retired Soviet army soldiers remaining in the country.

Valdis Birkavs, then Prime Minister of Latvia, more than twenty years later admitted in his memoirs about the experience of the diplomacy of army withdrawal that the agreements were not perfect, and that no agreement reached by a compromise could be perfect, but, according to Birkavs, “time has proven that no essential mistakes were made.”¹ The main goals of Latvia’s security policy were indeed achieved, however, the compromises on the term of operation of the Skrunda radar station and the status of the military pensioners, at the time, caused extremely strong disagreements in Latvian society and among the political elite. The echoes of these disputes are still heard occasionally.

At the beginning of 1994, Latvia was torn by disputes over whether searching for compromises with Russia on the issue of army withdrawal was justified at all, especially given that it was possible to argue from the ethical and legal standpoint that Russia was obliged to withdraw the troops of “occupation” immediately, completely, and without any caveats. Latvian diplomats and the government that was established after the elections in 1993 learned through the exhausting process of negotiations that the Latvian government’s legal and moral-political arguments had little tangible influence on Russia’s actions, even when backed up by international organisations. Therefore, foreign policy makers believed that these compromises were an unpleasant but adequate *realpolitik* price, which was to be paid for achieving the main goal – the elimination of Russia’s military presence in Latvia.

As ratification of the agreements on the withdrawal of Russian armed forces had to take place in the Saeima, the process was relatively transparent and many discussions about it took place. These discussions were emotionally charged, even traumatic for some involved. By the end of 1993, and especially in the beginning of 1994, foreign policy makers were harshly criticised for betraying state interests and political conflicts threatened the stability of the government.

Although most of the documents that reveal the nuances of the negotiation process are still in the diplomatic archives of the various participating countries and publically inaccessible, additional information can be found in the memoirs and publications of the individuals involved in the negotiations.² Therefore, the purpose of this article is more analytical than descriptive. The following pages will outline the discussion that occurred in the background of these events in

Latvia – the discussion about the conceptual dilemmas of foreign policy that the newly re-emerged country faced at that time and will inevitably face in the future when it comes to the issues of national security. Particular attention will be paid to the controversy around Latvia's various possible manoeuvres in the international environment of the various principles involved in the formation and evaluation of Latvia's foreign policy; on relations with the major powers; as well as on the hierarchy of arguments of moral and real-politics regarding foreign policy decisions.

The policy problem and progress on solutions in the period before the 5th Saeima elections

As part of the USSR's Western frontier during the Soviet era, the Baltic countries were thoroughly militarised. According to various estimates, by the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union the end of 1991, some 125,000 military personnel were deployed in the Baltics along with diverse armaments: nuclear warheads, air defence systems, heavy weaponry, warplanes in airfields, ships and submarines in military ports.³ As the former centre of the USSR's Baltic Military District, there were several dozen military units in Riga alone.⁴ The goal of neutralising this threat, which, even within the boundaries of the new state, could destroy Latvia's statehood in a few hours, took almost all the strength and mental capacity of foreign policy makers in the first half of the 1990s.

The first sprouts of the process had already appeared by the time of the May 4, 1990 declaration and the formation of the government led by the Latvian Popular Front (LPF). However, serious negotiations could only begin at the beginning of 1992, when the Russian Federation led by President Boris Yeltsin, replaced the USSR as the negotiating partner after the full international recognition of the statehood of the Baltic republics in August–September of 1991, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 around Christmas. Even just a few days after the putsch on August 29, 1991, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia (SC) adopted the request for the complete withdrawal of Soviet Armed Forces from the Republic of Latvia, calling to open negotiations on this issue. "It is clear that the status of an independent state cannot be compatible with the presence of the armed forces of another country in the territory of this free, independent state," said Aivars Endziņš, one of the LPF's leading lawyers and the head of the Legislative Commission of the SC.⁵

Initially, Latvian politicians and diplomats insisted that the armed forces of the neighbouring country had to disappear from Latvia within a few years without any caveats. The very beginning of the talks in the winter of 1992 gave rise to some optimism, as the Russian delegation's announced agreement that the foreign forces deployed in Latvia, now under Moscow's jurisdiction, "should be seen as requiring removal from the territory of another sovereign state."⁶ This was the first, and also the last, relatively easily attained concession from the part of the negotiators in Moscow on the issue of army withdrawal.

In 1990–1991, when the Boris Yeltsin-led Russian SFSR and the independence movements of the Baltic republics were tactical allies against the Gorbachev-led centre of the USSR, the movements experienced a honeymoon period. However, after the collapse of the USSR, Yeltsin's Russia itself had become a centre that had to start rethinking its military-political interests in the space of the former USSR; furthermore, conservative forces, which saw the collapse of the USSR as a mistake, began to regain influence in Moscow. Jānis Peters, the legendary poet, a leader of the Awakening period, and later Latvia's Ambassador to Moscow, explained these processes to his colleagues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, saying that "anti-imperial anti-communism, unfortunately, is not ... an unchangeable characteristic of Russian statehood."⁷ And as early as the spring of 1992, Peter's analysis of the events taking place in Russia called for a warning that "even the Yeltsinists' desire to make the Baltic countries their vassal territory, linking their greatest hopes to Latvia."⁸ As the capacity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Riga grew and Latvia's foreign policy developed towards the West, in the 1990s, Peters gradually lost his initial influence in the diplomatic corps of Latvia, but in terms of this assessment of the threat posed by Russia, a consensus prevailed in Riga. Shortly after being elected in the summer of 1993, the new President Guntis Ulmanis spoke about the foreign forces that would like to see Latvia as a "piece of land attached to a shortest possible political leash,"⁹ and the military presence, together with an escalation of inter-ethnic conflicts, could serve as an instrument for achieving such a goal. Similar theses were also, rather publicly, expressed in the strategies, developed by influential Russian foreign policy ideologues, on the methods of implementing Russian interests in the near abroad area.

As relations with Russia were objectively in a free-fall from the beginning of 1992, it is clear that moving forward in the negotiations on the withdrawal of the army was an extremely complicated task. Moreover, in parallel there

was also serious discussion in Latvia's politics about the citizen rights of the residents who had immigrated during the Soviet era. In the autumn of 1991, the Supreme Council ruled on a very strict citizenship policy based on the pre-occupation population, which left hundreds of thousands of inhabitants who had immigrated during the Soviet era with an unclear status, exacerbating tensions with Moscow. Not only Moscow viewed this policy with concern. It also created confusion in the potential Western allies of Latvia, diminishing their motivation to participate in army withdrawal negotiations and increasing human rights pressures from international organisations that feared that the former USSR republics could face similar ethnic conflicts that at that time were flaring up in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

In the time period leading up to the 5th Saeima elections under the leadership of the Minister of State Jānis Dinevičs, in Ivars Godmanis administration, painfully slow progress was made in the rounds of negotiations between the Russian and Latvian delegations, which were alternatively arranged in Jurmala and Moscow between February 1992 and June 1993. Latvia's legal arguments were strengthened by support resolutions arranged in international forums such as the United Nations General Assembly and OSCE¹⁰ in support of the withdrawal of the armed forces, which recommended

to get rid, peacefully and through negotiations, of the problems left by the past – such as the deployment of foreign armed forces in the territories of the Baltic countries without the consent of these states. Therefore, in accordance with the principles of international law and in order to prevent any conflict, the participating countries were urged to conclude the relevant bilateral agreements without delay, including regarding deadlines, to ensure expeditious, organised, and complete removal of these foreign forces from the territories of the Baltic countries.¹¹

However, as a small country, Latvia lacked not so much legal arguments as the leverage of political influence to achieve a result in its bilateral relations with a great power that did not wish to cooperate.

Given the simultaneous process of the withdrawal of Russian forces from many other former places of deployment in Eastern Europe, the amount of military equipment and the number of military personnel gradually decreased in Latvia. However, no agreement was reached on any of the main topics of the negotiations, meaning that the withdrawal of Russia's armed forces from Latvia could be suspended at any moment or linked to political

preconditions. There were unresolved questions both regarding the deadline for the withdrawal, the Latvian delegation demanded to be as soon as possible, and regarding social guarantees and rights of residence for military pensioners that Russia required. The greatest stalemate, however, was caused by Russia's insistence on the preservation of specific strategic objects, in particular Skrunda radar station (RS), in the territory of Latvia after the withdrawal of other components of the army.¹²

That “Damn”¹³ Skrunda

The Skrunda RS was indeed an issue that had to be considered separately from other problems related to the withdrawal of the army. The station was built in the 1960s and the radar equipment was outdated, but it still operated as part of the strategic protection system of the former USSR, now Russia. During the Soviet years, the Skrunda object was designed as a home for radar equipment of different generations, and, along with other similar facilities located in the USSR's periphery, formed an “early warning” system designed to detect the approach of opponent's ballistic missiles in the event of a nuclear conflict. The Skrunda station was the “eye” of the strategic defence system of the USSR, now Russia, towards Western Europe and the North Atlantic. Two *Dnepr*-type plants operated in Skrunda, and an impressive 19-storey building was constructed at the end of the 1980s for a new generation *Darjal*-type radar, though the building was empty because the electronic equipment had not yet been installed. The *Dnepr* plants were, however, functional, and according to Russian negotiators, their immediate dismantling was inconceivable until the construction of a compensating station could be completed elsewhere near Russia's western border. This process, in turn, would take years, and in the meantime Latvia did not have a choice but to accept it in the name of international peace and stability. So, the Russian negotiators insisted on this clause, arguing that the status of Skrunda was formally set out in the US–USSR anti-missile defence treaty of 1972, which had long served as one of the cornerstones of the strategic stability of the Cold War.

Thus, in the summer of 1993, when the 5th Saeima elections were held in Latvia and the new spectrum of political parties was emerging, a new government was formed and the institution of State President was restored, the vital issue regarding the withdrawal of the Russian army and military objects was “hanging in the air.” Signals were received from Moscow that the

withdrawal of the army could take place within about a year under various technical and political conditions, but in any case, Skrunda would stay for a long time. At the time, similar uncertainty was also present in Russian–Estonian talks on the withdrawal of the army, while the example of Lithuania showed that the negotiators on the Russian side had opted for differentiation tactics in negotiations with the three Baltic countries, the purpose of which was to neutralise international complaints of delays in the withdrawal of the army from the Baltics.

The withdrawal of Russian troops from Lithuania was completed on August 31, 1993, even before the conclusion of an intergovernmental agreement. On the one hand, it strengthened the arguments of some political forces in Latvia that perhaps such an agreement with Moscow on legalising the temporary status of the occupation army would not be necessary at all. However, making assumptions about parallels with Lithuania was unsafe and hypothetical. Given the geographic features and the proximity of the Kaliningrad region, during the Soviet years of power, less military infrastructure was located in Lithuania than in Estonia and Latvia. Moreover, the withdrawal from Lithuania strengthened Russia's position with Western powers, allowing it to say that delaying the withdrawal of the army was not a sign that it was renewing imperial ambitions, but could be legitimately linked to ethnic and citizenship legislation issues in Latvia and Estonia. In Lithuania, a very liberal citizenship law was introduced after the restoration of independence, which can be explained by the fact that the proportion of people who immigrated to Lithuania during the Soviet era was radically smaller than in the rest of the Baltics. Moreover, the territory of Lithuania, unlike Latvia and Estonia, had increased rather than decreased under the influence of the Soviet power, and therefore holding on to the pre-occupation citizenship legislation norms was impractical.

The 5th Saeima elections and the foreign policy makers

The union *Latvia's Way* (*Latvijas Ceļš*, LW), which became a political party of the same name soon after the 1993 elections, was a political force of national liberalism formed by a large part of the former *Latvian Popular Front* (LPF) leaders, whose program from the very beginning was characterised by the overriding goal of European integration. In the 5th Saeima, the LW won 36 of the 100 seats in the Saeima. With the participation of the Latvian Farmers'

Union (*Latvijas Zemnieku savienība*, LFU), whose representative Guntis Ulmanis was elected the President, a minority coalition and the Cabinet were formed under the leadership of Prime Minister Valdis Birkavs. In the 5th Saeima, among the parliamentarians operating in the opposition, those who positioned themselves most energetically in foreign affairs issues were the national bloc politicians from then separately existing and mutually competing parties *For Fatherland and Freedom* (*Tēvzemei un Brīvībai*) and LNNK (Latvian National Independence Movement, *Latvijas Nacionālās neatkarības kustība*). In the discussions, the voices of the non-parliamentary opposition – especially the leaders of the LPF and the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party (LSDWP) who were previously involved in the negotiations but were not successful in the 5th Saeima elections – were also particularly critical.

Meanwhile for the Latvian diplomatic corps, the outcome of the 5th Saeima elections meant a continuation of the previously established agenda. Several key figures in the Foreign Ministry had joined *Latvia's Way*. Georgs Andrejevs retained the position of the Minister, that he assumed in the Ivars Godmanis's administration. Historian Mārtiņš Virsis, one of the most experienced figures of the Foreign Ministry who had worked there since 1990, was confirmed in the responsible – and, as later turned out to be the most mercilessly criticised – post as the head of the new delegation for negotiations with Russia. The army withdrawal negotiations were a form of professional baptism by fire for such influential representatives of the Latvian diplomatic corps in later years as Māris Riekstiņš, Normans Penke, and Maira Mora.

Excluding the part of the society and politicians who in general had resisted Latvia's progress towards restoration of independence in the past years, after the 5th Saeima elections, nobody in Latvia's political elite doubted that the withdrawal of the Russian army was the most important objective of the country's foreign policy. In addition to the distant beacon of "growing into Europe,"¹⁴ the main point of the Birkavs administration foreign policy program was talks with Russia in attempt to finally settle the issue of the withdrawal of the army. Debating about the formation of the new government, Juris Sinka, one of the few members of the opposition experienced in foreign affairs and a representative of the *For Fatherland and Freedom* party, declared that the withdrawal of the army was a "priority of all priorities,"¹⁵ and there was really no dispute about that. However, disputes soon became heated about how this "priority of all priorities" was to be achieved.

Compromises and intermediaries

Having received the mandate of voters' confidence, the formation of a new government in Latvia in the second half of 1993 coincided with the period when the issue of the Russian army withdrawal began to gain new international dynamics that made it possible to break the deadlock, which before was unlikely to end through the bilateral regime between parties of such a different international weight. With the participation of diplomats from the Nordic countries, especially Sweden supporting Baltic goals, the issue of the army withdrawal had slowly gained more attention from Western powers.

The changes that had been gradually taking place in US policy towards the ongoing processes in Russia and Eastern Europe should be considered as the most significant. Following the more distant policies of the previous years, by the end of 1993 Washington began to develop the idea that, after the Cold War, it was in the interest of the United States to play an equally active role in Europe as in previous decades. This revision of foreign policy stances during the first year of Bill Clinton's presidency also led to their readiness to engage directly in the Latvia–Russia and Estonia–Russia negotiations on the army withdrawal.

Archival documents and memoirs published by the officials involved in this process show that at the end of 1993, the withdrawal of the Russian army from the Baltic countries became an important issue on the US–Russian agenda. In response to requests for assistance from Baltic and Swedish diplomats, particularly regarding the Skrunda problem, a number of delegations of high-ranking US officials visited Riga, Tallinn and Moscow between September and December 1993 to discuss the army withdrawal issue, explain the American position and look for ways to promote the process.

On September 20, for example, Clinton's right-hand man in Russian affairs, Ambassador at Large Strobe Talbott visited Riga. In talks with Valdis Birkavs and Guntis Ulmanis, he explained that it was in the interest of the United States to support the transformation processes in the former space of the USSR, to make these processes irreversible and to assist, in every possible way, the development of Russia's relations with its new neighbours in a constructive manner and with respect of their sovereignty. The removal of the military from the Baltic countries would be a sign that developments were indeed going in this direction. Talbott explained that Washington would be ready to use the opportunities and influence of its "good offices" to do something about the issue, but at the same time he emphasised that the

US would not be an official mediator, as a mediator should be neutral, but “... we are not neutral, we are on your side.”¹⁶ Ten days later, after Clinton’s first meeting with the Baltic Presidents in New York, President Ulmanis tried to dispel his scepticism about the fact that the interests of a superpower such as the United States could actually coincide with the interests of Latvia, asking Talbott a naively direct question about whether Americans had any secret deal with Russia regarding the Skrunda issue. “No!” was the answer. “This is unambiguous, categorical, and not debatable!”¹⁷

At the same time, in talks between diplomats and arms control experts at more official level, an explanation was received that Americans did not consider the Skrunda RS as a hostile object. Moreover, they acknowledged the legitimacy of Moscow’s arguments that, in the name of strategic stability, this component in Russia’s “early warning” system could not be simply eliminated before the construction of an equivalent site elsewhere in the Russian border area. However, US representatives emphasised that this did not mean that they had any agreement with Russia on the Skrunda object remaining in the territory of Latvia. If Latvia did not want it, then as a sovereign country, it had the full right to raise objections, in which case a rational solution would be a compromise on a clearly defined transition period, in which Skrunda would continue to operate while Russia built an alternative.¹⁸ Over the course of the next few months, continuing the talks in the diplomatic backstage, Latvia was encouraged to come up with a realistic compromise scenario with Russia and to change its formerly unconditional stance that all Russian military objects should leave Latvia immediately. If Riga showed that it was ready to handle the Skrunda issue in a constructive manner, Washington, for its part, promised to encourage Russia to also take a step forward, and to then hold Moscow accountable to fulfil the conditions of the agreement if it was concluded between Latvia and Russia.

Ultimately, the involvement of the allies played a crucial role in breaking the Skrunda deadlock. However, this engagement came Latvia’s need to accept what the allies saw as a reasonable compromise on the issue of the army withdrawal – including Skrunda as well as the demands on the Russian side to respect the status of military pensioners. The different notions among different groups of Latvian society and among the political forces on what an adequate compromise was – and whether Latvia was to compromise at all on this issue – made the winter–spring season of 1993–1994 one of the tensest moments in the political history of Latvia after the restoration of

independence. In Latvia, discussions about the army withdrawal agreements can be divided by content into two stages. During the 1993–1994 transition, discussions focused mostly on the compromise on the period of operation of the Skrunda RS, and exposed a tremendous amount of instinctive mistrust in the policies of the great powers, as well as concerns that during this period, a large segment of the Latvian political elite dominated in relation to the intentions of the United States. In the end, however, during the last months before the signing of the agreement discussions focused on the compromises around the status of military pensioners in Latvia.

Skrunda, the great powers, and possibilities to manoeuvre

Considering that there was not much knowledge about arms control even until the end of 1993 in Latvia, political circles in the country only gradually formed the understanding of the role played by Skrunda in Russia's interaction with other nuclear states. The Russian side repeatedly used this lack of understanding in discussions with Latvian diplomats and politicians, arguing that the United States had sanctioned preserving the site in the territory of Latvia. For some time, these hints fell on fertile soil, raising suspicion about the existence of a secret agreement between Washington and Moscow around Latvia belonging to Russia's zone of influence. Until autumn of 1993, this suspicion was also fuelled by highly reticent responses from the US administration to Latvian diplomats' requests to exert pressure on Russia on the issue of army withdrawal.

However, around the turn of 1993/1994, Latvian diplomats, having overcome their own scepticism about the goodwill of their Western advisers, had become more and more convinced that the involvement of Americans in the Skrunda issue was the best possible option. Shortly before the Clinton–Yeltsin summit scheduled for January 1994 in Washington, DC, the latest information on the status of the negotiations between Latvia and Russia regarding Skrunda was handed over to Washington. The information regarded the Latvian government's readiness to agree to a so called "3+1" formula, namely, giving Russia the right to continue to use the radar station for three years, and allocating another 12 months for the dismantling of the station. Russia's counter-offer in this stage of negotiations was a "5+2" formula. At a meeting in Moscow, Clinton offered Yeltsin a compromise solution that was

the middle ground between the positions of Latvia and Russia, namely, a “4+18” formula: four years of future operation of Skrunda and one and a half years to dismantle it. Encouraged by Clinton, Yeltsin agreed to this option.

Following these talks, the Latvian government, through diplomatic channels from Washington and many other negotiators in Western capitals, was encouraged to support the “4+18” formula on its part. In February, the Latvian government resolved that Yeltsin’s promise made to Clinton and Clinton’s willingness to personally follow up on fulfilling the promise was the best available guarantee for the Skrunda problem to truly be solved. The negotiating delegation was given a mandate to agree to the formula “4+18” solution and to incorporate it in the respective Latvian–Russian draft agreement. “[T]here is a reason to think,” Prime Minister Valdis Birkavs summed up at the end of February, “that what has been achieved as a result of the US engagement could be a much better solution than what we could hope to achieve on our own against Russia. Undoubtedly, the US involvement in solving this issue is in itself an indirect guarantee of Russia’s compliance with the agreement obligations, as it will be much more difficult and dangerous to ignore the promises given to the US than to Latvia.”¹⁹

This argument faced significant scepticism among Latvian opposition politicians in relation to whether great powers could ever act in good faith in relation to the interests of small countries. For example, Māris Grīnblats, one of the leaders of the party *For Fatherland and Freedom*, was worried: “will it not be that if we agree to these four years and another year and a half for its dismantling, the Western power, which carries out the function of mediation here between Riga and Moscow, will be relieved and will say: now this problem is off our shoulders for at least five and a half years, and after five and a half years we will then see what had happened here in the meantime.”²⁰ However, Grīnblats’s considerations were still relatively modest in comparison to the assessments of the nationally–conservative wing of Latvian politics. Roberts Milbergs, the spokesman of *For Fatherland and Freedom* emphasised in the debates that, in his opinion, “the spirit of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact is alive, and the great powers continue to solve their problems at the expense of the small nations!”²¹ “Let us not be naive!” added Pēteris Tabūns, a member of the *LNNK*, “the West, too, does not care much about the fate of Latvia and Latvians. They prefer to live in peace and harmony [with Russia]. They can sacrifice the small Latvia and the Baltics, and no big deal.”²²

Tālav Jundzis, the former Minister of defence of Ivars Godmanis's government, at that time believed that the actions of the United States and other Western countries "lead to serious reflection about a redistribution of the world in new spheres of influence."²³ The statements of President Guntis Ulmanis also indicate bewilderment about whether the Skrunda agreement was a Trojan horse, by which the great powers were deluding Latvia with the aim of leaving it in the orbit of Russia. In the middle of January 1994, a few days after receiving information about the Clinton–Yeltsin meeting, Ulmanis supposed that "there is reason to believe that they have agreed on the future fate of Latvia."²⁴ Over the following months, however, Ulmanis favoured the argument that, despite concerns and suspicions, the possibility for Latvia to manoeuvre within the system were so small that it was more appropriate to take a risk and trust the Americans. "I could [insist on] – in three months, Skrunda must get out, I do not want to hear anything else!" At the beginning of February, Ulmanis hypothesised, "[but] will anyone obey this decision made by the people of Latvia, the government, or the Saeima?"²⁵ In the Saeima's debates, a similar position was taken by Ulmanis's colleague from the LFU and a member of the government coalition, Gunārs Resnais, who called for the understanding that "if today we continue to resist it, to dictate our own rules, those Westerners will give up on us... Are we alone able to do anything? Of course not."²⁶

Politicians were divided into two camps in the discussions about the good faith of the great powers and the possibilities for Latvia to manoeuvre between them. The government's position was supported by those who were sceptical but ready to take the risk, and in the other camp, there were those particularly sceptical, for whom the potential return on risk seemed so unpredictable that it was not worth making concessions on core issues. Along with the President, most pronounced member of the first group were the leading politicians and diplomatic corps of the *Latvia's Way* party. The negotiator Mārtiņš Virsis, according to the observations of his frequent interlocutor, Swedish diplomat Lars Fredén, was a "confident pessimist," whose "whole [...] being radiated scepticism,"²⁷ nevertheless, Virsis himself slowly concluded that there was and would be no better solution and that, moreover, time was not on Latvia's side given the unpredictable situation in Russia. In Virsis's view, "Latvia would not have reached such agreements, even with compromise, without the support of the West."²⁸ Foreign Minister Georgs Andrejevs, calling for an agreement on the Skrunda compromise, acknowledged that the promises by Americans "of course [...] is not an exhaustive guarantee."²⁹ Indulis Bērziņš, a member

of the Saeima Foreign Affairs Committee and later Foreign Minister, also acknowledged that Washington's offer was not a honey-bread, but rather the lesser evil. "Indeed, that is a compromise... It would be very good if we had such strong friends who would only consider us, and would not consider Russia. Unfortunately, that's not the case."³⁰

In the other group, in addition to other national wing politicians, one of the most passionate critics of Latvia's foreign policy during this period was Jānis Straume, a representative of *For Fatherland and Freedom*. In his understanding, the government's readiness for a compromise was a betrayal of the state and demonstration of a lack of comprehension of foreign policy realities.

Indeed, the world has never wanted to understand us, because we live next to a hostile great power, and the world is nothing but a division of zones of interest among the major powers. And it is in vain to hope that others will care for us and will protect us if we do not do it ourselves, if we are not strong in spirit and unyielding in our demands ... If Mr. Birkavs and Mr. Andrejevs announce that they are going to vote for the "4+18" formula, then, in my opinion, they have not learned from the mistake made by the Latvian Foreign Minister Vilhelms Munters in 1939, signing an agreement in Moscow on the deployment of a limited Soviet Union contingent in the territory of Latvia. In that agreement, too, both the dates of the stay of these army units, and various other conditions were fixed. Then too, two major powers had agreed.³¹

National wing politicians also tended to believe that in this negotiation process, Latvia had much more leverage against Russia, and that the Skrunda compromise was a realistic opportunity to force Moscow to make concessions about the recognising the occupation, reparations arising from it and the territorial dispute over the ownership of Abrene. "The Latvian delegation has absolutely no backbone," noted Aleksandrs Kiršteins, the head of the Saeima Foreign Affairs Committee and a representative of the LNNK. "Besides, no agreement has been reached that would establish the relations between Latvia and Russia in the next 20 years: there have been no talks of Russia recognizing Latvia's occupation [...] thus there are no foundations laid for the assurance of compensation for property rights, for Abrene."³²

It would be incorrect to judge the caution of the leading Latvian politicians of the time in relation to the US intentions merely as ideological dogmatism. In the spring of 1994, nobody had a reliable guarantee that the process of removing the army and dismantling the Skrunda station would

proceed smoothly, even upon conclusion of the agreement. At the time, relying on the fact that Western allies would actually help to strengthen Latvia's sovereignty against Russia in the long run meant taking on risks. The reason for this scepticism was not an *a priori* mistaken perception of the opportunities provided by the international environment. Rather, it was the result of the delayed analysis of the rather rapid changes in the international state of affairs at the end of 1993, particularly the fact that the end of 1993 marked a real change in attitude by the US administration towards the Baltic countries. Particularly for opposition politicians, who mostly operated apart from diplomatic channels, there was no way to accurately and directly receive and adequately interpret these signals. Their assessment, reinforced by the passion of the domestic political struggle, was based on the analysis of Latvia's unfortunate experience of relations with the great powers in the previous period; a particular role in this analysis was taken by both the disappointment of the years of the Awakening regarding the US reticence towards the independence efforts of the Baltic countries in 1990 to 1991, and the lessons from World War II.

Latvia's position on military pensioners

Success in transnational relations depends on how adequately foreign policy makers have managed to create an image of the relative strength, influence and manoeuvrability of their country in the international environment. There may be different interpretations of the limits of these possibilities. However, in the eyes of the national wing representatives in the army withdrawal discussions, instead of political arguments, there one could often note the tendency to deal with sterile legal constructions that were not incorrect, but pragmatically could in no way compensate Latvia's relative strength deficit in relations to the great powers.

This was especially true in the spring of 1994, when various diplomatic activities resulted in a reduction in domestic political resistance to the Skrunda compromise. The opposition's objections were then turned against the second big concession – the retention of the objectionable Soviet Army military pensioners in the country – which Latvian negotiators had to accept in order to prepare the army withdrawal agreement for signing. However, many critics of the government's actions were still not convinced that such agreements were at all necessary for Latvia.

According to the doctrine of legal continuity on which the Baltic countries relied, the Soviet occupation regime was considered illegal following the events of 1940. Although Moscow's interpretation of these events was different, after 1992, nobody had any doubts about Russia's legal obligation to withdraw the army. The presence of the military force of one country on the territory of another without permission contradicts international law. Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, whose statehood Moscow itself had acknowledged, had not given such permissions. In the chaotic post-putsch days, Moscow did not even consider requesting such permission as a precondition for recognizing the countries' independence.

One of the leaders of *LNNK*, the national wing veteran Eduards Berklavs, used to regularly rely on international law, in particular the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which require occupying forces and their civilian populations to immediately leave an occupied territory. "What kind of agreement can there be with the occupant?" this trend of thought was supported also by Pēteris Tabūns, although without explaining what the mechanism would be to achieve this right. "They arrived here without an agreement, and so they must leave without an agreement... We had to give an ultimatum to Russia long ago ... and to say our no [to the world]."³³

The leaders of the *Latvia's Way* regarded this approach as "utopian nationalism"³⁴ and the legal mechanisms on which it was based as a real-political truth without perspective and "with a breath of a grave."³⁵ The leader of the *LW's* Saeima faction, Andrejs Panteļējēvs tried to convince the opposition that if Latvia overestimated its capabilities, clinging strongly to its truth, and the strongest support of their foreign policy would be only the resolutions of the international organisations, then "the reaction of the European countries will be very simple: [they will say]: "Of course, you may, to a large extent, be right that ... you do not sign this agreement [but you remain] alone with your truth in relations with Russia." Well, then in this solitude, solitude for two, or solitude for three – us, Russia, and our truth – we shall spend the next couple of years."³⁶ Supporting the government's position, Egils Levits, an influential lawyer of the public law of the Awakening period, the Minister of Justice representing the *Latvia's Way*, who argued that it would be right, in the case of the army withdrawal, for the moral-politics to concede to considerations of real-politics. Unfortunately, this would involve a "compromise also between the truth and injustice," Levits admitted. "But no nation can live only by illusions and its truth."³⁷

In the government's view, further hesitation with the conclusion of agreements was dangerous, given the restless domestic political situation in Russia, and the fact that Western partners' support for Latvia could gradually disappear on this issue. Therefore, in the middle of March 1994, the final versions of the agreements were adjusted, including both the Russian commitment to complete the withdrawal of troops by August 31, the compromise agreement on Skrunda and Latvia's concession in relation to military pensioners. The agreements were ready for signing, but the temperature of the domestic political debates in Latvia continued to increase as opposition politicians were trying to prevent the signing of the agreement, suggesting that another delegation be set up to start negotiating with Russia again. The head of the delegation, Mārtiņš Virsis became the object of serious personal attacks, as opposition politicians called the agreements "the Virsis–Zotov pact," and called Virsis himself a traitor of the state.

In Jānis Straume's assessment, signing the contracts actually turned Latvia into "Russia's vassal state,"³⁸ and another national-wing leader, Andrejs Krastiņš, a member of the Saeima representing LNNK, was of the opinion that the compromise on retaining retired military personnel in Latvia and giving them the status of non-citizens "is even more dangerous than the Skrunda issue because it virtually forces the Republic of Latvia to keep on its territory battle-capable persons."³⁹ The head of the Saeima Foreign Affairs Committee, Aleksandrs Kiršteins was also critical – to him, the status of the former Soviet military personnel was a "matter of principle."⁴⁰ Instead of yielding, Kiršteins recommended that Latvian foreign policy makers "implement the CSCE Helsinki Declaration."⁴¹ The former Minister of Defence, Tālav Jundzis reasoned in a similar manner that Latvia would be better off not agreeing to the compromises recommended by the great powers, but instead receiving an "official international expert opinion" on the actual time needed for Russia to move Skrunda, as well as doing everything possible for "the UN to recognise the fact of the occupation of 1940," which would further strengthen Latvia's legal arguments in negotiations with Russia and, in parallel, continue the "pressure on the world community."⁴²

However, according to the government's assessment, it was no longer possible to risk the suspension of the entire package of agreements at that time. Creating a new delegation, returning to the controversial issues, and winning better conditions, in the assessment of diplomats and the *Latvia's Way's* administration, was a risky utopian goal. "If we lose this historic

Diena newspaper's articles on the withdrawal of the Russian army (February 18, March 16, March 18, March 30, 1994).

