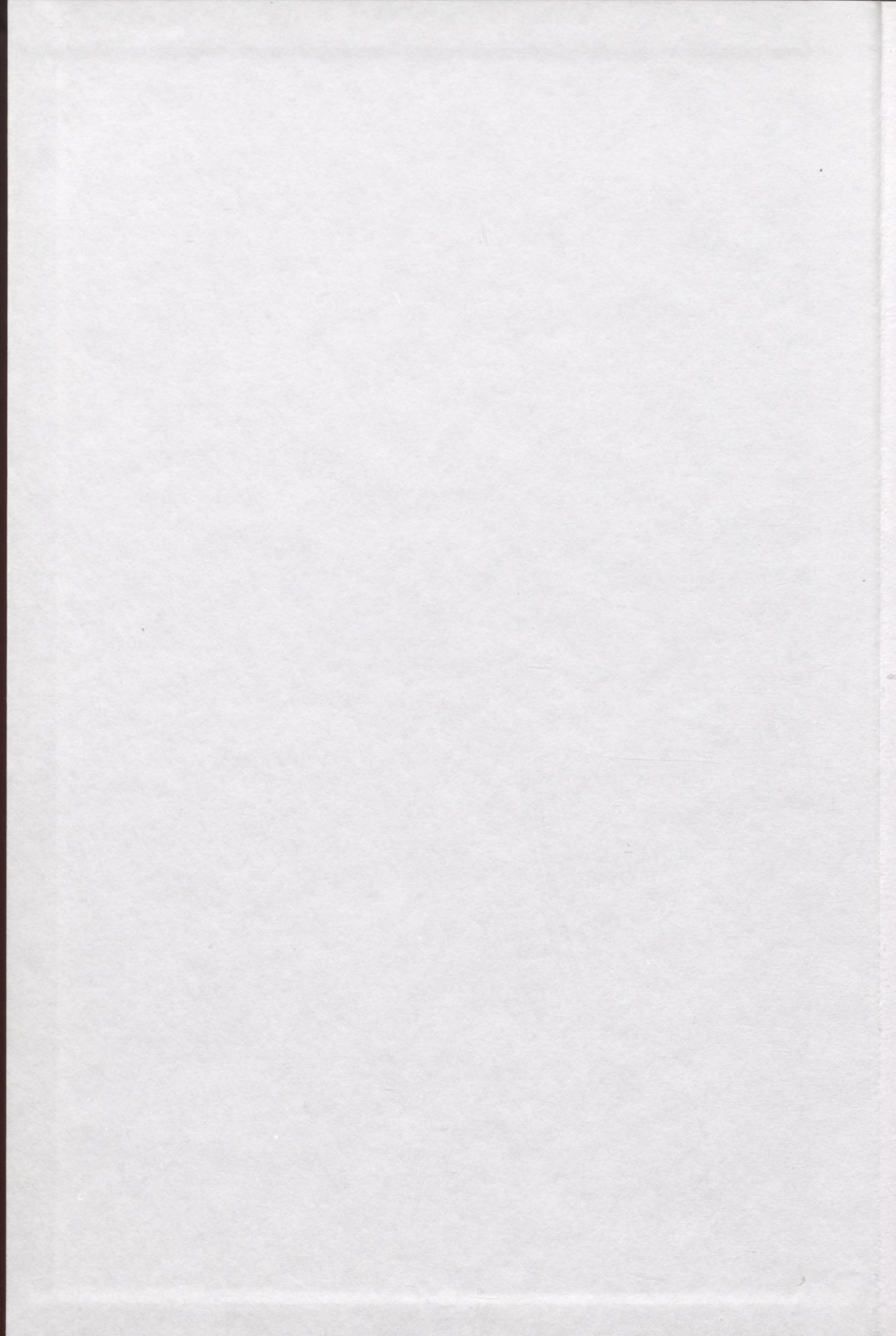


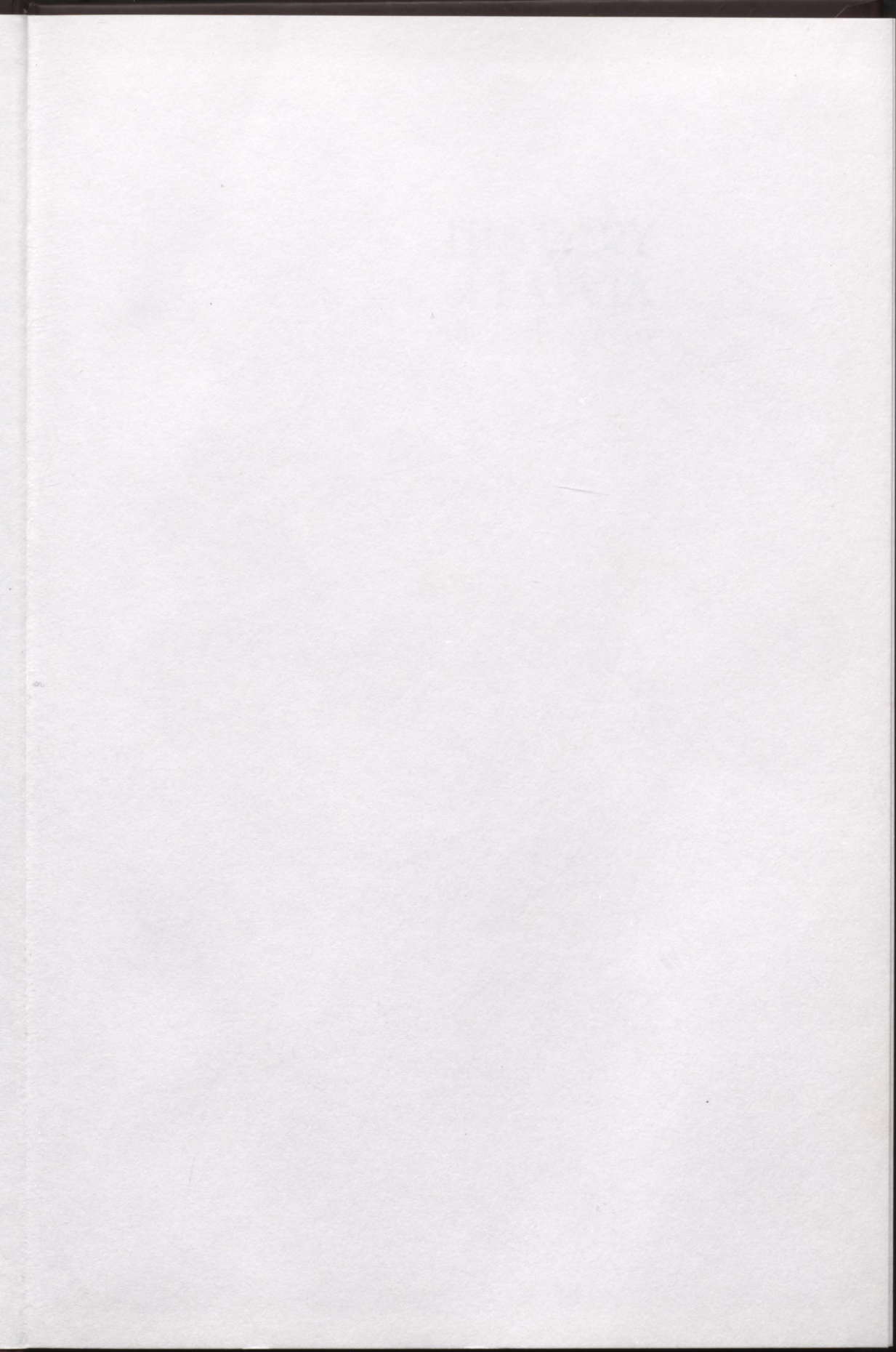
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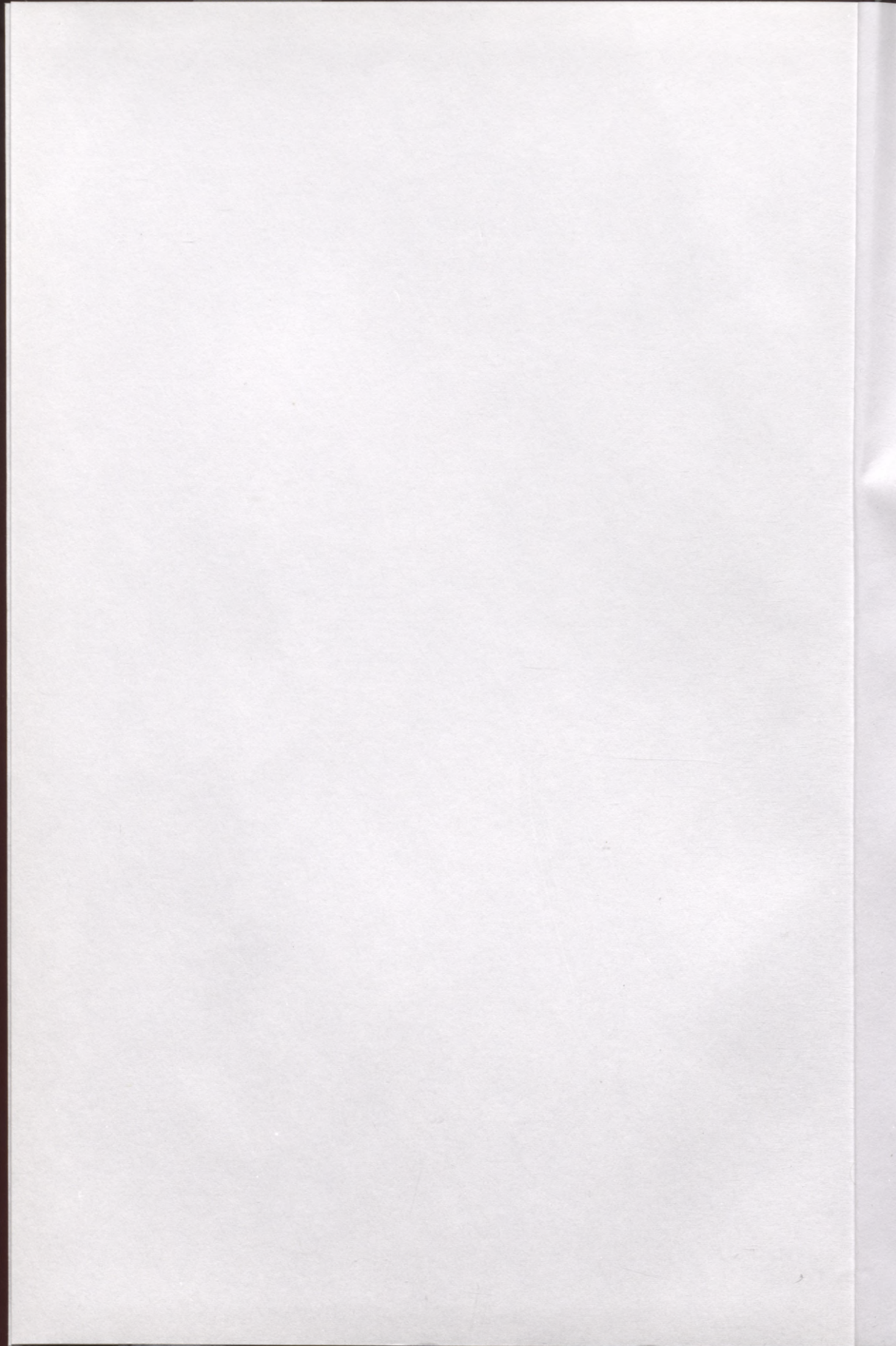
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Daina Bleiere, Ilgvars Butulis,
Inesis Feldmanis, Aivars Stranga,
Antonijs Zunda

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
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It is useful to reflect on the expressions politicians have used to describe the European Union and NATO enlargement at the beginning of the 21st century. The former "Soviet block" republics accession to these international organisations was referred to as "the true end of World War II", "the end of the 20th century", "an act of historical justice", "a moral obligation towards the much abused small nations of Europe", and so on. In all of these quotes, the notion of "history" is somehow present, seeking to emphasise the importance of the event and to persuade the addressees (the abused nations and countries) that their historical issues have been settled. Is this the case for Latvia? I apologise for my answer, so typical for a politician, but I have to say – yes and no.

Yes – because it is not Latvia that has returned to Europe, but in fact, Europe that has returned to Latvia. Our accession to the EU and NATO has renewed our historical ties and place in European culture – ties that had been disrupted for fifty years by the Nazi and Communist occupations. We have now entered the realm of security, prosperity, and cooperation where we feel at home, because we are Europeans. This is obvious to anyone who visits our capital city.

No – because even if the historical issues are settled, it does not mean that they are understood by everyone. Many issues topical in our country today related to the national minorities social situation, and our relationship with Russia, can be understood only within the context of Latvia's 20th century history.

At the same time, it should be noted that Latvia's "historical situation" has been changing very rapidly. Fifteen years ago, when Latvia regained its independence after the fall of the Soviet empire, there was a post-revolutionary excitement in the air. In the course of a few months, practising surgeons became heads of parliamentary commissions, poets became polished diplomats and physicists became government ministers. The Parliament set as its target the continuity of the state and set its direction towards membership of the EU and NATO. That's what it was like at the time...

These are different times. Latvia has become a stable and open democracy by Western standards. From a global viewpoint, Latvia is no longer a "problem region". We are not floundering or drowning – we are among those steering the ship. We are insiders, not outsiders. We have gained invaluable experience on our way from a centralised Soviet economy to a market economy, from a closed society to an open society, from the enslavement of occupation to national statehood. These fundamental changes within our country have taken place with full respect for human rights and political freedoms despite the heavy baggage of the occupation years on our society. We can serve as a case study for other nations that have not succeeded, for whatever reason, or have been denied the opportunity of implementing democratic reforms. Moreover, international bodies such as the EU, NATO, and the UN, would benefit from new blood in their quest for reform.

Therefore, I look optimistically at Latvia's future prospects. Our small and perhaps rather reserved northerly nation now has the most important thing of all – the opportunity to write our own history, free from oppression by external powers, limited only by our own capacity, imagination, and will-power. Finally, despite the attempts of certain theorists to claim the opposite, "the end of history" is nowhere near.

Artis Pabriks,
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Latvia

FROM EDITOR

Throughout its history, Latvia and Latvians been profoundly affected by geography, by their location in a region where the influence of the great powers has ebbed and flowed, always leaving an impact on the place and the people living there. The 20th century was no exception.

At its start, Latvia was part of the Russian Empire. During World War I, it was occupied by the German army. Then it won its independence, only to find itself 20 years later occupied first by the Soviet Union and then by the Nazi Germany during World War II, and then again by the USSR for more than 45 years after that conflict ended for everyone else. But at the end of that century, Latvia and her people recovered their independence, joined the most important Western institutions, and now at the start of a new century look to the future with confidence.

Like the other countries and nations of Europe, Latvia and Latvians experienced to the full all of the trends – both negative and positive – that characterized the continent's development, but more than most, Latvia and Latvians have seen their history written by others. And as a result, that history is full of willful distortions and myths that often have kept Latvians themselves as well as others from understanding their past and consequently themselves and prevented others from understanding both the problems and dilemmas Latvians have faced and the ways in which they have sought to solve them.

This book is designed to help both groups understand what happened here and why, what decisions were made and who made them, and what influences shaped Latvia and Latvians in the 20th century and which ones they hope to continue and which ones they hope to escape in the future. It has been prepared by a group of writers on the basis of both published and archival materials. Moreover, it includes both scholarly notes and a suggested bibliography.

A word about the structure of the book because it may strike some as overly complicated. The seven chapters are arranged chronologically, but

each of them is divided along functional lines. The authors chose this approach because it will allow those who are interested in particular issues to go directly to the portions of the book that discuss them even as it permits those who want to read the entire book to gain a comprehensive understanding of Latvia and her people.

This is the second edition of this book, and suggestions of readers have guided some of the changes from the first. The authors would like to thank all of those who sent in their comments and invite both them and new readers to send them their reactions positive and negative to this new work.

Paul Goble,

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INTRODUCTION

Through all of its various stages, the history of Latvia has been dominated by the country's geographic position, in a region where for centuries the interests of aggressive big powers have collided; for a long time this geopolitical situation was unfavorable to developing the nationhood of the local inhabitants. From the 13th century they lost the ability to continue developing statehood, a situation which had arisen following defeat at the hands of the German crusaders. The territory of Latvia (and also Estonia) was incorporated into the confederation of Livonia established by the conquerors, which survived until the 1660s. After the collapse of Livonia and several wars between the great powers vying influence and domination in the Baltic, the lands inhabited by the Latvians came under the subjugation of various nations (Poland-Lithuania, Sweden, Denmark) for longer or shorter periods. Finally, in the 18th century Latvia's territory was gradually annexed to the Russian Empire, in four stages. Coming under the control of foreign states, Latvia's inhabitants were affected by a number of contradictory processes: during the Livonian stage the German landed aristocracy established control in Latvia and Latvian peasants became serfs, but at the same time the inhabitants were drawn into the European cultural sphere and reached the same level of economic development as the European nations. The Latvian nation began to be formed in the final stages of Livonia's existence, and this process reached maturity in the following two centuries. Within this complex historical situation the Latvians were able to preserve and later strengthen their national identity. From the mid 19th century the national intelligentsia played a vital role in developing Latvian national consciousness. However, it was only in the 20th century that the first demands for an independent Latvia were put forward and it became possible to realize them.

Latvia's history in the 20th century was dynamic, threaded with trends that reversed or broke previous development processes, rich in both achievements and tragic trials. Latvia won, lost and rewon its independence, survived several revolutions and occupations as well as two devastating world

wars. It endured a significant drop in its population level. For the Latvian nation the 20th century has been a Darwinian struggle for survival (the number of Latvians has stayed virtually the same over the last 100 years); this situation intermingled with attempts to preserve the Latvian nation as an entity and to protect Latvian culture. From the political aspect this century was characterized by the efforts of Latvians to entrench their hard-won independence and liberate themselves from foreign subjugation. The three most important turning points during this phase of Latvia's history – 1918, 1940 and 1991 – are directly connected with the creation, destruction and renewal of the independent state. In the last century Latvia was an independent country for 31 years, and a subject territory for 69 years, including 18 years as part of the Czarist Empire at the beginning of the century.

The 20th century has gone down in European and world history as a century of conflict between liberalism and totalitarianism, which ended with the collapse of the latter and the complete triumph of the first ideology. Latvia was no exception with regard to the prevailing processes, ideas and currents in Europe. Following Latvia's winning its independence in 1918, it was (and is currently) a democratic country for a quarter of a century, but for 57 years it was ruled by dictatorships of various types. For six years there was a comparatively mild national dictatorship (the authoritarian regime of Kārlis Ulmanis), but for over half a century it was under the repressive regimes established by occupying states (the USSR and Nazi Germany), which claimed the lives of many people. Almost all of the Jews living in Latvia were murdered in the Nazi Holocaust, while the Soviet regime committed war crimes and carried out genocide against particular political and social groups in Latvia. During the first and second Soviet occupations, which lasted 47 years, significant Russian military forces were stationed in Latvia and hundreds of thousands of new arrivals (immigrants) were deliberately flooded in from other Soviet republics. Latvia's people were subjected to a dangerous and tragic course of events. They were forcibly cut off from the European cultural fold and subjected to the socialist experiment, Russification, backwardness and an existence that betrayed human dignity.

For the greater part of the 20th century Latvia was politically subject to Russia, and this factor has been primarily responsible for Latvia's economic structure, social backwardness and complex ethnic relations. Over the course of the century several models of economic development were followed: as a

transit bridge, agricultural or industrial exports, the Soviet economic system. The first of these appeared attractive both after the freedom struggles of the early 20th century, and post the restoration of independence in the early 1990s. Latvia hoped to become a bridge between Russia and the West and to earn a quick and easy profit. However, neither then nor now has this model proved to be the most optimal and suitable. From 1923 onward, when Russia's policy of isolation destroyed any illusions about profitable transit deals, Latvia put all of its hopes on agriculture, which was the main economic sector throughout the interwar period. But today agriculture does not hold a significant position in the national economy. Latvia's long-term economic development strategy is instead directed at creating a good business environment, stimulating high value-added goods and services, and encouraging a gradual transition to an innovative economy linked with the usage of intensive high technology.

Successful economic development is a prerequisite for resolving serious social problems, which are mostly Soviet era legacies. In terms of the standard of living of its inhabitants, in 1997, Latvia was ranked 92nd in the world, but by 2002 had risen to 53rd position. So significant progress has been made over just five years. However, wealth is unevenly distributed and severe inequalities in material welfare persist. Latvia has a relatively small number of rich and middle class people and a relatively high number of poor inhabitants. Statistics show that over half of Latvia's residents live below the official subsistence minimum. The situation is exacerbated by an inadequate and not always well thought-out social welfare system. The government of Latvia is currently paying special attention to putting the social welfare and services system in order to meet modern requirements so that it can ensure that people are effectively integrated into social and economic life, and that they are socially protected. Great attention is being paid to reducing unemployment, indexing pensions, upgrading the healthcare system and improving the demographic situation.

Entering the 21st century, within just a few years Latvia achieved its main strategic foreign policy goal since the restoration of independence: membership of Western security, political and economic structures. In the spring 2004 Latvia joined the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), in the process strengthening national security and independent statehood, obtaining stable guarantees of its irreversibility. Latvia has an interest in a strong, effective and united Europe which, based

on the principle of solidarity is a union of equal states in which each country is able to preserve its cultural and historical experience. Latvia supports the equality of all EU member states, strengthening the community method, preserving institutional balance, and more actively involving national parliaments in adopting EU decisions. Cooperation with the other EU member states is a prerequisite for realizing Latvia's national interests and ensuring its economic growth and the rapid improvement of the standard of living of its inhabitants.

Latvia's accession to NATO and the EU has increased the role of regional and bilateral relations. Latvia actively cooperates with other countries in the Baltic Sea region, thereby promoting regional development and cooperation. Latvia still considers it important to maintain good neighbourly relations with Russia, however, its policy toward the Baltic countries is still negative and creates tensions and unnecessary problems. Latvia favours constructive dialogue with Russia in both the bilateral and multilateral contexts. The legal foundations for relations between Latvia and Russia are around 20 inter-governmental agreements. Several additional inter-governmental agreements are ready for signing, including the National Border Treaty. The signing of this agreement would improve relations between the countries and significantly raise their quality from the present level.

* * *

"History of Latvia. The 20th Century" is intended for all who are interested in history. It has been written based on a wide range of sources and specialist literature, and it endeavours to objectively reconstruct the landscape of Latvia's history in the last century. Significant attention has been paid to dispelling myths created by Nazi and Soviet propaganda, and a clear conceptual approach to explaining complex historical peripetia and problems has been taken; this is a step towards an understanding of Latvia's history that is free of various biases and stereotypes. The most important historical facts, events, occurrences and processes are examined from a European context and evaluated from the viewpoint of the country of Latvia and its people. Simultaneously the most important events in Latvia over the course of the entire century have been analysed based on national, democratic and liberal values.

The book's content is arranged chronologically in seven parts. It is

the result of the collaboration of five authors. Inesis Feldmanis (the project's researcher in chief) wrote the introduction, conclusion, and the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th and 8th chapters of Part 3 (except for the sub-chapter on the Jews); Aivars Stranga wrote Part 4 and the 3rd, 4th, 7th and 9th chapters of Part 3, as well as the sub-chapter on Jews in chapter 8 of Part 3; Ilgvars Butulis wrote parts 1 and 2; Antonijs Zunda wrote Part 5; and Daina Bleiere is the author of parts 6 and 7. A list of recommended further reading is attached at the end of the book.

This second, expanded edition of the book has taken the comments and assessments made by readers into account. Several issues have been examined more broadly and in more detail and any inaccuracies and errors that we have detected have been corrected. Greater attention has been paid to the 1919 government of P. Stučka, the emigration of the Baltic Germans, the role of Latvian units in the Red Army during World War II, and also the contribution made to victory by Latvian merchant seamen who served as part of the US and British merchant navies. There is a special emphasis on the European context of Latvian culture, and the creation of the Latvian Diaspora, its political and cultural activities, and its role in the struggle to restore Latvia's independence.

In order to allow readers to verify the truthfulness of facts, views and assessments made in the book, the authors decided to preserve the academic tradition. Therefore the reference system used for scientific research works has been employed in the book. (See appendices for 13 documents characterising important events in history of Latvia in the period reviewed.)

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I. THE HISTORY OF LATVIA

UP TO THE TURN OF THE 20th CENTURY

The territory of present-day Latvia in the period before the 13th century. At around 14 000 BC, the ice sheet that had covered Northern Europe for thousands of years began to retreat from the land that is now Latvia, giving rise to a tundra landscape. Only when the climate grew warmer, in the 9th millennium BC, did the first people arrive from the south. They subsisted from hunting and fishing, lived in matriarchal communities and held their property in common, sharing it equally among themselves. Researchers have formed no definite opinion as to the ethnic affiliation of these people.

With further climatic change, mixed and deciduous forest developed. Larger settlement sites arose near major rivers and lakes. In the 7th–4th millennium BC, Latvia became more densely populated. The 4th to 2nd millennium BC was the Neolithic or New Stone Age. In the 3rd and 2nd millennium BC, Finno-Ugric groups – ancestors of the Livs, Estonians, Finns and other Finno-Ugric peoples – entered the area of present-day Latvia from the north and north-east. These Finno-Ugric people, who lived by hunting, fishing and gathering, also made pottery vessels. They were followed from the south and south-west by Indo-European tribes – the ancestors of the Baltic peoples. The Indo-Europeans introduced animal husbandry and agriculture and used bronze tools. Clearance farming began, domestic stock were reared and fortified settlements developed. A patriarchal society replaced the matriarchal system. The territory of Latvia became a zone of contact between Finno-Ugric and Indo-European groups.

Gradually, several different Baltic peoples emerged in Latvia: the Couronians (*kurši*) in western Latvia, the Selonians (*sēļi*) on the left bank of the Daugava River, the Latgallians (*latgaļi*) on the right bank and the Semigallians (*zemgaļi*) in the Lielupe River basin of central Latvia. The Finno-Ugric Livs inhabited the shore of the Baltic Sea, as well as the Daugava and Gauja river valleys.

Like the other ethnic groups inhabiting the shores of the Baltic, the people who lived in Latvia were unknown in southern Europe in the 4th–8th century AD. There is thus a lack of written information about them, and they were seemingly remote from the major events of the time.

The situation changed significantly from the 9th–11th centuries during the Viking Age. When Viking activities intensified, the Daugava River served as a branch of the great trade artery that stretched from “from the Vikings to the Greeks”. The intensity of contacts between the Scandinavians and the people of Latvia increased. Scandinavian raids particularly affected the Couronians and Semigallians. While Viking voyages to Latvia involved aggression and plunder as well as trade, their activities never led to the long-term subjugation of the peoples living in Latvia, or to colonisation.

The Scandinavian raiders were mainly Gotlanders, Swedes and Danes, and there is even a saga describing a voyage by the legendary Icelandic Viking Egil Skallagrimsson. The people of the Eastern Baltic, particularly the Estonians to the north and the Couronians of present-day Kurzeme (Courland), were known at that time as capable mariners and pirates. They were by no means passive in their relations with the Scandinavians. Often, they themselves raided the coasts of Scandinavia.

From about the 11th century onwards, the Ancient Rus also began to exert political and cultural influence in the Baltic area. This influence particularly affected the Latgallian lands in the eastern part of present-day Latvia. Latgallian dependence on the Russian principalities was marked by the extraction of church dues. Under the influence of the Rus, a section of the Latgallian aristocracy adopted the Russian Orthodox faith, although this was not forced upon it in the way that Christianity was forcibly introduced later by invading German crusaders. The Baltic peoples often replied to incursions by the Russian principalities with attacks against the border areas of the Ancient Rus.

The 9th–12th centuries witnessed major economic and social change in the territory of present-day Latvia. In agriculture, the three-field system was adopted and a new domestic crop appeared – rye. Iron-tipped ploughs came into use, as did long-handled scythes. The first towns developed next to wooden castles, along with settlements of peasants and craftsmen. The crafts became more specialised: blacksmiths forged tools and weapons, while jewellery smiths produced ornaments and potters started making pottery on the wheel. With the development of trade, silver coins and bars flowed into

Latvia from Scandinavia and Russia, as did ornaments, swords and spears. Local products used as exchange equivalents included amber, furs and wax.

A new kind of social structure developed. At its apex were the families of the chiefs and military leaders, who ruled districts, led military forces, lived in fortified castles and were known as “elders”. Next came the influential members of their military retinues – the heads of wealthy and important families. The main body of the population consisted of free peasants, and at the bottom of the social scale were servants and thralls.

The administrative division of the territory of Latvia also began to take shape at this time. Several villages formed a civil parish (*pagasts*), which functioned as a taxpaying unit. Several parishes formed a castle district, where the castle was the administrative centre. The castle districts were united into lands, each of which centred around a major castle with a town. Retained from this period up to the present day are the names of the administrative regions of Latvia – Vidzeme, Courland, Semigallia and Latgallia.

This indicates that early states had begun to form in Latvia. The chronicles of that period mention a whole string of small states in Courland, Latgallia and Semigallia, also giving the names of such rulers as Lamekins and Visvaldis, Viesturs and Namejs. Nowadays, however, it is difficult to assess the general level of social development and state-formation in the ancient lands of Latvia. One group of historians considers that there is definite evidence of ancient Latvian states, equivalent to those existing in Europe in the Early Middle Ages. Others hold the view that these are more properly described as “state-like formations”, an idea that the author of this chapter concurs with.

In the late 12th century, German merchants, the Roman Catholic Church and Christian knightly orders turned their attentions to the Eastern Baltic seaboard, including Latvia. Initial missionary work by monks was followed, starting from the turn of the 13th century, by an all-out crusade and military campaign. Initially, the main military force of the crusaders was the Order of the Brethren of the Sword, established in 1202. That same year, the territory that is now Latvia and Estonia was declared the Land of Holy Mary, thus equating this region with Palestine, the Land of Christ. A major role in subjugating the groups inhabiting the territory of Latvia was played by the German Bishop Albert, a talented organiser and politician. In 1201, the town of Riga was founded at the site of a Liv settlement near the mouth of the Daugava River, becoming the bishop’s seat and the main base for invading the whole of the Eastern Baltic.

It took almost the entire 13th century for the German invaders to subjugate the territory of present-day Latvia. First to be conquered were the Livs, followed by the Latgallians. However, the crusaders also suffered several crushing defeats. In 1236 at the Battle of Saule (thought to be somewhere near Šiauliai in present-day Lithuania) the Semigallians, together with the Lithuanians, annihilated the forces of the Order of the Brethren of the Sword, as a result of which the order had to be abolished. The surviving brethren were incorporated into the Teutonic Order, which was based in Prussia. The Teutonic Order then established a separate branch for the Eastern Baltic – the Livonian Order.

The largest battle of the 13th century in Eastern Europe was fought at Durbe in 1260. The forces of the Samogitians (a Baltic group from the northern part of present-day Lithuania), together with Couronian and Estonian units, crushed the Livonian Order, thus preventing the lands conquered by the Teutonic Order in Prussia from being linked with the lands of the Livonian Order.

This battle ensured the continued independence of Lithuania, but did not save the peoples of Latvia. During the decades that followed, the Couronians and Semigallians surrendered to the order and accepted the Christian faith. In 1290, burning their last remaining castles, tens of thousands of Semigallians left for Lithuania, thus ending the struggle for freedom fought by the ancient peoples of Latvia. The invaders triumphed because of their superior weaponry, the support they obtained from the rest of Europe, a carefully thought out plan of invasion, and the disunity of the indigenous groups living in Latvia and the whole of the Baltic.

Latvia as part of Livonia. The Livonian period of German rule in Latvia lasted from the 13th to the second half of the 16th century, i.e. for about 350 years. The name "Livonia" (*Livland* in German), derived from the name of the Finno-Ugric Liv people of present-day Latvia, refers to the German-controlled territory of Latvia and Estonia after the 13th-century conquest. Livonia developed as a typical medieval federation of five small states, three of them in present-day Latvia – the Archbishopric of Riga, the Bishopric of Couronia and the State of the Livonian Order. Nominally, these small states recognised the Pope and the German Emperor as their overlords, but in practice they were virtually independent.

Power was in the hands of three main political forces in Latvia. Militarily and politically, the strongest was the State of the Livonian Order, led by the

master of the order. It was subordinate, until the 15th century, to the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order. The State of the Livonian Order competed for control with the Archbishop of Riga, whose military forces were much weaker. Moreover, the order's dominions cut the archbishopric in two. The city of Riga, which was the main political centre for the whole of Livonia, itself developed into a third political force. The archbishop resided there, as did the Master of the Livonian Order in certain periods. In the 13th century, Riga joined the German-based league of trading towns known as the Hanseatic League, and adopted a legal code modelled on that of Hamburg. Power was in the hands of the town council (*Rat*). Seven other important towns in Latvia also joined the Hanseatic League and regulated their civic life according to Riga law.

The struggle for influence in Riga and in the confederation as a whole dominated the internal politics of Livonia. A rivalry between the Livonian Order and the Archbishop of Riga went in parallel with the City of Riga's struggle to reduce the influence of its feudal overlord, the Order. After the defeat of the Teutonic Order at the Battle of Tannenberg (Grünwald) in 1410, the Livonian Order's power in Riga was reduced to a formality, and it was forced to share control with the archbishop, as confirmed by the Peace of Salaspils in 1452.

With the Livonian Order's political hegemony in dispute throughout Livonia, an assembly of representatives from the different social estates – the Livonian Diet (*Landtag*) – was convened for the first time in 1419. The Diet consisted of four curiae, with representatives from the highest officials of the Church, the order, the knights and the towns. The Diet did create a balance between the order and the archbishop, but Livonia was never politically unified, remaining a fragmented country. The political battles within Livonia also came to involve the Pope, the German Emperor, the Master of the Teutonic Order and even Denmark, Lithuania and some Northern German towns.

During the Livonian period, the main economic activities in the area of present-day Latvia were agriculture and trade. Peasant farmsteads formed the basis of agricultural production. The main crops were cereals, and part of the crop had to be given up to the lord of the land – the order, the bishop or one of their vassals. During the 15th and 16th centuries, demand grew in Europe for agricultural produce, and prices rose accordingly. Grain, flax and hemp could be profitably exported, whereas the export of heavy goods was

hindered by the economic system of that period. The estates became the main providers of agricultural produce, profiting by extending their land at the expense of the peasants' holdings and using the peasants as *corvée* labour.

The city of Riga, whose merchants united to form the Greater Guild, obtained its greatest revenue as an intermediary in trade between Russia and Lithuania on the one hand, and Western Europe on the other. Ships from the Hanseatic towns, Holland and England were regularly loaded and unloaded at the port of Riga. In addition to the exports already mentioned, timber, ash, potash and tar were also sent abroad. Imports included salt, herrings, textiles, weapons, luxury goods, wine and spices. When the Hanseatic League declined, Dutch trading activity grew accordingly, and the Dutch strove to force their way into the local markets of Livonia.

Crafts in Riga were under the control of small guilds, which together formed the Lesser Guild. In Riga and the other towns of Latvia, the craftsmen were, however, of secondary importance, providing services for the traders and producing food, clothing, textiles and tools for local needs.

In the 16th century, there were about 400 000 people living in the area of present-day Latvia, and Riga had a population of about 12 000. The population belonged to two entirely different social worlds – German and Latvian. The clergy, nobility, merchants and craftsmen were ethnic Germans, who constituted five percent of the total population. They had come originally from North or Central Germany, from the areas where Middle Low German was spoken. The economic system, legislation, culture and urban administration were all modelled on the North German example. In visual terms as well, the towns of Latvia, with their town walls, public buildings and churches, resembled German towns, as did the buildings on the estates and the country churches. The most important social changes in the 15th and 16th centuries affected the vassals of the order and of the bishop – the knights. Their original function had been to provide a military force, but economic change turned them into holders of country estates, so that they became an economically active section of society. The knights thus developed into a landed nobility.

The Latvian population of Livonia was segregated from the Germans through social and political barriers. Most Latvians were peasants and constituted the lowest social stratum in the towns. They were not accepted into the guilds, while in commerce they could work only in ancillary professions: as goods weighers, bearers and dockworkers. Latvians were not

permitted to become craftsmen in the craft guilds or to buy real estate. The Latvian peasantry enjoyed a fair degree of freedom up to the 15th century, and Latvians often served in military units of the Livonian Order. A section of the pre-conquest indigenous élite became Germanised and obtained the status of vassals – the so-called *leimaņi* and *ķoniņi*.

The peasants gradually became tied to the land, and by the early 16th century, virtually all of them had been relegated to the status of serfs. Internal migration increased, border areas were settled and differences between the various indigenous groups faded. They began to merge into one people – the Latvians.

When the Reformation started in Germany against the domination of Catholicism, the ideas of Martin Luther also gained popularity in Livonia, initially in Riga. The preaching of Lutheran ideas began in the 1520s. Churches and monasteries were vandalised and the Catholic clergy was driven out. In the territory of Latvia, the Reformation found its strongest support among the citizens of Riga and the vassals of the order. For them, the Reformation also meant a political revolution that promised to free them from their feudal overlords – the Archbishop of Riga and the Livonian Order – and allow them to obtain the lands owned by these overlords. Latvia was the first land outside of Germany where Lutheranism became firmly established. By 1555, the Reformation was completely victorious, and the Livonian Diet declared freedom of religion in Livonia. The Latvian peasants, for their part, simply had to accept whatever faith was followed by their lord.

The Reformation was a spur to the development of education and culture. Religious texts were printed in Latvian – these being the very earliest printed works in the Latvian language. The first Latvian Lutheran congregations were established, as were the first Latvian schools, and a library was founded in Riga.

The 16th century also brought on the decline of Livonia. Centralised states developed in neighbouring areas, disrupting the region's geopolitical balance. The immediate danger was from Russia, which turned against Livonia in an effort to gain access to the Baltic Sea. The Teutonic Order had collapsed, and neither the Pope in Rome nor the German Emperor could be of much assistance. Country estates and towns were flourishing, and this reinforced the political independence of the nobles and town citizens. The Reformation had significantly undermined the position of the Catholic Church. The secular power wielded by the theocratic rulers was collapsing.

Instead of fusing together the small states and diverse political forces in Livonia, these developments led to even greater fragmentation. An effort to avert the collapse of the lands of Livonia was made by one of the Masters of the Livonian Order, Wolter von Plettenberg, who was among the most outstanding political figures of the Livonian era. His carefully conceived diplomacy, his energy and military victories set back the collapse of Livonia by half a century, but could not avert it entirely.

The Diet would not consent to invite the Master of the Order to become the ruler of Livonia and thus ensure a much-needed centralisation of power. Hence, after the death of Plettenberg in 1535, political chaos could no longer be averted.

In 1558, Russia invaded Livonia and started the Livonian War. The rulers of the states of Livonia asked for help from Poland-Lithuania, whose forces stopped and drove out the Russian army. In 1561, Livonia ceased to exist as a political entity and the Master of the Order, the Archbishop of Riga and the Livonian nobility swore allegiance to the King of Poland. The greater part of present-day Latvia came under the control of Poland-Lithuania. Part of the land was under direct rule, while other areas belonged to vassal states.

The part of present-day Latvia that lies on the west bank of the Daugava River became the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia (Kurzeme and Zemgale), which retained the right to control its own internal affairs, but was a vassal state of Poland-Lithuania. The area of present-day Latvia east of the Daugava River, along with southern Estonia, formed the Trans-Daugava Duchy, which became a province of Poland-Lithuania. After 20 years as a free city, Riga, too, was incorporated into Poland-Lithuania in 1581. A small part of the former Bishopric of Courland ended up in Danish hands.

Nowadays, historians recognise the Livonian period in Latvia's history as having had both negative and positive effects. The native peoples of Latvia lost their independence and were reduced to the status of serfs. However, by introducing new technology, writing and the arts, and traditions of Western European civilisation, the Livonian period brought the area of present-day Latvia into the Western European cultural sphere.

Latvia in the 17th and 18th century. *The Duchy of Courland and Semigallia.* The Duchy of Courland and Semigallia remained in existence for 233 years and had a population of around 200 000. About 80 percent were Latvians and Livs, 4 percent were Germans and the rest were Poles, Jews, Russians and Gypsies. The towns were small, with only 6 percent of the

population. Of the duchy's two capitals, Kuldīga and Jelgava, the latter grew in importance particularly in the 18th century, when it was on the main traffic route between the new Russian capital of St Petersburg and Western Europe.

The duchy was a secular state where religious freedom was observed. While Poland did strive to reinforce Catholicism, the Lutheran Church remained dominant. The duke's power was limited and depended on his personal authority. He appointed officials, granted fiefs and issued various privileges, but he had real power only on his own estates and in the crown lands. The supreme administrative body was the duke's council, which also had the function of a court. From the 17th century onwards, the duke, too, was bound to comply with the rulings of the Courland Diet.

The Courland nobility enjoyed extensive privileges. The nobles had complete power on their estates, which were granted to them as hereditary property. Decisions of the Diet had the force of law, and were binding on the duke. The entire administration of the duchy was in German hands. Just as had been the case before in Livonia, there were two separate social systems – German and Latvian. In the 1617 Statute of Courland, the status of the Latvian peasants was equated with that of slaves. The peasants suffered particularly on the private estates, while on the estates of the duke, the duties of the serfs were at least strictly regulated.

The rule of Duke James (Jēkabs, 1642–1682) is viewed as the duchy's heyday. Domestic affairs stabilised and the economy flourished. James developed an active Mercantilist policy: he took advantage of the favourable economic and political conditions in Western Europe, doing much to develop the duchy's traditional exports – grain, timber, amber, wax and tar. Likewise, he forced the pace of development of manufactories, which produced iron, textiles, rope and ships – both warships and trading vessels. The duchy had a large merchant fleet that was actively engaged in trade. In line with the general practice of the time, the duchy even obtained colonies abroad – the island of Tobago in Central America and part of Gambia in West Africa.

Historians have not agreed on the significance of the period of Duke James' rule in Latvian history. Some have overly romanticised it, while others emphasise that his economic and political achievements lasted only a short while. In the 17th century, Poland-Lithuania and Sweden struggled for influence in Courland, but in the 18th century the situation changed radically. Russia conquered neighbouring Livland in the Northern War, and an advantageous dynastic marriage took place: Anna Ivanovna, a relative of

Tsar Peter I, married the Duke of Courland. Thus, Russia's influence came to dominate in the duchy. In 1730, Ivanovna (who had since become a widow) ascended the Russian throne as Empress. A favourite of the new empress, the Courland nobleman Ernst Biron, who had even been the regent of Russia for a short while, became Duke of Courland.

The 17th and 18th century witnessed important cultural activities in the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia. The 17th century German pastors of Courland, most notably Georg Mancelius and Christoph Fürecker, were active in translating religious literature into Latvian, and themselves composed religious texts and hymns. They further developed written Latvian and published the first Latvian grammar and history book. In the 18th century, the pastor Gothard Friedrich Stender created the first secular Latvian literature. Also in the 18th century, schools for Latvian children were opened and an academic grammar school – the *Academia Petrina* – was established in Jelgava, recognised as providing a partial university education.

The dukes brought artists, architects and musicians to Jelgava from the cultural centres of Europe. Italian opera was performed at the duke's court, and painters came from Dresden, Venice and St Petersburg. Baroque palaces were built in the duchy by Bartolomeo Francesco Rastrelli, an outstanding architect at the Russian court who also built the Winter Palace (now the Hermitage Museum) in St Petersburg. In addition to talented artists, craftsmen and scientists, the duchy also attracted such well-known European fortune-hunters as the famed womaniser Giacomo Casanova and the occultist Alessandro Cagliostro.

In 1795, with the final partition of Poland, the Duchy of Courland was annexed to Russia, becoming the Province of Courland. The Courland nobles retained all their privileges and properties, and the status of the Latvian peasants as serfs was reaffirmed.

The Trans-Daugava Duchy (Livland). In the Trans-Daugava Duchy, the onset of Polish rule in the 16th century was marked initially by the complete acceptance of the privileges of the German landholders (the Privilege of Sigismund II Augustus). King Stephen Bithory did attempt to curb some of these privileges and sought to restore the position of Catholicism during the Counter-Reformation. The Jesuits were active in the duchy, while Lutheran discontent with the Counter-Reformation was vented in the Calendar Rebellion of 1584 in Riga, ostensibly a protest against the introduction of the Gregorian Calendar. At the same time, the Jesuits made an important

contribution to educating the Latvians. In Riga, a Latin school was opened during the time of the Counter-Reformation, and in 1588 the first printing house in Latvia was established. Humanist ideas began to spread and Humanist literature developed.

When Sweden became a major power, it joined the struggle for domination on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea. The first decades of the 17th century saw a war between Sweden and Poland. In 1621, the Swedish forces, led by King Gustav Adolf, took Riga, and by the 1629 Peace of Altmark, the former Trans-Daugava Duchy became the Swedish province of Livland.

Livland became Sweden's "bread basket", and the Swedish authorities were interested mainly in ensuring agricultural production and promoting the economic development of the city of Riga. Livland was not fully incorporated into Sweden, remaining instead a foreign province under the administration of a governor-general. Since Sweden was a Lutheran state, Lutheranism became the official religion in Livland. On the one hand, the Swedes generally retained the existing system and did not abolish serfdom, even though in Sweden itself the peasants were freemen. On the other hand, a whole series of economic, political and administrative measures were introduced, leading to serious conflict between the German nobility and the Swedish administration.

Large areas of land in Livland were granted to Swedish nobles at the expense of the German landowners. The German estates were surveyed and reduced. Those who held estates originally granted as fiefs – and this included the majority of landholders – were no longer recognised as owners of the land, but only as leaseholders. The Swedish crown obtained three quarters of all agricultural land. Corvée labour and peasant dues were strictly limited. Peasants gained the right to complain to the administration about mistreatment on the part of the landholders, while the heads of farmsteads obtained the right to retain their homes and inherit them.

It was because of these measures, along with care for the education of the Latvian peasantry (schools were opened for peasant children), that this period of rule was remembered long after as the "Good Swedish Times". Also in this period, the German pastor Ernst Glück translated the Bible into Latvian.*

In Livland, the first two decades of the 18th century were marked by the Great Northern War – a conflict between Russia and Sweden. Charles XII of

*Glück's stepdaughter Marta Skowronska later married Russian Tsar Peter I, and went on to become Catherine I, Empress of Russia.

Sweden defeated the Polish and Saxon allies of Russia outside Riga in 1701, but in 1710 the Russian forces, led by Count Sheremetev, marched into Latvia and laid the entire countryside to utter waste. Before finally taking Riga after a ten-month siege, Sheremetev proudly announced to Tsar Peter the Great that "there is nothing left to destroy in the enemy land. From Pskov to Pärnu to Riga, everything has been destroyed. Not even a rooster is to be heard crowing."¹ After the 1721 Treaty of Nystad, Livland was formally incorporated into Russia, becoming the Province of Livland. During the Northern War, Livland was also ravaged by Europe's last great epidemic of the plague, which took the lives of about 60 percent of the rural population.

The Tsarist government respected the rights of the German nobility, the status of the German language and the rulings of the Diet. Initially, the Latvian peasants were recognised as being the absolute property of their lords. In the 18th century, the German nobles of Livland strove to prove that their power over the peasants stretched right back to "the time of the conquest of Livonia". Only in 1765 did Governor-General George Browne advise the drafting of new agrarian legislation. The legislation aimed at restricting the impurity of landlords. However, it never came into effect, and the peasant situation grew even worse.

However, a string of German intellectuals and clergymen in Livland promoted the ideas of the Enlightenment, standing up for the natural rights of the Latvian people and advocating the abolition of serfdom. Among them was the Rector of the Riga Dom School, the outstanding German Enlightenment philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, along with his contemporary Garlieb Merkel. In the 1730s and 40s, the Herrnhut Movement began to spread among the Latvian peasantry of Livland, based on the principles of pietism. The Herrnhut Brethren considered that the church was not essential as an intermediary between Man and God, that moral principles are integral to human nature, that all are equal before God and that people must be allowed to develop freely. Because of the major educational effort undertaken by the Herrnhut Brethren, the Provinces of Livland and Estland had the highest level of education in the Russian Empire.

Latgallia (Inflanty, Polish Livland). From 1629, Latgallia became known as Inflanty or Polish Livland, having the status of a voivodship of Poland. The legislative institution in Inflanty was the *Sejmik*, a provincial diet of nobles belonging to the Polish aristocracy, who were represented in the *Sejm* of Poland-Lithuania by six delegates.

The region's only town, Daugavpils, became the administrative centre of the voivodship. Central to the economic system of Latgallia were the estates, belonging to nobles, churches and monasteries. The main axis of the region's economy was the waterway represented by the Daugava River. The initially influential Polish and Lithuanian nobility was gradually forced out by the German nobles, who, unlike the German nobility in Courland, had become completely Polonised by the 18th century.

The majority of the population consisted of peasants, divided into corvée peasants and rent-paying peasants. Agriculture was less developed in Latgallia than in Courland or Livland. The Jesuits were very active in the Polonisation of the Latvian population of Latgallia, promoting Catholicism and Polish Catholic education.

Although the peasantry of Latgallia never became assimilated into Polish culture, certain distinctive traits were introduced into the language and everyday life. With the First Partition of Poland in 1772, Latgallia came under Russian rule. Initially, the region was annexed to the Province of Pskov, but was later transferred to the Province of Vitebsk.

Latvia in the 19th century. The establishment in the early 19th century of a new administrative system in the Baltic Provinces – the “special order” was important in shaping the political history of Latvia.– It remained in force almost until the end of the century and gave the Baltic Germans a degree of autonomy and self-government in the Provinces of Livland and Courland. Latgallia was an area of contact between two different cultural regions of Europe – Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox. Here, religious, ethnic, political and economic factors were interlinked in a complex web. Latgallia's inclusion in the Province of Vitebsk heightened the region's distinctiveness from the other Latvian regions.

The Courland and Livland nobility retained their rights and privileges. The landowning nobles of the Baltic provinces could still call themselves “knights.” The Diets continued to exist, retaining certain decision-making powers.

The highest Tsarist official in the Baltic Provinces was the Governor-General of the Baltic, based in Riga, while economic and socio-political matters were handled by the provincial governors.

The peasant unrest in Livland in 1802 and support for reform from Tsar Alexander I stimulated the passing of the Peasant Laws of 1804. The new laws regulated the amount of corvée labour, linking it to the size and income

of the particular peasant farmstead, and forbade the landowners from buying and selling peasants. Peasant courts were set up, with representatives from the peasantry. This was an important step on the road to the abolition of serfdom.

In 1812, the Napoleonic Wars also affected Latvia. An army corps led by Marshall Macdonald invaded Courland and advanced straight toward Riga. On June 17th, a distant cloud of dust raised by a herd of livestock was mistaken as the approach of the French army. In a desperate move to protect Riga's medieval core with a blazing wall of fire, the commander of the Russian divisions stationed in Riga ordered the city's surrounding suburbs to be set ablaze. The fires destroyed nearly 800 buildings and left nearly 7000 people homeless. This act of official arson turned out to be fruitless, as in the end the French never arrived.²

During the war, rumours spread among the peasants that serfdom would be abolished. It was finally ended in Courland a few years later, in 1817, and in Livland in 1819. The laws on the emancipation of the serfs granted them personal freedom and extended their legal rights. The reforms increased the peasants' freedom of movement, and institutions of peasant self-administration were set up – parish boards and parish courts. The social status of the peasants changed: they were given surnames and obtained the right to buy land. However, corvée labour continued and practically all of the land remained the property of the landowners, who also controlled the implementation of the reforms.

In the 1840s, the laws emancipating the serfs exacerbated discontent among the Livland peasantry, and many people converted to Russian Orthodoxy in protest. This development alarmed the government and the landowners, and work began on a new law, drafted by Hamilcar von Fölkersahm. This law envisaged a transition from corvée labour to rent in money, with long-term agreements between the peasants and the holders of the estates. It also granted the peasants the right to buy out their farmsteads.

In 1861, serfdom was also abolished in Latgallia. In the course of two years, the basic principles of the relationship between the peasants and estate-owners had to be laid down in Latgallia, too, the peasants obtained the right to establish their own administration. However, Latgallia suffered badly in the wake of the 1863 Polish Revolt: official control was strengthened in local administrative institutions, schools and the Catholic Church, and printing in the Latin alphabet was forbidden according to the circular of

1865. The prohibition took effect in 1871 and existed up until 1904. Thus, Russification began earlier in Latgallia than in the rest of Latvia.

In the 1860s and 70s, the Baltic German nobles still retained their privileges and their stable position in the empire. After further reforms during the 1860s and 70s, the estate-owners lost their police power over the peasants and their right to impose corporal punishment. These reforms further developed the system of peasant self-administration. Meanwhile, new laws on urban administration abolished the privileges of the German craft guilds. From 1867, Russian replaced German as the language of administration in the Provinces of Courland and Livland.

An inspection by Senator Nikolai Manasein heralded a major Russification effort in the Baltic. The principal aim of the reforms was to reduce or abolish the special status of the Baltic Germans. Latvian social activists, who hoped that Latvian interests would be observed, were sorely disappointed. The reforms openly promoted Russification, ignoring national movements and cultures. Russian was introduced as the language of instruction in the teaching institutions of Courland and Livland, and state officials were replaced, the criterion for selection being loyalty and knowledge of Russian.

The course of the 19th century brought major socio-economic change in Latvia. At the beginning of the 19th century, Latvia had a population of 720 000, a figure that grew by the end of the century to almost two million. The ethnic composition of the population changed. At the beginning of the century, Latvians constituted about 90 percent of the population, but by the end of the century, this figure had fallen to 68 percent. The absolute number of Latvians actually grew, and the towns, too, became more Latvian. The proportion of other ethnic groups, particularly Russians and Jews, also increased, by 12 and 7 percent respectively. The proportion of town-dwellers increased from 7 percent at the beginning of the century to 40 percent at its close. Yet the strata of peasants and estate-owners still remained. However, the internal social structure of the peasantry became more complex, and during the course of the century the rights of the landowners were reduced. New elements appeared in the social structure: peasant owners of farmsteads, landless farm labourers and a new social group in the cities – the workers or proletariat.

Agriculture developed rapidly at this time, promoted by the country's advantageous geographical position, by the sale of land to the peasants and by close contact with Western European countries. In the course of

the century, the peasants were freed from serfdom, and a transition to paid labour occurred, along with crop rotation and the introduction of new cultivated plants. In famine years, potato-growing saved rural areas from starvation, while flax became a very profitable crop. The productivity of agriculture increased, and stock-rearing began to play an increasingly important role. There were still two separate forms of agricultural production: the estates and the peasant farmsteads. In 1897, 56 percent of the population made their living from farming, and, although industry was fast developing, Latvia remained an agrarian country.

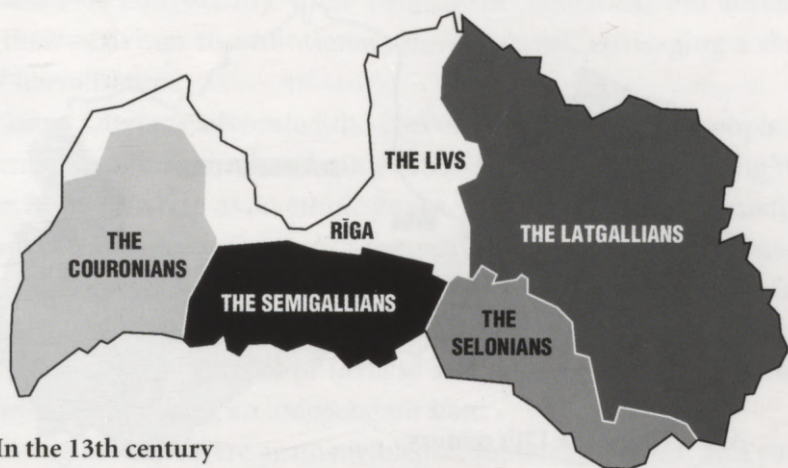
The 19th century was characterised by major industrial development. The 1830s saw a revolution in industrial production, since the abolition of serfdom had freed a large labour force. Manufactories were set up, steam power was introduced and the textile industry experienced particularly rapid development. In the late 19th century, large industrial enterprises rapidly developed in the towns and cities of Courland and Livland. Riga became the largest industrial centre in Latvia and in the whole of the Baltic. Metal-working and mechanical engineering developed particularly in Riga, Liepāja and Jelgava. Production was concentrated in large plants, most commonly owned as joint-stock companies with foreign capital.

The Latvian ports of Riga, Liepāja and Ventspils came to play an important role for the whole of the Russian Empire, particularly from the 1860s, when big railway-building projects were undertaken in Latvia. A large proportion of Russia's major export goods – grain, butter, flax and timber – passed through the ports of Latvia. Other exports included machinery, metals, coal and herrings.

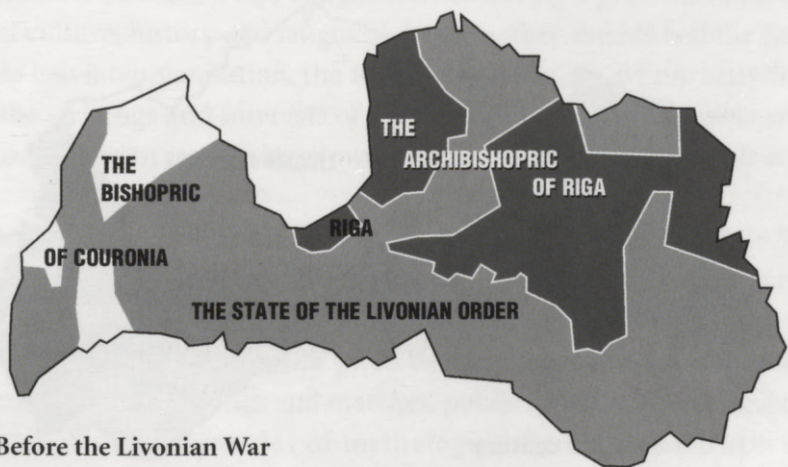
In the mid-19th century, Latvian students came to form an intellectual circle that arrived on the social and political scene, expressing their views in student evenings and especially in the newspaper *Pēterburgas Avīzes*. A great national movement began, known as the Young Latvians' movement. This period of activity is known as Latvia's National Awakening.

Criticising the existing socio-economic system in the Baltic and promoting the idea of the Latvians as a separate ethnic unit, the Young Latvians awakened national consciousness and promoted political organisation. The most active figures among the Young Latvians included Krišjānis Barons, Juris Alunāns, Krišjānis Valdemārs and Atis Kronvalds. Following Western European ideas, the views of the Young Latvians combined elements of liberalism and nationalism, directing Latvian history on a course towards

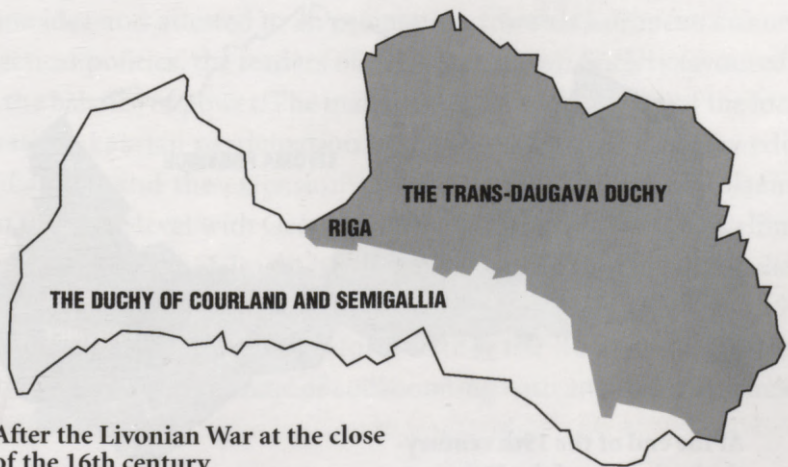
THE TERRITORY OF LATVIA FROM THE
13th TO THE 16th CENTURY



In the 13th century

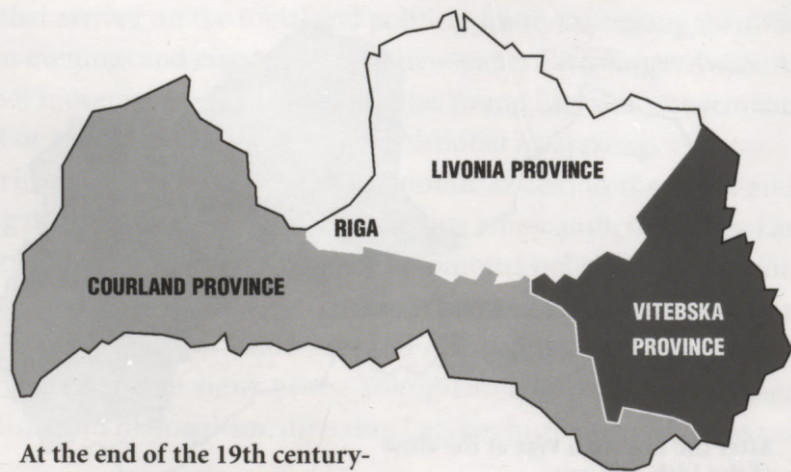


Before the Livonian War



After the Livonian War at the close
of the 16th century

THE TERRITORY OF LATVIA FROM THE
17th TO THE BEGINNING OF THE 20th CENTURY



democracy. However, in the conditions of that time in the Baltic, the Young Latvians did not consistently voice democratic demands, but instead oriented their activities to evolutionary development, envisaging a slow process of liberalisation.

The Young Latvians advocated the idea of a unified Latvian people in its own land, having a say in the administration of this land. Promoting the idea of the Latvian nation as an ethnic group, they opposed the alternative view, advanced by the Baltic Germans – that national development was based on political history, with a blending of Latvian, German and Estonian elements. However, the Young Latvians' demands only applied to those Latvians living in the Provinces of Livland and Courland, and they never even dreamt of establishing an independent state.

The Young Latvians were against violence, supported reform and paid great attention to education and enlightenment, having a profound interest in national culture, history and language. In 1868, they established the first nationwide Latvian organisation, the Riga Latvian Society, whose activities reflected the strivings and interests of the Young Latvians. The 1860s and 1870s in Latvia saw an impressive growth in press publications, schools and societies.

National ideology and national symbols developed further in the 1870s and 1880s. Under the influence of the national movement in Germany, and to compensate for the lack of political and social change in Courland and Livland, considerable attention was given to national symbols and rituals. Mass events, song festivals, flags and marches, public speeches and banquets, torchlight marches and parades of mythological figures, a pantheon of national deities and a national epic all expressed the idea of the nation as the supreme idea and attested to an orientation towards European culture.

In practical politics, the leaders of the Riga Latvian Society favoured a change in the balance of power. The main demands were: reform of the local administration, Latvian participation in urban matters, elementary education in Latvian and the extension of Latvian language rights, placing Latvian on the same level with German and Russian. With the aim of eliminating the "special order" of Tsarist rule in the Baltics – which had entrenched the power and political dominance the Baltic Germans during the 19th century – and promoting further reform within the Russian Empire, the Young Latvians adopted the tactic of collaborating with anti-German circles among the Russians.

In the 1870s, the Young Latvians faced a dilemma in this struggle: to support a reform of the existing system in the Baltic by collaborating with the liberal wing of the Baltic Germans, or to fight for its abolition and for the implementation of a different Russian system. For various reasons, the leaders of the national movement chose the second approach and fully supported the Manasein Revision. They also did not see the Russification of Latvia as a serious threat.

A somewhat paradoxical situation developed: the socio-economic system in the Baltic was much closer to the Western European model, and the Young Latvians regarded England and France as their models, but they adopted a black-and-white Slavophile view of the world, centring on Russia as a positive example. The Young Latvians thus became isolated from developments in European political thinking.

Already by the 1880s, the Young Latvian movement was spent. The movement's leaders did not react appropriately to social stratification and the emergence of new social groups, most importantly the workers. In the absence of new ideas and strong personalities among the leaders of the Young Latvians, their nationalist ideas and cultural activities alone could no longer sustain Latvian unity.

Yet the historical importance of the Young Latvians cannot be overestimated. They represented a political alternative to the existing system. They also did a great deal to modernise society and create the cultural and ideological preconditions for the establishment of the Latvian state in the 20th century.

The most important ideological and political movement in Latvia in the late 19th century – the New Current – began to develop in the late 1880s and became more active in the 1890s. This movement united young, democratically-minded Latvian intellectuals, led by Jānis Pliekšāns (the poet Rainis), Pēteris Stučka, Janis Jansons-Brauns and Miķelis Valters. The New Current movement was based mainly around the newspaper *Dienas Lapa* (1886–1897) and the legal societies. These activists wished to voice current socio-political ideas in accordance with the real social and economic conditions in Latvia.

The New Current activists returned to the European intellectual milieu and derived their ideas from the rich store of European culture. The New Current formed a kind of cultural opposition to the old values and traditions, striving for foreign contacts and seeking to Europeanise cultural life. It

emphasised self-education and the development of consciousness, promoting positive ideas and science. In this regard, the New Current had the character of an enlightenment movement.

Advocating civil liberties and parliamentary government, and spreading information about the experience of democracy abroad, the New Current activists actually laid the foundations of Latvia's democratic tradition, stimulating a struggle for democracy and a democratic system of rule. Under the slogan "Long live the worker!", they promoted their paper and instilled in Latvian workers a consciousness of their condition and class. Thus, the New Current stimulated the labour movement in Latvia. They emphasised the social aspects of current development, and saw the resolution of social problems and the attainment of social justice mainly through the realisation of socialist ideas. Through the movement's very extensive underground activities, socialist and Marxist ideas became very influential, emphasising in particular the experience of the German social democratic movement. In effect, the New Current was laying the ideological foundations for the later success of the Latvian social democratic movement.

It should be mentioned that the New Current was the first social movement in Latvia in which women took an active part and which began to spread the idea of the emancipation of women.

The New Current was an ill-defined youth movement, instilled with youthful vigour, passion and socialist romanticism, but not directly involved in political or revolutionary activities. The New Current activists reckoned that a revolution would come in about fifty years, and it was only the police officials who tried to portray the movement, after it had been crushed, as having had a nationalist political basis.

The New Current was not concerned with the national issue, and did not formulate the idea of Latvian autonomy. However, the movement undeniably had a certain political significance, since it promoted the growth of political culture among the people. The New Current had an immense modernising influence on all spheres of Latvian cultural life.

The 19th century came to a close with the Riga Uprising of 1899 and the establishment of the first social democratic organisations, heralding the approach of the Revolution of 1905, the momentous struggle of the workers and the immense influence later wielded by the social democrats.

However, Latvia was regarded by most Latvians themselves, and likewise by the administration of the Baltic Provinces and among the highest Russian

officials, as a loyal, peaceful corner of the Empire, remote from the unrest that was shaking the world. This mood was expressed very precisely by the poet Rainis:

*Many hundreds of miles away,
Beyond the bogs and forests,
My homeland sleeps its midday nap,
Sheltered by the blue vault of the sky:
Blue and sunny celestial sheets,
Shielding from all storms and currents.*

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II. LATVIA IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

(1900–1918)

2.1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

By the turn of the 20th century, Latvia's population had reached 1.93 million, of which ethnic Latvians constituted 1.31 million, or 68 percent. The other major ethnic groups included Russians (8 percent), Germans (7 percent) and Jews (6 percent). In the period up to the First World War, Latvia's population grew to almost 2.5 million, but there are no accurate statistics on changes in ethnic composition during the first fourteen years of the 20th century. Population movement was stimulated by economic development and by the political crisis that led to the Revolution of 1905. Latvian migration to other provinces of Russia continued during this period. Also, one section of the active revolutionaries were killed or sent into exile, while others fled abroad. In the period between the revolution and the First World War, German and Russian colonists were settled in Latvia. At the same time, large numbers of migrants in search of work arrived from neighbouring and distant provinces.

The Latvian countryside and agriculture. In the early 20th century, Latvia witnessed a fall in the proportion of the population inhabiting rural areas. Thus, at the close of the 19th century, the rural population made up 71 percent of the total, but by 1914 this figure had fallen to 60 percent. Nearly half of the population (49 percent) was employed in agriculture. The rural areas of Courland and the Latvian counties of Livland were practically monoethnic, with an overwhelming predominance of ethnic Latvian peasants. The situation was different in Latgallia, where 60 percent of the peasants were Latvian and 28 percent were Russian. Latvia had an enormous number of landless peasants – almost 600 000, or 55 percent of all peasants. In Latvia, the peasants owned 39 percent of agricultural land, with average holdings of 27 hectares (the mean figure for European Russia being only 12 hectares).

In Courland and Livland, peasant agriculture was based on family farms, while in Latgallia a different system existed. In this region, as in Russia, the peasants lived in villages, agricultural production being organised within a peasant commune. The separation of family holdings from the commune proceeded at a slow pace in Latgallia, hindering the development of larger farms.

Apart from the peasantry, land in Latvia was owned by the church (0.9 percent), the state (11 percent) and private landowners, mainly the nobility (48 percent). The nobles in Latvia numbered around 19 000–20 000 and included Baltic Germans, Poles, Russians and Polonised Baltic Germans. In Courland and Livland, the absolute majority of nobles were Baltic Germans, while in Latgallia the other three ethnic groups made up the majority. Most private land was in the hands of 1114 noble or “knightly” families. Certain of these families had vast landholdings. The 86 estates owned by the barons of Courland, with a total area of 290 000 hectares, between them covered a larger area than whole of Liepāja County. The 35 richest noble families each owned around 10 000 hectares.

The estates were important centres of economic and cultural life in the countryside, although their role declined in the 20th century. In Courland and Livland, the estates contributed 33 percent of agricultural production – a proportion almost five times greater than in inland Russia. In Latvia, there were 1254 private estates, 225 crown estates and 171 pastors’ estates – 1650 estates altogether. These had an average of around 350–400 hectares of agricultural land. The pastors’ estates were markedly smaller, as were the estates in Latgallia. In addition to agriculture, virtually all of the estates had other sources of income such as stock farms, lime and brick kilns, breweries and vodka distilleries, mills and sawmills. The workforce on the estates consisted mainly of peasant labourers.

The estates were in a much more advantageous and privileged situation for economic development than were the peasant farms. The estate-owners obtained considerable income in the form of payments from the peasants for the farms they were renting or buying out. In addition, nine tenths of the tax burden for maintaining municipal authorities, schools and roads was shouldered by the peasantry. Only the estate-owners were permitted to engage in forestry and other kinds of production. They also had fishing and hunting rights on peasant lands and the right to appoint the parish pastor. The Tsarist authorities upheld the legally-enshrined inequality and privileges

of the nobility – one of the main causes of social tension between the peasantry and the nobles.

One of the characteristic features of Latvian agriculture at the beginning of the 20th century was competition between the estates and the peasant farms, and in this regard, the latter were beginning to prevail. The estates had more land than the peasants, but the peasants made more intensive use of theirs. The peasant farmsteads had a significantly greater proportion of arable land than the estates, which had extensive tracts of forest and fallow land. Modern crop rotation systems were becoming established, with an increase in the areas under clover and grass. Along with the development of stock farming, the use of organic fertilizer increased. By this time, virtually all of the estates and peasant farms were also using artificial fertilizers.

Agriculture experienced rapid technical development. Machinery was not only imported, but also manufactured by 34 domestic companies, which meant that more expensive and complicated equipment could be purchased, such as sowers, reapers and threshing machines. About 10 percent of all the steam threshing machines in the Russian Empire were concentrated in Courland and Livland. The peasant farmsteads were not as well provided with machinery as the estates, but they used their equipment much more intensively. In terms of mechanisation, Latgallia fell far behind the other two regions of Latvia.

Traction was mainly provided by horses, 70 percent of which belonged to the peasants and 23 percent to the estates. The average estate had 50–60 horses, and only 9 percent of peasant farms were without a horse in 1912.

Productivity on the peasant farms was lower than on the estates, but because they sowed larger areas, the peasants actually produced more than two thirds of the total cereal harvest. Overall, agricultural productivity in Latvia lagged behind the Western European level, but was equal to that of the fertile *chernozem* (black soil) area of Russia and considerably exceeded the level in Russia's non-*chernozem* zone.

As on the estates, so too on the peasant farms, rationally organised stock farming developed as the main branch of agricultural production, and dairy farming emerged as a specialisation. The estates had large herds of cattle belonging to productive breeds and giving a high milk yield. Stockbreeding was very strictly supervised by livestock societies, and Latvian purebred stock was in demand across the whole of Russia. On the peasant farms, milk yields were lower and cattle breeding did not attain such high standards, but the

total number of cattle on peasant farms far exceeded the number of cattle on the estates, and the organisation of stockbreeding by the peasants was developing very rapidly. Likewise, pig farming was developing mainly on the peasant farms as an adjunct to dairy farming.

A strong peasant cooperative movement developed during the first years of the 20th century. By 1914, there were 860 peasant agricultural societies and organisations, including jointly-owned dairies and livestock societies, societies that provided joint use of machinery, consumer associations and agrarian educational societies. Despite opposition from the Tsarist authorities and the estate-owners, three central bodies were established to coordinate and lead the cooperative movement. The Riga Central Agricultural Society, established in 1906, became the first union of agricultural societies in the whole empire, and farmers came from many provinces of Russia to learn from the Latvian farming experience.

The work of these agricultural societies promoted a rapid increase in the competitiveness of Latvian peasant farming compared with the estates. By educating the peasantry and instilling a sense of pride and responsibility, the societies played more than just an economic and educational role. They were at the same time helping to define the social aims of the peasantry and promoting a national consciousness.

On the eve of the First World War, agricultural production in Latvia was already dominated by the peasant farms, and the peasant householders had completed the process of buying out their farms from the estates. Of inestimable importance in this regard was the Latvian peasants' love of their land, their dedication and hardiness, and the great amount of heavy labour contributed by the peasant householders and their families. In spite of the continued presence of elements of the feudal system, a labour shortage and other problems, agriculture in Latvia represented a progressive, dynamic branch of the economy.

Industry, transport, trade and credit institutions. The character of industrial development at the beginning of the 20th century was determined by Latvia's geographical position, by the traditional links with Western Europe, the dominance of the Baltic Germans and the opportunities provided by the vast market of inland Russia. Historically developed factors were also at work: a superior level of organisation of production and a more qualified workforce than in the Russian Empire as a whole.

Already in 1900, Latvia, which had only 1.5 percent of the Russian Empire's

total population, provided 5.5 percent of industrial production. Chemicals, timber and metalworking contributed a particularly large proportion of Latvia's industrial production.

In the early years of the 20th century, industrial development in Latvia's cities and regions proceeded unevenly. In 1913, the Latvian counties of Livland were providing 83 percent of Latvia's total industrial production, while Latgallia provided only 2.5 percent. Four cities – Riga, Liepāja, Jelgava and Daugavpils – had 72 percent of the industrial enterprises between them and 85 percent of the industrial workforce. Riga alone was home to 59 percent of Latvia's companies, and had 79 percent of the workers.

The concentration of Latvian industry in the cities was intensified by its consolidation in the hands of a small number of companies, a process that by 1913 had reached a remarkable level. The proportion of workers employed in companies with a staff of 101–500 had reached 35 percent, while companies with more than 500 workers accounted for 46 percent of the industrial workforce.

The most important branches of industry in Latvia were metalworking and mechanical engineering, chemicals, textiles, wood processing, the manufacture of building materials, food processing, papermaking and printing. The metalworking, mechanical engineering and chemical industries clearly dominated, together employing 46 percent of the workers and contributing 48 percent of Latvia's total industrial production.

The metalworking and engineering companies turned out a particularly wide range of products. Thus, the railway carriage manufacturing giants *Phoenix* and the Russian-Baltic Railway Car Factory produced not only high quality railway carriages and tramcars, but also high quality steel, agricultural machinery and internal combustion engines. Besides this, the Russian-Baltic Railway Car Factory was the Russian Empire's pioneer in automobile and airplane manufacturing. Other Riga factories also went into airplane and automobile production, along with the manufacture of airplane engines.

Latvia's metalworking and mechanical engineering enterprises also produced electric motors and electrical equipment, diesel engines, steam engines and turbines, and instruments. A string of shipbuilders led by *Lange and Son* provided steamships, icebreakers, tugboats, ferries and shipping equipment. The chemical enterprises produced varnishes, paints, mineral oils and fertilizers, while the manufacture of rubber goods was of particular importance. Riga was home to Russia's largest rubber manufacturer, *Provodnik*,

fourth in the world in terms of the volume of rubber goods manufactured and the second biggest producer of rubber tyres. With 16 000 employees, it was Latvia's largest enterprise. The growth of economic activity also stimulated the building material, timber and food industries, while the development of the textile industry lagged somewhat behind.

There was an active process of industrial monopolisation, as companies joined international, all-Russian and local-scale monopolies. The big mechanical engineering factory *Felser & Co* joined the International Diesel Construction Factory Syndicate, while the *Union* factory came under the control of the German electronics concern *AEG*, and the oil refining plant *A. Elrich & Co* became part of the international vaseline cartel. The Russian-Baltic Railway Car Factory and *Phoenix* joined the Russian *Prodvagon* syndicate, and the Latvian nail and wire factories became part of the Russian syndicate *Gvozd'*. Timber, building material, paper and foodstuff manufacturers united to form Latvian-scale syndicates.

The concentration of capital in Latvian industry also occurred through the establishment of joint-stock companies. By 1913, 72 such companies had already been formed, and their growth rate exceeded that of joint-stock companies in Russia. Many were actually subsidiaries of foreign companies, with English, French and particularly German capital. Collaboration and contacts with Western European companies and groups promoted the modernisation and development of companies in Latvia.

Both the sources of raw materials and the markets for Latvian industry lay outside of Latvia. Only 8 percent of the raw materials and semi-manufactured products for industry were supplied at home, with 27 percent being imported from other parts of the Empire and 65 percent from abroad. At the same time, 63 percent of Latvian production was sold in inland Russia, 26 percent was retained for local needs and 11 percent was exported. Thus, more than nine tenths of raw materials were imported and three quarters of production were not intended for local consumption.

In the decade leading up to the First World War, Latvia's industry experienced rapid technical modernisation. New steam boilers were installed, steam engines were replaced with electric and internal combustion engines, and new machinery was obtained. Factories were provided with electric lighting and heating. The annual rate of industrial growth at this time reached 6.4 percent, which was the highest figure not only in the Russian Empire, but in the entire world, exceeding the world figure by a factor of 1.6.

This phenomenal growth of Latvian industrial production reached its highest point in 1913. The number of industrial enterprises had grown 1.6 times, reaching a total of 790 companies. The industrial workforce had reached 110,000, an increase of 1.8 times, while the volume of production had reached 313 million roubles, growing 2.2 times compared to 1897. Certain branches of industry enjoyed an even higher level of growth. The greatest boom was experienced in the animal products sector, where the workforce grew by a figure of five, while the total volume of production increased 18 times.

The military also commissioned a great deal of work from Latvian industrial enterprises. As a result, these companies also played a role in the pre-war arms race. On the eve of the First World War, more than half of the volume of production in Riga's factories consisted of such military equipment as warships; electric, internal combustion and diesel engines for ships and fortresses; goods and passenger railway cars; automobiles; armoured cars; airplanes; military field kitchens; artillery and optical equipment; gunpowder manufacturing equipment; barbed wire; tyres and pontoons.

In the early part of the 20th century, the railway was in an unrivalled position in Latvia as a transporter of goods and passengers. The existing network, consisting of nine broad gauge and one narrow gauge line, was augmented in the years before the First World War with another two broad gauge and three narrow gauge lines, increasing the total track length to 1651 km (of which narrow gauge lines comprised 18 percent). More than a third of Latvia's towns and cities had railway links connecting them to regions of inland Russia. The railways promoted the growth of Latvia's major ports and industrial centres of Riga, Liepāja, Ventspils and Daugavpils.

Railway construction also stimulated economic activity in the small towns, and in many cases the building of a narrow gauge line was itself a sufficient stimulus for development. Of particular importance among the lines built in the early 20th century was the Ventspils–Moscow–Rybinsk Railway, which had the effect of transforming Ventspils into a major port, while the narrow gauge lines of Livland served to revitalise entire regions.

At the same time, many of the old trade routes and centres declined. Jelgava lost its important role and likewise, many previously flourishing small towns of Courland remained without access to the railway. Plans for building a network of narrow gauge lines in Courland were not realised, and neither was the idea of an electric line between Riga and Rīgas Jūrmala, or

the proposal for a Liepāja–Klaipėda line, which would have linked up with the German railway network.

The development of the railways in Latvia diminished the traditional role of horse-drawn transport, although horse post stations were still quite widespread. So were passenger and goods cabs in the towns, along with horse-drawn omnibus and coach services in some places. The role of the inland waterways declined. Only two of Latvia's rivers, the Daugava and the Lielupe, were navigable in their lower courses, and these had steamer services for passengers and goods, notably between Jelgava and Riga. The Gauja and Daugava were very important as timber-floating rivers. The economic importance of Latvia's inland waterways would have been significantly augmented with the implementation of the proposed Venta-Nemunas Canal, which was to connect Ventspils with the Vistula Basin, and the Riga–Herson Waterway, which would have connected the Baltic and the Black Sea. However, the prohibitive expense of these projects prevented them from ever being realised.

In addition to railway transport, other modern forms of transportation also developed in Latvia. At the turn of the 20th century, the first electric tram lines were built in Riga and Liepāja. Automobile transport also began to develop. By 1910, there were 123 automobiles and 40 motorcycles in Latvia. The first taxis appeared in Riga, as did the first bus services between cities, and automobiles also began to be used for military transport.

The rapid growth of Latvia's ports and shipping was a manifest sign of Latvia's economic development and increasing international links. The ports of Riga, Liepāja and Ventspils were considerably enlarged and modernised. Important for coastal shipping were the minor ports along the Gulf of Riga and coast of Livland: Ainaži, Kolka, Roja, Mērsrags and Pāvilosta, which were linked to Riga by steamer services.

The number and tonnage of the ships coming into Latvia's ports increased rapidly. In 1913, Latvia's three largest ports – Riga, Liepāja and Ventspils – were visited by an immense number of vessels – 5289 altogether, with a total tonnage of 3.6 million tons. German and British shipping predominated, and only 15 percent of the ships arriving at these ports sailed under the Russian flag. On the eve of the war, 56 steamships were registered at Latvian ports, mostly belonging to German shipping companies, as well as 105 sailing ships, virtually all under Latvian ownership. The ships regis-

tered in Latvia constituted 64 percent of the steamers and 42 percent of the sailing vessels in Russia's Baltic Sea merchant fleet.¹

Although sailing ships virtually ceased to be built after 1910, there were around 700 Latvian sailing vessels in operation before the war. About 5000 seamen manned Latvia's sailing vessels and steamers, while along the Baltic Sea coast, about 10 000 Latvian fishermen were engaged in coastal fisheries, with more than 3500 boats at their disposal.

Regular shipping services linked the ports of Latvia with the Russian Empire's other dominions on the Baltic coast, and with British, Belgian and Dutch ports. The growing role of the Latvian ports within Russia's foreign trade was determined by the ports' location on the transit routes between Russia and Western Europe, by the fact that Liepāja and Ventspils were practically ice-free, and by their convenient railway links to inland Russia. From the end of the 19th century up to 1913, the proportion of Russia's foreign trade handled by the Latvian ports grew from 14 to 24 percent, with Riga's share increasing from 8 to 17 percent. From its position as third in importance, Riga grew to become the leading port in the Russian Empire. Exports increased with astonishing rapidity, growing three times over from Riga, and 56 six times over from Ventspils. Altogether, 28 percent of Russia's exports passed through the ports of Latvia by 1913.

The main exports from Riga, Liepāja and Ventspils were timber, flax, hemp, grain, butter, eggs, meat, leather and furs. Riga became the world's largest timber exporting port just before the war. The Russian Empire's exports through Latvian ports went mainly to Germany and great Britain, as well as Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, France and the USA.

Nearly a quarter (24 percent) of Russia's imports also passed through the ports of Latvia. Imports still consisted mainly of raw materials such as Indian rubber, cotton and coal, as well as instruments, machinery, equipment and spare parts. With a growing demand for foodstuffs and colonial goods, an increasing amount of herrings, salt, coffee, tea, cocoa, spices and fruit were imported through the ports of Latvia. The main countries of origin were Great Britain, Germany, the USA and Sweden.

A significant proportion of import and export goods remained in the territory of Latvia, serving the needs of industry and local consumption.

Jewish and Baltic German merchants owned most of the large trading companies and leading enterprises. They also dominated commerce in Latvia in the early years of the 20th century. The Latvians, whose role in commerce

was continually expanding, generally owned smaller trading companies. The number of commercial companies grew, as did the number of managers and workers employed in them. At the turn of the 20th century, 325 000 people, or 14 percent of the working population, were employed in trade in Latvia's four largest cities of Riga, Liepāja, Daugavpils and Jelgava.²

Compared with the Russian Empire in general, the Latvian-populated provinces of Courland and Livland had a very high trade turnover and profits per inhabitant (312 and 20 roubles, respectively) – four times greater than in the Empire as a whole.

Extensive trade, urban development and the advance of industry and agriculture would all have been unthinkable without the existence of stable credit institutions, whose number in the territory of Latvia had exceeded 300 by 1914. The local financial sector was in Baltic German hands. This applies particularly to the banks: nine out of 11 private banks in Latvia were based on German capital and were controlled by the Germans. The exceptions were the Latvian-owned Jelgava Commercial Bank and the Russian-controlled Daugavpils Bank. Among the major banks was the Riga Stock Exchange Bank, the Baltic's most modern bank, and the Riga Commercial Bank, which handled the largest deals and was the second largest provincial commercial bank in Russia. Alongside their booming financial operations, the banks also provided major donations to culture, education and public works.

The Russian State Bank and a string of the Russian Empire's major banks also had branches in Latvia. The Empire's big banks gained control of several important enterprises, including the Russian-Baltic Railway Car Factory and *Phoenix*. However, the Russian banks never succeeded in toppling the Baltic Germans from their leading financial position in the territory of Latvia. The Baltic Germans remained the financiers of Latvia's major industrial and commercial ventures.

Credit institutions providing credit to medium-sized and small manufacturing and trading businesses, house-owners, farmers and craft workers were also very widespread in Latvia. Shortly before the war, there were 41 mutual credit societies and 236 credit unions in the territory of Latvia. Mutual credit societies could loan up to 25 000 roubles, while credit unions generally did not loan more than 1000 roubles. Latvia's credit unions had 112 000 members, including almost 70 percent of Latvian farmers.³ The credit unions of Latvia were a unique phenomenon within the Russian

Empire. In Russia, only 5 percent of workers had credit union deposits, while in Latvia this figure was 63 percent. In 1905 the total deposits in the credit unions of Livland and Courland constituted 43 percent of total credit union deposits in the Russian Empire.

The mutual credit societies and especially the credit unions were of great service to a great many Latvians. They provided the opportunity for a stratum of Latvian industrialists, traders and house-owners to emerge and establish itself in a fairly short period. They also provided capital for peasant farmsteads. The credit unions and mutual credit societies donated part of their profits to schools, scholarships, courses and various cultural and educational activities in Latvian towns and rural areas.

Urbanisation in Latvia in the early 20th century. Riga as a multinational city. The growth of industry and trade in Latvia was accompanied by a rapid population increase and a tremendous pace of urbanisation. In the 17 years from 1897 to 1914, Latvia's urban population grew 1.8 times and exceeded one million, with the percentage of town-dwellers in Latvia growing from 29 to 40.⁴ About 70 percent of the urban population was concentrated in three major centres – Riga, Daugavpils and Liepāja. At that time, Riga and Daugavpils could be classed as cities (having more than 100 000 inhabitants). The proportion of city-dwellers in Latvia reached 25 percent, a figure exceeded in Europe only by Britain.

The course of urban development, influenced by Latvia's strategic geographical position, the modernisation of transportation, industrial development and other factors, was uncontrolled and uneven. Between 1897 and 1914, the populations of Rēzekne and Valka doubled, while that of Ventspils even tripled. Some of this urban population increase was the result of the extension of town limits and natural increase, but most of it was due to migration. In the towns of Courland and Livland, more than half of the population were newcomers. The largest section of migrants consisted of landless peasants, farm labourers and the younger sons and daughters of householders, who came from Courland and Livland. Approximately one in five migrants were from other provinces. The case was different for the peasantry of Latgallia, where the towns were undeveloped, and where the labour market was very limited. Most peasant job seekers sought work in the Russian provinces and in Riga.

An incongruity appeared in Latvian urban society between the pre-existing social classification along the lines of the traditional social orders,

and a modern social structure that was based on property relations and employment. Thus, even when they came to the towns, rural people were still classed as peasants, while house-owners, honorary citizens, traders, petty bourgeoisie and artisans were classed as town citizens. The colourful urban spectrum also included the nobles, the clergy, state officials and soldiers.

In contrast to the situation in rural areas, where Latvians predominated, the ethnic composition of Latvia's towns and cities was mixed. In the early part of the 20th century, the situation did change in favour of the Latvians. In most towns of Courland and Livland, Latvians had at least a relative majority (being the largest single ethnic group), and in seven towns they constituted the absolute majority, making up more than half of the population. The Baltic Germans had minimal potential for population increase, and in the largest cities – Riga, Liepāja and Jelgava – the Latvians already outnumbered them.

Within the framework of a concerted Russification policy, the Tsarist government promoted the influx of ethnic Russians into the Baltic Provinces. The Russian population augmented significantly in the cities, most notably in Riga and Liepāja, where Russians made up the second and fourth largest ethnic group, respectively. The Polish and Lithuanian populations in Riga and Liepāja also grew rapidly.

The situation was completely different in Latgallia, where the Jewish population predominated in all of the towns, along with a significant proportion of Russians, Belarussians and Poles. The Latvians formed a small minority in the towns of Latgallia making up only 4.6 percent of the population in Ludza and 12.8 percent in Rēzekne.⁵ Riga and Liepāja also had large Jewish communities. In Riga Jews were the fourth largest ethnic group (with 7 percent of the population), while in Liepāja they were the third largest (15 percent).

In religious terms, too, Latvia's urban population was heterogeneous. Protestantism was dominant, since two thirds of the Latvians and Baltic Germans were Lutheran. A third of the Latvians, along with most Belarussians, Poles and Lithuanians, were Roman Catholics. The Russians, some of the Belarussians and a small number of Lithuanians belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church. Certain areas had sizeable communities of Old Believers (Russians and Belarussians). Virtually all of the Jews adhered to Judaism.

At the turn of the century, industry provided a substantial proportion

of the employment in the towns and cities, providing jobs for 36 percent of the urban population. Another 17 percent worked as domestic servants, 13 percent in trade, 7 percent in transportation and 6 percent in the civil service, public institutions and the free professions.

Riga's pre-war population. Riga held a special position in Latvia's urbanisation process. Riga's population grew rapidly in the early part of the 20th century. Between 1897 and 1913, it increased by 88 percent, reaching a figure of 482 000. Riga was the largest city in the Baltic, and was the region's centre of trade, industry and culture. People actually born in Riga constituted only slightly over a third of the city's total population. The rest were immigrants from Livland, Courland and the provinces of Russia.

The Rigans were a diverse crowd in occupational, religious, educational and ethnic terms. In the early 20th century, Riga definitely was a multiethnic city. In 1913, Riga had Latvian, Russian, German, Polish, Jewish, Lithuanian and other ethnic communities. Forty-two percent of the townspeople were not in paid employment, 39 percent were workers and 16 percent belonged to the wealthy bourgeoisie (property owners, civil servants and members of the free professions). The majority of Rigans were Protestant (mainly the Germans and Latvians). One section of Latvians, most of the Belarussians and virtually all of the Poles and Lithuanians were Roman Catholic. The Russians and part of the Latvian population were Russian Orthodox believers, and virtually all the Jews practiced Judaism. In 1913, 86 percent of Riga's population were literate, with illiteracy being highest among migrants from Russia and Lithuania. Although Latvians were in the majority in Riga, the influx of migrants from the provinces of Russia led to a reduction of the Latvian share of the city's population compared to the turn of the century. Most of the Latvians living in Riga were employed in industry and trade. Half of all the domestic servants in Riga were Latvian, and Latvians also predominated among house-owners.

However, Latvians were in quite a weak position among Riga's wealthy bourgeoisie, making up only slightly more than one fifth of the territory's top officials and members of the free professions. Latvians owned many craft workshops and small industrial businesses, but all the big businesses in the major branches of industry belonged to non-Latvians. They were quite happy to employ Latvian workers, since the Latvians were among Riga's best-educated and most qualified workers. While the number of Latvian city councillors in Riga increased three times compared with the turn of

the century, Latvians still could not seriously threaten Baltic German hegemony in the administration of Riga. A great many Riga Latvians were fluent in both German and Russian, and although Latvian did not have the same official status as Russian and German, it was regarded as Riga's unofficial third language.

From the turn of the century, the Russian-speaking population of Riga (mainly Great Russians) grew very rapidly – more than doubling. The majority of military personnel, every fifth civil servant and member of the free professions, every fourth Riga worker and every fifth domestic servant belonged to this ethnic group.

The Russians were in a very modest position among Riga's wealthy bourgeoisie. Some Russians did become house-owners, but the proportion of Russians among the city's house-owners was smaller than that of the Germans and Latvians. The Russians owned several trading companies, as well as small and medium-sized industrial companies. The only large Russian-owned business was the Sergei Kuznetsov Porcelain Factory. Thus, the Russians were in an incomparably weaker economic position in Riga than the Germans and the Jews. Russian had the status of an official language in Riga, being the language of instruction in education and the language of administration – a status conferred on it by the Tsarist administration as a means of promoting Russification.

Although the number of Russian speakers was increasing rapidly, Riga's non-Russian population did not face any direct threat of Russification, since Russian-speakers were a very heterogeneous group in terms of their outlook, social position and education. They had a poor knowledge of other languages, and their level of culture and education was comparatively low.⁶ The Old Believers of Riga constituted a very isolated group, standing apart from the other Russian speakers in religious terms.

Compared with the 19th century, the proportion of Germans among the Rigans had fallen significantly. The Germans were mainly intellectuals. Considerable numbers served as high-ranking officials in industry, trade and transportation and there were many in the free professions. The German population also included relatively large numbers of rentiers, pensioners and school pupils. Ethnic Germans constituted only a small part of the industrial labour force, but these were all highly qualified workers.

The Germans retained their influential position in the city's economic, social and cultural life, and in the urban administration. Almost a third of

Riga house-owners were Germans. The number of German councillors on the Riga City Council did fall, but with more than half of the councillors, the Germans succeeded in maintaining control of the municipal authority. The Baltic Germans, along with the Imperial Germans (Germans from Germany), dominated in Riga's large-scale industry, banking and commerce. Most of Riga's big factories were German-owned, as were the largest ships, craft workshops, hotels and restaurants.

The Baltic Germans of Riga were a very unified and cohesive population group, with a great deal of economic and political expertise, a highly-developed social life, a high level of culture and education and diverse contacts with Western Europe. In parallel with Russian, German was an officially recognised language in Riga, having considerable influence. Many members of other ethnic groups in Riga, mainly Latvians and Jews, had received a German education, spoke German at home and had been brought up in the German cultural tradition. In terms of its appearance, traditions, manners and contacts, Riga continued to display a host of German characteristics, so in the early part of the 20th century it was still regarded as a German city.

The Jewish population of Riga had also increased by 1913. Along with the Germans, Jews were prominent as owners of the largest industrial and trading enterprises, as well as in housing. Riga's Jewish population was cultured and educated, with a good knowledge of local languages, including Latvian. They maintained extensive foreign contacts. There were many Jews among the intellectuals and they did not face the problems of integration in Riga encountered by the Russians. The Polish and Lithuanian populations also grew rapidly.

In the early 20th century, a unique multiethnic setting had developed in Riga, with a great diversity of languages, religions, cultures and customs. Fortunately, the Rigans were generally tolerant towards one another, apart from the traditional rivalry between Latvians and Baltic Germans. Overall, the Latvians, as the city's largest ethnic group, demonstrated a high degree of open-mindedness towards the other groups.

Riga was also a major transport node, and served as Russia's main gateway to the West. Meeting and intersecting in this city were western and eastern, southern and northern characteristics and traditions. A distinctive, modern European metropolis had emerged.

The economy and people of Latvia in the years of the First World War. During the First World War, a number of negative factors had a devastating

effect on Latvia's economy and social life. Throughout almost the entire war, Latvia was either near the front or in directly in the zone of conflict. Courland was under German occupation from 1915 onwards, followed by Riga and part of Livland in 1917, and by the rest of the country in 1918. Northern Livland and Latgallia suffered from Bolshevik socio-economic experiments in 1917 and 1918.

Agriculture was undermined by the mobilisation of working-age men into the Russian army, and by the frequent requisitioning of grain, horses and cattle. The Baltic German estate-owners, exploiting their privileges and contacts, strove to avoid requisitioning and taxes, placing the bulk of this burden on the shoulders of the Latvian peasants. This only served to exacerbate social tensions between the peasantry and the nobility. A law adopted in 1916, revoked certain privileges of the nobility, but did not do much to alter this state of affairs. Economic competition between the peasant farms and the estates increased, with the latter losing still more of their economic potential and ceasing to function as broad-ranging economic units. When they confiscated the estates and turned them into Soviet farms, the Bolsheviks did win popularity among a wide section of the rural population, but this action was certainly not a success in economic terms. Accordingly, in 1917 and 1918, Latvia experienced a serious food shortage.

By 1918, more than half of Latvia's civil parishes had suffered from warfare and were criss-crossed with abandoned trenches. A quarter of pre-war agricultural land had been abandoned, livestock numbers had been significantly depleted and the highly productive dairy-farming sector had been decimated. One in ten buildings had been ruined in the war, and 14 percent had suffered damage.

The war seriously damaged Latvia's transport network industry and trade, and the monetary system. The transport network, and particularly the railways, had been placed at the service of the military, but railway-building activity continued during the war years. In both Livland and German-occupied Courland, new lines (mostly narrow-gauge) were built, mainly for military purposes, so that during the course of the war the total track length of Latvia's railways increased by a third. However, by the close of the war, many railways, highways and bridges had been destroyed.

At the outbreak of the war, the German fleet blockaded the Baltic Sea and Latvia's trade with Western Europe was effectively terminated. Latvian

industry could no longer obtain the fuel and raw materials it depended on. The merchant fleet suffered great losses and very little of it survived the war. Latvia's ports, which had formerly been so lively, were now paralysed. The value of the rouble fell, and when deposits at banks and credit unions were reduced, many lost their savings. The financial systems established by the occupying German authorities, the new Russian democracy and the *Iskolats* Bolshevik Republic were unstable. By the end of the war, only memories remained of Latvia's once-flourishing financial system.

At the beginning of the war, certain factories in Latvia became engaged in the frenzied production of large quantities of military equipment (including the world's first tank prototype, as well as armoured cars and mobile anti-aircraft guns). However, industry in general was hit by a grave crisis. Suffering from a chronic shortage of raw materials and fuel, factories reduced or ceased production, and the smaller ones went out of business altogether. In 1915, only three of the largest industrial enterprises were still working. There were marked problems with the supply of goods to the cities. Rising urban unemployment led workers to seek jobs either in Latvia's rural areas or in the cities of Russia.

However, it was the forced evacuation of production facilities in 1915, mainly from Riga, which caused the greatest losses to Latvian industry. Machinery and equipment, raw materials and vehicles, church bells and copper roofs with a total value of 186 million roubles were taken away, filling 30 000 railway cars. Another 75 factories in Daugavpils, Latgallia's largest industrial centre, were evacuated in 2500 cars. Altogether in 1915, 523 industrial companies were moved to inland Russia with all of their machinery. About 80 percent of these were Riga-based businesses.

This evacuation turned into the wholesale plunder of Latvia, in which Riga and Livland suffered the most, and which included the evacuation of public institutions and schools. About a quarter of a million Riga workers and their families also left for Russia. By mid-1916, Riga had only 31 small companies left, with 1500 employees. Factory buildings now served either as military barracks or stood empty. From a noisy, bustling industrial and cultural metropolis, Riga was transformed into a quiet, provincial centre. By the close of the war, the flourishing Latvian industry of the pre-war period had been virtually wiped out.

The first stream of refugees from Courland in 1915 rapidly grew into a monumental exodus that came to include a large section of Latvia's

population. The provinces of Courland and then Livland were affected the most. Following the Tsarist government's orders, Latvian refugees left the vicinity of the front for the northern and eastern parts of Latvia, as well as Estonia, St Petersburg (from 1914 – Petrograd), Moscow, the neighbouring provinces of inland Russia, and even Ukraine, the Urals and Siberia. This uncontrolled process continued up until 1917. As refugee numbers swelled, the Tsarist authorities proved completely incapable of resolving the problems faced by these people. Latvian refugees became a poignant symbol of the misery of the war. Their plight was most distressing: poverty, disease, hopelessness and high mortality were the characteristic features of refugee life. In 1916, more than 800 000 refugees out of a pre-war Latvian population of 2.4 million were scattered throughout the broad expanse of Russia.⁷ One third of the entire population, including half of all ethnic Latvians, had left the country, a proportion higher than anywhere else during the First World War. This was occurring in a situation where the German army was gradually occupying Latvia. The massive flight of refugees raised serious doubts about the very future of Latvia and its people.

The war radically changed Latvia's ethnic and social composition. The Baltic Germans were the target of growing anti-German feeling in Russia, and German sympathisers began to be deported to Siberia. The Baltic German community split up and disintegrated in 1915–1916. In German-occupied Courland, many Baltic Germans, particularly the Courland nobility, sided with Germany, hoping to secure its aid in preserving their privileges and power. In Livland, however, the diet still functioned, and many local Germans maintained their allegiance to Russia. Nevertheless, thousands of Baltic Germans, either forcibly or in the course of evacuation, ended up in Russia, merged into Russian society and never returned. In 1917, after the German occupation of Riga and the October Coup in Russia, the remaining Baltic Germans of Latvia came out unambiguously on the side of Germany.

Regarding the Jews as being sympathetic towards Germany, the Russian military ordered 40 000 Courland Jews to be driven from their homes in 1915. During the war, 75 percent of Latvia's Jewish population – more than 130 000 people – went to inland Russia, either moving voluntarily or being forcibly relocated.

With the reduction of the Russian administrative apparatus in the territory of Latvia, large numbers of Russian officials and their families left

for inland Russia, along with Russian traders and industrialists. Thus, in the course of a couple of years, the Russian population of Riga was reduced eightfold. Latvia's Polish and Lithuanian populations also fell considerably.

After the war had ended, Latvia held the unenviable distinction of being one of Europe's most war-ravaged areas. Only Belgium suffered more physical damage, and only Serbia lost a greater proportion of its population.

2.2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOMESTIC POLITICS

At the beginning of the 20th century, the regions of the Russian Empire with a Latvian population still did not constitute a single administrative unit, but formed three different provinces. The Province of Courland consisted of ten Latvian-populated counties, the Province of Livland had four Latvian counties and five Estonian counties, and the Province of Vitebsk included three Latvian counties. The counties with a Latvian population had 20 towns and cities, 61 townships and 490 parishes. Courland and Livland, together with the Province of Estonia, were known as the Empire's Baltic Provinces. The Province of Vitebsk, on the other hand, was classed as one of Russia's north-western provinces, thus continuing Latgallia's isolation from the other two regions of Latvia. The Russian authorities did not recognise or even permit the use of the term "Latvia" for referring to the Latvian-populated area.

Local administration in Latvia was based on the general system in the Empire. The highest representatives of state authority, who also headed the bureaucratic and police apparatus, were the provincial governors. The 19th-century practice of appointing governors from among the Baltic Germans was ended at the beginning of the 20th century. From then on, the governorships went to Russian officials, who were subordinate to the Tsar and the Minister of the Interior. The governor of Livland resided in Riga, while the governor of Courland resided in Jelgava.

Through the provincial administration, the governors also controlled the municipal authorities. The Board of Urban Affairs was in charge of matters relating to the cities, while the Board of Peasant Affairs supervised the parish authorities. Factory inspectorates supervised the observance of factory regulations and the life and mood of the workers. At the county level, the county captain represented the state and held supreme police power.

The police force of the whole province was under the charge of the governor. Although there were Latvians and a large number of Lithuanians in the police force, they were generally restricted to the lowest ranks. The Empire's political police was represented in Latvia by the provincial boards of gendarmes, gendarmes from the Riga and Daugavpils railway departments, and the Riga District of the (Russian Empire's) Security Department, or *Ohranka*. A military force of around 40 000 men was also stationed in the territory of Latvia.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Russia still retained its archaic state system, with no constitution or parliament. The autocracy refused to deal with social problems or give the people a role in governing the country. Russia was a police state in the full sense of the term. In the Baltic Provinces, the standard of living of most people, along with their way of life, customs and cultural traits, brought them closer to Western Europe. Accordingly, the Latvians felt even more keenly the weight of the Tsarist autocracy's undemocratic, repressive regime.

The local administrative apparatus limited the autonomy of the Baltic Provinces and strengthened the Empire's central power. The traditional characteristics of governance in the Provinces of Livland and Courland were abolished and were brought more in line with those in the Russian provinces. A chauvinistic ethnic policy was implemented, granting special privileges to the Russians, promoting Russification, Russifying the educational system and the activities of state and municipal institutions, and favouring the Russian Orthodox Church. The traditional tensions continued in Latvia between the Baltic German nobility and the imperial authorities. A second rift was emerging ever more clearly between the Latvians and Estonians on the one hand, and the official Russian representatives of the central authorities on the other.

The majority of Baltic German writers, such as Carl Schirren and Astaf von Transehe-Rozeneck, condemned Russification, viewing it as a threat to German cultural domination in the Baltic and perceiving it as the main cause of social tension. After Nicholas II ascended the throne, the pressure of Russification against the Baltic Germans was somewhat relaxed and they once again had considerable opportunities to influence the governors and the central administration. The leaders of the Baltic German nobility maintained regular links with the highest state institutions in St Petersburg, and were always seeking contacts at the governmental level and private connections

with influential people. They made good use of their extensive kinship ties in the top ranks of the Russian bureaucracy and their strong position at the Tsar's court, particularly among the associates of Tsarina Alexandra. By such means, the Baltic German elite even succeeded in obtaining the dismissal of the Governor of Livland, Mikhail Pashkov.

Generally, the Russian governors and the Baltic German élite were able to arrive at an understanding. The Russian officials, being unfamiliar with local conditions and customs, felt that they could not do without the help and cooperation of the Baltic Germans. Common social interests also played an important role, as did the centuries-old Baltic German skill of coming to an agreement with every official power. The Baltic Germans successfully obtained access to many administrative institutions and the police in Livland and Courland, and occupied many responsible posts. Thus, for example, nine out of ten Commissars of Peasant Affairs in the Province of Courland were Baltic German nobles. Many more Baltic Germans were county captains, deputy captains, police chiefs, etc.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Latvia still had a top tier of rural self-government established by the Baltic German nobility – the diets. These had a say in all matters relating to the nobility, land and the peasantry. They participated in deciding many issues of regional importance and drafted almost all of the peasant laws. The diets also had the right to initiate legislation. In matters relating to the nobility and financial affairs, the diets were sovereign, and the state had no right to control the nobility's treasury. Special privileges were retained by the Courland nobility, as its diet could decide on all local matters quite independently. In Livland, the interests of the nobility were realised by the diet through an elected figure, the Provincial Marshal or *Landmarschall*, and a College of *Landräte* or provincial advisors. The College of *Landräte* in large measure directed and controlled various aspects of rural life in Livland. The Livland Diet empowered a Resident *Landrat*, based permanently in Riga. His tasks included influencing the local representatives of the state authorities and state institutions, and obtaining information about the activities of these institutions. The real power wielded by the Resident *Landrat* made him the second most influential figure in Livland, after the provincial governor.

The diets, being elected representative bodies of the Baltic German nobility, voiced the interests of a very narrow stratum of the population. They staunchly opposed any discussion about modernising the administrative

system. There could be no talk about revoking the privileges of the nobility, or about democratisation and suffrage for a broad section of the population. They would not hear of changes in the self-government of Courland and Livland involving the abolition of the old governing institutions and the creation of new ones. Accordingly, administrative and bureaucratic pressure increased, although the influence of the diets in country areas remained.

The Latgallia nobility's influence was much more limited than that wielded by the nobles of Livland and Courland, and was equivalent to the influence of the Russian nobility in the empire's nine western provinces.

The interests of the peasantry in the provinces of Livland and Courland were represented by the parish authorities, which functioned in accordance with a law of 1866. These local authorities were elected at a parish meeting, where every landholder had one vote, and 10 landless peasants had one vote between them. (From 1904 onwards, every landless peasant also obtained one vote.) The parish meeting elected a body of deputies and the parish court. The body of deputies, in turn, elected the parish elder, who was the highest official in the parish. The parish elder and several of the deputies formed the parish board.

The parish authority decided all economic, financial and social issues in the parish. Judicial power in the parishes was separated from administrative power, with the parish courts having jurisdiction over minor civil and criminal offences. These parish authorities were actually in the hands of the Latvians, although they were rigorously controlled by the provincial institutions. The governor himself headed the provincial Board of Peasant Affairs. Very broad powers were wielded by the Commissars of Peasant Affairs, who were appointed by the Russian Minister of the Interior. These commissars supervised all aspects of parish life, apart from the parish courts. They had the power of rescinding any decision by the parish boards and dismissing parish officials. The powers and competency of the commissars were extensive, but these officials did virtually nothing for the peasants. The Baltic German nobles and Russian officials who served as commissioners represented the interests of the estate-owners, and in conflicts between the estates and the parishes, they generally sided with the estate-owners. Although the activities of the parish authorities were limited, they did represent something of a lesson in politics for the Latvian peasants.

In Latgallia, the rural authorities were somewhat differently structured. Since the parishes of Latgallia were much larger than those in the other two

regions of Latvia, they had two tiers of rural municipal authorities. The lower tier consisted of the rural commune – consisting of the peasants of one estate, who met to elect an elder and his deputies. At the top level, authority in the parish was in the hands of the parish assembly, the parish elder and the parish board (consisting of the parish elder, his deputies and the commune elders).

The parish authorities in Latgallia were supervised by 16 land captains, whose functions corresponded to those of the Commissars of Peasant Affairs in Courland and Livland. The land captain had to be a noble, and he held both administrative and judicial powers. In Latgallia, every county also had its county assembly, which combined administrative and judicial functions and could revoke the rulings of parish courts.

At the fore of attention during the early years of the century were the municipal elections in the towns and the associated political battles. Russia's 1892 Municipal Government Act, which also applied to the towns of Latvia, left them in charge only of economic affairs and, by introducing a high property franchise, reduced the electorate in the local elections by two thirds. In Latvia, only about 1.2 percent of the urban population had the right to vote. The governors and the provincial departments of urban affairs undertook bureaucratic supervision and control of the municipal authorities.

The beginning of the new century witnessed a change in the attitude of urban society towards municipal elections. Voters became markedly more active and the number of candidates increased. This was a result of economic growth in the cities, which served to extend the electorate. Participation in municipal government was practically the only opportunity of socio-political activity for the economically powerful bourgeoisie of Latvia's towns and cities. A seat on the council also meant an opportunity to occupy well-paid posts in civic institutions, obtain lucrative commissions and create advantageous conditions for economic activity.

The increasing proportion of ethnic Latvians in the towns and their growing wealth meant that Latvian electoral candidates began to threaten the continued Baltic German dominance of municipal authorities in Livland and Courland. Political tension grew. Success in council elections became a matter of national pride. The Baltic Germans relied on their economic power, their immense social experience and their skill at compromise. The Latvians, on the other hand, could draw strength from their growing electorate, increasing social and economic discord and their own energy, but this

was thwarted by insufficient experience, disagreements among themselves and a lack of political skill. The Latvian voters demanded a principle of equal representation, which would allocate council seats to ethnic groups in accordance with their proportion of the electorate. The Baltic Germans, on the other hand, placed emphasis on their economic strength and proclaimed that votes should be "weighed", rather than counted.

Elections to the urban municipalities also brought about considerable changes in the constitution of Baltic German and Latvian citizens' groups. Instead of a pronounced division along ethnic lines, common economic interests increasingly came to the fore. Both the Latvian and the German bourgeoisie split into liberals and conservatives, and intellectual circles sided with both of these groupings. Nevertheless, the Baltic Germans' corporative instinct and conservatism served to consolidate them more than the Latvian bourgeoisie. In the first town council elections of the 20th century, the number of Latvians elected grew in various Latvian towns, and in certain small towns such as Valmiera, Tukums, Sloka and Jaunjelgava they even obtained a council majority. However, in the big cities of Riga, Liepāja and Jelgava, the Baltic Germans retained their dominant position on the councils. They succeeded in reaching an understanding with the Russian and Jewish bourgeoisie, and with dissenters among the Latvians.

The Riga City Council elections in 1901 and the associated political struggle also hastened the emergence of rifts between the most influential Latvian bourgeois groups. The most prominent figures among the conservatives were Frīdrihs Veinbergs and Arveds Bergs, while the liberals were led by Vilis Olavs and Pēteris Bisenieks. While Veinbergs' attempts to dominate did lead to a split in the Latvian bourgeoisie, his reputation as a capable organiser and as an opponent of the Baltic Germans ensured him widespread sympathy among Latvians.

The Latvian social democrats became significantly more active at the turn of the century. The first Latvian social democratic organisations were established at émigré social democratic centres in the USA, Britain and Switzerland. They included the Latvian Social Democratic Union in Boston and the Western European Latvian Social Democratic Union in London, and these published the first Latvian social democratic literature. Frīcis Roziņš, Ernests Rolavs and Miķelis Valters became active social democrats and writers. The Latvian Social Democratic Union, founded by Rolavs and Valters in Switzerland in 1903, played a most important role in developing the idea of Latvian statehood.

Socialist ideas spread rapidly in Latvia as well. Both urban factories and rural areas became fertile ground for the growth of numerous illegal Marxist clubs. In the first years of the 20th century, Latvia's social democratic groups displayed an increasing trend towards unification. In Courland in 1901, the social democrats Pauls Kalniņš and Klāra Kalniņa, who were later to have great influence in the political life of independent Latvia, established the Courland Social Democratic Group. A year later, the Baltic Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Organisation was established in Riga. Led by the prominent social democrats Jānis Ozols and the brothers Ansis and Žanis Buševics, it aspired to lead the social democratic movement in Latvia. These initial social democratic groups organised demonstrations and strikes, while emphasising self-education and the promotion of socialist ideas.

By 1904, the Latvian social democrats in Riga were already strong enough to establish a Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party, led, along with Jānis Ozols, by Janis Jansons-Brauns and Pēteris Stučka, who were to become increasingly popular in later years. With 2500 members, it was an unusually large party for its time and for the conditions in Latvia,⁸ functioning as a highly-organised, highly-structured and well-educated underground party. The activities of this new party encompassed both towns and rural areas and were structured along ethnic lines.

The party's maximum programme envisaged the creation of a socialist society, while the minimal programme sought the "toppling of the Tsarist autocracy, replacing it with a republic based on a democratic constitution". The greatest paradox of the party's programme was the absence of any agrarian demands, a consequence of sticking dogmatically to the example of the German social democrats. The programme's strength lay in its exhortation to achieve personal liberties, to abolish all restrictions connected with the social orders and to give the peoples of Russia the right to self-determination – ideas that expressed the interests and mood of very broad sections of the Latvian population. This factor contributed greatly to the party's strength and popularity among Latvians.

Also formed in Latvia were social democratic organisations among other ethnic groups – Russians, Germans and Lithuanians. Particularly strong was the *Bund*, a Jewish social democratic organisation. Attempts at party unification failed, prevented by differences in views and excessive ambitions. Nevertheless, in 1904, a Federative Committee was established, which mainly had the role of coordinating the activities of the Latvian party and the *Bund*.

In the first years of the new century, a major ideological dispute developed in Latvian society on the question of a national state. The view of one section of the Latvian bourgeoisie was expressed by such Neonationalists as political writer Vilis Olavs and the pastor and writer Andrievs Niedra. They voiced their views mainly in the *Pēterburgas Avīzes* newspaper and the *Austrums* magazine. The Neonationalists urged the modernisation of Young Latvian nationalism in line with the spirit of the “age of steam and electricity”, exhorted Latvians to engage in nationalist activity and to have faith in their own strength. Economic ascendancy of the Latvian nation, a flourishing peasantry, Latvian Lutheran pastors and a “people’s church” in place of the existing German church, along with the development of Latvia’s national culture – such was the vision of the future Latvia advocated by the Neonationalists. They could not reach a common viewpoint in their attitude towards the Baltic Germans, vacillating between reconciliation and confrontation, and the Neonationalist vision generally did not influence Latvian workers and farm labourers. In their nationalist thinking, these politicians never looked beyond the borders of the Russian Empire and always emphasised their loyalty to the “two-headed eagle”, envisaging Latvian cultural autonomy as the maximum nationalist demand. However, the Neonationalists did stimulate thinking along nationalist lines.

The views of the majority of Latvian social democrats on the national question were markedly cosmopolitan, saturated with Marxist dogma. Dominating their outlook was the idea of a world brotherhood of workers, with emphasis on the class struggle and social issues. “The worker has no fatherland” was a favourite slogan of Roziņš and Jansons-Brauns. The complicated national issues seemed inconvenient and disruptive, dividing the workers and hindering the spread of Marxist ideas among the masses. Latvian autonomy, national aims and identity were envisaged, at most, as transitory phenomena. From the viewpoint of a world revolution, the national question in Latvia seemed unimportant. Such a stance was taken by the party as a whole.

The Latvian Social Democratic Union, by contrast, assigned a very important role to the national question. Its national programme demanded not only cultural, but also state autonomy for the Latvians, along with the transformation of Russia into a federation of nation states. Their programme showed the marked influence of Austrian social democrats and the constitution of Switzerland. Valters, the modern, European-educated and oriented

leader of the Social Democratic Union, urged in 1903 in the paper *Proletāriets*: “Down with the autocracy! Down with Russia! Break out of Russia!”⁹

The Social Democratic Union and its leaders were the first to give Latvian national demands a clear political character and the first to propose the idea of a Latvian state. The historic significance of this position must be recognised, even though these novel ideas did not win wide support at the time.

The Revolution of 1905. With its dramatic events, its revolutionary fervour, its contradictions, its chaos and its ruthlessness, 1905 has remained in the memory of the people of Latvia as “the mad year.” While the Revolution of 1905 came as a surprise to just about everyone, it had many causes. Their combination created the critical mass for the violent uprising that spread all across Latvia.

As elsewhere in the Russian Empire, there was growing discontent in Latvia with the absence of political rights. The demand for a constitution was voiced ever more loudly, while workers engaged in economic and political strikes to obtain greater rights. Between 1900 and 1904, 6000 workers went on strike in Livland and Courland. Russia’s war with Japan and the reverses in this war led to anti-war protests among students and workers in Latvia. Latvia was also hit by the resulting economic crisis, although in comparison with the Empire as a whole, the general level of material welfare remained much higher.

The Latvians’ specific demands included the establishment of municipal authorities with greater Latvian representation, rights for the Latvian language and national culture, and an end to the Baltic Germans’ economic, social and political privileges. Oppression by the Tsarist regime, which included a concerted Russification policy, together with the privileged position of the Baltic Germans, represented a double national yoke. These were the main local causes of the Revolution of 1905, and they significantly influenced its character and course in Latvia.

In protest at the shooting of demonstrating workers in St Petersburg on 9 January 1905, a wide-scale general strike began in Riga, with large demonstrations and gatherings. On January 13, when thousands of protestors reached the city centre, Russian army troops opened fire. Seventy-three people were killed and more than 200 wounded, the majority of the victims being young workers and students. Instead of ending the general strike, the shooting of the demonstrators only infuriated the workers, and the strike spread to other cities in Latvia. It was at this time that Jānis Akuraters wrote

his poem "With battle cries on their lips". Dedicated to the memory of the victims of the shooting in Riga, it became the Latvian revolutionary battle hymn:

*All the living will join the bloody battle,
And castles will crumble, thrones will fall!*

The Revolution of 1905 had broken out in Latvia.

The revolution had the characteristics of a social and bourgeois democratic uprising. The main aim was to topple the Tsarist autocracy and establish a democratic system of rule. The revolutionaries did not urge the abolition of private property, cardinal changes in the agrarian system or the establishment of a dictatorship. This was a mass revolution, in which about 30 000 of the most active revolutionaries were supported by the majority of Latvia's workers, peasants, landless labourers and a large section of intellectuals. The revolution was not supported by a minority within Latvian society, and by the moderate bourgeoisie.

The Latvian bourgeoisie had no strong political organisations that might take over the leadership of the revolution. Right from January 13, the Latvian social democrats placed themselves at the head of the revolution. The ranks of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party were 6000 strong in the summer 1905, a figure that swelled to 18 000 by the autumn. The total number of social democrats, including 1000 members of the Social Democratic Union and several thousand Jewish, Russian and German social democrats, was well over 20 000. In the cities, social democrats of various ethnic groups strove to coordinate their activities. In Riga, the Federative Committee assumed a coordinating role, and by the culmination of the revolution in late 1905, the committee seemed almost to have assumed the functions of a revolutionary provisional government.

Besides being the largest group, the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party was also by far the most organised and disciplined. Many dozens of paid propagandists organised and instructed the populace. At the head of the revolutionary movement were the prominent Latvian social democrats Jānis Ozols, Ansis Buševics, Janis Jansons-Brauns and Jānis Asars. The party expounded its views on various issues in the press and in its proclamations, organised and led gatherings, strikes and demonstrations, formulated slogans, determined revolutionary tactics and organised armed combat.

A divergence of views within the party itself, difficulties in collaborating with other social democratic groups in Latvia, a lack of experience, along with stereotypes and illusions based on a strict adherence to party doctrine reduced the Party's ability to control the revolutionary process. While the revolution in Latvia was also characterised by a great deal of spontaneous activity, the role of the Latvian social democrats as leaders of the revolutionary movement did give it a much more organised and broader character than in the Russian Empire as a whole.

There has been much discussion on the significance of the Revolution of 1905 in Latvia as a revolution of national liberation. The revolutionary slogans themselves – “Down with the autocracy! Long live the democratic republic! Long live the Constituent Assembly! Long live freedom!” – seemingly did not contain any national element. However, under the conditions of that time, any demand for national schools and education, or for democratic self-government, and likewise any form of opposition by the Latvian peasantry to the Baltic German landowners automatically assumed the character of a national struggle. The revolution was given a markedly national flavour by the overwhelming predominance of ethnic Latvians among the active revolutionaries (more than 96 percent) and by the mass revolutionary activity of the Latvian peasantry.

The manifestos issued by political parties during the revolution were dominated by demands for various degrees of autonomy. The Latvian Social Democratic Union insisted on extensive autonomy. It demanded the unification of Courland, the Latvian part of Livland and Latgallia in order to form a single region of Latvia, which would have extensive rights of self-determination with respect to all of its internal affairs. Much less clear and formal was the position of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party: “Extensive political and economic self-government (autonomy) for the provinces and equivalent economic and administrative self-government for cities, counties and parishes.”

Even the most radical section of the Latvian bourgeoisie, which in 1905 organised itself into the Latvian Democratic Party, did not go beyond the demand for cultural and economic self-administration in its national programme. Moreover, the Latvian Democratic Party did not advance the demands upheld by the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party. In the view of Arveds Bergs, leader of the radical bourgeoisie, the citizens of a small

country could never attain the political and economic benefits enjoyed by the citizens of a large country.

Overall, the Latvians who joined the revolution, were also fighting for national emancipation, and the revolution undeniably did obtain the character of a national liberation movement.

In the spring 1905, the events of the revolution in Latvia centred mainly on the cities, where a large-scale economic and political strike movement developed. The strikes involved not only workers, but also craftsmen, school pupils and civil servants. At the same time, groups of armed revolutionaries began to form. Social life rapidly became politicised, and an increasing role was played not only by the social democrats, who favoured open conflict with the authorities, but also by those sections of society that put their faith in the possibility of moderate reform. Public organisations and groups of intellectuals actively petitioned for reform. The Riga Latvian Society urged the extension of Latvian language rights, and more than 200 Latvian intellectuals petitioned for the reduction of censorship, for freedom of association, for ending the inequality that existed between the social orders and for the calling of a constituent assembly. The results of the Riga City Council elections in March 1905 did not threaten the Baltic German position on the council and did not bring any significant change of balance in favour of the Latvians. Latvians obtained only 12 out of 80 seats, less than half of the number they had hoped for.

During the summer 1905, the focus of revolutionary events shifted from the cities to the countryside. Mass meetings, demonstrations and marches with red flags took place, and political demands were voiced. This movement was combined with opposition to mobilisation for Russia's war with Japan and economic strikes by farm labourers, which became particularly widespread in rural Courland. Striving for leadership of the revolution in the countryside as well, the social democrats encouraged the peasantry to demand improvements in social conditions, to refuse to pay taxes or fulfil other obligations towards the state, and to establish new local government bodies.

These passive forms of opposition were combined with such active forms as the destruction of parish records and symbols of official authority, and the demolition of state vodka shops. Violent attacks against the German nobles grew in number and involved the burning of forests and estate buildings, as well as the seizure of estate property (including weapons).

A phenomenon specific to Courland and Livland was the holding of

“church demonstrations” in rural Lutheran churches. These demonstrations were political, rather than religious in nature. The social democrats chose churches for their mass meetings, since these were the most important gathering places for the rural population. Church services were turned into political demonstrations with the singing of revolutionary songs. In some cases, the German pastors were roughly treated. Although religious issues were generally not voiced at these church demonstrations, to many Latvian peasants the German Lutheran Church and its privileged pastors represented the hated yoke of the nobility.

The peak of revolutionary activity in Latvia came in the autumn of 1905, following the Tsar’s manifesto of October 17. The manifesto came too late, however, since the Latvians’ revolutionary demands had progressed much further, and the Tsarist authorities were no longer in control of the situation. Widespread strikes and mass meetings took hold in the cities.

One important feature of the revolution’s political activity was the organisation of workers into trade unions, whose development was greatly influenced by the social democrats. These unions were established not only by workers in various trades, but also by craftsmen (tailors and cobblers) and intellectuals (teachers, technical specialists and musicians). The employers, for their part, established the Riga Society of Factory Owners.

German, Russian and Latvian bourgeois parties began to form. The conservative Latvian Constitutional Democratic Party, led by Fridrihs Grosvalds, demanded self-government and the abolition of the nobility’s privileges, but categorically opposed universal and equal suffrage in Latvia. The Latvian Democratic Party, formed by radicals among the Latvian bourgeoisie, did support universal suffrage. The party also advocated the idea of carving up the estates and selling them to the peasantry, and went further in its demands for self-government.

