



FORGOTTEN PAGES IN BALTIC HISTORY

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Edited by
Martyn Housden and David J. Smith

Forgotten Pages in Baltic History

Diversity and Inclusion

On the Boundary of Two Worlds: Identity, Freedom, and Moral Imagination in the Baltics

30

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Table of Contents

Introduction <i>Martyn Housden and David J. Smith</i>	1
A Special Baltic German Understanding about Finland's Autonomy in the Russian Empire? Count Fabian Steinheil as the Governor-General of the Grand Duchy of Finland (1810–1823) <i>Frank Neseemann</i>	9
The “Old” and “New” Lithuanians: Collective Identity Types in Lithuania at the Turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries <i>Rimantas Miknys and Darius Staliūnas</i>	35
Regional Identity in Latvia: The Case of Latgale <i>Andrejs Plakans</i>	49
The Dancing Conference of Bulduri: A Clash of Alternative Regional Futures <i>Marko Lehti</i>	71
Securing the Lives of Ordinary People. Baltic Perspectives on the Work of the League of Nations <i>Martyn Housden</i>	95
The Historiography of Paul Schiemann <i>Michael Garleff</i>	117
Werner Hasselblatt on Cultural Autonomy: A Forgotten Manuscript <i>Jörg Hackmann</i>	147
A Matter of Uniqueness? Paul Schiemann, Ewald Ammende and Mikhail Kurchinskii Compared <i>Martyn Housden and David J. Smith</i>	161
Leaders, Divided Society and Crisis. The Coup d'État of 1934 in Latvia, its Causes and Consequences <i>Valters Ščerbinskis</i>	187

The View from the Top: German Soldiers and Lithuania in the Two World Wars <i>Joachim Tauber</i>	211
Soviet Genocide in Latvia? Conflicting Cultures of Remembrance of Stalin's Policy, 1940–1953 <i>Erwin Oberländer</i>	239
The Convergence of Two Worlds: Historians and Emerging Histories in the Baltic States <i>Eva-Clarita Pettai</i>	263
“You’ve got to know History!” Remembering and Forgetting the Past in the Present-Day Baltic <i>David J. Smith</i>	281
The Unbearable Lightness of Incessant Change: The Predicaments of Modernity in Lithuania <i>Leonidas Donskis</i>	301
Contributors	329

Introduction

Although it does not focus on them exclusively, this collection of essays takes as pivotal the years 1918 to 1945. It was a breath-taking, frantic period full of optimistic ventures and tragedies alike. In the euphoria of the post-war world, the Baltic States emerged as fresh and independent players on the international scene, a few private Baltic citizens tried to influence international relations, and the world community undertook an experiment in transnational government, the effects of which were felt in Kaunas, Riga and Tallinn as elsewhere. Later, in the wake of economic catastrophe and in the face of rising political nationalism among European populations which really should have known better, Baltic politicians and communities (like those in other parts of Europe) increasingly lost their progressive qualities and began defining their interests more narrowly. Finally, during wartime, the same Baltic communities and their leaders became both victims and, sometimes at least, victimisers. Ultimately their victimhood lasted until the end of the Cold War, yielding psychological consequences that still can be identified easily today.

Inevitably, decades like these produce all manner of historiographical challenges. How should we interpret the central historical figures, their initiatives and the populations following them? Was the optimism of the 1920s always based on inadequate foundations? Were the “lights” of the period always destined to “fail”?¹ Was the rising nationalism of the later 1920s and 1930s purely a response to crisis, or an out-flowing of something else—perhaps something more fundamental or long-term? How much understanding should we extend to progressive figures from the 1920s who, during the years that followed, changed tack and played nationalist cards? When we reach the Second World War, we encounter trains of events which resonate still in important ways. How do we balance the twin experiences of being persecuted, but being prepared to persecute too? And, in today’s increasingly globalized community of scholarship and historical memory, how does “coming to terms with the past” from a Baltic point of view stand in relation to the claims of other national communities—most notably German, Russian and Jewish ones?

Time and again when you deal with the period 1918 to 1945 you have to admit that history is not just about the past; it is too important for that. The statement holds good even for a topic such as security—in fact perhaps particularly for it, since many of the same concerns run through historical studies and contemporary security analyses. After all, both are interested in the causes of international tensions. Admittedly this comparison might strike some people as odd. After all, we are in the twenty first century and striving to create a post-Cold War security architecture. Only in 2003 the United Nations produced the Human Security agenda supposed to re-cast security thinking. Not military agendas, but social and economic ones are highlighted

as the touchstones of peace. By necessity, therefore, security discussions now throw up quandaries such as the best way to underpin peaceful lives without recourse to military thinking. We have to consider ways to establish stable, cohesive societies in which violent responses even to grave problems are always defined as “out of the game”.

The funny thing is, even this self-conscious definition of a security agenda for today amounts to a return to the past. In 1918 the world emerged from a protracted conflict and sought new, inclusive ways of doing things—ones supposed to avoid all the mistaken divisions and rivalries of prior years. It follows that the story of the pursuit of peace during the 1920s contains many elements which resonate with the reconstruction of a unified Europe since the end of the Cold War. In the 1920s, divisions between old empires disappeared and new nation states came to the fore. There was a tremendous fresh potential for international connectedness and—so long as you didn’t want to travel to Russia—for popular movement around the continent. International government took off with the construction of the League of Nations—and the Baltic States were enthusiastic to participate in the organisation. For its part, the League was much more interested in Eastern Europe than is realised generally.

In this environment, the governments of the Baltic States showed progressive trends. Particularly notable were the experiments in setting up liberal multicultural state structures, for instance as established in Latvia’s schooling law of 1919 and Estonia’s cultural autonomy law of 1925. Meanwhile Lithuania entered into negotiations with the League of Nations over her borders and pursued her serious dispute with Poland through peaceful channels. All three states made important international declarations to the League about the preservation of the rights of national minorities within their borders. Of course there were setbacks to deal with and some bitter pills to swallow. Typically land reform hit former imperial élites hard. Often these were members of national minorities, some of whom protested to foreign governments and the League of Nations. There was a poorly organised Communist putsch in Tallinn in 1924, as well as economic problems and a failure to forge the three Baltic States into an effective international bloc. Despite Lithuania’s protests to the League, Vilnius was not restored either. Yet the zest of newly gained popular democracy remained evident; there was a sense that opportunities lay in the hands of the peoples of the day mediated by their responsive leaders.

Individuals such as Zigfrīds Meierovics and Kaarel Pusta energised discourse at both international and domestic levels. Even if the motivations of some of the key players could be complicated—as was the case, say, for minorities activist Ewald Ammende—with anti-Communism and social reaction both playing a part in the thinking of the time, still the projects launched in the Baltic region in the 1920s were better than some of those on display elsewhere. Hence one Baltic commentator (admittedly a man

lukewarm on democracy as such) wanted a system that improved on American capitalism and Soviet Communism alike.² Others rejected Italian Fascism on the grounds that it persecuted so badly Italian citizens belonging to national minorities.³ In the 1920s at least, the most important Baltic politicians and activists were prepared to play their games whilst accepting respect for basic human rights and denouncing the application of state power against citizens who lived according to the rule of law. In the post-First World War environment generally it was accepted—even if not always easily—that a society stamped by social oppression and divided against itself was undesirable and unlikely to survive for the long-term.

Sad, then, that the roots of political progress did not have more time to gain depth and strength before the frost of utter economic disaster set in. Hardship and uncertainty were supplemented by a message of ethnic supremacy increasingly broadcast from Germany. The Hitler period arrived: a difficult political and economic context which challenges us to interpret and classify the nationally-minded governments of Päts, Smetona and Ulmanis. How much did they have in common with the popularist, ever-mobilising, militarist and ultimately genocidal rowdiness of Berlin? More complex still, why did some people who had supported (even pioneered) progressive social and political developments in the 1920s—particularly ones associated with the liberal management of multi-ethnic society—become drawn into the orbit of much more nationalistic (sometimes nihilistic) causes? Answers to questions like this, calling as they do for an understanding of potentially profound personal change, can be the most difficult to achieve simply because it is so hard to gain an understanding of the motivational complexes of individuals long dead. Yet the answers can be deeply important. Not least, were especially the German minorities of the day outriders for foreign powers or not?

The Nazi-Soviet pact and the start of the Second World War heralded some of the very worst historical experiences. The fact that the Baltic States experienced both kinds of ideological occupation invites a comparison of evil: who victimised the Baltic peoples more grievously, Stalin or Hitler? But since some Baltic people at least participated in both regimes, there is also a rather less frequently voiced question about how collaboration varied from situation to situation. It is hardly surprising that such tough historical experiences have left a stamp on public concerns in the Baltic region today. In what way do current identities reflect anxieties which originated decades ago in the face of atrocity, desperation and oppression? What can the politics of memory be in societies carrying such burdens? How does the heritage of the past interact with social divisions today? Given that large sections of society fled abroad rather than face a second Soviet occupation, how has the division between domestic and émigré commentator evolved? And how stable and harmonious can demographically complicated Baltic societies be after they have emerged from such intricate, difficult developments? The

complexities at stake here, of course, are all the more challenging given that international issues (ones fought out today between say, the Baltic States and Russia) must have consequences for domestic relations between majority populations and their Russian minorities—the arrival of which presents an historically thorny issue in its own right, in part at least. All of these questions—and we are only scratching the surface—explain why Baltic history has so very many pages that are forgotten, but which also require close attention.

This collection of essays hopes to contribute to the on-going investigation of Baltic history, but it has another purpose too. It is a *Festschrift* celebrating the career of John Hiden, Emeritus Professor of Baltic Studies at the University of Bradford and Senior Research Fellow at the University of Glasgow. Both of the editors started their academic careers as doctoral students under his supervision.

John's work covers much of the territory examined here. Arguably, now most famous is his biography of Paul Schiemann, which won a prize from the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies; but this certainly was not the start of his interest in Baltic history.⁴ While himself a doctoral student, John (apparently aided by his non-German-speaking wife, Juliet, who took copious notes in various Teutonic archives) began examining Weimar's policy towards the Baltic region. The study was published in due course and, as a revisionist treatment of Germany's relationship with the lands to its East, was discussed very widely indeed.⁵ True, John did not write on the Baltic region alone, but said much about inter-war Europe as a whole, and Germany in particular. Hence he wrote popular interpretations of Weimar politics, Germany's place in Europe, the character of the Third Reich (with John Farquharson) and a discursive introduction to inter-war German politics and society.⁶

But it was the Baltic to which he returned time and again. A long-standing member of the *Baltische Historische Kommission*—rather later of the Historians' Commission of Latvia too—and with close connections to a number of academics in Stockholm (particularly Alexander Loit), John was well placed to analyse the changes brought by the re-gaining of Baltic independence. In fact, during the early years he met a considerable number of influential political players, such as Lennart Meri (Estonian President), Mart Laar (Estonian Prime Minister), Jüri Luik (Estonian Foreign Minister and Defence Minister), Einars Repše (Head of Latvia's Central Bank and later Prime Minister), Normans Penke (Latvian representative to the UN), Imants Lieģis (Latvia's Justice Minister) and Vygaudas Ušackas (Lithuanian Foreign Minister). It was natural, therefore, that he (collaborating with Patrick Salmon) produced a timely introduction to the Baltic States in international context.⁷ Along with Tom Lane he also edited a collection of essays about the Baltic States and the origins of the Second World War.⁸ More recently, together with one of the editors he has written a short history

of Germany and Eastern Europe, which has a special eye for Baltic affairs. At the same time he has undertaken an extensive study of cultural autonomy with the other editor.⁹

As an undergraduate, John studied at Hull University where he was influenced by Frank Spencer—a pupil of Lewis Namier who interested him the origins of the Second World War and the Baltic—and A.G. Dickens—who introduced him to his subsequent doctoral supervisor, Francis Carsten. Having completed his PhD at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London, John was appointed to Aberdeen University where he worked for several years before moving to Bradford University. Here he set up the Baltic Research Unit, the members of which included Tom Lane, David Smith and Martyn Housden. He helped establish an MA in Baltic Studies. Unfortunately in 2002—and in spite of its considerable reputation as a centre of research excellence—the Department of European Studies in Bradford collapsed in quite dramatic fashion. The depressing turn of events led John to retire, but also to take up the post of Senior Research Fellow at Glasgow University. Since then, he has continued to work tirelessly promoting interest in Baltic affairs among academic and public audiences, this work being recognised by Bradford's award of the post of Emeritus Professor. As you'd expect of an author who has co-written with so many colleagues, he has always been ready to apply his effortless intellect and ready wit to engage productively with those working in related fields. All of the contributors to this volume have, at some point, had reason to be grateful to John—the two editors in particular.

Turning to the essays included here, in recognition of John's path-breaking work about national minorities activist Paul Schiemann, all address in some way diversity and inclusion in Baltic societies. Dealing with the nineteenth century, Frank Neesemann discusses Baltic German management of Finnish autonomy in the Russian Empire. The complicated historical experience of national and political identities as they were emerging during the same period provides the basis of the essay by Rimantas Miknys and Darius Staliūnas. It focuses especially on Lithuanian-ness and Polish-ness, while Andrejs Plakans takes up the story of cultural richness with a particular eye on the famous case of Latgale—a place which has managed to retain a peculiar sense of self in all manner of different political situations.

Naturally attempts to construct stable states able to provide peaceful homes to multiple nationalities was part of an international effort to create security in the Baltic region—as across the rest of Central and Eastern Europe—after the First World War. In this connection, Marko Lehti discusses the attempts by the region's governments to create a bloc of Baltic States made at the Bulduri conference. In this forum, security emerged as a theme to be dealt with from multiple different, non-military angles. A similar theme emerges in Martyn Housden's discussion of the League of Nations' engagement with the Baltic as it tried to forge a model of security that would

respect the lives of ordinary people. Both of these papers suggest that security strategies pursued in the 1920s have surprising echoes today. Intimately linked to the quest for security in the 1920s were the attempts to define places for national minorities in the Baltic's new liberal, democratic nation states. The participation of ethnic Germans in the projects was particularly important and Michael Garleff discusses how historians have treated the work of Paul Schiemann. In order the better to understand Schiemann's special qualities, Jörg Hackmann deals with the more reactionary, but nonetheless influential, character of Werner Hasselblatt, while Martyn Housden and David J. Smith compare him to the other Baltic minorities figures Ewald Ammende and Mikhael Kurchinskii.

The historical shift away from liberal democracy is reflected in the paper by Valters Ščerbinskis, which deals with Latvia's coup of 1934, and then in Joachim Tauber's analysis of German perceptions of Baltic populations during war time occupation. Of course the Soviet regime which was consolidated as the war ended would continue much longer than Hitler's New Order and brought its own set of horrors. In a careful discussion, Erwin Oberländer compares the treatment of the Baltic peoples by Stalin to the treatment of Baltic Jews between 1941 and 1944. Does the word "genocide" apply to both cases? Addressing a number of debates closely associated with Oberländer's essay, Pettai analyses the extent to which historians drawn from Baltic communities have been able to enter into dialogue with international counter-parts about their region's controversial heritage. Extending a number of the issues raised by Oberländer and Eva-Clarita Pettai, David J. Smith takes on difficult questions about the relationship between historical memory and popular identity as displayed in recent controversies about historical monuments in Estonia. Finally MEP and editor of this Rodopi series Leonidas Donskis reflects on where Baltic identity stands now. How has the sheer complexity of the Baltic region's heritage formed modern Baltic citizens and their polities?

We hope John approves of the efforts of all his friends who have written essays for this collection—likewise the work of the "hack historians" who have served as editors.

Martyn Housden and David J. Smith, January 2011.

Notes

1. Steiner, 2005.
2. Hasselblatt, *Über die Kulturautonomie. Buchmanuskript und Anlagen*. This manuscript is currently being translated into English and edited by John Hiden, Martyn Housden and Jörg Hackmann. It will be published by Rodopi.
3. This is displayed clearly in Ewald Ammende's papers collected in the Ministry of Defence Archive, Moscow, for example f. 1502–1–23, –60, –61. See also his journalism for *Revaler Bote* such as E.Ammende, "Der Untergang der deutschen Schulen in Süd-Tirol", 14 November 1923.
4. Hiden, 2004.
5. Hiden, 1987.
6. Hiden, 1974, 1977, 1983 (with John Farquharson) and 1996.
7. Hiden and Salmon, 1991.
8. Hiden and Lane (eds.), 1992.
9. Hiden and Housden, 2008. The study of cultural autonomy by John Hiden and David Smith is currently approaching completion.

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A Special Baltic German Understanding about Finland's Autonomy in the Russian Empire? Count Fabian Steinheil as the Governor-General of the Grand Duchy of Finland (1810–1823)

Frank Neseemann

Introduction

As soon as the conquest of Finland was under way in 1808,¹ Tsar Alexander I established the post of governor-general, whose role was to head both the military and the civil administration of the territory, also to act as the tsar's direct representative there. It was not, however, until 1810 that personal and administrative continuity was conferred to the post, through the appointment of the Baltic German Fabian Steinheil as the third governor-general of Finland. Whereas his predecessors—the Finn Göran Magnus Sprengtporten and Mikhail Barclay de Tolly, a Baltic German of Scottish origin—were only in office for some months each, Steinheil would stay in post until 1823. In that year, he was replaced by Arsenii Zakrevskii, the first ethnic Russian to serve as governor-general of Finland. Zakrevskii, who also served as Russia's minister of war for some years, would remain in charge of Finland until 1831. It was during the terms of office of these two governors-general that the central institutions and instruments of Finnish self-government in the Russian Empire came into being. Both Steinheil and his successor Zakrevskii put their stamp on this process. In this context, most works of historiography dealing with the period in question have viewed Steinheil as someone who fundamentally understood, if not actively fostered, the interests of Finnish self-government. By contrast, Zakrevskii was traditionally labelled as hostile to these interests—as a Russian nationalist thoroughly interested in administrative centralisation. Only in recent historiography has this negative assessment of Zakrevskii's role in Finland been corrected.²

Turning to the traditionally positive image of Steinheil as Finland's governor-general, it is quite interesting that some historians have regarded his attitude towards Finland to be—at least partly—grounded in his Baltic German origin: “As a Baltic German he could easily understand Finland's special position”, as the Finnish historian Keijo Korhonen once put it.³ However, the recent shift towards a more neutral or positive evaluation of Zakrevskii has also called into question the traditional notion that Baltic German functionaries maintained a “general open-mindedness” towards Finnish interests in the Russian Empire.⁴

Although Steinheil was in office for more than a decade, during a period which is generally regarded as crucial for the development of Finland's autonomy in the Russian Empire, he has all in all remained a relatively secondary figure in historic research.⁵ This chapter seeks to shed

light on Steinheil's role in shaping the evolution of Finnish autonomy and, in this way, to reassess Steinheil's activities within the context of the special political and administrative relationship between Russia and the Grand Duchy of Finland, which came into being in the years following the conquest of 1808–1809. As its particular focus it takes Steinheil's views on Finland's "fundamental laws"—i.e. the country's constitutional heritage which Alexander I had confirmed at the diet of Porvoo (in Swedish: Borgå) in 1809, albeit in indefinite and vague terms. By comparing Steinheil's attitude towards Finland's "fundamental laws" to that of his successor Zakrevskii, the article attempts to arrive at an overall assessment of whether the traditionally prevailing image of Steinheil as governor-general of Finland holds true, or whether it needs to be corrected.⁶

Dealing with Steinheil as the first influential governor-general of the Grand Duchy, this essay addresses primarily aspects of Finnish history. However, it also intends to point beyond this scope—to some extent at least. As it focuses on the political activities and views of a high-ranking Baltic German official in the tsar's service, it sheds some light on the imperial management of administrative and legal diversity as well as of different historic and cultural traditions. As such, it might also serve as a contribution to research on an imperial structure in which Baltic Germans traditionally played an important role as loyal executive personnel of the Russian rulers.

Steinheil and the institutions of Finnish self-government

Born in 1762 in the district of Haapsalu (Estonia), Fabian Steinheil made his career in the Russian administration of the province of Viipuri (in Swedish: Viborg)—the so-called "Old Finland"—from the early 1790s on.⁷ Having acquired the rank of lieutenant colonel, he served in the province in the years following the Russo-Swedish war of 1788–1790, when the Russian army undertook fortification measures in 1791 and 1792. In the course of his military service in the Viipuri province, he was also in charge of mapping this north western border territory of the empire. As a soldier, he finally rose to the rank of lieutenant general.