Starptvalstu sarunas beigušās bez dokumentu galigas saskaņošanas



M. Virsis atbild uz žurnālistu jautājumiem. Foto — Elmārs Rudzītis, A.F.I.

Parafēta līgumu pakete par armijas izvešanu

Ulmanis un Jeļcins, iespējams, tiksies aprīļa sākumā

Anita Matīsona, *Dienas* korespondente Maskavā

Maskava, 15. marts. Otrdien Maskava Krievijas Ārlietu ministrijas sarakstītajā Latvijas un Krievijas delegāciju vadītāji parafēta visu līgumu paketi par Krievijas armijas izvešanu no Latvijas. Kā ziņoja Latvijas delegācijas vadītājs Mārtiņš Virsis: «Tas ir tikai pusceļš.» Līdz brīdim, kad dokumenti sāksies spēkā, tie ir, pirmkārt, jāskatās abu valstu valdībām, otrkārt, jāparaksta abu valstu prezidentiem un, treškārt, jāratificē parlamentiem. Krievija pēc svinīgās ratifikācijas ceremonijas ieteica tikšanās augstākajā līmenī organizēt aprīļa pirmajā pusē. Latvijas delegācijas vadītājs Mārtiņš Virsis, novērtēdams šo priekšlikumu kā vēra ņemamu, sacīja, ka to nepieciešams apspriest ar Latvijas prezidentu.

Kā viens no pakētē ietilpstošajiem dokumentiem otrdien tika parafēti pamatlīgums par Krievijas armijas izvešanas kārtību un termiņiem no Latvijas. Kā apgalvoja Krievijas delegācijas galva Sergejs Zotovs: «Šis līgums starptautiski tiesiskā aspektā fiksē Krievijas jau agrāk izteikto apņemšanos izvest savu karaspēku no Latvijas līdz šā gada 31. augustam.» Krievijas armijas izvešanas grafiks līgumam tiks pievienots brīdī, kad to parakstīs prezidenti. Grafiks, pēc abu delegāciju vadītāju vārdiem, jau ir izstrādāts un karaspēka izbraukšana no Latvijas jau tagad notiek pēc tā.

Kā nākamais dokumenta tika parafēta vienošanās par sociālo aizsardzību Krievijas armijas pārstāvjiem to pagaidu uzturēšanās laikā Latvijā. Tika parafēta arī vienošanās par militāro pensijuāru un viņu ģimenes locekļu sociālo aizsardzību. Krievijas presē M. Virsis atzina: «Jums jāsaprot, ko Latvijas sabiedrībai nozīmē šo ka-



M. Virsis un S. Zotovs paraksta līgumus. Foto — ITAR—TASS—LETA

ra pensijuāru problēma pati par sevi, gan šo cilvēku politiskā aktivitāte, gan noslieces». Minētā vienošanās paredz, ka tiem armijas pārstāvjiem, kas atvairināti līdz 1992. gada 28. janvārim, tas ir, brīdī, kad Krievija pārņēma PSRS bruņotās spēkus savā jurisdikcijā, tiek garantēta iespēja palikt Latvijā. Pensijs tiem tiek izmaksātas no Krievijas pensiju fonda. Visu ar vienošanās realizāciju radušos problēmu risināšana tiek nodota speciāliem Krievijas, Latvijas un

EDSA nozīmētiem pilnvarotajiem. Pretēji dienu iepriekš solītajam tika ratificēti arī līgumi par Skrudas RLS pagaidu funkcionēšanas un demontēšanas kārtību. Tajā nav punkta par Krievijas ikgadējo maksu Latvijai par Skrudas RLS nomu. Tāca pretēji vēl vakar apgalvotajam, ka šī jautājuma nesaskaņošanas gadījumā prezidentu tikšanās ir neiespējama. Krievijas delegācija negatīvi mainīja viedokli un tās vadītājs paziņoja: «Skrudas maksājumi nevar kļūt par šķēr-

sil, lai tiktos augstākajā līmenī.» Tikai jautājums par nomas maksu paliek atklāts un tiks saskaņots tālāko starptautisko konsultāciju laikā. Krievija joprojām nesola vairāk kā 2 miljonus \$ gadā, turpretī Latvijai, gan kategoriski nepieprasīdama savus sākotnēji nosauktos 400 miljonus, tomēr cer saņemt vairāk. Kā *Diena* jau rakstīja, saskaņā ar šo līgumu Krievija saglābā tiesības izmantot minēto objektu vēl ceturds gadus un pusotra gada laikā veikt tā pilnīgu demontāžu. S. Zotovs at-

kārtoti atzīmēja, ka, parakstot šo līgumu, Krievija ir apņēmusies dot Latvijai visdažādākas, no tikai divpusējas garantijas par Latvijas suverenitātes neizkaramību. Gandarījumu par Latvijas un Krievijas līgumu šodien pauda arī Ziemeļrijas premjerministrs Karls Bilts, ziņojot *Reuters*: «Mums ir iespēja paveikt Latvijas valdību ar vitāli svarīgu līgumu, kas ir nozīmīgs gan Latvijas drošībai, gan stabilitātei Baltijas jūras reģionā», piebilda K. Bilts. ♦

Parafētie līgumi ar Krieviju atšķiras no projektiem, uzskata LNNK



No rita deputāts, arī Indulis Bērziņu (attēla centrā), pie Saeimas sagaidīja nikni piketētāji. Foto — Uldis Briedis, *Diena*

Valdība un prezidents pārrunā līgumus

Latvijas parafētie līgumi var sarežģīt sarunu gaitu Igaunijai



Kamēr Ministru kabinets kopā ar Valsts prezidentu pārrunā Latvijas un Krievijas parafēto līgumu paketi, lai izteiktu savu negatīvo attieksmi pret to, pie Ministru kabineta ēkas piketu organizēja Latvijas nacionālo spēku apvienība. Foto — Uldis Briedis, *Diena*

Jānis Kulmanis

Rīga, 29.marts. Šodien Latvijas Ministru kabinets kopā ar Valsts prezidentu Guntī Ullmani pārrunāja Latvijas un Krievijas parafēto līgumu paketi. Svētkara TV *Panorāmā* Valsts prezidents sacīja, ka katrs līgums ir sarežģīti jautājumi un punkti, kas jāpārrunā. Abu valstu prezidentu sarunām nebūtu jēgas, ja mēs, sacīja G.Ullmanis, aizbrauktu bez savas nostājas, sava vērtējuma. Valsts prezidents sacīja arī, ka pirms tikšanās ar Krievijas prezidentu Bor-

si Jelcinu vēlētos tikties ar Eiropas ievērojamākajiem politiķiem un uzzinātu viņu vērtējumu par šiem līgumiem un saņemtu no viņiem zināmas garantijas. *TV Panorāmā* ziņo, ka Latvijas Valsts prezidents vēl nezina, vai parakstīs līgumus.

Apspriežot līgumus ar Krieviju, Ministru kabinets gatavo arī politisko paziņojumu, kas līdz *Dienas* redakcijas slēgšanai vēl nebija pieņemts. Paredzams, ka tājā valdība izteiks savu atbalstu starptautu sarunās parafētais līgumu paketes ratifikācijai Saeimā un uz-

svērs, ka līguma parakstīšana par Krievijas karaspēka izvešanu ir vienīgā reālā garantija armijas izvešanai no Latvijas līdz šā gada 31.augustam. Paziņojumā valdība acinārdzot atzīs, ka šie līgumi ietver daudzus smagus kompromisus Latvijai, taču pavēlēs uzskatu, ka nav svarīgāka uzdevuma kā Krievijas karaspēka izvešanas beigū termiņa fiksēšana, līdz ar to panākot iespējami ātrāku šī karaspēka izvešanu no Latvijas teritorijas.

Atgādinot, ka armijas izvešana pašlaik ir vissvarīgākais jautājums

Latvijā, šātkšmes ministrs Andris Gūtmanis, pāršātvot Latvijas valdību šovakar TV preses konferencē, uzsver, ka ir vajadzīgas garantijas, lai šis process notiktu. Lielākais sasniegums divu gadu sarunās starp Latvijas un Krievijas valdību dēļ, gūcējam, sacīja A.Gūtmanis, ir filstēt termiņš — šā gada 31.augusts. Parakstot šos līgumus, rodas zināmas garantijas, ka karaspēks tiks izvests. Turklāt šo smago sarunu rezultātu veicināja arī tas, ka Latvija konsultējās ar Eiropas valstīm, NATO dalībvalstīm, lai noskaidrotu Eiropas

sabiedrības attieksmi pret šādiem līgumiem. Latvijas satiksmes ministrs sacīja, ka sarunu rezultāti liecina, ka «Latvija ir gatava ieklausīties Eiropas valstu saimē un ir gatava risināt vissarežģītākos jautājumus sarunu ceļā».

Kā informē *I/SNS*, Igaunijas parlamenta spikers Jūlo Nurgis-intelcijs, ka Latvijas un Krievijas parafētais līgums par militāro pensionāru sociālo aizsargātību var sarežģīt Krievijas un Igaunijas sarunas.

Skat. *Līgumi ar Krieviju* 8.lpp.

opportunity, and if the Russian army will still be here in Latvia after August 31,” warned Prime Minister Valdis Birkavs and responded to personal insults in like manner, “...then those will be godsons of Grinblats, Kiršteins and Straume, who will remain here with their care that, I assume, is based on patriotism and an erroneous assessment of the situation.”²⁴³ In Mārtiņš Virsis’s view, the relentless labelling of him as a national traitor and the attempts of the nationalists to torpedo the signing of the agreement was pure populism. It was convenient for the opposition, who did not carry the burden of actual responsibility. “I do not want to be mean, but I gladly would like to see at the forefront of the [newly established by the nationalists] delegation those people who have blamed me most passionately and, unfortunately, also most unrighteously,” Virsis said in the heat of the debate in parliament. “And yet more vile would be if I asked for ... a parliamentary decision to request [the implementation of] the withdrawal of the troops, say, by June 1, and, if the army would not be pulled out, including Skrunda, and with all the military pensioners, then also to provide for criminal liability for that.”²⁴⁴

Virsis did not hesitate to admit the fact that the agreements that were prepared were not perfect and the concessions contained there were painful for Latvia. However, the stakes were too high to risk and start the process over from the beginning. Clearly defined and internationally monitored deadlines for the termination of Russia’s military presence were too important for the future of Latvia, and, on behalf of these great benefits, it was reasonable to accept smaller losses. As Virsis said himself shortly before the signing of the agreements: “I definitely cannot defend all of these statements with my heart, but I defend these statements with my mind.”²⁴⁵ A few months later, the Estonian delegation for negotiations with Russia also agreed to a compromise over the disputed issue of military pensioners – the delegation which the national-wing politicians had called a model for not bowing in front of the great powers.

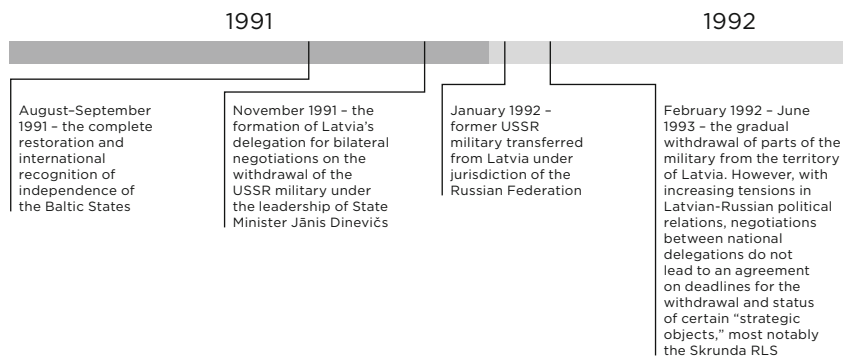
The Latvia–Russia package of agreements on the deadline of the withdrawal of the army, the period of temporary operation of Skrunda and the status of military pensioners was signed in Moscow on April 30, 1994. The agreement was also implemented in strict accordance with the signed contract.

Epilogue

August 31, 1994 was a sunny summer day in Riga. Well before the noon, press photographers had already started gathering near the House of Maikapars on Bļieķu street. The photographers, the street and the house itself were all witnesses to the convoluted history of Latvia.

During the Soviet era, this street in Riga had carried the name of Henri Barbusse, a French communist, author of an admiring biography of Stalin. After the restoration of Latvia's independence, Barbusse was replaced with the original name of the street, the 19th century German *Bleich Straße*, but later it regained the name of the French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, whose signature is on the documents internationally recognizing the statehood of Latvia issued by the great powers of the Entente in 1921. The street had carried Briand's name in the 1930s. For its part, the historic House of Maikapars served as a luxury hotel during the Cold War for the most prominent visitors, who during their visits to the Soviet Union were sometimes offered a chance to visit Riga. It was here where Josip Broz Tito, Fidel Castro and Ho Chi Minh all stayed overnight. However, in the turbulence of the early 1990s, the house was obtained by the notorious banker Aleksandrs Lavents, and he had provided the house to the Chancery of the State President until it could be relocated to its permanent home in the Riga Castle.

Thus, at the end of the summer of 1994, the House of Maikapars was the residence of President Guntis Ulmanis, and at noon on the last day of August, he awaited the arrival of guests. Guests arrived on time, as the black *chaika* limousine carefully maneuvered through the narrow courtyard of the House of Maikapars. The Ambassador of the Russian Federation Alexander Rannich, deputy commander of the Northwestern army group, general Fyodor Melnychuk, and chief of staff, general Valentin Bogushev, reported to the President of Latvia that Russian troops were no longer in the territory of Latvia. The audience proceeded in a business-like and – as video archives show – even a slightly nostalgic mood, and there was little evidence of the painful struggle in which the Latvian–Russian agreements on the withdrawal of the armed forces came into existence. Soon after that, the generals got back in the *chaika* and went to the Riga airport to get on the last Russian army transport airplane that left Latvia. Meanwhile, President Ulmanis addressed the journalists he had invited into his cabinet: “We can say these words with



ease... it has finally happened.” After fifty years spent in Latvia, the Eastern neighbour’s army was finally gone. With some conditions still, but gone.

The discussions in the previous few months about the correct approach to the problem of Russian army withdrawal outlined the reality that continued to characterise Latvia in the following years, that is, that it may be impossible to reach a national–level consensus on foreign policy, given that the representatives of the different ideological currents of Latvian politics tend to adhere to radically different notions regarding the most appropriate approach to Latvia’s foreign policy. At the same time, the diplomatic processes of 1993–1994 around the army withdrawal were a critically important landmark on the road to further realisation of the goals of Latvia’s foreign and security policy. The rapid and complete elimination of the military presence of a neighbouring country – even if it was achieved by accepting painful compromises – meant that, unlike most other former USSR republics, the Baltic countries succeeded in successfully achieving the great potential of geopolitics during the confusion of the 1990s, when Russia had a temporarily diminished ability to hold neighbouring countries in its orbital influence by exploiting their military presence.

Endnotes

- ¹ Valdis Birkavs, “Pirmie izšķirošie gadi: Krievijas armijas izvešana un Latvijas nonākšana Eiropas Savienības priekšvērtībā” from *Atgriešanās Eiropā: Latvijas prezidentu, premjerministru, ministru un diplomātu esejās* (Rīga: Zinātne, 2016), 52.
- ² The most detailed recount, from the Swedish diplomacy perspective, on the withdrawal process of the Russian army, is Larss Pēters Fredēns, *Atgriešanās: Zviedrijas drošības politika un Baltijas valstu atgūtās neatkarības pirmie gadi, 1991–1994* (Rīga: Atēna, 2011). A concentrated/concise

August 1993 – after Latvia's Way won in the 5th Saeima elections and Valdis Birkavs's government was approved, a new Latvia's delegation for bilateral negotiations with Russia is formed under the leadership of the Vice Foreign Minister Mārtiņš Virsis

January 1994 – US President Bill Clinton, working as an intermediary in negotiations with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, asks him to agree to the "4+18" formula concerning future operations of the Skrunda RLS. Yeltsin agrees to the compromise and, with the encouragement of US diplomats, so does Latvian government

March 1994 – with heated domestic debates going on in Latvia, the Latvian-Russian package of agreements is prepared for signing. It includes agreements on the provisional status of the Skrunda RLS and a deadline for its demolition, on the withdrawal of remaining military units by August 31, 1994, and on the status of former USSR military personnel retired in Latvia and their rights to stay in the country

April 1994 – The signing of the package of agreements during the visit of President Guntis Ulmanis and President of Ministers Valdis Birkavs to Moscow; in subsequent years, these agreements are implemented strictly according to the treaties

look at the US engagement is found in John R. Beyrle, *The Long Good-Bye: The Withdrawal of Russian Military Forces from the Baltic States* (Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, 1996). Among the Latvian diplomacy critics of the time, the most comprehensive publication on this issue is Tālavs Jundzis, "Krievijas armijas izvešana no Latvijas 1992–1994: Diplomātiska uzvara vai politiska piekāpšanās," *LZA Vēstis*, No. 68/3–4 (2014), 4–23; it is valuable to assess/evaluate these critical assessments in the context with Valdis Birkavs, "Pirmie izšķirošie gadi...", 43–56. A neutral researcher's description based on literature and more comprehensive archival sources is Jānis Taurēns, Inesis Feldmanis, *Latvijas ārpolitika un diplomātija 20. gadsimtā*, Vol. 3. (Rīga: Jumava, 2015), 75–93.

³ Larss Pēters Fredēns, *Atgriešanās...*, 60.

⁴ Ilgonis Upmalis, Eriks Tilgass, Jānis Dinevičs, Anatolijs Gorbunovs, *Latvija – PSRS karabāze* (Rīga: Zelta Grauds, 2006), 38–39.

⁵ "1991. gada 29. augusta sēdes stenogramma," Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://saeima.lv/steno/AP_steno/1991/st_910829.htm

⁶ "Krievijas Federācijas un Latvijas Republikas valdības delegāciju sarunu komunikē," February 1, 1992, from *Latvija – PSRS karabāze*, 205–206.

⁷ "Mūsdienu Krievijas ģenēze un Latvijas atjaunotais valstiskums," January 24, 1995, LVA-VPK 2200.f.5.a.489.l. Zinātne, 2016), 76.

⁸ Report of the Embassy of the Republic of Latvia in Moscow, March 11, 1992. LVA 270. f. 8. a. 24. l. 241.

⁹ "Valsts prezidenta G. Ulmaņa Daugavpili, pilsētas kinoteātri, tiekoties ar sabiedrības pārstāvjiem 1993. gada 28. jūlijā" from *Valsts prezidenta Gunta Ulmaņa runas, 1993–1996* (Rīga: Chancery of the President, 1997), 14.

¹⁰ Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, renamed OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as of January 1, 1995.

¹¹ "Helsinki Document 1992: The Challenges of Change," art.15, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, <http://www.osce.org/mc/39530?download=true>

¹² "LR Valsts delegācijas pārskats par starpvalstu sarunām ar Krievijas Federācijas Valsts delegāciju laika posmā no 1992. gada 1. februāra līdz 1993. gada 2. jūnijam," Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1994. 439. l. 38. k.

¹³ "Valsts prezidenta G. Ulmaņa runa Meirānu tautas namā 1994. gada 6. martā" from *Valsts prezidenta Gunta Ulmaņa runas*, 117.

¹⁴ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas ārkārtas rita sēde 1993. gada 20. jūlijā," Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://www.saeima.lv/steno/st_93/200793.html

- ¹⁵ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas ārkārtas rita sēde 1993. gada 20. jūlijā," Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://www.saeima.lv/steno/st_93/200793.html
- ¹⁶ Transcript of conversation, September 17, 1993, LVA-VPK 2200. f. 5. a. 221. l. 18–19.
- ¹⁷ Transcript of conversation, October 1, 1993, LVA-VPK 2200. f. 5. a. 74. l. 76.
- ¹⁸ Transcript of conversation, c. September 1993, LVA-VPK 2200. f. 5. a. 74. l. 83–87.
- ¹⁹ "Latvijas drošība: ceļā uz 21. gadsimtu," Prime Minister Valdis Birkavš's report at the international conference *Latvijas drošība gadsimtu mijā*, February 26, 1994, LVA 2000. f. 2. a. 390. l. 90.
- ²⁰ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas plenārsēde 1994. gada 3. martā," Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://saeima.lv/steno/st_94/st0303.html
- ²¹ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas plenārsēde 1993. gada 25. novembrī," Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://saeima.lv/steno/st_93/251193.html
- ²² Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas plenārsēde 1993. gada 25. novembrī," Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://saeima.lv/steno/st_93/251193.html
- ²³ Tālvārs Jundzis, *Latvijas drošība un aizsardzība* (Rīga: Junda, 1995), 325.
- ²⁴ "Valsts prezidenta G. Ulmaņa runa, apmeklējot robežsargu mācību centru Rēzeknē 1994. gada 19. janvārī," *Valsts prezidenta Guntā Ulmaņa runas*, 102–103.
- ²⁵ "Valsts prezidenta G. Ulmaņa runas fragmenti Latvijas Universitātē 1994. gada 8. februārī," *Valsts prezidenta Guntā Ulmaņa runas*, 111–112.
- ²⁶ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas plenārsēde 1994. gada 3. martā," Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://saeima.lv/steno/st_94/st0303.html
- ²⁷ Larss Pēters Fredēns, *Atgriešanās...*, 172.
- ²⁸ "Mārtiņš Virsis – tikai Jakubānam un Hānbergam," *Neatkarīgā Cīņa*, April 5, 1994, 5.
- ²⁹ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas plenārsēde 1994. gada 3. martā," Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://saeima.lv/steno/st_94/st0303.html
- ³⁰ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas ārkārtas plenārsēde 1994. gada 20. aprīlī," Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://saeima.lv/steno/st_94/st2004.html
- ³¹ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas plenārsēde 1994. gada 3. martā," Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://saeima.lv/steno/st_94/st0303.html
- ³² Cited from Kārlis Ērglis, "Parafētie līgumi ar Krieviju atšķiras no projektiem, uzskata LNNK," *Diena*, March 18, 1994, 1.
- ³³ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas plenārsēde 1993. gada 16. decembrī," Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://saeima.lv/steno/st_93/161293.html
- ³⁴ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas plenārsēde 1993. gada 25. novembrī," Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://saeima.lv/steno/st_93/251193.html
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas ārkārtas plenārsēde 1994. gada 20. aprīlī," Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://saeima.lv/steno/st_94/st2004.html
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas ārkārtas plenārsēde 1994. gada 20. aprīlī."
- ³⁹ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas plenārsēde 1994. gada 3. martā," Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://saeima.lv/steno/st_94/st0303.html
- ⁴⁰ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas ārkārtas plenārsēde 1994. gada 20. aprīlī."
- ⁴¹ See Kārlis Ērglis, "Parafētie līgumi ar Krieviju atšķiras no projektiem, uzskata LNNK."
- ⁴² "Zile nav rokā, bet mednis – kokā," *Neatkarīgā Cīņa*, March 24, 1994, 2.
- ⁴³ "“Latvijas drošības ārpolitiskie un iekšpolitiskie aspekti,” Ministru prezidenta Valda Birkava referāts Latvijas Universitātē," *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, April 15, 1994, 4.
- ⁴⁴ Verbatim report, "Latvijas Republikas 5. Saeimas ārkārtas plenārsēde 1994. gada 20. aprīlī."
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.

Latvia's Path to the European Union: In-between the Backstage and the Spotlight

KĀRLIS BUKOVSKIS, JUSTĪNE ELFERTE

Introduction

The accession of the Republic of Latvia to the European Union was a unique event in the history of a relatively small country. Not only is the European Union a political entity that has not had an analogue in the history of the world in terms of its formation process, but also Latvia's decision to join and its path to membership of the political-economic bloc of sovereign states has been multifaceted and full of political and institutional challenges. The geopolitical situation in which Latvia found itself upon regaining independence, as well as the economic, social and legal reforms that the state had to undergo to return to a democratic system of governance and a free market economy demanded substantial patience and working capability from Latvian society. However, the period of change in Latvia did not stop with restored elections for Saeima or the withdrawal of troops from the Russian Federation. The country selflessly continued adaptation to the new political situation and the legislative and institutional modernisation of the state by submitting Latvia's application for EU membership. The process, which was at the same time parallel to and strategically inseparable from the Latvian diplomatic struggle for joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), ended with the official entry into force of the treaty of accession to the European Union on May 1, 2004. The diplomatic lobby and the process of Latvia's legal preparation for EU membership took place at a time when Latvia and the whole of Europe had to make geostrategic choices after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Central and Eastern Europe became not only an experiment in economic and political transformation, but also a centre for the re-distribution of influence in the post-bipolar world. In the middle of this process, decision-makers in Latvia, together with Latvian society, consistently followed their chosen course to return to the Western world,

despite the difficulties and opposition that were faced both in international politics and at home.

This fundamental adaptation of the state was not only a success for decision-makers, who have often received recognition, but were also achievements of the backstage workers, and the whole of society. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to look at four processes: the political, the administrative, the diplomatic and the public. Each of these processes was most prominent at different times – in preparing applications for the EU membership, in organising the adoption of EU law, in the accession negotiations themselves, in the involvement of society and in organising a referendum on EU membership. Each of these stages was characterised by its own factors and central facilitators of the process. Latvia's common road to EU membership with the 11 other candidate countries has been analysed and described in a large number of academic, analytical, journalistic articles and books, and even novels. This article does not seek to diminish their intellectual significance, nor does it seek to replace the comprehensive and remarkable collection of memories "Return to Europe in the Essays of Presidents, Prime Ministers, Ministers, and Diplomats of Latvia." Rather, this article analyses the decisions made, the processes and the political logic behind them.

The political process: application for membership, the logic and the consequences of the decision

The historic decision on Latvia's road to the European Union was one choice among several potential scenarios after regaining independence and *de iure* international recognition in 1991. However, the progress towards the Euro-Atlantic structures rather quickly gained strategic dominance among politicians and in Latvian society. Adaptation to the EU and negotiations for membership in the EU was a comprehensive process involving all of the inhabitants of Latvia in one way or another. And so, it was also immodestly positioned in the central foreign policy document of the time: "...for Latvia to develop as a modern, democratic, secure, and economically strong European country, [...] accession to the European Union (EU) is an essential opportunity for the survival of the Latvian people and for the preservation of the Latvian state. Integration in the EU's economic system will contribute to the faster development of Latvian economy, science, education, and culture."¹ Two aspects of the choice of which direction to take were clear: the decision was made from the point of view of

long-term national security and future growth perspectives for a small country, as well as precise use of the opportunities created by the geopolitical chaos of the 1990s for the integration of Latvia into Euro-Atlantic structures and the society of nations. The other options, which did not receive as much support as a so-called “return to Europe” were: a return to the policy of neutrality advocated for by Jānis Jurkāns, the first Foreign Minister of restored Latvia, remaining in Russia’s orbit and preserving economic cooperation with the Commonwealth of Independent States, or balancing as a bridge between the West and the East. In this case, credit goes largely to the influential *Latvia’s Way* (*Latvijas ceļš*) party, which had already effectively launched the ideological direction of bringing Latvia closer to the European Union in the early 1990s. This was determined both by active members with experience abroad in the West, the “Satversme” faction in the Supreme Council, and successful personal contacts with Nordic and other Western partners.²

The Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’s strictly maintained direction toward membership in the European Union was supported by both the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Ivars Godmanis, as well as the later Prime Ministers Valdis Birkavs, and Māris Gailis under whose chairmanship the official application for EU membership was submitted. Likewise, it was supported by the subsequent Cabinet of Ministers under the chairmanship of Andris Šķēle, as well as Gundars Krasts, Vilis Krištopāns, Andris Bērziņš, Einars Repše and Indulis Emsis, who carried out the complicated implementation of EU law, negotiations on EU membership, and finally, the mobilisation of ministries to adopt the voluminous 80,000-page *acquis communautaire* (EU legislation, hereinafter *acquis*) by the specified due date. Although the path to the European Union involved the adaptability of the whole country, the whole of its administrative apparatus and society, the main driver was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There, long-time State Secretary, Māris Riekstiņš promoted changing the composition of the foreign ministers and ambassadors, and thereby the institutional memory and the consistency of progress toward the EU and NATO. The support received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from politicians and the consistent maintenance of the chosen euro integration course were closely linked to the pro-European position of all the Foreign Ministers, including Georgs Andrejevs, Indulis Bērziņš, and Sandra Kalniete, but particularly important was the work of Valdis Birkavs from September 1994 to July 1999. This phase included not only the submission of the application for EU

membership on October 27, 1995, but also the most significant preparation of the official candidacy for membership in the EU.

Formally, Latvia's relations with the European Union began on August 27, 1991, when the European Economic Community recognised Latvia's independence.³ Although Latvia had already become part of the *Phare* program and received money for economic reforms on January 1, 1992, the Agreement on Trade and Commercial and Economic Cooperation was only signed on May 11, 1992. However, the agreement signed by Jānis Jurkāns was not ratified because of the temporary status of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia. In May 1993, it was followed by an agreement on relations between Latvia and the European Economic Community in the fishery sector. The most significant legal developments in relations between Latvia and the EU in 1994 were the signing of the Free Trade Agreement with the EU on June 18, and the Europe (Association) Agreement signed in Luxembourg on June 12, 1995.⁴ It was precisely the association agreement that was signed after debates in Saeima on April 7 and the adoption of the statement "Latvian Foreign Policy Directions until 2005" that became the encouraging factor for further integration into the European Union and the subsequent formal application for membership.

On the path of EU integration, however, there were some moments of anxiety about a possible change of course between periods of political unity after the 6th Saeima elections on October 6, 1995. This anxiety led to a situation in which "[..] even before the establishment of the new Cabinet of Ministers, the government of Māris Gailis agreed to the proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to submit an application for Latvia's wish to join the European Union"⁵ by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of October 13, which was also signed by the President, Guntis Ulmanis. On October 14, Ulmanis convened all 11 elected parties to discuss the material developed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the long-term priorities of Latvia's foreign policy. The material was the basis for the statement adopted by the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia on April 7, 1995 entitled "Latvian Foreign Policy Directions until 2005," which emerged after discussions among the parties and became the "Declaration of the 6th Saeima Political Parties." Participation in the EU was declared to be the first priority, while NATO membership became the second priority, though it was called integration into the European security structures. This parliamentary acceptance and support continued in November of the same year with the establishment of the Saeima European Affairs Commission.⁶ The Commission, under the guidance of its long-term chairman Edvins Inkēns,

followed a traditional Scandinavian approach, performing parliamentary scrutiny of the Cabinet of Ministers regarding EU issues. This development, along with other successful cooperation on foreign policy issues between the first two Presidents and the MFA of re-established Latvia, were also the result of the effective mediation of diplomat Andris Razāns. The position of the Minister for Special Assignments for European Union Affairs, which existed between December 21, 1995 and August 7, 1997, was also established. The purpose of the creation of the ministerial post was to ensure political representation in negotiations with EU partners, and Aleksandrs Kiršteins became the only minister. It should also be noted that the position of the Minister for Special Assignments for cooperation with international financial institutions was established, and it was tasked with coordinating the use of EU structural funds. The position was held by Roberts Zīle in three governments during its existence between November 1998 and November 2002.