In November, two revolutionary forums met in Riga: the Congress of Primary School Teachers and the Congress of Parish Representatives. The teachers’ congress brought together about one thousand primary school teachers and other intellectuals, who agreed on demands to democratise the educational system, introduce six-year primary schools, ensure rights for the native language and place schools under the control of local authorities.

The Congress of Parish Representatives, attended by about a thousand delegates from the parishes of Latvia, was of immense political importance. Since the government would not grant any political liberties, it was decided

that the Latvian peasantry would form its own administration. Both forums demanded the convocation of a Constituent Assembly and democratic government in Russia. The Congress of Parish Representatives elected a Central Bureau for coordinating the work of the municipalities, but did not discuss the democratisation of the higher tiers of local government.

An unusually organised and extensive movement developed to elect new parish administrative bodies, or executive committees. Altogether 470 executive committees were formed in 94 percent of the parishes of Latvia.¹⁰ The power of the people was voiced in the countryside through popular assemblies that elected the executive committees. The new people's authorities worked mainly in two directions: organising the economic, social and administrative affairs of the parishes, and establishing a people's militia for participation in armed actions. Since the Congress of Parish Representatives had decided that the land issue would be resolved after the Constituent Assembly had been called, the local administrative bodies took widely diverging positions regarding the lands of the estates.

The Revolution of 1905 developed into an armed struggle mainly because both the Baltic German nobility and the Russian central authorities viewed the revolutionary unrest as simple anarchy and vandalism. The Baltic Germans stationed military units on their estates and formed self-defence groups. The Tsar, too, considered that the developments in the Baltic had occurred mainly because of an insufficient military presence. The idea of armed struggle was extremely popular among the revolutionaries, particularly among the youth, and was supported and promoted by the leaders of the Latvian social democrats. The confrontational mood was boosted by various myths and illusions: that weapons shipments were coming from abroad, that the Tsar's army would side with the people and so forth, as well as by successful local-scale military operations that the revolutionaries had undertaken.

Groups of revolutionary fighters numbering in the hundreds were formed in the towns and cities already in the early part of 1905. Money was collected for weapons purchases, while cold arms (knives) and bombs were made in the factories. The fighters organised several bold operations, including attacks on the Riga Central Prison and the secret police in October of 1905 and January of 1906, which were even reported abroad. However, considering the overwhelming might of the autocracy's forces, the decision by the social democratic leaders in Latvia's major cities of Riga, Liepāja and

Daugavpils not to begin a general armed uprising in December may be judged to have been a very sensible one.

Armed conflict was particularly fierce in the rural areas of Livland and Courland. Already in the autumn 1905, there were indications of a civil war between the Baltic German nobility and the Latvian peasants. The people's militia units formed in the countryside undertook armed attacks, coordinating their activities between neighbouring parishes. In Courland, the peasants seized or surrounded several towns. If the battles at Talsi involved a thousand labourers and peasants, then at Tukums 3000 took part, while the siege of Aizpute involved as many as 10 000 insurgents. One unit led by the "peasant general" Krišjānis Bočs operated in northern Livland. It controlled the Rūjiena-Pärnu Railway and made plans to attack the city of Pärnu in collaboration with Estonian revolutionaries.

In the village of Lielvārde (Riga County) in late November 1905, Latvian revolutionaries captured 36 Baltic German barons and their families. The Livland Diet began talks with the Federative Committee, represented by Janis Jansons-Brauns and Ansis Buševics, and an agreement was reached. The landowners promised not to station armed forces on their estates, while the social democrats freed the hostages and promised not to attack the manors. Signs of a general reconciliation began to appear, but were never allowed to develop.

Chronically short of arms and inadequately trained and organised, the revolutionaries were doomed to defeat if they engaged in any major battle with the regular army. Altogether, a thousand armed clashes were registered in Latvia in 1905.

In rural Latvia the revolutionaries did not submit without a fight. In 1906, more than 5000 partisans or "forest brothers" remained active, attacking small military units, prisoner transports and state officials, and taking vengeance on those who had betrayed the revolutionaries. As revolutionary zeal died away and hope in the resurgence of revolutionary activity was lost, the partisan movement gradually came to an end.

In order to fund weapons purchases, Latvian revolutionaries attacked post offices and banks in 1905 and early 1906. Major attacks took place in Riga, Liepāja, Helsinki and London. However, these robberies should more properly be regarded as criminal offences, and cannot be justified by revolutionary ideas. The activities of the partisans also showed too little restraint in many cases and could aptly be termed as criminal.

Once the war with Japan was over, the Tsarist government was free to unleash its full military force against the revolution. Martial law was declared in Courland in August 1905, and was extended to the Province of Livland in late November. At the same time, the post of Governor-General of the Baltic was created, and Vasily Sologub was appointed to this position. Special punitive expeditions formed from guard regiments and Cossacks were dispatched in mid-December of 1905 to quell the revolution. These forces made full use of the broad powers they were given. They shot or hanged 1170 people without trial or investigation, burned 300 individual homes, torched entire population centres such as the village of Gostiņi and severely beat large numbers of people. In 1906 the free rein of the punitive expeditions was followed by the establishment of military field courts that continued the reprisals. Baltic German landowners eager to avenge the burning of manor-houses played an active role in the punitive expeditions and displayed particular cruelty.

Looking back on the gains and losses of the revolution, many have posed the question: was it worth it? The revolution resulted in a great loss of life and left behind many ruins. About 3000 revolutionaries in the territory of Latvia were killed, 7000 were imprisoned or deported to Siberia and 5000 were forced to emigrate, many of whom would never return. Thus, Latvia lost a total of 15 000 people in the revolution.¹¹ At that time, nobody yet knew about the further trials that Latvia was to face in the 20th century, and the losses were greatly disturbing. The Latvian writer Augusts Saulietis wrote: "Let us be still... While other tribes rejoice, / We have fresh sand under the melting snow."

The Revolution of 1905 exacerbated the rift between the Baltic Germans and the Latvians. While the Latvian peasants may have had historical justice on their side, few today would claim that this justified the use of violence and the destruction of cultural values. The Baltic Germans, too, regarded Latvia as their homeland, having their roots in the country since the Middle Ages. After the revolution, they were separated from the Latvians by a wide schism.

Nevertheless, the Revolution of 1905 also brought many positive results. The people of Latvia began to express their interests through the Russian Duma and brought their demands before the whole of Russia. The revolution, which was widely reported abroad, also established a tradition of struggle among the Latvian people. During the revolution, the Latvian

people changed from a passive subject of historical events into a force that shaped history. Many of the revolution's emigrants, such as Miķelis Valters and Kārlis Ulmanis, would later return and become crucial political figures in Latvia. Sketched out for the first time in 1905 were ideas that later materialised in an independent Latvia: statehood, democratic local government and agrarian reform.

Domestic politics after the revolution

After the revolution was quelled, the Russian Empire's repressive apparatus went to work in Latvia with full force. Endless trials and reprisals were held against the participants in the revolution. Martial law was maintained in Livland and Courland until 1908, and a state of heightened alert continued until 1912. Only in late 1909 did the power of the Governor-General of the Baltic come to an end, and only in 1912 did the field courts cease to function. An amnesty was declared in 1913, after which a string of prominent Latvian political refugees (including Ulmanis and Valters) returned to Latvia.

Police operations and control were accompanied by the reinforcement of Russification measures. Latvian and Baltic German officials were replaced by Russians. The autocracy strove to introduce a principle of ethnic curiae in the local authorities and the proposed Baltic *zemstvo* assemblies, giving wide privileges to the Russian curia. Russian chauvinist activities under the slogan "Russia for the Russians", supported in great measure by the autocracy, were directed against any kind of autonomy for the peripheral regions of Russia.

In order to strengthen the Russian presence in Latvia, the government undertook concerted measures to increase the level of Russian colonisation. Plans were drafted for a secret operation to relocate Latvian peasants from Courland and Livland to the Russian Province of Vologda. At the same time, thousands of Russian peasants were brought into Courland and Latgallia. It was envisaged that 300 000 Russian peasants would be settled in Courland alone.

The Baltic German nobility, for its part, strove to establish a reliable German population group in Latvia. About 20 000 German colonists arrived in Livland and Courland from other provinces of Russia to work on the estates in the place of Latvian labourers. Most of the Russian and German colonists did not become permanently settled in Latvia, and so these colonisation

efforts never actually achieved their aim. Yet the fact that they were occurring at all meant that they presented a very real threat to the continued existence of the Latvian people.

Despite the wide-scale repressions that followed the revolution, the autocracy felt compelled to introduce limited reforms and offer certain political concessions. In Latvia, legal political parties continued to develop. Various monarchist and constitutional monarchist organisations emerged in the local Russian and German communities. There were branches of the Octobrist Party and even sections of the Union of the Russian People – the “Black Hundreds”, in Latgallia. The Baltic Constitutional Party was very influential, with 8000 members. Another successful group was the Jewish Constitutional Democratic (*Kadet*) Party, which took root in Riga.

The legal Latvian parties were unstable groupings that worked more like electoral associations and interest groups than political parties. The activists and supporters of a political party usually gathered around one Latvian newspaper or another. The conservative Latvian People’s Party, led by Frīdrihs Veinbergs, was associated with the *Rīgas Avīze* newspaper, while the Latvian Constitutional Democratic Party was connected with *Latvija*. The most liberal circles of the Latvian bourgeoisie were associated with *Mājas Viesis* and *Dzimtenes Vēstnesis*, while the truly democratic section, led by the prominent lawyer Gustavs Zemgals and others, grouped themselves around the *Jaunā Dienas Lapa*. The position of the underground left-wing revolutionary parties was now significantly weaker and the Jewish *Bund* became inactive. The Latvian Social Democratic Union, which in 1913 became the Latvian Socialist Revolutionary Party and presented its own distinctive programme, did not obtain major support among the Latvians. The Latvian Social Democrats, now under the name of Latvian Social Democracy, united with the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party. Membership fell significantly to only 2500 by 1912. The clear orientation of the radical party leaders (Pēteris Stučka and others) in favour of the Russian Bolsheviks reduced the authority of the Social Democrats among a large section of the population. Nevertheless, the party retained its core membership, successfully reoriented itself to work within the legal system and maintained a very good position, considering the general state of the social democratic movement in Russia.

In spite of various official restrictions, social life in Latvia was concentrated in a great variety of societies, whose number in Riga alone in 1913

reached 245. Trade unions developed quite successfully, engaging in an active struggle to improve workers' living and working conditions, achieve insurance for workers and obtain other concessions.

While the Baltic German élite was gradually losing its dominant influence in the municipal authorities, it continued to retain a strong position in the cities. In the 1913 city council elections in Riga, the anti-German opposition obtained 42 percent of the vote, which was its greatest achievement to date. Local elections remained an important sphere of activity for the Latvian, Baltic German, Russian and Jewish bourgeoisie and bourgeois parties. At the same time, the election process itself was turning into an increasingly overt competition for well-paid official posts.

Another arena of activity for Latvia's political forces was the Russian Duma. Altogether 32 deputies from Latvia were elected in four successive Dumas: 16 Latvians, eight Baltic Germans, four Jews, two Poles, one Russian and one Estonian. In both of the first two Dumas, Latvian deputies were in the majority, with six out of seven deputies, for the most part progressively-minded figures holding democratic views. They took an active part in Russian politics, joining the *Kadet*, *Trudovik* and Social Democratic groups, as well as the Autonomist Bloc in the Duma, and successfully cooperating with the Jewish deputies. The most prominent Latvian deputies represented the bourgeoisie and the peasantry: Jānis Čakste, Jānis Kreicbergs and Francis Trasuns, as well as the Social Democrat Jānis Ozols. Speaking in the Duma, they harshly criticised the autocracy's terror against the revolutionaries of 1905, highlighted national repression and the condition of the Latvian peasants, and insistently demanded the observance of legality and the constitution.

The reactionary Duma electoral law of 1907 had the effect of markedly reducing the representation of the non-Russian peripheral areas of the empire. In the Third and Fourth Duma Latvia was represented mainly by Baltic Germans, who had three deputies in each Duma. The number of Latvian deputies had fallen to a third, so that there were now only two Latvians in each of these Dumas. The Social Democrat Andrejs Priedkalns was very popular in the Third Duma on account of his constructive approach. The moderate representatives of the Latvian bourgeoisie, Jānis Zālītis and Jānis Goldmanis, were not particularly active.

Although none of the proposals by the progressive Latvian deputies

were accepted at the Dumas, their activities were of major political significance. For the first time, Latvian representatives assumed the role of high-ranking figures in the Russian state. They made use of the opportunity to explain the true condition of their country and people and to obtain the experience of parliamentary work. The elections to the Duma also gave various strata of Latvian society greater political experience.

After the revolution, the Latvian bourgeoisie did not put forward any new ideas on the national question. The urgings of certain writers for a rapprochement between Latvia's ethnic groups, overcoming cosmopolitanism and consolidation among various Latvian social and political groupings did not change anything. The Latvian bourgeoisie still reduced the national issue in Latvia to a struggle between the Latvians and the Baltic Germans, taking no account of the danger and scale of Russification and demonstrating full compliance with the Tsarist regime. The bourgeoisie remained passive and subservient towards Russian officialdom. Meanwhile most of the Latvian social democrats looked towards revolutionary Russia and proletarian internationalism, ignoring the national question.

On the eve of the First World War, the Menshevik Social Democrat Mārgers Skujenieks and the Socialist Revolutionary Miķelis Valters wrote important works on the national question. Both authors sharply criticised the citizenry's national subservience and the indifference of the Social Democrats to national issues. Their priority was the unification of Courland, the Latvian part of Livland and Latgallia into a single administrative unit – Latvia. They also spoke out for the establishment of a greater degree of self-government and extensive cultural and national autonomy, the consolidation of national forces, and the need to counter the Russification of Latvia. These ideas in effect made Skujenieks the progenitor of National Communism in Latvia, while the works of Valters show a transition from an anti-German mood to a broad anti-imperial mood. However, historian Arveds Švābe is largely correct in his assessment that at the outbreak of the First World War “the Latvians, apart from the left-wing underground movement, lacked virtually any political organisation, and the main section of the people had still not been stimulated towards the attainment of “broader national political aims”¹².

2.3. LATVIA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The military and political situation in 1914–1916. Latvian historian Arnolds Spekke, in describing Latvia's situation at the outbreak of war, wrote: "The land of the Latvians and Eastern Europe in general, lying between the Germans and the Russians, becomes in the time of a clash between these two large peoples, not only an important transitional area, but also a major arena of conflict, since this extensive area may be counted among the neuralgic points of the continent where many vital interests cross, being either pushed forward or defended, just like the plains of northern Italy, the middle courses of the Vistula and Danube, parts of Belgium, etc. It is really difficult for the peoples living there, but they do make it through."¹³

As in the rest of warring Europe, the First World War began with mass enthusiasm and spontaneous demonstrations. To the great surprise of the autocracy, the majority of Latvians supported the official jingoism, giving vent to their anti-German feeling. War awakened the Latvians from their inactivity in national politics. The involvement of Russia and other European powers in a war against Germany provided the Latvian people with the amazing and incredible feeling that their ancient enemy was also the foe of many other European peoples.

Latvians viewed the war against Germany as a dual war against the Baltic Germans, from whose domination they now had a chance to free themselves. Cultural and religious ties were forgotten in the revival of the centuries-old hatred of the Germans, and the fear arose that if Germany triumphed, then the Baltic Germans would take further revenge for the events of 1905 and destroy the Latvian people.

The war gave Latvians a vague hope in a future Latvia and a consciousness that the momentous events of the war should be used to promote the nation's interests. Exactly how this should be done was unclear, and there was a lack of organisation, experience, planning or political connections. The voice of reason advised delay, waiting to see which of the warring sides would offer the Latvians significant concessions and then come out actively in support of it; to strive not to worsen relations with the Baltic Germans and maintain a degree of neutrality.

However, Latvian politicians were not sufficiently farsighted and rational to observe neutrality. The orientation in favour of Russia seemed more familiar, convenient and realistic. A rapid victory of the Entente and

the defeat of Germany seemed inevitable. The Latvians thus demonstrated *a priori* their loyalty and support for the Russian state, in the hope that the Russian authorities would show their appreciation. Such a position is also understandable, if we consider the insinuations that the Baltic Germans spread about the Latvians at the Russian court, and the common view in the Tsarist bureaucracy of the Latvians as a “rebellious people”.

Initially, most Latvians were ready to assume the hardships of the war. Few stopped to consider how long it might last, how much damage it would bring and how many victims it would claim.

At the outbreak of war, the Latvian press was full of boisterous slogans, urging the Latvians to turn “from a nation of shepherds into a nation of warriors” and “to show the way to Berlin for the valiant Russian army”. It expressed admiration for the “bold Cossacks, who are saving European civilisation in the fight against the Germans”. The mood in Latvian society, and likewise the approach taken by Latvian politicians, was reflected in the exalted speech of the prominent Latvian deputy Jānis Goldmanis in the Russian Duma, in which he emphasised that “among the Latvians and Estonians, there is not a single person who does not appreciate that all their achievements have been attained only under the protection of the Russian eagle, and that all that still remains to be attained will only be possible if the Baltic remains, in the future as well, part of the great Russia. Not only our sons, our brothers and our fathers will valiantly fight in the ranks of the army, but the enemy will find in our homes, in every hovel, his most dangerous foe, great or small, who, even if beheaded, will cry out with his dying breath the words: long live Russia!”¹⁴

At the outset of the war, such anti-German sentiment, in accord with the officially sanctioned patriotic mood, was expressed in most of Latvian society: the bourgeoisie, the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. Somewhat more reticent were the workers, a large section of whom were influenced by the Latvian Social Democracy Party. The Latvian Social Democrats – Bolshevik and Menshevik internationalists – spoke out in opposition to the war. In fact, the war, with the misery and the collapse it would bring, was essential to the Bolsheviks in order to achieve their main aim of grasping power.

A very wide range of anti-German measures were taken in the territory of Latvia. The governors of Courland and Livland, having been sympathetic towards the Baltic Germans, were dismissed. The German names of popu-

lation centres, towns, streets, hotels, cinemas and other places were changed to Russian names, and German language use was restricted. A campaign to catch "German spies" began in Latvia, and German citizens, along with Germans sympathetic to Germany, were deported to distant provinces of Russia. In the spring of 1915, the German-language press was closed down in Latvia.

The urgings by certain politicians, such as Miķelis Valters, for respect towards Baltic German fellow citizens did not succeed in averting anti-German hysteria, although in Latvia this never developed into anti-German rioting.

Contrary to Latvian expectations, the imperial authorities were in no hurry to alter their stance of maintaining hegemony over the Baltic and its inhabitants. True, the Russian press in Moscow and Petrograd (St Petersburg) did heap kind words on the imperial army's Latvian soldiers for their prowess and valour in battles with the Germans. Latvian patriotism was widely praised: "Of all the peoples of our great fatherland, the Latvian people are at present virtually the most patriotic in the war against Germany." However, neither Tsar Nicholas II nor his court circles were about to change their attitude of suspicion towards the Latvians. There could be no talk of any reform or concessions in favour of Latvian national aspirations.

Quite the contrary, under wartime conditions, the intensification of Great Russian chauvinism was felt ever more keenly, and was particularly evident in the military command and official administration. The Latvian names of farmsteads were replaced with Russian names, and at the front, attempts were made to forbid the use of Latvian in correspondence with Latvian soldiers.

At the outbreak of the war, the most important military event in Latvia was mobilisation. There was an unending flow of volunteers and mobilisation plans were exceeded. Under the influence of propaganda, the youth in particular had an impression of the war as a great journey of comradeship, valour and adventure. During the war, the Russian army mobilised a total of 120 000–140 000 men from Latvia. Among those mobilised were the army and navy reservists, as well as those deemed fit for home guard service. The home guards were called up to form special units and were generally stationed close to their homes. Thus, 13 home guard companies made up almost entirely of Latvians were stationed at the Daugavgrīva Fortress. Most of the territory of Latvia was assigned to the Vilnius Military District, and

most of the mobilised Latvian soldiers ended up in the Russian First Army, which was formed in this district.

The First Army's 20th Corps, which consisted mainly of Latvian officers and men, was involved in particularly intense fighting in East Prussia (now Poland). In February 1915, the corps fought valiant rearguard battles in the Augustow marshlands, enabling the Russian 10th Army to retreat. However, the corps was practically destroyed in the process, and around 20 000 Latvian soldiers were killed, wounded or captured. No other military operation of the First World War demanded such a huge loss of Latvian soldiers' lives. The German high command compared the Latvian soldiers with Napoleon's guard, which "dies, but does not surrender".

Unsuccessful counter-attacks by the Russian army, characterised by vacillation and indecision, poor communications and poor cooperation between units, continued during the spring and summer 1915. By April, the war front had reached Latvia, moving into Courland and directly threatening Jelgava and Riga. The defence of Jelgava in early May was a triumph for two Latvian home guard battalions from Daugavgrīva. Poorly armed and trained, they were nevertheless able to repel the German attack and retain control of the city. Nevertheless, on 1 August 1915, Jelgava, the centre of the Province of Courland, fell to the Germans. The whole of the province would remain under German occupation for the next four years.

The loss of Courland did more than just radically altered the military and political situation in the territory of Latvia. It was seen as a real threat and challenge to the continued existence and future of the Latvian people. In addition to the problem of refugees from Courland, Latvia was also painfully affected by the fact that the front had cut the country in two. Direct contact between Courland and the rest of Latvia was no longer possible. Contacts between Courland and the unoccupied part of Latvia, and between Courland and its refugees, who were scattered throughout the broad expanse of Russia, could be maintained only with the help of the Danish Red Cross.

Along with Lithuania and part of Belarus, the Province of Courland was incorporated into Germany's *Ober-Ost* administrative region, which was established by the German high command on the Eastern Front. A German military administration was set up in Courland, headed by *Reichstag* deputy and German army Reserve Major Alfred von Gossler. The administration was led mainly by German reserve officers and local German nobles. Almost all Latvian social life ceased, with societies and most of the press

being closed down. Rapid Germanisation took place through the imposition of the German language in official institutions, companies and schools. Military police supervision of the Courlanders' every step was a characteristic feature of this regime, with stringent censorship, limits of freedom of movement, strict checks on the roads, concentration camps for the disobedient and a gendarmerie with extensive powers in every county of Courland. The interests of the local population (with the exception of the Courland nobility) were not considered by this military administration.

The question of the future of Courland was discussed in the ruling circles of Germany within the frame of wider issues: the fate of the Baltic in general and the eastern borders of Germany after the war. The idea of Germanising, colonising and annexing Courland was a popular one. The German government even established a special commission to plan the colonisation of Courland. The Baltic Trust Council established by the Baltic Germans was active in Berlin at this time. In 1915 it promulgated a Grey Memorandum on the necessity of annexing the Baltic. The "beautiful German land by the Baltic Sea – Courland" was praised in German books, pamphlets and the press. Limitless opportunities were promised to those wishing to make their homes in this "ancient German region".

The German colonisation plans envisaged the allocation a third of the land in Courland to German colonists, on the assumption that the Latvian refugees would not return. The Latvians who had stayed behind would be Germanised or resettled in other parts of Russia. The Courland baron Silvio von Broedrich calculated that, with the help of German colonists, Courland could be transformed into a truly German land in the space of a single generation. The influential and chauvinistic political, economic and military leaders in Germany saw no place for the Latvians in their plans for a post-war Europe. General Helmut von Seeckt lumped the Latvians together with the Jews, Poles, Lithuanians and Estonians as the dregs of Europe, whose expulsion from their lands would be Germany's greatest wartime achievement. The influential German industrialist Alfred Hugenberg declared that the Latvians and Lithuanians were doomed to extinction, just like the Old Prussians (an extinct Baltic tribe) before them.

The intense refugee flow from Courland and the question of the continued existence of Latvia and the Latvian people became pressing issues as the war continued. But the war also led to the mobilisation of the nation's

creative energy, and the unusual wartime conditions enabled the seeking and discovery of unanticipated answers to various historical questions.

The imperial authorities, unable to deal with the great volume of work and the severe problems that arose, were forced to entrust the resolution of some of them to private organisations. New social links were established. In Latvia, these organisations included various aid committees organised along ethnic lines for soldiers and their dependants. Private organisations also undertook the care and treatment of wounded soldiers. However, those in most urgent need of aid were the Latvian refugees, who eventually reached 800 000 in number. Although official circulars instructed the refugees to "travel east," the state authorities could not provide for their needs. In 1915, a large number of private organisations were established to take on the task of caring for the Latvian refugees. Their activities were uncoordinated and were plagued by disagreement, resulting from the competition for state funding to aid the refugees.

On August 30, 1915, the Congress of Latvian Refugees was convened in Petrograd, with 128 delegates from 83 different refugee aid organisations. The congress invited the Latvians "not to leave their native farmstead" even under the threat of German occupation, and decided that Latvian refugees should be sent to Livland, Latgallia or the major urban centres of Russia (Petrograd and Moscow), but certainly not to the provinces of the Volga, the Urals or Siberia.

The congress elected a Central Committee for Aid to Latvian Refugees, which functioned up until January 1918. The committee's members included Duma deputies Jānis Zālītis and Jānis Goldmanis, as well as other prominent figures in Latvian society: Vilis Olavs, A. Berķis and Jānis Čakste, along with the Catholic clergyman Nikodems Rancāns as a representative of the Latgallia region. With his great patriotism, amazing energy and capacity for uniting and organising people, Olavs was able to create a stable foundation for the provision of refugee aid as the committee's chairman.

The Central Committee for Aid to Latvian Refugees succeeded in an almost impossible task. Under wartime conditions, at a time when the Russian economy was in a state of collapse, it succeeded in finding, caring for and uniting hundreds of thousands of Latvian refugees throughout the whole expanse of Russia. The Central Committee established 260 local branches for refugee aid at all centres where sizeable numbers of Latvians had settled. By securing state aid and collecting money from private indivi-

duals and welfare organisations, the Central Committee obtained considerable funds – reaching almost 15 million roubles by 1917.

The Central Committee kept records of refugees, provided them with information, strove to find them work and distributed food, clothing and shoes. A detailed and carefully thought-out programme was prepared in order to satisfy “the cultural and spiritual needs of the refugees”. Paid teachers worked at the hundreds of schools that were opened for refugee children, and extra-curricular courses and lectures were organised. Assistance was provided for writers and artists, libraries were established and theatre companies formed. Church services were regularly held. All this cultural and educational work was in the Latvian language and had an emphatically national character. Contact between Latvian refugees in various parts of Russia, and with Latvia, was provided by refugee newspapers, which were published in virtually all of the Latvian refugee centres – from Petrograd and Moscow right up to Vladivostok.

The committee gathered the refugees together, strengthened their national consciousness and instilled in them a sense of national responsibility. Its activities played a vital role in the future history of Latvia. The Central Committee was an important school for Latvian politicians. Here they learned to unite the people, understand their interests and organise them in a joint effort. Many of the founders and leaders of the future Latvian state came from among the committee activists. In a sense, the committee resembled the future Latvian parliament, with representation from all regions of Latvia and from a very wide spectrum of social and political groups.

During the first years of the war (up to 1917), Latvian thinking on the national issue also became more active, although various groups of political, social and cultural activists had very different views on Latvia’s future development. The official patriotic stance in favour of the empire was upheld by the top stratum of the Latvian bourgeoisie, represented in the Duma by Goldmanis and Zālītis and by the leadership of the refugee Central Committee (Bergs, Olavs and Čakste). Their stance was vividly demonstrated in the newspaper *Baltija*, which was published in Petrograd and edited by Bergs. These political and social leaders avoided the issue of Latvian political autonomy and continued to limit their aspirations to the extremely modest request for the establishment of *zemstvo* assemblies in the Baltic Provinces, which would set them on an equal footing in terms of local administration to the provinces of inland Russia. In their writings and speeches, they continued to depict

a bright, sometimes even fantastic picture of the advancement of the Latvian people that would begin when Russia triumphed in the war.

It should be borne in mind that these activists were undertaking very important practical work for the good of the Latvian people and were afraid of losing the moral and material support of the Russian government and leading sections of society. This could be maintained only by expressing a markedly conformist attitude to the empire. At the same time, their bright and rosy visions of the future, presented in the official optimistic spirit, did not help to orient Latvian society towards realistic national aims.

Much bolder and more realistic views about the tasks of the immediate future were expressed by Latvian cultural figures who now found themselves in Moscow and whose opinions were voiced by the paper *Dzimtenes Atbalsis*. The talented journalists Jānis Bankavs, Ernests Blanks and the outstanding writers Kārlis Skalbe, Linards Laicens, Jānis Akuraters and Viktors Eglītis, gave their main attention to the national question and to Latvia's future. This group of intellectuals united people holding a variety of political views and opinions. Akuraters wrote: "We don't want to be red or black: we are united by our idea of Latvian national culture, our own economic and social system." The national political group formed in Moscow by the Latvian intellectuals urged a struggle for an undivided region of Latvia as a *unique* national area of Russia, and emphasised the significance of the social, cultural and educational development of the Latvian nation.

Also active were certain groups of Latvian political emigrants, especially in Switzerland. Here, nationally-oriented Latvian social democrats – Rainis, Fēlikss Cielēns and Anna Ķeniņa – formed a Latvian National Committee in the autumn 1915. The committee promoted the idea of Latvian self-determination and sought support among social and cultural figures in Western Europe. It energetically protested against Germany's annexation plans and strove to give international resonance to the issue of Latvia. In 1915, Fēlikss Cielēns drafted a plan that envisaged a moderate degree of autonomy for Latvia as part of Russia. This plan was quite influential for a time among Latvian political émigrés. At one point during the war years the poet Rainis even pondered the idea of a united Latvian-Lithuanian state.

In late 1916, the Latvian bourgeoisie and intellectuals turned increasingly to the issue of Latvian autonomy. The views of the Latvian national political groups in Moscow and Petrograd were gradually converging. The idea of a united Latvia that included Latgallia, the return of refugees to Latvia and

the establishment of a new system of Latvian self-government came to be accepted by the members of both groups.

1915 saw the formation of the Latvian Riflemen (*strēlnieki*), who were to have a great influence not only on the future of Latvia, but also on events in Russia as a whole. The first year of war changed the Russian generals' negative attitude towards the creation of army units based on ethnic lines. The Russian command was impressed by the discipline and military prowess of Latvian soldiers and officers, and hoped that the fighting spirit of the Latvians would inspire other units of the Russian army as well.

The Bolsheviks among the Latvian Social Democrats, along with the Baltic German elite, opposed the formation of Latvian army units. Nor was the attitude of Tsar Nicholas II, the Tsarina and the imperial court favourable to such a venture. However, under wartime conditions, the general mood in society and military opinion prevailed. In spring 1915, the idea of forming national military units became ever more popular in Latvia. The hope arose that Latvian soldiers could defend Riga and win back Courland from the Germans. An initiative group led by Duma deputy Jānis Goldmanis sent a letter to the commander-in-chief of the army, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich, who left the decision to the commander of the North-West Front. The commander's order No. 322 of August 1, 1915 permitted the formation of Latvian rifle battalions.

Latvian social and political activists then established a committee for organising these battalions. The committee included Goldmanis and Zālītis, as well as Bergs and some of the most prominent politicians in the future independent Latvia, such as Zigfrīds Meierovics and Voldemārs Zamuels. The call to enlist, signed by the Duma deputies, exhorted: "Gather under the Latvian flags!... Brothers, the hour has come. He who believes will triumph. Forward under the Latvian flag for the future of Latvia!"¹⁵ Large numbers of volunteers began to enlist and many soldiers left other army units to join the Latvian forces. The formation of the rifle battalions was accompanied by general national enthusiasm, and events marking the departure of the volunteers in Riga for training resembled a national celebration.

The Latvian soldiers were initially organised into eight rifle battalions named after historic regions and towns in Latvia. Each battalion numbered about 1500 officers and men. In September 1916, the eight rifle battalions were reorganised into eight Latvian Rifle Regiments, each consisting of two battalions. A Latvian Reserve Rifle Regiment was also formed and based in

the town of Valmiera. For military operations, the regiments were organised into two brigades – the 1st and 2nd Latvian Rifle Brigade. The high command stipulated that the size of the regiments should not be augmented, and that a rifle division should not be formed from the regiments, since in that case the Latvians would require not only infantry weapons, but also artillery, and the technical services would have to be augmented. This the army command considered undesirable and even dangerous. The initial regulations did not envisage the deployment of the Latvian Riflemen as regular infantry. The riflemen, being familiar with local conditions, were to serve as reconnaissance, diversionary and signals units, and provide guides and interpreters.

It was only in May 1916 that the instruction was issued on the deployment of the Latvian Riflemen as regular infantry. Altogether in 1916, the Latvian Rifle Regiments had around 40 000 men: 25 000 in active service and 15 000 in the Reserve Regiment.

The Latvian Riflemen were an unusual, even unique phenomenon in the Russian army, with their distinctive appearance and traditions. Alongside the Russian language, which was used for orders and documentation, Latvian was widely used in training and regimental life. More than nine tenths of the riflemen were Latvians, the rest being Estonians, Russians, Lithuanians and Poles living in Latvia. All regions of Latvia and all social strata were represented: workers and businessmen, labourers and farm owners, civil servants, school pupils and students. The riflemen's standard of education was very high for the time: only 3.5 percent were illiterate. The majority of junior officers and non-commissioned officers came from Latvian intellectual circles or were primary school teachers. The top commanders were experienced Latvian officers. The regimental and brigade commanders included the later Latvian army generals Rūdolfs Bangerskis, Jānis Kalniņš, Gustavs Francis, Kārlis Goppers, Andrejs Auzāns and Augusts Misiņš, as well as the later commander-in-chief of the armed forces of Soviet Russia, Colonel Jukums Vācietis. The relationship between the officers and the men in the rifle regiments was generally business-like, often friendly and respectful, without the accustomed humiliation of enlisted men and mutual antipathy.

The riflemen were permitted to wear national symbols on their breast badges, and to bear flags with Latvian symbols and mottoes. They sang Latvian songs and their orchestras played Latvian marches. With literary clubs, theatres, newspapers, magazines and books, the riflemen were part of

an educated Latvia. High self-esteem and a love of cleanliness and order were reflected in their appearance and the tidiness of their quarters. The practice of altering uniforms to individual fit was unusual in the Tsar's army, as were the smartly creased caps, the soldiers' elegant bearing, the flowerbeds and clean gravel paths in the barracks and at the war front, the flowers in the bunkers and shelters.

The riflemen had only light arms: Japanese Arisaka rifles, American Maxim and Colt machine-guns and hand grenades. Their outstanding prowess in battle derived from their unity and high sense of responsibility, their practice of fulfilling any task conscientiously and precisely, and the ability of the riflemen and their commanders to perceive military training and battle as a difficult and responsible task. Of course, there was youthful enthusiasm and recklessness as well. But above all else, the Latvian Riflemen were fighting on their own soil and for their own country, and were imbued with a sense of close contact with their people. Even more, they enjoyed the adulation of their people, since they constituted the kind of army that Latvia wished for. The riflemen had all of this, but they were too few, and even the most valiant struggle was not enough to win back Courland from the Germans.

The Latvian Rifle Regiments formed part of the Russian 12th Army and fought on the Northern Front. In 1915 and 1916, they were deployed just outside Riga in the most important and dangerous sectors of the front. The battles of 1916 were particularly bloody. The Russian command, in order to relieve the French army's situation on the Somme and in Verdun, began operations on the Northern Front as well. The commanders of the Northern Front and the 12th Army took a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the Latvian Riflemen. The Russian generals admitted their great battle prowess, and the commander of the front, General Nikolai Ruzsky, described them in a report to the high command in September 1916 as the "most secure bastion of support on the Riga front". While reports on the riflemen were generally very positive, the victories they won somewhat offended the Russian generals. The riflemen tended to be resented, and so were deliberately sent without support to the most dangerous sectors of the front, while others strove to distinguish themselves on account of the riflemen's military successes.

Military operations involving the Latvian Riflemen were perceived quite differently in different quarters. The riflemen and their commanders tried to see a rationale behind each battle, contributing to the aim of pushing

back the Germans and potentially driving them out of Courland. The commanders at the front and of the Russian 12th Army, for their part, were more concerned with demonstrating military activity. They did not wish to disrupt the apparent military balance on the front or to “annoy the Germans”. In planning their military operations, the commanders of the front and the army often simply went through the motions, demonstrating incompetence, inactivity, indecision and lack of comprehension of the situation. Thus, practically all of the Latvian Riflemen’s battlefield successes, which came at the cost of thousands of lives, turned out to be in vain, since the top Russian commanders never bothered to make use of them, or even knew how to.

This was demonstrated particularly in the bloody Christmas Battles, which raged from December 23, 1916 to January 18, 1917. A poorly thought-out and uncoordinated offensive in the direction of Jelgava came to a halt without any positive result. The Latvian Rifle Regiments suffered 9000 casualties, or more than 37 percent of their fighting strength, including 2000 dead.¹⁶ These were the largest losses suffered by the Latvian Riflemen in the First World War.

Following this futile loss of lives, the mood of the riflemen changed radically. They no longer trusted the Tsar or the supreme political and military commanders, nor did they have any faith in the Latvian bourgeoisie, which had not objected to their decimation on the Riga front. The Latvian officers and men increasingly began to question the importance of the war and the role of the Latvian people in it. Anti-war sentiment grew perceptibly, and the Latvian Bolsheviks actively carried on agitation work in the Rifle Regiments.

The Latvian Riflemen had the positive effect of bolstering the nation’s self-esteem. For the first time, they raised awareness of the existence of the Latvian people not only in Russia, but also in Western Europe. The exploits of the Latvian Riflemen were reported in Britain, France, Germany and Italy, and the outstanding Belgian poet Émile Verhaeren wrote:

*And here, at Verdun
And Yser, we listen
With bated breath,
As the Latvian oaks call to one another.
They know not how to bend,
But only break.*

The military and political situation in 1917–1918

The February Revolution in Russia significantly accelerated political developments and the polarisation of political forces in Latvia. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers from the Russian army units stationed in Latvia became involved in political events, thus destabilising the situation. With the emergence of democratic rights and various political changes, the German and Russian influence in the administration was significantly reduced. The administrative system became more Latvian, and the Latvians became the deciding political force. Control by the Russian Provisional Government weakened, so that power was wielded more independently at the local level. The role of elected bodies grew, and various political forces fought for influence in them. Clearly distinguishable within this exceptionally colourful political spectrum were the national liberal movement and the left-wing revolutionary movement, with the latter soon starting to come under Latvian Bolshevik domination.

Latvian society, having lacked any serious experience of democracy, had to choose between two main ideologies and political alternatives. The national liberals proposed a traditional parliamentary democracy – with laws, compromises, unequal distribution of property and evolutionary development. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, offered the prospect of a dictatorship of the proletariat, general peace and equality, and a state ruled by the workers of the world. The communist ideals, offering immediate, radical and seemingly just solutions on a worldwide scale, obtained an almost religious character, eagerly taken up by a people wracked by the hardship of war.

In 1917, after the February Revolution in Russia, many political parties were founded or recommenced their activities in the part of Latvia that had not been occupied by the Germans. These included radical left-wing, bourgeois and minority parties, as well as parties from Latgallia. Most were small, with very limited political influence. The bourgeois Latvian parties included the National Democratic Party, established by Latvian intellectual circles grouped around the paper *Dzimtenes Atbalss*. This party was distinguished by its radical national programme, which envisaged Latvia as a democratic republic within a Russian federation of republics.

The most influential and largest Latvian bourgeois party was the Latvian Farmers' Union, which united a large section of the peasantry and had two

prominent leaders: Kārlis Ulmanis and the former leader of the Socialist Revolutionaries, Miķelis Valters, who had just joined it. Also active in the party were Zigfrīds Meierovics and Oto Nonācs. Although the party's membership was not homogeneous, it was the only group that could put up significant opposition to the Latvian Social Democratic Party.

The Latvian Social Democrats, among whom in early 1917 the Bolsheviks did not yet have a decisive influence, became Latvia's most popular political party. In large measure, this was due to the fact that, unlike the Russian Social Democrats, the Latvians had not yet split into Bolshevik and Menshevik parties, and this coalition of party groups enjoyed mass support.

The broad process of democratisation was very evident in the formation of new municipal authorities, which took the place of the previous administration. In the towns, councils of private organisations were formed in order to promote cooperation between different political forces.

The Livland Provisional Territorial Council was established in Riga in March 1917. In place of the former Tsarist governor Andrejs Krastkalns, the mayor of Riga, became the commissar of the Russian Provisional Government, succeeded by the Social Democrat Andrejs Priedkalns. Kārlis Ulmanis, the leader of the Farmers' Union, took the post of vice-commissar. In late April in Tartu, Estonia, representatives of the refugees from Courland established a Courland Provisional Territorial Council, electing Jānis Čakste as commissar. Almost at the same time, the Latgallia Latvian Congress met in Rēzekne, electing a Latgallia Provisional Territorial Council, led by the prominent Latgallian social activist Francis Trasuns. The council expressed the Latgallians' desire for the region to be separated from the Russian Province of Vitebsk and joined to the rest of Latvia.

The establishment of these territorial councils in Latvia's regions and the desire they voiced for the establishment of a united Latvia did have the effect of promoting and speeding up the pace of unification. However, in practice, the Russian Provisional Government did not accept the unification of the regions of Latvia into a single autonomous unit, and those administrative reforms that it authorised could actually take effect only in Livland.

In parallel with these social organisations, soviets (councils) of soldiers, workers and landless peasants were established in the unoccupied part of Latvia. These served as a vehicle for creating a broad "wave of Bolshevism" in Riga and Livland. The Riga Soviet of Workers' Deputies soon obtained real power in the city. In order to out-compete the liberal Livland Provisional

Territorial Council, the Bolsheviks convened the 1st Livland Congress of Landless Peasants in April 1917 in the town of Valmiera. This congress elected a Soviet of Livland Landless Peasants. The activities of this soviet testified to the Bolsheviks' tactical skill, since the soviet, being a section of the Bolshevik-dominated Riga Soviet of Workers' Deputies, achieved the establishment of a new Livland Territorial Council, in which it held a dominant position.

The Bolshevisation of the Latvian Riflemen was to have a significant impact on both Latvian and Russian history. The Latvian Bolsheviks gradually succeeded in passing ever more radical measures at the Executive Committee of Latvian Riflemen and Officers (*Iskolastrels*). In May 1917, the congresses of the Latvian Riflemen pronounced their opposition to the continuation of the war and to the policies of the Russian Provisional Government. The congresses demanded the transferral of power to the soviets and passed motions in support of the Bolshevik Party. The *Iskolastrels* leadership came entirely under the control of left-wing radicals headed by Captain Voldemārs Ozols, who, while being an outstanding military leader, was an adventurer in politics. Soon after that, many nationalist officers left the Latvian Riflemen. The establishment of a National Union of Latvian Soldiers in August 1917 was a belated move that did not change the general mood among the riflemen and only served to highlight the political shortsightedness of the Latvian bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.

The first phase in the Bolsheviks' route to a monopoly of political power in Latvia concluded in July 1917, when the Latvian Social Democrats established the *Iskolats* – the Executive Committee of the Latvian Soviet of Workers, Soldiers and Landless Peasants.

The second phase in this advance was marked by the Bolsheviks' convincing triumph in municipal elections at various levels and in elections to the Russian Constituent Assembly in the second half of 1917. In the Riga City Council elections, the Bolsheviks obtained 49 out of 120 seats on the council, or 41 percent of the vote, leaving the other parties far behind. In the elections to the Livland Territorial Council in September, they obtained 63 percent of the vote. Their closest competitor, the Farmers' Union, received slightly more than 36 percent. Likewise, in the elections to the Russian Constituent Assembly in November 1917, the Bolsheviks had a convincing lead over the Farmers' Union: 72 percent of the vote against 23 percent. Voter support for the Bolsheviks in Latvia was greater than anywhere else in

the Russian Empire. (They obtained 25 percent of the total vote in Russia in elections to the Constituent Assembly.) The Bolsheviks were most successful in Livland, but less so in Latgallia, where the social conditions were different and where the party had traditionally been less active.

The unparalleled political success of the Bolsheviks in 1917 was the result of unusual and complex historical conditions. In Latvia, unlike Russia, there were no other influential left-wing parties that might compete with the Bolsheviks. The Latvian Mensheviks succeeded in establishing their own party only in 1918, while the Socialist Revolutionaries never enjoyed mass support. Compared with the newly-established bourgeois parties, the Bolsheviks had greater political experience, well thought-out political propaganda and demagogery, financial support from the German military and an excellent reputation as revolutionaries of 1905. Accordingly, their exhortations to take revenge against the German Barons and the Russian Black Hundreds for their wrongdoings against the Latvians had an electrifying effect on broad sections of Latvian society.

In seeking solutions to the issues of land, peace and national development, which were so crucial to the Latvians, the bourgeois parties were shackled by their orientation towards compromise with the Russian Provisional Government and other power structures, and by their wish for a traditional resolution of social and economic problems. The Latvian Bolsheviks, by contrast, offered radical and immediate solutions. To the enormous stratum of landless peasants in Livland, the nationalisation and confiscation of land seemed to be the only just course. The popularity of the Latvian bourgeoisie was certainly not increased by its support of the Provisional Government's call to continue the war until a final Russian victory was reached. To most of the population of Latvia, which had already been suffering the miseries of war for over two years, the Bolshevik slogan of immediate peace without annexations or reparations seemed incomparably more realistic and attractive.

The resolution of the equally important national question was hampered by the occupation of Courland and by the Russian Provisional Government's opposition to the idea of Latvian autonomy. The Provisional Government refused to join Latgallia to the Latvian part of Livland, or to regard Latvia as a separate administrative unit within Russia. The Latvian bourgeois leaders Goldmanis, Zālītis and Čakste were exceptionally cautious and passive in their national demands. Most Latvian social and political activists

were not yet ready to support the more radical plans promoted by the *National Democrats* for an independent Latvian state within a federation of Russian states. While the Latvian Bolsheviks, supported the popular slogan of 1917 "A free Latvia in a free Russia", they regarded the idea of Latvian autonomy as unnecessary and superfluous. At the same time, with the idea of autonomy becoming increasingly popular, and with Vladimir Lenin's tactical approach to the national issue, the Latvian Bolsheviks engaged in some deft manoeuvring. On July 30, 1917, at a conference of Latvian public organisations and political parties, they joined the demand for Latvian autonomy within a democratic republic of Russia. All in all, their propaganda and promises to resolve this issue by revolutionary means were more influential than the unsuccessful attempts by the bourgeois parties to plead for autonomy from the Russian Provisional Government.

The military and political situation in the territory of Latvia changed significantly when fighting recommenced on the Riga front on August 19 (1 September), 1917. The failure of an offensive launched by the Provisional Government in July 1917, *the Bolshevik-promoted collapse of the Russian army* and fraternisation among the soldiers created favourable conditions for the German command to take Riga and destroy the units of the Russian 12th Army outside of the city, thus opening the way for an attack on Petrograd and turning the military situation on the Russian front to Germany's favour.

In fierce battles lasting 26 hours, the 2nd Brigade of the Latvian Riflemen delayed a German advance at the Mazā Jugla River just outside Riga. As a result, the entire Russian 12th Army, of more than 300 000 men was able to avoid encirclement. During these battles, 6437 men from the Latvian Riflemen were killed, wounded or listed as missing in action. The 5th Semigallia Regiment suffered the greatest casualties and lost two thirds of its fighting strength. The bravery of the riflemen was attested by a case unprecedented in the Russian army: in this one regiment alone, 664 men and officers were awarded the Cross of St George for valour. This was to be the last big battle between the Latvian Riflemen and German forces in the First World War, and one that would have both moral and military significance.

The German army succeeded in taking Riga and Riga County soon after. The front once again stabilised, and the Germans were forced to give up their intention of quickly occupying Livland and moving on to Petrograd. The capture of Riga did extend the zone of German occupation, reinforcing the German position in Latvia and permitting the advancement of plans for

the Germanisation and annexation of the occupied territories. The Latvian Riflemen had once again demonstrated their patriotism and fighting abilities, and for a short time an illusion was created that the riflemen and the officers who had stayed with them were still a united force.

The period from October 1917 to February 1918 marked the third phase of the Bolshevik wave, when the *Iskolats* came to power in the unoccupied area of Latvia and began the implementation of communist experiments. The Bolsheviks were overwhelmingly dominant in the Livland Territorial Council. They obtained control of the councils of all three armies stationed in the region, and immediately after the Bolshevik October Coup in Petrograd, the Latvian Riflemen drove all of the former authorities out of Livland. On November 8, 1917, the *Iskolats* began realising a dictatorship of the proletariat, and on December 16–18, the Soviet of Latvian Workers, Soldiers and Landless Peasants formally established what is sometimes termed as the *Iskolats* Republic. The Latvian Marxist veteran and dogmatic theoretician Fricis Roziņš became chairman of the newly-elected *Iskolats*, or Bolshevik government.

The joining of Latgallia to the rest of Latvia was proclaimed and realised in practice, although Latgallia was being joined not to an independent state, but to an autonomous region of Russia.

The new authorities confiscated the Baltic German estates, began to abolish private property, outlawed commerce and introduced strict state control over the distribution of goods, returning in many cases to the *principles of a natural economy*. These measures went hand in hand with measures directed against property owners as a class, the abolition of civil liberties and elements of the so-called Red Terror. The activities of anti-Bolshevik parties were outlawed and opposition papers closed down. "In order to struggle mercilessly and effectively against counter-revolution, and to maintain revolutionary peace and order," units of Red Guards were organised, revolutionary tribunals set up and the practice of hostage-taking introduced. In February 1918, the *Iskolats* left Latvia together with about 300 hostages and transferred its activities to Moscow. The three months of *Iskolats* rule were enough to reveal quite clearly the economic and socio-political ideals of the Latvian Bolsheviks and showed what kind of political system could be expected in Latvia, should the Bolsheviks triumph.

In autumn 1917 and the beginning of 1918, the national liberal sections of Latvian society became markedly more active. The extension of the

German-occupied area, along with the Bolshevik rise to power in Russia and unoccupied Latvia stimulated the development of new, strong, nationally-oriented political organisations. These no longer perceived Latvian statehood within the frame of Russia's development, but had come to view it as an international issue.

The Latvians outside of Latvia (i.e. in Russia) also showed increasing signs of political activity in 1917. Latvian social democratic groups, mainly Bolshevik ones, also developed alongside the national liberal organisations. These were particularly active in Petrograd and Moscow. Thus, for example, in Petrograd, the Latvian *Prometejs* branch of the city's Bolshevik party organisation had 2500 members at the end of 1917. During the days of the October Coup, a string of Latvian Bolsheviks (including Pēteris Stučka and Mārtiņš Sudrabs-Lācis) occupied important posts in the Petrograd Soviet and on the Military Revolutionary Committee.

Some 8000–9000 Latvians joined the ranks of the Red Guards in Russia. Many of them were Latvian refugees, especially factory workers. Many Latvian Red Guards actually belonged to Russian Red Guard units. The former Red Guards of the *Iskolats* Republic who ended up in Russia after February 1918 also joined the ranks of the Red Guard. The Latvian Red Guards took part in the October Coup and in the suppression of anti-Soviet unrest, and they supplemented the ranks of the Soviet Latvian Rifle Division.

At the 2nd All-Russian Congress of Soviets of 25 October 1917, which declared Soviet power and which was convened to confer an appearance of legitimacy to the Bolshevik Coup, the approximately 100-strong Latvian delegation played a very important role. A furious speech by the Bolshevik Kārlis Pētersons, who represented the Latvian Riflemen, was directed against the representatives of other left-wing parties. It ended with the words: "Enough of revolution! Enough of words! We need action. We must take power into our hands! Let these false delegates leave! The army is not with them."¹⁷ His speech significantly altered the mood of the congress participants and contributed to the Bolshevik triumph at the congress.

Already from the time of the October Coup, and later as well during the Russian Civil War, those Latvian riflemen who fought on the Bolshevik side – the so-called Latvian Red Riflemen – wielded great influence on political and military developments in Russia. During the October Coup, they prevented the Russian 12th Army from intervening in the events in Petrograd. The first two Latvian Riflemen units, 2800-strong, arrived in

Petrograd in late November 1917. The Riflemen served as guards and maintained order. Sadly, they were also used in the implementation of *undemocratic actions* against the opponents of Soviet power.

In spring 1918, all of the Latvian Rifle Regiments (although considerably reduced in strength to about 12 000–15 000 men) arrived in Russia, where in April 1918 they were united into a Soviet Latvian Rifle Division. This Latvian army unit, commanded by Colonel Jukums Vācietis, was the first regular Red Army division. By the autumn of that year, it numbered 23 000–24 000 men, with infantry, cavalry, artillery and even aircraft. The unity of the Latvian Riflemen, as well as their discipline and skill in battle, made them indispensable for any major military operation. In this situation, and at a time when Latvia was completely under German occupation, the majority of the Soviet Latvian Riflemen were convinced that only a Bolshevik triumph would enable Latvia to be freed from occupation. Thus, they became a bastion of support for the Soviets.

Even though the Latvian Rifle Regiments had nominally been united into a single division, the division's units fought separately in different parts of Russia and on different fronts. In 1918, the Soviet Latvian Riflemen fought in Moscow and Yaroslavl, in the Urals and in Belarus, on the Volga, the Don, the Kuban and elsewhere. The Latvian Riflemen also generated a large number of commanders and commissars in many other Red Army units, as well as high-ranking political, economic and secret police officials.

Some writers have extolled the actions of the Latvian Riflemen in Soviet Russia as heroic, while others have criticised them. Some have emphasised that the battles fought by the Red Riflemen against the Russian White forces and their major contribution to the defeat of the Whites made possible the establishment of an independent Latvia. Accordingly, the Latvian Red Riflemen are depicted as fighters for the national cause. Critics point out that these men fought in battles that served foreign (i.e. Russian) interests, that these battles were pointless and in some cases even criminal. There is no doubt by anyone, however, that the Latvian Riflemen played an exceptional role in the October Coup and in the Russian Civil War, that they helped to establish what later became known as the Soviet Union, and that they can thus be viewed as something of a historical phenomenon. At the same time, there is no basis for taking an extreme view on one side or the other, and for ignoring the complicated historical realities of that period. Thousands of Latvian soldiers fought not only in the Red Army, but also initially in the

Tsarist forces and subsequently in the army of an independent Latvia. One section of the Latvian Riflemen never fought in the ranks of the Red Army at all. According to some calculations, the majority of officers from the Latvian Riflemen, who numbered in the thousands, actually fought in the Russian Civil War in various anti-Soviet military units; i.e. on the side of the Whites. Dozens of former Latvian Riflemen officers were very active in the anti-Soviet Union for the Salvation of the Fatherland and Freedom, which was led by Boris Savinkov. Among them were Kārlis Goppers and Fridrihs Briedis, who organised anti-Bolshevik uprisings in the summer of 1918.

2.4. EDUCATION AND CULTURE

At the turn of the 20th century, Latvia had a relatively high literacy rate. In this regard, Latvia, along with Estonia and Finland, stood out among the other regions of the Russian Empire. In Livland, literacy was as high as 95 percent, while in Courland the figure was 88 percent. Even Latgallia, with 50 percent, stood apart from the other counties of the Russian Province of Vitebsk.

However, there were serious obstacles to the further development of education in Latvia. Already from the 1880s, education was affected by a rapid process of bureaucratisation and Russification. Instead of the autonomy that schools previously enjoyed, scrupulous bureaucratic supervision was instituted. This supervision was undertaken in Latvia by the curators and inspectors of the Riga Teaching District. In Latgallia, it was implemented by the Vilnius Teaching District and the Vitebsk Directorate of Primary Schools.

As part of the Tsarist government's concerted Russification policy, teaching in the Latvian language was forbidden in primary schools, with the exception of religious instruction. Primary school pupils with an inadequate knowledge of Russian or who did not speak Russian among themselves were punished. Russian teachers were sent to Latvia to promote Russification and at state teaching seminaries, instruction was also in Russian. In Latgallia, where the government's Russification policy was particularly draconian, attempts were made to eliminate home teaching, and the use of the Latin alphabet was forbidden right up until 1904.

A real "war of languages" affected the whole educational system in

Latvia. More liberal legislation was drafted, envisaging native language instruction in the first years at primary school, but these proposals became bogged down in the Russian Duma. A directive from the curator of the Riga Teaching District in 1913 once again stipulated that primary schools in the Baltic were to teach all subjects except for religious instruction in the Russian language.

The demand for the democratisation of the educational system in Latvia, which was voiced by large sections of Latvian society, was explicitly expressed at the Congress of Latvian Primary School Teachers in 1905. The congress called for teaching in the native (i.e. Latvian) language, the introduction of compulsory elementary education, the provision of assistance for the schooling of needy children, changes to school curricula, an end to bureaucratic supervision, the transfer of control over education to municipal authorities, improved teacher training and improvements in teachers' material and legal status. Such demands were attainable only if a democratic system was established in Russia.

At the beginning of the 20th century, there was an impressive number of teaching institutions in the territory of Latvia: 2038 altogether, with 170 000 pupils and students in 1913.¹⁸ Primary school education was provided at various kinds of schools. In rural areas these included parish schools, church schools, elementary schools and "ABC schools", while in the towns there were elementary schools and ministry schools. However, certain authors have expressed the view that the number of primary schools and the number of pupils attending them *fell significantly* at the beginning of the 20th century in comparison with the late 19th century.

Parish schools were still the most widespread type, making up around 70 percent of the total number of schools. They were maintained by the parish authorities, and attendance was free of charge. In Livland and Latgallia, church schools actually offered a wider curriculum, but they charged school fees. In Latgallia, only Russian Orthodox schools were permitted, apart from a single Lutheran school and a single Roman Catholic school. Specific to Latgallia were unofficial home schools inspired by the Catholic Church and led by enterprising women, in addition to village schools run by clergymen. The number of primary schools in Latgallia in the first decade of the 20th century grew almost five times, reaching a considerable number – 352. However, many country children did not attend school due to poverty, to their residence's remoteness from the nearest school

or to a dislike of Russification. Common problems included the unsuitability of school premises, overly large classes and the teachers' heavy workload.

The urban elementary schools charged fees and in the cities, a large proportion of children could not attend school. This problem was alleviated by the opening of many new private schools. However, the state and the cities made a relatively small contribution to maintaining the urban schools. Thus, in Riga in 1911, for example, 57 percent of school expenditures were covered from school fees and donations. Even after building of 14 new schoolhouses, 20 percent of children in Riga, mainly the children of Russian and Latvian workers, could not attend the urban elementary schools.

In the towns and villages, 87 ministry schools were established with the approval of the Ministry of Education. These were more advanced primary schools, where one could learn a trade, but they also served to bolster the Russification effort.

With growing numbers of schools and pupils, secondary education developed rapidly in Latvia in the early part of the 20th century. In 1910, Latvia had 98 different secondary schools, or one school per 26 000 people, while in Germany the figure was one school per 42 600 people. In France it was one school per 43 000 people, in Italy it was one school per 59 000 people and in Russia one per 84 000. The rapid development of secondary schools resulted from an overall improvement in people's material welfare in Latvia. Many private secondary schools were established, there was a boom in secondary education for girls, and secondary schools diversified and modernised.

In private secondary schools, the teaching of the Latvian language and literature was permitted. The private schools were well organised, and many of the teachers were outstanding figures in Latvian culture. The rapid pace of women's emancipation in Latvian society led to an amazing growth in the number of girls' grammar schools and led to an unusually high proportion of girls' grammar schools in Latvia during this period. Thus, in 1913, Latvia had 40 girls' grammar schools and 13 boys' grammar schools. Moreover, the girls' schools had 2½ times more pupils (11 520 altogether) than the boys' schools. All of the girls' grammar schools were maintained by private organisations or individuals, but the graduates of these schools did not automatically obtain the right to enter institutions of higher education.

Modern schools, schools of commerce and schools of trade began to take an increasingly important place among secondary schools. By 1913, Latvia already had 45 teaching establishments of this kind, with 10 199

pupils. A growing number of schools also provided a vocational education. Thus, 13 trade schools with 2757 pupils taught all the main trades of the time – from blacksmith and carpenter to goldsmith and photographer.

Maritime schools were a unique phenomenon in Latvia at that time. Such a small territory as Latvia had 10 state-supported maritime schools (five senior schools and five junior schools), and the captains and helmsmen they trained were highly regarded as professionals not only in Russia, but in many ports and seas around the world. The maritime professions were very popular among Latvians. In 1914, out of 570 maritime school pupils, 72 percent were ethnic Latvians.

A description of early 20th-century education in Latvia would not be complete without mention of Latvia's eight agricultural schools, three establishments for the training of Russian Orthodox priests and three teachers' seminaries. Apart from the seminaries, primary school teachers were also trained in special classes or courses at schools, and were recruited in the provinces of inland Russia. Nevertheless, there was a constant shortage of teachers in Latvia, and their level of training generally lagged behind the demands of the time. Only a small proportion of teachers had a higher education, and, in fact, those who had attended special courses and classes had a somewhat improved level of primary school education.

However, teachers were exceptionally important as authorities in Latvian social life, particularly in the rural areas. A characteristic type of Latvian primary school teacher emerged: one who not only taught the prescribed curriculum, but also developed the pupils' talents, instilled a sense of patriotism, conducted local choirs, theatres and societies, collected folklore and wrote articles for the papers. Thus, practically all cultural life in the parish centred around the teacher. The majority of teachers held democratic views. Many were staunch supporters of left-wing ideas and were politically active, most notably during the Revolution of 1905.

At the end of the 19th century, there were 5334 higher education graduates in Latvia, of whom only 13 percent, or 693, were Latvians. In the early part of the 20th century, the number of Latvian graduates increased to 1240. The professional spectrum of the Latvian graduates was very broad. Most commonly they were doctors, teachers, pharmacists, lawyers and clergymen. These professions accounted for nearly half (47 percent) of all Latvian graduates. Significantly fewer – only 10 percent – were technical specialists: engineers, railwaymen, agricultural and forestry specialists. At

this time, academically educated Latvians had to compete with the Baltic German intellectuals, who were in a strong position in almost all fields. At the beginning of the 20th century, only about half (177) of Latvian graduates from higher education institutions in Russia were actually working in Riga. An equal number were employed in St Petersburg, Moscow or abroad.

The overall number of ethnic Latvians studying at higher education institutions in Russia grew more than threefold in the space of a decade and a half, and by 1913, Latvian students numbered 1850. Of the Russian higher education institutions, the most popular among Latvians was still Tartu University in Estonia. The Russification at the university and the abolition of its autonomy did reduce its influence in Latvia, but in the early part of the 20th century, it remained an important centre of Latvian intellectual life. Almost a third of the professors at the future University of Latvia would be former students of Tartu University. A large number of Latvians also studied at the Tartu Institute of Veterinary Medicine.

Many Latvians chose to study at higher education institutions in St Petersburg and Moscow, and particularly at the universities. The Academy of Military Medicine, the Mining Institute and the Shanavsky University were quite popular. The most ambitious Latvian officers in the Russian army attended Russian military academies. The officer corps of the future Latvian Army included about 40 graduates of Russian military academies.

By comparison, much smaller numbers of Latvians studied abroad, mainly in Germany and Switzerland. In the early part of the 20th century, Latvian women students were still exceptionally rare. About two dozen Latvian women studied in Russia and Western Europe – mainly in the fields of music and medicine.

The only higher education institution and the largest scientific centre in Latvia in the early part of the 20th century was the Riga Polytechnic Institute, from which 4749 students graduated in the years up to 1918. The majority of these students came from the Baltic Provinces (54 percent) and Poland (25 percent). The institute was becoming increasingly popular among Latvians as well, resulting in a growth of the proportion of Latvian students from 5 to 17 percent.

The high reputation enjoyed by the institute was the result of several different factors. Even in the conditions of an oppressive Tsarist bureaucracy and Russification, the institute succeeded in maintaining its academic autonomy and traditions, and served as a bridge for the exchange of technical

ideas between Russia and Western Europe. The institute excelled in its high standard of student education, its notable scientific achievements and its very close links, for that time, with industry.

The institute trained the first generation of Latvian technical specialists: engineers, architects, agronomists, chemists and many scientists who later became professors at the University of Latvia. Graduates of the institute, together with its professors, helped to transform Riga into a modern industrial and commercial metropolis. They built and modernised ports and factories, developed modern technologies, planned and supervised housing construction, built water mains and tramlines. A whole group of Polish scientists, engineers and agricultural specialists – first and foremost among them the outstanding chemist and later President of Poland, Ignacy Mościcki – graduated from the institute and went on to take an active part in building the new Polish state between the two world wars.

Germans predominated among the researchers and professors at the institute, with a large number of Poles as well. Holding a special place among the institute's fields of research was a broad spectrum of chemistry research, the foundations for which were laid by Nobel Prize winner Wilhelm Ostwald, and which included important work by Pauls Valdens (Paul Walden), Mieczyslaw Centnerszwer and Woldemar Fiszer. The mathematician and celestial mechanics specialist Piers Bohl was decades ahead of his time, as was aeronautics and rocketry pioneer Friedrich Zander. The Riga Polytechnic Institute also had outstanding engineers. Thus, Engelbert Arnold began the building of electrical machinery in Riga, Teodors Kaleps was the first in the Russian Empire to take up the construction of airplanes and airplane engines, and Charles Clark was a leading shipbuilding specialist who designed around 100 vessels.

At the beginning of the 20th century, it was difficult for ethnic Latvian scientists to make a career in Latvia. To enter the academic circles of the Riga Polytechnic Institute without cutting links with one's Latvian ethnic origins was virtually impossible. Instead, a whole string of outstanding Latvian scientists, linguists, physicists, chemists, astronomers and medical doctors taught at universities and institutes in Russia. Others went abroad, such as the distinguished economist Kārlis Balodis, who worked in Germany.

Baltic German research work in Latvia was conducted by various natural history, antiquarian, medical, technical and literary societies. Their studies on the Baltic region represented an immense contribution to the collection

of scientific facts and to the popularisation of science. Baltic German historians published a large number of historical sources, and accomplished their work to a standard that is still acceptable today.

Research by the Latvians was mainly focussed on linguistics, folklore and ethnography. There was also an element of amateur science, with the participation of primary school teachers, journalists, civil servants and writers. The Science Commission of the Riga Latvian Society became the centre of these "Latvian sciences". Notwithstanding its amateur approach, the commission did play a significant role in the development of research. The Science Commission challenged the intellectual monopoly of the Baltic German societies, promoting the development of Latvian scientific terminology and the collection and publication of scientific and folklore material. The leading Latvian linguistics specialists of the day, Kārlis Milēnbahs, Jānis Endzelīns and Pēteris Šmits, developed a new Latvian orthography that was based on the Latin alphabet. Milēnbahs began work on the compilation of a unique Latvian language dictionary, while several folklore researchers, most notably Pēteris Šmits, turned their attention to collecting Latvian folktales and legends. Krišjānis Barons continued his work of collecting and publishing Latvian folksongs. The Latvian bibliophile and bibliographer Jānis Misiņš collected all the books that were published in Latvian, and thus established the most complete library of Latvian literature.

However, for the most part, such notable projects remained efforts by individual scientists and amateur enthusiasts. For various reasons, the activities of the Science Commission in the field of coordinating scientific activity remained at a basic level.

The press and book publishing. In 1900, apart from the official publications of the provincial administration, Courland and Livland had 26 newspapers, nine magazines and seven advertising publications, most of them in German.

There were considerable obstacles to the Latvian-language press, including advance censorship. In Latgallia it was even forbidden to print and distribute press publications in the Latin alphabet. From the 1890s onward, licences were no longer given in the Baltic Provinces for new Latvian periodicals, with very few exceptions.

Nine Latvian newspapers (five weekly and four daily papers) and six magazines were published in Courland and Livland in the early years of the century, up to the Revolution of 1905. The leading papers had large circulations

that varied from 7000 to 18 000, and almost every paper had its own literary and economic supplements.

The press publications expressed the interests of various groups of the Latvian bourgeoisie, and they began to concentrate in the hands of big private companies. Thus, the stock company *Dīriķis un biedri* published the largest and most influential Latvian newspaper of the time: the moderately conservative *Baltijas Vēstnesis*. The Ernst Plates company published the liberal paper *Mājas Viesis*, along with the paper's monthly supplement, which was particularly significant for Latvian cultural life since it promoted current Latvian literature and contained articles on social, political and philosophical topics. The scientific and literary journal *Austrums* was the first example of a Latvian monthly journal, the type of which has existed with little change up to the present day. Riga was the main centre of the Latvian press, although the provincial press in Liepāja, Jelgava, Valmiera and Cēsis was also developing.

The newspaper *Pēterburgas Avīzes* was of considerable importance for Latvian social and cultural life. Published in St Petersburg, it was free from advance censorship and featured work by prominent Latvian writers and journalists. The paper discussed topical economic, social and political issues that other Latvian papers could not address, and had a markedly satirical slant.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Latvian newspapers and journals were also published in Western Europe and the USA. The revolutionary press published by émigrés in London and Boston marked the beginning of the Latvian social democratic press.

Following the Revolution of 1905, the Latvian-language press was badly hit. Six out of the 10 largest papers and all of the major magazines were closed down. At the same time, the events of the revolution opened up new possibilities for the development of a new press. After lifting of the ban on the Latgallian press in 1904, the publication of the first Latgallian-language papers began in St Petersburg. The lifting of the system of press licensing and advance censorship in 1905 gave a stimulus for the publication of new kinds of magazines.

A whole series of humorous and satirical magazines appeared, most notably *Svari*, which had the highest artistic standards. The new attractively designed literary and art magazines expressed the principles of creative freedom in the arts. Of outstanding importance for Latvian culture were the first photography magazine *Stari* and the literary magazine *Zalktis*.

After the revolution, the Latvian press gradually regained its stability.

New papers appeared, circulation increased several times over and the total number of major newspapers once again fluctuated at around ten. The daily paper *Dzimtenes Vēstnesis* took the lead, with a circulation of 75 000. It had a high standard of reporting, covered a wide range of themes and gave considerable attention to literature and literary life.

An entirely new phenomenon in Latvia was the appearance of such non-partisan mass newspapers as *Jaunākās Ziņas*, which was established in 1911. Sold at a low price, with clear and simple content, extensive social and crime information, engrossing serialised novels and a great number of advertisements, the paper attained a circulation of 97 000, which made it a profitable commercial venture.

The range of new magazines testified to further specialisation in the Latvian press. Several social and literary magazines for intellectuals were published, as well as theatre, women's and leisure magazines. The youth magazine *Jaunības Tekas* was very popular. Edited and published by Andrejs Jesens, it began the tradition of youth press in Latvia.

Significant changes affected the Latvian press during the First World War. About half of the major papers and virtually all of the magazines closed down in 1914–1915. A couple of newspapers continued to be published in Riga, including *Jaunākās Ziņas*. *Varavīksne*, which began the tradition of the illustrated weekly magazine, was an important publication during this period.

For a time, beginning in 1915, Petrograd, Moscow and Pskov became important publishing centres for the Latvian press. Several major Latvian papers continued to be published in the Russian cities, including *Dzimtenes Vēstnesis*, and new papers were established – the so-called “refugee papers”. Particularly important among these was *Dzimtenes Atbalss* in Moscow, the clearest voice in favour of Latvian independence.

Most of the Latvian press closed down in 1917 and 1918, while certain publications survived until 1919 or 1920, and only *Jaunākās Ziņas* continued to be published in independent Latvia.

The early 20th century witnessed major changes in Latvian book publishing. In the mid-1890s, 420 books in Latvian were being published per year, a figure that grew to 731 by 1902 and swelled to 1000 by 1913. The printing industry modernised and obtained major capital investments. By 1910, Latvia had 79 printing companies, most of them controlled by German and Jewish capital.

The book trade gradually branched out from publishing. By 1903, there were around 200 Latvian bookshops. The establishment of the Latvian Book Traders' and Suppliers' Society had the effect of improving the organisation of book publishing and sales. Latvian book publishing was concentrated mainly in the hands of 10 major publishers. As the readership diversified, the publishers also began to specialise. Virtually all of them gave considerable attention to publishing Latvian and translated fiction, which was most in demand. Volumes of verse by popular Latvian poets were printed in editions of 3000-5000.

New developments in Latvian book publishing included the creation of literary series and the publication of the complete works of Latvian writers. The *A. Jesens* publishers became popular with the many volumes of their "Youth Library", while the *A. Gulbis* publishing house created a "Universal Library", also in many volumes. *Ansis Gulbis* and the *Zalktis* publishers were the first to publish the complete works of several Latvian authors.

Also becoming popular were encyclopaedic works. A Conversational Dictionary was compiled by the *Derīgu Grāmatu Nodaļa* publishers, while *Valters un Rapa* published a series of bilingual dictionaries.

By this time, Latvian book illustration had attained a high standard, with all the different elements of a book's design being linked compositionally. A most important contribution in this regard was made by the *Zalktis* publishers, who also published a journal under the same title.

Altogether around 8000 books were published in Latvian from 1900 to 1918.

Literature. At the beginning of the 20th century, Latvian literature diversified and became more open to the modern currents in Europe. Two main movements predominated: Neoromanticism and Realism. The works of the Neoromantics were centred around personal spiritual experiences, dreams and self-analysis. Symbolist and Impressionist motifs were prominent. The Realists presented the realities of life in a down-to-earth style, emphasising moral and social issues.

Related to the Neoromantics were the Decadents, who proclaimed the freedom of art and individualism, rejecting the inclusion of ideology in literature and the superiority of Realism, as promoted by the Marxists. The writing of the Decadents was characterised by subjectivism, mystery and an exaggerated concern with literary form.

However, the extreme expressions of the Decadents were unimportant

in Latvian literature. The majority of the authors who signed the 1906 Decadent Manifesto or sympathised with it were actually writing in a Neo-romantic vein. Many of Latvia's early 20th century writers are difficult to classify as belonging to one literary movement or another, since even the works of individual writers reflected the interaction of these movements.

A whole constellation of outstanding Latvian poets was writing in the early 20th century. Aspazija, the *grande dame* of Latvian poetry, wrote in a powerful Romantic vein, expressing a demand for the sovereignty of the individual. One of the founding figures of Neoromanticism, Jānis Poruks, in his emotionally saturated poetry of love and contemplation expressed a sense of romantic melancholy, ethical maximalism and tragic contradictions between ideals and reality.

Vilis Plūdons was an outstanding talent and an accomplished master of form, who raised the genre of the ballad in Latvian poetry to the European level. He depicted historical and patriotic motifs with great expression, as well as social and natural themes, utilising romantic, mysterious symbols, and conjuring brilliant visual and sound images.

Unique in Latvian lyrical poetry is the master of silence, Kārlis Skalbe, a poet of nature and true patriotism. His reflective, emotionally restrained poetry is at the same time full of inner energy and suggestive force.

Fricis Bārda, with his elegiac lyrical verse, was a thinker who pondered the individual's link with the universe, issues of life and death and the impossibility of lasting happiness. His flowing verse is readily comprehended and rich in poetic images of nature and original personifications.

The genius of Rainis attained the highest peak of Latvian poetry. His philosophical verse, encompassing the fate of the individual, the nation and humanity, was rooted in world classics, Latvian folklore and contemporary social ideas. With aphoristic clarity he presents the force of his philosophical thinking and the ideas of continual change and development, employing keen vision and delicate feeling.

The poetry of all the most outstanding early 20th century Latvian poets is written in rich, clear and expressive language. It is deeply musical, and a significant proportion is written for children.

At the turn of the 20th century, Latvian prose was raised to the European level through the psychological stories of Rūdolfs Blaumanis, a master at depicting human ethical choices and problems with ethical clarity.

Such issues, with a particular emphasis on the tragic defencelessness of

the individual and the contradiction between romantic dreams and the reality of life, are likewise vividly treated in the romantic prose of Jānis Poruks, who praised the tragically stoic "purehearted people".

Kārlis Skalbe, a master conjurer of Latvian fairytales, looks to the ethics of the folktale, praising human labour and spiritual strength, dealing with issues of virtue and freedom and emphasising the significance of desires and dreams.

A talented young novelist on the literary scene was Andrejs Upīts, a harsh realist who revealed life's problems and social discord through his vivid depictions of the diversity of Latvian peasant life.

The short stories and novels of Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš reveal country life and nature in bright and peaceful colours, demonstrating an unusual combination of Realism and Romanticism. With his sincere emotion, his psychological nuances, his striving for harmony and his outstanding insight into the world through the eyes of children, he remains one of the favourite writers in Latvian literature.

Also in Latvian drama, the early 20th century was a time of great achievements. The realistic, masterful dramas and comedies of Rūdolfs Blaumanis depict the world of the Latvian peasantry with natural and passionate force. In his widely popular plays, the sublime, the tragic and the comic all obtain a wider, pan-human resonance.

Motifs from folklore, love of the homeland, and praise of work and ethical purity permeate the fairytale plays of Anna Brigadere, who conjures up the beautiful and sincere world of the Latvian fairytale.

Grand ideas and lofty ideals expressed in rich and colourful symbols, combining the traditions of world drama and Latvian folklore, are expressed in the monumental dramas of Rainis. The protagonists display a broad spectrum of feeling, being the bearers of ideas and at the same time strong personalities endowed with ethical and spiritual force, which is expressed in beautiful poetry and aphorisms. Neither before Rainis, nor after him, has Latvian drama seen plays with such broad scope and spiritual force.

Drama. In the early 20th century, theatre life in Latvia, and particularly in Riga, witnessed rich and diverse development. The three most important theatre companies in Riga were the Riga German, Russian and Latvian Theatres.

The German Theatre, with a tradition reaching back to the 18th century, had attained a high professional standard, acquainting its audiences with

world classics and with contemporary German drama. Outstanding theatre artists and companies from Germany and Austria regularly performed in Riga, including such stars as Max Reinhardt and his *Deutsches Theater* from Berlin.

Talented entrepreneurs, directors (Konstantin Mardzhanov and Aleksandr Tairov) and actors ensured the success of the Riga Russian Theatre, which mainly put on psychological realist productions of Russian drama. Outstanding actors and theatre companies from St Petersburg and Moscow often visited Riga, including the legendary Vera Kommissarzhevskaja and the Moscow Small Theatre.

In contrast to the German and Russian companies, which had specially-built theatres in the city, the Riga Latvian Theatre did not have its own playhouse. It remained the only professional Latvian drama company in the early years of the 20th century, making a significant contribution in terms of training actors and developing the Latvian tradition of dramatic art.

The years up to 1914 witnessed growing popularity of drama, and its role in Latvian society grew significantly, as did the number of theatres. Prominent among Riga's professional companies were the New Latvian Theatre and the New Riga Theatre, and there were a growing number of semi-professional and amateur companies attached to various societies. Drama developed in Jelgava, Ventspils and Valmiera, too. The first professional Latvian theatre outside of Riga was established in Liepāja. The annual number of theatre performances in Latvia grew from 523 in 1901 to 2283 in 1912.

With the rise of Latvian drama, the plays of Rūdolfs Blaumanis, Aspazija, Anna Brigadere and Rainis became prominent in theatre repertoires. Dramatic mastery was attained by actors such as Dace Akmentiņa, Tija Banga, Lilija Ērika, Jēkabs Duburs, Teodors Lācis and Reinholds Veics.

Drama in Latvia diversified, and actors relinquished the traditional approaches to acting, beginning instead to live out their roles. Alongside the predominating dramatic realism and naturalism, symbolism also appeared under the influence of revolutionary and national strivings, and whole productions obtained a symbolic importance.

Productions at the New Riga Theatre (1908–1915), most notably the symbolic plays of Rainis, were hugely successful, producing a major resonance in society. Rainis' dramatic genius was combined with the monumental, unusually vivid, stylised Latvian stage sets by the outstanding Latvian

set designers Jānis Kuga and Arturs Cimmermanis, along with an excellent company of actors and the masterful directing of Aleksis Mierlauks.

The greatest achievement in Latvian drama was the 1911 production of Rainis' play *Fire and Night*. An unprecedented success in Latvian theatre, with more than 100 performances, it was acclaimed even by German and Russian theatre critics. The wonder and passion of the audiences knew no bounds, and in the words "Arise, my bewitched people, arise!", spoken by an ancient hero, the Latvians perceived their own struggle against oppression and obscurantism.

These productions in the national spirit were in tune with the demand in Art Nouveau for stylistically unified drama, imagery and emotion. For the first time, Latvian theatre was approaching modern European theatre in terms of artistic force and philosophical depth. In the productions of plays by Rainis, in particular theatre critics see emergence of the national romantic and monumental style of production that was later raised to a higher level at the National and *Daile* Theatres.

During the First World War, Latvian theatre companies were established in St Petersburg and Moscow, and in the Latvian Rifle Regiments, maintaining the Latvian dramatic tradition and attesting to a great love of theatre.

Architecture. In the early years of the 20th century, architecture in Latvia flourished mainly within the frame of two architectural styles: Eclecticism and Art Nouveau. Outside of Riga, the architecturally most important buildings appeared in Liepāja, designed by German architect Paul Max Bertschy.

In rural Latvia, building of manor-houses continued, along with rebuilding of those destroyed in the Revolution of 1905. These houses were built in Eclectic style, with the nobles being most partial to Neogothic architecture. In many cases, a mix of historical styles was used in a talented and original manner. In addition to the Baltic Germans, many architects from abroad, and particularly from Germany, also worked in Latvia. Apart from their fine architecture, the manor-houses also had sumptuous interiors and valuable collections of fine and applied art. Along with other manor buildings and parks, the manor-houses enhanced the unique and carefully tended cultural landscape of rural Latvia.

Riga enjoyed a real architectural boom. Between 1900 and 1914, 70 architects worked in the city. Every year around 400 buildings were built according to their designs. Dominant were local (Baltic German, Latvian

and Jewish) architects, most of them graduates of the Riga Polytechnic Institute. The building regulations, which were much stricter than anywhere else in the Russian Empire, ensured a planned and disciplined pattern of urban development. The architects and builders were highly organised, with architects' associations, craftsmen's organisations, companies of architectural sculptors and stained glass workshops.

Up until 1904, Eclecticism – the replication of the historical styles – still predominated in Riga architecture. Built in this style were residential and public buildings: museums, theatres, schools, hospitals, religious buildings and factories. The work of Baltic German architects in Riga includes excellent examples of different styles: the Baroque forms of the national Art Museum by Wilhelm Neumann and of the building that is now known as the National Theatre by August Reinberg, the Neogothic Stock Exchange Commercial School by Wilhelm Bockslaff, and the schoolhouses, market buildings and hospitals by Reinhold Schmaeling. Completed during this later phase of Eclecticism was the architectural ensemble of Riga's ring of boulevards. A Riga school of architecture developed, which demonstrated its professionalism and talent most clearly during the decade of Art Nouveau (1905–1914).

Within the frame of Art Nouveau, the city's architecture developed with amazing diversity and dynamism. Initially, a string of architects designed sumptuously decorated buildings, displaying the talents of Heinrich Scheel, Friedrich Scheffel and Rudolf Zirkwits. Unique to Riga are the architectural fantasies in Art Nouveau style by Mikhail Eisenstein, which can be seen on Alberta iela.

The majority of local architects were more partial to the somewhat more restrained "Rational Art Nouveau" style, which gave rise to great diversity. Many buildings in Riga were built in Romantic Art Nouveau style. Under the direction of the city's chief garden architect, Georg Kuphaldt, the idea of a garden city was realised, resulting in Riga's green suburb – the Mežaparks district. In a beautiful woodland outside of the city, Riga architects built more than 100 private homes – an outstanding ensemble of Romantic Art Nouveau.

The age of Art Nouveau was rich in creative masterpieces by Latvian architects. Although Riga's ten Latvian architects constituted only 14 percent of all the architects working in the city, they designed 40 percent of the buildings built in the city centre. Working in the Rational Art Nouveau style

were the already familiar Latvian masters Konstantīns Pēkšēns and Jānis Alksnis, along with the young architects Eižens Laube and Aleksandrs Vanags. Borrowing Finnish ideas in architecture and elements of traditional wooden architecture, and employing motifs from Latvian ethnography, the Latvians developed their own style, known as National Romanticism. With their ponderous elegance and fairytale appearance, perfectly planned and finished, the buildings in this style remain true jewels of Riga's architecture.

Around 1910, in reaction to the perceived excesses of Art Nouveau, respectable, monumental buildings were designed, marking the appearance in the city's architecture of the last stylistic movement within Art Nouveau – Neoclassicism. It is most vividly represented in the architecture of public buildings, most notably the banks. One master of Neoclassical architecture was the Latvian Ernests Pole, whose bank buildings, along with the Riga Latvian Society House, designed in collaboration with Eižens Laube, are prime examples of this stylistic movement.

The Riga school of architecture that emerged at the beginning of the century, where Latvians played an important role, was moving abreast of European architecture. The architecture historian Jānis Krastiņš writes in this connection: "Outstanding examples were created from the synthesis of architecture and decorative art executed to high quality standards. Artistically and culturally significant architecture was created throughout Latvia, while the centre of Riga was transformed at this time into a distinctive ensemble of Art Nouveau architecture, unparalleled in the world."¹⁹ It should be added that 40 percent of the buildings in central Riga are in Art Nouveau style.

Fine art. The most important centre of fine art in Latvia at the turn of the century was Riga, with the organisation of artistic activities remaining in the hands of the Baltic Germans until 1905. However, there were about fifty active Latvian fine artists at work between 1900 and 1915, and their numbers and influence were growing apace. They held exhibitions, established art societies, opened studios and became art teachers and directors at the city's art schools. The Latvian artists obtained their professional training at the Blūms School of Drawing, at the Riga School of Art and at the academies and art schools of St Petersburg, Germany and France. Latvian fine art at this time was most clearly influenced by three stylistic movements: Impressionism, Art Nouveau and Symbolism. These found diverse and individual

expressions in Latvian art, but appeared in somewhat more restrained form than they did in Western Europe. The stylistic movements of the age were combined with the romantic world of Latvian folklore, leading to the development of the National Romantic style.

The characteristic subjects of Latvian fine art changed, so that instead of historical and genre art, two main themes emerged – people and nature. In the depiction of contemporaries, figures from folklore and mythology, a Latvian national type emerged. The Latvian landscape dominated in depictions of nature, which were shown with characteristic northern European restraint in terms of colour, lyric and melancholy in mood, and often enveloped in an aura of mystery.

Three European-level artists established the classical core of Latvian painting. Janis Rozentāls was a universal painter. Equally successful in portrait and genre painting as well as painting of scenes from mythology and folklore, he combined Realism with a tendency towards mystery and exaggeration.

The outstanding landscape painter Vilhelms Purvītis displayed an excellent knowledge of nature, a high level of painting and vivid mastery of colour. He also achieved a great deal in art teaching and the organisation of artistic activities. Jānis Valters depicted the features of Latvia's natural setting and a gallery of distinctive national types in vibrant, impressionistic works.

Two symbolists stand apart in the Latvian art of that time. Rūdolfs Pērle, with his archaic world of fantasy and legend, was a kindred spirit to the great Lithuanian painter Konstantinas Čurlionis. Voldemārs Matvejs, combining symbolism with primitive art, started out on a novel path and became an internationally recognised theoretician of modern art.

A major group of Latvian theatre set painters emerged. Outstanding among them were Jānis Kuga and Arturs Cimmermanis, who employed ethnographic motifs stylised in the characteristic manner of Art Nouveau.

Graphic art attained a high standard of professionalism and expressiveness, coming to the fore of Latvian fine art at the time of the Revolution of 1905, with deftly drawn, witty political comments and caricatures. One of the greatest achievements of Latvian graphic art, combining mysterious, romantic folklore motifs with academically pure and clear form, is the series *The soothing of the Latvian forest* by Rihards Zariņš.

A unique figure in art, also working in many different media, was Jūlijs

Madernieks. The folk designs he collected and interpreted in an Art Nouveau manner served throughout the 20th century as an inexhaustible source for the study of Latvian folk art.

During the First World War, painting was the most important medium of Latvian fine art, showing significant developments in terms of content and form. Several very young, but exceptionally talented artists emerged. These painters turned their attention to depicting the wartime trials of the nation, as seen in the experience of the Latvian riflemen and the refugees. Unequaled in truthfulness and expression were the wartime paintings of Jāzeps Grosvalds and Jēkabs Kazaks. At the same time, these artists enriched Latvian painting with new formal approaches, exhibiting characteristics of Post-Impressionism and Expressionism.

The first professional Latvian sculptors mastered their art under the tuition of the world famous French master, Auguste Rodin, with their portraits and figural sculptures expressing markedly Impressionistic traits. Gustavs Šķilters worked in bronze, cultivating both Realist and Symbolist approaches. Teodors Zaļkalns created monumental, lyrical figures in stone, being one of the first in Europe to discover the extensive possibilities of sculpture in granite.

In the first two decades of the 20th century, Latvian fine art was still at the start of its independent path of development. At this time, international influences in art were utilised and creatively transformed, leading to the development of national traditions and creating a large number of lasting and distinctive artistic treasures.

Music. One important aspect of Latvian musical culture in the early 20th century was the choral movement, a tradition maintained by the many choral societies that operated in Latvia's towns and countryside. The choirs were a focus not only of cultural, but also social life. The choral societies gave concerts, and joint choral concerts with hundreds of singers became popular. Song Festivals were held at regular intervals, bringing together mass choirs with thousands of singers.

Choral and solo singing also became the leading genres of Latvian professional music. Latvian composers of the time wrote a great many songs in these genres, which were seen as the most democratic and which best expressed the imagery and musicality of Latvian poetry. Latvian singing traditions were further enriched by the revolutionary songs of 1905 and by the riflemen's songs of the First World War.

The Latvian composers of that time were vivid, creative individuals, who had obtained their musical education at the St Petersburg Conservatory. Their art is characterised by rich content, close links with folk life and culture in general, mature professional mastery and an ability to express the spirit of the age in a distinctive musical language.

Jāzeps Vītols attained great achievements in Latvian choral and symphony music with his symbolic, epic works, which combined rich and colourful influences from Western European, Russian and Latvian music.

Alfrēds Kalniņš was a universal composer. He composed outstanding symphony music and choral songs, and was a major star in the field of solo singing. The emotional spectrum of his vivid, nationally coloured music encompassed both the lyrical idyll and the tragedy.

Emīlis Melngailis earned a place in Latvian musical culture as an outstanding folklore researcher and a composer of major choral works, who also developed a vibrant and modern style of folksong arrangements.

Emīls Dārziņš, who met an early death in 1910, left only 36 choral and solo songs and one symphony waltz. His simple, expressive songs, rooted in urban musical folklore and the intonations of spoken Latvian, are very melodic and sincere. Enjoying exceptional public popularity, Dārziņš's songs perhaps most vividly reveal the melancholy, tragic world outlook of the time.

Instrumental works began to occupy an increasingly important place in Latvian music. Alongside the many world-class instrumentalists who visited Riga, the first professional Latvian organists, pianists, violinists and cellists emerged. However, the opportunities for performing Latvian instrumental music developed more slowly.

Symphony music in Riga was performed by the German Theatre Orchestra and symphony orchestras from Germany, Finland and Poland. World famous conductors played a considerable role in promoting symphony music. Alongside the German and Polish masters, Bruno Walter and Gregor Fittlberg, the Finnish conductor Georg Schneevoigt had an outstanding role in the city's concert life. He conducted summer symphony concerts in Rīgas Jūrmala, and in 1910, established a permanent Riga Symphony Orchestra.

Foreign conductors often included works by Latvian composers in their concerts, and amateur orchestras conducted by young Latvians gave concerts of Latvian symphony music. Greater opportunities emerged for Latvian

orchestral music only in 1913, with the establishment of the first professional Latvian symphony orchestra, the Latvian Opera Orchestra, in 1913.

Although Riga did not have a permanent opera theatre, a rich tradition of opera and operetta was maintained by the German Theatre. The theatre had a fine orchestra, permanent soloists and regular guest performances by singers from Germany, France and Italy. Opera companies from Russia regularly performed at Riga's Russian Theatre. Riga also saw the performances of such world famous opera singers as Mattia Battistini, Herman Jadlovker, Fedor Shalyapin and Leonid Sobinov.

In 1913, the first Latvian opera company, the Latvian Opera was established, with its own orchestra, choirs and soloists, among whom were the most outstanding Latvian singers of the time: Ada Benefelde and Pauls Sakss, Malvīne Viņnere-Grīnberga and Ādolfs Kaktiņš. Up until 1915, the company created 12 productions. During the First World War, Alfrēds Kalniņš and the young Jānis Mediņš composed the first Latvian operas, which saw their first performances after Latvia gained its independence in 1918.

The rich concert life prevented Riga from falling far behind world musical innovations, which in the space of a few years also became well known in Latvia. Thus, the development of symphony music and opera – the main fields of European musical culture at that time – was ensured.

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III. REPUBLIC OF LATVIA (1918–1940)

3.1. THE PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The Prerequisites for the Foundation of the Latvian State

The First World War was crucial to the history of the Twentieth Century, deeply affecting the destinies of many nations and the bases for the development of their societies. The victory of the Entente changed the face of old, traditional Europe beyond recognition, resulting in democratic, nationalist, revolutionary and pacifist movements. The Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires collapsed, Germany and Russia were weakened, and the ancient, famed dynasties that had ruled for centuries disappeared. The deepest changes were to be seen in Central and Eastern Europe, where a power vacuum resulted in the creation of new nation-states: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Serbian and Croatian state of Yugoslavia. The nation-state became the characteristic feature of Central and Eastern Europe and the entire continent.

Together with the geopolitical and military results of the war, a unique and unprecedented atmosphere in the world of ideas arose. The right of self-determination had come to the fore among the Western powers already during the war, gradually becoming a principle of international law rather than a purely political principle. The nations of the Entente and the U.S.A., which entered the conflict in April 1917, made the defence of the interests of small nations, in accordance with the principle of self-determination, a goal of the war effort. Although this was meant to be applied primarily to the peoples of the Balkans and the Poles, the possibility that the principle of self-determination might be applied to other nations upon the collapse of the Russian Empire could not be discounted. The principle of self-determination was so attractive that it functioned as political gospel, sweeping across Europe. Latvia was no exception. In a short time, the torpor in the develop-

ment of Latvian nationalism was overcome, opening the way for preparing the foundations of a Latvian nation-state.

For a long time Latvian political nationalism had lacked direction in its limited vision. The desires for possible statehood, heard already at the beginning of the 20th century, were transmuted into a quest for political autonomy within the confines of the Russian Empire. Latvian national and political strivings were given impetus by the February revolution of 1917 in Russia, after which new Latvian political parties were founded. Among these, the Latvian National Democratic Party was the most consistent in promoting Latvian national interests. The core of this new party was the Latvian intelligentsia in Moscow grouped around the newspaper *Dzimtenes Atbalsis* (The Echo of the Homeland), including Jānis Akuraters, Viktors Eglītis, Linards Laicens, Jānis Bankavs, Kārlis Upītis, and Ernests Blanks. At first even this party didn't ask for full independence from Russia, advocating only broad political autonomy. It asked for the union of the historical Latvian provinces (Courland, Southern Livland, and Latgallia) in an autonomous Latvian state that would be part of a Russian Federal Republic. Latvia would have a democratically elected parliament, the Saeima, as well as its own national bank, courts, and military.

In the spring of 1917, the question of political autonomy was discussed in the Latvian press and debated in almost all Latvian organisations and gatherings. The slogan "a free Latvia in a free Russia" was ceaselessly proclaimed as a realistic political demand, since it seemed that Russia would develop along democratic lines. Although the meaning of the slogan was subject to different interpretations, it was a rare Latvian political party that didn't promote the principle of self-determination and support a united Latvia with self-rule and a democratically elected government. Even the Social Democrats recognised the need for autonomy, though the Bolsheviks (Pēteris Stučka, for example) saw autonomy as only territorially administrative, denying the principle of independent statehood.

The demand for autonomy was also argued and defended in resolutions adopted by the legislative bodies in Courland and Southern Livland, as well as at the Latgallian Congress. Latvian social and political leaders found it necessary to reconcile the different versions of autonomy being proposed, and on July 30, 1917 (August 12 O.S.), the representatives of ten different Latvian political and social organisations met in Riga, adopting a declaration that some Latvian authors mistakenly call a "declaration of independence".

The document was primarily concerned with the autonomy and not the independence of Latvia, and contained six points:

1. The Latvian nation, like all other nations, has the right to total self-determination;
2. Latvia must be indivisible, comprising Southern Livland, Courland, and Latgallia;
3. Latgallia, as a distinct but integral part of Latvia, should have control over its local governments, schools, language, and religious affairs;
4. Latvia should be a politically autonomous unit within a Russian Republic founded on the principles of democracy;
5. The legislative, executive, and judicial powers of an autonomous Latvia must be in the hands of the people of Latvia and their Saeima, to be chosen in direct elections;
6. The representatives oppose annexations or any other attempt to determine the legal status and borders of Latvia or parts of its territory without participation of the Latvian people.¹

The Riga Conference was the first gathering at which almost the entire Latvian nation was formally and actually represented. The decisions made at the Conference must be seen as belated, however, since the necessity for full independence had been spoken of since the spring of 1917. The radicalisation of the national movement took place in summer 1917, when it became completely clear that Russia's Provisional Government was openly ignoring moderate demands for political autonomy of Latvia. This growing crisis in trust gave rise to more frequent and more defined demands for an independent Latvian state; there was also support for the ideas of Jonas Šliūpas, liberal Lithuanian politician, and his hope for the creation of a unified Latvian and Lithuanian federation. The most active proponents of independence were to be found among National Democrats, whose newspaper, *Dzimtenes Atbalss*, was soon filled with articles on the theme of independence. Some of these articles (by Kārlis Upītis, for example) no longer considered the national question in the context of a Russian federation, instead treating the problem of statehood as international, its solution to be found only by obtaining the support of the Western democracies.

By September 1917, when Riga fell to the Germans, Latvian political nationalism had reached a new level. Russian military failures had dispersed any desires for a Russian victory and strengthened the position of those Latvians who believed that the future of the Russian Empire would be

internal collapse and not a renewal. Many Latvian politicians feared a division of the territory of Latvia between the Germans and the Russians. The only realistic hope, in their view, was a political orientation towards the Western democracies, and this view gained strength after the October revolution in Russia. The Latvian bourgeoisie was convinced that only an Allied victory and the application of the self-determination principle could save Latvia and its people from destruction. The poet and politician Kārlis Skalbe expressed this thought in these words, "I think we shall stand with both feet in Europe." The powers of the Entente, which had earlier backed the Russian Provisional Government, were now ready to support anti-Bolshevik forces, among them the national movements and organisations of the defunct Russian Empire.

The Democratic Bloc and the Latvian Provisional National Council

When the idea of Latvian independence was advanced, the necessary preparations were made to take advantage of the new possibilities for statehood and found an institution that could legally represent the entire Latvian nation. The two most important organisations for the advancement of the cause of independence were created in autumn 1917: the Latvian Provisional National Council (Latviešu Pagaidu nacionālā padome; LPNP) and the Democratic Bloc. Working independently of each other, both groupings supported "the political independence of Latvia and its separation from Russia". The Democratic Bloc, formed in the latter half of September in German-occupied Riga, included Social Democrats (Pauls Kalniņš, Fricis Menders, Mārgers Skujenieks et al), members of the Farmers' Union (Kārlis Ulmanis, Miķelis Valters) and representatives from several other parties. Neither the Bolsheviks, who supported a "pro-Russian orientation", nor the extreme right-wing People's Party of Fridrihs Veinbergs nor Andrejs Krastkalns, at that time pro-German and supportive of a Baltic state subject to Germany, participated in the Democratic Bloc. At the end of 1917, an assembly of Latvians from the territories then occupied by Germany was composed primarily of representatives from this right-wing party, adopting a resolution that declared the founding of a Latvian state fully in accord with their idea of a Baltic state.

Ever since its founding, the Democratic Bloc was dedicated to keeping

the idea of Latvian self-determination alive under the circumstances of German occupation and actualising this principle. Its representatives worked to popularise the idea of independence, enthusiastically informing their friends and colleagues of their ideas and giving public lectures on the subject of statehood. Taking advantage of the Social Democrats' connections in Germany, the Democratic Bloc kept independent Social Democrats in the Reichstag informed of the German military's plans for the annexation of Courland and the demands of the Latvians. Thus, the Baltic question came to be debated in the Reichstag, which helped draw international attention to the problem. Attempts were made to come to a direct understanding with the institutions of the occupation as well. For example, on December 18, 1917, the Bloc asked the commander of the Eastern Front, Prince Leopold of Bavaria, for permission to convene a congress of representatives of the Latvian nation to consider Latvia's future.² The Germans' conditions for convening such a congress, however, made participation impossible.

The Latvian Provisional National Council (LPNP), formed in November 1917, had greater opportunities to function. It united almost all of the important Latvian associations and political parties. At its founding meeting, the Land Councils of Courland, Southern Livland and Latgallia, the Central Committee of Latvian Refugees, the Committees for Baltic Refugee Relief, the Latgallian Aid Committee for Victims of the War, the Riga agricultural associations, the national associations of Latvian soldiers, the Farmers' Union, the National Democratic Party. Moreover, the Radical Democrats and Democratic Party were all represented. Seven of the invited organisations did not participate – including the Social Democrats. The Land Council of Southern Livland, at that time dominated by the Bolsheviks, attempted to inhibit the creation of the LPNP.

The LPNP began its work at the time of the October Revolution in Russia and the beginning of the Bolshevik dictatorship there. At the same time, the Iskolat Republic was founded in that part of Latvia not occupied by the Germans (Southern Livland, except Riga). This "republic", which lasted from November 1917 to February 1918, when German forces occupied all of Latvia, is considered to be the first Latvian state by some historians who point to the high degree of independence of the Iskolat in making decisions. Though there were changes in the status of Latvia in the period of the Iskolat, connected to the decentralisation of Russia and the concentration of power in local hands along class lines, it still cannot be said that the Iskolat

republic was truly independent, as the sovereign power did not rest in the people of Latvia and Latvia's own Social Democrats – Bolsheviks did not in any way desire separation from Soviet Russia to create a Latvian nation-state at the end of 1917. They wanted only autonomy restricted by the constitutional norms of Soviet Russia. In its declaration of autonomy, made on December 24, 1917 (January 6, 1918 O.S.), the Iskolat declared, "The proletariat of Latvia could never wish for nor ask for an independent Latvian statelet."³

As opposed to the Iskolat, the LPNP worked towards the goal of obtaining independence and founding a statehood. In its first session in Valka at the end of November and the beginning of December, 1917, it called itself "the highest institution of Latvia in the making", and declared that "Latvia, i.e. Courland, Livland and Latgallia, is an autonomous and indivisible state unit, its internal system and its external relations to be decided by its Constitutional convention, expressing the will of its people". Though it is difficult to call this modest declaration the proclamation of an independent nation-state, some Latvian authors (Ādolfs Klīve, Edgars Dunsdorfs) are convinced that it was.⁴ As the basis for his view, Klīve points to the declaration "To All Latvians", adopted that day. In the declaration, a free and independent Latvia is clearly proclaimed. Klīve focuses on the analysis of the last part of this declaration, in which the emphasis is plain, "Latvians! The word of liberation has been sounded: the self-determination of peoples! Take for yourselves what history gives, and prepare to cleanse your doorways of foreign oppressors."⁵

Together with the creation of the LPNP, another authority capable of functioning in the name of the Latvian nation was established – the National Council, with Voldemārs Zāmuēls as chairman and Kārlis Pauļuks, Jānis Rubulis and Jānis Palcmanis as his deputies. Eight sections of the LPNP were formed, the most active among them the Foreign Affairs and Finance Section. Jānis Kreicbergs, Zigfrīds Meierovics and Jānis Čakste were chosen to represent Latvia abroad. The establishment and activities of the National Council were the cause of great fear for the Bolsheviks. On December 19, 1917 (January 1, 1918 O.S.) the Iskolat adopted a resolution making the activities of the National Council illegal.

This decision by the Iskolat made it impossible for the National Council to function in Valka. It shifted its activities to Petrograd. On January 5, 1918 (January 18 O.S.) the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Section, Jānis

Goldmanis, acting with the authority of the LPNP, announced at the Russian Constitutional Convention that "the Latvian question has become international and can no longer be decided within the Tauride Palace", and on January 17 (30 O.S.) the National Council held a second session, adopting the resolution that laid the groundwork for an independent Latvia. The proclamation of its intent was this time absolutely clear: "Based on the principles of self-determination proclaimed throughout the world, the Latvian National Council 1) recognises that Latvia must be an independent, democratic republic, uniting Courland, Southern Livland, and Latgallia; 2) protests against any attempts to divide Latvia*, strongly emphasising that the first unequivocal demand of the Latvian nation is the territorial and ethnographic indivisibility of Latvia; 3) protests against any attempts to conclude a peace which transgresses the principle of the self-determination of nations; 4) and, finally, condemns the falsification of the will of the people under the constraints of occupation and in the circumstances of war."⁶ Reflecting the new situation, the LPNP (which, unlike the Democratic Bloc, excluded the German factor and directed its efforts towards the nations of the Entente alone) began to seek international international recognition for Latvia. The contacts the Foreign Affairs Section had made with foreign missions in Petrograd were especially important to these endeavours. Sending delegates abroad to work to inform the governments of the Entente of the Latvians' political goals proved to be more complex, and the LPNP was aware of the need to sway national opinion in these countries towards international recognition of the Latvian state. Though the decision had been made during the first session of the LPNP in Valka, it was only in July 1918 that the first accredited representative of the LPNP, Zigfrīds Meierovics, was sent to London. His brief was to "everywhere demonstrate the necessity for a sovereign and indivisible Latvia". Prior to his arrival in Great Britain, Meierovics founded an Information Bureau in Stockholm, which soon undertook varied and meaningful functions, regularly preparing materials on Latvia's strivings for independence and providing information to the foreign press.

The activities of the LPNP were well timed, since Germany – which controlled all Baltic territory from February 1918 – signed agreements with Russia that created a new situation in terms of international rights by changing and differentiating the status of parts of Latvia and Estonia. The Brest-

* At the time, at Brest-Litovsk, Germany and Russia were involved in peace negotiations, which proposed the division of Latvia's territory between them.

Litovsk Treaty signed on March 3, 1918, fixed Russia's agreement by giving it Latgallia, while Courland, Riga and Saaremaa were given to the Germans and the future status of Southern Livland and Estonia was left open. However, according to the Berlin Agreement, signed almost half a year later as an appendix to the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, on August 27, Russia abandoned its "higher power" over Southern Livland and Estonia. This meant that there were no longer any legal barriers to the annexation of Latvia by Germany in one way or another, in accordance with the plans of the German military and many Baltic Germans resident in Latvia. Although the German government gave the outward appearance of activity in this regard, in summer 1918 it was in no hurry to seek a solution to the Baltic problem, having lost almost any interest in the region. Berlin, its actions increasingly influenced by the desperate situation on the Western Front, didn't know what to do with the Baltic. Consequently, it was in effect simply abandoned to its fate. On September 22, Kaiser Wilhelm II even declared the Baltic region "a free and independent province". This type of official German politics was actually advantageous to the Latvians, since it objectively promoted the formation of a Latvian state.

The situation developing in and around Latvia was aided by Meierovics' diplomatic success in London. Despite active attempts by Russian political émigrés to counter his efforts, he was able to convince the English of the necessity for a Latvian state. The British hatred for Germany and Bolshevism was decisive. On October 23, 1918, Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour announced to Meierovics the decision by the British government to provisionally recognise "the Latvian National Council as the government of Latvia", the final status of Latvia to be left undecided until the Peace Conference.⁷ Thus, the LPNP was first recognised as the government of Latvia in terms of international law, and the correctness of the National Council's tactics and foreign policy orientation – towards a sovereign, international recognised Latvian state – were vindicated.

Balfour's declaration was interpreted by the National Council's politicians as *de facto** recognition of Latvia. On October 30, 1918, Meierovics sent Balfour a letter requesting a written declaration recognising Latvia's

* The concepts of *de facto* and *de iure* recognition must be distinguished; *de facto* recognition is the limited precursor to full recognition in which a state or government is recognised as established juridical fact, and consular and trade relations but not full diplomatic relations are established. *De facto* recognition can be annulled.

independence. Responding to this request, Balfour sent an official letter, dated November 11, stating that the British government “willingly confirms its readiness to provisionally recognise the Latvian National Council as a *de facto* independent institution” and accepts Meierovics as “the unofficial diplomatic representative of the provisional government of Latvia”.⁸ The text of this letter therefore confirmed Britain’s recognition of the National Council as the legitimate representative body and provisional government of Latvia.

In autumn 1918, Latvian national political forces attempted to obtain German support for Latvia’s independence as well. On October 19, when the first parliamentary government with the Prince of Baden, Maximilian, at the helm, had begun to develop an Eastern European politics based on the self-determination of nations, Miķelis Valters and Eduards Traubergs of the Democratic Bloc submitted a document to the German chancellor emphasising the determination of the Latvian nation to achieve international recognition for the independence of its territory. The document clearly set forth what the Latvians awaited from the new Germany – that Germany “would place no obstacles in the path of the Latvian people towards an immediate beginning for the building of an independent state.”⁹

The National Council was also unable to ignore the German factor because the military forces of German occupation were present in Latvia. In a letter to the Chancellor dated October 25, the directorate of the National Council protested against the actions of the unified Land Councils of Southern Livland, Estonia, Riga and Saaremaa, supported by the German military command, proposing the creation of a Baltic state pendant to Germany. Denying the right of these Councils (and the Land Council of Courland) to represent Latvia, the National Council proclaimed its right to rule Latvia and establish a national army. Prince Maximilian of Baden was also informed that the Provisional Government would be formed in a session of the National Council to be convened in the near future. The Provisional Government would draft a constitution and establish a Constitutional Assembly.¹⁰

Prince Maximilian was unable to respond to these demands with a clear decision from his government because of the speed of events – on November 3, revolution had begun in Germany, and on November 9 the monarchy became a republic. The Prince of Baden handed the chancellorship to the leader of the Social Democratic majority, Friedrich Ebert. Two days later,

Germany signed the armistice at Compiègne, its twelfth article committing Germany to withdrawing its armed forces from the Russian Empire in its pre-war borders (which included Latvia) only if the Entente saw this as necessary. The German forces were to defend the Baltic from Bolshevik attack. The Entente intended to use the German military in the struggle against Soviet Russia.

Both the revolution in Germany and the Compiègne armistice created advantageous circumstances for the continuing efforts to establish a Latvian state. In the view of many historians, the conclusion of the Armistice was the crucial moment for the creation of the Baltic nation-states. They point out that the Armistice meant, in essence, the complete abandonment of any plans for the annexation of the Baltic region by Germany, since any discussion of such plans had to be scuttled in the wake of Germany's defeat and democratisation. German foreign policy was set by new forces, the military losing its former influence.

The reality of Berlin's *Ostpolitik* in its effects in Latvia meant the loss of interest by imperial Germany in the Baltic state planned by the Baltic Germans, intended to include the territory of Courland, Livonia, and Estonia. Formally, this state was actually formed when the Unified Land Councils of Southern Livland, Livonia, Estonia, Saaremaa and Riga elected the so-called Council of Regents with Baron Adolf Pilar von Pilchau-Auders at its head. On November 11, the German Eighth Army in Latvia allowed the formation of the Baltic Landeswehr, dominated by ethnic Germans, as the national guard of this Baltic state. But this state existed only on paper, stillborn, disconnected from the political reality of the time. Berlin ignored its positions and requests, unable and unwilling to give it aid.

The new provisional government in Germany – the Popular Council created on November 10, 1918 with only the majority Social Democrats and independent Social Democrats present at its session on November 15, reacted to the request of the Democratic Bloc by making August Winnig, until then Commissioner of the German state in the Baltic provinces, the principal envoy from Germany. His brief was to “negotiate with the Latvians and Estonians” in view of their demands for the foundation of independent states. In this way, Ebert's government continued the policies of Maximilian of Baden, practically admitting the Latvian (and Estonian) rights to self-determination.

The Popular Council and the Proclamation of November 18

The military defeat of Germany and the change in its policies in the Baltic gave a strong impetus for to the actualisation of Latvian political life, resulting in great changes and finally the ceremonious proclamation of the independent Latvian state. Although the Popular Council was internationally recognised and had an important role in the creation of the nation-state, several influential Latvian politicians considered this institution to be insufficiently democratic because it didn't represent all of Latvia's classes. Attempts to include all of the major political forces in the Council were unsuccessful. The members of the Democratic Bloc proposed the idea of creating a new fore-parliament, the Popular Council, in which the Social Democrats and the ethnic minorities of Latvia would also be represented. Both the Social Democrats and some of the politicians in the Farmers' Union, including its leader Kārlis Ulmanis, were dissatisfied with the structure of the Popular Council because it included not only political parties but also non-political organisations. They were convinced that the new Popular Council must be founded only by political parties, the parties agreeing on the number of representatives to be accorded to each. In parts of Latvia – Courland and Latgallia – political parties were not yet functioning, however.

The Popular Council was constituted on November 17, 1918. At first it comprised 40 delegates (Courland still had to send 21 delegates, Latgallia 18) from eight parties. The Farmers' Union had the largest number of delegates, 13; the Social Democratic Workers' Party 10; the Democratic Party 5; the Radical Democrats 5; the Revolutionary Socialists 3; the National Democrats 2; the Republicans 1 and the Independence Party 1. Two resolutions were adopted during the first session (submitted by the Farmers' Union, one resolution declared that the National Council would continue the work of the National Council and the Democratic Bloc). Political Platform proclaimed that the sovereign power in Latvia belonged to the Popular Council until the Constitutional Convention convened. Leaders were elected – the chairman was Jānis Čakste, vice-chairman Mārgers Skujenieks and Gustavs Zemgals. Kārlis Ulmanis of the Farmers' Union was chosen as Prime Minister and charged with the formation of a provisional government. It is difficult to imagine anyone else in his place. No one had his remarkable indefatigable energy, and few doubted his right to become

the first politician to lead Latvia. Ulmanis had dedicated himself wholly to the cause of independence.

The independence of Latvia was solemnly proclaimed on November 18, 1918. In his first speech, Prime Minister Ulmanis defined the immediate task of the Provisional Government as "the construction and strengthening of the Latvian state externally and internally". He declared the equality of all Latvian citizens and their rights to participate in the state regardless of ethnic origin, echoing the Political Platform of the Popular Council and its declaration of the rights of minorities to have representatives in the Council and the institutions of administration. Ulmanis ended his speech by announcing that Latvia would be "a state of democratic justice with room for neither oppression nor injustice".¹¹ The principles of Latvia's national policy were thus clearly formulated already in 1918.

Some historians present distinctly dissenting views of the legal circumstances of the creation of the Latvian state, calling the proclamation made on November 18 an undemocratic act, and viewing it as a *coup d'état*. They complain about usurpation of power and doubt the legitimacy of the historic decisions made on November 18. Some also believe that the idea of independence lacked popularity among Latvians, claiming that the masses were indifferent to the declaration of independence.

These arguments, however, are for the most part baseless and collapse under serious scrutiny. The creation of most new states is usually simultaneously revolutionary and legitimate. The founding of the Popular Council of Latvia was closely connected to the actualisation of the right to self-determination of the Latvian people. The Council declared independence and took on the functions of sovereignty because the sole true sovereign – the Latvian nation – was unable to express its free will in the concrete historical circumstances that prevailed. Under occupation, and on the eve of Bolshevik invasion, it was impossible to hold democratic elections for the Constitutional Convention. Waiting would have meant losing the nation state.

The course of history shows that the decisions taken in November 1918 were correct and in the main reflected the interests of the Latvian nation. Together with the creation of the Popular Council, a unifying institution for the different ethnic groups in Latvia and a democratic base for the state were developed. The unity of Latvians developed in stages, opening the way for victory in the battles for freedom. The historical importance of November 18 cannot be denied, and it would be difficult to overemphasise its significance. A new phase in the life of the inhabitants of Latvia had begun.

3.2. THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Formalisation of Relations with Germany and the Beginning of the War of Independence

November 18, 1918 was not an accident but the direct result of the daring of the Latvian nationalists. Nation building had to begin almost from zero. Latvia had been laid waste by the war and robbed by both German and Russian troops. In dire circumstances, when Latvia was threatened by foreign invasion and national security was paramount, the post of minister of defence was vacant for two and a half weeks. Gradually, both the open and secret enemies of statehood began to take action. It was necessary to abandon the ideas and hopes for the construction to defend the country. The most chaotic period in Latvia's history had begun.

The Provisional Government concentrated on relations with Germany to begin with, since the Germans retained actual power in Latvia. The new government hoped to achieve recognition from Germany and take over the administration of the country. Already on November 19, the new Prime Minister, Kārlis Ulmanis and Gustavs Zemgals, the Deputy Chairman of the Popular Council, called upon August Winnig and informed him of the founding of the Latvian state. The fact that this didn't accord with protocol – ambassadors usually call upon the head of state – wasn't of interest to anyone, and Winnig didn't even mention this in his report to Berlin.

Ignoring protest from the Council of Regents, the German Provisional Government immediately decided to establish relations with the Latvian Provisional Government. In a Cabinet meeting only a few days after the proclamation of independence, it was decided to recognise Ulmanis' government as the provisional highest authority in "the ethnographic territory of Latvians" and the Popular Council as its controlling institution.

On November 25, Ulmanis received a message from Winnig stating that "it is my honour to inform the President that the German government is willing to provisionally recognise the Latvian Popular Council as an independent authority and the Provisional Government as its executive committee until such a time as the Peace Conference determines the future of Latvia in accordance with the rights of peoples to self-determination".¹²

On November 26, Winnig sent the Provisional Government another



James Kettler, Duke of
Courland and Semigalia



Latvian peasants at the beginning of the 19th century (a historical drawing)

Rainis and Aspazija, the prominent
Latvian poets at leisure in Jūrmala,
Melluži (1904)



Rūjiena and Mazsalaca militia parade on Rūjiena marketplace on November 12, 1905.
On the horse — Krišjānis Bočs, proponent of the Latvian Social Democratic Worker's Party



The building of Riga Polytechnic Institute (1910–1914)



A Riga harbour quayside (1910)



A house of Latvian peasants (1910)



F. Veidemanis, rifleman from the reconnaissance brigade of the 4. Vidzeme Rifle Division



The monument to a German soldier in Riga (1918)



Proclamation of Independence of the Republic of Latvia at the National Theatre on November 18, 1918



Latvian Provisional National Council cabinet members. Left to right, row 1: Spricis Paegle, Minister of Trade and Industry, Miķelis Valters, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kārlis Ulmanis, Prime Minister, Teodors Hermanovskis, Minister of Transport, Kārlis Kasparsons, Minister of Education. Row 2: Jānis Blumbergs, Minister of Provision, Eduards Strautnieks, Minister of Justice, Dāvids Rudzītis, Head of the State Chancellery, Jānis Zālītis, Minister of War, Kārlis Puriņš, Minister of Finance. Liepāja (1919)



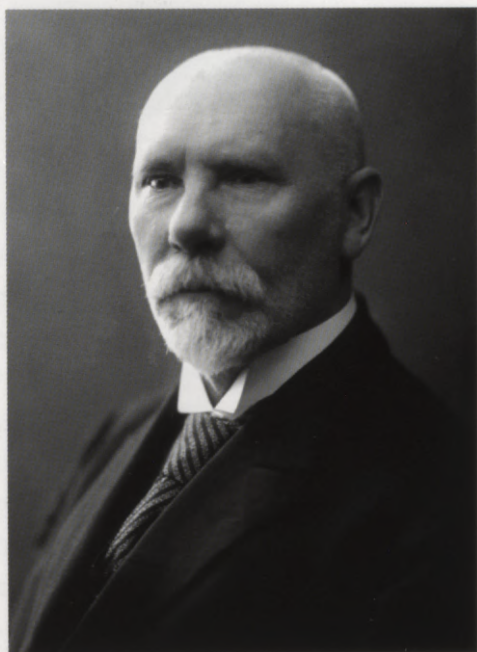
The highest officers of the Republic of Latvia. Left to right 4th — Colonel Jānis Apinis, 6th — Colonel Jānis Balodis (1919)



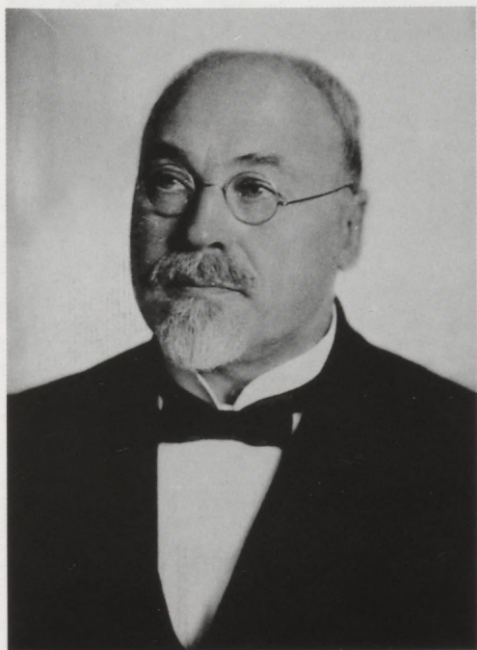
Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics, the first Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia



Andrejs Priedkalns, an eminent doctor,
Deputy of the Latvian People's Council
(the 1920s)



Jānis Čakste, the first President of the
Republic of Latvia (1922–1927)



Gustavs Zemgals, President of the
Republic of Latvia (1927–1930)



Alberts Kviesis, President of the Republic
of Latvia (1930–1936)



Vilhelms Munters, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia (1936-1940)



Kārlis Ulmanis, Latvian Farmers' Union leader, President of the Republic of Latvia (1936-1940)



National Economy Council session opening in the Great Guild on January 11, 1938. Left to right starting at first row: Ludvigs Ēķis, Minister of Finances, Mārgers Skujenieks, Prime Minister's Associate, Jānis Balodis, Minister of War, Kārlis Ulmanis, State President and Prime Minister. Row 2 left to right: Bernhards Einbergs, Minister of Transport

notice that was received and defined by the Latvians as formal recognition of the Latvian state. Two important conclusions were found in this document. Firstly, Winnig recognised the Provisional Government as the highest authority in the ethnographic territory of Latvia. Secondly, he declared that German authorities would hand the administration of the country over to the Provisional Government based on an agreement yet to be concluded. The occasional argument by some historiographers that recognition of Latvia by Germany was secretly meant to bring Latvia into the German sphere of influence is not convincing. The behaviour of Germany should instead be seen as the logical consequence of Berlin's new Eastern policy. It is another thing to note that the recognition accorded to Latvia by Germany was limited and applied only to government. The limitations were necessitated by the need to find a formula of recognition that would be supported by those holding varying perspectives. Even the two parties that together formed the German government were in serious disagreement on the question. For example, in contrast to the majority Social Democrats, the independent Social Democrats interpreted the revocation of Treaty of Brest by the Compiègne Armistice as meaning that Soviet Russia had regained its rights over the Baltic provinces that had belonged to the Russian Empire.

At the end of 1918, Latvian and German relations had various problems for which solutions had to be sought. For example, the German armed forces (the Eighth Army) in Latvia had been infected by revolution and no longer observed discipline. What the German troops most wanted was to return to Germany (Christmas was approaching), and they pressured their government to begin this process. The powers of the Entente were unable to compel the Germans to fulfill the Twelfth Article of the Armistice and stop the Bolshevik advance into the Baltic, which had begun in the second half of November after Russia annulled the Brest Treaty, interpreting the annulment as reinstatement of its legal power over the region. It should be emphasised that the contracting parties of the Compiègne Armistice (and later the Versailles Treaty, concluded on June 28, 1919) did not intend the revocation of the Treaty of Brest to be retroactive from the time of its signing; it was to have legal force until its revocation, but the terms of its revocation called for the inhabitants of the affected areas themselves to determine their legal status.

Bolshevik armed forces reached the territory of Latvia in the first days of December 1918. The first phase of the War of Independence had begun. The war can be divided into three phases: the first continued until February

1919, the second from March to June, the third ended in February 1920. With the Bolshevik invasion, volunteer military forces were organised to repel the invaders. The Landeswehr, dominated by Baltic Germans, had begun to form in November. A second formation, the so-called Iron Brigade (later Iron Division), was comprised of volunteers from the German Army's troops. Different Latvian companies began to take shape, but not with any measure of success. On December 7, 1918, the Latvian Minister of Defence, Jānis Zālītis, signed an agreement with Winnig about the composition of the Landeswehr, planning for its basis the inclusion of 18 Latvian, 7 German and 1 Russian company, as well as 3 Latvian and 2 German batteries. The agreement recognised Germany as an occupying power, committing it to providing credits for the necessary armaments and funding for the forces. Because of this, the Germans were able to invoke the Hague Conventions of 1907, one of which defined the responsibilities and rights of occupying states, permitting interference in internal affairs. The Germans later made frequent use of this, for instance by employing its limited veto against the decisions of the Provisional Government of Latvia to delay a general mobilisation. Another negative aspect to this agreement was the preservation of the old name "Baltic Landeswehr", since this was the name of the Baltic German volunteer formations already operating.

The steady deterioration of the strategic situation and the difficulty of recruiting volunteers (many Latvians, misunderstanding the political situation, condemned the cooperation of the Provisional Government with the Germans and sympathised with the Bolsheviks) pressured Ulmanis' cabinet into preparing a new agreement with Winnig, signed on December 29, guaranteeing Latvian citizenship rights to those German volunteers who fought the Bolsheviks for at least four weeks. Before concluding this new agreement, which was obviously meant to strengthen the position of the Germans in the Baltic, Ulmanis consulted the British representative. This step shows diplomatic foresight, since the government thereby avoided the complications in foreign policy that the agreement could have caused. The agreement with the Germans, however, palpably aggravated the domestic situation. The "sinful alliance" (as some history books call the cooperation between the Provisional Government and the German occupiers), which was based on mutual short-term interests, seriously weakened the popularity of Ulmanis' Cabinet among Latvians.

