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SHALL LATVIANS PERISH?

AN URGENT APPEAL

of the

LATVIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL

to the

CIVILIZED WORLD.

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SHALL LATVIANS PERISH?

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I. The Hitler—Stalin conspiracy against Poland and the Baltic States.

It has been established at the Nuremberg Trials and by documents published by USA State Department (referring to the Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939—1941) that the direct purpose of the Friendship- and non-Aggression Treaty signed by Germany and the Soviet Union on August 23rd, 1939, in Moscow and its secret annex, has been the conquest of foreign countries and the dividing of those countries among the conquerors. Poland and the Baltic States had been chosen as first victims.

Because of discords among the Allies of World War I and their patience, Hitler had managed to build up his war-machinery and now, after signing the Treaty, he became active. Inspired by former successes, he was thoroughly convinced that Great Britain and France would yield again and would not begin war with Germany for the sake of Poland and, therefore, Hitler started its invasion on September 1, 1939. The Red Army needed more time to complete its preparations for war and Stalin was able to step in only on September 17th. Poland's resistance having been broken by that time, Stalin's Armies easily occupied all Polish territories allotted to Soviets by the Moscow Treaty.

Having finished with Poland, both conspirators turned to the Baltic States. Hitler's immediate purpose was to evacuate from there the small group of German inhabitants called Volksdeutsche (3,10/o) before Moscow had taken authority over the Baltic States. Stalin's aim was to incorporate those countries into the Soviet Union bei means of concluding with them Pacts of Mutual Assistance as if for better common defence. The protestations of the Baltic States that they did not consider themselves endangered were futile. Moscow persisted in her standpoint which she buttressed by concentrating for intimidation purposes considerable Red Army forces near the borders of the Baltic States. Thus these peace loving States, notwithstanding their declarations of neutrality at the beginning of the German invasion of Poland, were imposed upon with Pacts of Mutual Assistance. In consequence of these pacts Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania had to tolerate Soviet garrisons and naval

bases in strategically important points of their respective countries.

All this happened at a time when the relations between Latvia and the Soviet Union had already been definitively settled by various treaties and conventions, the most important of them being the following:

1. Treaty of Peace of August 11th, 1920.

According to this the USSR recognizes the independence and sovereignty of the Latvian State without any objections and forever resigns all sovereign rights over the Latvian nation and territory which had been usurped by the Tsarist Empire.

§ 2 of this Treaty stipulates:

„Russia unreservedly recognizes the independence, selfsubsistency and sovereignty of the Latvian State and voluntarily and forever renounces all sovereign rights over the Latvian people and territory, which formerly belonged to Russia under international Treaties, which, in the sense here indicated, shall in the future cease to be valid. The previous status of subjection of Latvia to Russia shall not entail any obligation towards Russia on the part of the Latvian people or territory.”

In order to preserve the independence and liberty acquired after heavy losses and sacrifices in the war for her freedom and statehood, Latvia tried to avert any misunderstanding resp. conflict with the great neighbour and signed for this purpose different treaties of political and economical character assigning various advantages to the Soviet Union.

2. Treaty of non-Aggression.

On February 5th, 1932, Latvia contracted a Treaty of non-Aggression of 3 years duration with the USSR, which pact was prolonged till 1946 on April 4th, 1934. According to this Treaty both signataries undertook:

„Article 1: to refrain from any act of violence directed against the territorial integrity and inviolability or the political independence of the other Contracting Party, regardless of whether such aggression or such acts are committed separately or together with other powers, with or without a declaration of war;

Article 2: not to be a party to any military or political treaties, conventions or agreements

directed against the independence, territorial integrity or political security of the other Party, or to any treaties, conventions, or agreements aiming at an economic or financial boycott of the Contracting Parties."

Besides, both parties undertook to settle all conflicts, notwithstanding their reason and character by a conciliation procedure and in case they would not succeed to settle them in a due time, a mixed conciliation committee had to meet for this purpose.

3. A Convention relating to the Conciliation Procedure, has been signed on June 18th, 1932, laying down the conciliation procedure anticipated in the non-Aggression Pact.

4. Litvinoff Protocol.

Directed by devotion to peace and good neighbourly relations Latvia, together with Estonia, Poland and Roumania signed on February 9th, 1929, with the Soviet Union the so-called Litvinoff Protocol agreeing to apply in their relations the Kellogg-Briand anti-War-Pact signed in Paris on August 27th, 1928, without even waiting till this Pact would come into force for the signatories.

According to this Pact the signatories

„solemnly declare in the name of their respective peoples that they 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 and agree that 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."

5. Convention for the Definition of Aggression.

Developing still farther their relations with the USSR, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Roumania, Turkey and Afghanistan signed on July 3rd, 1933, a special Convention defining aggression and the aggressor. According to this Convention the aggressor shall be considered that State which is the first to commit one of the following acts:

- 1) Declaration of war upon another State;
- 2) Invasion by its armed forces, with or without a declaration of war, of the territory of another State;
- 3) Attack by its land, naval or air forces, with or without a declaration of war, on the territory, vessels or aircraft of another State;

- 4) Naval blockade of the coasts or ports of another State and
- 5) Provision of support to armed bands formed in its territory which have invaded the territory of another State, or refusal notwithstanding the request of the invaded State, to take, in its own territory, all the measures in its power to deprive those bands of all assistance or protection."

„No political, military, economic or other considerations may serve as an excuse or justification for the aggression."