Apart from his military career in the province, Steinheil also developed an economic interest in "Old Finland". In March 1794 he was endowed with the hereditary land donation of Saarela, situated near the city of Viipuri and encompassing 200 souls. Furthermore Steinheil also married the daughter of Nikolai Henrik Engelhardt who had, as a political favourite of Catherine II, once been a very influential governor of the province of Viipuri.⁸ In 1812—when he was already in office as governor-general—Steinheil was knighted in Finland, being given the rank of count by the tsar-grand duke. Six years later—in 1818—, he became a member of the Finnish *Riddarhuset* (House of Nobility).⁹

When Mikhail Barclay de Tolly, the second governor-general, resigned in 1810, Steinheil could certainly be considered one of the best

available candidates for the post, given his personal attachment to Finland and the considerable experience he had gathered in the Russian administration of “Old Finland”. It seems certain that he had a good knowledge of the Swedish laws and administrative forms which had, by and large, remained valid since the beginning of Russian rule in “Old Finland”—and which had not undergone any significant modification in Sweden-proper prior to the Russian conquest of Finland in 1808–1809.¹⁰ In addition, Steinheil had a fluent command of Swedish, the official language of Finland at that time. These language skills enabled him to follow the debates amongst Finland’s political élite. With his good knowledge of Swedish, Steinheil could also make effective use of the governor-general’s right to preside over the sessions of the plenum and the “Economic Department” of the “Government Council” (*regeringskanselj*), Finland’s domestic organ of government, which was renamed the “Senate” in 1816. Indeed, at the beginning of his time as governor-general, Steinheil chaired the plenary sessions of the Government Council / Senate quite regularly. At the end of the decade, however, he was ever more frequently absent from those sessions.¹¹

Having been appointed governor-general, Steinheil could certainly benefit from the fact that he was on good personal terms with several leading Finnish politicians. This applied above all to Johan Albrekt Ehrenström¹²—a close friend of Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt, Finland’s leading statesman in the early autonomy years—, whom Steinheil himself called a “friend” in his correspondence.¹³ In his relationship with Finland’s statesmen and functionaries, Steinheil was generally concerned not to overrule the competences of the bodies of domestic Finnish administration. This was something he regularly made clear in his correspondence with Finnish officials.¹⁴

Despite his personal attachment to the Grand Duchy and his sound personal contacts with key Finnish officials, Steinheil sometimes had good reason to show irritation at the actions of the Senate and the Committee for Finnish Affairs, which had been established as a representative body for Finland in Petersburg on the initiative of Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt.¹⁵ Indeed, both political bodies—above all the Committee—would at times make important decisions without even having consulted the governor-general.¹⁶ Due not least to such occurrences, there were several occasions on which Steinheil seriously considered tendering his resignation to the tsar. From 1821 onwards, there were also prominent Finns who, in their contacts with Alexander I, showed considerable interest in Steinheil being replaced.¹⁷ During the first years of Steinheil’s term of office as governor-general, however, any such deliberations were vigorously opposed by the “strong man” of Finnish politics, Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt, the chairman of the Committee for Finnish Affairs, who also defended Steinheil against political pressure coming from Russian protagonists. Among the latter was Mikhail

Speranskii, Russia's most prominent and talented statesman of the early 19th century, who functioned as Alexander's nearest and most important political counsellor until he was exiled to Siberia due to a court intrigue in 1812.¹⁸

By backing Steinheil as a general-governor who was known often to act in a hesitant and indecisive manner, the vigorous Armfelt could certainly hope to strengthen his dominant position within Finnish politics and administration, which he held as chairman of the Committee for Finnish Affairs until his death in 1814. However, in private correspondence—above all with his friend Ehrenström—Armfelt did not hide his criticism about Steinheil being indecisive and susceptible to other people's opinions. In one letter to Ehrenström, he even accused Steinheil of lacking personal courage and of being unable to present Finland's true problems to the tsar.¹⁹

Despite such instances of irritation, Steinheil's personal relationship with Finland's statesmen and political institutions developed quite well and was, all in all, free of serious controversies—at least during his first years as governor-general. This can be demonstrated, for example, by examining the close cooperation between Steinheil and the "Government Council" in 1812, when the term of office of the latter's members—who had been nominated for three years in 1809—had expired. On the initiative of Steinheil, who had emphasised the disadvantageous effects of any interruption of the Council's activities,²⁰ the tsar decided provisionally to leave the members of the old Council in office until he had appointed their successors. When Alexander I finally nominated new members of the Council some weeks later, he merely approved the candidates Steinheil had presented to him as a result of his consultations with leading Finnish officials.²¹ As a matter of fact, nearly all Council members who had been appointed in 1809 remained in office. With regard to the candidates to be nominated for the Council, Steinheil had apparently co-ordinated his own wishes with the preferences of the Committee for Finnish Affairs and of Robert Henrik Reh binder, who was then serving as the Committee's influential secretary (with the rank of state secretary).²²

Steinheil also had a major hand in regulating a problem crucial to Finland's economy—the complicated monetary situation. Once again, he did this in close co-operation with Finnish government officials. In the years following the Russian conquest of Finland, Swedish money—which was subject to inflation at that time—was still widely used in Finland, even though Alexander I had already confirmed the Russian rouble as Finland's official currency at the end of 1809.²³ The Bank of Exchange, Loan and Deposition, founded in Turku (Åbo) in 1811 and later renamed the Bank of Finland, had already taken measures to withdraw Swedish money in exchange for rouble assignments; however, it was not until 1819 that the existing monetary system was re-organised on a broader level. Swedish money was to a large extent withdrawn, and sufficient roubles issued to ensure that taxes in Finland could be paid mainly in roubles starting from

1822. From that time onwards, the wages of Finland's civil servants were also entirely paid in roubles.²⁴ Steinheil supervised and supported the implementation of the monetary reform to a considerable degree—as the chairman of both the Finnish Senate and of a special governmental committee, set up for the purpose. In close co-operation with the Committee for Finnish Affairs, he was also very active on behalf of the intended reform in his contacts with Alexander I. In so doing, he decisively supported the efforts of the Committee to emancipate Finland economically from Sweden. Being in line with the respective suggestions of the Committee, Steinheil thus pleaded that the amount of roubles in Finland should be increased as quickly as possible. In this context, he even criticised some Finns who were in charge of the reform for being too hesitant in this matter.²⁵

On the whole, Steinheil contributed significantly to the development and improvement of the system of central administration that had been gradually established in the Grand Duchy since 1809. This aspect of Steinheil's activities in Finland has been dealt with to some extent in scientific research.²⁶ As regards Steinheil's role as governor-general, however, a further point has remained largely neglected—his personal understanding of Finland's "constitution" or "fundamental laws", which Alexander I had solemnly confirmed at the diet of Porvoo (Borgå) in March 1809.²⁷ This aspect is of major relevance with regard to contemporary Russian and Finnish interpretations of the political and administrative position of the Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire. Indeed, the discussions of Finland's leading statesmen in the first quarter of the 19th century focused almost entirely on the question of which laws and constitutional forms were to be subsumed under the tsar's confirmation of 1809.

Steinheil and Finland's "fundamental laws"

As regards Steinheil's notion of Finland's "fundamental laws", there can be no doubt about his readiness and willingness to respect the special constitutional order of Finland, which the tsar had granted. In a report on the general state of affairs in Finland, written for the tsar in November 1815, Steinheil explicitly acknowledged the governor-general's obligation to protect and to defend the laws of Finland in order "thus" to "fulfil the emperor's will".²⁸ In a letter written to Robert Henrik Rehbinder in December 1814, Steinheil had already expressed his conviction that a law, promulgated for Russia, could not automatically become valid for Finland due to the fact that the country had a constitution of its own, which the tsar had confirmed.²⁹

Judging by Steinheil's remarks, it is, however, impossible to conclude which of Finland's laws he concretely deemed to be "fundamental laws" in the sense of the solemn act of Porvoo. As a matter of fact, Steinheil himself did not explicitly use the term "fundamental laws" in his official reports and

in his letters. Yet, a part of Steinheil's correspondence from his early years as governor-general may give a hint as to which laws he—at least implicitly—subsumed under this category, which had remained undefined at the Porvoo diet. In this context, it is above all his correspondence with Alexander I and Speranskii that deserves attention. First and foremost, this applies to the years 1810 to 1812, when Steinheil made some remarkable proposals on how to make the administration of Finland more efficient.

Among other things, Steinheil sent a letter to Speranskii, dated the 14/26 April 1810³⁰, in which he proposed that the “Government Council” should play a more important role even in those matters which Finland's laws deemed to be the exclusive purview of the monarch.³¹ Steinheil apparently envisaged a role for the “Government Council” that would go beyond the merely consultative competences defined by its statute; the Council should thus be given decision-making power in several executive matters as well. The concrete issue in question concerned the right of the monarch to decide in matters of marital status. In order to expedite administration and increase its effectiveness—and, as he wrote, in order to avoid bothering the tsar too much with such relatively minor matters—, Steinheil proposed that the right to decide such issues should be delegated to the Council; the tsar should in turn only confirm or annul the Council's decision.³² According to Steinheil, such a change to the existing rules had much to recommend it, regardless of the fact that, in some points, it went against both the statute of the council and the Swedish laws that were valid in Finland.³³

From the point of view of Finnish self-government in the Russian Empire, this proposal of Steinheil's was certainly substantial. Moreover, he justified it by quoting from the *Allmän Lag* (General Law) in quite detailed a manner.³⁴ Steinheil thus explicitly referred to the large-scale Swedish codification of 1734, as he dealt with some governmental competences that exclusively belonged to the monarch according to Swedish-Finnish constitutional law. However, his proposals not only elaborated on the extent to which the “Government Council” might be entitled to make particular decisions. He also explicitly enumerated the kinds of executive matters that, according to his plans, should remain entirely reserved for the monarch, as this had also been fixed in Swedish constitutional law. As such exclusive executive rights of the monarch, he named the following: the right to pardon persons sentenced to death; the right to approve any extra-budgetary funds, the right to confirm the nomination of all functionaries at the top of the country's administration; and finally the right *to alter any of the laws and statutes “that are currently valid in Finland.”*³⁵ (Author's italics.)

Steinheil's assessment of the first three points—as competences that belonged to the monarch exclusively—was completely in line with contemporary Swedish-Finnish constitutional law and contemporary state theory. But the inexactness of the last point is actually quite surprising. Indeed, it is in clear contrast to the detailed knowledge of the *Allmän Lag* that

Steinheil demonstrated in the same letter to Speranskii. And as for his belief that this point was grounded in Swedish law, this was definitely not the case: even during the neo-absolutist reign of Gustav III of Sweden (1772–1792), the legislative competences of the Finnish estates had (at least formally) never been abolished.

Certainly, one cannot exclude the possibility that, during his first years as governor-general, Steinheil still had an insufficient knowledge of the two major laws which formed the fundament of Finland's "political constitution" in a proper sense. The laws in question were the "Form of Government" (*regeringsformen*) and the "Act of Unity and of Security" (*Förenings- och säkerhetsakten*), pushed through due to Gustav's *coups d'état* of 1772 and 1789. Before 1808/1809, both laws had only been valid in Swedish-Finland—and naturally not in "Old Finland", where Steinheil had been active in Russian state service. In any case, Steinheil did not mention the two laws in his letter to Speranskii—unlike the *Allmän Lag* and other statutes of administration, to which he referred explicitly.

Yet, it would be inappropriate if one automatically concluded from the vagueness of Steinheil's remarks that he did not attach any importance to those Swedish laws while coming to an overall assessment of Finland's political constitution. Neither can it be seriously doubted, however, that one general premise fundamentally determined Steinheil's interpretation regarding the position of Finland in the empire: that the assurance given by the tsar at the Porvoo diet was basic for the continuity of Finland's constitutional heritage. Furthermore, it was absolutely clear to him, as it was to all other leading Russian representatives in Finland, that such an assurance regarding the legal status of any part of the empire could never bind the absolutist Russian monarch himself.³⁶ The confirmation of Porvoo (which, in its wording and in its shape, even resembled similar assurances granted in favour of the empire's western periphery since the 18th century³⁷) essentially amounted to a manifestation of the emperor's political will, but scarcely anything more substantial. According to this Russian tradition of government, political convenience dictated whether the separate laws and administrative forms of the newly acquired periphery territories could be maintained in political practice, or whether they were to be replaced by Russian equivalents.³⁸

In keeping with this tradition, Steinheil addressed Alexander I via Speranskii in April 1810. It was the tsar whom he expected to make the final decision on his proposals about administrative reform. In view of this, there was obviously no need for Steinheil to mention the legislative rights of the Finnish estates in his memorandum.

However difficult it may be to interpret the proposals Steinheil presented in April 1810, in any case it seems certain that his Finnish partners were also sometimes confused by the vagueness and uncertainty of his remarks on Finland's constitutional heritage. For example, in a letter to his

friend Carl Johan Walleen in June 1817, Johan Albrekt Ehrenström explicitly expressed his amazement about Steinheil's position in matters regarding Finland's constitution. In a letter sent to Ehrenström during spring of that same year, Steinheil had presented his thoughts about current problems regarding the billeting of Russian troops in Finland. In this context, Steinheil had expressed his hope that the Finnish Senate would, "with all the love of justice and with all the enthusiasm" it was capable of, "seek to fulfil the *constitutional fundamental laws*" (*Constitutions Verfassung* in the German original of the letter), "which our most merciful monarch has confirmed".³⁹ Rather bewildered, Ehrenström quoted these words in his letter to Walleen, asking him if he could interpret the enigmatic term "*Constitutions Verfassung*"—and if he understood what Steinheil's remark had to do with the matter of troops being billeted. As Ehrenström wrote, he was himself absolutely unable to give a suitable explanation.⁴⁰

When speaking of Steinheil's notion of Finland's "constitution" or "fundamental laws", it is indeed worth noting that he did not explicitly mention the "Form of Government" or the "Act of Unity and of Security"—i.e. the governmental laws promulgated during the reign of Gustav III—anywhere in his papers or his correspondence. Hence, it is not clear either to what extent he considered them to be "fundamental laws" in the sense of the assurance of Porvoo. However, it was primarily on these two laws that the contemporary Finnish discussion about the country's political position within the empire focused. Moreover, the leading contemporary statesmen of the Grand Duchy did not fail to mention them as "fundamental laws" in a number of memoranda they sent to Russian government officials and even to the tsar himself.⁴¹

Of course, one has to consider that Steinheil—at the time he presented his thoughts about the competences of the "Government Council" in April 1810—did not have the Committee for Finnish Affairs or any other consultative body at his disposal which could have provided him with more detailed information on the constitutional structure of Finland.⁴² Nor can it be denied that Steinheil faced much more difficult and transitional circumstances during his first years in office than did his successor Zakrevskii. However, this scarcely explains Steinheil's vagueness concerning those "fundamental laws" that regulated the political framework of the Grand Duchy. This might even seem more surprising once one considers that Steinheil was forced to acquaint himself quite closely with important details of the two Gustavian laws at an early stage of his term of office. This was the case in 1811, in the context of a Russo-Finnish constitutional conflict about the instruction (i.e. statute) for the governor-general. After this project had been initiated by Speranskii and Steinheil, a first draft for such a statute was withdrawn due to Finnish protests. The Finns alleged that the planned instruction was inconsistent with the country's "constitution" on several points—above all, because the draft provided for a right of veto for the

governor-general against decisions of the “Government Council”. In the end, it was primarily a detailed expert report by Mathias Calonius, the procurator of the “Government Council”, which played the decisive role in the success of Finnish efforts. In his report, Calonius explicitly referred to Gustav’s “Form of Government” and to the “Act of Unity and of Security”. Calonius’s report was sent to Steinheil, too, in the spring of 1811. Thus, by that time at least, Steinheil had necessarily already acquired some essential knowledge about the Swedish laws of 1772 and 1789 and about the Finnish tradition of interpreting constitutional law.⁴³

In spite of this, it remained unclear during the years that followed whether or to what extent Steinheil subsumed the two laws of 1772 and 1789 under the tsar’s confirmation of Finland’s “fundamental laws”. As a matter of fact, he did not use this term when dealing with questions of constitutional law. Instead, terms such as “laws of the country”, “laws of Finland” or enigmatic expressions like the one quoted above (“*Constitutions Verfassung*”) were characteristic of Steinheil’s vocabulary whenever he was in fact referring to the “fundamental laws”.

Constitutional conflicts between Finns and Russians

In light of this, it is, moreover, important to notice that Steinheil played a rather secondary political role in the two constitutional conflicts that originated or developed during his term of office. Analysing these two conflicts might also help in ascertaining whether the traditional image of Steinheil as an advocate of Finland’s interests in the Russian Empire actually holds true.

In the conflict about the instruction for the governor-general, which has already been described in this article, it was clearly Speranskii whose deliberations proved decisive in determining the Russian position. During the conflict, Speranskii gained the conviction that it might be appropriate to match Finnish demands, in order to pacify the minds and moods of the tsar’s Finnish subjects.⁴⁴ Thus, it was due to Speranskii’s influence that the constitutional arguments of Calonius and other Finns were reconsidered.⁴⁵ Judging from the available archival sources that are linked to the constitutional conflict of 1811—primarily the relevant correspondence within the Russian administration—, Steinheil’s role was clearly minor compared to that of Speranskii. Yet, it must be stated that he, too, accepted the Finnish standpoint, once the Russian position in the conflict had been modified and finally determined by Speranskii.⁴⁶ Indeed, a deputation of the Finnish “Government Council”, present in Petersburg in May 1811, succeeded in persuading Steinheil to buttress the Finnish claims for a correction of the planned instruction in his contacts with the tsar.⁴⁷ All in all, however, it was obviously due to the activities of Speranskii—and, from the Finnish side, of Armfelt⁴⁸—that the final version of the instruction for the governor-general

no longer contained the passages which the Finns had regarded as being contrary to their “fundamental laws”.

Compared to the first constitutional conflict between Russians and Finns, the second one was much more severe. It was waged over the question of equal rights for the tsar’s Finnish subjects of Orthodox faith in the public life of the Grand Duchy, not least about the question of whether they were to be given access to the country’s civil service. Proposed to the tsar by Zakrevskii, this plan encountered firm resistance on the part of the Finnish Senate. It vigorously objected to Zakrevskii having overridden the rights of the Finns, since, according to valid constitutional law, only Lutherans were allowed to enter civil service. Hence, the Senate pointed out to Alexander I in May 1825 that the settlement intended by Zakrevskii necessarily required a corresponding change to Finland’s “fundamental laws”, i.e. the consent of the Finnish estates convened at a diet.⁴⁹ These arguments, however, ultimately failed to have any effect. With Alexander I already having declared himself in favour of Zakrevskii’s initiative,⁵⁰ his successor Nicholas I signed a corresponding directive in June 1826. A general *ukaz*, promulgated in 1827, finally confirmed the decision solemnly, making it simultaneously known to the Finnish public.⁵¹

Although this second conflict reached its peak in 1825 and 1826, with Zakrevskii already serving as governor-general, it had its origins in the era of Steinheil. In November 1821, a group of Orthodox believers from Northern Karelia had already addressed Steinheil, complaining about being discriminated against in Finland’s public life due to the fact that they did not belong to the Lutheran state church. Steinheil had obviously advocated the demands of the Orthodox believers to state secretary Rehbinder, asking him to present them to the tsar “insofar as he regarded this to be convenient”. In this context, Steinheil had also stressed the fact that, at Finland’s university in Turku (Åbo), Orthodox believers were only allowed to study philosophical subjects and that they were totally excluded from civil service in the Grand Duchy.⁵² As Zakrevskii wrote to Nicholas I in 1826, Rehbinder did not react to Steinheil’s request. As a consequence of this, Zakrevskii explained, Steinheil had obviously stopped pursuing the whole matter.⁵³ It was therefore up to Zakrevskii to do this again.

Given the importance of the constitutional conflict of 1825 and 1826, it is certainly worth examining how Zakrevskii reacted to the juridical arguments of the Senate and how he justified his own position. Zakrevskii was addressed by the Orthodox believers from Karelia while he was on a major tour of inspection around the Grand Duchy in 1824. Above all, the plaintiffs wished to be entitled to elect representatives to the district courts, as this was possible in Old Finland. In addition, they asked that court procedures with Orthodox participants should not be held on days which were regarded as holidays according to the Orthodox calendar.⁵⁴ Taking up these requests, Zakrevskii vigorously spoke up for the emancipation of the Orthodox

believers in the public life of Finland. Primarily, he advocated the entitlement of Finnish subjects of Orthodox faith to enter into civil service in the Grand Duchy.