The Provisional Government found itself in a completely desperate

situation at the turn of the year, 1918-19. On December 30, the Socialists rejected cooperation and left the Popular Council, and on January 3 the Bolsheviks entered Riga. Continuing their attack, the Bolsheviks soon occupied almost all of Latvia's territory. The Provisional Government controlled only Liepāja, Grobiņa and Aizpute. Latvia was administered by the government of Pēteris Stučka, which formally headed the nominally independent Latvian Socialist Soviet Republic. The existence of this state, proclaimed in December 1918, was a tactical maneuver by Soviet Russia in response to the movement for Latvian national liberation, which had resulted in the proclamation of a Latvian state. Soviet Latvia, however, was incapable of performing the functions assigned to it. Stučka's policies, based on repression and Marxist dogma, turned out to be unacceptable to Latvians, and they gradually lost almost all interest in Bolshevik ideas. The economic policies of Soviet power were unusually inept and unsuccessful, failing to alleviate famine in the cities and aggravating the problems of the countryside. In a campaign against private business, land was nationalised together with factories and other means of production. Holdings larger than 111 hectares were converted into Soviet collectives. All other properties were leased to their owners or tenants for only one year. The longings of the landless for their own plots were not fulfilled, and instead whatever cows they possessed had to be taken to the barns of the Soviet farms. Stučka's government responded to increasing discontent with a wave of terror. Revolutionary tribunals and concentration camps were created. More than 5000 persons were killed in a few months' time. Armed resistance sprang up. Many rural people united in a partisan "green army" to oppose Soviet power.

The Provisional Government, which had fled to Liepāja, was given important but simultaneously dangerous help by Germany, which feared the Bolshevik offensive because of the proximity of East Prussia. The First Guards Division was transferred from the vicinity of Berlin to Courland. The command of the Baltic Landeswehr (which included a separate Latvian battalion led by Oskars Kalpaks) and the Iron Division was replaced by experienced officers who were ill-disposed toward the Latvians. Ruediger von der Goltz, the "political general" who had helped the government of Finland defeat the Bolsheviks, became the supreme commander of the German forces in Courland and northern Lithuania, as well as the governor of Liepāja, in early February. He was able to stabilise the situation and begin a successful offensive in Courland.

Von der Goltz had far-reaching plans opposed to Latvian independence and great political and military ambitions. He wanted to continue use of the Ostpolitik of imperial Germany "under the flag of the battle against Bolshevism", to "rescue what can be rescued from the unfortunate conclusion of the war," considering the Kaiser's Germany to have been victorious in the east. Von der Goltz hoped to begin his revanchist project in the Baltic. He considered not only the Bolsheviks and the Entente as his enemies, but the Latvian Provisional Government as well, seeing it as Bolshevistic and inimical to the Germans.

Soon after von der Goltz's arrival in Liepāja, relations between Ulmanis' government and Germany soured and began a slide towards a null point. Various factors caused this: both had opposing views on questions important to Latvia (Latvia's orientation toward the Entente, etc.); the tyrannical behaviour of the Baltic Germans and the German soldiers; von der Goltz's plans and his attempts to prevent the development of armed forces loyal to the Provisional Government; the coup of April 16, toppling Ulmanis' government, accomplished by a unit of the Landeswehr; and the creation of a pro-German government led by Andrievs Niedra. The German elite was also doubtful of whether independent Baltic States were even desirable, in view of their orientation towards the Entente. They could stand as an impediment to Germany's future political and economic relations with Russia, functioning as an "Allied barrier" separating Berlin and Moscow. Winnig's replacement, Wilhelm Burhard, believing that Germany would have to cooperate with Russia in order to rid itself of the Entente's yoke, even submitted a plan to his government in spring 1919, suggesting the division of the Baltic into spheres of interest. The second part of this initiative would see Russia controlling Southern Livland, Estonia uniting with Finland, and Courland annexed to a German-dominated Lithuania.

The Question of International Recognition for Latvia at the Paris Peace Conference

Although Great Britain was willing to recognise the independence of the Baltic states *de iure* if its allies acted accordingly, the nations of the Entente gradually began to pursue a politics as ambivalent and contradictory as Germany on this question. This was especially noticeable at the Paris Peace Conference between January 1919 and January 1920. The Allies' representa-

tives, who considered Soviet power in Russia to be a fleeting thing, were unwilling to ignore the earlier status of the Baltic as provinces of imperial Russia. France and England increasingly defended the idea of Russian unity, wanting to leave the question of independence for Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia to a Russian constitutional convention. They thus frequently retreated from the principle of self-determination that they themselves had promulgated, frequently rejecting the appeals of the delegations from these countries made at the Conference.

The Latvian delegation, which included Jānis Čakste, Zigfrīds Meierovics, Jānis Seskis and others, attending the opening of the Conference on January 23, considered their most important task to be achieving recognition for the independence of Latvia, and they also sought to obtain food aid, credits, and military assistance in the battle against the Bolsheviks. Unable to participate directly in the work of the Peace Conference, their primary efforts consisted of drafting submissions to the commissions and maintaining contacts with the leaders of the Conference and the participating nations. Between January 23 and December 15, 1919, the Latvian delegation submitted 34 different carefully argued petitions to the governments of the Entente and the Conference. They received, however, no responses.

At the opening of the Conference, the Latvian delegates who took advantage of every opportunity to make their case were very optimistic, their hopes buoyed by the promises of Georges Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, to personally urge recognition for newly independent states at the Peace Conference. Notes from the delegation show that the delegates were still convinced that the recognition of the Baltic states "is, in the near future, guaranteed" even on April 9. Their optimism was soon deflated, however. Esme Howard, who headed the Baltic Commission which had been formed within the framework of the Peace Conference, informed Meierovics in late May that the Latvian government would have to be content with the provisional recognition it had already received from Great Britain; Russian anti-Bolsheviks like the government of Admiral Alexandr Kolchak were dead set against Latvian independence. However, Howard did not exclude the possibility that the situation might change in the future and Latvia might achieve *de iure* recognition.

On June 10, 1919, the Baltic Commission heard a memorandum read by Meierovics. It noted that representatives of a few great powers had given moral support to Latvia in its struggle for national independence and

granted *de facto* recognition to its Provisional Government. At the end of the document was a clear request for the recognition of Latvia as a sovereign and independent state. The Commission's response was wholly negative. The Commission emphasised that Latvia cannot be given *de iure* recognition because its status as a state could not be decided without Russia. The Commission rejected the Latvian delegation's objection that the Latvian question was an international matter.

Though the Latvian delegation failed to achieve its main goal, it did have some successes. The Versailles Treaty signed with Germany on June 28, 1919, included stipulations beneficial to the Baltic states and indirect guarantees for their independence. Article 116 bound Germany to respect the independence of the territory that had belonged to the Russian Empire before August 1st, 1914. According to article 292, Berlin had to renounce all treaties concluded with Russia and its parts, and article 433 committed Germany to keeping its forces in the Baltic without interfering in the defence of the provisional governments of Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania, as well as withdrawing its forces at the Entente's request. In the interpretation of Latvian diplomats, all of the signatories of the Versailles Treaty had recognised the Baltic states *de facto*, though formal *de facto* recognition of the Provisional Government was granted only by Great Britain, Germany, Japan and Haiti (the latter two did so on January 10 and 30, 1919, respectively).

The Second and Third Phases of the War of Independence

Objectively, international recognition was impeded by the complex and unclear situation within Latvia. In spring 1919, Latvia had three governments: Kārlis Ulmanis' government, which had the support of the Allies, especially Britain, but since the coup of April 16 was on the ship *Saratov* in port at Liepāja; the government of Andrievs Niedra, supported by the Baltic Germans and von der Goltz (with which government Germany sympathised, believing that it defended German interests, though Berlin did not dare to extend it recognition); and the government of Pēteris Stučka, supported by Soviet Russia.

Specific military forces backed each of these governments. The Latvian soldiery remained loyal to Ulmanis while the Baltic Germans and the forces from Germany backed Niedra. The Red Army backed Stučka. Until German

forces retook Riga on May 22, 1919, both the forces backing Niedra and those loyal to Ulmanis opposed the Bolsheviks. At this time, the Germans were the most important. The situation changed, however, after Riga was retaken. Stučka's forces retreated from northern Latvia under the threat of being surrounded; the Estonian Army and Latvian forces organised in Estonia – the Latvians sympathetic to Ulmanis and not to Niedra's government – had begun to advance. Germans like von der Goltz, interested in increasing their influence in Latvia, were determined not to allow these forces to take a significant amount of territory, since this would strengthen the position of Ulmanis and his supporters. For this reason, the Germans (primarily the Baltic German Landeswehr, which had gradually been strengthened by the inclusion of units from the Iron Division) advanced towards Cēsis to conquer Vidzeme. A significant battle at Cēsis from the June 19 to 23 ended in the defeat of the Landeswehr and the Iron Division. Niedra's government was forced from the political stage. On June 27, Ulmanis' Provisional Government was able to leave *The Saratov* and reconvene in Liepāja, and only a week and a half later it returned to Riga. The great powers of the Entente, which had not lost hope in using the Germans against the Bolsheviks, pressured the Estonians and Latvians into signing a truce at Strazdumuiža, the terms of which required the Landeswehr and other German units to withdraw from Riga by the evening of July 5. The military forces from Germany (as distinct from the Baltic Germans) were to “quit the territory of Latvia as soon as possible”. The agreement also committed all German forces to cease all military operations within the territory of Latvia except those operations directed against the forces of Soviet Russia.

Although the nations of the Entente occasionally repeated the demand that the forces from Germany must leave Latvia after the Strazdumuiža truce, the Germans were in no hurry to do so despite their many promises. Quite the opposite, von der Goltz regularly received new reinforcements from Germany. Russian prisoners of war from Germany were also organised at camps in Germany and sent to Courland. The Allies had intended to use these units in military operations against Soviet Russia. Since the Russian forces in Courland were under German control, they were politically dependent on Germany. The German soldiers had no sympathies for Latvia. On August 25, 1919, their representatives adopted a resolution asking Ulmanis' government to fulfill the terms of the agreement made on December 29, 1918 and grant them citizenship as well as the right to acquire land. Their

demands had no basis because Article 292 of the Treaty of Versailles meant that such agreements had lost their legal force, and there were no explicit promises of land in the 1918 agreement. The German government agreed that their claims were invalid. Hermann Mueller, the German Foreign Minister, even noted that the German Cabinet had never actually recognised the December 1918 agreements.

In August and September 1919, to avoid having to leave Courland, German soldiers went over to the Russian army under the command of Pavel Bermond-Avalov, the so-called Russian Volunteer Western Army. The nations of the Entente did not specifically object at first, since Bermond declared that his units would go into battle against the Bolsheviks in Russia. On August 14, he announced that his forces would attack in the direction of Daugavpils – Velikiye Luki to cut communications between Moscow and Petrograd. The realisation of this plan of attack by Bermond would have meant the occupation of almost all Latvian territory by his Western Army. Ulmanis' government saw the extreme dangers involved and were determined not to permit it.

Under the influence of von der Goltz, who had not abandoned his grandiose ideas about breaking "shackles of Versailles", Bermond's immediate plans were to seize the Baltic States. At a meeting of officers of the Western Army in Jelgava on October 1, it was decided to attack Riga, overthrow the Latvian and Estonian governments, convert both Latvia and Estonia into Russian provinces with autonomy so limited that they would be prohibited from maintaining armed forces, and restoring all of the privileges of the German nobility. Two days later, when Bermond took over the command of all German forces deployed in Courland, a secret agreement was signed offering all of the German soldiers Russian citizenship as well as the possibility to acquire land.

German and Russian cooperation was extremely dangerous to Latvian independence. On October 8, Bermond's forces began their attack on Riga. Their advance was halted in Pārdaugava, the part of Riga lying on the left bank of the Daugava River from the centre. The decisive events took place in November. The Latvian Army, which at that time was very rapidly growing in size, was able to obtain the advantage over Bermond's forces and defeat it. By the beginning of December, what was left of the Western Army retreated to Germany.

Bermond's adventurism and its consequences brought about impor-

tant changes in Latvia's international standing and its relations with Germany. On November 18, 1919, the supreme commander of the Latvian Army, Jānis Balodis, received a telegram from the German Lieutenant General Eberhard informing him that Bermond's forces were to be under German command. When Meierovics inquired of the German government whether Berlin accepted this act, the German Foreign Minister replied in the affirmative. Upon receiving this response to Meierovics' inquiry, the Latvian government concluded that Germany was attacking Latvia and that a state of war existed between them. On November 25, Meierovics sent the German Foreign Ministry a note informing Berlin that Latvia was cutting diplomatic ties with Germany and "recalling its representatives to the German government". Latvia's interests would be entrusted to the Estonian mission in Germany.¹⁴

In declaring war on Germany, Ulmanis' government demonstrated a clear anti-German stance, which raised its popularity among the Latvian people considerably. As foreign policy, however, the declaration of war was a rash and unnecessary step that brought only difficulties. Even so, the state of war did reflect the ruin of relations between the two countries in 1919 as well as its character. Meierovics' diplomatic note listed nine of the most egregious examples of acts in which Germany had "behaved inimically toward Latvia and its government" since the July 3 truce. The first was Germany's irresponsibility in the matter of withdrawing German forces, as had been promised; the last was the attack upon Riga by Bermond. Meierovics emphasised the fact that Bermond's forces were composed primarily of Germans.

With the collapse of Bermond's "Baltic adventure", the final phase of the War of Independence began. With the help of the Polish Army, in early 1920 the Red Army was driven from Latgallia. The government of Soviet Latvia ceased to exist. Latvia and Soviet Russia began to negotiate a truce while these battles were still taking place, and on January 30 an armistice was signed. The War of Independence had come to an end. Having defeated all of its enemies by force of arms and founded its institutions in all parts of Latvia, the Latvian nation-state had come into its real existence. The ideas of national liberation that had first been promoted by the LPNP and the Democratic Bloc and later the Popular Council were crowned with victory. The democratic potential and the interests of the Latvian people were vindicated. The Republic of Latvia was to be based on democratic values, and the Constitutional Convention proved their popularity. The Baltic state the Germans had planned would have been based on feudal principles. The German Baltic

state and Soviet Latvia had also failed because these alternatives were directly dependent on the interests of Germany and Russia.

Ulmanis' personal virtues, charisma, and manifold talents were clearly evident. The new state was his most important and historically long-lived contribution to the Latvian people. No other politician gave so much energy or strength to the founding of the Latvian state, the defence of its independence and the development of its democracy.

The Battle for International Recognition in 1920

The final phase of the War of Independence and its end led to progress on the question of international recognition. On July 21, 1919, Latvia and Estonia signed an agreement to demarcate their border, settle debts, and resolve other questions, the agreement also confirming mutual *de facto* recognition. In autumn 1919 and the first half of 1920, several nations – Finland, Poland, Lithuania, Belgium, and France – formally granted *de facto* recognition to Latvia. The receipt of such formal recognition from France was especially important, since Paris had maintained an exceedingly reserved position toward the Baltic question, its attitude influenced by the fact that France had made loans to the Russian Empire of 13 billion gold rubles, their repayment threatened by the collapse of Russia.

In the first half of 1920, the question of recognition for Latvia and the other Baltic states as the subjects of international law was a matter of dispute among the great powers. On June 10, John Curzon, the British Foreign Minister, decided to discuss the question of recognition with the other governments of the Entente. Italy and Japan supported recognising the Baltic States *de iure*; France took an evasive position; the United States categorically objected. The U.S. doubted whether Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia would be able to maintain their independence for long, and Washington did not want to set a precedent that might give Japan the opportunity to chip away at the Russian Empire in the Far East.

Hopes for *de iure* recognition from Poland and Finland, both of which were apparently prepared to conclude military agreements with Latvia, turned out to be unfounded. Neither of these countries was willing to precede the Entente in offering recognition. The Polish position was influenced by the Latgallian question; recognising Latvia *de iure* would have meant the certain inclusion of Latgallia in Latvia. The Poles were not convinced of

Latvia's stability or the clarity of its international position. In case Latvia "leaned in the direction of Russia", Warsaw did not want to "give away" Latgallia and its largest city, Daugavpils.

Important and immediate tasks for Latvian diplomats at this juncture were the conclusion of a peace treaty with Russia and the renewal of diplomatic relations with Germany. Negotiations with both these powers began in spring 1920 and lasted for several months because of the many complex problems requiring resolution. All the difficulties were gradually overcome.

Latvia's position with regard to Berlin seemed fundamentally stable. Latvia had acquired documents that incontrovertibly proved that Germany had given official support to Bermond-Avalov's forces. These proofs influenced the German side and made it more pliable at the negotiating table. Already in the first round of talks, Germany agreed to recognise Latvia *de iure* after the Entente had done so. Berlin also made an ambiguous commitment to offer reparations (to be decided by a special commission) to compensate Latvia for damages caused by the German military. The Germans suggested that the agreement be called a *Vertrag* ("treaty") rather than a *Friedensvertrag* ("peace treaty").

The provisional agreement to renew relations between Latvia and Germany was signed on July 15, 1920. The treaty formally ended the state of war between the two countries and declared that Germany would offer *de iure* recognition upon such recognition for Latvia from the Entente. Another important aspect of the treaty for Latvia was the requirement contained in the third chapter, committing both sides "not to support, and not to allow within their borders, any efforts that might be made against the legitimate government of the other party". For Latvia, however, the inclusion of a phrase in which Germany formally disavowed any responsibility for Bermond-Avalov's attack was a definite minus. Because of this, Latvia's erstwhile declaration of war on Germany lost whatever meaning it may have had.

On August 11, 1920, Latvia signed a peace treaty with Russia. In the second article, Russia agreed that it "unreservedly recognises the independence and sovereignty of the Latvian State and voluntarily and forever renounces all sovereign rights which had belonged to Russia over the Latvian people and territory". A very important part of this article was the final passage, explicitly declaring that Latvia, no longer bound to Russia, no longer had any obligations toward it. This meant that Russia could no longer pretend to any sovereignty whatsoever over Latvia and committed it to making no

attempts to restore such sovereignty. The treaty defined the border between both countries and covered other questions, including trade relations.¹⁵

The peace treaties between Russia and Latvia (and the other Baltic states) were extremely important because they not only granted the new nations *de iure* recognition – they also resolved one of the most complex aspects of the Baltic problem. In renouncing all claims over the territory of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, Russia removed the major barrier to international recognition for the Baltic states and their participation in the international system.

Latvia, which had also received *de iure* recognition from Estonia and Lithuania, planned to achieve its diplomatic goals through membership in the League of Nations, which the Paris Peace Conference had founded as the first major international body of its kind in the world's history. A commission established by the League first assessed the question of Latvia and Estonia's admission. The commission raised several objections to membership for these countries, the two major ones being that 1) Latvia and Estonia had separated from, and shared a border with a country (Russia) where anarchy held sway, and the prevailing conditions there were such that the League could in no way influence them; 2) the Baltic states still lacked *de iure* recognition, and such recognition was opposed by the United States and France. In connection to the latter objection, it should be noted that the legal experts of the League were unable to agree on whether the admission of a country to the League in of itself implied *de iure* recognition. The question remained open.

The full Assembly of the League of Nations considered the possibility of admitting the Baltic States and Georgia to the League on December 16, 1920. The aforementioned objections were repeated and sometimes questioned (by Colombia and Portugal) during the debate. None of the candidates was accepted as a full member of the League. Five countries voted for Latvia's admission; twenty-four voted against and thirteen abstained or did not participate in the voting. The Baltic States and Georgia were, however, permitted to participate in non-governmental organisations connected to the League of Nations, for example the Postal Union, the International Red Cross, and some of the commissions of the League itself. Once this decision was made, diplomats in Geneva, where the League was based, considered the applicants to be halfway between their *de facto* independent status and the *de iure* recognition they desired.

The *De Iure* Recognition of Latvia

1920 did not bring the *de iure* recognition Latvia so desired, this failure leading to severe disappointment among politicians and in the press. Still, the end of the year brought about a break in the politics of France that began to change the position of Paris with regard to the Russian question. The defeat of Pyotr Wrangel's army in the Crimea dashed any hopes for a renewal of the defunct Russian Empire. The only Russia was now Bolshevik Russia.

The situation that developed at the close of 1920 required goal-oriented active work by Latvian diplomats. Foreign Minister Meierovics decided to visit Italy, France, and Great Britain in a renewed attempt to argue the need and justification for *de iure* recognition. All of the major Italian politicians affirmed their support for the full recognition of the Baltic States and expressed their willingness to take the initiative on their behalf. The very favourable position of Rome can be explained by a few of the circumstances influencing Italy's support: 1) the Italians had few economic interests in Russia and therefore no real interest to stimulate an effort to see the Russian Empire renewed; 2) Italy was dissatisfied with the Versailles Treaty and other peace agreements concluded after the war, therefore Rome took positions differing from those of Great Britain and France in some matters of international relations; 3) Italy had an interest in weakening Russia, since it feared a growth in its influence in the Balkans.

When Meierovics arrived in Paris at the end of December, French politicians had already come to realise that military intervention in Soviet Russia could neither renew the Empire nor create a new Russia. This realisation made Meierovics' task easier. Although there was still powerful opposition to the Baltic States in the French parliament, Meierovics was able to extract a promise from the French President, Alexandre Millerand, to support international recognition for Latvia. On December 29, the French government sent the other Great Powers diplomatic notes suggesting that *de iure* recognition should be granted to the Baltic States. The French political elite had finally admitted that the Baltic question could be decided without a resolution of the Russian question. This was a radical change in the political approach in Paris.

In London Meierovics was unable to obtain a firm commitment from Great Britain to support *de iure* recognition for the Latvian state. He met with the British Foreign Minister, John Curzon, who sharply objected to

recognition. The Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, took an ambiguous stance, and it seemed that he might defer to Curzon's opposition. These fears, however, turned out to be groundless. At the decisive moment, David Lloyd George diplomatically circumvented his Foreign Minister and backed a positive outcome for the question.

On January 26, 1921, the Supreme Council of the Entente (Great Britain, France, Belgium, Japan and Italy) decided unanimously to grant unconditional *de iure* recognition, without reservations, to Latvia and Estonia.¹⁶ This decision, which was certainly influenced by the desire of the Great Powers to strengthen a chain of independent states as a protection against Soviet Russian expansionism, led to *de iure* recognition by a string of other states. The Entente's act was followed by retroactive recognition from Latvia's potential allies, first Poland (December 31, 1920) and Finland (January 26, 1921). These were soon followed, in February, by Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Persia, Austria, Portugal and Romania. The last of the Great Powers to recognise Latvia was the United States of America, which did so only on July 28, 1922. A total of 42 countries formally recognised Latvia *de iure* between the wars.

Latvia joined the League of Nations without difficulty on September 1921. 38 countries voted for admission, no country opposed Latvia's membership, and ten countries did not participate or abstained.¹⁷ For Latvia, membership in the League seemed to offer greater security, since the statutes (especially Articles X and XVI) offered collective guarantees for the political independence and territorial integrity of the member states. The League of Nations offered the promise of replacing the principles of small nations' self-defence with absolutely more advantageous collective security for their independence and integrity.

3.3 THE DRAFTING OF THE CONSTITUTION

The People's Council 1918–1920

“With the dawn of peace, nations make their ancient homes by founding states within their ethnographic boundaries on the basis of unity and self-determination. Latvia takes the flag of freedom not by the right of might but from the hands of the goddess of justice herself.” – Atis Ķeniņš, November 18, 1918.

At the time of the proclamation of independence in 1918, numerous idealistic and eloquent speeches were given – Atis Ķeniņš' was among the most poetic. Those present believed that a free Latvia would be a just state for all of its citizens and were ready to work towards that goal. They did not doubt that a just system must be based on fullest democracy possible – in fact, they saw democracy almost as a panacea, the system miraculously solving problems that had accumulated for centuries. The actual establishment of a constitutional and judicial system, however, depended on various complex factors. Among these factors, the main ones were: 1) how quickly Latvia would achieve its independence on the ground; in November 1918, real power still belonged to the remains of the German occupation forces, while the east of the country was already threatened by Bolshevik attack (the Red Army attacked neighbouring Estonia on November 22 and the course of War of Independence would be the deciding factor in whether actual democracy could be obtained; 2) what the domestic political spectrum would be (in essence, the relative strength of the left and the conservative parties, both politically and intellectually); 3) what the foreign influences on constitutional rights would be (by the example of the Western constitutions).

The fore-parliament – the Popular Council – was formed through consultations among eight active political parties on November 17, 1918, at 3 Suvorov Street, the Latvian Tradesmen's Credit Union. The impressive building was called "Zemgala kase" by most people in Riga (after its founder, the jurist Gustavs Zemgals). The most crucial consultations were those between the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party and the Latvian Farmers' Union led by Kārlis Ulmanis. It is clear that a legislative body formed through negotiations between parties could not truly claim a mandate; a full mandate from the people could only be obtained through democratic elections, and in the chaotic conditions in Latvia at the end of 1918 it was as yet impossible to organise free elections. If it had been possible to hold elections at that time, a majority of votes would very likely have still gone to the Latvian Communists since they had popularised their promises of rapid, violent, and seemingly magical solutions to severe problems that plagued the country devastated by war. That the Bolsheviks would be unable to deliver solutions to the nation's problems, instead delivering only terror and indescribable violence, was not yet known to many people in Latvia. The People's Council continued to function until May 1, 1920, when the first freely elected parliament, the Constituent Assembly, which had been

elected in free, fully democratic, proportional elections two weeks before and therefore had a perfectly clear mandate, convened in Riga. The path that led to that point, however, turned out to be long and perilous.

The People's Council established on November 17th, 1918, comprised the following:

1) Political parties – these provided a modern, contemporary form of political organisation except at their radical extremes: on the left, the Bolshevik wing of the Social Democrats (who later became the Communists, and were implacable opponents of both independence and democracy), on the right, the extremely reactionary, pro-German and anti-national People's Party of Frīdrihs Veinbergs. Andrievs Niedra, a notable writer and talented pastor but a pathetic and later traitorous politician, was also increasingly opposed to the People's Council, instead desiring an anti-democratic Latvia that would be closely allied to a White, monarchist Russia. Niedra's Latvia would have been inimical to landless Latvians and poor farmers as well as to the proletariat in the city and the *petit bourgeoisie* while favouring the German nobility and the bourgeoisie. Niedra would maintain class privileges and deny the equality of the voters. The anti-democratic Latvia Niedra desired would be extremely pro-Germanic and would grant them the old privileges.

2) The regions – bearing in mind that political parties in Latgallia had only begun to develop at that point, eastern Latvia was given representation as a region. Later Latgallia was represented by 17 representatives, from the parties that were already developing. Courland, which had suffered the most from the exodus of refugees that took place during the years of war, was also represented as a region.

3) The minorities were guaranteed representation even when they had not yet developed political parties.

The system of representation, then, was fairly all encompassing. The largest delegations to the People's Council on November 17 belonged to the two largest political organisations – the Farmers' Union with 17 seats and the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party with 10. The total number of seats in the Council at the moment of the proclamation of independence was 39, but by the time the People's Council ended its work their number had grown to 183. Including seven Jews and five Baltic Germans who were loyal to the Latvian state, the majority of Latvia's population was represented and the Council could convincingly claim to express the will of the nation. During the entire term of its functioning, the Council was led by the remark-

able statesman Jānis Čakste of the Farmers' Union, a lawyer and politician. Though the People's Council had proclaimed as its goal the election of a Constituent Assembly through free elections, this stated goal – declared already at the time of its founding – was made impossible by the intervention of Soviet Russia and the outright hostility of the Baltic Germans. This hostility came to head in the “Barons' Putsch” of April 16, 1919 and the armed interference of German mercenaries (the Iron Division) against the fledgling independent state.

The People's Council adopted its Political Platform on November 18, 1918. This document can be considered to be the first draft of the Latvian constitution, setting out the main legal principles on which the Republic would be based: it would be a democratic republic in which the sovereign power would belong to the people; it would be tolerant of ethnic minorities, its political body would be composed of its citizens regardless of their ethnic identity; minority rights would be fully recognised (the question of the extent of the minorities' rights was discussed in the first sessions of the People's Council, and the autonomy of the minorities was already debated, though it was too early for this question to be resolved): “Latvia – the state of the people of Latvia”. All inhabitants of Latvia irrespective of their nationality were invited to participate in the building of the democratic republic so long as they recognised its independence and the democracy that would be its basis. With these principles, the concept of the modern Latvian political nation was formulated – a daring project because the minorities in Latvia were, at best, very reserved towards the idea of independent nationhood. The concept of the political nation would not be realised easily in any of the new or renewed European nation-states. The Platform of the People's Council also emphasised another important principle – the inviolability of private property since liberal democracy can only succeed where it is based on a stable and developed capitalist economy. As we shall see, the first freely elected parliament, the Constituent Assembly, would have to adopt legislation on expropriating the estates of the nobility in the interests of the Latvian nation and its new state.

Once the Landeswehr and the Iron Division were defeated (unfortunately not entirely) in June of 1919 and the pro-German and pro-Russian puppet government of Andrievs Niedra had disappeared, the People's Council was at last able to devote itself to its original mission and accomplish its historic goal – preparing for elections for the Constituent Assembly. To

begin with, a basic law governing elections was needed – the Law on Elections for the Constituent Assembly was duly adopted in August 19, 1919. It was based on radical, perhaps even excessively democratic ideas – and it is likely that any lesser course would have been impossible after the long years of Tsarist repression. The primary excess was that the electoral system was not only proportional – that was completely understandable – but that there was no minimum threshold for representation, opening the way to parliament for tiny parties and groups. In practice, what the system meant was that the Latvian parliament – then the Constituent Assembly – was composed of 150 mandates. Any party or group that received 1/150th of the votes (the electorate divided by 150) would get a seat in parliament. In the extreme, that could mean that dozens of groups might get seats, each with as few as one or two representatives. This was a dangerous principle in circumstances when Latvia, gaining its freedom for the first time, like many other newly independent countries, was obsessed with relishing its liberty to the dregs, forming parties and groupings whenever possible. The principle promised a fractious parliament, but the law was born of a historically understandable desire not to deny direct representation to even the smallest section of the electorate. For this reason, no minimum threshold was imposed.

Women were granted suffrage – a progressive and democratic principle not yet in place even in most of the established Western democracies, not even in republican France or Switzerland. Latvian women responded to the establishment of their rights with enthusiasm, very actively participating in every democratic election until the last polls in 1931. Voting was restricted to those citizens who had not reached the age of 21, in accordance with the understanding of the age of political maturity prevalent at that time. To decide who was a citizen, the People's Council adopted important legislation that was liberal both in spirit and in letter – the Law on Citizenship. Latvian citizenship was available to 1) citizens of the former Russian Empire who were resident in Latvia at the time, 2) all persons born in Latvia, 3) all persons who were resident Latvia on August 1, 1914. It would be inappropriate to compare the 1919 law with the 1994 Law on Citizenship, since the situation was dramatically different; from 1940-1991, when Latvia was under occupation, Latvia was flooded with hundred of thousands of illegal immigrants in violation of international law (under the 1948 United Nations definition, forcible population transfer in an occupied nation qualifies as genocide). The 1919 law was especially meant to address the nearly half million refugees

who were scattered throughout Russia; having lived in Latvia before the war, they were invited to return home as citizens of the newborn nation-state. Though it was not directly connected to the election of the Constituent Assembly, another major legislative act affecting early constitutional arrangements was the liberal Law on Minority Schools, also adopted in 1919. Although democracy is primarily majority rule, the guarantees for minority education offered the minorities security, reassuring them that their rights would be respected in democratic Latvia and that their cultures would not be oppressed by the majority. The country was divided into five electoral districts – the four traditional provinces and Riga. At the time – only once in history of Latvia – a separate district was granted to the Army: this was necessitated by the fact that 70 000 potential voters were serving in the military. The legal basis for successfully holding elections to parliament was not the only preparatory task, of course; the course of the War of Independence was crucial, since elections could be held only when all of Latvia was free of foreign armed forces. This was finally the case at the very end of January 1920, when the remainder of the Red Army was driven from Latgallia. The path to election campaigns was finally clear – campaigns that were quite fierce, as it could be expected in a country with no tradition of democracy and a dramatic history that in its most recent tragic years had left the nation politically, socially, and ethnically divided.

A political assassination cast a shadow over the elections, though it did not lead to their cancellation – drunken soldiers in Cēsis killed one of the most radical Social Democratic agitators, Kārlis Kurzemnieks of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party. He had verbally abused the bourgeois parties, calling Ulmanis "Latvia's Kolchak", and his murderers had thought him a Communist, which he was not. Although the crime, condemned from across the political spectrum, complicated the relations between the mainstream parties and the Social Democrats – they even began to talk of going underground – in the end, it did not bring about an end to the commitment of the Social Democrats to civil democracy and actually helped their election prospects, attracting voters on the far left to their party. An attempt by Communist bandits, who were still active in Latvia and infiltrated the country from terrorist bases in Russia (especially from the Pskov region, the primary base for Latvian Bolsheviks), to assassinate Kārlis Ulmanis failed. The elections took place on April 17 and 18, 1920 and, just as in the parliamentary elections in Estonia the year before, there was a very high

voter turnout – 80% of those eligible to vote cast ballots. It should be noted that such levels of voter participation – these remained high through the last elections to parliament in 1931 – serve as an affirmation of the trust in parliamentary democracy. Despite the fact that there was intense dislike for one or another government or its decisions – discontent inescapable in a democracy – the absolute majority of Latvia's inhabitants never wavered in their belief in parliamentary democracy itself. The 1920 elections were the first free elections in the history of Latvia. The tendency of Latvia's citizens to form political parties, associations and groups – though these sometimes bordered upon the comical – led to the creation of 25 parties and organisations with 50 lists participating. Representatives from 16 different parties or groups were elected to the Constituent Assembly, reflecting the extremely liberal election law. In of itself that was no great tragedy. But it did mean that such a fractious parliament would require tremendous political skill to function, especially in the art of compromise, if coalition governments were to be formed and survive. It is not necessary to note that not every politician in the freshly created Republic possessed such skills.

The most successful party – though their success was not unqualified, as they had wished – was the Social Democrats'. The Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party received 38,7% of the votes, 76,8% of those votes cast in the countryside. This Social Democratic success had far-reaching effects in two realms: firstly, it would decisively influence the parliament's stand in the major question then facing Latvia, that of land reform; secondly, it would influence the type of constitution Latvia would adopt – the *Satversme*. The 1920 elections already showed the tendencies that would persist throughout Latvia's brief period of democracy between the wars. First of all, although the ethnic minorities were rather active at the polls, their participation was less than that of ethnic Latvians. Minorities made up a quarter of the population while their candidates received only about 10% of the vote, indicating a much lower turnout among them. The most active minority was the Baltic German minority, throughout – this was in part a reflection of their high social and material level and the depth of their political traditions, but more importantly it was also a result of their understanding that they could only protect their interests by very actively participating in elections (they saw their interests as seriously threatened in an independent Latvian nation-state). The Jews were also very active politically, though they were also very divided in their politics. In the 1920s they were able to achieve

in Latvia what was almost unimaginable in the other new countries with large numbers of Jews – Jewish representation in parliament came close to reflecting their actual numbers, about 5% of the population. Latvia's Poles were also fairly active and well organised. The least active were the Russians, especially in the elections to the First Saeima in 1922, when they were unable to get even a single mandate from Riga district, where there were almost 40,000 Russians. Although the Russian turnout gradually grew, even in the 1931 elections, the last parliamentary vote, only 2/3 of the Russians cast votes for the Russian parties. Disagreements between the minorities prevented the creation of a minority bloc, though the idea was often invoked. Only the German minority was ever able to overcome its internal divisions and pursue its interests by participating in elections with a unified list.

The elections to the Constituent Assembly also demonstrated that large, well-organised parties with their own press, local organisations, and a party bureaucracy were best able to succeed at the polls. Throughout the democratic period there were only two truly national parties – the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party and the Latvian Farmers' Union.

Only a year and a half had passed since the proclamation of independence, but the changes in the country were almost unbelievable: from a German occupied province, Latvia had been transformed into a genuinely independent nation-state, free of occupiers and invaders, with a democratically elected parliament. It was a historic accomplishment for the Latvian nation – and the Latvian people. The People's Council had fulfilled its historic mission.

The Constituent Assembly: 1920–1922

On May 1, 1920, the newly elected Constituent Assembly ceremoniously and enthusiastically gathered for its first session. The day became a holiday onwards. Jānis Čakste (1859–1927), who had led the People's Council so well, was elected as the president of the Assembly; he was also the acting president of Latvia. Čakste was perfectly suited for the post: he had vast experience in statecraft. He was genial and compromise-oriented as a politician, but neither weak nor indecisive. He soon came into conflict with the ambitious Ulmanis, who did not get on well with the independent-minded.

Čakste was ready to work with all of the political forces represented in the Assembly, including the influential Social Democrats and the minorities. In his character and his circumstances, he cut a figure for civil society – he

was well educated, a successful lawyer, happy with his large family, and lacked the obsessive desire for power that was already becoming apparent in Kārlis Ulmanis' character. Even unto his early death in 1927, Čakste was a paragon among Latvian democrats. Both as the leader of parliament and later as president, he proved that although his position was not as politically powerful as that of the prime minister, he could be an important figure and merit what could really be called love among the people. Čakste was such a good leader of the Constituent Assembly that his leadership among other factors was part of why the left wing of the parliament opposed presidential powers in Latvia. For the writer Jānis Rainis, Čakste's election brought great bitterness – Rainis, though he had little talent as a politician, was very eager for a high position in politics; he came to suspect the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party (LSDSP) leadership of hindering his election to the post. Rainis' suspicions were unfounded. Although the party leadership did what it could to see Rainis elected, the election of a Social Democrat to head the Constituent Assembly, especially in a contest against the widely respected Čakste, was not in their power.

Already on May 15, 1920, without delay, the Constituent Assembly formed a committee for the drafting of the Satversme (the Latvian constitution) consisting of 26 members. This was the second largest committee, after that responsible for agriculture and agrarian matters, their size reflecting the two main priorities of the government at that time. Professionally and conceptually, the drafters were dominated by Social Democrats. The committee was led by Mārgers Skujenieks, one of the founding fathers of Latvian political nationalism and the author of the first academic studies of the national question. The first subcommittee, which was charged with formulating the framework of the government system, was led by another Social Democrat, Fēlikss Cielēns, who had developed the most radical program for Latvian autonomy while in exile in Switzerland in 1915. A major contribution to the work of the committee was also made by Fricis Mendērs, another notable figure among the Latvian Social Democrats – a participant in the 1905 Revolution, he was forced into exile, acquiring two doctorates in Vienna and Switzerland, in economics and jurisprudence respectively. In 1917, at the age of 32, he was about to embark on a career as a docent in Bern, specialising in the young science of sociology. An ethnic Latvian from a working class family in the poor neighborhood of Grīziņkalns, Riga, Mendērs had acquired academic qualifications in Western Europe that were

quite a rare quality for a Latvian. His academic career ended suddenly, with the February 1917 revolution in Russia, when Mendērs returned to Latvia to become one of its most prominent politicians. The experience of Western democracy gained in exile and the academic background of the Social Democrats led to their intellectual leadership in the drafting of the *Satversme*, but one cannot say that the bourgeois parties did not contribute their own specialists in constitutional law. Among them were Arveds Bergs, a recognised leader of the conservative and rather nationalistic bourgeoisie in the cities, especially Riga. Bergs was a well-educated lawyer and publicist who had a command of several languages and was well acquainted with the Western constitutions. He represented the so-called National Association. Though the primary bourgeois party, the Latvian Farmers' Union, did not lack its own notable jurists – including the future president Alberts Kviesis and the vice chairman of the Saeima, Kārlis Pauļuks – its lawyers were not experts in constitutional law and the contributions of the Farmers' Union to the draft project were minimal.

The committee focused on six existing foreign constitutions in their deliberations: three more or less older constitutions (those of the United States, Switzerland and France), and three quite recent constitutions (that of the Weimar Republic (1919) and the constitutions just adopted by Latvia's neighbors – Estonia's (adopted June 15, 1920) and the provisional constitution of Lithuania (adopted June 10, 1920)). The most attractive element in Switzerland's constitution was direct democracy exercised through the use of the popular referendum. The United States Constitution had few backers in Latvia – few Latvians had lived in America, and few considered it as a model for a new European country, though it was occasionally propagandised by Kārlis Ulmanis, who had spent nearly six years in the U.S. Ulmanis was less interested in the American constitutional system per se, with its checks and balances between executive, legislative and judicial branches. He was attracted to the broad presidential powers in the U.S. system, and he and some of the other Farmers' Union politicians wanted to expand these powers in the Latvian *Satversme*, even giving the president the right to dismiss parliament. This was what the Social Democrats feared. The short French constitution of 1875 was attractive to many in Latvia; it had a powerful parliament, with a relatively weak president elected by the parliament. But there were at least three factors that stabilised French society despite its frequent changes of government and even parliamentary crises. These were:

a large middle class that was loyal to democracy and the Republic, including middle class farmers; a strong administration and a large civil service with Republican sympathies, guaranteeing continuity during crises of government; a high level of prosperity, which always eases the workings of a civil society. Latvia was incomparably lacking in all three of these stabilising elements.

The German constitution – that of the Weimar Republic – had created a fairly powerful and independent presidency. The president was popularly elected and had the power to dismiss parliament, though this power was not unlimited. The strongest supporter of the Weimar constitution in Latvia was Arveds Bergs, and the German system also had many backers in the Farmers' Union and among the more conservative representatives from the ethnic minorities. Neighboring Lithuania had very recently adopted a provisional constitution after prolonged disagreements, their framework establishing a weak presidency: the president was chosen by parliament and could be dismissed by two-thirds of parliamentary vote. Leftist parliamentarians in Lithuania, primarily Social Democrats, had opposed the creation of a presidency, and the provisional constitution clearly concentrated political power in the parliament. Estonia had also recently adopted a constitution – a permanent and not a provisional one, though. The Estonian constitution appealed to Latvia's Social Democrats, since it did not provide for an independent presidency. Estonia's constitution was exceptionally parliamentary – the prime minister or premier served as the head of state, and governments were completely dependent upon parliament. Since the average term of a government in Estonia turned out to be eight months and twenty days, a politician could end up leading governments and serving as the head of state as many as four times.

The question of the presidency was at the centre of the fiercest arguments in Latvia. The constitutional project drafted by the Social Democrat Cielēns did not include a presidency, instead proposing to join the positions of chair of the parliament to the functions of a president, as was the practice since 1920. Čakste's accomplished performance as acting president gave the Social Democrats added weight to their arguments, which were based on few major factors. Like many people in Latvia, the Social Democrats feared the concentration of power in the hands of one person, their fears fueled by recent, bitter, and ineradicable memories of tsarist rule. In addition, there was a more personal motivation for some: growing suspicions regarding

Kārlis Ulmanis' ambitions. Just as centre-left forces in the Polish parliament drafted the constitution of a reborn Poland while bearing in mind the intractable personality of Pilsudski, who had led their fight for freedom, to prevent him from becoming a president with vast powers (the Polish constitution of March, 1921, provided for a president elected by parliament and with few powers), the Latvian Social Democrats drafted the Latvian Satversme with Ulmanis in mind. The most notable representative of the bourgeois parties Arveds Bergs, on the other hand, desired a popularly elected president with independent political functions and broad power. As a result of political battles so complex that they are well nigh indescribable, a compromise much closer to the Social Democrats' position was reached, providing for a presidency almost identical to that which already existed in Lithuania: a presidential institution was created. The president was not also the chair of parliament; but the president would be elected by parliament and not the population, for a term of three years. Parliament would have the right to dismiss the president, and the president's powers were few (though they could not be called merely ceremonial).

Another question that resulted in similarly fierce, brief, and tense political battles – the results of which could even have threatened the adoption of the constitution – was the fate of the second part of the Satversme, over which debate was opened on January 17, 1922. It was intended to provide not the framework of government but to frame the basic rights of citizens in some detail. There was no such section in the French constitution (though the Weimar constitution did include such articles), and the Latvian Social Democrats were determined to codify basic human rights as fundamentally and permanently as possible in the highest law of the land. In of itself, the Social Democrats' intent was laudable. Sentiments among the bourgeois representatives at the Constituent Assembly had begun to shift, however; the dreamy idealism of the dawn of democracy had begun to dissipate. Latvia had become a nation-state in actuality, and by 1921 it had not only been recognised *de iure* but had been accepted as a member of the League of Nations. The accession process had led to concentration upon the guarantees for democracy, and once Latvia became a member there was less of an interest in adopting the second part of the constitution. A few of the freedoms that were to be included already provoked stiff resistance – for example, the right to strike for political or economic reasons, one of the bourgeois members of the Assembly suggested, would lead from strikes to barricades and

bombs. The fearsome threat of Bolshevism was frequently invoked to argue against the inclusion of a bill of rights in the constitution.

The period of the Constituent Assembly was also marked by a crisis in government that would have far-reaching effects. In June 1921, the government of Kārlis Ulmanis fell as the result of a few rather demagogical Latgalian members of the Assembly (it was the first government with a mandate from a freely elected parliament, the Constituent Assembly; however, counting the preceding provisional governments, it was Ulmanis' fourth time at the helm). For Ulmanis – who had virtually no life outside politics – losing political power was disastrous and unexpected; he wanted to lead without interruption. Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics took the reins of government, and for five years Ulmanis was absent from centre stage. This led to jealousy and Ulmanis' growing distaste for Čakste and the popular Farmers' Union politician Hugo Celmiņš. Meierovics' government was the first not to include representatives from the minorities, and the new prime minister himself declared the principle "Latvia for Latvians". He meant this in a national and not in a chauvinistic or racist sense in which the extremist organisation *Pērkoņkrusts* (Thunder Cross) would later employ it. Though no one attempted to restrict the rights of the minorities, this was a certain watershed in the politics of the new democracy. At the same time, the largest party – the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party – underwent a schism; 17 members of the Assembly led by Mārgers Skujenieks, the right wing of the LSDSP, formed a splinter Social Democratic party with more nationalistic views and entered Meierovics' government. This splinter group was not successful, however, and collapsed in 1928, indicating that there was no niche in Latvia for another Social Democratic party, one that would stand to the right of LSDSP but to the left of the bourgeois parties.

Latvia's Constitution: The Satversme: 1922

Fēlikss Cielēns, one of the founding fathers of the constitution, though talented, was not blessed with strong nerves or a stable character. Having realised that a majority of the Assembly would reject the second part of the Satversme, i.e. the section establishing citizens' rights, he was so upset that he wished to kill the constitution in its entirety. The Social Democrats took the position that if the second section was lost, they would withdraw support for the entire project. Three Social Democratic members – Dr. Fricis Men-

ders, Ansis Buševics and Ansis Rudevics – broke party discipline to vote for the adoption of the Satversme even without the second part. Their three votes, cast on September 28, 1921, gave the constitution a slight majority in the first vote. 67 members of the Constituent Assembly voted for adoption. That led a positive result in the final vote on February 22, 1922.

Reading the second section today – especially when one takes into account the events that followed in Latvian history – is like reading a riveting novella. It banned all orders except those for accomplishments on the battlefield, and forbade Latvian citizens from accepting foreign medals. In actuality, Latvia would have two non-military honours – the Order of Three Stars and the Cross of Viesturs, but on the eve of occupation Ulmanis himself developed plans for a new order, the medals which would have been comical. Its motto: “Working men work, they do not laze about.” The second section of the Satversme would have abolished the death penalty. Though it was not abolished in interbellum Latvia, the death penalty was actually applied quite rarely, only in extreme cases – to the legendary bandit and murderer Kaupēns in 1927, and to three Latvian citizens in 1935 who were sentenced to death for espionage on behalf of the U.S.S.R. (Ulmanis, who was then a dictator, so often accused of atrocities by the Communists, granted these spies a reprieve. One of those pardoned, Solomon Murin, later “thanked” Latvia by becoming a Chekist in 1940). The Satversme was also to include an important article guaranteeing the inviolability of private property; but even without this article, property was protected – the Cabinet passed a law in 1921 preventing the seizure of property except by court order. This law remained in force until Ulmanis’ authoritarian regime made it possible for private property to be expropriated by order of the Cabinet. This was a serious setback for the rule of law, and though it did not lead to arbitrary seizures, the nationalisation (though not simple confiscation) was not rare during the years of Ulmanis’ regime. The Satversme’s second section would also have made Latvian the state language. This would have been a very valuable provision. However, the Latvian language did acquire this status in practice – especially after the coup of May 15. During the democratic period, members of parliament (in both the Constituent Assembly and the Saeima) were allowed to speak in Russian and German. Although this is understandable in view of the fact that the majority of people from the minorities did not have a command of Latvian before 1918, the situation was strange because it persisted even unto 1934 despite the fact that Latvia was a national state.

This circumstance was sometimes called Europe's political oddity. Article 116 would have granted ethnic minorities the right to extra-territorial national cultural autonomy, requiring the adoption of a law to define which minorities in Latvia would come under the definition of national minorities and so enjoy the rights to autonomy (which would have clarified the status of the minorities). Despite the fact that Article 116 was not adopted and no law defining minorities was passed, five minorities – the Russians, Belarusians, Jews, Germans and Poles – were given broadly autonomous cultural rights, though not as broad as in Estonia. During the entire period of parliamentary democracy – though this period was brief – Latvia was a fully democratic and liberal state, guaranteeing its citizens the full range of rights and freedoms.

The Latvian Satversme was a so-called strong constitution – it could be amended only by the vote of a two-thirds majority in parliament. This provision was well-founded, since it did not allow frequent changes, dictated by passing circumstances, to alter the basic law. A constitution should stand for stability. The Satversme declared Latvia to be a free, independent, democratic republic, in which the power is vested in the people of Latvia and where the system of government and the change of international status – i.e. union with another country, renunciation of sovereignty, etc. – could only occur if the people of Latvia decided so in a referendum. This was brutally transgressed after the occupation in June 1940, when the illegally elected People's Parliament adopted an unconstitutional decision to join so-called Soviet Latvia to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The rule of parliament was at the heart of the Satversme, but the Cabinet of Ministers also had broad powers: according to Article 81, it could even adopt legislation between the sessions of parliament. The president could dismiss parliament, but such a decision by the president had immediately to be put to the people in a referendum; if the people supported the dismissal of parliament, parliament would be dismissed – if the people opposed dismissal, the president would be dismissed. No legitimate Latvian president – Čakste, Zemgals, Kviēsis – ever dismissed parliament. Kviēsis did not do so even when his own party, the Farmers' Union, engaged in a campaign of demagoguery against the "failed" Saeima; he well knew that the people of Latvia had not lost faith in its parliament.

Not long after the Satversme was adopted – on June 9, 1922 – the new Law on Elections also passed, opening the way to electing the new parlia-

mentary body, the Saeima. It was elected for three years by all of the citizens of the Republic in direct, proportional, secret balloting. The new Law on Elections did not, however, introduce any threshold for representation in the Saeima – small parties continued to blossom and proliferate. In adopting the Latvian constitution, the Satversme, and the new Law on Elections, the Constituent Assembly had fulfilled its historic mission. Once again, however, an extremely liberal constitution and an excessively democratic Law on Elections required an artful sense of compromise of politicians – and not all of the politicians were prepared for that.

3.4. DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE PERIOD OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

The life of Latvian democracy was very short – it ended with the coup d'état of May 15, 1934. Because of this brief lifespan, it is almost impossible not to attribute to parliamentary democracy more serious failings than it actually possessed. Of Weimar Germany, when Hitler destroyed it, it was customary to say that it had been a democracy without democrats, a republic without republicans – its successes restricted to the arts, their splendour balanced by bitter failure in all else. Was Latvia also a democracy without democrats? Were the structural, legal (constitutional) and psychological factors unfavourable to a longer life for liberal democracy in Latvia? Of course, the social structure of Latvia presented a complex situation. More than 60% of the population of the country was rural; this was not the best beginning for a liberal democracy, which requires a more pluralistic and modern society. The course of events would prove that the agrarian societies of Eastern and Central Europe were unprepared for democracy: it survived in only a single country, Czechoslovakia, and it is perhaps not a coincidence that this was the only country where the percentage of the population engaged in agriculture had fallen below 50%. The standard of living in Latvia was also fairly low, and liberal democracy functions far better in the wealthy societies with a large middle class where liberal democracy arose – in Western Europe. Independent Latvia united all of the regions inhabited by ethnic Latvians. In tsarist times, this ethnographical territory had never been administratively united (Latgallia was not part of the Baltic provinces). Healing the divisions that had lasted centuries was not easy. A unified nation

was only in the process of development, and the regional differences were too great. The political culture of democracy had no traditions in Latvia, and democracy had not taken root in the behaviour, thoughts, and psychology of the masses. Moreover, the self-reliance of individualism, a fundamental requirement for liberal democracy, was rather weak. Many looked to the Satversme for the solution to all of Latvia's problems, as if the basic law of the state could anywhere provide satisfaction in of itself and ward of any ill. When this did not happen – and it could not have happened – Arveds Bergs' popular saying began to circulate: "The Satversme doesn't work!" The overblown hopes described here were not confined to Latvia alone. Latvia's new democracy, however, also had tremendous accomplishments, and one would have to be blind not to see them.

The Good Years: 1922–1930

The extremely democratic Law on Elections opened the way to parliament not only for the various and even the weirdest small parties. It also gave rise to another problem – voting lists. Any hundred voters could register a list and field candidates, and one gets the impression that everybody in Latvia had been waiting with bated breath to do just that. In 1922, in the elections to the First Saeima, there were 88 lists; in the elections to the Second Saeima in 1925 there were 141. Fortunately, not all of these lists led to election. By 1928, the politicians had at least a partial revelation, requiring a deposit of 100 lats for each list. If a list did not result in at least a single seat in parliament, the money was lost. But this measure discouraged only a few – that same year, in the elections to the Third Saeima, there were 120 lists, and in the last elections, to the Fourth Saeima in 1931, there were 103. No matter how unpleasant the multitude of lists was, their existence was not fatal. Since every voter could of course vote only once in one of the five election districts, the situation in the last polls was this: though the aforementioned 103 lists existed nationally, voters had (fortunately) fewer to choose from locally. Even so, their number was impressive: 22 in Riga, 19 in Livland, 19 in Courland, 23 in Semigallia, and 20 in Latgallia. Though parliament was thus necessarily politically fractious, governments were formed and functioned successfully. In the period between May 1, 1920, when the Constituent Assembly was called into session and true parliamentary democracy began in Latvia, until 7:52 p.m. of May 15, 1934, when the last session of the Saeima

(which also turned out to be the last until 1993), Latvia had 14 governments – not a small number, certainly, but not more than in many European countries at that time, not only in Eastern Europe but also in France (and while France, the cradle of democracy, had governments that lasted merely a couple of weeks, Latvia never saw such a short-lived government). There would have been even fewer changes of government had it not been for the specific characteristics of the two main parties, the Latvian Farmers' Union and the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party. The Farmers' Union was a conservative, pragmatic, and national party that either led or participated in the majority of governments. It was a member of the Farmers' Union, Hugo Celmiņš, who formed a government in 1928 that lasted almost three years, proving that even a divided parliament could have a strong and successful executive. Celmiņš made effective use of Article 81 in the Satversme, strengthening the ability of the government to make decisions between the sessions of parliament. Celmiņš' government fell due to Ulmanis' intrigues – Ulmanis, also of the Farmers' Union, did not like to see Celmiņš' success overshadowing him. It was Ulmanis' growing desire for power that would eventually destroy democracy in Latvia and even the Farmers' Union itself. The Farmers' Union was also the party most opposed to changing the Law on Elections: the small parties and the so-called "singles" (lists that had only a single member of parliament) allowed the Farmers to manipulate the government in times of crisis by adding a few votes, sometimes through bribery. The Farmers also feared that the Social Democrats would gain were the smaller parties hindered; the party favoured its selfish interests over the national interests.

The Social Democrats were also not without fault. Its greatest problem was not that it couldn't form a government – it didn't want to govern. Infected with Marxist dogma, the Social Democrats thought that Latvia was not yet ready for "democratic socialism", and so the Social Democrats preferred to be the opposition, criticising the bourgeoisie and waiting for the necessary conditions for socialism to develop. They received less votes with each election, but remained the largest party in parliament. After each loss, the leaders of the party seemed to say to themselves, "It could have been worse – we could have won." Winning would have meant governing. That would require forming a Cabinet and acting in accordance with reality, not dogma, and that was not their desire. Only twice – in 1923, very briefly, and again from 1926 to 1928 for a year and a month – did the Social Democratic

Workers' Party enter the government. While in power, the Social Democrats did nothing radical, pursued bourgeois government, and feared that further rule would alienate the leftist masses. Within the party, an even more leftist opposition began to grow, friendly to Moscow's foreign policies (the so-called "Muscovites" – Menders, Buševics, Lorencs) and in the early 1930s they took over the party, transforming it into an organisation suffused with leftist demagogy and utterly unacceptable to the centre.

And still the accomplishments of Latvian democracy were remarkable. Few places in Europe had been so devastated by war as Latvia, which had seen armies cross it since 1915, yet the economic recovery of the country was unprecedented in its speed. Many European countries still suffered from uncontrollable inflation when Latvia introduced its currency, the lat, which quickly became known for its stability even outside Latvia. The land reform, huge in its scope and social consequences, was enacted and implemented quickly and determinedly, the process not seriously hampered by political differences between the parties. Support for culture was unflagging. Reconstruction and new construction took place everywhere in the country. Latvia was a peaceful nation, and there were no serious political troubles during the 1920s, when troubles were not rare even in Western Europe (e.g. the general strike in England in 1926). The level of crime consistently fell, in contrast to the level in neighbouring Lithuania, where it grew, especially in the 1930s. Political stability was encouraged by the collapse of the Communist Party. After the terror of the Stučka regime, the Communists lost their support in the majority of the population. Many Communists fled to Russia together with Stučka, where – after serving in the bloodthirsty Cheka and other Soviet institutions – many of the Latvian Communists met their demise during Stalin's Great Terror in 1937-1939. Though the numbers of the murdered perhaps exceeded 16,000, their end cannot be called genocide; Stalin did not intend to kill all of the 150,000 Latvians in the U.S.S.R. Stučka died a natural death in Moscow in 1932, but there is no doubt what would have awaited him had he lived another four or five years. In the last years of Stučka's life, a campaign of merciless criticism against him, supported by Stalin himself, had already begun. In Latvia, the Communist Party was banned – it was not only completely opposed to the democracy it saw as bourgeois but denied independence itself and fought for union with Soviet Russia. The Party was extremely anti-national, the marionette of the Comintern and the Soviet Russian embassy in Riga, but its chances of provoking serious disturbances,

let alone the revolution it craved, were close to nil. The Party had been infiltrated by a large and growing number of informers from the Latvian political police – the secret police – and their agents, allowing the police not only to collect intelligence on what took place within the Latvian Communist Party but even to control it to a degree (in the late 1930s, Pēteris Kurlis in the Central Committee was actually a police informer).

Latvian democracy had its great figures. They were not populists or the types of charismatic leaders whose ambitions can lead to dictatorship – they were the prudent, even-tempered, steady politicians devoted to compromise that characterise a civil society, which is what Latvia was in those days. First among them was definitely Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics (1887–1925) – after Ulmanis (also of the Farmers' Union), Meierovics was doubtless the most important Latvian politician. He was not only the foreign minister from November 1918 to August 1925, almost without interruption; he also served as the prime minister in two governments. Meierovics never feared competition when surrounded by other wise men; he had no obsession with power. His tragic death in an automobile accident in August 1925 was a massive loss for Latvia's new democracy, and it leaves historians to speculate about what the fate of democracy might have been had he still been alive in the early 1930s. Would Meierovics have been able to avert the coup of May 15? One does not need to speculate about how events would have unfolded had he been alive in 1939 – he would have been 52 years old; even he would have been unable to prevent the conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the destruction of Latvia.

Less than two years after Meierovics' death, in March 1927, Latvia experienced another great loss: Jānis Čakste, the beloved president and another figure who seemed to be democracy incarnate, also died too soon. He had been indefatigable in teaching that trust in democracy and freedom were two inseparable values. The country mourned him in confusion, uncertain of who could take his place and continue his work. After nine rounds of voting that took a weary two weeks, in the tenth round the Saeima chose Gustavs Zemgals (1871–1939) for the presidency. Zemgals had led the historic session of the People's Council that proclaimed Latvia's independence in 1918, and his elevation to the presidency turned out to be a fortunate choice. Zemgals was a strong supporter of stable democracy: he was easy to get on with, interested in compromise, faithful to democratic principles and devoted to the principle of tolerance, "Latvia – the state of the people of

Latvia” which he emphasised when Latvia celebrated the tenth anniversary of its independence in 1928. A simple and modest person, he could not be persuaded to be a candidate for the presidency a second time, in 1930.

Another important politician in the period of parliamentary democracy was Dr. Pauls Kalniņš (1872–1945), a Social Democrat who served as the chairman of the Saeima from 1925 to 1934. Like Zemgals, he came from the older generation of the Latvian intelligentsia – the generation of the New Current and the Revolution of 1905. Also like Zemgals, his profession had eventually afforded him a solid place in society; he was a fine doctor with an established practice. The income had allowed him to build an impressive home in Majori, by the sea, even before the war and at a time when very few ethnic Latvians lived in that neighbourhood. As a Social Democrat, his views were those of the more conservative, moderate wing, opposed to the so-called “Muscovites” and interested in the integration of Social Democracy into the Latvian political system. Kalniņš’ prudent work in parliament led to increased respect for the institution.

The Germs of Discontent

Latvia’s liberal democracy quickly found not only critics and opponents but also sworn enemies. One of the causes for anxiety was the impression among some that democratic politics and liberal capitalism were excessive while Latvian nationalism was diminished. The first organisation to make radical demands was the Latvian National Club, founded in 1922 and including a motley array of adventurers, chauvinists, and birds of ill omen that wanted to replace the Satversme with a more “Latvian” constitution that would have dramatically decreased the powers of parliament to increase the powers of the presidency equally dramatically. They were racists and radical anti-Semites. Anti-Semitism was the main characteristic of their Club, and their interpretation of “Latvia for Latvians” was fundamentally different from that of Meierovics in 1921 and that of the later Ulmanis regime. The Club was categorically opposed to Social Democracy and attempted to bring street fighting into Latvian politics. The Social Democrats responded by founding their defence organisation, the Workers’ Guard and Sports group – which, like the much larger Social Democratic *Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold* in Weimar Germany, had as its primary goal the defence of democracy. In neither country was this defence successful. Unlike in

Germany, street battles did not become a feature of Latvian politics as they did in Germany and Austria or (to a lesser extent, in the early 1930s) even in France. On May Day in 1923, the thugs of the National Club did cause a fairly major disturbance in the Esplanāde in Rīga, in conflict with the Social Democrats, and in 1921 they killed a worker of Jewish origin, the Social Democrat Aleksandrs Meisaks. That was the end of the troubles they caused: their organisation was shut down, and in the coming years – until 1932 – racist groups experienced a sharp decline. Their social base was rather narrow: a segment of the student population, part of the *petit bourgeoisie*, a few military officers, and declassed elements. The most unpleasant aspect was the sympathy they received from the army commander, General Pēteris Radziņš, who was known for his extreme rightist views and immoral lifestyle. Radziņš lost his position in 1928, and thereafter the chauvinists had no serious influence in the army.

Part of the reason “the politics of the street” did not infect Latvia to any great degree is that, at the close of 1919, the most uncontrollable and criminal elements of society had fled the country with Bermond-Avalov’s forces – German and Russian White Guards, mercenaries, members of the Black Hundred, bandits, and several thousand Baltic Germans who were violently opposed to Latvian independence. Many of these so-called “Baltikum-ists,” who had fought in the Baltic in 1918 and 1919, joined the insatiable enemies of democracy in Weimar Germany, many joining Hitler’s Nazis.* They certainly would have expanded the ranks of radical and violent enemies of parliamentarianism in Latvia. Their violence was avoided by their departure.

By 1925, Latvian democracy was being criticised by a much more serious

* The most famous of these was Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter, who had been in imperial Germany’s diplomatic and military service in Turkey, the vice consul in Erzerum and an officer of the German-Turkish expeditionary forces. He was a witness to the Armenian genocide by the Turks. Afterwards he returned to the Baltic, leaving it for Munich at the close of 1919, and in autumn 1920 he joined the Nazi Party. He was very close to Hitler and informed the future Fuehrer of the Armenian genocide. Hitler formed the impression that genocide can remain unpunished. On the eve of the invasion of Poland, August 22, 1939, speaking of the approaching genocide, Hitler asked, “Who after all talks nowadays of the extermination of the Armenians?” In November 1923, Scheubner-Richter was one of the main organisers of the “Beer Hall Putsch”. He was killed in the battle with police on November 9, but it is possible that he actually saved Hitler’s life by pushing him to the ground and preventing him from being stricken by a bullet.

person than the thugs of the National Club – Kārlis Ulmanis. In that year, he was a candidate for president under the slogan “Latvia for Latvians”. It is important to understand that this slogan was different for Ulmanis than it was for the racists of the National Club; for Ulmanis, it meant state privileges and economic, social and political support for the Latvians. This was a retreat from the principles he had proclaimed on November 18, 1918, that all citizens regardless of ethnicity would have equal rights in Latvia. Ulmanis lost to Čakste in 1925, but the ideological precedent had been set. Discontent with liberal democracy was also influenced by the example of other nations – the first to see a collapse of democracy was Italy in 1922. Fascism attracted the rabble of the National Club, but not yet any of the important political forces in Latvia. In 1926, however, democracy was destroyed in two countries neighbouring Latvia – Poland in May and Lithuania in December. The influence of these events should not be overemphasised. Both of these countries were poor and backward – and in the opinion of a majority of Latvians, yet more backward than they actually were. Still, by 1927 not only Ulmanis but the academic section of the Farmers’ Union, the brains of the party, were asking for a serious reform of the Satversme, which they saw as too democratic and not “Latvian and agrarian” enough. Between 1928 and 1930, there appeared three more critics capable of making an impression: Ādolfs Klīve, Arveds Bergs, and Edvarts Virza. Klīve was the leader of the Farmers’ Union faction in parliament and an exemplar of those for whom the Satversme “stopped working” when political success passed them by personally: in 1928, he lost the elections, did not receive a seat in the Saeima, and became a critic of democracy. Klīve began to demand the restriction of minority rights, especially on an economic plane, and suggest the formation of an ethnic Latvian “economic front”. This bore witness to increasing anti-democratic tendencies in the Farmers’ Union, serious but not yet dramatic as Klīve was not among the most popular politicians in Latvia. Arveds Bergs’ distancing himself from the ideals of the Satversme was ideologically more dangerous; he was one of Latvia’s most remarkable publicists, publishing more than a thousand articles before 1934, his writings read outside the confines of his supporters. Edvarts Virza was not only one of the most important writers in Latvia but also an active member of the Farmers’ Union. His venomous attacks on democracy were not the product of selfish political or material interests, as they were for Klīve and Bergs – Virza’s beliefs were purely philosophical. He hated democracy, considering it plebeian, and

longed for an autocratic monarchy. Virza was a Francophile who acted like an old French reactionary. He began to describe democracy as aesthetically disgusting and revolting, referring to the Saeima, with its one hundred members, as “the hundred-headed dragon”. Despite its critics, however, democracy continued to blossom in Latvia until the world economic crisis began.

The Last Act of Democracy

The world economic depression reached Europe in 1930, its influence soon noticeable not only in the economy of Latvia but also in politics: it offered a second wind to the enemies of democracy. Those who had urged the restriction of democracy and radical changes to the Satversme for chauvinistic reasons now founded an energetic heir to the National Club – the racist organisation *Ugunskrusts*, later *Pērkoņkrusts* (“Fire Cross”, “Thunder Cross”). Established in January 1932, this organisation was led by a former activist of the National Club, Gustavs Celmiņš, of the fraternity Selonia. The Fire Cross hoped to expand the narrow social base of the National Club, uniting under its openly racist slogans not only students and the *petit bourgeoisie* but also workers and even farmers. This would have required the replacement of the parliamentary system with a presidential one; actually, a dictatorship – but the group’s main characteristic was extreme anti-Semitism. “Let us raise the sword and destroy the curse upon this land – the Jews,” the poet Leonīds Breikšs, a member of the group, proclaimed. This rhetoric showed a readiness to exterminate the Jews at least in the thought of some, and although the organisation was banned, it was reborn under other names and could count upon some support in a society weakened by crisis.

Chauvinism grew even in the centrist parties. For example, the Democratic Centre (Gustavs Zemgals’ party – though never Zemgals himself) began to demand that the principle “Latvia – the state of the Latvian people” should be replaced by the principle “Latvia for Latvians” in March 1934. Those parties opposed to constitutional change were lambasted as “serving the Jews and Germans”. Many prominent figures who had stood at the cradle of Latvian democracy surrendered to the wave of anti-democratic sentiment and even added to it – the great writer Kārlis Skalbe and the statesman Miķelis Valters among them. The most dangerous tendencies could be found in what was then Latvia’s most important political party, the Farmers’ Union. Many of its members, motivated by the economic crisis, began to demand

a "farmers' government" – government for the benefit of the peasantry as opposed to democracy; if democracy would not meet their needs, they were content to see it destroyed. A large part of the party and especially the Aizsargi (the national guard) took a more and more radical position, proposing the liquidation of democracy in its entirety. The Aizsargi, founded in 1919 and at that point an important part of the domestic security apparatus, had lost its national function. Latvia was domestically secure, and the police were successfully meeting Latvia's needs. There was no need for an organisation of tens of thousands of armed men that had no role in national defence. Lacking sympathy for liberal democracy, the Aizsargi began more and more actively to demand that Ulmanis "march on Riga" in the manner of Mussolini's "march on Rome" in 1922 – but the cautious Ulmanis still waited.

Although attacks on democracy continued to grow, even during the worldwide depression Latvia was more peaceful than some of the old democracies. In Germany, not only did democracy collapse – its most terrible enemy, Nazism, came to power; Austrian democracy was swept away in a bloody civil war; France, too, stood at the brink, or at least Paris did – on February 6, 1934, 15 persons were killed and 1000 injured in vicious street battles. In Latvia, nothing like that happened. Economically, the gloomiest year was 1932 – but even in that year there was no serious political violence and not even major strikes took place. Neither the Communists nor Thunder Cross were capable of causing major strife. Other, smaller groupings were equally impotent. Governments functioned normally, and their average lifespan was even longer than in the early 1920s. By the end of 1933, it could be seen that recovery from the economic crisis had begun – slow and painful, but nonetheless recovery. At that point, Ulmanis had already decided to destroy democracy. It's possible that others in Latvia dreamt about a coup – but the only person capable of staging one was the clever and calculating Ulmanis. Democracy in Latvia was not destroyed by insoluble political or economic conflicts, or by a desperate situation – it was brought down by the betrayal, by its most notable politician, of the ideals of November 18 and the readiness of some other politicians to follow him, as well as the unwillingness of some (whether due to cowardice, ignorance, or foolishness) to stop him.

The 1931 elections to the Saeima had proven that Ulmanis' star had begun to set: he was still elected to parliament, but in no district was he first, though he was first in the list in all districts, as the chairman of his party. The 1934 election promised to be yet more unfavourable to him, and perhaps

his last. What would he have in his life without politics? Nothing! In 1933, he could no longer delay. The emergence from economic crisis was becoming clear enough to prevent him from accusing the Saeima and what he called "the regime of the parties" in his demagoguery of leading the nation to "destruction". Ulmanis had to act, and he made the decision to stage a coup no later than in August 1933. In order to cover up his conspiracy and distract the attention of the parties, he resorted to a very clever tactic. He had shown no interest in constitutional reform even when Bergs had begun to demand it along with the Thunder Cross and many members of his own party. Deciding to stage a coup, however, Ulmanis suddenly directed the person closest to him in the Farmers' Union – the young and ambitious Alfrēds Bērziņš – to prepare a project for radical reform of the Satversme. What began was a show with a content and cynical subtext that wasn't understood even by the majority in his own party, let alone the other parties. A reform project was quickly composed, literally copying the most odious projects of the Thunder Cross and Bergs' followers, in which Ulmanis had taken no interest until then: he hadn't even attended the large meeting of Bergs' supporters and the Thunder Cross at the Latvian Community Centre in 1932, where these reforms were debated. Now he suddenly found in them the basis for a constitutional project submitted by the Farmers' Union to the Saeima on November 3, 1933.

This was not a reasonable proposal for constitutional reform. It was an intentionally extreme, provocative project meant to be either rejected outright or adopted only in part, allowing Ulmanis to exploit its rejection as an excuse for his coup. The fact that the Saeima would never vote for this reform was clear from day one. The proposal would have amended 19 articles of the Satversme to create not only a presidential republic but also presidential dictatorship. What parliament would sign its own death sentence? The project called for reducing the Saeima in size (from 100 to 50 members) and radically reducing its powers. The president, directly elected by the people to a term of five years (but only by those over the age of 25 – another restriction on democracy) would have the right to dismiss parliament whenever he wished, with no consequences and taking no responsibility for the dismissal; he could appoint and dismiss not only ministers but also the entire Cabinet. The Saeima had no choice but to consider this proposal, and a great controversy ensued – or, as the great historian Edgars Dunsdorfs noted, Ulmanis' carefully crafted show ensued, behind the noise of which,

with remarkably cold calculation, Ulmanis prepared the coup and the utter destruction of democracy.

To successfully prepare and execute his coup, Ulmanis had to topple the existing government, led by Ādolfs Bļodnieks, and become prime minister himself. It would be easier for Ulmanis if he already held the reins of power. The toppling of Bļodnieks' government and Ulmanis' assumption of the office as the last legal prime minister of Latvia was eased by the pathetic, though not decisive, role played by the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party, the largest party in parliament. Completely tangled up in its Marxist dogma and run by the "Muscovites" Menders and Buševics, the party dug a grave for itself – not realising that the grave would hold Latvian democracy as a whole. When Ulmanis decided to topple Bļodnieks at the beginning of March 1934, the Social Democrats backed Ulmanis' efforts with indescribable myopia – to them, Bļodnieks was a reactionary incarnate, though his government was actually moderate, fully devoted to democracy, and quite coherent in its governance. Aided by the Social Democrats' fervent efforts, Bļodnieks' government fell in early March. It would have been time for the Social Democrats to practice what they ceaselessly preached – defence of democracy against "fascism". They should have formed a government or at least attempted to do so. As the largest party in parliament, they received President Kviessis' invitation to form a government. However, fearing real responsibility rather than noise-making, they asked of their prospective partners in a coalition radically leftist commitments, bordering on the absurd – commitments no party could have agreed to in any country; even in Scandinavia, where the Social Democrats already ruled or shared power. The Latvian Social Democrats alienated themselves – and such was the desire of the radical demagogues running their party. They retained their "ideological purity" by refusing to stain themselves in co-operating with the bourgeoisie, and Ulmanis came to power on March 16 without any interference from the left. Such was Ulmanis' desire, and preparations for the coup were shifted into high gear. Persons in critical positions were replaced – the heads of the Political Police and the Riga army garrison, both of whom had not been trusted by Ulmanis and weren't among the conspirators. General Goppers, who commanded the garrison, was replaced by General Berķis, a conspirator; Jānis Fridrihsons, a conspirator, replaced Ozoliņš as the head of the Political Police. The Saeima was busy with empty debates about constitutional reform at the time, and the Saeima actually undertook real reform –

on May 4 and 8, 1934, the Saeima passed, in preliminary votes, legislation to introduce a directly elected presidency with a five year term, but without the right to dismiss parliament and with a strengthened premiership. The final vote for the adoption of these reforms was scheduled for the session of May 18 – which never came. The Social Democrats wavered like lunatics, not only backing the reform but also beginning private negotiations with Ulmanis in secret, promising him full support for changes to the Law on Elections and even suggesting drastic measures to limit small parties, such as raising the minimum threshold for election above 5%. All of this bears witness to the fact that the Satversme and the Law on Elections could truly have been reformed in the interests of strengthening democracy – something Ulmanis did not want to see. Instead, he skillfully stoked rumours about an approaching coup by Thunder Cross or the so-called Legionnaires, who would be led by a dismissed chauvinistic officer, Colonel Voldemārs Ozols, then living in exile in Estonia. No such coup was in the works, and even if it had been, Ulmanis could easily have foiled it with the powers he possessed as prime minister. The rumours merely served to distract people from the real coup that was brewing.

Late on May 15, at 11:00 p.m., the decisive act planned by the conspirators was put into motion – the Aizsargi and army units took control of the central institutions of government and began to arrest people. When the secret police arrived in Mežaparks at the home of Dr. Pauls Kalniņš, his son Bruno Kalniņš was actually at work on a draft of the proposed constitutional reform. With a revolver he had legally obtained, he fired into the air demonstratively – it was the sole shot fired at the funeral of Latvian democracy – and surrendered to the police. In a few hours, the first phase of the coup was already over: the conspirators had seized power with remarkable ease. At 2 a.m. on May 16, Ulmanis disturbed President Kviesis at Riga Castle. The president and his guests, including former president Zemgals, were playing cards. Ulmanis informed Kviesis of what was going on. According to the constitution, Kviesis was obligated to defend the Satversme with all his power – instead, without the slightest formal protest, he betrayed democracy and accepted the coup. Nothing threatened Latvia at the time that could have justified killing democracy. Neither a political nor an economic crisis encouraged the coup. On the contrary, the approaching end of the economic crisis would have prevented Ulmanis accusing democracy of weakness. In terms of its security against foreign powers, Latvia was no more threatened than it had

been the year before, and no security was gained from the coup, as the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact would prove in 1939. Latvia's fate was decided in Berlin and Moscow, and the destruction of democracy had no influence whatsoever on foreign tyrants.

3.5. THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND THE IDEOLOGY OF LATVIA AFTER MAY 15

The Preconditions, Preparations and Events of the Coup

Many countries in Europe were affected by the tendency to shift from democracy to dictatorship between the wars. The struggle against dictatorship suffered gradual losses, and across Europe the failures of rule of law and democracy were many – at the end of the 1930s, out of 29 countries, only 12 still retained a democratic system. The events in Latvia can be organically included in European political developments: Latvia took the road to authoritarianism in 1934 and was the last of the Baltic States to do so. Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis' and his followers' coup on the night of May 15 was doubtless an expression of the weakness of parliamentary democracy in Latvia, and democracy was put to death by a man who had played a decisive role in the creation and development of the Republic of Latvia.

With regard to the concrete social conditions that prevailed in Latvia, the democracy that had been developed was excessive. The population was not sufficiently prepared for parliamentary rule, was not educated in democratic traditions, and did not perceive democracy as a value in of itself. The liberal Law on Elections opened the way to parliament for many tiny parties playing a distinctly destructive role. The Social Democratic faction – always the largest parliamentary faction – was insufficiently integrated into the political system. Interests of their party, rather than those of the nation, were at the forefront of their politics. They rarely joined coalitions, making the formation of stabile and functioning governments difficult. The Social Democrats and the other parties distrusted each other; the Social Democrats were seen as Marxists whose loyalty to their ideology was greater than their loyalty to Latvia. The Social Democrats themselves suffered from a radicalism that formed a basis for the collaboration of some with the Communists.

Latvia lacked the social structure favourable to a democratic society: the middle class was weak, and the peasantry did not actively support democracy. The normal functioning of parliament was made more difficult by the lack of long-term economic stability. This factor became exceedingly important at the beginning of the 1930s, when the worldwide depression strengthened the trend against democracy in Latvia and favoured dictatorship. Those most affected by the economic crisis hoped that a "strong hand" would provide them with permanent state support. Various extremists were active – sources show that Ulmanis and his supporters were disturbed by the spread of anti-Semitic agitation in Latvia and by the growth of National Socialist ideology among the Baltic Germans after Hitler came to power in Germany.

The failure of parliamentary democracy in Latvia was closely connected to the lack of a supporting political culture. Many Latvian politicians were formed within the Russian Empire, where democratic traditions in political life had lasted only a few months in 1905 and 1917. The stunted political consciousness that developed in the absence of political rights was not fully overcome in the years of Latvian democracy. The majority of Latvian politicians still thought in the categories of leftist radicalism or authoritarianism.

A major cause of the weakness of democracy and the coup of May 15 was the unreadiness of the political elite in Latvia for democracy and the intensity of personal ambition among many of the leading politicians. A decisive role in this sense belonged to Ulmanis – his conviction that he knew how to improve the situation in the country, his tendency towards authoritarianism, and his desire for power. He couldn't imagine himself outside politics or out of power but the 1931 parliamentary elections had already shown that the size of his following was shrinking. Ulmanis was afraid that the next elections, scheduled for October 1934, could have meant a complete loss for him.

The political situation in Latvia in spring 1934 was singular. A few political forces were contemplating staging a coup. The Legion, an organisation of those who had received the highest award in the War of Independence and other veterans, dreamt about a coup. Thoughts of a coup were also popular among the members of the Thunder Cross, although the leadership of this organisation did not support the idea and did not back armed conflict. Neither the Legion, which had few members prepared to take up arms, nor the Thunder Cross had any real possibility of successfully taking

power by illegal means. The Latvian secret police maintained surveillance over these groups and completely controlled their activities. In the historical circumstances of the time, Latvia did not stand on the brink of two choices: democracy or an extremist coup. The coup of May 15 was not a preventative action but an illegal act consciously directed against Latvian democracy.

Making use of his charisma and organisational talents, Ulmanis was capable of professional plotting the coup. Preparations began at the end of summer 1933. His main associates in the early period of his conspiracy were later members of his Cabinet – Vilhelms Munters, Alfrēds Bērziņš, and Bernhards Einbergs. The conspirators' first task was to topple Ādolfs Bļodnieks' government and see Ulmanis become prime minister. This task was accomplished in March 1934. Equally important to the conspirators was gaining the support of the army. Hugo Rozenšteins was among the notable military officers to gradually involve himself in the conspiracy (he developed a military operational plan for the coup). Krišjānis Berķis, who became the commander of the Riga garrison and the Livland division on April 12, Mārtiņš Hartmanis and Jānis Balodis were also prominent conspirators. On the eve of the coup, the minister of home affairs, Vilis Gulbis, joined the conspiracy, and Jānis Fridrihsons, loyal to the plotters, became the director of the Political Police.

Preparations for May 15 were accompanied by noises about the necessity of constitutional reform, while the actual coup involved the actions of a few units of the army, the Aizsargi, and the police, who took over the most important facilities in Riga and occupied the Social Democrats' buildings. On the morning of May 16, a state of emergency was proclaimed retroactively. This was an awkward attempt to provide the illegal acts with a veneer of legality. At the time of the coup, there were no violent incidents. Assessing the situation, the German ambassador to Latvia noted that "two shots were heard, but there were no wounded".¹⁸ The people did not hold protests, reacting indifferently or supporting the changes. Ulmanis' political enemies offered no resistance. The Social Democratic leaders and those feared by the new regime were arrested. About 2000 people were jailed after the coup, but most of them were soon released. The period of detention did not exceed one year.

The process of strengthening democratic traditions came to an end with the coup. The constitution was paralysed but promises to draft a new basic law were unfulfilled. Latvia's people lost their parliament and representative

government as well as political parties and any possibility of even indirectly influencing their country's fate. Kārlis Ulmanis assumed all responsibility for the state. This was risky in that failure would have meant years in prison for him, and it was a massive political and historical mistake. This period in his political biography, in the opinion of many of his contemporaries and historians, greatly diminishes his prestige. Although Ulmanis was not nearly as dictatorial and merciless a leader as Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, or Benito Mussolini, he is often identified with the derogatory epithet "dictator".

The System of Power¹⁹

Based on the state of emergency or war, Ulmanis structured the regime that is often called "the Latvia of May 15" and is usually designated by the term "authoritarian" despite its academic imprecision. In works in the German language, this term is occasionally replaced by the concept *Einmannherrschaft*. Assessing the social and political forces that formed the basis for the authoritarian regime, it is possible to define it as a nationally conservative dictatorship. If we bear in mind the reorganisation that took place in the Latvia of May 15 – for example, the introduction of the *cameras* – and what the desired direction of these reforms was, we can speak of it as a corporate authoritarian regime or even as a regime of authoritarian modernisation. The problem is that the development of authoritarianism in Latvia was cut short violently in 1940, making it difficult to assess the successes of the Ulmanis regime in modernising Latvian society.

As in other Eastern European countries, the authoritarian regime created in Latvia attempted to separate national policy from party politics and found a presidential regime aloof from party interests, the president fully in control of economics, policy, and culture. Attention was also given to national integration as well as the strengthening of state authority and executive authority. This happened at the expense of legislative authority, in effect liquidating political pluralism. Latvia under Ulmanis was characterised by a distinctly anti-democratic government. The May 15 regime was the most authoritarian in the Baltic and possibly in all of Eastern Europe. Furthermore, it was virtually the only dictatorship in Europe that retained no formal elected representation whatsoever. The Saeima was dismissed and its functions assumed by the government. In many other authoritarian and even totalitarian countries, superficial aspects of parliamentarianism remained at least

as window dressing. Even in Germany under the Nazis, the Reichstag continued to function. Of course, its functions were exceedingly narrow and it effectively lost its legislative power as well as most of its earlier rights. In the ironic view, it had become "the best paid men's choir in Germany".

The basis of the political system in the Latvia of May 15 was that of the leader. Kārlis Ulmanis called himself "the authority of the people and state power" or simply "Vadonis" – "the Leader". His base was the army, the Aizsargi, the peasantry and that part of the intelligentsia that was closely tied to the land. Support for the authoritarian regime also came from employees of the state, whose numbers grew precipitously in the 1930s. To them, Ulmanis' dictatorship was the source of their personal welfare and material success. They actively participated in the exercise of power and the administration of the state.

The higher government institutions that existed in Latvia did not significantly limit Kārlis Ulmanis' autocratic rule. All of the most important decisions in Latvia were made by the Cabinet, appointed by him and different in status from its function in the parliamentary system. Because it took over the functions of the Saeima, legislative power became concentrated in the executive branch of government. The state of war or emergency even gave the government the power to adopt laws changing the constitution. In its technical functions (the issuing of government decrees and the preparation of legislation), the Cabinet was aided by the so-called Small Cabinet. Though both of these bodies included notable and familiar politicians at first, with the trust of influential social groups whose interests they represented, their influence in decision-making was rather limited. After listening to reports from the Cabinet ministers or considering their positions in meetings of the Large Cabinet, Ulmanis himself made the decisions. The Latvian historian Edgars Dunsdorfs did not consider Ulmanis' Cabinet as a collegial institution and even compared it to a choir "which sang in unison whatever the conductor – the Prime Minister – bade it sing".²⁰

The Cabinet, then, merely provided institutional cover for the realisation of the will of the dictator. Alberts Kviesis, who retained the post of President until spring 1936, did not endanger Ulmanis' monopoly on power. The presidency had not been a strong institution in the parliamentary system and it was not strengthened in the early years of authoritarianism. The President acquired no new powers after the coup. Instead, it could be said that his functions were actually diminished, since he no longer acted as

a stabilising factor in periods of government crisis, which function had earlier been the most important component of his political importance. With the dismissal of parliament, his right to dismiss parliament also lost whatever meaning it had had.

A few of the laws adopted by the authoritarian regime nonetheless gave the President the possibility of active participation in national politics. For example, a law proclaimed on June 7, 1934, established the procedure for issuing the most important laws. According to the law, legislation affecting the structure of government, the Cabinet, the courts, etc. was to be signed into law by the President. Furthermore, the President was given specific veto power. The President had seven days to request that the Cabinet should re-examine legislation submitted to him. If the Cabinet adopted the law a second time, the President was then obliged to sign it.

Kviesis did not exercise his veto power and did not interfere with the Cabinet's legislative functions. Formally, however, he slightly overshadowed Ulmanis: the President remained the head of state. Furthermore, tensions between the two men gradually increased, especially with the approach of April 11, 1936, when Kviesis' second term was to expire. Kviesis wanted to extend his presidency beyond the end of his term, but Ulmanis himself desired to become the head of state. Kviesis had no possibility of obtaining an extension. Their comparative power would never have permitted it. The fact that Alberts Kviesis was not nearly as competent a politician and lacked the tactical cleverness cultivated by Kārlis Ulmanis was also a factor in the outcome.

On February 27, 1936, in a secret session in which Ulmanis himself did not participate, the Cabinet unanimously adopted a decision to entrust the Prime Minister with the position of acting President until such a time as the promised reform of the *Satversme* was accomplished, "calling upon the Minister of Justice to draft the relevant legislation and submit it to the Cabinet of Ministers".²¹ This legislation was adopted two weeks later, at the meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers on March 12, and Ulmanis officially assumed (or, more precisely, usurped) the presidency on April 11. In the view of his deputy, Margers Skujenieks, he had thereby fully consolidated state power, "such power as individual persons in a state do not usually possess". In his private life, Kārlis Ulmanis celebrated this day – which initiated a new phase in the period of authoritarianism – as a holiday. He felt that he had realised the dreams of the ancient Semigallian chieftains Viesturs and

Namejs, and glimpsed in these events the savour of eternity. The concentration of power in Ulmanis' hands continued in later years. With the further progression of his authoritarian philosophy, in spring 1940 the President and Prime Minister also became the leader of the armed forces. Guaranteed and nearly absolute power lifted the Vadonis above the law in practical terms.

Kārlis Ulmanis also had primary control over local governments, choosing and appointing people to the most important positions. After May 15, local governments were placed under the control of the national government, since the authoritarian government could have had problems with administration had the local elected governments from the democratic period been allowed to remain in place. Legislation adopted on May 25, 1934, dissolved the 60 municipal councils, the mayors and members of the administrations replaced by the Minister of the Interior's appointees. Reorganisation also affected rural administration. According to a law passed on July 17, appointees in the districts took over the functions of district administration. The functions of rural communes were noticeably restricted, and elders with greater personal responsibilities replaced the chairs of the communes.

There was an apparent paradox in the relationship between a distinctly anti-democratic government structure and a comparatively limited use of force. The dictatorship in Latvia was mild, the regime was not characterised by repression on a broad scale, and it was not an inhuman rule. Not a single death sentence was executed during the authoritarian period. Ulmanis did not support political extremism and attempted to crack down on radicals of all persuasions: those on the extreme left, the Thunder Cross, and the Baltic German National Socialists. He opposed anti-Semitism, too. Jews from Nazi Germany and the territories it occupied could hope for refuge in Latvia. For various reasons, not a few countries refused to accept Jewish refugees from the Nazi terror.

Ulmanis had considerable support among the Latvian people because his regime had various successes. The authoritarian government supported new construction, but its main priorities were in the fields of education and culture. Ulmanis' popularity was enhanced by successful social and economic policies, and his government had an interest in guaranteeing prosperity to as broad a cross-section of the social classes as possible. His elevation of Latvian national consciousness was a major accomplishment. After May 15, 1934, Latvians felt like the owners of their country for the very

first time in history. Ulmanis' place in Latvians' historical memory as one of the greatest figures to express the national strivings of the Latvian people and as a symbol of a Latvian Latvia is not accidental. Even today, almost every person in Latvia knows of Ulmanis. His fame has acquired mythic proportions. His name and works marked everything in the period of authoritarianism, most often known as "the Ulmanis era". No other Latvian politician has had a whole era named after him.

The authoritarian regime was stable and fully in control of the country for the six years it lasted. The opposition was weak and diverse. The anti-Ulmanis camp included some of the conservatives (e.g. Arveds Bergs of the National Association and his colleagues), the Thunder Cross led by Gustavs Celmiņš, the Legionnaires, a group of veterans from the War of Independence, Communists, the illegalised Socialists, and several ethnic minority organisations. Each of these groups had its own interests and different reasons for opposing Ulmanis and the authoritarian regime. For these reasons the serious cooperation between them was practically impossible. Even the leftist opposition was unable to agree on a unified strategy or collective efforts.

In the last years of the authoritarian period, the relationship between Ulmanis and his Minister of War, Jānis Balodis, deteriorated. Ulmanis saw Balodis as a politician of more or less equal standing and a possible rival. The conflict between them was intensified by Balodis' distinctly pro-Russian stance and Ulmanis' reluctance to draft a new constitution. In March 1940, Ulmanis informed Balodis of his decision to dismiss him from his position as Minister of War. In his response, dated April 3, 1940, Balodis wrote that he and Ulmanis must retain their positions until the promise of a new Satversme was fulfilled. A few days later, Krišjānis Berķis was named the new Minister of War.

The Cameras and their Function

As in several other European states, Latvian authoritarianism was characterised by corporativism. Adopting the idea – but not specifically replicating the concrete model of any other state – Ulmanis introduced a corporative system of trade cameras. This was a singular attempt to organise and represent the inhabitants of Latvia as producers and members of specific professions. Six cameras were created in all: the Camera of Trade and Industry (1934), the Camera of Agriculture (1935), the Camera of Trades (1935),

the Camera of Labour (1936), the Camera of Literature and the Arts (1938), and the Camera of the Professions (1938). The cameras were overseen and their work coordinated by the State Economic Council and the State Cultural Council. From 1939, both of these Councils organised their meetings together.

The camera system and the State Councils were new structures that from the outside appeared to be similar to a parliament of trades. One view says that the creation of such a parliament was a dream Ulmanis had long nourished and constituted a goal of his. According to this view, this system was his attempt to keep his promise of constitutional reform. Latvian society, however, did not respond to the establishment of the camera system as a beginning of the promised reform, since the cameras did not represent a majority of the population or express its will. Neither the cameras nor the Councils were able to influence national politics to any serious degree. They had no legislative powers – they had only meagre consultative rights. Suggestions for changes or additions to legislation made by the Cameras or the Councils were for the most part ignored by the Government.

In actuality, the Cameras became consultative organs controlled by the Cabinet and directly subordinate to the relevant ministries. The ministers of the specific field appointed the members of the Camera for three-year terms. The Cameras needed to oversee their field, represent the interests of particular segment of society, and attempt to reconcile conflicting interests. The cameras also worked out recommendations for solutions to the problems and development of each field. The functions of the Cameras were diminished by their authoritarian structure. In each Camera, the chairman had the deciding voice on any question. Only his consent allowed decisions to be adopted. Even the most important questions were never settled by a vote. The leaders of the Cameras did not usually take the risk of expressing views that were not in line with official views.

The relevant associations were the subjects of each camera. So, for instance, the Camera of Trade and Industry was in charge of associations of merchants, manufacturers and property owners; the Camera of Agriculture was in charge of farmers' associations. Pre-existing associations were either reorganised or dissolved. Their properties were taken over, which frequently led to dissatisfaction or even sharp protests. Newly founded associations were required to get permission from the Camera. Outside a Camera, no professional association was any longer permitted. In this way, the authoritarian state attempted to restrict pluralism in society and its expression.

The Authoritarian Ideology²²

Important support for Kārlis Ulmanis' authoritarian regime was provided by its ideology, which developed gradually, based primarily on the views of the Vadonis and postulates developed by him. Its development was aided by various Latvian nationalists in the mould of Ernests Blanks, Arturs Kroders, Jānis Lapiņš, Edvarts Virza, theoreticians of a peasant ideology promoting authoritarianism. The authoritarian ideology was also influenced, to a degree, by the prominent currents of thought and sentiment in Europe, including Italian Fascism and German National Socialism. Three essential values characterised the ideology of the regime: leadership, the unity of the people, and nationalism – and these were broadly popularised and propagandised. From 1937, authoritarian propaganda fell to the Ministry of Social Affairs run by Alfreds Bērziņš. This institution controlled the press and oversaw developments in literature and the arts. Oversight and control was also the function of the State Cultural Council and the relevant Cameras. The most important ideas were institutionalised and written into many laws.

The most important aspect of the authoritarian ideology was the idea of a national state that lay at its core, most often coming to the fore as the demand for “the renewal of national justice” and the creation of a state with a distinctly Latvian character. These goals were to be reached through ethnic Latvian dominance in the economy, politics, and culture of the country, educating the people in the national spirit and strengthening Latvian pride and consciousness. Radically nationalist slogans cloaked a threat of increasing tensions between the nationalities, since a quarter of the population was not ethnically Latvian. The ideologues of authoritarianism were aware of this danger and attempted to diminish the conflicts, claiming that national politics were based on two related ideas: “In Latvia the sun shines above all” and “a Latvian Latvia”. Though the authoritarian government did not cultivate ethnic hatred or anti-Semitism, the state was in practice dominated by an excessively ethnocentric nationalism and attempts to eliminate the influence of the ethnic minorities. Several of the regime's projects impinged upon the interests of the local Germans, Jews, and Russians. The Ulmanis era was marked by nationalisation of the economy. Moreover, the cultural autonomy of the minorities was slightly restricted.

The idea of national unity had an important place in the authoritarian ideology. The concept of a unified Latvian people sharing the same goals

without regard for their being from the proletariat or the bourgeoisie, urban or rural, old or young, was an oft-repeated mainstay of this idea. The unity of the people was seen as a necessary precondition for accomplishments in various fields and as the only guarantee of freedom, welfare and a bright future. The idea of unity did not prevent the ideologues of authoritarianism from exalting the peasant in particular, however. In their view, the Latvian peasant was the main figure in the economic and political life of the country, the example by which those from other social classes should be measured. The peasant was idealised and mythologised, his place in society exaggerated to excess. He was the primary pillar of the regime, the guarantor of both nationalism and an "eternal Latvia".

The idea of national unity was closely connected to an idea of leadership opposed to the ideals of parliamentary democracy. Ulmanis' made his decisions as a virtually unbridled dictator. Official propaganda attempted to portray him as a leader given to the Latvian people by God himself. His peasant origins were accentuated, his character – courageous, responsible, self-sacrificing – exalted. The praise and flattery accorded him very quickly developed into an exaggerated and ridiculous cult of personality – the Vadonis was dubbed "the greatest statesman in Europe"; he was "the Great Sower" and the "Double Genius". This worship of Ulmanis was interwoven with an uncritical assessment of authoritarian rule devoid of any objectivity. Latvia's monolithic press usually lauded even the least achievement with the words "we're headed straight up".

3.6. THE MAIN PROBLEMS OF FOREIGN POLICY

The Problem of International Security in the Parliamentary Period

The beginning of the 1920s when Latvia attained international recognition was a time when the hour of democracy had struck in Europe. Democracy then defined the general orientation of Latvian foreign policy and its core values. On the international stage, Latvia appeared as the defender of the terms of peace fixed in the peace of Paris – the Versailles system – and as a supporter of international cooperation and collective security. Together with many other countries, Latvia strengthened Europe's democratic potential, the best

guarantee for peace. Latvia was not among the states that intentionally introduced destructive elements to international relations. Latvia's foreign policy, defined by its geographical position, national and economic interests, was not oriented against the interests of other nations.

Becoming a subject of international law, Latvia was able to fully participate in the overall processes to secure peace, supporting the League of Nations and the principle of arbitration in cases of international disputes. Avoiding other countries' conflicts and abstaining from markedly close contacts with the great powers whose interests conflicted in the Baltic region was characteristic of Latvia. The independent orientation embarked upon by Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics was predicated on Baltic cooperation that would allow the states in the region to join forces in defending their independence against possible Russian revanchism, thereby averting aggressive designs on Russia's part. Meierovics, who first formulated Latvia's foreign policy, worked for good relations with Great Britain, France, Russia and Russia. Reflecting the overall geopolitical situation in which Latvia found itself, foreign policy was dominated by particular directions. In the early 1920s, the dominant direction was a "vertical line", distinguished by attempts to create a Baltic Union. By 1925, this direction was beginning to be replaced by a "horizontal line" or attempts to find a *modus vivendi* with Germany and the USSR, increasing the security of the Baltic states by improving the international situation throughout Eastern Europe.

Throughout the parliamentary period, the problem of external security was paramount for Latvia. The scope of the problem was determined by Latvia's location in a geopolitical region where the interests of a few great powers conflicted, and the problem was exacerbated by the very restricted possibilities for the development of national armed forces. In such a situation, Latvian diplomats were compelled to actively seek additional guarantees for the country's security. This search took place in various directions and on different levels, in accord with geopolitical realities and making use of the new possibilities presented after the First World War with regard to the rise of collective security arrangements and principles in international affairs. The options were many, and a broad spectrum can be seen even if only the primary ones are mentioned: Latvia's efforts to further integrate itself into the system of sovereign states that emerged from the First World War, hopes for general security guarantees or the expansion of the existing guarantees, the pursuit of a greater or lesser Baltic Union, the politics of neutrality,

the testing of the waters for Baltic neutrality, orientation towards Great Britain or France in their roles as defenders of the status quo, non-aggression treaties with the great powers, seeking security guarantees from the great powers, and the creation of a regional security pact in case the need for defence arose.

Latvia's first steps in seeking security guarantees were based on plans for the creation of a Baltic Union. All of the efforts in this direction, however, proved to be rather futile. The agreement signed between Latvia and Estonia on November 1, 1923 was the only actual accomplishment in the hoped for process of creating a functioning Baltic Union in the 1920s. International relations in Eastern Europe were influenced by factors that prevented the close cooperation in the Baltic region that would have made a larger Baltic Union (Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Finland, and in some early variations Lithuania) or a smaller Union (Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania) possible. The primary obstacle to cooperation was the Polish-Lithuanian conflict that had begun in October 1920, when the Poles occupied Vilnius. Not wishing to strengthen the opposing side, Poland opposed the creation of a small League while Lithuania opposed the formation of the larger version. Furthermore, neither side considered the planned Baltic Union as a collective security arrangement. In both Poland and Lithuania, the League was seen as a means to strengthening their opposing positions on the Vilnius question. Because of this, the Polish and Lithuanian conflict became a vicious circle that paralysed the security system throughout the region.

The USSR and Germany also attempted to hamper Baltic cooperation, opposing any strengthening of the status quo in Eastern Europe because they coveted the territory. These great powers had unequal potential of endangering the Baltic region at the time, however; in the 1920s and early 1930s, only the USSR presented a real threat and only it could have conquered the Baltic States. Germany was not a serious military power at the time: the Treaty of Versailles had almost entirely disarmed it. From a military aspect it was only a third-rate power, incapable of competing even with Poland. Berlin was forced to reckon with this reality in formulating and executing its policies.

Germany's negative attitude toward plans for a Baltic Union was intimately connected to its chosen foreign policy in both strategy and tactics. Berlin was devoted to retaining the possibility of rearranging the Baltic region once it had regained its power. To those who forged German foreign policy, it was clear that any bloc formed by the buffer states (as Berlin saw

the new nations that had emerged from the collapsed Russian Empire), under English or French influence, would present serious obstacles to its irredentist intentions in Eastern Europe. To prevent such a bloc from forming, Berlin was ready to indulge in broad and manifold cooperation with the Soviet Union, receptive even to the possibility of developing a common strategy.

The policies of the USSR were especially destructive. Moscow attempted to obstruct the creation of a Baltic Union by exerting influence on Poland, worked to prolong the Lithuanian-Polish conflict over Vilnius, weaken contacts between the small countries of Eastern Europe and the Western powers, and strengthen its influence in the border states by concluding separate agreements with each of them. The position of Lithuania, which saw Poland as its primary enemy and the USSR and Germany as allies, was a boon to the Soviets' attempts to foster divisions. From the point of view of security, the foreign policy of Kaunas – “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” – was dangerous to the Baltic States.

Among the projects that never saw the light of day were the attempts by Eastern European countries to apply the special principles of the inviolability of frontiers developed at the Locarno Conference (October 1925). In Western Europe, the borders between France and Germany, and Germany and Belgium, were guaranteed by Great Britain and Italy. One of the many proposals to adapt these principles to Eastern Europe was that of Hermanis Albats, the General Secretary of the Latvian Foreign Ministry, providing for an “Eastern Locarno” in which both the Soviet Union and Germany would guarantee the borders of the Baltic States. The well-known Latvian Social Democrat Fēlikss Cielēns, who served as Foreign Minister from December 1926 to January 1928, advocated a “Baltic Locarno” plan that attracted more attention than Albats'. In September 1927, Cielēns negotiated with the foreign ministers of Germany, France, and Great Britain – Gustav Stresemann, Aristide Briand, and Austin Chamberlain – promoting a treaty in which Britain, France, Germany and the USSR would guarantee the neutrality and sovereignty of Latvia, Estonia, Finland, and Lithuania.

As to the guarantees that Latvia and other countries received through their membership in the League of Nations, it should be noted that attempts were made to expand and strengthen them throughout the 1920s. For example, on October 2, 1924, the Assembly of the League of Nations adopted the Geneva Protocol, providing for the arbitration and conciliation of disputes by peaceful means. Unfortunately, the Protocol did not receive universal

support and remained only on paper. On September 26, 1928, however, the Pact of Paris was implemented, with an optional clause requiring compulsory arbitration. The Pact was signed by only 23 nations, however.

Latvia participated in the Disarmament Conference that the League organised from 1932 and in the other institutions of the organisation. But already in the 1920s it had become completely clear that the League would be unable to fulfill the role intended for it in international relations. The League lacked universal support (the United States refused to join, and Germany and the USSR were long outside it), and this weakness was a sign of the impending failure of the Versailles system. The League of Nations did not meet expectations as the court of highest appeal in arbitration and did not fulfill its mission as a guarantor of peace. The League did not succeed in noticeable restricting the use of force in international relations. The hopes of Woodrow Wilson, the American president who had conceived it, that the League might lift international relations from the use of force to a new level, namely, the cooperation of all countries to secure world peace, were destined to remain an idealistic dream. International security on the European continent in the 1920s was for a finite period guaranteed by the ostensible hegemony of France, the weakness of Germany, and the barring of Russia from European politics. All of these factors, however, were to fluctuate and disappear.

Latvia was among the 63 countries that signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact renouncing aggressive war, on August 27, 1928. The League was not directly involved in its authorship. In the first article, the signatories agreed to "condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it, as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another". In the second article, they agreed that "the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them, shall never be sought except by pacific means". But the impact of the Pact on international relations was not especially significant; it contained no definition of an aggressor and did not specify which institution would monitor compliance with the terms of the Pact. Later events would prove that the League of Nations was incapable of forcing recalcitrant signatory nations to comply with their commitments.

The Kellogg-Briand Pact became effective on July 24, 1929, though the treaty came into force prior to its proclamation in the USSR, Latvia, Estonia, Poland and Romania, countries that had signed the so-called Moscow

Protocol at the Soviets' suggestion. Doubtless this Protocol – and the non-aggression pacts concluded between the Soviet government and the governments of Poland, Latvia, Estonia and Finland in 1932 – apparently brought temporary stability to the situation in Eastern Europe. In 1939 and 1940, however, the USSR violated all of these treaties and the principles of non-aggression contained in them.

As an appendix to the Kellogg-Briand Pact, on July 3, 1933, a convention defining aggression was concluded in London after a Soviet initiative, signed by Latvia, Estonia, Poland, the Soviet Union, Romania, Turkey, Persia, and Afghanistan. Finland added its signature in 1934. This agreement defined as an aggressor any country that declares war upon another or uses armed forces in foreign territory with or without a declaration of war, employs a blockade at sea, or supports insurgents in foreign territory. This agreement also stipulated that no political, economic, or other considerations excuse aggression.

The international agreements in effect in the early 1930s would have fully guaranteed the independence of Latvia and other European countries if it had been possible to believe that they would be observed. No such belief was possible, of course, and Latvia was constantly in fear of foreign threats because its security guarantees were insufficient. In the 1920s and early 1930s, Latvia had not succeeded in obtaining the guarantees of the great powers and no multinational league had been created. Together with other Eastern European countries, it had failed to resolve regional security problems and could not fill the vacuum left by the geopolitical collapse of the Russian and German empires. The new nation-states were incapable of taking advantage of a situation that would have given them a head start against the powers that posed the gravest threat to them – the Soviet Union and Germany, both of which had emerged weakened from the First World War.

In a situation in which Latvia could not rely upon the guarantees it had acquired, its security was more effectively guaranteed by a balance of powers among the strong nations in the region – Russia, Germany, and Poland. The positions of Great Britain and France as backers of the status quo did matter but the commitment of the British and French to strengthening the independence of Latvia and other Eastern European states was not nearly as important as those involved with foreign policy in Riga believed it to be. The position of the Baltic States – especially with regard to relations with Russia – was also stabilised, for a time, by the Weimar Republic's economic interests and German-Polish antagonism.

Foreign Policy in the Early Years of Authoritarianism

New factors began to influence the overall situation in the Baltic in the first half of the 1930s: the Nazis' rise to power in Germany, Poland's reconciliation with Germany, and the activities of the USSR. These factors rekindled the necessity of a Baltic Union, and on September 12, 1934, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia signed an agreement in Geneva that provided for cooperation in foreign affairs and mutual diplomatic support, including a minimum of two meetings a year between the foreign ministers of the three countries. The fifth article of the agreement stipulated closer contacts between the diplomatic and consular representatives of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia abroad. A separate clause declared Lithuania's "specific problems" to be an exception to the planned cooperation, excluded from the mutual diplomatic support.²³ A confidential protocol, signed together with the agreement, restricted these "specific problems" to the Vilnius question.²⁴

This Baltic Entente, concluded in the first year of Ulmanis' authoritarian rule, was an important event in Latvian foreign policy. It institutionalised cooperation among the Baltic States in foreign policy. Potentially, the Baltic Entente could have had greater importance if only the weakness of Lithuania's "specific problems" had been overcome. In this sense, the ideal solution would have been taking advantage of the possibilities for reconciliation between Poland and Lithuania immediately after the Baltic States had come to an understanding and signed the agreement. In this case, the chances for strengthening the Entente would have risen. The Baltic Entente could have been expanded or converted into a military alliance. In reality, though, the Entente did not become a serious factor for stability and security in the region. It did not form a major factor with which the great powers would have had to reckon, and it had no real meaning in strengthening the defence capabilities of the Baltic States.

In addition to working towards the Baltic Entente as a possible means to enhance Latvia's security in a climate of growing tension between the USSR and Germany, Latvia's policy-makers considered the Eastern Pact proposed jointly by France and the Soviet Union in July 1934. This Pact had three parts: an agreement for mutual assistance in the region, a mutual assistance agreement between France and the Soviet Union, and a general treaty. The agreement for regional mutual assistance was to include the USSR, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Finland and the Baltic states,

guaranteeing the inviolability of these countries' borders and granting assistance to any participating state that was the victim of unprovoked aggression. The treaty between France and the USSR would have made France the guarantour of the Eastern Pact and the Soviets the guarantours of the Locarno Agreement. The general treaty allowed the USSR to enter the League of Nations and defined the contracting parties' obligations and rights in relation to this international agreement.

The Eastern Pact reflected the interests of France and the Soviet Union in the first place, but on the whole it was also acceptable to Latvia because it contained the idea of guaranteeing the status quo in the Baltic. On July 16, 1934, the Latvian Foreign Ministry issued an instruction to Latvia's ambassadors abroad, informing them of Latvia's interest in the Pact if it were accepted by all of the states included in the plan. Latvia's ambassador to the USSR, Alfrēds Bilmanis, was given the authority to tell the Estonian foreign minister, Julius Friedrich Seljamaa (then in Moscow) that Latvia could respond positively to the Soviet initiative, jointly with the Estonians. Seljamaa agreed, and on July 29 both diplomats declared to the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs that Latvia and Estonia both view the pact for "Eastern European regional mutual assistance" positively.²⁵

Parallel to the plans for this Eastern Pact – which slowly sank into oblivion due to the negative response to it from Germany and Poland – Latvian diplomats looked to permanent neutralisation of the Baltic states as another possible antidote to the dangerous tendencies towards Russian and German expansionism. This option remained only an idea, and no foreign policy initiatives were made to realise it. Latvia continued to observe its traditionally neutral stance towards the USSR and Germany, which was often called the politics of the swing and seen as wavering between the East and the West. It must be said, though, that this neutrality was always absolutely balanced between both sides. There was a slight leaning towards the Soviet side from summer 1935, which continued until about spring 1938, when Greater Germany was formed. From that same autumn, influenced by the Munich conference under which Germany gained the Sudetenland and strengthened its position in Central Europe, Latvian foreign policy could be said to have turned more pro-German than pro-Soviet.

In the middle and second half of the 1930s, Latvia's profile at the League of Nations was raised. In October 1936, Latvia's representative, the Foreign Minister Vilhelms Munters, was elected to the Council of the League of

Nations for a three-year term. His election was certainly a reflection of the increased importance of the Baltic States in the international arena following the creation of their alliance in foreign policy. Munters' position was aided by the energetic work of Latvian diplomats and their tactics. Kārlis Ulmanis, speaking at a meeting of the Cabinet on October 13, 1936, described this success with these words, "This achievement is first of all evidence of trust in the direction of our foreign policy and recognition for our strategy. I want to note that the founding of the Baltic Entente has an increasingly important place in our politics and tactics."²⁶

However, at the time Munters began his term, the League of Nations was suffering a severe crisis and found itself in decline. Latvia and many other smaller countries in Europe had lost faith in the power of the League and its effectiveness. The authority of this international organisation was damaged by the failure of disarmament, the League's inability to avert acts of aggression and wars, the lifting of sanctions against Italy, and other decisions made by the forum. The powerlessness of the League of Nations in the struggle against tendencies threatening peace and stability was more and more readily apparent, and this was the result of the realities of the late 1930s and the political situation that had by then developed.

A dramatic shift in Latvia's policy towards the League of Nations took place in September 1938, when Latvia abandoned the principles of collective security stipulated by the League (Munters declared that Latvia would no longer consider the stipulations of Article 16 to be binding). This was a change in course from relative neutrality towards absolute neutrality. It was an inadequate and mistaken decision that did not improve Latvia's chances for preserving its independence in the swiftly shifting international situation. Latvia abandoned one of the basic elements of its foreign policy – cooperation with the League. The 16th Article was the sole guarantee to which Latvia could appeal in case of attack. The transition to absolute neutrality turned out to be only an imaginary guarantee for Latvia's security. It had no real basis, since Latvia was unable to obtain any guarantees for such neutrality from other countries.

The Fateful Years: 1939 and 1940

In spring 1939, the politics of the great powers posed a clear danger to the Baltic States and revealed how insecure their geopolitical position was. Germany's decision to solve "the Polish problem" by military means, Russia's

disinterest in defending Poland, and Great Britain's inability to effectively aid Poland created a situation in which the aggressive designs of the USSR and Germany in the Baltic region could be fulfilled. Regardless of what policies Latvia, Lithuania or Estonia might have pursued, hopes for maintaining full sovereignty were vain.

Latvia, which was pursuing a policy of continuing neutrality, signed a non-aggression treaty with Germany on June 7, 1939. Although the architects of foreign policy in Latvia had imbued such a treaty with great significance since 1934, considering it an important element for the security of Eastern Europe, in its concrete form the treaty was a reflection of Berlin's initiative and the ability of German diplomats to exploit Latvian efforts for their own interests. Berlin wanted Latvia to reject guarantees from the British, the French, and the Russians, intending Riga to concentrate all of its attention on possible aggression from the USSR.

The question of guarantees for the independence of the Baltic States was considered at the talks between the USSR, Britain and France that began in spring 1939. Latvia took a negative stance towards the guarantees from these three great powers as expressed in the version Moscow promoted, since these guarantees proposed assistance for a state subject to aggression without the consent of that state and even entailed (in the final draft) a formula of "indirect aggression", which would have allowed the Soviet Union to interfere in the home affairs of the country whose security it guaranteed. Latvian policymakers rightly considered this to be a pretext for a planned occupation of the Baltic States by the USSR. Foreign Minister Munters was convinced that Latvia could accept only a guarantee of neutrality extended by the USSR, Great Britain, France and Germany as well. Such a formula, however, was impossible to attain.

The fate of Latvia was decided in negotiations between Germany and the USSR that ended on August 23 with signing the Non-Aggression Pact and its secret protocol, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. The first article transferred Latvia, Estonia and Finland to the Soviet Union: "In the event of a territorial and political rearrangement in the areas belonging to the Baltic States (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the northern boundary of Lithuania shall represent the boundary of the spheres of influence of Germany and U.S.S.R." The second article stipulated the division of Poland into German and Russian spheres of influence, with a provision for the possible erasure of Polish statehood: "The question of whether the interests of both parties

make desirable the maintenance of an independent Polish State and how such a state should be bounded can only be definitely determined in the course of further political developments.”²⁷

The agreement of August 23 was an illegal and cynical deal. It was reconciliation at the expense of others. In concluding a pact that sanctioned aggression and aggressive war against a third country, both the USSR and Germany violated the Paris Pact of 1928 and broke many bilateral treaties which both countries had concluded with other countries. With the conclusion of the Non-Aggression Pact, the Second World War could begin. The Pact was a document of war, division, and destruction.

In a situation in which Germany had begun the war in Europe, on September 1, 1939, and liquidated Polish statehood together with the USSR, Latvia's place in the system of Eastern European relations was also immediately changed – the possibility of continuing its policy of neutrality became noticeably difficult. The room for diplomatic maneuvering was drastically narrowed. For all practical purposes, Latvia was forced into a situation from which there was no exit, and the loss of its independence became only a matter of time.

Those who forged Latvian foreign policy in this period unsuccessfully attempted to seek solutions to the problems presented by this exceedingly complex situation. They had access to information on the secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 23, and they were on the whole aware of the seriousness of the situation. They were not, however, wholly free of illusions and they did not seek ways to preserve independence with sufficient intensity. A course of yielding to Soviet pressure came to dominate foreign policy. The decision in favour of this course was made in October 1939, when the USSR had concentrated armed forces on the borders of the Baltic States and Latvia was immediately threatened with invasion by those forces.

The defeat of Poland provided the preliminary conditions for the gradual realisation of the Soviet Union's aggressive designs on the Baltic region and the occupation of the Baltic States. As a first step in this direction, Moscow had planned the imposition of mutual assistance agreements on Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (Lithuania was transferred to the Soviet sphere of influence by agreement between the USSR and Germany on September 28, 1939). These agreements were to create Soviet bases on the territory of these states. In negotiations with Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German foreign minister, regarding a treaty on borders and friendship between the

USSR and Germany at the end of September 1939, Stalin noted that Estonia had already agreed to this type of agreement. Were Latvia to resist, Stalin said, "The Red Army will make short work of it." The German side insisted that the Soviets should take a gradual approach to the takeover, temporarily leaving Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia nominally independent, but the possibility of their incorporation into the USSR in the future was not ruled out.²⁸

In negotiating the mutual assistance pact with Latvian representatives in Moscow, the Soviets demonstrated their aggressive stance and their refusal to take international norms into account. On October 3, 1939, Foreign Minister Vilhelms Munters informed the Latvian government that Stalin had told him "because of the Germans, we can occupy you", threatening Latvia with the possibility of depriving it of "territory with a Russian minority".²⁹ The Latvian government decided to capitulate and allow the Soviet forces to enter Latvian territory. The government saw yielding to Soviet demands as "an act imposed by force". A decision to resist militarily was not taken in the interests of preserving life. The Latvian government planned to suffer this violation of its sovereignty only until the end of the war.

On September 28, 1939 Estonia, and on October 5 and 10 Latvia and Lithuania, signed the mutual assistance agreements which had been imposed by Moscow as part of the Kremlin's plan to occupy the Baltic states. On the basis of these treaties, the USSR introduced specific numbers of troops into the territory of the three countries, developing land, air, and naval bases. The agreements marked the beginning of the end of Baltic independence and were a prelude to the occupation of June 1940. Assisted by Germany, the Soviet Union not only *de iure* but also *de facto* amputated the sovereignty of the Baltic States. In the period between the imposition of the mutual assistance pacts and the occupation, the Baltic States had in essence become Soviet protectorates. The essence of this was not altered by the emphasis of phrases like "recognition of national independence" or "non-interference in the internal affairs of the other contracting party" in these pacts, and references to the peace treaties of 1920 or the previously concluded non-aggression agreements did not alter the facts.

Berlin sought to save the Baltic Germans from a situation in which the Baltic States had for all practical purposes come under Soviet domination. Signing a special protocol regarding the Baltic German emigration in Moscow on September 28, 1939, Germany ensured their departure. The last preparations for this act in Latvia were concluded on October 30, when Germany

signed an agreement with the Latvian government. This formed the legal basis for the relocation of the Baltic Germans. The process was to be completed by the middle of December but actually continued until spring 1941. An ethnic group that had made incalculable cultural contributions to the nation and was the most highly educated and motivated demographic group in Latvia left the country. Ulmanis' government made no attempt to impede their departure. The government hoped to retain Germany's interest in Latvia by taking on debt for the properties that the Germans left behind. At the time of occupation (in June 1940), according to German calculations, Latvia's external debt to Germany stood at 75.6 million lats.³⁰

After Germany's attack on France, the Netherlands and Belgium, which began in May 1940, the USSR took advantage of the international situation beneficial to it and actively pursued preparations for the full occupation of the Baltic States. This time Lithuania was chosen as the first victim. In order to realise its planned aggression, Moscow presented the Lithuanian government with a concocted accusation, claiming that it had taken some Russian soldiers – one of them having been killed – to extract military secrets from them. Gradually intensifying this invented conflict, on the night of June 15, 1940 the Soviets gave the Lithuanians an ultimatum, demanding the formation of a new government that would be able to "honestly fulfill" the terms of the October 10, 1939 mutual assistance pact and permit the entry into Lithuania of Soviet armed forces. The Lithuanian government was forced to accept this ultimatum without opposition or protest. The decision taken by Antanas Smetona to go into exile on June 15, however, can be understood as a definite protest: Smetona refused to remain in Lithuania and ease the occupation by his presence.

On June 15, 1940, Soviet military units attacked Latvian border guards at Masļenki, which was intended either as a provocation to create an excuse for the occupation of Latvia or as a Stalin-style threat to warn the Latvian government that any resistance would be futile. On June 16, the Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov read an ultimatum to the Latvian Ambassador Fricis Kociņš, a document composed of lies and distortions that demanded the resignation of the Latvian government and the unrestricted entry of Soviet forces into Latvia. On the evening of June 16, Ulmanis' government caved in to the threat of force, accepted the ultimatum and resigned. The Cabinet rejected military resistance, deciding that it would result in bloodshed but fail to save the Latvian state. Kārlis Ulmanis'

government decided not to offer symbolic resistance, either, and it did not risk expressing even diplomatic protest to Moscow – a political near-sightedness that is difficult to understand. Furthermore, the Latvian Ambassador to Great Britain, Kārlis Zariņš, received no concrete instructions regarding the emergency powers granted him on May 17, 1940, which could have permitted him to embark upon a political and diplomatic battle for Latvia's sovereignty.

3.7. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

From 1915 – the year of the Russian catastrophe in the First World War – until the end of January 1920, Latvia's territory was ceaselessly traversed and laid waste by various armies: the fleeing Czarist forces and the advancing Germans, at the end of 1918 and in the beginning of 1919 the retreating Germans and the advancing Soviet Russian forces, and then – and most brutally – Bermond-Avalov's recruits. They had been followed by armed conflict in Latgallia. When the last active warfare on the last front in Latgallia ceased on February 1, 1920, Latvia was devastated to the point where nothing reminded of the last year of peace, 1914, when it had been the third most economically developed region of the Russian Empire, immediately behind St Petersburg and Moscow in development and renowned for the quality of its production, innovation, and the amount of capital turn-over per establishment. Almost all of these accomplishments had been erased. Latvia's first class industry had not only suffered massive physical losses as a result of the war and the barbaric evacuation of industry* – it had lost the three prerequisites for its pre-war fame: industry had been of a clearly imperial character, its market being the whole of imperial Russia; the Latvian economy was part of the world economy, with wide international connections, competition and interweaving that contributed to concentration on quality; heavy industry had been dominant, with large factories and a very small percentage of smaller enterprises. Beginning a new life in a newly independent Latvia,

* Most anything of any value had been taken, or for all practical purposes stolen and transported to Russia. Not only industrial equipment, which may have aided the military strength of the Kaiser's Germany, but cultural artefacts of no possible military importance were purloined – everything from the library of the Polytechnic Institute to the unique apparatus for fermentation at the "Ilguciems" brewery was removed to the mainland of Russia.

the Russian market had practically vanished. Russia was ruled by communism and growing autarchy. Integration into the world economy had to begin anew and with a different production base – agricultural products. The larger factories had been removed to Russia and destroyed in waves of revolution of war. Many countries in Europe were to experience complex problems in their transition from agricultural to industrial societies, but Latvia suffered the opposite problems: how to ensure the successful management of the economy in conditions of dramatic contraction for the industrial sector, especially in the first years of independence. Negative changes had taken place in the social structure as well. Before 1914 Latvia had been on the path to swift modernisation – changing from an agrarian to an industrial society – and trade and industry with other non-agricultural sectors had employed 31.3% of the population (in the Russian Empire as a whole, this figure was only 17%); 58.9% of the population was employed in agriculture – a large percentage, yet quite similar to the figure in Italy, which at 59% was the most agrarian of societies but Western European. In 1920, the new nation-state of Latvia was absolutely agrarian in its economic and social structure. The financial system was in thrall of indescribable chaos. The new nation had to solve extreme and seemingly insoluble problems to rebuild its economy.

The Agrarian Policy of the State

Any country with a rural population comprising more than 60% of its inhabitants, of which at least the same percentage – 60% — was landless or poor, as was the case in Latvia in 1920, the agrarian question would be the main question. In Latvia, however, the question was of an importance much deeper than these numbers would show, a question surrounded by dramatic aspects. It was a social and economic question, certainly – but even more it was a political, national, historical and even psychological question on the resolution of which the very fate of the newly founded state depended. From the economic point of view it was clear that the huge estates of the manors – taking up nearly half of the agricultural land in the country – were a complete anachronism. Even before the First World War in some Latvian regions (less around Riga, Krustpils and Ventpils but especially around Dobele and Bauska) the farms of Latvian farmers, hundreds of times smaller than the manorial estates, were already surpassing the grand estates in economic efficiency. The degeneration of the manors – though not always through the

fault of their owners (many Baltic Germans had been expelled from Latvia by the Czar's government, which saw them as a possible fifth column for Germany) had progressed very far by the time of independence: in 1920, about 50% of the manors stood abandoned; many barons had fled with the failure of Bermond-Avalov's revanchist dream. But it was the political problem, a burning issue for which a solution could not be postponed, that most influenced the course of land reform in Latvia (perhaps more than politics ought to influence a primarily economic question). It was perfectly clear to Latvian politicians, even before the war against Bermond-Avalov, that the estates of the manors would have to be divided and their land distributed to the landless – a state with the numbers of landless Latvia had at that time would have been socially explosive, offering fertile ground for communism or farmers' revolts; the latter plagued Italy immediately after the First World War. But it was the battle against Bermond-Avalov and the barons who supported him that settled a part of this question – the land would have to come for free! The hatred for Latvians by Bermond-Avalov's forces and the barons who sided with them was so horrible and so fundamentally racist that the thought of preserving the manorial estates or even having to pay for the parcels – to pay an enemy against which the Latvians had just fought, often literally barefoot, in an unprecedented flood of national patriotism – had become politically insupportable, and the Social Democrats were the first to understand this. Already in October 1919, in the heat of battle against Bermond-Avalov, the Social Democrats proclaimed, "Land for free!" This motto – the most popular in Latvia at the time – gave them tremendous success in elections to the Constituent Assembly and later even greater success in the election of a committee for the management of the agrarian reform, when the left received 80% of the votes.