6. Pact of Mutual Assistance

signed in Moscow on October 5th, 1939. Even by this Pact which has been forced upon Latvia it is recognised that the Peace Treaty of August 11th, 1920, as well as the above mentioned treaties and conventions continue to be the firm basis of the relations between both States.

Farther this Pact stipulates:

Article IV. Both contracting parties undertake not to enter into any alliances or to participate in any coalitions directed against one of the contracting parties.

Article V. The carrying into effect of the present pact must in no way affect the sovereign rights of the contracting parties, in particular their political structure, their economic and social system and their military measures.

Contrary to these Treaties, which all have been deposited with the League of Nations, the Soviet Union having no justification whatsoever, not to mention flagrant breach of the principles of International Law, presented in 1940 a short-dated ultimatum to the Baltic-States. This ultimatum prescribed:

- a) to change the existing governments against such agreeable to Moscow, and
- b) to admit an unlimited number of Soviet forces in order to ensure the realization of the Pact of Mutual Assistance.

Latvia on her behalf (as well as the other Baltic States) had never broken any of the obligations imposed upon her by the Pact of Mutual Assistance. But the double-faced politics of the Soviet Union was clearly demonstrated by the fact that, contrary to the obligations assumed, she had already agreed with Germany about their respective spheres of influence in the Baltic States and the annihilation of their independence.

In occupying the Baltic States the Soviet Union performed an unprovoked act of aggression against Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania breaking obligations of a treaty, that had been suggested and willingly assumed by the Soviet Union herself.

The maxim of World War I that signed treaties were nothing but scraps of paper, was deliberately adopted by the Bolsheviks and practically applied by the invasion of Poland and the Baltic States, the conflict over Berlin and in other instances. All this reaffirms the fact that according to Soviet conceptions treaties are less than waste-paper. The Bolsheviks do not care about them and act according to tactical motives inspired by the moment.

The invasion of the Baltic States caused deep indignation in the whole civilized world and the United States of America condemned this act of violence in their declaration of July 23rd, 1940, stating:

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

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

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

These principles constitute the very foundations upon which the existing relationship between the 21 sovereign republics of the New World rests.

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

II. Bolshevization of Latvia.

After the occupation of Latvia Mr. Andrej Vishinsky, special plenipotentiary from Moscow and Mr. Dereviansky, the USSR envoy to Latvia, set up without any cooperation with the Latvian constitutional organs a puppet „government” submissive to the far reaching aims of the USSR.

The first task of this puppet „government” was to organize new elections of Parliament.

Article 6 of the Latvian Constitution says, that Parliament is to be elected by general, equal, direct, secret and proportional suffrage. These important regulations of the Constitution were not observed by the puppet „government” forced upon the Latvian nation. No political party, with exception of the Communists, who had never been popular and whose membership amounted at the moment of the invasion only to a couple of hundreds, was allowed to continue their activities and to take part in the elections with their own lists of candidates. All attempts to ensure democratic elections, expressing the will of the Nation, were suppressed mercilessly and the elections were organized and carried out by order of the USSR and by its agents according to directions received from Moscow. The occupation power arranged so that only one list of candidates, dictated from Moscow, was submitted to the voters. There were no meetings, no freedom of speech, with of course one exception only — for the Communist party. The whole press was in the hands of the occupation power and wrote only according to their interest. Above all, voters were bound to deliver their ballots not in sealed envelopes but overtly.

The Nation had no opportunity even to boycott the elections. The passports of the voters were stamped and the people whose passports had no such entry were subject to persecution.

In such undemocratic elections held under most brutal means of coercion, supported by Red Army bayonets and tanks, the only candidates nominated by the Soviet government were proclaimed as being „elected” by an uncontrollable number of votes.

The Bolshevik commissaries ordered the election committees what the election results had to be like and what had to be entered into the Election Record. The number of votes delivered in Lithuania had been published in the foreign press

even 24 hours before the district election committees had reported the voting results. This fact clearly proves that the instructions received from Moscow prescribed what the voting results should be.

The fictitious „parliament” created by such means at its first meeting on July 21st, 1940, proceeded in haste to liquidate the independent Democratic Latvian Republic. Promptly and without any debates two fundamental resolutions were adopted as to:

- 1) abolishing democracy and establishing Soviet order in Latvia, and
- 2) renouncing Latvian independence and acceding to the USSR.

It is significant that at the same time similar resolutions were adopted by the Estonian and Lithuanian puppet „parliaments” as well. This proves that the respective decisions were dictated by Moscow. Still more: it has been ascertained that the official Moscow representatives designated members of „parliament” who had to speak and that the wording of their speeches had been written down at the USSR Legations and sent to Moscow for approval.

Article 77 of the Latvian Constitution clearly stipulates, that in case Parliament shall amend articles 1, 2, 3 or 6 of the Constitution, then such amendments in order to become valid, must be put to the plebiscite. The decisions adopted by the „parliament” on July 21st, 1940, were contrary to the dispositions of article 1, stating that „Latvia is an Independent, Democratic Republic,” and of article 2, saying that „the sovereign power of the Latvian State is vested in the people of Latvia”, as well as of article 3 defining the borders of the Latvian national territory, and therefore, according to article 77 of this Constitution a plebiscite should have taken place, but it never did. Consequently, both above mentioned decisions are illegitimate and anti-constitutional and not binding for the Latvian Nation.