The events of 1995 marked two principal aspects which later continued to be visible in Latvia's progress towards membership in the transatlantic institutions. First, the events of 1995 before and around the submission of the EU application marked what became characteristic of the process of accession and even of EU membership – the lack of debate caused by consensus. In his memory of the foreign policy debate of April 7, 1995, Valdis Birkavš notes that “Unfortunately, the debate was not fruitful, [...] the main reason for the weak opposition was the fact that the majority of the Saeima clearly supported the concept.”⁷ The fact that the vast majority of politicians, and therefore also the public perceived EU integration to be self-evident led to further progress on the issue and the accession negotiations becoming an estranged project. The lack of interest and intellectually strong opposition led to a number of issues, including: a lack of additional arguments and flexibility in the later negotiations with the EC on the conditions for accession;⁸ society later blaming the Foreign Ministry for not releasing all of the information and for the lack of openness;⁹ and the alienation of the public to the EU accession process due to a lack of knowledge about the EU, the creation of biases, and the understanding of the EU as an elite project.

Second, the “Declaration of the 6th Saeima Political Parties” marked the most fundamental problem with the integration of Latvia into the Euro-Atlantic structures – EU membership was more readily accepted for both the Western partners and domestic politicians than membership in the military NATO alliance. Although “it is not possible to clearly distinguish the EU and

NATO enlargement processes”¹⁰ and the link between the two objectives is clearly visible both in official documents and in the positions of the Foreign Ministry, Western partners consistently maintained the question of the potential reaction of the Russian Federation. And, as history shows, Russia’s view of Baltic membership in the EU was relatively acceptable, while its opposition to NATO membership was more pronounced. The task of convincing future partners, the EU and NATO, that Latvia was politically and legally prepared to join both the EU and NATO, and that it did not create immediate challenges in geopolitical relations, was a major challenge. But, as with every major challenge, it could be solved by dividing the problem into smaller pieces and solving each issue individually and in sequence. This was also the approach taken by Latvia and its central partner on the other side – the European Commission. EU accession was gradually transformed from a major political task into a bureaucratic process, the technical nature of which obscured the geopolitical importance of the issue – and the EU accession process thereby gradually became a platform for NATO membership as well. NATO membership was approved during the NATO Prague Summit on November 21, 2002 following active international lobbying by President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga along with her adviser Andrejs Pildegovičs (2000–2006), Latvian Ambassador to the US, Aivis Ronis (2000–2004), Secretary of State of the Foreign Ministry, Māris Riekstiņš, the Head of NATO Unit, Inga Skujiņa and Latvian Ambassador to Germany, Andris Teikmanis (1998–2002). The decisive inclination of the most influential NATO country – the United States – in favor of NATO enlargement including the Baltic States, is strategically linked not only to the lobbying work of the abovementioned decision-makers, but also to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, following which the United States did not want any “grey zones” to exist that could potentially harm the new foreign policy priority – the fight against international terrorism.¹¹ Interestingly, “[...] this tremendous achievement of our country was immediately put on the list of objections of Eurosceptics – we are in NATO, why would we need the European Union.”¹²

The administrative process: institutional and legal instrumentation for cooperation and EU membership

One of the most important technical and political institutional elements was the European Integration Bureau (EIB), established by the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of November 1, 1994. The bureau was created following

the request of the European Commission to create a single national coordinating body.¹³ In a political sense, the creation of a European Integration Bureau was an important domestic policy event, symbolising progress towards the EU even before the major debates of 1995 and submission of the official application, as well as the weight of EU integration on national interests. The EIB was originally established under the authority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,¹⁴ but it was subordinated to the authority of the Minister for Special Tasks for European Union Affairs by a decision on February 27, 1996,¹⁵ and already by September 16, 1997 it had become subordinated to the Prime Minister directly.¹⁶ Considering the multi-disciplinary character of the EIB and the process of integration itself, it was possible to carry out the technical preparatory processes more coherently and with less institutional jealousy. In parallel, The EIB established working groups of the ministries,¹⁷ and the Cabinet of Ministers established the Council for European Integration in order to solve not only legal issues, but also the most important political issues. The establishment of working groups and the appointment of representatives from the ministries was a significant process that enabled the effective resolution of the issues included in the Europe Agreement and the White Paper signed on June 12, 1995.¹⁸ For example, the head of the Foreign and Security Policy section was the later MFA State Secretary Normans Penke, the Ministry of Finance was represented by Inna Šteinbuka, who later became head of the European Commission Representation in Latvia. The EIB itself had two leaders: Jānis Vaivads until 1998 and Edvards Kušners until 2003. As of January 1, 2004, the EIB ceased to exist, and for a short time the European Affairs Office under the State Chancellery was established and headed by Sanita Pavļuta-Deslandes, who later became the Permanent Representative of Latvia to the EU.¹⁹ The Office was annexed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on February 1, 2005 and became the European Union Coordination Department. The only body still operating that was originally established to coordinate Latvia's accession to the EU is the Meeting of Senior Officials on European Union issues.²⁰

The role of the EIB lay not only in the successful inter-institutional balancing but also in the preparation of a series of technical issues under its responsibility. "The European Integration Bureau prepared the actual basis for administration, which was not the most important in the negotiations itself, but was very important in providing for sufficient administrative capacity."²¹ According to the EIB's regulations, it had a very wide range of rights and influence opportunities from today's perspective, since, like

the Ministry of Justice, the Bureau gave opinions on compliance with the requirements of the Europe Agreement, ensured the preparation and exchange of information with the EU institutions and national institutions, informed the public about the progress towards EU integration, evaluated the usefulness of technical assistance provided by the EU and the Member States, coordinated the training of public officials on EU issues together with the School of Public Administration, prepared the meetings of the European integration council, and communicated with diplomats of EU member states together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This voluminous set of responsibilities was significant, in particular concerning the implementation of the *acquis*, coordinated by Solvita Harbaceviča and Ivo Alehno. Similarly, the establishment of the Translation and Terminology Center (TTC) in September 1996, involved of the Latvian diaspora, and with the coordinating support of the Latvian Ambassador to Canada, Georgs Andrejevs. The creation of the TTC ensured the translation of the *acquis* into Latvian and the effectiveness of the harmonisation of the regulatory acts, and it was an essential part of the Latvian state administration with long-term consequences. Ivars Golsts became the TTC's first leader. Finally, the ability of individual ministers to work together and find compromises was also fundamentally important; perhaps as important as the famous Article 81 of the *Satversme* (Constitution), which allowed the Cabinet of Ministers to adopt provisions with the force of law in the intervals between Saeima sessions. This instrument was relatively irreplaceable in terms of efficiency in adapting the *acquis*.

Initially, Latvia's progress towards EU integration and adoptable standards were determined only by the Europe Agreement and the White Paper on "Preparing the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe for integration into the internal market of the Union." The White Paper identified the steps that should be taken by future EU candidate countries in adopting legislation and in arranging the basic issues of the domestic market. However, this was just the beginning of cooperation, as the European Commission's knowledge of the "associated countries" was limited. As a result, one of the first and most significant accomplishments of the EIB and the Latvian administration in general was the preparation of responses begun in April 1996, to 2000 questions covering all the EU legislative areas. Replies were prepared and submitted within three months. This informing of the EC and self-identification was followed by the development and adoption of the first national EU integration program on December 18, 1996. After



The first administrative challenge to Latvia's integration into the EU - answers to about 2,000 questions from the European Commission - 24 volumes in 3 months.
Source: A photo from Jānis Vaivads' personal archive.

reading and evaluating the documents for a year, the EC adopted the “Agenda 2000 – Commission Opinion on Latvia’s Application for Membership of the European Union”²² on July 15, 1997, stating that Latvia remains in the process of accession, while Estonia was already invited to start the accession negotiations. In December of the same year, the European Council in Luxembourg also endorsed the opening of accession negotiations with only the original six countries with relatively similar readiness indicators, one of the considerations being the ability to absorb the enlargement process more successfully. Accordingly, Latvia’s memorandum of response,²³ submitted in October 1997, was not able to change the perspective of EU partners.

Meanwhile, the domestic work was organised around the established institutional framework and the National Program for the Integration of Latvia into the EU, where the last updated plan was adopted on July 28, 1999.²⁴ Only on October 13, 1999, after accelerated domestic adaptation and international lobbying by Latvian politicians and officials, the EC recommended the start of negotiations with Latvia. Negotiations began on February 15, 2000, as Latvia officially became a candidate for accession to the EU, and an intergovernmental

conference on Latvia's membership in the EU began. The negotiations themselves were based on comparing the work completed to the requirements and gradually completing the 31 open sections, which under the mandate of the Cabinet of Ministers were completed by Latvian diplomats under the leadership of Andris Piebalgs and Andris Kēsteris.

Latvia's diplomatic relations with the EU began in 1992, Latvia opened an Embassy to the EU, headed by Ludmila Buligina as the first diplomat. The embassy, located in a small apartment,²⁵ initially gained the first ambassador to the European Union, NATO, as well as Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands in the person of Juris Kanels. He served until January 1998, when he was replaced by Andris Piebalgs, who in turn was replaced by Andris Kēsteris, who until then was the Deputy State Secretary of the MFA, and had been the leader of Latvia's accession negotiations with the EU from 1999. With the accession of Latvia to the EU, Kēsteris also became the first permanent representative of Latvia to the EU.

Specifically, the cooperation between the Latvian Embassy and the Central apparatus of the MFA was an essential condition for the successful and coordinated international lobbying process. Namely, while the EIB did most of the work on coordinating the internal regulations, the diplomatic work, the persuasion of foreign partners, and the promotion of Latvia's "story" was carried out directly by the MFA. The intensification of relations with the EU and the increase in the volume of work necessitated a greater number of employees as well as the distribution of the EU issues, leading to the separation of EU representation from the embassy in Belgium and the representation in NATO in April 1997. More and more people were actively involved in solving EU issues, including Aldis Austers, Astra Kurme, and Dace Krieva. Regular "selling" of Latvia's figures to the partners through diplomatic charm was not only a decisive achievement by Latvian politicians, including President Viķe-Freiberga, but also at the level of everyday diplomats both before and after the accession negotiations. In the process, strong staff within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself was also significant. In the early years, key roles in cooperation with the Representation and with other Latvian institutions were played by Artis Bērtulis as an advisor to the Minister (1994–1998), and by Eduards Stiprais, initially as the head of the EU accession negotiating team and since 1999 as the deputy chief of the MFA accession negotiations to the EU and the Head of the Secretariat of Latvia's Negotiation Team for the EU accession. Similarly significant was the work

done by Iveta Šulca, the Director of the European Union Department of the MFA and later Head of the European Commission Representation in Latvia; Alise Balode, the Head of the MFA division for EU legal affairs; as well as the work done by the representatives of the sectoral ministries, including Inta Vasaraudze, the Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Finance; Mihails Kozlovs, the head of the EU integration and later the department for EU integration; Māris Sprindžuks, the parliamentary secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture; as well as the work of many other officials either included in the delegation of the EU accession negotiations²⁶ or who had ensured prior advancement of Latvia and harmonisation of legislation.

At the same time, the success of the work of the representation was determined not exclusively by the actual readiness of Latvia or the formation of geopolitical self-confidence among the Western partners. It was also determined by the direct foreign partners, with whom there was cooperation both in Brussels and in Latvia: “The process had to be accepted both in Latvia and on the European Union side.”²⁷ Respectively, the main partners were the Directorate-General for EC Enlargement and the newly created post of the European Commissioner for Enlargement, held by Günter Verheugen. In his approach, the “Big Bang” concept in the context of enlargement was created. Prior to that, Catherine Day, who chaired the Association Committees with candidate countries in the 1990s and laid the foundations for the accession process, played a key role. At the technical level, however, the initially designated German EC partner was not able to find an effective cooperation model, while the opposite could be said about Katarina Areskoug, the Swedish reporter on Latvia’s progress. In addition to Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands, Denmark played a special role in the process of Latvia’s accession to the EU. It began already with Latvian–Danish cultural cooperation programs in 1991 and continued with the visits of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, followed by the significant work of Hans Brask as the advisor to Latvia’s Minister of Special Assignments for European Integration from 1996 to 1997, as well as the role of Denmark in the public administration of Latvia through the EU Twinning process. Similarly, it was during the time of the Danish Presidency of the European Union, on December 13, 2002 that Latvia completed the accession negotiations. In parallel with the technical preparation, Latvia gained assistance and knowledge from the Delegation of the European Commission in Latvia that was opened in February 1996. Gunter Weiss, its first Director, was instrumental in developing cooperation. In general, if “[.] the Nordic countries were not

energetically lobbying on behalf of the Baltic countries, they could “have fallen out of Europe.” [...] Due to the interference of the Nordic countries (Finland and Sweden were still not formally EU member countries), the Baltic countries were included in the “structured dialogue.”²⁸

Latvia’s preparations for European Union membership and accession negotiations were an important stage not only for Latvian diplomats, but for the entire administration. Successes and failures, institutional relations and jealousy, political struggles and economic challenges produced results based on the clear long-term goal of Latvia, which materialised on April 16, 2003 by signing the Treaty of Accession in Athens,²⁹ and still today serves as the legal basis for Latvia’s relations with the EU. “Latvia had to cement itself, to convince that we are serious, that we will not collapse, that we are operational enough, and that people at home will accept it.”³⁰ However, the negotiations themselves, from the point of view of the diplomatic process, were not always easy.

The diplomatic process: problems of the accession negotiations

Latvia’s negotiations on membership in the European Union was a long-term process, which required comprehensive reforms not only in the Latvian state administration. There was a need to provide political support and confidence in Latvia and the Baltics as capable countries, which do not, and will not, create problems for the existing EU member states and the EU itself. There were various aspects that impeded this confidence. This section will not discuss the accession negotiations in detail,³¹ but will focus on the most significant political challenges that Latvia faced with relation to the partners.

The most topical question regarding Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania’s membership was the geopolitical issue and the reaction of Russia. However, as more in-depth studies show, Russia’s opposition to Baltic membership in the European Union was largely imperceptible. Russia did not expand its activities in Latvia regarding the country’s accession to the European Union, but its position on NATO membership was much more critical and, therefore, although both processes ran in parallel, the stories and the challenges were different. There were a number of reasons for Russia’s “silent acceptance” with regard to Latvia’s membership in the European Union. First, the character of the EU – a bloc of trade and political cooperation that does not pose direct threats to Russia. Second, Russia’s domestic political and economic

challenges, especially the economic crisis of 1998, which weakened Russia's capabilities and available resources to resist outside processes that did not pose immediate and direct threat. Third, Russia's weakness coincided with an increase in the EU's self-confidence and the awareness of its capabilities, promoted by the successful, though very unilateral process of EU integration. Fourth, as soon as Russia's behaviour in bilateral relations with Latvia and the two other Baltic countries became unpleasant, Latvian society pushed for faster integration into the EU.³² One example of this trend was the infamous unauthorised demonstration at the Riga City Council by pensioners on March 3, 1998. Fifth, the legal and political modernisation of the Baltics, promoted by the European integration process, was beneficial for Russia itself. Namely, Russia used integration into the EU to address and raise the issues of the integration of Russian-speaking people in the Baltics.³³ This aspect also relates to the sixth factor of Russia's activity, as indicated by Aleksandrs Kiršteins, namely, that Russia sought to denigrate the image of Latvia in the eyes of the Western partners rather than directly stopping the process in Latvia. The initial efforts by Russia were accusations of human rights violations, followed by efforts to convince Western countries that anti-Semitism had traditionally been widespread in the Baltic countries.³⁴ Namely, "[the European Commission] had to be convinced that negative publications are not true."³⁵ Seventh, the invitation of Estonia to begin accession negotiations before Latvia and Lithuania was used as a tactical move to gauge Russia's reaction, rather than being justified by substantially greater achievements.³⁶ Finally, eighth, according to the memory of Egils Levits, a Judge of the European Court of Human Rights (1995–2004) – a socio-psychological aspect appeared, making Latvia feel the need to prove to itself and to Russia that it belongs to the Western value system with the help of the integration process into the EU, and to assure its own safety during the process of integration into the European Union.³⁷ Each of these elements was essential in Latvia's efforts to "return to Europe." The role of Russia, along with Latvia's own legal, economic, political and psychological alienation from the former Soviet Union, were important both to Latvia and to the Western partners – especially considering the fact that 12 out of 15 of the former Soviet republics chose a different path than the Baltic countries.

These considerations led to the diplomatic manoeuvres and arguments in relations with the European Commission and the existing EU Member States. In Latvia, especially during the most intensive adaptation period from 1997 to 1999,

the view of the EU was simple and black and white: the EU was positive, and any discrepancy was negative, a mindset that led to the situation in which regulations that were contrary to EU requirements were simply rejected.³⁸ “Every week we moved along one centimeter at a time,”³⁹ therefore the 1997 decision to start negotiations with Estonia and not with Latvia and Lithuania was understandably painful both for decision-makers and Latvian society. Particularly painful were the accompanying writings and opinions that Estonia should be admitted to the EU, Lithuania to NATO, and Latvia to the World Trade Organisation as an alternative to the inability of all three countries to be admitted both to the EU and NATO at once.⁴⁰ Such a turning point would have radically changed both the EU integration process and the later geopolitical situation in Europe, and also would have destroyed the unity of the Baltic countries. However, “in spite of the tensions that are caused among the Baltic countries because of the rivalry of joining the EU, as well as the mutual economic competition, the “four freedoms” are gradually being introduced in these countries,”⁴¹ and signalled that the Baltic countries could be admitted to the Euro-Atlantic structures without harsh reaction of Russia. Although the decision makers themselves had a “sense of humiliation that the validity or invalidity of the country is judged,”⁴² work continued, as all 12 of the then emerging EU member states were in the similar situation of “asymmetric integration.”

Lastly, as a candidate country in the accession negotiations, although it basically included providing evidence that Latvia had adopted the requirements that were included in the 31 negotiation sections, some problems were highlighted. Mainly, despite the fact that in the three administrations led by Andris Šķēle, and especially the administration led by Andris Bērziņš, Latvia was already even ahead of the “first tier state” Estonia in the accession negotiations and the implementation of the *acquis* and the closure of accession sections, the agricultural sector and the implementation of border reforms were still the last issues. Discussions on direct payments for agriculture continued not only during the accession talks but also to the present time. Regarding the border guard system, the source of the problem was the disorderly and corrupt system that resisted change and the implementation the *acquis* regulations. The fracture point came at the time of Einars Repše’s government, when the Prime Minister, organising weekly Cabinet discussions on the progress, managed to close the last two sections and Latvia’s connection to the common customs information system,⁴³ while the Foreign Minister Sandra Kalniete reached an agreement on the closure of the agriculture section.⁴⁴ As a result of the

accession negotiations, Latvia had achieved transitional periods in 35 areas,⁴⁵ including the pressing issue of the transitional period of seven years regarding the conditions for the acquisition of forest and agricultural land by persons who are not citizens of the Republic of Latvia.

The last and most important aspect that should be mentioned and which pointed to the self-confidence and ability of Latvian society to make long-term decisions, was the referendum of October 3, 1998 on Amendments to the Citizenship Law that provided the possibility of a simplified naturalisation process for non-citizens and stateless persons born in Latvia after 1991. In Andris Piebalgs's view, it was "[...] a testimony to the wisdom of the people, [...] they are not interested in trivialities, but when a decisive decision comes, people are always very far-sighted. In decisive votes, the Latvian people always clearly took a position that led to greater security, greater prosperity."⁴⁶ A negative outcome of the referendum not only could have had far-reaching consequences for the integration of the Latvian society, but also could have become a reason for a substantial delay in the process of accession to the EU. This was the first serious decision made by Latvian society, deliberately and directly, in favour of the EU integration process.

The public process: the referendum and citizen participation in the EU integration

The second decision – the referendum on EU membership – represented the request for the permission of Latvian society, which had to confirm that it had not changed its overall support for EU integration and agreed with the work of decision-makers, diplomats and lawyers over nearly ten years. In other words, “the most important in the negotiations was to define the priorities [...] and to get the acceptance in the Latvian society.”⁴⁷ Although the cost of the referendum process was estimated at around one million lats,⁴⁸ and there were calls not to delay the accession process even among Latvia's Way members of the Saeima, the decision was made in favour of a referendum as a long-term guarantor, a source of legitimacy and a contribution to educating society about the EU.⁴⁹

Consequently, this situation required both consistent communication with the public on ambiguous issues and decisions made, as well as diverging views⁵⁰ about the EU, and the voices that called for not joining the EU.⁵¹ Both the mission of the Republic of Latvia to the European Union and the EIB were active in informing the public prior to the referendum. The clarification

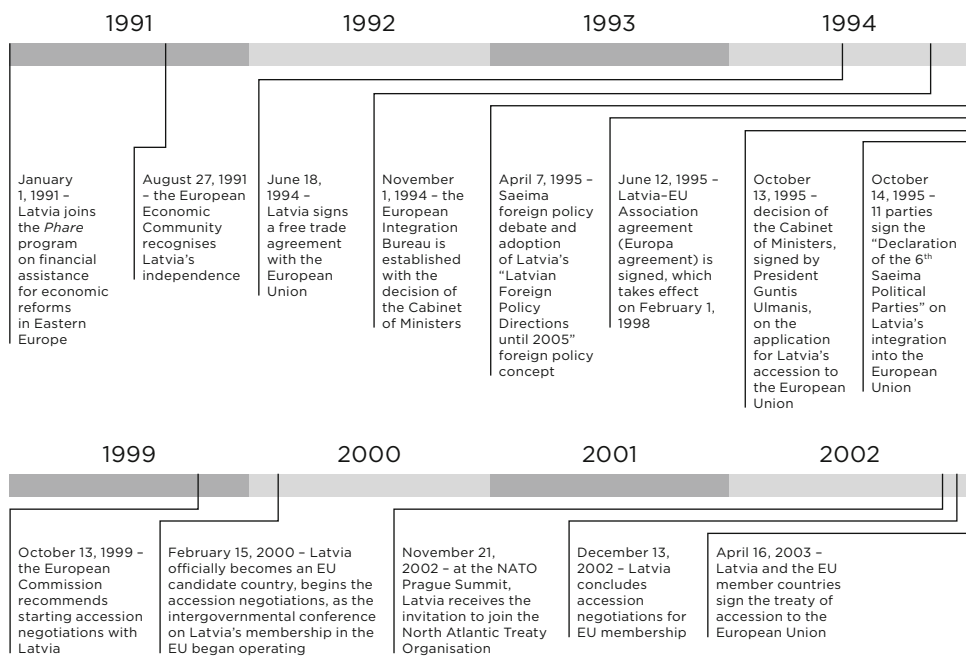
of the EU done by the diplomats was equally important, as the Latvian public was offered the views of the directly involved,⁵² because the work of the EIB Communications Department led by Linda Jākobsone⁵³ could have been insufficient on its own. Active promoters were not only certain political parties, including the *New Era Party* and the *People's Party*. Other efforts that were made were: the establishment of informative “Euro info” telephone lines, where residents of Latvia could receive answers to direct questions; the NGO *European Movement – Latvia*, founded in 1997, which was active under the leadership of its Presidents Ainārs Dimants,⁵⁴ and later Andris Gobiņš;⁵⁵ as well as the youth organisation *Klubs “Māja,”* established in 1995. The Cabinet of Ministers established a Public Advisory Council for the pre-referendum information campaign led by Prime Minister Repše and co-chaired by Žaneta Ozoliņa, a professor of the University of Latvia.⁵⁶

The leading political parties were able to mobilise both their party members and the people of Latvia for the referendum on European Union membership. There was an overall lack of understanding in the public discourse about the operation of the EU, as well as falsehoods such as the idea that Latvia would be enslaved in the EU. However, they were sporadic in nature and showed a lack of an intellectually strong, motivated resistance. The explanation for that is: “If there is a clear structure ahead to be achieved, then there is no discussion on choices.”⁵⁷ Latvia’s accession to the EU was seen by the public as a process of modernisation, as a process of putting the legal, political, and economic environment in order, as a transformation that had begun with its departure from the Soviet Union and the finalisation of which was approaching with the accession to the EU. The slogans on alternatives for Latvia were unconvincing, especially considering society’s still-living memories of the loss of independence due to adhering to individualist neutrality in foreign policy. As a result of these processes and understanding, Latvian society had developed a “system of binary values, where the decision was only between entering into the spheres of interest of Russia or the USA.”⁵⁸ These discussions also often came up with simple truths and expectations of rising living standards: “There were quite high expectations in the people – we will join, and the life will become better!”⁵⁹ As a result, 71.5 percent of voters participated in the fourth referendum held in modern Latvia, of which 67 percent or 676,700 people voted in favour of the EU, 32.3 percent voted against, thereby, on September 20, 2003, legitimising Latvia becoming a member of the European Union.

Conclusion

Latvia's progress towards the European Union was not a one-day event with one-day heroes. During the process spanning at least a decade, decisive decisions were made almost every day. It would be convenient to suppose that Valdis Birkavs as a Prime Minister and Foreign Minister was able to initiate and consistently organise the process of joining the European Union, and that the ability of the President Vaira Viķe-Freiberga to enter into the diplomatic processes and to charismatically represent Western values to Latvian society, were decisive in starting and completing the process of joining the EU. However, there were colleagues and teammates standing by them both in the Foreign Ministry, the sectoral ministries, the European Integration Bureau, the Mission of Latvia to the European Union, the Saeima, the political parties and Latvian society. The ability of *Latvia's Way* politicians to consistently defend the chosen foreign policy course and to find support from all other parties represented in parliament allowed the diplomats, namely Andris Ņesteris, Andris Piebalgs, Māris Riekstiņš, to consistently defend the impressive progress made by Latvian ministries and decision-makers in legal and political preparedness for membership in the European Union. The ability of diplomats and politicians to cooperate on behalf of Latvia's strategic national interests also yielded results for Latvia's cornerstone of national security policy – NATO membership.

Latvia's membership in the European Union has not been, and will not always be, an easy process. Latvia itself has gone through "membership training" in the European Union, enabling it to successfully pass the exam in the form of a successful Latvian Presidency of the EU Council. However, since Latvia's accession, the European Union itself has also experienced the accession of three newer member countries, the significant institutional changes brought by the Treaty of Lisbon, increased integration into the Economic and Monetary Union caused by the financial crisis, increased integration into the interior and justice affairs caused by the migration crisis and terrorism threats, as well as many other changes that have contributed to the rapprochement of the EU countries. Not only has Latvia experienced changes in each sector domestically,⁶⁰ but Latvia's accession to the Eurozone in 2014 was also a continuation of the initiated national policy. Looking back, one can see that, since the decision on Latvia's rapprochement with the European Union, Latvia has tried to keep pace with the neighbouring countries in its political and



diplomatic presence. Latvia's path towards the European Union was based on its desire to belong to a modern and prospective group of countries, rather than to the past. Latvia wanted to be in the core of modern countries. Belonging to the core of the European Union can be safely described as an optimal continuation of the traditional foreign policy of Latvia.

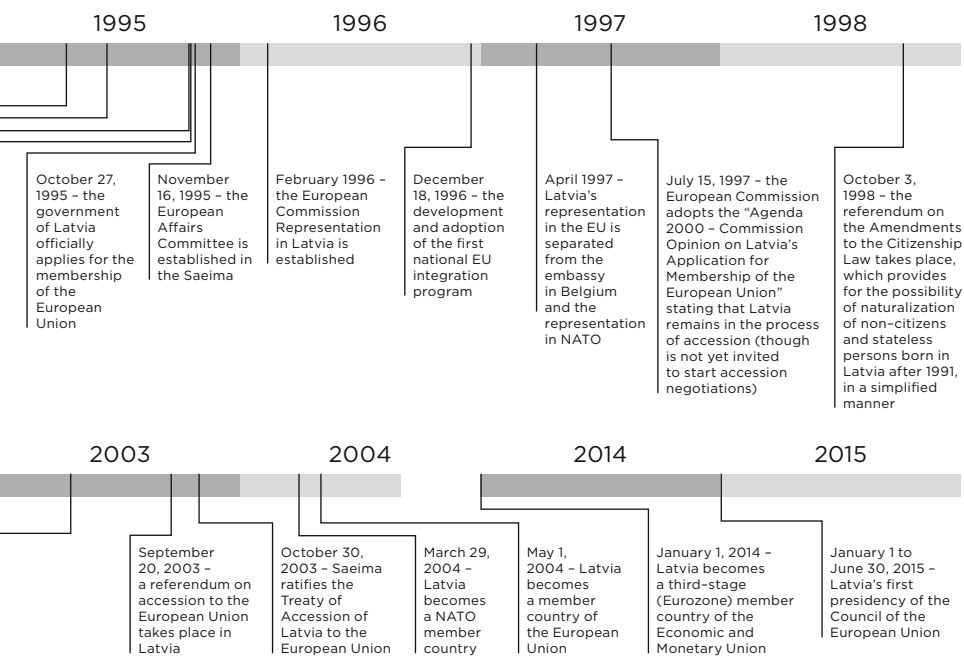
Authors express special thanks to Dr Jānis Vaivads for invaluable intellectual support in writing this article.

Endnotes

¹ "Latvijas ārpolitikas pamatvirzieni līdz 2005. gadam" [approved in the Saeimā on April 7, 1995], Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/arpolitika/latvijas-arpolitikas-pamatvirzieni-lidz-2005-gadam>

² Authors' interview with Valdis Birkavs, October 10, 2017.