When the Constituent Assembly formed a committee to draft the land reform in 1920, it was the largest committee in parliament with 40 seats, reflecting the importance of the fateful question to which the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party took the most active approach. From the very first day of deliberations it was obvious how politicised the matter was, to be weighed in terms of national politics or even historical myth-making more than in economic terms: seven centuries before, the Black Knight had robbed the Latvians of their land, and the Latvians were to regain it in a triumph of historical justice. In this atmosphere, the Social Democrat Nikolajs Kalniņš spoke for five and a half hours before the Constituent

Assembly, on July 7, 1922, in what was surely the longest speech ever given in the history of parliamentary democracy in Latvia. Kalniņš offered the most national romantic view of Latvian history (a large part of his lecture actually written by the historian Arveds Švābe, then a Social Democrat) to justify the expropriation of the barons' lands without compensation. The moderate approach of the Farmers' Union and Kārlis Ulmanis – compensating the landowners, a pragmatic and capitalistic position – did not receive support, and on April 14, 1924, the Saeima decided not to provide the owners of the estates with compensation. They were left with 50 hectares each and their land was distributed to the peasants (formally there were long-term payments, but these were a pittance and for all practical purposes the distribution took place without cost). This was a conscious and full understandable decision taken to satisfy the landless masses – those who had sympathised with Stučka's Bolsheviks – and draw their support for the Republic. It was indeed a victory for the so-called historical justice, but it gave rise to serious economic problems. Economics was unaware of the concept of the "Black Knight" whose power was "broken for eternity", and the economy was deaf to the trumpets of "historical justice".

Three grave economic problems appeared immediately, and none was to be fully solved in the period of independence. The first problem was the ratio of land area to those who desired land. It was quickly clear that there were far more people desiring land for free than there was land. The second problem was the question of economic efficiency: the more people wanted land, the smaller were the parcels distributed, and this made it difficult to farm at a profit, not even to mention introducing modern technology. The third and most dramatic problem – which became more dramatic in the 1930s and for which there was really no solution – was the question of labour: if almost everyone received land and became "lords", – who would serve them? Binding a massive labour force to small farms, the question grew in gravity: who would work on the larger, more efficient farms, which had a growing need for paid labour?

The agrarian reform was realised between 1920 and 1937, and its results – both economic and social – were immense, though often contradictory. Though the State Land Fund, which held the land to be distributed, was very large – it included 1479 nationalised manorial estates, 171 estates of the church, 294 half-estates, and 1,149,913 hectares of woodlands that had belonged to private estates and the nobility (40,5% of the Land Fund) – the

amount of land to be distributed was limited by the large number of those desiring it and the fact that the Latvian state from its inception considered national ownership of a significant portion of this land to be important, imposing state management on part of the Fund. This anti-liberal belief, which the state pursued throughout the twenty years of sovereignty, led to the state retaining ownership of 84% of forest land, thus seriously reducing the amount of land to be distributed (and allowing the state to dictate the terms in such important sectors of the economy as forestry, woodworking, and the provision of fuel). Though the law stipulated that parcels to be distributed could not be smaller than 10 hectares (and no larger than 22 hectares) – which was already a very small area for a farm – there was insufficient land for even this redistribution: from 1934, some parcels of less than 10 hectares were distributed. Latgallia, already the poorest region, saw the poorest distribution: more than half of the new farms in the region were smaller than 10 hectares in size, and this factor – coupled with the poor quality of the soil there – made the development of modern agriculture in Latgallia impossible.*

Although the motivation and work ethic of the new smallholders was remarkable, the small size of the farms and the perennial lack of funds led to questionable results economically. In extent – as could be expected with the creation of tens and thousands of new small farms – agriculture developed with amazing speed: already in 1923 planted fields exceeded their pre-war level, and Latvia was third in Europe in the growth of grazing lands, after Denmark and Lithuania (which does not mean, of course, that agriculture in Latvia – much less Lithuania – was at the Danish level). Raising animals developed rapidly. By 1929, the level of development in agriculture exceeded that of 1913, which was a significant achievement in view of the destruction that war had wrought. In terms of production per capita, however, Latvia lagged far behind the developed countries of Europe (though it did surpass neighbouring Lithuania and Poland). Plantings of rye and flax had not reached pre-war levels, only 2% of wetlands were meliorated, old farms

* The most unsuccessful land reform took place in Poland. Not wishing to alienate the large landowners – the base for political regimes – the state included in its land fund only 2.5 million hectares, a mere 10% of agricultural land. The results were shocking even in backward Poland: 34% of the farms were about 2 hectares in size, 31% no larger than 5 hectares. At least 5 hectares were necessary for sustenance, and at least 15 for even a minimum profit to be made.

remained the primary producers of grain, and the new farms purchased more grain than they sold. The burden of debt was also heavy: in 1930, before Latvia was affected by the world economic crisis, farmers owed the state 277.3 million lats, which was a massive sum. Many thousands of farms suffered foreclosure. The labour deficit in rural areas was noticeable already in the first half of the 1920s, and in 1925 Kārlis Ulmanis suggested importing farm labour from Lithuania – temporarily, he then thought – but in only a couple of years even this proved to be insufficient. Successful farms developed so quickly that they needed more and more labourers, but available labour was tied to the smaller farms. In 1928, labour began to come to Latvia from Poland, and the process seemed never-ending. At the end of the 1930s, the number of foreign farm labourers exceeded 40,000, and there was a serious question of what would happen should the flow of foreign labour cease. Ulmanis would look for a solution on the eve of the occupation, planning a second, radical agrarian reform. However, he did not survive to implement it.

Though the reform saw the interweaving of great achievements and great problems in economic terms (in 1935, 62% of Latvia's inhabitants were rural, but agriculture provided only 35% of the national wealth, almost twice as ineffective as the non-agricultural portion of the economy), in social and political terms the reform was characterised by success. The social picture of rural Latvia changed beyond recognition: 61.2% of the rural population in 1920 had been landless, but at the close of the reform – between 1935 and 1937 – the percentage of the landless had been brought down to only 18%. No matter how economically difficult many lives actually were, the 54,436 new farms (which averaged 17 hectares in size) were the pride of Latvia, and the new farmers were patriots of the new Republic; communist sympathisers practically vanished except in the most backward and impoverished corners of Latgallia. The agrarian reform in Latvia was the second most radical in Europe, Estonia's being the most radical. Latvia was followed by Lithuania, which had left 80 hectares in the hands of former landowners at first but later raised this minimum to 150 hectares. Even this rather minimal size for the large estates turned out to have severe social repercussions, however, since the numbers of the landless in Lithuania not only did not decline but even rose: in 1919, there were 57,485 peasants without land, but by 1940 there were already 80,000. The large numbers of the landless, combined with legions of the rural poor, led to civil strife in rural Lithuania in 1935, conflict that included dead and wounded. Nothing like this occurred in Latvia, but

the severe labour shortage forced Ulmanis to plan another radical restructuring of agriculture from 1939 – so radical that he feared to inform his Cabinet of the plans. He wanted another reform that would divide not the noble estates but the strong Latvian farms – the farms that employed the labour force that was increasingly difficult to obtain. The future would be one of small farms only, of a kind that did not require outside labour. Something so radical, which would break the rural backbone of Latvia – its larger and more successful farms – was not even dreamt of by the Social Democrats. The only thing that prevented the implementation of these plans – which would certainly have been radically opposed by the prosperous farmers and the Aizsargi (and so perhaps costing Ulmanis his power) – was the destruction of the state in June 1940.

Industry

In 1920, only the massive shells of the factories recalled the recent fame of Latvian industry. More than 550 industrial establishments had been evacuated to the interior of Russia in 1915 and 1916. Only about 10% of these – the smallest – were returned to Latvia after the signing of the peace treaty with Soviet Russia on August 11, 1920. The largest – of Baltic and even European significance – had disappeared into the vastnesses of Russia. It seemed that Latvia would be unable to renew a source of its pride before the war, namely, modern, productive, efficient and innovative industry staffed by educated and dedicated workers, an industry that had seen such innovations as the first assembly line production of motor vehicles in the Russian Empire. In 1913, there were 1032 industrial enterprises in Latvia, employing more than 100,000 workers. In 1920 the number of enterprises rose to 1430, but these employed only 21,000 workers. What was called an “enterprise” had a different definition and would have been called a workshop before the war – five workers without mechanised equipment, or even a solitary worker with such equipment, were now defined as “industrial enterprises”. Nonetheless, despite the destruction of Latvian industry and the transfer of factories to Russia – even despite the lack of sufficient local capital for investment – it was Latvian industry that presented the most surprising capacity for rebirth, blossoming and adapting to demand and the new circumstances of the market.

The structure of industry in the first decade of independence (1920–1930)

changed radically. The building of machinery was replaced by woodworking. This sector of industry developed most swiftly: it employed the most workers and made up 80% of exports in tonnage, but provided only 12.3% of export revenues, which meant that its products – primarily boards, veneer, and lumber – had minimal added value. Second was the food industry, which had a high level of efficiency and added value; this sector made up 30% of exports, and the productivity of workers in this sector was the highest per capita. The sector reflected the agricultural character of the Latvian economy. About forty manufacturers of sweets were exceedingly successful, among them companies that became known outside Latvia – Laima, V. Ķuze, and Staburadze (Latvian confections were even successfully exported to the United States by 1939, on the eve of the occupation). There were 11 tobacco factories, including the well-known Maikapars. The chemical sector took third place, with rubber products especially successful (e.g. Kvadrāts). Its roots stretched back to before the First World War, and this sector received the most foreign capital investment, making up ca. 85% of the industry.

As did other economic spheres, manufacturing in Latvia suffered from government interference and even from the tendency of the state to attempt to increase its share of ownership in the economy. As Ādolfs Klīve noted, however, state enterprises were far less successful than private industry. Many of the state-owned companies operated with losses – the four printing plants, the sugar refineries and linen manufacturers, the Jugla power plant – despite the fact that the government created artificially favourable conditions for them (easier access to credit (especially short-term loans), tax breaks, and government and other contracts), part of the state sector was not competitive, especially in the years of economic crisis. There were also stunning successes in the state sector, however: the workshops of the Post and Telegraph — which became the legendary VEF – began the assembly line manufacturing of radios already in 1919. In 1920, it began to manufacture telephones, and in 1929 electric light bulbs. By 1930, it employed 1000 highly skilled workers and engineers. VEF was reaching its heights – as many other firms were – in the very last years of independence, just before the occupation.

Latvian capitalism produced its own remarkable entrepreneurs already in the 1920s. The son of a simple Latvian miller, Roberts Hiršs, was certainly the most talented among them, his successes based on innovation. In 1926, he founded the textile company Rīgas audums and in 1928 he opened a branch in the Lithuanian capital, Kaunas (by 1939, 2500 people were employed at

the factory in Kaunas, an almost fantastic number in tiny Lithuania). Hiršs introduced new products, hired talented artists and designers (more than 20 designers were in his employ) and cultivated contacts with the fashion houses of Paris and Milan. He had friendly relationships with Jewish wholesalers and worked tirelessly to improve the living conditions of his employees. Had the Second World War not interrupted his company's rise, another branch would have been opened in Oslo, Norway, and Hiršs would have continued the firm's expansion into the European market – he was a true genius among Latvia's entrepreneurs.

At the close of the first decade of Latvian independence in 1930 – the last year before Latvia was strongly affected by the world economic crisis – industry had recovered from the destruction of war, though the productivity per worker was still lower than it had been. Manufacturing was dominated by small enterprises with inadequate technology, only 13.5% of Latvia's workforce was employed in industry, and the problem of capital investment was severe. Despite the difficulties, the darkest period was already in the past. Productivity rose, the standards of living of workers rose, and exactly in 1930 the workers reached the highest ratio between wages and the cost of living – wages had peaked, purchasing power was high, and the cost of living was the lowest. It is interesting to compare income in Latvia and neighbouring countries in 1930. The lowest wages were in Lithuania, 280 lats per annum, per person; Poland followed – also poor – with 380 lats. The national income in Latvia was 600 lats per capita – Finland was only ten lats richer, with 610. One must realise that both Latvia and Finland were still developing countries – a British pound traded at 15.5 lats (meaning that Latvian income was less than 40 pounds a year) – but it is significant that Latvia was so close to Finland, which had not suffered nearly as much during the war. It is difficult not to take note of how wealthy Finland is today and compare its prosperity to Latvia's current poverty, leading one to consider what half a century of occupation actually cost Latvia.

The world economic crisis of 1929-1932 was the most serious crisis in peacetime at least since the industrial revolution had begun more than a hundred years before. The world's gross product fell by 20%. The primary characteristic of the crisis was the disintegration of a world economy that had seemed so unified. In place of cooperation and unity came isolationism, egoism, tariffs and protectionism. 23 countries raised tariffs on imports and 32 introduced quotas on imports. The most dramatic effect on Europe,

including Latvia, was the November 1931 "revolution" in Great Britain. Abandoning a century old tradition of free trade, Britain turned to protectionism. Monetary policy also became incoherent and egoistical, with three different approaches in the three main world financial centres. London adhered to an intelligent policy in circumstances of overproduction, devaluing the currency and thereby making British products cheaper and increasing exports. New York had no financial policy at first, allowing a freefall and the collapse of the currency market to take place before a belated devaluation. Paris clung to gold reserves to cover a currency it kept strong, considering inflation to be the greatest threat. It was this latter policy to which Latvia also clung for a long time, despite the fact that Latvia was much more dependent on foreign trade than France and Latvia's exports suffered the consequences in a period of crisis.

The economic crisis increased state intervention in the economy in Latvia, soon covering not only manufacturing but commerce as well and creating a growing number of state monopolies (in flax, grain, and even currency trading). The monopolies put pressure on the private sector and narrowed it, weakening the primary driver of the economy: independent, innovative entrepreneurs who were ready to accept both responsibility and risk. Protectionism swelled – not only in Latvia. The country managed to emerge from the crisis without massive damage, as has already been described, but this emergence was soon followed by Ulmanis' authoritarian coup. The Ulmanis regime drastically increased state intervention in the economy, even introducing nationalisation (though not confiscation) on a vast scale. The Latvian Credit Bank, founded in 1935, was the central institution in this process: it was a state bank that could nationalise any private business, and its decisions could not be appealed in court. At the beginning of 1939, 38 large state companies were formed on the bases of nationalised private concerns, but none of these companies were more successful economically than they had been in private hands (the Credit Bank also nationalised 19 credit institutions and 180 cooperatives). The state dubbed this intervention "Latvianisation", since a large portion of the nationalised enterprises had belonged to Jews and Baltic Germans – but, in practical terms, the regime practiced a socialistic policy that could be directed (and was directed) against any and all private business regardless of the owners' ethnicity. None of the "Latvianised" companies came into the private hands of ethnic Latvians – they were taken over by the state.

The extreme of state intervention was contained in the draft of a six-year plan for the command of the economy in 1938, covering 21 spheres of the economy, but this was fortunately not adopted – perhaps because of the opposition of private owners. At the same time it must be said that state support for those industrial enterprises that produced the most modern products was both excusable and successful. VEF was again at the fore: in 1938, it began to produce the engineer Walter Zapp's tiny wonder – the smallest camera in the world, the Minox. This became the symbol of Latvia's innovative potential around the world. Technical superiority and excellence in design was also evident in VEF's radios; the designer Ādolfs Irbīte also created the VEF logo. Telephones and bicycles also bore an unmistakable elegance. The state was near to producing automobiles with the Vairogs Company, and managed to build six light aircraft. It is not instructive to compare the level of development in 1939 with that of 1913 directly. While it's true that Latvian industry produced nearly as much before the Second World War as it did before the First World War, such a comparison would be artificial and would not correctly reflect how amazing the progress during independence years really was. The successes between the wars took place in a completely different environment, minus the vast Russian market and based on the strengths of Latvia's own entrepreneurs and workers, their work ethic and their talents. Foreign capital also had an important role. One of the most notable accomplishments was the building of the Ķegums hydroelectric plant in 1939, and the project was financed by Swedish capital. For the first time in Latvian history, electricity began to be widely available in rural areas. One does not require clairvoyance to envision the possible successes of Latvian industry in almost every sphere, had the fateful acts of August 23, 1939 and June 17, 1940 not interrupted the nation's progress.

Finance

Confusion reigned in the currency circulating in Latvia between 1919 and 1922, giving rise to currency speculation, dishonest gains, and dissatisfaction among the common people. Though the government declared on March 18, 1920 that the sole currency to circulate must be the Latvian ruble, the people of Latvia ignored this directive – the ruble was weak and it was issued in massive amounts (for example, 100 million rubles were printed in November 1919, 200 million rubles in March 1920, 500 million rubles in

June 1920, and more than two and a half billion rubles by March 1921). Inflation kept pace with the increasing issue of the currency. Alongside the weak Latvian ruble – in addition to pounds sterling and dollars – Czarist rubles still circulated, and the other currencies were much more respected. Strong action was necessary to quickly and effectively introduce a functioning and functioning and stabile currency that had the trust of the population. Two persons should be especially honored for their contributions. The first was the well-known professor of economics and statistics Kārlis Balodis, who had precisely calculated the system for rationing introduced in Germany during the war. Returning to Latvia, Balodis was not successful in politics but retained his rational views on economic development. He recommended a stringent and simple plan: ceasing the emission of the Latvian ruble, withdrawing it from circulation, seriously decreasing the expenditures of the state, actively supporting exports (especially of wood products, which were in great demand in Europe) and utilizing the money earned from these exports to secure a new currency. Enacting Balodis' simple suggestions, however, required strong political will (few governments are interested in reducing spending). The first government of Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics (in office from June 1921 to January 1923), especially its colourful Minister of Finance Ringolds Kalnings, possessed such a will, and Kalnings can be called the father of the new Latvian currency, the lat ("lats" in Latvian). Kalnings was a notable Latvian businessman, known as a thrifty man, capable of saving not only his own but also the state's money. He successfully balanced the budget, decreased the number of ministries and government institutions, and concentrated on facilitating exports, limiting imports, and strictly collecting taxes. The overheated money machine was stopped, and on January 3, 1922, it was decided that the new currency would be called the "lats" (other names, including "franks" and "grasis", were rejected). The lat was introduced on August 3, 1922, pegged to the pound at 15.5 lats per pound sterling.

The new money was aesthetically pleasing, based on the graphics of the esteemed artist Rihards Zariņš, and it was stabile. Its purchasing power peaked between 1924 and 1928, when Latvia's economy was booming. The Latvian people loved their currency and were proud of it. The State Bank was also founded during Kalnings' tenure (in 1923), and this bank had certain unusual features. Unlike the classic Bank of England (founded in 1696 and known as "the Rock of Gibraltar" for its stability), which worked

only with the emission of currency and its security, the Bank of Latvia worked in the tradition of the former Czarist Russian bank and the recently created (1919) Estonian state bank, not only issuing currency but itself engaging in business. In Estonia, the state bank engaged in speculation, and a large number of its ventures brought considerable grief to the national economy. The Bank of Latvia was in large measure a commercial bank with the right to issue currency, and the bank was conservative precisely in the emission of currency, considering the stability of the lat to be paramount. A stable currency is of significant value, of course, but elasticity was lacking in the years when the world economic crisis most affected Latvia, 1931–1933. In this period, supporting the expensive lat made Latvia's exports expensive – exactly when a moderate devaluation would have helped ease the crisis. Instead, devaluation took place only in 1936, and it was a serious devaluation – one pound sterling, which had cost 15.5 lats, cost 25 lats. Dependent on the whims of politicians, the state bank actively engaged in commercial activity, generously providing credit to companies supported by politicians and to private banks – for example, the Farmers' Bank, which was supported by the Farmers' Union, was totally unsuccessful and finally went bankrupt, costing the state half a million lats in the name of political friendship. By 1928, private banks had already received credits in the amount of 34 million lats, and few of these loans were ever repaid. Oversight by the state bank of the banking sector was insufficient (especially in the case of banks belonging to the minorities, seen as rivals in the so-called economic Latvianisation of the country) and the law requiring that 10% of a bank's capital be reserved in the State Bank was often not observed. From 1928, 10 of the 20 private held banks in Latvia no longer paid dividends, but the Bank of Latvia did not interfere: itself engaging in commercial banking, it saw the many private banks as rivals. Weak oversight had severe repercussions in the years of crisis – a number of banks went bankrupt, taking people's savings with them. Under the Ulmanis regime, state interference in the banking sector grew as it did in other sectors, and almost all of the private banks were nationalised. In 1940, only 3 private banks remained, compared to 16 in 1933 – it should be emphasised that all of the latvians banks were also nationalised. Regardless of the faults mentioned above, Latvia's financial system between the wars functioned well. The state had significant reserves in gold and foreign currency, the purchasing power of the lat was high, and the standard of living steadily rose.

Foreign Trade

Various models for the development of the national economy were considered in the early 1920s. The first – popular and attractive – was the so-called bridge model, in which Latvia would act as the middleman between Russia and the West, offering its ports and railroads to gain lucre without great effort on the basis of its geography. This model came to function to a degree – not nearly as profitably as it was hoped – but it functioned only for a few years and completely collapsed already in the latter half of the 1920s, when Russia retreated into itself to try to build “communism in one country”. The second model required more self-reliance: this was the hope that Latvia could be reborn as an industrial country and base its economy on industrial exports. This model, too, had limited success, also lesser than had been hoped for. Only in the late 1930s were the preconditions for rapid industrial development in place, Latvian products reaching a level at which they could compete in the world’s markets; the Soviet occupation destroyed these conditions. During its period of independence, Latvia was forced to choose primarily agricultural development, and it was exactly for this reason foreign trade became crucial to the nation – Latvian agriculture produced far more than Latvia needed, a majority living on the land and the cities incapable of consuming what was produced. For many farmers, the ability to sell their products for export was almost a question of life or death. Latvia’s foreign trade went through three distinct phases, dependent on external conditions, namely, on what the dominating rules of trade in Europe were and on how the policies of the great powers influenced them. Latvia had no power to set the rules; the rules were set by the great powers.

The first phase – which lasted until the turn of the year 1931/32, when the world economic crisis had a severe impact on Latvia’s foreign trade – was extremely advantageous for Latvia. It was a period in which world economics was dominated by what was called neo-liberalism. Although this was not the beautiful liberalism that had died in the trenches of First World War – with the pre-1914 system of trade that was almost free of protectionism and egoistical tariffs (these had begun to grow only in the Kaiser’s Germany, with the so-called Bulow tariffs in 1902, and were very high in Czarist Russia, but in Great Britain they did not exist at all) and was devoid of quotas. The 1920s were still marked by low tariffs. Despite the fact that Germany, one of the two most important trading partners for Latvia, raised

them in 1925 with the introduction of a new tariff system, they were not insurmountable barriers. Commerce dominated – goods were exchanged for money (they were sold and not – as came to be the case in the 1930s – traded for other goods).

The primary trading partner for Latvia's agricultural economy was Great Britain, and in 1923 a trade agreement based on the principle of most favoured nation status was concluded between Latvia and Britain. The main share of Latvia's exports went to England, understandable in view of the post-war demand for Latvian wood, flax, butter and bacon. The flow was aided by the productivity of Latvian farmers, support from the Latvian state, and the efforts of Latvian merchants (including many prominent Jewish merchants). The main partner in imports was not England, however – Germany was in first place. The industrial products Latvia needed from Germany were of high quality – frequently higher in quality than those of Britain – but they were also cheaper because wages and costs were lower in Germany. Germany is also geographically nearer to Latvia, and linked to Latvia by historical ties. Baltic German and Jewish firms as well as private banks were active in this trade. 1923 was a watershed year for Baltic trade with Germany. Two provisional trade agreements were concluded (full agreements were forbidden to Germany by the terms of the Versailles treaty, and these limitations were not lifted until 1925) with Latvia and Estonia but not with Lithuania, whose relations with Germany were complicated by the annexation of Klaipeda (Memel) in that year. The profitable Latvia-England-Germany triangle in foreign trade continued through 1931, with Latvia selling more exports to Great Britain but utilising free currency trading to acquire very valuable British pounds and spending more of these pounds in Germany, where the value of sterling was extremely high. Germany was not only the most important exporter of goods to Latvia – it was also the second major importer of Latvian products. As a consequence, its importance as a trading partner – especially after the signing of a full trade agreement in 1926 (the first full trade agreement signed by Germany after the lifting of the Versailles limitations) – was as important as that of Great Britain.³¹ In 1927 and 1928, the prices of agricultural products began to fall on world markets due to overproduction causing fall in the value of Latvian products – but this was not yet a dramatic change.

This advantageous model collapsed during the years of the world economic crisis, introducing the second phase in foreign trade. The first

blow came precisely from England, the birthplace of economic liberalism. In November 1931, it retreated from almost a century of free trade and turned to protectionism – guarding its markets, raising tariffs, and turning to the principle of barter – goods for goods rather than money. This was a so-called November revolution, dramatically affecting not only Latvia's exports but also the entire European economy. A year later, in 1932, Germany also replaced free trade with a barter system, and a year after that Hitler came to power and began to use economic weapons aggressively for the good of the Reich: economic blackmail, threats, sanctions and the breaking of contracts became the foreign policy weaponry of Nazi Germany. The third phase had begun. Germany bought more from those who behaved "well", in the eyes of Berlin, and punished those who complained about Berlin's policies or somehow offended the Germans (Latvia had a "butter war" with Germany in June 1933; Lithuania suffered a very serious trade war between 1934 and 1935). In 1935, Latvia signed a new trade agreement with Berlin, based entirely on the barter system. Germany would buy from Latvia only if Latvia bought from Germany, and it was usually Germany that dictated what it would sell or not sell to Latvia. This led to the infamous "contingency lists", which had to be agreed upon each year, listing what Latvia would buy and what it would sell. Germany often forced goods that were not needed upon Latvia (for example, massive quantities of German children's toys); Germany also often violated its promises and did not deliver or sell to Latvia what Latvia had already paid for with its butter and bacon deliveries to Germany. By 1939, Germany was 20 million lats in debt in its deliveries of goods; Latvia had *de facto* given credits to Germany.

England also turned to barter, but not as aggressively as Germany. The new 1934 Latvian-British trade agreement was also based primarily on barter, but luckily not entirely so. England gradually began to write off the Baltic region to the German economic sphere, however. In 1939, therefore – for the first time in independent Latvia's history – Germany became the absolute number one trading partner for Latvia, in both imports and exports, with all of the consequences that entailed.

No matter how unfavourable barter was, it was still preferable to the ill fate that befell Latvia's foreign trade after September 1939, when the Second World War began. Germany blocked the shipping lanes in the Baltic Sea, and despite the desperate efforts of Latvia all trade with England began to come to a standstill. Raw materials and goods from abroad were soon in

short supply. Only Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia – leagued together – remained as serious trading partners. Latvia had to meet whatever demands Germany made, and Berlin was able to fulfil almost perfectly the three major goals it had in its economic relations with Latvia: in the first place, to sever Latvia's trade with the West, especially England, leaving only Eastern trade with its partner the Soviet Union and Latvia's insignificant trade with Estonia and Lithuania. To meet this goal, Berlin did not shy away from the most brutal of methods – for example, on December 28, 1939, it boarded the Latvian merchant vessel *Atis Kronvalds* and forced it into a German port. A second goal was to force Latvia to direct its exports – except those destined for the USSR – to Germany; it was in this spirit that the December 15, 1939 trade agreement was concluded. Berlin's third goal was to subjugate Latvian shipping and mobilise it for the German war economy. At the beginning of 1940, 49 Latvian vessels were confined to the German-controlled Baltic Sea and the North Sea, and Germany desired the use of these vessels to service the German-Latvian trade and even for the transport of Swedish ore to Germany. Latvia had been driven into a hopeless situation, since Moscow supported Germany's economic blackmail against Latvia.

Brief relief was provided by the trade agreement signed with the USSR in October 1939 as a consequence of the mutual assistance pact, but Moscow's plans were for the occupation of Latvia and not long-term economic relations with it; Moscow always recommended that Riga should submit to German demands. No matter what difficulties Latvia might have faced during the War, Latvia could have surmounted them had it not been for the Soviet occupation. Not only would the direct investments made in the Latvian economy not have been lost, Latvia would not have lost the investments in education, culture, and human resources; the newly educated generation of Latvian citizens would have returned the investment by working for Latvia's development. The work of independent Latvia in lessening social divisions and inequality would not have been lost, and the accomplishments in raising the level of the vulnerable would have endured – had Latvia not lost its independence, it would doubtless have continued to pursue the policies to prevent inequality from being handed down and creating barriers to the entry of new talent into culture and business. All of Latvia's plans were destroyed on June 17, 1940.

3.8. NATIONAL POLICY AND THE MINORITIES

The Basics of National Policy

Ethnic minorities in Latvia (Russians, Jews, Baltic Germans, Poles, Belarussians, Lithuanians and others) made up about a quarter of the population. This demographic situation required a balanced and tolerant national policy based on fundamental principles of liberalism and democracy. Its main goals were the consolidation of Latvian independence and domestic accord, respect for the specific interests of the national groups and equality among citizens, the strengthening of the political position of the titular nationality and its political responsibility, and the protection of the leading culture and language. The essence of national policy was determined by the titular nationality's natural desire to unify its ethnic and political community and create a stable nation-state. Interethnic relations were complicated and negatively affected by the heavy burden of history, the experience of the inhabitants in inter-ethnic relations, the presence of few ethnic Latvians in the upper classes of society, the unwillingness of the former elite (Baltic German but partly also Russian) to acquiesce to its loss of privilege in the changed circumstances that followed Latvia's liberation, and the reserved and not rarely openly hostile attitude of many in the ethnic minorities towards the new Latvian state. Several minorities found support for their strivings outside Latvia's borders: the Baltic Germans could count on the support of organisations in Germany, the Poles on Poland, and the Jews on Jewish communities abroad.

Latvian ethnic policy toward understanding among ethnic groups was characterised by multiplicity and fluctuation. In the parliamentary period, a tolerant approach to the minorities dominated. Already on August 23, 1919, a democratic and liberal law on citizenship had been adopted, granting Latvian citizenship to all persons legally resident in Latvia prior to the First World War regardless of their nationality or religion. Latvian citizenship could also be awarded for notable service to the state. In the beginning, not all of the nationalities were pleased by the law. The local Russian and German press even complained that Latvian citizenship was being imposed upon them. Attitudes swiftly shifted, however, and the adoption of Latvian citizenship became well nigh universal. According to the 1925 national census, 96.47% of the inhabitants of Latvia held Latvian citizenship. In the

circumstances prevailing in those days, this was a very high percentage indeed.

An important part of the policy was found in two laws passed by the People's Council on December 8, 1919 – “On the Educational Institutions of Latvia” and “On the Structure of Minority Schools in Latvia”, which guaranteed national and local government financing for minority schools and provided for the basis of cultural autonomy in education. Minorities could create their own school boards (these rights were exercised by the Baltic Germans, the Russians, the Jews, the Poles and the Belarussians), and the proposals called for the unification of these diverse boards in the Minorities Department of the Ministry of Education. The director of each minority educational system was given the opportunity to represent that minority in the determination of cultural policy at a national level. In this way the ethnic minorities had gained not only educational but also general cultural autonomy. They were guaranteed the same national cultural infrastructure that the titular nation developed – schools, associations, organisations, cultural institutions, a minority language press, etc.

Minorities in Latvia (and Estonia) were thus given noticeably better conditions than minorities possessed in many other countries and many more rights than international norms required. The guarantees for minority education mentioned in the preceding paragraph were among the most important legislation for the protection of minorities in Europe after the First World War. Of European countries, only in Latvia and Estonia was education in the mother tongue of ethnic minorities so broadly financed by the state. The models for cultural autonomy in the Baltic States were unique and differed from one another. In Latvia, the Ministry of Education as a state institution administered the school boards, and cultural and educational autonomy was realised within this structure. In Estonia, which adopted a law on cultural autonomy in February 1925, the institutions of self-administration for the minorities performed this function. For example, the cultural self-administration of the German minority, created after the aforementioned law was adopted, was in charge of all German cultural life in the country.

From the perspective of the minorities' interests, guarantees of their rights at a constitutional level were important. Broad guarantees for the minorities were given in the second part of the Satversme – the part finally rejected on April 5, 1922. In the First Saeima, minority members of parliament

made proposals that would have broadened their autonomy beyond the level of culture. The majority of ethnic Latvian politicians were unwilling to permit this, as such proposals would have created states within a state. Also, on July 7, 1923, Latvia had submitted a declaration guaranteeing the rights of minorities to the League of Nations. In response, analysing the situation of ethnic minorities in Latvia, the League found it to be very good.

Nonetheless, there was some ethnic discord in the first half of the 1920s and the interests of the ethnic groups in Latvia sometimes sharply conflicted. Minority members of parliament in the Constituent Assembly, and later in the First Saeima, attempted to create a bloc in opposition and criticised the conception of the nation-state. The Baltic German community supported the nobility against the agrarian reform. The divisions between the Latvians and the Baltic Germans were exacerbated when June 22, the decisive day in the Battle of Cēsis, was declared a national holiday. The Baltic Germans, Russians, and Jews frequently protested against the transition to Latvian as the state language, which began in the first days of the Republic but was legally formalised on November 20, 1921. Objectively, this limited the use of German and Russian as public languages and created discomfort for those who did not know Latvian – but from a legal standpoint, the granting of a new status to the Latvian language was normal and in accord with international norms; it was meant to promote Latvian and broaden its use. In the private sphere, the rights of minorities to use their native languages were wholly respected.

The stability in interethnic relations that characterised the mid-1920s and the latter half of the decade began to unravel in the years of the world economic crisis. In conditions of straitened circumstances for the Latvian economy, many nationalistically inclined persons began to ask the government to restrict state budget expenditures for the maintenance of ethnic minority schools and their administrative bodies. According to them, credits should be given to ethnic Latvian businesses and the Latvian language should be made obligatory in business administration. The government of Mārgers Skujenieks, leader of the Progressive Union, which was formed in December 1931, embarked upon a new course in national policy that was most noticeable in education policy. The Minister of Education, Atis Ķeniņš, undertook efforts for a unifying culture in Latvia (called a *Kulturkampf* by the Baltic Germans), and in practice this meant attempts to limit the autonomy of the ethnic minorities' school systems. He justified his actions with the complaint

that the situation of the minorities was superior to that of the Latvians in education. The Saeima did not support these policies, and on June 15, 1933, Ķeniņš was forced to resign.

A new situation in inter-ethnic relations was created by the coup of May 15, 1934. The Ulmanis regime began to implement a policy of "Latvianising" Latvia, taking a harder line against the minorities and not worrying about intensifying tensions with the non-Latvian ethnic groups. The Law on Public Education of July 12, 1934 stipulated the liquidation of the Department of Minority Schools and the minorities' school boards, limiting the autonomy of the minority schools. The Law on the State Language of January 5, 1934 – which did not contain anything unjust – introduced a more stringent language policy that was welcomed by Latvians but criticised by the minorities. Many of the Ulmanis government's economic projects and restructuring – devoted to narrowing the private sector – impinged upon the economic interests of the Baltic German, Russian and Jewish bourgeoisie. The local Germans found it difficult to acquire property in the Latvia of May 15, especially in rural areas.

The Russians

The Russians³³ formed the largest ethnic minority in Latvia. In 1935, there were 206,400 Russians in Latvia, making up 10,5% of the total population of the country. About 75% of these Russians lived in Latgallia, economically the least developed region, and 14% of them lived in Riga. 80% of Latvia's Russians were employed in agriculture. 7% worked in industry, and 4% in commerce. The Russians in Courland and Semigallia often earned their income from craftsmanship. As a whole, the Russian minority was not among the most successful national groups in Latvia. The average income of the Russians was about four times smaller than that of the Jews. The material prosperity and standard of living of the Russians depended upon their employment. In the countryside, most of the Russians were small farmers with economically unprofitable farms. Craftsmen and merchants were in a better position, as were those who worked in private and public institutions. Because many of the Russians spoke no Latvian (in 1930, only 18.9% of the Russians knew Latvian), there were few Russians in the national and local bureaucracies.

Russian political life in Latvia was not especially active. In the early

1920s, a few Russian parties were founded: the Russian National Union, the Russian Labour Union, and the Russian National Democratic Party. The Russian minority was represented in the Constituent Assembly and in every Saeima. By comparison to their numbers, however, the number of Russians in parliament was rather low (in the Fourth Saeima – six members). Only 2-6% of the voters in Latvia voted for the Russian parties. Many ethnic Russians were indifferent to unifying or coalescing on an ethnic basis, and many voted for the Social Democrats. Due to their low level of education, most were actually disinterested in politics. Furthermore, Russian society in Latvia was characterised by sharp inner contradictions. They lacked real or charismatic community leaders who could succeed in politics. The Orthodox archbishop Jānis Pommers was the most impressive defender of Russian interests in the Saeima. Melety Kalistratov, Leonty Spolansky, and Sergei Trofimov were also prominent. The persons elected to parliament by the ethnic Russians frequently changed.

National organisations held an important place in Russian society in Latvia. The major organisation created in the early 1920s was the Riga Russian Citizens' National Democratic Union. In the last years of its brief life, this organisation operated throughout the country. In the middle of the 1920s, several new national organisations were formed, for example the Russian National Union in Latvia, which had as its goal the promotion of Russian sociopolitical and cultural interests. Moreover, the Union wanted to secure cultural autonomy for the Russian minority. Latvia's Russian intelligentsia joined the ideology of democratic nationalism to their desire for greater cultural autonomy, finding in nationalism what they considered to be the organic connection between their ethnic group, rights, and moral principles. Many Russians looked to the ideas of democratic nationalism for the preservation of their language and national culture – but in other circumstances the ideology was used in open defense of Russian imperialism.

After the coup of May 15, Russian nationalism in Latvia was dampened and its full expression no longer permitted. Russian political activity decreased considerably under the authoritarian regime, and Russians became the most passive ethnic group in the country. Even the political police was surprised to find that many Russian organisations did not even attempt any activity. The Russians accepted the limiting of minority schools' autonomy and the decline in the number of newspapers and associations without much protest. Although the replacement of Russians who did not know Latvian with

Latvians in local governments was negatively perceived, there was no significant opposition to the Ulmanis regime in Russian society. Nonetheless, there was gradually growing disaffection with the authoritarian system, especially among rightist and leftist young people.

Most of the ethnic Russians were unable to identify with the fate of Latvia. Some saw Latvia as a temporary way station on the road to a democratic Russia while others long hid their disloyal stance toward the state, concealing their actual sympathies and antipathies. The true feelings of many only became apparent after the conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the imposition of the Soviet military bases. The local Russian press included articles and editorials extolling the growth of Russian power in connection to the annexation of eastern Poland and Soviet aggression in Finland. Not a few Latvian Russians welcomed the occupation and the forcible incorporation of Latvia in the USSR in summer 1940.

The Baltic Germans³⁴

Since 1920, with the exchange of roles between Latvians and Germans, the position of the Baltic German elite changed. The creation of the Latvian nation-state introduced a weakening in the political and economic position of the Baltic German minority. Latvians, who gained a dominant role in the Republic, began to mold political and national life as they saw fit. Some of the national projects were directed against Baltic German privileges in a direct manner. The heaviest blow for the Baltic Germans was the land reform, which broke their economic power in the countryside; this power had also been the basis for their political power. The Baltic Germans could only attempt to affirm their strength as a national minority, and this status was uncomfortable and strange to them.

The Baltic Germans were the third largest ethnic minority, among the richest and the most unified national groups as well as the most organised politically. They knew how to retain a strong position in Latvian trade and industry and they were also able to maintain a significant influence in the political life of the country. Unlike the other minorities in Latvia, the Baltic Germans developed an efficient system of political organisations that allowed them to unify disparate political forces and gain solid representation in parliament throughout the period of parliamentary democracy – five or six seats in parliament. Taking into account their real numbers – 3.9% of

the population in 1925 – that level of representation was surprisingly high. The other ethnic minorities were incapable of obtaining even the number of seats that would have reflected their share of the population. The remarkable political successes of the Baltic Germans were secured because of various factors. Most were urban and possessed the highest average level of education and culture, stimulating their political activity. They participated in elections with a single list and were highly disciplined at election time. The Baltic Germans also made clever use of the electoral system that existed in Latvia.

The willingness of the state to accommodate the Baltic Germans allowed them to make great strides in guaranteeing their cultural autonomy. They had the possibility of creating their own cultural infrastructure: schools, including a private institution of higher education – the Herder Institute – and associations, social organisations, cultural institutions, a German language press, etc. In 1923, they founded a centre for the coordination of their efforts – *Zentrale deutschbaltischer Arbeit in Lettland* – that was renamed the German People's Association in Latvia (*Deutschbaltische Volksgemeinschaft in Lettland*) in 1928, gradually acquiring broad functions and becoming the primary national organisation of the local Germans. The People's Association attempted to coordinate all of the other German organisations' work in the field of culture as well as in the social sphere and in business. With the help of the People's Association the Baltic Germans achieved a certain degree of self-rule. Once the authoritarian regime was founded in May 1934, the Association also came to represent the Baltic Germans politically.

Baltic German relations with the nation-state were complex and mutable. Their stance at first was one of waiting or even one of open rejection. They could not forget their privileged past and did not believe in the idea of an independent Latvia. They were unwilling to submit to the structure of a small nation's state and they did not accept the concept of the nation-state attempting to balance the competing interests of its citizens. In their view, the state worked only to transgress their imagined rights or ignore their demands. Gradually, however, the Baltic Germans were able to reorient themselves and adapt to their changed political and social circumstances. They behaved more and more loyally – though they kept the interests of their group at the fore, they began to cooperate in building the state. The movement from confrontation to accommodation was eased by both the national policy of tolerance in Latvia and by the Baltic German leadership, its position favouring the pragmatic development of a realistic political strategy. The

greatest accomplishments belonged to Paul Schiemann, the most notable and influential Baltic German politician in the 1920s and early 1930s in Latvia. He was a firm supporter of Latvian statehood and helped strengthen the concept of loyalty among the Baltic Germans.

After 1933, the opposite process began. The Baltic Germans gradually but steadily retreated from Latvian national life. This was closely and inseparably linked to Hitler's coming to power in Germany – the fascinating influence of the “new” German Reich, the metamorphosis of National Socialism into the official ideology and policy of Nazi Germany, the spread of Nazi ideas in the Baltic German community in Latvia and local Nazi propaganda that openly demanded a change in attitude towards the Latvian nation-state. In the view of these agitators, relations with the Republic of Latvia could no longer be a question of the heart – it could only be a “political matter”. For them, the interests of Germany took precedence over the interests of Latvia. They were ready to work for the good of Germany in the hope that Germany would one day subjugate Latvia and destroy its independence.

The main group promoting Nazism in Latvia was “the Movement” – *Bewegung* – headed by the Riga attorney Erhard Kroeger. Functioning illegally from spring 1933, the Movement masked itself as the German Education Association in Latvia for a few years (*Deutscher Bildungsverein in Lettland*) and the Baltic German Travel and Sports Association (*Deutschbaltischer Wander- und Sportverein*). Working behind these legal front organisations, the Movement gradually created and developed illegal structures. The core of the Movement was the Men's Union (*Mannschaft*), with branches in Riga, Liepāja, Kuldīga, Aizpute, Skrunda and other Latvian towns and villages. Men could join the *Mannschaft* from the age of nineteen, and every member received a gold pin.

The members of the Movement undertook ceaseless efforts to strengthen their influence in the main Baltic German organisations, beginning with the People's Association. They gained decisive success at the end of 1938 when their candidate, Alfred Intelmann, was elected to the presidency of the People's Association on November 26. Erhard Kroeger became a member of the directorate and the six most important organisations in the Association came into the hands of Movement members. The Movement celebrated November 26 as “the Day of the Seizure of Power”. Kroeger's group could now control the direction the Association took.

The strength of the Movement among Baltic Germans gave Latvians

reason to look upon the Baltic Germans with distrust. The Baltic Germans, on their side, were embittered by some of the actions of Ulmanis' authoritarian regime that affected their interests – the limitations on the autonomy of the German schools, the confiscation of the Large and Small Guildhalls, restrictions on acquiring land, etc. As a result, it was difficult and complex for Latvians to interact with the local Germans. In the late 1930s, Ulmanis' government came to the conclusion that the Baltic Germans were disloyal and cooperating on a "social platform" was therefore impossible. The Latvian Foreign Minister, Vilhelms Munters, distilled the concern, "We know how the leading Germans look upon Latvia and Latvians. We know they hate us and look across the borders; we know that they take their complaints abroad along various routes, determined to prevent normal relations between Germany and Latvia, hoping that the Germans will invade our country."³⁵

In autumn 1939, the exodus of the Baltic Germans began; their departure was a notable expression and consequence of the criminal policies of the USSR and Nazi Germany. By spring 1940, about 51,000 Germans left Latvia, mostly in German ships. They were settled in German occupied western Poland. About 10,000 Germans remained in Latvia. After the forcible incorporation of Latvia into the Soviet Union in summer 1940, the majority of the remainder expressed the desire to depart. A second exodus took place between January 10 and March 25, 1940, and only about 1,500 Baltic Germans remained in Latvia.

With hindsight it is completely clear that the departure of the Baltic Germans from Latvia was an irreplaceable loss. Many local Germans were leading specialists in economics, medicine and other crucial fields. An intellectual vacuum began with their exodus, soon to be intensified by the Stalinist deportations, the Holocaust, and the massive emigration that came with the return of Soviet troops in 1944 and 1945.

The Jews

The Jews were the ethnic minority that had seen the most shrinkage of their community in the waves of war. 40,000 Jews had been expelled from Courland by the Tzarist government in April, 1915, when they were accused collectively of pro-German sympathies. Others became refugees, just as many Latvians did, and still others emigrated to the West. In 1914, there were at least 170,000 Jews living in the territory of Latvia; by 1920, however, in independent Latvia, their numbers had declined to 75,000, or 4.99% of

the population. Later this number increased, though: about 12,000 Jewish refugees returned from Russia, and a few thousand Jews who had not lived in Latvia before the First World War sought refuge in the Republic and gained citizenship. Latvia welcomed refugees, as it did later – once Hitler took power in Germany, and after the annexation of Austria and the occupation of Czechoslovakia, hundreds of people found refuge in Latvia. At the outset of the occupation, in June 1940, 550 of these later refugees were still in Latvia while others had used Latvia as a stepping-stone to seek refuge in the West. Latvia was at least friendlier to refugees than the wealthy and secure United States. In 1940, there were over 90,000 Jews in Latvia – 46,000 of them in Riga, where they made up 11% of the city's inhabitants. The Jewish community could develop freely for the first time in many centuries, the regional barriers between them slowly overcome. On the one side were the ancient, affluent, and mostly German speaking Jews of Courland, and on the other the more recent arrivals in Latgallia, poorer, more religious, and Russian or Yiddish speaking. In the middle were the diverse Jews of Riga. Though 10-15% of the Jews in Latvia were considered poor – a percentage much lower than in Poland or even Lithuania – most were very affluent (comparable to the Baltic Germans) and they had the lowest rate of infant mortality in the country. Gradually the Jews began to integrate, learning Latvian. Though there was some anti-Semitism in Latvia, as everywhere else in Europe, there was doubtless less of it than in Lithuania, not to mention Poland. No anti-Semitic laws were ever passed in Latvia, not even a *numerus clausus* in institutions of higher education (such a law was adopted in Hungary in 1920); no pogroms ever took place in free Latvia, and as a whole the two decades of independence were the best years in the history of the Jews' life in Latvia, their golden age.

Though the Jews pursued a dream of extra-territorial autonomy like the Baltic Germans, they did not get it – as they did in the first half of the 1920s in Lithuania and as they had with the Germans in Estonia between 1925 and 1940 (such autonomy was a state within a state, with a parliament elected by the minorities. The National Council in Lithuania and the Cultural Council in Estonia had legal status within the states). Nonetheless, all Jewish individual and collective rights were fully guaranteed, and Jewish culture developed and blossomed until the destruction of the state in 1940. Since Latvia had no major Jewish religious center (like Lithuania and Poland) and Latvian Jews did not create any notable literary works, most Jewish efforts and historic accomplishments centred on their schools, especially education

in the Jewish eastern European language, Yiddish; education in Hebrew was also a successful focus. A pillar of Jewish identity and preservation of language in the coming occupation and the years of Soviet anti-Semitism was the education that had been gained in the Jewish schools of independent Latvia. It is no wonder that Latvian Jews and Jews from Riga were among the pioneers of anti-Soviet and Zionist activity in the USSR between 1950 and 1980. Jewish religious life developed without any obstructions and even with national support – in 1920, there were 17 synagogues and houses of worship in Riga; by 1937 there were 37, and a similar increase took place wherever Jews lived (72 synagogues and 136 houses of worship in total).³⁶ Jewish political life was very active – in the number of parties (nine in 1928) the Jews were behind only the Latvians and the Baltic Germans, and Jews were represented in parliament as a reflection of their actual numbers throughout the 1920s – 5%. Jewish communities anywhere else in Eastern Europe did not accomplish this, and in 1931 their representation in Latvia also declined: they had become less active politically. Three political currents should be mentioned because of their historical importance – *Agudat Israel*, known as the Aguda, which represented religiously Orthodox and politically conservative Jews, cooperating with the Latvian bourgeois parties (especially the Farmers' Union) and gave Europe one of its most important *Shtadlen*, the defender of Jewish interests and community leader Mordecai Dubin, who was a member of the People's Council and all four Saeimas. Dubin tirelessly worked for the good of every Jew, did much to support Latvia's economic recovery, and used his excellent personal relationship with Kārlis Ulmanis to defend Jewish interests even under the authoritarian regime. *Aguda* was not a Zionist organisation. It rejected the creation of state of Israel before the arrival of Messiah, but neither was it vehemently anti-Zionist. One of Dubin's most important accomplishments, with international historical resonance, was twice saving the life of Rabbi Joseph Yitshak Schneerson, the Sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe. This first happened in 1927, when the Lubavitcher Rebbe was sentenced to death in Soviet Russia. In the broad international campaign to free him, Dubin was among the most active persons, receiving unofficial support from influential Latvian politicians like Kārlis Ulmanis. The Rebbe was allowed to leave Russia for Latvia, where he was even given citizenship by the government. Riga became the world centre for Chabad Lubavitch. The second time Dubin saved his life was in September 1939 in Warsaw; the Rebbe had moved to Poland in the 1930s

but retained his Latvian citizenship. Again receiving Ulmanis' support, Dubin became involved in rescuing the Rebbe, which was accomplished in practical terms by the Secretary of the Latvian Embassy in Warsaw, Arnolds Langins. In a city besieged by the Germans and burning, Langins found the ailing Rebbe and dozens of other Jewish Latvian citizens and organised their evacuation from Warsaw. When the so-called diplomatic train left a fallen Warsaw on October 17, 1939, carrying the foreign diplomatic corps, not only Langins but the Rebbe and his family was on it. The Rebbe later left Latvia for the United States. Both Dubin and Langins had behaved in an exemplary manner – Langins even heroically.³⁷ The occupying forces jailed Latvia's patriot Dubin already in early 1941, and he perished in the Gulag in 1956, physically but not spiritually broken.

Within the Zionist wing – which was very active in Latvia – two directions must be mentioned. The religious Zionists – the *Mizrahi* (or “Dawn”) Party – wanted an independent Jewish state in Palestine, but wanted that state to be religious; this party was most ably represented by Mordecai Nurok, who was also one of the leaders of the world Zionist movement. Mizrahi was oriented toward the centre left and contributed much to the development of Jewish culture. Nurok was also deported after the 1940 invasion; the American President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was able to gain his release, and Nurok relocated to Palestine to become one of the founders of the Jewish state in 1948. Neither Aguda nor Mizrahi were actually “born” in Latvia – the first was “born” in Poland, the latter in Lithuania. Latvia, however, gave Zionism its most dynamic current – the youth branch *Beitar*. Zeev Zabotinsky's militant, rightist Zionist revisionists felt that Israel could only be born through force of arms, overcoming British and Arab resistance. Beitar was founded in Riga in 1923, when Zabotinsky was about to abandon politics – inspired by the intensity of young Riga Jews and their devotion to the ideals of Zionism, he returned to the political stage. Riga was the world centre for Beitar until 1930, and the organisation promoted Zionist thought and supported Jewish loyalty to the Latvian Republic. Many Beitar activists engaged in armed struggle for Israel's independence between 1945 and 1948.

A religious authority of world fame that Latvian Jewry produced was Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook (1865-1935). Born in Grīva, he settled in Palestine and from 1921 – when the Chief Rabbinate was established there – he became the first Ashkenazi Grand Rabbi. One of his major thoughts, which was to have great practical value in the realisation of the

Zionist dream, was that even secular and atheistic Jews who went to Palestine were fulfilling a religious mission and doing God's will. He believed that even atheists played a major role in accomplishing God's will. Extreme Orthodox rabbis saw Kook's tolerance towards secular Jews and his invitations to them to return to the Holy Land before the Messiah's return as overly modern.

3.9. EDUCATION AND CULTURE

National Policy in Culture and Education

"In the days when the dream of a Latvian state began to take shape, thoughts of cultivating our national culture and supporting it were born with it."

Kārlis Skalbe

Broad support for culture was characteristic of the Latvian nation-state from the earliest days of its existence. On November 18, 1920 – on the second anniversary of the proclamation of independence – Kārlis Ulmanis' government adopted one of its most important decisions: the Culture Foundation, a permanent institution for the promotion of culture, was founded. In 1921, it was directed by the chair of parliament, and until 1940 it extended priceless support to culture, with especial attention to the development of rural and school libraries, the construction of cultural centres in rural areas, the material support of the most notable artists and academics, and funding for their work in centres of science and culture abroad. Among the larger projects funded by the Culture Foundation were the creation of the Botanical Garden of the University of Latvia, the founding of the Historical Institute in 1936, and the publication of the Milenbahs-Endzelins definitive dictionary of the Latvian language. State support helped Latvia develop as a highly cultured nation – but after the coup of May 15, 1934, there was a growing tendency to fully regulate and subjugate almost every form of cultural life in the country.

There were few areas that received more of a focus in the new Latvian nation-state than education. Beautiful modern schools were constructed throughout the country, from the working class neighbourhood of Čiekurkalns in Riga (where the architect Alfrēds Grīnbergs' school in the functiona-

list style was internationally remarkable) to Zilupe on the Russian border. Few Europeans were as determined to receive quality education as the youth of the new Latvia. According to the 1919 Law on Education, elementary education – from the age of eight to fourteen; six grades – was obligatory and free. The next level was that of the primary trade schools; on the eve of the occupation there were 126. Above that was secondary education: *gymnasia* (70), technical schools, business schools, and teachers' institutes (4) – 111 institutions in all in 1939, ahead of even the citadels of culture in Europe. Latvia had one secondary school for every 26,100 inhabitants, while Germany had one for every 42,500 inhabitants and France one for 43,000. Nowhere was the desire for education more pronounced than in higher education, however. Latvia had the highest number of students per capita in Europe – in 1932, there were 45 students for every 10,000 persons (20 in Germany, 9 in Great Britain. In practice, the Latvian rate was one student for every 228 inhabitants). This did, of course, lead to a serious social problem – overproduction of graduates and a new phenomenon called the unemployed intelligentsia.

On September 28, 1919, the University of Latvia opened its doors – an absolute necessity for the nation-state. “This autumn day speaks to us in the language of spring. We breathe a vernal hope... we stand on land that carries Latvia and its university,” the Minister of Education Kārlis Kasparsons proclaimed. The University became a major academic centre: some of the major accomplishments were in Baltic philology (Jānis Endzelīns' *Latvian Grammar* of 1922 (*Latviešu gramatika*) and the dictionary already mentioned, *Latviešu valodas vārdnīca* (published in four volumes between 1923 and 1932); Šmits' *Introduction to Baltic Philology* (*Ievads baltu filoloģijā*, 1921–1936); Mechislav Tzentnerschwer's studies in corrosionism and Fišers' studies in analytical chemistry were notable, as was the work of Lucs and Vanags in organic chemistry. In 1929, Petrikalns made important studies in photochemistry and the phenomena of luminescence, and Auškaps in spectroscopy. Boris Wipper, who lived in Latvia from 1924, published fine studies of Renaissance art in Italy, Dutch painting and the history of art in Latvia (*Latvju māksla*, 1927).

Two other institutions of higher education were founded in 1919. The rector of the Academy of Art was the noted painter Vilhelms Purvītis (1872–1945). There were seven master classes, and teaching at the Academy was organised under the influence of the Czarist St Petersburg Academy. Purvītis himself led the landscape master class, and the result was an entire “Purvītis

school” including the painters Ārijs Skride, Jūlijs Viļumanis, Eduards Kalniņš Jānis Gailis, and Kārlis Melbāzdis. Purvītis’ tremendous personal investment was the reason why the Academy of Art retained its high academic level even after 1945 and the Soviet re-occupation. The Academy seemed too conservative to many younger Latvian artists, and so they found an outlet at the Riga People’s College. Created in 1920 by the Social Democrats, the College from 1923 to May 15, 1934, when it was shuttered, included a drawing and painting studio where Liberts, Vidbergs, Ubāns and Suta – prominent Latvian modernists – taught. On March 1, 1929, young radicals even submitted a petition to the Latvian parliament asking that the Latvian Academy of Art be closed. Luckily, the Saeima did not do this.

The Conservatoire was led by the renowned Jāzeps Vītols (1863–1948), not only a great composer but also a rector very loved by his students. On the eve of the end of independence, in 1939, the Agricultural University in Jelgava was founded. In independent Latvia the full spectrum of education was available for the first time in the history of the Latvian people, from primary education through diverse higher academic education. It was a historic gain.

Arts

Visual art. Three great historical events – the battles of the Latvian Riflemen, the tragic experience of the refugees, and the War of Independence – combined with the influence of modern European (especially French and Belgian) art caused a real revolution in art in Latvia. As refugees in Russia, young Latvian artists encountered French modern art at the Morozov and Shchukin Gallery between 1915 and 1917, and these works – especially those of Cubism – made a profound impression on them. (It was in painting that modernism in Latvia was in full flower. In other disciplines it was less strong, though it did appear in Latvian music in the 1930s).³⁸ One of Latvia’s most talented painters, Jānis Kazaks (who had barely crossed the threshold into his twenties) wrote, “We believed that after its terrible ordeals the Latvian people would survive, and in art we would speak in an unheard of language.” They began to speak, indeed: an expressionist group was founded in Riga in 1919, and by 1920 they began to be called “the Riga group”. This group, creating a free and creative Latvian culture in the context of a completely free society, best represented Latvian radical modernism. Latvian modernism found full expression in the work of Jānis Kazaks (who lived only briefly,

1895–1920), in his portraits and refugee scenes, and in the cycle of Aleksandrs Drēviņš, “Bēgles” (“The Refugee Women”, painted 1915–1917). Like Kazaks, the especially well-educated painter Jāzevs Grosvalds (1891–1920) died young. He had seriously studied the French Fauvists and Cubists and was the main figure to inspire a generation of Latvian artists, searching for new ideas and organising exhibitions. Both Grosvalds and Kazaks possessed what the writer Anšlavs Eglītis called “a monumental simplicity”. Another influential and radical modernist was the multi-faceted Romans Suta (1896–1944), who completely rejected realism to promote expressing only the inner being of the artist – “*l’art pour l’art*”. Influenced by the French Cubists and the Russian Constructivists, Suta created abstract, geometrical paintings, graphics, and coloured porcelain works in his avant-garde studio “Baltars”. His works were given the highest honours at the Paris Exhibition of 1925. Other notable modernists were at work at that time – Oto Skulme, Erasts Šveics, and Niklāvs Strunke among them – and Riga as a centre for modern art was not far behind the great European centres of the day, Paris and Berlin. Stipends from the Culture Foundation allowed Latvian artists to visit centres like Paris and Berlin. In 1923, at the Berlin Exhibition, Europe glimpsed the work of well-known Latvian artists like the sculptor Kārlis Zāle (1888–1942), who was taken by Constructivism at the time, and the painters Niklāvs Strunke, Sigismunds Vidbergs, and Aleksandrs Beļcovs – a second wave of Cubism swept Latvia.

As society became more bourgeois in the second half of the 1920s, modernism gradually declined. There were many professional artists in Latvia – as many as 300 in the late 1920s (in 1914 there were only between 50 and 60) – and they had to struggle to survive. Modernism meant anti-traditionalism, but the taste of society and purchasers of art was mostly conservative and nationally oriented. Returning to Latvia from modernistic Berlin, Kārlis Zāle turned to a field for which there was great demand in Latvia, even politically: the creation of monumental sculptural ensembles. With the Freedom Monument (1935) and the Cemetery of the Brethren in Riga (1924–1936), Zāle joined patriotic and mythological symbols in a rather conservative neoclassical style reminiscent of early twentieth century German monumental art – but no longer redolent of modernism. That was exactly why Zāle’s designs won over those of the notable Latvian sculptor Teodors Zaļkalns, whose proposals were more modern and of very high quality, but less traditional. In the years of the Ulmanis regime, many former modernists

retreated from their earlier inspiration and turned to realism and landscapes; some (Tone, Skulme, and Liberts) even painted portraits of the Vadonis or figurative compositions that reflected the authoritarian ideology. These products were either for profit or served to demonstrate loyalty to the regime.

Latvian painting was characterised by its diversity. There was portraiture, represented by both psychological (Voldemārs Tone) and representative (the older master, Roberts Tilbergs). There were landscapes, primarily scenes of rural labour (Kārlis Miesnieks, Ģederts Eliass. "In Eliass' work, even people transporting manure look great and important – that is the view," the painter Imants Vecozols writes of the monumentality of those landscapes) and scenes from the life of fishermen (especially Jānis Liepiņš with his fine sense of colour). Moreover, there were the most diverse of landscapes by artists like Purvītis, Pladers and Skride in the academic vein. Ubāns was an surpassing colourist. In Eduards Kalniņš' works, the painterly dominated the scene portrayed. Liberts' city scenes set in Riga, Paris and Venice are also remarkable. Still lifes were painted by Leo Svemps – often flowers in a bright palette – and Šveics and Norītis favoured everyday objects, loaves of bread and clay cups. From the 1950s, this latter tradition was continued by Vilis Ozols, Imants Vecozols and Līvija Endzelīna.

Two artists born in Latvia attained genius by leaving to work in foreign centres of art. Gustavs Klucis (1895-1944) was born in Rūjiena but became famous in Soviet Russia in the 1920s when Russia was truly (if briefly) a world centre for modernism. Unlike many Latvian modernists, who could be called leftists or "salon socialists" but not communists, Klucis truly believed in a communist utopia and fervently served it – until the Gulag system destroyed the artist himself. As a painter, graphic artist (with a specialty in colour graphics) and sculptor, Klucis was a tireless supporter of Constructivism and used his talents for Soviet agitation beginning with his decorations for the May Day celebrations in Moscow in 1918. Almost all of the media we find in contemporary art were already used by Klucis – collages, experiments with paper and wood, installations, impressive posters, and photomontages. Like Aleksandrs Drēviņš, who was shot in Moscow on February 26, 1938, Klucis was one of the most notable figures in twentieth century art.

Another artist of world renown was Mark Rothko – born Marcus Rothkowitz in Daugavpils in 1903, he died in New York in 1970. His family left what was then Dvinsk in the Russian Empire to seek a better (and less

anti-Semitic) life in the United States. Once modern art had been destroyed in Communist Russia, Germany was in the hands of the Nazis, and its last citadel – Paris – had been occupied, the centre of modern art moved to New York in about 1940. Rothko excelled in a diverse scene with his Abstract Expressionism, his free-floating rectangular fields of colour now classics of twentieth century art (the artist himself rejected the label of abstractionism and stressed that his art speaks “to the most important human emotions – tragedy, ecstasy, fate”.) Klucis consciously served the purposes of totalitarian propaganda whilst Rothko with his abstract fields of colour evoked a strong emotional response. His paintings were from the pole opposite to propaganda: abstractions cannot be subjugated to it.

Literature. Rainis (1865-1929) was the figure inseparably linked to the birth of the independent Latvian nation and the struggle for freedom. In autumn 1919, when Latvia faced its mostly deadly enemy – the Russian and German Black Hundred under the leadership of Bermond-Avalov – Rainis’ dramatic ballad “Daugava” was published as a separate work, and the defenders of Latvia took the little pamphlet with them to the front. In “Daugava”, Rainis again turned to the poetry that had provided such inspiring power in the Revolution of 1905 – brief, emotionally charged lines:

*Ejam! Uz priekšu! Uz cīņu!
Mēs negribam kalpot ne austrumam,
Mēs negribam vergot ne rietumam.*

(“Onward! Forward! To battle! / It is not our will to serve the East, / Nor to be enslaved by the West.”)

The patriotic role played by the poem was immense. The writer Andrejs Upīts, then in the service of Stučka’s Soviet Latvia, attacked the work for a reason, as did Latvian communists. In 1919, Rainis – still in exile in Switzerland – penned two remarkable works: the tragedy “Joseph and His Brothers” and the play (dubbed “a folk song”) “I play, I dance”. After many years of exile he and his wife, the dramatist, writer and poet Aspazija, returned to Latvia on April 10, 1920, greeted by mass enthusiasm in Riga – two of the finest boulevards were given their names, and both immediately became actively involved in Social Democratic politics. The coming nine years turned out not to be Rainis’ happiest, however – though he wrote a considerable

number of texts, especially in children's literature, the greatness of his earlier works was lacking, in a reflection of the inescapable ebb tide of genius. Like many a great man, Rainis lived a very sensitive life riddled with trials. Three things especially embittered his last years. The first was personal – complications in his marriage to the great poet Aspazija and a late love for much younger Olga Krīgere, to whom he dedicated the collection of verse *Mēness meitiņa* (*Moon Lass*) in 1925. The second was his desire for the Nobel Prize. This obsessed him from 1919, when he wrote "I must win the Nobel Prize" in his diary on July 10, while still in Switzerland. For many reasons – among them the conservative parties' and writers' envy and intrigue against the Social Democrat Rainis – he wasn't even nominated, wounding him. Rainis loved political office, and expressed the belief that "new states need a political poet who has founded them earlier, in his imagination". He especially craved the presidency, and the presidency was denied him not only because he had no talent in politics but because he was an active Social Democrat and the balance of political power prevented it – this failure wounded him, too. Rainis died in 1929, dissatisfied and lonely. He was and remains at the acme of Latvian literature, his influence making a historical mark on the creation of the modern nation even beyond his literary accomplishments.

Another current in art and politics was represented by the stylistically and ideologically conservative Edvarts Virza (1883–1940), among the most notable of Latvian poets, having written the remarkable poetic novel *Straumēni* – a hymn to the patriarchal Latvian countryside, *Straumēni* (the title is the name of a farmstead) is unsurpassed in the refined beauty of its language in Latvian literature, comparable in literary values to the inimitable work of Virza's older contemporary, the great Russian writer Ivan Bunin. In contrast to Rainis' leftist politics, Virza – active in the Farmers' Union – sang the praises of authoritarianism, finding in autocracy not so much a narrow political view as a complex of aesthetic and moral values blended with a neo-romantic idealisation of the patriarchal Latvian farmstead. A master of style, Virza became one of the most ardent and active molders of Ulmanis' cult of personality after the coup.

No one represented the new, dynamic, urban world as brightly and wildly as the popular and exceedingly talented poet Aleksandrs Čaks (1901–1950), whose prime was in the 1920s and 1930s. Unlike Rainis, who treated grand but often distant symbols, or Virza, who indulged in nostalgia for a patriarchal rural life, Čaks depicted a dashing urban life of joy and sadness,

centred on love and amusements in the centre of the city and in poetically romanticised outskirts, in taverns and in the company of women. In the gay 1920s – as they would come to be called – Čaks made heroes of audacious young bon-viands in collections like *Es un šis laiks* (*I and This Time*) and *Sirds uz trotuāra* (*Heart on the Sidewalk*). His poetry was both simple and transcendent, occasionally sentimental and gloomy, sometimes full of bravado and now and then almost trivial – and it was the sort of verse people learned by heart, quoted, read aloud and put to music to sing. The urban scene was also central to Jānis Grots, Jānis Sudrabkalns and Jānis Ziemeļnieks, three poets who could share the pantheon of the period with Čaks.

Independent Latvia was also characterised by the growth of professional theatre. The first drama house, offering performances from 1919, was the National Theatre. It was noted for its slow strivings to escape the clutches of realism and even naturalism, actors like Lilija Ērika, Mirdza Šmithene, Anta Klints, Žanis Katlaps and Jānis Ģermanis adding lustre to its stage. But in a dynamic, modern era, the tone was set by another direction – refugees and exiles returned from different directions full of fresh ideas in 1920. The actor and director Eduards Smiļģis had experienced experimental theatre in Russia; Rainis had also come home. Both wanted a new theatre free of boring realism and naturalism, centred on fascinating actors, moving ideas and symbols. The name it was given was Dailes teātris, and it opened its doors in 1920 to bewitch audiences with innovative performers and provocative modern sets for which the designer Jānis Muncis received the Grand Prize at the 1925 Paris Exhibition. Luminaries to grace its stage included Arveds Miķelsons, Artūrs Filipsons, Lilita Bērziņa, Emīlija Viesture and Elvīra Bramberga. Burhards Sosārs provided enchanting music (“The crazy year of the cavaliers” for the play “Gösta Berling” became a hit) and Felicita Ertneere contributed careful choreography. Rainis’ “Fire and Night”, “Indulis and Ārija”, and “I Play, I Dance” were reborn on the stage of the Dailes Theatre, and Ibsen and Shakespeare were also given new life.

The dynamic spirit of national construction was reflected in the variety of theatres. There was a theatre in almost every larger provincial town, with major playhouses in Daugavpils, Ventspils, Rēzekne, Jelgava, and Liepāja. Traveling troupes also performed (The Peasants’ Theatre from 1930 to 1940). Temporary ensembles also appeared, like the Intimate Theatre of Biruta Skujeniece in 1924 and 1925. The leftist current popular throughout Europe was represented by the Social Democratic Workers’ Theatre (1926–1934),

benefiting from the remarkable scenography of Niklāvs Strunke but suffering from a reliance on Soviet drama. Almost every minority also had a theatre. In 1921, the Russian Drama Theater was reopened, sometimes offering great Russian actors' guest performances (Vassily Kachalov and Mikhail Chekhov) and fine direction by Yuri Yurovski. There were German, Lithuanian and Polish theatres, too, but the best attended performances were those of the Jewish minority: in the 1936/1937 season, the Jewish stage offered 289 performances attended by 103,000 theatre-goers. At the end of the 1930s, there were 16 drama houses in Latvia, and Liepāja had even its own opera house.

Few cultural institutions in the country were born at such a fateful moment as the National Opera. In October 1919, when Bermond-Avalov's troops attacked Riga, the New Riga Theatre was shelled. It was there that the National Opera was to open. On November 11, the first rehearsals were held – the very day when the tide turned and the Latvian Army began a counter-attack against Bermond-Avalov's forces – and already on December 2 came opening night for Wagner's "Tannhauser". Already in this first performance, the audience was enthralled by three great figures who would influence the destiny of the opera in the years to come – the conductor Teodors Reiters with his avid love for Wagner; an experienced dramatic tenor, the corpulent Rūdolfs Bērziņš, who had sung in noted German opera houses; and the young Milda Brehmane-Štengele with her vast range and beautiful voice. They and the renowned baritone Ādolfs Kaktiņš were also talented as actors, and without them, the performances of many an opera, especially those of Verdi and Puccini, became unimaginable. Wagner operas were favoured, testifying to a high level of art at the Opera. Already in the next season, in 1920, "Lohengrin" was performed. This became one of the most popular operas in the repertoire, with 99 performances through 1939. In 1934, the great Mikhail Chekhov as guest director undertook performances of the mystical "Parsifal", which was one of the best-attended operas (970 persons in the audience at each performance). In 1921, Wagner's masterpiece "Tristan und Isolde" was performed – prematurely, the opera later withdrawn from the repertoire. The same fate awaited "Die Walküre", which saw only four performances. Many of the world's greatest operas were performed with success, however: Mozart's "Don Giovanni" Beethoven's "Fidelio", Verdi's "Otello", Mussorgsky's "Boris Godunov", Tchaikovsky's "Queen of Spades" and Richard Strauss's "Salome".

The flowering of the Opera already in the mid-1920s was aided by a readiness to invite great foreign directors and conductors to Riga. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia – a catastrophe for the world – led many Russian artists to look for work outside the Soviet state, and Riga benefited from its proximity. Two made a particularly remarkable impression. The first was the director Pyotr Melnikov, who had worked at the Bolshoi; arriving in Riga in 1922. He was a director of great scope and refined taste despite his tendency to a dogmatic and authoritarian style of direction. A few years later, the conductor Emil Kuper arrived, bringing his fine sense of the vocal art to Riga, of great help to the singers. The fruitful collaboration of Kuper and Melnikov helped to bring about the first blossoming of the National Opera between 1925 and 1928, but this was soon followed by less successful years as the intrigues found in many a theatre took their toll, together with changes in the public taste (broader audiences brought with them a focus on lighter, genre works), whilst the nationalistic complaints of some newspapers against the “Russification” of the Opera led to a change in the leadership and repertoire, beginning an unforgivable shift to operettas. Artistic resurgence began between 1934 and 1935 with the advent of the director Jānis Zariņš, the conductor Jānis Kalniņš and the stage designer Pēteris Rožlapa. Along with the National Opera, Latvian opera came into being: in the 1920s and 1930s, 12 operas were composed and 11 were performed. Opera is an old and extremely difficult form of art, however, and really only the very first of these – Alfrēds Kalniņš’ “Baņuta” (1920) was truly a work of art of high quality, reflecting the composer’s belief that “musical drama is the highest function of opera, and only where drama and music are fused into one whole can we speak of an ideal work for the stage”. “Baņuta” was well received by the fairly conservative Latvian opera-goers. The three operas by his son “Lolita’s Wonder Bird” (1934), “Hamlet” (1936) and “In the Fire” (1937) did not meet a similarly warm reception – especially in “Hamlet”, Kalniņš had begun to tread the path of modernism, and this was not accepted by the average listeners of the time, accustomed as they were to traditionally melodic music. Today the works of Jānis Kalniņš attract growing interest. Their high artistic value is fully recognised and “Hamlet” is even compared to one of cornerstones of twentieth century modern opera, the Czech composer Leos Janacek’s “Jenufa”.

The Opera reached its zenith just as the independent Latvian state was

entering its twilight. Leo Blech was forced to leave Nazi Berlin. Blech had given thirty-five years to German opera and became famous for his talents in working with musical ensembles, but now he'd become an unwanted non-Aryan. Latvia not only offered him refuge – he arrived in Riga on January 13, 1938 – but immediately offered him the position of primary conductor at the Opera. Already on January 27, only two weeks after his arrival, the curtain opened on a new production of “Aida” under his baton. On March 25, this was followed by Puccini’s “Manon Lescaut”, and at the end of the year by Verdi’s “Requiem”. Blech’s productions in collaboration with Jānis Zariņš and Pēteris Rožlapa were the pinnacle of the Opera’s flowering in the 1930s. Brehmane-Štengele wrote in her memoirs, “Opera performances became true ceremonies when Leo Blech took up the baton. What precision, what expression, what emotion! He knew every partitura of every opera in detail and knew how to inspire the other artists... the Maestro inspired me with a single sentence: ‘*Du kannst das dir erlauben!*’ (‘You can allow yourself that!’)” Every Blech performance was attended by the young Latvian conductor Leonīds Vīgners, who studied the art of the experienced maestro. After the war, it would be Vīgners who maintained the fame and excellence of the Opera. On February 15, 1940, the Opera experienced what was perhaps its greatest triumph, tragically the last in a free Latvia: with Blech as conductor and Zariņš as director, the curtain opened on Mozart’s mysterious “The Magic Flute” with a new star, the coloratura soprano Elfrīda Pakule in the very difficult role of Queen of Night. The next opening night took place in occupied Latvia, when functionaries of the occupation and Red Army officers gathered on December 20, 1940, to listen to Stalin’s favourite opera, the hack Dzerzhinsky’s “Quiet Flows the Don”. It was already another world and a humiliation for the Opera and its devotees.

The life of the great opera singer Hermann Jadlowker, a great coloratura tenor with a fantastic timbre, born in Riga in 1877, was led outside of Latvia for the most part. He began to sing at the Berlin Hofoper already in 1909 and earned the admiration of his audiences (including Kaiser Wilhelm II) for his role as Lohengrin. This brought him world fame, and in 1910 he appeared on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, in the era of Caruso. Jadlowker was no shadow. His repertoire was vast, from the lyrical “Faust” to the exceedingly difficult and dramatic Raul in “Les Huguenots” of Meyerbeer. Jadlowker was unsurpassed in German operas, from the role of Bacchus in Richard Strauss’s “Ariadne auf Naxos” to the works of Wagner.

He returned to Riga in retirement in 1929, offering private classes and singing in the synagogues. Luckily, Jadlowker left for Palestine in 1938, escaping the Holocaust and living in Israel until his death in Tel Aviv in 1953.³⁹

Latvian choral music resonated internationally, especially the choir of Teodors Reiters (1920-1944) – a truly national institution, the choir maintained a high world standard. A change of generations took place in music. Jāzeps Vītols and Emīlis Melngailis continued the traditions of Russian classical music, adding a national coloration. Both had a notable role in producing arrangements of Latvian folk music. The new generation took a more modern path. Jānis Mediņš was one of the most productive symphonic composers, while Richard Strauss and French impressionist music influenced Ādolfs Ābele, Jānis Kalniņš, and Volfgangs Dārziņš. Music – especially classical music, but other genres as well – was heavily influenced by a new invention, radio. Music had been bounded by space (the concert hall) and distance (the limitations of hearing), but both these obstacles were overcome and life without music became unimaginable under the influence of radio. The first words broadcast in Latvia (“Hallo, Latvija”) were heard on November 1, 1925, and this is the birthday of Latvian radio. At first broadcasts were limited to two hours a day – from 8:00 to 10:00 in the evenings – but in the coming years the broadcasts were extended to seven hours, and nine hours on Sundays. In 1928, Jānis Mediņš became the director of the radio symphony, enriching broadcasts with serious music. The number of radios in Latvia was small and began to rise precipitously only in the very late 1930s (when there were over 100,000 receivers in Latvia) as a result of the technically excellent products of VEF, with their fine design. In this period, radio began to become a means of mass communication. The first Latvian politician to employ radio for political and ideological goals was Kārlis Ulmanis. His speech on February 10, 1940, in which he suddenly announced that Latvia might see “a grave, decisive moment” – war? – was the first instance when a broadcast resulted in fear in the country.

Ballet grew on the basis of fertile foreign influences. Its development was aided by openness to these influences and the talent of artists from Latvia. As in the visual arts, refugees came into close contact with the art in Russia, and fell in love with classical ballet. Already in 1919, a small group of ballet enthusiasts – ten people – under the master Voldemārs Komisārs,

founded the first ensemble in Riga. This was still an amateurish group, incapable of producing ballets, but it offered brief appearances Opera performances. That was a beginning that grew into an effort for a permanent ensemble that could stage full ballets. The effort was realised, at least in part, by Nikolai Sergeev from St Petersburg. Though there were performances, they were rare and the choreography was rather primitive. Growth came with the arrival of Alexandra Fyodorova, who was invited to the National Opera as ballet master. Her contributions were historic: though she was not a creator of originals, she produced the great classical ballets, beginning with the hugely popular "Swan Lake". She worked in the tradition of Mikhail Fokin and the Petipas, and in 1929 Fokin himself produced two one act ballets. A permanent salary for Fokin was beyond the financial capabilities of the Opera. Fyodorova trained dancers, founding her own studio and teaching interpretation and technique, so that only in a few years there were already remarkable Latvian soloists. Ballet performances took place regularly, twice a week, and in eight years, until 1932, Fyodorova produced 18 ballets. In the early 1930s, a delayed desire came among audiences for modern choreography, and in 1932 Anatol Vilzak (who replaced Fyodorova), of Diaghilev's famous troupe in Paris, tried to provide this. He produced seven one-acts including Stravinsky's "Petrushka" (the famous "Firebird" had already been produced by Fyodorova in 1928), but they did not become great events and audiences began to be critical, speaking of a crisis in ballet; the nationalistic press commented on "Russification" and asked for a "more Latvian" master.

The exit from the crisis had to be found by Osvalds Lēmanis, a well-known dancer who became the master in 1934 and was, after Fyodorova, the second most important artistic director in Latvian ballet in the 1920s and 1930s. He revived the great classical ballets, including "Don Quixote" and "Swan Lake", and he added to the repertoire. In response to Ulmanis' ideology, there were growing demands for a "national ballet", and seven original ballets were written. Four of these were performed, including "Milas uzvara" ("The Victory of Love") by Mediņš, in 1935. None were of much importance to the art. The growth of ballet included important scenography, however, with at least three true works of art attaining international recognition. Ludolfs Liberts, the chief artist at the Opera and ballet from 1924 to 1938, created sets that audiences and critics found fabulously beautiful, and his work was given the highest honours in Barcelona (1931)

and Paris (1937). The works of Niklāvs Strunke and Romans Suta were perhaps less beautiful, but no less impressive. For Stravinsky's "Pulcinella" in 1931, Suta produced sets that were still influenced by Cubism. This was major work at a European level, not at all inferior to work done in Paris. Precise lines and fascinatingly large fields of color characterised Strunke's sets for "Scaramouche". But ballet is of course dependent on the dancers. Fyodorova herself was a fine ballerina, and from 1927 she had to compete with Helēna Tangijeva-Birzniece, who was the most impressive Latvian ballet dancer for a decade. She was followed by a generation schooled in Latvia: Edīte Pfeifere, Mirdza Griķe and Anna Priede, as well as the notable Arvīds Ozoliņš, who had danced in well-known Western European and American troupes, Harijs Plucis, and Aleksandrs Lembergs. Tangijeva-Birzniece and Lembergs maintained the high standards of the Latvian ballet into the occupation, both becoming the main dance masters after 1944.

Interest in film, the major genre of twentieth century art, was as important in Latvia as it was in the rest of the world. In 1930, there were 85 motion picture theatres in Latvia. Besides the 31 in the capital, there were theatres in every town of any size, with even Tukums and Ludza having two theatres each. On the eve of occupation, there were already 103 screens with 6.3 million viewers a year. The first Latvian film after the war, "I am Off to the War", was produced in 1920. It was a popular success and had a direct influence on the immediate founding of the "Latvju filma" studios. Though interest in film grew ceaselessly in the 1920s and 1930s, uninterrupted even by the world economic crisis, the fortunes of Latvian filmmaking fluctuated. "Latvju filma" went bankrupt already in 1923, unable to compete with German and Russian cinematic art in the silent era and the expansion of Hollywood. In Germany and Soviet Russia, modern experimentation and artistic values were at their pinnacle. An important figure was Sergei Eisenstein, who had left Latvia in 1915 as a refugee. Latvia would have been too narrow for him – he was a genius lost to Latvia who became a genius *because* he was lost to Latvia. His 1920 "Battleship Potemkin" became an enduring classic; the scene in which the crowd on the steps leading down to the sea in Odessa is fired upon is considered six of the most moving minutes in the history of cinema.

In the coming years in Latvia the director Aleksandrs Rusteiķis completed several films – "Daugava," "Homeland," "Barrier" with a pseudo-folkloric direction. These films were immature and provincial against the background

of European film in the period, when sound had led to France as a centre of the art. The documentaries of Linde and Eduards Kraucs were of a higher quality. Documentaries throughout Europe sought to break the mold. Not long before the destruction of the nation-state the first quality feature film, "The Fisherman's Son" by the director Vilis Lapenieks, premiered in the Riga cinema *Splendid Palace* to massive crowd that sparked a near riot. The film was wildly popular. Vilis Lācis had successfully reworked his populist, anti-capitalist novel for the screen and in accord with the censorship of the Ulmanis regime (the censored version followed by another censored version in the Soviet period – the evil merchant made more evil, the role played by Rūdolfs Bērziņš, whose singing career had set; the good fisherman was made yet better). The film had what no popular film could do without: a well-written romantic plot and attractive actors. Ulmanis himself went to see the film on January 22, 1940, announcing, "We liked the film very much." His pronouncement transformed the picture into a masterpiece – which it unfortunately was not.

The Press and Publishing

The German occupation had not yet ended when the free press began to flower. On November 12, 1918, the day after the armistice, a revolutionary socialist paper called *Uz priekšu* (Forward) appeared – this was only a curio, but already on November 15, Antons Benjamiņš' *Jaunākās Ziņas* (The Latest News) resumed publication to become the unsurpassed Latvian newspaper in circulation. On November 21, the LSDSP newspaper *Sociāldemokrāts* (The Social Democrat) began its run and became one of the most important political newspapers before its closure with the coup of May 15, 1934. The growth of the press was rapid until the coup. The liberal press law of 1924 aided the development of a diverse press: there was no censorship before publication and the only publications that could be banned were treasonous or pornographic. Furthermore, any expurgation was immediately noted in the government newspaper, so any deletions were made public. The growth of the press was stimulated by the entrepreneurship of the publishers and a readership with impressive literacy and a long tradition in the media. Already prior to 1914, there were more than 60 newspapers and magazines being published in Latvian (both in Latvia and abroad, in the United States and Western Europe). In the 1920s and 1930s, nearly 2000 newspapers, maga-

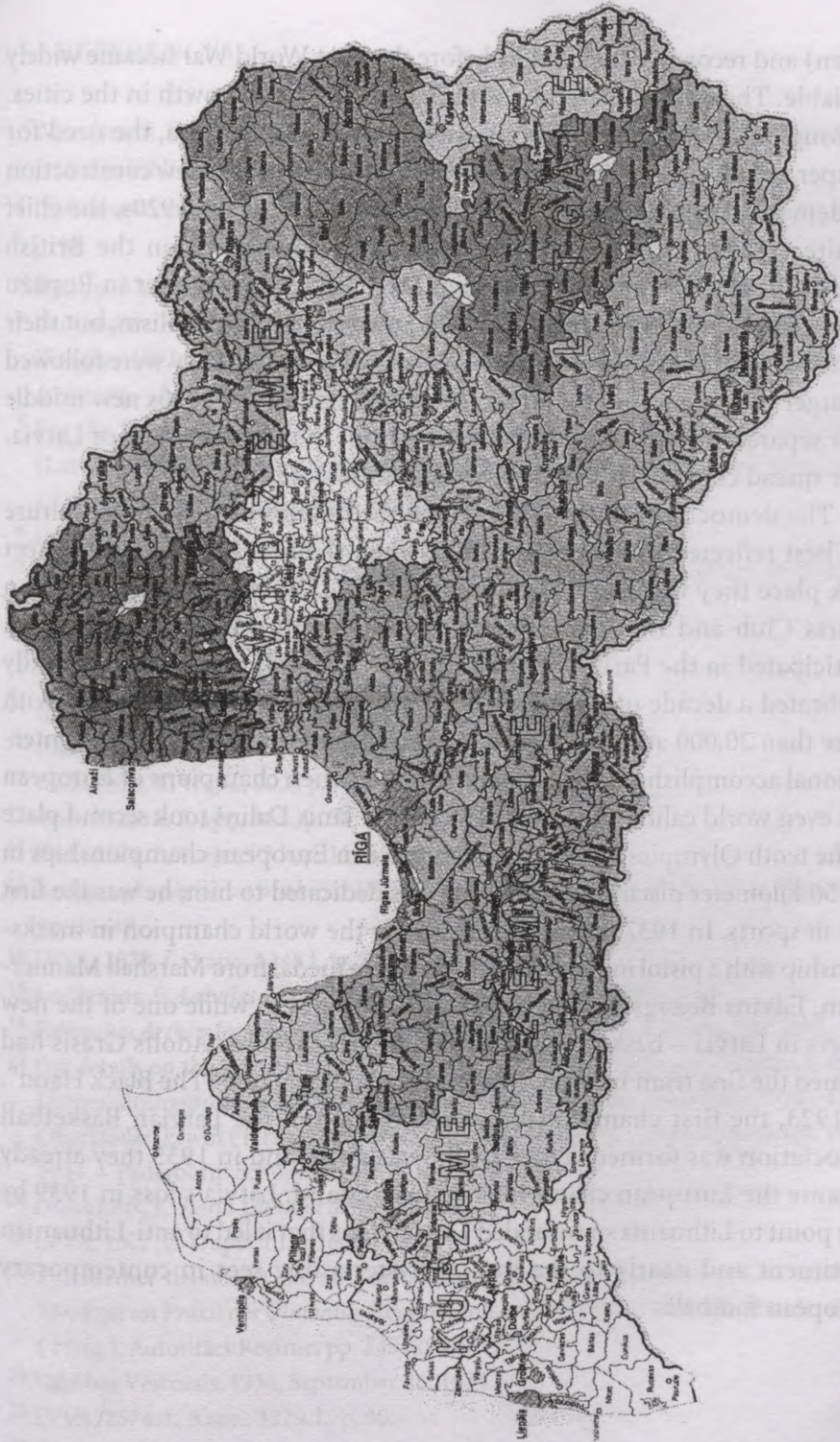
zines, and newsletters were printed in Latvia in ten languages, including German, Russian, Polish and Yiddish. The inter-war years were especially important to the Yiddish press. Before 1914 there were no regular Yiddish publications whatsoever, but in independent Latvia there were more than 10. The Yiddish press, however, suffered the most under the regime of May 15. Only 2 of these continued to be published while the others were shut down (though among those banned were some openly communist publications). Circulation grew through the 1920s. *Jaunākās Ziņas* led the field with tens of thousands of readers, followed by the successful Russian language newspaper *Segodnya* (Today). Even more surprising than the numbers of newspapers was their diversity – besides the political parties' and the minorities' publications a broad spectrum of media existed. The growth of the magazine industry was even faster – before 1914, there were only a few magazines, but soon there were dozens: women's, sports, political (*Domas* – Thoughts), cinema, theatre (*Daugava*, *Burtnieks*), and even “picture magazines” full of photographs, which were becoming popular only in America, Britain and France. Such was the magazine *Atpūta* (Recreation) published by *Jaunākās Ziņas* – in a reflection of democratic tastes, *Atpūta* published riveting serial novels (though they lacked literary quality) and short stories (the last to appear before the destruction of the state was “The Broken Cup” by Alfrēds Dziļums). Adventure stories and cheap novels also reflected a growing mass culture.

The greatest success belonged to the publishers who understood how to succeed in the capitalist environment, basing their business on innovation. *Segodnya* (1919-1940) was a leader in this respect and the second oldest Russian newspaper to be published outside Russia. It was the first newspaper to discover the evening niche, introducing a second newspaper, *Segodnya večerom*, on December 1, 1924, and from December 1926 it published colour photographs (decades earlier than most of the larger Western newspapers). *Segodnya* employed many foreign correspondents and was in essence the first successful venture to Americanise the Latvian press, publishing several newspapers in its modern printing plant and circulating throughout Europe. The paper was sometimes called Latvia's best export. There were twelve dailies in Latvia in 1930. Unfortunately, the Ulmanis regime had its effect, and the new anti-democratic press laws of 1938 saw that number halved – even in 1937 there were only six dailies, and over 100 periodicals and 300 books were banned.

Publishing houses, which had an established tradition (there were 79 in 1910, and every workday saw three books published in Latvian, 1.3 copies for every Latvian in 1913) also saw a boom in democratic Latvia. On the average, 700 to 1800 titles were published in Latvia each year. In the 1930s, the total number of copies printed sometimes reached four million a year. Several new aspects characterised publishing:

1) Fundamental encyclopedic works were published for the first time (“Latviešu konversācijas vārdnīca,” a major encyclopedia, and the definitive Mīlenbahs-Endzelīns dictionary of the Latvian language); 2) the art of printing blossomed with the work of some of Latvia’s most notable painters and graphic artists in publishing (Suta, Vidbergs, Skulme, Junkers, Plēpe); 3) competition led to specialisation – Valters un Rapa and Zemnieku Domas published a wide array of literature while Miķelis Goppers’ small Zelta ābele (Golden Apple) specialised in very colourful publications and the ambitious Helmārs Rudzītis became the exemplar of the successful capitalist in the industry with Grāmatu draugs. “Every third Latvian crafted wonderful plans,” Rudzītis said of the 1920s. In his case, he realised his plans. A free Latvia offered immense opportunities for those who knew how to take advantage of them. In September 1926, at the age of 23, Rudzītis opened his Grāmatu Draugs (The Friend of the Book) business, offering cheap (one lat!) products, effective advertising, prizes for frequent purchasers, and an attractive list of titles. He took a risk – but without risk there would have been no success – with large print runs in his modern plant with a mobile and effective workforce. By 1940 he has published 890 books; the publisher even broke into the European market with popular original and translated literature in Russian. Rudzītis, like Hiršs in the textile industry, was a great businessman.

Afterword. As Eric Hobsbawm, the eminent British historian, noted – the twentieth century was increasingly the century of ordinary people, dominated by art and culture created by them and for them. This was most palpably enfolded in the press, radio, cinema, and popular music (in Latvia the Brothers Laivinieks, Jānis Vinters and the tangos of Oskars Stroks, the Daugavpils-born composer whose heartrending tangos especially in Russian émigré society, could be heard throughout Europe. Their performance was made popular by the Russian singer Pyotr Leshchenko, who lived in Bucharest. At least four songs and tangos by Stroks – “Blue Rhapsody”, “Tell me why”, “Blue Eyes” and “Rest, my poor heart” were hits of their time, not yet for-



Administrative division of Latvia in 1939

gotten) and records, which unlike before the First World War became widely available. The democratisation of society meant new growth in the cities. Although cities had declined in population, especially Riga, the need for cheaper residences and not the excesses of Jugendstil meant new construction for demand that was never met. In the second half of the 1920s, the chief architect Pāvils Dreimanis offered two-story rowhouses on the British model; the first were built in Liepājas Street in 1926 and later in Ropažu Street. They joined modern Art Deco to an ethnographic localism, but their limited space did not solve the problems of living space. They were followed by larger housing projects, and on the second half of the 1930s new middle class separate residences with style were built in different parts of Latvia, their spread cut short by the destruction of the state.

The democratisation of society and the development of mass culture was best reflected by sports – in 1920, when the first Latvian sports meet took place they were limited to only two associations, the Riga Garrison Sports Club and the Riga Cycling Club. Growth was swift, and Latvia participated in the Paris Olympics in 1924. In 1928, when Latvia proudly celebrated a decade of independence, there were 65 sporting groups with more than 20,000 athletes. Mass sports had become a reality. Latvia's international accomplishments came in the 1930s, when champions of European and even world calibre appeared. The walker Jānis Daliņš took second place in the tenth Olympics in 1932 and first place in European championships in the 50 kilometer distance. Even a song was dedicated to him; he was the first star in sports. In 1937, Kārlis Kļava became the world champion in marksmanship with a pistol in Helsinki and received a medal from Marshall Mannerheim. Edvīns Beitags became a world-wrestling star, while one of the new sports in Latvia – basketball – soon led to great results. Ādolfs Grasis had formed the first team in Latvia, with the intriguing name "The Black Hand". In 1923, the first championships took place and the Latvian Basketball Association was formed. Their ascent was swift, and in 1935 they already became the European champions in Switzerland. Latvia's loss in 1939 by one point to Lithuania so wounded Latvian fans that it led to anti-Lithuanian sentiment and nearly to the sort of hysteria one sees in contemporary European football.

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IV. THE OCCUPATION OF LATVIA AND ITS INCORPORATION INTO THE USSR

4.1. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE STATE

On June 17, 1940, at 5 a.m. Soviet military forces began to cross the Latvian border. In only three hours, by 8 a.m., the Soviet Army had crossed the frontier in at least 15 places: at all three land borders – in the north through Valka, in the south through Joniškis and Bauska, and through ten crossings in Latgallia, Latvia's eastern province – to quickly occupy Riga, Jelgava, Daugavpils and Krustpils. The Soviet Union – officially an ally of Nazi Germany – occupied Latvia in an act of unprovoked aggression. In doing so, Moscow violated several of the agreements that had been signed. The most important among them were the Peace Treaty concluded between Latvia and Russia in 1920, and the Latvia-USSR Non-Aggression Pact of 1932. Kārlis Ulmanis' decision not to resist this aggression can be understood from a military point of view: his priorities were the survival of the nation and the avoidance at any cost of the bloodshed that opposing the Soviet forces, with their vast military superiority, would have entailed. However, his decision not to offer even diplomatic protest was without doubt wrong and deserves severe criticism. Even this decision, made by the authoritarian Ulmanis alone, does not dilute the essence of what occurred: whatever the behavior of a victim at the time of his murder, the murderer cannot be excused. It was the Soviet Union that slew the independence of the Baltic States. Even if Ulmanis had chosen a different course of action, nothing could have altered the circumstances of Latvia's occupation and annexation. The example of Lithuania proves this: even though President Antanas Smetona fled the country and did not sign any documents dictated by the occupants, this did not fundamentally affect the process or nature of the occupation.

The process of occupation was coordinated at the Soviet Embassy in Riga and the People's Commissariat for Home Affairs by a group of operatives that had arrived in Latvia already in May. Sergey Rusakov, later asking

for a special personal pension from the Latvian SSR, wrote: "In May 1940, I was sent to Latvia as part of the operative group conducting illegal espionage to establish Soviet power in Latvia." Alfrēds Pumpāns, Dmitry Belov, and Viktor Verbovsky were among the members of this group.¹ Immediately following the June 17th invasion, the NKVD set to work activating agents it had earlier recruited among Latvia's citizens and recruiting new collaborators. Ivan Chichayev, advisor at the Soviet embassy, played the central role in this feverish activity.² On June 18, the person on whom everything would depend in the near future arrived in Latvia – Andrey Vishinsky, Stalin's emissary, who had been the prosecutor in the Great Purges in Soviet Union in the latter half of the 1930s. In preparation for the next phase of the operation, annexation, Vishinsky remained in Latvia for a month, making brief excursions to Moscow and Tallinn, where Andrey Zhdanov, the highest-ranking Soviet official in the occupied Baltic as a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik), played Vishinsky's role.

Vishinsky had a number of important tasks to oversee at this phase.

Firstly, Professor Augusts Kirhenšteins' puppet government for the occupied country was formed on June 20. The composition of this government did not give an impression of a particular political orientation: its Communist leanings were not readily apparent, and such was Vishinsky's intent. Nobody knew that the popular writer Vilis Lācis – appointed to the post of Minister of Home Affairs – had maintained contacts with the illegal Communist Party and the Soviet Embassy in Riga, possibly already from 1928. The fact that the new chairman of the Secret Police and Minister of the Home Affairs, Vikentijs Latkovskis, was a seasoned Soviet agent long in contact with the Soviet diplomat and spy in Riga Ivan Chichayev was not public knowledge either.³ Neither was it known that General Roberts Kļaviņš, the new commander of what was now the People's Army, had been in contact with Soviet intelligence agencies in Latvia since 1939.

Secondly, Kirhenšteins' Moscow-controlled "government" began the process of dissolving any and all social and political organisations already at the end of June, sparing only a few that were entirely Communist or Communist-dominated. This process offered ample opportunity for settling personal scores. For example, the mediocre writer Arvīds Grigulis, who had been a second-rate Social Democratic activist before the coup of May 15, 1934, was selected to dissolve the Press Association, which was composed of

journalists and other writers. This “stain” in his biography – his having been a Social Democrat – caused him to serve the occupying power without reservations. 156 Press Association members, an absolute majority, were expelled (about half of them were later punished as political criminals). The purged Press Association – from which the Writer’s Union of Latvia, a vehicle for the promotion of Soviet ideology, would soon emerge – accepted such new members as Žanis Spure, Secretary of the Communist Party of Latvia, whose ignorance was striking even among the most uneducated Communists. For his serving the Soviet power, Arvīds Grigulis was honoured as People’s Writer of the Latvian SSR in 1976 – with this the “prestige” of the title reached its nadir.

Thirdly, gradually but irreversibly, the influence of the Communist Party was growing. The Party was completely controlled by the Soviet Embassy and Vishinsky’s team. For instance, “Comrades Vladimirov and Sergejev”, emissaries from Moscow with assumed names, participated in meetings of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and set the agenda for the local Communists, while Viktors Verbovskis, NKVD operative sent from the USSR and given the pseudonym Viktors Virza, was assigned to the Political Police “to facilitate the elections (to the Saeima)”. The control was also exercised by continually arriving “cadres” from the USSR, many of them being ethnic Latvian Communists. They were imported to enhance the local Communist Party, which at the beginning of the occupation had consisted of only about 500 members and was both ideologically and professionally weak.

However, Vishinsky’s most important task was to provide the occupation with a veneer of legality, which required staging of elections to a “People’s Parliament” for appearances’ sake. The decision to hold elections was made in Moscow on July 4. The elections were to take place in only ten days’ time, on June 14 and 15. So brief a pre-election period was in violation of the Law on Elections. The Latvian constitution (the Satversme) – which was formally still in force – also stipulated that elections to the Saeima must be held on the first Sunday in October and the preceding Saturday. These violations were intended to guarantee victory for the People’s Labour Bloc. The most important factor, of course, was the fact that no other lists were permitted. The Democratic Bloc, which united several truly popular centrist politicians (Atis Ķeniņš, Jānis Breikšs, Voldemārs Zāmuēls, Hugo Celmiņš) and eminent intellectuals (Kārlis Skalbe, Mintauts and Konstantīns Čakste) and would

probably have drawn substantial support from the electorate in its attempt to salvage what little remained of Latvian independence, was banned, and many of its members were subjected to repressive measures. In the brief campaign, what mattered was not what the People's Labour Bloc promised to do but what it promised *not* to do. First of all, slogans hinting at an end to Latvian independence and the country's incorporation into the USSR were not permitted before the elections. On July 5, Vishinsky himself publicly and threateningly rebuked those Communists carried away by "various senseless fantasies" of this kind. Secondly, nothing was said about the imminent establishment of Soviet power. Thirdly, the populace was assured that no dramatic expropriation of private property would occur, the platform of the People's Labour Bloc promising to "guarantee the immunity of all citizens and their property". Finally, nothing whatsoever was said about the catastrophic agricultural policies soon to be implemented. The electorate was subjected to psychological pressure, intense because of the presence of Soviet troops and their involvement in organising the poll. The results of the voting were frequently falsified. As was common in the Soviet Union, the total votes for the sole list of candidates supposedly approached 100% – even exactly 100% in Kuldīga. These rigged elections were a decisive step towards the coming annexation of Latvia.

By July 21, 1940 – prior to the seating of the so-called People's Saeima – more than 70 Latvian citizens had been arrested, and some of those arrested were deported to Russia. This unprecedented act – the arrest and deportation of the citizens of a still formally independent state by foreign security services to a foreign country – forms crystal clear evidence of the criminal nature of the occupation. All three leaders of the Baltic States were deported: first Antanas Merkys, the acting president of Lithuania, on July 22; then Kārlis Ulmanis, on July 30; and finally Konstantin Päts, the president of Estonia, on July 30. Most of the arrests in Latvia were made on July 19 and 20, when many of the Russian "Whites" who had taken refuge in Latvia were imprisoned on orders from Vikentijš Latkovskis, the head of the Political Police. Among the imprisoned were some of the officers from the monarchists' anti-Soviet forces in the Civil War of 1917–1920, such as Mikhail Afanasyev, a general in Yudenich's army – soon to be shot – as well as prominent Latvian Russians like the parliament members Melety Kalistratov and Grigory Yeliseyev.⁴

4.2. ANNEXATION

Already on July 21, at the first session of the People's Saeima, all of the pre-election lies were jettisoned. Žanis Spure suggested proclaiming Soviet power in Latvia. Vilis Lācis recommended joining the Soviet Union. The Latvian constitution was once again violated, since the Satversme stipulated that questions of the structure of the state and its sovereignty must be decided by referenda. On July 30, a delegation of 20 members of the Saeima went to Moscow to request the admission of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. On August 5 in Moscow, the final act of the annexation took place: in a show that was doubtless pathetically humorous to Stalin but tragic for Latvia, the delegation asked that Latvia be admitted to the brotherly union. It was suggested that the women in the delegation should wear Latvian national costume. Olga Auguste, an uneducated member of the Communist underground, categorically refused to wear "such rags" – even such a formal and theatrical exhibition of national belonging was unacceptable to a Communist internationalist who detested anything ethnic. The request of the People's Saeima was met: Latvia was not only occupied but also annexed. The last remnants of the show were cast aside and the real life began – a horrible life under an occupying power. Repressive measures against the minorities increased, too, though other ethnicities had recently been promised liberation from "Ulmanis' chauvinism". On August 5, Jewish political activists were arrested and deported, from leaders of the right wing organisation "Trumpeldors" that was loyal to the independent Latvia, to the leftist Bund. On August 7, all the publishing houses were nationalised, completely dissolving what was left of a free press. They were joined in a sole state publishing house, and Jānis Niedre, a local Communist, was appointed to lead it. Almost all other important positions were filled by ethnic Latvian Communists who had arrived from Russia. All of Latvia's school swiftly began to teach "Stalin's constitution".

Radical changes immediately took place in the Latvian Army. At first, immediately after the invasion, it was renamed "the People's Army". In practical terms, this meant a steep reduction in its size, repressive measures and dismissal for many officers as well as the introduction of control by political commissars. After the annexation, on August 13, a new decision was made in Moscow to further diminish the remains of the Latvian army. Instead of the "People's Army", the 24th territorial corps was formed, with

the result that the number of Latvian troops declined dramatically, to 11,000 in December 1940 (less than half the size of the Latvian Army before the occupation) and the control of the political commissars grew. Another difference was that whilst a majority of the commissars in July had been local communists or left-wing socialists, most of the 470 (!) commissars after the August changes had been sent from the interior of the USSR. Repression of the officers and the soldiers increased. By June 22, 1940, when the German invasion of the Soviet Union began, 19.4% of the corps had been arrested, deported, or shot.

On August 25, the annexed Baltic republics saw changes at the highest level of collaboration: the previous Prime Ministers were formally promoted to chair the local Supreme Soviets. In reality, this new post was powerless. In Latvia, August Kirhenšteins came to chair the Supreme Soviet whilst the former minister of the home affairs, Vilis Lācis, became Prime Minister; Alfons Noviks, formerly of the Communist underground, took Lācis' place at the Ministry of Home Affairs (he had been recruited to the Soviet security apparatus already in 1926). At the same time NKVD men sent from Moscow took a more prominent role at the Ministry of Home Affairs. (Most often they were called "Chekists" by Latvians; the Всероссийская чрезвычайная комиссия по борьбе с контрреволюцией и саботажем – *Vecheka* or *Cheka*, the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counter-Revolution and Sabotage had been created by Felix Dzerzhinsky in 1917 but had become the GPU (State Political Directorate) of the NKVD – Народный комиссариат внутренних дел or People's Commissariat for Home Affairs in 1922. Because the acronyms and structure were frequently changed, the term "Chekist" is frequently used for Soviet state security personnel in the former Soviet Union and occupied countries. The term is still used in Russia for members of the security apparatus today). Semyon Shustin replaced Vikentijis Latkovskis and became Noviks' deputy in the security apparatus (Chairman of the NKGB from March 1941 – Народный комиссариат государственной безопасности – the People's Commissariat for State Security). Political terror increased: by November 1940, when the Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic came into force, at least 1,500 persons had already been arrested for political reasons. An underground prison was rapidly constructed in the basement of the Ministry of Home Affairs building in Riga, at 37/39 Freedom Street. For half a century, this was the notorious "house on the corner", a place where Latvian patriots were tortured.

The first warden of the prison, 1940-41, was V. G. Zevin. Although Zevin was almost the sole Jew working in the prison, his prominence was a source for rumours about "the Jews – Chekists".

4.3. THE OCCUPATION REGIME

The terror of what came to be called "the year of horror" affected the private property of Latvia's inhabitants, too: what had been accumulated through the generations was destined for destruction, confiscation, or robbery that brought it into the hands of occupiers and collaborators. Already on July 22, the recently "elected" People's Saeima, breaking its pre-election promises, nationalised all land and confiscated – i.e. expropriated – lands exceeding 30 hectares. The larger, more efficient farms which formed the backbone of Latvian agriculture were eliminated. This was soon followed by the nationalisation and confiscation of banks, credit institutions, and larger and mid-sized industrial, commercial and transportation facilities. By August 3, in only two weeks, 804 establishments (each of them employing more than ten people) had already been seized.

On August 9, securities of the inhabitants were confiscated. In the next months, other assets were seized; on October 28, privately owned buildings were nationalised. Many persons were evicted from their houses and apartments, functionaries of the occupation regime replacing them. In February 1941, smaller companies, with as few as five employees, were also expropriated. In less than half a year, almost all private property in urban areas and a large part of the private property in the countryside had been confiscated. Another portion was nationalised on May 17, 1941, liquidating almost the entire private sector. In June 1941, on the eve of German aggression, privately owned industry already produced merely 5% of the total product, whilst sales by private merchants comprised less than 10% of the total national sales.

The changes did not stop there. The **financial policies** of the regime also resulted in catastrophe. The pride of independent Latvia, a stable currency and financial system, began to crumble soon after the occupiers' arrival. The citizens of Latvia began a run on goods in preparation for the worst; the value of money fell. Shortages were evident already in July; they were dramatically exacerbated by the influx of Soviet military personnel and

their dependents, and the immigration of Russian bureaucrats. Exchanging their rubles for lats, they were able to make massive purchases and send goods to the interior of Russia (a tragicomedy that had commenced already in 1939, when the purchasers were officers from the Soviet bases and their families). On July 23, in a time of peace rather than war, rationing was introduced, at first for clothing and then expanding to cover almost everything (for example, purchases of soap were limited to 125 grams a month). Along with rationing came the punishment of merchants and consumers who did not abide by these restrictions. The militia was given the right to inspect goods in people's abodes. Along with these processes came denunciations, an inescapable human weakness in a period of occupation: residents began to complain of "suspicious activity in shops" and "those storming the stores" were labelled "enemies of the people". Threatening personal security and even survival, this label could be attached to anyone.

The situation became wholly unbearable on November 25, 1940, when the worthless Soviet ruble was declared to be the official currency alongside the lat and at a completely artificial exchange rate of one ruble: one lat. Only a few months before, when Latvia was still independent, one lat cost ten rubles. The same occurred in occupied Estonia where one kroon was converted at 1.25 rubles although the earlier exchange rate had been ten to fifteen rubles, and in Lithuania, where one litas was worth 0.9 rubles despite the litas having traded at three to five rubles. At the same time, price differences between Latvia and the old Soviet republics persisted. For example, butter cost only seven rubles and beef three rubles a kilogram in Latvia in November, but twenty-eight and twelve rubles, respectively, in Moscow. Such price differences led to shops being emptied of goods, which were sent in packages to Russia. On March 25, 1941, the lat was withdrawn from circulation and the Soviet ruble became the sole currency. Not long before the beginning of the German invasion in June 1941, another misfortune that had long pained the inhabitants of the USSR reached Latvia: residents were compelled to subscribe to domestic debt, a form of expropriation that would culminate during the second Soviet occupation, after 1945.

The ceaseless printing of money to satisfy the regime began already in the early days of the occupation. After less than a month after the invasion, on July 15, 1940, 9.2 million lats had been printed. Massive amounts were issued to the new institutions of the regime and to the political police (soon to be the NKVD), as well as to the occupying military forces (for instance, in

a single day, August 19, 1940 – 37 thousand lats were issued to furnish the dwellings of Russian officers). Afraid of losing all of their savings, the inhabitants began to “storm” financial institutions on the very first days of the occupation. However, on August 1, strict limitations were introduced and only one hundred lats a week could be withdrawn. When the Soviet ruble became the sole currency on March 25, 1941, and the lat was finally utterly erased, only a maximum of a thousand lats remained in each private person’s account. The remainder was confiscated. Prices rose swiftly and ceaselessly, especially for industrial products and even more for clothing and footwear: in August 1940, it was possible to obtain a good autumn or winter coat for sixty-eight lats. In December such a coat cost five hundred rubles. In one year of Soviet occupation, prices for industrial goods rose by a multiple of six, whilst prices for groceries tripled. The problems integral to the Soviet system, destined to influence social life for several generations, were soon manifest: long lines for goods, the black market, goods obtained through influence, special stores and supplies for the Party and the *nomenklatura*. On May 15, 1941, rationing was applied to food – butter, meat, and sausage – something unheard of in a free Latvia but an irreplaceable sign of the Soviet system.

Gradually but irrevocably, the entire Latvian economy was adjusted to the Soviet Union model. This happened swiftly in industry, with the very first year of occupation introducing the policies the regime would carry to extremes after the war. First of all, the seven largest enterprises (including VEF, *Vairogs*, *Tosmāre*, and *Sarkanais metalurģis*) were declared to be of “all-union significance”. Increasingly deprived of any connection to the economic needs of Latvia, artificially enlarged and integrated into the economic system of the USSR, these industrial companies were to produce goods for the entire Soviet Union. They were made dependent on raw materials from the interior of Soviet Union, and this dependence was consciously exacerbated to eliminate any remaining economic autonomy in occupied Latvia.

Secondly, all enterprises – whether of “all-union” or local significance – were subject to Stalinist quotas and labour relations, degrading the work ethic. Workers were forced to participate in “socialist competition” (especially the Stakhanovite movement) that was for all practical purposes a hidden form of exploitation. A previously unheard phenomenon appeared in workplaces: so-called “special sections”, actually branches of the Cheka, their function to spy on the employees. These sections were often staffed by so-

called "Russian Latvians", among the most committed Stalinists. The number of bureaucrats in industry multiplied madly, at times out of all reasonable proportions. For example, in the textile plant *Sarkanais rīts* ("Red Morning"), the number of functionaries producing nothing was double the number of workers in 1941.

Thirdly, the colonisation of Latvia began already in 1940-1941, with Russification among its most evil means. Though the number of arriving Russians was small by comparison to their influx after the war, it was already quite perceptible and facilitated primarily by increasing quantities of Red Army soldiers and officers, importation of Soviet and Party bureaucrats, and growth of the bureaucracy in industry (especially in the so-called "all-union" industries, the administration of which was under the control of ministries). In the first year of occupation, however, there was not yet an influx of lesser skilled Russian workers, which would be especially characteristic of the postwar years.

The most tragic fate awaited rural Latvia. At that time, 60% of Latvia's population was rural, and this percentage was even higher for ethnic Latvians. The countryside was fundamental to Latvian culture and society. Though the occupation régime promised not to introduce collectivisation ("Nothing like that will happen, because the new power understands the Latvian farmer well and knows his psychology," the People's Agriculture Minister J. Vanags had said), the actions of the régime suggested that coercive mass collectivisation would have begun already in the latter half of 1941, had the German aggression not occurred. As first, from the end of July 1940, a Soviet agrarian reform was rapidly introduced. By September 25, 1940, land had to be allocated to all of the landless in very small plots of fewer than 10 hectares. Expropriating land from farms larger than 30 hectares and from all "enemies of the people and speculators" (anyone disliked by the occupiers could be labelled as such), 51,762 new 10-hectare farms were created and additional land was attached to 23,321 farms that had been smaller than 10 hectares. There was absolutely no economic basis for the creation of completely inefficient small farms, and these were doomed to utter poverty. It must be said, however, that many of the new small farmers, especially in Latgallia, became fervent supporters of the Soviet power, unaware of the fact that they would meet an ill fate upon the arrival of the next occupier. Others would meet with bitter disappointment after the war, when even these tiny plots would be expropriated, and their owners driven

into the collectives. Frequently, the “new farmers” of 1940 would be the most embittered by the forced collectivisation of the late 1940s, when the last hope of enjoying “their little corner of land” would be taken from them.

On September 25, 1940, the first collective farm in the Baltic was founded in Estonia. At the time it was still an exception: apparently a decision on mass collectivisation had not yet been made in Moscow. The unfolding of events was, however, strongly influenced by the arrival in the Baltic in 1940 of a large commission led by Andrey Andreyev, at that time Secretary of the Party Central Committee, with the mission of controlling the pace of Sovietisation. Returning to Moscow, Andreyev recommended to Stalin that kolkhozes and sovkhoses should be created in the Baltic and mass repression against kulaks, manufacturers, the former leaders of political parties, merchants and clergymen should be begun. These elements must be deported from the Baltic, which would thus be cleansed of “hateful scoundrels” (Andreyev: “Очистить Литву, Латвию и Эстонию от этой враждебной сволочи”). Soon after Andreyev’s visit, in January 1941, the first kolkhoz, named after Lenin, was founded in Akmenė, Lithuania, with a very small area – only 250 hectares. It is thought that such small kolkhozes would be developed at the point of mass collectivisation. Preparations for collectivisation were initiated by a resolution of the USSR Council of People’s Commissars and the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, adopted on February 19 and signed by Stalin and Molotov, ordering the construction of buildings in country villages. This indicates that a decision had been taken to begin collectivisation and limit separate farms. Soon afterwards, on March 3, a decision made by the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party and the Council of People’s Commissars yet more clearly indicated the destiny being prepared for rural Latvia: the resolution stated that all Soviet citizens would be required to aid the “voluntary” efforts of farm labour to establish the simplest of collective enterprises, farmers’ cooperatives, with these farms to be formed on land expropriated from the most successful Latvian farmers and the model farms.

Thereafter, in the spring 1941 and at the beginning of the summer, developments were swift leaving no doubts about the goal. On March 12, the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party adopted a plan to create a point for the rental of farm machinery and horses in each civil parish, known by the acronym “MZIP”; these facilities would be created on a nationalised large farm in each locale. Since the number of civil parishes in Latvia

exceeded 500, the decision meant that a notable number of successful farms would be confiscated. This plan opened the way for personal revenge and the settling of scores, since the district Party Committee would decide which farms must be confiscated as "large". The farms chosen often belonged to the former home guardsmen ("aizsargi"), the confiscation becoming a means of political terror. At the same time, economic repression of the farmers was increasing. Firstly, from March 31, quotas for products to be transferred to the state were increased: the larger the farm, the larger the proportion of production was taken. In fact, this was a form of expropriation: those farmers with 30-hectare farms saw the quotas rise to as much as 50% of the total production, whilst the payment for these products could be six times lower than their actual worth. Secondly, from May 13 a new agricultural tax was introduced, the system based on class distinctions more so than the urban taxes. Workers and Soviet functionaries paid 8% in income tax in the cities, the remaining small business owners (anything at all sizeable had been confiscated), 30.5% – in order to ruin the so-called "large farms," however, taxes could reach 50% of the income on farms with paid labour, whilst those farms with an income in excess of 10,000 rubles per annum were taxed in excess of 55%. On the eve of coercive collectivisation, Latvia – unlike the older Soviet republics – was not yet victimised by one of the most barbaric and odious taxes: the horse tax, set so high that it forced farmers to renounce their horses and join the kolkhoz. Nonetheless, the tendency to weaken the farms through taxation, forcing the farmers to collectivise "voluntarily", was readily apparent. Several sovkhoses were formed, and on May 14 the Soviet government and the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party adopted a decision to establish 18 new sovkhoses and dissolve numerous private farms (the first decision to establish sovkhoses had been taken on March 7, but this new decision significantly expedited their establishment. At least 134 farms were expropriated in the process, despite the fact that the German invasion cut short the implementation of these plans). The Prosecutor of the LSSR, Ernests Soldnieks, who had been sent from Soviet Russia, was clear about his intentions: "With the *kulak*, agitation is absolutely useless. *Kulaks* must be dealt with through repression." Propaganda in favour of collectives gained prominence in the press, and in June an announcement was made that over a thousand collective farms, whose members would live in villages in the future, were awaiting registration. In reality, only 3 kolkhozes had been established before the German attack.

The day after the Great Terror of June 14 – perhaps not by coincidence – “Stalin’s Artel” was registered in the Abrene district. Like the first kolkhoz in Lithuania, it was a mere 250 hectares in size. Some solace could be found in the fact that the extreme reform of Soviet Latvia in 1919, which had immediately nationalised to form 249 sovkhoses, was not fully repeated in 1941, nor after the war. The USSR kolkhoz statutes of 1935 were applied, and they at least allowed farmers to retain a patch of land near their houses and a few farm animals. In “Stalin’s Artel”, for example, the member could keep half a hectare, two cows, two pigs and 10 sheep. Exactly these little patches of land as well as the immense labour of the farmers under circumstances of collectivisation would provide a tremendous share of the products at market by comparison to the minuscule size of these private plots. The creation of “Stalin’s Artel” was followed by the establishment of a kolkhoz in the civil parish of Kārsava, Ludza district, and a third in Līvāni parish, Daugavpils district.

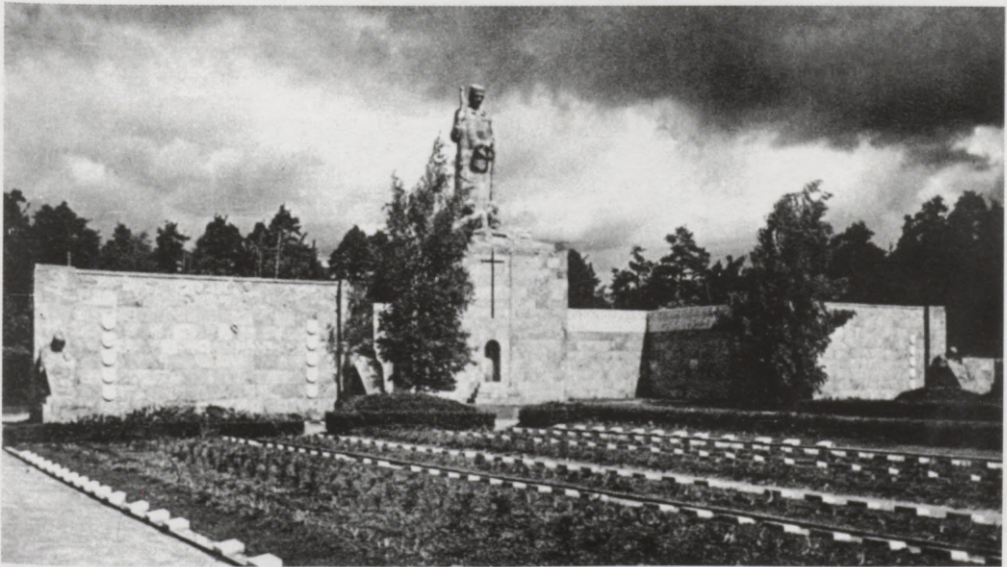
That the first wave of deportations would soon be followed by a second wave and mass collectivisation was no longer in doubt. Only the attack by another occupier, Nazi Germany – so recently a Soviet friend and ally – interrupted this process. At the outbreak of war between Germany and the Soviet Union, 12 kolkhoses had been established in Lithuania and 3 in Estonia. In Latvia, there were 31 sovkhoses, 3 kolkhoses, and 2 state-owned horse-breeding farms.

