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BALTIC QUEST FOR A HUNGARIAN PATH, 1965

Rein Taagepera

The Soviet Union annexed the Baltic states in August 1940, an act Western democracies refused to recognize. Under somewhat different circumstances, the Baltic states could have turned, instead, into satellite ‘People’s Democracies’ like Hungary – Communist-ruled but outside the Soviet Union. The annexed Baltic states played a major disruptive role during the demise of the Soviet Union. Might the Soviet Union have survived, had it disgorged the Baltic ferment in good time? The satellite option received mention repeatedly, from as early as June 1940 to as late as 1989. Here the focus is on 1965, when three Estonian refugees proposed a compromise: Washington might encourage Moscow to turn the Baltic states into satellites, the governments of which the USA could then recognize. For the Baltic nations, the main change would have been to curtail the influx of Russians. The reactions to this proposal are reviewed, ending with the question: what do alternate histories tell us about the actual one?

Keywords: Satellite regimes; People’s Democracies; annexation; demise of the Soviet Union

It is risky to swallow something one cannot digest. Soviet annexation of the Baltic states hurt both the Baltic peoples and the Moscow-centered empire. It could have become fatal for the Balts but, instead, arguably turned lethal for the empire. Indeed, the annexed Baltic states played such a major and disruptive role during the demise of the Soviet Union that it may be asked whether the Soviet Union might have survived, had it disgorged its Baltic prey in good time. This question cannot be answered, but it highlights the potential worldwide impact of a seemingly local change. In the words of historian Toivo Raun: ‘Rousseau once noted on the last partition of Poland: Poland can be swallowed but not digested. The same applies to the Baltic states during the 20th century’ (personal communication, 5 May 2009).

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The Soviet empire consisted of different layers on top of the ethnically Russian core. The autonomous republics within the Russian republic were so fully subdued that they remain under Moscow control even now. The Union republics seemed equally well controlled – until the final debacle proved otherwise. The tightly guarded Soviet border isolated these internal layers from the occasionally restive satellite countries ('People's Democracies', in Soviet terminology) with their very different cultures. The annexed Baltic states inserted another layer into this ethnic onion – akin to satellites because of their distinct cultures, but nonetheless within Soviet boundaries. In Moscow street language they were *sovetskaia zagranitsa* (Soviet 'abroad'). For the empire, this was a dangerous layer, Western by culture but not separated from the imperial core by a guarded border.

How come some areas controlled by Moscow were inside the Soviet Union and others outside it? Could the delineation have gone in differently under slightly different circumstances? Or could corrections have been made later on? For the Baltic states, the satellite prospect arose repeatedly, from as early as June 1940 to as late as 1989. Nothing came of it, preserving a stark US-Soviet disagreement regarding the status of the Baltic states. The USA refused to recognize a blatantly forcible annexation and continued to deal with the pre-occupation Baltic diplomats, in contrast to Washington's acceptance of communist satellite regimes.

In 1965, three young Estonian refugees in the USA (including the author) suggested that Washington might encourage Moscow to turn the Baltic states into satellites, the governments of which the USA could then recognize. They spelled out the respective advantages of such a move for the Soviet Union and for the USA. For the Baltic nations, the main gain would have been curtailing the influx of Russians.

This article presents the origins of this proposal, its text (in the Appendix), the role of Zbigniew Brzezinski as a go-between, and the follow-up actions up to 1973. It describes the reactions of Washington (friendly but passive), of the population in Estonia (positive but lacking hope), of Soviet Estonian authorities (first silence, then hostility), and of Estonian exile organizations (mostly immediate hostility). The impact of the action on the lives of the creators of the memorandum varied from minor to all-encompassing and ultimately positive. A somewhat different version is available in Estonian (Taagepera 2010). The materials cited have been deposited at the library of the University of Tartu.

Satellites vs. Annexed Areas

The Soviet Union was officially formed in 1922. Some areas that fell under Moscow's control at a later date were incorporated into the Soviet Union, while some were not. The urge to restore the boundaries of Tsarist Russia visibly motivated the new masters, yet exceptions occurred in both directions. Some areas which never had belonged to the Tsarist empire were incorporated: Tyva (a satellite since 1921), Northern Bukovina, Trans-Carpathia, Galicia, and Klaipeda. Yet the Polish heartland around Warsaw remained outside the Soviet Union despite having been part of the Tsarist realm. It may be presumed that Finland, too, would have remained outside the USSR, had Moscow succeeded in turning it communist.

In this respect, the Baltic states were borderline. The Baltic German feudals in Latvia and Estonia had less autonomy than Finland, yet more than the Polish areas. In the summer of 1940 Stalin hurriedly annexed the Baltic states. The idea of a satellite regime, however, surfaced repeatedly, from the beginning to the end of Soviet occupation. In summer 1940, the newly minted 'June Communists' in Estonia talked of an 'Outer Mongolia status' (but never expressed it in print), and President Konstantin Päts seemed initially to harbor such a hope. During the February 1989 'Singing Revolution' nationalist leader Trivimi Velliste envisaged a 'Hungarian path' – an Estonia ruled by native communists, outside the USSR. How long the communists could hold on to power may have been of little concern for Velliste. The Hungarian path option quickly became moot in 1989, as Hungary stopped being a satellite. All former satellites in Europe achieved genuine independence a couple of years ahead of the Baltic states.

While recognizing the communist governments in the satellite countries, the USA and some other states refused to recognize the annexation of the Baltic states. This meant that these Western governments continued to recognize the ambassadors and consuls of the prewar Baltic states, while abandoning the non-communist governments-in-exile of Soviet satellites. They construed a forcible regime change as a domestic matter (even when blatantly engineered from the outside), but saw effacing sovereign countries from the map as a much more serious matter, from the viewpoint of international law and practice. The peculiar result was that, as far as international recognition was concerned, Moscow's hold was shakier in the Baltic states than in Hungary or Poland. It may have bothered Moscow in a minor way.

Thus, by hurriedly annexing the Baltic states, Stalin committed a tactical blunder on top of a geopolitical one. If he had delayed annexation, he could have obtained recognition of the Baltic puppet governments by the USA and most certainly by Britain, where the main concern was the prevention of a German takeover. Formally, this would have been an internal regime change. Baltic diplomatic personnel abroad could have been replaced, and merchant ships would have gradually returned home. Once recognized internationally, the puppet governments could have 'decided' half a year later to join the USSR, and it would have been much more difficult for Western governments to refuse recognizing such annexation. This is why hasty annexation was a tactical blunder. The indigestion the swallowed-up Baltic states would cause the Soviet Union many decades later was of course something Stalin hardly could have anticipated.

In April 1956, several West European journals published rumors that Moscow was pondering a satellite regime for the Baltic states.¹ This rumor seemed to originate in the East, as if to test Western reactions. *Baltic Review*, published in New York, discussed these rumors and the broader prospects for the satellite option in two articles Dr. Antanas Trimakas (1956), 'Satellite Status for the Baltic States – A Possible Opening for Freedom', and Anonymous (1956) 'Kremlin Tactics in Converting the Baltic States into Satellites'. *Baltic Review* was published by the Free Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania Committees.

It seems that the piece published under the name of Trimakas, a leader of the Free Lithuania Committee, was actually written by a young American (Kütt to Taagepera, 30 November 1965). It reviewed the non-recognition of the annexation by the USA

and the more active US pressure on the USSR in 1954–1955. At the Big Four Conference (Geneva, 18–23 July 1955), Western powers proposed that the issue of the Baltic states be placed on the agenda, along with the European satellites. The USSR refused, but the issue may have been discussed in private. The same happened at the Big Four Foreign Ministers Conference in October 1955. What ‘Trimakas’ chose to ignore was that the West did not seem to distinguish between the degrees of Moscow predominance in the satellites and in the annexed Baltic states. In his conclusion, ‘Trimakas’ himself saw a clear difference: ‘Certainly, satellite status alone does not mean that freedom has arrived in the Baltic area. However, it could provide an opening for freedom’ (Trimakas 1956).

The anonymous study (1956) weighed dispassionately what the Soviet Union would gain, lose, or maintain, by converting the Baltic states into satellites. The USSR probably would get rid of the prewar Baltic diplomats and could claim the gold deposited by the Baltic states in Western banks. It would obtain three pro-Soviet seats in the UN, would strengthen COMECON (East European economic alliance), make the Soviet Constitution more credible (by applying its article on the right to secede), and would score a general propaganda victory in the Cold War. At the same time the Soviet Union would risk encouraging independence demands elsewhere in the USSR (Ukraine and Georgia, in particular). Indirectly, Moscow would admit to a failure of national integration in the USSR. A satellite condition could open a path to ‘Titoism’ for the Balts and would deliver a blow to Russian chauvinism. Factors unaltered by a change to ‘satellite status’ would be Communist Party hegemony, economic dependence on the USSR, and social structure.