³ A full chronological list of events is available at: "Latvijas Republikas Iestāšanās Eiropas Savienībā (ES). Svarīgākās norises" from *Dokumentu izstāde "Latvija ceļā uz Eiropas savienību" 1987–2003*, State Archives of Latvia, <http://www.latvijasarhivi.lv/index.php?&336>; also "Latvija un ES. Attiecību hronoloģija," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/arpolitika/eiropas-savieniba-arpolitika/arhivs/integracija-es/attiecibu-hronologija>



- ⁴ Exact title: "Europe Agreement establishing an association between the European Communities and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Latvia, of the other part." After completion of ratification in all the Member States, the agreement entered into force only on February 1, 1998. Available at: <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=36721>
- ⁵ Valdis Birkavs, "Pirmie izšķirošie gadi: Krievijas armijas izvešana un Latvijas nonākšana Eiropas Savienības priekšvērtība" from *Atgriešanās Eiropā Latvijas prezidentu, premjerministru, ministru un diplomātu esejās. No starptautiskās atzīšanas līdz pirmajai prezidentūrai Eiropas Savienībā 1990–2015*, compiled by Kristīne Kozlova (Rīga: Zinātne, 2016), 66, www.zinatnesgramatas.lv/site/fileBlock/upload/e_Eiropa.pdf
- ⁶ "Eiropas lietu komisija," fact sheet, February 26, 2017, Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, http://www.saeima.lv/faktulapas/2605_Eiropas_lietu_komisijaLV_SCREEN.pdf
- ⁷ Valdis Birkavs, "Pirmie izšķirošie gadi...", 65.
- ⁸ Authors' interview with Valdis Birkavs.
- ⁹ The concerns of other institutions are also indicated in the authors' interviews with Māris Riekstiņš, May 25, 2017, and with Jānis Vaivads, June 9, 2017.
- ¹⁰ Authors' interview with Māris Riekstiņš.
- ¹¹ Author's interview with Aleksandrs Kiršteins, September 14, 2017.
- ¹² Sandra Kalniete, "Kā trāpīt desmitniekā" from *Atgriešanās Eiropā Latvijas prezidentu, premjerministru, ministru un diplomātu esejās...*, 188.
- ¹³ Authors' video interview with Ineta Strautiņa-Engelena, August 2, 2017.
- ¹⁴ Decision by the Cabinet of Ministers No. 134 (prot. No. 54 6. §) "Par Eiropas integrācijas biroju," November 1, 1994, <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=57681>

- ¹⁵ Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 47 (prot. No. 10, 13.§) "Grozījumi Ministru kabineta 1994.gada 1. novembra lēmumā Nr. 134 "Par Eiropas integrācijas biroju" un Ārlietu ministrijas nolikumā," February 27, 1996, <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=39171>
- ¹⁶ Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 327 (prot. No. 52 35.§) "Eiropas integrācijas biroja nolikums," September 16, 1997, <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=44970>
- ¹⁷ Order of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 97 (prot. nr. 16, 4.§) "Par Ministriju un Eiropas integrācijas biroja darba grupu kompetences sadalījumu Eiropas līguma saistību izpildei," March 29, 1996, <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=39553>
- ¹⁸ The Europe Agreement was originally intended as an alternative to actual EU membership, but gradually its role changed, and it became a guideline and framework for cooperation. For a more detailed explanation see, for example, Solvita Harbaceviča, "Eiropas Savienības likumdošanas pārņemšana Latvijas likumdošanā un tiesībās" from *Atgriešanās Eiropā Latvijas prezidentu, premjerministru, ministru un diplomātu esējās...*, 202.
- ¹⁹ "Eiropas lietu birojs uzņem apgriezienus," *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, March 27, 2004, <https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/85692>
- ²⁰ Initially: Meeting of Senior Officials on European integration issues, that was established by the December 23, 1997 Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 449 (prot. no. 72 39.ᅇ): "Noteikumi par Vecāko amatpersonu sanākumi Eiropas integrācijas jautājumos," <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/46501-noteikumi-par-vecako-amatpersonu-sanaksmi-eiropas-integracijas-jautajumos>. It was established on the basis of the working groups, following the elimination of the position of the Minister for Special Assignments, and the EIB came under the authority of the State Chancellery.
- ²¹ Authors' interview with Māris Riekstiņš.
- ²² "Agenda 2000 – Commission Opinion on Latvia's Application for Membership of the European Union," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/images/archive/data/file/1/kom-kart-zin-1997.pdf>
- ²³ "Memorandum from the Latvian Government on Agenda 2000 and on Latvia's application for accession to the EU (1997)," CVCE, https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2005/6/13/f9ea1296-ad9f-46ec-b535-3d618cd5ee53/publishable_en.pdf
- ²⁴ "Nacionālā programma Latvijas integrācijai Eiropas Savienībā" (Fourth revised version. Shortened version), *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, July 28, 1999, <https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/19477>
- ²⁵ The full history of the Permanent Representation of Latvia to the EU is available here: "Pārstāvniecības vēsture," December 15, 2016, Permanent Representation of the Republic of Latvia to the European Union, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/brussels/parstavnieciba/vesture>
- ²⁶ Complete list available at: "Iestāšanās Eiropas Savienībā sarunu delegācija," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/arpolitika/eiropas-savieniba-arpolitika/arhivs/integracija-es/iestasanas-es-sarunas/iestasanas-eiropas-savieniba-sarunu-delegacija>
- ²⁷ Authors' interview with Andris Piebalgs, August 2, 2017.
- ²⁸ Atis Lejiņš, "Pievienošanās ES un NATO: Baltijas drošības perspektīvas uz 21. gadsimta sliekšņa" from *Pirmie desmit gadi. Cīņa par Latvijas drošību pasaules lielajā politikā* (Rīga: Zinātne, 2002), 193.
- ²⁹ Available in full version here: "Pievienošanās ES līgums," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/arpolitika/eiropas-savieniba-arpolitika/arhivs/integracija-es/iestasanas-es-sarunas/pievienosanas-es-ligums>
- ³⁰ Authors' interview with Māris Riekstiņš.
- ³¹ For more detailed recounting of the negotiations, refer to Andris Ķesters's article "ES iestāšanās sarunas: sacensība pirms paša finiša" from *Atgriešanās Eiropā Latvijas prezidentu, premjerministru, ministru un diplomātu esējās...*
- ³² Authors' interview with Valdis Birkavcs.
- ³³ Author's interview with Edmunds Krastiņš, September 27, 2017.
- ³⁴ Author's interview with Aleksandrs Kiršteins, September 14, 2017. In an interview with the authors, Andris Piebalgs noted as well the argument about the emergence of antisemitism problem in the public space.

- ³⁵ Authors' interview with Andris Piebalgs.
- ³⁶ Author's interview with Egils Levits, August 31, 2017.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Authors' interview with Valdis Birkavs.
- ³⁹ Authors' interview with Andris Piebalgs.
- ⁴⁰ Authors' interview with Māris Riektiņš.
- ⁴¹ Atis Lejiņš, "Pievienošanās ES un NATO...", 187.
- ⁴² Authors' interview with Jānis Vaivads, June 9, 2017.
- ⁴³ Authors' interview with Andris Piebalgs.
- ⁴⁴ Authors' interview with Andris Bērziņš (former Prime Minister), September 25, 2017.
- ⁴⁵ "Ko Latvijai paredz pārejas noteikumi?," *Providus.lv*, September 2, 2003, <http://providus.lv/article/ko-latvijai-paredz-parejas-noteikumi>
- ⁴⁶ Authors' interview with Andris Piebalgs.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Daunis Auers, "Cik demokrātisks bija referendums?," *Providus.lv*, October 14, 2003, [http://providus.lv/article/cik-demokrātisks-bija-referendums](http://providus.lv/article/cik-demokratisks-bija-referendums)
- ⁴⁹ Authors' interview with Jānis Vaivads.
- ⁵⁰ For a summary of opinions expressed in the press against Latvia's membership in the EU see: European Union Information Center, "Viedokļu kopsavilkums pret Eiropas Savienību (no preses izdevumiem 2003. gada augustā)," http://www.mfa.gov.lv/data/file/1/PRET_augusts_2003.pdf
- ⁵¹ From the authors' interview with Normunds Grostiņš, October 5, 2017, it emerged that the negative, Eurosceptic speakers were not only the *Latvia's Freedom Party*, but also a number of other activists, including Jānis Sils, the president of *Klubs 415*, publisher Aivars Garda, etc. The calls not to join the EU were supported by Danish (ModEU and Jens Peters Bonde) and Finnish Eurosceptics, while funding did not come from neither Russia nor other countries, according to Grostiņš. For more details about the development of the euroscepticism phenomenon in Latvia see: Gints Apals, "Euroscepticism in Latvian Politics: Twenty-Five Years of Change" in *Euroscepticism in the Baltic States: Uncovering Issues, People and Stereotypes*, eds. Aldis Austers, Karlis Bukovskis (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2017), <http://www.lai.lv/publikācijas/euroscepticism-in-the-baltic-states-uncovering-issues-people-and-stereotypes-639>
- ⁵² See e.g. "Aldis Austers: NĒ nacionālajam mazohismam!," *Delfi.lv* (Politika.lv), May 31, 2002, <http://www.delfi.lv/news/comment/comment/aldis-austers-ne-nacionalajam-mazohismam.d?id=3279127>
- ⁵³ "Mūsu cilvēks" – EIB Informācijas departamenta vadītāja Linda Jākobsone," *TVNET/LTV Panorāma*, May 6, 2002, http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/viedokli/291772-musu_cilveks_eib_informācijas_departamenta_vaditaja_linda_jakobsone
- ⁵⁴ "Mūsu cilvēks" – Eiropas Kustības Latvijai prezidents Ainārs Dimants," *TVNET/LTV Panorāma*, February 26, 2003, http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/viedokli/292037-musu_cilveks_eiropas_kustibas_latvijai_prezidents_ainars_dimants
- ⁵⁵ BNS, "Eiropas kustību Latvijā vadīs Andris Gobiņš," *Delfi.lv*, November 22, 2003, <http://www.delfi.lv/news/national/politics/eiropas-kustibu-latvija-vadis-andris-gobins.d?id=6856453>
- ⁵⁶ Order of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 100 (prot. Nr. 8 39.§) "Par Latvijas Republikas iestāšanās Eiropas Savienībā pirmsreferenduma informēšanas pasākumu sagatavošanas sabiedriski konsultatīvo padomi," February 13, 2003, <https://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=71315>
- ⁵⁷ Author's interview with Egils Levits.
- ⁵⁸ Author's interview with Edmunds Krastiņš.
- ⁵⁹ Author's interview with Egils Levits.
- ⁶⁰ "Latvija pēc 10 gadiem Eiropas Savienībā – cita Latvija?" (Riga, 2014), http://www.europarl.europa.eu/latvia/resource/static/files/publikācijas/latvija-es-10-gadi_petijums.pdf

Careful Approachment: The Official Visit of Valdis Zatlers to Moscow in December 2010

ILVIJA BRUĢE

Latvia's relationship with Russia has always been complicated. Since the restoration of Latvia's independence in 1991, several crucial events have defined these relations. Latvian President Valdis Zatlers's visit to Russia in December 2010 should be looked at from a wider prism of the relations between the two states. It is important to also consider the recognition of Latvian independence by Russia in 1991; the signing and implementation of the treaty on withdrawal of the Russian Army in 1994 and demolition of the Skrunda Radar Station; President Vaira Viķe-Freiberga's visit to Russia in 2005; the signing of the border treaty in 2007; as well as Valdis Zatlers's visit to Russia on May 9, 2010, that finally led to an official meeting of Presidents and their accompanying delegations in Moscow in December 2010. Opinions are split on whether this meeting was the most important point in relations between the two countries, but it is clear that this represents the highest and most positive point. Furthermore, this visit became possible not only due to the dynamics of Latvian–Russian bilateral relations, but also by the respective global events and trends.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 1990s, Latvian–Russian relations have been strained. Russia criticized Latvia for its citizenship and minority policies, at times comparing the citizenship law to an apartheid regime against ethnic Russians, and stressing that Russia is responsible for ensuring respect for human rights in the area of the former Soviet Union.¹ This position not only contributed to strained relations within Latvia, but also damaged Latvia's image abroad. Such Russian policy “dates back to 1992, when Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev during Boris Yeltsin's presidency

announced that Russia has rights to protect states in the former USSR territory even with a military force.”² Although the Latvian citizenship law is controversial, such statements from Russia were unavoidably perceived as a threat to the sovereignty of Latvia. Throughout the 1990s and in the beginning of the 2000s – until Latvia joined the EU – Russia used similar rhetoric.

Russia’s position diminished any hope that it might give up its geopolitical ambitions. Latvia’s trust in the end of Russian imperial history is directly linked to the acknowledgment of the occupation of the Baltic States, independent of Russia’s current regime or which President is ruling at any given time. However, this issue has an additional dimension, in that the rhetoric around non-citizens and Russian-speakers in Latvia has an enormous role in Russian internal and foreign policy. As Aivars Ozoliņš, a Latvian journalist and political commentator, recounted in an interview: “This was [in 1994 or 1995] told to me by an extremely influential Kremlin spin doctor. [...] I asked him: “Do you really think that the Baltic States were not occupied?’ And he answered: “Of course, they were. Who doubts that? [...] But, remember, not a single responsible Russian politician will ever officially admit that. I repeat – not a single responsible Russian politician.””³ This quote exemplifies relations between the two states throughout the 1990s, especially as the situation became more complicated near the end of the 1990s. In a conversation in 1997 with the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Avdeyev, the Latvian State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was bluntly dictated the Russian demands regarding issues around non-citizens and minorities, and that, while Latvia continues not to obey them, negotiations on anything else would be impossible.

The first notable change in Latvian–Russian relations only became evident in 2004–2005, when Russia took some steps of rapprochement. Latvia’s accession to the EU and NATO played an important role in this, as it meant that Russia’s political attempts to hinder Latvia’s integration into both organisations had not panned out. Since Latvia became a member of the EU and NATO, Russia’s attempts to influence Latvian policy have shifted from the international arena to internal processes by seeking control in the Latvian Parliament and Government. Despite these developments, and even despite the signing of the border treaty in 2007, long-term relations were not meant to become simpler. First and foremost, the August 2008 Russia–Georgia War was one more reminder of Latvia’s insecurity. The next improvement in the

relations took place in 2009 following Barack Obama's reset policy that was aimed to improve relations with Russia. Indeed, this policy permitted and encouraged Valdis Zatlers's visit to Russia, a topic that will be explained in more detail in future chapters.

Landmarks of Latvian–Russian relations

Possibly the most important step in Latvia–Russia relations after the Soviet Union's decision to recognise Latvia's independence on 6 September 1991, was the visit of Guntis Ulmanis, the first President of post–Soviet independent Latvia, to Russia in April 1994. During this visit the two countries signed a treaty not only on withdrawal of the Russian troops, but also on the demolition of the Skrunda Radar Station's new building and the complete termination of the station's operations in 1998.⁴ Western diplomats also took an active part in solving the issue of the withdrawal of the Russian Army. Swedish Prime Minister Karl Bildt was especially active on this matter. Latvian Parliamentary Fractions made a visit to the US, during which Latvian representatives met with the highest–ranking officials of the US Administration – National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, Defence Secretary William Perry, State Secretary Warren Christopher, Vice President Al Gore, and even the President Bill Clinton. The Western representatives engaged in solving this issue in order to convince Latvia that it was important not only for the country itself, but also within the context of global missile defence. According to Māris Riekstiņš, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs and current Ambassador of Latvia to Russia, this treaty is perhaps the most important achievement in Latvian–Russian relations. “If we had not managed to rid from the Russian Army here, in Baltics. [...] If that Army had stayed here longer, then I think our dreams on [...] an eventual membership in the EU and even more so in NATO, could not be fulfilled.”⁵ It is even possible that the geopolitical situation could have developed along similar lines to the other former Soviet republics – as in the Transnistrian conflict in Moldova, the issue of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia. Although the historic context in these states was somewhat different, the presence of the Russian Army played an enormous role.

As previously mentioned, the 1990s was a challenging period in the relations of both states. Latvian President Vaira Viķe–Freiberģa's visit to Russia in 2005 for May 9 celebration in Moscow was therefore the next

crucial step in the interstate relations. All three Presidents of the Baltic States were invited, which, of course, created an important moral dilemma. As Vaira Viķe-Freiberga herself describes: “Is it really possible to accept such invitation to Moscow, to the same capital that directed the loss of their states’ independence and for several decades brought oppression and suffering to their people?”⁶ Despite the fact that the Lithuanian and Estonian Presidents declined the invitation, Vaira Viķe-Freiberga decided to use this visit as an opportunity to explain Latvia’s understanding of historic events and the Soviet occupation to both Russia and the West. Preparations for the visit started at the beginning of 2005 and carried certain political risks. On January 12, 2005, the President prepared a declaration⁷ regarding the May 9 where she explained what the end of the World War II meant for Latvia; what the restoration of its independence meant; as well as that joining the EU less than a year earlier, on May 1, 2004, for Latvia meant return to its historic home – Europe.

The declaration on the meaning of World War II in Latvia and the consecutive Soviet occupation gave the expected result. The majority of state leaders to whom it was sent expressed their understanding of the Latvian history and support for the President’s visit to Moscow, while stressing the necessity to “put aside” historical injustices.⁸ Latvia thereby repeatedly demonstrated its historical understanding to Russia and the West, while demonstrating that it is the master of its own land. The declaration inevitably came with political risks. The general opinion in Latvia on the necessity for such a visit was split; while Russia’s reaction to Vaira Viķe-Freiberga’s declaration and statements, as well as to announcements by US and European leaders that followed the May 9 celebration, was openly hostile and fully revealed Russia’s historic understanding.⁹ It has to be taken into account that Vaira Viķe-Freiberga’s decision to attend the May 9 celebration was not so much based on a willingness to improve relations with Russia, as on a resolve to explain the Latvian history and consequences of the Soviet occupation to the rest of the world.

The next landmark in Latvian–Russian relations was the signing of the border treaty in March 2007, and its ratification in May. Despite differing opinions and the complicated issue of Abrene, the Latvian government decided to sign the treaty regardless of the related political risks. The signing of the treaty led to the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov’s first visit to Latvia, during which he invited the newly elected Latvian

President Valdis Zatlers to visit Russia. It should be noted, however, that this invitation was not yet considered official – which will be discussed in more detail when we pivot to the preparation for the President’s visit in December 2010.

This positive trend was followed by the crisis in Georgia in August 2008, which severed relations between the two countries once again. However, in 2009 the US began its reset policy in relation to Russia despite its ongoing aggression. A very hopeful perspective on NATO–Russia relations was already laid out in 2010 during the NATO Lisbon Summit, going as far as proposing ideas about strategic partnership.¹⁰ Possibly, the fact that Russia had a new President played some role here. Dmitry Medvedev was perceived in a much more positive light in the West, and was believed to have a more western oriented stance. Most importantly, the thaw in Russian–Western relations was reflected in Latvian foreign policy, as the country was already a member of two crucial Western organisations. Furthermore, Māris Riekstiņš highlights that as a neighbour, Latvia needed to use its momentum both diplomatically and practically: “From good neighbour relations we will benefit the most. From bad relations, we may eventually become the biggest losers.”¹¹ Altogether, within the context of the international environment, the above–mentioned events in relations between the two states permitted the Latvian government and President Valdis Zatlers to move towards an official visit to Moscow.

From an idea to an official visit

Why Sergey Lavrov’s 2007 invitation was not really an invitation

Informal agreements on a potential state visits often take place during meetings between statesmen, however, an official invitation to meet is often sent much later after both sides have already coordinated it. Sergey Lavrov first invited Valdis Zatlers in December 2007,¹² but this cannot be regarded an official invitation. First, it was not made by a state president to another state president; second, an official invitation also features the date of an official visit that both administrations have agreed upon. Furthermore, Māris Riekstiņš the then State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasizes that: “In order for two state presidents to meet, as Russians sometimes describe it,

a content is needed. Especially, if visits of such level are not annual or regular. Then there should after all be a content, what we talk about. [Furthermore] states try to avoid meetings in the highest level where leaders, so to say, get cross with each other. Everything has to be arranged – it should be a success story. Diplomats and even ministers can argue, but state presidents should not do it.”¹³ Creating the necessary content required time, but the official visit was further delayed by Russian aggression in Georgia, and Latvia’s strict stance on the conflict. Furthermore, it should be taken into account that at the time, Latvia was undergoing a financial crisis that impacted the state’s priorities and also the functioning of state institutions.

Finally, it should be noted that Valdis Zatlers’s speech in the NATO–Russia Council meeting in April 2008 strongly resonated in the international arena. The President not only strongly supported signing the NATO Membership Action Plan with Georgia, but also criticized Russia and Vladimir Putin in a NATO–Russia working session. He stressed the necessity to change the rhetoric of political dialogue, calling on Russia: “To stop chasing imagined Cold War demons, as their time is over.”¹⁴ As Aivars Ozoliņš points out, Vladimir Putin has always reacted negatively to reminders of past ghosts and imperial thinking. A similar situation arose in 1994, when Estonian President Lennart Meri criticized Russian imperial ambition at a G20 Summit in Hamburg. Vladimir Putin, at the time still working as the Vice Mayor of the Hamburg twin city Saint Petersburg, reacted by walking out of the hall.¹⁵ However, as mentioned above, due to the changing international situation, the West’s decision to turn a blind eye to the events in Georgia, Latvia’s acknowledgment of its geopolitical situation, and US–Russia reset policy, Valdis Zatlers’s visit did finally take place in December 2010. It is important to understand the significance of the President’s own initiative in building contacts with Russian statesmen and looking for opportunities to engage officially with the hostile but important neighbouring great power.

Valdis Zatlers’s initiative in receiving an official invitation

In July 2007, Valdis Zatlers was elected President of Latvia. At that point, the Latvian–Russian border treaty had just been signed, and the question of the legality of ceding Abrene to Russia was at the centre of public attention. That discussion went hand in hand with the issue of the President’s potential

visit to Russia, which could only happen when Russia wanted it. According to Valdis Zatlers himself, these circumstances combined to create the understanding that a lot of attention should be paid to Russian relations, and that Latvia as a national state must seek a middle ground between relations with Russia that are either too positive or too negative. Latvia must maintain decent relations with Russia as its neighbour to remain protected against Russia's potential economic, political or even military aggression.

Initially, in discussions with Sergey Lavrov about an official visit to Russia, Valdis Zatlers received the following answer: "It will happen only when there will be appropriate political and informational background."¹⁶ By this he meant that no negative information about Russia could be spread in Latvia, and that the citizenship and Russian language issues must be solved to Russia's satisfaction. For Valdis Zatlers, that response served as a reason to make an important decision about his political position towards Russia. In order to move towards pragmatic, predictable and positive relations with Russia, he decided that negotiations with Russia would be carried out by nationally oriented politicians and officials, as only then could both sides take these negotiations seriously. It should be noted that from the Latvian perspective, relations at the time were very stable and predictable politically and economically. However, it was simultaneously important to maintain and clearly communicate Latvia's red line – political, social, economic and military self-determination.

At the time, the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs considered rapprochement with Russia with grounded suspicion and scepticism. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a similar position in which conservatives held major influence. Therefore, according to Valdis Zatlers, the President himself sought direct contact with Russian politicians through various mechanisms, approaching them in informal settings and demonstrating his understanding of the real dynamics of their relationship. The first individual contact with Sergey Lavrov following Valdis Zatlers's decision to take initiative occurred in September 2007 in New York, during the UN General Assembly. Despite Sergey Lavrov's initially aggressive response, the meeting resulted in both sides managing to hold a pragmatic discussion. In January 2008, when they both met again during the inauguration ceremony of the Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, the conversation was already more open and Sergey Lavrov took the initiative. In December 2007, Sergey Lavrov finally visited Riga and after this meeting it



The Baltic Sea Action Summit in Finland, February 10, 2010. Valdis Zatlers addresses Vladimir Putin suggesting official negotiations, and Vladimir Putin later invites Valdis Zatlers to the May 9 celebrations in Moscow. Source: photo from Valdis Zatlers's personal archive.

was announced that the Russian government had issued an official invitation to visit Russia.¹⁷ Despite the announcement, it still could not be considered that the President had received an official invitation, as the protocol envisaged such invite among officials of the same rank.

The next contact between the Latvian President and Russian officials took place in April 2008 in the NATO Bucharest Summit, when Vladimir Putin was still the President of Russia.¹⁸ The most important outcome of this summit was the failure to confirm the NATO Membership Action Plan with either Georgia or Ukraine. Ukraine's unpreparedness for an Action Plan was clear, while to Georgia the Action Plan was denied following extensive lobbying by Russia through Germany and France (which in the end blocked the decision). Although Valdis Zatlers had initially had a chance to talk to Vladimir Putin, Russia's negative statements and policy towards NATO expressed on the following day during the Russia–NATO Council, incited the Latvian President to come out with the previously-mentioned speech criticizing Russia on its imperialism and aggressive policies in the post-Soviet area. Therefore,

at that time no progress could be made in receiving an official invitation or organising a visit. It should also be taken into account that shortly after that – in May 2008 – the Russian President also changed.

An important step towards promoting the visit was the creation of the Latvian–Russian Cooperation Council in 2008.¹⁹ The Council consisted of the advisor to Valdis Zatlers, entrepreneur Vassily Melnik and President of the Alfa Bank Piotr Aven, who had exclusive access to Russian powerstructures. The Council was created with the aim of fostering ties between the two sides and speed-up the exchange of information. The Council was an economic organisation and first and foremost its target was to ensure the signing of the semi-prepared and prepared contracts, agreements and other cooperation documents with Russia.

Unfortunately, relations worsened again in August 2008, when the conflict in Georgia escalated during the Beijing Olympic Games. Valdis Zatlers received broad public criticism for failing to interrupt his presence at the games. However, as previously mentioned, Zatlers had consistently stated his support for Georgia in the past both publicly and privately, including assistance with organising the support visit to Georgia by the Polish President and Baltic representatives,²⁰ as well as going on a state visit to Georgia in December 2009.²¹

Valdis Zatlers once again used his initiative on Russian relations during the UN General Assembly in September 2008, when he tried to foster contacts with then still relatively unknown Dmitry Medvedev. Their conversation did not end with an official invitation despite the positive indications from the Russian President.²² They met again in 2009, during the celebrations marking the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, when Dmitry Medvedev announced Russia's willingness to cooperate with Europe on their common interests and to become a part of a united Europe.²³ This announcement was considered to be the most positive signal from Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Dmitry Medvedev communicated with both Valdis Zatlers and Dalia Grybauskaitė during the commemoration event, and steered the conversation into more official waters. The state leaders agreed that it was necessary to establish contacts between the Presidential Administrations and to begin planning the future visit, despite the scepticism of the foreign services of both sides and the Russian President's tight schedule.

It is important to mention in this context that in autumn of 2009, leaders of all three Baltic States agreed to attend the May 9 celebration in Russia in

2010. In an unexpected move, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė invited Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to attend the celebration of the 20th Independence Day of Lithuania in March 2010. Russia was less than enthusiastic to participate, and Dmitry Medvedev did not attend the celebration. Following Russia's lead, the logical response from the Lithuanian President was to abstain from the Victory Day celebration.²⁴ Despite their disappointment in Dalia Grybauskaitė's decision, which ruined a chance to demonstrate the Baltic unity at the May 9 celebration, both Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and the Latvian President remained committed to attending the event. But as there was no official invitation from the Russian side, the Presidents had to search for justifications for their visit.

During the Baltic Sea States' Ecology Conference that took place in February 2010 in Finland, then Russian Vice-President Vladimir Putin was informed that the Latvian President intended to approach him. Valdis Zatlers suggested a more official discussion with him during a photo session. That was quickly organised during the intermission of the conference. It was the first meeting of the official delegations of the both states and the Presidents spoke about the Victory Day celebration in Russia. Vladimir Putin made indications that he would invite President Valdis Zatlers, and during the following conversation an official invitation was given. The next official meeting between the two states took place in spring 2010, when Edgars Rinkēvičs, then the Head of the Chancery of the President, went to Moscow to meet with Sergey Prikhodko, a representative of the Russian Presidential Administration. This was the first such contact on the administration level. Meanwhile, the visit in Moscow on May 9 had given Valdis Zatlers a chance to renew discussions with Dmitry Medvedev on the official Presidential visit to Russia.

Finally on July 9, 2010, the Head of the Russian Presidential Administration Sergey Naryshkin arrived on a visit to Latvia and delivered an official invitation from the Russian President for Valdis Zatlers to visit Moscow.²⁵ The precise date of the visit was not stated in the invitation, making the public, politicians and the Foreign Service concerned about the content and attendees of the visit, and suspicious that it might be humiliating for Latvia or that Russia might not be respectful.²⁶ In November 2010, during the NATO Lisbon Summit, Valdis Zatlers managed to meet repeatedly with Dmitry Medvedev and arrange an official status to the visit over Sergey Prikhodko's objections.²⁷ The visit was set to take place on December 19–22, 2010.

The position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

It is clear that the President's role in preparing for the visit was big. Despite many officials' scepticism over the necessity of such visit, it would not be possible if the President himself did not want it or if the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not actively organise it. In order to organise such visit, first an official invitation and the President's support for a visit are necessary. Undeniably, Valdis Zatlers's visit, as with other Latvian Presidents' visits to Moscow and meetings with the Russian Presidents, was met with scepticism and critique from a certain fraction of politicians, diplomats and society. This was the case with Guntis Ulmanis's trip to sign the treaty on withdrawal of the Russian Army, as well as with Vaira Viķe-Freiberga's unofficial meeting with Vladimir Putin in Alps. The visit to Russia, especially considering the historic situation, carries certain political risks that a president must be willing to take. Hence, Valdis Zatlers's decision to normalise relations with Russia as much as possible was crucial in itself.

We should also remember, that Latvia as a small neighbour of Russia does not have much leverage and must necessarily focus on creating stable neighbouring relations. When Latvia became a member of NATO and the EU this position became much easier to maintain. According to Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time: "Of course, not everything that is done by state officials in such context is understandable to the society... But, despite that, the Foreign Service always tries to have a respectful relationship with Russia and adjust a common Russia policy with the respective President."²⁸ Hence, without denying the role of the President, it would be incorrect to claim that Valdis Zatlers, Guntis Ulmanis or Vaira Viķe-Freiberga would have had an oppositional Russian policy based on diverging targets or initiatives. The actions of all the Presidents were aligned with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although they were indeed dependent on the individual initiatives of the Presidents themselves.

The impact of the Western states

It should not be forgotten that no state decisions take place in a vacuum. Western countries' positions played an important role in Valdis Zatlers's visit. For a long time, Western Europe and Germany, reasonably or not, perceived Latvia as a Russophobic state. Although Germany could have done much

to normalize the Latvian–Russian relations after restoration of the Latvian independence and promote the meeting between Presidents of the two states, the country remained very cautious. Germany perceived that too much pressure could further damage the relations due to the unpredictability of the intergovernmental relationship. The pivotal moment at the Victory Day celebration on 9 May 2010 in Moscow was not only important for Latvian–Russian relations, but also in Latvian–German relations. The German Chancellor Angela Merkel seeing the Latvian President in Moscow ended her perception of Latvia as a Russophobic state. During the celebration, Merkel arranged a visit to Latvia in September 2010, as well as a visit by Vice Chancellor Guido Westerwelle in June of the same year. At the same time, Germany also put light pressure on Russia to advance the official meeting of the two Presidents. “From such simple symbolic acts, statesmen change their opinions on others. Germany and the West helped a lot, Angela Merkel pushed Russians to talk and meet. The pressure was not on Latvia, as we ourselves did want to cooperate. But with a full force she pushed only then, after the 9th May.”²⁹

In a wider context, since the 1990s Western leaders have encouraged the Baltic States to overcome their historic grievances and to search for and create a dialogue with Russia, to act “pragmatically and less emotionally.”³⁰ The reason for that is clear – the West did not desire a new conflict on the European continent, particularly after the events in the Balkans. Hence, Western representatives invested considerable diplomatic resources in encouraging discussion between the two sides. According to Māris Riekstiņš, the creation of the Council of the Baltic Sea States in 1992 was thanks to the initiative of German Foreign Minister Hans–Dietrich Genscher and Danish Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann–Jensen. The aim was to create a diplomatic discussion forum for the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea, and to give Russia and the Baltic States an opportunity to solve common issues in the presence of Scandinavians.

In turn, Finnish President Tarja Halonen contributed greatly to the preparation of Valdis Zatlers’s visit. She made suggestions on how to speak with Russia and its officials. Also, from Angela Merkel, and the “German side there was clearly evident willingness to promote modernisation of Russia without confrontation, but by engaging in a dialogue.”³¹ Furthermore, Germany had good relations both with the Baltics and with crucial contacts in Russia. The participation of an EU and NATO member state, traditionally

hostile to Russia, in the Russian Victory Day celebration, gave the West hope that the relationship could improve, evolve and be rearranged. Looking back, we can unfortunately see that the expected change did not really take place. At the same time, the West rests assured that Latvia in the long-term is a stable, pragmatic and predictable state that does not change its stance.

The presidential visit to Moscow

The delegation

The delegation of politicians and entrepreneurs that went to Russia on December 19–22, 2010, was the largest delegation in the history of Latvia, and together with accompanying personnel included nearly 200 people. Among the participants was the President; the Minister of Economics Artis Kampars, Minister of Environment Raimonds Vējonis, Minister of Agriculture Jānis Dūklavs, Minister of Interior Linda Mūrniece and Minister of Transport Uldis Augulis, as well as the Riga City Mayor Nils Ušakovs, the head of the Bank of Latvia Ilmārs Rimšēvics; the state secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Andris Teikmanis; and the Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church Alexander. Additionally, a group of more than 120 entrepreneurs also joined the delegation.³² As this was the largest delegation to another country in Latvia's history, politicians and entrepreneurs were extremely interested to take part in it.