The most active role in following Moscow’s agenda in occupied Latvia and creating an all-encompassing system of state terror fell to the Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party and the organs directly responsible for repression: the People’s Commissariat of the Home Affairs of the Latvian SSR, the Commissariat for State Security (from early 1941; previously, the security services had been subordinate to the Ministry of the Home Affairs), the War Tribunal of the Special Military District of the Baltic, the Tribunal of the Baltic Fleet, the special branch of the Red Army (the “Osobiy otdel”), the People’s Commissariat of the Home Affairs and Defence Roads and Transport branches (“Dorozhno-transportniy otdel”), the prosecutorial sections, and the courts. Membership in the Latvian Communist Party grew swiftly in circumstances of occupation, especially because of those arriving from Russia. The percentage of Russians in the Party rose, too. In December 1940, when the Party held its 9th congress, there were 1,600 members and 1,200 candidates for membership in the Party – this is almost thrice the number at the moment of occupation on June 17, 1940. Though the influx

of “Russian Latvians” and ethnic Russians as well as their appointment to significant posts had begun, their numbers prior to the German invasion were not as large as they would be after the war (and after the purges of the ranks in 1959, especially). The First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party was Jānis Kalnbērziņš, who can be seen as a “Russian Latvian” at least in part. He had lived in Moscow until 1936, when he was sent into Latvia to commence illegal activities and purge the Party of Trotskyites and “provocateurs”. He was arrested by Latvia’s Political Police in July 1939, and awaited the staging of the “socialist revolution” in prison, as did Žanis Spure, the other leader of the underground Party. Spure’s career was similar. Having lived in Russia from 1923 to 1936, he was sent to Latvia for the same purposes as Kalnbērziņš and arrested in spring 1940. Until December 1940, Spure was the Second Secretary of the Central Committee. He was replaced by Roberts Neilands, perhaps because of Spure’s alcoholism. In the first year of the occupation, the later practice in which the “national” First Secretary was paired with a Second Secretary (who would invariably be a Russian from the interior of the USSR) keeping an eye on the First Secretary to prevent the slightest tendency toward “national communism” – had not yet been introduced. (In 1940-41 local Communists also controlled the Party in Lithuania and Estonia. The Lithuanian situation was unique: Antanus Sniečkus had led the underground party for four years since 1936, and would continue to lead it under the circumstances of occupation, without interruption, until 1974. The Estonian Party was also led by a local Communist, Karl Säre.) The Party played the decisive part in imposing Communist ideology. Its monopoly on information was tirelessly protected. In three phases – in November 1940, and in February and March 1941 – radical removals of forbidden books and pamphlets from the libraries were effected. The methods for the destruction of this literature included burnings, reminiscent of book burning in Nazi Germany. The writers Aleksandrs Grīns and Leonīds Breikšs were murdered, Vilis Veldre was driven to suicide, and Atis Ķeniņš was deported. The Communist ideology imposed on occupied Latvia was characterised by Stalin’s unbridled cult of personality: “friendship among peoples” was promoted with an emphasis on the altruistic and decisive role of the Russian people in the history of Latvia since prehistory. The Russification of history was begun (at that point the pretence that June 1940 could be portrayed as a “socialist revolution” brought about by the Latvian people itself was not yet promulgated; instead, the occupation was



The Freedom Monument (1936)



Brethren Cemetery (1937)

Andrei Vyshinsky,
Vice-Chairman of the
USSR Council of the
People's, addressing
participants of the
demonstration on
July 5, 1940



Augusts Kirhenšteins,
Head of People's
Government
addressing the
assigned delegation
of People's Parliament
of the 7. Session
on July 30, 1940



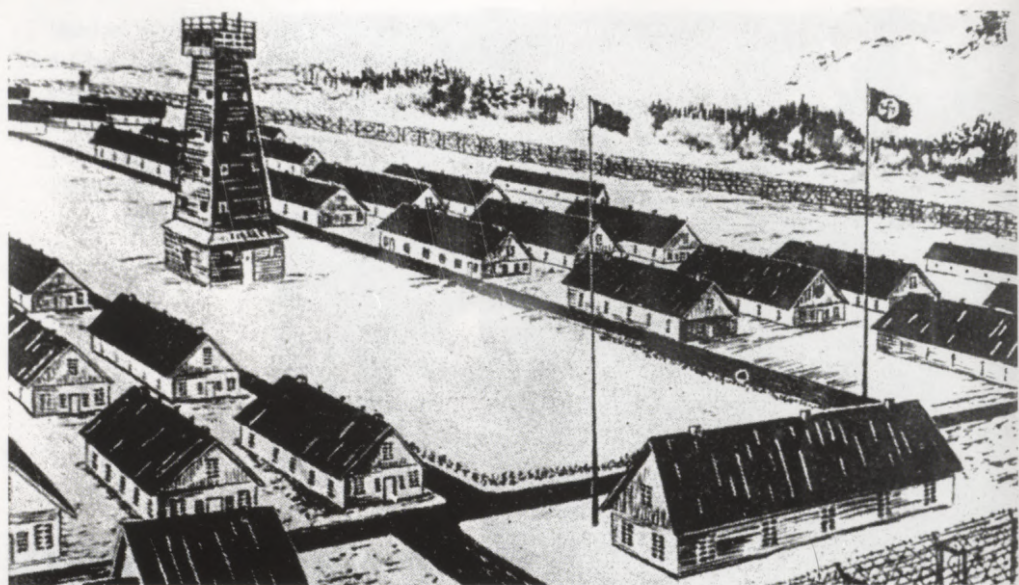
Alfons Noviks,
People's Commissar,
Head of the Security
police in his office
(1940)



German soldiers at the
Freedom Monument



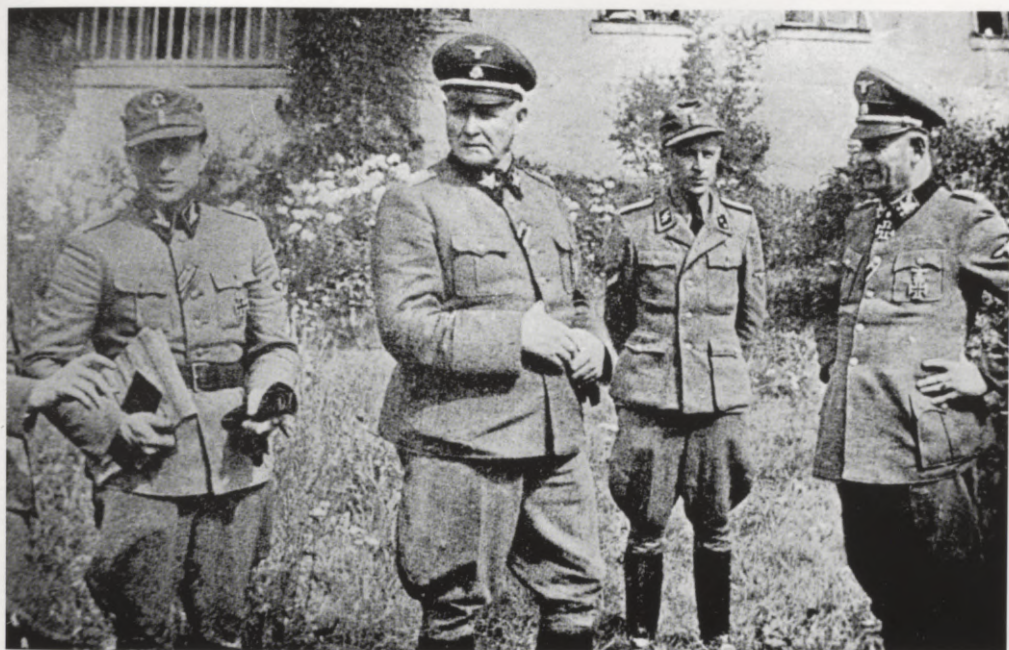
Oskars Dankers, General, Chairman of Home Affairs during the German occupation
in Latvia inspecting the troops on June 1, 1942



Salaspils Concentration camp (reproduction of a drawing by K. Bušs, former political prisoner)



Liepāja-Grobiņa aerodrome: pilots of the Latvian aviation group within the German 1. airforce division taking an oath



Left to right: 2nd General Rūdolfs Bangerskis, the Inspector General of the Latvian Legion, 3rd Uldis Ģermanis, war journalist (1944–1945)



The German soldiers taken prisoner on May 1945, Courland



Riga garrison guards on Victory Square (Uzvaras laukums) during parade marking the 28th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. November 7, 1945



Inhabitants of Riga on a Saturday morning working together to remove ruins near St. Peter's church (1945-1946)



Riga youth on the demonstration on November 7, 1945 marking the 28th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution



Jānis Kalnberziņš, Secretary of the Latvian Communist Party Central Committee, receiving a USSR deputy card. Right to left: Vilis Lācis, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Arnolds Deglavs, Chairman of the Executive Committee of Riga (1946)



Alexander Nikonov, the USSR Minister of Agriculture (late 1950s)



The USSR Writer's Union meeting devoted to nomination of Anna Sakse as a commissioner of the USSR Supreme Council electoral district (1950)

presented as brotherly aid offered by the Russian people or the USSR, toppling Ulmanis' "fascist clique"), and promises were made about the coming cornucopia of Communism. Like Nazi ideology, Communist ideology changed language: military terminology reflecting the speech of an army came to dominate. Brutal attacks on religion took place. Everything became a "struggle": a struggle to raise productivity, a struggle for the harvest, a yet more threatening struggle against "enemies of the people". Simultaneously, citizens were indoctrinated with paranoid stereotypes about the "hidden enemy" lurking everywhere. Everything written and said of the Party or the government in Soviet Latvia, meanwhile, was expressed in pathetic superlatives. The Communists not only worked with ideology: many, including Party members who did not work in the security structures or internal affairs, actively participated in the repression of the people of Latvia, producing lists of "kulaks" and "speculators," or "enemies of the people", submitting them directly to the organs of repression. One of the most active opponents of "anti-Soviet elements," for example, was Eduards Berkļavs, later the most prominent national Communist, who submitted information on these "elements" to the security services. Party members also actively participated in drafting the lists of those to be deported on June 14, 1941.

The Commissariats of the Home Affairs and Security, Commissariat for Justice and the Supreme Court were Russified far more swiftly than the Latvian Communist Party, with newly arrived Russians – and sometimes Jews and Latvians from Russia, who were not infrequently more supportive of Russification than the Russians themselves – quickly appointed to leading positions. The Commissar of the Home Affairs of the Latvian SSR (after the war: the People's Commissar for Security) Alfons Noviks did retain his position even unto Stalin's death in 1953, which testifies to Moscow's complete trust in him and the Soviets' conviction that he would be merciless in battling the "enemies of the people". In the Commissariat for State Security, however, almost the entire leadership was in the hands of those who had arrived from the USSR. Semyon Shustin, already mentioned, was appointed the Commissar for Security. The Commissariat for Justice was led by Ernests Soldnieks, who had worked in Soviet Ukraine since 1925. The Prosecutor's Office was largely purged in the spring 1941, the local employees replaced by those sent from the Soviet Union. The Supreme Court of the Latvian SSR was led by the Russian Latvians Fricis Dombrovskis (Chairman)

and Emilija Veinberga (his Deputy). On the whole, those employed by the institutions of repression were characterised by a low level of education, this deficiency balanced by their political trustworthiness and rapid, shallow training. In January 1941, for example, three-month courses in the law were organised. A second wind was given to the terror in November 1940 by the official introduction of the Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. This Code was applied retroactively, so that charges could be brought against the imprisoned for "crimes" they couldn't have committed in the two decades of Latvian independence after 1920, when no Russian codes were in place. The most odious part of the Code was Article 58-1a, stipulating the most serious punishment for "betraying the fatherland". Although no imprisoned person was guilty of treason to their fatherland (i.e. Latvia), they were charged with treason to Soviet Russia, a country they were supposed to have "betrayed" in the 1920s and 1930s, when they were not citizens of the USSR. The Code also fully legalised confiscation of property and deportation by administrative decree, methods already widely in use before the formal introduction of the Code.

In May 1941, Moscow adopted a decision to begin a fourth wave of deportations from the territories the Soviets had occupied and annexed (the first three waves had taken place in 1940, beginning on February 10 in eastern Poland, taken by the USSR after the attack on Poland in September 1939). The way to the Great Terror was opened by the joint resolution of the USSR Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), No. 1299-526ss on May 14, 1941, providing for deportations from western Ukraine. This was followed on May 16 by a decision for deportations from Lithuania and no later than May 22 by a decision to deport inhabitants from Latvia, Estonia, western Belarus and Moldova. It was exactly on May 22 that deportations from Ukraine began, and this larger wave ended with deportations from western Belarus in the night of June 19/20. The process was executed by the USSR Commissariat for State Security and the Commissariats in the republics that were subordinate to it (e.g., the organ led by Shustin in Latvia). The decision for the deportations was taken in Moscow, and the institutions in occupied Latvia were not responsible for its adoption – but they certainly bear full responsibility for the fervent way in which the decision was carried out. The lists of those to be deported were compiled not only by the security services, but also by Party members and Soviet

activists. The 1941 deportations differed in character from the 1941 deportations because the categories of those deported were far broader. Ten groups of inhabitants were slated for deportation, from “members of counter-revolutionary parties and anti-Soviet organisations” (group 1) to “refugees from the former Poland who have refused to take Soviet citizenship” (Point 9) and “Germans who had registered for repatriation but have not repatriated” (Point 10). Practically anybody could be included in one or another group. Another important characteristic was that the deportees were not even formally charged, even in connection with Soviet law or in kangaroo courts.⁵

At the night of June 14-15, 15,424 persons were deported from Latvia, including almost a hundred infants under the age of one and more than 3,000 children under 16 (the Jews suffered the most relative to their numbers: although Jews made up only about 5% of the population, they were 11% of the deportees).⁶ A very active role in the deportations was played by the USSR NKVD 155th separate military convoy battalion, deployed in Riga. On the borders of the Latvian SSR and Russia and Belarus, border guards were deployed to prevent the escape of any persons slated to be deported from occupied Latvia. The deportees represented the nation's pride and backbone – entrepreneurs, politicians and the intelligentsia (among them 1,345 farmers, 616 merchants, and 71 teachers). Many died already on their way to Siberia from the lack of food and especially water, and from the unbearable heat. The destinations of the deportees were three: the Krasnoyarsk and Novosibirsk districts in Siberia and the Karaganda district in Kazakhstan. Only those deported from the Baltic were subject to all three types of terror: firstly, deportations in which the deportees were placed under the oversight of local security services at their destinations; secondly, those subjected to repression who ended up in camps for prisoners of war; and thirdly, those who ended up in work camps (their official name was “corrective labour camps”, but in fact these were concentration camps with a very severe regimen).⁷ Terror on this scale, in so short a period, had never been experienced in Latvia, and the result was horror and shock among the populace: emotions exacerbated by immediate rumors that a second wave would soon follow. These rumours, spreading with lightning speed, had a solid basis: a second wave was indeed being prepared, directed against farmers (“kulaks”) and meant to lay the ground for rapid mass collectivisation as Andreyev had already recommended. The lists of the next deportees were already being compiled, and the local committees of the Latvian Communist Party (Bolshevik) were again

actively engaged in this work. Later, in 1948, the Prosecutor's Office of the Latvian SSR would note that only the German invasion had prevented "a total liquidation of the remaining counterrevolutionary elements in the Latvian SSR". The "Year of Horror", as it came to be known, and especially the deportations of June 14, created such fear and hatred in the populace that in a very short period the common view of the Germans ("the black knights") as the Latvians' primary enemies – developed over the centuries – was suddenly replaced by the view that the primary enemy was Russia and the Communists. This change of perspective defined the reception the Germans received when they invaded. Entering Latvia a week after the deportations, the Germans were often greeted as liberators from Communist tyranny, though they would turn out not to be liberators at all, of course.

Soviet terror reached bestial proportions immediately after the German attack began. Instead of organising a defence, energy was expended on a final wave of murder. At least 349 political prisoners were killed in the jails and massacres at the Central Prison and at Baltezers, a lake near Riga; others (the total number of the imprisoned was 3592, of which 96.73% – 3,458 persons – were political prisoners) were "evacuated" to the interior of Russia, a large proportion being murdered there. Arrests continued apace, and at the beginning of July 1941 when the Germans occupied all of Latvia the number of those arrested for political reasons on the "Year of Horror" had reached at least 7,292 in total. Although the terror was perpetrated by a large number of Chekists and members of the Soviet police, there were four individuals at the centre of events: Semyon Shustin, who ordered the deportation of 6,636 people and had at least several dozen shot; Zyama Krivitsky, Chairman of the 1st Special Branch of the People's Commissariat for Security, who was responsible for the deportation of 1,915 persons; Aleksandr Brezgin, responsible for the deportation of 1,138 persons, and Jānis Cinis, the Deputy Chairman of the People's Commissariat for Home Affairs, who ordered the deportation of 2,479 persons. The first three of these main figures in the security apparatus were of Jewish origin, and this fact created the stereotype common in occupied Latvia regarding "Jewish Chekists".

To oversee the deportations in the Baltic, the highest leaders of the USSR People's Commissariat were personally sent to the region: Commissar Vsevolod Merkulov to Lithuania, Deputy Commissar Ivan Serov – known for running the deportations in the annexed part of Poland – to Latvia, and Viktor Abakumov to Estonia.

Although all-encompassing terror reigned, the first resistance began during the "Year of Horror". The most valuable result of the period of Latvian freedom, the idealistic and patriotic flower of its youth, experienced the destruction of the state most painfully and began to form anti-Soviet groups already in August 1940. Ilmārs Grundis, Arvīds Freibergs, Zāmuels Kušaks and Haralds Urbāns, Scouts from Cēsis, laid the foundation for an illegal movement on August 24, 1940. In October 1940, the CSNA ("Cēsu skolnieku nacionālā apvienība", the National Union of Cēsis Students) was founded as a secret organisation with the aim of toppling the occupation regime. These were followed by students at the Aizupe School of Forestry, the Jelgava Secondary School No. 1 and the Jelgava Polytechnic, and the First Secondary School in Daugavpils. Gedimins Franckaičs, who tried to organise schoolchildren in Aglona, was executed on the orders of the Tribunal of the Special Baltic Military District, his corpse was found floating in Baltezers. The youths were followed by an adult underground formed in various groupings: "Tēvijas Sargi" ("Guards of the Fatherland"), "Jaunlatvieši" ("The Young Latvians"), the Latvian National Legion and others. Edgars Rūja, Jānis Tamanis and Laimonis Sala were among the leaders of the resistance. On May 13, 1941, one of the major acts against the occupiers took place, with the appearance of circa 5,000 leaflets opposing the occupation. Although the Cheka was successful in uncovering and paralysing the resistance in the spring 1941, the spirit of resistance was not crushed and flared up again immediately upon the opening of hostilities between Germany and the USSR, when a movement of national partisans, aiming to restore Latvia's independence, appeared in 129 civil parishes – almost every fourth parish in Latvia.

REFERENCES

- ¹ The advisor to the Soviet Embassy in Latvia and NKVD resident in June 1940, Ivan Chichayev, wrote of Pumpāns' activities in Latvia that period. Writing in Moscow on April 14, 1965, Chichayev noted that "before the establishment of Soviet power, Comrade Pumpāns Alfrēds arrived there (at the Embassy) from the USSR VDM for a special mission, spending about three months in Riga until August 1940. During this period, Comrade Pumpāns, using the surnames Krilovs, Berdins and Bērziņš, fulfilled special duties connected to the work of the Latvian Foreign Ministry, the Latvian General Staff, the political police and communications institutions, also actively participating in various efforts involving the establishment of Soviet power."

Quoted from the book *Latvijas izlūkdienesti 1919. –1940. 664 likteņi*. Totalitārisma seku dokumentēšanas centrs, Rīga, pp. 89–90. Viktors Verbovskis wrote of 1940 on February 17, 1974: “Working in USSR NKVD organs in Moscow, as a result of a resolution by the Central Committee of the CP USSR, in June (1940) I was sent to Latvia on a special mission...” Ibid., p. 92.

² Regarding the work of Ivan Chichayev (1896–1984) in the USSR NKVD espionage service, see Kristofer Endrju, Oļeg Gordijevskij. *Istorija vnešnepolitičeskikh operacij ot Ļeņina do Gorbačeva*. – Moscow, Nota Bene, 1992, pp. 335–337, 369, 370; Chichayev, a colonel in the security service, was involved in the destructive operations of the USSR in several countries: Finland, Estonia, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Great Britain, and China. See Modris Ziemeņš, “Vēstures pēdziņa novērojumi.” *Latvijas Avīze*, February 17, 2005, p. 5. Regarding Chichayev’s work in Latvia, see *Latvijas izlūkdienesti 1919. –1940.*, op. cit. An active role was played by the First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy (from February 16, 1937), Mikhail Vetrov, and the USSR trade representative from September 1939, V. Terentyev, who had been transferred to Latvia from Finland, where he had attracted attention as an NKVD agent. For details, see I. Feldmanis, Stranga, A., Virsis, M.: *Latvijas ārpolitika un starptautiskais stāvoklis. 30. gadu otrā puse*. Rīga: Latvijas ārpolitikas institūts, 1993, pp. 384–385.

³ Vikentijš Latkovskis had been recruited by the Soviet secret services already in 1920; contacts were kept up with greater or lesser intensity for a full two decades. With the beginning of the occupation in June 1940, Moscow decided to give the long-time agent a position of responsibility, at least briefly. Already on June 18th, Latkovskis was ordered to meet with Ivan Chichayev. A second meeting took place on June 19, at 10 a.m., and Chichayev then informed Latkovskis that he would be in the government created by the Soviet Embassy. See Vikentijš Latkovskis’ memoirs of his contacts with Chichayev, the Latvian History Archive, 200. fonds, 9. apraksts, 703. lieta, pp. 34–41.

⁴ The details of the terror in 1940 are given in Dzintars Ērglis, Irēne Šneidere, Rudite Viksne, Arturs Žvinklis: *Padomju represijas Latvijā 1940. gada jūnijā – augustā: struktūranalīze*. The collected works of the Historians’ Commission of Latvia, Vo. 12. Rīga, 2004, p. 130.

⁵ For details, see the very professional analysis of the 1941 deportations by Guryanov, A. E. *Maštabi deportāciju naseļenija v glubj SSSR v maje ijuņe 1941 g. – v Repressiji protiv Poļakov i poļskih graždan* Moscow: Zvenya, 1997, pp. 137–176.

⁶ Currently, the most precise list of persons deported from Latvia is *Aizvestie. 1941. gada 14. jūnijs*. Ed. by: Pelkaus, E., Latvian State Archives, 2001, p. 804.

⁷ Guryanov, A. E. op. cit. – p. 140.

V. LATVIA UNDER THE OCCUPATION OF NAZI GERMANY (1941–1945)

5.1. THE GERMAN OCCUPATION REGIME IN LATVIA

The beginning of the occupation

At 4 a. m. on June 22, 1941 the German air force began bombing Soviet military airfields, headquarters, military concentration areas, ports and railway junctions in Ventspils and Liepāja. The German Army Group North under Field Marshall Wilhelm von Leeb assaulted Latvia in four directions: towards Liepāja, Daugavpils, Krustpils and Riga. The sudden German attack caught the Soviet forces by surprise and led to their rapid and chaotic retreat without offering significant resistance. The most serious fighting took place in Liepāja on June 23, where units of the Red Army's 67th Infantry Division under General Nikolai Dedayev and Navy detachments were surrounded by the Germans. During the defence of Liepāja, groups of Soviet and Komsomol activists under Miķelis Būka and Jānis Zars fought on the Soviet side.

The battle for Liepāja was fought from June 23 to 26. In fact, it was not so much a defence of the city as a desperate attempt by units of the Red Army and Navy to break the blockade of the German 291st Infantry Division. On June 27 some Soviet troops escaped from the city and headed in the direction of Riga and Šķēde, incurring heavy losses. German forces entered JaunLiepāja on June 28 and gained full control of the city the next day. In a letter to the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party in 1942, Secretary of the Liepāja Komsomol and battle group leader Imants Sudmalis was highly critical of the Red Army during the battle for Liepāja. He noted that the Red Army and Navy units did not try to defend the city from the German onslaught, but instead concentrated on escaping the blockade. On the orders of the Soviet fleet commander, six submarines were scuttled in port. At the Grobina airfield the Germans captured aircraft intact.

The German forces met even less resistance in other cities and advanced rapidly. On June 26, they took Daugavpils, on June 27 Tukums, on June 28 Līvāni and Krustpils, and on the tenth day of the war (July 1) the Germans entered Riga without significant battle. In fact, the city was only defended by the Soviet Interior Forces 5th Regiment and units of the Workers' Guards.

On June 27, the Latvian Soviet government left Riga for Valka, where they remained a short time, as the German forces rapidly pushed the Front line eastwards. On the night of July 4/5, the Soviet government moved from Valka to Novgorod. By July 8, 1941, the German army had occupied the entire territory of Latvia.

In many places the Germans were received as liberators from Soviet tyranny. The June 14, 1941 deportations of residents of Latvia had generated hostility towards the Soviets. Without trials or evidence of guilt, the Soviet regime illegally deported 15,000 residents of Latvia to Siberia of whom 15 percent (over 2300) were children aged under 10 years. Of these deportees, 6081 or almost 40 percent died. Hostility to the Soviet regime was also generated by the confiscation of property, general Sovietisation, and a variety of repressions and persecutions.¹

National partisans and self-defence command groups

Even before the German invasion, armed groups calling themselves National Partisans had sprung up in many parts of Latvia. These groups became especially active with the onset of the German-Soviet war. Exploiting the situation, the partisans wanted to liquidate the communist regime and restore Latvia's statehood. The partisan movement brought together civilian escapees from Soviet arrests and deportations, National Guard troops, soldiers of the Latvian Army, and deserters from the Soviet-formed 24th Latvian Territorial Infantry Group. On June 22 the National Partisans attempted the takeover of the post and telegraph building in Priekule. They also attacked the retreating Soviet forces in Riga, Valmiera, Smiltene, Alūksne, Gulbene, Limbaži, Madona and in many parishes and small towns. In summer 1941, 129 National Partisan groups operated in Latvia: 83 in Livland, 24 in Semigallia, 22 in Courland and 1 in Latgallia. The effectiveness of National Partisan activities is confirmed by the complaints from Soviet commanders about frequent "fifth column" attacks. These hindered the organised retreat of the Red Army, frustrated the evacuation and caused

panic and chaos. After the entry of the German forces, the National Partisans were disarmed. Some were placed under the command of the German military, some with the police force and some incorporated into Latvia's self-defence structures.²

At the start of the German occupation the occupying regime established self-defence command groups throughout Latvia. These were actually formed on the basis of orders from the German military authorities. On July 8, 1941, in an appeal to Latvian soldiers, home guards and police units, the commander of the Latvian self-defence forces, Colonel Aleksandrs Plensners, formulated the mission of these forces: to uphold security and order locally in close cooperation with German military units and institutions. The units guarded railways, bridges, roads, prisons and important economic sites, and attempted to protect the population from marauders and fleeing Red Army soldiers. The German military permitted only the members of the self-defence units to be armed with rifles and pistols. Just 2 percent of parish and town residents were permitted to receive arms and participate in self-defence. The German authorities stressed that the self-defence forces had no connection with Latvia's statehood or the re-establishment of its army, but rather that they were auxiliary police units assisting the German military. These forces contained about 7000 people.

In the first weeks of the German occupation around 700 self-defence command groups were established in Latvia. They were set up territorially, with district, town and parish groups. The insignia of the members of the groups was a maroon-white-maroon armband (the colours of the Latvian flag). The Latvian self-defence command groups were disbanded in August 1941, once the first phase of the German occupation regime had ended and these forces had served their purpose. The Latvian auxiliary police was later drawn from these forces.

From the first days of the German occupation, former state officials, political party leaders and military officers of the Republic of Latvia planned on setting up a new government of Latvia. In the early stages of the occupation, the attempts to restore Latvia's statehood and form national armed forces were opposed with particular vehemence by Brigadier Walter Stahlecker, commander in the Ostland of the German Security Police and Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst* – SD). He considered that both the National Partisans and the Latvian self-defence forces should primarily be used for exterminating the Jews and strengthening the German occupation regime. He

was categorically against any national activities. On Stahlecker's orders the Latvian national partisans were disbanded, required to hand in their weapons and prohibited from wearing non-German uniforms.

Some historians maintain that in late June and early July 1941, between the departure of the Soviet regime and the entry of German forces, there was a relatively long power vacuum (interregnum) in Latvia during which Latvian nationalists settled scores with Soviet activists and Jews. The latest research, however, has overturned these assertions. Documentary sources show that German commanders in both towns and rural areas tightly controlled their territories and nothing in Latvia happened without their knowledge. Latvian self-defence forces operated under the orders of the local German government. The German commanders took charge of Latvia's economics, provisioned the local population, assumed responsibility for security, sent authorised representatives to parishes under their command, appointed local government officials and generally made it clear that they were the new rulers. The German officials also gave orders to commence the registering of Jews. The power vacuum lasted no longer than one day, with some slight local variations.³

During the change of power officials of the crumbling Soviet regime continued to repress the inhabitants of Latvia. Previously arrested "enemies of the people" were shot, people were arrested, property was confiscated, and domestic institutions were robbed by employees as well as by workers' guards. For example, documents show that 104 civilians were arrested in Latgallia from June 23 to 25, 1941.

Plans of the national forces

After experiencing the Stalinist "Year Of Horrors", many Latvians hoped that the entry of the Germans would soon lead to the re-establishment of the state of Latvia. In early July 1941, several former Republic of Latvia government ministers, officers and politicians initiated the Centre for Latvian Organisations at the Riga Latvian Society House to begin developing activities to this end. Those working at the Centre included the former Finance Minister Alfrēds Valdmanis, Transport Minister Bernhards Einbergs, Colonel Ernests Kreišmanis and Vilis Olavs. Einbergs assumed the leadership of the Centre and planned that it would be the foundation of the next national government. The Centre for Latvian Organisations attempted to establish

contacts with German military institutions and take over power at local levels. The centre also published the newspaper *Tēvija* (*Fatherland*). All of these efforts were in vain.

The planning of Latvia's future after the ejection of the communists also attracted those Latvians who had repatriated or fled to Germany. They now returned to Latvia with the German army. The most notable of these were officers connected with the *Abwehr*, including Lieutenant Colonel Viktors Deglavs, Colonel Aleksandrs Plensners and others. While in Germany, they had assembled a group of over 200 men who agreed to help the German forces in the battle for Latvia. After the taking of Latvia Plensners was expected to organise the self-defence forces. However, the Germans forgot their promises to support Latvian nationalist aims. On July 18, 1941, Deglavs was shot in Riga by an unknown assailant. The former leaders of the "Pērkonkrusts" (Thunder Cross) organisation, Gustavs Celmiņš and Ēvalds Andersons, also sought cooperation with the Germans.⁴

The activities of the Latvian nationalists did not align with the plans of the Nazi regime. The German authorities quickly announced that no government would be formed in Latvia and that Latvia's status would be decided after the war in the new Europe. Latvian hopes to govern their own country were dashed. On July 9, 1941 the following order was issued by Wehrmacht Colonel L. Petersen, the Commandant of Riga: "Recently some persons have appointed themselves to various official positions, and there have even been attempts to renew central institutions that existed before the Bolshevik period. Such actions are not permissible and shall be punished."

The occupation regime

An occupation regime was established in Latvia in accordance with Nazi aims. Initially, all power was concentrated in the hands of the German military high command, but as the army moved eastwards, German civil administration took over. A special ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories (*Reichsministerium die besetzten Ostgebiete*) was created under Alfred Rosenberg. It had authority over the Eastern Territory (Ostland) Reich Commissariat led by Hinrich Lohse. Adolf Hitler gave the order to establish the Eastern Territory (Ostland) Reich Commissariat and introduce civil administration in the occupied eastern territories on July 17, 1941. The General District of Latvia was incorporated into Ostland together with

Estonia, Lithuania and part of Belarus. The head of the General District of Latvia was General Commissar Otto Heinrich Drexler.

The General District of Latvia was divided into five regional commissariats: Liepāja, Jelgava, Valmiera, Daugavpils and the rural district around Riga. The city of Riga comprised a special administrative unit; Dr. Hugo Vitrok was appointed its *Oberbirgemeistar*. Each region was administered by a commissar: for the Riga rural district – SA Colonel Joachim Fust; for Liepāja – land advisor Dr. Walter Alnor; for Jelgava – SA Colonel Walther Eberhard von Medem; for Valmiera – Herman Hansen; and for Daugavpils – Riken (later Schwung).

Although the order to establish a civil administration had been given, military administration remained in force in Latvia in July and August 1941. During the initial stages of the occupation, the German forces in Latvia were commanded by General Franz von Roques, and from August 25 the Armed Forces Supreme Commander of the Ostland was Cavalry Lieutenant General Walter Bremer. Independent from local officials, Bremer reported directly to the Wehrmacht high command in Berlin. Bremer had at his disposal a large administrative and intelligence service, a command network, and also the military units stationed in Ostland. The Wehrmacht ensured the stable functioning of the occupation regime.

The police forces under Reich Fuhrer Heinrich Himmler also functioned in the occupied territories. In autumn 1941, General Friedrich Jeckeln was appointed Supreme Commander of the SS and the police in the Ostland, while the Supreme Commander of the SS and police in the General District of Latvia was SS *Oberfuhrer* Walther Schroder. The Commander in Latvia of German State Security Chief Administration Operational Group A (*Einsatzgruppe A*) was SS *Brigadenfuhrer* Walter Stahlecker. The Commander of the Security Police and SD in Latvia was *Oberstumbanfuhrer* Rudolf Lange. There was also a German Order Police headed in Latvia by Schroder and commanded by Colonel Max Knecht.

The German forces in Latvia created a highly complex administrative structure for the occupation regime. There was a large network of civil service, police, Gestapo, Schutzman Battalions, gendarmerie and Wehrmacht organisations in Latvia, along with many German officials, for a number of reasons. Firstly, many organisations were established in the anticipation of the colonisation of the Baltic States. Secondly, the Germans themselves aspired to be posted to the Baltic because the level of material provisioning

was higher than in Germany. Many also went to work for the German civil administration because this was a way of avoiding military service.

Most of the various German occupation institutions were stationed in Riga. The city hosted the Ostland Reich Commissariat (with 900 German officials) and the General Commissariat for Latvia (with 280 German officials), as well as the propaganda administration, a representative office of the Economic Headquarters Ost, the "Riga" economic unit, the Nazi party's major administrative institutions in the Ostland and other organisations. Obviously, an excessive bureaucratic apparatus was typical of not only the Soviet but also the Nazi occupation regime.

The courts and prosecutors were also important institutions in the occupation regime's administrative structure. On October 6, 1941 Lohse ordered the establishment of German courts and prosecutors in the Ostland. The court system had two levels. The lowest, the so-called German court, was under the authority of the General Commissar. Under this system, a German higher court had appellate functions and could rule on complaints about judgments handed down by the German court. In the German court cases were heard by one judge, while the German higher court was presided over by three judges. In addition, to further strengthen the occupation regime, on January 12, 1942 Rosenberg, the Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, issued a decree for the establishment of an extraordinary court. It should be noted that Germans were not subject to the jurisdiction of this extraordinary court. This court was usually summoned by the General Commissar, and consisted of one police officer or SS leader as chairman plus two subordinates (similar to the extraordinary hearings or "troikas" under the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union). Importantly, the judgments of the extraordinary court could not be questioned or appealed.

The Nazi regime had its own plans for the occupied eastern territories. Reich Minister Rosenberg was the official primarily involved with these issues. Latvia and Estonia were to become German living space. The colonisation and Germanisation of these countries were planned with the rejection of any restoration of their statehoods. Rosenberg believed that about 50 percent of the Baltic peoples were racially suitable for Germanisation, while the remainder would be transferred to the occupied regions of Russia and Belarus. The various versions of General Plan Ost give an insight into the objectives of the Nazi occupation. This plan anticipated the complete Germanisation and colonisation of the Baltic within 20 to 30 years.

Not long after the establishment of the occupation regime in the Ostland, some of its leaders concluded that the broader involvement of the local inhabitants would assist in reaching their objectives. This was the seed of the idea of local self-administration. The Germans appointed the former commander of the Courland Division, General Oskars Dankers, as the head of the Latvian self-government. The self-government of Latvia was designated a General Directorate, and by the end of 1941 Dankers was able to form this Directorate.

The supreme leaders of Nazi Germany were convinced that the local self-governments would resolve any issues using their own resources. It was expected that this would significantly reduce the number of German officials and police (about 120,000 in the Ostland) needed to keep the occupation regime functioning. The creation of self-government cannot be considered a great achievement by local Latvian politicians, but rather a necessity created by the German occupation regime. It was not a government of Latvia. The establishment of the Latvian self-government was also facilitated by the German setbacks in the battles near Moscow.

A new phase of self-government was marked by Rosenberg's directive of March 7, 1942, which confirmed the administrative setup of the General Districts of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and stipulated that these districts must be administered by organisations established by local populations. Rosenberg's order stated: "In these three General Districts the German leadership will have supervisory functions." The document emphasised that German organisations would retain political power and control. It was also stipulated that the Nazi authorities would determine the number of self-government directors and the tasks that fell under their sphere of influence. The self-government was headed by the first General Director, who was appointed by the General Commissar. The previously established district, town and parish self-government organisations were made partially subordinate to the self-government of the land. There could be no consideration of any serious self-determination or independence for the self-government of the land. Its main task was to implement Nazi instructions. In his postwar memoirs the German occupation regime official Harry Marnitz described the Latvian self-government directors as men in a highly unenviable position – they were expected to do everything but were given no authority to carry out difficult tasks.

With the consent of Ostland Reich Commissar Lohse, on May 9, 1942 the General Commissar of Latvia Hans Drexler appointed the following self-government General Directors: of the interior – O. Dankers; of the

economy – Voldemārs Zāgars; of finance – Jānis Skujevics; of education and culture – Riga University Chancellor Professor Mārtiņš Prīmanis; of equipment and transport – Oskars Leimanis; as controller – Pēteris Vanags; of internal security – Voldemārs Veiss. To simplify administration the Trade, Industry and Agriculture General Directorates were attached to the Economy General Directorate, which also included a Chief Directorate of Forestry and Wood Processing and a Trade and Industry Department as separate units. The agronomist J. Andersons was appointed to the position of Chief Director for Agriculture.^{5,6}

Overall, the Latvian self-government was an additional element of the civil administration of the German occupation. The most important political and economic issues – food quotas, wages, labour requisitions and mandatory material levies, etc. – were decided by German institutions. The rights of the self-government were restricted not just by the Reich Commissar and General Commissar but also by the German police and SS leadership, which acted with complete autonomy. This powerlessness was exacerbated by the uncoordinated and frequently contradictory acts of the many German institutions. The powerlessness of the Latvian self-government was also evident in the regulation of the local courts. By a special order of General Commissar H. Drexler, local courts were seemingly permitted to hear civil and criminal cases. However, it was also stipulated that this was only possible in the event that the accused was of non-German nationality and the offence did not have impact on the national interests of Germany. It was also stipulated that local court judges, prosecutors, prison governors, barristers, public notaries and private solicitors were appointed by the General Director for Justice, however, their authorisations would only become valid following approval by the General Commissar.

The headquarters of the Latvian self-government was in Riga, where it operated until September 1944 when it was transferred to Liepāja in the face of the advancing Soviet forces. In the final stages of the war, the functioning of the Latvian self-government's general directorate became even more difficult.

Ideas of autonomy

To secure more support from Latvians and Estonians for the occupation regime, the German government considered the idea of autonomy for the

Baltic States as early as 1941. This issue was examined because Germany needed to effectively resolve its military and economic problems in the occupied territories. The Nazi leaders were divided on this issue: a liberal stance espoused by Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories Rosenberg and a hard line implemented by Reich Commissar Lohse, who consistently opposed granting any political autonomy to the Baltic. On the other hand, in summer 1941 Rosenberg stated that after victory over the Bolsheviks, Germany would support the aspiration for freedom of small nations. The new states could be a buffer to protect Germany from pressure from the east. Rosenberg prepared a proposal for administration by local Fuhrer appointees in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. In his opinion such a project would turn the Balts into close allies of the Nazis. Himmler, Hermann Goering and Martin Bormann, however, had completely opposing views on this matter. On Rosenberg's initiative, the Eastern Ministry considered the adoption of a modified approach to the fate of the Baltic. A secret report dated February 3 emphasised that in the future the Baltic nations must be closely tied to the Reich, but that this merging would take a long time, requiring not just a few years or decades, but several generations. The repeated discussions of Latvia's autonomy were intended to induce the Baltic nations to participate in the achievement of Nazi objectives. At a meeting of Latvia's self-government on July 7, 1942 Dankers reported that General Jeckeln had told Latvian officers at the Front that Latvia and Estonia would have cultural and economic self-determination. They would have their own currency, armed forces and a representative at the German high command. However, officially Jeckeln's remarks were characterised as his own personal views.

In a November 1942 memorandum to Drechsler, Valdmanis wrote that Germany could allow Latvia to establish a free state on the model of Slovakia, receiving in return support for mobilising Latvians into the Legion. Valdmanis promised 100,000 Latvian men for the German armed forces. Drechsler favored the idea, but Lohse was once again opposed. Rosenberg also ordered the staff of the Eastern Ministry to propose to Hitler the political self-determination of Latvia and Estonia under the firm control of and subservience to the Reich. Meanwhile Himmler prepared a project anticipating a status between that of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and the Slovak state.⁷

In meetings with Rosenberg, Borman, Himmler, Lohse and others on November 16–17, 1943 Hitler stated that during the current difficult period

wide-ranging changes in the Baltic should not be initiated, but that the idea of autonomy should not be forgotten. Hitler did not object to the publishing of a declaration promising Latvians and Estonians cultural autonomy after the war. After these meetings, Rosenberg postponed the autonomy issue until the end of the war. He believed that the Fuhrer could return to this issue after assessing the performance of the Latvian and Estonian soldiers on the Eastern Front. As the situation on the Eastern Front deteriorated, during discussions in 1943 with officers of the Latvian Legion Himmler also allowed for the possibility of autonomy for Latvia. His aim was to attract additional support for the German army.

Despite the changed situation, in 1943 Lohse continued to oppose the idea of autonomy for the Baltic States. He stressed that it would distance the Ostland from Germany. Lohse also suspected the political loyalty of the local population. He hoped to utilise the fighting capacity of the Latvian Legion without promising Baltic autonomy. In December 1943 Joachim von Ribbentrop expressed the view held by other hardliners that all political discussions about the legal status of the General Districts of Latvia and Estonia must cease. The plans for autonomy were blocked.

In February 1944 Rosenberg visited Riga, and the autonomy issue was again raised in talks with self-government leaders. He returned to Germany convinced of the relevance of the issue and the need to resolve it. On November 30, 1944 Rosenberg signed a report on the utility of establishing a national committee in Latvia. In order to motivate Latvian soldiers to fight, on February 20, 1945 the National Council of Latvia met in Potsdam with the blessing of Reich Fuhrer Himmler. It elected the National Committee of Latvia (NCL) with General Rūdolfs Bangerskis as its president. Elected as committee members were Legion Colonel Artūrs Silgailis, agronomist J. Andersons, Lieutenant Colonel R. Kociņš, J. Miežis and others. The NCL was intended to replace the Latvian self-government. However, the establishment of the NCL did not resolve the issue of Latvia's autonomy; it was a propaganda maneuver by the Nazis. Germany did not plan on recognising an independent state of Latvia nor its government. The German press wrote that the NCL could only be considered as a refugee organisation. Even at such a critical time, Germany did not change its policy toward Latvia.

At the start of March 1945, the NCL and its president Bangerskis moved to Liepāja, where it attempted to take control of several civil institutions. The German administration boycotted the NCL. At this time there were also

talks in Liepāja between German General Herman Behrendt (Himmler's representative in Courland) and the NCL. General Behrendt declared that there could be no question of restoring Latvia's statehood, and that the NCL could only perform local administrative functions. At the beginning of April Bangerskis and Miezis departed for Germany, stating that they were going to Berlin to protest the actions of General Behrendt. A short time later Bangerskis surrendered to the Western Allies.

During the final stages of the war, rumours in Courland maintained that the Germans would capitulate the Western Front, but continue fighting on the Eastern Front. Under these circumstances, on May 3, 1945 the NCL decided to disband and a new government was created in Liepāja under Colonel Roberts Osis, a regimental commander in the Legion. It decided to orient its activities in line with the possibility of Germany concluding a separate peace with the British and Americans while continuing the war against the Soviet Union. Colonel Osis tried to persuade the commander of the Courland Group, General Karl Hilpert, to continue resistance in Courland until American and British assistance. However, such maneuverings by the Osis government were in vain, because everyone ignored them. Shortly before the capitulation of the German forces Osis escaped to Germany where he surrendered to the British.

5.2. THE REPRESSIONS AND THE HOLOCAUST

From the first days of the occupation the Nazis established an extensive system of repression in Latvia, which they considered essential in strengthening and bolstering the regime. The most important elements of this system were the police and the security service, the courts and the prosecutors, and the concentration camps and prisons. The Nazis also involved Latvians by using them in both the police and the security service.

The German Security Police and Security Service

SS *Brigandenführer* and Police Major General W. Stahlecker, commander of the German Security Police and SD in Ostland, played a major role in establishing and implementing the repressive Nazi regime in Latvia. He directed the German Operational Group A and attempted to also involve

Latvians in the extermination of Jews and communists. Alongside the Latvian Auxiliary Order Police he formed several security police and security service auxiliary units and teams. These so-called *Sonderkommando* were overseen by Stahlecker himself. The SD had a large network of agents at its disposal to monitor the local populations. Jeckeln, Stahlecker and Lange had the largest impact on the SD's activities in Latvia. Stahlecker was killed in a military operation near Leningrad in 1942.

Jeckeln had a major role in the crimes and atrocities committed against civilians. He planned and organised the liquidation of the Riga ghetto at Rumbula. Jeckeln's name is also connected with other mass murders. In May 1945 he was captured by the Soviets. A court sentenced Jeckeln to death by hanging, and the punishment was carried out in Riga on February 3, 1946.

The Security Police and the SD were central to the system of repression created in Latvia by the Nazis. Its base was located in Berlin and included the Main Reich Security Authority (RSHA). In Latvia the SD was the advance guard of the occupation regime and was given wide-ranging authority. Although the Wehrmacht and the civilian administration had some disputes with the SD, it was all-powerful and always imposed its own terms. Stahlecker considered the Security Police as the only stable German ruling institution. SD representatives wore black uniforms, with a death's head insignia on their caps. The SD's system of rank was the same as for the SS. Operational Group A was one of the mobile punishment units whose task was to exterminate communists, Chekists (Soviet agents), Jews and gypsies. The SD was responsible for security behind the Front line. When the SD entered Latvia, it had information about the locations of Chekist institutions and military, as well as lists of the chief officials of the communist regime. Together with the Wehrmacht, on June 22, 1941 about 900 men of Operational Group A entered Latvia. They were professionals and true fanatics ready to carry out the harshest orders of the Nazi regime.

Operational Group A entered Latvia in three teams. One team of 50–60 men headed for Liepāja, the second went to Daugavpils and Rezekne, while the main force under Stahlecker's command went to Riga. The operational group included German security police and Waffen SS technical service personnel: drivers, telegraphers, and decipher clerks, etc. After the taking of Latvia part of the operational group's forces was sent to Estonia and northern Russia. From December 3, 1941 Lange took command of the German SD forces in Latvia. He was also the second commander of the operational group.

After arriving in Riga on July 1, 1941, Stahlecker began setting up the command centre in Latvia for the Security Police and SD at 1 Reimersa Street, Riga. The Security Police and SD consisted of five departments: personnel, administration, surveillance, state secret police and criminal police. The state secret police was the centre that was served by the other departments. It had several sections: IVa was responsible for communist matters, IVb for the Jewish question, while IVn dealt with spies and agents. Also under this department was the Arājs team and the Latvian Political Police led by Herberts Teidemanis. The Fourth Department was indisputably responsible for the harshest repressions against civilians and the Holocaust against the Jews. It also oversaw the concentration camps and the ghetto. The Fourth Department was lead by Lange. In order to achieve the occupation regime's objectives more quickly, on Stahlecker's initiative Latvian units were set up within the SD forces. The most notable were Viktors Arājs' team in Riga, the ancillary unit commanded by Martins Vagulāns in Jelgava and Herberts Teidemanis' group in Valmiera.

On Stahlecker's orders Vagulāns was appointed to command the first organised SD unit in Latvia in Jelgava. Operating for about six weeks, Vagulāns created a large network of SD groups in Semigallia: in the districts of Jelgava, Bauska, Tukums and Jēkabpils. The members of the unit were mostly former home guards and policemen. Vagulāns' team consisted of around 300 men, of whom about 100 were in Jelgava. Vagulāns was also the publisher of the highly anti-Semitic newspaper *Nacionālā Zemgale* (*National Semigallia*). On August 16, 1941 Vagulāns' units were disbanded and reorganised as Latvian auxiliary police. Valdis Jursons was appointed the new head of the Jelgava District Latvian Police. In the early stages of the occupation, the second most important locally staffed unit in the SD forces was H. Teidemanis' group in Valmiera. It was created in mid July 1941 and consisted of about 100 men. The head of the largest *Sonderkomando* formed from Latvian forces was Viktors Arājs. The team was set up on Stahlecker's orders at the start of July 1941 and brought together students, officers and policemen amongst others. The choral synagogue on Gogol Street in Riga was burned down on July 4 on Stahlecker's orders and with the participation of the Arājs' Team. Another synagogue on Stabu Street and a prayer house in a Latgallia suburb met a similar fate. On July 8 a prayer house in the Jewish cemetery at Šmerlis was burned down.⁸

In Latvian towns, including Bauska, Talsi, Kuldīga, Ventspils, Jēkabpils,

Valmiera, Viļāni and Rēzekne, the local police and SD participated in shooting communists, Soviet activists and Jews. Typically, the SD and self-defence forces provided security, while the Arājs team did the killing. As time went on, the Arājs team began to resemble German operational teams in terms of functions and structure. In autumn 1941, the team had 300 men, a figure that rose to 1200 by 1943. There were also changes in its primary tasks. After the Jews in Latvia had been eliminated, from the end of 1941 it was increasingly involved in fighting partisans in the conquered regions of Russia and Belarus. During this period the first Latvian SD units were sent to the Leningrad and Minsk districts. The company under Konrāds Kalējs, part of the Arājs team, operated for a time in Narva district. Arājs studied for a short time at the SD school in Furstenberg, and after graduation he received the rank of SS major.

In 1943, the SD Latvian forces consisted of five companies. The main company of 338 men was stationed in Riga. Two companies guarded the Salaspils concentration camp, while some contingents were sent to the Eastern Front. Some units were also used to guard various SD sites, including the central headquarters on Reimersa Street, prisons and the camp at Jumpravmuiža. At this time the Latgallia *Sonderkomando* was also created. It was used to fight the Red partisans in the borderlands between Latvia and Belarus as part of the “Winter Magic” (*Winterzauber*) campaign at the start of 1943. The central base of the SD forces was in Riga, with units stationed in Liepāja, Daugavpils, Valmiera and Jelgava. At the end of 1943 the local SD forces were reformed into two battalions: the 3rd Battalion (commanded by Arājs) and the 4th Battalion (commanded by Kārlis Ozols).

By 1944 only 847 men had remained in the local SD forces. As the Red Army approached they were transferred to Courland. At this time these units lost their initial functions and were disbanded. Arājs and one company under his command were transferred to Germany and incorporated into the 15th Division of the Latvian Legion, where for a brief period Arājs was a battalion commander. The units under major Ozols were incorporated into the 19th Division of the Legion and fought against the Soviet forces in Courland. At the end of 1944, some local SD units under Jeckeln’s command fought against national partisans – Kurelians. At the end of the war, Arājs was captured by the British. He was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1979 by the Hamburg Land Court for participating in the murder of civilians.⁹

Ghettos, concentration camps and prisons

To provide the Nazi regime with stability and security, the German occupation authorities established a system of ghettos, concentration camps and prisons in Latvia. According to figures from Stahlecker, as early as October 15, 1941, Latvia's prisons had 7046 inmates, of whom just 308 were criminals. In 1942 there were 20,872 prisoners in various prisons. The 15 prisons as existed in the Republic of Latvia were overflowing. The Central Prison was filled to double its capacity. At the end of 1941 the occupiers turned to establishing and building concentration camps.

During the German occupation 4 ghettos, 17 prisons and the Mezaparks Concentration Camp with its many branches operated in Latvia. The ghettos were set up with the aim of concentrating the Jews and using them as labour. The idea of creating ghettos was brought to Ostland in July 1941 by the newly appointed *Reichskomisar* Lohse. The idea of the ghettos seemed to be at odds in regards to Nazi plans for the total extermination of the Jews. This led to a conflict between Lohse and the SD forces. Stahlecker opposed Lohse, and on July 27, 1941 Stahlecker ordered the stringent registration of all Jews. The order also included various discriminatory measures: Jews had to wear the Star of David, they were forbidden from changing their place of residence, use public transport, visit theatres, museums, schools, etc. The order also prescribed the establishment of ghettos and the exploitation of Jewish labour. The Jews were to be concentrated in set districts of towns that they were forbidden to leave. The Jews in the ghettos were given minimal food rations, and they were taken outside the ghettos for forced labour.

On Lohse's orders the largest ghettos were established in Riga, Daugavpils and Liepāja. Of these, the Riga ghetto held the most people. It was set up over 12 city blocks in the Latgallia suburb and surrounded by barbed wire. Jews were transferred from other parts of the city to the ghetto in stages that was completed by October 25, 1941. The ghetto housed 29,602 Jews. Jewish property was expropriated simultaneously with the formation of the ghetto. Latvian SD and police units guarded the ghetto, while the German order police and the SD supervised.

After the extermination of Jews at Rumbula, Jews deported from elsewhere in Europe were held for periods of time in the Riga ghetto. In February 1942, 11,000 Jews were deported from the Reich to Riga, and they occupied four ghetto blocks. Lohse protested against the transportation of Reich Jews

to Latvia. Upon Himmler's order that all ghettos were to be liquidated, the Riga ghetto was readied for closure in the summer of 1943 and ceased to exist by the end of 1943.

The Daugavpils ghetto was established at the end of July 1941 in the Grīva fortress. About 14,000 people divided by gender were herded in: women and children up to 14 years to one section of the fortress and the men to another. The ghetto's inhabitants were exterminated in May 1942 following an order from Lange.

The Liepāja ghetto was established in June 1942, eight months after the ghettos in Riga and Daugavpils. Located in 11 buildings on four streets, it incarcerated 814 Jews. The Liepāja ghetto was liquidated in October 1943, and the surviving Jews were sent to Riga.¹⁰

In October 1941 construction began on a concentration camp near Salaspils. On Lange's orders it was initially intended for Jews brought in from the Reich. The official name of the Salaspils concentration camp was the Expanded Police Prison and Labour Correctional Camp. Construction work was finished in mid 1943. The camp stretched over 30.2 hectares and contained 15 barracks that each housed 100–150 prisoners. The camp held over 2000 prisoners: various categories of political prisoners, national resistance movement members, Jews, army deserters, malingerers, Gypsies and others. Salaspils functioned as a transit camp. The living conditions within it were grim: cold, insufficient food, torture, and the threat of death. Many prisoners could not endure it and died. People were sentenced to death for attempting to escape, disobeying orders and resisting. Salaspils was under the Latvian Security Police Commander *Standatenführer* Lange. Its first commandant was Siegfried Nickel, who was later replaced by Kurt Krauze. The camp was guarded by a Latvian SD unit under First Lieutenant Konrāds Kalējs.

In the year 2000, Professor Heinrihs Strods noted that Soviet historiography had generated many myths about Salaspils.¹¹ Under the Nazi regime, many camps for Soviet prisoners of war were set up in Latvia. These included "Stalag 350" in Riga, a large camp, as well as three POW camps at Salaspils: one was near the railway station (18.2 hectares), the second 200 metres from Salaspils Lutheran Church (10.28 hectares), and the third was within the present day territory of the town of Salaspils. During the early part of the war, many POWs died because of the extremely harsh conditions.

The Nazi regime established another large concentration camp in Latvia

at Mežaparks (*Riga-Kaiserwald*), with numerous branches in Vecmīlgravis, Spilve, Strazdumuiža, Dundaga, the "Lenta" factory, Sarkandaugava and elsewhere. Run by the SD, the camp mostly functioned as a registration and disbursement centre from where prisoners were sent to work elsewhere. In autumn 1943, the concentration camp held about 15,000 Jews, and included Jews from Vilnius, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In August 1944 the camp inmates were sent by ship to Germany.¹²

A camp for Jews deported from Europe was set up near Šķirotava Station at Jumpravmuiža and incarcerated several thousand people. The camp commandant was Rudolf Zek. The conditions in the camp were inhuman, and by 1943 only 450 prisoners remained alive. Strazdumuiža had about 2000 prisoners, of whom 1300 were killed before the liquidation of the camp in 1944. Two branches of the Mežaparks concentration camp were set up in the vicinity of Dundaga in 1943, where a total of 6000 Jews were imprisoned. The prisoners were used as labour to create the so-called SS Knights' House in three parishes (Dundaga, Arlava and Lubezers) of Dundaga District. This project was part of a plan by Reich Fuhrer Himmler to create SS rural districts in the occupied countries of Europe where only the SS would farm. As part of the project, the prisoners built roads, did construction work, sawed timber, etc. As the Red Army approached in 1944, the Nazis abandoned the project.

Latvian police forces

The leaders of the Nazi regime understood that it would be difficult to govern the conquered territories in the east with only the SS and SD. On Himmler's initiative police units were established from local citizens who were acceptable to the Germans. On July 20, 1941 Stahlecker ordered the formation of the Auxiliary Order Police in Riga and the surrounding area. The largest unit was the Riga City Police with 1500 men. Lieutenant Colonel Voldemārs Veiss was appointed head of the Auxiliary Order Police, with Roberts Osis as his deputy.

The Latvian police forces were initially formed on a voluntary basis. The police system was complex and encompassed Riga, large and small towns, rural areas, as well as the Order Service Battalions fighting the partisans on the Eastern Front. On November 6, 1941 Himmler ordered the auxiliary police in the occupied eastern territories to be renamed the Order Guards Service. It included both a detached and closed order service. The

detached service performed general policing duties, while the closed service guarded vital objects inside and outside of Latvia and also fought at the Front. Thus, Latvian police forces had two functions: policing and military duties. The Order Police supervised the inhabitants and thereby strengthened the occupation regime at a local level. The closed police units were used for military tasks in the occupied territories: for fighting at the Front and against the partisans, for guarding the ghettos, etc. The Latvian police forces were not autonomous, but were fully subservient to the German command. Lieutenant Colonel R. Osis, who was responsible for forming the Latvian police units, stated that they were, "only mercenaries, paid for their work".

The Order Police was divided into three categories: Category A consisted of active police forces; Category B police performed special tasks, such as guarding bridges, warehouses, roads, etc.; and Category C, the inactive reserve or home guard, was called up in special cases. The number of police officers in the precincts and rural areas remained relatively stable, but after 1942 the number of police in the closed units rose rapidly.

The Holocaust

The Nazi regime's policy towards the Jews – their extermination and the subsequent Holocaust – had a significant impact on Latvia and its citizens during World War II. From June 1941 to 1945, 70,000 Jews from Latvia were exterminated. About 20,000 Jews were deported from Latvia to Germany, Austria, Hungary and Lithuania, where they were killed. The total number of victims of the Holocaust in Latvia was about 90,000. The chief perpetrators of these crimes were F. Jeckeln, the Supreme SS and Police Leader in the Ostland and Northern Russia, W. Stahlecker, and R. Lange. The German Operational Group A (*SD Einsatzgruppe A*) and also local SD units were instrumental in carrying out these crimes. The German regime implemented a plan previously set in Berlin and maintained that the killing of the Jews was instigated and carried out by the local populations. In the province of Latvia the local self-defence forces or ancillary police would arrest the Jews, while either a Latvian SD auxiliary unit or a specially formed team carried out the murders. The most notorious of these local SD ancillary forces in Latvia were led by Viktors Arājs in Riga, Mārtiņš Vagulāns in Jelgava and Herberts Teidemanis in Valmiera.

The Wehrmacht and the navy were the first to discriminate against and

kill the Jews as their commanders gave the respective orders. The extermination of Jews in Latvia began on June 23, 1941 at Grobina, where Operational Group A killed six Jews. On July 6 Jews were exterminated in Liepāja, Priekule, Durbe and Riga – in almost all of the German-occupied areas. In Auce all of the Jews were killed on July 11. By the end of August 1941 almost all of the Jews in Latvia's small towns had been exterminated.

The extermination of the Jews in Nazi-occupied Latvia occurred in two stages. In the first stage (the so-called Stahlecker phase), which continued until October 1941, all of the Jews in rural areas were executed. During this period Jews were also executed in the cities (Riga, Jelgava, Liepāja, Daugavpils), but not totally as in the small towns where whole populations of Jews were exterminated. Some small towns of Latvia – Preiļi, Varakļāni, Gostiņi – lost the majority of their inhabitants. The smaller the Jewish community in some hamlet, the more ruthlessly it was destroyed. In places where Jews were few, they were brought together in larger towns to expedite the murders.

About 20,000 of the 28,000 Jews living in Latgallia were executed. Most were executed in Daugavpils District (about 13,000), while 7000 others were executed in Ludza, Rēzekne, Līvāni, Varakļāni, etc. Here, too, the executions were carried out by Operational Group A together with Latvian SD forces. In Daugavpils three mass executions of Jews were headed by *Oberstumbanfuhrer* Eric Elinger, Joachim Hamann and Gunter Tabbert.

In the Courland region, the largest extermination of Jews took place in Liepāja and the surrounding area, where of about 7600 Jews, 5700 were executed. The main execution sites in Liepāja were Rainis Park in the city centre, the fishing port, the naval port, and the area around the stadium. But the largest mass execution was carried out at Šķēde on a former Latvian Army base in the dunes by the sea. Communists and gypsies were also killed here. In addition to the German operational group, the Latvian SD Guard Platoon under Lieutenant Pēteris Galiņš also took part in the executions.

The participation of local SD units in the extermination of the Jews was most prevalent in Semigallia under the leadership of M. Vagulāns. He created a broad network of SD groups and actively called for the extermination of the Jews. His newspaper *Nacionālā Semigallia* was blatantly anti-Semitic and argued for Jewish extermination by blaming the Jews for a variety of ills. Under Vagulāns' leadership about 2000 Jews in Semigallia were killed. By October 1941, about 24,000 Jews had been executed in rural Latvia.¹³

The creation of the ghettos in the large cities delayed the extermination

of the Jews. In Riga the greatest number of Jews – over 5000 – were executed in Biķernieki Forest. This execution was organised by SS *Sturmbanfuhrer* Horst Barth and Arno Besekow. The Nazi leadership in Berlin was dissatisfied with the slow pace of the extermination of the Jews. Although by October 1941, about 30,000 Jews had been killed in Latvia under Stahlecker's command, this was thought to be too slow. Ostland Reich Commissar Lohse, the head of the German civil administration, believed it would be more useful to use the Jews as labour for the needs of the Front rather than killing them. Lohse supported the creation of ghettos for the Jews and the confiscation of their property. SS *Reich Fuhrer* Himmler, however, had other ideas. To speed up the resolution of the Jewish question, a decision was made in Latvia to send F. Jeckeln to Riga. He had actively participated in the extermination of Jews in the Ukraine and had developed his own system.

With a unit of 50, Jeckeln arrived in Riga on November 5, 1941. So began the second stage of the extermination of the Jews. On November 12 in Berlin, Jeckeln received the order from Himmler to exterminate the Jews of Riga ghetto, contrary to the plans of Lohse. Upon his return to Latvia, Jeckeln explained the order to Lohse: the Jews were security risks and their employment in the work force increased the risks for sabotage. Lohse did not oppose the order. Within two weeks of his arrival in Riga, Jeckeln organised the first execution of ghetto Jews. Located about 10 kilometres from the ghetto, Rumbula was chosen as the execution site.

The first campaign for the liquidation of the Riga ghetto began on November 30, 1941. First, Russian prisoners of war dug six large pits in Rumbula Forest to accommodate 25,000 bodies. Columns were formed of about 1000 prisoners from the ghetto. Over 1000 Jews were shot while being driven out of the ghetto and on the road to Rumbula by Jeckeln's bodyguard of 10–12 men. The German Order Police forces under Major Karl Heise and the Gendarmerie under Captain Richard Reberg participated in the execution of the Jews at Rumbula. Arājs team of about 300 men helped drive the Jews out of the ghetto and ensured order near the pits. Latvian police units under the SD patrolled the road to Rumbula, and Latvian police forces from Riga and Jelgava organised the Jewish columns and their transportation to Rumbula. The executions were watched by Jeckeln, Lohse, Stahlecker and other high-ranking SS, SD and police leaders.

The second Riga ghetto liquidation took place on December 8. It was similar to the first. About 25,000 people were killed in both executions.¹⁴

After the Rumbula execution, only about 6000 Latvian Jews were left alive. At this time the first trainloads of Jews deported from Germany and other European countries began to arrive in Riga. The initial four transports of Jews from Nuremberg, Stuttgart, Vienna and Hamburg were followed by others until December 1942. Most of the deportees were immediately executed at Bikernieki, without even entering the ghetto. Some of those deported were transported to the Auschwitz death camp and died there.

Latvian society was divided into three groups with regard to the Holocaust as planned and organised by the Nazi regime. A small number participated in the killing of the Jews, others tried to save the condemned Jews, but most stood by and waited. Latvian historian Margers Vestermanis has researched this history and has compiled a list of about 400 Latvians who attempted to save the Jews. They were assisted by several hundred others. One of the most notable of these Latvians was a labourer in Riga, Žanis Lipke, who saved over 50 Jews. As in other European countries, in German-occupied Latvia during World War II there was collaboration with the Nazis in killing the Jews, some assistance for the victims, and also indifference.

During the Nazi regime 80,000–100,000 civilians were killed in Latvia; of these about 90,000 were citizens of Latvia (including 70,000 Jews and 18,000 Latvians). In addition, about 2000 Gypsies and 2271 mentally ill people were also executed.¹⁵

5.3. MILITARY POLICY AND THE LATVIAN SS VOLUNTARY LEGION

Latvian police battalions

The Nazi regime's military policy in the Ostland anticipated the extensive use of local populations, not only for maintaining order in the occupied areas, but also eventually for fighting on the Eastern Front. In Latvia the closed police units were Order Service battalions. They were popularly known as "Schutzman Battalions" after their designation in German (*Schutzmannschafts-bataillone*). On September 4, 1941 the First Independent Riga Order Service Battalion was formed on a voluntary basis, and another two battalions were added by the end of the month. By the end of the year five battalions had been established in Riga. In mid October the First Independent

Riga Order Service Battalion was sent to the Eastern Front. After the military setbacks near Moscow at the end of 1941, the German regime needed more and more forces to secure the Eastern Front. The forming of new Latvian police battalions was intensified.

In addition to the already-established 16th, 18th and 20th battalions, the 19th and 17th battalions were formed in December 1941. These battalions consisted entirely of volunteers. Most of the newly created units were sent to the Eastern Front without adequate training. During the German occupation, a total of 42 Latvian police battalions and 7 battalions of men of Russian nationality from Latgallia were formed in the General District of Latvia. By mid 1943 the military contained 9700 men and by July 1944 the figure increased to 14,884. In 1943 six Latvian police battalions were incorporated into the Latvian Legion.

As the flow of volunteers into the police battalions declined, on February 11, 1942 Jeckeln called to Latvians to join these units. The Land Self-Administration was brought into the task of recruitment, and a special chief committee of Latvian volunteer organisations was set up under Gustavs Celmiņš. The press and radio were also used to encourage recruitment. By June 1942, the German regime had managed to form 13 police battalions. Soon, volunteers became scarce, with the manpower instead coming from the detached service (A and B category policemen), as well as home guards (C category) and mobilised men. Indirect pressure was also applied to fill the police ranks. Initially, the duration of the service contracts was six months, but after completing their terms the recruited men were not discharged. They were instead forced to extend their contracts to the end of the war. Some Latvians viewed the police battalions as a step toward establishing a national army for Latvia.

On June 11, 1942, the police battalions were renamed the Defence Service Battalions, but an order from Himmler of May 24, 1943 again redubbed them as Latvian Police Battalions. It was stipulated that each battalion should consist of 501 men. Over time a few police battalions were incorporated into the Latvian Legion. Reich Fuhrer Himmler considered that the Latvian Legion must include all units formed as part of the Waffen SS and police forces. In reality, however, there were differences between the police battalions and the Legion. The police battalions were formed on a voluntary basis while the Legion was mostly formed through forced mobilisation. The police battalions primarily ensured security behind the Front

line, fought partisans and helped to guard concentration camps and ghettos, while the Legion was a Front-line unit. The closed order service battalions seemed to serve two functions: they ensured security behind the Front line and performed military duties directly on the Eastern Front. Latvian police battalions were sometimes used for persecutions outside of Latvia's territory. For example, in May 1942 the 18th Police Battalion was sent to Belarus. Near the towns of Stolbci and Slonyima the battalion participated in fighting the partisans and guarding a ghetto. In July/October 1942 the 22nd and 272nd Police Battalions performed guard duties in Warsaw, including external guarding of the ghetto. From August to December 1943, the 22nd Battalion participated in anti-partisan activities in Lutsk District in western Ukraine. In August/October 1943, the 313th and 316th Battalions fought partisans in Vilnius District, while four battalions of the Riga Police Regiment fought Soviet partisans in Braslava District in western Belarus. From 1942 to 1945, under the command of the German military, Latvian police battalions also took part in various operations in the prewar territory of Poland: guarding the Warsaw and Slonyima ghetto, transporting imprisoned Jews to Treblinka concentration camp, and fighting the Soviet partisans, the Red Army, and its ally, the Polish People's Army.^{16, 17}

Forming of the Latvian SS Voluntary Legion

As the German situation on the Eastern Front deteriorated, demand increased for new Latvian military units. On January 23, 1943, Hitler simultaneously permitted and ordered Himmler to establish the Latvian SS Voluntary Legion. Hitler's written order regarding this appeared on February 10. Therefore, on January 24 Himmler merged four Latvian defence service battalions fighting in the 2nd SS Brigade and named them the Latvian SS Voluntary Legion. This was the beginning of the Latvian Legion. On May 26, 1943, Himmler gave new instructions stipulating that the Latvian Legion was to be the common designation for all Latvian units within the Waffen SS and police. Thus several Latvian police battalions were merged into the Legion.

To ensure Latvian involvement in the German armed forces, a screening of the population (*Musterung*) was conducted – in fact, mobilisation. Conscription within the territory of Latvia took place from March 1943 to August 1944. In Courland mobilisation continued into September and October 1944. The first mobilisation in Latvia occurred from March to August 1943. Those

born from 1919 to 1925 were subject to screening and to conscription. Mobilisation was conducted based on the regulations issued by the German occupation powers on December 19, 1941 upon the introduction of labour obligations in the conquered eastern territories. The regulations prescribed that avoiding service would be harshly punished in accordance with wartime laws.

To implement the conscription campaign the General Commissariat's Labour and Social Board established a special headquarters. The police compiled the mobilisation lists. The German occupation authorities determined the number of conscripts: 15,500 in the SS Legion, 22,000 in the Wehrmacht, 15,600 in the civil labour service. The call-up directives stipulated that those subject to obligatory labour duties should be able to choose one of these three forms of service, but in reality such a free choice was not permitted. Himmler's order of March 24, 1943 stated that men could be called up for the Latvian SS Legion who were no shorter than 164–168 cm and were aged 17 to 45 years. The draftee had to be an Aryan, he could not have been previously convicted, and he had to be physically and mentally fit for Waffen SS service.

The Land Self-Administration was also involved in mobilising Latvians for the German armed forces. The call by General O. Dankers for Latvians to join the Legion appeared on March 9, 1943. Supporting the call-up, the Land Self-Administration attempted to dictate the terms under which it would support the formation of the Legion. They demanded that the Legion's Commander should be the Latvian General Rūdolfs Bangerskis and that the soldiers be trained for at least six months. The Land Self-Administration also demanded that Latvian soldiers should have the same provisions and rights as German soldiers and that Latvian units should be used on the northern sector of the Eastern Front, i.e. closer to Latvia's borders. However, the German occupation authorities did not take these demands seriously.

Initially, the Nazi regime promised that Bangerskis would be the commander of the 15th Latvian SS Division; however, later the commanders of both Legion divisions – the 15th and the 19th – were Germans. Bangerskis was appointed the General Inspector of the Legion. His rights were restricted and undefined and offered no real opportunity to involve himself in commanding Latvian units. However, he was given the ranks of SS *Gruppenführer* and Waffen SS Lieutenant General.

In the first call-up, the Latvian SS legion received 17,971 men, or 53

percent of the total call-up, the Wehrmacht 12,979 (36.4 percent) and the rest 4,769 (13.3 percent). The second call-up took place in October and November 1943. This mobilisation consisted of the repeated drafting of those born in 1919 to 1924, and the full drafting of those born in 1923 to 1925. The third mobilisation occurred in December 1943 and January 1944. Men born in 1917 to 1918 were subject to the call-up, as well as men born in 1922 and 1924. In July 1944 men born in 1926 were called up. An SS supplementary team (*Ersatzkommando Lettland*) conducted the screening and mobilisation campaign. About 12,000 men were sent to the Latvian Legion in these two call-ups. To reduce evasion of mobilisation, in early 1944 the German occupation authorities set tougher punishments. Disobedience carried the death penalty. From February 14, 1944, the orders for call-up to military service were signed either by the First General Director of the Self-Administration O. Dankers or the General Inspector of the Latvian SS Voluntary Legion R. Bangerskis. It was stipulated that mobilisation should follow the same rules and regulations as those followed during the Republic of Latvia.

As increasingly younger men were mobilised, over 42,000 men were called up in the first half of 1944. In July the occupation authorities declared total mobilisation, and all men born from 1910 were screened, including previously exempted so-called irreplaceable persons. At this time youths born in 1927 to 1928 began to be called up for Auxiliary Air Force service. By September 1944, 19,000 youths had been called up.¹⁸

The Latvian SS Legion's battles at the Front

During World War II, the Latvian Legion consisted of two divisions: the 15th and the 19th (previously – 2nd Latvian SS Volunteer brigade). The first formed was the 15th Latvian SS Volunteer Division, later renamed the 15th Waffen SS Grenadier Division, with commander von Pikler-Burghauz. At the end of 1943, the division had 15,192 men, and by the summer of 1944 it had 18,413. The 15th Division of the Latvian Legion primarily fought defensive battles in Russia. Despite the fact that Latvian soldiers were insufficiently trained and armed, in November 1943 the division was put into a defensive sector near Novosokolniki. After tough retreating battles, in early 1944 the 15th Division was transferred to a sector of the Front on the banks of the Redya River about 45 km from Staraya Russ. In heavy battles in this sector of the Front Colonel Vilis Janums' unit stood out. The division's

32nd and 33rd Regiments suffered especially large losses. In February 1944 a new commander, SS *Oberfuhrer* Nikolaus Heilman, was appointed to the division. He was a police officer with little military knowledge or command skills. On February 18, 1944, the division was ordered to withdraw to prepared defensive positions (the Panther positions) on the Velikaya River. From March to April the division fought in the sector of the Front near Ostrova, Pskov and Opochka.

In June 1944, the Red Army began its summer offensive, and the Latvian forces fought with German units in the Bardovo-Kudereva sector. In these battles (the Jāņukalns battles) the division's 32nd Regiment under Colonel Arvīds Kripēns stood out. By July the division had retreated into the territory of Latvia. In this retreating battle, the 32nd and 33rd Regiments battle group led by Lieutenant Colonel Kārlis Aperāts was almost completely wiped out near Mozuli while crossing the Zilupe River.

After heavy losses in the battles of summer 1944, the German military leadership withdrew the remaining units of the 15th Division to Germany for regrouping. By the second half of August, the remainder of the division was already in East Prussia. There it was reinforced by Latvian youths conscripted into labour service who had already previously been sent to Germany. By the end of the year the division was in battle readiness. In early 1945, it was involved in heavy fighting in East Prussia at Danzig, Pommerania and Mecklenburg. At the end of April, the division's units led by Colonel V. Janums surrendered to the Americans.

In early 1944, the SS High Command decided to regroup the 2nd SS Latvian Volunteer Brigade into a division. Himmler ordered the formation of the 19th Latvian SS Volunteer Division, consisting of three grenadier regiments. The division was formed by mid March, when it took up a defensive position on the Velikaya together with the 15th Division. The division's commander was SS *Oberfuhrer* Heinrich Schultz, who was later replaced by SS *Standartenfuhrer* Bock. The final commander of the division was SS *Brigadenfuhrer* Bruno Schtrekenbah. The infantry leader of the 19th Division was Colonel Voldemārs Veiss. In June 1944 the division had around 10,592 men, which increased to 12,507 by the autumn.

From March to July 1944, the 19th Division took part in heavy retreating battles together with the 15th Division. On July 17 units of the division crossed the border into Latvia in Kārsava District. It was engaged in heavy battles at Lake Lubāns. In August, the 19th Division retreated to positions at

Aiviekste. Following new Red Army assaults, in September the division's soldiers took part in the battle at More with the SS VI Corps. K. Hilpert, commander of the German 18th Army, expressed his gratitude to the 19th Division's soldiers for their courage at More, which delayed the Red Army's attack and allowed German forces to withdraw from Estonia. After More the 19th Division's fighting in Vidzeme was over.

In October 1944, the 19th Latvian Division retreated to Courland with units from the German 16th and 18th armies. At this time a large German military unit was surrounded in Courland, the western part of Latvia. The so-called Courland Fortress was created. It included Talsi, Ventspils, part of Kuldīga, Aizpute, Tukums and Liepāja districts, a total of 13 towns and 76 parishes. The Courland Fortress included about 230,000 local inhabitants, as well as 150,000 refugees from elsewhere in Latvia and 35,000 refugees from regions of the USSR. The Fortress was defended by 32 German divisions, as well as the 19th Latvian Division. At the start of the battle the group commander was Colonel General Ferdinand Scherner. The Front in Courland was about 170 km long. A large number of soldiers and civilians were concentrated within a small territory.

On October 15, 1944 the Soviet forces began their first major assault on the Courland Fortress. The main thrust of the attack was from Dobeles to Džukste. After eight days of fighting, the Red Army had not made any significant gains and had only forced the German forces back about 2 km. The second major Soviet assault started on October 27 in the Priekule-Vaiņode and Auce sectors. Auce was abandoned on October 28, but 12 days of continuous attacks had not brought decisive results. The third large Red Army assault on Courland began on December 21. Its objective was to take Saldus and cut the Liepāja railway line. There were very heavy battles in the 19th Division's sector in the vicinity of Rumbiņi-Pienava and Rīmeiki. The battle group under Senior Lieutenant Roberts Ancāns stood out for exceptional bravery. The 19th Division lost many soldiers. The 42nd Grenadier Regiment under Nikolajs Galdiņš was left with only 300 men out of 1200.

The fourth major battle for Courland began on January 23, 1945. Eleven Soviet divisions attacked toward Liepāja. The 19th Division defended the Lestene-Zebras Lake sector. The fifth big battle for Courland took place from February 12 to March 14. Amongst the Latvian forces mention must be made of the battalion led by Major Ernests Laumanis. In these battles the Soviet forces took Bērzepe, Josta and Blīdene stations and arrived at Brocēni

and Saldus. Although heavily outnumbered by the enemy, the German forces managed to hold the Front together. The sixth big Soviet attack on Courland started on March 17. The 42nd and 43rd Latvian Grenadier Regiments suffered heavy losses. During the Courland battles, seven Latvian soldiers were awarded the German Army's highest award for bravery – the Knight's Cross.

The German forces in Courland capitulated on May 8, 1945. About 286,000 German soldiers were imprisoned, including 14,000 Latvians.¹⁹

Other Latvian military units in German service

In addition to the police battalions and the 15th and 19th SS Divisions, other Latvian military units were formed and operated within the German armed forces. Following an August 1, 1943 order from SS *Standartenführer* M. Knecht, the commander of the Order Police in Latvia, four battalions engaged in guarding the Latvia-Russia border – the 276th, 277th, 278th and 321st Battalions – were merged as the Latvian Volunteer Police Regiment. Roberts Osis was appointed as its commander. The regiment participated in fighting partisans in Russia and in battles against the Red Army on the Eastern Front and in Latvia. In October 1944, the regiment was transferred to Germany where it was subordinated to the Latvian 15th Division and was engaged in building fortifications.

The Liepāja Latvian Police Regiment began forming in February 1944, and was based on 22nd, 25th, 313th and 316th Battalions. The regimental commander was Lieutenant Colonel Jānis Grosbergs. It helped fight partisans in Belarus and fought at the Front. The regiment was disbanded in August 1944 after suffering heavy losses in battles on Latvia's territory. In mid-February 1944, the 3rd Cēsis Police Regiment began to form, followed in September by the Courland Latvian Volunteer Police Regiment.

After the German Front was overrun on the Leningrad-Volhova sector in early 1944 and the Red Army started advancing rapidly westward, six Latvian border guard regiments began to be formed on the initiative of General F. Jeckeln. In support of Jeckeln's decision, the Latvian Self-Administration announced the mobilisation of men born from 1906 to 1914. About 20,000 men were subjected to the mobilisation. The first three regiments were established in Tukums, and then one each in Tukums, Aizpute and Kuldīga. The conscripts were poorly supplied and trained. Since the Front line situation was critical, the regiments were used not to guard Latvia's border but to

reinforce the 15th and 19th Divisions. In June 1944, Himmler ordered that the border guard regiments should be merged into the Front-line divisions.

In summer 1944, Bangerskis proposed forming construction battalions from Latvian citizens imprisoned for minor offenses in the Salaspils camp and other prisons. These battalions were sent to the Front as labour for various German sapper units. In spring 1943, the 672nd Latvian Sapper Battalion was formed. It performed sapper duties on the Eastern Front and took part in battles against the Red Army.

In August 1944, four training battalions of about 500 men each were assembled to create training centres for the newly conscripted Latvian soldiers. At the end of the war these battalions were transferred to Germany and used to reinforce the 15th Division. Under conditions of total mobilisation in Latvia, in 1944 people unfit for regular duty also began to be called up into German military formations. They participated in the German Air Force as auxiliaries. Over 5000 men were conscripted as auxiliaries. Some of the conscripts were put into the old 3rd Parachute Division, while others served in antiaircraft units, in airfields, etc. In 1944, Latvians were invited to serve in the German Navy and civilian fleet. This was motivated by the need to protect not just Latvia's land borders but also its maritime ones. Around 900 Latvians volunteered to serve in the German Navy. Latvians also had their own units in the German Air Force. The idea to form such units was made by Rūdolfs Kandis, the former commander of the Republic of Latvia Aviation Regiment. In 1943, the Liepāja-Grobiņa Pilot School was established at Grobiņa. The training centre for Latvian flyers and the marshaling point for fighting units was the Grobiņa Airfield. On January 1, 1944, the school was renamed the Night Fighting Reinforcement Group in *Ostland*. Its commander was German Air Force Major Walter Andress. On March 1 the Latvian Night Fighting Squadron was assembled and began flying combat missions over Pskov, Ostrova and OPOCHKA districts. The 2nd Latvian Night Fighting Squadron with 18 warplanes was assembled on June 22, 1944. In July, the 3rd Latvian Night Fighting Squadron was formed with only 10 planes. On August 10 a German High Commander ordered the formation of the Aviation Legion "Latvia". Lieutenant Colonel Janis Rucelis was appointed as its commander. In October, the Latvian aviation units were transferred to Germany. The planes were given to German units and the Aviation Legion "Latvia" ceased to exist.

Since the armed forces lacked soldiers, in spring 1944 the German Air Force was ordered to call up 7,000 underage Latvian boys into the auxiliary

forces. On July 12, 1944 Dankers signed an invitation to boys to voluntarily join the auxiliary air force. The response was minimal and on July 26 the order was given to conscript those born from 1927 to 1928. After the Red Army entered Latvia, the air force auxiliaries were transferred to Germany. At the end of the war, they were captured by the British and Americans. The German armed formations included individual units, such as the Guard Battalion Riga, Captain Ivanov's Alarm Battalion, the Prisoners Special Missions Battalion, etc.

During the German occupation about 110,000 men were mobilised into various military units. About 52,000 men entered the Latvian SS Volunteer 15th and 19th Divisions. Of these, only a small number of Latvians "volunteered" to serve. Most of the men mobilised into German military units were forced to do so. The German authorities used the term "volunteer" to hide infringements of international law (the Hague Convention) forbidding the mobilisation of the inhabitants of an occupied territory to serve in foreign armed forces. The Latvian SS Legion was by no means an exception in the German armed forces. During World War II there was uninterrupted growth in the number of SS divisions and the soldiers serving in them. The Nazi leadership had abandoned racial criteria for manpower in SS divisions and brought in non-Germanic nations. The SS military forces included divisions or smaller military units of French, Ukrainians, Russians, Italians, Belorussians, Serbians, Estonians, Latvians and other occupied European nations. By the end of 1944, the SS forces comprised 38 divisions, over 910,000 men. The identification of Latvian military formations with the SS forces was only a formality. It was not the free choice of the Latvian soldiers themselves. The Nazi regime would not have succeeded in forming the Latvian Legion if the occupation of Latvia in 1940, the repressions conducted by the Soviet Union and the deportations of civilians had not taken place.^{20, 21}

5.4. RESISTANCE TO THE NAZI OCCUPATION

Characteristics of the resistance movement

The Nazi regime had no intention of restoring Latvia's statehood after the Soviets were driven out. One occupying regime was replaced by another. The Third Reich considered Latvia to be a part of the USSR and treated it as

if it were in occupied territory, taking all authority and property under its control. Latvia became a General District, which together with Lithuania, Estonia and Belarus was incorporated into the Nazi Ostland Reich Commissariat. This generated disillusionment in Latvia because it opposed Hitler's previous statement in his declaration of war against the Soviet Union – that he did not recognise the Soviet annexation of the Baltic States. When the German invasion began, Latvians believed that Latvia's sovereignty would be restored.

On July 3, 1941, former Minister of Transport Bernhards Einbergs, a member of the Latvian Organisations Centre (LOC), led a delegation to Stahlecker to discuss the issue of re-establishing Latvia's government. These representatives of Latvian society were disappointed by Stahlecker's lack of support for these ambitions. On the contrary, Stahlecker stressed that the formation of a government of Latvia would not be permitted, and that Latvia's status would be decided after the war. On July 11, the LOC sent a delegation headed by Alfrēds Valdmanis to Berlin to ascertain Latvia's fate. However, the German military authorities refused to grant the LOC an exit permit and its activities ended without results. In the beginning of July 1941 the Nazi regime's actions underlined the fact that Latvia was viewed not as a liberated country, but rather as one that had been occupied again. Thus, streets, the National Theatre, National Opera and University of Latvia (as the University of Riga) were renamed. The name 'Latvia' was broadly censored and banned. The stance of Rosenberg's Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories shattered any remaining illusions. As a result, Latvians were faced with a choice: to endure the occupying regime, to collabourate with it or to oppose it. The majority of inhabitants tolerated the occupying regime, and resistance came only from the bravest and most patriotic citizens. The resistance movement was not a mass movement. It mainly expressed itself not as an armed struggle but rather as a political activity aimed at explaining the true nature of the occupying regime.

Opposition to the Nazi regime during World War II in Latvia was not unified, but followed several different paths. Latvian national resistance favoured the rapid re-establishment of national sovereignty. On the other hand, the Soviet-supported communist resistance wanted to weaken Nazi Germany and reinstate the illegal Soviet occupation regime in Latvia. Therefore, from the juridical perspective of the national interests of the Republic of Latvia this was not resistance but rather diversionary, partisan, under-

ground activity inspired and supported by Moscow for its own interests. Those citizens of Latvia who for various reasons collaborated with the Soviet underground or with its partisans should be considered more as collaborators rather than members of a resistance movement. The national resistance movement and the communist-supported partisan movement in Latvia had diametrically opposing objectives, and cooperation between them was impossible.

The multiple occupation of Latvia, with one occupying regime replacing another over a short period of time, had an impact on the resistance movement. Unlike the occupied countries of Western Europe, which had one enemy – the Nazis – the Latvian national resistance fought against two enemies: supporters of the Nazi and Soviet regimes. The resistance movements in Western Europe were financially and politically supported by the Allied powers, but the Latvians did not have this external assistance. National resistance in Latvia involved illegal and also open activities against the German occupation by groups, organisations and individuals. It was a struggle for national survival, the preservation of economic and cultural assets, and the restoration of Latvia's statehood. Resistance was targeted at the mobilisation of Latvians into the SS Legion, Nazi economic and cultural policies, the forced deportation of workers to Germany, the order and ideology established by the regime, and other activities. It was both active and passive opposition to the various political manifestations of the occupying power to weaken this regime. National resistance was essentially non-violent. A large-scale armed struggle was not organised, because of a shortage of resources and the fear of serious repressions by the German regime, resulting in unnecessary casualties. The resistance organisers believed that military action would only serve to weaken Nazi Germany and therefore hasten the return of the Soviet regime. The intelligentsia, former members of parliament, ministers, officers, students, academics, young people, rural residents and other groups were involved in the national resistance movement.²²

Illegal organisations and their publications

Dissatisfaction with the German occupation regime in Latvia was expressed as early as autumn 1941. The hopes for an independent Latvia that had been cherished by Latvia's inhabitants were all but dashed within a few months. Soon Latvians began illegal activities such as distributing

newspapers, flyers and proclamations and forming organisations. They covered the real objectives of the Nazi regime's policies and popularised the idea of restoring Latvia's statehood. At Riga University students voiced their concerns over the banning of the teaching of Latvia's history and the closure of the History Institute. Rumours circulated that the Baltic States would be transformed into a German district as part of Greater Germany, and Latvians would be deported to Russia. In November 1941, the Latvian Nationalist Union (LNU), which had been established during the first Soviet year of occupation (1940/41), restarted its operations. This organisation published flyers and collected information and weapons. It was led by A. Čaupals, and it consisted of an external information section, a secret section and two military groups. The LNU had good contacts with Riga police officers, especially in the 6th and 12th precincts. LNU groups operated in the Riga City Children's Hospital, the Red Cross Nursing School, the joint stock company "Vairogs", the Philology Faculty of Riga University, the State Technical College, the machine building factory "Metālists", and elsewhere. In February 1942, the organisation began publishing the illegal newspaper *Tautas Balss* (*Voice of the People*) with A. Kaminskis as its editor in chief. Nine issues of the newspaper were published and distributed in Cēsis, Valmiera, Dobele, Kuldīga, Liepāja, Daugavpils and Madona. The organisation called on Latvians not to join the police battalions and not to obey but oppose orders from the occupier's institutions that were against nationalist interests. The LNS wanted to restore a democratic Republic of Latvia and believed that both occupants – the Soviets and the Germans – were to be opposed. *Tautas Balss* ended publication in November 1942 when German security arrested over 100 of its members.

Another illegal newspaper, *Latvija* (Latvia), appeared on November 18, 1941, and was published by the "Patriots" organisation. The paper's circulation averaged 1600–6500 copies. The Patriots had few members, but brought together students, members of the intelligentsia and nationalists. It advocated minimal support of Germany in the war against communism. It believed that the restoration of Latvia's independence would only be possible with the victory of the Americans and British. Assessing the activities of the members of the national resistance, General Commissar of Latvia Otto Drechsler stressed that they were not Bolshevik sympathisers, but rather anglophiles trying to turn back the wheel of history. In the newspaper *Tēvija* (Fatherland), which was permitted by the occupation regime, Drechsler described

such people as empty-headed agitators trying to cast doubts on policies implemented by the German regime. The German security services believed that the publishers of *Latvija* were pro-British and that they saw the Nazi regime's policies as a threat to the future existence of the Latvian nation.

In spring 1943, the head of the "Pērkonkrusts" (Thunder Cross) organisation Gustavs Celmiņš published the illegal newspaper *Brīvā Latvija. Latvju Raksti* (Free Latvia. Writings by Latvians). By spring 1944, 14 issues had been published, each with a circulation of about 700. The newspaper had three sections: foreign policy, domestic policy and practical matters. *Brīva Latvija* was distributed in both Riga and rural districts. Celmiņš and his paper's supporters called for the restoration of Latvia's statehood and not to blindly follow the orders of the German authorities. Celmiņš' activities and involvement in the resistance movement are testimony to how complicated the situation within Latvian society had become during the German occupation. Celmiņš, Valdmanis and other social and political activists tried to cooperate with the German regime at the start of the occupation, but soon became disillusioned and joined the resistance movement. One could simultaneously be both a collaborator and an active member of the resistance. This was the peculiarity of Latvia's situation, which was largely created by the Soviet occupation of 1940/41. So, for example, Celmiņš changed from being a good friend of the Nazis to an opponent of the regime, and he was arrested in March 1944 and imprisoned in the Flossenburg concentration camp in Germany.

The resistance organisation "Daugavas Vanagi" (Hawks of the Daugava) operated from July 1942 to May 1943 and published a newspaper of the same name. Three issues were published, and focused on national consciousness and a Latvian stance. The organisation's members were mostly youths about 20 years of age. The activities of the Daugavas Vanagi brought it to the attention of Security Police and SD leader Lange and it was terminated. The youth resistance organisation "Jaunpulki" (New Regiments) was founded in the beginning of 1942. Its leader Mārtiņš Jansons was able to bring together about 50 members aged 15 to 18 years. The organisation published flyers opposing the Nazi regime and emphasised that independence for the Baltic States would only be possible with the defeat of Germany. Jaunpulki called on people not to believe Nazi promises and to refuse to cooperate with them. In June 1942 the SD also terminated this organisation. An illegal group operated in the Forestry Department in Riga in 1942, which for a short time

published the newspaper *Tālavas Taurētājs* (The Bugler of Tālava). It was distributed in Riga and surrounding areas. The German security services assessed this group as being anglophile. In 1942/43, a group of employees at the VEF factory published an illegal pamphlet called *Latviešu Ceļš* (Latvian's Way), with a markedly radical nationalist stance. The occupation authorities assessed it as being decidedly anti-German. The pamphlet was produced by workers at the VEF electrical assembly section P. Klibiķis, F. Lorencs, D. Grunulis and others. "Brīvā Latvija" (Free Latvia) was a resistance organisation of Riga University students with a core of about 20 members. Its leaders included V. Grosbarts, V. Neimanis, J. Āboliņš, J. Platais and others. The organisation's leaders hoped for a repeat of the 1918 situation and the restoration of Latvia's independence after Germany's defeat in the war. The Latvian SS Legion was considered to be the nucleus of an independent national army. The underground newspaper *Brīvais Vanags* (The Free Hawk) came out for almost a full year in Jelgava. This group of 20 to 30 people included A. Veisbergs, J. Čermaks, A. Liepa and E. Bērziņš. The paper was especially opposed to the involvement of young people in the labour service and tried to unveil the future plans of the German regime for Latvia. In 1944, a number of other underground papers were distributed: *Lāčplēsis*, *Dzimtā Zeme* (Native Land), *Par Latviju* (For Latvia) and others. Many national resistance groups in Latvia had grandiose names that did not reflect their real ability to act. These groups published flyers, informative pamphlets and newspapers and tried to maintain national consciousness within society, a spirit of opposition to the Nazi regime, and to uphold the idea of Latvia's statehood. The illegal publications were important for explaining the Nazi regime's policies to society. On the whole, however, the national resistance movement in Latvia was uncoordinated and lacked unified political leadership.²³

The Central Council of Latvia (CCL)

Up to summer 1943, the resistance movement in Latvia was markedly decentralised. There were many small resistance organisations and groups without a unified organisational and political centre. The largest and most influential resistance organisation – the Central Council of Latvia (CCL) – attempted to become a unified centre for the national resistance movement. This underground organisation was founded by representatives from the four largest political parties of the Republic of Latvia's final assembled

parliament – the Social Democratic Workers Party of Latvia, the Latvian Farmers Union, the Democratic Centre Party and the Latgallia Christian Farmers and Catholic Party. The founding meeting took place in Riga on August 13, 1943. The four parties it brought together had won 49 of the 100 mandates at the last elections for the Saeima (Parliament), and therefore considered that they had the right to speak on behalf of the Latvian people.

Riga University Law Professor Konstantīns Čakste was elected chairman of the CCL. Also active in the organisation were the last Speaker of the Saeima Pauls Kalniņš, one of the Social Democrat leaders Bruno Kalniņš, former Foreign Minister Fēlikss Cielēns, Democratic Centre leader Janis Breikšs, Bishop Jāzeps Rancāns, Farmers Union leader Ādolfs Klīve, General Verners Teffers and others. Latvia's former Ambassador to Sweden Voldemārs Salnais also participated in the founding of the CCL. The organisation's main objective was the restoration of a democratic Republic of Latvia. The CCL also undertook to try coordinate the struggle against the German occupation regime at the national level, cooperate with national resistance movements in the other Baltic states, gather information about Nazi policies in Latvia and their consequences, and provide the democratic Western countries with information. The CCL also tried to correct the idea that Latvians were voluntarily cooperating with the Nazi regime and supporting its objectives.

The CCL created seven committees to achieve its stated objectives: foreign affairs, military, information, legal, economic, resource collection and communication. In February 1944, the CCL adopted its political platform in which the most important stand was to fight against both occupying powers – Nazi and Soviet. It did not support the mobilisation of Latvians into the German military, and called for the preservation of national economic and cultural assets. The organisation's final objective was the restoration of an independent, democratic Republic of Latvia based on the Constitution of 1922. The CCL also pledged its allegiance to the principles of the Atlantic Charter and stated that it hoped for victory by the Western democracies in the war. The CCL did not encompass and extend across all of Latvia. Its most active centres outside of Riga were Ventspils and Jelgava. It did not conduct military operations against the Nazi regime; its main activities were political. An important task was gathering and analysing information about the situation in Latvia and passing it on to the Western

countries. In March 1944, the CCL developed a political memorandum that was signed by 190 prominent Latvians: former ministers, members of parliament, clergymen, lawyers, etc. The memorandum demanded the immediate restoration of Latvia's statehood, protection for the country against the looming Soviet invasion, and the establishing of diplomatic contacts with foreign countries.

One of the CCL's most important activities from 1944 was helping refugees escape from Latvia to Sweden. The CCL organised the so-called "boat campaign", thus assisting 5000 people to escape Soviet occupation. The historian K. Kangars has estimated that by the end of 1944 about 200,000 residents of Latvia had arrived in Germany, primarily by ship from Riga, Ventspils and Liepāja. The Nazi regime justified the transferring of Latvians to Germany in political and economic terms.

The CCL's military committee headed by General Jānis Kurelis and Captain Kristaps Upelnieks worked actively. In spring 1944, the German security forces began repressions against the CCL. Čakste was arrested in April. He was incarcerated in the Riga Central Prison and later sent to the Stuhoff concentration camp, where he died on February 22, 1945. The CCL was led for a short while by B. Kalniņš and then by General V. Tepfers. After Riga was occupied in October 1944, the CCL continued operating in Courland and later in Sweden and Germany. In the postwar period the CCL attempted to renew its activities in Soviet-occupied Latvia, but without success.

During its period of operation the CCL was unable to unify and consolidate all of the forces involved in national resistance. The organisation developed more as a political and ideological centre that was strongly behind the idea of the necessity to fight against both occupying powers.²⁴

The Kurelians

To hinder the entry of Soviet forces into Latvia, the Nazi occupation regime gave permission for the establishment of a Riga home guard regiment. General Jānis Kurelis was appointed the commander of this group, which was named the "Kurelieši" (the Kurelians). The German regime planned to use the Kurelian units for Front line fighting against the Red Army, and also for diversions behind the Front. Captain Upelnieks was active in the group. The CCL had close contacts with the Kurelians.

The Kurelian units initially formed in Skrīveri parish, Riga District, but as the Red Army approached, they moved to the Strazde Estate in Talsi District, and later still to Puze parish in Ventspils District. The Kurelian units in Courland maintained radio contacts with the CCL leadership in Sweden. One of the best organised Kurelian units was the battalion led by Lieutenant Roberts Rubenis. After the transfer of the Kurelian units to Courland, their membership grew rapidly to over 1000 men. The Kurelians were joined by deserters from the Legion, home guards, police officers – anyone who wanted to fight for the restoration of the state of Latvia and had a weapon. In autumn 1944, serious differences arose between the German regime and the Kurelians, who refused to obey German orders. Upelnieks and other Kurelian leaders believed that the forces under their command could become the nucleus for a Latvian army, and that at the end of the war they could take over the defence of Courland and restore Latvia's independence with Western support. On October 8, 1944, a decision was made at Kurelis' headquarters to oppose both occupying powers. The German occupation regime was not happy with this turn of events. On November 14 German security forces led by General Jeckeln surrounded the Kurelian headquarters and arrested and disarmed the members of the unit. The battalion under Lieutenant Rubenis refused to surrender and resisted with force. The eight most active Kurelian leaders were sentenced to death by an SS and police court in Liepāja on November 18, 1944. The following men were shot: Captain Kristaps Upelnieks, Colonel Pēteris Liepiņš, Captain Jūlijs Mucenieks, Senior Lieutenant Jānis Gregors and others. Kurelis was sent to Germany. Over 1300 men were arrested and sent to concentration camps in Germany. With the defeat of the Kurelians the Germans dealt a significant blow to the national resistance movement. This was the end of any significant opposition to the Nazi regime for the remainder of the war.²⁵

The communist underground and Soviet partisans

The communist underground and Soviet partisans also opposed the German occupation regime in Latvia. They were strongly supported by the Soviet Union, which in this way hoped not just to weaken its enemy, Germany, but also to pave the way for a new occupation of Latvia. Until 1942, there was no significant Soviet underground or partisan activity in Latvia. Latvians clearly remembered the first Soviet occupation in 1940/41 and its

repressions. The Soviet Union, however, began to popularise Soviet ideology in Latvia, hoping to turn the population against the German regime. Large quantities of newspapers, flyers and other propaganda materials produced in the Soviet Union were imported into Latvia, and Radio Moscow began broadcasts in Latvian.

Based on instructions from the Russian Communist Party Central Committee and the State Protection Committee, in January 1943 the communist party of Latvia established a partisan headquarters for Latvia in Moscow. Its leader was Artūrs Sproģis. In the summer of the same year the authorised representative of the communist party of Latvia's operational group, Imants Sudmalis, was sent to Latvia. He established a group with the task of coordinating the activities of the communist underground in Riga and Latvia's other large cities. The Soviets also sent well-trained and armed units to Latvia with the objective of spreading partisan activity in Latvia. In 1943, on the orders of the partisan movement headquarters, Red Partisan groups that had previously operated in the borderlands between Latvia and Russia moved their base into Latvia. Units led by Vilis Samsons, Pēteris Ratiņš and Otomārs Oškalsns were sent into Latvia. These partisan groups were trained, armed, prepared and assisted by the Soviet Union. Apart from the Red Partisans of Latgallia, however, there was no significant public support for the partisans in Latvia. Materials recently found in the Russian archives show that there were not many Soviet partisans at the start of 1944: 11 partisan units with 812 members. The largest Soviet underground groups operated in Riga, Daugavpils, Liepāja and Rēzekne. In summer 1944 three partisan brigades operated in Latvia. Together with the Soviet underground the partisans carried out acts of sabotage and diversions against the German regime: they blew up railway lines, damaged roads and bridges, killed military personnel and officials of the regime, hid escaped prisoners of war, and spread Soviet propaganda amongst the inhabitants. On the whole, the partisans and Soviet underground were a force whose task was to weaken the German regime and facilitate the return of the Soviet occupation regime to Latvia. The German security units actively fought the communist forces, with resultant civilian casualties. In January 1942, 200 people in the village of Audriņi, Rēzekne District, were shot for hiding and supporting Red Army soldiers. In early December 1944, the same fate befell several farm families in Zlēku parish, Ventspils District.²⁶

5.5. ECONOMIC POLICY

General policies

The main feature of the Nazi regime's economic policy in the occupied Baltic states was to extract as many resources from these countries as possible to meet military needs. Several German government organisations were involved in resolving economic issues in occupied Latvia, and each had its own priorities. Reich Marshall Hermann Goering, who believed that the conquered countries should be ruthlessly exploited, headed Germany's four-year economic plan. On November 8, 1941 he gave instructions that the occupied eastern territories were to be primarily utilized as colonies, using colonial administration methods. In fulfilling these instructions, large monopolies were created with the task of exporting as much food and raw materials as possible from the occupied countries. On the other hand, the Ministry of the Eastern Territories led by Rosenberg believed that the occupied areas should not simply be looted, but that their productive potential should be realised as efficiently as possible. Rosenberg was convinced that since the Ostland was closer to the Front, its industry could supply the army more quickly than enterprises in Germany. He also called for reasonable local development of production. The various German military institutions also had an impact on economic policy in occupied Latvia. The military was chiefly concerned with keeping its armies supplied.

The economic policy of the German occupiers in Latvia had two key features. The first concerned the future colonisation plans for Latvia and anticipated the maximum removal of its economic resources. The second concerned the preservation of Latvia's economic potential and how to use it efficiently to meet immediate military needs. Both these features were enacted in Latvia.

Reich Commissar for Ostland Lohse explained the reason behind the German economic policy. He recounted that in 1940 the Bolsheviks conquered Latvia and nationalised all property: buildings, banks, factories, retail enterprises, country houses and moveable and immovable property. Everything was declared to be the property of the Soviet Union. After the Bolsheviks were driven out of Latvia, this property came into the hands of the Third Reich as war booty. These observations by Lohse became the ideological basis for the German regime's economic policy. From the beginning of its

occupation of Latvia, the German civil administration not only maintained Soviet-era nationalisation, but also actually expanded it.

The German authorities sent several teams to Latvia to ascertain the existence of their acquired properties, make inventories of them, and then to begin exploiting them. One of the first was the "Riga Economic Team". At the end of July 1941 it reported to Berlin that it had assessed about 60 to 65 percent of enterprises in Riga and 50 percent in Jelgava. Preparatory work was also undertaken in Liepāja and Daugavpils. The team reported that it had obtained considerable quantities of raw materials and finished products: 7200 tons of cotton, 2400 tons of flax, 14,000 tons of soybeans, 700 tons of linseed oil, 600 tons of lead, 174,000 various hides, and large quantities of timber. Verification of property had not yet begun in small villages and rural areas. While inventories were taken, the goods were sent to Germany. In August 1941, the following goods were transported by ship: 8000 tons of soybeans, 280 tons of butter, 1700 tons of plywood sheets, 16,500 tons of pulpwood, 1700 tons of grain, and other goods. During the same period, 80 wagons of sugar, 95 tons of butter, as well as cement and gasoline were sent by rail. Quite significant quantities were also delivered for the army's needs: 6000 tons of rye and 21,000 tons of wheat, as well as large amounts of fresh and conserved meat. To ensure that the required quantities were collected, the German authorities instituted restrictions on certain products for local civilians. The occupation authorities began to export not only food products from Latvia, but industrial equipment and machinery as well.

To manage the properties confiscated from the Soviets, on October 24, 1941 Reich Commissar Lohse ordered the establishment of the Fiduciary Board. As of December 1 property confiscated from Jews also came under the control of this board. Some Latvian industrial enterprises were leased to German firms for periods of not longer than five years. In the event that the war ended sooner, it was anticipated that the lease contracts could continue operating for not longer than one year. The "Kvadrāts" rubber factory was leased to the Hamburg enterprise Phoenix, the Milgrāvis shipbuilding works and the Tosmare factory in Liepāja went to the firm Schichau, while VEF came under the control of the AEG concern. The Ķegums power station was also taken over by a German company. To speed up the entry of German firms into the occupied Baltic states, through an order of January 26, 1942, the Reich Commissar permitted Germans to establish enterprises based on

legislation valid in Germany. This facilitated the more rapid transfer of former Latvian state property into the hands of German firms. The tendency was to combine enterprises in the same sectors into conglomerates, which the German occupation authorities believed allowed for the more efficient usage of resources under wartime conditions. In this manner peat, brick-making, soap, hide and printing conglomerates were established. Some of the conglomerates operated within the boundaries of one general district, while others spanned all of the Ostland. The Ostland Reich Commissar established the General Chamber of Economy to control the respective chambers in each general district, thus overseeing and optimising the operation of the seized enterprises and newly established conglomerates.

The system established by the Germans to manage the economy in Latvia was highly bureaucratic and complex. Its inefficiency was criticised by the German government's Ministry of Finance, which also commented on the excessive number of officials employed by the system, the heavy administrative apparatus and the internal contradictions.²⁷

Reprivatisation

Although Nazi Germany had promised to return nationalised enterprises to their owners before the invasion of the Soviet Union, by the second half of 1941 no move had been made to enact this. Universal reprivatisation was not part of the occupation regime's plans. This greatly concerned Latvia's inhabitants and became a major issue along with the restoration of independence. The non-committal attitude on this issue by the German authorities generally caused disappointment and dissatisfaction. Ostland Reich Commissar Lohse was against reprivatisation. However, actual circumstances forced the Germans to gradually reconsider their policy. Over time it became clear that the nationalised enterprises were operating inefficiently, did not turn a profit and became another burden to the occupation's administration authorities. Therefore, in order to stimulate economic activity and to improve the attitude of the population toward the occupying power, the Germans began to gradually return properties to their owners. On October 17, 1941, Lohse gave an order for the re-establishment of crafts, small-scale industry and retailing, thus permitting the reprivatisation of small enterprises, but only where necessary. Small-scale industrial enterprises were

defined as those with no more than 20 employees. However, the Germans did not return immovable property (land, buildings), which the enterprises were required to lease from the German authorities. By the end of 1942, 153 small factories and 636 craft enterprises had been privatised.

An order from the Ostland Reich Commissar on regulations governing small-scale trade came into effect on December 16, 1941. This stipulated that small-scale trade encompassed points of sale for goods, restaurants, mess halls, cafés, etc. The order required that former owners should submit requests to regain their former properties by March 31, 1942. The order also stipulated that upon reprivatising the enterprise, the owner had to pay for the goods and fittings. So, in fact, nationalised enterprises could be regained by repurchasing them. By the end of 1942, 238 small-scale trade enterprises had been reprivatised. In spite of the many restrictions, many sought to regain their former properties. With the many reprivatisation applications, proxies responsible for small-scale industrial, craft and retail enterprises were appointed. Evaluation committees were formed to determine the value of each enterprise, but not its legal status. On this issue the German authorities had the final say, while local officials only had an advisory role. The decisions of the evaluation committees could be appealed before the main economic section of the General Commissar.

Enterprises could not be privatised if the applicant was insolvent or untrustworthy as affirmed by a statement from the police. The German authorities also demanded that potential owners of enterprises have adequate trade qualifications, i.e. that they would be capable of running the enterprise. Persons who had disobeyed the orders of the occupation authorities were barred from privatisation.

On February 18, 1943, the Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories Rosenberg issued regulations anticipating the general restitution of private property in the General Districts of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. This decision was grounded in politics, because after the defeat at Stalingrad Germany faced a shortage of troops for the Eastern Front. The hope was that the return of property would secure greater support for German policies from the population. Developed and undeveloped blocks of land nationalised by the Soviets also were to be returned to the owners. It was stressed that priority in returning property should be given to persons loyal to the regime. Property deemed essential to the German war economy was not allowed to be reprivatised.²⁸

On March 2, 1943, Ostland Reich Commissar Lohse gave instructions that in returning agricultural properties priority should be given to people whom themselves or whose relatives had voluntarily fought the Bolsheviks. It was also stressed that favourable treatment would be enjoyed by those who had strengthened the regime through their positive stance, had settled product levies on time, and had successfully oriented production for the needs of the war economy. The German authorities presented the return of private property in Latvia as a big event, however, the bureaucracy and the complex and slow reprivatisation process caused dissatisfaction. By 1944, 90 percent of buildings in the cities and 24 percent of farmers' properties, as well as 1306 craft enterprises and 542 shops had been reprivatised.

Taxes

Upon assuming control in Latvia, the German occupation authorities announced that all enterprises, organisations and private persons would continue to pay all Soviet-era taxes: profit, turnover, land taxes, etc. The first order from the Ostland Reich Commissar on taxes was issued on October 18, 1941, and was eventually expanded and amended. The order to introduce monopolies resulted in large revenues for the German regime. The monopoly on salt and sweetening products came into effect on January 16, 1942. Later, tobacco and alcoholic spirit monopolies were also brought in. These two monopolies brought the greatest revenues for the German civil administration. To control the operation of the monopolies in the Ostland, a special board with branches in each general district was created. To increase tax revenues, on March 30, 1943 the German civil administration ordered the collection of excess profits. This order instructed the general commissar to examine the books of all enterprises to determine what share of their profits should be turned over to the state. This additional tax was applied to all enterprises in the Ostland territory, including those owned by Germans.

Everyone had to pay income tax, except for farm labourers and workers earning less than 50 Reich Marks (RM) per month. The tax was progressive: earnings of 50 RM per month were taxed at 2.9 percent, 100 RM at 5.5 percent, 300 RM at 10.1 percent, and 500 RM at 16.8 percent. The tax rate was increased by 50 percent for unmarried persons and childless divorcees. An April 30, 1943 order from the Reich Commissar stipulated

that other income from capital earnings, independent work and enterprises would also be subject to tax. Taxes were levied on income from agriculture and forestry, as well as on pensions and welfare benefits. Private companies had to pay 50 percent tax on their profits, while cooperatives were levied at 30 percent. There was also a tax on city real estate properties. The only buildings excluded from this were those destroyed during the war. A 10 percent tax (101 to 500 RM) was applied on gross income from city real estate. Additionally, a trade and industry tax was introduced on June 26, 1942.

Rural residents paid personal tax (a head tax), but did not have to pay income tax. Persons aged under 18 years of age, men over 60 years, women over 50 years, as well as married women were exempt from paying the tax. The personal tax was 8–15 RM and was directed to the budget of the local administration.

To better collect the many and varied taxes, General Commissar Drechsler established a Chief Financial Treasury in Latvia with 27 local branches. For local populations, taxation during the German occupation was excessive, as they were required to surrender a large part of their incomes. Under the wartime conditions civilians were also called upon to perform various work duties, which were a burden on rural residents. The duties had to be fulfilled by both physical and legal persons.

Agriculture

The German occupation regime squeezed as large a quantity of food products and raw materials as required by industry from Latvia's farmers. Agriculture was considered to be an important sector for meeting wartime needs. On September 13, 1941 Reich Commissar Lohse cancelled the agricultural reform introduced by the Soviets, returning previously confiscated tracts of land to large farms. The German authorities attempted to strictly control the operation of farms. A special agriculture leader (*Kreislandwirt*) was appointed in each district.

The German authorities demanded that farmers increase the area of arable land and its potential yield. Thus, in 1942 the total area planted with sugar beets increased by 6000 hectares compared with the previous year, while the figure for flax rose by 21,000 hectares. Orders were also given to increase the cultivation of winter and summer crops. Farmers also had to fulfill large timber delivery quotas: for example, 2780 cubic meters of

firewood, 328,000 cubic meters of pulp wood and 37,000 cubic meters of plywood logs in 1942/43.

The lack of hauling and other equipment was a serious problem in Latvia's countryside during the war, as tractors and horses were in short supply. Horses had been requisitioned by both the departing Red Army and the German army. To resolve this problem, on February 19, 1943 the General Commissar gave an order permitting the removal of horses from farms where they were in surplus and giving them to farms where there was a shortage. In Latvia's countryside, the number of tractors was insignificant; for example, about 1885 tractors in 1941. Due to wartime shortage of fuel and spare parts, it was difficult to keep machinery running. Germany also failed to supply an adequate quantity of other agricultural equipment: cultivators, seeders, plows, mowers, etc.

Rural Latvia also had a shortage of labour, as men were mobilised into police battalions and the Legion. In 1942 the occupation authorities ordered that all school students older than 14 years perform obligatory farm work for three months during summer. On September 22, 1942 the Land Self-Administration ordered all non-working women aged 17 to 45 years to assist in bringing in the harvest. The next order came on May 18, 1943 and stipulated that all workers in Latvian institutions should work for six weeks in the fields, including during their vacations. Only employees of munitions and military institutions were exempted from rural work levies.

Farmers were not allowed to freely sell their produce. An April 10, 1943 order from the Reich Commissar stipulated that all agricultural products should be considered as encumbered. Farmers could only sell their produce according to instructions from the German authorities. They were only allowed a limited amount of produce enough to feed their families. All milk that was not required for the farm itself had to be given over to a dairy. From 1942 farmers were obliged to turn over 70 kilograms of butter from every milking cow every year. However, these draconian measures did not help to collect the planned quantity of butter in 1943. The imposed quota was 27,000 tons of butter, but farmers only turned over 20,613 tons. To increase the weight of the butter, the German authorities even allowed the permitted quantity of water in butter to be raised from 18 to 20 percent. The entire sugar beet harvest also had to be turned over to the sugar factories. Making syrup from sugar beets or feeding them to cattle was categorically forbidden. There were similar regulations for flax, linseed, grain crops, meat, etc.

This system of obligatory duties did not earn the occupation regime the results it desired, and the planned quantity of produce was rarely collected. One of the principal reasons for this was the very low and unfavourable purchase prices set by the German authorities. The set quantity of manufactured goods that could be purchased for the delivered agricultural products was also inadequate. For example, a ton of delivered new potatoes would buy 80 cigarettes and 1.5 liters of vodka.

Overall, the German occupation regime's agricultural policies did not facilitate the growth and development of the sector. They were only aimed at securing the maximum possible amount of produce.

Industry

The German regime's policies did not plan on developing industry in the occupied territories. Existing industry was primarily utilised for the needs of the Front, to ease the burden on German industry. By December 1941, 14 enterprises in Latvia were already fulfilling military orders. These included the "Kvadrāts" rubber factory, VEF, the "Vairogs" munitions factory, the "Ērenpreiss" bicycle factory, the "Mīlgrāvis" shipbuilding plant, the Liepāja powder factory and others. By the start of 1942, there were 174 such enterprises. At this time some military equipment repair factories were transferred from Germany to Riga for its proximity to the Eastern Front. A tank repair plant also began operation in Riga.

A shortage of raw materials and energy resources prevented Latvia's industry from expanding production and fulfilling larger-scale orders. The shortage of coal was a particularly serious problem. In a report to Berlin on June 30, 1942 Reich Commissar Lohse indicated that Latvia's industry required 32,500 tons of coal per month, but only 22,500 tons had been allocated. The Riga cement factory ceased operation due to the shortage of coal. The German authorities attempted to resolve the fuel shortage by increasing the extraction and usage of peat. Factories also lacked required machinery, instrumentation and spare parts, which Germany could not supply in the required quantities.

From 1942, Latvia's industry began to suffer a labour shortage. This problem was exacerbated by the numerous recruiting campaigns and forced labour orders that sent workers to Germany. In his reports to Berlin the

Reich Commissar wrote that due to the shortage of workers, production might have to be halted in the rubber industry and various metal processing enterprises. The largest seeker of labour was the Rural Work Board in Germany. The mobilisation of Latvians into the Legion, the police and other military units exacerbated the problem. At the start of 1942, Latvia was asked to send 24,000 workers to Germany within three months. This labour recruitment included those persons who were considered politically untrustworthy by the regime, such as the Soviet-era "new farmers" who had received 10 hectares to set up farms in 1940/41. During this "new farmers" campaign 2517 people were sent to Germany. As labour recruitment on a voluntary basis proved unsuccessful, in 1943 the German authorities decided to mobilise an entire one-year cohort for labour service. On July 25 of the same year the violent campaign "Summer Trip" (*Sommerreise*) was held and led to the capture of 3284 persons in Latgallia. Of these roughly 2000 people were sent for forced labour in Germany. By the beginning of 1944, about 16,800 workers had been sent from Latvia to Germany for labour service.

In 1943, 183 Latvian enterprises fulfilled orders for the German army of approximately 19 million RM. These were primarily timber, textiles, metals, printing goods, chemicals and food products. Latvian companies also fulfilled various orders for the German civil authorities, and furniture, shoes, textile goods, timber, etc., were sent to Germany. However, most of the goods produced by Latvia's industries were diverted to fulfilling orders for the German war economy. The smallest share of these products was used to meet the needs of the local population.

During the German occupation many industrial enterprises in Latvia ceased operation due to the lack of raw materials, equipment and labour. As the Red Army approached in 1944, the German regime implemented a scorched earth policy in Latvia, and agricultural produce, industrial equipment, machines, raw materials and finished products were either evacuated to Germany or destroyed. In May 1944, Reich Commissar Lohse ordered the evacuation of Riga's factories. The Ķegums power station, several factories, the Daugava embankment in the port district, bridges and other economic objects were blown up. It has been calculated that the losses inflicted on Latvia's economy during the war years by the German occupying power totalled 660 million US dollars, as calculated according to the values of that time.²⁹

5.6. CULTURAL POLICY

Cultural policy guidelines

After the Nazi regime occupied Latvia, it not only set out its economic goals, but also imposed its ideology and culture. Latvia's education, art, theatre, literature and other cultural spheres were reorganised. The superiority of German culture was emphasised, while simultaneously scorning and diminishing Latvian cultural achievements. Reich Minister A. Rosenberg, who was born and educated in the Baltic states, claimed that the Ostland nations did not have their own independent cultures, but were rather only derivations of German and Russian culture. The German regime treated the Latvian intelligentsia with suspicion, planning to deport its members to Russia after the war. A June 5, 1941 memorandum noted that 30,000 to 40,000 people would be deported. Latvian intelligentsia was viewed as being chauvinistic, anglophile and primarily a voice for Latvian nationalism and independence, and therefore dangerous to the occupation regime.

In August 18, 1941 the Ostland Reich Commissar Lohse ordered that the official language within state institutions would be German. A special circular from the Eastern Territories Ministry stated that employees of German occupation institutions would not be required to learn the Baltic national languages, because it was expected that soon all the inhabitants of this territory would speak German. A March 7, 1942 order stipulated that correspondence between German and Latvian institutions should be written in German. Only within Latvian institutions communication was permitted in both German and Latvian. Although Latvian was permitted, it was granted only secondary functions.

In the beginning of August, on the initiative of the Baltic German civil administration, Riga's streets were renamed. Brīvības Street became Adolf Hitler Street, while Elizabetes Street became Walter von Pletenberg Avenue. Soviet Boulevard was renamed the Avenue of the German Order, Merķeļa Street as Otto Bismarck Street, Aspazijas Boulevard as Von der Golz Avenue, Raiņa Boulevard as Alfred Rosenberg Street, K. Valdemara Street as Hermann Goering Street, etc.

In the beginning of August 1941, the order was given to abolish the History Institute of Latvia. For this reason, the Latvian History Repository

was created, which encouraged resource collection and research. The Language Repository was established on the same principles.

In 1941, the German regime in the East continued to adhere to the Blitzkrieg strategy and did not establish any cultural policies for the occupied nations. The regime planned to resolve these issues after victory in the war against the Bolsheviks. After the failure of the Blitzkrieg, however, the Nazi regime began to pay more serious attention to cultural policy strategy. These policies were established by Rosenberg's Eastern Ministry and Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry in Berlin. The Ostland Reich Commissar, the General Commissar of the General District of Latvia, the Land Self-Administration and other organisations were also involved in deciding cultural policy. The General Commissar's initial head of the cultural section, Karl von Stricky (who was later replaced by Kurt Dilfer) was directly involved in setting cultural and educational policies in Latvia.

An important feature of the German regime's cultural policy was the firm control and supervision of cultural and educational organisations. In his 1943 report the General Commissar's desk officer for culture and publishing, F. Nather, indicated that 637 literary works and 14 event programs had been assessed, and 19 newspapers had been censored. As well, 320 musical concert programs were checked and permitted, and a list of 800 censored song texts was issued. On the radio 203 radio plays, 84 stories and 1070 poems were checked. Special attention was paid to the teaching of the German language and history. An attempt was made to erase the idea of Latvia's statehood from public awareness by banning the use of the term "the Republic of Latvia" in the press. In its place the Germans suggested using "the Baltic lands". Cultural assets were also stolen during this time and involved Rosenberg's headquarters in Riga.

As the situation on the Eastern Front deteriorated, the focus of the German regime's cultural policy also changed. It became less aggressive as from 1943 onwards the Nazi regime required more and more of the human and material resources of the conquered areas. Local populations were promised something in return for taking part in the war and assisting a German victory. Instructions came from Berlin to be more tolerant and tactful toward the local culture and not to overly publicise the planned Germanisation. The Land Self-Administration was to be more closely involved in resolving cultural issues, allowing Latvians to practice their national culture more freely. In 1944, the Nazi regime began to promote

Russian culture in Latvia. The political objective of this was to ease the fears of Russian residents evacuated to Latvia, thus encouraging the recruitment of soldiers into Vlasov's Russian Liberation Army.

Despite its negative attitude toward Latvian culture, the Nazi regime did not achieve its aims during the occupation years. The Latvian nation was not Germanised; instead it preserved its culture and identity. In 1943 on the initiative of the Land Self-Administration, the Culture Fund restarted its activities. Its main objective was to promote Latvian cultural life. The Culture Fund gave material support to writers and artists and ensured that benefits, prizes and pensions were paid to Latvian cultural workers. From 1944 the Culture Fund granted prizes in literature and other areas of the arts.³⁰

Education policy

During the early stages of the occupation Latvia's educational system was changed significantly. On July 21, 1941, Ostland Reich Commissar Lohse stated that attempts by Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians and Belorussians to establish their own universities and colleges must be blocked, but that craft schools and technical training institutes should be allowed to operate unhindered. The Technical College in Riga was once again to become a German college. The usage of the German language was to be increased. Instructions were given to overhaul the lesson plans for geography and history. Changes were also made to study programs for Latvian language and literature, the natural sciences and other subjects. New textbooks meeting the regime's requirements were intensively developed. The University of Latvia was renamed Riga University and was significantly altered. In August 1941, the head of the Ostland Reich Commissariat Political Section, Friedrich Trampedach, opposed reopening the university and instead suggested that assessed and loyal students be allowed to study in the Reich. On August 21, 1942, Rosenberg's Eastern Ministry ordered Reich Commissar Lohse to suspend the preparation of Lithuanian, Estonian and Latvian students for scientific work. It was forbidden to grant research assignments to teaching staff in the humanities faculties. Any teachers and lecturers deemed unreliable by the regime were fired from schools and tertiary institutions. The first to go were Jewish professors and those who had worked actively during the Soviet occupation of 1940/41. Teaching staff was required to sign affirmations

that there had been no members of the Jewish faith for four generations either in their own or their spouse's families. Professor Konstantīns Čakste was fired from his job at the university and sent to a concentration camp for participating in the resistance movement and establishing and leading the Central Council of Latvia. The Social Democrat Bruno Kalniņš met a similar fate. The teaching of history at the university was controlled by the Germans. Instructions had been given that German teaching staff would be responsible for the quality of its teaching. The German authorities allowed the gradual reopening of the university from November 1941. Initially, the Medical and Veterinary Science Faculty reopened, followed by the technical and theology faculties. The University Chancellor was Professor Mārtiņš Pīmanis.

The educational system was required to espouse Nazi ideology and to focus on race theory and National Socialist propaganda. In 1942, the Ostland Reich Commissariat stated in its school guidelines that the function of the native schools was to prepare young people for a New Europe led by a Greater Germany. The underpinnings of the educational system suffered severely during the war. Some schools were taken over by the German army and converted to hospitals and barracks. Schools lacked necessary teaching materials and heating fuel, and teaching in two shifts became widespread. During the war years the number of pupils declined. In the 1940/41 school year 238,526 pupils attended school, while in 1942/43 the figure was just 207,744. During the same period, the number of grammar school students fell from 23,092 to 16,812. Students were employed in building fortifications, worked in the labour service, or were mobilised into the German army.

The Land Self-Administration's Education and Culture General Directorate worked with the German civil administration in resolving the education issue. Initially led by Jānis Celms and later by Professor Mārtiņš Pīmanis, the work was performed by two departments. The Scientific Institutes and General Affairs Department was responsible for tertiary institutions, libraries, museums, archives, the Latvian language repository, etc., while the Schools Department was in charge of elementary schools, high schools, trade schools, as well as the Belorussian and Russian school directorates. The Land Self-Administration General Directorate mediated between the school and German authorities in supporting and protecting Latvia's national interests. It cannot be denied that this was done in a form acceptable to the Germans. In March 1942, the leader of the General Directorate Jānis Celms informed

the German authorities that all political subjects introduced during the Bolshevik period had been removed from school programs. A list of banned books was prepared and these were removed from circulation. This list included the classic works of Marxism-Leninism, Soviet, British, American and Jewish literature, etc. For example, 30,000 books in the Central University Library were deemed to have communist content.³¹

Literature and theatre

During the German occupation, much prose and poetry and more than 20 novels were published in Latvia. Generally, authors did not express their attitudes toward the events of the time and instead focused on Latvia of the 1920s and 1930s, publishing works with psychological and domestic subjects. Anšlavs Eglītis' novel *Homo Novus* deserves attention, as the author painted the artistic milieu in the Republic of Latvia in positive, bright colors. He induced his readers to remember and acknowledge their value, to survive the present and preserve themselves for the future. In Ēriks Adamsons' novel, *Going His Own Way*, the main character is a youth honestly making his own way through life during a dramatic era. Knuts Lesiņš wrote the psychological work, *The Stamp of Love*, where he stresses that a person should be loved even if he only has one good characteristic. The writer Ilona Leimane focused on what it was to be a Latvian. In her book, *The Werewolf's Heiress*, she emphasises that to be a bright, noble and ethical Latvian is a precious asset that must not be destroyed by war or power. The author invites her readers to acknowledge the value of this asset and to hold on to it. Zenta Mauriņa's book, *The Train of Life*, earned public attention. The heroes of her work are constantly encountering the tragic, and at every step they are buffeted by fate. The whole of Mauriņa's novel is enveloped in sorrow, pain, suffering, hopelessness and tragedy. Elīna Zālīte published a work of a different nature. In her novel, *Early Rust*, the author examines the fate of a woman who confesses the story of her life. The heroine Elza is simple and vital, and her passions are easy to understand. Jānis Sārts wrote the political work, *The Deceived*, where he analyses the developments in rural Latvia during the first Soviet occupation of 1940/41. Sārts speaks out against Soviet supporters and collaborationists, and considers Jews to be the root of all evil. Anti-Semitism also appears in Teodors Zeltiņš's book, *Hawks of the Storm*. The novel's hero Valdis Vārpa celebrates the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union.