The Soviet Union has always pretended that the incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union took place only after the citizens of these states had voted for it. But as it may be seen from the above mentioned facts, such voting never took place in these countries and therefore the incorporation is to be considered as an act of violence on the part of the Soviet Union.

III. Under the Occupants' Yoke.

The Government appointed by Moscow hurried to reorganize completely the economic and social life of Latvia. All landed property, factories, banks, commercial enterprises, ships, city houses and funds were nationalized without any compensation.

Parallel to this reorganization there was established in Latvia the Soviet political system and a slave regime with all its cruelties and atrocities.

The first period of Communist dictatorship in Latvia lasted only one year. During this period the registered number of citizens imprisoned, killed and deported to Siberia exceeded 34 000 of the total number of 2 000 000 inhabitants. But as many cases were not recorded or notified to the respective authorities, the actual loss of population in Latvia was considerably higher.

The first to be persecuted were government and public functionaries, the army staff, safety police and the intelligentsia of independent Latvia. Neither the peasantry and workers, nor children and women were spared. This is to be seen from the official documents submitted to the UN General Assembly President by the Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian representatives on November 24, 1947. Mass reprisals with regard to the local population were started on June 13/14, 1941, when during one night alone there were imprisoned and deported in the most inhuman way for slave labour about 15 000 persons. According to the found NKVD plans they were to be followed by many thousands of other Latvian men, women and children. But the war with Germany, which broke out on June 22, frustrated the Bolshevik plans of extermination.

The first Bolshevik occupation period of Latvia was followed by Nazi German occupation. The Latvian people hoped that after the expulsion of the Bolsheviks they would get a chance to reestablish the independence of Latvia and also the civil rights of which the citizens were deprived by the Bolsheviks. But already the first German decrees proved that these hopes were idle.

The German occupation powers left in force the nationalization decrees issued by the Bolsheviks and they did it with the deliberate purpose to keep the most valuable nationalized property for themselves. All more important enterprises and establishments were taken over by newly created German so-

cieties. These were also granted considerable prerogatives as to jurisdiction and taxation.

At the same time the remaining Latvian private firms were suppressed by all possible means. The Nazi intention was to extirpate any enterprise of Latvians, who were even not allowed to call themselves Latvians, renaming them simply as „Einheimische” or natives.

The Latvian farmers felt the burden of occupation still more than the tradesmen and industrialists. They were assessed with exceedingly heavy taxes, duties and compulsory labour, which they could fill only with the utmost strain. For non-fulfilment of these obligations, even partly, the farmers were penalized. They were deprived even of their hereditary property. For the delivered products they were paid ridiculously low prices. By these few examples it is to be seen that all classes of Latvian population were economically and legally reduced to the level of pariahs.

One of the most harmful was the order deporting Latvians to Germany for war work. This affected many thousands. Still more detrimental was the order concerning the conscription of Latvian young men for the so-called Latvian Legion and several other technical units.

In order to hide this flagrant violation of the Hague Convention, which forbids to mobilize the population of occupied countries for military purposes, the conscription was carried out under the guise of volunteering. Actually everything was carried through by force, as it had been with the population of Alsace and Lorraine after the occupation of these French provinces in 1940 when the Germans had carried out there a mobilization, sending the drafted to the Eastern front. The conscripts, who did not appear at the mobilization point or tried to resist anyhow, were imprisoned and court martialled. In such a way there were mobilized men of 28 conscription years and furthermore even youths for anti-aircraft defence.

The question of the restoration of the country's independence annulled by the Bolsheviks was out of discussion with Nazi Germany. As it has been established at the Nuremberg Trials, Rosenberg had planned to move the Baltic people further to the east in order to get free space for German colonization. With the help of the Gestapo and the SD, Nazis stood up against everything reminding of the existence of a Latvian State and were striving to root out every thought of independence the Latvians might have had. Many outstanding Lat-

vian politicians, public functionaries and participants of resistance movements had to sustain persecutions. The actions of the occupation power created a powerful underground movement in which in some way or other participated the whole nation. Many were arrested and put into concentration camps. Early in 1945 in the one camp of Stutthof, near Danzig, there were 6500 Latvians of whose final fate, except of a few persons, nothing has been heard since. The total number of imprisoned Latvians, however, was much higher. From the uncomplete nominal rolls which came into the hands of the Allies it is to be seen that in the concentration camps of Western Europe alone there have perished more than 3500 Latvians.

Nazi commissaries of various ranks, SA and SS functionaries did not so much persecute Communists as could be surmised, but mainly Latvian patriotic citizens, particularly the youth.

When in summer 1944 the Eastern front line had reached the Latvian territory, the Commanding Staff of the retreating German Army issued orders as to the devastation of the Latvian country and the evacuation of its inhabitants. This was motivated with military considerations. Masses of refugees were moving from east to south-west of the country, i. e. to districts not touched by war activities, whereby they had to experience all the misery and sufferings that usually afflict innocent people on similar „via dolorosa”.

When the war activities were sweeping more and more over the Latvian territory the German occupation authorities issued orders for the removal of the population to Germany. The transfer to this country was disliked by Latvians. But the mere thought of getting again under the power of Bolsheviks was terrifying, and therefore many looked for the opportunity of escaping to neutral Sweden. Only a small number of the population succeeded in doing this. To leave Latvia by sea — and this was the only way to Sweden — was prohibited under capital punishment. At the sea there were patrolling units of German Navy and Air forces which picked up the refugees and brought them to German concentration camps.