Alexander I basically reacted in favour of Zakrevskii's initiative, but ordered him to have the Finnish Senate give its view on the matter—about which decision Zakrevskii informed the Senate on 16/28 March 1825.⁵⁵ The Senate, in turn, condemned Zakrevskii's actions, accusing him of having gravely infringed the rights and competences of the Committee for Finnish Affairs and simultaneously Finland's fundamental laws. The members of the Senate argued that Zakrevskii had, on the one hand, presented his initiative directly to the tsar, without having asked for the Committee's view on the matter first, although he had been obliged to do so according to the statute, issued for the Committee in November 1811. As was stated in the Senate's report to the tsar, the Committee had been established in order to ensure that Finland would be governed "according to its own laws".⁵⁶ On the other hand, the members of the Senate pointed out that the statute for the governor-general also obliged the office holder to abide strictly by the laws and ordinances that were valid in the country. On these grounds, the Senate members accused the governor-general of failing to take into account that the reform he was pursuing categorically implied a change of Finland's "fundamental laws", since those required all civil servants to be Lutheran.⁵⁷

Zakrevskii, in turn, sought to counter the criticism of the Senate by referring to those laws that the Finns themselves considered "fundamental". In a letter sent to Reh binder in July 1826, Zakrevskii justified his initiative by reference to the *Allmän Lag* and to a resolution of the Swedish diet, which in 1779 had granted Orthodox believers in the kingdom limited freedom to practise their faith.⁵⁸ In his report to the tsar, already cited above, he referred to several paragraphs of the Form of Government of 1772, of the "Act of Unity and Security" and of the privilege issued for the Lutheran clergy in 1723.⁵⁹ Regarding the *Allmän Lag*, in turn, Zakrevskii made it clear in his letter to Reh binder that he had studied the codification closely.⁶⁰ This knowledge had been made possible by the fact that a Russian translation of the *Allmän Lag* had been completed in 1824. Zakrevskii himself had vigorously supported this translation project after he had been appointed governor-general of Finland in 1823.⁶¹

Already during his first months in office, Zakrevskii had indeed initiated a systematic exploration of those laws that made up Finland's constitution.⁶² Such a systematisation of Finland's constitutional law had not got under way as long as Steinheil had been governor-general. As a result of this "collecting" of Finnish laws—which was still far from complete in 1825 and 1826—, Zakrevskii finally had a "catalogue" drawn up in 1828 which comprised all laws and statutes he regarded to be essential for the government and administration of Finland. Amongst these were the Form of Government of 1772 and the "Act of Unity and of Security" of 1789. Thus,

these two laws, which the Finns had constantly considered and claimed to be “fundamental laws” of the Grand Duchy, were more or less officially acknowledged by a leading Russian official.⁶³

In spite of this remarkable development—which scarcely fits with the traditionally dark image of Zakrevskii as governor-general in Finland—, Zakrevskii did not leave any doubt about his attitude should Finnish law come into conflict with what he regarded as the superior political, administrative and legal interests of the Russian Empire. Such priority was, in fact, at stake for him, as he had to deal with the question of whether the religious faith the tsar himself professed could be discriminated against in any part whatsoever of the empire.

By thus seeking substantially to correct the laws concerning the state religion of Finland, Zakrevskii simultaneously revealed the weak points in the contemporary political argumentation of the leading Finnish statesmen. In their contacts with the tsar and Russian government officials, the Finns had always used the argument—at least implicitly—that there was a basic unbroken continuity of their Swedish laws despite the Russian conquest of 1808/1809. Only in their internal correspondence had some of the Finnish statesmen admitted that several important details of Finnish constitutional law were not reconcilable with the actual political situation of Finland and needed to be corrected. As some Finns did not fail to notice either, this especially applied to the corresponding provisions of the Form of Government of 1772, which categorically required that the monarch had to be Lutheran.⁶⁴ Zakrevskii explicitly pointed out these weak points in Finnish argumentation during his conflict with the Senate. In so doing, however, he did not only refer to Finland’s “fundamental laws” to justify his viewpoint.

In the letter he sent to Rehbinder in July 1826, Zakrevskii emphasised that the political position of Finland had radically changed with the country having become a part of the Russian Empire. From this, he concluded that one should not only have considered Finland’s traditional laws in the current conflict, but also those statutes and ordinances that had created the new political situation of the country. As Zakrevskii explained to Rehbinder, the sixth paragraph of the peace treaty of Fredrikshamn (in Finnish: Hamina) clearly stipulated it was only by the tsar’s generosity and mercy that the inhabitants of the newly conquered territories had been granted the free exercise of their religious faith, their right to property and their traditional rights and privileges. According to Zakrevskii, however, such a confirmation scarcely meant that the tsar would tolerate discrimination within Finland against the faith that he himself professed. This was something that no honest inhabitant of the Grand Duchy was entitled to presume.⁶⁵

Giving such a pragmatic and, as it were, “historical” interpretation of the paragraph mentioned above, Zakrevskii also quoted a corresponding section from the Russo-Swedish peace treaty of 1721 (i.e. the treaty of Nystad/Uusikaupunki), on the basis of which large parts of Karelia, including

the city of Viipuri, had officially been ceded to Russia. As Zakrevskii pointed out to Rehbinder, the tenth paragraph of the treaty of Nystad stipulated that Lutheran and Orthodox inhabitants of the newly conquered territories should be on absolutely the same footing with regard to the freedom to profess their faith and to the right to property of their respective churches.⁶⁶ On the basis of Zakrevskii's remark, Rehbinder could easily infer that the governor-general viewed the aforementioned sections of the Nystad treaty as having become applicable to the political framework of which Finland had been a part since the Russian conquest.

Conclusion

On the one hand, Zakrevskii, Steinheil's successor in Finland, was the first governor-general of the Grand Duchy to acknowledge explicitly the Gustavian laws of 1772 and 1789 as integral parts of Finland's constitution. On the other hand, he made it clear to the Finns that the political and legal interests of the imperial centre had to be regarded as superior to those of the Grand Duchy: in the case of Russian and Finnish claims coming into conflict with one another, the latter were secondary and could be overruled if necessary.⁶⁷ Being very clear on both points mentioned, Zakrevskii differed visibly from his predecessor Steinheil, who had neither sorted out the substance of Finland's "fundamental laws" nor sought to clearly define the political and legal position of Finland within the Russian Empire. With his definite and unequivocal views on the limits of Finland's special position in the empire, Zakrevskii was, however, in line with other Russian statesmen and functionaries who were in charge of Finnish affairs. For example, the Baltic German general Buxhoevden, the commander in chief of the Russian invasion army in 1808, had already stated in February 1808—in a letter he sent to the first governor-general, Göran Magnus Sprengtporten—that Finland's traditional rights and privileges could only remain valid as long as they did not contradict the "constitution" of Russia.⁶⁸ Sprengtporten, in turn, uttered similar thoughts in a memorandum, dated 23 March/4 April 1808 and written for the use of the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nikolai Rumiantsev. In this memorandum, Sprengtporten elaborated on the programme to be dealt with at a possible Finnish diet. According to him, it was the explicit will of the tsar that "the fundamental laws of the country" should be maintained "in their entire pureness"—as far as they did not get into conflict with the "fundamental laws" of the empire.⁶⁹

Apparently, as one might conclude from the two statements, the Russians still stuck to the political line that had been defined for the administration of "Old Finland" some years before. In 1802, no less a figure than Alexander I himself worded these principles in an *ukaz*, by which he ordered the "Commission of Finnish Affairs" to be established—with the aim of a general revision of administration and jurisdiction in the province. This *ukaz* stipulated that Russian laws had to replace their Finnish equivalents in

case they were more appropriate to meet “the needs and rights” of the inhabitants. As was stated in the *ukaz*, this applied especially wherever the Commission should come across “contradictions with the uniformity of the general administration of Our Empire”, resulting from the special administrative and legal position of “Old Finland”.⁷⁰ Thus, Alexander I, who would later confirm the “fundamental laws” and privileges of the newly conquered Grand Duchy, stressed the relativity of the Swedish legal heritage and emphasised that the reason of state of the imperial centre was superior to the interests of the periphery.

As the quotations from Buxhoevden’s letter and from Sprengtporten’s memorandum suggest, this doctrine, defined by Alexander I for “Old Finland” in 1802, had not lost its validity after the whole of Finland had become a part of the tsarist empire. The sources cited here further show that Zakrevskii’s viewpoint during the conflict of 1825 and 1826 was, all in all, in line with those premises that had already been fixed before and during the conquest of Swedish-Finland. Hence, Zakrevskii only championed a basic principle of Russian policy towards Finland as a *de facto* autonomous part of the empire.

In the constitutional conflict with the Finnish Senate, Zakrevskii consequently showed the Finns the limits of their country’s autonomy within the Russian Empire. In so doing, he did not refrain from a sharp confrontation with the Finnish Senate. As explained earlier, Steinheil’s position at the beginning of this constitutional conflict—a conflict that was, in fact crucial for Russo-Finnish administrative relations—did not essentially differ from that of Zakrevskii. The only major difference between the two governors-general was that Steinheil shunned an open controversy with the Finns as long as he still served as governor-general. All this, however, does not imply that Zakrevskii was basically less inclined to respect Finland’s separate legal structure than his predecessor: to him, such a “constitution-abiding” attitude was rather a fulfilment of the tsar’s explicit will, which he considered the only binding guideline for all his activities as governor-general.⁷¹

On the other hand, there can be no doubt that Steinheil also followed the general principles for Russo-Finnish administrative relations which, for example, the Baltic German Buxhoevden and the Finn Sprengtporten had explicitly worded in 1808. In the letter he wrote to Speranskii in April 1810—the same letter in which he also suggested that the “Government Council” should be granted a wider range of executive competences—, Steinheil himself noticed that his propositions were barely reconcilable with Finland’s laws—above all with the *Allmän Lag*, which he explicitly named in this context.⁷² In principle, he also favoured a political settlement which would have contradicted some provisions of the laws that had hitherto been valid in Finland. Unlike Zakrevskii, however, who focused on Russia’s reason of state in the conflict with the Senate one and a half decades later,

Steinheil, in 1810, presented his ideas in the interest of governmental and administrative processes in Finland being effectuated. In this respect, Steinheil can certainly be considered to have been more well-disposed to the interests of Finnish self-government than Zakrevskii. On this point—but not with regard to their general attitude towards Finland's rights and privileges—, Steinheil and Zakrevskii clearly differed from one another.

During his term of office, Steinheil primarily focused on securing as efficient an administration of the Grand Duchy as possible. In contrast, he paid less attention to those “fundamental laws” of Finland which could be considered to be political in a proper sense. It was up to his successor, Zakrevskii, finally to achieve a first concrete specification of such “fundamental laws” of the Grand Duchy. This specification and acknowledgement of Finland's peculiar position within the Russian Empire did not prevent Zakrevskii, on the other hand, from vigorously advocating the priority of Russian legal and political interests over respective Finnish claims. It would, however, be totally misleading and anachronistic if one equated Zakrevskii's efforts with purposeful Russification—such as the policies worked out by the Russian government towards Finland in the reign of Nicholas II. Indeed, it was not before the end of the 19th century that these fateful political approaches became relevant.⁷³

Notes

1. During the Russo-Swedish war of 1808–09, Russian troops conquered all of the vital parts of Finland already in the course of 1808. However, the war continued until September of 1809, when Finland—which had belonged to the Swedish empire for more than six centuries—was officially ceded to Russia in the peace treaty of Fredrikshamn (in Finnish: Hamina) in September 1809.
2. A slightly negative image of Zakrevskii can still be discerned in Thaden, 1984, p. 92. For the “revised”, more positive interpretation of his activities in Finland see Kalleinen, 1994, pp.105–09; Jussila, 1969, pp. 94–95; Jussila, 2004, pp. 193–99; Neseemann, 2003, pp.127–47.
3. “Baltian saksalaisena Steinheil saattoi helposti ymmärtää Suomen erillisaseman.” Korhonen, 1963, p.103. Similarly—albeit in a less pronounced manner—Jussila, 2004, p. 130.
4. See Kalleinen, 1994, pp. 118–24; furthermore Schweitzer, 1990, passim; Hösch, 1990, passim.
5. Thus, for example, Steinheil and his understanding of Finland’s “fundamental laws” are dealt with only briefly in the following important works: Jussila, 1969, pp. 92, 135 and 137–40; Jussila, 2004, pp. 129–31, 197 and 242–43; Kirby, 2008, pp. 76 and 84.
6. The following explanations are mainly based on archival materials that are to be found in the Finnish National Archives (*Kansallisarkisto*), Helsinki, as well as in several Russian state archives in Petersburg and Moscow.
7. The term “Old Finland” (*Staraiia Finliandiia* in Russian, *Gamla Finland* in Swedish, *Vanha Suomi* in Finnish) became common within the Russian administration after the whole of Finland had been conquered in 1809. As such, it marked the difference between the south eastern parts of Finland that had already become Russian with the peace treaties of 1721 and 1743 and the Grand Duchy, ceded by Sweden in 1809 (the latter also being called “New Finland”—*Novaia Finliandiia* in Russian, *Nya Finland* in Swedish, *Uusi Suomi* in Finnish).
8. Schweitzer, 1990, p. 93; Danielson-Kalmari, 1920–1928, vol.1, pp. 39–40; Bonsdorff, 1921, pp. 62–63; Paaskoski, 1997 pp. 97–99; Neseemann, 2006, passim.
9. Danielson-Kalmari, 1920–1928, vol.1, p. 40.
10. Jussila, 1969, pp. 92 and 98; Korhonen, 1963, p. 103.
11. Tommila, 1984, p. 120; Jussila, 1996, p. 85.
12. Among other things, Ehrenström worked as the chairman of the committee that was in charge of rebuilding Helsinki (Helsingfors)—which Alexander I declared the new capital of Finland in 1812.
13. *Kansallisarkisto*, Helsinki (subsequently: KA), Ehrenströmin kokoelma III: Steinheil to Ehrenström, 30 August 1812 and 17/29 March 1817. Furthermore, see Bonsdorff, 1921, pp. 63–64.

14. KA, R.H. Reh binderin kokoelma, I (VA Y 989), pp. 247–49: Steinheil to Rehinder, 21 May 1821 (whole letter: *ibid.*, pp. 247–52). Furthermore, Danielson-Kalmari, 1920–1928, vol.4, pp. 599–600: Steinheil to Ehrenström, 4/16 April 1814.

15. The Committee for Finnish Affairs had come into being in 1811. According to its statute, which followed a proposal drawn up by Armfelt, the Committee was to advise the tsar in all current political and administrative matters “to be immediately decided by the monarch himself in accordance with the country’s laws”. In practice, with Armfelt working as its first chairman, the Committee played a dominant role in Russo-Finnish political relations as well as in internal Finnish administration during the first decade after Finland had become a part of the Russian Empire. Regarding the history of the Committee, see Korhonen, 1963, *passim*.

16. Danielson-Kalmari, 1920–1928, vol.4, pp. 599–600 (citing a letter, written by Steinheil and addressed to Ehrenström); Korhonen, 1963, pp. 104–05; Kalleinen, 1994, p. 104.

17. The most influential Finns speaking in favour of Steinheil being replaced as governor-general were Carl Johan Walleen, who was to work as the Senate’s procurator (=legal adviser) for over three decades, and his friend Robert Henrik Reh binder, who later became the tsar’s first Secretary of State for Finland (from 1834 onwards: “Minister Secretary of State”, i.e. in the rank of a Russian minister). The Secretary of State—the institutional successor of the Committee for Finnish Affairs, which was disbanded in 1826—was to play a key role in Russo-Finnish administrative and legal relations. This key position was rooted in his competence to examine to what extent Russian laws were consistent with the legal structure of Finland: administrative practice was to show that the Secretary of State almost held a monopoly on this politically decisive matter in Russo-Finnish relations. See Kalleinen, 1994, p. 104; Korhonen, 1963, p. 372; Jussila, 1996, p. 86; regarding the position of the Secretary of State, see Jussila, 1985, pp. 350–59, and Neumann, 2003, pp. 284–91 and 294–97.

18. Armfelt, who personally disliked Speranskii and distrusted him deeply, obviously took an active part in the intrigue that led to Speranskii’s fall, thus seeking to deprive him of any future influence on Finnish affairs. See Ramel (1997), p. 296; Scheibert, 1958, pp. 464–67; Bonsdorff, 1911, pp. 2–3 and 22.

19. KA (cf. note 13), Ehrenströmin kokoelma I, Armfelt to Ehrenström, 19 July 1814 and 23 July 1814. Armfelt’s words referred to in the text are to be found in the latter document.

20. KA, Kenraalikuvernöörin kanslia [subsequently: KKK], Fa 8, Akti 21/1809: undated draft of a letter by Steinheil (written in German), added to a letter to the plenum of the “Government Council” and to the (undated) draft of a letter to Armfelt.

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21. Sources concerning these proceedings can mainly be found in the following collections: KA, KKK, Fa 8, Akti 21/1809, and KKK, Fa 11, Akti 29/1809.
 22. KA, R.H. Rehbinderin kokoelma, VI (VA Y 1005), pp. 32–35: Steinheil to Rehbinder, 26 (?) July 1812.
 23. Tommila, 1984, pp. 46–47.
 24. Pulma, 1997, pp. 426–27.
 25. KA, Valtiosihteerin virasto [subsequently: VSV], Fb 14, 273/1819: Paper by Steinheil, concerning the basic points of the planned monetary reform (1819), fol. 79–85. Cf. Neseemann, 2003, pp. 266–67. As a matter of fact, the amount of Swedish money increased again during the years that followed, and it was not until another reform, implemented in 1840/1841, that Finland’s monetary system was finally consolidated on the basis of the Russian rouble. In 1860, the Grand Duchy got a currency of its own – the Finnish mark. Initially tied to the rouble, the mark became independent from the Russian currency in 1865. Cf. Pulma, 1997, p. 427; Jussila, 2004, pp. 151–53; Kirby, 2008, p. 110.
 26. Korhonen, 1963, pp. 103–05, 134–35 and 256–58; Tommila, 1984, pp. 111–12.
 27. Korhonen and Jussila, who wrote fundamental works on the birth of Finland’s autonomy within the Russian Empire, confined their observations on this point to some summarising remarks, see Jussila, 1969, pp. 92–93; Jussila, 2004, p. 130; Korhonen, 1963, p. 103.
 28. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv, St. Petersburg (subsequently: RGIA), f. 1361, op. 2, d. 53, fol. 5: Steinheil to Alexander I, 4/16 November 1815. (The source can also be found in the microfilm collection of the Finnish National Archives—KA, NL MF [= Microfilms from the Soviet Union] 93).
 29. KA, R.H. Rehbinderin kokoelma, VI [VA Y 1005], p.84: Steinheil to Rehbinder, December 1814.
 30. In this as in any other cases in which a “double date” is cited, the former refers to the old Russian calendar, while the latter denotes the western, Gregorian calendar. The difference between both calendars amounted to twelve days in the 19th century.
 31. KA, KKK (cf. note 20), Fa 8, Akti 21/1809: Steinheil to Speranskii, 14/26 April 1810.
 32. Ibid.
 33. Ibid.
 34. Ibid.
 35. Ibid. The exact wording of the passage quoted here reads as follows in the Russian original: “(...) об отмене какого либо из ныне действующих в Финляндии законов или утверждений. (...)”

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36. Jussila, 1969, pp. 81–89. Furthermore, see Jussila, 1995, pp. 65–68; Hartley, 1995, pp. 47–49.
37. Neesemann, 2003, pp. 77–81.
38. Jussila, 1987, pp. 25–41; Jussila, 1969, pp. 77–78; Neesemann, 2003, pp. 77–85 and 92–93.
- Furthermore, confer Kappeler, 2008, pp. 94–98.
39. KA, Ehrenströmin kokoelma, III: Steinheil to Ehrenström, obviously incorrectly dated the 7 March/25 April (!) 1817 [*italics: F.N.*].
40. KA, Stjernvall-Walleenin suvun kokoelma, IV (VA Y 1162): Ehrenström to Walleen, 20.5./1.6.1817 (Quote on page 15 of the respective volume).
41. Neesemann, 2003, pp. 170–81.
42. Jussila, 1969, p. 92.
43. KA, KKK, Ohjeaktit, Fd 22, No. 109, fol. 140-144: “Memorial”, written by Calonius about the project of an instruction for the governor-general of Finland, 6 March 1811.
44. Kalleinen, 1994, p. 79.
45. In the correspondence between Steinheil and Speranskii concerning the conflict, it was also Speranskii who gave an explanation for the term “fundamental laws”: according to him, they were to be clearly separated from “those temporarily fixed” laws which were, in principle, “subject to the changes and changeabilities of government” —KA, KKK, Ohjeaktit, Fd 22, No. 109, fol. 145–46: Speranskii to Steinheil, 19/31 May 1811.
46. Cf. Jussila, 1969, p. 137.
47. In this context, Steinheil also promised to support Finnish demands concerning a revision of the instruction for the procurator of the “Government Council”, for which a first draft had been presented together with the draft for the instruction for the governor-general. Cf. Kalleinen, 1994, p. 79.
48. Cf. Jussila, 1969, pp. 137–38.
49. RGIA (cf. note 28), f.660, op.1, d.35 (ed. khr. 35), fol. 2–4 (KA, NL MF 7).
50. As early as 1817, Alexander I had, as a matter of fact, expressed his doubts about Finland’s church laws being able to remain unchanged in the country’s new political position. Cf. a letter by Rehbinder to the chairman of the Committee for Finnish Affairs, von Troil, 27 November 1817, published in: Danielson-Kalmari, 1928–1931, vol.2, pp. 109–10.
51. The directive, signed by Nicholas I, is to be found in: KA, KKK, Ca 1 (Esittelynotit), fol.146-149, No. 48/1826. For the text of the ukaz, promulgated in August 1827, see Samling (1831), pp. 207–09. For more information on the constitutional conflict of 1825/1826 and its political implications see M.G. Schybergson, 1897, *passim*; Neesemann, 2009a, *passim*, and 2009b, *passim*.