Other authors who published during the German occupation include Jānis Veselis, Aīda Niedra and Hilda Vīka.

Over 30 Latvian poets were published during the German occupation. Works by Jānis Akurāters, Jānis Poruks, Kārlis Skalbe, Fricis Bārda and other classic writers were released. Poetry collections by writers deported and killed by the Soviets were also published. Leonīds Breikšs' book, *Songs for the Earth and the Sky*, Atis Ķeniņš' collection, *Paths and Fates*, and other works were published in 1942 and 1943. The anthology of poems compiled by Veronika Strēlerte, encompassing the work of over 50 Latvian poets, earned special attention. At the start of the occupation the poets were euphoric about the German regime and believed that it would give Latvia its independence. These literary figures, however, soon realised that the German occupation was a tragedy for the Latvian nation and its culture. From 1943 the German regime permitted the publishing of national patriotic lyrics to boost the fighting spirit of Latvian soldiers on the Eastern Front.

Although Latvian writers and poets were required to deal with the difficulties of the occupation and the heightened focus on popularising German literature, they were able to avoid openly bowing before the occupying government. Although Latvian fiction deserves a special mention amongst the books published during the occupation, important translations were also published, mostly of German literature. These translations included Vilis Cedriņš of Goethe's works, Fricis Dziesma of Rainer Maria Rilke and Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš of Konrad Ferdinand Meier. Translations of works by Baltic German authors Oskar Grossberg and Manfred Kibner were also released. Rūdolfs Egle put together the collection, *Masters of the German Novella*.

Immediately after the German forces entered Riga, the Arts Theatre under the prominent director Eduards Smilģis opened its season on July 29, 1941. The People's Theatre began its season in December 1941. For a time the German *Soldaten Theatre* occupied the National Theatre. In January 1942, the Riga Dramatic Theatre was able to work in the National Theatre using the National Theatre troupe as its base. The theatre's director was Jānis Zariņš.

Audiences filled the theatres. For example, about 700 attended every performance at the Arts Theatre. The theatres presented interesting plays of Latvian playwrights, as well as classics from other nations. The 1941/42 season of the Arts Theatre primarily presented works by Latvian playwrights,

and the best of these were A. Brigadere's *Maija and Paija*, R. Blaumanis' *The Sins of Trine*, M. Zīverts' *Minhauzen's Wedding*, and Rainis' *Love Stronger than Death* amongst others.

During the German occupation, Latvian society wished to see new plays. Comedies were produced, such as Anšlavs Eglītis' *The Confirmation of the Universe* and *Pay by the Snout*, Tija Banga's *Clever Marjona*, and the musical *The Lakeside Crocodile* by Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš and Jānis Norvilis. These plays dealt with lovers' triangles and various human frailties, and their irony and humour made everyday life during the occupation easier. Latvian dramaturgy did not openly and directly praise the German regime and its ideology, but well understood the real mind-set of the governing power that be toward the Latvian nation.

On the surface, the German authorities interfered seemingly little in Latvian theatrical life. It was not mandatory to perform plays by German authors in the theatres of Riga or the provinces. The repertoire was restricted, however, because the German censors did not permit performances that did not conform with the Third Reich's ideology. In 1943, the Arts Theatre under Smilģis wanted to perform Rainis' play *Fire and Night*, but this was not allowed. The occupation authorities found the treatment of the Black Knight unacceptable. The Latvian Self-Administration had also established a prize for the best production. In 1943 this went to the Arts Theatre for Friedrich Schiller's *Mary Stuart*, and in 1944 the winner was the National Theatre for Rudolfs Blaumanis' *The Prodigal Son*. Jelgava, Liepāja, Valmiera and Daugavpils each had their theatres. The Jelgava Theatre was the most renowned with actor and director Osvalds Glāznieks and Jānis Kļava.^{32, 33, 34}

Opera was popular with the Germans, and the leaders of the occupation followed the repertoire of the Riga and Liepāja opera houses. The censors not only evaluated the repertoire, but demanded that half of the performances should be in German. They also demanded works by German composers, especially Richard Wagner. During the war years, outstanding singers at the Riga Opera included Milda Brehmane-Štengele and Mariss Vētra. The Opera Director was Jēkabs Poruks. Conductors and directors from Germany also performed. Until 1943, the Ostland Reich Commissariat oversaw opera, but afterwards it came under the control of General Commissar for Latvia, O. Drexler. With only 1700 seats in the Riga Opera, tickets were scarce as they were in great demand by the various German civil and military institutions.

The fine arts

During the German occupation, Latvian fine arts traditions established in earlier years were continued. In addition to the old masters such as J. Kuga, L. Liberts, N. Strunke and S. Vidbergs, the middle generation of artists included Fridrihs Milts, Jūlijs Jēgers, Erna Geistaute and others. The Fine Arts Cooperative, which in 1941 assembled about 500 artists, continued working successfully. The cooperative's chairman was J. Bīne. It helped artists obtain paints and other essential materials and for a time protected artists from being called up for military service.

One of the most important fine arts centres was the Academy of Art, which continued to work during the war under its Chancellor, J. Kuga. The commencement of classes was announced on November 25, 1941, but teaching was difficult because of the obligatory farm work for students as ordered by the occupation authorities. Jewish students were driven from the academy. Repressions also affected the teaching staff. Leo Svemps, who taught still-life painting, was forced to leave the academy for cooperating with the Soviet regime in 1940/41. A similar fate befell Professor Ģederts Elias, head of the figure master class. Director of the Art and Culture Affairs Board, E. Puksis, demanded that Elias should be banished from the academy for a communistic introduction to the book, *20 Years of the Latvian SSR Academy of Art*. Despite the active protests of both students and Land Self-Administration Director J. Celms, in December 1941 Elias was dismissed from his post.

The relatively large number of artistic organisations, such as art galleries and commercial salons, was an important indicator of the activity level of the arts. A new exhibition was held in the Fine Arts Cooperative's salon almost every month. There were both solo exhibits – by J. Bīne, E. Druja, J. Jablovskis, F. Milts and others – and thematic group showings. One example was the portraiture exhibition of 44 artists held in 1944. The popular Z. Mierkalne's salon "Zinta" began in September 1941 and soon held a broad retrospective of Latvian artists' work. Many prominent Latvian painters were represented among the 150 works. The salon also hosted personal exhibitions by I. Zeberīņš, E. Vītols, R. Zariņš and other artists. The "Zinta" salon was noted for its shows by young artists. During its existence, the salon organised about 30 exhibitions.

The E. Hermanovskis Art and Architecture Salon opened in Riga in

1942. It was a family enterprise offering fine and applied arts objects, as well as construction services. Paula Hermanovska worked in porcelain, ceramic and leather, while the brothers Hermanovskis painted and drew. Art salons also opened in Jelgava, Valmiera, Jēkabpils, Talsi, Liepāja, Cēsis and elsewhere.

Organising exhibitions was difficult during the German occupation because of the required number of permits. The Propaganda Section of the General District of Latvia had the final word. Two free tickets were required for the German Security Police. Life was made difficult for the State Art Museum and the Riga City Museum, on the foundation of which the German Museum was established. German art was removed from Latvian museums so that the German Museum could exhibit the significance of German culture in the Baltic lands. The State Art Museum was required to vacate 17 rooms by September 1, 1942, including exhibition halls, and transfer these to the control of the German authorities.

The most active period for the fine arts was 1942/43, when several important exhibitions were held, including two general exhibitions of Latvian paintings, graphics and sculptures. One of these was the exhibition of 300 works held in the Riga City Art Museum in honour of the 70th birthday of V. Purvītis. The Second General Latvian Artists' Exhibition was unveiled on May 1, 1943 with works by 193 artists.

Latvian fine arts continued to develop with a new generation of artists despite the war and the German regime's policies. The Culture Fund supported the creative growth of artists. It cannot be denied, however, that artistic activities were subsidiary to German cultural policy.³⁵

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VI. LATVIA AS PART OF THE USSR (1945–1990)

6.1. LATVIA'S REPEATED OCCUPATION AND SOVIETISATION

The Soviet system that was implemented in Latvia in 1940 differs greatly from the system that came into Latvia along with the Soviet forces in 1944–1945. After the war, the Soviet Union had turned into a super power on a world scale, taken control over Eastern Europe, and in terms of its domestic policy had achieved almost complete control over all areas of life. The general direction of development in the post-war years is clear – even up to Stalin's death, the Soviet regime increasingly centralised. This was manifest in all areas of life. As a result of the pre-war persecutions, the bureaucratic apparatus was to a large extent replaced in the Soviet Union. The post-war period saw the finalising of the bureaucratic administrative system. The degree of centralisation had a direct correlation to an ideology that was increasingly based on Great Russian nationalism.

Nevertheless, the general progression toward centralisation does not answer the question of why and in what way these or other specific decisions were accepted. This also applies to the status of the Baltic republics in the Soviet Union, to the tempo and specific forms of their Sovietisation. There continue to be many uncertainties in the question of how and why these or other resolutions regarding the Baltic republics were passed. One widespread assumption is that after Stalin had managed to obtain F.D. Roosevelt's and W. Churchill's factual admission of the incorporation of the Baltic States at the conference in Tehran in November-December of 1943, which was secured at the Yalta conference in February of 1945, the policy that was actually realised had been planned out beforehand. However, a more detailed study of the ruling politics of the USSR in the first year after the war – both

domestically and internationally – makes one view this approach as being overly simplified. Apparently immediately following the war, Stalin conceded the fact that the West may try and once again bring forward the matter of the Baltic States, that the question had not been completely solved. It is no accident that the Baltic Republics' "foreign ministers" were included among the USSR delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1946, in which a peace treaty was drafted between the Anti-Hitler Coalition States and the former German allies – Bulgaria, Italy, Romania, Finland, and Hungary. Stalin's unsuccessful attempt to secure voting rights in the United Nations for all the Soviet republics must also be mentioned. It was precisely in this context that the resolution regarding the establishment of Foreign and Defence Ministries in the republics was passed (actually in Latvia only the foreign ministry was set up).

The essential difference between the Baltic republics and the other USSR republics was the existence of a private sector in commerce, the service field, and especially in agriculture. If we look at the political changes, we see parallels in the development of the Cold War, the securing of USSR positions in Eastern Europe, and the events in the Baltic Republics, where in 1947–1948 economic politics was changed. It was at this time that the Soviet atomic bomb was developed and Stalin no longer feared the dominance of the United States in this sphere. The logical step for the Soviet leader was to bring the Eastern European nations under complete control and to liquidate the possible "fifth column" in the western republics of the USSR. In the second half of 1948, a resolution was passed for total collectivisation in the Baltic republics and to enact deportations that eliminated both the farmers' resistance to collectivization and the partisan movement.¹

Nevertheless, political development was determined not only by the developmental logic of international and Soviet domestic policy systems, but power in the Soviet Union was also concentrated in the hands of a single person – Stalin – who delegated this power at his own discretion to a narrow circle of his closest comrades. The archival materials of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union's Communist Party, which became available to historians in the 1990s, offer a clearer picture of the battles at the highest levels of power in the USSR and the political effects of these battles. Possibly, the period of apparent liberalisation immediately following the war occurred because Stalin had a stroke then and underwent treatment until December of 1945. In 1947, Stalin suffered another stroke. As a result

of these illnesses, the leader's suspiciousness was intensified, and his closest comrades took advantage of this in their jockeying for power. The repercussions of these power struggles in the republics, including Latvia, have not yet been fully studied.

The result of various international, domestic policy, and character factors was a politics that was realised both in the Soviet Union as a whole, and also targeted to the Baltic republics. By Stalin's death, all aspects of Latvia's administrative and economic spheres were absorbed into the USSR's political and economic system. More time was required for Latvians to come to terms with these changes and accept the situation as it had developed, so that Sovietisation could occur not only materially, but also spiritually and ideologically. Some progress in this respect was only achieved after 1956, when the Soviet intervention in Hungary together with the beginnings of peaceful coexistence with the West turned any hopes for Western intervention. Economic and political liberalisation also made the regime more acceptable, especially for the youngest generation, whose consciousness was formed in the post-war period. Nevertheless, the merging of Latvians, as well as other nations, into a united "Soviet peoples" was unsuccessful. This was to be shown by the speed of spiritual liberation from the stereotypes of Soviet ideology in the second half of the 1980s.

The Reoccupation of Latvia

In June and July of 1944, the 1st Baltic Front's forces began attacking towards Kaunas and Daugavpils. The target of the assault was Lithuania, yet in the middle of July, southeast of Krāslava, Soviet forces also entered Latvia's territory. By early August 1944, Soviet forces had taken over all of Latgallia, and by mid-September the forces were secured in a line that crossed a large part of Livland and Semigallia.

The German forces were not prepared to surrender, but the military force that was concentrated against them exceeded the German forces in terms of soldiers, tanks, cannons, and airplanes. The Soviet forces renewed attack on September 14, this time from the north, and northern Latvia fell under the control of the Soviet armed forces. In October, the 1st Baltic front broke through to the Baltic Sea towards Klaipēda, taking Palanga and, in Latvia, Rucava. Thus, the army group "North" was separated from Eastern Prussia. Realising that they would not be able to secure Riga and the territory

in the east, the German commanders withdrew their military units to Courland. The Soviet forces entered Riga on October 13, 1944 without a major battle.

The German army group *Nord* was closed off in Courland. In January 1945, it was renamed army group *Kurland*. In October 1944, the group still had hopes of recontacting Eastern Prussia, but the Soviet forces succeeded in expanding the gap. In December, the German commanders refused to break through to the south. Supplies for the group were provided by sea. The Courland group did not have strategic importance, yet Hitler commanded that the front be held at all costs in hopes that it would attract large Soviet forces. Many of the Latvians who fought on the German side in the 19th Division believed that by holding Courland they would delay the total subjugation of Latvia's territory to the communists, as well as preserve a base in the battle for Latvia's independence in the war that, as many thought, would inevitably have to begin between Stalin and his Western allies. Although the battles in Courland were localised, they were fierce. Latvians were involved in these battles and suffered many casualties on both sides of the front.

Latvians in the Soviet military

The annihilation of the Latvian army began immediately after the occupation of Latvia in June of 1940 when it became the People's Army. This was accompanied by the retiring of unreliable officers and the establishment of a political leaders' institute (initially, this was usually made up of local communists and left-leaning men from the ranks, later they were replaced with people sent from Russia). In September-November of 1940, after the annexation of Latvia, the People's Army was renamed the Red Army's 24th Territorial Rifle Corps, which included two divisions and several other units, and was a part of the Baltic Special Military District. Since the USSR had not had a territorial army unit since 1938, the 24th Territorial Corps (just like the corresponding Estonian and Lithuanian units) was supposed to be replaced after one year with an exterritorial unit. In September 1940, the corps contained 24,416 men, although only 16,000 soldiers were anticipated. After multiple tests of loyalty, more than 800 officers and about 10,000 instructors and soldiers were discharged. Therefore, in autumn 1940 about 1,250 former Latvian Army officers and 14,000

soldiers and instructors remained in active service.² The arresting of Latvian soldiers also continued in the months that followed, yet the elimination of the former Latvian Army began on the eve of the war when the order was given to concentrate the entire Territorial Corps in the Litene Camp by June 10, 1941, where it was blocked by the NKVD motorised units. Before leaving for the summer camp, Latvians drafted in 1939 were demobilised from the Corps, but they were replaced by about 4000 Russian soldiers from the area around Moscow.³ On June 10, the Corps' senior officers were replaced by Russian officers who up until then had officially been carrying out deputy duties. All of the replaced officers were sent to Russia on June 12 for "improvement of professional skills". Here, as the war began, they were arrested and most were shot, including the Corps' Commanding General Roberts Kļaviņš. On June 14, at least 430 officers were arrested in the Litene Camps (those that resisted were shot on the spot) and sent to Soviet concentration camps. The arrests continued in the days that followed, and from June 14 – 21 a total of 550 to 555 actively serving officers were arrested.⁴ Officers who had earlier been retired from military service were also arrested. Most were shot in the camps and others died from starvation and disease. Of about 560 officers, instructors, and soldiers incarcerated in Norillag, only 80 returned to their homeland in the 1950s.⁵

This violence against the officers demoralised the remaining soldiers. Fearing that they might turn their weapons against the commissars and Russian officers, the Soviet regime demobilised 2080 Latvian citizens from the Corps from June 29 to July 1, including 635 officers.⁶ The demobilisation also continued in the days that followed. Simultaneously, many soldiers and officers deserted.⁷ The number of Latvian citizens that remained in rank is unknown. A few sources mention that when the Corps crossed the Latvian border only 3000 Latvian soldiers remained.⁸ The arrests of senior commanders and ensuing demobilisation paralysed the Corps' ability to fight and its retreat was more like an escape.

The Latvian citizens who had arrived in Russia as part of the 24th Territorial Corps were sent to the Gorokhovets camps set up around Nizhny Novgorod. Here upon Stalin's order of August 3, 1941, the 201st Latvian Rifle Division was formed. The Division also included the soldiers from the two volunteer regiments that had been formed from the workers' battalion combatants and Soviet activists in mid-July 1941 in Estonia. Initially, these regiments contained more than 2600 soldiers. Until the end of August, these

regiments fought in Estonia; then until the end of October on the outskirts of Leningrad, where they suffered heavy losses. On October 7, only 196 soldiers remained in the ranks of the 2nd regiment.⁹

Initially, the proportion of Latvian citizens in the 201st Division was fairly high. A fairly large number of Latvian citizens were behind Soviet lines – active communists and their supporters, Jews who had fled Latvia out of fear of the Nazis, seamen from merchant fleets, railway men and other citizens who found themselves behind the lines of the front voluntarily, accidentally, or by force. The number of citizens behind Soviet lines is usually estimated to have been approximately 40,000, although smaller and larger figures are also mentioned – 20,000 and 53,000.¹⁰ Whatever the case may be, the number of soldiers from Latvia who were capable of fighting was limited, and, in addition the Soviet commanders mistrusted their loyalty, therefore, early on a large number of Russia's Latvians were included in the Division, and later, soldiers of other nationalities were also added.

The 201st Division, which at the time had more than 10,000 soldiers, suffered heavy losses in the battles near Moscow, with 55 percent killed or wounded.¹¹ After the Moscow battles, the Division fought with similarly heavy losses near Demyansk and Staraya Russa. In October 1942, the Division was issued the title of Guard Division, and it was renamed the 43rd Latvian Guard's Rifle Division. In 1943, the 1st Latvian Bomber Aviation Regiment was established, which throughout the war had a majority of Latvian soldiers and was the only national aviation unit in the Red Army. The 1591st Antiaircraft Artillery Regiment was also established and included soldiers from the former Territorial Corps's Separate Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion, which up until then had fought as part of the 43rd Guard's Latvian Rifle Division. From January 1944, the regiment operated as part of the 2nd Belorussian Front, taking part in military activities in Belarus, Eastern Prussia and Poland.

In June 1944 – shortly before Soviet forces entered Latvian territory – the 130th Latvian Rifle Corps was established. This included both the aforementioned 43rd Guard's Division and the 308th Latvian Rifle Division, which had been set up on the basis of a Reserve (Training) Regiment. The formation of this Corps was completed on July 7. As a result of the heavy losses in previous battles, the proportion of Latvian citizens had shrunk substantially. The Corps consisted of 52.5 percent Russian soldiers, 35 percent Latvians and 12.8 percent other nationalities (mostly Jews and

Tatars).¹² On July 18, 1944 the 43rd Division crossed Latvia's border, and suffered heavy losses. From August 1 to August 20, 1944, 1906 soldiers of the 43rd Division were killed, and 2433 in the 308th Division.¹³

When speaking about the participation of Latvians and Latvian citizens in the war on the Soviet Union's side, discussion is usually about those that went behind Soviet lines in 1941, forgetting that the largest percentage was made up of those who were mobilised by the Soviet Army in 1944/45. Mobilisation – the enlisting of persons born between 1903 and 1926 – began in eastern Latvia as early as July 27, 1944, and in Riga on November 3. According to data from Soviet sources, a total of 57,470 Latvian citizens were mobilised by the end of the war; 50,000 of these citizens were mobilised in combatant units (not only in the Latvian units, but also in other Red Army units).¹⁴ Many Latvians, however, attempted to evade mobilisation or deserted. By January 1945, 2214 had deserted, and by February 1, 1945, 1529 soldiers had been sent to special camps.¹⁵ According to several Soviet historians, the number of Latvians fighting on the Soviet side varied from 70,000 to 85,000, including Russia's Latvians. Other sources mention larger figures – up to 130,000 (including partisans),¹⁶ but this figure may be overestimated.

Mobilisation in the Red Army substantially changed the ethnic makeup of the Corps' soldiers. In mid-October 1944, the 308th Division was already 60 percent Latvian, but by the end of March 1945 this figure had reached 83.4 percent. The proportion of Latvians in the 43rd Division had increased from 40 percent to 60–90 percent in various units of the Division.¹⁷ The Latvian Rifle Corps fought in Courland, where the losses were extremely heavy, even more so because those mobilised in 1944/45 were often sent to the front without adequate training and poorly armed. During the entire war, approximately 36,000 soldiers from the Corps were killed.¹⁸ Often the Riflemen had to fight against units from the Latvian Legion, for example, in the Christmas Battles in Courland in 1944; thus brothers, fathers and sons mobilised in the battling armies fought against each other on opposite sides of the front. The Latvian Division in the Soviet Army continued operating in Latvia after the war until 1956.

A little known page in history is the contribution of Latvian merchant ship seamen in the forging of victory on the side of the Western allies. A few merchant fleet ships disobeyed the A. Kirhenšteins administration's order to return to ports in Latvia or the USSR. At the beginning of the war, five steamers were located or later arrived in British ports. These were taken over

by Great Britain's Ministry of Transportation. Though the ships were given over to be managed by British shipping companies, who changed the ships' names, the crews remained intact. At the beginning of 1940, nine steamers were located on the North American continent; Latvian Ambassador Alfrēds Bilmanis handed over eight of them to the United States, which used them for transportation of military cargo. Two of the ships given to Great Britain and six of the ships that had been handed over to the United States sank German submarines.¹⁹ Many Latvian seamen were killed. It must be noted that many Latvian merchant fleet seamen were also killed from June-August 1941 in the Baltic Sea when Soviet troops were evacuating from Tallinn to Leningrad at the end of August.

The German Army's units in Courland yielded themselves prisoners only after Germany's capitulation, which went into effect at 24:00 on the night before May 9, 1945.

Was Latvia liberated, as the Soviet ideologues and historians asserted, or occupied again, as was viewed in the West and as most contemporary Latvian historians maintain? Without a doubt, Latvia was liberated from the Nazi occupation's regime, yet the Soviet regime was once again imposed on Latvia. The argument need not be repeated here that attests to the fact that the incorporation of Latvia and the other Baltic republics into the USSR was involuntary and was not based on the freely and constitutionally expressed will of these nations' citizens. Yet it is also important to understand how Latvia's citizens and the Soviet soldiers and government of the USSR perceived "liberation" in 1944/45.

The attitude of Latvian citizens toward Soviet rule

The views of Latvia's citizens at the end of the war conflicted. The Nazi occupation did not attract many sympathisers; people were tired of the horrors of war and wished for normal life to finally begin again. Yet at the same time they were even more afraid that the communist forces might return. The Nazis had successfully taken advantage of the deportations of June 14, 1941 and the atrocities of the Soviet regime in their propaganda, yet even with this, people were completely justified in their fear (and this anxiety proved to be well-founded) of new repressions. Not everyone agreed with the view that one must fight on the side of the Germans in order to

save Latvia from communism, yet there is no doubt that a majority wished that Latvia be saved both from the Third Reich and from the Soviet Union. Latvians understood very well that it would not be possible to regain independence by their own strength alone, and hoped in an armed conflict between Stalin and his Western allies after the defeat of Germany. This would have given the Baltic nations the opportunity to once again appear on the stage of history, just like after the First World War. This is why the attitude of the majority of Latvian citizens at the end of the war and shortly after the war may be characterised as expectant. The Soviet regime and its emissaries were perceived as the representatives of a foreign power, whose presence one must learn to accept, yet they were neither wanted nor welcome. Many wanted to simply close themselves off from the Soviet regime. The attitude of most farmers was expressed by a farmer from the Aglona parish, "I don't want anything from the Soviet powers, and I'd like it if they didn't ask anything of us either."²⁰ To a lesser degree, Soviet propaganda also contributed to raising people's hopes that the West would liberate Latvia from the communist and "Russian" regime, because the Soviets constantly kindled tensions, maintaining that the imperialists were threatening socialism and preparing for the Third World War.

This does not mean that some of Latvia's citizens did not want to actively collaborate with the Soviet regime in positions directly connected to the implementation of the Soviet regime – in institutions of the Communist Party (including the Communist Youth), local Soviets, the militia, security forces, the legal system, etc. Initially, however, support was minimal. It must be noted that the support of a majority of the population in an occupied territory is unnecessary for the more-or-less normal functioning of an occupying regime; a relatively small number of collaborationists is enough.

The Latvian citizens who collaborated with the Soviet regime can be divided into three groups. For the first group, this was an ideological choice. Nazism did not ideologically attract Latvians. The idea of communism was more universal: it promised happiness and prosperity for all representatives of the poorer classes independent of their ethnic origins. The deportations of June 14, 1941 had mostly affected the economic and political elite, as well as the intelligentsia. The lower classes of society probably viewed this as an unavoidable punishment for the social injustices that had carried a few to the peak of society while others were given nothing. The repressions during the German occupation against the activists of 1940/1941, the landless

peasants who had received land after the agrarian reform, and against others who were considered disloyal had deepened this social division, and in many cases it had taken on the characteristic of personal revenge. The desire for social revenge also had a significant impact.

The second group consisted of those who saw in the Soviet regime first and foremost an opportunity to sharply and substantially improve their social status and build a successful career, which during the independent republic period was impossible due to their low social standing or lack of education. This group's worst representatives were active toward the end of the war and immediately following it, when they were recruited by various soviet organisations. The communist party, militia, security forces and others recruited a fair number of corrupt and sometimes criminal individuals who took advantage of the opportunities to terrorise the population and establish themselves at their expense. Not all of them, though, can simply be reduced to criminal and half-criminal elements. Many knew how to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the Soviet regime and build a more-or-less successful career, secure an education, or at least ensure better opportunities for their children.

The third group was made up of the "realists" – those who did not hold any illusions about the communist regime, yet at the same time believed that the Soviet regime was stable, would not disappear, and therefore sought to find their place under the Soviet sun. Often they were intellectuals who had attained a profession and a respectable social standing in independent Latvia. At the beginning of the Soviet reoccupation, the members of this group were sought by the regime's functionaries, but years later many of them became the victims of attacks and "cleansings".

The attitude of the Soviet regime and its functionaries towards Latvia and Latvians was more than ambivalent. On the one hand, Soviet propaganda frequently mentioned that the Latvian SSR was once Nazi occupied and was now a liberated Soviet territory. Actually, Soviet soldiers, security forces, and also many party and civil administration functionaries perceived Latvia as an occupied, hostile territory, and were of the opinion that they could and should deal with Latvia's citizens accordingly. This attitude was first expressed by the soldiers and contact with the Army was the first hint for the occupied populations of what awaited them.

The attitude of much of the Soviet military personnel toward the local population is expressed by the words of a Soviet Army lieutenant who had

become a disabled veteran, as recorded by an employee of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party in March 1945,

“Too bad that now I’m a disabled veteran of the Fatherland War, I’m an aviator... If I were flying an airplane now, I would...drop bombs on every farmstead, every house in Latvia, because members of paramilitary organisations are sitting in every house here; Latvians have gotten together with the Germans, they are traitors. Take a look, all the villages in the Pskov district have been burnt down, but here – the farmsteads are unscathed, the animals – unharmed – and there are 5–7 cows in each farm. Why? Because all the Latvians supported the Germans and the Germans didn’t touch them.”²¹

Not only in the memories of Latvians, but also the Communist Party archives bear witness to the fact that when the Soviet forces came into Latvia, they frequently pillaged, raped, and murdered civilians. Treatment of the local populations was even worse where punishment units were stationed; these units often were made complete from criminals. Military commanders often did not wish to or were not able to oppose this behaviour. Sometimes the officers themselves were involved in illegalities. Large numbers of complaints were directed at the “Smersh” counterintelligence officers. The criminal offences of the military did not cease after the end of the war. This was so alarming that the leaders of the republic turned to Moscow and the commanders of the Baltic Military District several times with appeals to establish order. The actual situation is well described in a comment by Sergei Zelenov, representative of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist (Bolshevik) Party Bureau in Latvia, in a special meeting of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party on July 11, 1946 about the offences of military persons against civilians. He reminded the representatives of military units stationed in and around Riga that it was “particularly necessary for you to make your inferiors understand that this is not an occupied country, but a Soviet socialist republic”.²² In early 1947, Latvia’s Minister of the Interior, Augusts Eglītis, admitted that when compared to 1945 the crimes committed by the military had increased, even though the number of stationed military units had decreased and the Baltic Military District commanders had carried out some measures.²³ The most dangerous were armed robberies, often using a military unit’s vehicles, as well as malicious hooliganism, which were carried out with impunity. It was only at the beginning of 1946 that the situation actually improved. Whether or not the excesses occurred because the military leaders could not or would

not prevent them, these excesses actually helped subjugate the population, who often felt unprotected and had very little trust in the local government, the militia and security forces, which often behaved even worse.

As the front lines crossed Latvia's territory, the army was followed closely by the USSR Internal Affairs People's Commissariat (NKVD) and the army's counterintelligence "Smersh" units, which were engaged in investigations of local citizens, searching for those who had collaborated with the Nazis and possible saboteurs, etc. Investigations intensified after the capitulation of the Courland units. Many of the military and also the refugees remained in Courland. Any suspicious individuals were sent to screening camps or arrested. Not everyone who caught the attention of the NKVD and the "Smersh" had been connected with the Nazi regime or was guilty of war crimes. Those Latvian citizens who had served in the German armed forces were also subjected to screening. In 1946, those who had not been sentenced and had remained alive were allowed to return home. Nevertheless, a large number of former German army soldiers and air force assistants who were of military service age in the Soviet army were drafted to construction battalions and sent to construct such complexes, as, for example, uranium extraction plant in Sillamäe (Estonia). Their service lasted for three to five years. Many individuals, especially former legionnaires, did not survive, because in many of the screening camps and the USSR Ministry of the Interior's construction operations they worked under severe conditions and insufficient food. The screening camps were actually no different from places of incarceration.

The attitude towards Latvia as an occupied territory was also apparent in Soviet personnel policy. Initially, local citizens who had been in German occupied territories during the war were not permitted to work in the party, the soviet power and legal structures, except in cases where they had operated in Soviet partisan units or supported the Soviet forces in some way. The most negative attitude was toward Latvians, whereas the attitude towards local Russians and Byelorussians was a little better. The most important positions were filled by local citizens who had evacuated behind Soviet lines at the beginning of the war, and to Latvians and non-Latvians from Russia and other USSR republics. As in 1940/41, Latvians were generally distrusted, even if they were ideologically engaged.

The Latvian SSR had formally continued to exist behind Soviet lines, and already in spring 1944, preparatory work was begun for the actual renewal

of its operations after the German forces were driven out of Latvia. Operative groups were formed: management of county and city party committees, local soviets' executive committees, people's commissariats (ministries), departments and other important establishments, as well as management for the largest industrial enterprises to take the helm immediately following the occupation of the corresponding territories. Initially, information was gathered about the people who had worked in the corresponding establishments in 1940/41 and had evacuated behind Soviet lines. Yet many had been killed or were not included for some other reason. Therefore, the operational groups included a large proportion of people who up until the war had not worked in Latvia: they were both Russia's Latvians and also non-Latvians. Although the operative groups did not succeed in becoming fully assembled, they nevertheless made up a core that could take over power in the appropriate territory or sector. The operational groups followed "on the heels" of the military units and were attached to the separate armies of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Baltic fronts. In July 1944, the Central Committee of the LCP, the LSSR Council of People's Commissars, the particular people's commissariats, and other organisations moved to Latvia – first to Ludza and later to Daugavpils. As early as October 13, the first representatives of the Latvian SSR government arrived in Riga. Although the operative groups were permitted to take over civil power, nevertheless, their real power was very limited. During the war, real power belonged to the Soviet armed forces, which generally did not take the civil authorities into consideration.

Administrative territorial changes

In 1944/45, Estonia and Latvia suffered significant territorial losses to the Russian SFSR. On August 22, 1944 the Presidium of the Latvian SSR's Supreme Soviet, who was in Moscow at the time, "begged" the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to separate from Latvia a part of the Abrene county inhabited predominantly by Russians. Of note is that the presidium did not meet, but instead the decision was made by gathering signatures in a poll of the members of the presidium. The decision is viewed as a formality and is proved by the fact that the territories to be given over were initially not even clearly named. The next day, August 23, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued the decree "On the Establishment of the Pskov Province within the Structure of the Russian SFSR". The third session of the Supreme

Soviet of the Latvian SSR on October 5–6, when the Latvian government was still located in Daugavpils, confirmed the corresponding decree of the Presidium. The actual annexation had already taken place on October 1 before the session of the Supreme Soviet, yet for an entire year, the county whose centre had now been relocated to Viļaka continued to be called the Abrene county; it was only in October 1945 that it was renamed the Viļaka county. The decision regarding the handing over of the city of Abrene and six parishes was accepted in ignorance of the constitution of the Latvian SSR. Only 52 of 100 deputies participated in the meeting of the Supreme Soviet, and without the clarification in the plebiscite of the true wishes of the citizens in the corresponding parishes.²⁴

In 1953, another small piece of Latvia's territory was added to the Russian SSR and the Estonian SSR. The area of Latvia's territory that was added to Russia experienced all the same Sovietisation procedures that took place in Latvia's territory; the same "kulak" deportations took place, only later in 1950.²⁵ Before the war, the added territory was one of the poorest outlying districts in Latvia, yet now the citizens' situation worsened because the territory became an outskirts of the Pskov province, and it was one of the poorest provinces in the RSFSR. Most of the young people moved to Latvia, and most of the older generation remained. Of course, the border between the Latvian SSR and the Russian SFSR was only administrative and conditional, and in some areas lacked definition. This caused difficulties in the 1990s, with the demarcation of Latvia's and Russia's borders.

Not only did Latvia's exterior borders change, but her interior borders changed as well. The post-war period saw multiple and significant changes in administrative territorial division. In ten years time – from 1945 to 1955/56 – the structure of the territories was changed substantially ten times. Actual administrative changes were begun already in 1940/41. The most substantial change was the introduction of the republican order city status, as well as the division of Riga into six districts.

After the war, the first large undertaking was the forming of rural soviets in 1945/46. Latvia's 510 parishes were divided into 1,362 rural soviets, simultaneously preserving the division in the counties. The new administrative units were created, first of all to align territorial administration with the system in the rest of the USSR. Second, the goal was to more effectively supervise rural territories, especially in the all-important collection of taxes and duties for agricultural products, as well as on the logging work that

farmers were required to complete. The rural soviets were not under the authority of the parishes, and two parallel local administrative structures were formed. The alignment of territory of Latvia with the USSR system had already begun in 1946. The first step was the formation of new counties by dividing up the territories of the counties that had existed up until then.²⁶

In November 1948, the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party passed a resolution for the zoning of Latvia's territory in 1949. This was connected with the planned general collectivisation of the farms. The kolkhozes' territories needed to align with those of the rural soviets (although initially, when the kolkhozes were formed on a more-or-less voluntary basis, this was not the case, for they were often small and did not encompass one rural soviet territory). On December 24, 1949 the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist (Bolshevik) Party' resolution "On the Establishment of 58 Districts in the Latvian SSR" was passed, and on December 31 the Supreme Soviet Presidium of the Latvian SSR passed a corresponding decree. The counties were also similarly liquidated. The rural soviet became the lowest administrative territorial division unit, and the district became the biggest. The districts initially were very small – this guaranteed tight monitoring of all the territories. Another reform took place in April 1952, namely the division of Latvia's territory into three provinces – Riga, Daugavpils and Liepāja – following the example of Russia and the other larger republics. Yet the division of Latvia's rather small territory into provinces was impractical, and already one year later, in April 1953, the provinces were eliminated.

In June 1950, the USSR Council of Ministers passed a resolution for the merging of small kolkhozes. This reform, which applied to all republics, was also implemented in Latvia. In 1950, there were 4118 kolkhozes, but with the merging this figure shrank to 1794 kolkhozes. The merging of kolkhozes continued in the following years, and in the 1950s the number of kolkhozes decreased by an average of 50 per year. As a result, the borders of rural soviets were also reviewed and the number of rural soviets was decreased. As mentioned, rural soviet and kolkhoz (sovkhos) territories were aligned. As a result of the changes, the territorial dimensions of the rural soviet territories approached the dimensions of the pre-war parish territories, yet the actual borders were changed substantially in many places. In June 1940, there were 516 parishes, but in 1991, 471 parishes, which had formerly been rural soviets. The districts were merged in 1955/56, resulting in the forma-

tion of 45 districts, but these were not yet the final changes. In 1960, the number of districts decreased to 32, and in 1963 to 21, but in 1967, the number increased to 26, a number which was preserved until the 1990s.²⁷ In the post-war years the borders and number of districts in the city of Riga were also changed multiple times. In 1946, the Jūrmala district was added to Riga, but in 1959 Jūrmala became an independent republican city (republican cities were the biggest ones which were not a part of the corresponding rural district) adding to it the towns of Ķemeri and Sloka. The territory in the central part of Riga was divided up many times between various districts, and in 1969 Pārdaugava was divided into two districts. Administrative territorial division stabilised in the 1970s and 1980s, although changes occurred that were connected with the expansion of cities' administrative borders.

The significance of Latvian Communist Party in the state administrative system and the formation of the political elite

The principle role in the Sovietisation of Latvia was allocated to the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party and its local (county/district and city) committees. The Party's task was to convey Moscow's directives to the lowest party and administrative organisations. Nevertheless, one must remember that the Latvian Communist Party (LCP) did not and could not have any independent political significance. Post-war Soviet Union was an extraordinarily centralised state, wherein the governments of the republics were taken into very little consideration, except for the largest republics – Russia and the Ukraine. In reality, all important resolutions were passed by a single person – Stalin. He consulted with a very small group of individuals: the secretariats of the Politburo, Orgburo, and the Central Committee, and after the 19th Congress of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union's Communist Party in 1952, the members of the Central Committee's Presidium, as well as ministers from the most important branches of economics as well as power structures. Aside from Stalin, the most power was held by an even smaller group of people, 5 to 9 members of the Politburo.²⁸ This group could influence the passing of resolutions, and it was the task of others to carry them out. Actual power belonged not to the bodies elected by the party, but to the party's functionaries – the nomenclature that controlled the execution of tasks put forth by the party's highest manage-

ment in all establishments, businesses, and civic organisations. Initially, Latvian Communist Party performed the task of Sovietisation fairly weakly, because there were very few communists and those who were communist were inexperienced. In addition, Moscow did not trust the Latvian communists. The Latvian Communist Party (LCP) was strengthened in two ways. Special offices of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist (Bolshevik) Party were established for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1944–1947. Latvia's office (the Bureau for Latvia) was initially led by Nikolai Shatalin (who also simultaneously led the corresponding Estonian office), later, Vasiliy Ryazanov.²⁹ The Bureau's leader was actually more influential than J. Kalnbērziņš, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the LCP. After the liquidation of the the Bureau for Latvia, the role of Moscow's "eye" was filled by the Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the LCP. Although individuals completely loyal to the centre were chosen to be leaders of the republics' party organisations, in reality their concern for their republic's well-being often conflicted with Moscow's interests. Therefore, it was the responsibility of the republic's party organisation's second secretary to monitor the first secretary and the other republic's leaders. In the Baltic republics, with only a few exceptions (in Latvia, this position was filled by Vilis Krūmiņš in 1953–1956 and 1958–1960), this position was filled by Russians who had been sent from Moscow.

The second path to the strengthening of the Central Committee of the LCP was the streaming in of reliable personnel from the "old" republics of the USSR. Efforts were made to appoint employees of Latvian descent to the main positions – secretaries of the Central Committee of the LCP, leaders of the Central Committee's departments, secretaries of the county/district committees – yet most were Russia's Latvians whose advantage was the fact that they were generally conversant in Latvian and had mastered the management style of the Soviet Union. Often they had no conception of conditions in Latvia, and were initially unhappy and lost in unfamiliar conditions. Since almost all of the Latvians who had been appointed to leading positions in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s had been shot or incarcerated in detention camps, the functionaries of Latvian descent sent from other republics prior to coming to Latvia usually occupied rather low positions (usually in district party committee and soviet executive committee levels in provinces, in Machine and Tractor Station' (MTS) political divisions, etc.), or they were young people who just begun their careers as Komsomol functionaries

or in the military. The recruitment of Russia's Latvians, however, did not solve the personnel problem, and most of the communist party functionaries were representatives of different nationalities.

At the end of the war and soon after, the Latvian Communist Party (as the All-Union Communist (Bolshevik) Party) was a party of officials and functionaries. In early 1945, out of 217 LCP primary party organisations, only 20 were in factories, and the rest functioned for the most part in various offices in Riga.³⁰ In June 1945, workers employed in manufacturing made up only 5.3 percent of the total number of communists. A party membership card was almost always a pass up the career ladder. To minimise the feeling of awkwardness that could be caused by the admission that the "avant-garde of the working class" was really made up of bureaucrats, the social status of party members was also noted, that is, their parents' or their own social status before the admission to the party. For example, in the Kuldīga district in 1951, 68.3 percent of all party members were civil servants, whereas according to social status, 34.5 percent were registered as labourers, 17.4 percent as farmers, and 48.1 percent as civil servants. In April 1953 in the Abrene district's party organisation, 19.4 percent were labourers, 21.2 percent were farmers, and 59.4 percent were civil servants.³¹ These data show that the party was not very proletarian either by descent or by the members' occupations. The same can be said about the All-Union Communist (Bolshevik) Party as a whole: at the beginning of 1946, 47.6 percent of all its members were civil servants.³² In 1946, a resolution was passed that prescribed a decrease in the number of civil servants admitted to the party, yet during the 1940s and 1950s this did not change the situation in the LCP very much because when joining the party, a labourer or farmer automatically had career opportunities made available to him, and he became a civil servant. Party members were mostly concentrated in the cities, and even until the 1950s there were very few party members in rural areas.

During the entire period between 1944 and 1990, Latvians were a pronounced minority in the Latvian Communist Party; this could be seen especially clearly in the first post-war years, when the proportion of Latvians among party members, not only in the big cities but also in rural districts, was perceptibly smaller than the proportion of Latvians in the general population. For example, in the predominantly Latvian Kuldīga district in 1951, Latvians made up 54.5 percent of party members, Russians made up 35.3 percent, and representatives of other nationalities, 10.3 percent. In April

1953, Latvians made up only 11.6 percent of the Abrene district's party organisation, although the district's population was predominantly Latvian.³³ In Riga, party members as a whole and the nomenclature were even more markedly non-Latvian. The poor participation of Latvians in the party had several reasons. First, the regime was unpopular among the citizens, and anyone involved in the party could be ostracised by other Latvians and their lives could be threatened. One had to be either extremely ideologically engaged or a pronounced careerist to take on this burden. Of course, it was easier in the cities, especially for those living in the largest cities, where social acceptance was not as important or noticeable. Thus Latvians living in big cities became involved in the party earlier, although this involvement was not especially intense. Second, those who wanted to join the party and those who had joined were constantly being screened, so that anyone with undesirable factors in their past activities or in their relatives' biographies were banned. Immediately following the war, the attitude became more lenient and a candidate's conviction and deeds were more often assessed. From 1949 to 1952, however, a real witch hunt took place, and anyone who not only participated in right-wing, but also social democratic organisations, including such children's organisations as 4H clubs or scouts, not to even mention service in the German Army, social descent, or relatives that had emigrated could be thrown away. J. Kalnbērziņš conducted the most thorough assessment of party membership at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the LCP on June 22–23, 1953. At this time, Latvians made up 29.2 percent of the republic's party organisation, among them 20.4 percent in Riga and 21 percent in Jelgava. Latvians made up 42 percent of the senior officials of the Central Committee of the LCP, 47 percent of the city and district party secretaries, and 31 percent of the primary party organisations' secretaries. There was not a single Latvian among the leaders of the Riga party committee departments, and of 31 instructors only 2 were Latvians. Latvians made up only 17 percent of the Riga party's primary organisation secretaries, but the number of Latvians among the city's party nomenclature functionaries had decreased by 5 percent over the last two years. Among the heads of the Jelgava city party committee departments none was Latvian and only one instructor was Latvian. Of 56 party primary organisation secretaries only 18 were Latvian.³⁴ The problems discussed in the general meeting of June 1953 were not solved, because a few days later the initiator of the plenary meeting Lavrenty Beria was arrested and later sentenced to death.

It cannot be said that the Latvian majority's negative attitude toward the communist party did not worry the leaders of the LCP, who knew very well that the participation of the principal nationality's citizens was necessary for the legitimisation of the Soviet regime. Since a party membership card was required before assuming a significant position, the relatively low proportion of Latvians among party members also meant that they had relatively weak positions not only in the party, but also in the republic's entire administrative system. Another problem was that many of the non-Latvian party members did not speak Latvian or spoke so poorly that they could not successfully work within a Latvian environment, not only in rural areas, but also in large industrial enterprises. During the second half of the 1950s, the national communists attempted to legitimise the regime among Latvians by inviting Latvians to become involved in the communist party. In 1958, Eduards Berklavs published the article "A Conversation from the Heart" in the newspapers *Padomju Jaunatne* (*Soviet Youth*) and *Rīgas Balsis* (*The Voice of Riga*), in which he invited Latvians to join the party. The article was almost immediately denounced by both the local orthodox and by Moscow, and this was still before the beginning of the utter defeat of the national communists. Apparently, the principle cause of this harsh reaction was the fact that it hinted that there were few Latvians in the LCP. It must be noted that generally before and after this incident, information about the national makeup of the LCP was carefully hidden.

Beginning in the 1960s, the recruitment policies of the Soviet Union's Communist Party changed overall. The greatest attention was directed at an attempt to expand the representation of workers and farmers, which would turn the Communist Party into a party for the masses, not just the nomenclature. Workers and farmers were given priority when joining the party, and unofficial restrictions were introduced in order to regulate civil servants' entrance into the party. These policies achieved a sharp increase in the number of LCP members. In early 1946, there were almost 11,000 members, and by early 1953 there were 42,000 members; in 1967 this figure exceeded 107,000, but in 1988 it reached 182,000 members and candidates.³⁵ A party membership card was now even more necessary for a successful career than it had been in the post-war years. However, it was no longer a guarantee of a career. Membership in the Communist Party was also no longer that closely connected with ideological engagement. This also somewhat decreased the reserved attitude of most Latvians toward Communist Party membership.

Within intellectual circles, the popular view was that Latvians should join the party so as to not completely lose their influence on the life of the republic. More Latvians did join the party and the proportion of Latvians in the party increased: in 1989 this figure was 39.7 percent of the total number of LCP members.³⁶ The proportion of Latvians was larger in the rural districts' party organisations, and the proportion of Latvians in the party nomenclature was also perceptible in these organisations, especially when compared with the situation during the post-war years. Simultaneously, Latvians were intensively "forced out" or more precisely "not let in" to the party nomenclature in Riga and the other large cities during the 1970s and 1980s, except in fields that were connected with culture and education.

The view that the Soviet regime gave the lower strata of Latvian society an opportunity to realise their potential and that the representatives of these classes greatly comprised Soviet Latvia's political elite and the elite in general was widespread. It cannot be denied that career opportunities that did not exist earlier became available to the lower strata of society, especially in 1940/41 and soon after the war, when the old political, and to a large extent also the business, scientific, and cultural elite were discriminated and denied participation. Later as well, there were more factory and rural proletarians and their descendants in the new elite, both because their opportunities for acquiring an education and for gaining a foothold in the ranks of the elite had improved. Nevertheless, the new Latvian elite as a whole was made up of the same strata that had formed this elite earlier. As opposed to Russia and other large nations, the degree of social consolidation in Latvia, being a small nation, was fairly high. Therefore, major social antagonism did not exist, although the descendants of the formerly wealthy and the intellectual elite had to overcome certain obstacles. A new feature was the growth in regional integration, as an unprecedented number of Latgallians flowed into the new elite.

In the first years following the war, the criteria for the selection of party members influenced the general qualitative makeup of both the LCP and the party and its administrative apparatus. Members were recruited primarily from the lowest social strata, and the educational level of most of the party functionaries was fairly low. Not only was higher education a rarity, but the same was true for high school education, and the majority had only an elementary education (six grades), yet often even this had not been obtained. The education and cultural level of Soviet and party functionaries was

sometimes simply shocking. During a pre-election meeting in January 1946, in a speech at a meeting of the city of Rēzekne intelligentsia, Chairman Panasenkov of the county's soviet's executive committee stated: "There is absolutely no culture in England, and there is only one theatre in the entire country, which is only attended by lords and sirs and a few enslavers of the working class."³⁷ It is no surprise that officials from the parish and rural soviet levels were also sometimes half-illiterate and did not have any authority among the local citizens.

This was a problem not only in Latvia, but in the entire Soviet Union, because after the repressions of the 1930s, the party and administrative apparatus had essentially changed, yet the quality of its members had declined dramatically, even when compared with the 1920s. When the war ended, 67.2 percent of the communists in the USSR did not have a high-school education. In August of 1946, a resolution by the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist (Bolshevik) Party was passed that addressed the preparation of leading party and soviets' officials and the raising of their qualifications. This prescribed obligatory education for party functionaries. A party education system was formed where the highest level was the Supreme Party School, the Social Sciences Academy, as well as the renewed Political War Academy. As they moved up the career ladder, party members had to complete set party education stages – from the party's schools for lowest rank functionaries to the republic's party schools and the Social Sciences Academy in Moscow.³⁸

In rural areas during the first years after the war, the implementation of the Soviet regime was assigned to the parish Party-Orgs – or formally – the party organizers appointed by the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party. The Party-Orgs were responsible for both the choices and actions of the local executive power – rural and parish soviets' executive committee chairmen. They also organised the kolkhozes, but their principle responsibility was to ensure the execution of the logging and agriculture procurement plan and sign for state loans. The Party-Org position was risky, for they were more often than others the victims of partisan attacks; therefore, finding suitable candidates was not easy. In 1946, many Party-Orgs admitted that they did not have political work experience, moreover, many were from the cities and therefore did not have knowledge of agriculture. Party-Orgs met with disloyalty and also outright animosity from the local population. Among the Party-Orgs were some who successfully

wielded authority and gained the respect of citizens, for example, the Lielvārde parish Party-Org Edgars Kauliņš, who later became the organiser and long-time chairman of the "Lāčplēsis" kolkhoz. Kauliņš had a powerful, charismatic personality and was also knowledgeable about farm work and understood the life of the rural populace. He was one of the rare individuals able to operate independently and pass non-standard resolutions that were not accepted "above", for example, admit kulaks into the kolkhoz. However, these types of Party-Orgs were rare. More common were individuals who more or less successfully attempted to manoeuvre the population's sentiments and the party leaders' directives, often surrendering out of hopelessness to alcoholism. Others viewed farmers as enemies upon whom taxes and duties could be enforced sometimes with physical force. Another fact that attests to the actual situation in rural areas is that initially not all parishes had Party-Orgs, although in 1947 there were already 421 Party-Orgs. At the end of 1948, party parish committees were already established in 400 parishes (committees could be established in places where there were at least 10 communists), though only Party-Orgs still operated in 30 parishes.³⁹ There was an attempt at compensating for the lack of communists on the local level with the help of the MTS, because the monitoring of rural politics was among the political tasks of the MTS deputy directors. Mass collectivisation improved party control on the local level, because efforts were made to appoint party members as kolkhoz chairmen. Mass campaigns also took place of sending party members from the cities to be kolkhoz chairmen, and the role of the MTS political divisions was also strengthened. Neither of these measures achieved any significant results.

The lack of adequate functionaries in rural areas during the post-war years was also compensated by the help of the institution of the so-called commissioners. The commissioners were officials from organisations at the republic level (the Central Committee of the LCP, Council of Ministers, Ministries) or on the county/district level. They were sent to rural areas to implement sowing and the harvest, the transfer of crops to the state, procurement of lumber, and other campaigns. The institution of commissioners was abolished after Stalin's death. In the recollections and literature of their contemporaries, the commissioners are represented as incompetent urbanites whose shouting and threatening only disturbed the country folk from doing their jobs. The role of the commissioners was evaluated particularly negatively during the first years of the kolkhozes. This negative attitude was

based on the fact that the commissioners were often (but not always) incompetent and too quickly dealt with their responsibilities and returned to the city. The number of Communist Party members in rural areas began to increase substantially in the second half of the 1950s. At that time, more and more agriculture specialists with advanced degrees also began to work in the kolkhozes and state farms (sovkhozes), and the educational level of individuals employed in other fields also improved. As a result, not only did the number of party members increase, but the qualitative makeup of the party and party members' prestige in the community increased as well.

In the first years following the war, the burden of Sovietisation, particularly in rural areas, lay first of all on the soviets and, in rural areas, on parish and rural soviets' executive committees, because, unlike party organisations, they encompassed all of the administrative territories. From 1941 up until even January 1948 when the first local soviets' elections took place, local soviets on the county/district, city, parish, and rural soviet levels did not exist. Instead, executive committees took on this role, the members of which were appointed by the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR, with the approval of the party committees. After the elections of 1948, the local soviets and their executive – the executive committees of the people's deputy soviets – became legitimate organisations, in accordance with the Soviet constitution. Actually, the local soviets, like the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian SSR, did not have any real power. They upheld the resolutions prepared by the party committees together with the executive committees.

A feature of the Soviet regime was the fact that the functions of the party and the state were not clearly separated: the party intervened in political, as well as economic matters, and, in addition, the final word belonged to the party. At the same time, neither the soviets nor the party institutions were in complete control of all their territories, and this can also be said about the organisations on all levels – from the Central Committee of the LCP and the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR to the county/district party committees and the local soviets' executive committees. There were various reasons for this. First, military sites and all things connected with military matters were outside of their control. To ensure the coordination and cohesion of necessary operations, army leaders from the appropriate rank were included in the structure of the local soviet and party bodies. The very highest level was the Bureau of the Central Committee of the LCP, whose member was

always the commander of the Baltic Military District. The party and administrative organisations on the republic as well as on the local levels had minimal opportunities to influence the operations of the organisations subordinate to the co-republican ministries. During the Stalin era, the economic and state administration's degree of centralisation was very high, and with the reforming of the people's commissariats as ministries reinforced this even more. All the industrial enterprises, except for the local industrial enterprises, were placed under the authority of the co-republican ministries. The interior affairs and security organisations were subjected first and foremost to Moscow, although there were corresponding republic ministries. After Stalin's death, the process of decentralisation began, yet the determinant spheres and the largest industrial enterprises were under the authority of the Union's structures. Although various kinds of mechanisms aimed at attuning interests were developed, the vertical mechanisms of subjugation always functioned more effectively than horizontal bonds.

Soviet armed forces in Latvia

At the end of the war, a large contingent of the Soviet army was concentrated in Latvian territory, which in a numerical sense exceeded the German army units situated in Courland. As the war ended, the military units were relocated to other districts, and the Baltic Military District was reestablished by July 1945. At that time it included the territories of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Kaliningrad (formerly Eastern Prussia). The USSR's most powerful military units were situated along its southern and western borders, including the Baltic Military District. A majority of the military units most capable of fighting were found in the Kaliningrad province and in Lithuania. The headquarters of the Baltic Military District were situated in Latvia. The republic's territory was primarily a supply base, with warehouses for gasoline, weapons and other materials, as well as maintenance factories and similar establishments. Latvia was also the Baltic Military District's training centre, where three military schools were in operation. In addition to the Baltic Military District, there were also other military institutions and units: intelligence and counterintelligence structures, various Baltic Fleet units, border guards, strategic aviation, missile bases, and others. In 1990, there were 223 USSR Armed Forces, Navy, and border guard military subunits with 70,000-80,000 personnel (including cadets from three military schools) situated in

Latvia.⁴⁰ After the Russian Army was withdrawn from Latvia in 1994, there were 850 military sites on Latvian territory.⁴¹

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the USSR tried to overcome their lagging behind the West in terms of strategic armament, and decided to situate ballistic missiles in the Baltic Military District aimed at the most important European capital cities. Although the local population knew about the existence of the missile bases, the type of missiles that were located at these bases became known only in December 1987 when the USA and the USSR signed a treaty for the elimination of intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles. The appendix to the treaty confirmed that the treaty prescribed the dismantling of missile launching devices in the Baltic Republics, including in the vicinity of Alūksne and Jelgava in Latvia. *R-12* intermediate-range missiles, which are known as *SS-4* in the West, were located in the vicinity of Alūksne, and *SS-c-4* missiles were located in the vicinity of Jelgava. Other types of missiles were located at a few sites – *R-14* ballistic missiles, which had a range of 3,600 kilometres, as well as cruise missiles.⁴² Since the former Baltic Republics made up the western border of the Soviet Union, they were looked upon as a base for a possible attack on the West and also as the first defensive barrier against aggression from the West. If the Soviet side attacked first, the West's retaliatory blow would subject the entire region to immense horrors. Militarists had a large influence on the political life of Latvia, for example, the removal of Eduards Berklavs and other Latvian national communists from office in 1959. Militarists were without a doubt one of the principle strata of Soviet society that supported the Soviet Union's "territorial unity", therefore, the leaders of the armed forces did not approve of the Baltic Republics' efforts to regain independence. After the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian SSR passed the Declaration of Independence on May 4, 1990, the leaders of the Baltic Military District openly supported the opponents of independence.

After the Baltic States had regained their independence, Boris Yeltsin, the President of the Russian Federation, passed a decree for the reforming of the Baltic Military District as the North-western Military Group, which ceased to exist following the withdrawal of the Russian military in August 1994.

6.2. THE REPRESSIONS

The scale of political repressions

Even until the end of the 1980s, the Latvian population did not know the true scope of the political repressions. Party functionaries, however, were informed about them in a plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the LCP on June 22–23, 1953 in a report by the Central Committee's First Secretary J. Kalnbērziņš. He acknowledged that from 1945 to 1953, 119,000 people had been persecuted, and of these, 72,850 had been arrested, 43,702 had been deported and 2,321 had been killed.⁴³ If the 20,000 people repressed in 1940/1941 are added to this figure, as well as the 1849 Latvian citizens individually deported from 1944 to 1953, the total figure reaches at least 140,000 people. Several Latvian historians estimate the total number of persecuted at approximately 190,000 people.⁴⁴

A book by Russian demographer Vadim Erlikhman published in 2004 summarises the losses suffered by Latvia in the 20th century. According to the data he has collected, which are based on archival data already published by several Russian researchers, 2625 persons were arrested in 1940/41, and 9546 persons deported (2000 of whom perished), and 2000 persons were sentenced to death and killed. From 1944 to 1953, 2,0000 persons were sentenced to death, 88,000 persons were arrested and incarcerated in detention and screening camps (8000 of whom perished), and 41,393 persons were deported (5,000 of whom perished). Therefore, the total number of repressed persons is more than 148,000.⁴⁵ Other historians have estimated that the victims of the communist regime's political repressions numbered between 140,000 and 190,000, with some estimates as high as 216,000 – 240,000.

Current archival sources are inadequate for more precise figures, and it is perhaps not even possible to obtain them. Data are lacking about the victims of repression during the war at the Soviet rear, including those who were shot without a trial and investigation at the beginning and also after the war. In addition, an individual could be persecuted multiple times. Soviet security forces did not keep good records and files. Nevertheless, over the past ten years Latvian historians have been able to more precisely approximate the total number of politically persecuted victims.

According to the Latvian State Archive (from lists of persons deported

in 1941 and 1949), more than 15,000 persons were deported in 1941, of whom one third were arrested and incarcerated in detention camps.⁴⁶ In the deportations of March 25, 1949, 44,191 persons were deported for various periods of time.⁴⁷ This figure includes the March 25–29, 1949 deportees, who were sent or travelled voluntarily to be with their family members, as well as the children born in the exile (special settlement). According to the Latvian State Archive's data, 91,034 persons were placed in the filtration (screening) camps for shorter or longer (up to five years) periods of time.⁴⁸

Data published from the files of the former Latvian SSR State Security Committee show that a total of 47,218 persons were arrested and sentenced for political "crimes" from 1940 to 1986. The largest number arrested was 38,473 in 1944/45 (of this figure, 14,702 were arrested in 1945); 7292 were arrested in 1940/41. After 1954, the number of arrests sharply declined, on average not exceeding a few dozen per year.⁴⁹ In addition to the mass deportations of 1949, there were several smaller scale collective deportations for special settlement from 1945 to 1949, for example, the deportation of 660 German citizens and stateless persons from Riga, 584 family members of convicted so-called betrayers of the homeland, and 40 Jehovah's Witnesses in 1951. People were also deported for special settlement individually – as family members of the convicted, supporters of partisans, etc. According to data from the Republic of Latvia's Ministry of the Interior, the number of persons deported for special settlement in addition to the number of persons deported in 1949 comes to 1849.⁵⁰ Yet this figure may have been higher, as a Latvian SSR KGB notice in 1962 indicates that 60,462 persons were deported from Latvia in 1941, 1945 and 1949.⁵¹ It is difficult to estimate the number of persons arrested and shot without trial at the beginning of the war, those sentenced at the Soviet rear during the war, as well as the number of national partisans and their supporters shot after the war. It may be assumed that the figure mentioned in J. Kalnbērziņš' report – 2321 persons shot in the republic's territory from 1945 to 1952 – is fairly close to the truth, although other figures (for example, 2420) are also mentioned. This number may be estimated at 2500 persons, and approximately 2000 could be victims of 1941–1944 (yet these are very approximate estimations). By combining all these figures, as many as 198,800 persons were persecuted by the Soviet regime. Since the same person could have been persecuted multiple times, the actual number of victims may be closer to 180,000 – 190,000.

From 1944 to 1953, most were sentenced for collaborating with the

German regime, participating and supporting the resistance movement, and taking part in anti-Soviet activities (often the accusation where other reasons for sentencing could not be found). In the first years following the war, the policy of repression was staged according to the perceived problem. An example is the campaign against cosmopolitanism, where those who celebrated Western culture and values were persecuted. One of the most infamous of these persecutions is the so-called French Case: a group of intellectuals – Maija Silmale, Ieva Lase, Kurts Fridrihsons, Milda Grīnfelde and others, who met in 1946/47 to read and discuss the works of French writers and philosophers, were arrested and sentenced at the beginning of 1951. In the late 1940s and particularly in the early 1950s, former social democrats were increasingly persecuted, as were the leftist social democrats that had collaborated with the communists during the period of Kārlis Ulmanis's dictatorship. Almost all of the most well-known social democrats who had remained in Latvia – Fricis Menders, Kristaps Eliass, Kārlis Lorencs, Roberts Bīlmanis, Kārlis Būmeisters, Valdis Grēviņš, and others – were sentenced. Beginning in 1948 – the year the state of Israel was established – Jewish intellectuals were increasingly persecuted. At the beginning of 1953, as a result of the so-called Doctors' Case in Moscow, a real witch-hunt began. At least three trials were prepared at an accelerated speed – against “doctors/poisoners”, against Jews working in the cultural field, but the main trial had to be staged against a fictitious Jewish anti-communist nationalistic centre. The security forces targeted Max Schatz-Anin, a professor, lawyer, literature specialist, and active member of the leftist movement, as the leader of this fictitious centre.⁵²

Without a doubt, there were those among the convicted who during German occupation had taken part in the elimination of Jews and gypsies or were guilty of war crimes, yet both they and most of the others were convicted for collaborating with the Nazis, and no effort was exerted to find evidence of specific crimes. Service in the Nazi military and police forces was reason enough for conviction, and an equally serious punishment could be meted out both to an actual criminal and to one whose hands were not stained with blood. The same was true for persons who had worked in the civil administration of the German occupying regime. Generally, no effort was made to provide evidence for specific offences also for those convicted as national partisans or their supporters. Many of the convicted had often not done anything condemnable, even from the perspective of the Soviet

government. The reason for arrest and conviction could be for having a higher social status, a profession such as a teacher, doctor, railway man, etc., in independent Latvia or during the period of German occupation, as well as certain political views and making political jokes and statements while under the influence of alcohol. In cases where the death penalty was imposed, the convicted person's entire family and closest relatives were deported. Meanwhile, persons guilty of war crimes or genocide during the German occupation, but who had also collaborated with Soviet security services, were not convicted.⁵³

Investigations and legal procedures did not comply with any civilised juridical norms, as during investigations, people were often tortured and intimidated. Although general practice, only in a few cases was it ascertained that the investigation's materials had been falsified and those guilty of this were punished even in the Stalin era, but after 1953, when the rehabilitation cases of the convicted were reviewed, these incidents were ascertained on a mass scale. The accused were not even formally given the right to a fair trial; an arrest automatically meant a guilty verdict. Only rarely were political cases reviewed in the Supreme Court of the Latvian SSR, usually in cases regarding anti-Soviet agitation and other relatively insignificant offences. The majority were tried by the Baltic Military District's or the Internal Affairs People's Commissariat/Ministry of the Interior (NKVD) Military Tribunal. In cases where the evidence was so weak that it would be unconvincing to even these legal institutions, they were sent to Moscow – to a Special Meeting in the USSR State Security Ministry, which reviewed cases without the presence of the accused. Lawyers were not permitted to participate in political cases at all, and the verdict was almost always preset to be guilty. The Prosecutor's Office of the Latvian SSR also did not have the right to supervise proceedings instituted by state security forces. The military prosecutor performed the task of supervisor, yet this was a formality, and security forces almost always received authorisation for a search and arrest.

During the Stalin era, the internal affairs and security institutions were "a nation within a nation" and acted independently or upon orders of the top government officials of the USSR. Therefore, the employees of these institutions often out of selfish interests unlawfully expanded the wide-ranging powers that had been officially granted to them. The license of security establishment officers was taken advantage of as justification in the battle with the partisans. For example, in November 1945 an inspection conducted by the Latvian SSR

Internal Affairs People's Commissariat military prosecutors presented evidence that operational officer of the Internal Affairs People's Commissariat's Viļaka county Rugāji parish branch, Ivan Murmilov, the Baltinava parish's branch chief, Ivan Minosyan, and the Tilža parish's branch chief, Aleksandrs Mihelsons, had all beaten citizens and confiscated their goods, livestock, and food products. The following statements were about the officers of the Viļaka county branch who "systematically dealt with the supporters of bandits, shooting them without an investigation and trial. From July to September 1945, as well as in early October, approximately 27 people were illegally shot in this county." Similar incidents were shown to have occurred in other counties as well.⁵⁴ The efforts of the republic's party and security establishments to limit lawlessness were inconsequential and often ambiguous, because where kulaks or those suspected of disloyalty towards the Soviet regime were terrorised, the perpetrators often escaped penalty.

Along with detention in the concentration camps, administrative exile was also widely practiced in the Soviet Union during the Stalin era, i.e. the deportation of persons to distant regions of the USSR, for so-called special settlement (*specposeleniye*) under supervision by security forces. Deportation could be imposed as an additional measure after the convict had already served time in a prison or camp, and it could also be imposed as an independent penalty. This punishment was often applied to persons who were arrested, but no evidence could be found for his/her conviction.

A special form of administrative exile was the mass deportation. The largest deportations in Latvia took place on June 14, 1941 and March 25, 1949. The deportations of March 1949 mostly affected the rural population – those who were accused of being kulaks or partisan supporters. The goal of the 1949 campaign was to break the resistance to collectivisation and completely suppress the armed resistance. It is still unclear when the government of the USSR began to review the question of the necessity of this campaign. Although some documents claim that the motive came from the republic, the initiative actually came "from above" and was an element in the Sovietisation of the Baltic Republics and the international situation.

The USSR Council of Ministers' secret resolution number 390-138 passed on January 29, 1949 defined the following categories of persons to be deported from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia: 1) "kulaks" and their families; 2) the families of "bandits" and "nationalists" who have an illegal status, as well as family members of convicted and shot "bandits"; 3) legalised "bandits" and

their family members who continue to conduct anti-Soviet activities; 4) family members of the supporters of "bandits". The resolution specified that underage family members and those incapable of working would not be subjected to deportation, but could voluntarily accompany their families. The reality, however, was that all family members at home during the arrests were deported.

On March 13–15, 1949 the chairmen of the county Soviets' executive committees authorised the lists of persons to be deported including 11,000 families with 38,000 family members.⁵⁵ On March 17, 1949 the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers passed secret resolution nr.282 "On the Deportation of the Families of Kulaks from the Latvian SSR", which stipulated that 10,000 families of "kulaks" must be deported, and confirmed the lists of persons to be deported as prepared by the county soviets' executive committees. Not all the persons included in the lists of kulaks were deported, and, in turn, families not included in these lists were added, sometimes even including families who were well-known supporters of the Soviet regime. Of the 9422 farms that were officially assigned the status of kulak on April 1, 1949, only 4001 farm families were deported, less than half. The reason for this was that the decisions regarding who was to be deported were made by the state security forces before the approval of the lists by the local party and administrative institutions. These lists only partially took into account the current state of farms, and were based primarily on the Latvian SSR State History Archive the Republic of Latvia's 1939 census data on farms. These lists did not account for the changes in farm status since 1939. In regards to the "nationalists", the lists were prepared by the State Security Ministry. In addition, a Special Meeting's resolution on deportation was prepared only five or six months after the actual deportations.⁵⁶

From March 25–29, 1949 a total of 9147 families designated as kulaks were deported. These included 29,252 persons of whom 28,107 were Latvians, 482 were Russians, and 663 were other nationalities. Deported "nationalists" included 3841 families, of whom 12,158 were Latvians, 293 were Russians, and 430 were other nationalities. Although most of the deportees were from rural areas, urban populations were affected as well. The lists of deported included 1280 persons from Riga, of whom 161 were deported as kulaks and 1119 as "nationalists". Most were employed as workers (759), 256 were secondary school and higher education students, 141 were civil servants and members of the intelligentsia, and only 6 were farmers.⁵⁷

The actual number of deportees in exile was larger than the number deported on March 25, because family members either voluntarily or involuntarily followed them or were sent to their families after their imprisonment. Between 1949 and 1954, 405 persons were freed from exile; they were regarded as deported without reason even according to the criteria of the time. As already mentioned, a total of 44,191 persons, including children born in exile, spent longer or shorter periods of time in banishment as a result of the administrative deportations of March 25, 1949. Latvian citizens were sent to the provinces of Amur, Tomsk and Omsk. The deported were informed that they had been resettled permanently; they were required to regularly check in at the place of settlement and were prohibited from leaving without the permission of the commandant's office.

The fate of those deported in 1949 was more benign than that of those deported in 1941. In 1941, most of the deported were from intelligentsia and were unaccustomed to heavy physical labour. Their situation was made worse by wartime conditions and by the fact that adult men were separated from their families and incarcerated in camps. The families deported in 1949 were not separated, and most were farmers and labourers, some of whom soon became kolkhoz brigade leaders and community leaders. However, the conditions of most deportees were unenviable. Many children, the elderly, and those incapable of working could not endure the harsh climate, the starvation, and exhaustive labour.

The Communist Party's reports about the morale of the population the day following the deportations of March 25, 1949 attest to the belief of most Latvians that they would all be deported to Siberia. In addition, analogous to the 1941 deportations, these deportations were also perceived as the harbinger of war. For a long time, Latvians expected new deportations. Although most of the deported were from the countryside, the deportations demoralised Latvians in both rural and urban areas.

The deportation campaign was prepared in complete secrecy, and the local officials who were in charge of showing a way to deportees' farmsteads and recording abandoned properties were given instructions only a few hours before the beginning of the operation. As sources attest, information was leaked and many knew or at least sensed that a mass deportation campaign was being prepared. There were various sources for the leakage of information: the State Security Ministry's forces and employees, local activists and officials. Many who were included in the lists of persons to be

deported, or at least thought that they might be, went into hiding. In Riga County, more than 30 percent of the men capable of labour and destined for deportation went into hiding. In Ludza, 20 families and many young people escaped deportation.⁵⁸ Yet overall, the campaign did not encounter serious resistance either from the deported or from the partisans. The main reason for this was the superior strength of those managing and executing the deportations. They numbered 8313 military persons from the USSR State Security Ministry Internal Affairs Forces, along with 3300 USSR and Latvian SSR State Security Ministry employees and 9800 combatants from the Latvian SSR State Security Ministry's Destroyer Battalions (1742 of whom were mercenaries). This brings the total number to 33,413 persons, although the officers of the USSR and Latvian SSR NKVD must also be added to this figure, but this number is unknown.⁵⁹ The deportees were theoretically permitted to take with them 1500 kilograms of belongings and food reserves per family. However, in reality they were not given enough time to prepare for the journey (formally deportees were granted one hour for preparations, but later leadership of the Soviet security institutions admitted that operations groups deliberately shortened them up to 15 minutes, and there is evidence that even less on some occasions)⁶⁰, and many did not even have that many belongings. Any property left behind was confiscated or simply looted. When the deportees were allowed to return home in the late 1950s, the confiscated property was not returned nor was it compensated. The opportunity to buy back one's former home from the kolkhoz may be viewed as an example of the goodwill of the kolkhoz management, yet many returning deportees were not given even this opportunity, and were not permitted to live in their homes.⁶¹

The question regarding the opportunity for deportees to return home was put forth relatively soon after Stalin's death. Neither the USSR nor the republic's leaders were interested in the deportees returning home en masse. Moscow was afraid that Siberia and the eastern USSR would lose a large number of working force. The republic's leaders were apparently afraid that the animosity and pain of the deportees would negatively impact the morale of the population. This question was discussed in a meeting of the LCP Central Committee on March 7, 1955. J. Kalnbērziņš summarised the results of the meeting as follows,

"I think that we will not hurry with the return. There are a number of people whom it would be best not to bring back right now. Besides that,

they have settled in there and are working there, but they will return here and not have anything. This will only aggravate them even more. In cases where a mistake can clearly be seen, those people should be brought back, but those cases are only a few hundred, not tens of thousands.”⁶²

Nevertheless, the USSR government passed a resolution in 1957 for the release of all administratively exiled from the special settlement. Henceforth, the leaders of the republic attempted to impose various restrictions on those who had returned. The Latvian SSR KGB and the Committee's Chairman, Jānis Vēvers, were especially active in this respect. In a report in January 1958, Vēvers expressed his dissatisfaction with the local authorities, who tried to help the former deportees,

“Particular employees of the Soviet authorities and managers of the kolkhozes, being led by them and sometimes thinking that the Soviet authorities have undeservedly harmed these people, satisfy their often unfounded requests, return their homes to them, give them livestock and offer other forms of help at the expense of the kolkhoz and to the detriment of the kolkhoz members' interests.”⁶³

Those persons deported for special settlement in 1941 and 1949 were not rehabilitated or granted amnesty. Although they were perceived as deported without good reason, this did not prevent their discrimination.

The review of cases against persons convicted of counterrevolutionary crimes began in 1954, and initially this was very moderate. On September 17, 1955 the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet issued a decree regarding amnesty for those who had collaborated with the German occupation powers, and the mass rehabilitation of the convicted began after the 20th Congress.

The attitude of the leaders of the republic toward the return of rehabilitated convicts and convicts granted amnesty was fairly negative. In 1958, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet issued the decree “On the Lifting of Restrictions for Particular Categories of Specially Displaced Persons”, which prescribed that several categories of repressed persons could return to their former homes with the permission of the republic's Council of Ministers. This was not always granted. Many who had already returned were forced to leave the republic. Another fact that testifies to the anxiety of the republic's leadership was that as late as 1961, the Central Committee of the LCP indicated the necessity to deport from Latvia “the most active nationalists and other hostile elements” who had returned from imprisonment.⁶⁴

Returned victims of repressions were also restricted in their educational

and career opportunities, including those of their children. A survey of repressed persons conducted in 1994/95 confirmed that after returning to their homeland, 58.8 percent felt discriminated against as they began working in their chosen profession or trade; 43.4 percent had difficulties in finding a place to live and faced restrictions in securing an apartment; 42.3 percent found it difficult to pursue an education; 41.8 percent were forbidden to leave the country; about 33 percent had suffered permanent injuries to their pride and honour; about 25 percent were summoned to the KGB; and 18.9 percent met with restrictions of rights of their children.⁶⁵

Changes to the judicial and repressive policies in the USSR were connected with fundamental changes in ideology. Until 1953 the policy of repression was based on Stalin's contention that as socialism became widespread and achieved success, the resistance of its enemies would intensify. Although it was difficult for the leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to change this approach, a new doctrine was developed after Stalin's death. Accordingly, the victory of socialism also meant that people had accepted the ideals of socialism, and its enemies had lost a social base. These enemies were individuals who had come under the influence of bourgeois propaganda, or were socially inferior, such as the mentally unstable and hooligans, etc. Emphasis began to be put on "prevention", which took the form of increased control over various social groups, especially those that had contact with foreigners or were exposed to the opportunity to escape to other countries (for example, the crews of commercial and fishing ships), as well as the formerly persecuted, etc. Criminal prosecution was sometimes replaced by discussions with suspects and a prison sentence could be replaced with forced treatment in a psychiatric hospital. Indirect persecutions against politically unreliable persons were also widely applied: they were not permitted to hold specific positions and travel abroad was restricted, and intellectuals could be prohibited from publishing, performing, or exhibiting their work.

Confinement in detention camps now was relatively rare and was imposed on those who did not heed multiple warnings to cease their "anti-state activities" or statements, or where the offence was perceived as being quite serious. This did not mean that the convicted were actually guilty of an offence. The reason for conviction was most often a person's opinion, not his or her activities. The most well-known political prisoners in the 1960s through the 1980s – Gunārs Astra, Viktors Kalniņš, Gunārs

Freimanis, Juris Ziemelis, Gunārs Rode and others – were sentenced not for actual anti-state activities, but for expressing convictions that were perceived as being anti-state. The expressing of one's opinions not only publicly but also privately within a circle of acquaintances could be qualified as anti-Soviet agitation. Very often the charge was based on owning and disseminating "anti-Soviet literature", which often only meant that the person on trial owned books or newspapers published in independent Latvia, during the period of German occupation, or published abroad, and that he or she had given them to someone else to read, though sometimes it was enough that the literature simply could have been available to others.

In the 1950s, security institutions were also reorganised. Immediately after Stalin's death, the State Security Ministry was abolished and merged with the Ministry of the Interior. Soon, security services – the KGBs of the individual republics under the direct command of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, but in particular republics – under command of the republic's Council of Ministers – were reassigned from the Ministry of the Interior. The republic's security forces' dependence on the Central Committee of the republic's Communist Party was strengthened. The security forces were mandated to consult with the party, and they were prohibited from placing party functionaries under observation, listening in on telephone conversations and other investigative activities. As early as 1952 it was forbidden to recruit them as secret informants. In the 1950s, staff of security forces was also substantially reduced.⁶⁶

Important changes took place in juridical practice. Although the death penalty was retained, the maximum imprisonment penalty was decreased from 25 to 15 years. Young people could now be held criminally liable from 16 years of age instead of from 14 years of age. The public prosecutor's supervision of the cases being investigated by the State Security Committee was heightened. On December 25, 1958, laws were passed regarding the basis of criminal legislation and criminal procedure in the USSR and the union's republics. This was an interim measure in the transition from the Russian SFSR Criminal Code of 1926, which had been in effect in Latvia since November 6, 1940, to the development of the republic's criminal code and criminal procedure code. The Criminal Code of the Latvian SSR went into effect on June 1, 1961, and the criminal procedure code went into effect on April 1, 1961. Individual persecutions took the place of mass persecutions. However, the character of the campaign-type repressions was preserved.

“Non-political repressions”

In addition to political repressions, “non-political repressions” were widely applied during the Stalin era. These repressions were not formally associated with charges of a political nature. Persons were tried for defaulting on taxes and duties, for looting socialist property, and so on. These may only conditionally be called non-political, because they were enacted primarily to achieve the political goals of the Soviet regime. Some examples include the subjection of farmers to political and economic control and to facilitate their collectivisation. This was not hidden by those implementing the repressions. The boundary between political and non-political persecutions was unclear, because in a few cases the 58th article of the political Russian SFSR Criminal Code was also applied to persons charged with economic crimes. Additionally, the fervour of the administration of punishment and the harshness of the penalty were dependent on the political and economic campaign that was topical in the corresponding time period. For example, in 1945/46, most attention was paid to persons who did not fulfil the logging norms; in 1947/48 the Soviet sword of justice was turned against those kulaks who had not complied with the taxes and duties on agricultural products; in 1949/50 against individual farmers, and then against kolkhoz members who had violated the kolkhoz statutes. In June 1947, a decree from the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet regarding heightened penalties for thefts of socialist property was adopted. This decree prescribed heavy penalties – beginning with five years of imprisonment – for small thefts of state or kolkhoz property. Initially, these penalties were imposed on workers and civil servants, but after 1950 on kolkhoz members as well. When penalties were imposed, the condition that reinforced guilt was the social status, descent, or former activities of the persons on trial, especially whether or not the person on trial had been included in the lists of kulaks.

In accordance with the decree of 1947, the penalty for theft of socialist property was extremely harsh. For example, kolkhoz member G. from the Gulbene district was given a five-year sentence for stealing 15 kilograms of sugar beets; in the Alūksne district in 1950 S.C. from the kolkhoz “Zvezda” was given a five-year sentence for stealing 4 kilograms of grain; and A.R. from the kolkhoz “Cīņa” was sentenced of for stealing 6 kilograms of grain.⁶⁷ The Supreme Court kept these verdicts in effect. The documents clearly show that the application and direction of repressions was strongly controlled

“from above”. On August 30, 1952 the Minister of Justice, Emīlija Veinberga, in speaking about violations of collective farm statutes, emphasised the following:

“...Deadlines (legal proceedings had to take place in 10 days’ time – *author*) are damaging our work. We still encounter light verdicts. The people’s judges do not think politically when hearing these cases; the reasons why a person has committed a crime must be found. Our enemies that are engaged in sabotage have wormed their way into the kolkhozes. There is no such thing as a case not connected with politics.”⁶⁸

Overall, the practice of penalties in Latvia corresponded to the practice that existed in the entire USSR, and often the campaigns, for example, the campaign for adherence to kolkhoz statutes, were part of the corresponding All-Union campaigns. In Latvia and the other Baltic Republics, however, there were often differences in the application of some legislative acts. For example, immediately after the war, the Baltic republics did not observe the decree of June 26, 1940 that prescribed criminal liability to labourers and civil servants who changed employment and were absent from work without the permission of the management. In the first years after the war, Aleksander Mishutin, the republic’s public prosecutor, pointed out many times to the Central Committee of the LCP and the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers that several industrial plants’ and organisation leaders viewed that this decree should be implemented, yet he received the answer that Moscow did not view the implementation of this decree as useful. Nevertheless, beginning in 1948, the decree went into effect in military industrial enterprises and in railway, river and sea transport, but after July 14, 1951, when the conditions of the decree of June 26, 1940 were lightened, it was also applied to other branches of industry and state institutions. From the second half of 1948 to the first half of 1956 (in 1956 criminal liability for unwarranted changing of employment and absence from work was lifted), 4926 people were convicted for unlawfully changing employment and 4921 were convicted for absence from work, although only a relatively small percentage were actually imprisoned (from 1946 to 1955 more than 1,000 of those convicted).⁶⁹

The application of non-political repressions also changed in the mid-1950s. The harshest decrees and laws were revoked, and the courts and the prosecutor’s office were required to renounce unwarranted severity and observe “socialist lawfulness”. In many cases, however, non-political articles of the law continued to be applied to punish persons for their political views

or activities that were viewed as politically unacceptable; for example, for profiteering, for being "social parasites" (as those without permanent occupation were called by state authorities), for illegal currency transactions (sometimes this was simply for having a few dollars at home), etc.

After Stalin's death changes in penalty policies ended the mass political persecutions and significantly decreased non-political and indirect repressions, yet neither was completely revoked, and as before, anyone could become the victim of repressions. The State Security Committee monitored and controlled persons who were potentially ideologically unstable and anti-Soviet. The power of the courts was completely dependent on party and state authorities and functionaries, who continued to determine convictions and penalties. It is for this reason that the fear instilled during the Stalin era did not wane even during a period with relatively few persecutions and the existence of a Soviet regime that was not threatened by any significant opposition.

6.3. RESISTANCE TO THE SOVIET REGIME

The Soviet regime's social and political bases were narrow, whereas anti-Soviet sentiments were widespread. Yet the antipathies were not enough to become active resistance fighter. In psychology this is called the threshold of risk, namely, a person measures out his activities with the possible consequences, and only when he finds the level of risk acceptable is he ready to participate in resistance. The possible consequences in an extremely repressive regime can be very negative (although most were unaware of the true risk, before they had come into contact with the security forces), therefore, extreme conditions or deep convictions were necessary for someone to take part in anti-Soviet activities. In any society, the most active are the young. Young people more easily participate in protest campaigns, and their threshold of risk is the lowest. This is because they do not shoulder the burden of responsibility for their family, and they tend to be less aware of the consequences of their actions. Therefore, it is no surprise that most participants in active resistance were young people, but it is also the young that the war affected the most with many dead and others in prison camps. This had a substantial impact on the scale and intensity of active resistance.

Soviet propaganda in the post-war years alleged that the persons who

took part in resistance were either from the "exploiters' class" or were influenced by their propaganda. Nevertheless, archival materials attest to the fact that most participants of some kind of resistance in the post-war years were simple people, most from mid-sized farm families and the intelligentsia. For example, of the 135 people whom the Supreme Court of the Latvian SSR and the district courts had convicted between 1951 and 1953 for counterrevolutionary agitation, owning anti-Soviet literature, and participation in religious sects, 44 were descendants of mid-sized farmers, 42 of workers and 12 of civil servants.⁷⁰ Studies on the social makeup of northern Latvia's partisans show that most had descended not from kulaks, but from mid-sized farmers. A large number of the Soviet regime's opponents came from the so-called new farmers that had obtained land after the agrarian reforms of independent Latvia.⁷¹

The second most popular myth of Soviet propaganda was the assertion that the partisan movement was organised by the Nazis' intelligence service in order to conduct acts of sabotage behind Soviet lines. In July 1944, the Nazis did begin to organise groups of saboteurs, and a few of them later became the core around which the partisan groups were formed. Yet most of these participants did not identify with Nazi ideology nor with their goals in the war. They took advantage of the opportunity to acquire skills and equipment thinking that this would help them fight against the Soviets until help arrived from the West. An example of this was Pēteris Supe's group of saboteurs, who landed in the Abrene county in October 1944. They did not engage in acts of sabotage or any other acts that would comply with the military goals of the German army, but rather they immediately began organising partisan opposition, viewing as their principle mission to fight Soviet security forces and local supporters of the Soviet regime, as well as disseminating propaganda.⁷²

Most partisan groups formed spontaneously, beginning in the eastern regions of Latvia as early as summer 1944. The opposition was primarily to mobilisation in the Red Army. Many Latvian citizens did not show up at the enlisting stations and others deserted on the way to their military units or from their military units at the front. Many had earlier gone into hiding or deserted after mobilisation in the German army. Of course, not all of the deserters wished or wanted to begin active opposition. In summer and autumn 1945, a legalisation campaign took place and many deserters came out of the forests. Yet ideological considerations, armed campaigns against deser-

ters, and repressions against their relatives made many of them form or join partisan groups. Many of the legionnaires who did not want to submit to capitulation on May 8, 1945 also joined the partisan movement (according to many estimates, approximately 4000 legionnaires went underground). An essential aspect was also the belief that an engagement between the Soviet Union and the USA and Britain would inevitably take place after the capitulation of Germany. The Soviet repressions were also an essential stimulus to the forming and sustaining of the partisan movement, because the partisan ranks were filled by people faced with the threat of arrest or who believed they might be persecuted.

Initially, large partisan groups were able to form in a few regions. The unit led by P. Supe in the area around Balvi and Viļaka at the beginning of 1945 consisted of 350 to 400 people, of whom 40 to 50 were women, children and old people.⁷³ Elsewhere as well, partisan units with as many as 100 people were often formed. The partisan units were often modelled on the army, with military ranks, regulations, etc. Before long, however, the forest-combing campaigns conducted by the State Security Ministry's military and the regular army, the work of provocateurs, as well as promises of amnesty succeeded in eliminating and dispersing the larger units. The larger units were easier to uncover during winter, and it was also difficult to supply them with food. Therefore, the smaller mobile partisan groups of 5 to 10 people were better able to survive. Immediately after the end of the war, arms and ammunition supplies were adequate, but a few years later this was a problem, especially ammunition. This was an additional factor that limited the fighting abilities of the partisans.

Several partisan organisations attempted to unite the partisans and coordinate their activities – the Latvian National Partisan Association in Livland and Latgallia, the Northern Courland Partisan Organisation, the Latvian National Partisan Organization in Courland, the Latvian Defenders of the Homeland (partisan) Association in Latgallia and the “Fatherland’s Hawks” in Southern Courland. Some operated up until 1953, for example, the Latvian National Partisan Association. Within their limited resources, they conducted propaganda activities and published newspapers and leaflets. Attempts to form a coordinated resistance on a national scale were unsuccessful.

The most active partisan operations took place between 1944 and 1946, when the partisans were able to not only defend themselves, but also actively attack the Soviet offices, activists, as well as army units; they also successfully

defended attacks on their headquarters. In some places the partisans' influence was so powerful that the authorities were forced to give way to them. In September 1945, an unprecedented event was the ten-day Alsviķi Ceasefire, which was negotiated by the Valka county unit of the Internal Affairs People's Commissariat and the partisans. A statement that testifies to the partisans' influence on morale of local authorities was made by First Secretary Mihailovs of the Priekule district's Party Committee, who spoke about a few areas in late 1952 or early 1953,

"It's good that you can go to these kolkhozes now, because before you weren't allowed to show yourself there."⁷⁴

In the years that followed, the number of partisans decreased, as did their activities. This was brought about by both the repressive measures and by the announcement of legalisation campaigns. The partisans were not able to conduct large-scale campaigns, and their strategy for attack was replaced by a strategy for survival. With their hopes for help from the outside dashed, some partisans searched for opportunities to become legalised, while others in their desperation took revenge on the Soviet activists for the brutality with which their security forces had fought against the partisans. Partisan activities increased after the deportations of 1949. Yet the deportations had decreased the numbers of partisan supporters, and those who remained could no longer offer regular support with food, clothing, etc. The security forces' abilities to control the situation in rural areas also increased. The number of partisans sharply declined. Nevertheless, in October 1953, a report prepared by the Ministry of the Interior at the request of the Central Committee of the LCP indicated that partisans were still active in 16 districts (more than one-fourth of the country's districts). It was known that there were 10 partisan groups, which had a total number of 30 members, as well as 71 partisans who worked alone, and, in addition, there were also people underground who were in hiding but did not conduct any activities.⁷⁵ Within one year after the publication of the USSR Supreme Soviet's decree on amnesty on September 17, 1955, 284 hiding persons had voluntarily come forward to the authorities, but another report indicates that from the date the decree was announced to December 31, 1956, 348 hiding persons had become legalised, most of whom had been in hiding for five to nine years. The partisan war actually continued up until 1956, although a few partisan groups came out from hiding even later.

An October 1953 report by the Latvian SSR Ministry of the Interior

upon the request of the Central Committee of the LCP presents evidence that since 1944, a total of 20,079 persons had went underground, plus 114 persons who escaped the deportations of 1949. From 1944 to October 1953, approximately 900 partisan units with 9764 partisans had been eliminated, 10,268 partisans had become legalised, and 2422 partisans had been killed. Partisans had also conducted 2659 attacks during this time.⁷⁶ It is possible that these figure are not precise (there were partisans who lived legally or half-legally while simultaneously participating in underground activities; some succeeded in becoming legalised without the note of security), yet these figures are without a doubt sufficient proof of the scale of the partisan movement. It must also be taken into account that there was an even greater number of partisan supporters.

Although the conditions for conducting their operations were dangerous, the partisans succeeded in causing substantial losses to their enemies. From 1944 to October 1953, the partisans had killed 1070 civilians in Latvian territory (mostly local functionaries, such as Party-Orgs, local soviets' executive committee chairmen, local activists, etc.), 259 soldiers from the Ministry of the Interior/State Security Ministry military forces, 111 officers from the Ministry of the Interior, 199 destroyer battalion fighters – a total of 1639 persons, as well as 568 injured.⁷⁷ These figures may be incomplete (another document indicates that during this period 569 KGB men had been killed and 377 had been injured in battles with “bandits”), but they point to the fact that partisan victims on the Soviet side were primarily representatives of local authorities and activists (as well as their family members). One reason could be the fact that the animosity toward local collaborationists was much greater than toward soldiers and officers from the internal military. Their offences were also better known. Yet it must also be taken into account that the officers of the State Security Ministry, many of whom operated on the local level, were armed, and, furthermore, they were based in the county/district centres and were therefore more difficult to reach. The Ministry of the Interior/State Security Ministry internal troops were situated in a county's centres and were involved in larger-scale operations against the partisans (combing the forests, attacks on individual units, etc.). More than 1500 of these operations were conducted from 1945 to 1950.

The destroyer battalions of 1944 to 1953 were regarded as the primary armed unit in the battle against the partisans. The battalions were formed in counties, and platoons operated in the parishes under the leadership of the

county's militia department. Initially, the destroyer battalions mobilised local citizens who were not of military service age. But the loyalty of these destroyers was doubtful, and they often collaborated with the partisans or deserted at the first possible opportunity. Discipline was also extremely low, and the destroyers often avoided participation in armed conflicts with partisans. Therefore, in 1945, the core of the destroyer battalions began to be constructed from volunteers of military service age, who operated under the leadership of the commander of the destroyer battalion assigned by the county's Internal Affairs People's Commissariat department. The destroyers were paid a salary and often were not local citizens. Although the destroyers had a bad reputation among the citizens, their combat abilities had improved. Nevertheless, their main task was to perform subsidiary functions: protect the local soviets' executive committee offices and show the way for the security men and the army, etc.

The most effective combat method utilised in the battle against the partisans was the recruiting and/or infiltrating of secret informants among the ranks of the partisans and their supporters, as well as the formation of false partisan units. Problems for the militia and the Chekists were caused by the fact that there were few among them who spoke Latvian (as late as 1955, the officers of the State Security Committee's regional departments were only 26,9 percent Latvian).⁷⁸ This lack of language skills encumbered the task of working with the secret agents. By using threats and physical coercion, a fairly large number of the partisans' family members and supporters were forced to become secret agents, though following this, many avoided collaboration with security establishments or even went underground. Truly effective secret agents could not be found or infiltrated into every parish. In the battle against the partisans, the security forces also widely used physical violence and intimidation. The partisans who were taken prisoners were often mercilessly tortured in order to extract information from them regarding their comrades. Beatings, preventative arrests, and intimidation were used against their relatives. The corpses of partisans were also displayed publicly in parish centres.

A fair number of partisan groups were not involved in armed struggle, but rather published underground newspapers, disseminated leaflets, and conducted various other propaganda activities. Sometimes these groups were connected with the armed partisans. This was equally dangerous and difficult, because torture and heavy penalties awaited those who were caught.

The 1950^s thaw and its effect on the resistance

In the mid-1950s, it became clear that Soviet power in the Baltic would hold and that there was no hope of help from the West. After the repressions of the Stalin era, life during the thaw became safe and also improved materially. For this reason, a majority of the population thought it best to conform and not openly speak out against Soviet rule, even more so because the KGB operated effectively and opposition groups were quickly defeated. Only a few consciously opposed Soviet rule. In the second half of the 1950s, changes took place in the organisation and ideology of resistance groups. Although there were attempts to form underground organisations, these were usually quickly defeated. Opposition continued only within the framework of separate individual or small group activities; furthermore, this opposition took the form of dissidentism, by requesting that the USSR fulfil its obligations as required under international treaties, and that it observe the principles of freedom of speech and the press, freedom of association, etc., as defined in the Soviet constitution and Soviet law. In Russia the goal of the dissidents was to fight for civil rights (particularly after the signing of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Accords) in 1975). The central goal of Latvian dissidents was the fight for the Latvian nation's rights to self-determination and the renewal of Latvian independence. This was based on the principles of the UN Statutes and Human Rights Declaration, which denoted an appeal for a referendum regarding the existence of Latvia as a part of the USSR.

Differences in the understanding of basic goals were also determined by the fact that in Latvia, as opposed to Lithuania and Estonia, the so-called Helsinki group, a group for the protection of civil rights, was not formed until 1986, when three workers formed the group "Helsinki-86" in Liepāja. Efforts increased to consolidate forces with dissidents from the other Baltic States. These efforts had results, primarily because many members of the resistance who spent time in Soviet detention camps had established contacts with dissidents from other republics (not only from the Baltic states, but also from Russia, the Ukraine, etc.). Due to opposition from the KGB, attempts to establish long-term collaboration were unsuccessful, although there were a few major common activities. For example, on August 20, 1977, several Baltic dissidents passed a resolution for the formation of the Supreme Committee of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian National Movements.

The State Security Committee arrested one of the authors of the resolution, the Lithuanian fighter for the renewal of independence, Viktoras Petkus, along with several other former political prisoners from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Searches took place as well.

The dissidents' foremost problem was how to inform society at large about their activities, and how to educate society and uphold the spirit of resistance. The most effective means of transmitting information was the foreign "radio voices", which, despite the intensive interference called "sawing", had since the 1950s become one of the most important sources of information regarding the outside world, Latvian emigration, and, within limits, events in Latvia. The Soviet authorities also found it more difficult to suppress the dissidents' activities if there was information about them abroad. The opportunities for transmitting information were very limited for Latvian dissidents, because security controlled the relatively few visitors from abroad, especially Latvian émigrés. Nevertheless, Latvian dissidents did sometimes succeed in informing the outside world about their demands. Of particular importance was the letter of 17 Latvian communists written and signed by Eduards Berklavs and his like-minded associates that found its way abroad at the beginning of 1972.⁷⁹ This was so upsetting to the authorities that they put great efforts into an attempt to prove that the letter was a fake.

Parallel to political dissidents, so-called religious dissidents also played an important role. They insisted on adhering to religious views that the Soviet government did not acknowledge, for example, Jehovah's Witnesses and the Baptists who did not wish to submit to the leaders of the Baptist Congregation as controlled by the Soviets.

Undeniably, Latvia's dissidents were the most prosecuted of all the Baltic Republics, because the leaders of the LCP and the State Security Committee were relatively effective in combating every manifestation of freethinking, both by infiltrating their agents into suspected groups and by direct repressions. The last of the large arrests took place in 1983, when Gunārs Astra, Ints Cālītis, Lidija Doroņina-Lasmane, and others were convicted. Gunārs Astra's speech before his verdict was announced expressed the feelings of those people who could not accept the Soviet regime.

The division between active political engagement and passive protest was not very pronounced. Various manifestations of hidden political protest associated with nationalism and/or anti-communism occurred within legal

limitations or were difficult to restrain because a large number of people were involved in them and they were unorganised. Some examples include: the struggle against the ban on celebrating the *Jāņi* midsummer festival and the inobservance of this ban, the gathering at Warriors' Cemetery on All Souls' Day and the placing of candles at the graves of independent Latvia's first President Jānis Čakste and other Latvian statesmen in the Forest Cemetery, participation in folklore ensembles, the exploration of and tending to Latvian soldiers' graves and battle sites, historical societies and environmental protection propaganda, the dissemination and reading of *samizdat*, etc.

Latvians were not the only ones to oppose the Soviet regime: many Russians and representatives of other nationalities in Latvia also protested the regime. The ideological range of these groups and individuals was very wide – from quests for “true” communism and socialism to monarchism, sometimes even fascism, yet leftist views were most common. For example, the Baltic Navy Officers' Group, which was active from 1957 to 1959, held the view that power in the USSR had been seized by the “Soviet bourgeoisie”, namely the nomenclature, and that state capitalism existed in the USSR.

The intervention of the Warsaw pact nations in Czechoslovakia in 1968 caused a considerable wave of protests. Many of the protesters were members of the Communist Party, and many were expelled from the party for publicly expressing their dissatisfaction with USSR politics. The most dramatic protest against the intervention in Czechoslovakia was student Ilya Rips's attempt to set himself on fire in front of the Freedom Monument in Riga in 1969. Leaflets were also disseminated, and many wrote letters of protest, for example, the Rēzekne school teacher Jānis Jahimovičs.

In addition to political protests, there were also economic protests in the form of strikes. Such activity was carefully hidden, because they usually occurred in large industrial enterprises by labourers who by definition had to be loyal to the Soviet regime. Nevertheless, strikes did take place, particularly at the beginning of the 1960s, when the supply of food declined sharply and the price of meat was raised on account of Nikita Khrushchev's unsuccessful agricultural experiments. Yet the main reason for the strikes was usually an increase of production norms, as well as low wages, and sometimes the attitude of the enterprise's administration.

Individuals who attracted the attention of security institutions often paid a heavy price for expressing opposition, often simply for an intent or an opinion. Prison conditions were harsh: the incarcerated were physically

and sometimes also mentally damaged. If information about these individuals appeared in the Soviet mass media, it was always denigrating and the facts were twisted beyond recognition. Yet in spite of the repressions, resistance was never eradicated, proving that the hopes of Soviet Latvia's ideologues – that Latvians would eventually accept their conditions – were in vain.

6.4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The effects of the war on the economy of Latvia and its integration into the Soviet national economy

The Second World War caused significant losses for Latvia's economy. It is difficult to determine the total extent of losses, though from August 1944 to July 1945 the Extraordinary State Commission of the Latvian SSR took an account of the incurred losses and evaluated them at 20 billion roubles, according to 1941 prices. This figure, however, is doubtful, because both victims and authorities were interested in showing the largest losses possible in order to receive larger compensations. In addition, the Commission attributed all losses to the German occupying powers and either did not account for the crimes committed by the Red Army or attributed these offences to the Nazis.

Several cities suffered heavily during the war – Jelgava, Daugavpils, Rēzekne, Balvi, and Valmiera. Riga, the capital of Latvia and the largest industrial centre, had suffered relatively little loss (the exception being the historical centre, which burned down in July 1941). City cultural heritage centres suffered the most damage, and these losses were not renewable. The damage to industrial sectors was relatively easy to repair. The largest losses were incurred in transportation. Riga's port was almost entirely destroyed, but the Liepāja and Ventspils ports did not incur much damage. The automobile, locomotive, and railway car depots, as well as commercial and fishing vessels, were almost completely destroyed or requisitioned for the needs of the battling armies; railway lengths was destroyed and many bridges were blown up or damaged. Yet transportation was the sector that was the most quickly renewed; in the first five years following the war, more than 27 percent of the capital investments in the national economy were allocated to the renewal of transportation and communications.⁸⁰ The energy base also

suffered heavy damage, because as the German military retreated, it destroyed electric power stations and industry electrical supply. The largest losses in agriculture were incurred by the loss of livestock. Although Latvia's economy suffered considerable damage, it was possible to eliminate it in a relatively short period of time. Renewal attempts to pre-war production levels, however, were impossible in some sectors, for example, agriculture, even into the 1960s. This was due to the politics of the Soviet regime and not because it wasn't technically possible.

The shifting of the economy onto Soviet "tracks" took place simultaneously with the elimination of damages caused by the war. During the Sovietisation of Latvia, heightened attention was paid to the nationalisation of the economy. In accordance with the Stalinist doctrine of Communism, industrialisation and the collectivisation of agriculture were two of the three cornerstones in the construction of socialism (the third was the so-called cultural revolution). The government of the USSR attempted to achieve the deepest possible integration of Latvia and the other Baltic republics into the Soviet state economic system. Economic centralisation and its administration together with the subjection of Latvia's economy to the USSR's "central" interests occurred quickly and consistently. At the same time, some differences were preserved, as in the existence of individual farms and private businesses in the commercial, service and small industry sector. The collectivisation of agriculture was complex, but private businesses in other sectors were eradicated relatively quickly.

Some economists and historians have expressed the opinion that the first post-war years within a limited private sector are reminiscent of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the Soviet Union during the 1920s. Yet it seems that the resemblance is slight. The contribution of the private sector in industrial production was miniscule, giving no more than 1 percent of the volume of production. Private sector was much more perceptible in the commercial and service sector – up to 10 percent. Yet the private sector was tolerated only so long as rationing was maintained. Initially, the private sector was scheduled to be abolished in 1946. This was unsuccessful because of a drought in the southern regions of the European part of the USSR, which was followed by famine. Yet in 1946, the Soviets achieved the closing down of the majority of private retail businesses by imposing taxes that merchants were unable to pay. The authorities' accounting records did not even hide the fact that the aim of their tax policies was to eradicate the private

sector in industry and commerce. This was completely achieved by summer 1947. Small craftsmen's workshops were forced to combine into cooperative associations. The result of Sovietisation and the nationalisation of the economy was the unavoidable lack or low quality of various services and products. The authorities never succeeded in completely eradicating the private sector, but it was relatively rare for any private service business to operate officially, with the appropriate licence and when paying taxes. These operations were for the most part illegal or semi-legal individual business activities.

Industry and transportation

After the war, the subjection of the economy to the "central" interests of the USSR occurred quickly and consistently. This function was filled by the Commissioner of the USSR State Planning Commission (Gosplan) in the Latvian SSR. This position and related staff of employees existed until 1949. The bureaucracy of the USSR Gosplan Commissioner to a certain extent duplicated the Latvian SSR State Planning Commission, yet its powers were much wider and were not only limited to planning – it actually controlled both the renewal of the economy and future development and also determined priorities. The Latvian SSR State Planning Commission was limited to the development of sectors currently existing under the jurisdiction of the republic's Council of Ministers, although the USSR Commissioner controlled economic development as a whole. The Commissioner targeted increased industrial production without taking into account the limited financial, energy and labour resources.⁸¹

Restrictions were imposed from the beginning on the powers of the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers (until March 1946, the Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars) in the management of the economy. In 1945/46, the engineering industry in all the republics was placed under the authority of the All-Union's ministries, along with all the other enterprises that manufactured "strategic products", such as the chemical and pharmaceutical industries, sugar and flax processing plants, etc. The objections of Latvia's leaders to, for example, the placing of the pulp and paper industry under the authority of the Union were not taken into account.

A number of sectors were under the partial authority of the republic's Council of Ministers, the so-called union-republic ministries in the food

and light industries, and the construction material manufacturing sector. In other words, enterprises were simultaneously under the authority of the corresponding Latvian SSR ministry (for example, the Fishing Industry Ministry) and the All-Union's ministry. Only local industry – small enterprises like brick kilns and metalworking enterprises, etc., as well as municipal services – were under the complete authority of the republic's government. Characteristic features of economic management during this time were the largely fragmented economic management structures with the large number of ministries, each of which specialised in a narrow sector. These features were preserved up until the downfall of the USSR, albeit with many reorganisations.

The leaders of Latvia had their own plans and ideas about how the economy should be developed, but these were of very little interest to Moscow. Any illusions that the republics' interests and particularities were to be taken into account were quickly dispelled. This was made manifest in the development of the first post-war five-year plan (1946–1950) for economic development. Immediately after the war, new enterprises were formed, mostly engineering and metalworking plants. Soviet propaganda professed that the Baltic Republics were being industrialised, that new enterprises were being built and the old ones completely reconstructed. In reality, an attempt was made to get by with minimal capital investments, using the industrial potential (buildings, manufacturing equipment, technical specialists, manufacturing culture, railway network) that had been developed up to 1940. In Latvia, Riga had the most industry, with many factory buildings built during the period of Tsarist Russia and independent Latvia that needed only to be fitted for specific needs in order to begin the relatively quick manufacture of products. The All-Union's ministries were interested in neither the balanced development of Latvia's regions nor in Latvia's labour reserves, because an almost unlimited workforce was available outside the republic. Therefore, the ministries set up new production units in Riga, where the communal and social infrastructure was well developed and smaller capital investments were sufficient. Minimal attention was paid to environmental protection and work safety. Workers were recruited outside of Latvia. In reality, when planning the construction of a new industrial enterprise or the expansion of an old enterprise, the USSR State Planning Commission's Commissioner anticipated that it would be necessary to recruit workers from other republics.

It has been alleged that immigration benefited Latvia, because the country

supposedly lacked qualified specialists in industry and other important sectors and that most immigrants were qualified specialists. This allegation is rooted for the most part in Soviet propaganda, which asserted that Latvia had been an underdeveloped agricultural country before the Second World War and only the aid of the "brotherly republics" helped Latvia modernise and become an industrially developed republic. Yet the lack of specialists had been caused by Soviet rule itself, because it persecuted many of the local technical intelligentsia, forced them to emigrate, or did not allow them to operate fully in their specialty. Administrative employees of all the industrial and transportation organizations were screened after the war by the security forces. The political loyalty of all persons working in transportation, which at the time was a semi-militarised sector, was tested. Latvians were almost completely forced out of commercial fleets and to a large extent from jobs on the railway. In May 1947, there were only 10 Latvians left of the 232 rank seamen on the "Latvian Shipping" foreign trade ships, and only 16 of the 84 commanding seamen were Latvian.⁸² In addition, the policies of forced industrialisation and irrational use of technical and human resources resulted in a permanent lack of labour. If it was true that the large volume of immigration was caused by the lack of a local workforce, then what was the explanation for the attempts of national communists in the 1950s to develop industry in accordance with the labour reserves and appoint local specialists to positions of responsibility qualified as "bourgeois nationalism" and put down. In addition, enterprises associated with the military industrial complex were reluctant to employ local specialists especially in responsible positions. The reason for this was both because of questionnaire data and because Latvians were not trusted in general.

Most immigrants to Latvia, especially in the 1940s and 1950s, were by no means qualified specialists. They were mostly country folk fleeing from the poverty of the kolkhozes for work that required little or no qualifications in construction, textile factories, sovkhoses, on the railway, and elsewhere. Archival documents from the post-war years reveal the heartrending conditions in the industrial and construction enterprise dormitories and barracks where these people lived. Once they were qualified, some gradually settled into to better jobs, yet many remained in low-qualified work. Only their children and grandchildren received better education and career opportunities.

Migration was both organised and spontaneous. Along with the organised

recruiting of workers, party and administrative functionaries, as well as technical specialists, were ordered to work in Latvia. Labour was often recruited independently by large industrial and construction enterprises, without coordination with the organisations responsible for the placement of the labour force. However, spontaneous immigration also took place.

After the war, the top leaders of the USSR had different opinions regarding the proportions between heavy industry (the manufacture of means of production and military goods), and the manufacture of consumer goods. Stalin was on the side of those that believed that heavy industry must have priority. Yet in the Baltic Republics, most manufacturing yielded consumer goods. This was determined by the structure and specialisation of the industrial sectors during the period between the wars. As late as 1960, 53.4 percent of industrial products were yielded by enterprises that manufactured consumer (the so-called "B group") goods,⁸³ yet gradually the proportion of the manufacture of production goods increased, although the proportion of consumer goods was higher than in other republics, along with a higher quality of goods. Many of these goods were popular throughout the Soviet Union, for example, the "Spīdola" and "VEF" radios manufactured in Latvia.

The relatively large proportion of light industry and the food industry gave the Baltic republics certain benefits. Stores in the Baltic republics were better supplied with clothing, shoes, household electronics, and other goods, and the quality of these goods was better than in other republics of the USSR. Yet these advantages were conditional. In any case, relative to the West, there were not enough goods and their quality was unsatisfactory.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the main criterion according to which the operations of an enterprise (and its management) were evaluated was the completion of the assigned production plan. Quality was a secondary indicator. The distribution of manufactured goods throughout the Soviet Union was determined by the Gosplan, and consumers had limited choices. Consumers had to come to terms with the quality of the products that were delivered. Chronic bursts of work occurred at the end of each month in order to complete the plan by all means possible. Enterprises were not interested in the overfilling of the plan, because then the plans were once again increased. The fulfilling of the plan was evaluated according to many indicators, yet the main indicator was the total volume of manufactured products in terms of money. Therefore, enterprises were more interested in manufacturing more expensive products that demanded less effort; they also avoided more

complex items and shunned innovation. Quality standards for products managed to be preserved only in enterprises that manufactured products for military needs, the nomenclature, state institutions with a special status, as well as other privileged consumers. To a certain extent this helped preserve quality standards in Latvia's leading industrial enterprises, because their quality products (radios, various food products, and others) were soon appreciated by the Soviet ruling elite.

Soviet-style "labour organisation" was a true shock to pre-war Latvia's workers, technologists, and engineers, who were accustomed to manufacturing for the market and therefore used to firmly adhering to quality standards, production deadlines, and to an attitude on the part of the suppliers that was just as conscientious. The change of industrial managers "helped" break the Latvians' "conservative" approach. Specialists sent from the "old" republics of the USSR were appointed as the directors and chief engineers of the most important plants. In 1961, only 24.8 percent of enterprise directors were Latvians but 51.1 percent were Russians; in 1984 29.0 percent were Latvians and 45.8 percent were Russians.⁸⁴ The party committees' control also had significant impact. Thus, the open resistance to the Soviet-style organization of manufacturing was broken relatively quickly, yet it was more difficult to fight against the hidden nostalgia for pre-war manufacturing traditions. The technical traditions of Latvia's enterprises were admired by the specialists who had arrived from other republics. Therefore, it was understandable that dissatisfaction with the Soviet-style economic management system and level of development was already widespread the early 1950s, though publicly it was criticised very cautiously.

The economy was decentralized between 1954 and 1957, and 15,000 industrial enterprises were placed under the authority of the republics. In Latvia, these were wood and paper industries, logging and other sector enterprises. Radical industrial decentralisation was begun in 1957 by abolishing the sectors' ministries and forming administrative economic regions, the Regional Economic Councils (*sovnarkhozy*). Latvia made up one region or Regional Economic Council. The *Sovnarkhoz* was under the authority of the LSSR Council of Ministers. A majority of the industrial enterprises were placed under the command of the Regional Economic Council. Until the establishment of the Regional Economic Council, only 22 percent of industrial enterprises were under the authority of the republic, but after the establishment of the Council, 54 percent of enterprises, which yielded 73

percent of the entire industrial output, were placed under its command. Since some enterprises were under the direct authority of the republic's Council of Ministers (but not the Regional Economic Council), for example, forestry and timber industry enterprises, the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers controlled the enterprises that manufactured almost 97 percent of the entire industrial output.⁸⁵

In Latvia, the formation of Regional Economic Council produced positive results. For example, by 1957 the number of enterprises that had not completed the plan decreased by more than 10-fold. Problems appeared immediately, however, primarily the weakening of inter-regional communications. Latvia's enterprises were forced to manufacture accessories on site, because their supply was undependable.

Nevertheless, the hope emerged of the possibility that the republic's interests would be taken into account and would rationally solve industrial development and workforce issues. More attention began to be paid to the environment. For the first time since the end of the war, serious thought was given to whether or not it was necessary to discontinue the spontaneous concentration of industry in Riga and a few other large cities. Pauls Dzērve had an important role in the development of the Latvian SSR economic development plan. From 1953 to 1958, he was the Deputy Director in Scientific Work at the Economics Institute of the Academy of Sciences, and from 1958 to 1960 he was the Director of the Institute. Under his leadership the Latvian SSR program for researching economic prospects proposed the orientation of Latvia's economy toward local needs, increasing the proportion of consumer goods production in comparison with heavy industry, and supporting the development of high tech sectors, for example, radio engineering. The program also proposed that production be developed in those sectors that had a sufficient and qualified Latvian workforce and a good base of raw materials.

These propositions, however, suffered defeat in a plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the LCP in July 1959, in which the national communists who held positions of responsibility in the LCP and the administration (see 6.5. **National Communism**) were purged. P. Dzērve was especially subjected to persecution, apparently because he was one of the best-educated party functionaries of his generation and was viewed as the national Communists' ideologue. He was not only removed from office and sent to work as a workshop economist in an automotive electrical accessories factory, but

was also removed from membership in the Academy of Sciences.⁸⁶ The defeat of P. Dzērve and other national communists rendered impossible any objections to the construction of the new large industrial sites. The economists' calculations regarding the lack of a labour force in Latvia was held to be unfounded, and furthermore, that the intensification of industry would decrease the demand for a labour force, and that there were still large labour reserves in rural areas. As announced by Khrushchev, the chemical industry's development track was put in motion: the Daugavpils Chemical Fibre Plant was put into operation in 1963/64, the Valmiera Glass Fibre Plant and the Olaine Chemical Reagent Plant in 1963, and the Olaine Plastic Processing Plant in 1965. The construction of the Plaviņas Hydroelectric Power Station began in 1961, over the objection of the local population. Already existing enterprises were expanded or reconstructed. Many large enterprises established branches in small towns, for example, the A. Popov Riga Radio Factory founded a branch in Kandava, and the State Electrotechnics Factory (VEF) in Alūksne, Malta, Skrunda and Stučka (now Aizkraukle). Often, the branches were opened close to military sites and the resulting availability of a labour force. The construction of large factories proved that the calculations of the condemned economists had been correct: labour reserves in Latvia were limited, and soon manpower had to be sought outside of Latvia. The economic planners prescribed the importing of a labour force to fulfil the economic plan: 43.3 percent in 1966–1970 and 38.9 percent in 1971–1980 of workers were scheduled to be imported.⁸⁷ By the end of the 1960s, resources for extensive industrial development had been exhausted. Nevertheless, the construction of new factories and the expansion of old factories continued; for example, the RAF microbus factory was built in Jelgava, the Knitted Goods Integrated Plant in Ogre, the enterprise "Lauma" in Liepāja, and many others. Although many factories were built outside of Riga from the 1960s to the 1980s, industry in Latvia continued to be concentrated for the most part in Riga and its environs. Riga manufactured approximately half of the total industrial production yield. Latvia also had the high level of military industry: more than 15 percent of the workforce was involved in the manufacturing of military products, which was more than in Lithuania and three times more than in Estonia.⁸⁸

The construction of new industrial sites was facilitated by the fact that the energy base sharply increased in the 1960s. As late as the end of the 1950s, the lack of electrical energy was a significant limiting factor. The construc-

tion of the Dashav long-distance pipeline was completed in 1962, enabling the Riga Thermo Electric Station to switch to gas fuel. In 1961, the Baltic State Regional Electro Station (close to Narva in Estonia) and Latvia and Lithuania's State Regional Electro Stations were joined in a combined energy system. Combined with the erection of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant, the lack of electricity deficit was overcome. The building of the Daugava cascade's hydroelectric stations – the Pļaviņas and Riga Hydroelectric Stations and the reconstruction of Ķegums – substantially increased the amount of energy produced in Latvia (from 2695 million kilowatt-hours in 1970 to 5937 kilowatt-hours in 1987), yet the amount of energy received from other republics increased at an even faster rate – from 2914 kilowatt-hours to 8175 kilowatt-hours during the same time period.⁸⁹ This jump in energy consumption was caused not only by the development of industry, but also by the increase in energy consumption by agriculture and households, as well as by the power required by production equipment and large energy wastage. The availability and low price of energy resources in the Soviet Union and the economy's extensive development did not facilitate the manufacturing of equipment that would conserve energy. With the energy crisis in the 1970s, the more developed capitalist countries had achieved a new level of technical superiority, but the Soviet Union did not have a practical stimulus to achieve this.

In spite of the speeches and appeals to implement comprehensive mechanisation and automatisisation and, in the 1980s, robotisation, technological development was slow. This was because industry in the USSR was unable to manufacture the required equipment in sufficient amounts and sufficient quality, and there were financial and political restrictions on purchasing equipment abroad. Although new factories were built and the old ones reconstructed, the basic funds for manufacturing decreased fairly quickly in the 1980s. In 1980, the depreciation of basic funds in industry overall was 36.4 percent and by 1987 this had already reached 47.4 percent. In a few sectors – fuel, metallurgy, chemical, forestry, wood-processing, pulp and paper and construction materials – this had already exceeded 50 percent.⁹⁰ Although “industry flagships” had equipment that was relatively modern, many small and medium-sized enterprises still operated with production equipment from the period of independent Latvia or even Tsarist Russia.

To solve the inefficiencies in manufacturing various new methods of administration and economic stimulation were attempted. In 1965,

the Regional Economic Councils were abolished and economic administration was returned to the former All-Union and republic ministry pattern. This was justified by the weakening of inter-regional communication. Nobody wanted to openly admit that the main problem was the command economy itself, which was equally inefficient in managing both centralised and decentralised economies. By this time, however, many economists were of the opinion that real economic efficiency could be achieved by introducing some elements of a market economy. In 1965, the so-called "operation on a self-supporting basis" was implemented.

Enterprises achieved certain autonomy. The number of indicators according to which an enterprise's operations were evaluated was decreased. The indicator of gross production was preserved, yet, in order to facilitate the manufacturing of sought-after products, an enterprise's operations were evaluated according to the value of the actual production yield. Furthermore, new indicators such as the collective salary fund and the total amount of centralised capital investments were introduced. A portion of the enterprises' income was left at their disposal. They were granted the right to sign contracts directly with other enterprises for the delivery of component materials and to plan the manufacturing of specific products within the framework of the collective plan. The economic incentives system was also changed. This reform was much more modest than those that were implemented in several socialist countries at this time, and its effect was much smaller than was initially hoped. To encourage the improvement of product quality, the Soviet Union introduced a unified product quality evaluation system in 1967, but this did not resolve the problem. In 1985, the State Sign of Quality was issued to 58 percent of the products evaluated in Latvia, but only a tenth with the sign of quality conformed to world quality standards.⁹¹

The counteraction of the party and administrative cadre gradually "cleansed" the reform of its positive features. The main goal – an increase in labour productivity – was not achieved, although in the first years of the reform a certain breakthrough was reached in Latvia: from 1966 to 1970 the increase in labour productivity rates was higher than in 1961–1965, but after that the rate decreased with every five-year period. The rates of increase in the manufacturing of industrial products also decreased, as it did in agriculture and other sectors. In the 1970s, the problems in productivity could be considered surmountable, but in the 1980s the fact that technology in the USSR and in Latvia sharply lagged behind the West became apparent. The

technical and economic elite in Latvia were sufficiently aware of the seriousness of the problems, but these could not be resolved because republic did not have the rights to do so, and up until even the mid-1980s, the USSR party nomenclature successfully neutralised any attempts to substantially reform the economy.

For centuries important trade routes passed through Latvia's territory and it served as a bridge between the East and the West. After the Second World War, the situation substantially changed. Latvia was turned towards the East, as direct passenger transportation lines no longer existed with the West – no ships, airplanes nor railways. This situation was preserved up until the end of the 1980s. The commercial fleets in the late 1940s and early 1950s serviced mostly USSR internal shipments in the Baltic Sea basin, and the amount of commerce with the West was small. The Liepāja Port was handed over to the Navy, along with several other ports. In the 1960s, the Soviet Union's economic commerce with the West, as well as economic relations with Cuba, became significant; this also substantially influenced the development of Latvia's ports and commercial fleet. In the 1970s, Ventspils became the main port in the USSR for the export of potassium fertiliser and the second largest port for the export of oil; oil was received both by the Polotsk-Ventspils oil pipeline and by railway. The Port of Riga specialised in the transshipment of dry cargo: in 1946 – 397,000 tons of cargo were transhipped; in 1970 – 4.3 million; and in 1985 – 8.4 million tons.⁹² In the 1960s, the commercial fleet began to specialise in the shipping of southern fruits, liquid gas, and oil and its products, and in the 1980s with the shipping of containers as well. In the 1980s, Latvian sea shipping yielded 7.7 percent of the USSR sea transport cargo turnover.⁹³ In 1971, a new type of international transportation appeared: Latvia's automobile transport carriers began international cargo shipments outside the borders of the Soviet Union. In contrast to sea transportation, air and railway shipments were for the most part oriented to the Soviet Union.

An evaluation of the development of industry and transportation in Latvia during the post-war years yield contradictory conclusions. On the one hand, a significant amount of industry had been created, and some sectors and enterprises were, in terms of quality, the leaders in the USSR; a few products or types of services (for example, sea shipments) were able to compete in the world market. Since the second half of the 1940s, Latvia's economy was closely integrated with the USSR economic system, which was made manifest in the juridical affiliation of enterprises (in 1980, 17 percent,

and in 1987, only 10 percent of industrial enterprises were under the authority of the republic, which nonetheless was still controlled by the central administration), as well as in its dependence on raw materials, semi-manufactured materials, and the sales of products to other republics (at the end of the 1980s, 45 to 50 percent of Latvia's Gross Domestic Product was made up of imports and exports from and to other USSR republics, but for Russia this was only 15 percent).⁹⁴ All economic problems typical for the Soviet economy – low labour productivity, low basic fund renewal rates, delay in acquiring new types of products and technologies – had intensified due to increased industrialisation. This was in addition to the inequalities in regional development, social (lack of apartments, inadequacy of service and public utilities) and ethnic problems. Of note is the fact that industry disproportionately dominated the economy at the expense of a relatively undeveloped commercial and service sector.

Soviet-style industrialisation seriously damaged the environment. In the technical solutions of manufacturing processes, thought was put first and foremost into the inexpensive and simple functioning of these processes. Production that minimised the damage to the environment increased the cost of manufacturing and also required time in their setup; therefore, industry avoided accruing the added time and expense. In addition, few resources were allocated to the improvement of municipal infrastructures, and these improvements could not keep up with the rate of urbanisation. For these reasons, the quality of drinking water declined, and many cities did not have water purification systems, or if they did, the equipment functioned poorly. Furthermore, industry under the All-Union ministries, Soviet army units and other institutions under the direct authority of the "centre" ignored the resolutions of the republic's government and the local authorities. The local authorities rarely were successful in punishing the industry that introduced non-purified and toxic wastewater into the sewage system or damaged the environment in some other way.

Agriculture

Collectivisation was the heaviest blow experienced by Latvia's countryside in the 20th century. It changed not only the form of property and methods of manufacturing, but also caused enormous social, demographic and moral changes.