With the retreat of the German Army the second most terrible period of Bolshevik occupation in Latvia began. As already described, during the first period of Bolshevik occupation in 1940/41 the number of killed and deported was high. But since the Red Army broke into

Latvia for the second time in 1944/45, the number of victims is increasing rapidly and the annihilation of the Latvian people is going on uninterruptedly affecting ever larger masses of the people, not excluding old men, women and children. Prisons, and various other places of detention are overcrowded to the utmost, as there are steadily arriving floods of new prisoners. The treatment of the prisoners is brutal to the highest degree, and the outsider may scarcely imagine that such things are happening in the middle of the 20th century and moreover in the name of „democracy“. In the eastern and northern parts of the country which has been occupied by Soviet Russia in summer and autumn 1944 there has been left a rather small number of men from 16 to 60 years of age according to information which has passed around the iron curtain and arrived here. But the conditions are not better in those districts of Latvia which fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks only after the German capitulation in May 1945, because in these districts all men of the mentioned age were immediately pressed into investigation camps and many of them later sent away in an unknown direction. Women and children were deported as well, and the total number of deported is already running up to several hundreds of thousands. If that will be allowed to take its course, then in a comparatively short time the majority of the Latvian people will perish as victims of the red terror.

Parallel to this the looting and ruining of the Latvian economy is going on. When in June 1940 the Bolsheviks came into Latvia they sent immediately all corn and other vitals, flax, manufactured goods, particularly textiles and footwear, which they found on the spot to Soviet Russia. But the Bolshevik press reported in one voice just the opposite and stated that when the red army had marched into Latvia they found there starving masses and that it was necessary to bring immediately food from Soviet Russia to feed the hungry population.

The Latvian woods are cut down in a hurry and the timber materials are said to be sent for reconstruction of devastated districts in Soviet Russia, although Latvia herself has suffered not to a small extent. According to Soviet Russia's own published figures in Latvia there were destroyed hundreds of thousands of houses.

The rural estates are burdened with exaggerated taxes, duties and compulsory work, which the farmers are not able

to fill, but for not filling the imposed duty the farmers are dispossessed and their estates delivered to the „Sovkhoz“ or „Kolkhoz“. In such a way there have been created hundreds of collective farms at the expense of the estates of individual farmers, and the former landed proprietors are perishing in slave camps of Soviet Russia.

In the same way the disintegration of the social structure and the bolshevization of schools, churches and the families is being carried out, making these a political instrument for the Soviets. The Soviet power is instructing pastors and priests what and how they have to preach and those of them, who resist, are arrested and deported to arctic regions where they are doomed to perish. The churches have to pay high taxes among which in the first place there stands the room tax. This is computed according to the cubature of the church, and the churches are closed as soon as the parishes are not able to pay the tax in due course. As to the tax rate, the churches are put on a par with the movies, first class restaurants and night bars. The income tax of the clergyman has been raised by 75% and they are not allowed to engage domestic servants. Parallel to that there are being cultivated and promoted Godless movements. These movements, however, are not popular with the peoples of the Baltic States and are represented mainly by the newly arrived alien elements who are taking up the place of the deported inhabitants. The aliens are provided with personal documents by the Soviet authorities taken from deported Latvians. This is evidently done when due to possible changes in the international situation there might be carried out a plebiscite in the Baltic States. Then those strangers would be claimed to be natives and with their votes there would be once more falsified the actual will of Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians.

The Soviets have invented new methods of liquidating a nation. With a decree they have dissolved all marriages in which one of the consorts is living abroad and refuses to return, while the women compulsory divorced are pressed to marry the racially strange elements brought to Latvia.

If this process of annihilation will not be stopped, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania will be russified within the nearest future but the Baltic Nations themselves exterminated.

IV. Objections against the Baltic States.

1) Are these countries a product of conjuncture?

An objection most frequently repeated by the Bolsheviks is the assertion that the Baltic States have been created artificially by the Capitalistic World in order to encircle the Soviet Union. The Baltic Nations are reported as belonging to a Slavonic race and the place assigned to them by Nature is supposed to be within a State of Russians. Balts are said to be void of any culture or other gifts of their own entitling them to independent life in separate states.

These pretexts are not worth more than the rest of the Bolshevik assertions brought forward now and then in order to raise the low spirit of the Russian Nation saying that almost all important inventions (as steam-engines, electric bulbs, wireless telegraph, radio, submarines, airplanes etc.) are ideas of Russian brains that have been stolen and copied by Addison and other capitalistic scientists afterwards.

The Latvians are neither Slavs nor Germans but they belong together with the Lithuanians to the group of Balts which have been characterized by prof. Savory during the debates of the House of Commons on May 23rd, 1947, as „the two magnificent Nordic races, not Slav, not German, but purely Nordic breeds”.

The Latvian und Lithuanian languages are closely related to Sanskrit and they have as little in common with Russian as the other languages which also have descended from the Indo-European root.

As to the form of life, political and economical organization as well as mentality the Latvians not only differ, but they are quite the reverse to the Russians. Prof. A. Schwabe says in his „History of Latvia and his Neighbours”, specifying this difference:

„The Russians are a passive type of mankind. They are an emotional people. Work they regard as an evil that has to be suffered. The Baltic people are active, they are men of will and reason. They regard work as a moral good, and indolence, slovenliness and untidiness as the greatest vices. In contrast to the Russians, who have always had a tendency towards dreaminess and a metaphysical contemplative search for God and the ultimate truths, and who try to find salvation and escape from the harsh realities of life in religious depths or social and political Utopias, the Baltic people are realists and possess a natural talent for organization.