Interestingly, the Latvian Foreign Minister did not take part in the delegation, which is atypical for a foreign visit of such importance. There was no clear reason for this omission, however, and it was a result of various circumstances. Firstly, Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis was only appointed Foreign Minister on 3 November 2010 – just over a month before the visit. His nationalist political stance also potentially played some role. According to Valdis Zatlers, there was no official agreement that Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis would not take part in the delegation. He believes that the Minister, the Russian side and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs quietly agreed that it was better if the Minister did not attend that visit. However, it is important to note that even prior to Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis's appointment, the President believed he was not an appropriate choice for the post of the Foreign Minister. The Minister's predecessor, Māris Riekstiņš, also believes that public opinion on his suitability for the role was important in this process

(Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis came from the nationalist political force and was seen as successful in his previous long-term position as the Minister of Defence). Though somewhat a speculation, Māris Riekstiņš suggests that it is also possible that the Minister himself decided not to participate, as in Latvia there are no strict rules on who accompanies the President on an official visit (Minister or State Secretary). Such speculation stems from the fact that Foreign Minister Georgs Andrejevs refused to accompany Guntis Ulmanis in his visit to Russia to sign the treaty of army withdrawal in 1994.³³

According to Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis, he made the decision not to participate in the visit due to external pressure. “As there was a campaign waged against me as the newly appointed Foreign Minister (Kristovskis is unsuitable for the role because he is a Russophobe), Zatlers was afraid to include me in the delegation to Russia.”³⁴ He points out that his nationalist stance, and his former role in the defence sector were used against him, interpreting him as anti-Russian and Russophobe. “It all created an environment where a Foreign Minister that has such a Russophobe image, independently of how much it is merely a result of political opponents’ speculation, was not desirable in the delegation of Valdis Zatlers. In this situation, I myself believed that my presence could result in further speculations and their exaggerations, which are not desirable in Latvia’s relations with Russia.”³⁵ Overall, one must conclude that from the perspective of the state’s public image, taking such a step, did not seem appropriate. However, due to internal and external critiques and the amount of time and work invested in arranging the visit, nobody wanted to encourage a negative outcome from the meeting. Russia had shown extreme benevolence towards Valdis Zatlers and the members of the delegation that held a friendly stance. It is therefore possible that Russia exerted some pressure on who should and who should not be part of the delegation.

The questions discussed and the decisions taken

The questions discussed during the visit can be divided in the four main blocks.³⁶ First, attention was drawn to political dialogue, and both countries announced the creation of a Joint Historic Committee. There was an unexpected precedent in this question block – Dmitry Medvedev announced that historic issues should be put aside and their evaluation left to academics.³⁷ The second discussion block was the economy, covering the

development of car and railway infrastructure, increased exports and the development of transit links between Latvia and Afghanistan passing through Russia. Within this block, the idea of a high-speed railway link between Riga and Moscow appeared, but two crucial considerations quickly scrapped this idea. Firstly, Russia wanted the EU to finance the railroad; secondly, as pointed out by Valdis Zatlers, good rail infrastructure also allows for the quick movement of military equipment – in this case such railway would endanger Latvian military security.

The third discussion block focused on EU and NATO relations with Russia, including cooperation in the Middle East and a visa free regime between Russia and the EU. Valdis Zatlers did express his support for the visa free regime. We should, however, take into account his own words that such promises have no real standing while Russia has not fulfilled the necessary EU criteria in security, democracy, human rights and other spheres. Having taken his stance, the President then turned to the general Western approach aimed at stability in the Middle East and normalised relations with Russia. The fourth and in retrospect the most important segment of discussions was the signing of various contracts, agreements and other documents on cooperation. Many of these contracts had been prepared long ago, but could only be signed by the Presidents from both sides. Taking into account that this was the first such meeting, it was also a great opportunity to settle these matters.³⁸

Admittedly, the visit was an important political gesture as the first official visit on a presidential level, but it did not result in considerable long-term achievements. For example, as the former President admits, nothing was achieved on the issue of mutual protection of investment. The Russian side blocked the agreement despite the fact that its investment in Latvia is much larger than Latvian investment in Russia. Additionally, some Latvian ministers arrived unprepared for the visit in contrast to preparedness of the Russian President and Prime Minister and as a result the presence of some ministers hindered rather than enriched discussions.

At the same time, it would not be reasonable to claim that the visit was unsuccessful – many documents regulating Latvian–Russian relations were signed at all levels. Abiding to international agreements is first and foremost in the interests of small states, hence “from the Latvian perspective any agreement, any contract, any resolution that is put on paper and signed, is undeniably in our interests.”³⁹ From this standpoint, the visit was very



Valdis Zatlers's visit to Moscow, December 19–22, 2010. Meeting with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. Source: photo from Valdis Zatlers's personal archive.

positive. Also positive were the public statements from Dmitry Medvedev, which showed that Russia could be less prejudiced regarding the citizenship and Russian minority issues that had dominated Latvian–Russian relations since the beginning of the 1990s. Valdis Zatlers highlighted Dmitry Medvedev's statements on leaving history to academics, resulting in the creation of the Joint Latvian–Russian Historical Committee, as well as the extremely important Medvedev's statement, in which he agrees that Latvian is the only state language in Latvia and the issue of non–citizens is Latvia's internal matter.

As a result, Valdis Zatlers's visit to Russia was scarcely reflected in media, especially in the Russian–speaking press. Press coverage was closely tied to the announcement that history should be left to academic researchers. Some ideas resurfaced that the Russian government might have given directions⁴⁰ to minimize exposure of the event, which limited the opportunities for the Russian media to criticize Latvia on citizenship and human rights issues. As Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis points out, the visit did not gain wide publicity “because it was not in the interests of Russia, if it is interested in continuing to cultivate and maintain a bad image of Latvia.”⁴¹ Before the visit, however,

the Russian speaking media did express the opinion that the human rights of Russian speakers, as well as the non-citizen issue would be among the most important questions discussed during the visit.⁴² In the long-term, it cannot be denied that these issues still reappear in Russian rhetoric, although not in such a dramatic manner as in the 1990s.

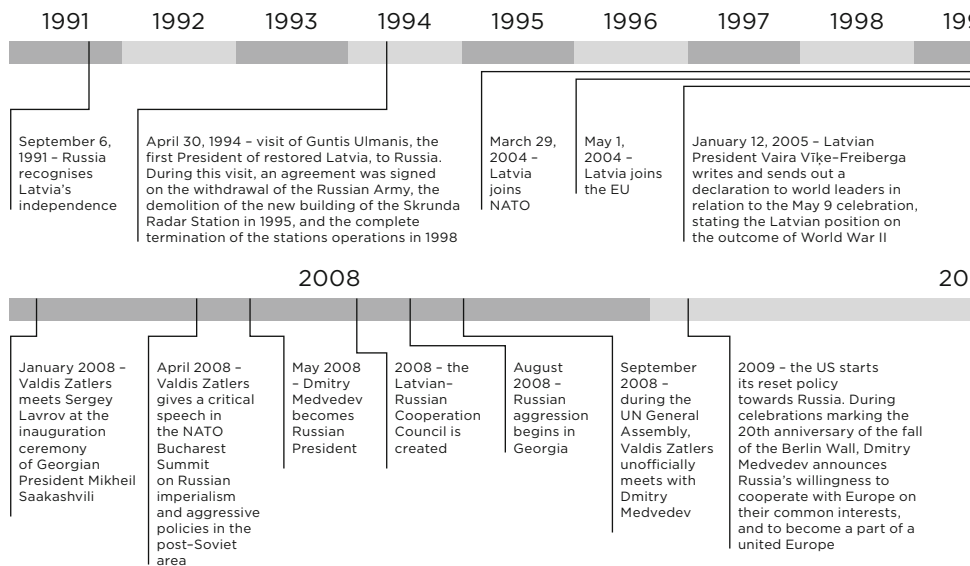
Hopes for the normalisation of relations after Valdis Zatlers's visit were high, as were announcements that the 16-year long Cold War with Russia is over.⁴³ The head of the Chancery of the President, current Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs announced that the President's visit to Russia is not the end of anything, but rather the beginning.⁴⁴ The border treaty in 2007 and Zatlers's visit allowed the assumption that Russia's approach to Latvia would not be as negative as in the past. Dmitry Medvedev's statements in the press conference showed that there really might be some changes. In Latvia, Valdis Zatlers's official visit was seen in a rather positive light,⁴⁵ especially among a large fraction of Latvian politicians⁴⁶ and businessmen, although in the media environment there was significant scepticism about how real or long-term the improvement of relations between the two states after this visit could be.⁴⁷ The reality turned out to be closer to the predictions of sceptics, and the long-term developments were less important than expected. Valdis Zatlers's visit was the moment when relations between the two states were at their highest and most positive point. This positive dynamic remained until the annexation of Crimea and war in Ukraine. Even more than the war in Georgia, Russia's actions in Ukraine crossed Latvia's red lines and created a real sense of threat in its neighbouring states.

Conclusions

It is arguable whether Valdis Zatlers's visit to Russia in December 2010 was the most pivotal point in the relations between the two countries, or whether there have been more important events, such as the Soviet Union's recognition of Latvian independence, or the treaty on the withdrawal of the Russian Army from Latvia, or the signing of the border treaty in 2007. Undeniably, these events have more significance in ensuring Latvia's long-term sovereignty. However, what highlights Valdis Zatlers's visit above other landmarks is the pragmatism with which this visit was achieved and the way Latvia showed itself as a predictable, stable subject of international relations embedded with Western values. Without a doubt, this meeting was

the most positive moment in the relations between the two states, even if it did not bring the expected long-term results. In terms of decision making, it appears that the Latvian President played the main role in achieving the visit, actively searching for individual, direct contacts with Russian politicians in various international forums, and most importantly, making relations with Russia a foreign policy priority for his presidency. At the same time, the visit would not have been possible if a similar political will were not present within the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the wider political environment (as illustrated by the great interest in joining the delegation) and in Russia itself. As the former State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Māris Riekstiņš emphasized, it is also important to remember that a presidential visit requires not only the ability of both sides to have a pragmatic conversation, but also content for this conversation. Hence, what made this visit possible was the set of circumstances – the political will of institutions on both sides, the favourable international situation, as well as the sufficiently positive dynamic of relations that permitted raising the discussion from a lower rank meeting to a meeting on a presidential level.

Most importantly, with this visit Latvia demonstrated its ability to step back from emotional announcements and accept its geopolitical situation, at least on a political level. Just like Latvia is a part of Europe and a member of NATO and the EU, Russia is and will continue to be Latvia's neighbour. Latvia needs to recognize its place geographically and politically, and must implement its interstate relations from this position. It is clear that Latvia and Russia have different understandings of history which, most likely, will not change in the foreseeable future, and Latvia will always feel threatened. It is also clear that Georgia, Crimea and Ukraine are the red lines where Latvia will not compromise with Russia. However, if we consider Valdis Zatlers's visit to Moscow in a wider context, it was an example of Latvia's pragmatism towards Russia. The visit was long expected and prepared for, and Latvia achieved what was within its power. The fact that there were few tangible long-term results relates to Russia's politics rather than Latvia's mistakes. Long-term changes can be expected only when Russia has a President that will make an official visit to independent Latvia.



Endnotes

- ¹ Andrei Kozyrev, *Radio Rossii*, 18 April 1992, FBIS SOV-92-078-S, 22 April 1992, as quoted in Wynne Russell, *Russian Policy Towards the "Near Abroad": The Discourse of Hierarchy*, Working Paper No.1995/7, Canberra, August 1995, 14, <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/41684/4/95-7.pdf>
- ² Interview with Aivars Ozoliņš, August 11, 2017, Riga.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Tālav Jundzis, "Krievijas karaspēka izvešana no Latvijas 1992–1994: diplomātiska uzvara vai politiska piekāpšanās?" *Latvijas zinātņu vēstnesis* (2014), http://www.lza.lv/LZA_VestisA/68_3-4/1_Talavs%20Jundzis_Krievijas%20karaspēka%20izvesana.pdf
- ⁵ Interview with Māris Riekstiņš, August 18, 2017, Riga.
- ⁶ Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, "Ievads" no *Latvija un Otrā pasaules kara beigas Eiropā*, red. Andris Caune, Andrejs Pildegovičs, Antonijs Zunda (Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2005), 10.
- ⁷ *Latvija un Otrā pasaules kara beigas Eiropā*, 24.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid, 224–226.
- ¹⁰ "Aizsardzības ministrs: Par NATO Lisabonas samita ieguvumiem," *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 2010. gada 21. novembris, <https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/221693>
- ¹¹ Interview with Māris Riekstiņš.
- ¹² "Par Krievijas ārlietu ministra darba vizīti Latvijā 18. decembrī," *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 2007. gada 19. decembris, <https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/168204>
- ¹³ Interview with Māris Riekstiņš.
- ¹⁴ "NATO samits Bukarestē – NATO-Ukrainas un NATO-Krievijas sesijas," *Latvijas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja*, 2008. gada 4. aprīlis, http://www.president.lv/pk/content/?cat_id=605&art_id=12035

99 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007

May 9, 2005 - Latvian President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga attends the May 9 celebration in Moscow

March-May 2007 - Latvia and Russia sign and ratify the border treaty

July 8, 2007 - Valdis Zatlers becomes the President of Latvia

September 2007 - during the UN General Assembly in New York, Valdis Zatlers initiates a conversation with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov

December 2007 - Sergey Lavrov visits Latvia and unofficially invites Valdis Zatlers to visit Russia

09

2010

February 2010 - the Baltic Sea States' Ecology Conference takes place in Finland. Valdis Zatlers approaches Vladimir Putin, suggesting a more official discussion. During this meeting Vladimir Putin invites Valdis Zatlers to the May 9 celebration in Moscow

May 9, 2010 - Valdis Zatlers attends the May 9 celebration in Moscow

July 9, 2010 - the Head of the Russian Presidential Administration Sergey Naryshkin arrives on a visit to Latvia and delivers an official invitation from the Russian President to Valdis Zatlers to visit Moscow

November 2010 - during the NATO Lisbon Summit, Valdis Zatlers meets Dmitry Medvedev and achieves an official status for his visit to Moscow

December 19-22, 2010 - Valdis Zatlers goes for an official visit to Moscow with the largest delegation to date

- ¹⁵ "Речь, из-за которой Путин вышел, хлопнув дверью. Что случилось в Гамбурге в 1994 году," Настоящее Время, 6 июля 2017 года, <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/28598781.html>
- ¹⁶ Interview with Valdis Zatlers, August 10, 2017, Riga; Aivars Ozoliņš, "Zatlers Maskavā," *Ir*, December 22, 2010, <http://www.irlv.lv/2010/12/22/zatlers-maskava>
- ¹⁷ "Par Krievijas ārlietu ministra darba vizīti Latvijā 18. decembrī."
- ¹⁸ Dmitry Medvedev was elected President of Russia in March 2008; and he was inaugurated in May 2008.
- ¹⁹ In Russia this Council was established earlier – already in July 2007. For more information see: "Maskavā nodibināta Latvijas–Krievijas lietišķā padome," Latvijas Republikas Ārlietu ministrija, 2007. gada 7. jūlijs, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/aktualitates/zinas/23876-maskava-nodibinata-latvijas-ndash-krievijas-lietiska-padome>; Latvijas–Krievijas Lietišķās sadarbības padome, <http://lsp.lddk.lv/index.php/lv/>
- ²⁰ Interview with Valdis Zatlers.
- ²¹ "Valdis Zatlers dodas valsts vizītē uz Gruziju," *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, 2009. gada 7. decembris, <http://nra.lv/latvija/politika/10448-valdis-zatlers-dodas-valsts-vizite-uz-gruziju.htm>
- ²² Valdis Zatlers, *Kas es esmu?* (Rīga: Jumava, 2015), 216.
- ²³ "Speech at Celebrations Marking the 20th Anniversary of the Berlin Wall's Fall," *President of Russia*, November 9, 2009, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/48500>; "Medvedev Speech at Celebrations Marking Fall of Berlin Wall," *RT – YouTube*, November 9, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1ncRadF0Mg>
- ²⁴ *Kas es esmu?*, 219.
- ²⁵ "Kanceleja: darbs pie Zatlera vizītes Maskavā nav apstājies," *Delfi*, September 6, 2010, <http://m.delfi.lv/latvija/article.php?id=33944271>; "Nākamnedēļ, iespējams, gaidāma lielāka skaidrība par Zatlera vizīti Maskavā," *LETA*, July 2, 2010.
- ²⁶ Interview with Valdis Zatlers.

- ²⁷ Valdis Zatlers, *Kas es esmu?* (Rīga: Jumava, 2015), 221.
- ²⁸ Correspondence with Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis, August 10–16, 2017.
- ²⁹ Interview with Valdis Zatlers.
- ³⁰ Correspondence with Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis.
- ³¹ Interview with Māris Riekstiņš.
- ³² “Rinkēvičs: Zatlera vizīte Maskavā ir starts, nevis finišs,” *Diena*, 2010. gada 15. decembris, <https://www.diena.lv/raksts/latvija/politika/rinkevics-zatlera-vizite-maskava-ir-starts-nevis-finiss-760204>; “Президент Латвии Валдис Затлерс прибыл в Москву,” *Gorod*, 19 декабря 2010 года, http://www.gorod.lv/novosti/120062-prezident_latvii_valdis_zatlers_pribyil_v_moskvu
- ³³ Interview with Māris Riekstiņš.
- ³⁴ Correspondence with Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ “Rinkēvičs: Zatlera vizīte Maskavā ir starts, nevis finišs.”
- ³⁷ Interviews with Valdis Zatlers, Māris Riekstiņš and Aivars Ozoliņš.
- ³⁸ “Rinkēvičs: Zatlera vizīte Maskavā ir starts, nevis finišs.”
- ³⁹ Interview with Māris Riekstiņš.
- ⁴⁰ Сергей Танцоров, “Визит президента Латвии в Москву. Есть ли итоги?,” *Балтийский мир*, No. 1 (2011), 46, <http://www.digar.ee/arhiiv/et/periodika/37611>
- ⁴¹ Correspondence with Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis.
- ⁴² “Затлерс с небольшим опозданием прибыл в Москву,” *Delfi,ru*, 19 декабря 2010 года, <http://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/latvia/zatlers-s-nebolshim-opozdaniem-pribyl-v-moskvu.d?id=35833595>; “Эдгар Скуя: “Встреча двух президентов – итог огромной работы,”” *Gorod*, 17 декабря 2010 года, http://www.gorod.lv/novosti/119924-edgar_skuya_vstrecha_dvuh_prezidentov_itog_ogromnoy_raboty; “Кремль: “безгражданство” – главная проблема РФ и Латвии,” *Росбалт*, 16 декабря 2010 года, <http://www.rosbalt.ru/main/2010/12/17/802027.html>
- ⁴³ Interview with Aivars Ozoliņš (reference to statements of Jānis Peters, former Latvian Ambassador to Russia).
- ⁴⁴ “Rinkēvičs: Zatlera vizīte Maskavā ir starts, nevis finišs.”
- ⁴⁵ “Eksperti – Zatlera vizīte Krievijā var kalpot par jaunu pavērsienu Latvijas un Krievijas attiecību veidošanā,” *LSM*, December 15, 2010, <http://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/eksperti-zatlera-vizite-krievija-var-kalpot-par-jaunu-paversienu-latvijas-un-krievijas-attiecibu-veidosana.a40146/>
- ⁴⁶ “Viķe-Freiberga: Latvijas un Krievijas attiecības uzlabosies pēc prezidentu abpusējām vizītēm,” *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, 2010. gada 2. decembris, <http://nra.lv/latvija/36609-vike-freiberga-latvijas-un-krievijas-attiecibas-uzlabosies-pec-prezidentu-abpusejam-vizitem.htm>
- ⁴⁷ Dmitrijs Petrenko, “Būs kā bērēs,” *Ir*, 2010. gada 3. decembris, <http://www.satori.lv/article/bus-ka-beres>; “Zatlera vizīte neietekmēs attiecības ar Krieviju,” *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, 2010. gada 6. novembris, <http://nra.lv/latvija/politika/34791-zatlera-vizite-neietekmes-attiecibas-ar-krieviju.htm>

Latvia's Reaction to the Crisis in Ukraine and Reinforcement of NATO Security Guarantees

TOMS ROSTOKS

The military conflict in Ukraine has had a major impact on the security of Latvia. Comparing NATO's military presence in Latvia in the summer of 2013, when the Ukrainian crisis had not yet begun, and summer 2017, the differences are striking. NATO's presence in Latvia has increased significantly over the past four years. On June 19, 2017, a ceremony for the NATO enlarged presence in Latvia in Ādaži was held, attended not just by Latvian officials, but also NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and Canadian Minister of Defence Harjit Sajjan. NATO's multinational battlegroup in Latvia is led by Canada and has more than 1,000 troops from six NATO member states. Three years ago, in September 2014, Barack Obama, President of the United States visited Estonia, where he pronounced words so essential to all the Baltic states that "the protection of Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius is as important as the protection of Berlin, Paris and London."¹

NATO soldiers and armoured vehicles were constantly present in Latvia during recent years. The Latvian National Armed Forces have been caught in a whirlwind of endless international military exercises. The presence of the NATO navy has increased in the Baltic Sea. Unmanned aerial vehicles *Predator* of the US Army have been brought for training to Latvia, the American fifth-generation fighters F35 visited Estonia, and in the second half of 2017, the United States *Patriot* anti-missile defence systems were deployed to Lithuania during military exercise. In the summer of 2013, it was hard to imagine that in the coming years Latvia and the other two Baltic states could attract such a great attention from the NATO allies. From the point of view of Latvia, the security guarantees defined in paragraph 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty have been reinvigorated and strengthened in recent years. In general, these developments are in line with the important priority of Latvia's foreign and security policy – a deeper integration into NATO.

The aim of this chapter is relatively simple – to find out how Latvia managed to strengthen the NATO security guarantees, but it is also complicated at the same time, as the Alliance’s presence in the Baltic States has been taking place gradually over years. Latvia has not been the only country that has sought to strengthen NATO security guarantees. Estonia, Lithuania and Poland have also tried to achieve the same goal. Latvia’s NATO allies have come to the conclusion that the threat posed by Russia to European security has become more serious. NATO’s decisions have been most affected by developments in Russian–Ukrainian relations. In turn, strengthening security guarantees has been a significant issue in Latvia’s relations with other NATO members. The domestic political processes of Latvia are also significant, as strengthening NATO’s security guarantees would not be possible without Latvia’s readiness to increase its defence spending. It should be taken into account that, although originally in 2014–15 the actions of NATO countries were mostly evoked by the Russian–Ukrainian conflict, then gradually Russia’s efforts to interfere in the domestic politics of the EU and NATO countries, including Russia’s interference in the US and the French elections via cyber–attacks, the dissemination of disinformation and propaganda in the Western countries, Russian military presence near the borders of Britain, the United States and other countries, as well as providing support to the extreme right parties in Europe became increasingly relevant. Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine is not the sole reason why relations between Russia and the West have deteriorated.

The significant number of factors that have affected in one way or another the increase in NATO’s presence in Latvia in recent years provides grounds for narrowing the issue; therefore, the chapter further will focus on Latvia’s efforts to pursue its security interests in NATO, paying less attention to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and various other factors influencing Russian relations with the Western countries. The chapter will continue by characterization of the context in which Latvia obtained enhanced NATO security guarantees, paying particular attention to the evaluation of the impact of external and domestic factors on Latvia’s foreign policy. The next section discusses how NATO’s presence in Latvia has grown since the start of the Ukrainian crisis. The link between the increase in the presence of NATO in Latvia and the decisions made by Latvia itself is also considered. Finally, the process of making important decisions is examined. The concluding part of the chapter focuses on what Latvia can learn from the changes that have been experienced in recent years.

NATO security guarantees: the international context and the role of personalities

NATO's presence in Latvia in summer 2017 reached a level that could be described as an adequate minimum. These are not the seven brigades in the Baltics as suggested by RAND's researchers,² but this is neither the situation before the Ukrainian conflict, when NATO's presence in the Baltic States was confined to the Baltic Air Policing mission and some military exercises. It is worth questioning how big was Latvia's own contribution to ensuring NATO's enhanced presence and what was the influence of external circumstances. Looking at the link between the events in Ukraine and the reinforcement of NATO's security guarantees for Latvia, one can conclude that Latvia's security has been most affected by external factors rather than the decisions taken by Latvia itself. If someone asked the question of whether a NATO Battle Group would be deployed in Latvia if the Crimean annexation had not taken place and if Russia had not launched military aggression against Ukraine, the answer would certainly be negative.

Latvia has been striving to achieve a greater NATO presence for a quite long time, but this goal remained elusive. The same goes for increasing defence spending. It is hard to imagine that Latvia would have sharply increased its defence spending and attempted to reach 2 per cent of GDP if Russia had not initiated military aggression against Ukraine. Thus, Russia's actions against Ukraine created conditions for obtaining increased security guarantees for Latvia. The rise of Russian military power itself did not create such preconditions, but the use of this power against Ukraine provided sufficient grounds for changes in the conduct of both Latvia and other NATO countries. The image of Russia as a country trying to change the existing rules of the game and itself not complying with any rules gradually became firmly established. The change of image on Russia was gradual, and in 2014, even after the Crimean annexation, there was still uncertainty as to how prolonged the deterioration of relations between Russia and the Western countries was going to be. In the fall of 2017, it can be concluded that this deterioration of relations with Russia is a lasting one, which is due to Russia's actions both against Ukraine and against other countries.

In the context of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, Latvia came into a situation that is aptly described in an example about a fire in the building given by the international relations scholar Arnold Wolfers. According to

Wolfers, people in the building will behave very similarly in the event of a fire (they will try to get out of the room aflame) despite the many differences that exist between these people.³ The essence of this hypothetical example is that different countries behave similarly in similar circumstances. As the external threat increases, countries are trying to protect themselves against this threat. At such moments, the public rallies behind the political leaders, while various political elite groups put aside disagreements for the time-being and agree on concerted action to strengthen national security. To a certain extent, Latvian Minister of defence Raimonds Bergmanis confirms this assessment of the situation. According to him “in the context of the Ukrainian crisis, the political decision-makers gradually improved their understanding of the situation in which Latvia found itself, and as a result readiness to allocate the necessary funding to defence needs increased.”⁴ The reaction of Latvia to the deterioration of the security situation in Europe is not surprising, nor is it very different from the actions of other countries – Estonia, Lithuania and Poland. Consequently, this chapter focuses on the analysis of the international context.

There are two more reasons why the actions of individual officials are not scrutinised much in this chapter. First of all, the work in the foreign and defence sectors is a teamwork, which is exercised over a lengthy period of time. It should be noted that there are both political decision-makers in the Ministry of defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Saeima, as well as officials in these institutions and representatives of Latvia in NATO member states. The Latvia’s security interests is a long-term endeavour, which involves constant cooperation with other NATO member states. Distinguishing some decision-makers would leave others in the shadow. Most simply, of course, would be to highlight those making political decisions such as Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma, defence Minister Raimonds Vējonis (replaced by Raimonds Bergmanis in the summer of 2015) and Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs, but this might not be the most productive option, as the list of officials involved is considerably longer. The increase in defence spending required support from all coalition politicians, and a tacit approval was also received from the opposition parties.

Second, it has been a too short time since the start of the Ukrainian crisis, and a series of events continues. A large amount of information on the actions of different officials in the early stages of the crisis is available in the public space, but often this information has not been contextualized and does

not fully reflect the progress of events. For example, the statement by then-President Andris Bērziņš in an interview to the LNT morning news program on March 27, 2014 that the invitation to Russian President Vladimir Putin to visit Latvia is still valid can raise doubt about consensus in the political elite of Latvia about how to react to events in Ukraine. It should be noted that President Bērziņš comment on the invitation to President Putin to visit Latvia was said about ten days after the annexation of Crimea. The President's statement sparked public outrage, and as a result the President had to explain that the visit of the Russian President Vladimir Putin to Latvia was "neither current, nor anticipated, nor possible."⁵ However, it must be remembered that President Bērziņš, along with other senior officials of the country, issued a statement on March 1, 2014 condemning Russia's intervention in Ukraine and expressing support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine.⁶ A few days later the Saeima also expressed its condemnation about Russia's aggression against Ukraine.⁷ Informal information suggests that President Bērziņš' public statements should be regarded as a failed communication with the public (which, admittedly, was never one of his strengths), rather than a fundamentally different position on issues of importance to Latvia's security. Perhaps greater damage to Latvia's security was caused by the letter of May 14, 2014 by Aivars Lembergs, mayor of Ventspils, which was sent to NATO Secretary General Anders Fog Rasmussen, Defence Minister Raimonds Vējonis and Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevičs. He was outraged at the behaviour of soldiers of other NATO member-states in Ventspils during international military exercise and demanded NATO Secretary General Rasmussen to apologize. The letter's ornate language tells what could happen to Ventspils if NATO soldiers stayed in this city permanently, namely, "Ventspils would be a city with each corner vomited and urinated on."⁸ The situation was made worse by the fact that Aivars Lembergs had met with the Russian ambassador to Latvia shortly before the letter was written. The letter received a clear condemnation from the country's highest officials, and it was noted that Lembergs' statements pose a threat to national security, as the presence of soldiers from other NATO nations in Latvia was questioned and alleged that these soldiers posed a threat to the residents of Latvia. All in all, numerous factors suggest that Latvia's efforts to obtain enhanced NATO security guarantees can be regarded as an action by a unified actor aimed at reducing external threats.

Latvia's foreign policy priorities and NATO security guarantees

NATO's security guarantees have been the goal of Latvia since the mid-1990s. On April 7, 1995 the Saeima approved the main foreign policy directions of Latvia until 2005. This document defines two of Latvia's most important foreign policy goals: integration into the EU and NATO.⁹ Both goals were achieved in the spring of 2004, however, the question of defining the Alliance's security guarantees became topical for Latvia in the process of joining NATO. Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs in an interview expressed the view that "the discussion of NATO security guarantees for the Baltic States can be divided into three stages: the accession process until 2004, the period of 2004–2013 and after 2014."¹⁰ The first stage is characterized by the fact that Latvia's integration into NATO took place in an international environment in which Western countries regarded international terrorism as the main threat, while Russia was considered a partner. The Alliance that Latvia joined in 2004 was no longer the same alliance, which provided protection against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. It was a widely held view that NATO members did not have to worry that Russia would pose a direct military threat. Consequently, there was no need to deploy soldiers and military equipment from other NATO member states in the new member states. However, a minor NATO presence in the Baltic States was established thanks to the Baltic Air Policing Mission. Initially, the attitude towards this mission was cautious, but it was eventually decided that the Alliance's airspace had to be monitored in accordance with NATO standards and that the Baltic States should be no exception to this general rule.

In the second phase, which lasted from the moment of Latvia's accession to NATO in 2004 until 2013, the Baltic States had to work to prove that they were not second-class members. The crash of a Russian military plane in the territory of Lithuania in September 2005 raised questions about the effectiveness of the Baltic Air Policing Mission. The issue of the absence of elaborated Baltic defence plans acquired a growing role in the context of Baltic States' NATO membership. There were countries that did not want to disappoint Russia, therefore, the Baltic States failed to convince their allies of the need for such plans for a long time. Only after the Russian–Georgian war the Baltic States received a defence plan. It was drafted as a supplement to the Polish defence plan when the latter was revised. It should be noted

that neither the argument about the participation of the Baltic States in international operations jointly with other NATO member states, nor the practical argument that Latvia, in order to plan its defence, had to know what military capabilities and to what extent in the event of a military conflict Latvia would have to provide for itself and what would be provided by its allies, were particularly helpful. This position of other NATO member states inevitably led to asking questions about whether the Baltic States would receive assistance at all if Russia launched a military aggression against them. NATO was not paying enough attention to Russia's military modernization after the Russian–Georgian war. During this time, the Baltic States tried to achieve at least a limited US presence, but these efforts were unsuccessful. It was considered that the Baltic States were biased towards Russia, while the Baltic states' concerns about Russia's efforts to influence the general public of these countries through propaganda and disinformation were written off to the low level of development of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It was considered that Russia's efforts to influence the internal policies of other countries could be successful in the Baltic States, but would not work in Western countries. The experience of recent years, however, suggests that this view was inaccurate.

In the third phase, starting with 2014, the most comprehensive reinforcement of NATO security guarantees for the Baltic States took place. The annexation of the Crimea and the military conflict in Ukraine created the preconditions for strengthening NATO's North–East flank to become a logical next step in the development of the Alliance and in its relations with Russia. Changes in the position of NATO member states against Russia took place at different pace. Well after Russia's involvement in the Ukrainian conflict was already proven, there were countries that felt that there had been no convincing evidence that armoured vehicles and soldiers in the Donbass region were being sent from Russia. In the summer of 2014, about a month before the NATO summit in Wales, there were still countries that regarded the presence of NATO forces in the Baltic States as a red line, which should not be trespassed. The hope was still present that the deterioration of relations with Russia was only temporary and that they relations would improve again soon. However, these expectations did not come true, and NATO's stance towards Russia has become more rigorous.