It should be recalled that the Soviet Union had withdrawn its troops from northeastern Austria (1955) and also from a base at Porkkala near Helsinki (January 1956). Thus it had shown a willingness to pull back so as to ensure international recognition for its other new holdings. In the case of the Baltic states, no such pullback materialized. The Hungarian uprising (October 1956) must have made Moscow even more reluctant to loosen its hold.

In the aftermath of the Cuban crisis, a mutual desire for a *détente* began to grow in the Soviet Union and the West, before the deepening war in Vietnam once again cooled their relations. During this interval, a grand settlement across Europe looked possible. Such a deal could alter the Baltic situation in quite opposite directions. Moscow might turn the Baltic states into satellites as a price for the USA agreeing to their belonging to the communist world. More likely was the scenario that the USA would recognize their annexation in return for compensation elsewhere, for instance in Berlin. The Berlin Airlift (*Luftbrücke*) (1948) had shown both how precarious and how important this area was when viewed from Washington.

What difference did it make to the local people whether they lived under a satellite regime or within the Soviet Union? The daily difference was that the Hungarians were hit by commands from Moscow through the intermediary of the government in Budapest, while the Balts were largely hit directly by the ministries and other offices in Moscow that bypassed the Baltic capitals. Hungary had more opportunity to delay, modify, and dilute responses to disagreeable orders. A long-range difference was that no satellite underwent marked Russian immigration. After decades of indirect Moscow rule, Hungary still was ethnically Hungarian, while in

Latvia and Estonia the survival of the nation and its language were in danger. In Estonia the 1959 census showed ethnic Estonians dropping from their prewar 95% (within the present borders) to 74.6%, and one could foresee the results of the census of 1970 (68%). In Latvia, it was even worse.

So, what difference would it have made, if the Baltic states had become satellites around 1960? Given the civilian garrison already implanted, Moscow's influence would have continued to be stronger there than in Hungary. Further Russian immigration, however, most likely would have stopped, so that the present demographic picture would have been markedly different. Given this difference, Aleksander Kütt, a member of Free Estonia Committee and the foremost North American student of conditions in Estonia, commented: 'I am certain that if it were realistically possible to have a fair referendum in Estonia on the issue of status quo vs. satellite status, the latter would receive the votes of at least 90% of the Estonians' (Kütt to Taagepera, 30 November 1965).

A shift to satellite regimes in the Baltic states arguably might have had a deep effect on world history: with the Baltics fenced off, the Soviet Union might still exist. Did the USSR crumble from Moscow outwards, with the happenings in the provinces quite irrelevant? Or was Baltic activity during perestroika the critical yeast that caused fermentation in ever more regions inside the USSR, from Ukraine up to Yeltsin's Moscow? If the latter view has any merit, then a timely separation of the Baltic states might have enabled Mikhail Gorbachev to keep together the pre-WWII Soviet Union. Precisely their status as union republics made the Baltic countries role models for the other union republics. If so, then the annexation of the Baltic states eventually made the Soviet Union burst – but Latvia and Estonia emerged from the wolf's stomach with an altered population.

The reverse question also must be asked: what difference would it have made if a grand settlement in Europe had materialized in the 1960s, including US recognition of the Baltic annexation? Immigration presumably would not have been affected. Baltic broadcasts by Radio Liberty and Voice of America most likely would not have come about. The perception of utter abandonment by the West would have had some effect on the will and skills of Baltic resistance, but its extent is hard to evaluate.

As we now know, the deepening war in Vietnam prevented a grand settlement in Europe – but this could not be foreseen. A deal seemed possible, in which the Baltic states would serve as petty cash. The Singing Revolution might or might not have come about later on. Such an outlook caused at least two attempts by Baltic exiles to reduce the risk of recognition of annexation and enhance the prospects for satellite condition.

In an obituary for pharmacist Jaan Krüner (1889–1965), Bernhard Mäelo (1965) wrote in Sweden: 'He was one of those who urged us to claim the prerogatives of a satellite state for Estonia, because it would offer more economic independence, more freedom of action, and less Russian immigration. He even suggested personal contact with Nikita Khrushchev while the latter was visiting Sweden.' The recipient's response (Mäelo to Krüner, 26 December 1958) was negative, and little action seemed to follow.

As a second attempt, Helmo Raag, Heino Susi, and Rein Taagepera composed a memorandum, which the later US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski

transmitted to Washington in 1964. In 1965, Raag and Taagepera sent a more polished version directly to a number of US officials. In 1966, Taagepera also sent it to the British government. He sent a new version to even wider worldwide destinations. Recipients included Brezhnev. This action and reactions to it are described here in some detail. Before this is done, terminology needs clarification.

International Status vs. Domestic Regime; Citizenship and ‘Satellite Status’

While discussing the conditions of states under Moscow control, international status and domestic regime have often been confused. Confusion is heightened by differences between recognition *de facto* and *de jure*, which can be marked. The USA currently recognizes China’s *de jure* authority over Taiwan, yet seems prepared to defend Taiwan’s separate *de facto* statehood even by military means. Conversely, the USA recognized the Baltic states *de jure* as independent, through 1940–1991, but *de facto* saw them as parts of the Soviet Union to such an extent that, when they began to shift away from such roles, the USA rather advised them to proceed slowly: ‘the policy of the Bush administration after 1989 was to retard Baltic independence, not encourage it’ (Lieven 1993, p. 224). Different states have different ideas about the *de jure* status of a given area. From the Soviet viewpoint, the Baltic states were *de jure* parts of the USSR, while they continued to be *de jure* separate states from the US viewpoint.

Table 1 compares Hungary and Estonia as examples. Real life is perforce more varied than what can fit into a short table. One could add several pages of additions and reservations, but let us limit ourselves to bare essentials.

The international status of both Hungary and Estonia changed in 1918 (even though Hungary had been formally an almost equal partner in the Austro-Hungarian dual state). Completely distinct states came about, with their own ambassadors and

TABLE 1 International status vs. domestic regime: comparison of Hungary and Estonia

		International status		
		Part of a major state	Separate state	Part of the USSR
Domestic regime	Right authoritarian	Hungary–1918	Hungary 1918–1945	
	Democratic	Estonia–1918	Estonia 1934–1940	
			Estonia 1918–1934	Hungary 1945–1947
	Communist totalitarian/ authoritarian		Estonia 1989–	
			Estonia 1991–	
			Hungary 1947–1989	Estonia 1940/1941 and 1944–1991: by USA, <i>de facto</i>
				Estonia 1940–1991: by USSR, <i>de jure</i>
	Not dependent on regime		Estonia 1923–: by USA, <i>de jure</i>	

memberships in international organizations. In Hungary, domestic regime changes took place at least twice: in 1945, when democracy began to take root, and then in 1947, when communism supplanted it. Estonia saw a formal regime change in June 1940, followed in August by a factual annexation by the Soviet Union, which some states recognized *de jure*, while some others did not. This table shows only the stands taken by the US and the USSR.

All this *de jure* and *de facto* is state business. Individuals cannot offer or deny recognition. They only have their opinions – and citizenship. Most Baltic exiles acquired citizenship in their new countries of semi-permanent residence as soon as possible (which often meant after 5 years). This course simplified local transactions, made travel abroad possible (in contrast to Baltic passports, which received visas either through a slow process or not at all), and precluded imposition of Soviet citizenship. Dual citizenship was not acceptable in those times, so adopting local citizenship meant turning in one's Baltic passport. Thus, on a personal level the new citizenship implied sort of a '*de facto*' evaluation that Soviet rule in one's homeland might continue. So it happened that, on the respective independence days of the Baltic states, large crowds of exiles would listen with great emotion to the greetings by ambassadors and consuls of a country they had personally abandoned in a formal sense. Maybe this act even enhanced their emotions.

While discussing the perspectives for a Baltic satellite condition to materialize, the aforementioned *Baltic Review* No. 7 introduced the term 'satellite status'. No such status exists in international relations. Smaller states often defer to the demands of more powerful ones, to a greater or lesser degree. Larger powers can influence and punish them to different degrees. Unwritten international norms may well have meant that Soviet military interventions in Hungary and in Austria would have been considered in a very different light. But formally, there is no such thing as a satellite 'status'. So what did this term imply in the Baltic context?

Turning the Baltic states into satellites would have changed their juridical status *only from the Soviet viewpoint*. From the US viewpoint (and all those not recognizing the annexation), the juridical status would not change – it's just that the *de facto* condition would be more in line with the *de jure*. In the 1960s, the use of the term 'satellite status' confused the issue, causing misunderstanding and even a reverse understanding of what it would mean from the US and Soviet viewpoints. Here I would rather use the wording 'satellite condition'.

The only ones whose personal status certainly would have changed were the ambassadors and consuls of the Baltic states. They would have been replaced by representatives of the communist satellite regimes. This thought alone was extremely painful for many exiles. The Estonian embassy in London, for instance, was technically the last tiny piece of free Estonian territory. The thought of handing it over to the communists was repulsive. Compared to this very specific loss within the range of activities of the exiles themselves, the reduction of Russian immigration to the old homeland seemed abstract and hypothetical.