Even at the beginning of our era the Roman author Tacitus could write that the Aesti (as the Baltic people were called in those days) cultivated their cereals more diligently than the indolent Germans. Medieval authors have described the Balts as human, peaceful and hospitable people...

The Baltic people are natural sceptics and individualists, democracy is in the flesh and blood of the Baltic people. They have a sense for justice and demand respect for the natural rights of every individual. Since time immemorial woman has been man's equal in the Baltic countries. In contrast to the Slav woman, who is the man's slave and meekly submits herself to all his whims, a married Baltic woman is as independent in her sphere of activity as the husband is in his. Her emancipation is not a result of an electoral Reform Bill, it is a feature of the national character, a spiritual patrimony inherited through generations.

Also in respect of culture the Baltic is an area separate from Russia. Even quite outwardly the difference is clearly visible. Both the sacred and profane architecture of the Baltic capitals has followed the West European styles, whereas in Russia from the 10th century Byzantine architecture had set roots. The Baltic people are either Roman Catholic or Protestant, the Russians Greek Orthodox. The books and newspapers in the Baltic languages are printed in Latin characters whereas the Russians use their own script. With the frontiers between the Baltic States and Russia end also such essential elements of European civilization as Roman Law and Canon Law. Whilst the Baltic is a province of the Roman Law system, the Russians have had their own system.

Such great streams in European civilization as feudalism, the Italian Renaissance, humanism and all the modern movements in art, literature, economics, sociology and politics have in their ebb and flow washed the Eastern shores of the Baltic Sea, but they never reached Russia, which has always been governed by trends of its own."

Archaeological excavations have proved that the Balts have inhabited the present Baltic space since 2000 years before Christ at least, at a time when the Slav races dwelled in the steppes of South Russia. They began to move North-West much later and only during the 8th century after Christ they approached regions inhabited by the Balts and began to harass them. In defence against those Slav marauders the Latvians formed a zone of strong fortifications consisting of more

then 150 castles in order to live under their protection an independent life with their own Kings, administration, money, taxation and weight systems and under proper laws. Agriculture with individuals farms, so characteristic to the Latvians, and handicraft were highly developed. The national prosperity, judging by the ample funds of money and jewelery excavated, has been considerable. The civilization of that period was of a purely democratic character with an abundant folklore and national songs quite free from German or Slav influence.

It is important to note that the fortification zone of those days was congruent with the present Latvian USSR State frontier. That proves that Latvia has never usurped a foot of soil that had not been populated by Latvians since antiquity and if there were a small number of Russians too on Latvian territory, then they were immigrants who had settled there during the time when Latvia was under Russian domination.

Up to the 18th century, all Muscovite endeavours to conquer the Baltic region, the most vigorous of them being the campaign of Ivan the Terrible at the beginning of the 16th century, failed to succeed. Only at the beginning of the 18th century the Tsar Peter the Great conquered Baltic territory to the North of the river Daugava, with the exception of the Province Latgale. The Duchy of Kurzeme remained independent and became an important political factor in Europe during the reign of Duke Jacob the Great and his son Kazimir. This Duchy had a mighty navy and mercantile marine, colonies in Africa (Gambia) and West India (Tobago) as well as copper mines in Norway. Kurzeme took an active part in European politics and had even supported the King of England with ships and grain during his struggle against Cromwell. The economic and cultural life of the country was flourishing and in Jelgava, the capital of Kurzeme, even a French Opera and ballet were performing. As far as international politics are concerned, the Duchy was of so great a specific weight that William Penn considered her as a possible member of a future European Union (William Penn „An Essay Towards the Present and Future of Europe” 1694).

Only at the end of the 18th century when quite new political constellations had formed in East Europe, at first Latgale and then the Duchy of Kurzeme as well as Poland became victims of the new Russo-Prussian-Austrian Block and had to

capitulate before Russia. Napoleon in 1812 re-established the independence of the Duchy of Kurzeme and created a Council of Regency. A French Consulate was opened in Jelgava, the capital of Kurzeme. But in 1813 after Napoleon's retreat Kurzeme was finally occupied by Russia.

From the above mentioned facts, it appears that:

- a) the Latvians have nothing in common with the Russians neither in origin or in culture;
- b) the Latvians have always belonged to Western Europe as to their mode of living, culture and civilization, and that
- c) the Latvians have always led a life independent of Russia excepting only of the period after the Great Northern War when the North of Latvia (Vidzeme) according to the Nystad Peace Treaty in 1721 was annexed to Russia, and after the dismemberment of Poland in 1795 when Kurzeme together with the Polish Kingdom was subject to Russian domination and the Tsar of Russia added to his many titles that of the Duke of Kurzeme. But even then, Vidzeme and Kurzeme, as Russian provinces retained a certain domestic autonomy till on November 18th, 1918, the whole territory inhabited by Latvians was reunited again as an independent Latvian Republic.

That the Latvian State is not a product of conjuncture can be proved by facts. The Latvian Nation has never become reconciled to her oppressors. During the darkest time of oppression, at the end of the age of rationalism, most powerful insurrections took place in Vidzeme (Livonia) in 1771, 1779, and 1784, against the usurpers, but were suppressed by Russian armed forces. And again in the XIX century (1802, 1805, 1830, 1844, 1863, 1899) and in 1904—05 the Latvians by their insurrections proved to the world that they were politically alive ever more than before, and did not lose courage.