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52. Zakrevskii mentioned this in a report for Nicholas I in which he explained and justified his position in the current conflict with the Finnish Senate; on 9 May 1825, the Senate had sent the tsar a harsh complaint about the governor-general's actions—Zakrevskii to Nicholas I, in: RGIA (cf. note 28), f.660, op.1, d.35 (ed. khr. 35), fol. 14 (KA, NL MF 7).
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*, fol. 13.
55. *Ibid.*, fol. 13–15.
56. *Ibid.*, fol. 2 (Report of the Senate to the tsar, 9 May 1825).
57. *Ibid.*, fol. 3–4.
58. RGIA, f. 1409, op. 2, d. 4828, fol. 7 (KA, NL MF 222). [Another copy of the letter can be found in: KA, VSV, Fa 42, Akti 76/1826].
59. Zakrevskii to Nicholas I, in: RGIA, f.660, op.1, d.35 (ed. khr. 35), fol. 15–16 (KA, NL MF 7).
60. RGIA, f. 1409, op. 2, d. 4828, fol. 7 (KA, NL MF 222).
61. Cf. Jussila, 1969, pp. 93 and 96–97. Furthermore, Schweitzer (2006), p. 56.
62. Neseemann, 2003, pp. 130–37.
63. RGIA, f. 660, op. 1, d. 99—cf. Jussila, 1969, p. 94.
64. Above all, see a memorandum written by Reh binder in October 1816: “Svar på en Finsk Patriots Reflexioner rörande åtskillige Allmänna angelägenheter”—KA, Riilahden kartanon arkisto, 43. Besides, see a memorandum by Reh binder's friend Carl Johan Walleen, with which the latter unsuccessfully tried to persuade Alexander I in 1819 to issue a written constitutional charter for Finland (which would have been based on the Gustavian laws of 1772 and 1789)—J.R. Danielson-Kalmari, 1914, p. 4; Neseemann, 2007, pp. 48–51.
65. RGIA, f. 1409, op. 2, d. 4828, fol. 9 (KA, NL MF 222).
66. *Ibid.*, fol. 7 and fol. 9. For text of the treaty of Nystad, see the official law collection of the Russian Empire: *Polnoe sobranie I* (1830), vol.6, p. 425 [No. 3819].
67. Jussila, 1969, p. 95. It might moreover be interesting that Zakrevskii was quite aware of the linguistic differences between the Swedish-speaking upper class and the Finnish-speaking majority (at that time, ca. 85 per cent of Finland's population) and referred to them in order to substantiate his position in the constitutional conflict with the Finnish Senate. Thus, he argued in his letter to Reh binder in July 1826 that the “good Finnish or Karelian subject” was likely to have a much more favourable attitude to an initiative the aim of which was to achieve equal rights for the Orthodox population in the public life of the Grand Duchy. As for matters of administration and jurisdiction, Zakrevskii wrote, the tsar's “Finnish or Karelian” subjects were always confronted with the dominance of the “Swedes”, from whom they differed considerably with regard to their

customs and traditions. RGIA, f. 1409, op. 2, d. 4828, fol. 10 (KA, NL MF 222). In his report to the tsar in which he reacted to the criticism of the Senate, Zakrevskii stated similarly that higher offices in Finland's administration and jurisdiction were only open to ethnic Swedes—RGIA, f.660, op. 1, d. 35 (ed. khr. Nr. 35), fol. 16-17 (KA, NL MF 7). Such an “ethnic” pattern of argumentation, was however quite unique in Zakrevskii's official correspondence, and obviously he never made use of similar arguments on another occasion again. Neither did this “ethnic argumentation” have anything substantial in common with the kind of deliberate *divide et impera* tactic that Russia practised towards both language groups in Finland at the turn of the century. Cf. Nesemann, 2009a, p. 293; Nesemann, 2009b, p. 16.

68. According to Buxhoevden, Finland's own laws could only be preserved insofar as the “circumstances allowed it” and the inhabitants of the country “deserved” such a “special mercy” of the tsar “by their behaviour”—Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Moscow, III.F, d.2032 (“Sprengtporten Réception”), fol.30: Buxhoevden to Sprengtporten, 10 February 1808 (KA, NL MF 178).

69. Memorandum by Sprengtporten, 23 March/4 April 1808: “(...) Le tout conformément aux lois fondamentales du pays, que l'intention de S.M.I. a été et sera de conserver dans toute leur pureté pour autant qu'elles ne se trouvent en opposition avec celles de l'empire. (...)” in Castrén, 1882, p. 105.

70. The original wording of the passage quoted here reads as follows: “...в случае (...) противоречий единообразию общего в Империи Нашей управления”—Polnoe sobranie I (1830), vol. 27, p. 148 [No. 20275].

71. Cf. a letter by Zakrevskii to Nicholas I, 28 December 1826/9 January 1827, in: Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii, Moscow, f. 109 c/a, op. 3, d. 1346, fol. 23 [KA, NL MF 167].

72. KA, KKK, Fa 8, Akti 21/1809: Steinheil to Speranskii, 14/26 April 1810.

73. Cf. Kirby, 2008, pp. 125-144.

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Riilahden kartanon arkisto (= Archive of the Riilahti estate).

Stjernvall-Walleenin suvun kokoelma (= Collection of the family Stjernvall-Walleen).

Valtiosihteerin virasto (= Office of the Secretary of State).

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III. F: Kantseliariia (= Chancellery).

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The “Old” and “New” Lithuanians: Collective Identity Types in Lithuania at the Turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Rimantas Miknys and Darius Staliūnas

Introduction

In recent years, certain terms dating from the early twentieth century have made a quite unexpected return to scholarly discourse, viz. “Old Lithuanian” and “New Lithuanian”. Researchers who have revived these terms seek among other things to criticise the dominant view among historians that the Lithuanian-Polish conflict of the late 19th to the early 20th century was a clash between two modern nationalisms. It is asserted that the above-mentioned terms suit this conflict better, since it was indeed a dispute between two different understandings of what it means to be a Lithuanian—one old and historical, the other new and ethno-linguistic.¹ According to Alfredas Bumblauskas:

“...the Old Lithuanians did not understand the aims of the Young Lithuanians to revive the Lithuanian language and solve the social problems of modern society and so they threw in their lot with Poland and rejected the idea of Lithuania.... Perhaps it is not too late to say that the stance taken by the Young Lithuanians was also far from ideal. Rejecting the concerns felt by Old Lithuanians for their Polish language, and adopting a strictly anti-Polish position, they pushed the Old Lithuanians into the arms of the Poles and made them ‘aliens’ rather than autochthonous inhabitants of Lithuania, that is, Lithuanian Poles.... The stance taken by Polish nationalists (of the National Democratic Party, or ND) should be regarded as national egoism embroiled in the disputes of Old and New Lithuanians over Vilnius and visions of the future of the Lithuanian and Polish languages, thereby exacerbating the conflict.”²

In our view, however, this is a rather simplistic scheme for describing the conflict.

The very distinction between an “old” and “new” version of one or other national identity is encountered quite often in countries of Central and Eastern Europe (e.g. “Old Latvians” vs “Young Latvians,” “Old Czechs” vs “Young Czechs” etc.) but the application of this terminology to the Lithuanian case, especially when describing the situation at the beginning of

the twentieth century, can be misleading. We shall attempt to prove this thesis by discussing types of collective identity which are attributed by the scholarly tradition mentioned above to the “Old Lithuanian type.” We understand these selected models of collective identity as special kinds of ideal types, clearly recognising that there were various intermediate versions of identity, if we may put it that way; moreover, they did not exist as certain unchanging givens but were subject to constant modification.

Our discussion takes as its point of departure the thesis formulated by both Polish and Lithuanian historians, according to which the Poles in Historic Lithuania³ were not originally colonisers but were by ethnic origin Lithuanians and Belarusians, who only later became the Polonised gentry and nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.⁴ The specificity of Polish culture within the GDL in comparison to Polish culture as prevalent within the Kingdom of Poland was noted. Sometimes it was called a Polish subculture, that is, a Polish culture influenced by the local Belarusian and Lithuanian populations. It has been noted that all this was reflected within the mentality of such Poles.⁵ The renowned Polish historian Juliusz Bardach remarked that “such a situation created various atypical forms of social consciousness among individuals and social groups which are difficult to classify.”⁶ Furthermore this was not a situation unique to territories within the former GDL. It should be noted that complications in national identification are common in ethno-cultural borderlands.⁷

Bearing this in mind, we may distinguish two basic types of “Old” Lithuanian identity, namely the Pole in Lithuania (*Polak na Litwie*) and the Lithuanian Pole (*Polak litewski/ litewski Polak*). A distinction between these two concepts was stressed as early as the beginning of the twentieth century.⁸ The concept of “Lithuanian Pole” can be found in public discourse from the very beginning of the century. The terms *Polak-Litwin* (Pole-Lithuanian) or *krajowiec* (“native”) are synonymous with this term.⁹ At the same time it should be said that these terms are suitable as analytical categories to help determine the types of identity of individuals who associated themselves with Polonicity. Here it would be useful to characterise the essential above-mentioned varieties of atypical identities from the period of transition from traditional to modern society, reconstructing the views of such categories as “society”, “nation” and “state” held by persons contributing to public discourse at that time.

The Pole in Lithuania

We may start with the case of the Pole in Lithuania. We consider that such Poles are represented by persons associating themselves with the modern ethno-cultural (ethno-linguistic) Polish Nation. Most of them were NDs (Polish National Democrats). An important aspect of their self-identity was the fact that they did not acknowledge the existence of a specific ethnic culture belonging to the Poles in Lithuania (that is, the difference between

them and Poles within the Kingdom of Poland). It was asserted that whoever “feels he is a Pole, thinks and speaks in Polish and prays in Polish is a Pole, despite having a Lithuanian surname.”¹⁰ In their view “the interests of the whole Polish Nation” were above the needs of the land (*kraj*, that is, Lithuania). The formation of their identity was influenced directly by the luminaries of Polish nationalism Zygmunt Balicki, Jan Ludwik Popławski and Roman Dmowski, who stressed the “pan-Polish” nature of the movement, despite the barriers created by the partitions of the Commonwealth of the Two Nations (or Poland, as they termed it) at the end of the eighteenth century, which consigned Poles to three different empires. They paid special attention to the common people and sought to include Ukrainians (whom they called “a failed Polish creation”) and Belarusians (“an off-shoot, a people but not a nationality”) within the modern Polish Nation. They regarded the national movements of these eastern Slavs as unnatural, while their connections with Poland (like those of Lithuanians) were “an historical fact created lawfully and voluntarily by their ancestors.”¹¹

According to these public figures, the Polonisation of Lithuanians, Belarusians and Ukrainians was evidence that Polish culture was attractive to them. Meanwhile submission to Russification and Germanisation was regarded as a betrayal of the nation. Furthermore they came out categorically against possible federal state relationships because, in their opinion, politically and culturally the land inhabited by Lithuanians was Polish.¹² They had lost sight of the integrated society of Historic Lithuania; Józef Hłasko asserted that “this is a weak-willed land. There is no common denominator here to join together separate social groups. Here every branch of society has its own will which paralyses joint labour.”¹³ Historic Lithuania was regarded only as a territorial unit with no prospects for independent statehood. Prospects for statehood they associated with Poland. On the other hand, in the name of pan-Polonism they spoke out with particular passion against projections of a distinct identity for Poles from Lithuania. Jan Bohuszewicz wrote: “We fight against all those who say to us that they remain Poles culturally while politically forming a nationality for the land of Lithuania and Belarus.”¹⁴

Admittedly, the fact that they did not recognise the ethno-cultural specificity of Lithuanian Poles did not necessarily lead towards ND ideology. Perhaps the best example to illustrate this thesis is to be found in the views and activities of Tadeusz Wróblewski. This famous public figure from early-twentieth-century Lithuania was a lawyer and member of para-masonic lodges, who regarded Poles from former lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Poland as one integral national community. In simpler terms, as far as nationality was concerned, Poles from these two historical regions were essentially the same. However this understanding of Polonicity and personal identification with the modern Polish nation did not stop Wróblewski from being one of the most consistent of the small number of

supporters of *krajowcy* ideology. He was perfectly aware that only the restoration of a state within the former territory of the Grand Duchy would allow ethnic/national conflicts to be resolved and preserve the peoples living there from the aggression of stronger neighbours. Inter alia Wróblewski put forward one of the more interesting mechanisms for resolving national problems, albeit hardly open to practical implementation, namely the idea of personal cultural autonomy, which he borrowed from the Austrian Marxists.¹⁵

Lithuanian Poles

At the beginning of the twentieth century another relatively distinct group was clearly evident and its members valued ancestry and history. Historians have formed a thesis to the effect that although many of them were distanced from ethnic (Lithuanian, Belarusian, Ukrainian) values and language they still felt the specificity of GDL gentry culture in comparison with gentry culture in Poland and were wont to refer to themselves as Lithuanian Poles (*Polak litewski/litewski Polak*) rather than Poles in Lithuania; they also called themselves Pole-Lithuanians (*Polak-Litwin*). It should be stressed that cases of the *Polak litewski* identity can be found most often among the *krajowcy*. Specific cases have very individual features which can even be different in their essence.

Historians distinguish two groups of *krajowcy* on the basis of the special features of their reasoning and outlook, namely the Conservative-traditionalist *krajowcy*, who formed the majority; and Democratic *krajowcy*. Conservative-Traditionalist *Krajowcy* can be divided into a clerical category (such as Bishop Edward von der Ropp of Vilnius and Stanisław Łopaciński); loyalists, who declared their complete political loyalty to the Romanov Empire (for example, the Korwin-Milewski brothers, Hipolit and Ignacy; Aleksander Chomiński and Aleksander Meysztowicz, who were members of the Russian State Council); and democratically-inclined traditionalists (Konstancja and Roman Skirmunt, Czesław Jankowski, Mieczysław Jałowicki). These were united by their consciousness of being citizens of the Grand Duchy, and their view of the territory of Lithuania and Belarus—which they called The (Native) Land (*Kraj*)—as a united indivisible political, social, cultural and economic whole with its own specific historical-cultural traditions and specific population structure. The particular and distinct interests of this land in comparison to those of Russia and the Kingdom of Poland were stressed also.¹⁶

Their view of society also had one common characteristic: they understood society to be the society of Historic Lithuania which was multilingual but nonetheless homogenous, united by a common past, common religion and common social hierarchy formed over the centuries. This component of how society was understood was accorded special significance. Society was led by the masters—landowners who directed the petty gentry (*szlachta*) and lower social orders (i.e. the ordinary people who

spoke Lithuanian or Belarusian). The masters and the people were not social equals. The masters not only understood the needs of society best, but also took care of the fate of the lower orders.¹⁷ Thus for them the society of Historic Lithuania was a model of the ideal patriarchal society. In essence most of them regarded differences of language as being insignificant (but only when speaking of the peasantry) and did not consider them a reason for ethnic conflict.

According to H. Korwin-Milewski, disputes between Poles and Lithuanians were not a national conflict but merely a certain form of social in-fighting. This in-fighting was understood to be inspired to a certain degree by the Russian authorities.¹⁸ Konstancja Skirmunt recognised and sympathised with the Lithuanian national movement and propagated mutual recognition and rapprochement between both the Polish and Lithuanian peoples that would enable them to learn one another’s languages and take part in one another’s cultural life. Poles were encouraged in particular to take part in developing Lithuanian literacy.¹⁹ She regarded Lithuanian Poles and Lithuanians as part of a single society and thought that it was possible to be a Lithuanian whilst not being able to speak Lithuanian. The identity model of “*gente Lithuanus, natione Polonus*” was promoted along with efforts to show how historical conditions had formed the specific *Polak-Litwin* type.

Only the shared identity of the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy was recognised. This was a concept of political nation, or rather a democratised version of the old political nation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The concept of what made a state remained unchanged. This was associated with the tradition of the Jagiellonian Union, that is, the restoration of the Polish-Lithuanian state was intended.

When discussing cases which fit more than this single version of identity, first and foremost we should mention radical cases. In one instance we may cite Konstancja Skirmunt, in another, the Korwin-Milewski brothers. Dariusz Szpoper’s research has shown how Konstancja Skirmunt, although no longer treating ordinary people from the patronal viewpoint, expressed the wish that “he who feels himself to be a Lithuanian, even though he is not of the common social order, should seek what has not been required previously, namely to become familiar with and learn the language of his ancestors and the common people, viz. Lithuanian.”²⁰ In effect she thus supported a new identity formula, as Szpoper expressed it when defining her identity: *gente Lithuanus, natione Lithuanus*. Thus it is obvious that in her concept she was gravitating towards the type of modern political nation—the identity of *natio lithuana*. However we will deal with such notions in more detail when we discuss the democratic *krajowiec* type.

A somewhat different relationship between Polonicity and Lithuanicity is represented by Hipolit and Ignacy Korwin-Milewski. Although their views were not identical, certain fundamental similarities in their outlook allow us to place them in the same category of conservative Polish identity. A pre-

modern outlook was typical of both brothers in which ethnicity and nationality were not politically important categories. The most important social function—including in political life—fell to the lot of the gentry, the traditional élite such as the Korwin-Milewski brothers.

This conservative view of the world defined the constellation of their friends and enemies. The Russian imperial authorities were for them an ally, which could and should ensure the dominance of the gentry and promote its culture, for which the gentry was to express its gratitude in unconditional loyalty. The enemy was not only the modern Belarusian and especially Lithuanian national movements—which were envisaged as expressions of social antagonism on the part of the peasantry towards landowners rather than national-political movements (Hipolit spoke with particular arrogance of the Lithuanian language, denying the existence of what we would call a standard language)—but also the Polish national movement in the Kingdom of Poland (because it was democratic in character). Thus we should not be surprised by declarations of the necessity to separate the interests of Lithuania and Poland clearly. In this context it was convenient for them (the *krajowcy*) sometimes to call themselves the gentry of Lithuania or simply Lithuanians. This term seemed to legitimise their claims to represent all the country's inhabitants.²¹ As we can see, this Lithuanicity is instrumental; it is conditioned by the aim of defending the social status quo and especially the leading role of the gentry.