Russia itself is largely to blame for the changing NATO's view about it. If there would be no annexation of the Crimea, if the military conflict in

the eastern part of Ukraine was not so bloodstained, if Russia would not increase its military presence in the vicinity of the Baltic States and other NATO member states, if the Malaysian airliner had not been downed and if Russia had not tried to intervene in the internal affairs of the EU and NATO, the outcome could have been different. However, Russia's actions alienated even those countries whose initial position towards Russia was reconciliatory. However, it should be noted that the benefits for the Baltic states from the deterioration of relations between Russia and NATO are not limited to the presence of NATO forces only. As there is a fear that Russia could wage a hybrid war against the Baltic States, the 72nd paragraph of the final text of the NATO Warsaw Summit includes the collective commitment of alliance member states to resist hybrid threats and to provide assistance to the country at risk. While the primary responsibility for countering hybrid threats lies with the country facing these threats, the North Atlantic Council may still decide to extend the application of the 5th paragraph of the Washington Treaty to hybrid war conditions.¹¹ Finally, the other members' attitude towards the Baltic States has changed. If the Baltic States were once considered to be biased towards Russia, then the situation has changed dramatically. The interest of other NATO member states, journalists and researchers has increased significantly, not only about the situation in the Baltic States, but also about the perception of Russia by their officials and researchers. One can play jokes that one of the core tasks of the Ministry of defence in recent years has been to facilitate and provide organisational support to numerous foreign visits to Latvia.

The process of strengthening NATO security guarantees clearly shows that the presence of other allies in Latvia is increasing after major international shocks. It is rather reactive, not proactive trend. Measures to strengthen Latvian security are taken when the Alliance changes its own opinion about Russia's capabilities and intentions. Unfortunately, the experience so far shows that reinforcement of security guarantees for Latvia (and also for other NATO member states neighbouring Russia) depends on various preconditions. Decisions are based not on the real security needs of the Alliance and on the assessment of the military capabilities of the potential opponent, but on the political logic, namely, which decisions seem politically reasoned. Looking back to the period before Ukraine's conflict, the question is, why were the interests of the potential opponent – Russia – so much respected and not those of frontline allies?



Exercises on the Ādaži military base, November 21, 2014.
From the left: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, Latvia's Defence Minister Raimonds Vējonis, Commander of Latvia's National Armed Forces Raimonds Graube.
Autors: Staff Sgt. Kenneth C. Upsall, US Army, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_objective_is_to_rescue_the_hostage_141121-A-LY282-010.jpg

Security guarantees: the link between domestic and foreign policy

The reinforcement of security guarantees was a process in which there was a close interaction between domestic political developments in Latvia and discussions within NATO about what measures should be taken to protect the Baltic States. Consequently, decisions taken by Latvian government and intra-NATO decision-making must both be considered. The most important issue in Latvia was the issue of increasing military expenditure. Latvia's position before the start of the Ukrainian crisis was somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, Latvia was among the countries that considered that Russia poses a potential military threat, but, on the other hand, Latvia's defence spending due to the economic crisis of 2008–2009 dropped below 1 per cent of GDP and did not significantly increase after the crisis. Latvia's claims about military threat posed by Russia lacked credibility, as there were no indications that Latvia was really preparing to significantly increase its defence funding in response to Russia's military modernization.

It was only in July 2014 (more than two months after the annexation of Crimea) when the Law on National Defence Financing was adopted, which envisaged a gradual increase of funding for the defence sector in the period

up to 2020. The law foresees that defence financing should be at least 1 per cent of GDP in 2015, 1.1 per cent in 2016, 1.3 per cent of GDP in 2017 and not less than 1.5 per cent of GDP in 2018. The largest increase in funding would take place in 2019 (1.75 % of GDP) and in 2020, when defence funding would eventually reach the 2.0 % of GDP mark recommended by NATO.¹² The Saeima, which would be elected in 2018, would have to decide on the most significant increase in defence sector financing, thus placing the burden of responsibility on decisions taken as far as possible in the future. This suggests that there was not sufficient political will in Latvia to define the defence sector as a priority and to allocate the necessary funds to it.

With the deterioration of the situation in Ukraine and the growing pressure from Latvia's NATO partners, a decision was taken to increase defence financing faster at the end of August 2015 (one year and five months after the Crimean annexation), reaching 2 % of GDP in 2018. In fact, a leap from around 1 % of GDP to 2 % of GDP would occur over a period of three years. This would mean that in the year 2016 1.4 per cent of GDP were allocated, 1.7 per cent in 2017 and 2 per cent in 2018. In terms of money, it would be a leap from EUR 254 million in 2015 to EUR 559 million in 2018 (depending on GDP growth rates).¹³

In many ways, Latvia was objectively in the worst situation among the Baltic States as comparatively attested by the made by the think-tank RAND.¹⁴ Estonia had already reached the 2 % mark of GDP already in 2012, and before that, the defence budget in values of percentage of GDP was higher than in Latvia. By contrast, the proportion of the Lithuanian defence budget in relation to GDP was quite similar to that in Latvia at the time of the start of the conflict in Ukraine, but Lithuania is a larger country in terms of population, thus, in monetary expression 1 per cent of GDP is higher than in Latvia. Consequently, Lithuania had a more capable military even with this defence budget. The average income of the population in Estonia is higher than in Latvia, therefore, Estonia can invest in the defence sector more than Latvia, even at considerably lower population levels. For example, according to NATO data, Estonia's defence budget in 2012 was almost €200 million higher than that of Latvia. Although Latvia has increased funding for the defence sector in recent years, however, even in 2017, when defence financing in Latvia has reached €450 million, Estonia's defence funding is still almost €30 million higher.¹⁵ The average income of Estonia's residents is higher than in Latvia, therefore the defence financing has been considerably higher

for a long time. Only in 2018 will Latvian defence spending exceed Estonia. However, it should be emphasized that each of the Baltic states gains, to a certain extent, from the fact that the defence funding is increased in the other two neighbours, because Russia's military aggression is likely to affect the security of all three Baltic states. This can explain Estonia's dissatisfaction several years before the Ukrainian crisis, when importance of Estonia's defence investment was diminished by the fact that Latvia and Lithuania neglected the need to hike defence spending.

It is possible that if the international security situation deteriorates further, there will be a need to continue to increase funding for defence. Estonia's defence budget has already exceeded 2 % of GDP in recent years. There is also a debate in Lithuania on whether defence funding in the future should not be raised to 2.5 % of GDP. On the other hand, the reduction of defence funding seems unlikely as the Baltic States have launched long-term military capability development programs, which will require substantial investment not only in armament purchases, but also in maintenance for many coming years. At the same time, the defence capabilities of the Baltic States have gaps that will need to be filled in the coming years, for example by developing air defence capabilities. This means that political decision-makers in Latvia might have to explain to the public in the coming years why there is a need to further increase defence funding (assuming that defence spending in Estonia and Lithuania will continue to increase). Closing of the gaps when it comes to key defence capabilities would also likely involve close collaboration with key allies. When facing external threats, countries need to be protected as much as necessary and not just as much as they wish to.

Increasing defence funding in Latvia was directly linked to decisions taken by NATO regarding the deployment of multinational battalions, as Latvia was tasked not only with the development of self-defence capabilities, but also the provision of host state support functions. Thus, in fact, a significant share of the increase in defence budget of Latvia went to cover construction costs of the infrastructure to accommodate more than a thousand soldiers of the multinational battalion from six countries: Canada, Spain, Italy, Albania, Slovenia and Poland. Most likely, soldiers from two more countries will join in 2018. So, in the event of Russia's military aggression against the Baltic states, almost half of the alliance member states, whose soldiers would be in the zone of probable military conflict, would be directly involved from the very outset of such a conflict. Consequently,

NATO members have an interest in ensuring that the deterrence measures implemented by the Alliance are sufficient and credible, since deterrence is cheaper and less dangerous than participation in a high-intensity military conflict with Russia. The presence of other NATO members in Latvia also helps these countries better understand Russia's methods of conduct, such as the misinformation that is being spread about their soldiers. Russia's misinformation becomes less effective if it is carefully scrutinized and when falsehoods are refuted.

Along with decisions taken by Latvia, decision-making within the framework of NATO took place. This process had a slow start, and at the time of the annexation of the Crimea, Latvian decision-makers had reasonable doubts about NATO's ability to provide assistance if any alliance member states were to be subjected to military aggression. The annexation of Crimea and the beginning of a military conflict in Ukraine came as a surprise to many. However, after the Warsaw Summit in July 2016, it was already clear that Latvia had received from allies what it had wanted. At the Wales Summit in September 2014, significant decisions were made to increase NATO's presence in a number of Alliance member states, including the Baltics, to improve the Alliance's readiness to provide military assistance to Member States in need as soon as possible, and to reverse the trend of declining defence budgets in all Alliance member states. The Member States also committed to "aim to move towards the 2 % guideline within a decade with a view to meeting their NATO Capability Targets and filling NATO's capability shortfalls."¹⁶ The decision to establish a NATO Force Integration Unit in Latvia, the establishment of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) and the increase of NATO Response Force to 30,000 troops was of particular importance to Latvia. At the same time, rotating units from other NATO member states, including the United States, were permanently deployed to Latvia and the other two Baltic states. The number of military exercises rose significantly. However, there is still doubt whether NATO would be able to provide timely assistance to Latvia in the event if Russia initiates aggression against it.

NATO's Warsaw Summit decisions and their implementation helped dispel concerns about the Alliance's ability to deter Russia. In Warsaw, a decision was made to deploy four multinational battalions to the Baltic States and Poland starting from 2017. They would be located in those countries permanently.¹⁷ It should be noted that the multinational battalions were set up in less than one year after the decision at the Warsaw Summit, which is a

significant achievement. Before the Warsaw Summit, it was not clear which country would play a leading role in the deployment of the multinational battalion to Latvia. After Germany took the leading role in Lithuania and the United Kingdom in Estonia, it seemed that the United States could play a leading role in Latvia, but the United States chose Poland. In this situation, Canada took the leading role in the multinational battalion for Latvia. Although in the case of Lithuania and Estonia, it became sooner clear which country would take leadership in building a multinational battalion than in the case of Latvia, however, there was no reason for decision makers in Latvia to worry, as the signals from major NATO countries were clear – given the worsened relations between NATO and Russia, Latvia could rest assured that a multinational battle group would be deployed to Latvia. The information that the leadership would be taken up by Canada was received shortly before the NATO Warsaw Summit. It should be noted that Latvia's decision-makers appreciate cooperation with Canada very well in both military and strategic as well personal terms.¹⁸ The defence minister Raimonds Bergmanis noted that "Latvia is lucky that Canada took the lead, because the Canadians are very serious about their commitment to Baltic security."¹⁹

The deployment of multinational battle groups in the Baltic states is a major step towards creating an effective deterrent. The Baltic States are developing their own military capabilities which supplemented by capabilities of the NATO multinational battle groups. Of course, these forces alone are not sufficient to deter Russia's possible aggression, but they may prove sufficient to delay Russia's attack, before the NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force and, subsequently, the NATO Response Force enter. As the Baltic States continue to develop their self-defence capabilities, deterrence is likely to be strengthened even further. After the deployment of NATO multinational battle groups, there is an intensive continuous work on identifying the remaining gaps in military capabilities, so the Alliance might need to decide in the coming years about provision of the missing capabilities in the Baltic States and find solutions to the control the air and the sea in the event of a military conflict. Taking into account the concentration of Russian military forces near the Baltic states and the military capabilities they have to deter the adversary from access to the Baltic states in the event of a military conflict (A2/AD capabilities), establishing NATO superiority can be a difficult task. However, the good news is that NATO members have not yet been convinced that the security problems of the Baltic States have



Latvia's and Canada's Defence Ministers Raimonds Bergmanis (third from the left) and Harjit Singh Sajjan (second from the right) during the NATO Warsaw Summit, July 8, 2016. Author: Gatis Dieziņš, Youth Guard and Information Centre, https://www.flickr.com/photos/latvijas_armija/28073356412

been completely solved. Russia is receiving increased attention, therefore, the further strengthening of the NATO presence in the Baltic region can be expected. The preference, however, should be given to low-cost solutions, as the Baltic states' defence budgets are limited.

Lessons learned for Latvia

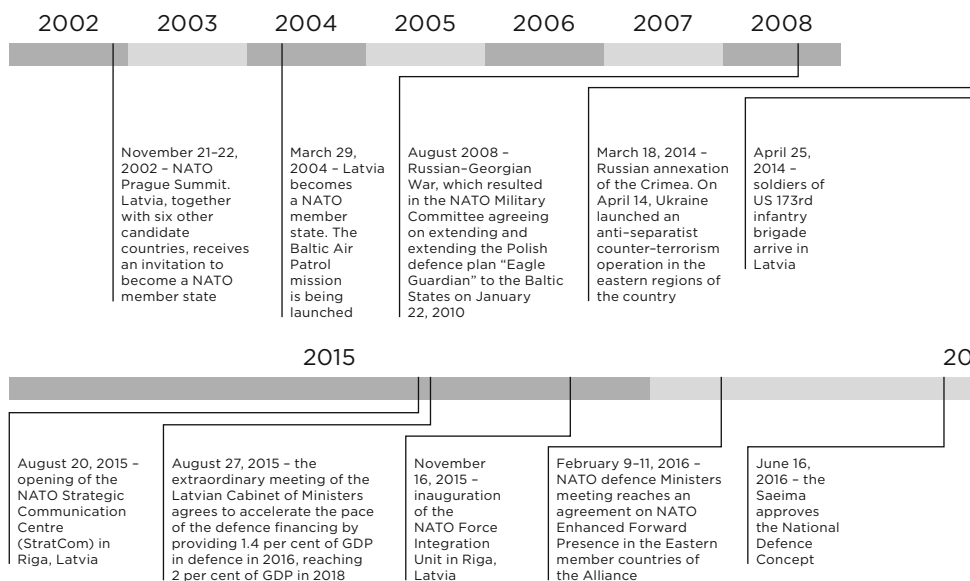
NATO security guarantees for Latvia have become more tangible in the last few years. Latvia has managed to achieve greater NATO presence, thus achieving a significant foreign and security policy objective. If just a few years ago the Baltic states were considered to be unable to objectively assess Russia, it turned out later that the Baltic states' assessment of Russia's foreign policy was more accurate than the perceptions of other NATO member states about Russia's goals and interests. At the moment, the NATO countries' perception of Russia has become closer to that of the Baltic states.

In recent years, Latvia has learned a number of substantial lessons. First of all, Latvia can rely on its allies, but it must take into account that

fundamental changes in the thinking of NATO member states require time. The situation in the fall of 2017, when NATO's expanded military presence has expanded considerably, is much more favourable than in the spring of 2014, when Russia launched an aggression against Ukraine and the presence of NATO troops in the Baltic States was widely regarded by a number of allies as a red line, which should not be crossed. Over time, those red lines have been crossed, and a consensus has emerged among NATO member states about the threats posed by Russia and how those should be responded to. The fact that Russia is paid more attention than ever, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, gives grounds for optimism.

Secondly, Latvia had learned about importance of the defence financing. This is one of the most important lessons learned since the restoration of independence in 1991. The Ukrainian crisis uncovered the severe reality in the defence sector of Latvia. The lesson was learned that a rapid advancement in the defence sector is not possible and that changes require many years of hard work. The training, purchase and acquisition of military equipment takes time. Military equipment and armaments purchased by Latvia after the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis will be used for many years. If, in turn, such investments are not made, the defence sector would be weakened considerably, and the effects of that would be felt for years. Political decision-makers should keep in mind that defence spending of at least 2 per cent of GDP should be maintained at all times rather than increased or reduced in response to a changing security environment. With Russia as its neighbour, Latvia has a good reason to pay more attention to defence permanently.

Third, Latvia should no longer assume that its Western allies are inherently more competent when it comes to security issues that are key priorities to Latvia (Russia being the most important security challenge). There is little doubt that Latvia has gained much from following the advice of its Western partners, but the influence of allies on the choice of priorities in the defence sector should be evaluated with a critical eye. Latvia became a member of NATO at a time when it seemed that the times of territorial defence had gone for good and that the future main tasks of NATO would be mainly related to the management of regional conflicts and the fight against terrorism in countries like Afghanistan. Unfortunately, Latvia relied too much on the widespread opinion that Russia no longer posed a military threat and that there was no need to think about strengthening self-defence capabilities. Thus, the military capabilities that the Latvian



armed forces currently lack, such as air defence, have not been developed. Within the framework of the land forces mechanization project, the first combat equipment units were only received in the second half of 2015. In the future, when assessing the changes in the international security environment, Latvia should rely more on its own expertise, that is, if Russia appears to be a military threat, then it is likely to be a threat, no matter what the opinion of Western analysts on this issue is. And, of course, the assessment of the international security environment should be reflected in decisive action of the political decision-makers and consistent implementation of the decisions made.

Fourth, the security debate since the onset of the Ukrainian crisis proves once again that security is a concept that covers a wide range of issues. Strengthening NATO's security guarantees is one essential element in helping to reduce the military threat posed by Russia, but there are other types of threats that Latvia should seek to counter by working closely with its partners within the EU and NATO. Placing more emphasis on Russia's disinformation campaigns, cyber-attacks and the use of economic coercion to achieve foreign policy goals is the way forward. However, it must be

2014

June 2014 – the United States announces the launch of a European Reassurance Initiative (ERI). The funding of the initiative will increase over time from 985 million USD in 2014 to 3.4 billion in 2017

July 10, 2014 – the Law on National Defence Financing, which provides for a gradual increase in defence funding to 2 % of GDP by 2020, comes into force

September 3, 2014 – visit by US President Barack Obama to Tallinn, Estonia. Statement of security guarantees for the three Baltic States

September 4–5, 2014 – NATO Summit in Wales. Important decisions relating to Latvia's security are adopted: the establishment of the NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU), increasing of the defence expenditures of the NATO member states, increase of the number of NATO's Rapid Reaction Force (NRF), setting up the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), increasing the number of military training and deploying military equipment in a number of NATO countries, including Latvia

2016

July 8–9, 2016 – NATO Warsaw Summit. NATO nations agree on the deployment of multinational battlegroups in the Baltic States and Poland in 2017

November 29, 2016 – the Cabinet of Ministers approves the National Armed Forces Development Plan for 2016–2018

June 19, 2017 – inaugural ceremony of the NATO Battle Group in Latvia

2017

borne in mind that there is not only a negative synergy, but also a positive relationship with respect to the various types of threat posed by Russia. Better awareness of the threats posed by Russia in one realm can lead to more interest about the dangers it poses in other realms. This will intensify the efforts of NATO member states to seek solutions to the threats posed by Russia.

Endnotes

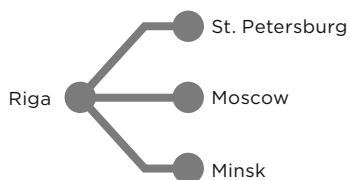
- ¹ Barack Obama, *Remarks by President Obama to the People of Estonia*, The White House, 3 September 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/03/remarks-president-obama-people-estonia>
- ² David A. Shlapak, Michael W. Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank*, RAND Corporation, 2016, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1200/RR1253/RAND_RR1253.pdf
- ³ Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (The John Hopkins University Press, 1962), p. 13.
- ⁴ Author's interview with the Minister of defence Mr. Raimonds Bergmanis, July 5, 2017.
- ⁵ "Bērziņš: Putina vizīte Latvijā nav ne aktuāla, ne gaidīta, ne arī iespējama," LSM, April 10, 2014, <http://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/berzins-putina-vizite-latvija-nav-ne-aktuala-ne-gaidita-ne-ari-iespejama.a82487/>

- ⁶ “Latvijas valsts prezidenta, Saeimas priekšsēdētājas, ministru prezidentes un ārlietu ministra paziņojums par Krievijas iejaukšanos Ukrainā,” March 1, 2014, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/264841-par-krievijas-agresiju-ukraina>
- ⁷ “Saeimas paziņojums par Krievijas agresiju Ukrainā,” March 6, 2014, <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/264841-par-krievijas-agresiju-ukraina>
- ⁸ “Protesta vēstule par NATO militārpersonu nepiedienīgu uzvedību,” Ventspils City Council, May 24, 2014, http://www.aivarslebergs.lv/files/Protestas_vestule_NATO_LV.pdf
- ⁹ “Latvijas Republikas ārpolitikas pamatvirzieni līdz 2005. gadam,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, April 7, 1995, <http://www.mfa.gov.lv/arpolitika/latvijas-arpolitikas-pamatvirzieni-lidz-2005-gadam>
- ¹⁰ Author’s interview with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs, June 30, 2017.
- ¹¹ “Warsaw Summit Communiqué,” NATO, July 9, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm
- ¹² “Valsts aizsardzības finansēšanas likums,” July 10, 2014, <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=267469>
- ¹³ “Aizsardzības budžeta dinamika, 2005.-2008. milj. EUR: Aizsardzības budžets % no IKP,” Latvijas Republikas Aizsardzības ministrijas dati, http://www.mod.gov.lv/~media/Sargs_LV/ZinasLV/2016/12/BUDzeta_izlietojums_infografika.ashx
- ¹⁴ Christopher S. Chivvis, Raphael S. Cohen, Bryan Frederick, Daniel S. Hamilton, Stephen F. Larrabee, Bonny Lin, NATO’s *Northeastern Flank: Emerging Opportunities for Engagement* (RAND Corporation, 2017), http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1400/RR1467/RAND_RR1467.pdf
- ¹⁵ NATO Public Diplomacy Division, “Defence Expenditure in NATO Countries (2010–2017),” June 29, 2017, http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_06/20170629_170629-pr2017-111-en.pdf; “Aizsardzības budžeta dinamika, 2005.-2008. milj. EUR...”; “Estonia passes 2017 record level budget spending to bolster defence,” Reuters, December 19, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-estonia-budget-idUSKBN14824W>
- ¹⁶ “Wales Summit Declaration,” NATO, September 5, 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm
- ¹⁷ The presence of multinational battalions in the Baltic states and Poland has been characterized by using the phrase ‘at all times’ in the NATO Warsaw Summit declaration. “Warsaw Summit Communiqué,” NATO, July 9, 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm
- ¹⁸ Imants Lieģis discusses the reasons why Canada’s initiative has been welcomed by Latvia. Imants Lieģis, “Latvia’s Foreign Policy – Predictable Pragmatism in Unpredictable Times” in *Latvian Foreign and Security Policy Yearbook 2017*, Andris Sprūds, Ilvija Bruģe, Kārlis Bukovskis (eds.) (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2017), pp. 51–62.
- ¹⁹ Author’s interview with the Minister of defence Mr. Raimonds Bergmanis, July 5, 2017.

Rail Baltica – the Railroad Back to Europe

MĀRIS ANDŽĀNS, KRISTIĀNS ANDŽĀNS

Taking a passenger train from Rīga to Berlin, Paris or Ostend – it is not only a future prospect but also a testimony of the past. Already before World War II, Rīga was connected to Western European cities by regular rail services. With the occupation by the Soviet Union, Latvia, both in practice and symbolically, was disconnected from the West, and connections were instead strengthened with the Soviet metropolises. Now, approaching the centenary of Latvia, international rail passenger services only connect Rīga to Moscow, St. Petersburg and Minsk (there is also a symbolic connection with the Estonian border–town Valga). At present, both cargo and passenger transport between the Baltic countries and Central and Western Europe is significantly hampered by the railroad infrastructure created during the Soviet Union. Baltic railroads are not technically compatible with Western ones and do not allow the Baltic countries to develop speeds characteristic to high-speed rail lines.



Riga's current international passenger railway connections.

However, Latvia and the Baltics are returning to Europe by rail seemingly irreversibly with the “European standard gauge” or the 1435–millimeter *Rail Baltica* standard gauge line – the largest infrastructure project in Latvia since the restoration of independence. Although nowadays the importance of railroads has diminished, rail transport still plays a very important role in passenger and freight transportation; particularly important for the Baltic countries, which currently are not connected to Central and Western Europe by high-speed highways. With events such as joining the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Schengen area, and the Eurozone, the new railroad line will bring Latvia even closer to the Western world and will facilitate its return to Europe.

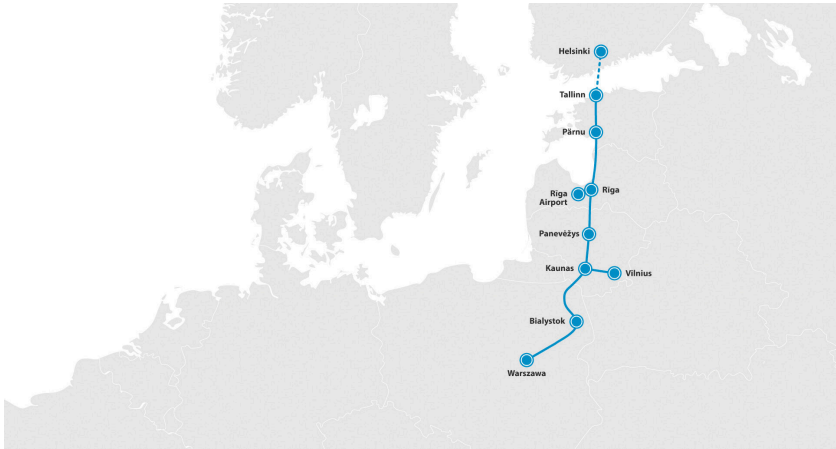
Progress towards the implementation of the joint Baltic *Rail Baltica* project has been long and complicated – due in part to the complex set of decisions necessary for the project: decisions by the Ministry of Transport, the Cabinet of Ministers, and the Saeima, decisions by European Union (EU) institutions, multilateral declarations and statements by the Baltics and other countries. The lengthy process of developing *Rail Baltica* also reveals various aspects of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia’s domestic and foreign policy: the impact of the substantial and lasting consequences of the Soviet occupation, as well as the complexity of overcoming these consequences; disagreements among the Baltic countries, as well as the ability to unite in implementing the project nonetheless; attempts by sympathisers of an “Eastern direction” for Latvia, supporting Russia’s involvement in the project and hindering the implementation of the project, as well as the EU’s irreplaceable role in the implementation of the project.

The first two decades – from a concept to a concrete outline

The idea of re-connecting the Baltic countries with Central and Western Europe by rail already appeared in the early nineties. It was developed in discussions both in Latvia and in other Baltic countries, and was discussed at various international forums.

Although in the first decade of reestablished Latvia, the *Rail Baltica* project, due to objective reasons, was not high on the political agenda of the transport sector, it was, however, broadly supported conceptually. This can be explained by the fact that after the first term of the restored Latvian Cabinet of Ministers and until 2002, the Ministry of Transport was led by representatives of a pro-European party, *Latvijas Ceļš (Latvia’s Way)*, Andris Gūtmanis, Vilis Krištopans, and Anatolijs Gorbunovs, and by the fact that the new railroad line was still far too far away from practical implementation, and thus also too far from substantive debate about the project itself.

More specific progress towards the development of the new railroad line began in the early 2000s. In 2001, the ministers responsible for transport in the Baltic countries, including Latvian minister Anatolijs Gorbunovs, signed a cooperation agreement on preparations for developing the new railroad corridor, while a year later, meetings of an international coordination group began. The development process became even more active after Roberts Zīle



The intended route of *Rail Baltica*.

Source: *RB RAIL AS*, <http://railbaltica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/rb-1.jpg>

(*Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK (For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK)*) became Minister of Transport in November 2002. Under his leadership, the idea of the need for the new railroad line was more actively developed at multiple levels along with increased activity in identifying potential sources of finance. For example, in November 2003, together with the Lithuanian and Estonian ministers responsible for transport, Zile called on the European Commission (EC) to fund a feasibility study of the project (in this period, Vigo Legzdīņš, State Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, made a significant contribution to the project). As Zile recalls, by that time it was already clear that Latvia would qualify for EU support for only one large infrastructure project. Therefore, the creation of a new railroad line was made the priority.¹

Latvia's accession to the EU paved the way for more concrete progress of the project. In April 2004, a month before the Baltic countries became EU members, *Rail Baltica* was included as one of the 30 priority projects of the EU that were aimed to facilitate development of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), which were intended to begin by 2010 (this decision gave a formal basis to attract EU financial resources for construction). As Zile remembers, a variety of factors coincided in favour of the positive decision, including the need to respect geographic proportionality in the construction of the large infrastructure projects at the EU level.² A year later, the EC launched the procurement process for

a feasibility study, a project coordinator position was set up at the EU level. Czech Pavel Telička, who in the following years became an active and publicly visible advocate of *Rail Baltica*, held this post until 2013.

Between 2004 and 2009, the Ministry of Transport was led by the representatives of the *Latvia's First Party* (in 2007 it merged with the party *Latvijas Ceļš (Latvia's Way)* under the title *LPP/LC*) Ainārs Šlesers and Krišjānis Peters. For Šlesers, one of the most influential Latvian politicians at that time, the new railroad line was not a priority. Although Šlesers did not object to the project, he added a new vector for *Rail Baltica* project – the goal of linking the railroad line with Russia. He began to popularise this idea while still acting as a Deputy Prime Minister in 2003. In September 2005, Šlesers and the Estonian Minister at the time, Edgar Savisaar, one of the most prominent politicians of his country with a favourable view of the “Eastern direction,” announced a consensus on the need to involve Russia in this project. Although Šlesers regularly raised this issue publicly and discussed it with officials from other countries and the EU, this intention was never practically realised.

In the meantime, the EC-commissioned feasibility study of the *Rail Baltica* project intended to provide concrete answers and recommendations on how to implement the project. However, according to Jānis Eiduks, then Director of the Railway Department at the Ministry of Transport, the report prepared by the company *COWI* and published in January 2007, was a disappointment – it was too general and did not give a convincing evaluation of the project's future.³ In other words, the feasibility study could not serve as the basis for inspiring confidence for either the EU or Baltic decision-makers on the necessity and viability of *Rail Baltica*.

Following the feasibility study published in 2007, the international coordination group established by the Baltic countries continued its work, the results of which led to the ministers of the Baltic countries signing a memorandum of understanding in June and July of that year. The implementation of the project was divided into two stages: first was improving the existing railroad infrastructure (1520-millimeter or “Russian gauge” tracks) in the North-South transport corridor; and the second was elaborating a detailed feasibility study of the construction of a 1435-millimeter railroad line. The first phase – improving the existing railroads – was named *Rail Baltica I* (although it was not linked with the new railroad construction), and the second – *Rail Baltica II*. The so-called *Rail Baltica I* project could have become the end of the *Rail Baltica* project as



The draft of the planned reconstruction of the *Rail Baltica*'s Rīga Railroad Bridge and Rīga Central Station. Source: Publicity photo of *Eiropas Dzelzceļa līnijas, SIA*, the implementer of the Rail Baltica project in Latvia, <http://edzl.lv/assets/media/images/galleries/large/34c8ba408c4c213446e0c1a533ea8978.jpg>

we understand it now. Although it improved the condition of existing tracks, the circuitous rail network did not have the potential to serve as an efficient connection either among the Baltic countries or to the rest of the EU (for example, getting to Riga from Tallinn would require transiting through Tartu, making the trip uncompetitive with other modes of transport).

However, the work on the railroad project of the “European standard gauge” did not stop. In July 2007, Latvia submitted an application to the EC for co-financing for both the renovation of the existing railroad infrastructure and for the feasibility study of the construction of a new railroad line, at that time called *Rail Baltica II* (at this stage, an essential role in continuing work towards the construction of the new “European standard gauge” track was played by the officials of the Ministry of Transport, in particular the Deputy State Secretary Andulis Židkovs). Based on the application submitted by Latvia, in 2008 the EC agreed to grant co-financing

for a new feasibility study. As a result, in 2009, during Kaspars Gerhards's tenure as Latvian Minister of Transport (*Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK (For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK)*), the procurement of new feasibility study was announced on behalf of the Baltic countries.