The revolt of 1905 was an insurrection on a particularly extensive scale. The whole Latvian Country was aflame of revolution. The local Russian administration was driven away and the authority was taken over by the insurgents. The Russians held only the bigger towns defended by strong garrisons. Victory seemed near, but the Russian Government, being conscious of the gravity of the situation, made use of military forces released at the end of the war with Japan.

Strong Russian punitive expeditions crossed Latvia in all directions and the fighters for Latvian freedom had to capitulate in this unequal combat. The Russian revenge was terrible. Everywhere court-martials were set up and they punished the actual or imagined insurgents by shooting or hanging them, by condemning them to forced labour, by corporal punishment, by setting fire to their homes a.s.f. If the offender had fled, fire was set to his belongings. In some cases even relatives of the fugitives were punished. Even on purpose of revenge social buildings were set on fire and destroyed.

The leading insurgents who had managed to escape in time, emigrated. The rest hid and looked for refuge in the woods, creating a strong partisan-movement.

The insurrection of 1905 did cost the Latvians about 2000 dead, not to mention those who had been condemned to forced labour. Having served their sentence, the latter were not permitted to return home, but compelled to settle in Siberia for life.

The revolt was suppressed, but Tsarist Russia did not succeed in effacing the yearning for freedom from the soul of the Latvian nation.

World War I brought heavy trials to the Latvian nation again. As war activities were shifted to the Latvian soil and devastations became enormous, while the Russian government did not care much about the Latvian refugees, Latvians resolved to take the defence of their soil in their own hands. In the beginning the Russian government did not agree, but at the end of 1915 when the situation on the front grew critical and when it seemed that the Germans would force their way for Petrograd, the permission was given to organize Latvian troops (called „Latvian rifle regiments“). Thus two Latvian brigades with 4 regiments in each, the number of men amounting to 32.000, were formed.

Although the Latvian rifle regiments, notwithstanding their heroism and enormous losses caused by the incompetent and even treacherous actions of the Russian army command, were unable to liberate the part of Latvia occupied by the Germans, they braced by their exploits the conviction of Latvian strength and prepared the foundations for Latvian independence.

Left to their own fate, the Latvians formed by their own means powerful welfare organizations to assist their refugees,

whose number amounted to 700.000 during World War I. The work with these organizations was a good training for the future Latvian state officials.

In 1917, after the Russian revolution, the Latvians got a chance to take an active part in the political life as well. Country Councils were elected in each province — Kurzeme, Vidzeme and Latgale. In order to have an organization authorized to speak in the name of the whole Latvian Nation a Provisional Latvian National Council was founded in Petrograd in 1917, and this Council met for its first session on December 1st, 1917, at Valka. At this meeting a declaration was adopted, proclaiming that the whole territory inhabited by Latvians should be united into one autonomous national unit whose status, foreign relations and interior regime should be determined by a constitutional assembly and plebiscite. On January 5th, 1918, the Latvian National Council appealing to the self-determination rights of peoples informed the Russian Constitutional Assembly about its resolution to secede from Russia.

The Germans, who occupied at that time the greatest part of Latvia, as well the Bolsheviks were hostile to the idea of a Latvian State and hampered the work of the National Council considerably. Then the Council started its work abroad and did its best to propagate the idea of a Latvian State.

Germany understood that it would not be possible simply to annex the Baltic Provinces, and therefore trying to meet the ideas of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian nations, proposed to create a Baltic Duchy consisting of Latvia and Estonia which had to be joined in a personal union to Germany resp. Prussia.

As it is known, according to treaties signed on March 3rd, 1917, at Brest-Litovsk and on August 27th, 1918, in Berlin, Moscow had voluntarily renounced the Baltic territories adding part of them to Germany (Kurzeme and the Isles of Estonia) while the decision on the future of the remaining part (Vidzeme and Estonia) was left to the inhabitants themselves. In order to maintain peace and order German police forces were permitted to remain temporarily in Vidzeme and Estonia. By these treaties Germany practically retained the supreme power over the Baltic countries, and she was trying to transform it into a legal status. The Germans persisted on their line till their collapse in autumn 1918 when all their plans were cancelled by the capitulation.

The Latvian National Council was opposing those projects by all possible means and solemnly declared in the name of the Latvian nation in July 1917 that the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was violating the right of self-determination of peoples and therefore, being an act of violence, was not to be considered binding on the Latvian nation, that the Latvian nation was against the annexation by as well as against any personal union with Prussia and that Latvians claimed an indivisible and independent Latvian State, internationally guaranteed.

The Latvian politicians who remained in the provinces under German occupation secretly joined into a Democratic Block, where bourgeois and socialists were working side by side. This Democratic Block also decided in October 1917 to strive for an Independent Democratic Latvian Republic.

By this way all leading Latvian organizations had during 1917/18 declared their claim for a Latvian State uniting all the territory inhabited by Latvians. Therefore it is not true that Latvia became independent in 1918 only by accident as a „cordon sanitaire” or a „barrier state” against Russia, allegedly „artificially” established by the Versailles Treaty. The truth is that Latvia's independence grew organically.

Although Lenin, after seizing authority in Russia, was forced to declare on November 15th, 1917, under the impact of President Wilson's 14 articles that to the various peoples which had belonged till then to the Russian Empire a right of self-determination was granted, he, as has been established by later events, did never mean it seriously and turned the weapons against the newly established republics. In this struggle the new national states Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland were victorious but they had to suffer heavy losses in blood and material.