The democratic *krajowiec*, like their opponents from the conservative camp, treated Historic Lithuania as an indivisible territory, but their model of identity was different. First of all, they envisaged the society of Historic Lithuania as a democratic body of citizens. Here it should be stressed that they did not deny the existence of ethno-cultural nations. The formation of such nations on the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania was held to be a precondition for the development of a society of citizens and a new state organism. It was thought that only as the national consciousness of the common people of Historic Lithuania developed would civic consciousness be nurtured along with an understanding of the common weal of Historic Lithuania.²² In this sense the local democratic national movements, especially those of the Lithuanians and Belarusians were valued as a force which would help to form a society of citizens. For each of the proponents of the democratic *krajowcy* movement the formation of the modern Lithuanian and Polish nations and especially the exacerbated conflict between them became a great dilemma, a particular challenge. They had all grown up under the influence of both cultural and linguistic traditions and so the consolidating ethno-linguistic nationalisms posed a complex question of national consciousness for them. Probably Michał Römer (Mykolas Riomeris) expressed this dilemma most colourfully:

“At that time I still did not realise that my skin was peculiar, being neither purely Polish nor purely Lithuanian but a special combination of the two which bears the marks of both Polishness and Lithuanness, the old skin of Adam Mickiewicz, a special creature from our Motherland’s history, a skin in which the soul is also special, neither Lithuanian nor yet Polish.”²³

This duality of consciousness was also expressed by Juozapas Albinas Herbačiauskas (Józef Albin Herbaczewski): “From my father I received Polish culture and from my mother, Lithuanian blood!”²⁴ Bearing in mind this dual identity we should not be surprised in the least that these scions of the Lithuanian gentry did not consider such relatively “objective” criteria as ethno-cultural ones to be the most important when defining the essence of national identity. When defining the essence of Lithuanicity, Herbačiauskas rejected language as a sole criterion: “Not only he who speaks Lithuanian is a Lithuanian but also he who does not know the ancient Lithuanian tongue but feels a cultural community with the fellowship of the Lithuanian soul (Kraszewski, Narbut, Jucewicz).”²⁵ As noted above, Konstancja Skirmunt also regarded consciousness rather than language as the most important criterion of nationality.²⁶

Dual national consciousness together with geopolitical and geo-cultural considerations conditioned the fact that the persons mentioned above nurtured a special model of the future during the epoch of nationalisms. According to Herbačiauskas, political sovereignty was possible only after a special national culture has been formed. Wishing to bring this aim to life in Lithuania, it was necessary to seek a synthesis of two cultures: those of the common people (Lithuanian) and the gentry (Polish). The popular subculture was important in that it had preserved the Lithuanian language, while the gentry’s culture had preserved its citizen-state tradition.²⁷ Römer also cherished a similar concept of democratic modern national culture. The future state model was connected with such a national concept of culture created in the synthesis of two subcultures. According to Herbačiauskas, it would be easier for the gentry to integrate into modern Lithuanian national culture if a continuity of state tradition were to be maintained, that is, a federation with Poland. Geopolitical motives also encouraged the establishment of such a federation since, in Herbačiauskas’ opinion only in that way would it be possible to hold out against Russia and Germany.²⁸ Konstancja Skirmunt wrote in a very similar way about the need for a rapprochement between the two subcultures. She also stressed that the treasure preserved by the common people was the Lithuanian language and that preserved by the gentry was Lithuanian culture and tradition.²⁹ Skirmunt stressed the geo-cultural aspect too. Only after bringing these two subcultures together would it be possible to defend ourselves from Russian cultural expansion. Skirmunt clearly states

that in her opinion the Lithuanians were faced with a dilemma: either remain in the Latin cultural sphere with Polish culture (without rejecting the Lithuanian language at all) or submit to Byzantine (Russian) influence.³⁰

Did Skirmunt, Herbačiauskas, Römer and others, who modelled a future for Lithuania in a similar fashion, see any other strong basis to enable the bringing together of the two subcultures, Lithuanian and Polish, apart from clearly considered geo-cultural and geopolitical motives? Undoubtedly the shared past was one such basis. Skirmunt claimed that Lithuanian society was united “by descent and history.”³¹ Mickiewicz and other early nineteenth century Lithuanian *litterateurs*, who had written in Polish, symbolised for them this Lithuanian social unity which had developed in the course of history and the synthesis of Lithuanian and Polish culture. According to Herbačiauskas, neither Lithuanians nor Poles yet appreciated Mickiewicz’s ideas: “they have considered and continue to consider his *oeuvre* from the point of view of nationalism, ignoring completely the synthetic elements, expressing supranational thoughts in relation to today’s sense of nationality.”³² We may say that Skirmunt wrote identically on this topic: “For one person to be a Lithuanian and a Pole at the same time, speaking in the sense of nationality, was completely possible when the ancient way of life of independent Lithuania had disappeared and the special new hour for the rebirth of the Lithuanian nation had not yet come.”³³

In 1933, when he was rector of the University of Lithuania in Kaunas, Römer admitted in an interview with a correspondent from the *Trinitas* journal that he would classify himself as part of the Lithuanian Polish Nation if such a nation existed.³⁴ Römer regarded Mickiewicz as a representative and ancestor of such a nation. In 1920 on his return to Lithuania he wrote to urges Jurgis Šaulys, his close acquaintance and signatory to the Lithuanian Act of Independence then working in the Lithuanian representation in Rome:

“I am not exclusively Polish, nor am I exclusively a Lithuanian; I am both a Pole and a Lithuanian at the same time.... Neither Poles nor Lithuanians know what Adam Mickiewicz was, but I know that very well since I am the same as he, for I myself feel what he felt because I belong myself to the same spiritual race as he. This is a dying race and all that dies out is barren.”³⁵

So what kind of relations developed between these two different types of Pole and the modern Lithuanian national movement? Poles in Lithuania, who identified themselves with the ethno-linguistic Polish community usually supported some kind of model for restoring the Commonwealth of the Two Nations and in many a case this was an ND model, which could see nothing more for Lithuanians than national minority status. Such views were dominant in Lithuanian Polish society, judging by the results of elections to

the Russian Duma, newspaper circulation figures and other such indicators. Poles sharing the views of Wróblewski were few and far between.

Admittedly, Lithuanian Poles (*Polak litewski, litewski Polak*) who held democratic views and spoke Lithuanian, or those who had a conservative outlook but acknowledged the role of the Belarusian or and Lithuanian commons in society could be regarded as representatives of a different kind of Lithuanicity (Old Lithuanians) but this group was small and lacked influence, as is illustrated well by the scant popularity and short life of newsprints issued by the *krajowcy* (*Gazeta wileńska*, 1906; *Kurier krajowy*, 1912–13). Moreover the existence of the *krajowcy* is no basis for the thesis of a conflict between “Old Lithuanians” and “New Lithuanians” because followers of this group most often did not seek confrontation with the modern Lithuanian national movement but rather sought opportunities for collaboration.³⁶ It is no accident that perhaps the clearest figure within this group, Römer, chose to live and work in Lithuania after the First World War rather than Poland. Stanisław Narutowicz (Stanislovas Narutavičius), brother of the Polish president, Gabriel Narutowicz, took an active part in building the new Lithuania in 1917–19 because “he believed that there was a chance for a type of independent Lithuanian citizen to form, similar to the Belgian Walloons, loyal to their common state while preserving their Polonicity in the ethno-cultural sense. He identified himself as one such.”³⁷ Similar views were held by Tadeusz Dowgird, Leon Domeyko and Fr Bronisław Żongołowicz, who also worked for national Lithuania.³⁸ Those persons who identified with old Lithuanicity found motivation with more or less difficulty to live with the “New Lithuanians” rather than enter into conflicts with them.³⁹

Conclusion

At first sight the section of the conservative Lithuanian gentry which often referred to themselves as Lithuanians might be the most ideal representatives of the “Old Lithuanians.” However, for them, as the case of two of the group’s most prominent members, the Korwin-Milewski brothers shows, Lithuanicity was purely a tool pre-determined by the aim of defending the social status quo and especially the leading social role of the class they represented. The main axis of the conflict lay between the modern Lithuanian movement and the modern Polish, primarily ND, national movement.

Notes

1. Buchowski, 2006, pp. 98–103; Bumblauskas, 2008, pp. 63–65.
2. Bumblauskas, 64.
3. At the beginning of the twentieth century ‘Historical Lithuania’ was associated with the then imperial Russian ‘North West Province’ (*Severo-zapadnyy krai*) covering the Vilna, Kovno, Grodno, Minsk, Mogilev and Vitebsk gubernias.
4. Römer, 1908, 27; Römer, 1993, pp. 13–138; Römer, 1925, Herbaczewski, 1905, pp. 33, 61; Maliszewski, 1916, pp. 36–37; Kulakauskas, 1989, pp. 9–24.
5. Bardach, 1988, p. 197.
6. Bardach, 1988, p. 200.
7. Kłoskowa, 1992, p. 8.
8. J.S.[?], 1906, pp. 13–14; Zawisza, 1907, pp. 12–14; Römer, 1908, p. 27; Baranowski, 1911, pp. 1–3.
9. Wł. Dw.[?], 1912, pp. 579–81; Kg. [Kazys Grinius], 1912; Maliszewski, 1918, pp. 4–7; Świechowski, 1917, pp. 44–45; B.H. [?], 1915, pp. 46–47.
10. Obst, 1912, p. 31.
11. Kłoczowski, 2000, pp. 149–52.
12. Miknys, 1991, p. 178.
13. Głosy, 1915, p. 2.
14. Bohuszewicz, 1908, p. 18.
15. Staliūnas, 1996, pp. 150–70; Staliūnas, 1999, pp. 99–107.
16. Historians note that even after the 1863 Uprising among Conservatives and Traditionalists, often called Loyalists it was noticed that the patriotism promulgated from the Kingdom of Poland was a danger to Historic Lithuania and so the view became entrenched that the interests of the Kingdom and the empire’s western gubernias differed clearly: Jurkowski, 2001, p. 76.
17. Meysztowicz, 1973, p. 117.
18. Korwin-Milewski, 1913, p. 31.
19. Futurus [Skirmunt], 1913; Futurus [Skirmunt], 1907.
20. Szpoper, 2009, p. 180.
21. Korwin-Milewski, 1993, 132, 147, 321, 335, 336; Weeks, 1999, pp. 347–69.
22. Römer, M., *Dziennik*, vol. 3, *Lietuvos mokslų akademijos biblioteka, Rankraščių skyrius* (henceforth LMAB; Manuscript division of the Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences), F.138 –2230, l.62, 66.
23. Maksimaitis, 1996, p. 190.
24. Quoted from: Sirutavičius, 1996, p. 272.
25. Herbaczewski, 1905, p. 11; Herbaczewski, 1907, p. 155.
26. Futurus [K. Skirmunt], 1907, p. 33.
27. Herbaczewski, 1905, 11; Sirutavičius, 1996, pp. 278–79.

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28. Herbaczewski, 1905, pp. 18–19; Herbaczewski, 1907; Herbačevskis, 1919, p. 10; Sirutavičius, 1996, p. 283.
 29. Futurus [K. Skirmunt], 1906, p. 8.
 30. Ibid, p. 14.
 31. Ibid, p. 7.
 32. Herbaczewski, 1905, p. 29.
 33. Skirmuntaitė, 1913.
 34. Bičiūnas, 1933, p. 28. As J. Sawickis shows, in 1927 Römer referred to himself in official documents as a Lithuanian pole (*Polak litewski*): Sawicki, 1998, p. 143
 35. M. Römer, *Dziennik*, vol. 28, *LMAB*, F. 138–2254, l. 240.
 36. K. Buchowski has shown that conservative-traditionalist *krajowcy*, who sometimes referred to themselves as “Old Lithuanians”, used this term ‘to stress thereby their connection with the Young Lithuanian Movement’ (Buchowski, 2006, p. 98). Furthermore, he also acknowledges that democratic *krajowcy* did not use this term and most identified themselves as Lithuanian Poles and sought a *modus vivendi* when stressing the citizen principle in relations between the country’s nations, based on the search for common political interests (ibidem, pp. 99–100).
 37. Narutowicz, 1990, pp. 204–205. It should be noted that Otto Zawisza spoke of the same prospects for Lithuanian Poles: Zawisza, 1907, pp. 12–14.
 38. The fact that it proved difficult for them to fit into national Lithuania is another matter.
 39. The fact that in 1921 Michał Römer, the renowned Lithuanian public figure and one of those who might be categorised as an ‘Old Lithuanian’ tried to organise an ‘Old Lithuanian’ (*Staro-Litwinów*) club in Kaunas would support this thesis. Landowners of ancient Lithuanian extraction featured on the list of potential club members including Waclaw Bielski, Czesław Milwid, Stefan Billewicz, General Sylwester Żukowski (Silvestras Žukauskas), Dominik Dowgiełło, Jerzy Dowiat, Oskaras Milašius and others. They did not wish to accept the unfavourable conditions developing for them as persons of Polish culture and attempted to mark out a place for themselves in the New Lithuania: Sawicki, 1998, p. 141.

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Regional Identity in Latvia: The Case of Latgale

Andrejs Plakans

1. Identity and place

Europe is a continent of nation states and federations, but it is also a continent of regions, some supra-national (e.g. Scandinavia) and others sub-national (e.g. the Banat in Romania); some carefully demarcated and others closer to what Benedict Anderson meant with his concept of “imagined communities”.¹ How these variously defined regional entities produce in their inhabitants a sense of personal and collective identity has been an intriguing question for a long time, generating many different models not only of “identity” itself but of how “place” is linked to it.² These three matters—identity, place, belonging—were easier to think about in the distant past, when Europeans tended to remain in or near their birthplaces and took their sense of self from them. But a definitive understanding of the three became more difficult when normal lives began to include long-distance migration, return migration, and the crossing of many man-made boundary lines. Identity became malleable and protean, referring not only place but to language, religion, nationality, ethnicity, and other such hard-to-define variables.

The history of Latvia and Latvians contains a chain of identity-transforming processes that started in the early nineteenth century when serf-emancipation led Latvians to cease thinking about themselves as peasant-serfs (Ger. *Leibeigene*, Latv. *Dzimiļaudis*) “belonging” to a particular estate owner and residing in a particular landed estate. These reforms now required them to take on a new identity: subjects of the Tsar. The evolution of their sense of self and of collective belonging became an important theme of their subsequent history; significant socio-political changes enlarged the number of identities to which they could lay claim and each passing generation brought with it the possibility of identity shifts. The questions “Who am I?” and “Who are we?” were never answered in quite the same way and with the same conviction from one generation to the next, unlike in well-established societies with fixed borders and stable national consciousnesses. Even after the founding of the Republic of Latvia in 1918, the older tradition of identifying oneself more with a region, a status group, or religion than with the national state remained alive among many of the republic’s citizens. Furthermore, a close reading of the historical record will suggest that in this respect categorical and one-dimensional self-definition was less widespread than ambiguity at both the individual or collective level. *Gradations* of identification were much more likely, and they ranged from complete commitment to complete indifference regardless of the entity of which one thought oneself a part.

The present essay deals with these broad themes—place, identity, belonging—in the recent history of Latvia and Latvians but focuses on one aspect of them: regional thinking as it relates to the county’s eastern-most region now called Latgale. In 1917, Latgale decided to join a unified Latvia and in 1918 became the “third star” in Latvia’s national symbolism together with the old “Baltic provinces” of Kurzeme (Courland) and southern Vidzeme (southern Livland). Some residents of this eastern territory, however, did not totally embrace the inclusion of Latgale in the Republic, and some insisted on having written guarantees. Ever since 1918 a portion of the Latgalian intelligentsia has continued to articulate grievances about their native region’s treatment by the Latvian state. This dissatisfaction, expressed in different ways at different times and against different regimes, has remained barely discernible to external observers unfamiliar with Latvian-language publications. Moreover, most Latvian political leaders, planners, and administrators from 1918 onward have believed the Latvian national state to be a *fait accompli* and its internal policies a true expression of the will of the state’s population, speaking either through the electoral process, the voice of an authoritarian leader, or the dictates of the Communist Party. The temptation to minimize internal disputes and dismiss regional dissatisfaction has therefore been strong and often overwhelming. The post-Soviet years, however, brought a new energy to regional thinking in Latvia, particularly in relation to economic development. Yet the recent entry of Latvia into the European Union in 2004 was again a mixed blessing for champions of Latvia’s regions. On the one hand, the EU’s policies have been increasingly solicitous and protective toward the regions of national states, “indigenous” peoples, and minorities of various definitions, and have promoted investment in the development of sub-national areas. On the other, the EU’s encouragement of free movement of labour across national boundaries has created a persistent drain of regionally defined sub-populations in many states, including Latvia, as people have sought better economic opportunities elsewhere and thus have willingly entered life situations that threaten assimilation and dilute personal identification with one’s region of birth.

Is a region’s loss of identity inevitable as population loss continues? Resistance to such an outcome can be felt in the realm of culture, as suggested by the recently reported demand by the Second Congress of Latgalistics in Riga (2009) that written Latgalian be granted the status of a “regional language”. And this may also have to be the interpretation placed on two other reports: one, entitled “‘Trench Warfare’ about the Latgalian written language”; and another the claim, made by the Centre for Traditional Latgalian Culture in February 2010, that the post-1991 Latvian government failed to meet the requirement in the Language Law of 1999 that it protect the “Latgalian language”.³ To those familiar with the history of Latvia’s first period of independence, such headline-producing charges seem a throwback

to 1917 when disgruntled Latgalian activists feared the loss of their traditional way of writing and speaking if Latgale were to join the “Balts” (i.e. Latvians-speakers in Livland and Courland) within in a single-state framework. These current headlines also give the first impression—which needs to be tested against evidence—that in present-day Latvia the “language question” is *not* reducible solely to the Lettophone-Russophone controversies that have been at the centre of the language debate within the country for a long time.⁴ How aspects of the language question came to be intertwined with aspects of the regional question and both of these with aspects of the identity question seems a puzzle worth unraveling.

2. Regions and identities around 1900: Courland, Livland, and Latgale

Regional concerns have played a significant role in Latvian political and cultural history ever since the nineteenth century. When in the 1850s a handful of Latvian intellectuals began to articulate a philosophy of nationhood, they were confronted with the hard fact that the Latvian-speakers of the Russian Baltic provinces and adjoining areas had not thought of themselves as a single collectivity—let alone a nation (Latv. *tauta*)—for many generations, if ever; and therefore diluting the cultural importance of provincial boundaries in popular thinking became a major task. A bit later in time, at the proclamation of the Latvian national state in 1918, its architects had to make decisions about dividing the new country into regions for the purpose of effective administration. Viewed solely from the political and administrative angle, however, regions by themselves do not provide a sufficient understanding of how wrenching the supersession of regional identity can be to people strongly attached to place. Strong feelings may linger even when a population can choose a more inclusive identity, rendering the coherence of the state and a national culture problematic. Among Latvians, national integration has never been inevitable, and the country’s relatively small size has not been able to counteract the complications created by its fragmented history.

Among Latvia’s regions, Latgale has always evoked special concerns. Accounts of how the Latvians living in the two Russian Baltic provinces of Livland and Courland developed complementary cultural-political attitudes during the second half of the nineteenth century suggest a process of attitudinal integration that, if not wholly unproblematic, was nonetheless comparatively successful. Cleavages on the “national question” in the Latvian population around the year 1900 were not so much along Livland-Courland provincial lines as along ideological ones: by the 1890s, Marxism had made headway among the Latvian population, a strong social-democratic party had been founded in 1904, and its discourse emphasized class division. In the wide-ranging, pre-1900 public discussions about the future of the Latvian *tauta*, however, Latgale remained something of a conundrum, decidedly an outlier. Indeed, the term “Latgale” itself gained currency only after 1900. Before that date, “Polish Livland” or “Inflanty” were more frequently used in

Latvian and Baltic German writings. Latgale consisted of three districts (Daugavpils, Rēzekne, and Ludza) of the Vitebsk *gubernnia* (province) adjoining Livland and Courland to the East. The population of these districts in 1897 was not negligible: about 501,000 persons, as compared to about 674,000 in Courland and about 753,000 in Livland. Accounts in Latvian-language newspapers reported that a large proportion of the population of these districts spoke what sounded like a “dialect” of the Latvian spoken in Livland and Courland. In line with their language-centered nationalist ideology, most western activists opined that this “branch” of the *tauta* should be included in all discussions about the future of Latvians as a whole. Nationally oriented activists in Latgale agreed, hoping to initiate a “national awakening” in their constituencies, and continued the self-assigned task of persuading the population of Latgale to think of themselves as part of a larger Latvian *tauta*, i.e. to re-orient their sense of collective identity.

Latgalian activists were in fact replicating later in time the efforts that by 1900 had already engaged the “western” Latvians of Courland and southern Livland for almost a half century. As increasing numbers of ambitious Latvian-speakers in the Baltic provinces left behind their rural origins and entered the largely German-speaking urban social environment, many of them “germanized” (Latv. *pārvācojās*). The “national awakeners” among them, however, wanted to ensure that upward socio-economic mobility among persons of Latvian origin would not diminish the numbers of the *tauta* and thus worked to arouse among Latvian-speakers a sense of Latvian nationality (Latv. *tautība*) and the desire for membership in it. In other words, they wanted to change in their audience both the sense of self and the sense of group identity. An important symbolic act was the use by the accomplished activist Krišjānis Valdemārs of the nationality designator “Latvian” on his calling card. The basis of a visible collective identity was to be expanded through the creation of a broad range of cultural activities that used the Latvian language and were managed by Latvians themselves: newspapers, cultural organisations, singing festivals, primary schools, and a written literature. This cultural superstructure was necessary to persuade Latvians that they did not need to change their national identity as they entered adulthood, became more educated, and entered urban-based occupations. Yet perceptive members of the Latvian intelligentsia continued to complain, even until 1918, about drainage from the *tauta* caused by assimilation, which meant that although Latvian culture-building efforts had succeeded, the process of de-nationalisation had not ceased entirely. In any event, few Latgalians were included in the Latvian-language cultural superstructure that was a significant element in the life of the Baltic provinces by 1900. The fact that the two “awakenings” did not correlate temporally saddled the Latgalian population with the burden of being perceived as “backward.” Not only did their speech sound suspicious to western Latvian ears, but public elementary schools in the Latgale districts

were scarce and the level of literacy much lower than in either Courland or Livland, in spite of a strong tradition in Latgale of home schooling.⁵

Public discussions about these matters in the second half of the nineteenth century, of course, did not use the relatively modern concept of identity (Latv. *identitāte*) but relied on the older terminology drawn from early nineteenth-century German thought (most importantly, J.G. Herder and J.G. Fichte). These ideas were centered on the concept of *Volk* (Latv. *tauta*; Engl. *a people, a nation*). Among Latvian intellectuals, as elsewhere, the *tauta* was reified: it had a soul or spirit (Latv. *gars, dvēsele*) that expressed itself in language, historical patterns, “low” and “high” culture, folklore, and customs. The *tauta* was a reality regardless of the attitudes of its individual members; moreover, all human beings had such membership (Latv. *tautība*), and could be classified into one or another of the *tauta(s)* comprising the population of Latvian-speaking territory. A modern reading of these discussions and a re-casting them in terms of nationality, ethnos, ethnicity, ethnic identity and the like de-emphasises the compulsion inherent in the nineteenth century conceptualisations and brings to the fore the element of *agency*. The modern usage of the concept of identity implies much greater personal freedom and choice: one “constructs” an ethnic identity and “chooses” a collectivity for oneself; people are always “actors” and the essentialism implied by the earlier terms is laid aside.