The new assessment was developed and published by company AECOM in 2011. The new evaluation is considered to be one of the decisive points in developing the new railroad line. The report recommended the construction of a completely new railroad line with a 1435–millimeter track gauge along the shortest possible geographical route between the cities of Tallinn, Pärnu, Riga, Panevėžys, and Kaunas. In addition, the report provided justification for the economic viability of the new railroad line, namely, the possibility of sustaining itself in the long–term with both passengers and cargo (the role of Arnis Kākulis, then Regional Director of the AECOM project in the Baltic countries, should be highlighted in creating and defending the report). If this report did not provide assurance on the need for *Rail Baltica*, it was unlikely that a new, third study would follow in the following years.

The second decade of Latvia's renewed independence ended with Uldis Augulis as the Minister of Transport representing the Union of Greens and Farmers. Although the AECOM report was released during his tenure, the “Eastern direction” was also renewed in this time within the context of the development of *Rail Baltica*. In December 2010, President of Latvia Valdis Zatlers made an official visit to Russia during which he met with the Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev, as well as with the head of the government, Vladimir Putin. During this attempt to intensify relations, Latvia particularly tried to strengthen economic cooperation with Russia. Among other things, the idea of building a high–speed motorway and a high–speed railroad line to Moscow was developed, while the *Rail Baltica* project was left aside as seemingly economically unrealistic. Juris Iesalnieks, the Director of the State Railway Administration remembers the idea of a new railway line to Moscow as absurd – not only contrary to Latvia's foreign policy interests, but also economically unreasonable because of insufficient passenger flows and long distances for such lines (from Rīga to Moscow it is slightly over 900 km that, for passenger transport, would not allow successful competition with air transport, while in freight transport, the current capacity is already significant and can be further increased without the construction of a completely new line). Moreover, it was not clear whether the authors of the proposed construction of the “Moscow line” were Russian or Latvian representatives.⁴

***Rail Baltica* facts**

- The construction of a completely new railroad line, 870 kilometres long, 1435 mm wide – or “European standard gauge;”
- The new railroad line in the territory of the Baltic countries is planned to be finished in 2025, while the extension to Warsaw is intended by 2030;
- It will be possible to get from Rīga to Tallinn in about two hours, to Kaunas in one and a half hours, and to Warsaw in four hours;⁵
- The passenger trains will travel at a speed up to 240 kilometres per hour;⁶
- Construction is planned to begin in 2020;
- The total cost of the project is estimated to be about 5.788 billion euro,⁷ of which most is planned to be covered by EU funding.

At the turn of decades, when the “Eastern direction” had become a priority for the railroad sector and critics’ voices were louder than supporters (the most prominent critics who emphasised the risks of economic disadvantages were Uģis Magonis, then head of the *Latvijas Dzelzceļš* (*Latvian Railway*) company and Aivars Lembergs, the Mayor of Ventspils and head of the Latvian Transit Business Association), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs played a more important role. It attempted to keep the *Rail Baltica* issue on the political agenda. As Marika Simanoviča, at the time an official of the diplomatic service responsible for transport, remembers, the ministry repeatedly had to respond to criticisms of EU institutions and other countries about Latvia’s lack of support for the new railroad line.⁸

On the way to implementing the project in the third decade

At the beginning of the third decade of Latvia’s renewed state, and similarly of the development of *Rail Baltica*, discussions on the necessity and validity of the new railroad line continued in Latvia. Important for the continuation of the project was not only the AECOM report, but also the fact that the position of the European Commissioner for Transport between 2010 and 2014 was held by Siim Kallas from Estonia – one of the most important figures in the implementation of *Rail Baltica*. Kallas played a decisive role in prioritising

the project among the EU transport infrastructure projects and in creating the financial mechanisms for the project. It is also important to note that, at the time when the “Eastern direction” was still a priority in Latvia, Kallas publicly pointed out both the risk of losing the position of *Rail Baltica* on the EU agenda and the fact that the EU would not financially support the construction of a new railroad line to Moscow.

In 2013, the next Minister of Transport, Aivis Ronis, who was not aligned to a political party, was replaced by another politically non-aligned minister, Anrijs Matīss (a year later he joined the *Vienotība (Unity)* party, which took “political responsibility” for both Ronis’s and Matīss’s work). It was during Matīss’s time as minister that more active development of *Rail Baltica* started, and progress towards practical implementation of the project began. This can be explained in part by the the *Nacionālā Apvienība (National Alliance)* party’s insistence on this issue, represented also by Roberts Zīle, former Minister of Transport and a Member of the European Parliament (in February 2013, the party did not support Matīss’s approval for the post of the minister – also basing their position on his inadequate performance as the Ministry’s State Secretary on this matter). Matīss recalls that as State Secretary, he had to implement not only the agenda of the political leadership, but the project itself was not considered viable until the publication of the *AECOM* report – at that time, he recalls, it was not possible to persuade either the other institutions, the transport industry, or the public.⁹

A significant political assurance to move the *Rail Baltica* project forward were the declarations on cooperation for the implementation of the project that were signed by the Baltic ministers of transport on April 2013, and in September by the ministers of the Baltic countries, Finland and Poland. The latter served as a signal that other EU countries, not just the Baltic states, also saw the prospect of the new railroad line. The declaration was also essential in establishing a joint venture through which the implementation of the project would be ensured. The Baltic joint venture *RB Rail* was established in October 2014. The company, located in Rīga with shares divided among three specially created companies by the Baltic countries, was entrusted with supervising the project’s engineering, construction and management. The fact that the company’s headquarters was located in Rīga, even though Estonia was more active in developing the new railroad line at the time, can be counted as an achievement on the part of Latvia. Then Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis played a decisive role in this decision by managing



Signing of the *Rail Baltica* Baltic joint venture's *RB Rail* establishment agreement: Baltic ministers responsible for transport – from left: Urve Palo, Anrijs Matīss and Rimantas Sinkevičius. October 28, 2014, Rīga. Author - F64. Source: Ministry of Transport, https://www.flickr.com/photos/satiksmes_ministrija/15466001200/in/album-72157648598175299/

to persuade the other Baltic Prime Ministers about the candidacy of Rīga. Dombrovskis also played a significant role in convincing the parties concerned of the need to establish a *Rail Baltica* stop at the Riga International Airport.

In February 2015, the Baltic joint venture *RB Rail* submitted an application to the EC for the first-round of *Rail Baltica* financing. The EU co-financing was approved in July. In November, a financing agreement was signed between the European Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INEA) and *RB Rail* on the allocation of more than 442 million euro, or nearly 82 % of total first-round costs¹⁰ (the first round included activities such as conducting technical studies, land appropriation, initial construction works, support measures, communication with the public and supervision of the work performed). Although the decision on allocating of funding was formally adopted in July 2015, Latvia's Presidency of the EU Council in the first half of that year was significant in promoting a positive decision. Matīss recalls that the opportunity for Latvia to lead the work of the EU Council

helped convince both the new EC constituency and the EU's major powers of the need to support the project.¹¹

2016 was essential for ensuring the future financing of *Rail Baltica*. Although Uldis Augulis, a representative of the *Zaļo un zemnieku savienība* (the *Union of Greens and Farmers*), returned to the post of Minister for Transport, he did not obstruct the path of project implementation. In February, *RB Rail* submitted an application for EU co-financing for the implementation of the next phase of the project, involving technical investigation, project engineering and construction. In July, this application was conceptually approved. However, the prerequisite for financing was the ability of the Baltic countries to agree on a future course for cooperation. Here, Lithuania took a different position. A written agreement had to be reached among the parties involved by the end of September, however, the Lithuanian railroad company *Lietuvos geležinkeliai* initially did not give its consent. Eventually, after the EC issued a warning, the Lithuanian company agreed to move forward. In November, a new co-financing agreement was signed allocating approximately 191 million euro to co-finance the second phase.¹²

The above-noted incident was not the only difficulty in relations among the Baltic countries. This conflict was likely related to Lithuania's desire to gain control over the procurement of the construction in its territory, though previously the Lithuanian side had also expressed dissatisfaction with the route of the new railroad line (the main line does not cross the capital, Vilnius), with *RB Rail's* management, and other issues. It is also worth noting that in October 2015, a 1435-millimeter railroad line from the Polish-Lithuanian border to Kaunas was officially opened in Lithuania (however, its technical implementation makes it difficult to connect with the *Rail Baltica* high-speed railroad line). Lithuania's work in developing this connection can be explained by a desire to concentrate and handle the transit cargo in the North-South transport corridor in its territory. Over the decades in which the project has developed, there has been less disagreement with Estonia, with the most visible dispute being rather symbolic – the use of a slightly different name, *Rail Baltic*. Paradoxically, in anticipation of the centenary of Latvia and the other Baltic countries, Lithuania has become the most active among the Baltic countries in support for the project, while in Estonia the potential risks of project implementation are still discussed.

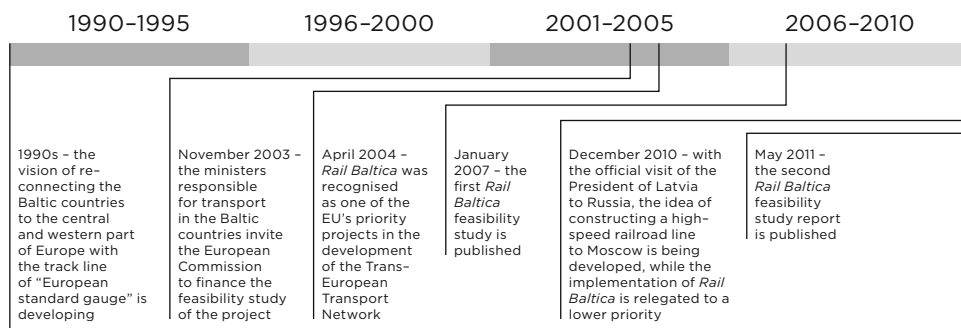
Finally, in January 2017, the Baltic Prime Ministers signed an intergovernmental agreement on the implementation of the *Rail Baltica*

connection, which was ratified by all three parliaments by October of that year. Furthermore, in April 2017, the financial and economic forecasts of *Rail Baltica* were updated: the total cost of the project is currently estimated at 5.788 billion euro, of which the EU could cover up to 4.635 billion euro;¹³ the socio-economic benefits of the project are estimated at more than 16 billion euro, and the multiplier effect of the GDP at another two billion euros; it is estimated that the project will create or maintain 13 thousand full-time jobs in construction and more than 24 thousand direct and indirect jobs in the related sectors during the construction of the railroad.¹⁴

Concluding remarks: the lessons of *Rail Baltica* in the context of foreign policy formulation

By the centenary of Latvia, the construction of the *Rail Baltica* railroad line will not yet have begun. If everything goes as planned, it will take nearly another decade until all three countries are connected with Warsaw by rail. So far, significant steps have been taken in the Baltic countries for the project to be implemented – political and financial support has been received from the EU; the structures necessary for project implementation have been established in all three countries; preparation for construction is under way, with varying success, in each of the countries. Meanwhile, the vision of both the Rīga Central Station and the new railroad bridge across the river Daugava has been clarified in Latvia. Additionally, on a societal and political level the need for the project is no longer fundamentally questioned in Latvia. The loudest voices of critics have quieted – both those who previously questioned the need for the project and those who wanted to make changes to the route of the new railroad line.

However, there is still substantial work ahead to implement the project. The main task of officials in Latvia and other Baltic countries will be to obtain EU co-financing for further project phases – and as close as possible to the maximum potential amount. Likewise, one of the biggest challenges of the next decade will be establishing an efficient connection with Poland, which will include improving the already constructed 1435-millimeter gauge connection to Poland in the territory of Lithuania, and improving the railroads in the territory of Poland to the specifications of high-speed rail requirements. Without an effective extension into the territory of Poland, *Rail Baltica* would remain a railroad connecting only the Baltic countries, and



would not provide a connection to Central and Western Europe that could compete with other modes of transport. A future concept also involves the construction of an underwater tunnel under the Gulf of Finland, which would allow the new railroad line to extend to Helsinki and further within Finland.

In the progress of the current project, it is possible to identify several key lessons, which in general reflect the entire history of Latvia since independence was restored. First, Latvia's practical return to Europe is a lengthy process. In 2030, the planned date for completion of the connection with Warsaw, it will have been almost 40 years since the restoration of the independence of the Baltic countries and 90 years since Latvia was disconnected from Europe by the beginning of the Soviet Union's occupation.

Second, Latvia's foreign policy is determined not only by formal participation in the organisations of the Western world, but also by practical connections to the Western countries. Third, not everything can be measured in terms of money. Although not everyone is convinced yet about the economic profitability of *Rail Baltica*, its most significant added value will be of a political and socio-economic nature – through greater physical interconnection with other European countries and greater mobility and interaction of Baltic residents with the citizens of other EU countries.

Fourth, returning to Europe would not be possible without political and financial support from the EU. The return to Europe through new rail and energy infrastructure connections (the established and emerging connections by the Baltic countries with Sweden, Poland and Finland) would not be possible without the help of the EU due to the high costs, nor would it be possible to resolve disputes among the participating countries and within the countries themselves.

2011-2015

2016-2020

2021-2025

2026-2030

September 2013 – the ministers of the Baltic countries, Finland, and Poland sign a declaration on cooperation in implementing the project

October 2014 – *RB Rail*, a joint venture for implementing *Rail Baltica* is established

November 2015 – the co-financing agreement on the implementation of the first phase of *Rail Baltica* is signed, and a year later, a contract for the implementation of the second phase

January 2017 – the Baltic Prime Ministers sign an intergovernmental agreement on development of *Rail Baltica* railroad connection. By October that year, the agreement is ratified by the parliaments of all three countries

2025 – planned completion of the railroad line in the territory of the Baltic countries

2030 – intended completion of the extension of the railroad line to Warsaw

Fifth, the Baltic countries need to work together, both so that they are heard, but also to help them carry out large-scale projects. Although cooperation among the three countries has not always been smooth on the issue of *Rail Baltica*, the agreement on the new railroad line and the way of its implementation has, however, been achieved thanks to different circumstances. It is worth noting that Baltic countries' cooperation on other major infrastructure projects has not proved as successful, for example, no agreement was reached on the construction of a common liquefied natural gas terminal and it was unilaterally established in Klaipeda by Lithuania.

Finally, a wide range of institutions and individuals is involved in achieving Latvia's foreign policy goals. In the case of *Rail Baltica*, the Ministry of Transport and its related institutions have played the leading role. They have ensured the preparation and progress of the most important decisions in Latvia, and have represented the national position in negotiations with other countries and EU institutions. The course taken by these institutions, however, has depended on the prevailing political views at the time regarding rapprochement with the East or the West. Among officials in Latvia, it is especially important to highlight the significant contribution of former Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis and the former Ministers of Transport, Roberts Zile and Anrijs Matīss.

The authors of the chapter are grateful to Jānis Eiduks, Juris Iesalnieks, Anrijs Matīss, Marika Šimanoviča, and Roberts Zile for their time and contributions to this article.

Endnotes

- ¹ Interview with Roberts Zile (Member of the European Parliament since 2004, former Minister of Transport of Latvia (2002–2004)), June 22, 2017.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Interview with Jānis Eiduks (former Director of the Railway Department at Ministry of Transport of Latvia (2004–2016)), May 3, 2017.
- ⁴ Interview with Juris Iesalnieks (Director of the State Railway Administration of Latvia (since 1999)), May 8, 2017.
- ⁵ *Rail Baltica Global Project Cost-Benefit Analysis. Final Report*, EY, April 30, 2017, http://railbaltica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/RB_CBA_FINAL_REPORT_0405.pdf, 177.
- ⁶ Ibid., 9.
- ⁷ Ibid., 156.
- ⁸ Interview with Marika Simanoviča (former official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia with responsibility for transport issues (2007–2012), former advisor to the Ministers of Transport of Latvia Aivis Ronis and Anrijs Matiss (2012–2014)), June 15, 2017.
- ⁹ Interview with Anrijs Matiss, June 14, 2017.
- ¹⁰ “Baltic Rail Connection Receives EU Support,” *European Commission*, November 24, 2015, <https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/news-events/newsroom/baltic-rail-connection-receives-eu-support>; “Rail Baltica projekts sāksies ar atzara izbūvi no centrālās stacijas uz lidostu,” Pilnsabiedrība “RB Latvija,” <http://www.railbaltica.info/rail-baltica-projekts-saksies-ar-atzara-izbuvi-no-centralas-stacijas-uz-lidostu/>
- ¹¹ Interview with Anrijs Matiss.
- ¹² “Parakstīts projekta “Rail Baltica” otrais CEF līdzfinansējuma līgums par kopumā 225 miljoniem eiro,” LETA, November 21, 2016, <http://leta.lv/archive/search/?patern=rail%20baltica&item=96D1E6D8-BA07-4C38-87CA-4106AAD96EB6&date=1477951200,0&mode=stem,wide>
- ¹³ “Rail Baltica Global Project Cost-Benefit Analysis. Final Report,” EY, April 30, 2017, http://railbaltica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/RB_CBA_FINAL_REPORT_0405.pdf, 156–159.
- ¹⁴ “Rail Baltica Global Project Cost-Benefit Analysis,” EY, April 24, 2017, http://www.railbaltica.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Nauris_Klava_RB_Forum.pdf

But the Next One is Already in the Pipeline: Latvian Foreign Policy – With View into the Second Century

IVARS ĪJABS

The activities and events described in this book are landmarks in the development of foreign policy of Latvia. They have not only substantially affected further progress of foreign policy of the state, but, as suggested by the detailed analysis offered by the authors, these activities and events also illustrate peculiarities of decision-making – the way that Latvia's foreign policy makers formulate their position, the most typical dilemmas and the players involved in the formulation of decisions. Certainly, the foreign policy decisions of Latvia are formulated in a variable international environment: the time when diplomats of Latvia were working in exile significantly differs from the period following the restoration of independence; also, ensuring more widespread presence of NATO differs from the time, when Latvia wanted to be elected to the League of Nations Council. At the same time, a careful reader will see important parallels, say, between the road to international recognition in 1918–1920 and the diplomats' efforts to achieve recognition in 1990–1991. Likewise, besides differences in relations with the USSR and Russia during both periods of actual independence, we can also observe rather many parallels and continuity between both periods.

The authors, who have analyzed the respective foreign policy episodes of Latvia, have deliberately avoided excessive generalizations. Their task was to show the specific situation in all its complexity and multidimensionality, highlighting the details of the developments inasmuch as possible, for example, by writing about the intricacies surrounding the removal of the Russian army, the construction of *Rail Baltica* or the visit of the President Valdis Zatlers in Moscow. These detailed analyses provide us with an insight into “the backstage” of the foreign policy of Latvia – in a process, which most often remains outside official reports and communications. To achieve this

goal, the authors have employed a broad spectrum of methods – starting from an analysis of the internal documents of the diplomatic service and ending with a review of memoirs of prominent individuals. Here, the authors have acted depending on the specific features of the particular occurrence, by adapting the research methods to the research tasks.

Nevertheless, when considering the activities described in the book, we can notice a range of similar tendencies, which could characterize the foreign policy of Latvia on the whole. The geopolitical and cultural identity of each and every country is relatively enduring, thus rendering its general courses of direction of foreign policy similar. They are implemented under different circumstances and with different methods relevant to the time. However, in a broader sense, we can speak of the foreign policy of Latvia as a uniform whole from the moment of founding of the state until the present day. These are peculiar crosscutting factors, which in one way or another emerge in each of the articles in the collection. Firstly, geography is a fate. The location of Latvia at the crossroads between the Central and Eastern Europe, on the shores of the Baltic Sea, without any natural border against the extensive Eurasian land mass to the East simultaneously links in with our identity, the roots of which are found in Western Europe, in Western Christianity and European views on politics. There has hardly been a time during the first century of existence of the State, when the big neighbors of Latvia have not cherished hegemonic ambitions towards it. Therefore, it is no wonder that one of the key tasks of foreign policy of Latvia has been to ensure irreversibility of sovereign statehood, into which diplomats have invested a lot of effort. This does not only concern formally legal sovereignty, but also the equal weight of the voice of Latvia in the international space and the subjecthood of foreign policy as the entitlement of independent conduct. This is why it is essential to place emphasis on international organisations and collective security as an important marker in the foreign policy of Latvia – experience shows that isolation and seclusion can only lead to adverse results. Historically, Russia – both in the form of the Romanov Empire and the USSR – has played a special role in the understanding of state sovereignty and security. We can either agree or disagree with the claim by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn that Russia “has lost the 20th century.” However, it cannot be denied that the stormy and controversial development of Russia has been the most important of all those “variables,” which have affected the foreign policy of Latvia in the past century – both negatively, when the Stalinist USSR occupation started the half-a-century long absence of liberty of Latvia, and positively, when the

implosion of the Soviet empire allowed Latvia to regain independence in a relatively peaceful way. Possibly, it is the unpredictability of Russia that forced the diplomacy of Latvia to work intensively on increasing integration with Western structures. Overall, it must be admitted that this strategy has proven successful and correct. At the same time, the West, where Latvia has attempted to find its place, is not at all a homogeneous or unchanging formation. As shown in the articles contained in this collection, one of the challenges of the diplomacy of Latvia has been specifically the ability to dynamically react to changes in the West, with which the country wants to integrate – instead of holding on to stagnant concepts and stereotypes, as has happened at times before. Another one of cross-cutting factors that are mentioned in the introduction by the editors of the collection is the bond between domestic and foreign policy that has strengthened over the course of the century, along with the linked thematic expansion of foreign policy. After the restoration of independence, this has necessitated that Latvia is adequate for its time, and after a half-a-century long forced isolation, rapidly integrates with a new, different international environment. This necessity illustrated the key challenge of the diplomacy of Latvia in the future, namely, to be adequate for its time.

The dawn of the external service: recognition and public diplomacy

There are quite a few countries in the world, which started their diplomatic function before the country as such was established: an important example to mention here is Israel, and many Eastern European countries have had a similar experience. These are cases, when the main task of the future diplomats is international legitimization of the formation of the state itself – and it is particularly in this process, where the beginnings of the external service must be sought. However, the experience of Latvia, as well as that of Lithuania and Estonia here is unique: these countries due to their specific historical development have experienced a similar process twice in the 20th century: first, right after the end of World War I, and the second time, during the stage of collapse of the USSR, at the turn of 1980s/1990s decade. This experience distinguishes the Baltic countries from Central European countries, which, despite their USSR satellite status, had not lost at least formal signs of sovereignty, as well as from other Soviet republics, whose claims to sovereignty had a considerably lower priority. This collection, too, focuses predominantly on the main mission of the diplomats of Latvia in

the circumstances of the turn of historical eras – to guarantee an internationally recognized, sovereign statehood of Latvia.

During the interwar period and after the restoration of independence alike, the said time period laid the groundwork for the activities of the Latvian external services and even of the foreign policy on the whole. In both instances, the period before actual independence was a peculiar “qualifier match” for further function of the external service, which was first manifested in the recruitment of certain individuals. Influential diplomats of Latvia of the first independence period, such as Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics, Fēlikss Cielēns, Miķelis Valters, among others, had started their work for the good of the state of Latvia as diplomats. Since a range of the first international representatives of Latvia (such as Jānis Čakste, Frīdrihs Vesmanis, Voldemārs Zamuels) later chose to pursue other areas of political activity, it ensured certain continuity between the achievement of foreign policy goals of Latvia and the internal policy process. As suggested by the analysis offered in the articles contained in the collection, despite the lack of diplomatic experience, most advocates of international interests of Latvia successfully handled this difficult task, namely, to achieve maximum support for the existence of a sovereign Latvia. This is a significant achievement even if we do not consider the favorable international situation, and a range of articles in this collection starkly illustrate it.

The situation was similar in the stage of restoration of independence, when international activities in favor of the State of Latvia had started a longer time before *de iure* restoration of the State. Here, it was the continuity of statehood of Latvia that was of great importance, as was symbolized by Latvian embassies in Washington and London. Kristine Beķere in her study excellently describes the work of Latvian diplomats in exile, as they were bitterly and even desperately fighting for their international relevance. In order to gain an insight in the specific circumstances, under which Latvian diplomats were working, it is worth turning your attention to the disagreements described by Beķere between the embassies of Latvia, on the one part, and the various Latvian exile organisations, on the other part. Excessively intensive and open lobbying of Latvia’s interests in the US government could end up with the loss of a diplomat status, which, in turn, would mean that Latvia would lose one of the few symbolic bastions, which still bore witness of a sovereign statehood.

At a time, when the state to be formed did not yet exist, it was very cumbersome for its representatives to assume a significant role in the international circles, as is well portrayed in the article by Inesis Feldmans

regarding battles for international recognition of Latvia. This is why every chance had to be taken to access the decision-makers, by employing personal contacts, informal acquaintances and leaving an impression of self as a partner of negotiations to be reckoned with. This task was relevant during both time periods, though, in both cases in a different way. In the first instance, by shaping the independence of Latvia following World War I, the European political environment was rather chaotic, and those negotiating in Versailles lacked clear understanding of the desirable development within the former Romanov Empire territories, where a civil war was raging at that time. This also offered an opportunity for exercising effective political maneuvers, which the diplomats of the Republic of Latvia successfully employed. The situation was different during the time of restoration of independence. On the one hand, at that time, no serious politicians in the West needed explanation of what Latvia was and what it wants – these were well-known matters. However, the collapse of the USSR did not transpire according to the same scenario as that of the Romanov Empire: it occurred by means of a slow implosion of the central power and faced by economic problems, without any guarantees that Neo-Stalinists will not ascend to power and that the powerful Soviet repressive apparatus will not resume its activities. Under these circumstances, the task of Latvian diplomats was not as much to tell the world about Latvia, as eradicate the “speak-to-Russia” mentality in the West, which is described in her article by Gunda Reire. It was a complex task, bearing in mind the vast support of the West to Mikhail Gorbachev, whose positions could only allay various “separatist” initiatives. However, in general, this task was successfully carried out, and the exiled Latvians’ organisations played a major role in it as they not only supported the Latvian independence attempts, but provided its proponents with resources important for diplomatic work, namely, with contacts and staff.

Simultaneously, the exile served not only as an important resource in the stage of restoration of independence of Latvia, but also as a basis of recruitment for the future diplomatic service of Latvia. The role of the exile in the formation of the diplomatic service of Latvia is still awaiting a serious study. However, it must be noted that a special role was played here by the public or “people’s” diplomacy, which was of utter importance in both time periods. Already during the first independence, public diplomacy received substantial attention. After losing independence, public diplomacy was practically the only instrument in the work of Latvian diplomats, whereas

at the stage of restoring independence, the support of Western society to the efforts of Latvia to regain independence was of decisive importance. Elements of public diplomacy emerge in many articles of the collection: this was an important element of diplomatic work in the struggle for international recognition and within the context of the League of Nations, as well as in relations with Russia with regard to the removal of its army and to the visit of the President of the State, and in other instances, too. The *Rail Baltica* project described by Māris and Kristiāns Andžāns has an unmistakable dimension of public diplomacy – possibly, it even dominates over economic considerations. The reader has a chance to assess how successfully the foreign policy makers of Latvia have managed to control information flow related to the interests of Latvia in the media of other countries, as well as to assume initiative in the work with other countries' public opinion. It will not be excessive to conclude that, in the case of Latvia, public diplomacy is one of the most essential directions of diplomatic work, and the future key to success is found in understanding the specifics of it. This topic is particularly important, bearing in mind the role, which for years has been played by internationalization in the foreign policy formation of Latvia, namely, the ability to include foreign policy priorities in the agenda of international community.

Internationalization and sovereign capacity

Latvia is a small country, whose first century of foreign policy has concerned the consolidation of national independence and international status. This happened twice in the 20th century, besides, similar processes transpired on both occasions. Internationalization of independence of Latvia is at the center of these processes; it is an approach, whereby national sovereignty and security are turned into important issues of international agenda, and not a local problem, the resolution of which depends on the will of neighbors. An insight into such efforts of internationalization is given by most topics included in the collection – from international recognition in 1919/1920 and participation in the League of Nations in the interwar period, to the restoration of independence and removal of Russian armed forces after the restoration of independence. Valters Ščerbinskis offers an excellent insight into the process of demarcation of borders of Latvia right after the establishment of the state, which even in the case of Lithuania and Latvia would have been very complicated, had the allied British not undertaken the role of

intermediators, who in the eyes of all stakeholders were sufficiently legitimate for the performance of this task. It was specifically the ability of attracting the attention of international society and the readiness of that society to respond that had a decisive role in the fate of foreign policy of Latvia. The case of Latvia is not unique, of course – it is well known that internationalization of small countries' security around the globe is among the key ways that these countries use to ensure their existence. This is particularly true in the case of countries, whose economic and military potential cannot compete against powerful and, possibly, revisionist neighbors.

At the same time, as shown in the collection, it is specifically the case of Latvia, which offers interesting food for thought. Firstly, internationalization since the restoration of independence has been the most effective method for achieving foreign policy goals of Latvia – at least since the moment, when, as described by Gunda Reire, the leader of the Popular Front of Latvia of that time Dainis Īvāns understood that the key to independence of Latvia was “not in the settlement of relations with Moscow, but in the internationalization of the issue.” This is also evidenced by the removal of the Russian armed forces as described by Edijs Bošs; despite some unwelcome compromises, it was achieved in a way that corresponded to the interests of Latvia. In this respect, it is self-evident that foreign policy capacity of Latvia depends directly on the ability to internationalize an issue. This logically leads to the will of Latvia to be present in all international fora and organisations, which can serve as the arena of such internationalization. The most ambitious project of such type was the accession of Latvia to the EU, which is described in detail by Kārlis Bukovskis and Justine Elferte, however this is only the most visible manifestation of a broader strategy. Meanwhile, a range of articles included in the collection demonstrate well that this strategy, though often effective, is not, however, free of problems.

Firstly, international environment is changeable, and this demands from the Latvian foreign policy makers a flexible, well-informed understanding of what is happening in it. As is evident, at times, there has been a lack of this understanding. However, not less important is the issue of balance between internationalization of foreign policy tasks, on the one hand, and the sovereign capacity of the state, on the other. As it relies on the support of international environment, Latvia sometimes pays too little attention to the enhancement of its national expertise and to the assessment of possible scenarios of action. This element is clearly manifested, for instance, in the

article by Toms Rostoks on the increased presence of NATO where he criticizes the over-dependence on Western partners and points out that “if it appears that Russia presents a military threat, then it is most likely a threat irrespective of what the Western analysts’ opinions are in this matter.”

This telling conclusion gives an insight into an important matter on the link of evaluating threats with the internationalization of foreign policy of the state. To what extent can a state expect that its international partners will take over its perception of threats? After all, in the relations of Latvia and the other Baltic countries with the Western allies, there are infrequent, muffled reprimands voiced regarding “the paranoia” (in relation to a seemingly imminent Russian aggression) and “naïveté” (in relation to Russia’s true intents). Most likely, misperception of threats is not alien to any of the involved counterparts – neither Latvia nor Western allies. This, for its part, demands careful mutual adaptation, while being aware of different perspectives of both counterparts in the assessment of threats, inasmuch as possible agreeing on a specific set of criteria and points of reference.

Internationalization and sovereign capacity are linked in another very important aspect. Latvia will be able to effectively internationalize its foreign policy interests only if it does not allow to doubt its independent ability of resolving lower level issues also without the involvement of international actors. Effective internationalization provides for special “subsidiarity” in the resolution of foreign policy issues, within the framework of which lower level issues are to be resolved at a lower level, i.e. at a level of bilateral inter-state relations. This topic has been touched upon in several articles of the collection, mostly with regard to the Latvia–Russia relations. Here, on the one hand, we can see marked movement of foreign policy towards internationalization of security policy of Latvia; on the other hand, there is the desire of the Western allies to see Latvia capable of independently building pragmatic, i.e. largely de-ideologized relations, insofar as possible. This phenomenon is well outlined by Edijs Bošs, as he writes about the position of Latvia in the (undoubtedly, very internationalized) matter of removal of Russian armed forces, and especially by Ilvija Brūge, who writes about the visit of the President of Latvia Valdis Zatlers to Moscow in 2010. This visit, in her view, is the highest and most positive point in the relations between both countries since the restoration of independence, and this has organically combined the sovereign initiative of Latvia towards improved relations and international conjuncture, namely, the reset policy of the US President Barak Obama. As worded by Ilvija Brūge:

“The most significant conclusion is that at least at the political level Latvia demonstrated its ability to take a step back from emotional statements and accept its geopolitical situation. Russia is and will be the neighbor of Latvia, just like Latvia is a part of Europe and NATO and an EU Member State.”