A satellite condition would have also personally affected those exiles who were still using Baltic passports. Few were left by the mid-1960s, but those who had been compelled to give up their Baltic passports empathized with those who still

carried them. In earlier times, satellite condition would also have affected ships sailing under Baltic flags, but none were left in the 1960s.

The Origins of the 1965 Memorandum

The cast consisted of three men in their 30s who were raising families on the US East Coast with their spouses. The latter participated in Estonian exile activities, but left the political matters to men – this was pre-1968!

Helmo Raag (1929–2008), the son of a journalist, fled in 1944 from Estonia to Germany, along with his family. They reached the USA in 1949. Helmo studied electronic engineering, receiving a Master's degree. By 1963 he was leading a section at the Bell Telephone Laboratories in New Jersey and was also teaching at Farleigh Dickinson College. He was active in the Estonian Student Association in the USA and became a major initiator of the Estonian Student Fund. As chair of this fund, he established contacts with the Union of Student Associations in Finland and began to send American Estonian students to Finland.

Heino Susi (1925–1987) avoided the German draft in Estonia by fleeing to Finland, where he joined the Estonian regiment of the Finnish army, which returned to Estonia in September 1944. Forced into the German army, he fought in Silesia, escaped from a Soviet POW camp, and made his way to West Germany. He came to the US in 1950, completed his PhD in chemistry, and settled in Pennsylvania, where he worked at an institute of the US Department of Agriculture. His father, Arnold Susi, a member of the Estonian government briefly reactivated in Tallinn in September 1944, met Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in a Soviet slave labor camp. From 1963 on, the latter wrote much of his *Gulag Archipelago* at the Susi summer cottage in Estonia. So as not to endanger his family back home, Heino wrote his numerous articles in the Estonian exile publications under a pseudonym, Heino S. Hunt.

Rein Taagepera (b. 1933), whose father was professor of veterinary science at the University of Tartu, followed his family to Germany (1944) and Morocco (1947). He reached Canada in 1954. In 1960–1961 he had a scholarship in Helsinki, then married and emigrated to the USA, doing a PhD in physics (1965) and working in textile fibers at the DuPont Co. in Delaware (1964–1970). Within a single year (1962), he wrote 35 articles in the weekly *Vaba Eesti Sõna* [Free Estonian Speech], published in New York. In 1963, he was elected member of the Estonian National Committee in the USA – the central organization of the exiles.

While in Helsinki in 1961, I wrote on a slip of paper: 'Try to find aspects where Estonian and Moscow interests do not clash head-on.' Satellite condition was a logical outgrowth, but it did not catch on among my friends on the US East Coast until 1963, when Helmo Raag suddenly asked me to visit him. Heino Susi was already there. He had established contact with his father, who probably had stressed the likely impact of satellite condition on Russian immigration.

The alternative of Baltic 'People's Democracies' had to be presented to US government officials before they might recognize annexation in return for Soviet concessions somewhere else. To do so, we had to show how it would profit the USA, and we had to supply the USA with arguments as to how it would also profit the

Soviet Union. There was little point in stressing what concerned us most. The interests of the Baltic peoples would not impress Moscow and were a tertiary concern for Washington. Our non-technical English was still clumsy. Nonetheless, contrary to the prevalent exile practice at the time, I suggested that the very first draft should be in English, because a translation always preserves a certain foreign flavor.

Some proposals are presented to the government in the name of the ‘people’, meaning a lobby or a group of voters. Some other recommendations and analyses are clearly presented by individuals, who deem them to be of general interest – *amicus curiae*, in judicial context. Ours was of this second kind. We never presented ourselves as somehow representative of American Estonians or Balts. We were just residents of the USA who were interested in resolving a point of friction in US-Soviet relations. Indeed, it was not desirable for any Baltic exile organization to lend support for the satellite proposal, as it would only enhance Soviet hesitations.

Not that any such support was looming. It was obvious that exile organizations would, at best, react calmly to the satellite proposal, while some could react heatedly. We had our hands full finding and wording arguments for the major powers. We did not need a parallel altercation with brave but not always thoughtful patriots. So we decided to keep the project in the closest circle possible – us three and our spouses. I was given the task of composing the first draft, dated 12 August 1963. The drafts passed dozens of times from one person to another, to be corrected and added to.

Helmo had established contact with Zbigniew Brzezinski, the future United States National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter (1977–1981), who at the time was a professor at Columbia University and already quite visible in international relations. He made no suggestions regarding the contents of our text but was willing to submit it informally in Washington. While not divulging our names he must have mentioned our Baltic backgrounds, because he later reported to Helmo:

I thought you might be interested in the following comments from the State Department concerning your memorandum: ‘I read with great interest this thoughtful statement by the Baltic drafters making proposals for possible United States courses concerning the future status of the Baltic countries. I was impressed by the more objective approach of these young Balts to the problem than is displayed by most Baltic exiles and Baltic Americans. I was glad to see their more flexible and realistic attitude in considering a solution to the Baltic problem.’ (Brzezinski to Raag, possibly August 1964)²

The commentator may have been Raymond E. Lisle, Director of the Office of Eastern European Affairs, given that he later (9 September 1965) let me know that he had seen the version transmitted by Brzezinski. Helmo pointed out the wording ‘*more flexible and realistic*’ and wondered: did it mean that, in order to be considered fully realistic we should accept the present situation?

While the text was already on its indirect way to Washington, I felt it was time to discuss the satellite option publicly among the Estonian exiles. I did so at the Fifteenth Estonian Student Meeting, in the New York Estonian House, on 12 September 1964. My text was published in *Vaba Eesti Sõna* on 1 October 1964, with the title ‘People’s Democracy in Estonia would block Russification’ (Taagepera 1964). Without mentioning our draft memorandum, I presented the reasoning behind it and

suggested that it would be desirable ‘to get the great power politicians to become used to this idea’. The listeners reacted favorably, and the printed text brought only one challenge – an editorial with the title ‘People’s Democracy?’ in *Eesti Päevaleht* (Estonian Daily, 13 October 1964), published in Sweden. It belittled the differences in the conditions prevailing in satellites and within the Soviet Union.

I also submitted a manuscript (‘Russianization and Estonia’) to *Lituanus* (30 January 1965), but there was no response. My text observed: ‘The probability of ever attaining an Estonian People’s Democracy is extremely small – maybe 5%. Yet it is a non-zero probability, and represents the only chance of survival for the Estonian nation in the present world situation.’ I did not discount a change in the global situation, but short of such a change, Russian immigration would continue.

New elections for the Estonian National Committee in the USA were coming in 1965, and its leadership urged me to run again. I resisted. The satellite proposal had to come from private persons, without implying the Committee in any way. They had a different role to uphold.

Once the satellite option was spelled out publicly, in *Vaba Eesti Sõna*, we pondered with whom we could discuss our draft, so as to improve it. Around March 1965, I sent it to Professor Karl Aun, who taught at Waterloo College in Canada and was the only professor of political science among the Estonian political refugees. (The only other Estonian PhD in political science was Jaan Pennar; Toivo Miljan was completing his.) Aun sent back an annotated copy, plus two pages of further comments (25 July 1965), which helped to improve on various details. Four more pages followed, but by that time the final copy of the memo had already been typed. Aun wrote, in Estonian:

To strive for satellite status for the Baltic states – this plan struck me immediately, upon learning of it, as a good one, or even splendid – but with great doubts about its implementability. . . . Continuing extension of the present situation, which can materialize without decisive steps [on our part], is fraught with danger. . . . To demand full and immediate independence for the Baltic states sounds great – but what can we achieve by so demanding? (Aun to Taagepera, undated, summer 1965)

The text of the memorandum composed by Raag, Susi and Taagepera is reproduced in the Appendix.

Sending the Memorandum

Helmo typed the final clean copy and began typing cover letters. In this pre-computer age, each had to be typed separately. At the last moment, Heino Susi decided that he could not risk signing them. If Moscow should react in a strongly negative way, his family in Estonia would pay the price. ‘Well, it seems then that us two will be those sinners who will sign’, Helmo wrote (Raag to Taagepera, 18 August 1965) as he mailed me the letters for President Lyndon Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk and his aid Llewellyn Thompson, dated 20 August 1965. I co-signed and sent them off. Later (30 August 1965) we sent them to ten more officials and Congressional leaders.

I wrote Helmo that it would be proper to inform Consul General Johannes Kaiv, the highest Estonian diplomat in the USA, of our action and that I could do so mentioning my name alone (Taagepera to Raag, 22 August 1965). I did so on 6 September 1965, sending along the text of the memo and also my previous article in *Vaba Eesti Sõna*, with a copy to Heikki Leesment, head of the Estonian National Committee in the USA, and later to Aleksander Warma in Sweden, head of the Estonian government in exile.³ Later, copies also went to various Baltic political scientists, historians, and law specialists (such as Boris Meissner), and to Estonian activists. Helmo had contacts among young Latvian activists (Raag to Taagepera, 21 September 1965), who apparently did not react.