Shifting to the modern terminology, we can say that by stressing the centrality of the *tauta* the nineteenth century national awakeners among the western Latvians hoped to persuade the rural population of the Russian Baltic provinces to forget other sources of personal identity (place, occupation, economic standing, religion) and to think of themselves as more than peasants (Latv. *zemnieki*), more than “non-Germans” (Ger. *Undeutsch*) as the medieval Livonian Confederation documents described them, and more than Livlanders (Latv. *vidzemnieki*) and Courlanders (Latv. *kurzemnieki*). By realizing and accepting their “Latvianness,” the Latvian-speakers of the Baltic provinces would acquire a collective identity, and, as individuals, would draw from this new collective identity their sense of self, a personal identity. By the early decades of the twentieth century much of the work of fashioning (or constructing) a consciousness had succeeded but was by no means completed. Even so, some ten percent of the Latvian-speaking population of the Russian Empire lived dispersed throughout other provinces, and their sense of identity was decidedly problematic. Though in the first decade of the twentieth century the Latgale activists had declared themselves (and their immediate audience) part of the Latvian *tauta*, such a declaration was not based on any hard evidence (other than the activists’ personal observations) about what this audience actually thought collectively or individually. In fact, Latgalian activists in the period 1900–18 were themselves few (though their numbers were growing) and many if not most lived and worked outside Latgale territory, primarily in St. Petersburg.

Even up to the First World War, views among western Latvians about Latgale and Latgalians were barely focused. The Riga Latvian Association, which had started its efforts of national consciousness-building in 1868, certainly remained aware of the Vitebsk population of Latvians, but directed most of its energies toward Livland and Courland and continued to view the trans-Daugava Latvians as somewhat exotic. There, activists were only now fashioning the name “Latgale” for their region, thus strengthening the districts’ common regional identity. The situation was ripe for the circulation of negative stereotypes and malignant images of the *Other* (to again draw on modern terminology). Coarse language among Latgalians referred to the western Latvians as *čiuli*, and among western Latvians Latgalians were often called *čangaļi*.⁶ Neither term was complementary, and embodied either resentment or condescension. Yet activists on both sides were faced (in different times periods) with the same structural challenges: persuading thousands of their regional compatriots that they belonged to a nation, convincing them primary education in their local language was important for the next generation, explication for them of a history of accomplishment and survival, and propounding the view that the still-influential traditional regional élites (Baltic Germans in the one case and Poles in the other) had no natural right to dominate their respective regions.

On the other hand, the fates seemed to have conspired to render these populations largely unrecognizable to each other. The traditional élites of Courland and Livland were German-speaking while those of Latgale were primarily Polish-speaking. Loss of cultural identity in the western case meant Germanisation; in Latgale, Polonisation. Both Courland and Livland had privileged positions in the Empire and were permitted considerable self-rule. Latgale, by contrast, had been a remote province of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth since the early seventeenth century and was now a set of unremarkable districts in the western borderlands. Most western Latvians were Lutherans with a skeptical view about a church dominated by German-speaking clergy. Religious life in Latgale, on the other hand, was intensely Roman Catholic, and there were close ties between clergy and congregation (perhaps half of the most prominent Latgalian “awakeners” were Catholic priests). Western Latvians had been emancipated from serfdom in the period 1816–19, but the rural people of Latgale not until the 1860s. The imperial Russification policy in Latgale began in 1867, when the three districts were caught up in the notorious “print prohibition” of books in the Latin alphabet; among western Latvians no such prohibition had ever existed, and the print culture was thriving. By the 1880s western Latvians had already produced a substantial and differentiated secular literature in the Latvian language, whereas until the turn of the twentieth century reading material in Latgalian consisted primarily of religious writings and calendars. Western Latvians were well-situated to ward off the cultural threat of both Russification and Germanisation, but in Latgale the Polish and Russian languages had made

considerable inroads into everyday life. A common observation was that Latgalians used Latgalian at home, Polish in church, and Russian when dealing with the authorities.

Organisationally, by the turn of the twentieth century western Latvians had created impressive and materially well-grounded personal and institutional networks that the Baltic German landowning nobility considered a threat to their dominance. Organisation-based activities (outside the Church) in Latgale appeared three decades later by which time the Latgalian activists, being very much aware of the strengths of the western Latvians, often despaired of ever catching up. This was particularly true of the countryside in the two regions. Economic modernization in rural Courland and rural Livland had proceeded apace from the 1860s onward, even to the extent that the western Latvians could point with pride to wealthy farmers in their midst, the so-called “grey barons” (by analogy with the traditional ennobled Baltic German ennobled landowners). Native critics of the Latgalian status quo argued that agricultural modernization in Latgale was hampered by the continuing existence of open-field farming, in which the land being worked by individual farmers consisted of scattered and intermingled strips rather than consolidated fields. Both the western Latvian region and Latgale had “smallholdership,” but the relative per capita wealth of the two sets of smallholders differed sharply in favor of the westerners. The western Latvians, as well as Latgalian commentators, considered competitive, market-oriented, individual landownership of farmland as the main source of agricultural progress and maintained that the common residential pattern in rural Latgale—hamlets and clustered farmsteads—was a significant obstacle to development.

By 1900, a sense of Latvian collective identity among western Latvians was strong, and the core of the population that no longer hankered for an alternate identity was large; the sources of Latvianness (Latv. *latvietība*) were immediately available and capable of sustaining a commitment over time. In Latgale, by contrast, the awakening activists argued among themselves about the strategy to be used for joining the *tauta*. Among western Latvians, the idea of cultural autonomy, based on a new Latvian-language province and operating within a liberalised Russian Empire, had become very popular by the decade before the First World War; whereas in the Latgale camp fundamental disagreements were symbolized by the contrasting ideas of Francis Kemps (1876–1952) and Francis Trasūns (1864–1926), the two most prominent champions of the Latgalian cause.⁷ Kemps, who was both a seminarian and an engineer, wished to maintain a considerable distance between Latgalians and western Latvians, and at times even argued for a separate Latgalian autonomy within a reformed Empire. Trasūns, a Catholic priest, was unambiguously in favor of unity among Latvian-speakers—eastern and western—believing that overcoming residential separation and language differences was the only way for the

Latvian *tauta* to succeed. The disagreements between Kempis and Trasūns and their respective followers can be exaggerated, but they were publicly expressed and had resonance in the Latgalian population. Despite such disagreements, the Latgalian awakeners did succeed in taking charge of Latgalian literary endeavors, which, they discovered could be tracked back to the eighteenth century but now needed expansion, refinement, and perpetuation.⁸ Even so, on both sides—the western and the Latgalian—thousands of people remained indifferent to the identity question. Among western Latvians, birth language was the most likely indicator of national identity, whereas in Latgale, religion—Roman Catholicism—probably remained the principal outward sign of membership of a larger collectivity. But for many others, material considerations and economic survival were most likely the driving forces of personal decisions about identity.

3. Regions stabilised and identity reformulated

The 1918 formation of the Republic of Latvia from the combined territories of Courland, southern Livland, and Latgale brought into being a new source of collective identity—a national state—for many residents of these areas. They could now be citizens of a country called Latvia, regardless of their own nationality. To what extent they immediately availed themselves of this opportunity is unclear, since the 1918 Independence Declaration was not followed by the appearance of the persuasive structures of a functioning state for some time. Thus, the new Republic remained for many an abstraction, and personal responses to the 1918 Declaration as well as to the 1919 “independence wars” ranged from surprise to skepticism to enthusiasm. Judging by available, but generally indirect, evidence about public opinion, the new republic did have considerable legitimacy in the eyes of at least the Latvian-speaking population of the Baltic littoral. After all, thousands of young men joined the expanding “national” army to fight for the idea, and support for their sacrifice was pervasive. Over the next decade, the successful process of state-building testified to the fact that in increasing numbers the erstwhile subjects of the Russian Tsar were now willing to draw their sense of collective identity from this new political entity. Perhaps inner transformations for such a shift came easiest to those who had already identified themselves with the Latvian *tauta*; the new state, after all, bore their name and was pledging to safeguard and promote their interests regardless of who else might be included in the citizenry. To most Latvian-speakers, and certainly to the activists, the new state was a *realised* (i.e. no longer simply imagined) community in which and through which they could unify their personal identity with the political collectivity manifesting their presence among other European states. To those who subscribed to the idea of historical inevitability, the 1918 state was the preordained result of the

nineteenth century national awakening that had brought the Latvian *tauta* to self-awareness and eventually to the political reward it deserved.

Yet the history of the period also suggests that the new state could not supplant all other sources of personal and collective identity available to its residents or indeed to the Latvian speakers in it. The territories that now comprised the Latvian Republic had lost about a third of their population (1914: 2.5 million; 1920: 1.8 million) during the war years, only a portion of whom were military casualties; the rest had fled or emigrated, finding that life elsewhere promised a better future. A substantial number of Latvians (est.150, 000) remained in or emigrated to the new Soviet Russia, many of them being committed to the Marxist-Leninist ideology on which that state was based. This fragment of the population, as the next fifteen years showed, was able to combine Latvianness with the Bolshevik creed of proletarian internationalism until the mid-1930s and Stalin's slaughter of the Latvian "Old Bolsheviks". A portion of the Baltic German population (1897: 120,000; 1920: 58,000) emigrated to Germany, exchanging their ancestral homeland (the *Baltikum*) for a larger state with which they had cultural and linguistic kinship. But the majority of the pre-war population of the Latvian territories remained in place or returned from exile to their native lands after the war, largely as a result of personal decisions. Much reduced in population, the territories that had comprised Courland, southern Livland, and Latgale were now re-cast as the regions of the new republic—Kurzeme, Zemgale, Vidzeme, and Latgale—and the people in them were expected to subordinate their regional identities to the larger nation state.

All evidence suggests that most of the Latgale population accepted their change of formal status—from subjects of the Tsar to citizens of the Republic—when the reality of it having taken place took hold. Prevailing attitudes, however, expressed uncertainty. Earlier, in March 1917 in the Latgalian city of Rēzekne the First Latgalian Congress—a general meeting of 238 delegates from diverse Latgalian organizations—had indeed cast a significant vote in favor of joining the western Latvians; the resolution they passed, however, still highlighted the Latgalians' strong desire for considerable autonomy in whatever new language-based political formation would emerge. A significant minority of attendees, led by Francis Kemps, walked out, desiring a stronger statement of separateness.⁹ Yet many Latgalians began to embrace the union and served in the new national army that by the end of 1920 freed Latvian territory of all foreign troops. The task of re-building Latgale now lay ahead, having to be accomplished by a much reduced population (from approximately 646,000 in 1914 to 496,000 in 1920)—a decline of about 23%.¹⁰ What proportion of the decline was due to those who had left because they did not want to live under the new dispensation may never be known. Latgale, in fact, entered the new state as the least "Latvian" of the country's four regions: its population in 1920 was 53.5% Latvian by nationality, Kurzeme 83.0%, Vidzeme 82.0%, and

Zemgale 78.3%. In Latgale, the next four largest nationality (ethnic) groups in 1920 were Russians (19.7%), Belorussians (13.4%), Jews (6.1%), and Poles (6.1%).¹¹ The geographical location of Latgale—the easternmost region—and its large proportion of non-Latvians perpetuated its image as a borderland (Latv. *nomale*) in constant need of further “integration”.¹² The earlier unease about Latgale still remained, certainly among the most nationalistic activists.

During the first period of Latvian independence (1918–40), Latgalians themselves had a hand in perpetuating the image of their region as different from the rest of the country. This seeming regional self-isolation came at a price: the insistence by Latgalian intellectuals that their region possessed a higher order of distinctiveness than the other regions of Latvia was proof to many of lurking separatist tendencies, a dangerous reputation for a region in a relatively fragile new state. The signals coming out of Latgale were altogether mixed. During the parliamentary (*Saeima*) era in Latvian national politics (1918–34), members from Latgale participated widely in all four parliamentary elections and in fact served in crucial positions in that central political institution. Yet among the political parties that presented slates of candidates in the four elections, seventeen had “Latgale” in their official names, whereas the other three regional designations (Vidzeme, Kurzeme, Zemgale) appeared rarely in the names of other parties.¹³ While the largest political organizations—the Latvian Social Democratic Workers’ Party and the Agrarian Union—strove to present themselves as “national parties”, those originating in Latgale remained regional in their platforms and concerns. Also, among Latgalian public intellectuals voices continued to be heard that continued to warn that national integration was a threat to Latgalian speech, culture, and folkways, pointing to as evidence to the large number of non-Latgalians in administrative positions and the school system.

Some of these fears simply replicated pre-war attitudes, but the new factor in the situation was the existence of a national government that could now be blamed for mistreating the Latgalian population (as the Tsarist government could no longer be). Although amongst the parliamentary political “élite” of the country MPs from the several regions worked well together, outside of political circles a certain degree of low-level cultural friction persisted within the general population. Fueling this friction was a widely shared assumption about the purposes for which the Latvian state had been founded, namely, it was responsible for safeguarding Latvian-language cultural life, particularly the language itself. Most people expected language, education, and cultural expression to be standardised with the help of state subsidies in these domains. The “middle” Latvian dialect, which for many decades was generally preferred, now consolidated its position; the intelligentsia in the inter-war years used it for the vast bulk of its written output. Though publications in the Latgalian variant continued and expanded in number and variety, increasingly the special way of speaking and writing

prized by many Latgalian intellectuals was turning into a regional curiosity, a situation that could only breed resentment in the region and in the national arena. In spite of this, the renovation of the Latgalian literary tradition continued, as perhaps a dozen or so accomplished writers determinedly used Latgalian in their creative work, however small their national audience turned out to be.¹⁴

Regional frictions were far from being the main concern in inter-war Latvia, of course. The economic effects of the worldwide depression in the early 1930s, growing uncertainty about the balance of power in Europe, and the seeming ineffectuality of parliamentary government were all sources of worry, as was the growing sense among the most nationalistically minded in the titular nationality—Latvians—that they were not as fully in control as they deserved to be. Statistics concerning national wealth underlined the prominence of Baltic Germans and Jews as owners of business enterprises and as highly successful practitioners of some professions such as medicine. This situation seemed particularly galling to those Latvians who envisaged their country's spiritual strength to lie in a strong agrarian sector, and who had hoped that the Agrarian Reform Law of 1919–20 (which confiscated the estates of Baltic German large landowners and redistributed the land to smallholders) would wholly dislodge this minority from its still-influential position within Latvian society. Many desired cultural and linguistic uniformity in the Latvian state, and for them Baltic Germans and Jews were not part of the *tauta* and their visibility was worrisome. Latgale's population (which by 1935 had less than 2/3 [61.3%] Latvian-speakers) in many ways symbolized the problem. There was little outright hostility toward Latgale, but the region's image continued to linger, even though in important ways Latgale was in fact becoming more like the rest of Latvia. The Agrarian Reform Law, for example, which continued to reshape the Latvian countryside until 1937, had special meaning for Latgale. By 1939 some 4,730 of the region's hamlets had been dispersed and reconfigured as 69,616 new individual farmsteads (Latv. *viensētas*).¹⁵ These socio-economic changes, however, were not accompanied by changes in the cultural superstructure of the region. Catholicism remained solidly institutionalized in the Latvian portion of the Latgalian population; the Russian-speaking population, primarily Old Believers who had resided in the region for almost two centuries, showed no sign of wanting to change their religious orientation; and the Jewish communities remained steadfastly committed to their faith. The diversity of Latgale appeared to be unchangeable. Yet after 1934 and the governmental coup by the Agrarian leader Kārlis Ulmanis, the slogan of "national unity" dominated and cultural differentiation, however expressed, was discouraged.¹⁶ No overt effort was made to prohibit outright the use of Latgalian, but both its spoken and written forms could be surrounded by opprobrium and their use in schools almost disappeared. During the Ulmanis years the Latgalian regional press lagged and books in Latgalian diminished

in number, to the extent that later these years were referred to by Latgalian intellectuals as the “second period of print prohibition”. The Ulmanis regime did not last long enough, however, for this aspect of its cultural policy to have deep consequences. By the end of the 1930s, Latgale remained a highly distinctive region in many of its characteristics and offered its inhabitants an additional source of collective and personal identity alongside the national identity required by the republic itself.

4. The return of disarray: region and identity in Soviet and Post-Soviet times

The Ulmanis years ended when Latvia was occupied by and incorporated into the USSR during the summer of 1940. A year later the country was invaded and occupied by the armed forces of the Third Reich from 1941 until 1944; re-occupation by the USSR was completed by the spring of 1945. The first period of Soviet occupation (1940–41) and the German period (1941–45) brought not only substantial material destruction to Latvia, including Latgale, but also radically changed the population structure of the country. The Baltic German sub-population (which in Latgale was small) was almost eliminated as a result of their forced relocation in the autumn of 1939 to the western sectors of German-occupied Poland. The Jewish population, relatively large in Latgale, was nearly extinguished by the Holocaust of the German years, especially during the mass murders in the summer and autumn of 1941. Beginning immediately after the Second World War, the continuing immigration of thousands of Russian speakers established a long-term trend; over the next half-century the Latvian proportion of the country’s population diminished to about 52% in 1989 (in Latgale to about 43%). This reduction of the Latvian population was accompanied by (and to a great extent the result of) many interacting socio-economic and cultural processes: continuing rural-to-urban migration (from all regions to Riga and from the rural areas of all regions to its urban centres), an increase in inter-ethnic marriages, the growing dominance of the Russian language in most sphere of everyday life, and a massive reorganization of agricultural production and rural living patterns.

The war years also saw the continuing creation of new sources of collective identity: in August 1940, the inhabitants of Latvia were forced to assume the status of “Soviet citizens”, while in July 1941, the German invaders created an entirely new political entity *Ostland* from the territories of the former Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Belarus. By the end of the war *Ostland* had disappeared, never having had any permanent significance, but the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic (previously established in August 1940) had returned. Identification with the interwar Latvian republic became dangerous, and the Latvian Communist Party’s propaganda trumpeted the arrival a new Motherland (Lat. *Dzimtene*)—i.e. the USSR—membership of which purported to transcend all local and regional identities and by

definition be superior to any lesser ties. Because the shifts of these politically defined and imposed collective entities followed one another so quickly, there is much reason to doubt their efficacy in accomplishing permanent changes in group identity among Latvians. In fact, the Latvian Communist Party continued to fulminate against the ever-present dangers of “bourgeois nationalism” within Party ranks and in the general population; it feared the memory of and perhaps silent association with the interwar republic in the minds of the older generations, as well as regionally oriented loyalties in the new regime. In 1959 the Latvian Party purged itself of members (the so-called national communists) who were suspected of believing that Moscow-initiated policy should be made palatable to the inhabitants of each Soviet Socialist Republic. Party cadres worked tirelessly to destroy the public’s memory of all other collective identities and urged vigilance against the recrudescence of such memory in private thinking.