The independence of those nations was not a gift of the Western capitalists as the Bolsheviks and their satellites claim under the influence of Moscow, but they had fought for it and defended it with weapons in their hands.

2. Are the Baltic States without an economical basis?

The next argument the Bolsheviks and Russian imperialists raise against the Baltic States is the fiction that they are unable to exist because they have no mines and no other natural resources and are economically fully dependent on Soviet Russia.

The economical basis for Latvia is her agriculture in which more than 60% of the whole population are employed. And it is an old truth and has been established again by the latest events that the farmer is the most stable factor in the life of a nation.

As soon as Latvia had freed herself from Russian guardianship, its agriculture attained a very high level, leaving Soviet Russia with her kolkhozes and Bolshevik working methods far behind.

The development of Latvian agriculture was furthered in a great measure by the Agrarian Reform achieved during the first years of independence, when numerous farmhands became farm owners. This reform was of a great economical and political importance. When the reform was accomplished, 80% of all Latvian farms were family farms managed by the farmer and his family. These family farms, as has been proved by farther developments, were a solid foundation to the new state. While the Bolsheviks were proletarianizing their farmers, transferring them into payed labourers attached to public estates, Latvia went in the other direction by raising the agricultural proletariat to landowners.

This explains the cruelty the Bolsheviks display against the farmers in Latvia ruining them with duties, taxes and corvee in order to turn them out of their individual farms and to establish kolkhozes instead as it has been done in many hundred cases, whilst the farmers themselves have been deported for slave labour to the Soviet Union. What is happening in Latvia now may be considered as the greatest tragedy of peasantry.

The Latvian farmer is an individualist, and he is attached to his soil with all his heart and will sooner perish than forsake it. And, therefore, there is nothing surprising in the fact that in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia an extensive partisan movement has developed. This movement is supported by all classes of inhabitants, but its core is the persecuted farmer, desperately fighting for his

existence, for the liberty of his people and the independence of his State.

As a result of the Agrarian Reform and thanks to the Latvian farmer's zeal and industry, Latvia in a short time became an exporter of agricultural products which were delivered to Great Britain and various other countries of the European Continent. If Europe is undergoing now a heavy food crisis, the reason in a great measure is to be sought in the fact that of all European agricultural countries only Denmark and Sweden are on this side of the Iron Curtain, while the great majority of the agricultural states remain under the Bolshevik yoke and have been entirely cut off from the outside world.

Among Latvian export-items butter stood in the first place. As a matter of comparison, in 1937 the Soviet Union exported 14.600 tons of butter but Latvia 23.400 tons — that is 60% more than Russia did — and held the second place in Europe (just after Denmark). Besides that, Latvia exported timber, flax, bacon, clover seeds, breed cattle, paper and different other produce, and the export balance of the last year before the war was 52 mil. dollars against an import balance of 44 mil. dollars.

The Latvian foreign trade figures for 1938 were as follows:

	Import	Export
	in p. c.	
Great Britain	20,8	41,9
Germany	38,9	29,5
USA	6,3	1,4
Russia	3,5	3,0

These figures show that the Soviet Union played a comparatively small part in the economic life of Latvia and that the Latvian foreign trade was undeniably directed westward. Data published by the League of Nations concerning the world trade in 1938 show that Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania had participated in this trade with 222 mil. dollars or 0,47% and the Soviet Union with 525 mil. dollars or 1,1%. These figures indicate clearly that the three Baltic States with 5,6 mil. inhabitants played in the world trade comparatively a much more important part than the Soviet Union with her 170 mil. inhabitants.

Along with agriculture, industry had been an important factor of Latvian economy and was based for the most part

on local raw materials. 6000 enterprises employed 120.000 workers and their yearly production amounted to 135 mil. dollars. Manufactured goods were sold on the local market as well as exported.

Building trade had greatly developed especially in connection with the Agrarian Reform. New power-stations, factories, schools, social buildings and dwelling houses were built, modern roads and bridges were constructed. The government paid great attention to the building of modern dwelling-houses in rural districts.

Latvia did not know unemployment. There always has been want of workers for intensified farming, and Latvia imported yearly 50.000 farmhands from Poland and Lithuania.

Social legislation was highly developed. In ratifying Labour Conventions adopted by Conferences of the International Labour Organization, Latvia held the first place. The workers' standard of living was high. Latvia held the first place in the world in milk and meat consumption with an average of 566 kg of milk products and 85 kg of meat yearly per one inhabitant.

The figures showing the difference between the Soviet and Latvian economy are most striking:

Inhabitants and territory:	Soviet Union	Latvia
Territory, 1000 km ²	21.400	66
Inhabitants in mil.	170,5	2
Percent: country inhabitants	67,2	63,5
city inhabitants	32,8	36,5
Average of inhabitants on 1 km ²	8	33

As to the size of territory the Soviet Union was 324 times, but as to the number of inhabitants 85 times superior to Latvia.

Average production per 1 inhabitant in 1938 (in kg):

	Soviet Union	Latvia
Milk	170	835
Butter	1	15
Meat	21	85
Flax 1937	3,4	12
Paper 1937	5,0	15,2
Cement 1938	34	78

The above figures show that the achievements of Latvian economy excel by far those of the Soviet Union. It ought to be considered that the fertility of soil and the natural riches of the Soviet Union are much above

those in Latvia. Latvia has scarcely any natural riches. Already under the Tsarist regime Russian production had always been lower than the Latvian. This fact is due to the diligence, education and ability of the Latvian farmer and worker. The Latvian intelligentsia, state and communal institutions had also great merits in organizing and leading the economic life of the country.