Why didn't we seek collaboration with young exile Latvians and Lithuanians while drafting our memorandum? In these pre-Baltic Appeal to the United Nations [BATUN] times, inter-Baltic contacts were remarkably weak both factually and psychologically. Moreover, we did not wish to leave any impression of acting in the name of Baltic exiles as a group. The outlook for the satellite option had to be analyzed by just a few private persons.

Washington reacted with short polite responses from the White House (admittedly not from the President, but his special advisor McGeorge Bundy) and from four other people. Two others included something more substantial. Deputy Secretary of State Llewellyn Thompson: 'Although we do not believe that the Soviet Government would be willing to discuss the status of the Baltic States in any constructive way at the present time, we are glad to be informed...' (Thompson to Taagepera, 31 August 1965). The encouraging part was his saying that he had already circulated our memo in the Department. The Director of the East European section, Raymond Lisle, observed similarities with the draft forwarded by Brzezinski (Lisle to Taagepera, 9 September 1965). No more was to be expected. If the issue of the Baltic states should arise in the future, our arguments would be available in the files of the State Department. Aun transmitted the memo to Toivo Miljan in Ottawa, who soon reported that it had been entered into the Baltic file of the Canadian government (Aun to Taagepera, 14 November 1965).

Sympathetic responses came from the Lithuanian historian Julius Slavenas (Slavenas to Taagepera, 22 September 1965) and political scientist V. Stanley Vardys (Vardys to Taagepera, 1 October 1965, 16 February 1966). Estonian exile reactions will be reviewed later. *Teataja* [Courier] in Sweden was the only newspaper to publish an Estonian translation of our memo (11 December 1965).

It was conceivable that the satellite option might be of more interest in Europe. During British-Soviet trade talks, I sent the memo to the British Foreign Ministry, adding a one-page abstract. I argued that a satellite condition for the Baltic states would contribute to reducing tensions in Europe, and I warned against recognition of annexation: 'It should be stressed that a recognition of the Baltic *Anschluss*, to the contrary, would only help to perpetuate a pocket of deep national discontent and would be, in the long run, counterproductive' (Taagepera to Michael Stewart, 10 January 1966). Actually, the Baltic annexation went more blatantly against the wishes of the population concerned than the Austrian *Anschluss*. But since the postwar world had declared *Anschluss* unjustified, it made sense to hitch the Baltic annexation to it. There was no response. Once again, I sent copies of my letter to the Estonian Consul

General in New York and possibly to the National Committee, who leaked it to the Estonian exile press.

At the same time, I tried to get an article entitled ‘Baltic People’s Democracies?’ published in the American media. Brzezinski suggested *The New Leader* or *The New Republic* (Brzezinski to Taagepera, 11 November 1964). The first rejected it on 1 September 1965 and the latter in November. Brzezinski then transmitted my text to the *Washington Post*, with a strong cover letter (Brzezinski to Wiggins, 10 January 1966). Rejection was coupled to an alternative offer: ‘It seems to be special pleading for a particular policy view and I do not think that we should be in the position of advocating that at this time. I would be much more interested in an article on the conditions of life in those states and the history of our policy toward them’ (Clayton to Brzezinski, 19 January 1966). It rather sounded like: ‘Don’t bother us with a sovereign Estonia; instead, describe it as a somewhat peculiar province of Russia.’ So this was where one had to start, so as to build gradually an image of a separate identity.

Brzezinski next suggested three more journals. *East Europe* and *Foreign Affairs* flatly rejected the submission. *Orbis* presented a technical objection which left the door open: my text supposedly was too brief (Herber to Taagepera, 6 June 1966)! When the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* also rejected ‘Baltic People’s Democracies?’ I gave up on the manuscript.

Meanwhile, I made use of the tentative offer by the *Washington Post* and sent them a review of the Estonian scene, with the overly-optimistic title ‘Second Thaw in Estonia’. With numerous stylistic adjustments, it was published under the title ‘Estonian “Thaw” Is Chilly’ (Taagepera 1966), with a pretty pointless photo added. This is when I learned that the US newspapers ask for the author’s acceptance of changes in the text, but headlines and photos are outside the author’s control. This article represented a breakthrough of sorts – to my best knowledge it was the first article by an Estonian exile in a major US newspaper. Actually, not many attempts had probably been made. The exiles were satisfied with readers’ letters. These were believed to have a major impact on the government, and *Vaba Eesti Sõna* reported each of them as a major achievement. (In contrast, my article rated only a few lines, given my *bête noire* status, to which I’ll come.) It is evident from the previous account how much effort and resilience it took to get an article published, but it was possible.

By this time, I stood alone. Helmo was undertaking an idealistic move unique among the exiles in North America: to be closer to Estonia, he gave up his career at Bell and was taking his family to Finland. While looking for engineering employment there, he did not wish to unsettle the cautious Finns with an activity that concerned the Soviet Union. In particular, he asked me not to send the memo to President Urho Kekkonen before he was safely on his way to Finland.

Korhonen wrote that propagation of this memo might be considered an act inconvenient for the USSR. . . . But since Finnish foreign ministry already has this memo and they know that both of us were involved, they may feel, even when you alone send it, that my name has been omitted only as a matter of tactics . . . and they may consider me undesirable. (Raag to Taagepera, 3 January 1966)

The text of the memo had reached the Finnish foreign ministry anyway, through an acquaintance of Helmo. He did not explain who Korhonen was.

For his part, Heino Susi composed a letter to August Torma, the Estonian ambassador in London, clarifying the motives behind the memorandum. He wished that I transmit it, but without mentioning his name: 'I do not want my name on any paper. Because of the Susi family in Estonia, let this name be omitted from any combinations that touch on the Soviet Union and would sooner or later be known there' (Susi to Taagepera, 7 June 1966). No response came from Torma.

Follow-up, 1966–1973

These were the times when many younger Baltic exiles in North America were impatient with the rigid and passive style of the older generation, and several new initiatives materialized within a couple of years. Baltic Appeal to the United Nations (BATUN) developed on the basis of a joint action in late 1965. The example of Latvian 'Two-by-Two' inspired Estonians in 1967 to start *Metsäilikool* [Forest University] north of Toronto. A 1968 Latvian initiative led to the First Conference on Baltic Studies, where the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies [AABS] was founded (see Taagepera 2009). In modest capacities, I participated in all of them.

The role of BATUN was to stress the legal continuity of the non-communist Baltic states. Hence it was not advisable for a proponent of the satellite option to be visible there. However, Norbert Trepša, a main initiator of BATUN, had cause to thank me for revising some of its texts in French (Trepša to Taagepera, 10 June 1966). I had interacted intensively with the later founders of *Metsäilikool* when I lived in Toronto, but only in 1970, when the trade mark of *Metsäilikool* was well established, did they dare to invite such a black sheep as I had become for the exile community. At the First Conference on Baltic Studies, I received the honor of plenary presentation. This is the background for my follow-up attempts.

In October 1966 I submitted a longer study, 'Satellites Within the Soviet Union', to *Orbis*. It documented that the Baltic states were such dissonant pieces within the Soviet Union that Moscovites called them *sovetskaja zagranitsa* [Soviet abroad], and hence it might be in the Kremlin's interest to segregate them from the rest of the USSR. I had received a valuable critique of this manuscript from Helmo in Finland, after the top Estonian writer back home, Jaan Kross, had asked him for a copy of our memorandum (Raag to Taagepera, September 1966). Unfortunately, *Orbis* rejected my text. They said it was of publishable quality, but space allowed them to publish only one-quarter of such submissions (Herber to Taagepera, 5 January 1967). *World Politics* also rejected it. At the least, it was handy when Senator Joseph S. Clark asked his aid Andrew Rebori to compile an overview of Estonia 1919–1950 and Rebori consulted me. An intense correspondence resulted (December 1967–January 1968), but I never got to see Rebori's final report.

Inspired by my success with *The Washington Post*, I wrote another piece on Western-oriented cultural activities in Soviet Estonia, 'Estonia Likes Porgy and Bess'. It was rejected in 1967 both by *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. In August 1967 I started a modest newsletter, *Estonian Events* (1967–1972), which later became

Baltic Events (1973–1975) when Juris Dreifelds in Canada had joined me. It reached a circulation of 300 among US Sovietologists and Baltic activists (*BE*, August 1973).

To promote Baltic interests, I clearly needed a better handle on English and on what sells in the West. I realized, for instance, that George Washington was never called a nationalist, even while he had fought for the creation of a new nation – the positive term for such people was ‘patriots’. Baltic exiles often shot themselves in the foot by presenting themselves as nationalists rather than patriots (Taagepera to Raag, 10 December 1966). So I began to take evening courses in political science on top of my full-time employment in textile engineering, aiming at a Master’s degree in international relations. The consequences were unexpected.