Both the German and Soviet occupying forces during the Second World War had practised a limited tolerance toward the existence of Latgalian peculiarities, probably as a tactic meant to divide the regional population from the rest of Latvia’s residents. According to Nazi racial theory, however, the heavy Slavic influence rendered Latgalians much less desirable candidates than western Latvians for eventual Germanisation. At the same time, the German authorities in 1943 did permit, while retaining strict control, Vladislavs Locis to establish a Latgalian publishing house in Daugavpils, which during its relatively short existence managed to publish thirty works in Latgalian before Locis emigrated to Germany in 1944. For the Moscow-oriented planners of the USSR, cultural and linguistic (e.g. superstructural) features of the republics had relatively little significance because they could easily be overridden and rendered harmless through coercion. That the Soviet government cared little for Latvian or Latgalian sensitivities in geopolitical matters was demonstrated in 1945 when the Abrene district in northeastern Latgale was separated from Latvia and added to the RFSR. This was a clear sign that the Latvian SSR in its entirety was merely a region of the USSR with boundaries being adjusted according to the needs of Moscow party chieftains. Moreover, the use of the Latgalian language in official settings was essentially banned during 1948–50. Thus Latvia along with Estonia and Lithuania gradually became marginalised, with Latgale concurrently becoming a periphery of a periphery.

During the half century of Soviet rule, regional sensibilities generally and their Latgalian variant did not disappear but were decidedly muted. The Communist Party of Latvia and the Soviet government in Moscow had little reason to encourage the perpetuation of loyalties to any subsection of the internally complicated USSR; rather, Marxism-Leninism rewarded a reorientation toward “internationalism”, that is, loyalty to an abstract “Soviet” society that used as its medium of expression the Russian language and regarded Russians and Russian culture as more advanced. Party slogans

encouraged the view that the subpopulations of the giant Homeland were interchangeable; using the model of “the new Soviet man”, self-reconceptualization was encouraged. At the same time, the slogan “national in form, socialist in content” appeared to offer some degree of tolerance of local undertakings, which in turn validated the continuing reality of regions in the Latvian SSR. Although a kind of a practical middle course in the formulation of “nationalities policy”, this approach was still dictated from above. In Latvia, this meant for example, continued funding of an open-air ethnographic museum in which descriptions of exhibits clearly made the link, by name, between material culture and Latvia’s “historic regions”. The tradition of quadrennial song festivals continued, with the program now including not only Latvian music but also that of other “fraternal peoples” (usually sung in Russian) while choir members wore regional folk costumes. On the other hand, too strong an expression of regional sentiments was frowned upon: thus, for example, historians of the Latgalian experience during Soviet times now speak of a “third period of book prohibition”, that is, the Party’s general but unwritten ban on publications in Latgalian. Of course, it was nearly impossible to ban spoken Latgalian, and from the later memoir literature dealing with the Soviet years it is obvious that the spoken variant remained very much alive. If strong feelings about the Latgale region had survived from the interwar period or were felt toward Latgale by younger populations, these had to be expressed in indirect ways—artistic design especially in ceramics, stubbornness in the face of the Party’s militant atheism, retention of the ability to shift linguistic codes in everyday situations, birthplace visits that took on the trappings of private pilgrimages, and continuing commitment to the institutions of the Catholic Church.

The pre-Second World War frictions focused on Latgale, however, found a new venue during the Soviet years among the approximately 200,000 Latvians who fled the country in the autumn of 1944 before the advancing Soviet army. This number included many of the most important pre-war Latgalian intellectuals, religious leaders, and political activists. Rather than being diluted by the refugee experience, however, activism in fact intensified, first in Germany’s post-war displaced persons (DP) camps, and then in the new homelands the Latvian DPs chose for themselves after the so-called great dispersal out of Germany during 1949–51. A Latgalian publishing centre re-emerged in Munich, West Germany, as did the Latgalian Research Institute; both launched a remarkably high degree of cultural activity. Yet it was difficult for these Latgalian writers, historians, and cultural activists to establish a strong presence in émigré communities because, under constant assimilation pressures, the émigrés emphasized cultural and linguistic unity; the vast majority of émigré publications were in “standard Latvian”, and authors who retained a love of its Latgalian variant became adept at writing and publishing most of their works in standard Latvian, even while featuring in it Latgalian themes. Still, for a number of talented writers in exile, defence

of the Latgalian literary tradition became something like a holy mission. In this view, writing in other variants of Latvian constituted betrayal, and the loyalists castigated the émigré Catholic Church for its decision to hold Catholic services in standard Latvian (even while in the Latvian SSR, in Latgale, the Church continued to use Latgalian). They also criticized Kārlis Ulmanis (who, by contrast, was becoming a heroic figure in the memories of other Latvian émigrés) for promulgating negative policies toward Latgale when he was in power. For this subset of a subset of the Latvian diaspora population many of the interwar disputes and resentments continued, but they were barely audible in the émigré communities much less to outsiders. The new socio-cultural contexts in which Latgalian exiles now lived and worked, of course, were in many ways more threatening (even if, ironically, more tolerant); a hardening of Latgalian identity was therefore an understandable response. In spite of all these internal disputes, however, the Latgalian literary effort in exile was astonishingly successful, continuing the pre-war momentum and keeping Latgalian writing alive when in the Latvian SSR it had virtually disappeared.¹⁷ By the 1980s, however, these energetic émigré generations of loyalists had died or otherwise moved off-stage, as the intensity of Latvian diaspora culture was diminishing through attrition of both its creators and its audience.

Latgale became a strong candidate for a regional identity once again during the Latvia “singing revolution” in the late 1980s, as the Soviet system permitted regionally focused and regionally based organisations (NGOs); the Riga Latgalian Society, for example, was founded in December 1988. To be sure, such bodies had take a backseat to more pressing matters, since the renewal of independence in 1991 required attention to the creation a new legal system, the final withdrawal of Russian armed forces, and settling the citizenship question. Candidacy for NATO and EU membership had to be tended to as well. Nonetheless, the names of the four “historic regions” of the country—Kurzeme, Zemgale, Vidzeme, and Latgale—were revived, although somewhat gradually. There was a touch of the anomalous if not the anachronistic about these regional terms: they were used by the new national government for statistical, planning and juridical purposes, but there were no administrative boundaries precisely defining the geographic space they referred to. The people within these ill-defined spaces could once again proudly assert their belonging to them, but there was no way to formalise that belonging. In fact, demographic trends suggested that the hold of the historic regions over their residents was diminishing, as constant internal migration out of all of them, particularly Latgale, resulted in negative annual population growth after 1991 year after year. The beneficiary from these internal movements, predictably, was Riga and its environs; about a third of Latvia’s population lived there by 2010.¹⁸ More ominously, major population outflow from the regions and *from the country as a whole* began in 2007 (est. 200,000 by 2010). The motives for outmigration varied, and departure from one’s

place of birth did not necessarily mean the immediate abandonment of personal or collective identification with a region; one in fact could say that regional identity had become portable.

In the post-1991 decades two other “historic” collectivities vied with Latgale for public attention. The territory assumed to have been populated by the pre-Christian Selonians (Latv. *sēli*) had strong proponents but remained largely undefined.¹⁹ The Livonians (Livs; Latv. *lībji*) had mostly latvianised over the centuries, but their cultural legacy, based on their Finno-Ugric language, had managed to retain an impressive presence through choral groups and language programs (the latter being of great interest to Estonians and Finns). Generally speaking, though, Latgale as a region has continued to enjoy greater recognition among these competitors, especially in Latvia’s musical culture. Several recently formed popular singing groups explicitly advertise themselves as coming from Latgale, and in their recordings almost always include songs—sung in Latgalian—praising the beauty of the region or expressing some form of nostalgia for it. Even the well-known composer Raimonds Pauls authored music meant to please Latgalian ears. At the same time, literary compositions in Latgalian and academic studies of Latgale have increased in number and quality, the academic effort being recently crowned perhaps by Pēteris Zeile’s magisterial 750-page *Latgales kultūras vēsture (History of Latgalian Culture)*.²⁰

The puzzle of Latgale as a region has had no solution thus far.²¹ The complicated socio-cultural dynamics changing the eastern part of Latvia since 1991 continue, with the ultimate outcome unpredictable. Great effort has been invested during the post-1991 decades to re-legitimize Latgale’s distinctiveness. The focus has been on the variant of Latvian spoken there, the branch of Latvian literature written in Latgalian, the many-stranded history of the region, and even the theoretically interesting phenomenon of a “Latgalian ethnomentality”.²² There have even been attempts at turning necessity into virtue (probably for the eyes of western Europeans) through descriptions of Latgale’s ethnically differentiated population as an example of highly desirable “ethnic diversity” and “multiculturalism” (year 2000 census: Latvians 43%, Russians 40.4%, Poles 7.2%, Belorussians 6.0%, Ukrainians 1.5%, others 1.9%).²³ Yet the distinctiveness of Latgale no longer presents itself even to sympathetic readers in as graphic a manner as it did, say, after the new Latvian state was founded in 1918. Even seemingly knowledgeable descriptions occasionally seem contradictory: for example, *in the same recent publication*, one chapter reports that “approximate estimates show that the Latgalian language is used as a daily means of communication by about 150,000–200,000 people,” while another states that “the Latgalian language is not used in many Latgalian families anymore.”²⁴ Almost a century of dramatic changes have blurred not only the region’s boundaries but also its linguistic particularism; indeed, the characteristics of all “the historic regions” of the country can be located on a continuum. The

absolutisation of physical characteristics has lost its ability to impress, and place of birth does not appear to be as important a variable in everyday human affairs as it once was. Recent (2004–05) survey data for Latgale show that only about 42% of the current population, when asked about their “sense of belonging” to their place of residence, select 5 (highest score) on a 1-to-5 scale; and in the same survey, only 45% of the region’s population is reported to have lived there since birth.²⁵

One reading of this situation suggests that descriptions of Latgale as a distinctive region are slowly shifting their base: they are becoming less expressive of a deep emotional attachment to an actual place and more to the *idea* of a place. At the core of this idea stands the defence of Latgalian as a legitimate variant of literary expressions: the Latvian language thus is to be thought of as having two literary variants—Latgalian and what is sometimes referred to as the “common” or “joint” variant (Latv. *kopējā valoda*) of Latvian.²⁶ Proponents of such a two-variant Latvian language argue the point strongly and logically, and they are talented and articulate defenders of their position. At the same time, physical location in Latgale seems not to be a prerequisite for this position, and the defenders of Latgale’s identity as a region often live somewhere else, where they become vulnerable to the process of de-latgalisation. Resistance to this process requires extraordinary commitment, as the experience of the post-1944 émigré Latvians has shown. The process loosens ties between individual and place, even between collectivity and place. Place—in this case Latgale—becomes increasingly a location in memory, an object of nostalgic defence; its potency as a source of identity diminishes, and continuing identification with it requires increasingly more powerful and repeated acts of imagination. In time, such a troubled and devitalised sense of identity becomes difficult to transmit to future generations.

Notes

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1. That is, a deep horizontal comradeship of people who do not know and will know most of their fellow members; Anderson, 1991, p. 6.
2. Studies of European regionalism are many; for an introduction to the subject see Sorensen, 1995; Gastelaars and de Ruijter, 1998; Wagstaff, 1999; Telò, 2001; Kaplan and Häkli, 2002; Adams, Alden, and Harris, 2006. For a post-1991 look at the question among Latvian historians, see Misāns, Oberlenders, and Straube, 1999, particularly the essay by Misāns, pp. 83–86.
3. Mūrniece, 2010; Hirša, 2010; “Latgaļu valodas”, 2010.
4. The 586 page review by the National Language Commission of its work during the first fifteen years of renewed independence in implementing the National Language Law devotes two paragraphs (pp. 88, 290) to Latgalian. See Valsts Valodas Komisija, 2007.
5. Cibuļš, 2009, pp. 24–26.
6. Kursīte, 2005b, pp. 78–87. The exact meaning and origin of these two words remains something of a mystery, though historical linguists believe that neither much predates the twentieth century. *Čangaļi* is a plural term that is meant to refer to somewhat odd people who do things that are backward; *čiuļi* refers to clumsy, boasting people who do not seem to fit in; see Kursīte 2007, pp. 58–60 for a full discussion. In contemporary Latvian usage, however, these terms are more than likely to appear amidst good-natured banter; and the Latgalian pop-music group *Baltie lāči* (White Bears) has written a humorous song in which the origins of the term *čangaļi* is given a totally absurd explanation.
7. For their views see Kemps, 1910, 1991; Trasūns, 1997.
8. Bukšs, 1957, pp. 119–58.
9. Zeile, 2006, pp. 399–409.
10. Skujeneeks, 1922, pp. 197, 207.
11. Skujeneeks, 1922, p.2 23; Strods, 1989.
12. Kursīte, 2005a, pp. 17–20. For a fine case study of interwar integration policy see Purs, 2002.
13. Jēkabsons and Ščerbinskis, 2006, pp. 26–28; Šilde, 1976, pp. 386–419
14. Salceviča, 2005.
15. Dunsdorfs, 1991, p. 58.
16. Oļehnovičs, 2009.
17. Salceviča, 2005, pp. 111–41
18. Krišjāne and Bauls, 2006; Vītoliņš, 2006.
19. Stradiņš, 1999.

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20. Zeile, 2006.
 21. "Regional identity", 2002.
 22. Zeile, 2006, pp.285–98; Apine, 2002, pp. 22–31.
 23. Peipiņa, 2002, p. 99.
 24. First quotation from Soms and Ivanovs, 2002, p. 10; second quotation from Leikuma, 2002, p.41.
 25. Latvia. Human Development, 2004/2005, pp. 27, 34.
 26. Stafecka, 2004; Leikuma, 2008. For a detailed review of the current role of Latgalian in the systems of primary and secondary education, see Marten, Šuplinska, and Lagzdiņa, 2009.

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The Dancing Conference of Bulduri: A Clash of Alternative Regional Futures

Marko Lehti

Introduction

From today's perspective, the Baltic conference of Baltic states¹ held at Bulduri (Bilderlingshof)—a small spa town which is part of present-day Jūrmala—in August 1920 looks marginal and undeserving of too much attention. The Baltic states never managed to form any kind of alliance and thus their efforts to co-operate are regarded as a failure, a side-track to inter-war history. However, the idealism dominating the immediate post-First World War years is too often judged from the perspective of the Second World War, just as *Realpolitik* is accepted as a given norm of international relations. This paper argues that the Bulduri conference's significance lies not in what happened afterwards, but in the way its participants thought about the new bright future that was supposed to be under construction at the time. Consequently Bulduri offers an opportunity to look at an alternative future, and to point out that in the past there were different options and competing visions available to historical actors.

The Bulduri conference was in many respects a benchmark in multilateral co-operation and integrationist thinking. It was one of the first attempts to realize a new vision of regional co-operation and sovereignty through the integrationist ideal that prevailed in Europe immediately after the First World War. Several visions of a Europe-wide league or union were expressed by the likes of Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi and Aristide Briand, and regional co-operation was organised among (for instance) the so-called Little Entente countries and Balkan states. Nonetheless, the Bulduri conference and the co-operation it entailed between the Baltic states, was a pioneering event both in terms of timing and agenda. It represented an early effort to implement integrationist and multilateral policy in practice and, consequently, also highlights the difficulties encountered by such efforts. No diplomatic experience or tradition provided a template for how to organize this kind of meeting. Moreover, as the diplomats began their work, idealism clashed with more nationalistic and exclusive points of view.

The Bulduri conference also has obvious relevance to the twenty first century. The issues introduced at that multilateral conference, as well as the far-reaching goal of creating an integrated Baltic area, are self-evident in today's European Union, but ninety years ago it required great courage and far-sightedness to address such a program. Now, the Baltic Sea Area is once again the focus of efforts to establish regional co-operation, and although (once again) states have differing interests, there is also a prevailing and similar optimism about building a common regional future.

Further, in 1920 one of the major driving forces for generating regional co-operation was the absence of *de jure* recognition for the three Baltic States. The Europe of today again has countries without *de jure* recognition of their independence and thus there is a need to find alternative ways of entering into international relations and arranging everyday relationships. The Bulduri conference offers an interesting early example of how this could be achieved. But first and foremost the Bulduri conference offers an opportunity to juxtapose alternative regional futures as they were available at the time. Its story deserves to be told because it helps break the dominance of overly harmonious histories and challenges the idea that history could only have happened in the way that it did.

The future in unity

The first conference of Baltic states was held at Helsinki in January 1920. It involved Finns, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians and Poles.² Soon after Helsinki, the Latvians started preparations for the next conference and a special committee was appointed.³ In contrast to Helsinki, several issues that concerned everyday relations between states were included in the preliminary conference agenda and the idea of integration was emphasized. In February, the Latvians listed the issues to be discussed under the rubric of Baltic co-operation: the arbitration of border conflicts, the role of the court of arbitration in their relations, the arrangement of copyright and inheritance legislation, the campaign against infectious diseases,⁴ the outline of the principles of a common social policy, the co-ordination of railway and maritime communications, the organisation of postal and telegram communications, the regulation of customs duties and trade links, and, finally, the drafting of treaties on military and cultural issues.⁵ At the start of July, the Latvian government finally invited the other Baltic states to gather in Riga on 20 July. The Finns and Estonians were immediately ready to take part, but the Lithuanians and Poles hesitated. After a couple of days, the latter also communicated their acceptance, but the Poles wanted to change the date of the conference to the beginning of August.⁶

The Bulduri conference was called as a meeting of “Baltic states” (*des États Baltiques*) and the term referred to the whole Baltic Sea area. The Scandinavian countries were also invited to the conference. In Scandinavia, however, a negative attitude was taken towards this initiative and the Swedish foreign minister, Erik Palmstierna, regarded the idea as ridiculous. Finally the Swedish, Danish and Norwegian foreign ministers rejected the invitation at their meeting in Kristiania, Oslo in May 1920. Still, on the eve of the conference, the Latvians waited and hoped that the Scandinavians would take part in the Bulduri conference after all—but they hoped in vain.⁷ Bulduri remained a final effort to bind the states on the western shore of the Baltic Sea into Baltic co-operation.

Instead of coming from the West, the states which were interested in taking part in the conference came from the East. On 20 August, with the event already underway, Belarus and Ukraine asked permission to join the conference. Only the application of the latter was accepted, the main reason for this being the close Ukrainian relationship with Poland. Ukraine had, in practice, already been conquered by the Bolsheviks and the Ukrainian government was without a territory of its own.⁸ The Ukrainian application was not accepted unanimously, with the Estonians stressing that Ukraine was not a Baltic Sea country at all and its participation would change the Bulduri conference from being a Baltic conference into a conference of Russian border states.⁹

On 6 August 1920, the delegations of Estonia, Latvia, Finland, Lithuania and Poland gathered and a conference, which lasted the whole month, began. In his opening speech, the Latvian prime minister, Kārlis Ulmanis painted a picture in which questions of a military alliance and even security policy were not to be distinguished especially from several other matters requiring Baltic co-operation.

“Ces questions, vous les connaissez déjà. Elles touchent a toutes les formes de notre existence, a l'amelioration de nos finances, de notre industrie, de notre commerce, de nos voies de communication, aux relations entre nos états, a la sauvegarde des droits d'auteur et des droits d'héritage, a la commune défense de l'indépendance de nos pays, comme au développement de notre culture littéraire, scientifique et artistique, condition primordiale de toute ascension et de tout progrès.”¹⁰

When the goals of the conference were being specified, political and military issues were held to be in harmony with economic and cultural questions as well as with issues concerning everyday relations. The final programme included almost a hundred different items which were divided into ten main topics: the organization of the conference, a military defensive alliance, an economic treaty, a political treaty concerning mutual relations, a political treaty concerning foreign relations, a legal treaty, a cultural treaty, a health treaty, a social treaty and propaganda.¹¹

“The formation of a league between the states we represent, which will ensure the economic development of our people and their external security” was the goal of the conference according to the Latvian president, Jānis Čakste. In the papers which the Latvians drew up, three different French terms on the proposed league of the Baltic states were used: *l'Union des États Baltiques*¹², *la Ligue Baltique*,¹³ and *l'Entente des États Baltiques*.¹⁴ Through terms like Union or League, reference was made to connections between the states than went beyond those of a traditional alliance. A military

alliance, however, was only one dimension in the projected Baltic League and the construction and maintenance of the sovereignty of the new Baltic states required—it was believed—co-operation in different social fields. A league was part of a general project for the reconstruction of the independent nation state in its totality. The origin of the idea dated back to the last year of the war when Baltic politicians in exile—Latvian Zigfrīds Meierovics, Estonians Ants Piip and Kaarel Pusta, as well as Finn Rudolf Holsti—launched the idea of the Baltic League in their discussions held in London.¹⁵

The statements of the Latvian foreign minister, Zigfrīds Meierovics, explained the logic behind the wide programme and what it was trying to achieve. At that time, Meierovics was the clear leader of Latvia's foreign policy and if we need to find one person behind the programme of the Bulduri conference, it was him. On the eve of the conference, Meierovics analysed the international situation in the light of emerging peace treaties between the Baltic states and Soviet Russia. His opinion was that, after the peace treaties, it was almost unnecessary to make an alliance against Russia because it no longer presented a threat. Such an alliance had been a main goal of the Helsinki conference, but for Meierovics, the greatest challenge for the future when constructing independence was to resolve several practical problems. For Meierovics, the unification and integration of the Baltic states in matters of economic and everyday relations seems to have a goal in its own right. It was part of the process of constructing a sovereign nation state and thus successful state-building required the creation of a Baltic League. This league was not primarily a military alliance. More important than military co-operation was integration on economic and social questions. As a concrete example, he mentioned the monetary union of the Baltic states. So Meierovics was aiming to construct a political-economic-social union, which was not directed to repel an attack from the East but was to help the internal building-process of these new states.¹⁶

In the official journal of the Latvian foreign ministry, an editorial was published on 22 August, which reflected the same atmosphere and the same interpretation of the necessity of integration as a means to promoting state sovereignty. In the editorial, it was suggested that the development of mankind to a higher level proceeded through the union of nations. The main point was that the liberation of nations from empire should not lead to isolation and withdrawal. Rather than disintegration and isolationism, especially in economic issues, the modern world needed the integration and association of states. Progress towards a union of states should be a common goal. The Bulduri conference was believed to be constructing just such an ideal world.¹⁷ At a time when the development of the whole international system—or at least that in eastern Europe—was oriented towards unions of states, the Baltic League was not an abandonment of something important

(i.e. political independence) but a natural step in the evolution of international relations and a necessary condition for the construction of a full sovereignty.