According to the official data of Tsarist Russia (1913), Latvia gave her a yearly income of 235 mil. gold Francs, but the administrative expenses necessary for this province amounted to 144,8 mil. Francs only. So Latvia gave Russia a net income of 90,3 mil. gold Francs or 18 mil. dollars yearly.

Consequently even during the Tsarist regime Russia was the gainer and not Latvia, to say nothing of the time of Latvian independence when Latvia proved to the whole world that she had a healthy economy of her own, quite independent from the Soviet Union.

3. Are the Baltic States a hindrance to the Soviet trade with the West?

Just as baseless is the allegation of the Bolsheviks, that independent Latvia with her ice free ports has been a hindrance to Russian trade with the outer world. The circumstance that some Baltic seaports are situated on Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian territory does by no means imply that thereby an obstacle to Soviet trade has been created. If so, Germany could protest as well against Belgium and the Netherlands and claim the Belgian and Dutch ports.

Since ancient times Latvia has been an important trade and communication mediator between the East and the West. On her rivers and afterwards on her roads a lively traffic was going on from Scandinavia over Latvia to Byzantium, Persia and other Eastern countries. Latvia was always ready to extend the same facilities to the Soviet Union.

The truth is that Latvia, contrary to the Soviet assertion, did not hinder the transit trade coming from Russia and vice versa, but did everything possible and even impossible in order to ease the Soviet transit operations.

At the end of World War I the gauge of Latvian railway lines was that of West European standards — 1435 mm. In

order to give the Russian trains an opportunity to reach Latvian ports without reloading their goods, Latvia adjusted the gauge of her most important transit lines to that of the Russian railroads — 1542 mm. Furthermore, Soviet goods were transported for a rate 75% lower in comparison with that payable for Latvian goods. The Soviet import and export through Latvia was free from any duties. In Liepaja (Libau) a free port was established. To meet the needs of the Soviet Union, the harbour installations were modernized (electrical derricks, cold storage buildings, grain elevators) and warehouses were leased for a trifling price.

On the whole, Latvia did everything possible to enable Soviet goods to pass through their territory quicker and easier than in the Soviet Union herself.

Notwithstanding this obliging attitude the Soviet Union made only insignificant use of these possibilities. It appeared that in economical questions as well as everywhere else Soviet Russia is guided only by political considerations and that she did use transit through Latvia as a political weapon.

The only constant factor was the Soviet Trade Agency in Latvia with its excessive staff of employees that afterwards proved to have been commissioned for other work of widely subversive character.

V. Conclusion.

As a result of World War II France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, Denmark, Norway and Greece have been liberated from their enemies and have gained their freedom and sovereignty. On the contrary Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania are still under the most horrible regime.

In Latvia the destruction of the economical, social and cultural order, of religious and moral life is going on uninterruptedly, the inhabitants continue to be robbed of their material and cultural values and even to be exterminated and replaced by a racially alien type of men coming from the East. There is no doubt that, should the Bolshevist occupation last for long, Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians will be exterminated and soon disappear entirely, to be mentioned only by historians in their books.

If during 1939/40 the Bolsheviks put forth the argument that the Baltic States were weak and that the Soviet Union's duty was to protect them against the West, then with the defeat of Germany this argument has lost its essence, and even from the point of view as advanced by the Bolsheviks themselves there is no longer any reason for the occupation of the Baltic States.

Therefore, the Latvian National Council on its session of July 10/11, 1948, adopted the following resolution as to the restoration of the independence of the Baltic States:

"Having convened for its first session and having listened to the reports about the conditions in Latvia and the international position of the Latvian State, the Latvian National Council protests most energetically against the unprovoked act of aggression by the Soviet Union against the peace loving Latvian Democratic Republic on June 17, 1940, breaking the Peace Treaty, the Non-Aggression and other Treaties, as well as the Briand-Kellog Pact and other international obligations, occupying, sovietizing Latvia and destroying her independence. The Latvian National Council solemnly declares that the Latvians do not recognize and will never recognize the corruption by the Soviet occupational authorities by means of ruse and violence of the constitutional status, the political and economical order of the Latvian State.

In deep confidence in the Great Democracies the Latvian National Council expects that in faithfulness to the principles of the Atlantic and UN Charter they will:

- a) Insist that Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania should be LIBERATED from the inhuman Bolshevik yoke and their independence re-established;
- b) Use all means at their disposal to end the dreadful terror and the extermination of the Baltic Nations and

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- c) Take measures as to enable Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians already deported to the Soviet Union, but still alive and decaying in prisons or concentration camps to return home or to emigrate.

The Latvian National Council hopes and expects that all organizations and persons willing to struggle for Democracy and the elementary Human Rights:

- a) Will listen to the SOS call sent by Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians, from the other side of the Iron Curtain;
- b) Will not remain indifferent spectators, but
- c) bravely and decidedly raise their voices for the right cause of the Baltic Nations who without any fault of their own got into the power of the Soviets, are enduring intolerable sufferings and are facing complete annihilation;
- d) Will achieve liberation of these Nations from Soviet tyranny and
- e) regain their liberty and national independence.

September 1948.

Latvian National Council

LATVIJAS NACIONĀLA BIBLIOTEKA



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