Half a dozen seminar papers on Eastern Europe certainly resulted, but when I finally succeeded in getting a paper accepted by a scholarly journal, it was on a different topic: the growth curves of historical empires. And instead of a Baltic topic, I ended up writing a Master’s thesis on the so-called cube law of elections. These shifts in direction ended with my saying goodbye to textile fibers, when I landed an Assistant Professor’s position in political science at the University of California, Irvine (1970). It was a *tour de force* – to be recruited by a top university, with merely an MA in the field. They sure wondered about a recommendation by Brzezinski (whom I never have met face to face), but, foremost, they were intrigued by my projects in electoral systems and empire growth patterns.

New openings for propagating Baltic separation from the Soviet Union were getting scarce. In 1969 situations emerged for writing to Senator Edward Kennedy, who did not reply, and to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, in whose stead the aforementioned Raymond Lisle did (Lisle to Taagepera, 27 June 1969). My last attempt was motivated by a new spell of relaxation of international tensions in 1972–1973. I first sent our memorandum of 1965 to Presidents Richard Nixon (whose assistant acknowledged it) and Leonid Brezhnev (20 February 1972). By November, I prepared a new one: ‘On the Status of Estonia: A Study Prepared on the Occasion of the European Security and Cooperation Conference.’ An Estonian translation was published in Sweden (Taagepera 1977). Along with a two-page cover letter, I sent it on 29 November to Richard Tötterman, coordinator of the preparatory meeting, requesting him to distribute it to the participants. The hope that he would do so was minuscule, but I lacked the means to send it to the participants directly. I think I also sent the study to some newspapers, including the communist, but relatively independent, *Volkstimme* in Austria and *Kansan Uutiset* in Finland.

Meanwhile, I had finally placed an article in *The Nation* (Taagepera 1971), on a non-Baltic thesis which I now consider a major goof. However, the editor was impressed to the point of asking for another piece. I submitted ‘Estonia: Satellite within the Soviet Union’, which was published as ‘Estonia: Uppity Satellite’ (Taagepera 1973). As was said before: titles are determined by editors, without consulting authors. I sent copies and cover letters to various ministers of foreign affairs (25 May 1973), including Andrei Gromyko, receiving brief replies from London, Ottawa, and Bonn. Most likely thanks to Professor Thomas Remeikis, a translation of the article was published in exile Lithuanian *Draugas* (1 June 1973).

By this time, the probability of achieving a satellite condition had shrunk from tiny to nil. Such a decision would have required a degree of decisiveness that Moscow

no longer could marshal. Abroad, one could only stress the distinct identity of the Baltic states – that despite being factually within the Soviet Union, their peoples often behaved as if they were further west. This was the time *Metsälikool* asked me to draft a long-perspective plan for Estonia. It has been described elsewhere (Taagepera 1992). It focused on moral and social measures that might be implemented regardless of the nature of Estonia's relationship to its big neighbor.

In retrospect, the Baltic chances for achieving a satellite condition may have been the best immediately after Stalin's death, when Lavrentii Beria was painfully aware of the weaknesses of an excessively multinational Soviet Union. The option may still have been open at the time Khrushchev withdrew from Austria and Porkkala. The Hungarian uprising sharply reduced the chances, showing Moscow that satellites could be hard to control. From this time on, it would have been counterproductive to serve it to the Kremlin as the 'Hungarian path' – better use 'Bulgarian path', given that Bulgaria was the only European satellite where Moscow's suzerainty was never questioned. During the Brezhnevite stagnation, the Kremlin no longer dared to undertake any non-routine steps.

And so the Soviet Union lurched toward internal tensions, which Baltic activities magnified and possibly took beyond the critical limit. The result was that the Baltic states won even more than a satellite condition, but, in the case of Latvia and Estonia, kept a complex demographic inheritance.

Responses in the West and in the East

Responses in the West have already been reported: basically, it was deep indifference. Beyond some juridical formalities, the West had no interest in the Baltics. One cannot even say the West had written them off, because from the Western viewpoint there wasn't anything to write off in the first place. The Baltic states were seen as a random fluctuation in history, like the city-state of Danzig, which took shape and vanished at the same time. They were seen to be back where they had 'always' belonged. For those Balts who made contact with the West only during or after the Singing Revolution, it is difficult to grasp this previous indifference. Even well-meaning commentators often dismissed the Balts as 'vanishing nations' that could no longer be helped:

In another decade, these Baltic lands will have lost their own imprint in history, and the once proud native of Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania will be a rarity amidst overbearing Russians planted there. . . . Today, the Baltics are taking on every aspect of Soviet life, . . . and a child under ten has little knowledge of parental nationality. (Huss 1964).

By 1965, the 'Baltic Question' (Hiden *et al.* 2008) was solidly frozen. The only scholarly book within a dozen years to have 'Baltic Question' in its title (Kirchner 1954) dealt with the 1500s. No Western representative had openly broached the issue since 1955. A recent and thorough biography of a central Baltic protagonist, August Torma, Estonian ambassador in London (Tamman 2011), mentions only one activity between 1955 and 1966: a new set of people at the British Foreign Office reviewing in

1963 the Baltic ministers' status after the death of Latvian minister Charles Zarine (Tamman 2011, pp. 170–1).

The US policy of non-recognition of Soviet annexation was slowly yielding to the *de facto* situation. The US consul in Leningrad began to visit the Baltic capitals. He made an effort to avoid republic-level officials and interact only with city authorities, yet the Soviet Estonian main daily *Rahva Hää* claimed on 24 January 1975 that he had also visited the Soviet Estonian foreign ministry (*Baltic Events*, June–August 1975). When the USA complemented the official Voice of America broadcasts in the Baltic languages with semi-official ones, this was done through Radio Liberty, which broadcast to the Soviet Union, not through Radio Free Europe, which broadcast to the satellites.

The responses in the East referred to Moscow, its lieutenants in the Baltic states and their populations. Of course, no direct comments could come from people outside the Communist Party. In this respect, one is limited to indirect responses. A person who had left Estonia a few years earlier wrote as follows, in Estonian. Keeping in mind possible KGB interest in my files, I hid the original so well that I cannot even recollect the person's name.

I quite agree with Your claim that such a shift – turn Estonia into a people's democracy – would improve the situation in many ways. Above all, regarding this most burning issue – the continuous influx of Russians into Estonia, and the threat of Russification. I believe everyone would agree with that – Estonian communists included. As I sensed while living there, they too would rather prefer to live on their own, without directives from Moscow and without Russian supervisors. National resentment seems often stronger than direct resentment against ideology... I cannot understand why Your letter has produced such heated opposition in certain [exile] circles. Do they have some more specific and more realistic plan? One should take into account the conditions under which we live, and the world.

A visitor to Estonia in summer 1967, probably from the USA, wrote:

We also talked about the satellite matter (when drinking – elsewhere he would not talk). He thought it would be acceptable to people over there, as a logical step toward, so to say, a peaceful resolution. But he is not aware of it being raised in university, government or other circles, and he doubted if anyone there would dare to raise it. He also did not believe the ruling Russian clique would ever agree to it, for it would lead to the crumbling of the empire, given that, in the wake of the Baltic countries, the others also would start to demand the same, and if I am not mistaken, some circles in Ukraine and Georgia are considering similar demands. But he thought such a demand from this [Western] side would have great propagandistic value, given that the ruling Russian clique could not openly oppose it without unmasking its Russian chauvinism.

Erika Nivanka, who lived in Finland and often visited her native Estonia (Nivanka to Mare and Rein Taagepera, 11 December 1965):

This memorandum was a splendid thing, and presently it is in fact the only way to help our homeland. The satellite condition would offer the Estonians quite different opportunities now and in the future. It's a different matter what the US

can do in those matters. And I believe most or a major part of our exiles will be out to get you because of this step. I raise my hat to you for this act.

The following comment by Communist Party member Väino Unt arrived from Tartu by ordinary mail and hence can be considered approved by Soviet security organs. As a fellow physicist, I got into correspondence with him in 1960, and in 1961 he even came to visit me in Helsinki, as if this were the simplest thing to do for a Soviet person. The copy of my *Vaba Eesti Sõna* article on People's Democracies which I had sent to Tartu by regular mail had evidently reached him, as if a tight censorship of letters did not exist.

A few words about your speech. First of all, I do not believe that all exiles would react enthusiastically to your idea, for this would imply recognition of liquidation of capitalism, which many are likely to refuse. Some others might adopt this idea only on tactical grounds, so as to use the conditions of people's democracies to start a struggle for restoration of capitalism. I don't think they would achieve any success, without the help of foreign states, but a fair amount of energy would be wasted on domestic squabbles, which would be the more time-consuming because many a person would say one thing but try to achieve something else. This is why I am not all persuaded that the adoption of your proposal would accelerate the development of our culture and economy. A part of the energy that would be spent on these other matters could with great success be applied to the development of Estonian culture.

Similarly to many exile critiques, Communist Party member Unt overlooked the likely impact of satellite condition on Russian immigration.