Considered overall, the internationalization of the most important foreign policy matters is the correct strategy for a country, which must also continuously take care of full-fledged “subjecthood” in the international space, as well as of the respect of international society towards its interests. The geopolitical situation of Latvia is not a simple one in the least; its experience in the 20th century has been sufficiently traumatic, to assume a concerned outlook on any attempts of powers to sweep the interests of smaller countries “under the carpet” in the name of greater considerations. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the internationalization strategy demands that it is used reasonably. The support of international partners is an important resource, however it is effective only if the state balances it with an effective and pragmatic sovereign foreign policy. Over-dependence on international partners depletes this important resource, which in the history of Latvia has on several occasions been decisively important.

Consolidation of foreign policy

Several articles included in the collection, and especially the study by Māris and Kristiāns Andžāns regarding the development of the *Rail Baltica* project, the article by Ilze Freiberga regarding the economic negotiations in Moscow in 1932–1933 and the review by Edijs Bošs of the removal of Russian armed forces, bear witness of a lingering problem of the foreign policy of Latvia. Namely, this concerns the formation of a consolidated foreign policy position. This is an area, in which foreign policy interacts most closely with political processes within the country itself. In a parliamentary and markedly pluralistic country, such as is Latvia, a range of institutional actors are involved in the making of foreign policy decisions – not only the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament, but also the Cabinet of Ministers, the President of the State, and the key parties represented in the parliament, at times also the Bank of Latvia, entrepreneurs’ organisations, among other players. Relationships between these players are very variable, and clarity about the hierarchy of authority is not always there. Sometimes, that encumbers the decision-making process.

Inesis Feldmanis, by competently describing the progress of recognition of the Republic of Latvia in 1918–1920, sees the roots of the subsequent problems already in the period leading to the foundation of the state, such as when the representatives of the Democratic Bloc Miķelis Valters and Edvards Traubergs and the Latvian Provisional National Council represented by Voldemārs Zāmuels nearly simultaneously approached the German government, both organisations asking to be recognized as the legitimate representative of interests of the people of Latvia. There have been a number of similar situations as the time progressed: as concluded by Ilze Freiberga, economic negotiations with the USSR ended unsuccessfully for the most part because of the Latvian counterpart's inability "to agree on uniform policy and on how Latvia's goals should be achieved. It is well shown by the fact that the delegation was given a rather narrow and, in fact, an uncertain mandate, its members were not capable of fully agreeing amongst themselves or with the government of Latvia. Some individuals operated on the assumption that they knew better than others and were convinced that the resolution of matters they were interested in was to be achieved single-handedly. All of that not only delayed proper work of the Latvian delegation, but also helped the Soviet delegation, because it is easier to play against a divided team."

This offers us an insight into relations between democratic pluralism and the effective capacity of foreign policy to function. It can be analyzed from the opposite perspective, too. The collection also includes two articles about the foreign policy of the authoritarian regime of Ulmanis. Both Jānis Ķeruss, as he writes about the neutrality policy in 1938–1939, and Jānis Taurēns, who looks at the election of Latvia to the League of Nations Council, rather critically view the foreign policy of the Ulmanis's period, all the while, of course, bearing in mind the narrow framework that was imposed on Latvia by the European political realia of the time. In any case, it is clear that, even though foreign policy in an authoritarian regime can be more capable of maneuvering than foreign policy in democratic regimes, the quality of decisions made, taking into account democratic discussions and lack of critical scrutiny, is rather lower.

Under circumstances of democracy, foreign policy decision makers must inescapably reckon with the pluralism of views existing in society, as well as with the fact that foreign policy is inevitably dragged into the battle of competition between parties. What is more, many signs of today's political processes suggest that by failing to address the electorate with internal policy agenda topics, politicians ever more frequently turn foreign policy into their

campaign themes. Latvia has had to face this process on multiple occasions. For example, in the negotiations with the USSR, as explained by Ilze Freiberga, different, even antagonistic powers, were involved, starting with the Farmers' Union, the Bļodnieks's Party, and the Social Democrats. Likewise, in the persona of Alfrēds Bīlmanis, it is apparent that some prominent diplomats wish to play their own game, as if in the spirit of the 19th century, which, in the light of lack of a uniform political position, can acquire a decisive influence.

A whole new level of disagreements between parties was reached after the restoration of independence in 1991, when the determinant course of foreign policy of Latvia was formed in a dialogue between two antagonistic positions. They are both represented in the political spectrum of Latvia and still fight for influence on the foreign policy of the country. The first of those is the nationally legalistic. This position strictly latches on to the postulate of unlawfulness of occupation of Latvia, deeming any compromise in favor of Russia as the legal successor of the USSR or of the Russian-speaking immigrant community of the Soviet era as a treachery of national interests. This position does not permit any compromises in the achieving of foreign policy goals of Latvia even if it jeopardized integration of the state with Western organisations, such as the Council of Europe, the EU or NATO. The nationally legalistic position in the political spectrum of Latvia is usually assumed by the so-called nationally right-wing parties, which traditionally have had a decisive influence and even veto rights in matters of "values." This influence is described in detail by Edijs Bošs in his article about political complexities surrounding the removal of Russian armed forces. It describes the resistance of the nationally legalistic position towards any compromises, and it could have seriously endangered the support that Western allies provide to Latvia. He writes of the tendency "to operate with purely legal constructs, which in themselves were incorrect, however, if considering it pragmatically, this legalistic approach to foreign policy could not in any way compensate for the deficit of relative power of Latvia as a small country in relations with larger powers." Here, the statements by Andrejs Panteļejevs, as cited by Bošs, offer a clear illustration: "If the said legalism dominated in the position of Latvia concerning the removal of Russian armed forces, the response of European countries would be very simple: [they would say]: "Certainly, you might largely be in the right in that... you refuse to sign the agreement, [but you remain] alone with your righteousness in relations with Russia." Well, in this solitary confinement, in this solitude shared with the

other one or two – us, Russia and our truth – we will spend the upcoming couple of years.” It must be added that the removal of Russian armed forces was by far not the only time when the said nationally legalistic position, which is rather influential in the domestic policy of Latvia, has demonstrated its muscles in foreign policy. Likewise, it would be wrong to imagine that its influence has decreased since mid-1990s. Quite the contrary – it is still a consistent factor in the adoption of Latvia’s foreign policy decisions.

Deserving at least the same attention is the restrained optimism in relations with Russia, which has many proponents in the political circles of Latvia. This is a mentality, which is described by Toms Rostoks, as he portrays the response of Latvia’s political circles to the 2014 events in Crimea and the southeast of Ukraine. The fact that following these events the President of Latvia Andris Bērziņš symbolically upheld the invitation extended to the President of Russia to visit Latvia or the letter by the Chairman of the Ventspils City Council Aivars Lembergs complaining to Anders Fogh Rasmussen about the behavior of NATO troops in Ventspils are neither an accident nor a situative desire to appeal to the public opinion. Here, it concerns a broader trend of wanting to see pragmatic, i.e. de-ideologized relations with Russia – to maintain cooperation with the neighbor state in maximally versatile formats and not to focus excessively on confrontational rhetoric and its symbolically ritualistic manifestations of disagreements, which have been branding the relations between the two countries at least since mid-1990s. Similar to national legalism, believing in the possibility of such pragmatically de-ideologized relations is a constant phenomenon of the Latvian political environment. It can be observed in various segments of the political spectrum and discernibly affects the formation of a consolidated foreign policy position. The most effective formula here is “not to annoy Russia,” namely, “do not put the cart before the horse” in initiating and supporting such activities of Western allies, the intention of which is the restriction of Russia’s interests. It is well illustrated by Māris and Kristiāns Andžāns, as they describe the resistance demonstrated by some of the leading Latvian politicians (and enterprises associated with them) to the initiative of *Rail Baltica*, which was perceived as an alternative aimed against Russia for the further construction of the Riga–Moscow railway line.

This restrained optimism is predominantly coloured with the economic hue – similar to the pro-Moscow stance of Social Democrats during the interwar period. There is nothing to condemn in the idea of de-ideologized and pragmatic relations per se, because practical joint efforts in a long-term

can also reduce the effects of ideological disagreements. At the same time, the issue remains as to the extent that Russia is ready for de-ideologized relations. Former experience in this area has not been exceptionally positive. Quite the contrary: economic cooperation ties are frequently used to achieve political objectives – first and foremost attempting to undermine the relations between Latvia and its Western allies. At the same time, the tradition of restrained optimism is sufficiently enduring among the decision makers of Latvia. It is not always based on any rational factors. It is clear that a part of the Latvian decision-making elite still cherishes historical sympathies towards Russia at the level of communication culture and mentality, which paradoxically cohabit with the country's pro-European and transatlantic course of development. It is a peculiar belief that you can make arrangements about everything with "the Russians," that under the brutally aggressive rhetoric in the relations between the countries there will always be room for humane sympathies and mutual understanding. This effect is certainly aggravated by the leverage of economic influence, which Russia is able to use both overtly and covertly.

Consolidation of the foreign policy position of Latvia is inextricably linked to further development of democracy. It is clear that foreign policy in many democratic countries traditionally transpires slightly outside the regular political process. Only this way it is possible to ensure certain continuity of the course of foreign policy, regardless of changes of governments, parliamentary majority and leading coalitions. It is particularly important in countries, where, like in Latvia, governments change relatively frequently. At the same time, the current situation in Europe does not offer assurances that this tradition will continue in the future. Ever more frequently, foreign policy topics are turned into election campaign topics – be it the demand by NATO to allocate 2 per cent of the GDP to defence or EU immigration quotas, or the participation of the country in various global environmental protection agreements. Populistic politicians often take advantage of these topics, thus turning against "elitist" foreign policy and its detachment from the day-to-day needs of society. The said trend does not pass by Latvia, which forces us to anticipate that difficulties in formulating the foreign policy position will not diminish. Certainly, we may assume that the close ties of Latvia with its international partners will be playing an important role in the future. However, it must be borne in mind that Latvia's partner states also face similar processes, where concerns are increasing of the stability of the course of foreign policy thus far.

How much is too much

The current security situation in Europe overall corresponds to the interests of Latvia, however it cannot be considered as self-evident. Participation in collective security organisations, close cooperation between countries, support for deeper integration of the country with these structures and their consolidation are the cornerstones of foreign policy of Latvia. At the same time, in today's international situation, we preclude the possibility of crises, in the course of which collective security structures are subjected to substantial changes. This is the lesson taught to us by the most tragic experience of Latvia in the 20th century – the occupation and annexation of the state within the framework of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. Even though the repetition of this scenario in today's Europe is no longer fathomable, the foreign policy decisions of those times still offer plenty of material for critical analysis.

This task is most directly performed by Jānis Ķeruss, who in his article considers neutrality policy, which Latvia embarked upon several years before the occupation of 1940, as gradually expectations of collective security guarantees offered by the League of Nations were depleted. He points to the objective dead-end situation of Latvia within the situation of Europe of that time, and states: “Here, we should not confuse real lack of alternatives, the neutrality policy opted for as a result of it, and the non-aggression treaty with Germany with an obedient and unnecessarily obliging attitude towards the aggressor countries in matters unrelated to the survival of Latvia.” It is clear that in 1940 no action for the part of the government of Latvia could have led to saving the independence of Latvia, regarding the destruction of which two totalitarian powers had already mutually agreed on. At the same time, the obliging attitude demonstrated towards the aggressor by the government of Latvia could be deemed excessive even if occupation had not followed it. This makes us wonder about the potential action of foreign policy of Latvia under potential circumstances of collective security crises.

Both during the interwar period and after the restoration of independence, Latvia has been an ardent proponent of international law, against the use of force and “spheres of influence” of bigger powers. Unfortunately, as has been proven by previous experience, under circumstances of crisis, international law undergoes political instrumentalization, the interpretation of one or another statutory provision is approached from power positions, and the smaller players have only limited possibilities of defending their interests. Politics takes the

upper hand over law. Under such circumstances, uniform understanding of the strategy of action is essential. As regards the neutrality policy adopted before the occupation, the lack of this strategy is very apparent, and illusions about the intentions of powers are very optimistic. The article by Kērusss clearly highlights the assessment of various risks among foreign policy makers in 1938–1940 that were decisive for Latvia, which also prevented from implementing a consolidated policy. This was largely linked to the absence of a conceptual discussion regarding the international environment, in which Latvia had to act in the specific situation and what the possible alternative actions are. It is specifically the lack of this conceptual approach that, during times, which were critical to the state, we have observed wishful thinking among foreign policy decision makers, as well as delays and *ad hoc* solutions instead of a strategic approach.

The loss of independence of Latvia is primarily due to an agreement between two totalitarian powers and the resulting occupation by the USSR. However, it is easy to notice that the conduct of Latvian decision makers, as described by Kērusss, was in stark contrast with the principles, on which the country's foreign policy was previously based and of which Latvia has been an ardent advocate – namely, international law and collective security. This is exactly why it is worth understanding the reasoning, which made the Ministry of Foreign affairs, at a time critical to the state, to initially congratulate Poland on annexing a part of Czechoslovakia, whereas later – to close the Polish Embassy in Riga on its own accord after Poland country was occupied in the fall of 1939. Unfortunately, similar episodes can also be encountered in later pages of the tragic history of Latvia. Therefore, it is right to question our readiness to stand up for our principles in critical times, too, or how much should we compromise with a potential aggressor, and which red lines we cannot cross under any circumstances. Sovereign capacity to act and the consistency of foreign policy course of the state is unfortunately tested specifically in critical situations, and we cannot be certain that all of the hard tests are already behind for the diplomacy of Latvia.

Conclusion

Reaching the second century in the foreign policy of Latvia is not merely a symbolic occurrence. It also coincides with important transformations in European and world politics, which carry along new risks and opportunities. Along with accession to the EU and NATO, Latvia has reached a yet

unprecedented level of national security, which, hopefully, is also sufficiently sustainable. Simultaneously, a range of new problems have emerged, the solution of which can be sought only in the future. This concerns cybersecurity, the increasing globalization of economy, issues of control of migration flows – all of these are on the agenda of foreign policy makers already today and are awaiting well-considered solutions. In the last few years, Latvia has seen a growing belief that increasing integration with international structures does not release local decision makers from the need to think with their own head, instead of relying on partners' instructions in the capacity of "a security client."

At the same time, an important challenge of the future is the growing links between the foreign policy and domestic policy and the fact that we are living in an increasingly unified European space, where information, labor force and capital circulation knows ever fewer borders between countries. Undoubtedly, sovereign countries still preserve their leading role in the world politics, however changes in the way they function increasingly more directly also affect the foreign policy. A narrow set-up of concerns of external security and entering into transnational agreements gives way to an integral perspective, where the key role is played by the ability to affect global and regional cooperation regimes in line with interests of the respective country. This, of course, renders the work of foreign policy makers and diplomats much more complicated. Firstly, foreign policy ever more often leaves the mysterious semi-darkness of the Vienna Convention, by becoming more public and getting dragged into public debates, which are additionally fueled by internet communication. Secondly, foreign policy decision-makers must increasingly take into consideration seemingly non-political – economic, social – actors. States are more frequently competing not for territory or natural resources, but for qualified and creative individuals – and this also demands a new way of thinking in foreign policy, too. The first centenary of foreign policy of Latvia has achieved a result, of which we can be proud with good reason. However, this pride should develop into a conviction that we are ready for the upcoming centenary to consolidate and expand the international influence and reputation of Latvia, in the name of which the individuals described in this collection have selflessly worked for.

About the Authors

KRISTIĀNS ANDŽĀNS is a student of the PhD programme in Political Science at Rīga Stradiņš University (RSU). He obtained a Master's degree in International Relations and Diplomacy from RSU, and during Bachelor's studies also studied at the Zuyd Hogeschool in Maastricht, Netherlands, as an exchange student. His main areas of research are transportation and energy policies of the Baltic states and their development. Since 2014 he has also worked for the Latvian government alongside his studies.

MĀRIS ANDŽĀNS is a Research Fellow at the Latvian Institute of International Affairs and an assistant professor at Rīga Stradiņš University where he earned his Ph.D. in 2014. He has ten years of experience in the public administration of Latvia. He has served in different positions related to the coordination of EU and NATO issues, security of transport and communications, civil–military cooperation, aviation, electronic communications and postal issues. Dr Andžāns also chaired the National Cyber Security Council of Latvia and the Dangerous Goods Movement Consultative Council of Latvia. He has represented Latvia in different NATO and EU working parties as well as in national supervisory mechanisms of EU agencies.

KRISTĪNE BEĶERE studied at Greifswald University in Germany, and in 2009 obtained Master's degree in History. She has researched the political history of the Latvian exile community, and in 2011 started doctoral studies at the University of Latvia. Since 2012, she has been Vice-President of the “Baltic Heritage Network,” an organisation researching the Baltic diaspora. Beķere is also a Researcher at the Baltic Centre for Strategic Studies of the Latvian Academy of Sciences.

EDIJS BOŠS has spent twenty years working for various Latvian news organisations as a journalist and presenter: LNT television, Diena newspaper, LTV public broadcaster and, currently, TV3 Latvia. Edijs has additionally focused on an academic career. He earned an MPhil and a PhD in international politics at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. He is currently an associate professor at Rīga Stradiņš University and lectures on U.S. foreign policy, U.S.–Baltic relations and international history.

ILVIJA BRUĢE is a Researcher at the Latvian Institute of International Affairs. She holds a BA degree in Political Science and MA degree in International Relations from Rīga Stradiņš University, as well as an MSc degree in Social Anthropology from the University of Edinburgh. She is currently in her 3rd year of PhD studies at Rīga Stradiņš University. Apart from academia and her long–term collaboration with the institute, where she has been a co–editor and author of several articles and books, her research experience includes work as a research analyst for a UK–based political risk advisory and

as a national expert for international research projects. Her research interests are related to political, economic, historical, and socio-cultural developments in the post-Soviet area, and Russia and Ukraine in particular.

KĀRLIS BUKOVSKIS is the Deputy Director and a researcher at the Latvian Institute of International Affairs (LIIA), the author of numerous articles, and the scientific editor of several books. Bukovskis is also a lecturer on global political economy, international financial systems and the EU integration at Riga Graduate School of Law and Rīga Stradiņš University. He holds Master's degrees from the University of Latvia and the University of Helsinki, and is currently a PhD candidate. Bukovskis has dealt with European Union institutional, political and economic developments while serving at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, the Secretariat of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (where he developed the Presidency's six-month work program), and also at the Latvian Ministry of Finance.

JUSTĪNE ELFERTE is Head of the International Department at Riga Graduate School of Law. Justine received her Bachelor's degree in Law and Diplomacy and continues her studies in the International and European Law Master's programme at Riga Graduate School of Law, and cooperates on research with the Latvian Institute of International Affairs. Justine has previously gained significant experience working with the French government on behalf of the Secretariat of the Latvian Presidency of the European Union. Justine's academic interest lie with the European Union, specifically she is interested in its external and foreign policies, developments in the concept of sovereignty of member states as well as security concerns.

INESIS FELDMANIS – Professor, Dr. habil. hist., is a leading researcher at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology in the University of Latvia, a full member of the Latvian Academy of Sciences and correspondent member of the Baltic Historical Commission (Göttingen, Germany). He chairs the Commission of Historians of Latvia and is a member of the Latvian-Russian Joint Commission of Historians and chair of the board of the Support Foundation of the Small Library of Latvian History. Feldmanis has focused on the issues of Latvia's foreign policy and history of national minorities in the interwar period, and has researched the history of Latvia during World War II. Inesis Feldmanis has authored or co-authored 15 monographs and anthologies, along with more than 380 scientific or popular scientific articles. Additionally, he has participated in the compilation of four collections of documents and three textbooks.

ILZE FREIBERGA is Curator of expositions and exhibitions at the Latvian Railway History Museum. In 2012, she obtained a Master's degree in History from the University of Latvia. Her research interests include Latvia-USSR relations and cultural ties in the interwar period, the general development of Latvia's cultural ties in the 1920s/1930s, as well as issues of railway history in Latvia, especially through contemporaries' memories. She has conducted research on railway history in the development of the museum's expositions and writing on railway catastrophes in Latvia.

IVARS ĪJABS, Dr. Sc. Pol., is a political scientist and publicist, Associate Professor and Researcher at the University of Latvia. He has dedicated substantial efforts to studying Music, Philosophy and Political Science, but his work reaches far beyond the academic realm. He is an expert on issues of society's self-organisation and political culture, a subject to which he regularly dedicates major and minor published texts. Ījabs has taken part in developing political and communication strategies, has written speeches and been a partner of decision-makers for intellectual sparring. His last book in Latvian, *Politikas teorija: pirmie soļi*, was published by the "Lasītava" publishing house.

JĀNIS ĶERUSS interned at Mainz and Basel Universities and in 2009 defended his dissertation on Latvia's neutrality in the 1930s. Since 2010, Ķeruss has been Docent of the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the University of Latvia, and an author of several works on the history of the Latvian SSR.

AINĀRS LERHIS, Dr. hist. (2002; University of Latvia) is a leading researcher at the Institute of Latvian History at the University of Latvia, Chair of the Board of the Centre for East European Policy Studies and a member of the Commission of Historians of Latvia. Lerhis has taught lecture courses at Rīga Stradiņš University on international affairs and at the University of Latvia on the history of diplomacy and international relations. He has authored a scientific monograph, as well as authored, co-authored or edited seven collective monographs, anthologies and collections of documents. Lerhis has also authored more than 35 scientific articles and numerous popular scientific articles. His research interests include: the history of Latvia's Foreign Service, the Baltic question in international affairs in 1940–1991, Latvia's foreign policy history in the context of European history and politics, the politicisation of the heritage of 20th century totalitarian regimes and of history.

DĪĀNA POTJOMKINA is a Researcher at the Latvian Institute of International Affairs and a lecturer at the Rīga Stradiņš University. She has worked as a project manager and advisor for the European Movement – Latvia (where she is currently a board member) and as an expert for three opinions at the European Economic and Social Committee. Potjomkina received her Bachelor's and Master's degrees cum laude from the Rīga Stradiņš University. She spent the 2015/2016 academic year at George Mason University in the United States as a guest researcher within the framework of the Fulbright Program. Her main research interests include: the foreign policy of Latvia and Europeanization processes, relations with the US and CIS/Eastern Partnership, the foreign relations of the EU and the US and public involvement in decision-making.

GUNDA REIRE is Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia and Director of the Center for International Studies. She holds the position of Lecturer in diplomacy studies at the Riga Graduate School of Law. Combining both the academic and practical spheres of politics, she has served as Deputy Chairperson of the Strategic Analysis Commission under the auspices of the President of Latvia, as the Chief of Staff of the Speaker's Office, and as Adviser to several ministers. Her core research interests

include multilateral international cooperation, Russia studies, global politics regarding the United Nations, geopolitics and global peace and security. She is the scientific editor of several volumes of research papers and the author of scientific publications on Latvia's foreign policy and the maintenance of international peace and security.

TOMS ROSTOKS is a Researcher at the Center for Security and Strategic Research at the National Defence Academy and an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Latvia. He is the author of many publications on Latvian security and foreign policy. He obtained a PhD degree in 2008, defending his dissertation on "Integration and regionalization in the Baltic Sea Region." Additionally, Rostoks spent time at Humboldt University in Germany, and as a Fulbright grantee at the Rutgers University in the USA. His current research interests are mostly related to Latvia's foreign and security policy, deterrence in NATO-Russia relations, the changing distribution of power in the international system as well as the use of non-violent resistance in national defence.

ANDRIS SPRŪDS is the Director of the Latvian Institute of International Affairs. He also holds the position of professor at Rīga Stradiņš University. Dr Sprūds has an MA in Central European History from the CEU in Budapest, Hungary and in International Relations from University of Latvia. He has also holds a PhD in Political Science from Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland. Dr Sprūds has been a visiting student and scholar at Oxford, Uppsala, Columbia and Johns Hopkins University, as well as the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and Japan's Institute of Energy Economics. His research interests focus on energy security and policy in the Baltic Sea region, the domestic and foreign policy of post-Soviet countries, and transatlantic relations.

VALTERS ŠČERBINSKIS studied history at the University of Latvia, and in 2003 defended his dissertation titled "Finland in Latvian Foreign Policy 1918–1940." For a long time, Ščerbinskis taught at the Political Science Department of Rīga Stradiņš University. Has written about Latvia's foreign policy in the Interwar period (especially its relations with the Nordic countries), domestic policy issues (especially the May 15 coup d'état), the history of student organisations, and has taken part in preparation of multiple biographical dictionaries. From 2014, Ščerbinskis has been Editor in Chief of the National Encyclopaedia.

JĀNIS TAURĒNS is an Associate Professor in the Department of History and Archaeology, part of the Faculty of History and Philosophy at the University of Latvia. Dr Taurēns is a Doctor of History (University of Latvia, 1999) and a member of the Commission for Research of Latvian SSR State Security Committee. Dr. Taurēns is editor of the periodical History. Journal of the University of Latvia, and co-authored the collective Latvian language monograph "Foreign policy and diplomacy of Latvia in the 20th century" (2015–2016). His research interests include: the history of Latvia's foreign policy, the political history of Latvia since restoration of independence and Latvian historiography.

Personalities*

Hermanis Albats
Ivo Alehno
Georgs Andrejevs
Uldis Augulis
Aldis Austers

Alise Balode
Antons Balodis
Jānis Balodis
Juris Bandrevičs
Vilis Bandrevičs
Aivars Baumanis
Toms Baumanis
Raimonds Bergmanis
Pēteris Berķis
Eduards Berklavs
Artis Bērtulis
Andris Bērziņš (President)
Andris Bērziņš (Prime Minister)
Indulis Bērziņš
Valdis Birkavs
Georgs Bisenieks
Ilmārs Bišers
Alfrēds Bīlmanis
Kārlis Bļodnieks
Jānis Bokalders
Mārtiņš Bondars
Baiba Braže
Eduards Brikovskis
Ludmila Buligina

Fēlikss Cielēns

Kristīne Čakste
Jānis Čakste
Jēkabs Čikste

Argita Daudze
Ainārs Dimants
Anatols Dinbergs
Jānis Dinevičs
Roalds Dobrovenskis
Valdis Dombrovskis
Kārlis Ducmanis
Jānis Dūklavs
Hugo Dzelzītis

Jānis Eiduks
Pēteris Elferts
Indulis Emsis
Aivars Endziņš

Ludvigs Ēķis

Ēriks Feldmanis
Jūlijs Feldmans
Māra Freimane
Kārlis Freimanis

Māris Gailis
Markus Gailītis
Roberts Garselis
Kaspars Gerhards
Kaija Gertnere
Andris Gobiņš
Ivars Godmanis
Ivars Golsts
Anatolijs Gorbunovs
Austris Grasis
Uldis Grava
Māris Grīnblats
Imants Gross
Olģerds Grosvalds

* Personalities mentioned by the authors of the book and survey participants, in alphabetical order.

Andris Gūtmanis	Rolands Lappuķe
Solvita Harbaceviča	Vigo Legzdiņš
Jons Hāns	Atis Lejiņš
	Aivars Lembergs
Juris Iesalnieks	Egils Levits
Edvīns Inkēns	Augusts Lēbers
	Imants Lieģis
Dainis Īvāns	Roberts Liepiņš
Jānis Īverts	Valdis Liepiņš
	Jānis Libietis
	Jānis Lucāns
Linda Jākobsone	
Ilze Juhansone	Uģis Magonis
Tālavš Jundzis	Anrijs Matīss
Jānis Jurkāns	Vilis Māsēns
	Gunārs Meierovics
Sandra Kalniete	Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics
Eduards Kalniņš	Kārlis Meinerts
Ojārs Kalniņš	Vasilis Meļņiks
Oskars Kalpaks	Roberts Mīlbergs
Artis Kampars	Maira Mora
Andrejs Kampe	Vilhelms Munters
Juris Kanelis	Linda Mūrniece
Arnis Kākulis	
Aleksandrs Kiršteins	Aina Nagobada-Ābola
Ādolfs Klīve	Andrievs Niedra
Visvaldis Klīve	
Iļģvars Kļava	Aija Odiņa
Mihails Kozlovs	Pēteris Oliņš
Andrejs Krastiņš	Žaneta Ozoliņa
Gundars Krasts	Aivars Ozoliņš
Dace Krieva	Ernests Ozoliņš
Edgars Krieviņš	Teodots Ozoliņš
Vilis Krištopans	
Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis	Artis Pabriks
Oto Kučelis	Vaira Paegle
Arveds Kundziņš	Andrejs Panteļejevs
Astra Kurme	Kārlis Pauļuks
Edvards Kušners	Astra Pavlovska
	Oļģerts Pavlovskis
Andris Ķesteris	Sanita Pavļuta-Deslandes
Māris Ķirsons	Andris Pelšs
Aristīds Lambergs	Normans Penke

Mārtiņš Perts
Krišjānis Peters
Jānis Peters
Karina Pētersone
Ansis Petrevics
Andris Piebalgs
Andrejs Pildegovičs
Bruno Plaudis
Anita Prince

Jānis Ramanis
Andris Razāns
Einars Repše
Gunārs Resnais
Māris Riekstiņš
Ilmārs Rimšēvičs
Edgars Rinkēvičs
Jānis Ritenis
Aivis Ronis
Ojārs Rubenis
Jānis Rukšāns

Voldemārs Salnājs
Alberts Sarkanis
Jānis Seskis
Vilis Siliņš
Solveiga Silkalna
Marika Simanoviča
Juris Sinka
Verners Skujenieks
Inga Skujiņa
Arnolds Spekke
Māris Sprindžuks
Andris Sprūds
Eduards Stiprais
Laimdota Straujuma
Jānis Straume
Kārlis Streips
Pēteris Stučka

Andris Šķēle
Ainārs Šlesers
Iveta Šulca

Inna Šteinbuka

Pēteris Tabūns
Andris Teikmanis
Pāvels Telička
The Metropolitan of the Russian
Orthodox Church Alexander
Edwards Traubergs

Guntis Ulmanis
Kārlis Ulmanis
Ramona Umblija
Ints Upmacis
Nils Ušakovs

Juris Vagels
Jānis Vaivads
Miķelis Valters
Guntis Valujevs
Inta Vasaraudze
Jānis Vesmanis
Verners Vestermanis
Raimonds Vējonis
Mārtiņš Virsis
Vaira Viķe-Freiberga
Aivars Vovers
Mavriks Vulfsons

Vilnis Zaļkalns
Alberts Zalts
Jānis Zariņš
Kārlis Zariņš
Valdis Zatlers
Voldemārs Zāmuels
Gustavs Zemgals
Jorģis Zemitāns
Aurēlijs Zēbergs
Roberts Zīle

Tatjana Ždanoka
Andulis Židkovs
Anna Žigūre

Supported by:



LATVIJAS REPUBLIKAS SAEIMA



Ārlietu ministrija

The Latvian Institute of International Affairs is the oldest Latvian think tank that specializes in foreign and security policy analysis.

The LIIA was established in 1992 as non-profit association with the aim of providing Latvia's decision-makers, experts and the wider public with analysis, recommendations and information about international developments, regional security issues and foreign policy strategy and choices. It is an independent research institute that conducts research, develops publications and organizes public lectures and conferences related to global affairs and Latvia's international role and policies.

Pils iela 21, Rīga, Latvia | www.liia.lv