After the war preparations for collectivisation began along with the Red Army's entry into Latvian territory. As early as September 7, 1944, the decree of the Presidium of the Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet "On Changes and Additions to the Law on Land of 29 July 1940" was issued in Daugavpils. This resolution renewed the rights to land for those who had acquired it in accordance with the law of July 29, 1940. The new farms could be apportioned with an area of 10 to 15 hectares (in 1940/41, 10 hectares). The decree prescribed the confiscation of land and its inclusion into the State Land Fund at much larger amounts than in 1940/41, because the land commissions had been given the right to assign as much land as they wished within the limits of 20–30 hectares "depending on local conditions". Yet persons, who, as was written in the decree, "had offered active help to the German occupying forces during the period of occupation, ought to be given land with an area of 5–8 hectares..."⁹⁵ Their farms were considered to be on the same level as kulak farms and charged increased taxes. The agrarian reform substantially changed the structure of farms. A total of 48,900 new farms were formed, which were issued 606,100 hectares of land, and 20,900 farms received allotments.⁹⁶ For example, in Ventspils county, 24 percent of all the county's farms were labelled as "big kulaks, active German minions, enemy of the people", and had their land either completely or partially taken away from them.⁹⁷

Without a doubt, agrarian reform was unjust, and its goal was not to create successful farms. Yet it was popular, as indicated by the fact that almost all national partisan programs requested that the results of the Soviet agrarian reform be preserved after the renewal of Latvian independence. Yet the hope that the small, new farms would form the next foundation of collective farming and that the new farmers would want to combine into kolkhozes did not prove to be correct. Those who had acquired new land held on to it. The relative tax allowances and benefits from the state gave some the opportunity to retain their land longer than many mid-sized and formerly wealthy farmers.

The question of whom to look upon as a kulak caused great difficulties for the leaders of the republic. As a result of the agrarian reform, there were no longer any large farms in Latvia. The former large farm owners were either prosecuted or had emigrated, and only a few continued to struggle on their 25–30 hectare farms to manage the duties imposed upon them. Many of the largest farms were left with only the elderly or with women and children who could not manage to fulfil the obligations placed upon them.

The imposition of duties and taxes was one of the principle means with

which the Soviet government tried to force the farmers to join kolkhozes. Another method was through propaganda and the forming of model kolkhozes. A 1946 order called for the organisation of 25 to 30 model kolkhozes by 1947. In every district initiator groups were organised from the poorest of the farms. These kolkhozes were scheduled to be furnished with the newest of agricultural machinery, but no tractors, as kolkhozes were designated as second-class property and could not own manufacturing equipment such as tractors, automobiles and combines. These were only allowed by the state-owned Machine Tractor Stations, which offered kolkhozes the appropriate services. Only kolkhozes were able to acquire electric power and telephones. Kolkhozes and kolkhoz members also had lowered state procurement norms. These measures, however, did not yield the results the Communist Party had hoped for. The number of kolkhozes increased, but slowly. On January 1, 1949, 890 small kolkhozes had been formed by 23,900 farmers or 10.2 percent of the total.⁹⁸ The poor migrants from Pskov province and other regions of Belarus and Russia closest to Latvia created an anti-advertisement for the kolkhozes, especially in the eastern regions of Latvia.

By the end of 1948 and early 1949, the republics' communist party congresses in the Baltic Republics, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldavia announced that prerequisites had been developed for overall collectivisation. In Latvia the congress took place on January 24–27, 1949. It must be noted that the questions regarding collectivisation had been expressed in a form that did not reveal the drastic changes that occurred, not to even mention the mass deportations. It only seemed like the usual rhetoric.

The trauma that was caused by the deportations of March 25 was enormous, not only for those people that were deported, but also for those who remained in their homeland. The criteria used in the assembling of the lists of persons to be deported were known to neither the deportees nor to those who remained behind. The goal of the deportation was to achieve general collectivization at a fast pace, and this was achieved. On March 24, 1949, Latvia had 1443 kolkhozes and about 500 initiator groups for the founding of kolkhozes. From March 27 to April 6, 1740 new kolkhozes were set up (in 11 days' time!). By May 1, 1949, 71.6 percent of farms had already been combined in kolkhozes.⁹⁹

Various open and hidden persecutions were directed at those who still hesitated to join the kolkhozes. Between 1949 and 1952, taxes on individual farmers were raised multiple times. If their land was located between kolkhoz

fields, it was expropriated and allocated elsewhere, often in poorly arable land or far from home. Unable to handle the persecutions, most individual farmers had joined the kolkhozes by 1953. The rest left their farms and went to work in state jobs in the city or elsewhere, and their land was taken over by the kolkhozes. By the end of 1951, practically all the farms in Latvia had been collectivised – 98.4 percent.¹⁰⁰

General collectivisation was associated with a variety of economic and social consequences. One of the main consequences was an unprecedented fall in agricultural productivity. On June 22–23, 1953, in a general meeting of the Central Committee of the LCP regarding agriculture, J. Kalnbērziņš conceded that pre-war production had not been reached in the most important agricultural sectors, and agricultural crop sowing reached only 80 percent of the pre-war level. The number of cows and horses in kolkhozes in 1953 had also decreased when compared with the figure for 1949.¹⁰¹ From 1950 to 1953, the productivity of all major crops in the kolkhozes had declined, as had the total harvest of crops and potatoes. A similar decline was not noted in livestock-breeding products (at least according to official statistics) only because of the productivity of individual plots of land in use of kolkhoz members.

Although the statutes stated that the kolkhoz was a “voluntary association of farmers” whose determinant factor was the meeting of kolkhoz members, the kolkhozes were completely controlled by the party. The kolkhoz chairmen were actually appointed “from above”. In the great wave of the founding of kolkhozes, local farmers who were chosen by the kolkhoz members themselves often became chairmen of the board due to a lack of suitable candidates. Yet soon enough many of these chairmen lost their positions or voluntarily relinquished their responsibilities. Leading a kolkhoz was not the same as managing a farm, and many good farmers were unable to do so. Many others were forced to leave their positions, because searches for “class enemies” that had “snuck into” the kolkhozes were constant. The security forces inspected the kolkhozes’ management, as well as the brigade leaders. The communists’ attempts to replenish the number of absent chairmen with cadre – communists from the party and state establishments did not yield their hoped for results. Many were incompetent in agriculture or lacked the necessary organisational skills. People who had organisational abilities and knowledge of agriculture combined with the appropriate biography were rare. These chairmen became leaders of the relatively few

successful kolkhozes. The kolkhoz system, just like the entire nation, was authoritarian. The kolkhoz chairman's character, as countless examples attest, had the determining role in whether or not farming would be successful.

One of the main reasons for the kolkhozes' difficulties during the first stage of their existence was state politics that targeted the unlimited exploitation of the kolkhozes. The procurement prices of agricultural products were determined in the Soviet Union in 1928–1929 and these existed up until 1953, even though retail prices had increased many times. From 1947 to 1949, kolkhoz taxes were calculated at 50 percent of the established amount, even though in 1950 this was raised to the usual level. After the settlement of obligatory procurements, a certain quantity of the products had to be handed over supposedly voluntarily above the plan for state purchasing prices, which were a bit higher than the obligatory procurement prices. So, for example, the obligatory procurement price for rye in 1951/52 was 8.60–11.10 rubles per centner, but the state-purchasing price was 14.90 rubles per centner; for milk, the respective prices were 0.30 and 0.45 rubles per kilogram; and for pork the respective prices were 0.61–0.95 and 2.66–4.59 rubles per kilogram. Furthermore, the obligatory procurement prices for kolkhozes were much lower than for state farms, and in turn the prices for individual suppliers were much lower than for kolkhozes. For a kilogram of the live weight of cattle, the state farms received 184 rubles, kolkhozes received 34 rubles and individual suppliers received 32 rubles.¹⁰² Payment to the Machine Tractor Stations for their services was also a heavy burden for the kolkhozes. This payment was calculated from the so-called “biological harvest”, that is, an estimation made in the summer before the first harvest that estimated the amount of crops that had grown. The actual harvest was often more than two times smaller. Although most kolkhozes fulfilled the norms imposed upon them, some remained indebted to the state, and the sum of these debts was significant.

At the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s, kolkhozes also had to carry out corvee – road maintenance work, carting duty. The heaviest corvee work was the procurement of lumber for the needs of the state; this lasted until the end of the 1950s, although on a smaller scale after 1953. Logging kept the kolkhoz workers from performing their routine duties, furthermore, this heavy work damaged the kolkhoz members' health and wore out their horses.

The kolkhozes also had to pay high income taxes and make obligatory insurance payments. They also had to take out loans from the state for capital

investments (for example, the acquisition of livestock, electric power and equipment, as well as for construction and amelioration). Many kolkhozes were in debt to the state. In the second half of 1953, a portion of their debts were written off, but the financial situation of many kolkhozes continued to be poor.

Before mass collectivisation, owing to the various tax and duty easements, kolkhoz members received relatively good income. Income was relatively tolerable in 1949, but from 1950 to 1953 it decreased, and often the kolkhozes were unable to pay their members when required.

Kolkhoz members also had to fulfil deliveries in kind from the small household plots. Each farmstead was required to hand over 40 kilograms live weight of meat and 50 eggs, over 300 litres of milk, 0.2 kilograms of wool from each sheep, 12 centners of potatoes from each hectare of crops, as well as the hides of livestock; if crops were also grown, than grain also had to be handed over.¹⁰³ In kolkhozes where income from work in kolkhoz was minimal and in which the small household plots were the only source of subsistence, these norms were very difficult to fulfil. Furthermore, kolkhoz members had to pay taxes. Until 1949 kolkhoz members had a discount in this respect, but by 1950, taxes began to increase. In 1949, agricultural taxes for one household averaged 52.10 rubles, but in 1953 this figure rose to 2,094 rubles.¹⁰⁴ Kolkhoz members, just like the rest of the population, had to subscribe for state loans. This was also essentially an extra annual tax, and, furthermore, its size was constantly being increased.

All these deliveries and taxes, of course, caused discontentment among the kolkhoz members. Although the kolkhoz members knew very well what the consequences could be, they often hazarded "anti-Soviet transgressions", that is, they publicly expressed their discontentment. Mostly, discontentment was expressed by efforts to quit the kolkhoz and switch to another job elsewhere or to a more successful kolkhoz. Between 1950 and 1953, the number of kolkhoz members of working age decreased by about 40,000.¹⁰⁵

After Stalin's death, several reforms slightly improved the working conditions of the kolkhozes and their members. By the end of 1953, all of the kolkhozes' debts for the delivery of agricultural products to the state were erased. After the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union's Communist Party in September 1953, in which agricultural problems were discussed, the obligatory delivery norms were decreased, and the delivery norms for agricultural products were determined by arable land

rather than by the total area of land, according to which the norms had formerly been determined. Obligatory procurement and state purchasing prices were also increased; the last ones now considerably exceeded the procurement prices. The obligatory deliveries of agricultural products from individual households were decreased and later abolished, as was the subscription for state loan bonds. These reforms provided the kolkhoz members opportunity to improve their conditions. The state began to grant large subsidies to the kolkhozes. The rights of kolkhozes were also expanded in Latvia, where the kolkhozes had been in existence for only a few years and farming population had not yet completely lost its initiative and work ethic. This brought about substantial improvement.

Nevertheless, the Khrushchev period also brought new challenges. On the one hand, Khrushchev brought forward the theory that socialism had been built in the Soviet Union and the construction of communism was now beginning, therefore "remnants of the past" like kolkhoz members' subsidiary farms had to be given up: kolkhoz members could buy the necessary food products in the kolkhozes. Subsidiary farms were thus restricted in various ways. On the other hand, Khrushchev liked to conduct various agricultural experiments. One of these experiments was the growing of corn to eliminate the deficit of feed for livestock. Corn began to be introduced in those regions where suitable conditions for the growing of corn did not exist. In Latvia as well, kolkhozes were forced to grow corn by decreasing the area for growing traditional livestock feed crops.

Along with the kolkhozes, which were considered the kolkhoz members' communally owned property, there also existed state farms or sovkhozes. The state farms had existed in independent Latvia, and the first Soviet sovkhozes were formed in 1941 with these farms as a foundation. After the war, the number of sovkhozes increased quickly, to 41 by the end of 1945. The number of sovkhozes increased sharply at the end of the 1950s, to include the enterprises' and establishments' subsidiary farms, which had been formed in ownerless or state-confiscated farms after the war (in 1948 there were 150 of these subsidiary farms, which increased in subsequent years). They also included Machine Tractor Station farms, which were formed either in former manor houses or in state-confiscated farms whose owners had abandoned them or were persecuted. In addition, a large number of economically weak kolkhozes were remade into sovkhozes or added to them. In subsequent years as well, bankrupt kolkhozes were often converted into

sovkhozes. As a result, by the end of 1960 there were 162 state farms at, and in 1980 243 such farms.¹⁰⁶ Initially, most sovkhozes were formed in central Latvia – in Semigallia and Courland – where the land was more fertile and the wealthiest farms used to exist. In the years that followed, the sovkhozes were spread evenly over all of Latvia.

Employees of the state farms were considered workers and office personnel and they had the right to the same social benefits as other workers and civil servants; they also received set wages, which in the 1940s to 1960s were usually less than in other economic sectors. State farms had a range of economic privileges: they could own tractors and automobiles, they received state capital investments, and, most importantly, they acquired electricity. Soviet historical resources claimed that “farmers, observing how the state farms spread out over the entire republic operated, became convinced that technical equipment could be used much better in large farms than in farmers’ tiny, fragmented plots of land”.¹⁰⁷ In reality, many of the sovkhozes were the opposite – a demonstrative example of how ineffective collective farming was; as a result of the low wages and poor living conditions, sovkhozes were unable to recruit qualified and industrious workers, employee turnover was high, and work discipline was low. Most sovkhoz workers were newcomers from elsewhere and non-Latvians. In May 1950, the proportion of Latvians was only 25.5 percent of all sovkhoz workers.¹⁰⁸ Administrative employees were usually selected according to the principle of political reliability and very often were incompetent. In the 1950s and especially into the next decade, the situation began to stabilise, because capital investments were diverted into rural areas giving sovkhozes the opportunity to strengthen themselves economically, build more homes, and improve the social infrastructure overall; this facilitated the recruiting of agricultural specialists and qualified labourers.

In the 1960s, the discrimination of kolkhoz members decreased in comparison with other population groups; in 1964 they obtained the right to a state pension, though retirement was set at five years later than for workers and office personnel. In the 1970s, kolkhoz members had gained the same retirement age as workers and office personnel. Other social guarantees as well now applied equally to all groups of the populations. Payment for work in cash grew sharply for both kolkhoz members and sovkhoz workers. In 1960, the average wage for industrial workers and public servants was 86 rubles; for state farm workers and workers from other agricultural

production enterprises 51.3 rubles; and for kolkhoz members 31.7 rubles. In 1985, wages were almost the same for all three groups – 208.9 rubles, 218.4 rubles, and 212.7 rubles, respectively.¹⁰⁹ Country folk also had another source of income – household subsidiary farms. In the 1970s and 1980s, the attitude toward subsidiary farms in the USSR justifiably became more lenient, because, for example, in Latvia these yielded approximately one-third of meat and milk, although only a fraction of agriculturally useable land was farmed.

Since the 1960s, agriculture in the Baltic republics developed more successfully overall than in the other USSR regions. The level of agricultural engineering was higher, with better educated agricultural specialists. State subsidies were used more productively. Agriculture was one of the few economic sectors under the authority of the republic. Much depended on the interest of the government of each republic, kolkhoz, and state farm, as well as their ability to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Soviet system. For example, by gaining centralised subsidy grants for the construction of new apartments and production sites or by developing various auxiliary sectors (such as canning, manufacturing of construction materials, ceramics, and souvenirs) could yield good income and compensated for the losses in basic production. Although Latvia's government viewed the auxiliary sectors with more suspicion than did the governments of Estonia and Lithuania, many kolkhozes and state farms were adept at taking advantage of these opportunities, for example, the kolkhozes "Ādaži" and "Lāčplēsis". The financial and housing improvements of the rural population minimised their tendency to move from rural areas. In the 1980s, there was even a small migration in the opposite direction, as many urban dwellers moved to countryside, where they could obtain apartments more quickly and make a good living. But the seemingly prospering rural landscape had serious problems. The main problem was the ineffective collective production. Although in the 1960s to the 1980s, crop productivity increased in comparison with the first years of the kolkhozes, the overall productivity of potato production did not reach pre-war levels. According to Soviet statistics (which can never be accused of the desire to show conditions as being worse than they actually were), 151 centners of potatoes per hectare were harvested in 1940; an average of 138 centners/hectare per year from 1971 to 1975; 131 centners/hectares from 1976–1980; and an average of 145 centners/hectares from 1981–1985. In grain production the pre-war level was

more-or-less reached only in the 1960s (12.1 centners/hectares in 1940 and an average of 18.1 centners/hectare per year from 1966-1970). At the same time, the level of the total harvest of grain in 1940 – 1,372 tons – was surpassed in a sustained manner only in 1981-1985, at an average of 1,552 tons per year). Milk production reached pre-war levels in the mid-1960s (but the 1940 level was unsurpassed for milk production per capita).¹¹⁰ The pre-war level was surpassed by 1960 only in meat production. The productivity of kolkhozes' and state farms' fields, but with a decrease in sowing area. The sowing area for cereal crops in all categories of farms in 1987 had decreased by almost two times in comparison with the figures for 1940, and the sowing area for industrial crops had decreased even more from 75,000 to 33,000 hectares.¹¹¹ In 1967, the private sector (mostly the household plots of kolkhoz members, workers and public servants in both rural and urban areas) produced 42 percent of the total quantity of milk, 44 percent of meat, 61 percent of potatoes, 65 percent of root crops.¹¹² Even with the creation of big livestock farms in the 1960s to 1980s, in 1985 small household farms still yielded more than 27 percent of meat and milk, and the number of cattle in these small household farms was approximately one-fifth of the total.¹¹³ Household farms also produced a considerable portion of vegetables, berries and fruits. It was only in egg and poultry production that large-scale farming was successful – poultry factories that were actually capable of ensuring intensive production at relatively low costs.

In the 1970s and especially in the 1980s, another tendency manifested itself with increasing clarity. Latvia, which in the period between the wars was the Baltic agricultural big power, perceptibly lost its position to Lithuania and Estonia, where soil and climate conditions were less favourable for farming. This was apparent both in the productivity of the main agricultural crops and in improvements in amelioration and irrigation, as well as in investments in agricultural product processing enterprises, but most demonstratively, it was visible in retail shops. Until the mid-1970s, the provisioning of Latvia's cities with milk and meat products was at an acceptable level (in comparison with other regions of the USSR), but later this became problematic. Latvia's citizens convinced themselves that Estonia's and Lithuania's stores were well stocked. People were of the opinion that the reason for the lack of food products was because Latvia's leaders were more diligent in fulfilling Moscow's increasing demands in the delivery of meat and milk products to the All-Union Fund, as well as because food

products were being bought by visitors, as "shopping tourism" was widespread in the 1970s and 1980s. However, Lithuania's (but not Estonia's) deliveries to the All-Union Fund increased even more rapidly than did Latvia's, and "shopping tourism" was a problem in all the Baltic Republics.

When observing economic development as a whole, one must agree with the economists who state that socialist modernisation in Eastern Europe was ineffectual, because it created substantial developmental disproportions and did not delay economic development as much as it led it in the wrong direction. The accessibility of general and specialised education led to that the situation were most part of personnel employed in industry and agriculture were educated and sufficiently qualified administrators, engineers, and workers. Furthermore, since the 1970s there were no substantial differences in this respect between rural areas and the city. Yet this potential was not effectively taken advantage of, because the politicised, centrally planned and centrally led economy was unable to intensify production. The sector and economic specialisation model which was enforced during the course of socialistic industrialisation had become out-of-date and, furthermore, did not conform to Latvia's resources and needs causing economic and labour resource problems. The solutions which may have been acceptable in the first post-war years, for example, the use of equipment obtained through reparations from Germany, became disadvantageous in the long-term, because they did not facilitate economic modernisation. The introduction of high tech and energy/raw material-saving technologies was stalled, because although energy resources were inexpensive, and the market for the sale of products was spacious – the entire Soviet Union. This market was firmly guarded and product competitiveness was not an issue. The economy of the 1990s attest to the fact that the economic sectors and production units that had earlier been involved in global economic processes (for example, transit and cargo transport), or those that had a high technical standards were most successful in taking advantage of systemic and political changes.

6.5. NATIONAL COMMUNISM IN LATVIA

In historical works, national Communism is described as a trend where during the construction of socialism, the characteristics of each state or, in the Soviet Union's case, each republic must be taken into consideration.

In Latvia, national Communism was manifest immediately after the second Soviet occupation. Many Communists were well aware that the number of supporters for the Soviet regime was quite small. Therefore, the belief that the population's trust must first be won before serious socialist reorganisation could occur was relatively widespread among local Communists. Yet attempts to take into account the local populations were already dealt a blow in the second half of 1946 and early 1947, when a wide replacement of cadre took place, beginning with the LCP Central Committee's Secretary on Agriculture, Jānis Jurgens, and ending with approximately 45 percent of the parish soviets' executive committee chairmen; many parish Party-Orgs were also replaced.

After Stalin's death, many Communists expressed their dissatisfaction both with the status of the republics and with the role they had been assigned.

Moscow was at least partially aware of the possible consequences of the narrow ethnic base in the republics' communist parties. In spring 1953, after Stalin's death, on the initiative of Lavrenty Beria, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union's Communist Party passed several resolutions that called for the inclusion of titular nation personnel in the Party and state administration in the republics and that officials who did not speak the local language were to be recalled from the republics where possible. In regards to Latvia, this resolution was passed on June 12, 1953. The resolution was followed by a plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the LCP on June 22–23, where the fact that Latvian functionaries and Latvian language were discriminated against were made clear. Three days later, on June 26, Beria was arrested, and the measures envisaged by resolutions of the plenary meeting were not implemented, yet this brief attempt was not forgotten.¹¹⁴

A conflict had developed among Latvia's political elite, which had several dimensions. One dimension was the issue of what was primary, the republic's or the Union's interests. The second was the ethnic and cultural dimension, the forcing out of Latvians from leading positions in their own land and the discrimination against the Latvian language; the third dimension was the conflict between the Stalinist model of socialism and the appeal to return to "true" Marxism Leninism; the fourth dimension was connected to careerist considerations, the fears of the oldest generation of party functionaries that it would be outrivaled by the better-educated and better-prepared younger generation. The majority of the older generation was

represented by members who had arrived or were sent from other USSR republics and included both Latvians and non-Latvians. There was a much larger proportion of local Latvians in the younger generation. For these reasons, various motives and considerations were entwined and sometimes conflicted with one another. Many Latvian Communists and locally descended communists in general were also disappointed, as their ideals of equality and social justice were not met.

It must be noted that the national Communists neither came down against the presence of Latvia in the makeup of the Soviet Union nor were they against the Soviet model of socialism. The objections of Latvia's national communists were against the fact that the "centre's" interests were set above the republic's interests (from economics to culture and education), as well as against the fact that the republic's characteristics and specific situation were not taken into consideration when determining the rate and methods of socialistic transformations. Yet it must be taken into account that the low proportion of Latvians in the makeup of the Communist Party and administration relegated the national question into the foreground more than in other republics. Local Communists believed that the disproportions were created by the incompetence of functionaries who had been sent or had arrived during the post-war years, along with their lack of desire to understand local conditions. This was made evident by the fact that most lacked the knowledge or the wish to learn the Latvian language and did not show any interest in Latvian culture.¹¹⁵

The national Communists could only become active after the 20th Congress of the Soviet Union's Communist Party in February 1956, when partial de-Stalinisation and reforms began. In Latvia, the view of the necessity of reducing developmental disproportions existed at the highest level. In December 1956, Khrushchev received the three highest officials from the Latvian SSR – J. Kalnbērziņš, V. Lācis and Kārlis Ozoliņš, chairman of the Presidium of the Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet. V. Lācis set forth the mutual opinion on the prospects for the republic's development: it was necessary to restrict migration and the construction of large industrial sites which would require an immigrant workforce; local citizens must be nominated for positions of authority; and administrative employees must have a command of the Latvian language. Khrushchev acknowledged that the Latvian government's concerns were legitimate.¹¹⁶

However, the activities of the national Communists were associated not

so much with J.Kalnberziņš and V.Lācis as they were with the younger generation of the nomenclature. The generation of Communists that had operated underground in the Communist Youth before the occupation of Latvia in 1940 had begun their real party career in 1940/41, had later fought in war, after the war worked in the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Youth (Komsomol) and attained positions of authority in the beginning of the 1950. Now they held high posts in republic leadership. They included Eduards Berklavs, Pauls Dzērve, Indriķis Pinksis, Vilis Krūmiņš and Pāvels Pizāns, etc. The group of national Communists was not limited to only Latvians from Latvia but also included the Russian Aleksander Nikonov, the Jew Faivišs Frīdmans, and the Byelorussian Pavel Cherkovsky. Among the national Communists were also a considerable number of Russia's Latvians, particularly representatives of the younger generation who had actually begun their career in post-war Latvia. They included the head of the City of Riga's Education Department, Jānis Ģibietis, and the director of Riga's 49th High School, Milda Vernere, etc. The anti-Communist uprisings and unrest in Eastern Europe, particularly the revolution in Hungary in 1956, also substantially influenced the rational-minded Communists.

National Communists in Latvia were not a defined group with a coordinated program of operation. Instead, it was more like a general state of mind, an orientation that was supported by a broad circle of the party and Komsomol functionaries, as well as some of the intelligentsia. As Ilga Apine points out, the national Communists' positions were most powerful at the very top leadership of the LCP and on the periphery in the rural districts.¹¹⁷ The fact that the liberal spirit was fairly powerful among Party functionaries is shown most clearly in the 15th Congress of the LCP in January 1958, in which approximately 150 delegates voted against the re-election of the then Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the LCP ("The Eye of Moscow"), Fyodor Kashnikov, and the Secretary on Ideology, Arvīds Pelše. While not even close to a majority, both were elected, but immediately after the Congress, the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the LCP voted out Kashnikov, which Moscow had to accept.¹¹⁸ Vilis Krūmiņš was once again elected as the Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the LCP. The voting out of a candidature approbated "above" was an unprecedented event, and it is evidence of the correlation of forces in the LCP at that time. The reformists did not have a majority in the party as a whole, yet their proportion in the governing bodies of the Central Committee of the LCP

was large enough (aside from the Bureau of the Central Committee of the LCP, however, it was not predominate) to substantially influence decisions. Yet the fact that Kashnikov was not elected was the beginning of the end for the national Communists, because the officials of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union's Communist Party assigned to supervise Latvia could not forgive the rejection of a candidate that they themselves had accepted. The accusations of Kashnikov and other dissatisfied individuals that they were victims of anti-Russian feelings did not fall on deaf ears.

Positions and activities

Many view Pauls Dzērve as being the ideologue of national Communism because ideas formulated under his leadership were based on the opinion that the republic's economy must work first and foremost in the interests of its citizens. These views were supported by many, including E. Berklavs, Minister of Agriculture, Aleksander Nikonov, head of the Agricultural Department of the Central Committee of the LCP, Antons Lūriņš, and others. They were supported by many lower level party functionaries.

The opinion of economists provided justification for measures that were directed at the restriction of immigration and were for the most part connected with the activities of E. Berklavs. As the deputy chairman of the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers in 1956/57 and 1958/59, and the first secretary of the City of Riga's Party Committee in 1957/58, Berklavs actively attempted to limit the increase in Riga's population, as well as to ensure that those with authority and those who worked with the public learn Latvian. In terms of limiting the population of Riga, he held the view that Riga should receive the same status as Moscow, Kiev and Leningrad, which had special restrictions on the registration of citizens. This matter was coordinated with the USSR Council of Ministers. Yet the realisation of this caused a wave of disappointment, particularly among actively serving and retired officers from the Soviet Army. In 1957, the armed forces were considerably reduced in the USSR, and many officers demobilised or arrived for the first time in Riga. The reduction of the armed forces had seriously harmed the popularity of Khrushchev among military circles, therefore, the complaints that began to flow to Moscow (one of the main spokesmen for their dissatisfaction was, according to the recollections of contemporaries, Major-General Nikita Dyomin, head of the Baltic Military District's Political Department) sooner

or later created a negative resonance in the Central Committee of the Soviet Union's Communist Party.

Regarding language politics, the Bureau of the Central Committee of the LCP passed a resolution on December 6, 1956 for the teaching of the Latvian and Russian languages, in which it was acknowledged that when working with the populace, the republic's party, soviet and economic organisations poorly fulfil the USSR's Communist Party's direction to take into account national peculiarities. It was acknowledged that in many enterprises, as well as in kolkhozes, sovkhozes, and in a few rural districts, particularly in the eastern regions, mass political, cultural, and educational events take place only in Russian. In addition, orders and instructions from the management of enterprises and organisations are written only in Russian, without accounting for the national makeup of the workers. Many other violations of language equality were also mentioned. The resolution indicated that this situation provided a reason for the bourgeois nationalists to incite strife between Russian and Latvian citizens.

The Bureau of the Central Committee of the LCP decided to make the heads of Party city and regional committees, as well as the heads of various organisations, sovkhozes, and Machine Tractor Stations responsible for organising Latvian and Russian language courses for those party, soviet, and economic employees who did not speak one of these languages. Also, administrative employees who did not speak Latvian or Russian were required to learn the language at a conversational level in two years' time. In November 1956, the City of Riga's party committee passed a resolution that persons who service broad strata of the population (commerce, public utility services, medical establishments, the militia, and others) had to acquire Latvian and Russian in two years' time, at least at the conversational level.¹¹⁹ In 1957 and 1958, more resolutions were passed in Riga that were connected with the acquisition of the Latvian language.

Similar to the restriction on residence registration, these resolutions also caused enormous dissatisfaction. Employees who had been fired from their jobs due to a lack of competence could now assert that they had become victims of "Latvian nationalism". It must be emphasised that the forcing out of non-Latvians from the nomenclature did not occur in theory nor in actual practice. The low proportion of Latvians in the LCP was the Achilles heel for attempts to promote the Latvian language in the practical and ideological field, because only members of the Communist Party could be

appointed to leading positions, and there were too few Communists who knew Latvian and could hold these positions.

An essential component of national Communist politics was the revision of the legacy of cultural history and cultural politics in an attempt to free themselves from the vulgar Marxist view enforced in the post-war years. According to this view, Latvian culture that was not connected to the (obligatory) positive influence of proletarian and Russian culture, was discarded as bourgeois and reactionary. At this time, the construction of a memorial for victims of fascism began in Salaspils (opened in 1967), along with the care of the mass graves of Holocaust victims.

The issue in 1958 regarding the usefulness of the construction of the Pļaviņas Hydroelectric Station must be viewed in an economic and cultural context. This was the first time after the war that a truly broad-based activity on the part of the populace that was not initiated from above occurred. Due to the countermeasures of the KGB, however, it did not reach the dimensions of the protests that occurred against the construction of the Daugavpils Hydroelectric Station in 1986/87. Prominent scientists, work collectives and educational institutions submitted protests to the republic's government. The press did not stand aside either. The protests were caused by the fact that the HES project intended to flood the most beautiful and culturally and historically rich part of the Daugava River valley – the Koknese castle ruins, the Pērse waterfall and Staburags – locations featured in Andrejs Pumpurs's epic *Lāčplēsis*, which had become part of the Latvian national identity. As Voldemārs Kalpiņš wrote in his memoirs, the partial blowing-up of Staburags was qualified as a war crime in the proceedings against German war criminals that took place in Riga in 1946.¹²⁰ During the course of discussions about the project, it was revealed that its construction could cause unfavourable ecological consequences, among them regular flooding around Jēkabpils. An alternative for the construction of the HES was also discussed in which flooding would not be necessary and which would not cause such harm to the ecology. A meeting occurred in the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers in which all interested parties participated, but they did not arrive at an agreement. Khrushchev was also informed of the issue when he visited Latvia on June 12, 1959. He acknowledged that due to the opposition, the construction of the HES was not advisable. But by the next morning, his opinion on the events in Latvia had changed – we will consider this later –

and this was the green light for the construction of the HES, moreover, in a variant that least conserved nature and cultural monuments.

In the cultural politics of the second half of the 1950s, more importance began to be placed on Latgallia in an attempt to promote its cultural life. The largest event was the Latgallia Cultural Week in Riga in December 1958. Yet the attempt to promote Latgallia's cultural life butted up against the lack of interest on the part of the City of Daugavpils Party Committee and its negative attitude toward Latvian culture and the Latvian language. This caused a serious conflict in 1958 between the leaders of Daugavpils and the Bureau of the Central Committee of the LCP, which a few months later became the pretence for strengthening the accusations against the national Communists.

New trends in education were also instituted in the second half of the 1950s. The Ministry of Education developed new programs in which greater emphasis was placed on aesthetic education, education based on work, and teaching of the subjects connected with Latvia and Latvian culture; moreover, these programs were successfully defended in Moscow.¹²¹ Yet a conflict arose with Moscow in March 1959 regarding the matter of the passing of the Latvian SSR educational law. This conflict revealed the true limitations of the republics' autonomy. Latvia's government believed that it was necessary to lengthen the period of schooling by one year in comparison with the Russian SFSR, because Latvian schoolchildren had to learn one additional language (Latvian, Russian, and a foreign language). Educators were also against the supposedly liberal condition that parents had the right to choose in which language their children learned – the language of the republic or Russian. These differences with the USSR Law were cemented in the Latvian SSR Educational Law along with several other points. Again, the goal of the exchange of views was the acceptance of Moscow's proposals and by May/August 1959 the Latvian SSR was required to change its educational law, abandoning all the articles that did not conform word for word to USSR law.¹²²

By 1957/1958, the axis of confrontation had already been drawn in the Bureau of the Central Committee of the LCP. The core of national Communist group was made up of K. Ozoliņš, E. Berklavs and P. Pizāns, editor-in-chief of *Cīņa* (*The Fight*), the newspaper of the Central Committee of the LCP. The opposing side was represented by Aleksander Gorbatov, commander of the Baltic Military District from 1954–1958, Nikolai Saleyev,

editor-in-chief of the newspaper, *Sovetskaya Latvija* (Soviet Latvia), and A. Pelše. Pelše had not openly placed himself in opposition to the national communists. In many matters, for example, the educational law, his statements did not differ from the national Communists' position. The advocates and opponents of the reforms concentrated around these four. As previously stated, the opposing group had perceptible support in the Central Committee of the Soviet Union's Communist Party. A certain balance was upheld by J. Kalnbērziņš's and V. Lācis's support of the national Communists, yet Kalnbērziņš's stance was indecisive and was strongly influenced by Moscow's position. In spring 1959, the situation became so heated that in April, the brigade of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union's Communist Party was sent to Latvia to inspect the activities of the republic's leadership. The conclusions of this brigade were apparently not particularly favourable for the leadership of the Central Committee of the LCP, yet they would not have caused such great changes had the national Communists' opponents not succeeded in getting Khrushchev on their side. In June 1959, a delegation from the German Democratic Republic led by Walter Ulbricht visited Latvia and was escorted by Khrushchev. After the Germans left on June 12, he met with the government of Latvia and several matters were discussed, for example, the granting of days off for the *Jāņi* midsummer solstice festival, the purchasing of agricultural technical equipment in Sweden that would be suitable for the Baltic Republics, and halting the construction of the Pļaviņas HES. Khrushchev's attitude toward developments in the republics was positive. On the morning of June 13, Khrushchev left. During the night, his state of mind had changed significantly. V. Kalpiņš writes:

"Khrushchev, as usual when he was angry, was not especially picky about the forms of expression he chose and attacked the Bureau members of the Central Committee of the LCP, who supposedly had Latvian bourgeois nationalists rioting in front of their noses. They supposedly wanted to drive out other nationalities from the republic – first and foremost, the residents that were of Russian descent. The most came down on Kalnbērziņš as an old Bolshevik and fist secretary of the Central Committee, and then came the phrase: "There is only one person among you who is completely faultless and that is Pelše. Is he here?"¹²³

In the period between the meeting with the leaders of Latvia and his departure from Latvia, Khrushchev had met with Major-General Dyomin and former Deputy Chairman of the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers

Nikolai Ponomaryov, who had lost this position due to incompetence. Apparently, the strength of their arguments and their interpretations of the politics of Latvia's leaders drastically changed the emotional Khrushchev's opinion. That same day, the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union's Communist Party passed a resolution to send the Central Committee brigade's report to Latvia, so that "measures would be carried out".

On June 20/21, a meeting of the Bureau of the LCP Central Committee was called, with the participation of CPSU CC Secretary Nuriddin Mukhitdinov, in which the report was discussed. The reprimands of the republic's leaders were summarised in seven points. The main accusations were as follows: that the high-level officials who were non-Latvians or Russia's Latvians were fired from their jobs or discriminated against; Berklavs's assertions that light and the food industry should be developed in the republic, and that the engineering industry should not be developed because it was based on imported raw materials and an imported workforce (these views had also been supported by other functionaries); the restrictions implemented by the City of Riga's Soviet Executive Committee on the registration of army officers and their family members, as well as specialists sent to work in Latvia; and that the selection of high officials for the Central Committee of the LCP supposedly followed the ethnic principle, giving preference to Latvians. The report was extremely tendentious, with many examples of nationalism interpreted one-sidedly or even invented. It seems that those that sided with Pelše, despite Moscow's support, were still not completely convinced of victory. However, although Berklavs and other members of the Bureau tried to refute the accusations, as well as indicate the groundlessness of many of the accusations, this was to no avail, and signs of division appeared among the national Communists. Kalnbērziņš immediately accepted all reproaches, and other members of the Bureau of the LCP Central Committee, except for Berklavs, more or less quickly surrendered their positions, probably because Berklavs was targeted as the main scapegoat and the others hoped that submitting to Moscow's pressure would allow them to preserve the *status quo*.

During the extraordinary plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the LCP on July 7–8, the report by the brigade of the Central Committee of the CPSU was the base of Kalnbērziņš's presentation. Although several individuals who took part in the plenary meeting attempted to refute particular accusations, everything had actually been decided beforehand. The matter

regarding the accountability of Pelše, “the only faultless person”, was also raised during the plenary meeting, because as a member of the Bureau of the LCP CC, he was jointly responsible for the policies that had been implemented and had also not objected to it. The mastery with which Pelše acted to extricate himself proves that his reputation as a brilliant schemer and “Jesuit” was well founded.¹²⁴

In the plenary meeting itself, only one person was removed from Bureau, namely, Berklavs. He was sent into exile to the Vladimir province and appointed head of the Provision of Film Shows Administration. Yet during the plenary meeting, certain functionaries were marked who over the following months were gradually fired from their jobs – chief editor of *Cīņa*, P. Pizāns, chief editor of *Rīgas Balss*, Osvalds Darbiņš, chief editor of the illustrated magazine, *Zvaigzne*, Rafaels Blūms and others. Moreover, this was actually done by the previous composition of the Bureau of the LCP CC (without Berklavs). During the plenary meeting of the LCP CC on November 25 1959, Kalnbērziņš and Lācis stepped down from their positions. Pelše became the first secretary of the LCP CC. His position was solidified by the 17th Congress of the LCP in February 1960, in which the makeup of the LCP CC and the Bureau changed substantially. After the Congress, the purging of functionaries began in full force. Many party members in positions of responsibility were removed from office. Widespread “purges” of the party, the Komsomol, the government, and the heads of mass media took place and continued up until 1962. The republic’s ruling elite was to a large extent replaced. Several ministers lost their positions (Minister of Agriculture, Nikonov, was forced to relocate to Russia, where he later became the president of the USSR Agricultural Academy of Sciences), CC department heads, the City of Riga party committee’s and the executive committee’s leading cadre, almost all the chief editors of mass media, and others. Apparently, Pelše did not have Moscow’s mandate for a large-scale purges, therefore, functionaries were replaced gradually. The transferring of individuals to be punished to lesser, yet still important positions was often practiced. This was later followed by total dismissal from the ranks of the nomenclature. Thus the populace was unable to assess the true extent of the purges.

Apparently there was also intent to begin criminal prosecutions of Berklavs and Dzērve, but this did not receive Khrushchev’s consent. Berklavs was not removed from the party either, although in the second half of 1961, the Party primary organisations’ demands for a total reckoning with him

and other national Communists appeared once again. Until the end of his term, Berklavs also remained deputy of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

While discussing the resolutions of the July 1959 plenary meeting in the party primary organisations, many Communists ventured to vocally disagree. There were also protest letters to the Central Committee of the Soviet Union's Communist Party and prominent newspapers. Of course, with the help of the KGB, the dissatisfied were forced to remain silent.

Various historians and contemporaries mention differing figures for the number of national Communists dismissed during these persecutions – anywhere from 100 to 2000. If we consider the immediate victims of the persecution of national Communists – victims who were incriminated with the charge of “nationalistic inclinations” or those who were dismissed from their jobs as a result of this campaign – the real figure could be approximately 200. Yet the actual number of victims is much larger, because many officials were removed as a result of various false accusations, the real reason being the fact that they had agreed with the politics of the national Communists or had negatively assessed the plenary meeting of 1959 and Pelše's politics following the meeting. During this witch-hunt, many fell victim to the insinuations of their rivals or foes.

In his relatively short period of rule in Latvia, Pelše (in 1966, he became a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU; he was replaced by another Latvian from Russia – Augusts Voss), as much as it was in his power, did everything possible to steer the republic's development on a course that was the opposite of the course set by the national Communists. Anything that was connected to spiritual culture, the legacy of the past, and ethnic relations was not negotiable. This also influenced the attitude toward the preservation of cultural monuments, ecology, the construction of large industrial enterprises, and so on. The view that was widespread among Latvians was that Latvia's leaders in the Baltic republics were the least likely to protect the republic's interests and were the most diligent in fulfilling Moscow's instructions. This was maybe not entirely accurate in all cases, yet it reflects how Latvia differed from Estonia and Lithuania and the fact that since the 1960s Latvia began to lose its leading position in many areas.

The utter defeat of national Communism had a great impact in regards to the legitimisation of Soviet rule and Communist ideas. The defeat essentially killed the belief in “socialism with a humane face” almost ten years before the Prague Spring. A strong 1960s generation did not form in Latvia the way

it did in Russia, for instance, where belief in reformed socialism was an important ideological factor in intellectual life. In the 1970s and 1980s, the number of Latvians increased among the ranks of the Communist Party's nomenclature, yet these were for the most part individuals from technocrat circles who perceived a party career pragmatically – as a step to a better opportunity to solve technical and administrative problems, rather than as an ideological choice.

In 1988, a commission of the Central Committee of the LCP was formed to review the matter of 1959 national Communist purges, yet the correlation of forces in the Latvian Communist Party was such that a motion in April 1990 to revoke the resolutions of the plenary meeting of July 1959 did not gain the support of the LCP 25th Congress majority and the Bureau of the LCP CC.¹²⁵ The national Communists quickly lost the power to influence the reawakening processes both because they were a minority in party and because most Latvians perceived Communism as nothing more than the ideological justification for Russia's imperialistic dominance.

6.6. CULTURE, EDUCATION, SCIENCE, RELIGION

The significance of culture

After the bitter experience of the deportations of 1940/41, many of the Latvian intelligentsia emigrated. Approximately three-quarters of Latvia's architects and many writers, artists etc., left Latvia – about half of the intelligentsia. Others were persecuted and shut out completely or for a period of time from cultural process. The Latvian artistic and intellectual elite formed for the most part all over again. Their base, of course, was an accumulated cultural and intellectual legacy, yet conditions had changed, and culture had to face brand new challenges.

The main challenge was the fact that culture and intellectuals acquired an unprecedented significance (even greater than in the national reawakening period of the 19th century). First, culture was the expression of a small nation's collective resistance against efforts to dissolve its identity into the Soviet nation and culture. Second, resistance was also the confrontation of creative personalities and cultural icons with authority. Here, both the nonconformists' confrontation with power and the elite, which exists in any

political regime, the resistance of the artistic community to efforts to turn them into obedient servants of Communist ideology, as well as protests against national enslavement were made manifest. The totalitarian regime perceived any free thought or creative independence as political opposition, thereby turning into political dissident occurrences that in another political regime would be looked upon as expressions of originality or creative non-conformity. This could cause various types of negative consequences, including political persecutions. Nonetheless, the creative elite had the opportunity, within limits, to discuss or at least indicate the problems the issues of an ailing society by taking on the roles of philosopher, sociologist, cultural anthropologist, historian, and so on.¹²⁶

The period from 1944 to 1953 was the most difficult time, when Latvian culture did not develop but rather fought for survival. Only a small part of Latvian cultural legacy was deemed acceptable to the regime. A rigid hierarchical ranking system had been established at Stalin's time, which was used to categorise cultural works, both old and new. For example, in literature, Jānis Rainis as well as living ones – Andrejs Upīts, Vilis Lācis, Anna Sakse, Jānis Sudrabkalns, Valdis Lukss, and Arvīds Grigulis were included in category of literary classics. The influence of Western culture on the Baltic Republics was denied, whereas Russian culture's propitious effect was highlighted in various ways.

At the end of the war and soon afterwards, there was a short period of apparent liberalism, when the attempts on the part of the authorities to entice the intellectuals, over to their side could be observed. But by spring and summer 1946, liberalism was replaced by increased ideological canon and the bonding of the artistic community with the ruling power. The first important step down this path was the resolution of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist (Bolshevik) Party on August 14, 1946, which criticised the magazines *Zvezda* (Star) and *Leningrad*. This was followed by a succession of other resolutions and campaigns, all of which were reflected in the republics, including Latvia. Writers were subjected to criticism, including, for example, poets Aleksandrs Čaks, Cecīlija Dinere, and Mirdza Ķempe. Conservatory Rector Alfrēds Kalniņš delayed condemning Dimitri Shostakovitch and Sergei Prokofiev after the Party Central Committee's resolutions of February 10, 1948 regarding music – and this was used to remove him from office. Artists and other representatives of the creative professions were also subjected to "re-education". Many creative intellectuals

were persecuted. By the end of the 1940s and early 1950s, ties with emigrated cultural and scientific intelligentsia were completely cut off.¹²⁷

At the same time, the Soviet regime tried to take advantage of and integrate specific elements of national culture, for example, choir singing traditions and folk costumes, by assigning them a Soviet content. The Soviet regime still had to deal with the perspectives and traditions of Latvian society. Perhaps this was most clearly made manifest in the organisation of the Song Festival. For the rulers, the festival allowed the populace to feel as a national unity – yet under the control of the authorities and with minimal political losses. The Song Festival was intensively Sovieticised; this was made manifest both in the Festival's attachment to Soviet Latvia's anniversaries and in its design and repertoire, by largely including ideologically based repertoire and Russian and other Soviet peoples' folk songs and dances whereas Latvian songs were often in the minority. Yet the festival continued to be a reminder to Latvians that Latvia was still in existence – even if only on the level of an idea, and for them, the Song Festival was an acknowledgment of their collective identity and solidarity.

The opportunities of the cultural and professional works from the pre-Soviet period had still not been exhausted. For example, the productions by the Daile Theatre (in 1947) and the Drama Theatre (in 1949) in Moscow were rated very highly, as well as the performances of other performing arts collectives. One of the first steps in Sovietisation of culture was formation and consolidation of creative unions in Latvia; these enabled the complete administrative control over “the engineers of human souls”. Every creative activity that occurred outside the official organisations or without their knowledge could be qualified as illegal, and therefore automatically considered subversive activity.

During the mid-1950s and the late 1960s, political and cultural liberalisation took place; moreover, neither can be considered separately. Some of the more important works from the literary legacy of the pre-Soviet period, including the emigration, were once again circulated. Previously forbidden themes were permitted, though very cautiously. Stylistic expression also became more manifold. Artistic genres and forms that did not have a direct social resonance (intimate lyricism in poetry, still-life and landscape painting, etc.) were allowed, although not without limitations. In the mid-1950s, the generation that in the following decades would define Latvian literature arrived on the literary scene – Vizma Belševica, Ojārs Vācietis, Imants

Ziedonis, Ārija Elksne, Jānis Peters, Māris Čaklais, Imants Auziņš, Miervaldis Birze, Visvaldis Lāms, Gunārs Priede and others. The fine arts were the first to attempt to break away from the firm dictate of the Communist Party. The first young artists' exhibit took place in 1956, which, overcoming many obstacles, was organised by Uldis Zemzaris, Zigurds Zuze, Juris Mauriņš, among others. The young artists fought for and won the right to continue creating.¹²⁸

Poetry took on great significance, because its aphoristic form allowed true expression. Poetry became the most popular literary genre. The annual Latvian Days of Poetry, which took place for the first time in 1965, became one of the most popular cultural events. Books of poetry were published in large quantities (20,000–30,000 copies were standard), and often there was a shortage of them. As it is easier to censure prose, in Latvia, where the dictate of the Communist Party had the most control, it was more difficult for prose to develop than in Estonia, for example. Nevertheless, there were writers of prose who could create outstanding fiction, such as Regīna Ezera.

The conflict between the authorities and culture was to a large extent perceived as a conflict between the Stalinist influence on culture and the more democratic trends. After the 20th Congress of the Soviet Union's Communist Party, the illusion emerged that creative freedom and the Communist regime would be able to coexist, as manifested by national Communist activities and the numerous cultural achievements. Yet the fight against Stalinism and for socialism "with a humane face" led to confrontations between the artistic community and the authorities (for example, with Ojārs Vācietis, Vizma Belševica). During this period, the intellectuals expressed themselves much more openly and directly than in the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, because their creative limits had not been clearly defined. These limits, however, were set with the incarceration of poet Knuts Skujenieks, with bans on publishing and exhibiting, and other sanctions. Importantly, however, in most cases deviations from party lines were not threatened with physical persecution and, although publicly defamed, most who were subjected to criticism were not completely shut off from the cultural process. Usually, economic constraints were enforced – works were not published and various benefits and privileges were denied. Thus, for example, after the publication of V. Belševica's 1968 long-form poem *The Notations of Henricus de Lettis in the Margins of the Livonian Chronicle*, she was forbidden from publishing for about ten years. Similarly, O. Vācietis was unable to

publish his poetry for six years, from 1960 to 1966; Visvaldis Lāms was also prohibited from publishing his prose for six years (in his case, for venturing, however minimally, to touch upon the forbidden theme of the legionnaires).

In the 1970s and mid-1980s, the cultural space attained during previous years expanded, not so much through open confrontation as through attempts at proving its compatibility or harmlessness with the ideological demands of the ruling regime. The canon of socialist realism was expanded to such an extent that attempts were made to include within it trends that did not have anything in common with socialism or with realism. Simultaneously, attempts were made to politically adapt various movements, trends, and expressions of mass culture, such as rock music, discotheques, and the ecological movement, by subjecting them to the patronage of the Komsomol or other organisations. As the Soviet system became more defensive, the tendency increased to tame already repressed cultural expressions and then to use them for ideological aims. Culture was also used as a showcase to demonstrate abroad that the Latvian people were prospering in Soviet Latvia. At the same time, the opportunities for Latvian artists to participate in world culture were extremely limited. Latvian culture achieved a broader resonance only within the Soviet Union, where individual artists and their works became cultural icons; for example, the composer Raimonds Pauls; director Jānis Streičs's film *The Theatre* with Vija Artmane in the starring role; director Juris Podnieks's documentary film *Is It Easy Being Young?* during the "perestroika" period.

Unacceptable trends or artists who did not wish to collaborate were repressed. For example, approximately 600 hippies were arrested in Riga in 1970 for showing up at a concert held by the band *Natural Products*. As the concert was unsanctioned, the militia confiscated the band's instruments and charged the musicians with anti-Soviet propaganda.¹²⁹

Resistance manifested itself both through official organisations, such as the creative unions (since 1965, the Writers' Union became a bulwark of nonconformists)¹³⁰ and the weekly *Literatūra un Māksla* (Literature and Art). These creative organisations also took advantage of the opportunities provided by the state, and through the expansion of the sphere that was "outside the system" (not so much in the field of creating culture as in the field of its consumption).

Open political opposition and dissident activities among the cultural elite was a relatively rare occurrence. It must be noted, however, that the

open confrontation of a small nation's culture with a ruling power and the resultant repressions could be fatal. The fact that the losses caused by the persecutions and emigration were relatively quickly compensated for attests to the vitality of Latvian culture, yet its reserves were limited, and this forced artists to instinctively avoid radicalism. In this way, culture as a form of the nation's collective resistance often came into conflict with dissidentism and nonconformism as the creative personalities' confrontation with the authorities.¹³¹

In the 1970s and 1980s, a new generation emerged that had not personally experienced the persecutions and intellectual terror of the past and did not know much about them. There was not as much fear anymore. The new generation was better educated and better informed about trends in world culture. This generation was also much less ideologised. Trends like surrealism, hyperrealism, and conceptualism entered the fine arts. Although contact with the outside world was limited, intellectuals were sufficiently informed about trends in world culture, but often with a certain displacement in time. In many fields, there was greater creative freedom than in Moscow and Leningrad. For example, in the fine arts one could officially exhibit works that would never be allowed in Russia. Yet this leniency had developed with great difficulties and various compromises, and the most courageous attempts were often cut short, for example, the 1984 exhibit *Nature. The Environment. Man* was closed down by authorities in advance.¹³²

The culture of the Russians and other ethnic minorities in Latvia found itself in a paradox. Soviet cultural politics prescribed that only a titular nation's culture along with Russian culture could fully develop in the republics. Thus, although a considerable number of Estonians, Lithuanians, Belorussians, and other nationalities lived in Latvia, practically no official cultural activities were permitted on their part. Although Russian culture was supported and stimulated in various ways, certain privileges were reserved for the titular nation's culture. As far as Moscow was concerned, the culture that took shape in the republics was considered provincial. For a Russian intellectual to achieve recognition throughout the USSR, it was necessary for him to work in one of the capital cities. Nevertheless, Russian cultural works in Latvia did achieve renown abroad as well. These included the performances staged by directors Adolf Shapiro and Arkady Katz in the Youth Theatre's Russian troupe and Riga's Russian Drama Theatre. In 1977, the literary magazine in Russian *Daugava* was begun, in which many Russian

writers published their works, including Marina Kostenecka, Ludmila Azarova, Roald Dobrovensky; the works of Latvian authors were published in translations by Yuri Abyzov, Frida Doroshenko, Viktor Andreyev, Lidia Zhdanova, and others.

Education

Owing to the war, the emigration, and the persecutions, the ranks of the intelligentsia had thinned out to such an extent that after the war it was difficult to begin the activities of the Latvian State University and the Agricultural Academy. In the first post-war years, of all the intelligentsia, teachers and professors at institutions of higher education suffered perhaps the greatest pressure on the part of the authorities, as manifested by direct repressions and in the demand to reorganise teaching plans and actively participate in ideological campaigns. In the first years following the war, the majority of educators were replaced with either new arrivals from other republics or by the new generation, who were trained onsite. For example, in Daugavpils, as early as the 1947/48 school year, 57.3 percent of teachers had obtained their education in the Soviet Union,¹³³ that is, they had either arrived from other republics or had already graduated from educational institutions in the post-war Latvian SSR.

In the first years of the Soviet occupation, several minority schools were still in operation in Latvia – Jewish, Polish, Byelorussian, Estonian and Lithuanian. A few of them also continued to operate after the war. However, a few years later, all of the minority schools were closed down. After the elimination of the minority schools, only two languages of instruction in the schools were left – Latvian and Russian. In 1945, 78–79 percent of schoolchildren learned in Latvian, but in 1963 the number of schoolchildren attending Latvian language schools had decreased to 55 percent, that is, the number of schoolchildren that learned in Latvian was less than the proportion of Latvians in the population as a whole. Although in later years the proportion of Latvian schoolchildren increased, it nevertheless decreased once again after 1976, reaching a minimum of 52 percent in 1988.¹³⁴

Close attention was paid to education in the USSR with some positive outcomes. Education, all the way up to higher education, was inexpensive and accessible to the majority of the population, and primary education and, beginning in the 1970s, secondary education, essentially became

obligatory, especially after most professional technical schools became institutions of secondary education. In 1982, 56.3 percent of graduates of the eighth grade continued their education in the ninth grade of high school, but 26.4 percent in professional technical high schools. Following the model of the USSR educational system, obligatory seven-year education was officially implemented already in 1940, although only formally in the first year of the occupation. After the war, the consistent reorganisation of general education was begun following the Soviet model. The transition to an obligatory eight-year education was begun in 1959 and ended in the 1961/62 school year. Beginning in the 1960s, intensive construction of new schools was begun, and large schools (with more than 1,000 students) became the dominant type of school. The number of primary schools and junior high schools shrank sharply and the number of high schools grew. Simultaneously, the number of institutions of higher education substantially increased. After the war, four institutions of higher education were in operation which had also existed before the Second World War – the Latvian State University, the Latvian Agricultural Academy, the Art Academy and the Conservatory – as well as the State Pedagogical Language and Literature Institute founded in 1940 (after several reorganisations, the Institute was added to the University in 1959). The number of institutions of higher education grew fairly quickly. By 1960, there were 10 institutions of higher education, and this number was maintained in the following years. The most significant additions were the establishment of the Riga Polytechnic Institute (now the Riga Technical University) and the Riga Institute of Medicine (now Riga's Stradiņš University) on the base of the Latvian State University. Also of importance was the founding of the Daugavpils and Liepāja Pedagogical Institutes on the base of secondary pedagogical educational institutions, as well as the Riga Civil Aviation Engineering Institute, which prepared personnel for the entire USSR civil aviation system (for this reason, instruction was in Russian). Most educational institutions had parallel Latvian and Russian streams, except for the Art Academy, where instruction took place in Latvian.

Russification

Beginning in the mid-1930s, the institution of Russian language and culture became the principle means of bringing together and integrating the very different nations of the Soviet Union. By the late 1940s and early

1950s, this was manifest as an unrestrained campaign for the glorification of the Russian language and culture. Although the Soviets maintained that Russian was equal to local languages, Russian had privileges. The teaching of Russian in Latvian schools was heightened, whereas local languages were often not taught at all in Russian schools or taught at a very low level. The age at which Russian began to be taught in Latvian schools was lowered, and later Russian also began to be taught in nursery schools; there were also appeals to teach more subjects in Russian in the institutions of higher education.¹³⁵

Yet Soviet national politics, which constitutionally guaranteed privileges to native languages, did not allow the open discrimination of local languages. Nationally, Latvians were self-confident, and since having a career outside of the republic was not particularly popular, most Latvians were of the opinion that their children should obtain an education in their native language. Latvians also wanted to obtain a higher education in their own language, and only a small number studied, for example, at the Riga Civil Aviation Institute and elsewhere where an education could only be obtained in the Russian language. To a large extent this was also connected with the realisation that career opportunities for Latvians in the transportation sectors – aviation, sea shipping, and railway transportation – were limited.¹³⁶ Overall, the level of proficiency in the Russian language grew, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. After the war, less than 50 percent of Latvians were proficient in the Russian language, but by 1989, 82 percent could speak the language.¹³⁷ Although the principle emphasis in Russian language acquisition was placed on the schools, there was also significance in the fact that domestically and socially one could not get by without using Russian. The use of Russian consistently expanded to include: service in the Soviet Army, mass information media, particularly television, in which broadcasts on the Russian channels were very popular, and increasingly, animation and feature films were not dubbed or subtitled; the work environment, in stores and on the streets. As the proportion of native populations decreased, it became impossible to get by without Russian language skills, particularly in the largest cities. The Latvian language was pushed out of many professions, as the associated literature and technical instructions were only available in Russian.

Throughout the Soviet Union, measures were taken to reduce the diversity of national languages and cultures as much as possible. The assimilation of small nationalities and national groups into the corresponding republic's

titular nation or their Russification was supported in various ways: for example, the Livs in Latvia were not permitted to display their nationality on their passport, and activities in cultivation of their culture and language roused the interest of the security forces. In the 1940s and 1950s, books continued to be printed and newspapers were still published in the Latgalian written language, but in the 1960s this was no longer possible.

Science

Substantial changes also took place in the sciences. Just as in other sectors, a certain liberalism could be observed in science after the war. In early 1945, eight scientific research institutes had already been founded, and a USSR Council of People's Commissars resolution was passed in November for the establishment of the Academy of Sciences. First-time staffing of the Academy of Sciences, with president Professor Paulis Lejiņš, was approved by the Central Committee of the LCP (as all subsequent staff); nonetheless, it included many prominent scientists, such as linguist Jānis Endzelīns, wood chemist Arvīds Kalniņš, physician Pauls Stradiņš, and architect Ernests Štālbergs. But the staff was also "diluted" with Soviet emissaries who were reliable, but were not current in their science. Initially, the attitude toward science was relatively tolerant, but this was replaced by persecution campaigns that began in autumn 1946 and continued up until 1953. These campaigns affected the founders of the Academy of Sciences, as well as many others. Thus, considerable Sovietisation of the Academy of Sciences had already occurred by the 1950s.¹³⁸

In Latvia as elsewhere in the USSR, a division of labour developed between the institutions of higher education and the institutes of the Academy of Sciences. Scientific research activities concentrated for the most part in the institutes of the Academy of Sciences, which were entrusted with the function of coordinating research in the corresponding sector. Although separate strong scientific centres formed in the institutions of higher education, such as the Solid-State Physics Institute at the Latvian State University, and many talented scientists also worked at the other institutions of higher education, the Academy of Sciences was regarded as the main centre for research. To a certain extent, this conferred the seal of liberalism upon the institutions of higher education, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. In these institutions, research trends sometimes developed semi-officially,

which could not have developed in the institutes of the Academy of Sciences; prominent philosophers, literary theorists, and historians from Moscow arrived to give lectures. A more liberal atmosphere existed in the field of the humanities and social sciences. At the Academy of Sciences, the fundamental and particularly the technical sciences were preferred and consequently developed successfully. Studies in magneto-hydrodynamics, computer technology, and organic chemistry yielded results that were evaluated very highly elsewhere in the world. In summarising the development of science in Latvia from the 1940s to the 1980s, considerable efforts were put into developing those sectors that internationalised Latvia's science and made it useful for the needs of the USSR's science and technology (for the military and for space research). Research that was connected with Latvia's needs, particularly the history of Latvia and other areas associated with national identity, were pushed aside and became secondary, even though the content and direction of this research was always firmly controlled.

Religious life

In 1940/41, the Soviet regime did not have sufficient time to gain control over religious denominations. The most significant events were the nationalisation of the religious organisation's properties and the inception of official atheist propaganda – the founding of the Godless Society. The consistent subjection of religious life to state control only began after the Second World War. During the war, crucial changes had taken place in the USSR's official policy toward the church. This was acknowledged as a useful instrument for the rousing of society's patriotic emotions. The new attitude also manifested itself in Latvia soon after the war. All denominations had suffered substantial material and human losses. The heaviest loss, of course, had been suffered by the Jews – not only had they and their spiritual leaders been eliminated, but so had all the synagogues (before the war there were more than 30 synagogues in Riga alone). Three bishops from the Catholic Church were taken under restraint to Germany and 35 priests emigrated.¹³⁹ Almost the entire leadership of the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Latvian Orthodox Church had emigrated. Many churches had been damaged during the war and several were completely destroyed.

At the beginning of the reoccupation, an institution was formed to ensure control over the religious denominations and congregations – the

USSR Council of People's Commissars Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults Commissioner in the Latvian SSR. All religious denominations came under its authority, except for the Russian Orthodox Church, which was controlled by a special Commissioner (in 1960s both offices were merged). The Religious Cults Commissioner actualised Moscow's politics, which during the post-war years focused on the following goals: 1) ensure the loyalty of the clergy and use it for the advantage of the Communist Party's goals; 2) taking into account the influence of religion over a large part of the population, attain complete control over the activities of the clergy and religious denominations. The officially recognised denominations in Latvia were the Orthodox, Old-Believers, Lutherans, Catholics, Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, and the Jews. Pressure was exerted first on religious leaders to display loyalty to the Soviet government. In exchange, the government promised a certain obliging attitude toward the church. All religious congregations were re-registered. In order to establish a congregation, a petition submitted by 20 faithful was necessary. These people – the so-called *dvadcatki* (team of 20 persons) – had to guarantee that all religious activities would take place within the framework of set precepts. A unified leadership was established for denominations that had never had this before, for instance, the Baptists. Denominations that had centres abroad were pressured to relinquish contact with them. This also applied to the Roman Catholic Church, whose non-authorized by the state officials contacts with the Vatican in the first post-war years were completely cut off. Those that refused to be subjected to these conditions were persecuted, including a few esoteric sects, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others.¹⁴⁰

After Stalin's death, there was a certain thaw in the relations between church and state. This was for the most part connected with the transition to a politics of peaceful coexistence. The visits of high-ranking church officials and contacts abroad – participation in congresses for advocates of peace, renewal of contacts with colleagues from Diaspora communities, and other measures – were necessary for the Soviet Union to prove that its politics were also supported by influential non-governmental organisations like religious denominations. However, the state and the church did not mutually trust one another. Soviet state politics increasingly forced out the church from social life, because ideologically religion was positioned as a relic of the past with no place in the communist society of the future. Places of worship were expropriated from religious denominations more intensively

than before (for example, at the beginning of the 1960s in Riga the Orthodox Cathedral was turned into a planetarium and the Dome Cathedral was taken away from the Lutheran Church), and new places of worship were not permitted to be built. Religious congregations were also completely dependent on the benevolence of the local and the republic's authorities when a place of worship required renovation, because construction materials could be obtained only with their permission. Religious traditions – baptisms, confirmations, weddings, etc. – were replaced fairly successfully with Soviet traditions.

Yet this does not mean that people's interest in religions had diminished. In the 1970s and 1980s, following world trends, interest increased in non-Christian world religions and their sects (Buddhism, Hinduism), as well as in various esoteric teachings. Various protestant trends that had earlier not been as widespread also increased, particularly among non-Latvians. The new generation of clergy were dissatisfied with the conformism of the established religious leaders. For example, a group of ministers from the Lutheran Church (Modris Plāte, Juris Rubenis, Jānis Vanags, and others) founded the Christian movement "Rebirth and Renewal", which officially gave notification of its existence in 1987. This trend could also be seen in other denominations and became more apparent during the period of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring).

6.7. MIGRATION, DEMOGRAPHIC AND ETHNIC CHANGES

Migration and its effect on ethnic makeup

After the Second World War, Latvia's ethnic makeup changed substantially. The repatriation of Germans before the war and the extermination of Jews during the war had almost completely eradicated two ethnic groups that had had an important role in Latvia's economy and culture. Due to the war casualties, the repressions and the emigrations, the number of citizens of Latvian nationality also decreased substantially. The last population census during the period of the Republic of Latvia took place in 1935, and the first during the Soviet period was taken in 1959. This made the task of determining the true impact of warfare, the repressions, and the emigration

on the number of citizens more difficult. The newest calculations of demographers Pārsla Eglīte and Ilmārs Mežs allege that the losses from 1940 to 1959 are estimated at 267,000 citizens of Latvian nationality and 325,000 citizens of all nationalities together, that is, approximately 17 percent of the pre-war population. Earlier calculations by demographers and historians surmised 600,000–700,000 losses, that is, approximately one-third of the pre-war population, but these figures included everyone who had been mobilised into the Soviet or German Armies, fled as refugees to the East in 1941 and to the West in 1944/45, as well as those who had been convicted or deported. In 1959, when the first post-war population census was taken, the refugees who had wished to do so had returned home, and the majority of the persecuted who had survived had also returned home. Therefore, this census actually hid the true scale of the repressions, as well as the enormous demographic changes of the Latvian population during and after the war.¹⁴¹

The 1959 population census showed that Latvia's population had grown in comparison with the pre-war period. The reason for this was the incredibly swift inflow of citizens from other Soviet republics, mostly from Russia and Byelorussia. From 1945 to 1959, they numbered approximately 400,000 persons (including the children already born in Latvia). Over the next 40 years, the population increase caused by the migrations was less than it had been immediately following the war – during this period, 708,000 persons arrived.¹⁴² In terms of the birth rate, Latvia had the lowest population growth of all the Soviet republics and, simultaneously, the largest population growth due to migration. In this respect, Latvia's situation was unique in Europe, because it is difficult to find another country where such a large number of people immigrated over such a relatively short period of time.

The ethnic makeup of Latvia's population changed dramatically because of the migrations. The proportion of persons of Slavic peoples grew sharply. In 1989, persons of Slavic peoples (not counting Poles) made up 42 percent of Latvia's population. At the same time, the proportion of Latvians had decreased from almost 80 percent before the war to 52 percent in 1989.¹⁴³

Why did the largest migrations occur in Latvia? This was determined by several factors. First, this was the purposeful policy of the Soviet government: to firmly attach Latvia to the Soviet Union, especially since the Baltic republics had strategic military importance as the USSR's outpost against the West. The loyalty of Latvians was doubted, but arrivals from the "old" republics of the USSR were looked upon as a bulwark of the regime. Second,

the migration's "pump" was socialist industrialisation. There is no doubt that on-site labour was lacking – yet forced industrial development also caused an artificial lack of manpower, especially in the 1960s, when the building of large factories was intensified. Third, the battles in Courland, and later the many military institutions in Riga and Latvia attracted a large number of military units and persons to Latvia, who remained in Latvia after their demobilisation. Fourth, migration was facilitated by the fact that Russia's infertile regions were close to Latvia, especially the Pskov province as well as Byelorussia. The Baltic republics soaked up the excess workforce from these regions, and in this way the social and economic problems of the corresponding regions were to a large extent solved or, more precisely, not solved, by taking into account the opportunities for migration. It must also be noted that immigrants to Latvia had an easier time settling there than in neighbouring Baltic republics, because before the war, the proportion of citizens of the titular nationality in Latvia (even after the repatriation of Germans) was the lowest (after Poland) of the nations around the Baltic Sea region, with the corresponding ethnic tolerance and tradition of coexistence.

The majority of the citizens from the other Soviet republics were economically motivated to move to Latvia wishing to create a better life for themselves and their children. This was connected with the ability to acquire apartments, better wages and opportunities for professional growth. Of course, these opportunities were not always realised, and therefore the number of people who settled permanently in Latvia was considerably smaller than the total number of immigrants. According to the calculations of demographer Bruno Mežgailis, four million people arrived in Latvia in 1951–1990, but 1.82 million had left. The total balance of migration during the Soviet period (since 1940) was 941,000 people.¹⁴⁴ Those who had put down roots in Latvia and their descendents were not about to leave Latvia, and this is proven by the fact that in the 1990s, after Latvia regained its independence, only about 15 percent emigrated from Latvia.¹⁴⁵

Immediately after the war immigrants were directed primarily to large cities, especially Riga. By the 1960s, Latvians made up less than half of Riga's population, but in 1989 Latvians were a minority in all of its largest cities. The smaller towns usually did not have the large industrial complexes that could employ a large number of people. The immigrants to the towns initially were usually the employees of various party, administrative and repressive organisations, and their number was relatively small.

A few rural districts did attract immigrants, such as the Brocēni Cement Factory and the peat extraction enterprises, where immigrants became concentrated (for example, the Seda and Zilaiskalns townships were established next to peat extraction enterprises; the proportion of Latvians in these areas was miniscule). In Semigallia as well, where many state farms were created on the foundation of the large farms confiscated in 1941 or which had belonged to farmers who had been persecuted or had emigrated, the majority of workers immediately after the war were immigrants from Russia. Semigallia's "ethnic face" changed swiftly, and it took shape as a mostly Russian-speaking area (in the 1990s, the largest proportion of non-citizens lived in Semigallia – in the Bauska, Dobele and Jelgava districts). In the 1940s and 1950s, few immigrants settled in Latvia's eastern districts, as there was a lack of work for these districts' own citizens, who in turn migrated to Latvia's central and western districts.

In the 1960s and the 1970s, the proportion of non-Latvians sharply increased even in those territories that had earlier been markedly Latvian. This was especially noticeable in the military settlements, which substantially altered the ethnic makeup of the corresponding region, for example, in Alūksne, Dobele, Lielvārde, Vaiņode, and Skrunda. By the end of the 1980s, Latvians made up only 44 percent of the urban population, and in the rural districts their proportion had decreased to 71 percent.¹⁴⁶

Undeniably, a portion of the immigrants integrated successfully in Latvia, but primarily in places where they were a minority and did not live compactly. Some could even be considered as having assimilated in the rural areas and small towns of the 1940s and 1950s. Yet the formation of compact territories populated by non-Latvians, as well as the high mobility of migrants did not facilitate their integration in Latvia. Furthermore, not knowing whether or not they would permanently settle in Latvia, many immigrants did not feel the need to expend time and energy on learning Latvian, even more so because official policy did not promote this in any way, but rather the opposite – Latvian was gradually forced out of the most essential economic areas of life. Mixed marriages, as well as the liquidation of Latvian schools in several places in Latgallia, led to a gradual increase in the proportion of Latvians whose native tongue was Russian. Moreover, the largest proportion was in the youngest age groups.

The heightened migration also increased tension in society, because it substantially affected the ability to secure one of the greatest deficits in Soviet

society – one's own apartment; this in turn affected the starts of a family and restricted its size. Data from the 1989 population census show that 79 percent of families in which all family members had immigrated from other republics (and 68 percent of those who had lived in the republic for less than five years) already lived in individual apartments, but only 57 percent of Latvian families and single Latvians lived in individual apartments. It is true that Latvians more often lived in individual homes (24.3 percent of families), yet this meant that these homes were built, bought, or renovated with personal funds. Moreover, in Riga the building of single-family homes was not permitted in 1970s and 1980s.¹⁴⁷

As the period of openness and rebuilding began, the dissatisfaction of Latvians with the large scale immigration burst forth as the opportunity arose to openly discuss these problems. These became one of the principle matters of discussion in the press and in public debates, yet only in 1989 did the republic's government venture to pass the resolution "On Measures to End the Population Increase Due to Unfounded Migration".

Demographic changes

The war and the persecutions were the main reasons for the decrease in the natural growth of the number of Latvians in the years after the war. After the First World War, the number of Latvians, particularly men, of reproductive age had perceptively decreased, because many of the young had been killed in the war, died of diseases, or had not returned to Latvia from their flight as refugees. The number of women of reproductive age substantially exceeded the number of men of reproductive age. During peace, these deformations gradually smoothed out, yet in 1935, Latvia was first in Europe in terms of the number of women per one thousand inhabitants. These conditions caused a significant decrease in the birth rate combined with an increase in the proportion of elderly people. In all of Latvia's provinces, except for Latgallia, natural increase in the 1930s approached the depopulation threshold.

The Second World War, along with the repressions following it, not only strengthened the negative demographic trends, but also was actually a demographic catastrophe. The war thinned out the ranks of men born from 1915 to 1924 the most; it negatively affected the growth in the birth rate during the post-war years and caused a very low birth rate in the 1970s. As a result,

the number of Latvians decreased, because the number of deaths was larger than the number of births. In terms of absolute growth from 1959 to 1988, Latvians were last among the former USSR republics' titular nationalities. The situation improved in the 1980s. This was connected both with the growing awareness of the citizens, particularly the intelligentsia, that the Latvians as a nation were threatened with extinction, as well as with the measures conducted on the scale of the USSR as a whole to promote the birth-rate (monthly allowances, partially funded leaves of absence for child care) and an improvement in living conditions.¹⁴⁸ It must be emphasised that state policy was changed primarily for economic reasons. Due to extensive economic development, the lack of manpower did not decrease, yet the earlier sources – the infertile regions of Russian and Byelorussia – were almost exhausted. The only regions of the USSR that preserved a high birth rate and had a surplus of manpower were Central Asia and the Caucasus (less so). Yet at the same time, beginning in the mid-1970s, the appropriation of Siberia and the Far East was put forth as one of the courses of state politics that had the most priority; this also required manpower. Moreover, there was growing anxiety in Russia itself about the decrease in the birth rate among the citizens of Russian nationality. As a result of these conditions, the government of the Latvian SSR also began to think seriously about how to promote an increase in the in the republic's birth rate and how to potentially decrease the dependence on migration.

After the Second World War, the number of young men of other nationalities had, of course, also decreased, and this resulted in the decrease of the birth rate. Yet heightened migration and the fact that the majority of immigrants to Latvia were young people at the reproductive age maintained the non-Latvians' natural growth at a relatively high level, although the birth rate of non-Latvian families as well was not high or was even a bit lower than in Latvian families. However, the immigrants' formerly benevolent effect on the population's birth-rate level was replaced in the 1990s by a higher aging level and the resultant decrease in natural growth. As a result of these factors, Latvia's population shrank rather sharply in the 1990s.¹⁴⁹

The effects of both World Wars on the gender makeup of Latvia's population affected not only the natural growth of the population, but also demography and social situation. The number of partial families increased (at the beginning of the 1980s, these constituted one-seventh of all families), and the stability of marriages decreased. Demographic studies of both pre-war

Latvia and the 1980s show that Latvians as a whole had reserved feelings regarding mixed marriages, yet the number of these marriages increased because the disproportions in gender lessened prejudice. The members of the other ethnic groups engaged in mixed marriages much more often than Latvians.

Substantial changes also took place in the division of the population between urban and rural areas, and also among the different Latvian regions and within these regions. Before the Second World War, most Latvian citizens were country folk – almost 63 percent in 1935. At the beginning of 1991, more than 69 percent of the population lived in urban areas and less than one-third lived in rural areas.¹⁵⁰ The urban population had grown primarily due to mechanical increase, and also because of the formation of new cities and the expansion of administrative borders of the existing cities.

The negative effects of migration along with changes in demographic makeup of Latvia's population in the post war years were also characteristic of the developed European nations. These effects resulted in the decrease of the birth rate, the aging of the population, the depopulation of rural areas, and increased migration. The Soviet regime, however, consciously facilitated many of these effects in the interests of its political and economic goals. The survival of the Latvian people was threatened not only by the war and the persecutions, but also by the destruction of farming population as a social stratum and the diligent following of the policy for creating agro-cities as promoted in the entire Soviet Union, which facilitated not only the depopulation of rural areas, but also encouraged irresponsibility and social degradation. This was also achieved by increases in immigration, which affected not only the living conditions of the native population, but also the social milieu as a whole.

6.8. THE LATVIAN DIASPORA IN THE WEST

Emigrant Latvian political organisations and their fight to end Latvia's occupation

Most Latvians and Latvian citizens of other nationalities who arrived in the West during and at the conclusion of the Second World War were concentrated in Germany in displaced persons camps. A smaller number

had arrived in Austria, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden. The exact number of displaced persons is not known, because movement in all directions was very large; some returned to Latvia immediately after the war (a part of them – only to be sent to Soviet concentration camps), and included almost all of those who had ended up in the Soviet occupational zone in Germany. In 1945, the Latvian Red Cross estimated that the number of displaced Latvians was 130,000, of whom the majority were in Germany, 3000 in Austria, 2000 in Denmark and 6500 in Sweden.¹⁵¹ Most refugees in Germany lived in 300 displaced persons camps, which were under the jurisdiction of the UN.

The emigration of Latvians to the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Canada, and other countries began in 1947, and ended for the most part in 1951. Approximately 17,000 Latvians emigrated to England, 20,000 to Australia, 19,000 to Canada, 45,000 to the United States, 5000 to South America, 4000 to Sweden, and about 15,000 remained in Germany.¹⁵² The first years in the new countries of residence were difficult for the majority of immigrants. Most of the Latvian exiles belonged to the wealthiest and most educated part of society, and there were many representatives of the so-called “intelligent” professions among them – doctors, teachers, faculty members at institutions of higher education, scientists, lawyers, and others. In the beginning, only a few were lucky enough to find jobs in their speciality, and the majority had to work in jobs that required heavy physical labour. Nevertheless, the Latvian exiles gradually settled in to their new conditions, and their material position improved.

Those who emigrated to North America constituted the second wave of Latvian emigrations to these countries. The first consisted of the revolutionaries who fled from persecution in Tsarist Russia at the beginning of the 20th century and especially after the revolution of 1905; they were followed by many members of the working class. The Latvian emigrants settled for the most part in north-eastern America, with Boston as their centre. These emigrants were inclined to the politics of the social democrats and many Latvian organisations later merged with the American socialist movement and the American Communist Party.¹⁵³ It is no surprise that the representatives of the “old” emigration did not succeed in finding a common language with those that fled from the Soviets in the 1940s. It must be noted that two political trends of independent Latvia were manifest in post-war emigrants and did not always succeed in understanding one another – these were the authoritarian and democratic.¹⁵⁴ But in the fundamental issues –

the disapproval of the Latvian occupation, the non-recognition of the annexation of Latvia, and the necessity of the renewal of Latvia's independence – disagreements did not exist.

In the first years of exile, most Latvians who had emigrated in the 1940s were convinced that the Western democracies would be able to end the Soviet occupational regime in Latvia in the very near future and that the period of exile would be short lived. The first generation of the post-war emigrants was negatively disposed to any social and political contacts with the homeland, thinking, not without reason, that the Soviet authorities would use this to their advantage. This generation also believed that culture in their homeland was incapable of developing under the conditions of the occupation, and that values of any worth could only be created in exile. As time passed, however, and as hope was lost that Latvia could regain its independence in the foreseeable future, an ideological crisis set in. The "thaw" in the USSR and the USA and the change in policy in other Western nations toward the Soviet Union in the second half of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s initiated a discussion about a change of positions. The change in attitude was also affected by the change in generations. Young people were of the opinion that they had to attempt by all possible means to inform their homeland about what was happening in the West – in the émigré communities and about the West's support of Baltic independence (yet avoiding activities that could be interpreted as recognizing annexation). Of course, the fact that this would be very difficult to do was taken into account. At the same time, the young generation also acknowledged that the people back in the homeland were creating considerable cultural values. Culture had also become the main form of legal resistance in the Baltic republics. For culture to develop among the emigrants, it needed to take from that which was created in the homeland. As a result, contacts were expanded with the artistic community of Latvia, particularly beginning with the 1970s. These mostly had to be established through the Cultural Committee for Contact with Countrymen Abroad, which was controlled by the KGB.

Soviet activities were directed at encouraging emigrant acknowledgment of Latvia's incorporation *de facto* and *de iure*, as well as discouraging the influence of émigré political organisations both on the Latvian communities abroad and on the governments of their countries of residence and international organisations. Since more and more émigré Latvians visited their relatives in the homeland in the 1970s and 1980s, the Soviet Union

tried to take advantage of the exiles' longing for their homeland by encouraging them to acknowledge during their visit that Latvia was flourishing as a part of the Soviet Union. In this way, the émigré community was split, and those activities that were interpreted as collaborating with the occupying powers and recognising the annexation were condemned, although some who visited their homeland simply became victims of provocation.

Well aware of the aims of Latvian SSR functionaries, many emigrant Latvians tried to establish personal contacts with Latvia's artistic community, become acquainted with its art, and inform Latvians in the homeland about the cultural activities of Latvians in exile without abandoning the principles of the non-recognition of annexation. In emigrant communities these activities were not perceived unequivocally. The visits of poets Velta Toma and Olafs Stumbrs, scientist Vaira Viķe-Freiberga, and other cultural representatives from the émigré community to the homeland and their collaboration with official institutions (the Writers' Union, the Academy of Sciences) were harshly criticised by many emigrants.

The young émigré generation's entry into politics changed not only the attitude toward contacts with the homeland, but also made the fight for the renewal of Latvian independence more effective in a variety of ways. They had been educated in the West, had a good command of the language of their countries of residence, and had a much better understanding of the mentality of these nations' politicians. The young generation began to incorporate new and more effective methods in the activities of émigré organisations.

Already during the war, refugee organisations were established in Germany and Sweden. Their task was to represent refugee interests to the authorities, and after the war to the occupation zone administration and international organisations. In addition to political organisations, other types of organisations and societies were established as well – church organisations, educational and cultural organisations, student fraternities, and professional associations. During the early 1950s, central organisations were formed that attempted to unite Latvians in the countries of asylum. The first to be established was the Latvian National Association in Canada, followed by in 1951 the American Latvian Association (ALA), the Latvian Association in Australia and New Zealand, the Latvian Liberation Committee's European Centre (now the Western European Latvian Association); the South American Latvian Association was established in 1971. In 1956,

the highest representative of émigré Latvians was established – the World Federation of Free Latvians (WFFL) – uniting the above-mentioned central organisations. In order to finance the operations of the WFFL, the Latvian Freedom Fund was created in 1973. An information bureau was set up for the WFFL – first in Stockholm and later in Münster. One of the central aims of the WFFL was to fight for the renewal of Latvian independence, liberation from the occupying powers, and the renewal of democracy, as well as to ensure the continued existence of Latvians. Latvian youth organisations were also formed in the countries of residence – the American Latvian Youth Association (1951), the Latvian National Youth Association in Canada (1954), and others. The European Latvian Youth Association, founded in 1954, was the most active youth association in the West. One of the most influential Latvian diaspora organisations was the “Daugavas Vanagi”, or Daugava Hawks (DV), which was established in December 1945 in Belgian POW camps with the goal of offering support to soldiers and their families. Later, the DV continued to operate in displaced persons’ camps and in the countries of residence. A broad network of local DV organisations was established, and these organisations worked with a wide range of issues for the promotion of politics, culture, education, society, and welfare.

Émigré organisations established a considerable network of educational, social assistance, and recreational centres. The majority of educational establishments were Saturday schools, yet a considerable achievement was the creation of the state-supported secondary school with Latvian-language instruction in Münster, Germany, where a secondary education chiefly in Latvian was obtained by many young people not only from Germany, but also from the United States, Australia, Sweden, England, and other countries.

Baltic collaboration

Realising that the Baltic republics’ fight for the renewal of their nations’ independence would only be effective if the Estonians, Lithuanians, and Latvians worked together, a string of joint organisations were also established: the Joint Baltic Committee, the World Baltic Council, and the Baltic-American Freedom League. The largest and most influential Baltic political organisation was the United Baltic Appeal—the Baltic Appeal to the United Nations (UBA–BATUN),¹⁵⁵ which was established in the United States in 1966. In 1984/85, BATUN missions were opened in Stockholm and London.

The central aim of BATUN was to achieve the renewal of Baltic independence. BATUN conducted the wide-ranging task of explanation to inform the governments of various countries of the Baltic question and for its inclusion in the daily schedule of international organizations.

Baltic political activities and collaboration was enhanced during the preparation for the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which began in 1972. Baltic organisations submitted memoranda to the governments of the conference's member states, asking them not to forget that the independence of the Baltic States had been lost as a result of the Second World War and had still not been regained. As a result, the United States Congress passed a resolution in November 1975 in which it was underlined that US policy remained unchanged. The parliaments of Belgium, France, Great Britain, and the Federal Republic of Germany passed the same declarations. During the Helsinki meeting, the Balts conducted various protest campaigns so effectively that the USSR urged the Finnish government to expel them.¹⁵⁶

In subsequent meetings of the CSCE the Balts were very active both in informing the members about violations of civil rights in the Baltics and in organising various campaigns. These activities were expanded in 1985 when various events were dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. The Balts organised the Baltic tribunal in Copenhagen, the Baltic Peace and Freedom Cruise and a seminar in Stockholm dedicated to the future of the Baltic republics.

Émigré culture

In the first years after the war, when the majority of refugees were concentrated together, their cultural and social life developed actively. From 1946 to 1950, approximately 1,500 book titles were published in Latvian outside of Latvia, and from 1951 to 1960, 1,200 titles were published.¹⁵⁷ Approximately 29 percent of these books were works of literature. Joint cultural and political activities also developed for all three of the Baltic nations. From 1945 to 1949, the journal *The Baltic Review* was published in Sweden, featuring articles by prominent scientists from pre-war Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In Hamburg, Germany (later in nearby Pineberg), Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian academic faculty members established the Baltic University (British occupational authorities did not officially

recognise the university status of this educational establishment and therefore called it a study centre). In November 1946, there were 193 lecturers, of which 53 were professors. The number of students changed fairly substantially over time: in 1946/47 it fluctuated at around 1,000 students and in mid-1949 there were almost 500 students. The University functioned from 1946 to 1949.¹⁵⁸

Newspapers, journals, and other periodical publications helped maintain contacts between various members of the Latvian Diaspora both during the period in displaced persons' camps and especially after departure from the camps. Approximately 500 periodical publications appeared between 1944 and 1991, including the newspaper *Laiks* (The Time) published in New York, the literary journal *Jaunā Gaita*, which first came out in 1955 and continues to be published, and *Archīvs* (The Archive), a collection of articles on cultural history published in Australia under editor Edgars Dunsdorfs (a total of 30 volumes were published).¹⁵⁹

The principal role of the WFFL was in its educational and cultural work. The WFFL Cultural fund was established in 1972, which took over from the ALA Cultural Fund and the North American Latvian Cultural Fund the conferring of distinctions for achievements in science, education, literature, art, and journalism, as well as the support of global events (for example, the World Free Latvians' Song Days in 1979, 1984, and 1987).¹⁶⁰

Many Latvian emigrants, particularly the older generations, devoted much of their time to Latvian culture, seeing it as their duty to preserve and cultivate it for the renewed independent Latvia. However, this was also connected to and affected by the processes that took place in the countries of residence, and, as Juris Soikāns wrote in 1970, Latvian spiritual culture resembled a "mosaic created by several artists which, although it has one set theme, is nevertheless without a pre-determined composition".¹⁶¹ Many artists of Latvian descent also became part of the cultural life in their countries of residence and achieved international success, for example, the artists Vija Celmiņa, Raimonds Staprāns, Laimonis Mieriņš, Edvīns Strautmanis, Laris Strunke, Leo Jānis Brieditis, Jānis Šenbergs, Imants Tillers,¹⁶² and architect Gunārs Birkerts. This process was easier in the United States, Australia, and Canada, where a "melting pot" mentality prevails. In the European countries this was more difficult for the first generation, yet for the second and third generations of émigrés this was already a conventional process. This did not always mean estrangement from the Latvian community. Sometimes it was

the dominant Western cultural trends that facilitated the strengthening of the Latvians' sense of identity. For instance, the search for ethnic roots and the growth in self-confidence among national minorities in the second half of the 1960s and the 1970s in America and elsewhere in the West compelled the young generation of Latvians to become aware of and search for their Latvian identity.¹⁶³

Culture was also perceived by the Diaspora as a political weapon.¹⁶⁴ Culture was assigned an important and essentially determinative role in the activities of émigré Latvians, and in this respect certain parallels can be seen with the special role of culture in Soviet Latvia. They also had in common the foundation and starting point from which both Latvia's and the émigré Latvians' culture developed. Nevertheless, the important fact was that both in Latvia and in the Diaspora, culture had to assume one and the same function – to become the main bulwark of national awareness and thus to a large extent also the nation's physical survival.

6.9. THE REGAINING OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

In an extraordinary plenum of the Central Committee of the Soviet Union's Communist Party in April 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Party. He began a liberalisation of the regime, which became known as *glasnost* and *perestroika*. The Soviet Union's highest authorities as a whole understood that the state was experiencing an economic and political crisis and that reforms were necessary. Gorbachev was convinced that socialism had taken root in Soviet society, and that reforms and the opening up of the state to outside influences could not harm the socialistic order.

Gorbachev looked upon the Baltic as a laboratory for reforms. Party and economic leaders perceived the economic reforms here with a much more obliging attitude and with greater understanding than in other republics. Yet contrary to Gorbachev's intentions, it was precisely in the Baltic republics that the ability to more or less freely express one's opinion led very soon not only to greater demands for independence within the framework of the USSR, but also to a fight for complete national independence. The processes of democratisation in the Baltic republics substantially affected democratisation in the entire Soviet Union. It is often asserted that

the Baltic republics were “to blame” for the collapse of the USSR. If viewed objectively, the Baltic republics were too small and their influence on the legislative institutions of the USSR was too little for them to be capable of single-handedly influencing the entire Union. The fate of the Soviet Union was determined primarily by the position of the political elite of its largest republic – Russia. The Ukraine also had significant influence. Yet the Baltic republics were a catalyst, and they also offered important moral support to the democratic and reformist movements in Russia and the other republics of the USSR.

The new trends became manifest in September 1986, when a meeting of representatives from the USSR and the USA took place in Jūrmala, the Chautauqua Conference. In the USSR’s new political atmosphere, many local citizens (of course, screened and loyal) were allowed to take part in the Conference, and the proceedings were reflected fairly widely and objectively on Latvian Television. During the Conference, a speech given by Jack Matlock, the US president’s senior consultant in matters related to the Soviet Union, shocked the listeners, as he clearly stated in Latvian that the US still does not recognise and will not recognise Latvia’s incorporation into the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁵ Something that had not been possible before was the fact that this declaration was televised in Latvian (though this was later not published in the book issued in Soviet Latvia). One month later, the creative union’s weekly *Literatūra un Māksla* published an article by Dainis Īvāns and Artūrs Snips in which they protested against the building of the Daugavpils Hydroelectric Station. The article caused wide-spread discussion on television and in the press. Scientists participated in ecological assessments and other expertises, and the community succeeded in cancelling construction of the hydroelectric station.

The year that marked a change from liberalisation “from above” to grass-roots movements was 1987. On June 14, the “Helsinki-86” group, which had formed the previous year, organised the placing of flowers at the Freedom Monument in Riga on the anniversary of the 1941 deportations. This was the beginning of the so-called “calendar unrests”, namely, mass public events that were connected with important days of commemoration in the Baltic republics. On August 23 – the anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact – a protest rally took place at the Freedom Monument. This time a fairly large number of people participated. The militia tried to break them up, and many protesters were arrested. With the help of large numbers of militia and KGB

officers, as well as cordons of appointed “public order volunteers”, mass demonstrations were successfully prevented on the next important date – November 18 – yet it was clear to the leaders of the LCP that it was not possible to reduce the “calendar unrests” to merely “American imperialist” and “bourgeoisie émigré” campaigns inspired by the foreign “radio voice”. A split began to develop in the political elite over the question of which tactic to choose – confrontation or dialogue with the opposition.

Among the leadership of the LCP, the initial predominant view was that it was necessary to lead the disposition of the masses and the mass movement into the channel of *perestroika*. On March 25, permission was granted for the placing of flowers in the Warriors’ Cemetery, which was organised by the creative unions; official permission was also given to celebrate the Midsummer Festival, and the program *Labvakar* (Good Evening) began on Latvian TV. On April 27, the first mass demonstration undisturbed by the militia took place (though the event was officially not permitted); the demonstration of about 10,000 people against the construction of a metro in Riga.

The spring and summer of 1988 was a time when freedom’s borders developed very swiftly. The Baltic republics mutually influenced one another. In April 1988 the Popular Front of Estonia was created, and this was followed by Lithuania’s restructuring (later – independence) movement *Sajūdis*. Discussion about the renewal of national symbols – the flag, the hymn and other national emblems – began in the neighbouring Baltic republics earlier than in Latvia. The influence of the neighbouring republics enabled the conquering of the resistance and displeasure of the LCP CC conservatives in Latvia.

Perestroika both in Latvia and the neighbouring Baltic republics continued to develop along the “controllable restructuring” channel, but real confusion was created by the extended plenary meeting of the board of the Latvian Writers’ Union on June 1-2, 1988 with the participation of other creative unions and experts. During the meeting, the growing problems were talked about openly and in detail for the first time: the demographic situation, inter-republic migration and the status of the Latvian language. The fact that these issues were discussed in an official meeting, in which Boris Pugo, First Secretary of the LCP CC, also participated, was already an enormous achievement, yet the exploding bomb effect was caused by the declaration by Mavriks Vulfsons, a well-known political commentator and active participant in the events of 1940, that a socialist revolution had not



Ernest Rudzuroga, one of the strike organisers in Vorkuta camp galleys in the Autonomous Socialistic Soviet Republic of Komi (1956)



Nikita Khrushchev, the Head of the USSR Council of Ministers, addressing kolhozniks of the collective farm "The Red October" (June 1959)



Mikhail Gorbachov, the USSR Communist Party Central Committee General secretary, meeting workers of production association VEF during his visit in Riga in February 1987



Boris Yeltsin, Head of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, addressing deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Latvia on August 2, 1990



National manifestation on the banks of the Daugava river after the declaration "On the Renewal of the Independence of the Republic of Latvia" was adopted



Dzirnavu street in Riga during the days of barricades on January 14, 1991



The participants of the XX Latvian Song and Dance Festival celebration parade are greeted by: Row 1, left to right 3rd — Imants Kokars, head conductor. Row 2, left to right — Arnold Rūitel, Head of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Estonia, Anatolijs Gorbunovs, Head of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Latvia, Vitautas Landsbergis, Head of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Lithuania, Dainis Īvāns, Vice-Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Latvia



President Guntis Ulmanis in the Parliament taking the oath of office as President of Latvia on July 8, 1993



The USA President Bill Clinton visiting Riga on July 6, 1994. Left to right: Guntis Ulmanis, President of Latvia, Bill Clinton, Algirdas Brazauskas, President of Lithuania, Lennart Meri, President of Estonia



Meeting of the Heads of Government of the Baltic Sea States in the Riga Castle on January 22, 1998



President Vaira Viķe-Freiberga taking her presidential oath on July 8, 1999



Riga City 800th anniversary celebration in Bastejkalns on August 18, 2001



The Latvian delegation at the NATO summit in Prague (November 2002)



The Heads of State of the EU member states and accession countries. Group photo taken after Latvia had been invited to join the EU (December 2002)

taken place in Latvia in 1940.¹⁶⁶ This announcement marked the beginning of the process of historical re-evaluation and inquiry. The first officially permitted rally in commemoration of the victims of mass deportation took place on June 14, in which more than 10,000 people took part. National symbols began to be revived. Following the example of Estonia and Lithuania, the Popular Front of Latvia also began to be organised. The events took a turn that made the conservative wing in the leadership of the LCP justifiably afraid that the party might not be able to maintain control over what was taking place. On June 18, a general meeting of the LCP CC passed the resolution "On the Political Situation in the Republic" in which it was expressed that in the extended plenary meeting of the board of the Writers' Union "...the interests of all of the republic's social groups and nationalities were not properly observed" and "...the subjective interpretations of historical events, which have been irresponsibly perceived by a few mass means of information, disorient public opinion and serve as a platform for the consolidation of nationalistically inclined elements".¹⁶⁷ This attempt to halt the process of democratisation was unsuccessful, however, and turned public opinion even more against the leadership of the republic and strengthened the process of division within it. Gorbachev and the reformists that gathered around him needed the support of the Baltic republics' democratic leaders. This was clear in the 19th Conference of the Soviet Union's Communist Party from June 28 to July 1, 1988, and in the USSR Congress of People's Deputies in 1989/90. At the same time, reformists in the Kremlin agreed only partially and with much hesitation to even the most minimal demands of the Baltic States to expand their autonomy. When this finally happened, the public opinion in the republics had become considerably radicalised, and what Moscow looked upon as a great concession was viewed in the Baltic even in moderately reformist circles as clumsy attempts at preserving the status quo.

In summer 1988, the anti-reformists in Moscow also began to try and intercept the methods of the opposition and organise anti-reformist and anti-secessionist powers in the Baltic republics "from below". In July 1988, in Tallinn, the Workers' International Front, better known as Interfront, was formed based on the military industrial complex. The first Interfront Congress in Latvia took place on January 8, 1989. Apparently the person with the key role in forming the Interfront was Vitaly Sobolev, Second Secretary of the LCP CC. Interfront was founded on the basis of the nomenclature of

the Communist Party together with large industrial plants, and it was actively supported by the leaders of the Baltic Military District and the numerous military establishments in general.

Clearly, most Interfront supporters were non-Latvians, but its claims to politically represent all non-Latvians were unfounded. This was shown both by the Latvian Peoples' Forum on December 10–11, 1988 and the election of the USSR People's Deputies in March 1989, in which candidates gained a majority supported by the Popular Front of Latvia. This was made particularly clear in the elections of the Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet on March 18, 1990, in which the question of Latvia's sovereignty was resolved. The supporters of the Interfront were not homogenous. On the one hand, a part of them were openly Stalinist – opponents of any type of reforms – and on the other hand, many Interfront advocates came from technical and economic circles who supported economic reforms, yet were against any efforts to achieve the autonomy of the republic, not to even mention complete secession from the USSR.

The formation of the Popular Front in the summer of 1988 faced many difficulties. During this time, in radical opposition, the meeting to mark the foundation of the Latvian National Independence Movement took place on July 10. This movement did not have anything in common with reform Communism and the goal of greater autonomy within the framework of the USSR. The reform Communists and these radicals only united under one "roof" when the creative unions assumed the role of coordinating the formation of the Popular Front. They were led by Jānis Peters, Jānis Škapars, Sandra Kalniete and others.¹⁶⁸

Overall, the period up to the complete regaining of independence was the culmination of the political role of the intellectuals. The creative unions became the centre around which the opposition to the Soviet regime was organised. The cultural elite was instrumental in actualising the ecological movement (in the fight against construction of the Daugavpils Hydroelectric Station and the Riga metro), the formation of the Popular Front of Latvia, the rehabilitation of the Latvian language and historical legacy (the renewal of the national hymn, flag and symbols), contact between Latvia and the émigré community, the gathering of information about world political and cultural trends, and the overall political emancipation of Latvian society. The creative unions were practically the only legal organisations that held a high level of prestige in the community. They were centres around which

the most active part of society assembled. At the same time, the union's leaders had considerable experience in collaborating with the republic's leadership, which had justifiably been accustomed to regarding the creative unions as the drivers in apprising the LCP CC of the public opinion. The balance between the authorities and the opposition, however, was very conditional in 1988. Neither freedom of speech nor freedom to assemble was guaranteed by law, and the constitutional article that prescribed a governing role to the Communist Party was still in effect. The presence of the radical element in the opposition movement could have given Moscow a good reason for its forcible suppression, which would not have been difficult with the presence of armed forces and other power structures in Latvia.

The LCP tried to see to it that the Popular Front would form similarly to the popular fronts of "people's democracies" of the Eastern Europe – an apolitical formation that would unite various social organisations and operate within the framework of the existing political order. However, the Popular Front of Latvia (PFL) already at formation phase developed outside the official framework. Support groups formed very rapidly. By the time of the foundational congress of the PFL on October 8–9, 1988, support groups united 110,000 people. Of significance was the fact that the Central Committee of the LCP permitted the publication of the PFL newspaper (newsletter) *Atmoda*, which soon became the most popular publication in Latvia.

In the first congress of the PFL, Dainis Īvāns was elected leader of the movement. In the movement's board and council, powerful positions were held by reform Communists, and the first program of the PFL prescribed that the republic attain sovereignty within the framework of the USSR.

As an umbrella organisation that united the most diverse social strata and political groups – from national Communists to anti-Communists and nationalists – the PFL developed into the most influential and determinative political power in the republic. It is estimated that this organisation was supported by approximately 65 percent of the republic's population.¹⁶⁹ The PFL's pressure on the governing authorities aided the passing of a series of important resolutions, for example, the Law for the Appointing of National Language Status to the Latvian Language, the resolution for the restriction of migration and the resolution for the renewal of national symbols. The collaboration of the Popular Fronts in all three of the Baltic Republics also had significant consequences. In May 1989, representatives of the Baltic Popular Front councils began to meet regularly as the Baltic Assembly, and

the leaders of the Baltic popular movements met as the Baltic Council. The example of the Baltic republics influenced the formation of similar movements in other republics. The reputation of the Baltic movements was enhanced by the fact that no bloody conflicts occurred between nationalities nor any other type of disorder.

The appearance of the PFL in the political arena forced Moscow to attempt to increase the authority of the LCP CC by securing within it the national Communists' positions. Jānis Vagris was elected the First Secretary of the LCP CC in October 1988. The majority of Latvian Communists wanted to see Anatolijs Gorbunovs, a supporter of the reforms, elected to this office, but he was appointed Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Presidium. The reformist-minded Vilnis Edvīns Bressis was nominated as Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Reform Communists were also elected to other important positions, yet the Second Secretary of the LCP CC, Sobolev (Moscow's "arm"), who's task was to guarantee order in the republic, retained his position. Since Latvians for the most part concentrated in the Party organisations in rural districts, these radicalised the fastest. On the one hand, the LCP began to disintegrate because many of the party members increasingly did not see the point in belonging to this organisation, and on the other hand the orthodox Communists and national Communists began to politically polarise. This reached a culmination in April 1990, when during the 25th Congress of the LCP the party was split. Most of the LCP remained within the structure of the Soviet Union's Communist Party with Alfrēds Rubiks as its elected First Secretary. The national Communist component of the LCP was led by Ivars Ķezbers and became the Latvian Independent Communist Party.

During summer and autumn 1988, non-Communist political parties began to rapidly take shape. The largest of these was the Latvian National Independence Movement (LNIM), and it became the most influential movement to take a stand for the renewal of Latvian independence. However, the more radical organisations, such as "Helsinki-86", the PFL Radical Bloc and others were fairly critical of the activities of the PFL board and council. In March 1989, these organisations, and eventually LNIM as well, began to form the Citizens' Committees and register the citizens of the Republic of Latvia and their descendents. The Citizens' Committees believed that the Supreme Soviet did not have the right to rule on the matter of Latvia's national independence because it was an institution of the occupying authorities.

This matter could only be decided by the Citizens' Congress, which would be called after the registration of the Republic of Latvia's citizens and their descendants (to June 17, 1940). The PFL leaders were against the registration of citizens and did not nominate their candidates for the Citizens' Congress elections. The PFL leaders' position is understandable, taking into account the fact that the LCP was markedly against the Citizens' Committees, particularly the City of Riga's Party Committee, which had become the centre for the opponents of the national movement. At the same time, the confrontation with the radical wing of the national movement threatened the Popular Front. The position of the PFL no longer met the demands of most of its supporters. Therefore, under the influence of the LNIM, the PFL board turned to its supporters on May 31, 1989 with an appeal to discuss the question of Latvia's complete political and economic independence.

During the Second Congress of the PFL on October 7, 1989, a marked polarisation of opinions appeared between the PFL moderate and radical wings, mostly in the matter regarding the attitude toward the LNIM and Citizens' Committees; there was concern that the PFL could split. Among the advocates of the PFL there were no doubts about the necessity for national independence. Moscow's policy towards more power for the republics, as well as the increased opposition to the people's movement, especially in 1989, had diminished the argument for a confederative union within the USSR. During the PFL Congress, the most heated discussions were not about the necessity of independence, but rather about the correct path towards it. During the Congress, LNIM substantially increased its power over the PFL council – an equal number of councillors were elected from the PFL and LNIM. Although the former leaders of the PFL retained their positions on the board, nevertheless, the results of the elections proved that the influence of the PFL radical wing had grown. At the same time, it was clear that the path to regaining independence as proposed by the Citizens' Committee – the so-called internationally juridical path, which prescribed the renewal of the status quo of June 17, 1940 – was unrealistic, because no one believed that the USSR government would by their own volition recognise Latvia's status as an occupied nation, remove their military and liquidate other effects of the occupation, nor remove the citizens and their descendants who had arrived in Latvia after 1940. Despite international sympathy for the Baltic Republics' aspirations for freedom, international support for this path toward the renewal of independence was not to be

expected. Estonia and Lithuania also viewed this path as unrealistic. At the same time, pressure of the radicals on the more moderate members of the PFL forced the development of greater radicalism and greater clarity of aims of the popular movement. The situation was also complicated by the fact that the USSR Congress of People's Deputies passed Gorbachev's intended plan for withdrawing from the Soviet Union; the law prescribed an order for withdrawing that made it practically impossible.

The new PFL program proposed that the main task of the movement was to achieve independence along a parliamentary path. To do this, it was necessary to win the local soviets' and Supreme Soviet elections. Withdrawal from the USSR was not proposed as a direct goal, but as a transition period up until the complete regaining of independence in which a specific political and economic status had to be attained. What was actually being discussed was a gradual dismantling of Soviet institutions and a transition to a Western-type democracy, following the spirit of the Republic of Latvia, but not setting as a goal the renewal of the Republic of Latvia based on the Constitution of 1922.

In the USSR Congress of People's Deputies elections in March 1989, the candidates supported by the Popular Front gained a majority (80 percent) of the mandates granted to the Latvian SSR. The PFL candidates also gained a significant victory in the local soviets' elections of December 1989, although the PFL suffered defeat in a few local soviets, for example, in the City of Riga's Leningrad (now Kurzeme, or Courland) district and in the City of Daugavpils. The next and most essential step was to achieve victory in the republic's Supreme Soviet elections. In accordance with the Soviet constitution, the Supreme Soviet had legitimate rights to determine Latvia's constitutional status. Since all registered citizens participated in the elections (including the officers of the USSR armed forces), this path could be seen as legitimate by the legislation and government of the USSR. The Citizens' Committees, however, believed that an independent Latvian nation founded in this way would legitimise the 50-year occupation instead of renewing the Republic of Latvia of 1922, and would thus form a new, so-called Second Republic.

The confrontation between the advocates of these differing paths in late 1989 and early 1990 was a real threat to the achieving of independence. If the Citizens' Committees announced a boycott of the elections, this could reduce important votes for the PFL candidates. Of note too were the

so-called “third powers” that also nominated candidates, and the Democratic bloc proclaimed that deputy candidates who were communists should not be supported. In turn, the Citizens’ Committees did not have enough influence and power to realistically take control and actualise the “internationally juridical path”. Nevertheless, in early 1990 compromise was achieved. The radical wing resolved to join forces with the PFL in order to win in the elections, and, in turn, the PFL clearly stated that its goal was the renewal of independence.

In the elections of March 18, 1990, the Popular Front’s and supported by the PFL delegates gained 116 mandates of the 170 elected deputies’ seats as early as the first round of elections. After the second round, the PFL and the supporting delegates gained a total of 122 deputy mandates out of 201, and, in turn, nine more elected deputies joined the PFL faction. Thus the PFL could safely assume a total of 131 votes.¹⁷⁰

Before the newly elected Supreme Soviet convened for the first session, there was discussion about what kind of declaration of independence to announce. At that time, Lithuania had already declared complete independence (March 11), and Estonia had announced a period of transition to independence (March 30). Several options were suggested. The most minimal prescribed the announcement of settling on the path toward the regaining of independence, and the most maximal option prescribed the immediate declaration of independence. As a result of the discussion, the maximal option was accepted, yet it was softened, prescribing a period of transition. The Constitution of 1922 was renewed, yet simultaneously also suspended, except for the articles that prescribed the nation’s constitutional foundation which could only be changed with a referendum. It was established that the Latvian SSR Constitution and other laws that were not in conflict with the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 6th articles of the 1922 Constitution could be applied during the transition period. The Supreme Soviet was recognised as the highest authority during the transition period.

May 3, 1990 to August 21, 1991

On May 3, 1990 the Supreme Soviet convened for their first session, and A. Gorbunovs was elected Chairman of the Soviet. Two factions were formed – PFL (131 deputies) and “Equal Rights” (57 deputies), which was connected to the Interfront. The next day – May 4 – voting for the declaration of

independence took place. Before the voting, the "Equal Rights" faction left the room. One hundred and thirty-eight deputies voted for the declaration and one deputy abstained.¹⁷¹ From this moment, the Latvian SSR became the Republic of Latvia. On May 7, the Supreme Soviet appointed Ivars Godmanis Chairman of the Council of Ministers. The formation of the government had to overcome certain problems, because the PFL had put all its efforts into achieving victory in the parliamentary elections, and in addition there was a lack of experience in the actual organisation of the administrative process. Up until May 1990, the political process, and, along with it, the PFL mass actions and the entire task of overall organisation was connected with various types of symbolic campaigns – the fight for the renewal of national symbols and commemorative days, mass rallies, and so on. Now power had to be seized. Problems were also caused by the fact that the existing political parties (except for the Communist Party) were either in early development or they were inexperienced in governing. As a result, Godmanis's government was made up of professionals, that is, high-ranking functionaries from the previous government who were loyal to the new nation.

The majority of Latvians received the declaration of independence with enthusiasm. Data from sociological polls show that in September 1990, Latvia's independence from the USSR was supported by 85 percent of ethnic Latvians, 22 percent of Russians and 35 percent of citizens of other nationalities. It must be noted that the non-Latvians' support of Latvia's independence grew in subsequent months, and in 1991 had reached 35 percent.¹⁷² The fact that a considerable portion of the non-Latvians supported the policies of the PFL was also confirmed by the results of the elections. The positions of the PFL in the national question, which had been accepted in the Second Congress, were also the most acceptable to the majority of the population. Interfront and the supporting it the pro-Soviet and chauvinistic powers in Russia could only be in confrontation with the goals of the majority of the Latvian people. Clearly, the non-Latvians were not attracted by the option offered by the Citizens' Committees.

The opposition of the LCP, Interfront and the military to Latvian independence was made manifest by the next day after M. Gorbachev signed a decree on May 14 announcing that Estonia's, Latvia's and Lithuania's independence declarations were not in accordance with the constitution of the USSR and the law of April 3, 1990 "On the Order in Which Matters Must Be Solved that are Related to the Withdrawal of the United Republics from

the USSR" as therefore invalid. On May 20, the Committee for the Protection of the USSR and the Latvian SSR Constitutions and Civil Rights was formed – an umbrella organisation that united all the organisations against Latvian independence – Interfront, the Baltic Soldier's Union, the Republic Council of War, Labour, Armed Forces Veterans and Soldiers – Internationalists, the Republic Strike Committee, the Republic of Latvia's Supreme Soviet faction "Equal Rights" and the Interregional Deputy Group *Sojuz*. A. Rubiks, First Secretary of the LCP CC, became the chairman of the organisation.¹⁷³ On May 14-15, the supporters of Interfront – mostly students of military schools in civilian dress – tried to break into the building of the Supreme Soviet. The militia and OMON (a special militia unit) succeeded in stopping this attempt only with great difficulty. The question of militia's (police) loyalty to the government of the Republic of Latvia also developed very harshly. In the end, the militia as a whole accepted the new Minister of the Interior, Aloizis Vaznis, yet the loyalty of many officers was doubtful, and some soon transferred to the side of the opponents of independence. The most significant power structure that became a strike force of pro-Soviet forces was Riga's OMON. The Latvian SSR Prosecutor's Office also split, with most displaying loyalty to the Republic of Latvia, but with some notifying that they would only comply with the USSR Prosecutor's Office and USSR laws. Paradoxically, the Latvian SSR KGB (KGB) declared loyalty, yet it was not guaranteed, therefore this institution – the bulwark of the Soviet regime most hated by society – continued to operate and the KGB chairman was included in the composition of the government.

A period began of a marked increase in confrontation and extremism on the part of the opponents to independence. Although Moscow did not officially acknowledge support of extremist campaigns, nevertheless, tension in the republic always increased synchronously with each recurring wave of confrontation between the Kremlin and the government of the Republic of Latvia. The Latvian government devoted its energies primarily to beginning discussions about the terms with which Latvia could withdraw from the USSR. Of essential importance during this stage was the Chairman of the Russian SFSR Supreme Soviet Boris Yeltsin's support for the Baltic republics' drive for independence.

The Latvian émigré community abroad perceived the declaration of May 4, 1990 with a certain distrust and mixed feelings. The community was of the opinion that the Supreme Soviet, which operated according to the

laws of the USSR, was an organ of the occupying powers and did not have the right to decide on Latvia's independence. It was also afraid that the announced transition period would be followed by other compromises, which would alienate the renewing of independence. It distrusted the considerable proportion of former Communists among the deputies of the Supreme Soviet and at the governing bodies of the PFL.

Émigré Latvians were more sympathetic to the Citizens' Congress and other organisations that represented the "internationally judicial" path.¹⁷⁴ It was only with time that the émigré organisations concluded that the Citizens' Committees would not be capable of taking over power and that the political reality that had formed during the years of occupation had to be reckoned with. At the same time, people in Latvia placed huge hopes on Latvians from the West, for their experience of working in a democratic system and market economy. Various congresses and meetings were organised to provide the opportunity for émigré and local Latvian representatives from various sectors to interact and unite. Many émigré Latvians offered their skills and knowledge to Latvia.

The actual independence of the Republic of Latvia was impossible without international recognition. The positions of both Moscow and the West, however, embittered Latvians. The policy of *perestroika* begun by Gorbachev did not mean the review of the official Soviet position on the Baltic question. According to the Soviet Union, the Baltic question was resolved and with no need to for review. In December 1989, the USSR Congress of People's Deputies reluctantly acknowledged the existence of the secret treaties of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and condemned them. Yet it did not acknowledge the occupation. Moscow hesitated in beginning negotiations with the Baltic republics, and, when they finally occurred, the negotiations yielded almost nothing. Moscow put more and more hopes on the signing of a new union law. The draft new union law was published on November 26, 1990, and this caused a wave of protests in the Baltic republics. In Latvia, more than one million signatures against the draft law were gathered. Nevertheless, Moscow did not lose hope in both the signing of the new union law with the other republics and in achieving the joining up of the Baltic republics to the new union.

The attitude of the West was not very positive either. After the popular movements in the Baltic republics had proposed as their goal the renewal of independence, the attitude of the Western nations toward their drive for

independence was not unequivocal. The Western nations wanted to support Gorbachev and his course of democratisation. They believed that first the "main" questions had to be solved – the reduction in nuclear arms and the formation of an international security system – and that the Baltic question was secondary and could wait. The West also worried that if the Baltic States regained independence, it could intensify the disintegration of the USSR, which could result in violence and civil war in many regions of the crumbling empire. At the same time, the non-violent path for the regaining of independence aroused the affinity of the Western governments and public opinion. Undoubtedly, all of this restricted the Kremlin's opportunities to violently halt the secession of the Baltic States from the USSR, and pressured Western politicians to not reject the Baltic States but rather to offer them if not material and actual political support, than at least moral support.

In the period from the acceptance of the declaration on May 4, 1990 to August of 1991, the opponents of independence directed their efforts towards gaining Gorbachev's approval for the defeat of the Republic of Latvia, particularly after he was granted authority to implement presidential extraordinary administration in September 1990. It is no surprise that immediately after this OMON took over control of the Press Building in Riga, under the pretence of protecting the property of the Communist Party. As winter approached, the number of incidents increased – explosions (without victims) and the defilement of monuments. Pressure increased on all three Baltic republics, especially in Lithuania and Latvia. On December 6, the All-Latvian Public Rescue Committee openly appealed to Gorbachev to implement presidential administration.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Latvia implemented procedures in order to form a democratic Latvia based on the principles of a market economy. Many laws and resolutions were passed that substantially changed the economic situation: for example, on land reform, stock companies, the free buying and selling of currency in the republic's territory, and the lifting of restrictions that affected foreigners' freedom to travel through the republic's territory. A customs office was also established.

The confrontation with the opponents of independence culminated in January 1991. On the night of January 12, 1991, when Soviet military units attacked the television tower in Vilnius, 14 civilians were killed and 110 were injured. As soon as Riga received information about the attack, Popular Front of Latvia Chairman Dainis Īvāns headed to the radio station and at

4:45 a.m. called for the city's population to protect the strategically important buildings.¹⁷⁵ On January 13, about 500,000 people took to the streets to protest against the violence that had taken place in Lithuania. Bridges and the access roads to the most important buildings were blocked by trucks and agricultural machinery, which was sent from rural areas. People from all over Latvia arrived to guard the barricades. Volunteers helped feed those that stood guard on the barricades. The barricades in Riga were defended until January 27.

In Latvia, the Latvian Communist Party, with the support of the Soviet Army's Commanders, was prepared to overthrow the government. The Party's Central Committee, meeting in a plenary session on January 13, requested that the Supreme Soviet should be dissolved, for the Latvian government to step down, and for all power to be handed over to the All-Latvian Public Rescue Committee. OMON forces attacked the defenders of the barricades multiple times, and during one of these attacks a person was killed. The most significant attack by OMON forces was on the Latvian Ministry of the Interior on January 20, when five people were killed.

The Russian Federation's Supreme Soviet Chairman Boris Yeltsin played an important role, taking a stand for the ending of bloodshed in the Baltic republics. He arrived in Tallinn on January 13 to sign bilateral relations treaties with Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

Of course, the barricades and trucks would not have been an obstacle for the Soviet tanks, but they played an essential role in two respects. First, they showed the leaders of the Soviet Union and especially people all over the world that the citizens of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were organised and prepared to sacrifice their lives in the name of independence. The overthrowing of the elected parliament and government could not be done without bloodshed. Second, the Barricade Days proved that the opponents of independence were not capable of this kind of sacrifice.

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VII. THE RESTORATION AND STRENGTHENING OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA (1991 – 2004)

7.1. THE RESTORATION OF LATVIA'S INDEPENDENCE AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM

The restoration of full independence

After the barricades the situation was still uncertain. An all-Union referendum on retaining the USSR had been announced on March 17, 1991. The leaders of the Baltic Republics refused to take part in the referendum. In Latvia, the referendum was organised by the Latvian Communist Party (LCP) with the assistance of the Baltic Military District with 501,280 people participating, and 95 percent voting to keep the Union (in the USSR as a whole 80 percent of inhabitants citizens took part with 76 percent in favour). The Baltic Republics organised alternative referendums. Latvia's referendum – an all-Latvia plebiscite on independence – was held on March 3, with 87.5 percent of eligible voters participating in the plebiscite and 73.8 percent voting for independence.¹ As a result, Mikhail Gorbachev was forced to start talks with the Baltic Republics, and these started with Latvia on April 11. The talks were difficult, especially in July when the new Union Agreement treaty was simultaneously being prepared for signing. Although the Baltic Republics had clearly stated that they would not be part of the new Union, obviously Moscow still believed that such a possibility existed. At the same time military pressure was constantly being applied, both officially – with threats of sanctions if the conscription of soldiers into the Soviet armed forces was not ensured – and unofficially through OMON

attacks on customs posts (the bloodiest of these attacks took place on July 31 at Medininkai in Lithuania, when seven people were killed and one seriously wounded), organised protests by social anti-independence organisations, propaganda from the *Sodruzhestvo* radio station and similar activities. Despite these attempts at destabilisation, it was clear that sooner or later Moscow would have to agree to the independence of the Baltic republics, although the separation process would be long and difficult. There were various forecasts about how long it could take, but in July 1991 few could have imagined that just a few weeks later everything would be changed so radically.

The attempted coup in Moscow on August 19, organised to prevent the signing of the new Union Agreement treaty and save the Soviet Union, dealt a fatal blow to the Union and showed that it had in fact already collapsed. In Latvia, the LCP's Central Committee First Secretary Alfrēds Rubiks already announced in the morning that he supported the coup. The commander of the Baltic Military District Fyodor Kuzmin informed Council of Ministers Chairman Ivars Godmanis that he had been designated as the implementer of martial law in Latvia. By the evening of August 20, army special forces and OMON had seized the radio, the TV building, the international telephone exchange and other sites. Latvia was almost totally cut off from the outside world. The main events took place in Moscow where the tough stance of Boris Yeltsin, Chairman of Russia's Supreme Council, did not allow the putsch to succeed. However, in Latvia Parliamentarians also had to decide where they stood. At 1:10 p.m. on August 21, as OMON troops with four armoured personnel carriers tried to attack the barricades on Dome Square to break through to the Parliament building, the Supreme Council passed the Constitutional Law on the status of the state of the Republic of Latvia. This cancelled the transition period and declared the Republic of Latvia as restored *de facto*. An hour later the armoured personnel carriers unexpectedly abandoned Dome Square. It later turned out that this had happened because the Moscow coup had collapsed.

The very rapid process of recognising the independence of the Baltic States began the next day. On August 22, Latvia's independence was recognised by Lithuania and Estonia. The first Western country to recognise Latvia's independence (and also Estonia's and Lithuania's) was Iceland (August 22). A day later, Denmark and Finland followed, as did the Russian Federation. Yeltsin's position significantly helped the avalanche-like process of interna-

tional recognition. On August 26, the Baltic States were recognised by the countries of the European Community. On September 6, recognition was given by the USSR State Council, then the supreme state organ in the USSR. On September 17, Latvia was admitted to the United Nations. By September 18, the Republic of Latvia had been recognised by 79 countries.

The problem of constitutional inheritance

Without doubt, in the period since May 4, 1990, much had been done to lay the foundation for an independent state. However, there was also much that had been impossible to do, because USSR structures were a hindrance, a lack of experience, or tasks were delayed to in anticipation of a lengthy transition period.²

One of the significant issues during the discussions in the early 1990s was whether the Republic of Latvia was a direct continuation of the pre-war state, or whether it was essentially a new state with an emphasis on the links with the first republic whose existence was violently terminated. This issue had relevance both from the aspect of international law and domestic politics. The majority of the world's non-Communist countries had throughout the post war years not recognised the incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR. Now with renewed diplomatic relations with the Baltic States, they recognised the legal continuity of these states, but not all countries did so. Albania, China, Cuba, Russia (the legal inheritor of the USSR) and several other countries did not recognise the legal continuity of the Baltic States. Romania restored diplomatic relations with reference to the friendly relations that had existed between the two countries before World War II. Poland acted similarly. Sweden, which had recognised the fact that the Baltic States had ceased to exist, recognised Latvia as a newly created country. In this way the form in which Latvia's sovereignty was recognised and diplomatic relations were restored was determined in the first instance by the respective country's earlier attitude toward the incorporation of the Baltic States into the USSR. The stance of several international organisations was also contradictory. The United Nations Security Council recognised that the Baltic States had regained their independence, but their membership fees at the UN were calculated as a proportion of the USSR's payments to this organisation. Latvia also had to join the International Labour Organisation anew, even though Latvia had been one of the founding countries of this organisation

in 1921. At the same time, the Council of Europe recognised the legal continuity of the Baltic States.³

The fact that the major Western countries recognized the international legal continuity of the Baltic States allowed a range of issues important to the Baltic to be resolved. One of these was the return of the Baltic States' pre-war diplomatic representation buildings in foreign countries, or if this was not possible then to receive compensation for them. A second was the so-called Baltic gold issue, respectively, the gold and foreign currency reserves of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania that had been deposited in foreign banks in 1940. Latvia's gold and currency reserves were held in US, French, British (the greatest share) and Swiss banks. In 1967, the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Alexei Kosygin had reached an agreement with the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson to use the Baltic States' (including Latvia's) gold deposited in the Bank of England to pay British shareholders for British properties nationalised by the Soviet Union, and to allow the USSR to purchase goods in England under the auspices of the English and Russian bilateral trade agreement.⁴ The USA and Switzerland had refused to hand over the Baltic States' deposits to the USSR. Now the Baltic deposits were returned to their lawful owners.