Indirectly, I heard from three different sources that Vambola Pöder, head of the foreign information office of the Estonian Communist Party, had in 1967 given a presentation on new exile tactics to the Party *aktiiv* of the Tallinn writers' organization. His main topic was describing and ridiculing the People's Democracy proposal. During the discussion that followed, several participants suggested that the idea of People's Democracy deserved serious consideration. (At closed Party meetings, one could open one's mouth a bit more than in public.) Pöder listened, then declared that the Party line was set: this idea was unacceptable and was not to be discussed any further. I reported this information in *Estonian Events* No. 17, December 1969. Personal communications were published in *EE* with a delay of many months and sometimes years, so as not to endanger the sources.

It took the Communist establishment six years to react in print. Why did they, when they had managed to keep mum that long? Was it that the proposal was still discussed in Estonia to an extent that called for a rebuttal? Anyway, under the title 'Socialist International and its Estonian brood' in the monthly *Eesti Kommunist*, Armin-Herbert Lebbin included a section which had little to do with Social Democrats:

With 'national communism' in mind, the emigré establishment has for several years already promoted a 'memorandum' composed by R. Taagepera and H. Raag, which makes it look as if they too supported a socialist regime in Estonia, but without a union with the other Soviet republics. The authors of the 'memorandum' argue for the Estonian SSR leaving the Soviet Union and 'creation of an independent Estonian state of the type of people's democracies'. 'Side' [the

bulletin of exile Social Democrats], while discussing the ‘memorandum’, spells out the motivation behind this maneuver: ‘The proponents start from the premise that no refiguration of the spheres of interest in Eastern Europe is to be expected in the foreseeable future.’ It is not hard to understand that, hidden behind this propaganda maneuver, is the dream of restoring capitalism in Estonia. (Lebbin 1971; a slightly different translation is given in *Estonian Events*, 27, August 1971)

The actually prevalent evaluation of the memorandum by the ‘emigré establishment’ will be reviewed shortly.

A year later, *Eesti Kommunist* published an article by Artur Vader, second secretary of the Estonian Communist Party (Vader 1972a), in which the attack on the satellite proposal filled half a page. The article was also printed in the Russian version of the monthly *Kommunist Estonii*, and was reproduced in a collection of Vader’s speeches (Vader 1972b, p. 129).

To listen to the Estonian bourgeois emigrés, they do not really object to the power of the working people, to socialism. The main target of their venom is Estonia’s being part of the Soviet federation. For many years already, several members of the emigré establishment have declared that they would consent to a socialist regime in Estonia but are opposed to Estonia being joined to the other Soviet republics, meaning belonging to the Soviet Union. The authors of this ridiculous conception propagate the idea that Estonia should leave the Soviet Union, and an ‘independent Estonian state of the type of people’s democracy’ should be formed.

In connection to this, one should recall a book by Viktor Kingissepp (an Estonian Bolshevik leader around 1920), ‘Under the yoke of independence’, where the micro-idea of ‘independence’ is compared to the Trojan horse: such a horse was fed by deceit into the camp of the working people, and it enabled the bourgeoisie to subdue the working people and seize power. The aforementioned thesis, too, is a Trojan horse of anti-Soviet propaganda: maybe someone will take the bait... An anti-Soviet concoction, full of anger and spite against the Estonian people and the Soviet Union, cannot mislead anyone. If it is mentioned here, it is only as an example of the renegades’ lack of sense.

It is true, though, that due to the influence of bourgeois propaganda, we can sometimes observe manifestations of national conceit and narrow-mindedness among us, but we have absolute grounds for declaring [that this is not the norm] (Vader 1972a; a slightly different translation is given in *Estonian Events*, 33, August 1972).

Thus, after a while, the Soviet Estonian satraps could not completely ignore the satellite memorandum. Vader later even wrote about ‘the “Memorandum” of R. Taagepera and H. Raag’ in Ukrainian (Vader 1975). Once more, the multi-national Soviet society was seen as the target of visibly slanderous propaganda from Estonian and other emigrés, who did not oppose the Socialist system in Estonia but only advocated the creation of an autonomous national democratic state of Estonia, not incorporated into the Soviet Union.

At the time, agitation meetings at various Soviet Estonian plants and educational outfits stressed that the anti-Soviet activities of the Baltic exile organizations had reached a new and more dangerous phase, as many younger activists had given up on the blind anti-Soviet anger of their elders. They were said to hide their anticommunism under a scholarly cloak and seek to establish contacts with organizations and individuals in Tallinn and Tartu, so as to spread their harmful ideology. 'Among such exile scholars, your name was mentioned first', I was told in private. At such meetings, I was apparently presented as the people's enemy number one, until Andres Küng published his *Estland – en studie i imperialism* [Estonia: A Study in Imperialism] (1971), relegating me to the second place. I never wrote down the names of such sources and have long forgotten who they were. Visibly, the new approaches by AABS and BATUN annoyed the Soviet lieutenants in Estonia.

Taken together, these echos from the East were spotty and mixed. Guesses by exiles on the preferences of the people back home ranged widely. As mentioned, Aleksander Kütt felt that in a referendum, status quo vs. satellite condition, the latter would receive 90% support among Estonians in Estonia. An opposite opinion was expressed by Aleksander Warma, head of the government in exile: 'On the basis of information received from back home, I am convinced that your memorandum, which in itself was well worded, is supported by 3 to 5% of the Estonian people. But it has brought disappointment to 95%' (Warma to Taagepera, December 1965).

Exile Estonian Reactions

The success of the satellite memorandum depended on the strength of its arguments regarding the advantages of such a shift for both the USA and the Soviet Union. The number of exile supporters for such a memo was irrelevant. Hence the authors did not attempt to obtain active support among exiles. Indeed, exile support could have been counterproductive, had the Kremlin seriously pondered such an option. Given the low chance of success, it was not worth investing too much into this project. Mixed strategies are often optimal. It was worthwhile for a couple of individuals to analyze the satellite option, but no further participants were needed. The types of activities BATUN was engaged in required more labor. Indeed, the more BATUN made it awkward for Moscow to justify annexation, the more it helped to make the satellite option attractive. Those exiles active in promoting the Baltic cause in the wider world tended to espouse a neutral attitude toward the satellite memorandum. Those whose struggle was confined to exhortations within the exile community itself tended to take a more negative stance.

Remarkably, even while the memo dealt with all three Baltic states, the resulting row was restricted to the Estonian exiles. This was indicative of the degree to which the Baltic exile communities lived, acted and felt apart. Appreciable person-to-person contacts were to arise only in the late 1960s, in the context of BATUN and AABS.

It so happened that that Helmo, I, and Professor Aun, with whom I had consulted, all were alumni of the oldest Estonian student organization (Eesti Üliõpilaste Selts – Estonian Students Association [EÜS]), founded in the late 1800s, and so were the three major representatives of the Republic of Estonia: Aleksander

Warma in Stockholm, head of the Estonian government in exile; August Torma, Estonian ambassador in London; and Johannes Kaiv, Estonian consul general in New York. This put EÜS in a special bind. In early 1965 I had the distinction of editing the organization's almanac (EÜS 1965), a hallowed tradition going back to 1889. In March 1966 it expelled me, and upon this Helmo also left EÜS. The Estonian central organizations in the USA and Canada also took a highly negative stance. Among the several central organizations in Sweden, the one connected with Warma took the least strident stand, and *Teataja*, a newspaper close to them, was the only one to publish a translation of the memo. More details of exile reactions are given in Taagepera (2010).

As leader of government in exile (whom Kaiv and Torma did not recognize), Warma of course had to oppose the satellite proposal. Yet, when I sent him the text, he responded: 'In my opinion, the press (and some organizations) have made, so to say, a mountain out of a molehill' (Warma to Taagepera, 16 November 1965). When *Teataja* published the memo, it added comments by Warma (1965b): 'Even if a satellite condition materialized, it would not eliminate the danger of Russification.' Warma deemed the proposal hopeless and ill-advised, but he avoided pointless invectives. It was the only year he sent me a Christmas card:

By its contents, I do not consider this memo timely, given the present perspectives and keeping in mind the Soviet politics present and past. However, at least in my opinion there is no cause for making a fuss about it. You'll excuse me for saying that it will not change the US policy in the least, in one direction or the other. But I am glad to see that there are younger men in the US who have taken to heart the fate of our people. The present conditions demand from us staying power and taking into account the will of our people. Every person makes mistakes. (Warma to Taagepera, December 1965)

The rest of this letter, on the presumed preferences of people back home, has already been cited.

Reports on the stand by Consul General Kaiv are contradictory. The prevalent view was that he demanded that EÜS expel me, but the opposite attitude also has been claimed. Kaiv soon died. Ambassador Torma remained noncommittal.

The tenor of the exile press was set by a short note in the occasional periodical *Võitleja* (The Combattant, Germany, No. 10, October 1965), followed by an editorial, 'Staatus muutjad' [Status Modifiers], in *Eesti Päevaleht* (15 October 1965). The objective of the memo was falsified into its opposite – perpetuation of Soviet annexation. This was the only version most exile newspaper readers ever got. The main trick used was to reverse the order of steps proposed. The order in the memo (see Appendix) was as follows:

- (1) The US must not recognize the annexation. ('It is also a question of not recognizing exterior imperialism and colonialism. All the political ideals which the United States have repeatedly professed are at stake in the Baltic question. . . .')
- (2) The Soviet Union turns the Baltic states into satellites outside the USSR.
- (3) Thereafter, the US extends recognition to their governments, in line with US precedents regarding Hungary and the other 'People's Democracies'.

Võitleja misrepresented it by claiming the reverse order:

- (a) First the US gives up on recognizing Baltic independence and ‘recognizes the present communist governments there’,
- (b) ‘so that, thereafter, the Soviet Union would give Estonia (and Latvia and Lithuania) satellite state status’ – if it should wish to do so, after receiving a blank check.

Päevaleht completely omitted the very proposal to exit the Soviet Union:

- (a) The US government ‘simply would give up on recognizing the Republic of Estonia and its still active embassies, and instead, would recognize the puppet government in Tallinn’,
- (b) ‘who then, according to these naive “geniuses”, would automatically be promoted to satellite government’.

This is how the proposal to end annexation was turned into a proposal to perpetuate it, and so it was repeated by most of the exile press. Why didn’t we clarify it? First, we could not say ‘Don’t worry, it’s meant only as a way station toward complete independence’, without sinking the proposal. In this respect, we had already gone on a limb with the last sentence of the memo: ‘Although the immediate results of such a course fall far short of the ultimate aspirations of the Baltic peoples...’ Second, previous experience told us that once the exile press labeled someone a ‘pinko’, this person was no longer accorded space for a rebuttal. Given that the exiles could do little to help their people back home, the search for and creation of an internal enemy offered vicarious satisfaction.

Some black humor was inserted when the Estonian National Committee in the USA asked us for the Estonian *original* text of the memo, because some members had difficulties with English. It was beyond their understanding that young Estonians would compose such a text in English from the very beginning. Some other exile leaders, who knew English sufficiently well, had another concern: The English of the memo supposedly was too good to be the job of ‘our own boys’. But here the opinions diverged: were the real authors from the KGB or from the US Department of State? (condensed from Taagepera to Aun, Raag and Susi, 3 October 1965). A likelier suspect was Professor Aun, who did not deny having commented on a draft. Because he hadn’t immediately denounced the project to the Estonian central organization in Canada, his resignation from this body was demanded. He complied, so that the inter-exile squabbles would not supply fodder for Soviet propaganda (Aun to Taagepera, 14 November 1965). The political exiles had neutralized their only professor of political science.

In Retrospect

Whatever might have been, the actual impact of the 1965 quest for a Hungarian path was nil, regarding its direct objective. Indirectly, it affected the lives of the people involved, with some wider spinoff.

Heino Susi remained a respected member of the exile community. But more than ever, he realized to what extent his family's being in occupied Estonia limited his political freedom of action. He focused on publishing bluntly thoughtful wartime memoirs. Sadly, he died at the dawn of the Singing Revolution, which would have unshackled him.

Helmo Raag and family lived in Finland for five years (1966–1970). In 1967 the Soviet authorities allowed him to visit Estonia, where communications specialists were interested in his expertise. As he returned to the USA, his first words to me were: 'Here you see a defeated soldier.' For various reasons he had been unable to fulfill his intended connecting role. He gave up on any activity outside his family and his engineering job, but this withdrawal had little to do with the memo as such.

In view of his remote connection to the memo, the exile persecution of Karl Aun was grotesque – but it was short-lived. He was soon again a respected member of the community and of the EÜS in particular. But his feelings toward EÜS had changed (Aun to Taagepera, 9 March 1982).

My own life was profoundly altered by the action in 1965, in several unpredictable directions. For years, it put me in a sort of double exile – blocked from visiting Estonia until 1987 (for an aborted attempt, see Taagepera 1978), and banned from many exile circles, except of course BATUN, AABS, and *Metsailikool*. Being in the desert was saddening, though not unexpected. Yet it was also liberating. My previous Sisyphus-like efforts to sanitize the exile community were cut short. It released energy for studies in political science, which were at the same time required for follow-up attempts toward satellite condition. In turn, these applied studies took me toward more fundamental ones, which in 2008 culminated in my receiving the Johann Skytte Prize, the largest in political science worldwide.

Meanwhile, I also had a minor impact on Estonian politics. It was vaguely known in Estonia that the occupation regime deemed me specially dangerous. As a result, Tartu students included in their obligatory May parade in 1988 an unauthorized banner: 'Taagepera for university rektor!' (photo in *Edasi*, 4 May 1988). In 1992, I was asked to run for President of Estonia. I was not elected but most likely tilted the outcome in favor of Lennart Meri. My candidature would not have happened without the chain of events that began in 1965. But it also might have cost me the election, had the votes been close. I netted 24% in Estonia, but among the exiles I fell far short of even the former titular head of Soviet Estonia: he got 11% of the exile vote, while I got 4%. Such is the effect of exile memories, real or imagined.

Was it worth it? With the benefit of hindsight, one could always play one's cards better – or so it seems. Trouble is, every alternate course has its own unpredictabilities, which need not always be pleasant. Many further questions may be asked. How would an Estonian People's democracy have dealt with the civil garrison already settled in Estonia? As of 1965, this was a lesser issue compared to what it had become by 1990, both in size and duration. Do archival sources in Estonia or Russia shed further light on the attitude of Soviet authorities regarding the satellite proposal? This would be up to someone else to investigate; my concern has been to mine the primary materials in my possession.

What lesson can the quest for a Hungarian path offer for Baltic history – and for politics more generally? All too often we tend to take the history that does materialize

as inevitable. Alternatives that might have occurred make us sense the randomness of outcomes we later take for granted. In retrospect, the quest for Baltic satellite condition may have been faintly plausible in 1955, but completely unrealistic by 1965. But if there ever was an idea even more fanciful, in 1965, it was for the Soviet Union to crumble peacefully 25 years later – just sit and wait.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

- 1 *Stockholms Tidningen* [Stockholm News], 5 April 1956 (based on information from London); *Norges-Handels och Sjöfarts Tidende* [Norway's Commerce and Seafare News], 6 April 1956; *Uusi Suomi* [New Finland], date uncertain (referring to unspecified London newspapers); *Norddeutsche Nachrichten* [North German News], 11 April 1956 (on the basis of sources in Helsinki); *Das Ostpreussen Blatt* [The East Prussian Sheet] (Hamburg), 21 April 1956.
- 2 I do not have a copy of this letter but only an undated copy of this excerpt. The era of office copiers had not yet arrived, and given a possible interest by the KGB we did not even try to copy everything, complete with names and dates.
- 3 During the preceding year (1964 and March 1965) Warma had sent me six letters in connection with his article (Warma 1965a) in a volume I edited (EÜS 1965). His title was 'Is the juridical continuity of the Republic of Estonia defensible and politically necessary?' As our memorandum stressed that the annexation of the Republic of Estonia must not be recognized, there was no basic contradiction between the two stands.

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Appendix: The 1965 Memorandum

This is the exact text as mailed by Helmo Raag and Rein Taagepera in August 1965 to various US officials, with one spelling correction: the Baltic states, with lower case s.

ON THE STATUS OF THE BALTIC STATES

Introduction

If and when a meaningful discussion of Cold War issues between the Soviet Union and the United States becomes possible, a number of specific problems concerning Eastern Europe will have to be settled. Shifts in ideological and power constellations in Europe and Asia have in recent years assumed a somewhat accelerated pace and might lead to a situation where such discussions become necessary.

Formally, the two unsettled questions in Eastern Europe are the status of the Baltic states and that of Eastern Germany and Berlin, the remaining East European governments having been recognized by both East and West.

The thoughts presented here are concerned with the Baltic situation and with the possibilities for future developments in that area, in the light of the following assumptions: (a) drastic revision of spheres of influence in that region is unlikely in the foreseeable future, (b) gradual lessening of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union is not impossible, and (c) formal settlement of the status of the Baltic states might emerge as a problem demanding solution.

Historical Background of the Present Situation

The East-Baltic region was incorporated into the Russian Empire during the 18th century; the non-Russian character of the region was, however, explicitly recognized in the form of special legislation for these provinces. Following the Russian Revolution the efforts of the Baltic peoples resulted in the establishment of three essentially democratic republics which correspond to three very different linguistic areas: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The independence period of these republics was characterized by anti-aristocratic land reforms, and oscillations between extreme democracy and moderate strongmanship. In Estonia and Lithuania extensive cultural autonomy was granted to Jews and other minorities. All three republics tried to remain neutral in great power rivalries.