The legal basis for the international recognition of Latvia's sovereignty also had a direct connection with the validity of agreements signed by the Republic of Latvia up to 1940, especially the Tartu, Riga and Moscow peace treaties which set out the Republic of Latvia's borders, especially considering that the Latvia-Russia border was changed in 1944. Russia's diplomats asserted that the USSR had not occupied the Baltic States and that the 1920 peace treaty between Latvia and Soviet Russia had only historic significance.⁵ For its part, Latvia considered that the principle of the legal continuity of the state meant that the peace treaty was still in force. This did not mean, however, that there could not be negotiations concerning the border. Russia's diplomats have postulated that in 1940 international law did not condemn the use of force. However, many international law experts indicate that this was not the case, and that the use of violent force was also proscribed by the then valid bilateral agreements between Latvia and the USSR. Russia has consistently refused to discuss the issue of the 1920 peace treaty. Latvia's attempts to activate this issue were expressed in the Supreme Council's decision of January 22, 1992 on the non-recognition of annexation of the town of Abrene and six parishes in Abrene district, and

the Saeima's Declaration on Latvia's Occupation of August 28, 1996 that emphasised the importance of the 1920 peace treaty for determining the eastern border. These efforts by Latvia generated an extremely negative response in Russia, where they were qualified as Latvia's "territorial ambitions" against the Russian Federation.

Latvia had to forgo the hope of having the issue discussed at international talks after the Estonian government announced that it would be ready to agree on the existing eastern border without reference to the peace treaty between Estonia and Soviet Russia. Latvia followed Estonia's example and declined to put forward the issue of the 1920 peace treaty on February 1997 declared its readiness to sign a technical agreement.⁶ This was a diplomatic victory for Russia.⁶ This was also a very serious concession by the Estonian and Latvian governments. Large segments of society assessed it very negatively and the government was severely criticised. Initially, this concession activated international talks and opened the possibility of marking a temporary border between the two countries and preparing a border agreement. However, although the agreement has been ready for signing since 1997, this has still not been done due to Russia's unwillingness. In spring 1998, this deferment of signing was explained as being due to the crisis in bilateral relations caused by Latvia's Citizenship Law, and later blamed on the general attitude toward Russian-speaking residents of Latvia. The border agreement with Estonia was also not signed. It is also possible that initially the delay in signing the border agreement was due to the hope of the Russian elite to slow the acceptance of the Baltic States into NATO. However, the agreement was not signed even after it became clear that NATO (and also the European Union) did not consider the lack of a border agreement to be a barrier to membership in this organisation.

The issue of legal continuity also had a domestic political aspect, first because it was a question of the legitimacy of the existing legislative power – the Supreme Council – and second, because it was about citizenship and property rights issues. Of all the Baltic States, Latvia stood most consistently by the legal continuity principle by renewing the 1922 Constitution. Estonia adopted a new constitution in 1992. Lithuania initially renewed the 1938 constitution (rescinding a few articles regarding an authoritarian regime), but then adopted a new constitution in 1992. Both countries declared the principle of legal continuity in their constitutions (Lithuania with reference to the state's historical roots in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.)

Latvia chose another path. The 1922 Constitution was formally renewed on August 21, 1991, but in reality this was only instituted with the 5th Saeima in July 1993; the Supreme Council (formerly Supreme Soviet) as elected in 1990 was in power until the elections for the 5th Saeima on June 5-6, 1993. It had, of course, gone through some changes, because Soviet/Russian military service-men lost their deputies' seats, as had deputies who had actively opposed Latvia's independence. After the Saeima elections the power structure system of government stipulated by the 1922 Constitution was renewed. Discussions on adopting a new constitution continued up to autumn 1992. A working group for a transitional constitution had already been established on July 31, 1990. The group was entitled also with an additional task was to develop a new citizenship conception. The draft transitional constitution was ready in summer 1991 and it is quite possible that it would have been adopted if not for the August putsch. A draft Citizenship Law had also been developed, but it was not tabled because a majority of the Popular Front of Latvia (PFL) faction decided that only the Saeima would have the right to adopt a Citizenship Law.

The citizenship issue

After the August 21 situation, the balance of political power significantly changed within the PFL faction as well. First, after May 4, 1990 the political centre had already shifted from the PFL Council and Board to the Supreme Council. All of the Board's members (except for Sandra Kalniete) had been elected as deputies, and legislative or government work drew their attention away from the PFL. The composition of the PFL Council and Board changed so that radical deputies were in the majority. However, these developments went unnoticed until August, because pressure from the USSR and the need to find compromises meant that the influence of the PFL's liberal wing represented by Godmanis and Īvāns was maintained. After August 21, these limitations disappeared, and by September it was clear that the principles for implementing the citizenship law put forward, for example, in an PFL Council decision of July 15, 1989 – that citizenship be granted to all permanent residents who had lived in Latvia for ten years⁷ and were loyal to the state of Latvia⁷ – could not be realised. On September 12, 1991 the PFL faction in the Parliament split, forming the faction "*Satversme*" (Constitution). It asserted that the state of Latvia had to be renewed and

formed on the basis of the 1922 Constitution, and therefore, the citizenship issue should be resolved by the Saeima rather than the Supreme Council (SC). To elect the Saeima, however, a body of legitimate citizens had to be determined.

On October 15, 1991 the SC adopted the decision "On the Renewal of the Rights of Republic of Latvia Citizens and the Basic Regulations for Naturalisation". In accordance with this decision, a Latvian citizen includes anyone who was a Republic of Latvia citizen on June 17, 1940, along with their descendants, who at the time of the passing of the decision is living in Latvia and registered by July 1, 1992. Later on the law was also applied to citizens and their descendants living in foreign countries, and the registration deadline was extended. Additionally, Western Latvians gained the right to double citizenship.

Although the majority of persons who were citizens in accordance with this law were Latvians (about 78 percent), the decision was not ethnically discriminatory. Citizenship went to non-Latvians who themselves or whose parents or grandparents had been citizens up to 1940 irrespective of nationality and language proficiency. On the other hand, it did not give citizenship rights to about 40,000 Latvians from Russia who moved to Latvia after 1940.

The decision caused a negative reaction in those potential non-citizens who had supported the PFL and Latvia's independence and now felt pushed aside. In combination with other developments – the collapse of large industrial enterprises and kolkhozes and sovkhoses, rising unemployment, a decline in the status of a large part of the intelligentsia, the diminishing role of the Russian language and other factors – non-Latvians felt increasing alienation from the state. This was strengthened by uncertainty over the future, because the citizenship law was only adopted three years later, on July 22, 1994. A bitter struggle developed around the adoption of the law. The law was initially passed on June 21, 1994, but its embedded regulation on the naturalisation quota – 0.1 percent of the number of existing citizens per year – drew serious criticism from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Russia. President Guntis Ulmanis refused to proclaim the law and it was sent back to be tabled a second time. In the new version of the law the quotas were removed, but instead they provided for a so-called "windows" system, i.e. every year people of a certain age would have the right to submit an application to naturalise, with naturalisation starting with the youngest age groups. The law as a whole

met the requirements of the OSCE and other organisations. In accordance with this law (with amendments adopted in 1995), citizens of Latvia were recognised as being citizens of Latvia before the occupation and their descendants; naturalised citizens; and some other categories. Other permanent residents of Latvia who had registered with the Register of Residents had the right to obtain citizenship through naturalisation. The Citizenship Law gave the opportunity to naturalise to persons who had lived in Latvia for more than five years, who had legal sources of income, were proficient in Latvian, were familiar with the constitution and swore an oath of loyalty.⁸

Naturalisation began on February 1, 1995. The Naturalisation Board was established to implement it. On April 28, 1995 a law was adopted on former citizens of the USSR without the citizenship of another state, recognising them as permanent residents of Latvia with the lawful right to reside in the country. Upon starting work, the Naturalisation Board estimated that by the end of the 20th century around 200,000 non-citizens would become citizens of Latvia, but in reality the rate of naturalisation was very slow. Many who had the right to naturalise did not exercise it, including almost half of the Latvians from Russia. In early 1998, of 150,000 persons with the right to naturalise, only 11,000 did so.⁹ Although international institutions criticised Latvia for various unjustified restrictions on non-citizens' rights (for example bans on working as lawyers, pharmacists, aircraft service personnel, etc. and restrictions on rights to own land), which were gradually removed following this criticism, non-citizenship status did not have such a large effect on the lives of the majority to prompt them to naturalise. Studies revealed that other barriers included insufficient proficiency in Latvian, political passivity, and for young men a desire not to serve in the army. Many non-citizens also held the unjustified view that obtaining citizenship was very complex.

Both the OSCE and the European Union (EU) criticised Latvia's slow naturalisation rates. There were intense discussions in Latvia in 1997/98 about whether to amend the Citizenship Law. In the Saeima, the "Latvia's Way" faction, the National Harmony Party and the Democratic Party "Saimnieks" supported amending the Citizenship Law, while "For Fatherland and Freedom/ LNNK" (TB/LNNK) was categorically opposed. The parties of the governing coalition had agreed not to amend the law before the end of the mandate of the 6th Saeima, and so discussions were complicated by the possibility that amending the law could bring down the government (at the

time the Prime Minister was Guntars Krasts of "For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK"). President Ulmanis was also a supporter of the view that it was necessary to remove the "windows" system and grant rights to automatic citizenship to non-citizens' children who were born in Latvia. Opinion polls showed that a majority of Latvia's citizens supported granting citizenship to the children of non-citizens.¹⁰

The new Citizenship Law was passed on June 22, 1998, removing the "windows" system and granting citizenship rights to the children born in Latvia of non-citizens. "For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK" was against the changes and managed to have the issue put before a referendum. However, 53 percent of voters supported the new version of the Citizenship Law. Naturalisation rates increased. In 1998, 4,439 people were naturalised, in 1999 the figure was 12,427, while in 2000 it stood at 14,900.¹¹ However, in subsequent years the rate of naturalisation slowed. According to data from the Naturalisation Board, as of January 1, 2004, 69,288 people had obtained citizenship of Latvia through naturalisation¹² since the beginning of the naturalisation process in 1995.¹² In early 2005, there were still 452,033 non-citizens.¹³ In 2003 and 2004, naturalisation rates increased, which can obviously be explained by Latvia's accession to the EU. But the citizenship registration of children born in Latvia to non-citizens has been slow. In addition to the above-mentioned factors for the failure to stimulate naturalisation, there may also be some influence from the movements that position themselves as the defenders of non-citizens. They demanded that Russian should be made the second official language and that the so-called "zero variant" for citizenship should be introduced. These demands are also supported by Moscow. For some non-citizens, this has created unrealistic hopes of automatically receiving citizenship. During protests in spring 2004 against the new Education Law, which provides for the partial transition to Latvian language instruction in minority schools, opponents of the reform clearly said that their main objectives are to see Russian made the second state language and the introduction of the citizenship "zero variant". However, at the same time in April 2004 the number of naturalisation hopefuls increased before EU accession.

The Supreme Council decision of October 15, 1991 was significant in that it allowed the holding of the 5th Saeima elections by defining with sufficient clarity the group of people eligible to take part in the election.

This did not contravene the legal continuity principle and silenced arguments from the opposition both within and outside Parliament. They had doubted the right of the Supreme Council to hold such elections, because, as it was claimed, these could only take place after the withdrawal of Russian forces and the acknowledgement of the fact of occupation and the rectifying of its consequences. Given that Estonia and Lithuania had resolved the problems of the legitimacy of power, Latvia's dithering would not promote political stability and the transition to democracy and a market economy. The fact that this was the right decision was shown again by the fact that part of the opposition outside the parliament, which was mostly composed of the most radical citizens movement activists, decided to refrain from obstructing the government and to take part in the 5th Saeima elections.

There was a widely held view that the 1934 coup by Kārlis Ulmanis was provoked by the inadequacies of Latvia's Parliamentary system, especially the lack of a percentage barrier for party lists to gain representation in the Saeima and also the highly democratic procedures for forming and registering the lists. The law "On the 5th Saeima Elections" adopted on October 20, 1992 was in essence a slightly amended and expanded version of the 1922 "Law on Saeima Elections". The most important amendment was that the Supreme Council introduced a 4 percent barrier required for a list to receive deputies' seats. The 6th Saeima elections held in October 1995 saw the introduction of an even higher barrier – 5 percent. The elections for the 5th Saeima of the Republic of Latvia took place on June 5-6, 1993, with 1,118,316 voters or 89.9 percent of eligible Latvian citizens participating. The list of candidates put forward numbered 23 of which 8 gained seats. The largest number of seats – 36 – was won by the centrist alliance "Latvia's Way",¹⁴ which brought together many of the country's best known politicians and also some prominent émigré activists. In subsequent Saeima elections no party has managed to win such a large number of seats. Saeima seats were also won by the right wing parties, the "National Independence Movement" and "For Fatherland and Freedom", the Christian Democrats Union and the renewed Latvian Farmers Union, as well as the centre left parties, the Democratic Centre Party and "Harmony for Latvia – Economic Rebirth". Seven seats were also won by the political organisation "Equality", the most left wing force in the 5th Saeima. Anatolijs Gorbunovs became the Saeima Speaker.

Full renewal of the constitution

On July 6, 1993 the Saeima met for its first sitting and fully renewed the Republic of Latvia Constitution. In 1998, the Constitution was expanded by another section that guaranteed the freedom of citizens and made Latvian the official state language. The new section was based on the Constitutional Law on the Rights and Obligations of a Citizen and a Person adopted in December 1991. It reinforces personal freedoms – the right to life, freedom, inviolability of the person, human dignity and respect, free movement; political freedoms – freedom of thought, conscience and religion, rights to free speech and association; and social rights – rights to property, payment for work, social security, medical care and education.

The Supreme Council surrendered its powers. Valdis Birkavs (“Latvia’s Way”) was entrusted with forming the Cabinet of Ministers. The Council of Ministers led by Ivars Godmanis had been working since May 7, 1990 (it was reorganised on November 19, 1991). Unfortunately, the subsequent governments could not boast of such stability. On July 7, the Saeima elected Guntis Ulmanis (the grandson of K. Ulmanis’ brother) as State President. He fulfilled these functions for two terms, until June 1999. The period of G. Ulmanis’ presidency was linked with the resolution of several complex problems, including successfully seeing the withdrawal of Russian military forces, the adoption of the Citizenship Law, the political crisis of spring 1998 connected with the need to amend the Citizenship Law, deteriorating relations between Russia and Latvia, and the evaluation of Latvia’s history during World War II.

On June 17, 1999 the Saeima elected as President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of Montreal and an important contributor to the study of Latvian folk songs. She has won general recognition for her skills at representing the country both abroad and at home. The first two presidents of the renewed Latvia have shown that the institution of the presidency has an important role in maintaining political stability within the country and shaping the country’s image in the international arena. Although there have been calls to amend the Constitution to have a President elected by the people rather than the Parliament, this has not attracted general public support.

The President of Latvia has primarily representative functions without

political responsibility. Nevertheless, the president is granted rights to intervene during crises connected with controversial laws and decisions. One of the president's most important functions is selecting the candidate for Prime Minister and calling on him/her to form a government. A second important function is proclaiming laws. The president has the right to send laws passed by the Saeima back for further review. Latvia's presidents have used these rights on numerous occasions, for example in the course of adopting the Citizenship Law.

The elections for the 6th Saeima took place on September 30 and October 1, 1995, with 71.9 percent of eligible citizens of Latvia voting. Candidate lists numbered 19, of which 9 won seats. "Latvia's Way" won 17 seats, the Democratic Party "Saimnieks" - 18, the "People's Movement for Latvia" - 16, "For Fatherland and Freedom" - 14, while 8 seats each were gained by the combined list of the Latvian Farmers Union, the Latvian Christian Democrats and the Latgallia Democratic Party, the Latvia Unity Party, and also the joint ticket of the "National Conservative Party LNNK" and the Green Party. The National Harmony Party won 6 seats, and the Latvian Socialist Party - 5.¹⁵ The first Speaker of the 6th Saeima was Ilga Kreituse, a Doctor of History, while from September 26, 1996 the post was held by Alfrēds Čepānis.

Before the 7th Saeima elections the Constitution was amended so that for the first time in the history of the state of Latvia elections would be held over one day - October 3, 1998. For these elections 71.9 percent of eligible Latvian citizens took part in the vote, and 21 candidate lists were put forward of which 6 gained seats. The People's Party won the most seats - 24, followed by "Latvia's Way" - 21, the alliance "For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK" - 17, the National Harmony Party - 16, the Latvian Union of Social Democrats - 14, and the New Party - 8.¹⁶ The Speaker of the 7th Saeima was Jānis Straume.

The 8th Saeima elections were held on October 5, 2002, when 71.51 percent of eligible voters took part. Of 20 candidate lists put forward, 6 parties and party alliances passed the 5 percent barrier and won seats. The "New Era" party won 26 seats, "For Human Rights in a United Latvia" - 25, the People's Party - 20, the Union of Greens and Farmers - 12, Latvia's First Party - 10, and "For Fatherland and Freedom/ LNNK" - 7.¹⁷ The Speaker of the 8th Saeima is Ingrīda Ūdre.

The election results show that in the 6th to 8th Saeima elections the voter turnout was lower than in the 5th, but the trend is fairly high and very stable.

At the same time they also show that the majority of parties and political alliances have been unable to retain the support of voters over the long term. Opinion polls show that during the struggle to have Latvia's independence recognised, the ratings of the parliament and government were high. After the restoration of independence the ratings of the parliament and government have fallen quite rapidly to relatively low levels compared with, for example, the institution of the state presidency and the Constitutional Court. To a certain extent this reflects the difficulties of politics in a parliamentary republic, where putting together a government is often a complex and tiring process, while its freedom of action is limited by the interests and programs of the members of the governing coalition.¹⁸

The renewal of the Constitution fundamentally resolved one of the most significant problems for the state administration system under the Soviet system – separating legislative and executive functions and developing the independent power of the courts.

Government functions are performed by the Prime Minister, who forms the cabinet of Ministers. The government must receive the approval of the Saeima and is responsible for its activities before the Saeima. Although the Saeima election results indicate that left-oriented and left-wing populist politics have certain popularity amongst Latvia's voters, the governing coalitions since 1993 have mostly been dominated by right-wing parties. Despite the short life spans of parties and alliances elected to the Saeima, the workings of minority governments and the inability of the parties in the Saeima to always agree on forming a government – in 1996, for example, a government was only formed when the third prime ministerial candidate was an independent, Andris Šķēle – political stability and continuity has been maintained. "Latvia's Way" participated in all of the governing coalitions from 1993 to 2002, and ministers from this party ran the foreign ministry throughout the period. Ten governments have been in power since 1993, including that of Aigars Kalvītis formed in December 2004. It is made up of the People's Party, "New Era", Latvia's First Party and the Union of Greens and Farmers.

Adopting the Constitution and creating the supreme state administrative institutions did not resolve all the problems of legal continuity. One of the most significant problems was the compliance of laws and legal institutions with the Constitution. Until the development of a Republic of Latvia codex or another legislative act, the following remained valid after the

restoration of independence: the Latvian SSR Criminal Codex, the Criminal Process Codex, the Civil Codex, the Labour Law Codex and all other codices and laws. Naturally, the body of laws of the Latvian SSR was intended for a totally different political and social arrangement and was hard to adapt to the new conditions even with amendments. There were also heated discussions about whether the laws of the pre-war Republic of Latvia were suitable for contemporary circumstances or whether all codices and laws had to be created anew, especially in relation to renewing the 1937 Civil Law. The idea that the Civil Law can be applied (with amendments) to present day circumstances won the debate.¹⁹ At the same time, not all of the laws required today existed in pre-war Latvia, and some laws do not meet modern needs. The majority of other laws and codices were created anew and this created issues due to a lack of harmonisation between laws or deficiencies in them, while at times the legislators failed to understand which laws were needed more quickly.

One inheritance from the Soviet system was the right of the prosecutor to oversee the observance of legality in a court, which contradicted the principle of judicial independence. This provision was cancelled. At the same time the institution of the sworn advocate was created, which made advocates equal members of the judicial process. Appeals courts were introduced to the court system. Three levels of courts were created: regional (city) courts, district courts and the Supreme Court. Also passed were the Land Book Law and the Notaries Law.

An important role in the creation of a democratic system was played by the Constitutional Court, which was founded in 1996. Article 6 Section 2 of the May 4, 1990 Declaration of the Restoration of the Independence of the Republic of Latvia mentioned the need to establish a Constitutional Court. However, in reality the issue began to be addressed in 1993, although the Law on Judicial Power adopted on December 15, 1992 had already granted constitutional control functions to the Republic of Latvia Supreme Court. The idea of establishing a Constitutional Court encountered serious political opposition, which showed that society did not yet fully understand or believe in the existence of independent judicial power. It was not until June 5, 1996 that the Saeima made amendments to Article 85 of the Republic of Latvia Constitution, stipulating the following,

“In Latvia, there shall be a Constitutional Court, which, within its jurisdiction as provided for by law, shall review cases concerning the compliance

of laws with the Constitution, as well as other matters regarding which jurisdiction is conferred upon it by law. The Constitutional Court shall have the right to declare laws or other enactments or parts thereof invalid. There exists in Latvia a Constitutional Court which within the bounds of competency set out in the law shall hear cases of compliance of laws with the Constitution, as well as other cases brought to it by law and within its competency. The Constitutional Court shall have the right to declare as invalid laws and other acts or their parts."

The Constitutional Court Law was adopted at the same time, and came into force on June 28, 1996. The Constitutional Court met for its first sitting on December 11, 1996. On September 11, 1997 amendments were made to the Constitutional Court Law expanding the number of subjects who can approach the court, however, these did not include general courts or individual citizens. These rights were granted in amendments to the law that came into effect on January 1, 2001. The Constitutional Court hears cases of compliance of laws with the Constitution; compliance with the Constitution of international treaties signed or concluded by Latvia (also up to the ratification of the respective treaty by the Saeima: compliance of other normative acts or parts thereof with higher valid legal provisions (acts); compliance with the law of other acts of the Saeima, Cabinet of Ministers, State President, Saeima Speaker and Prime Minister, except for administrative acts; the compliance with the law of orders by which a minister authorised by the Cabinet of Ministers has suspended the decision of a municipal board (council); and compliance of national legal norms of Latvia with international agreements concluded by Latvia that do not contravene the Constitution.²⁰

7.2. LATVIA'S DOMESTIC POLICY

Administrative and territorial government reforms

Administrative and territorial government reforms were implemented before the full restoration of Latvia's independence and where possible aimed at democratising and decentralising the government. The law adopted by the Supreme Council on June 6, 1991, "On the Creation of Administrative Territories within the Republic of Latvia and the Determining of the Status of Population Settlements Centres in Accordance with the Constitution",

stipulated that the Republic of Latvia consists of Livland, Latgallia, Courland and Semigallia, and that these were to be divided into districts and cities. The City of Riga was divided into city districts. Population centres were divided into two categories: cities and inhabited rural areas (villages or farmsteads).

The division of Latvia into four regions is not an administrative division; in practice it is only used in Saeima elections, when five electoral districts are used: Riga, Livland, Latgallia, Courland and Semigallia. The administrative division used in pre-occupation Latvia was not restored. Following the restoration of independence the role of local governments changed and expanded, but the Soviet era administrative division was retained – 26 districts plus seven republic cities (the first level) and over 550 municipalities parishes (the second level). The municipalities of the second lower level are parishes, a name given to the Soviet era local soviets, and also small towns. In the early 1990s, the previously named townships were redesignated as towns with adjacent rural territory.

The development of plans for new administrative territorial divisions anticipating the amalgamation of municipalities has been proceeding since 1992. The Cabinet of Ministers adopted the local government reform concept on September 28, 1992, which is based on the recommended principles for local municipalities set out in the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The law on local governments passed by the Saeima on May 19, 1994 set out three types of local government – city, district and parish – and clarified the competency of local governments and the division of functions between types of local government and between municipalities and the central government. As a result of local government reform, municipal property has been divided off and affirmed through legislation, procedures for the development of independent municipal budgets have been adopted, and the municipal financial distribution system has been set out by law, i.e. the system whereby the richest municipalities transfer a certain proportion of their resources to poorer municipalities.

The Administrative Territorial Reform Law was adopted in 1998. The law stipulated two levels of local government: 1) local municipalities – shires, towns and parishes; 2) regional municipalities – regions/counties. However, the creation of regions/counties had to be regulated by a special law, while the 1998 law provided detailed regulations only for the administrative territorial reform of the first lowest level of municipalities. The law stipulated that the reform was to be implemented by November 30, 2004 and was to be

implemented in two stages. The first stage would take place on the initiative of local municipalities, with the voluntary amalgamation into larger administrative units – shires – by December 31, 2003, and in line with projects developed by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development from January 1, 2004. The following criteria for the necessity of the reform were formulated in the law: the long-term development of municipal territories; a sound revenue base; infrastructure necessary for performing municipal functions; number of inhabitants; a municipality's economic, geographic and historical unity; accessibility of local government services; other conditions proposed by district councils. The idea of amalgamating municipalities did not initially draw great support. From 1998 to June 2004, 15 shires had been created.

In 2001, three projects were prepared which anticipated that the country would be divided into 33, 77 and or 102 local government territories, respectively. The government and the political party "Latvia's Way" expressed support for the 102-shires model, and many municipalities also began to see the positive aspects of this model. Information collated by the Ministry of Local Government Affairs in July 2003 showed that of local governments, 154 supported the 102-shire model, 237 other models and 137 the retention of the existing boundaries. In summer 2003, the government of Einārs Repše declared that the 33-shire model was the most rational; however, it was forced to withdraw from this position and from the possibility, as stipulated in the law, to forcibly amalgamate parishes into shires following protests from local governments.²¹ There was also much discussion about whether the county-level local governments were really necessary, what their optimal size would be and also whether their leaders would be government appointed or elected.

Political and social organisations

The hope that the introduction of the percentage barrier would promote the growth of stronger political parties and more stable government has only partially been realised. The number of party lists elected to the 6th, 7th and 8th Saeimas has been smaller than for the first four Saeimas. In addition, a relatively stable core of political parties has maintained greater or lesser power over the last ten years ("Latvia's Way", "For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK" (TB/LNNK), Latvian Farmers Union, Latvian Social Democratic

Workers Party, National Harmony Party, "Equality", and People's Party). However, before each election new parties and alliances form, while the electoral bases of the existing parties are insufficiently broad and stable to ensure them parliamentary representation that would guarantee long-term governing coalitions.

There were attempts in the early 1990s to create political parties based on the parties of the pre-war Republic of Latvia. However, only two such parties emerged – the Latvian Social Democratic Workers Party (LSDWP) and the Latvian Farmers Union. In the case of the LSDWP the important factor was that it had existed throughout the occupation years in exile (in Sweden) and had retained its prestige within the world socialist movement – the party's chairman Bruno Kalniņš was honorary chairman of the Socialist International. The Latvian Farmers Union was born anew, helped by the popularity of Kārlis Ulmanis. However, neither of these parties gained the same popularity they had enjoyed before 1934.

Unlike in other post-communist countries, the national Communist wing of the reformed Latvian Communist Party (LCP) – the Latvian Democratic Labour Party (later the Latvian Social Democratic Party) – was unable to retain its influence. However, the pro-Moscow wing of the LCP was able to survive in the new conditions and became the base for the Latvian Socialist Party.

The Popular Front of Latvia (PFL) was unable to maintain public support after the restoration of independence. This was a natural process, since the PFL was an umbrella organisation for a variety of parties and groups. In fact, it became the main organisation from which the multiparty system grew, by dividing into numerous parties and organisations. As a political organisation, the PFL was heavily defeated at the 5th Saeima elections in 1993, after which it was renamed the Christian Peoples' Party, whose members later joined other political organisations. The second largest opposition force, the TB/LNNK, had considerable success at the 5th Saeima elections, but split in 1997.

In the first stages of the party system's development, ideological differences did not revolve around approaches to economic problems as much as other issues, for example citizenship. The ideology of neo-liberalism had the biggest impact on economic views in the first half of the 1990s. However, the imbalances in economic development and the social price paid were so great that by the mid 1990s populist trend emerged. This was seen most

clearly in the 6th Saeima elections where the People's Movement for Latvia under Joahims Zigerists gained 16 seats, and the Latvia Unity Party and the Democratic Party "Saimnieks", whose platforms had notable populist elements, also enjoyed considerable success. However, the inability of these organisations to offer concrete solutions to problems saw them soon exiting the political stage. However, the political potential of populism has been retained, as seen in the 7th and 8th Saeima elections, where promises to fight corruption and fix the healthcare, social security and education systems were amongst the main factors in the victory of "New Era" under Einars Repše.

The social democrats also had a significant impact on the political process. In the second half of the 1990s, they actively came out against the privatisation of big enterprises and in favour of progressive income tax rates and market-regulating institutions.

Due to the influence of the populist movements, the existing and new right-wing parties began to pay more attention to social issues. Thus, for example, "Latvia's Way" changed its platform to soften neo-liberalism and move more in a socially oriented market direction. The People's Party (established in 1998) became the most consistent defender of neo-liberal principles. These principles were also supported by the national conservative alliance TB/LNNK, which had a distinct contradiction in its program between neo-liberal economic views and nationalist policies. Such contradictions can also be seen in the platform of "New Era".

In parallel to the economically neo-liberal parties, other parties came out in favour of the state having a regulating role in the economy and the social sphere, as in supporting large state enterprises, regulating the central bank and preserving a broad social security system. The most consistent was the Socialist Party under former LCP leader Alfrēds Rubiks. The policies of the Socialist Party are aimed at strengthening ties with Russia and the CIS. Although the Socialist Party was established on the basis of the "Equality" faction, there were policy differences on a number of issues. The LSDWP was consistently against Latvia's joining NATO and was considerably negative toward EU membership. On the other hand, "Equality" is not as sceptical about the EU, believing that EU membership will allow for a more effective fight for non-citizens' rights. Similarities in economic programs and in orientation toward Russia and common attitudes toward the non-citizens' problem were the factors behind the unification of these parties and the more liberal National Harmony Party before the 7th Saeima elections to

become the political alliance, "For Human Rights in a United Latvia" (ForHRUL). The National Harmony Party left the ForHRUL in February 2003. Up until the present, in contrast to the 1920s and 1930s, regional parties have not gained national popularity, possibly because regional differences have been markedly reduced as a result of Soviet policies. At the same time regional and local parties have on the whole enjoyed better results than Saeima parties in municipal elections. To a certain extent, this is connected with the fact that in the 1990s most of the larger parties did not devote sufficient attention to developing local branches and attracting members. Parties that were established in the late 1990s and early 2000, for example, the People's Party and "New Era", have been paying more attention to regional support. This resulted in success for the People's Party in the 2001 municipal elections.

After the civic activities of the late 1980s and early 1990s, many believed that society had become more apathetic because of weak participation in a range of social activities. Participation in civic organisations did decrease, and for the majority of citizens the main expression of civic activity was participation in parliamentary and municipal elections. Since May 4, 1990 there have been four Saeima elections in Latvia, three municipal elections and two referendums. The Saeima elections saw considerably high levels of voter activity (above 70 percent), there was slightly less in municipal polls (57-62 percent) and relatively low turnout for the referendums. The only successful referendums have been those held simultaneously with Saeima or municipal polls. A relatively small number of the population has participated in pickets, meetings and public campaigns, and even less in the work of non-governmental organisations. According to studies by Baltic Data House, in 1994 only 19 percent of Latvia's inhabitants were members of civic organisation,²² however, in subsequent years participation by the population in civic organisations began to rise. This is understandable because during the socioeconomic changes of the early 1990s the first priority for most people was to deal with their own personal problems. Furthermore, people lacked the experience, initiative and knowledge required for working in non-governmental organisations. Studies showed that Latvia's inhabitants rated their personal level of political competency at a very low level. There is also an extremely low level of trust in the political elite, and a lack of conviction in their ability to influence political decisions.²³ Life in a markedly totalitarian society such as the Soviet Union did not promote political participation

skills and generated a sense of helplessness on the one hand, and a highly cynical attitude toward state authority on the other, resulting in a conviction that authority could not be trusted.

The relatively low level of political activity, however, should not be seen as an entirely negative phenomenon. Given the fact that the country underwent significant economic transformation, with a mixed ethnic composition and with marked political inequality, the lack of public political activity allowed the political elite to implement important reforms without meeting insurmountable opposition. Only in the mid to late 1990s did some social groups – pensioners, teachers, medics and farmers – begin to organise mass campaigns to force the government to improve their circumstances. In summer 2000, farmers blocked the roads at border crossings to force the government to take their interests into account and create a cooperation mechanism with farmer organisations.

Political participation, however, did not automatically mean confrontation with the state. It was more likely to mean the ability of a group to formulate its interests and achieve its goals, not only by manipulating power but also by exploiting resources at their own disposal. One example of this is the organisation of various interest groups, or credit unions, and courses or groups to learn new skills or begin new forms of employment. Since the late 1990s, these types of activities have been increasing, especially in rural areas and small towns. This has been significantly boosted by the support of local governments and various foreign organisations, funds, charitable organisations and interest groups, and through the sponsorship of specific projects (business start-ups, special interest hobbies' clubs, environmental protection, etc.). Successfully working in small non-governmental organisations and special interest groups that arise over specific issues and also successful spontaneous protest actions increases self-confidence and acts as an incentive for further activity. Changes are gradually occurring in opinions about social activities and the forms in which they can happen. An increasing numbers of people, especially the young, are discovering how civil society works in the developed Western countries and how their populations confront and cooperate with state authorities.²⁴

Of note is that there is a strong trend towards the increase of the number of civic organisations. In 1993, 978 social non-governmental organisations were registered; by January 1, 2004 this figure had risen to 7704 with steady growth year by year.²⁵

Minority policy and social integration

On March 19, 1991 the Supreme Council passed the law "On the Free Development of Latvia's National and Ethnic Groups and Rights to Cultural Autonomy". This law guaranteed equal human rights to all inhabitants, and the right to preserve their own national traditions and form their own national associations to all of Latvia's minorities. The state undertook to support the associations. The adoption of the law facilitated the founding of national cultural associations and minority schools in Latvia. After the restoration of independence six Polish and two Jewish schools have been established, as have Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Estonian, etc., minority schools and classes, as well as Belarussian, Roma classes in Ventspils and Sabile. Schools with Russian-language instruction were maintained, although in the 1990s their number decreased; this was connected with a drop in the number of students due to the withdrawal of the Russian army and emigration, and also because more non-Latvians began studying at other minority or Latvian schools. However, it must be admitted that in the first half of the 1990s insufficient attention was paid to ethnic relations and the ethnic policy institutional base was not put in order. This was despite the fact that a special Human Rights and Social Affairs Committee operated in the Supreme Council and in all of the Saeimas, as did the Citizenship Law Implementation Committee, while the National Affairs Section existed under the auspices of the Cabinet of Ministers and later the Ministry of Justice. The main problem was the lack of a strategic approach – ethnic policy developed as a response to either internal (non-citizens' dissatisfaction, demands from social organisations) or external (OSCE demands) pressure rather than as long-term policy.²⁶

This attitude started to change in the mid-1990s. This was mostly connected with discussions about the adoption of the Citizenship Law and concerns about the impact of the large number of non-citizens on inter-ethnic relations, and also the influence of "Latvia's Way", since its policies were decidedly centrist and oriented toward the integration of minorities rather than achieving voluntary repatriation (the position of the national conservative parties) or the creation of a two-community country ("Equality").

The Naturalisation Board was established in 1995, with the task of resolving issues connected with implementing the Citizenship Law. In August 1996, the State President established the Nationalities Consultative

Board. However, work on a social integration concept for Latvia only began in spring 1998. During discussions of the plan, the idea crystallised that the integration program should cover not just ethnic integration, but also social integration, meaning all ethnic groups, overcoming the political alienation of Latvians, reduction of regional imbalances, integration in education, language and culture, and participation of the mass media in this process. The Cabinet of Ministers approved the Social Integration Program on February 6, 2001.

The minority problem is often presented both within and outside of Latvia as if only two ethnic groups exist in Latvia – Latvians and the so-called Russian-speakers. Such an approach ignores the fact that there is a range of significant ethnic groups with their own specific conditions and cultural needs.

The Russian and Russian-speaking group is very large and influential, and without a doubt its integration in Latvia (by this is meant their political integration, not assimilation) is one of the main issues, with an important political dimension. Various ethnic groups in Latvia have differing views of the country's past, the Soviet Union, as well as the processes that have taken place after the restoration of independence; the main differences are between Latvians on the one hand and Russians and Russian-speakers on the other.

The number of non-Latvians and their social composition had significantly changed by the late 1990s. Up to 1990, immigration had considerably exceeded emigration, but since 1991 the situation has been radically reversed. From 1991 to 1995, 6200 people moved to Latvia every year on average, while 33,600 left. After 1994, the number of permanent emigrants has fallen, but at the same time the number of immigrants has also declined. From 1996 to 2000, on average every year 2400 people entered the country while 9400 departed²⁷. This is understandable because statistics show that the biggest population exchange has been with the CIS countries. Although in the 1990s quite a few Latvians returned to their homeland from the West, for various reasons a considerable number of Latvia's inhabitants left to live in the West; however, this migration flow is much smaller than that to the CIS countries. The largest migration flow was associated with the exit of the Russian army and with the family reunion process. At the same time, studies show that a majority of emigrant non-Latvians do not wish to and are not planning to return to their ethnic homeland.

The change of the situation after the restoration of Latvia's independence

came as a shock to many non-Latvians, especially, Russians, who until then had considered Latvia not as an independent country but as a province of the Soviet Union. From being a majority (within the USSR as a whole) they had become a minority in a small country. This was both a personal drama as it became more difficult to maintain links with their ethnic homeland, and an ideological problem due to the loss of a sense of belonging that the majority had believed in. From being citizens of a super power they were forced to become citizens of a small country and to submit to demands that many of them found humiliating. Economic and social difficulties not infrequently intensified the sense of discrimination. Although Russian-speakers formed a large majority amongst business people (according to some surveys in the mid 1990s they comprised up to 80 percent²⁸ of this group in Latvia²⁸), these people also quite widely held the view that they were discriminated against. This sense was nurtured both by political organisations that made the struggle against the discrimination of Russian-speakers their main area of activity, and by the emergence of two differing information spaces – mass media outlets in the Russian language (TV channels from Russia, radio, and press publications, as well as Russian-language media in Latvia) on the one hand and those in Latvian on the other.

The social self-confidence of Latvians has not risen as much as might be expected from the fact that the proportion of Latvians within the republic has increased due to the emigration of other nationalities. Latvians may form a majority in the republic as a whole, but in the largest cities they are still in the minority, and therefore there are justified or unjustified suspicions of economic discrimination and the preservation of a two-language system (at best) in many places. Undoubtedly, the social self-confidence of Latvians has also suffered due to the fact that many of them are now materially worse off. The same could be said of non-Latvians. In the mid-1990s, Juris Dreifelds noted that as a result of Soviet policies a situation had arisen whereby, "...all groups in Latvia see themselves as minorities and feel insecure and somewhat threatened. The problem is that the strengthening of the security of one often means the growth of insecurity of the other."²⁹ Unfortunately, this feeling of being threatened still exists today.

One of the main questions in this context is the language issue. The demands of the most radical local Russian politicians for the introduction of two state languages, which is echoed in the statements of some politicians

in Russia, is unacceptable to the majority of Latvians, who would see it as reinforcing their own minority status. Latvians want to reach a situation wherein the inter-ethnic lingua franca is Latvian. However, a large proportion of Russian speakers see this as an attempt at assimilation.

Nevertheless, this very complex situation has not led to a significant worsening of inter-ethnic relations. Rather, it could more accurately be said that the level of ethnic tolerance in the 1990s was higher than during the Soviet era. One explanation for this is that it is now easier for everyone to find his/her own niche in terms of their place of work and entertainment and free time opportunities. However, in such a situation there is the danger that alienation is actually increasing and a two-community country is developing. A counterargument to such an assertion would be the fact that attempts to draw non-Latvians into ethnically based parties have thus far been unsuccessful (although it is well known that the electorates of "Equality" and the Socialist Party are primarily non-Latvian). Inter-ethnic tension increased in spring 2004 in connection with protests against the transition in minority schools to Latvian as the main language of instruction. Many blame the failure by state institutions to effectively explain and implement the requirements of the law for the growth of the protests, and for insufficient dialogue with the Russian-speaking community. At the same time, these protests are taking on an increasingly political form and there are growing demands to make Latvia a country of two communities, which is obviously connected with attempts by left-wing political forces to increase their political influence.

7.3. LATVIA'S FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICIES

One of the most important tasks after the restoration of independence was to develop a foreign policy strategy and to guarantee state security. That required the creation of armed forces, defence and foreign ministries, and the diplomatic service.

Latvia's foreign policy

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was set up in May 1990, with the first steps in establishing a diplomatic service. Diplomatic representation of the

independent state of Latvia still existed in foreign countries. In 1940, the majority of diplomats in Western countries refused to submit to the Soviet demand that they return to Latvia and hand over their diplomatic institutions to Soviet representatives; they continued to carry out the diplomatic duties entrusted to them. The United States had the most favourable attitude toward diplomats from the Baltic States. Latvia's embassy in Washington, DC, operated without interruption. Latvia's diplomats in the United States enjoyed all diplomatic privileges and immunities. In 1950, the US Treasury Department allowed the interest from Latvian money held in American banks to be used for the upkeep of the Washington embassy. In London, too, the Latvian embassy continued operating until 1991; however, in 1942 the embassy staff was struck off the diplomatic list and was considered to be private persons with diplomatic status. In other countries Latvia's diplomatic representation operated for shorter time periods (until 1946 in Argentina and Switzerland, from 1946 to 1961 in Brazil, and in Spain from 1953 to 1959). From 1940 to 1963, Latvia's diplomatic service was headed by the Ambassador and General Consul in the United Kingdom Kārlis Zariņš, who was granted extraordinary powers by Latvia's government on May 17, 1940. From 1963 to 1970, these functions were carried out by Arnolds Spekke, Latvia's ambassador in Washington, and then by Anatols Dinbergs.

Until the 1980s, Western countries only recognised persons who had had diplomatic rank before 1940 as official representatives of the Baltic States. Deceased representatives could only be replaced if the replacement was someone who had had diplomatic status before the Soviet occupation. This became an increasingly serious problem with the passing years until on October 25, 1980 the United States government agreed to recognise Baltic diplomats who did not have diplomatic status during the period of independence.³⁰

Although the exile organisations and the Latvia's diplomatic representatives in foreign countries provided Republic of Latvia considerable support After the restoration of its independence on May 4, 1990, especially as the Republic of Latvia attempted to gain international recognition, but initially here was some scepticism and mistrust on their part of the legitimacy of the method for restoring independent statehood. The attitude changed after August 21, 1991; in 1991 A. Dinbergs was appointed as Ambassador of the restored Republic of Latvia in the United States, followed by Ojārs Kalniņš, who had also worked at Latvia's Washington embassy before 1991. Many Diaspora Latvians who had not previously worked in this sphere also entered

the diplomatic service. The diplomatic service was also a challenge met by young and talented people in Latvia, who quickly learned the necessary skills.³¹

The restored Republic of Latvia established its first diplomatic offices in Estonia, Lithuania and Great Britain (1990), and the Russian Federation and USA (both in 1991). In 2002, there were 489 people in Latvia's diplomatic corps who worked in 36 diplomatic missions in foreign countries – 26 embassies, 7 missions to international organisations and 3 consulates.³²

Latvia's State Security

The Ministry of Defence was set up in autumn 1991 simultaneously with the creation of the Armed Forces. Since everything had to be built from the bottom up, one of the main principles of a democratic country – democratic control over the armed forces – was introduced with relative ease. No one disputed the principle that the minister of defence should be a politician rather than a member of the military as was accepted practice in socialist countries. It was more difficult to bring about understanding of the need for parliamentary control, and of the fact that within the Ministry of Defence all functions not directly connected with performing military functions but which relate to the supply, material provisioning, financing, etc., of the armed forces can be performed by civilian officials rather than military personnel. Although the defence policy was approved in 1995, until 1999 there was a lack of real direction in defence policy, insufficient resources, and concerns about strengthening defence capabilities were mostly rhetorical. It became clear in 1999 that Latvia could become a member of NATO in the near future, but that a possible barrier could be the lack of preparation of the Armed Forces. This prompted an intensive reorganisation of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces, an important element of Latvia's 2000 Action Plan for NATO membership that was developed in 1999. At the end of 1999, the National Armed Forces Law also came into force, and the Cabinet of Ministers approved the Defence policy, which stipulates that national defence must be based on total and territorial defence principles and that National Armed Forces compatibility with NATO countries must be developed. A significant achievement was that on June 15, 1999 the Saeima approved the declaration by the ministerial cabinet to undertake a gradual increase in defence funding to 2 percent of GDP by 2003.

Although Latvia's National Armed Forces (NAF) have not been in existence for a long time, in terms of their structures and military organization they have gone through quite considerable changes. Initially, the Border Guards were part of the NAF, but were later put under the command of the Ministry of the Interior. The National Guard, however, was integrated into the NAF.

In 2003, Latvia reviewed its national defence policy. It now stipulates that the fundamental defence principles are participation in collective defence, development of professional armed forces, and cooperation between the Armed Forces and society and international military cooperation; a new national armed forces structure was also developed. This was essential to allow full participation by Latvia in NATO and of its soldiers in NATO operations and to develop host country capacities. This has also been driven by changes in the international situation, as all-encompassing national territorial defence has become redundant and collective defence capabilities have become a priority. It was also important to use all resources allocated for defence more efficiently, creating professional service professionalised units with modern equipment. On March 1, 2004 the NAF consisted of 1350 officers, 1900 instructors, 1200 soldiers, 1000 obligatory mandatory military service soldiers, 11,650 national guards, 200 military employees (civilians in military posts) and 400 civilian employees.³³

Latvia's foreign and security policy priorities

In the early 1990s, foreign and security policy priorities of the Baltic States – irreversibly securing independence and integrating as rapidly as possible into Western political and economic structures – were clear; however, the view that the way to achieve these goals was by joining the EU and NATO only developed gradually. The model of the post-Communist countries of Central Europe, where integration into these organisations became a foreign policy priority earlier, had some influence. Relations with Russia and the situation within the Commonwealth of Independent States area were also important.

The foreign policy priorities were officially formulated for the first time in the document "Latvia's Main Foreign Policy Directions up to 2005" and its annex "The Foreign Policy Concept of the Republic of Latvia" prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and approved by the Saeima in April 1995.

It formulated that the main task of Latvia's foreign policy was maintenance of national independence and ensuring its irreversibility, to be achieved by integrating into European security, political and economic organisations and becoming actively involved in global political processes. The document set out the following main directions for Latvia's foreign policy: joining the EU and NATO, working in international and regional organisations, deepening cooperation with the other Baltic States, developing bilateral relations with the larger European and Nordic countries, maintaining neighbourly relations with Russia, cooperating with the USA, deepening the economic dimension, developing the programs "Latvia in the World" and "Latvia's Diaspora" to create and reinforce international public awareness of Latvia as a country, and to strengthen ties between the country and Latvia's Diaspora. In June 1995, the Saeima approved the National Defence Policy, which also emphasised that full integration into the EU and NATO was central to national interest. This document was based on the understanding that external state security and domestic political stability are closely linked.

On March 29, 2004 the new member states, including Latvia, submitted their accession documents to NATO in Washington, DC, while on March April 2 the flags of the new member states were raised at NATO headquarters in Brussels. On May 1, 2004 Latvia was admitted to the EU. As it became clear that these goals would be shortly reached, it became necessary to formulate new foreign and security policy priorities that would align with both the global situation and the understanding of the EU and NATO about the objectives of these organisations.

The National Security Policy approved by the Saeima in January 2002 stressed, "Security of Latvia may be attained by ensuring lasting internal policy, social and economic situation, developing effective structures of defence forces, creating the crisis management and civil protection systems, forming the system for the state with rule of law and structures complying with the international commitments and norms, as well as integrating in the European and transatlantic political, economic, security and defence structures. Latvia's security will be ensured by nurturing a stable domestic, social and economic situation, developing effective defence force structures, establishing crisis management and civil defence systems, creating a law-based state system and structures, respecting international obligations and norms, and also integrating into European and transatlantic political, economic, security and defence structures." In 2003, the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs began developing a new foreign policy concept based on the fact that after Latvia's accession to the EU and NATO in 2004 the main objectives of the previous policy had been achieved. Furthermore, the international environment had also changed, with emerging new threats, for example, from international terrorism, and from unstable regions and countries, which due to the undemocratic policies of their regimes could threaten international order. Reference was also made to EU economic and social reforms that are needed to make the EU competitive in the global economy and to play a suitable role in international politics.

The Russian military withdrawal

After the restoration of independence, the most important task was to ensure the withdrawal of Russian military forces, as well as complete sovereignty in relations with the post-Soviet states. This meant effective control of land and sea borders and airspace, property settlements and similar issues. The question of the status of the then-Soviet military forces and their gradual withdrawal was raised as early as November 1990 in a note from the Republic of Latvia's Supreme Council to USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev. On February 1, 1992 an agreement was reached to begin withdrawing Russian forces as of March 1992. Lithuania was able to achieve the withdrawal of Russian forces a year earlier than Estonia and Latvia – it was completed by August 31, 1993. Initially, Russia denied that the delay in military withdrawal was linked to the situation with the Russian speakers minority in Latvia, but on October 28, 1992 the Russian president announced that the withdrawal of Russian forces was being suspended due to the necessity of securing the rights of Russian speaking population. Russia's stance was largely driven by domestic problems, such as the increasing pressure from militaries and the growing influence of the Communist opposition. Russia justified the delay in withdrawing military forces by claiming there would be nowhere to base the withdrawn army units, especially with the simultaneous withdrawal of forces from Germany.

Support from international organisations and the most influential Western countries was important for the Baltic States. On July 10, 1992, during a summit meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, now the OSCE) a document was prepared and signed calling on Russia to withdraw its military forces as soon as possible and to

sign bilateral agreements with the Baltic countries. A similar call was included in a UN general General Assembly Resolution of November 25, 1992. The support of the United States and the mediating role of the then Prime Minister of Sweden, Carl Bildt, were also of crucial importance. The Western countries supported the Baltic States not just morally but also materially, by financing the construction of residential buildings and other structures for the military forces withdrawn from the Baltic.

The withdrawal of Russian forces began in March 1992, but there was a fierce struggle over the final withdrawal date. During negotiations at Jūrmala in May 1993, Russia demanded a very lengthy withdrawal timetable, as well as the retention of the Skrunda radar station until 2003, the Liepāja naval base until 1999, and the Ventspils electronic surveillance station until 1997.³⁴

Finally, the agreement on the conditions, timetable, procedures and legal status during the withdrawal period for the complete withdrawal of Russian armed forces was signed in Moscow on April 30, 1994. The Russians were forced undertake to fully withdraw their forces by August 31, 1994. Russia also had to agree to the termination of the temporary functioning of the Skrunda radar base by August 31, 1998 and its complete dismantling not later than February 29, 2000. Latvia made concessions by agreeing to lease the Skrunda site for a further four years, and by agreeing to allow Russian military personnel, who had retired from the army prior to January 28, 1992 (around 21,000), to continue living in Latvia with guaranteed property rights, social guarantees and rights to education. Both of these concessions were harshly criticised. On August 31, 1994 the withdrawal of Russian military forces was completed – simultaneously with Germany – and in 1995 the newly built radar block at Skrunda was demolished by explosives. The station ceased operating in 1998 and was completely dismantled in 1999. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Latvia observed the fulfilment of the agreement.

The road to the EU and NATO

Contacts and cooperation with both the EU and NATO were established immediately after the restoration of Baltic independence, but initially neither these organisations nor the Baltic States considered full membership status to be a realistic objective. In 1992, the European Community (EC) included the Baltic in the PHARE program, while on May 11 an agreement was signed

between the EC and Latvia in trade, commercial and economic cooperation, which brought about a most favoured trading regime. In 1993, Latvia and the other Baltic States activated their policies toward the EU and in April of that year in Copenhagen at the Conference on Economic Cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe Latvia announced that its goal was to join the EU. A Free Trade Agreement between Latvia and the EU was signed on July 18, 1994, which facilitated the reorientation of trade from the East to the West, since it became easier for Latvia's goods to enter the EU market. An Association Agreement was signed between the EU and the Baltic States on June 12, 1995.

At the EU Council meeting in Copenhagen in June 1993, criteria for the accession to the EU of the Central and Eastern European post-Communist countries were formulated (these were expanded amended at Essen in December 1994). The so-called Copenhagen Criteria encompassed political requirements: stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for minorities and protection of minorities; and economic requirements: a functioning market economy, and the ability to deal with the constant pressure of competition within the European Union and market forces. The third criterion was the ability to meet the obligations of a member state, observing the *acquis communautaire* and being faithful to the objective of creating a political, economic and monetary union. These criteria became the guidelines for Latvia's integration into the EU. In 1995, the EU Council of Ministers adopted the "White Book" for harmonising legislation. This document clarified the requirements that had to be met to achieve EU accession. In May 1994, Latvia approved the program for EU integration, which set out concrete tasks to be carried out by state institutions. To coordinate the work of the various institutions in this regard, the European Integration Bureau within the Cabinet of Ministers and the Saeima European Affairs Committee were established. The First National Program for EU Integration was adopted in 1996. The Second and Third programs were adopted in 1997 and 1998. These programs set out political responsibility for the progress of integration at the national level. Before the association agreement came into force, Latvia had the opportunity to take part in structured political dialogue intended for the candidate countries, the purpose of which was to bring together the positions of the EU and the candidate countries on various international issues, especially those important to both sides, and also to familiarise the candidate countries with the

common EU foreign and security policy, and to promote stability and security in Europe.

The decision to expand the EU to the east was a complex and courageous one for this community of countries, because for the first time in its history of expansion a large number of relatively economically weak countries wanted to join. Furthermore, most of these countries were not sufficiently integrated economically either between themselves or with the EU. The decision was taken at a time when it had become clear that the hopes invested in the Maastricht Treaty (which came into force in November 1993) establishing the EU, that it would lead to a more dynamic economy, greater cohesion between the member states, more rapid mutual integration and levelling of development, had not been realised.

Although the Copenhagen Criteria stipulated that the readiness of each candidate country for the EU would be assessed individually, there were intensive discussions about whether to start accession negotiations with all 10 candidate countries at the same time, to do it in groups, or to find some other solution. In July 1997, the European Commission (EC) published its report on the readiness of the candidate countries to join the EU. The EC recommended that negotiations should begin with the Czech Republic, Estonia, Poland, Slovenia and Hungary. Latvia was reported as meeting the political criteria, but that it would have difficulty competing in the long term within the common EU market. This opinion caused concerns that Estonia's joining before the other Baltic States would lead to both economic and security problems. However, the shock caused by the decision helped to mobilise Latvia's preparations for the European Union.

For its part the EU also created mechanisms to facilitate the integration of the candidate countries. One of these mechanisms was the annual Report from the Commission on Latvia's Progress towards the EU, which was prepared from 1998 to 2002. A second was bilateral reviewing of EU legislation, which was started in 1999 and was intended to more successfully align Latvia's laws with those of the EU. In October 1999, the EC approved the "Pre-Accession Partnership" program to bring together several extant EU support programs. The new version of this program was approved in November 2001.

In 1999, the European Union began accession negotiations with the Central and Eastern European candidate countries. The talks with Latvia began in February 2000 and concluded in December 2002. Together with

the other candidate countries Latvia signed the accession treaty with the European Union at a meeting of the EU Council in Athens in April 2003. This had to be approved by a referendum; however, forecasts of its possible result were often pessimistic as surveys showed that the number of Euro-sceptics had risen since the start of accession talks. In the referendum of September 2003, however, 69 percent of participating voters came out in favour of joining the EU. The formal accession procedure took place after all of the EU member states' parliaments had ratified the accession treaty.

After the end of the Cold War, NATO established the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) to promote links between the new countries and NATO and understanding of its policies. Latvia joined this organisation on December 20, 1991. The post-Communist countries viewed the NACC as an opportunity to resolve their problems and draw closer to the alliance. This consideration was very important to Latvia, which emphasised it in its foreign policy guidelines in 1992.

In 1993, some Central European countries began to talk openly about the possibility of joining NATO. Initially, the reaction from the NATO countries was very reserved. But on January 11, 1994 at the suggestion of the United States, NATO offered interested countries the "Partnership for Peace" (PfP) initiative. Latvia viewed this initiative as the first step on the road to full membership in the alliance and announced that it would join the program on January 14. A study on the expansion of the alliance was completed in 1995; NATO announced that expansion would occur, but that this process would be gradual and transparent. At the same time potential member states were presented with set requirements for admission into the alliance. Some of these repeated the Copenhagen Criteria, but there were also specific requirements: a geographic connection of borders with NATO countries, civilian control over military organisations, openness regarding security policy and military budget, as well as good neighbourly relations and resolution of ethnic and territorial conflicts. Russia reacted negatively to NATO expansion to take in the Central European countries and it was anticipated that it would be even more negative if the Baltic States joined the alliance.

In July 1997, the NATO member countries decided to admit the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary into the alliance in 1999, and made a decision that the organisation would be open to taking on new members in the future. However, the prospects for the Baltic States were still unclear due to Russia's

opposition. The 1999 Washington meeting where the three new members were admitted also saw the approval of NATO's new strategic policy, which anticipated a new approach for the European Security Organization. An important element of the policy was cooperation with the EU and the performing of peacekeeping functions as one of NATO's main functions. It was important to the Baltic States that they were named as realistic candidates for admission. Furthermore, this happened in the midst of a situation wherein, due to the bombing of Yugoslavia by NATO in 1999, Russia had suspended consultations provided for under the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act.

The transformation of NATO from a defensive alliance into a collective security organisation also encompassing participation in peacekeeping operations within and outside Europe, as set out in NATO's 1999 strategic policy, crystallised following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. Terrorism came to the forefront in terms of threats to security. This also impacted on attitudes toward admitting the Baltic States to NATO. On November 21, 2002 at the summit meeting of leaders of the alliance and its member states in Prague, Latvia and six other countries received invitations to begin negotiations for joining NATO. This process was successfully completed in March 2004. It should be noted that Russia has still not reversed its negative attitude toward NATO expansion. However, its leadership is aware that the process cannot be stopped and therefore places greater emphasis on cooperation under the auspices of the NATO-Russia Council, which was set up in May 2002.

Over time, Latvia's motivations and aims in joining NATO have become more diverse. Both initially and currently the alliance is considered to be the most effective way of guaranteeing national security and defence. However, greater attention is now being paid to aspects such as the possibility of developing Europe's security policy, ensuring long-term security in the Baltic region through the admission to NATO of all three countries, strengthening the democratic foundations of the country, attracting investment, efficiently using resources allocated for defence, and bettering opportunities for modernising the armed forces. The outcomes of joining NATO have been generally assessed as positive. The fighting capabilities and supply and organisation of the Armed Forces have improved, along with their prestige. To a large extent this has all been connected to preparing for participation in peacekeeping operations. In May 2004, Latvia was participating in five international peace-

keeping missions – in Afghanistan (since February 2003), Bosnia and Herzegovina (April 1996), Iraq (May 2003), Georgia (2000) and Kosovo (2000). A Latvian military medic unit took part in a humanitarian mission to Albania in 1999, providing assistance to refugees from Kosovo.

Bilateral relations with the USA and Russia

Latvia saw the solution to its security problems primarily in multilateral relations, but simultaneously a great deal of importance was placed on bilateral relations with the US. The influence of the US in global politics gave it the decisive role in the process of recognizing the independence of the Baltic States, the withdrawal of the Russian army, as well as integration into NATO and other political processes that arise from its interest in having a stable Baltic Sea region. In his speech before Riga's Freedom Monument on July 6, 1994, US president Bill Clinton said, "And as you return to Europe's fold, we will stand with you." The US also provided significant assistance to the Baltic States both in the form of assistance in establishing military organisations structures and in attracting investment.

The objective of the US in the Baltic region is to promote stability and Russia's involvement in regional integration processes. The US has been an observer at the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS), and in 1997 it put forward the Northern European initiative, the essence of which was to help the Baltic States become strong candidates for integration into European organisations. Mention must also be made of the development of relations between Northern Europe and Northern Russia, and the strengthening of multilateral ties between the US and Northern Europe.

An important stage in relations between the US and the Baltic States was the signing of the Partnership Charter on January 16, 1998. Work on the charter began in 1997 when it became clear that the Baltic States would not be included in the first round of NATO expansion. The charter affirmed the interest of the US in the security of the Baltic States and reduced insecurity caused by the unclear prospects of joining the alliance. Although the charter did not give US security guarantees, it formalised already extant cooperation networks and granted them a goal-oriented and organised character, establishing a regular consultation mechanism for economic, democratic and security strengthening.

The withdrawal of Russian forces did not resolve the relationship

problems between Russia and the Baltic States. Initially, the human rights issue was an additional argument for Russia in the troop withdrawal negotiations, but after 1994 it became part of a policy aimed at not allowing Baltic integration into NATO. Russia's attempts to internationalise this problem brought some results. Latvia was forced to accept a mission from this organisation, which opened on November 19, 1993. The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoep, and Council of Europe experts made recommendations on the drafting and implementation of the Citizenship Law, as well as on the Language Law and amendments to the Labour Law codex that pertained to restrictions on the professions of non-citizens. On the one hand, the internationalisation of the bilateral relationship problems placed an extra burden on the responsible top officials in Latvia, who were forced to listen to criticism both from international organisations as well as from local politicians who accused Latvia's foreign policy service of inadequately explaining to the world public opinion the consequences of foreign occupation and Latvia's special situation. On the other hand, the fulfilment of the recommendations of the OSCE and the Council of Europe meant the adoption of Western democratic standards, and through their observance the effectiveness of Russia's accusations was blunted.

In 1997, Russia drafted its long-term strategy toward the Baltic States. Essentially, this involved approaches that had been developed in the previous years: attempts to make the Baltic States neutral outside of NATO; the use of economic levers to achieve political ends; demands to grant citizenship to all of Latvia's inhabitants, and the linkage of this issue to the conclusion of border agreements. The National Security Policy concept approved by Russia's president in December 1997 asserted that NATO expansion was one of the gravest threats to national security and marked the forming of a new line across Europe. This went against the understanding by Western countries of the meaning of expansion in which it was stressed that such a line would not exist.

The political and economic interests of Russia and Latvia were closely connected. On the one hand, Latvia's dependence on Russian energy, raw materials, markets and income from the transit of oil and other products gave Russian politicians hope that they would be able to influence Latvia's policies in a direction they favoured. Regular demands and threats to introduce economic sanctions against Latvia were made to achieve the desired policy toward Russian speakers minority. In reality sanctions were

not introduced, because these would definitely not have received the support of the international community, and furthermore they would have been harmful to Russia's own interests since the export of oil products and other raw materials is one of the main sources of budgetary revenue. Naturally, the threats to introduce sanctions only strengthened the resolve of most of Latvia's politicians that EU and NATO integration must be achieved as quickly as possible. Russia's attempts to make the Baltic States a buffer zone between NATO and Russia not only created associations with the unfavourable situation for the Baltic States between the world wars and its tragic results, but also led to concerns that in such a "grey zone" Latvia would be completely dependant on Russia's geo-strategic and economic interests.

One of the initiatives put forward by Russia to oppose NATO's expansion into the Baltic was the offer of security guarantees to the Baltic States made in October 1997. Russia's proposal allowed for the possibility that it could be of a multilateral character, involving the USA, Germany, France and some other Western countries. The Baltic States rejected such guarantees, considering them to be inadequate for the real needs of bilateral and regional cooperation and the spirit of the European integration process.³⁵

Relations between the two countries deteriorated after police were forced to use force to disperse a protest meeting outside the Riga City Council in March 1998. The incident was used to put pressure on Latvia's domestic policies, especially over the citizenship issue, and to punish Latvia before international institutions, for example, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov compared Latvia with Pol Pot's Cambodia and called for economic sanctions. Although these were not officially imposed, traders refused to sell Latvian goods in Moscow and many other cities. After amendments were made to the Citizenship Law and approved by voters in a referendum, this campaign quieted down. However, relations between the two countries did not notably improve. Economic ties rapidly declined after the Russian financial crisis of August 1998, and although they were gradually reinstated, they remained at a smaller volume than previously.³⁶

At the same time, the end of the 1990s saw certain stabilisation in relations with Russia, mainly because of Latvia's growing integration with Europe. There has been a shift in Russian policy during the presidency of

Vladimir Putin. More attention is being paid to Russia's place within global processes, and therefore also to EU integration processes and the protection of Russia's economic interests as a priority national interest. However, hopes that joining the EU and NATO would help Latvia to normalise relations with Russia more quickly have not materialised. On the eve of accession Russia voiced the issue of Russian speakers in Latvia, especially in connection with the Education Law that provides for increasing the proportion of subjects taught in Latvian at minority schools from September 1, 2004, and demanded the renewal of the OSCE mission in Latvia.

Regional cooperation

In the early 1990s, cooperation between the Baltic States was for some time maintained intensity that have been achieved during connected to the struggles for independence. The institutions for cooperation between the Baltic States were established – the Baltic Assembly and the Council of Ministers. A free-trade agreement was concluded and the creation of a customs union and a defence union (1992) were discussed. The idea of cooperation modelled on the Benelux countries was very popular. However, it soon transpired that ideas about a closer political, military and economic union between the Baltic States were unrealistic. The most reserved were the Estonians. Some politicians saw a union of the Baltic States and other regional alliances of post-Communist states as barriers to more rapid integration into the EU and NATO. Every country sought allies in the attempt to integrate more quickly into Europe. Estonia placed its biggest hopes on cooperation with Finland and Sweden. In the mid-1990s, Lithuanian politicians increasingly stressed that Baltic cooperation could be a barrier on the road to the EU and NATO and considered that cooperation with Poland and other Central European countries could lead to earlier entry into these organisations. Latvia did not have a distinct “locomotive”, but it received the most political and economic support from Sweden and Denmark. Due to its geographic position Latvia tried a lot harder to develop cooperation between the Baltic States. However, Latvia also viewed closer cooperation with the Scandinavian countries as an important foreign policy component.

By the end of the 1990s, however, it had become apparent that, although readiness to join the EU and NATO was assessed individually, in reality the three Baltic States were perceived as a group of countries that would be

admitted to these organisations simultaneously or at very brief intervals due to political and practical considerations. Therefore, cooperation cannot be a hindering factor. Political solidarity between the candidate countries was especially emphasised when trying to gain admission to NATO.

Preparations for NATO membership, cooperation under the PfP, and also peacekeeping missions made military cooperation the most successful aspect of cooperation between the Baltic States. The most important spheres of cooperation are the Baltic Peacekeeping Battalion (BALTBAT), which operated from 1996 to September 2003, the joint Airspace Surveillance and Control System (BALNET), the joint Baltic Naval Squadron (BALTRON) and the Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL) in Tartu.

In other areas it was more difficult to develop cooperation. Latvia also had several conflicts with its neighbours – with Lithuania over the sea boundary and with Estonia over fishing hauls in the Gulf of Riga. There were also difficulties in implementing the free-trade agreement.

At the same time, forms of regional cooperation embracing a wider range of countries developed. The Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) was founded in 1992 and includes as its members all of the countries around the Baltic Sea. The council's mission is to facilitate cooperation between the countries of the region on security issues, economic and cultural cooperation, and environmental protection.

On the suggestion of several heads of government, "5+3" cooperation – cooperation between the governments of the Nordic and Baltic countries – began in 1992. Since then, meetings between prime ministers, foreign ministers and ministers from various other spheres and officials have become common practice. In 2000, this structure was renamed "the Nordic and Baltic Eight". A characteristic feature of regional cooperation is that it develops at several levels: under the auspices of multilateral institutions, at the bilateral level, and between local governments, enterprises, institutions and non-governmental organisations.

7.4. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The people who at the end of the 1980s stood up for independence and rejected the Communist model of society underestimated the problems that Latvia would have to overcome. There was a lack of understanding of just how deeply Latvia was integrated into the planned economy and how much

of the social structure was determined by the socialist state. The view was widely held that reforms could be carried out rapidly and that the development of private initiative would allow an upper middle class to quickly arise.

Although in the early 1990s the Scandinavian market economy model was popular with both Latvia's political elite and society, in practice Latvia along with other European post-Communist countries followed the neo-liberal model. Latvia chose the so-called "shock therapy model", which anticipated a rapid transition to a market economy while simultaneously creating a legislative and institutional base, as opposed to the gradualist approach that called for reform by creating the necessary legislative and institutional base first. It was not possible, however, to implement the shock therapy model consistently and fully.

The reforms had already started in 1990. On January 3, 1991 the decision was made to raise retail prices, and from autumn 1991 prices were "freed", respectively, the removal of state regulation, which continued until 1992. The first phase of monetary reform began on May 7, 1992 with the introduction of a temporary currency, the Latvian ruble. The circulation of Soviet rubles within Latvia was halted on July 20, 1992. The second stage of monetary reform started on March 5, 1993 with the introduction of the lats (1 lats = 200 Latvian rubles). On October 18, 1993 Latvian rubles were taken out of circulation. The lats was pegged to the SDR (Special Drawing Rights) basket of currencies, the International Monetary Fund's unit of account. Following EU accession, Latvia is preparing to join the Economic and Monetary Union.

The transition to a national currency allowed macroeconomic stability, the reduction of inflation and stabilisation of the exchange rate to be achieved relatively quickly. However, many banks suffered heavy losses after attracting depositors with high interest rates in the hope that inflation would remain high. The most serious phase of the banking crisis occurred in 1995 when *Banka Baltija* was closed and several other commercial banks went bankrupt or suspended their operations. This period also saw disappearance of firms that had been established on the so-called pyramid principle to cheat people out of their money. The bank crisis of the mid-1990s was a serious test for hundreds of thousands of people who became its victims.

Retail and service, as well as some small manufacturing and especially agricultural enterprises were rapidly privatised in the early 1990s. However,

the privatisation of big state enterprises and apartments only began in the mid 1990s and proceeded very slowly. It was delayed by the banking crisis and also by discussions of what privatisation model – for cash or vouchers – was the most acceptable in each case. By 1999, the majority of large enterprises had been privatised; the few that had not been were the Latvian Shipping Company (the auction for which was held in 2002), Latvenergo (the electricity utility), Latvijas Dzelzceļš (the national railway) and Latvijas Pasts (the postal service).

The results of de-collectivisation for agriculture were mixed. Collective farms that had been turned into joint stock companies quickly collapsed. Most people wanted to regain land that had belonged to them or their parents or grandparents up to 1940. At the start of 1993, almost 40,000 farm enterprises had been registered.³⁷ However, a 1993 study of 17,000 newly created farm enterprises showed that 42 percent were without electricity, 52 percent did not have a tractor, 85 percent did not have a telephone, 25 percent were without a residential building, and in most other farms houses had been built before 1940; only 42 percent of farms had their own means of transport.³⁸ Although in theory all of the members of a collective farm could privatise collective farm equipment and production buildings with shares, in practice most of the assets ended up in the hands of the former managers and specialists who had the necessary knowledge and skills. A lack of capital and expensive credit, poor infrastructure, price fluctuations for produce, inconsistent government agriculture policies and many other conditions ensured that only a small numbers of farmers were able to develop competitive and profitable enterprises. The result was severe social differentiation in the countryside.

The structure of the economy has changed greatly since the early 1990s. In 1990, 36.5 percent of GDP came from manufacturing, 21.9 percent from agriculture, 9.7 percent from construction and 31.9 percent from services, while in 2001 services produced 70.4 percent of GDP, industry 14.8 percent, construction 6.2, and agriculture (including forestry and fishing) just 4.4 percent.³⁹ In the services sector the main growth item has been the transit of oil and other its products. The decline in the importance of manufacturing is connected with the closure of many big industrial enterprises, although some of the traditional sectors – chemical production, metal processing and machine manufacturing, food processing and textiles – have managed to survive. Nevertheless, the dominant trend has been that the surviving

enterprises and newly created ones have primarily been small or medium in size.

The structural changes were brought about by the fact that simultaneously with the transition to a market economy there were also changes in sources of raw materials and end markets and a rapid transition to world prices for raw materials and energy. At the same time there were also changes in ownership forms. From 1990 to 1994, GDP per capita fell from 1105.65 lats in 1990 to 558.87 lats in 1994. In 1991, inflation reached 272.2 percent, in 1992 – 1051 percent, in 1993 – 209.2 percent, and in 1994 – 119 percent.⁴⁰ The rate of increase for residents' incomes could not keep up with prices. Government employees, pensioners and others receiving fixed incomes from the state were hit especially hard. Savings were wiped out by inflation.

Strict budgetary discipline helped to bring inflation under control relatively quickly; it fell rapidly in the mid-1990s and by the end of the 1990s and the start of the millennium was running at around 3 percent per annum. The economy started to grow from 1996, and this was only slowed in 1999 by the Russian financial crisis. Since 1996, the annual GDP growth rate has been around 6 percent per year, one of the highest indicators of all the EU candidate countries. GDP per capita (in real prices) has grown from 1136 Ls in 1996 to 2719 Ls in 2003.⁴¹ Acceptable budget deficit and external debt levels have also been achieved. Along with the stability of the lats, all of this points to considerable success in macroeconomic stabilisation. However, Latvia still has the lowest GDP and average wage level in the Baltic States and in the EU.

Among the problems caused by the shock therapy model was the inability to simultaneously resolve all of the problems connected with the transition process: implementing economic liberalisation, and introducing appropriate institutions and laws. The lack of laws and legal harmonisation, difficulties in establishing necessary institutions and their overlapping areas of authority – these and other problems provided fertile soil for corruption. Since the late 1990s, both Latvia's society and international organisations have been focusing on this problem. A second problem has been a rise in social tensions which given Latvia's ethnic makeup can cause other problems not only domestically but also internationally. This was clearly seen in March 1998 at an unsanctioned protest meeting by mostly Russian speakers outside the Riga City Council. The meeting had been prompted by increases in charges for apartment heating and other utilities, and it caused a serious

crisis in relations between Russia and Latvia and threatened to also destabilise the domestic political situation.

Initially, the official unemployment rate rose only minimally, largely because many large enterprises continued operating even though wage payments to their workers were often delayed. But after 1993 the unemployment rate started rising quickly. According to data from the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia data, from 1996 to 2002 the unemployment rate fluctuated between 7 and 9 percent. Although economic growth rates have been relatively high, unemployment has remained unchanged. Women form the largest group of unemployed. People aged 30–49 years dominate the age structure, but unemployment amongst young people with no previous work experience has also been increasing. Socioeconomic differences between Riga and some other successfully developed centres such as Ventspils, on the one hand, and depressed rural areas, especially in eastern Latvia, on the other, have grown rapidly. This is reflected in unemployment.⁴² Growing regional differences are also reflected in significant differences in wage levels between Riga and the countryside, especially Latgallia. Since 1996 there has also been an increase in the difference between average family income per person in urban and rural areas and between Riga and other regions of Latvia, especially Latgallia.

Despite the existence of these imbalances, since 1996 the overall income level has risen and pensions and benefits have been increased. The improvement in the economic situation is reflected in a drop in the crime and mortality rates and a slight rise in the number of births and registered marriages from 2000 to 2003.

The proportion of total trade between Latvia and Russia as well other CIS countries as compared with the former USSR has fallen. Due to political differences Latvia was not granted most favourable nation status with Russia, and therefore higher customs tariffs and other taxes were applied that reduced competitiveness in the CIS markets. Other difficulties in the CIS market included the unreformed system for settling accounts and competition from imports from other countries. However, in the 1990s Latvia was an important transit corridor for Russian oil products and other export materials. Income from transit made up a significant part of Latvia's budget revenue. At the start of the 21st century, this situation has worsened as Russia builds its own ports to export oil and other products. However, Latvia's strategically important position on the crossroads of East-West trade after

the EU enlargement means that the importance of transit has not declined, despite competition from Estonian and Lithuanian ports.

The Russian financial crisis of 1998 gave a painful jolt blow to all of the Baltic States. In Latvia food, and especially fish, processing enterprises suffered the most, many of which went bankrupt. But the crisis helped reorient Latvia's foreign trade toward the EU market. In 2001, 61 percent of Latvia's exports and 53 percent of imports were with the EU.

Economic and social problems caused by the transition from a socialistic to a market economy were not foreign to any of the post-Communist countries. The only difference lied in how pressing these problems were and how successfully the countries coped with them. The development of Latvia was inhibited by the burden of the Soviet heritage – heavier than in the other Baltic states.

7.5. EDUCATION, CULTURE, SPORT

Education and science

The enormous changes that Latvia went through affected all facets of life, including education and culture. There were major changes in the status of professions and in values. At the same time there was a rise in the prestige of education and qualifications, which had declined in the 1970s and 1980s. More and more young people wanted to study, especially in professions in demand in the labour market, despite the fact that student allowances had been reduced and many had to pay for education. State loans for students have been available since 2002; however, typically most students find it necessary to work as well.

Along with increases in the state higher education institutions, there was growth in the number of private ones. In 1990, there were just 12 higher education establishments in Latvia, while in the beginning of 2005 there were 36 higher education establishments and 20 colleges, of which 16 were private higher education establishments and 4 were private colleges. The number of students increased from 46,000 in 1990 to 101,300 in 2004.⁴³ Over this period there were major changes to specialisations offered and courses available. Opportunities to study or expand knowledge abroad have also spurred teaching staff to meet the new requirements. The problem is

that the majority of students want to study economics, law or political science, but relatively few want to study science and engineering.

There is also constantly increasing demand for qualified workers and specialists in fields not requiring tertiary education, but the professional vocational education system is unable to keep up with the new demands of the labour market. Latvia also has a higher proportion of young people with only primary level education than Estonia or Lithuania, and therefore fewer young people finish secondary school in comparison with the neighbouring countries.

In the 2004/05 academic year, there were 993 general education institutions establishments and special schools in Latvia. The majority of schools (724) had Latvian as their language of instruction, 155 taught in the Russian language, and 108 taught in both languages. There were also four Polish-language schools, one Ukrainian and one Belorussian. 214,855 pupils' language of instruction was Latvian, but for 84 559 it was basically Russian.⁴⁴

In the early 1990s, the fact that scientific institutes were not integrated into the university system, while the universities performed little research, was considered a serious weakness for science in Latvia. As a result of reforms most scientific institutes were placed within the University of Latvia system. New institutes were established at the universities, and independent research institutes were also created. This process enabled new sectors to develop, especially those not requiring large capital investments or whose products were in demand commercially. Theoretical and technical sciences were slow to develop due to insufficient state funding and scarce new funding sources. Low wages did not stimulate young people to study science. Some scientists, especially young ones, have moved to countries with better conditions for scientific research work, however, there has been a great deal more "internal migration" from science to better-paid professions.

By participating in various scientific international programs and projects, scientific potential can be maintained. The Nordic countries have made a large contribution in training academic staff and students and conducting research. From 1999 to 2002, Latvian scientists took part in the 5th framework programme of the European Community for research and technological development and since 2002 take part in the 6th framework program. Latvian scientists also participate in the "Eureka" program, a cooperative program

between European countries for developing and implementing on high-technology for the implementation of a new product, process or service, with world-market applications of civilian technology, mainly in small and medium enterprises, ; as well as in scientific exchange programs with the USA. Since 1999, Latvia has been a member of the “Cost” scientific and technical cooperation program. In November 2001, the Cabinet of Ministers approved specific priority areas for basic theoretical and applied scientific research funding for 2002–2005: these include information technologies, organic synthesis and biomedicine, material sciences, forestry science and wood technology, and *lettonica* (Latvian language, history and culture).

Culture

Major changes in culture began during the period of the national re-awakening. Across all genres previously unavailable gems of global and Latvian culture were discovered. There Initially there was enormous interest in pre-war and Diaspora Latvian culture, and in Soviet writers and philosophers whose works had previously only been available in *samizdat*. New cultural-philosophical and literary journals sprang up from this wave of interest – *Avots*, *Grāmata*, *Kentaurs XXI* – and existing publications such as the Russian literary journal *Daugava*, along with the Russian-language edition of *Avots*, gained new leases on life and were read with great interest throughout the Soviet Union. The “Cinema Days ‘86” festival first held in 1986 later grew into the international film festival “Arsenāls”. This opened a window on the riches of world cinema, especially the avant-garde.⁴⁵

The reunion of Latvian and Diaspora Latvian culture was also important. This was symbolically expressed in the 1990 Song Festival, when Diaspora choirs and dance groups participated for the first time. As with integration between Latvians in Latvia and the Diaspora in general, this the process of re-union was not easy at first, as there was no shortage of mistrust and misunderstandings, because of the very different conditions in which Latvian culture had developed on opposite sides of the Iron Curtain.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw feverish experimentation by intellectuals who had grown up under socialism, as they experienced and integrated into their social and professional lives everything that had been unavailable for almost half a century. However, the political and economic transformation of the 1990s brought not only benefits but also losses and difficulties

that more or less affected all cultural spheres. Culture gained certain autonomy from political processes, but as a result of this, it lost the special social mission and purpose of preserving national identity which it had nurtured under the Soviet regime. The manoeuvring, compromise seeking and subtext culture that had been necessary for working in the Soviet system was now superfluous. However, the ability to speak about issues of interest to society in a language appropriate to the new times was not learned instantly.

At the same time pressure from mass culture rapidly grew. The function of literature, especially poetry, narrowed significantly, and furthermore was subjected to enormous competition as the latest works of foreign literature and so-called trivial pulp literature (detective novels, romances, etc.) flooded the market. Similar processes could be seen in television, theatre, cinema and music. The supply of and demand for entertainment products and new mass entertainment forms increased, for example, reality shows on TV. It was not easy to oppose these pressures, especially since under the new market conditions new sources were required for funding culture. It was natural that cultural publications and institutions that were created anew or significantly reorganised found it easier to adapt to the new conditions. Examples included the magazine *Rīgas Laiks*, the visual arts magazine *Studija*, and the New Riga Theatre established in 1992, whose performances such as Gogol's *The Auditor* (director Alvis Hermanis) have won international recognition. The Latvian National Opera House was reopened in 1995 after restoration and many quality productions have been staged there: Verdi's *Nabucco* (producer Guntis Gailītis, stage designer Andris Freibergs), Verdi's *Aida* and others (director Māra Ķimele, stage designer Ilmārs Blumbergs) and others. Many private art galleries have opened which host exhibitions and successfully sell artists' works⁴⁶.

The transition to the market economy impacted most painfully on art genres requiring large capital investments. This was especially the case with cinema, where the sudden reduction in state funding and privatisation led to the collapse of the film industry's infrastructure in the early 1990s. Some time passed before a new generation of directors and producers obtained the necessary experience and education. Cooperation with foreign countries helped make several films at the end of the 1990s, which have won recognition both in Latvia and abroad.⁴⁷

The establishment of the Culture Capital Fund was an important step

for funding culture. The fund's mission is to attract, accrue, manage and disburse funds for realising cultural projects and for lifetime stipends paid to outstanding cultural and artistic workers. The state also directly finances theatres, museums and other cultural institutions as well as certain cultural events.

The changing of generations was also an important factor, because the generation that began working in various art and culture genres in the 1990s had a different understanding of their social mission and the role of culture in society to that held by the older generations. In this regard, a major development was the post-modern view of the world and its resulting new language of art and search for images. This was reflected in, for example, the productions and literary works of theatre directors Dž. Dž. Džilindžers and Alvis Hermanis. As opposed to poetry which presented a defined hierarchy of values and a holistic world view (Imants Auziņš, Māris Čaklais, Jānis Rokpelnis, Knuts Skujenieks, Māra Zālīte, Imants Ziedonis), the 1990s saw the emergence of a new generation representing the post-modern view with a new value system and relativism (Amanda Aizpuriete, Pēters Brūveris, Guntars Godiņš, Anna Rancāne). In the first half of the 1990s, there were also several exhibitions – “Gentle Fluctuations”, “The Ship of Experience”, “The Ship is Drunk Again” – which showcased the professional skills and artistic principles of visual artists of the middle generation: Ieva Iltnerē, Zane Iltnerē, Vita Jurjāne, Sandra Krastiņa, Ilze Neilande, Aija Zariņa, Jānis Mitrēvics, Ģirts Muižnieks, Juris Utāns, Edgars Vērpe, etc.⁴⁸

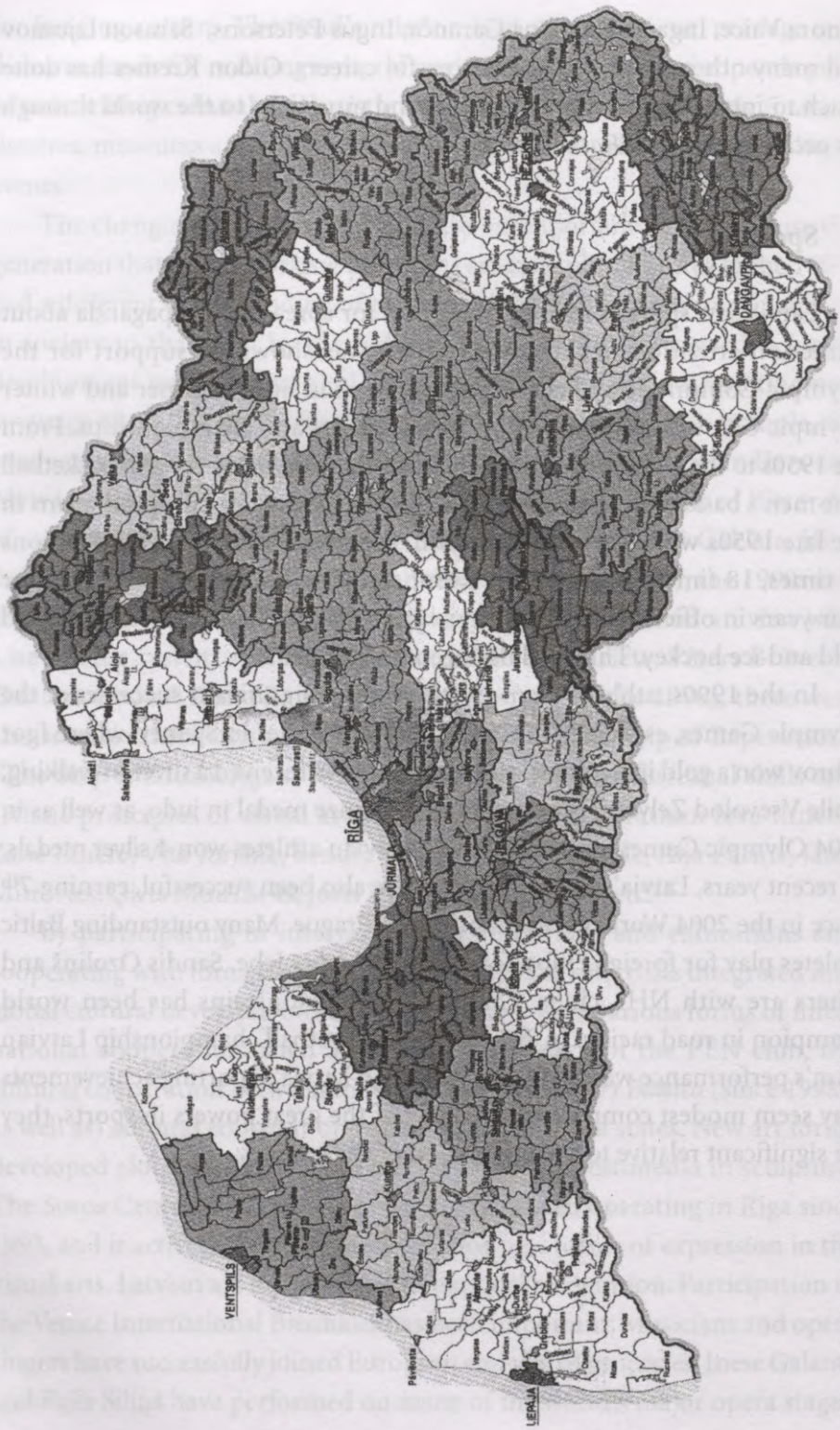
By participating in international competitions and exhibitions and cooperating with foreign colleagues, the creative intellectuals integrated into global cultural developments and events. There were various forms of international cooperation, such as the Latvian branch of the PEN club, the cultural cooperation between the Baltic Sea states – *Ars Baltica* (since 1998), as well as) cultural cooperation between the Baltic Sea states. New art forms developed alongside traditional art, for example multimedia in sculpture. The Soros Centre for Contemporary Arts has been operating in Riga since 1993, and it actively supports the search for new forms of expression in the visual arts. Latvian art has gained international recognition. Participation in the Venice International Biennales has been important. Musicians and opera singers have successfully joined European and global processes. Inese Galante and Egils Siliņš have performed on many of the world's major opera stages.

Sonora Vaice, Inga Kalna, Elīna Garanča, Ingus Pētersons, Samson Izjumov and many others have also had successful careers. Gidon Kremer has done much to introduce Latvian composers and musicians to the world through his orchestra *KREMERata Baltica*.

Sport

Latvia saw sport as an important tool for spreading propaganda about attraction attention to the country. This was shown by support for the Olympic Committee and active participation in both summer and winter Olympic Games and various other sports events and championships. From the 1950s to the 1980s, Latvian athletes had outstanding success in basketball (the men's basketball team, ASK Riga, was one of the top European teams in the late 1950s while the women's team, Riga TTT, were Soviet champions 21 times, 18 time winners of the European Cup, and were undefeated for four years in official games), rowing, luge toboggan and bobsled, track and field and ice hockey. This level has been maintained.

In the 1990s, athletes from Latvia enjoyed significant successes at the Olympic Games, especially the XXVI summer games in Sydney, where Igor Vihrov won a gold in gymnastics, Aigars Fadejevs received a silver in walking, while Vsevolod Zelyonij brought home a bronze medal in judo, as well as in 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, where Latvian athletes won 4 silver medals. In recent years, Latvia's hockey players have also been successful, earning 7th place in the 2004 World Championships in Prague. Many outstanding Baltic athletes play for foreign clubs, for example Artūrs Irbe, Sandis Ozoliņš and others are with NHL clubs. Cyclist Romāns Vainšteins has been world champion in road racing. In 2004 European football championship Latvian team's performance was also good. Although Latvia's sporting achievements may seem modest compared with those of the great powers in sports, they are significant relative to the population of the country.



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- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ See Pilsoniskās sabiedrības attīstība Latvijā: situācijas analīze. – Rīga: Consensus PR, Latvijas Ārpolitikas institūts, 2004.// http://www.ngo.org.lv/files/1774_petijums.pdf.
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- ²⁶ See Apine, I. *Citizenship Matters and Ethnic Relations in Latvia in the 90's*// http://www.politics.lv/en/psistema/frame_psistema.htm.
- ²⁷ Latvijas Statistikas Gadagrāmata 2002. Statistical Yearbook of Latvia, Riga: Latvijas Republikas Centrālā Statistikas pārvalde, 2002, p. 52.
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- ⁴¹ Latvijas Republikas Centrālā Statistikas pārvalde // <http://www.csb.gov.lv/satr/larh.cfm?tema3=ikp>.
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- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 438–439.
- ⁴⁷ *Filmmaking in the 1990s//Baltic Region: Conflicts and Co-operation. Road from the Past to the Future*, Tallinn: Eurouliskool, Kirjastus Ilo, 2004, p. 163.
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CONCLUSION

The 20th century was a singular period in Latvia's history. It witnessed undoubted progress in social development, enormous transformations in a variety of spheres, and several changes in the political conditions for the existence of the Latvian nation. Early in the century, when Latvia was part of the Russian Empire, Latvians already comprised an ethnic nation united by common origins, native language, cultural specifics and national consciousness. At that time Latvia was gripped by heightened social tensions brought about by national coercion which culminated in the 1905 Revolution, a watershed demonstrating that the Latvian nation was turning from a historical object into a subject. Although the revolutionary events were dominated by anti-national leftist forces, the popular movement took on the characteristics of a national liberation struggle. Some Latvian circles increasingly saw the necessity to obtain independent statehood for Latvia, and this was not lost without a trace in the course of subsequent events. However, it took World War I to create the preconditions for the idea of Latvia as an independent country to become reality. The Republic of Latvia proclaimed on November 18, 1918 was an expression of the natural desire of the Latvian nation to unite as a whole ethnic and political community. But there was a multicultural society within the national state of Latvia.

The independent state of Latvia produced great achievements. Latvia was gradually brought closer and closer to Europe and became a country meeting European standards. It recovered from the terrible devastation of World War I relatively quickly and flourished in various social and economic fields. The 1920s and 1930s saw growth in agriculture, industry and foreign trade, which allowed Latvia to stabilise as a country of medium development level. Its national finances were well managed and the introduction of sickness insurance rapidly made it one of the international leaders in social security. Latvia was also a shining example of the fact that even in Eastern European countries with large ethnic minorities it was possible to find a *modus vivendi*

with minorities, at least for a time. During the interwar period Latvia developed as a genuinely cultural country where support for culture and education was a priority. There were few other European countries where young people sought education as passionately as they did in Latvia. National literature and art flourished in the country, and new talents arose who honorably represented Latvia far beyond its borders. Culture and education gave the Latvian nation invaluable spiritual strength which allowed it to survive the long, hard years of occupation.

June 17, 1940, the date when Latvia was occupied by Soviet military forces, was truly a black day in the country's history. A farce was played out with the puppet government under A. Kirhenšteins, falsified election results and the incorporation of the country into the Soviet Union. This was the start of the period of three occupations which lasted over 50 years in total, marking a tragic and dangerous turn in the fate of the Latvian nation. The repressive policies implemented by both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (the Holocaust, the Stalinist deportations etc.) deepened the intellectual vacuum in Latvia that had begun with the emigration of the Baltic Germans. The Soviet occupation regime that ruled Latvia for 47 years tarnished its natural assets, destroyed the economy, coerced the inhabitants into the socialist experiment, stationed a disproportionately large military contingent on its territory, and flooded in hundreds of thousands of people of other nationalities, almost making Latvians a minority in their own country. The situation was further exacerbated and worsened by a persistent and deliberate policy of Russification, lack of access to objective information, and the absence of freedom to travel. For two generations Latvians lost their connection with Western culture and the possibility of obtaining a qualitative education. Initially Latvians had severe restrictions placed on contacts with their compatriots who went into exile at the end of World War II and were on the other side of the Iron Curtain.

In terms of international law, the annexation and incorporation of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia into the USSR in the summer of 1940 was illegal. Despite the fact that the Baltic States had no capacity for independent action, over 50 countries around the world considered that they continued to be subjects of international law. This non-recognition of the annexation and incorporation was very important to the Balts because it allowed them to keep valid the claim to end the Soviet occupation. It helped Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to restore their independence in 1990/91, which was swiftly recognised by many other countries. This created broad opportunities to open

and implement diplomatic relations, which Latvia currently has with around 140 countries. Latvia is also a member of many international organisations. On September 10, 1991, it was accepted into the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. A week later it joined the United Nations, and on October 15 became a member of UNESCO.

After the restoration of independence on August 21, 1991, the establishment and strengthening of the democratic foundations of an independent country became the chief domestic question. This was resolved in spring 1993 when the political system and state structure set out in the 1922 Constitution was reinstated in full. Equally important tasks were creating institutions of national sovereignty from scratch (the armed forces, the foreign ministry), introducing a national currency, moving over to a free market economy, and managing the withdrawal of Russian military forces from Latvia. This process lasting many months led up to an agreement between Latvia and Russia signed on April 30, 1994. The withdrawal of Russian forces finally ended 50 years of occupation and opened the way for Latvia to begin integrating into Euro-Atlantic security, political and economic structures. This was symbolically completed in the spring of 2004 with Latvia's joining the EU and NATO, symbolising its belonging to the Western world.

Latvia's inclusion in Euro-Atlantic structures is an important and irreplaceable precondition for strengthening the country's external security, guaranteeing stability and future prosperity. However, Latvia's lengthy subjugation by Russia has created several chronic problems. Latvia is currently one of the poorest countries in the EU, with average income per inhabitant four to five times lower than in wealthy European countries, and an inadequate social security system. Rarely has Latvia had such complicated, tense and irresponsibly inflamed relations between nationalities as it does at present. At the bottom of the complicated situation is the unwillingness of Latvia's largest minority groups, the Russians (around 29 percent of the population), to accept the political reality and the loss of their earlier privileges. Some Russians believe that they are discriminated against politically, culturally and linguistically. They have difficulties coming to terms with the idea that they live in independent Latvia rather than the Soviet Union. Stabilising the situation is made more difficult by Russia, which has taken on an exaggerated protector's role with regard to the Russians in Latvia, using them as a decorative element in its foreign policy. There is no genuine concern for people in its approach.

International experts have unequivocally reported on many occasions that the rights of minorities are not infringed in Latvia and their interests are respected. The state of Latvia is trying to implement ethnic policies that are balanced and based on modern, democratic norms and values. All non-citizens have the right to become naturalised and obtain citizenship. Citizenship is what determines that a resident of a country belongs to the political nation, and also stipulates the mutual rights and obligations between the citizen and the state. The processes of the last few years demonstrate that a political nation, the traditional Western model, is gradually developing in Latvia.

Latvia, on the one side, and Russia, on the other side, are actively seeking to end the state of war between them and to begin peace talks with the purpose of reaching a permanent, honorable and just state of peace and to give final resolution to all matters resulting from Latvia's previous status as a territory of Russia. For this purpose, the two sides have concluded an agreement for the government of the Democratic Republic of Latvia, signed in Moscow on 11 August 1991. The agreement states that the two sides have agreed to the following terms:

Paragraph I

The state of war between the two sides shall conclude on the date when this agreement takes effect.

Paragraph II

In accord with the announced principle of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic that all peoples have the right to free self-determination, not excluding the right to secede from the country in which they reside, and in recognition of the certainty expressed by the Latvian people to establish a separate state, Russia without objection recognises the independence, existence and sovereignty of the Latvian state and willingly and for time eternal renounces all sovereignty rights which Russia has possessed with respect to the Latvian people and territory both with respect to the

APPENDICES

No. 1

Excerpts from the Peace Treaty Between Latvia and Soviet Russia

Rīga, 11 August 1920

Latvia, on the one side, and Russia, on the other side, seriously seeking to end the state of war between them, undertook to begin peace talks with the purpose of reaching a permanent, honorable and just state of peace and to give final resolution to all matters resulting from Latvia's previous status as a territory of Russia. For this purpose the two sides have appointed as their representatives:

For the government of the Democratic Republic of Latvia:

Jānis Vesmanis¹, son of Jānis
Pēteris Bergis², son of Remberts
Ansis Buševics³, son of Kristaps
Eduards Kalniņš⁴, son of Andrejs
Kārlis Pauļuks⁵, son of Jēkabs

For the government of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic:

Adolf Joffe⁶, son of Abraham
Jakov Hanecki⁷, son of Stamslav

These representatives, having gathered in Moscow and presented their documents of authority, and same having been recognized as properly and fully in order, agreed to the following terms:

Paragraph I

The state of war between the two sides shall conclude on the date when this agreement takes effect⁸.

Paragraph II

In concert with the announced principle of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic that all peoples have the right to free self-determination, not excluding therefrom the right to secede from the country in which they reside, and in recognition of the certainly expressed will of the Latvian people to establish a separate state, Russia without objection recognizes the independence, existence and sovereignty of the Latvian state and willingly and for time eternal renounces all sovereign rights which Russia has possessed with respect to the Latvian people and territory both with respect to the

existing judicial order of the state and with respect to any and all international agreements which with respect to the aforementioned purpose are hereby declared null and void for all time henceforth. The people and territory of Latvia have no obligations with respect to Russia in connection with their previous state as a territory of Russia.

[...]

Valdības Vēstnesis, 14 september 1920

¹ *Jānis Vesmanis (1878-1942). Leader of the Latvian delegation to peace talks with Soviet Russia from June to August 1920. He replaced A. Zēbergs, who had led the delegation from April to June.*

² *Pēteris Bergis (1882 - ?). Member of the Latvian delegation.*

³ *Ansis Buševics (1878 - 1942). Social Democrat, member of the Latvian delegation in July and August 1920.*

⁴ *Eduards Kalniņš (1876 - 1964). Colonel, later general, member of the Latvian delegation.*

⁵ *Kārlis Pauļuks (1870 - 1945). Member of the Latvian Constitutional convention, member of the Latvian delegation.*

⁶ *Adolf Joffe (1883 - 1927), Soviet Russian diplomat, leader of the Soviet Russian delegation.*

⁷ *Jakov Hanecki (Firstenberg) (1879 - 1937), Soviet Russian diplomat, member of the Soviet Russian delegation.*

⁸ *The Latvian Constitutional convention ratified the agreement on 2 September 1920. Soviet Russia ratified it on 9 September. The exchange of ratification documents took place in Moscow on 4 October 1920.*

No. 2
**The Secret Supplementary Protocol to the
German-Soviet Non-Aggression Agreement
of 23 August 1939**

23 August 1939

Secret Supplementary Protocol¹

In connection with the signing of the non-aggression agreement between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the authorized representatives of both countries, having signed this pact, met in confidential negotiations to consider the matter of designating the spheres of interest of both parties in Eastern Europe. The result of these negotiations is as follows:

1. In the event of territorial and political reordering in the territory of the Baltic states (Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), the northern border of Lithuania shall be considered to be the boundary between the German and Soviet spheres of interest. Lithuania's interests with respect to the Vilnius region are recognized by both parties.

2. In the event of territorial and political reordering in the territory of Poland, the boundary between the German and Soviet spheres of interest shall be deemed to approximately follow the Narev, Visla and Sana rivers².

The matters of whether the existence of an independent Polish state serves the interests of both parties, and what should be the borders of such an independent state, shall be determined in the context of further political developments.

In any event, the two governments shall resolve this matter in the spirit of friendly cooperation.

3. In the Southeast of Europe, the Soviet side emphasizes the interests of the USSR in Bessarabia. The German side confirms its lack of any political interest whatsoever in this region.

4. Both parties agree to maintain complete secrecy with respect to this agreement³.

Moscow, 23 August 1939

For the German government:

J. von Ribbentrop

Authorized by the government of the USSR:

V. Molotov

*Akten zur deutschen auswaertigen Politik 1918-1945. - Serie D.
Bd. VII. - Baden-Baden, 1956, pp. 206-207. Copy.*

¹The USSR tried for more than 50 years to deny that this protocol ever existed.

²On 28 August 1939, the Soviet foreign affairs commissar, V. Molotov, and the German ambassador to Moscow, W. von der Schulenburg, signed a "supplementary agreement" in Moscow which more precisely defined the text of the latter words in this paragraph. The more precise definition read: "...to follow the Pissa, Narev, Visla and Sana rivers".

³The fact that the German-Soviet non-aggression agreement was actually oriented toward the engendering of war was most clearly evidenced by this secret protocol, which spoke to "territorial and political reordering".

For the German
government
J. von Ribbentrop

Authorized by
the Soviet government
V. Molotov

*Akten zur deutschen auswaertigen Politik 1918-1945, Serie D,
Bd. VII, Baden-Baden, 1956, p. 128.*

The text of this agreement of various kinds of secret which the Soviet Union and Germany signed in connection with their agreement on friendship and border issues. It seems that this agreement has no precedent in the history of international politics. It represents in the only agreement of its type: the division of the territories of a third, sovereign country in the interest of an agreement.

The agreement also refers to Germany to Latvia and Estonia, but the international law was concluded by secret. Apparently the agreement was intended to result in how should the Baltic territories be changed by the USSR while Germany was still involved there.

No. 3
Latvia's Declaration of Neutrality

1 September 1939

A Declaration by the President

President Kārlis Ulmanis yesterday signed the following declaration:

1) I hereby declare that in the matter of the war which has arisen between other countries, Latvia shall maintain strict neutrality.

2) Based on the Law on the rules of neutrality¹ I determine that the regulations of the law are to be applied with respect to all combatant countries beginning on 1 September 1939.

K. Ulmanis
President

Valdības Vēstnesis, 2 September 1939

¹*The law was adopted on 21 December 1938.*

No. 4
A Confidential Protocol Between Germany
and the USSR¹

28 September 1939

The government of the USSR shall place no obstacles in the way of German citizens and other persons of German extraction who are resident in territories which are included in the Soviet sphere of interest, should such persons seek to depart for Germany or for territories in the German sphere of interest. The Soviet government agrees that the movement of individuals will be carried out by authorized representatives of the German government in concert with the appropriate local officials². The property rights of those who depart will not be violated.

The German government undertakes analogous obligations with respect to persons of Ukrainian and Byelorussian origin who are resident in territories which are in the German sphere of interest.

Moscow, 28 September 1939

For the German
government
J. von Ribbentrop

Authorized by
the Soviet government
V. Molotov

Akten zur detuschen auswaertigen Politik: 1918-1945. Serie D., Bd. 8, Baden-Baden, 1961, p. 128.

¹ This is one of three agreements of various levels of secrecy which the Soviet Union and German signed in connection with their agreement on friendship and border issues. It seems that this protocol has no precedent in the history of international justice. It apparently is the only agreement of its type: two dictators choosing citizens of a third, sovereign country to be the object of an agreement.

² The agreement also refers to Germans in Latvia and Estonia, but the two countries are not mentioned by name. Apparently the agreement was intended to remain in force should the Baltic countries be occupied by the USSR while Germans were still resident there.

No5

**The Mutual Assistance Pact between Latvia and
the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics**

5 October 1939

The President of the Republic of Latvia on the one side,
and

The Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR
on the other side,

With the purpose of developing further the friendly relations which were established through the peace treaty of 11 August 1920, said treaty being based on the mutual recognition of the other party's independent statehood and on the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of the other party;

Recognizing that the peace treaty of 11 August 1920 and the agreement of 5 February 1932 on non-aggression and on the peaceful settlement of conflicts remain the strong basis of their mutual relations;

Convinced that the interests of both Equal Parties shall be served by a precise definition of terms with respect to the assurance of mutual security,

Deemed it necessary to conclude the following mutual aid agreement and for this purpose appointed as their authorized representatives:

The President of the Republic of Latvia:

Vilhelms Munters, Foreign Minister

The Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR:

V.M. Molotov, Chairman of the Council of
People's Commissars and Foreign Affairs
Commissar,

who, having mutually presented their documents of authority, and same having been recognized to be proper and appropriate, agreed to the following:

Paragraph I

Both Signatory Parties undertake to provide one another with all manner of assistance, including military assistance, in the event that there should be a direct attack or the threat of attack from any European power against their sea boundaries in the Baltic Sea or their land boundaries through the territory of the Republic of Estonia or the Republic of Lithuania, or against the bases which are provided by Paragraph III of this agreement.

Paragraph II

The Soviet Union undertakes to extend assistance to the Latvian army in terms of armament and other war materiel.

Paragraph III

The Republic of Latvia, for the purpose of ensuring the security of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Republic of Latvia, hereby extends to the Soviet Union the right to take control of naval bases at the cities of Liepāja and Ventspils, as well as several aviation aerodromes, on the basis of a lease agreement, for an agreed lease price. The specific locations of the bases and aerodromes and their boundaries shall be determined on the basis of mutual agreement.

For the purpose of defending the Straits of Irbe, the Soviet Union hereby is granted the right to place a coastal artillery base on the shore between Ventspils and Pitragi, applying thereto the same terms and conditions.

For the purpose of defending the naval bases, aerodromes and coastal artillery base, the Soviet Union shall have the right to station at these bases and aerodromes, in specific locations and at its own cost, a strictly limited number of Soviet land and aviation troops. The maximum number of such troops shall be set by separate agreement.

Paragraph IV

Both Signatory Parties undertake not to conclude any agreement or participate in any coalition which is aimed against one of the Signatory Parties.

Paragraph V

The implementation of this pact shall have no impact upon the sovereign rights of the Signatory Parties, including therein their governing order, their economic and social system, and their military activities.

The bases and aerodromes (Paragraph III) shall remain the territory of the Republic of Latvia.

Paragraph VI

This pact shall take effect upon the exchange of documents of ratification. The exchange of documents shall take place in Riga within six days, counting from the day of signing¹.

This pact shall remain in effect for ten years. In the event that neither Signatory Party determines one year prior to the expiration of the agreement that the agreement should be abrogated, the agreement shall automatically remain in effect for another ten years.

In confirmation of this, the authorized representatives have signed and sealed this agreement.

Concluded in Moscow in two originals, in the Latvian and Russian languages, on 5 October 1939.

V. Munters

V. Molotov

Document 6

**Excerpts from the decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet
“On Formation of the Pskov Region within the RSFSR”, dated 23 August 1944**

Decree of 23 August 1944

1. To confirm the application of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic concerning the formation of the Pskov Region within the RSFSR with the centre in the city of Pskov.

(..)

2. Taking into account the repeated requests of the inhabitants of the *pagasts* of Vishgorod, Kachanovo and Tolkovo, inhabited prevaillingly by Russians, and satisfying their wishes, as well as taking into consideration (..) the request of the Presidium of the Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet concerning the inclusion of the above *pagasts* into the RSFSR, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics **r e s o l v e s**:

To confirm (..) the application of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and include the *pagasts* of Vishgorod, Kachanovo and Tolkovo within the Pskov Region (..), separating them from the Latvian SSR.

Document 7

Corkern Internal Memorandum to Senior Officials

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

US. Displaced Persons Commission Headquarters
Frankfurt, APO 757

To: All Senior Officers and Staff
From: Robert J. Corkern, Coordinator for Europe
Subject: Baltic *Waffen SS* Units
Date: November 28, 1950

I. For your information we are forwarding excerpts of a letter from the Commission in Washington to this office further clarifying the Commission's policy regarding Baltic *Waffen SS* Units.

A. The Commission's policy on *Waffen SS* Units is as you stated, «that any Baltic National who qualifies as a displaced person will be considered for admission to the United States on the basis of his individual record and that the fact of membership in a *Waffen SS* Unit will not, in and of itself, be a basis for his exclusion.» This is completely consistent with the Commission's statement of policy dated September 1, 1950.

B. The Commission directed that all Baltic soldiers' cases in suspension be reactivated immediately in accordance with the policy decision of September 1, 1950. For practical purposes, this meant all such cases held by the Frankfurt Review Panel were to be returned to the appropriate area offices for action, and that all such cases suspended on the area level were to be reactivated.

C. Cases that were formerly rejected on the grounds of service in the Baltic Legion fall in the same category as those suspended so far as eligibility for reactivation is concerned. However, although in suspended cases such reactivation is automatic, in rejected cases the sponsor or sponsoring agency must request reactivation of the cases. It should be noted that Baltic Legion cases rejected for reasons other than mere service in the Baltic *Waffen SS* would not be reactivated on the basis of the policy decision of September 1, 1950.

D. Policy of the Commission has been to consider either voluntary or involuntary membership in the *Waffen SS*, except in the Baltic *Waffen SS*, as a bar per se under Section 13. In the case of the Baltic *Waffen SS* units, it received evidence showing membership in these units was due to conscription, a method by the Hitler regime, and that members of the Baltic *SS* were impressed for the most part for actual fighting on the eastern front. After very careful consideration, the Commission finally decided that the Baltic *Waffen SS* units were not a hostile movement within Section 13 of the Act, and membership in these units was not a bar per se.

The above has been prepared for use in the implementation of the Commission policy statement of September 1, 1950, concerning service in the Baltic *Waffen SS* Units.

Signature: Robert J. Corkern, Coordinator for Europe

The Latvian Legion. Heroes, Nazis or Victims? A collection of documents from OSS War-Crimes investigation files 1945–1950. Ezergailis, A. (Editor). Riga: The Historical Institute of Latvia.

Document 8

Excerpt from the speech of J. Kalnbērziņš, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the C(B)PL, at the meeting of the Secretaries of the Party Committees of *pagasts*, Party organizers for *pagasts* and the Secretaries of the Party primary organizations of rural localities on the course of collectivization, 7 April 1949

7 April 1949

(..)

Owing to the recent operation¹, carried out in Soviet Latvia, which was basically correct, as well as the accomplished great political work, for the first time in history, the poor and middle-class peasantry absolutely freely expresses its wish, its hidden desire to unite in kolkhozs without delay and to take the road outlined by comrade Stalin.

Today we have 3500 kolkhozs, which have united 60% of all peasants' farms of Latvia, cattle, arable land, etc. are united to even higher percent. Many officials of the Party and Soviet bodies in *pagasts* understand the great changes, which take place in our Republic and our *pagasts*, however all employees of Soviet bodies haven't understood them. There are the employees, who are the detached observers of these important tasks.

How else could one explain the fact that in the countryside there are still the *pagasts* with no or 1–2 kolkhozs. A characteristic example of the above is the speech of the head of the Agricultural Department, who expressed the opinion that it was too early to do, [that] it had to be done slower, carrying out discussions, nobody knew what would come out of it, etc. It gives proof to the fact that the Party officials of *pagasts* still live in the old way, as they lived in 1945–1946, flirt with the individual farms and consider that collectivization will roll over Latvia like a whirlwind and that it isn't still known whether it will touch some *pagasts* or won't. I would very much like that these wrong views are overcome at this meeting. And it's high time to understand that the great transformation of agriculture is as inevitable as is the existence of Soviet power, as inevitable was the October Revolution, etc. (*Stormy applause.*)

One should say straight and frankly that the Party officials, who have worked in a definite *pagasts* for 2–3 years and have not been able to organize a single kolkhoz

¹ The deportation of 25 March 1949 is meant here.

there, have worked in vain. I would like to say that there are no bad *pagasts*, administrative districts and farmers, but there are bad Party officials of *pagasts* and administrative districts. The number of kolkhozs grows, and the whole peasantry has risen to work in a new way, in accordance with Soviet standards. Communists have no rights to delay this movement, but they have to be in the vanguard and to get rid of everything that hampers this movement, they have to break the resistance of kulaks and to bring the question of kulaks to the final end.

(..)

One shall not forget that in spite of the accomplished operation, the class enemy is not liquidated in our Republic. A comrade from the administrative district¹ of Sigulda said if we were entrusted to carry out the operation, we would have done it so that no enemies were left in Latvia. That is wrong. Neither the Central Committee of the Party, nor the Party organization of the administrative district can do it. It is not possible to achieve in an instant that nothing of the old is left and that there is only the new. That is an illusion. It had never been so, and there was such a possibility neither in Moscow, nor Leningrad. And also in Latvia it is not possible to liquidate all class enemies by a single operation. The political consciousness of people shall be increased. And if all collective farmers, officials of the Party and Soviet bodies and all our deputies are vigilant and do not allow the enemy to sit, where it may not sit, if it is timely unmasked, we will cope with this matter then. And I think that definite hatred against the enemies of our country has to be inculcated, since there were very many who cried, etc.², and that means there is too little of hatred (..).

¹ That's how in text. Correct: the *pagasts* of Sigulda.

² The people, who saw the deportation of 25 March 1949, are meant here.

Document 9

Appeal of the leaders of the exile national and refugees' organizations of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Hungary, as well as the ACEN¹ Delegation in Stockholm and the Baltic Committee to help the Baltic nations in their liberation struggle, 14 June 1973

Stockholm, 14 June 1973

APPEAL

European Security and the Baltic States

Most Western States including the USA have not recognized the annexation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union in the summer of 1940. This is a result of the condemnation of war and the use of force in the so-called Briand-Kellog Pact of 1928, which is still in force, and of a reaffirmation of this ban in the Charter of the United Nations (1945). The ban on war ought to mean that changes in territorial boundaries attained by the use of armed forces are not recognized. This principle, the so-called Stimson doctrine, was first formulated in a Note to China and Japan in 1932 by the then US Secretary of State, Henry Stimson. The USA reaffirmed this doctrine on July 27, 1940, declaring she would not recognize the annexation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union by use of force and on the basis of a secret agreement between Hitler and Stalin.

The activities of Baltic organisations and individuals abroad, and the passive resistance of the Baltic nations at home, have contributed to a continued non-recognition by the major Western Powers of the incorporation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union. The diplomatic representatives of the Baltic States have been able to carry on their work. The Soviet Union has tried repeatedly to attain an international recognition of the annexation, but so far without results. This means that the status of the Baltic States is not a domestic Soviet problem but, on the contrary, an international problem.

The United Nations have issued several appeals to all Governments to combat violations of the human rights and basic freedoms, such as the right of self-determination, freedom of organization, religious freedom, freedom of opinion, freedom of speech, ban of racial discrimination, etc. The nations bordering on the Soviet Union have suffered great losses through Soviet terror and genocide which started with mass

¹ Assembly of the Captive European Nations (ACEN) was founded in 1954. The General Meeting of the Assembly was convened 1-2 times a year in New York and Strasbourg. Till 1960, the commissions of politics, justice, information, social matters and culture were active within the ACEN. In the 80s, owing to the détente, the activities of the ACEN actually stopped.

deportations from the Baltic States on June 14, 1941. The Baltic States were hit particularly severely but the populations of Poland, Roumania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and other East and Central European countries have suffered through Communist terror and through Soviet colonialism and russianization, more particularly in the Baltic States.

We accuse the rulers in the Kremlin of oppression and of violations of the basic human rights in the Baltic States and in the Central and East European countries as well as in the USSR proper.

The undersigned representatives in the free world of the East and Central European nations appeal to the free nations and their Governments, to the free Press, to world public opinion and to international organizations:

- not to refuse to help the Baltic nations in their struggle of freedom against Soviet neo-colonialism and russianization because their just demands are based on historical, cultural and ethical facts;

- to assess correctly Soviet aspirations at the planned European Security Conference – to try to secure and to attain a recognition in treaties to the present status quo in Europe, to reduce US influence in Europe in order to increase Soviet influence. There is reason to fear that the Soviet Union will be prepared to make considerable concessions and pledges for the future to escape rectifying its earlier acts of injustice;

- not to recognize the Soviet annexation of the Baltic States and to grant all the occupied nations the possibility to exercise their right of self-determination under the protection of the United Nations.

Chairman of the Estonian National Foundation (signature)

Chairman of the Latvian National Foundation (signature)

Chairman of the Lithuanian Society in Sweden (signature)

Chairman of the Polish Refugee Council in Sweden (signature)

Chairman of the Central Society of Free Hungarians in Sweden (signature)

Chairman of the ACEN Delegation in Stockholm (signature)

Secretary of the Baltic Committee (signature)

Document 10

Excerpts from the report of A. Voss, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Latvia, on the expansion of the teaching of Russian at the conference "The Development of National Relations under the Conditions of Developed Socialism", 29-30 June 1982

(..)

In our Republic, the majority of workers' collectives are multinational collectives. The composition of comprehensive, professional technical schools and institutions of higher education is usually multinational. Millions of people change their places of residence every year and often they cross the borders of Union and Autonomous republics. And everywhere there appears a common problem for everybody – the problem of human contacts. But under the conditions of our multinational country, the knowledge of Russian undoubtedly considerably helps to widen these contacts.

(..)

Everywhere people very much strive for mastering the Russian language, and this striving manifests itself more and more widely. Therefore the Party organizations and Soviet bodies constantly have to see to it that all conditions are created to satisfy the wish, which in our country is caused by the objective logic of the building of communism.

(..)

Document 11

Excerpts from the last word of the Latvian freedom fighter Gunārs Astra
at the Supreme Court of the Latvian SSR on 15 December 1983

15 December 1983

(..)

It hurts and I feel humiliated stating that my native tongue must shrink away to reservations – Open-air museum, to a few theatre stages, to the activities of mass-media – and there too it is slowly and confidently suppressed by the grand Russian tongue.

It hurts and I feel humiliated stating that the overwhelming majority of Russians born and bred in Latvia do not learn and do not want to know the Latvian language, that for the holder of the certificate of secondary school the Latvian language is the object of disdain and scoffing and that none of the examiners ask from the Russian pupil knowledge of this language, but for the Latvian pupil the knowledge of the Russian language is obligatory.

(..)

I am deeply insulted and humiliated when in a public place – shop, office, transport vehicles, in the street in the territory of Latvia – on every step I have to experience haughty, chauvinistic attitude towards my language – in the best case hearing: "Chevo, chevo? Po rusksky!"¹ – in the worst – the addressee gazes at me as if I were a window pane and then I can admire his back.

(..)

I believe that this time will fade away as an evil nightmare. It gives me strength to stand and breathe here. Our nation has suffered a lot and therefore it has learned and will weather also this dark period.

¹ "What, what? Russian!" (in Russian).

Document 12

**Declaration of the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic
"On the Renewal of Independence of the Republic of Latvia"
dated 4 May 1990**

4 May 1990

The independent State of Latvia, founded on 18 November 1918, was granted international recognition in 1920 and became a member of the League of Nations in 1921. The Latvian Nation's right to self-determination was implemented in April 1920, when the people of Latvia gave their mandate to the Constituent Assembly chosen by universal, equal and direct and proportional elections. In February, 1922, the Assembly adopted the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, which is still in effect *de iure*. The ultimatum of June 16, 1940 from the Stalinist government of the USSR to the Latvian Government, asking for its resignation, and the following military aggression, constitute international crimes, which resulted in the occupation of Latvia and the liquidation of its statehood. The new government of Latvia was formed by the dictate of the government of the USSR. According to international law, this government did not represent the executive authority of the sovereign Republic of Latvia, since it represented the interests of the USSR instead of those of Latvia.

The elections of 14 and 15 July 1940, to the Parliament (Saeima) of occupied Latvia were held under the conditions of political terror after an illegal and unconstitutional election law had been adopted. Of the 17 lists of candidates submitted, only one was permitted in the elections – the list of the Working People's Bloc. The pre-election platform of this bloc did not include any demand to establish Soviet power in Latvia or to join the Soviet Union. Moreover, the results of the elections were falsified. Thus, the illegally and fraudulently formed Parliament did not represent the will of the Latvian people. It had no constitutional powers to change the government system and liquidate the sovereignty of Latvia. Only the people had the right to decide on these matters, but no referendum was held. Hence, according to international law, the incorporation of Latvia into the Soviet Union is invalid. Accordingly, the Republic of Latvia continues to exist *de iure* as a subject of international law and is recognized as such by more than 50 nations of the world.

Taking into account the "Declaration on the Sovereignty of the Latvian State" adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian SSR on July 28, 1989; the "Declaration on the Questions of the Independence of the Latvian State" adopted by the Latvian

Supreme Soviet on February 15, 1990; and the "Appeal of the All-Latvia Meeting of People's Deputies" of April 21, 1990;

Observing the will of the inhabitants of Latvia, which was unmistakably expressed by the election to the Latvian Supreme Soviet of a majority of deputies who had expressed the determination to restore the independence of the Republic of Latvia;

Being determined to restore *de facto* the free, democratic and independent Republic of Latvia,

The Supreme Soviet of the Latvian SSR *d e c i d e s*:

1. To recognize the supremacy of the fundamental principles of international law over national law and to consider illegal the treaty of August 23, 1939, between the USSR and Germany, and the subsequent liquidation of the sovereignty of the Republic of Latvia on June 17, 1940, which was the result of Soviet military aggression.

2. To declare null and void from the moment of inception the decision of July 21, 1940, by the Parliament of Latvia: "On the Republic of Latvia's Joining the USSR".

3. To re-establish the authority of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, adopted by the Constituent Assembly on February 15, 1922, in the entire territory of Latvia. The official name of the Latvian state is "The Republic of Latvia", abbreviated as "Latvia".

4. Until the adoption of a revised constitution, to suspend the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, except for the articles expressing the constitutional and legal foundation of the Latvian state, which, according to Article 77 of the Constitution, can be changed only by popular referendum:

Article 1 – Latvia is an independent democratic republic;

Article 2 – The sovereign power of the Latvian state belongs to the people of Latvia;

Article 3 – The territory of the Latvian state shall consist of Vidzeme, Latgale, Kurzeme and Zemgale, within the boundaries stipulated by International treaties;

Article 6 – The Saeima is elected by universal, equal, direct and secret vote on the basis of proportional representation.

The application of Article 6 will follow the renewal of those state and administrative structures of Latvia which guarantee free elections.

5. To set a transition period for the re-establishment of the *de facto* independence of the Republic of Latvia, which will conclude with the convening of the Parliament of Latvia.* During the transition period, supreme state power in Latvia is held by the Parliament of Latvia.

* From 4 May 1990 to 6 July 1993 the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia was called the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia.

6. During the transition period, to implement those constitutional and other legal acts of the Latvian SSR which are in effect in Latvia when this Declaration is adopted, insofar as they do not contradict Articles 1, 2, 3 and 6 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia. Conflicts of law are resolved by the Constitutional Court of Latvia.

7. To form a commission for revising the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, so that it corresponds to the present political, economic and social situation in Latvia.

8. To guarantee citizens of the Republic of Latvia and those of other nations permanently residing in Latvia social, economic and cultural rights, as well as those political rights and freedoms which are defined in international human rights instruments. To apply these rights also to those citizens of the USSR who express the desire to continue living in the territory of Latvia.

9. To develop relations between Latvia and the USSR in accordance with the Peace Treaty between Latvia and Russia of August 11, 1920, which is still in force and which recognizes the independence of Latvia for all time. To establish a Government Commission for conducting negotiations with the USSR.

This act takes effect from the moment of its adoption.

A. GORBUNOV
Chairman, Supreme
Soviet of the Latvian SSR

I. DAUDIŠS
Secretary, Supreme
Soviet of the Latvian SSR

Document 13

The Decree on Recognition of Independence of Republic of Latvia, issued on August 24, 1991 by President of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (SFSR)

1. Apropos the decision of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia, to recognise the national independence of the Republic of Latvia.
2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs shall negotiate and sign treaties regarding the establishment of diplomatic relationship between the Russian SFSR and the Republic of Latvia.
3. The USSR president shall be invited to recognise the national independence of the Republic of Latvia and negotiate the settlement of international relationship between Russia and the Republic of Latvia.
4. The international society shall be invited to recognise the independence of the Republic of Latvia.

President of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

signature B. Yeltsin

Moscow, Kremlin
August 24, 1991

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I look optimistically at Latvia's future prospects. Our small and perhaps rather reserved northerly nation now has the most important thing of all – the opportunity to write our own history, free from oppression by external powers, limited only by our own capacity, imagination, and willpower. Finally, despite the attempts of certain theorists to claim the opposite, 'the end of history' is nowhere near.

Artis Pabriks
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia

Like the other countries and nations of Europe, Latvia and Latvians experienced to the full all of the trends – both negative and positive – that characterized the continent's development, but more than most, Latvia and Latvians have seen their history written by others. And as a result, that history is full of willful distortions and myths that often have kept Latvians themselves as well as others from understanding their past and consequently themselves and prevented others from understanding both the problems and dilemmas Latvians have faced and the ways in which they have sought to solve them.

This book is designed to help both groups understand what happened here and why, what decisions were made and who made them, and what influences shaped Latvia and Latvians in the 20th century and which ones they hope to continue and which ones they hope to escape in the future. It has been prepared by a group of writers on the basis of both published and archival materials. And it includes both scholarly notes and a suggested bibliography.

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