As a result of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact the Soviet Union was given a free hand in the Baltic region. It occupied the Baltic states and, after Soviet-style single-list elections, incorporated them into the Soviet Union.

Soviet Union and the Present Baltic Situation

Striving to conquer and hold the Eastern shores of the Baltic Sea has for a long time been part of the Russian imperialist tradition. Coupled with the expansionist stage of the communist movement the occupation of the Baltic states thus represented a logical step for the Soviet Union in 1940. The region has been of some military and economic importance for the Russians: the economy of the Baltic states is by now interwoven with the Soviet economy to a much larger extent than is the case with other East European countries.

The direct annexation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union, however, has also created some problems for Moscow. The Baltic states have been a source of a steady flow of Western ideas into the other parts of the Soviet Union. In the decade preceding the 'Thaw' this was in fact almost the only place where wide segments of the Soviet population were exposed to such ideas. [Footnote 1: See e.g., 'Privileges of the Soviet "Abroad"', *London Times*, 5 and 6 Oct. 1964, and V. Aksenov's novels 'A Ticket to the Stars' (*Yunost* no. 6 and 7, 1961) and 'It's Time, My Friend' (*Molodaya Gvardia*, April and May, 1964).] With increasing direct East-West contacts, however, the Westernizing role of the Baltic states is gradually losing its importance.

In order to 'catch up' with other regions of the Soviet Union and to minimize the Westernizing impact, the direct annexation forced a much faster pace of sovietization than in the so-called People's Democracies. The methods included deportations and

other repressive measures on a scale and severity unwitnessed in any of the People's Democracies. These measures, however, did not succeed in stamping out, but rather hardened an attitude of passive resistance. The pressure of Russianization has forced into opposition even those nationalists who might otherwise have accepted communism. There have been student demonstrations at several universities. [Footnote 2: Referred to by S.P. Pavlov in his speech at the Komsomol Congress at Tallinn, Estonia, July 19, 1963.]

The local communist leaders themselves are less than happy about Moscow's heavy-handed centralism. The Soviet Estonian prime minister (now president) Müürisepp has for a long time asked for 'more independence in settling local questions' and objected to population reshuffling for non-economic reasons. [Footnote 3: A. Müürisepp's article in *Izvestia*, 22 Sept. 1956.] An even more explicit program of autonomy was proposed by the Latvians. 'This program was supported by almost all leading State and Party functionaries in Latvia. After two years of bickering and hesitation Moscow decided that these ideas were unacceptable.' [Footnote 4: 'The Baltic States and the Soviet Union' (Estonian Information Centre, Stockholm, 1962), based on Document 1173 (1960) of the Council of Europe.] The remarkable thing is not that the Latvian leadership was subsequently purged (1958–1960) but that it took Moscow two years to make up its mind – apparently there were some arguments in favor of accepting the Latvian program.

On the international scene the annexation of the Baltic states has not been recognized by the United States and by most other Western countries up to this day. To uncommitted countries a People's Democracy may appear independent; the annexation of the Baltic states bears a more evident stamp of colonialism and indeed has been denounced as such at the United Nations by the representatives of not only the Western countries, but also of the Malagassy Republic. It thus somewhat tarnishes the 'anticolonialist' image of the Soviet Union in the eyes of neutral nations. Furthermore, Moscow has forfeited three seats in the UN by not making the Baltic states into formally independent People's Democracies. It also has forfeited three docile delegations at the international communist meetings (such as the one in March, 1965) – three delegations it could use in the ideological struggle with Peking.

From the military viewpoint the annexation of a part of the pre-war neutral zone in Northern Europe may have been justified in face of the Nazi threat, but proved to be a mixed blessing later because it forced some other previously neutral Scandinavian countries closer to the NATO. In the missile age the strategic value of the Baltic bases has become questionable.

Nevertheless, it is certainly still in the Soviet interest to keep the Baltic states tightly aligned economically and ideologically. It may, however, be not essential to keep the Baltic states inside the Soviet Union. Formal independence of the Baltic states would improve the Soviet image abroad, while the present economic links would ensure continuing close cooperation with the Soviet Union (the strength of such economic ties is exemplified by the neighboring non-communist Finland). Also, Soviet security might be increased if a wide demilitarized zone could be established in Northern Europe.

The United States and the Present Baltic Situation

It appears that the general policy of the United States in Eastern Europe is to accept the existence of communist governments, while trying to help them become less dependent on the Soviet Union and encouraging non-violent internal developments in the direction of greater personal freedom.

This policy cannot be applied to the Baltic states in the present situation. On the one hand the United States has not recognized their annexation by the Soviet Union, and continues relations with the pre-war non-communist Baltic representatives in the United States. On the other hand, the reality of the international situation has been such that it has not been possible to take any meaningful steps in the interest of Western-type democracy in the Baltic countries. Indeed, whereas the developing polycentrism in the Soviet bloc may enable the United States to increase its influence and trade in some parts of Eastern Europe, the present situation excludes it from any influence regarding development in the Baltic countries.

This situation has persisted now for more than twenty-five years. During this time the United States has made many declarations on the subject. It is not only a question of not approving of the inner structure of a country. It is also a question of not recognizing exterior imperialism and colonialism. All the political ideals which the United States have repeatedly professed are at stake in the Baltic question and no retreat appears possible under present conditions without renouncing these ideals in the eyes of a world increasingly sceptical about the American motives.

Yet obviously the present situation cannot last forever. Up to the present time the Baltic question has been overshadowed by other cold war issues between the United States and the Soviet Union. Should these, however, come closer to a solution, then the Baltic question will also demand attention.

Immediate Interests of the Baltic States

The greatest concern from the standpoint of the Baltic peoples is survival in face of a massive influx of Russians. This danger is also understood by Baltic communist leaders. It also makes no economic sense to displace local people and send Russians in to do similar jobs, as has been done according to Soviet Estonian Premier Müürispepp. [Footnote 5, erroneously labelled 3: Ibid.] This calculated policy of Russianization threatens the very existence of the Baltic nations. Thus, regardless of the present or future forms of government, any movement away from the centralized Soviet control and toward autonomy must be regarded as serving their national interests.

Alternatives for the Future

If the question of the Baltic states should become the subject of serious discussion between the United States and the Soviet Union, three alternatives exist (excluding dramatic change in the power relations in Europe):

- (1) Formal recognition by the United States of the incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union, with no concessions on the part of the Soviet Union.
- (2) Continuation of the present situation which would reduce itself in the long run to an equivalent of formal recognition of the incorporation.

- (3) A compromise which, while leaving the Baltic states inside the Soviet hemisphere, would transform them into distinct People's Democracies.

From the standpoint of the Baltic peoples the first two solutions would be highly undesirable. Their dissatisfaction also contributes to a state of tension in Northern Europe. On the other hand, transformation into People's Democracies would keep the road clear for further developments by non-violent means.

The compromise solution, despite its difficulties and shortcomings, may nonetheless offer also advantages to both the Soviet Union and the United States.

From the standpoint of the Soviet Union, the advantages might be:

- (1) A decrease of the number of formal disagreements with the United States.
- (2) A gesture of good will toward the world opinion and a decrease of various accusations regarding Soviet-style colonialism.
- (3) A possibility to make communism more palatable to the Baltic peoples by dissociating it from russianization, while still controlling them by economic means.
- (4) Three additional friendly votes in the United Nations and in the world communist meetings.
- (5) A first step toward neutralization of the broad region of Northern Europe, which would contribute to Soviet security.

From the standpoint of the United States, the following advantages might emerge:

- (1) Normalization of the situation without the necessity to recognize an annexation which has been repeatedly condemned.
- (2) Another step toward decentralization within the Soviet bloc which is likely to encourage economic and cultural developments leading toward reduced East-West tensions.
- (3) The possibility of reestablishing a wider neutral zone in Northern Europe which would eliminate the danger of an accidental East-West collision in that area.
- (4) Improved prospects of trade in the Baltic area.
- (5) The Baltic states are the only members of the former League of Nations which are not members of the United Nations. Their participation in any form might become of interest in a United Nations increasingly dominated by Afro-Asian states no larger than the Baltic states, and submitted to intensive Red Chinese propaganda.

Conclusion

Since a drastic revision of the spheres of influence in Eastern Europe is unlikely in the foreseeable future, the policy of the United States seems to be to accept communist governments in this region while trying to decrease their dependence on Moscow.

This policy, however, cannot be applied to the Soviet-occupied Baltic states in their present situation which excludes any U.S. influence.

It is therefore recommended that the Soviet Union be encouraged to transform the annexed Baltic states into distinct People's Democracies, in exchange for the following concessions by the United States: official recognition of the communist

regimes in the Baltic People's Democracies; no opposition to their admission to the United Nations; readiness to discuss the neutralization of the entire Baltic-Scandinavian region.

Although the immediate results of such a course fall far short of the ultimate aspirations of the Baltic peoples, and of the declared long-range aims of the United States policy, it offers definite advantages over the perpetuation of the present situation.

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