The Latvian discussion had, however, its own discords and there were those who emphasized more than Meierovics the significance of a common defence and military alliance, and who saw economic integration only as a method of achieving this end. In the 1920s, the borders of a nation state were seen as exclusive dividing-lines and Baltic co-operation was needed precisely to secure the integrity of these boundaries.¹⁸ So the Latvian discussion contained two quite different views on the Baltic League. One discourse, based on the wider interpretation of the League, emphasized how the defensive alliance was only a part—and not necessarily a crucial part—of a much wider league or union, while another, more limited discourse, understood the defensive alliance as a goal in itself.

As in the Latvian discussion, the Estonian discussion contained two main interpretations of co-operation: a wider definition and a more limited definition. In contrast to the Latvian situation, official circles in Estonia particularly emphasized the significance of a military alliance. In meetings of the Estonian government led by Jaan Tõnisson and in the Estonian delegation to Bulduri, a military treaty emerged as a top priority. The significance of other issues was not, however, denied completely and statements on other questions were carefully drafted in the foreign ministry ahead of the conference; yet the government displayed a surprisingly restrained attitude towards several of the economic and political issues aired at Bulduri. It was afraid that different economic treaties would constitute a threat to Estonian economic sovereignty.¹⁹ However, Kaarel Pusta, one of the creators of the Baltic League idea, led the Estonian delegation at the conference and this did, of course, have some influence on Estonian policy.²⁰

Nevertheless, Estonian political debates also involved opinions similar to those of Meierovics. In the Estonian newspaper *Vaba Maa*, an organ of the Labour Party, it was stressed that political sovereignty without an independent economic base was impossible and that this could only be achieved through a Baltic League. Thus, establishing independence was both possible and necessary only in association with other states because unification would bring power.²¹

The Finns took their stand more unanimously on the traditional side of the discourse on sovereignty. Their attitude towards a variety of issues at Bulduri was very restrained, yet they wanted to retain their membership of the grouping to support “the pleasing zeal for stabilizing the state and organizing society” found among the Baltic states.²² A question put by a journalist of the *Helsingin Sanomat* to the Finnish delegation after the Bulduri conference portrayed well the general state of Finnish feelings about the event. The journalist was not at all satisfied with what the Finnish delegation said about the different economic, social and other issues, and so posed an uncertain question as to “whether the political questions were in the

end the most important ones at the conference”.²³ This showed how difficult it was for the Finns to understand the meaning of wider co-operation.

During the first twelve months after the First World War, two different discourses on the Baltic League and international relations clashed. One was supportive of the Rightist parties, relying on classic *Realpolitik* and emphasising security and sovereignty, while the other was supportive of liberal-leftists circles, applying a liberal-idealist worldview focused on peace and co-operation. In the case of Baltic co-operation, the former groups regarded a military alliance as the ultimate goal, while the latter wanted to build up a new Europe grounded on a more extensive union of nations.

Scenes of co-operation

From the outset, Bulduri distinguished itself from previous meetings of states from the Baltic region and marked a break with past practices, as it was a *multilateral* conference. Lack of experience of organising this kind of forum caused several problems, but the hosts did their best to offer excellent frameworks for discussion. The Latvians had staged the conference as a start to long-term preparations for laying the foundations for a future unity of Baltic states. The host country had sent out the programmes before the conference to all participants, which meant that they had enough time to prepare their own viewpoints.²⁴ There were almost forty participants in total, since the size of the delegations varied from five from Finland to nine from Estonia. All these delegations were composed of different specialists, and there was enough time for long and detailed discussions since the conference lasted the whole month, ending on 6 September. There were no complaints about the general environment in which the conference took place and different participants praised both the place and the general atmosphere which accompanied the proceedings. In the hotel on the Bulduri shore, everything was arranged impeccably for the participants. Several foreign newspapers were ordered by the hotel and the latest telegraphic equipment was installed. Special rooms decorated with Latvian art were also reserved for every delegation.²⁵ This decoration reflected well the strong national feeling characteristic of these young nation states. The representative of Great Britain, Stephen Tallents, who participated as an observer, described the conference as follows:

“The Latvian Government have retained for it [the conference] an excellent hotel at Bilderlingshof, on the Baltic coast, about 15 miles from Riga, and there, in conditions strongly reminiscent of the Hotel Majestic, the five delegations both live and work. I paid an informal visit to Mr. Albat, the General Secretary of the Conference, in this hotel last night, and was amused to find that even the usual after-dinner dance for the young ladies who surround the deliberations of the Conference

had not been forgotten. The several delegations meet on amicable terms, and even the Polish and Lithuanian representatives are reported to engage during official meetings in occasional humorous repartee.²⁶

The hosts had not forgotten amusements. Participants enjoyed several dinners and concerts held in Riga. The whole cream of Latvian political and diplomatic society attended these events, and so they provided an excellent forum for unofficial discussions and the exchange of information. On one occasion, a dinner held by the Latvian president even lasted until one o'clock in the morning.²⁷

The atmosphere of the conference and its long duration created a situation in which new personal contacts emerged automatically and old ones were strengthened. However, there was one obstacle to the creation of really important relationships. The length of the conference also imposed practical limits on the participation of the most senior leaders of the Baltic states. Foreign ministers could not stay a whole month in a foreign country when other important negotiations were also underway. During the Bulduri conference, the Finns, for example, were engaged in peace negotiations with Soviet Russia at Tartu. As a result, only the hosts, the Latvians, were always represented at the ministerial level. The Estonian delegation was led by their minister in Paris, Kaarel Pusta, while the Poles were led by Leon Wasilewski, an associate of Pilsudski, as had been the case at Helsinki. Neither of these was a government minister but, on the other hand, they belonged to their country's political élite. Lithuania and Finland were represented at a lower political level; the Lithuanian delegation was led by the head of protocol of the foreign ministry, Dr. Jurgis Saulys, and the Finnish delegation by the head of the economic department of the foreign ministry, Leonard Åström.²⁸

The Finnish and Lithuanian delegations lacked authority to negotiate on big questions and Åström himself, for example, was forced to ask advice from Helsinki all the time. Telegraph connections did not always work and quite often answers arrived too late so that the delegation at Bulduri had to make *ad hoc* decisions. That is why the Finns mostly tried to put the brakes on the conference and to outline different resolutions in such vague ways that they had little practical significance. Members of the Lithuanian delegation were forced to travel to Kaunas during the conference to ask advice, but they did at least receive it.²⁹

The variety of authorities exercised by the delegations and the different political statuses of the participants presented a problem for the conference. The host country had drafted a programme which included both big questions of principle and small technical matters, and involvement had been expected both of senior political leaders and specialists.³⁰ The delegations which arrived at Bulduri were, however, composed mostly of officials rather than ministers and so lacked the capability to handle really big

questions. The situation led to an unresolved contradiction between the programme and the delegations, which in turn had a poor effect on the results of the conference. Bulduri provided the best of conditions for dogged work by specialists, but the existence of a certain confusion about the aims of the conference, not to say the gap between a political summit and the meetings of the specialists, caused many practical problems.

Towards an integrated Baltic region

A closer examination the Bulduri programme reveals the sort of system which the Latvians wanted to construct between the Baltic states, while the reactions of the different participants to several details of the programme show which parts of it they were ready to accept. All in all, the scope of the issues put on the table during the conference was surprisingly wide. The conference was divided into three committees dealing with political and legal questions, economics and, lastly, cultural, social and health issues. They outlined proposals and resolutions for the conference.³¹ The proposals and draft decisions may be divided into four main groups. The first related to the implementation of international treaties and new practices; the second involved decisions and recommendations aiming to create closer mutual contacts; a third group of decisions related to the external situation of the states; while the last category aimed to generate more effective propaganda for the Baltic group.

The first group of decisions related to the introduction in the eastern Baltic Sea area of practices and treaties regulating the European state system. A good example of these is the resolution on contagious diseases made on 21 August. In this agreement, the participants bound themselves to follow the 1903 Paris treaty. In the light of that treaty, the Baltic states promised to inform each other of all epidemics, including plague, cholera, smallpox and typhus. The same rules also applied to livestock diseases.³² These questions were significant in the chaos that followed the Russian revolution and the Russian civil war. Epidemics affecting people and livestock were still an on-going problem in the Baltic Sea area in 1920. The cause of cholera had been found in 1883, but its epidemics still had not been conquered. The situation became more chaotic because of the internal Russian situation since new plague epidemics—including typhus—were spreading westwards from Russia as refugees returned home from that country having been evacuated by the imperial army during the First World War.³³

There were other similar decisions and statements for adhering to international agreements. The economic committee did not draft treaties but made proposals that were not legally binding. These proposals expressed clear wishes about participating in different international initiatives—joining the international bureau of statistics in Brussels, adhering to the resolutions of The Hague conference on bills and cheques, approving the 1883 Paris treaty and the 1911 Washington treaty concerning patents.³⁴ Legal questions were

also arranged through a declaration about joining existing international treaties. In the matter of international civil law, the Hague treaty of 1905 was accepted. A special draft for a mutual copyright agreement was also drawn up. Similarly, the treaty on exchanges of prisoners confirmed mutual relations between the states.³⁵

The railway and postal conferences held after Bulduri adopted the same line over accepting established international practices. The representatives of the post offices had their own conference in Riga at the end of September and drafted a treaty regulating postal traffic between the states. Naturally it aimed to regularise postal communications, including the parcel post. In effect it was introducing the practices of the International Postal Union into the eastern Baltic area.³⁶ The Baltic railway conference was held in Helsinki at the start of October and it was decided to observe the Berne international railway agreement of 1890.³⁷ All international or inter-state railway traffic presupposed regulations about timetables, transit stations and changes of wagon; adopting the existing agreement was the easiest way of regulating Baltic traffic.

At Bulduri and its ancillary conferences intentions were declared to join eleven international treaties, regimes, institutions or codes of practice. The significance of the initiatives lay in their importance for the creation of normal, everyday relations between states. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the development of modern technology had made the world smaller and its innovations had linked states together. Different ties created by the new technology, such as the railways or postal communications, also required regulation between the states. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, a network of different international treaties and institutions was created in Europe to regulate and control these interactions.³⁸ Because the Baltic states did not form their own units within the Russian empire, they had to start constructing their independence from scratch, including every kind of infrastructure. Most of the infrastructures which were so natural and self-evident for established states were absent altogether in the Baltic states, and this made them very conscious of the different treaties and institutions regulating everyday relations. The absence of international recognition of the Baltic states, however, imposed its own restraints. Normal, regulated everyday relations were one way of expressing sovereignty and this was not possible for them, because under international law they were still incapable of signing international treaties. So the Baltic conferences offered the only possible forum for introducing the necessary regulations. If it were not possible to join existing treaties and international institutions, the best possible solution was to arrange these everyday relations independently and on the regional level. Regional co-operation between the Baltic states served as a means for entering full membership of the European state system. But the ultimate significance of the decisions and recommendations made at Bulduri was not for the future; in that fateful

situation of the summer of 1920, regional co-operation offered, above all, an important means of expressing sovereignty.

The second group of decisions included, for instance, the programme for increasing contacts between scientific institutions and concerning the Arts. The need to unify navigation and aviation regulations, also the need to start collaboration between meteorological institutions, were mentioned—as were other similar issues. A long list of recommendations was outlined on economic questions. Most of these involved quite vague statements about unifying the different practices between the Baltic states or simply promoting co-operation. Questions involved, for example, customs, finances, the banking system, patents, agriculture, fishing and meteorology. Basic conditions for improving mutual trade were examined and monetary union was again mentioned as a means of developing economic co-operation. The long-term goal of the Latvians' programme seemed to be the creation of a unified economic area among the Baltic states involving uniform customs, tariffs and currency.³⁹

The endeavour aimed at enlarging and consolidating the scope of co-operation through the establishment of special common institutions. A new council of representatives of the Baltic states was to be founded in Riga to act as a new co-ordinating institution for the whole field of co-operation. The council was supposed to negotiate unfinished questions, promote the acceptance and realisation of resolutions, draft preparations for the next conference and outline its budget. The goal was to create a permanent institution which would symbolise the unity of the Baltic group of states.⁴⁰ The organisation of special conferences on railway issues, on postal and telegram communications, and liaison between military representatives were all felt to be necessary. The first two projects were realised soon after the Bulduri conference and so it was decided to hold a Baltic conference of specialists to develop and organise this type of co-operation.⁴¹ New central bureaux were also planned, including the *Eisenbahn Centralbureau der baltischen Staaten*—an institution for co-ordinating mutual traffic and transit.⁴²

Several decisions, agreements and proposals made at the Bulduri conference focused directly on internal questions of the Baltic states. For example, recommendations were made for labour protection and a banking system, also there was a draft treaty for a nationality law. Although these recommendations were not true treaties between states, the spectrum of issues under discussion was surprisingly wide, as was shown by the very detailed proposal for a law on labour protection. The jointly-prepared draft of a nationality law was equally surprising, because a definition of nationality was one of the key issues for the new nation states. Here, the right to nationality was reserved for those persons whose parents and ancestors had lived in the country. For newcomers, five years' permanent residence before the war was expected. After the First World War, however, nationality questions did not

constitute a matter of principle in the way that they did after the Cold War in the 1990s.⁴³ The need for recommendations of this kind and draft treaties becomes more understandable when it is remembered that, except for Finland, all of the other Baltic states lacked their own legislation. Its very making was therefore also a crucial expression of sovereignty.

The fourth group of decisions was the smallest. This comprised efforts to organise joint propaganda abroad. At the general level it was to occur through common information offices in London and Paris, but also through special fields of activity like art and science. The aim was to propagate a picture of a united Baltic group, including in the West. In this way, these decisions served the same purpose as the three others—incorporation into the European state system, defining one's place in that system, and expressing in the only way possible the sovereignty of these unrecognized, young nation states.

As a whole, this system provided a plan for an economically, politically, socially and culturally integrated and unified Baltic society; but all participants were not ready to deal with all the questions proposed by the Latvians. The Estonians had a reserved attitude especially towards legal issues that were the concern of internal legislation and had a similarly negative view of proposals to remove mutual economic restrictions.⁴⁴ But it was the Finns who opposed most clearly of all scrutiny of small technical questions. In committee, they tried to outline resolutions so vague that they became insignificant, or they related them specifically to the existing Finnish situation so that Finland could approve the initiatives.⁴⁵ Finnish action was understandable because most of the technical questions at issue had been solved in Finland during the period of autonomy, when the country had already had the right to adhere to international treaties and institutions concerning everyday relations. Furthermore, Finland was recognized *de jure*. It thus had the chance to resolve these questions in the full international forum and there was no need for regional solutions. In questions of this nature, the Finns were only really interested in ones connected with mutual trade.

Efforts to create a mutual security community

The timing of the Bulduri conference was bad for political and military co-operation. Poland's eastern offensive, which had started in the spring, turned out to be a failure and the Red Army started a counter-offensive in the summer which saw them advance into ethnic Poland. On the eve of the conference, Moscow's troops were at the gates of Warsaw and the very independence of Poland was at stake.⁴⁶ In the Baltic States, the politicians were conscious that, if Warsaw fell, their independence, too, would be put in question. The situation was, however, in many ways contradictory. Poland's losses were unfavourable for the Baltic States but, on the other hand, there was no sense in helping Poland in its campaign. The Soviet representative in

Riga, Adolf Joffe, had even circulated a note saying that every ally of Poland would automatically be considered at war with Soviet Russia. Thus, the Latvians stated that an alliance would be possible only after all the participants had concluded a peace treaty with Soviet Russia. So a “wait-and-see” policy was the only possibility initially and Polish events were followed with great anxiety.⁴⁷

In mid-August, the situation on the Polish-Soviet front changed dramatically. The Poles launched a counter-attack on 16 August and after a couple of days it was clear that the Red Army was being forced to withdraw.⁴⁸ This change of fortunes influenced the atmosphere of the conference. Based on its military capacity, Poland had its authority restored and an open discussion of the Baltic alliance became possible.⁴⁹ This time Pusta made a suggestion on 21 August to start preparing for a Baltic alliance. A week later, on 28 August, the Latvians presented a draft treaty. It was discussed by committees a couple of days after this and the final treaty was signed on 31 August.⁵⁰

The final treaty was not itself a military alliance, which was already impossible because of the continuing Polish-Soviet war; its central purpose lay elsewhere. The participants still promised to start preparations for a defensive alliance without delay.⁵¹ A similar statement had already been made in the final protocol of the Helsinki conference and now one more step was being taken towards a more binding decision. The commitment to the preparation of the defensive alliance was not accepted without reservations. The Lithuanians were not ready to co-operate with the Poles, while the Finns did not feel it meaningful to undertake a binding commitment over this question before all the Baltic States were recognised internationally. After all, a commitment to a defensive alliance might mean standing in relative isolation on the side of the Baltic States and falling with them. On the other hand, the Finnish leadership did understand the need for security ties with the Baltic States and Finland was ready to help if Russia attacked them, although it was felt that no binding treaties were necessary. The commitment to a defensive alliance was, however, included in the Bulduri treaty by a majority decision.⁵² According to this paragraph, military representatives would continue with their negotiations after the end of the conference.⁵³

Mutual disagreements created something of a special atmosphere at Bulduri as had happened at its predecessor in Helsinki. At Bulduri, Estonia and Latvia engaged in a discussion about existing territorial disputes, but these negotiations did not have any serious effect on co-operation.⁵⁴ The main problem was still between Lithuania and Poland, and their open conflict left an impression on the whole conference. The situation had changed since the beginning of the year. The Red Army had conquered its war aim—Vilnius—from the Poles in mid-July. After that, the Russians had negotiated with the Lithuanians on returning the city to Lithuania—something which happened during the conference on 25 August

when Lithuanian troops replaced the Red Army. At that time, the Lithuanians were the party that wanted to preserve the existing situation and were willing to settle the conflict on that basis. The Poles, however, were not prepared to settle the question of Vilnius according to the *status quo*; so, suspicious feelings dominated Polish and Lithuanian attitudes towards each other. When, at Bulduri, the Poles supported a large-scale programme of co-operation, the Lithuanians chose instead the old policy of a triple alliance. They also withdraw from military co-operation because the Poles were participants.⁵⁵

At this time the resolution of the Polish-Lithuanian conflict and other mutual disagreements was not attempted through mediation, rather Bulduri witnessed a new method of controlling and regulating mutual relations. Of course, there was an unofficial discussion between the disputants, but a fresh official approach was introduced. The military alliance was a question of only secondary importance in the treaty of 31 August and altogether five paragraphs were devised to frame mutual relations. In the treaty the signatories were bound to resolve mutual disputes on borders and territories by peaceful means only and if no conciliation occurred, the issues had to be submitted to an outside authority. Further, the Baltic states made a commitment neither to allow their territories to be used for aggression against other the Baltic states, nor to conclude any treaties directed against them. The rights of national minorities belonging to the Baltic nations were also guaranteed. This latter paragraph obviously concerned the Polish minority in Latgale, whose rights Poland had tried to protect.⁵⁶ Behind the nationality paragraph it was possible to discern a new dimension in the sovereignty of the new nation states because this was understood to cover people of the same nationality wherever they lived. Hence, the Poles in Latgale were emerging as—effectively—under the protection of Poland.

The main aim of the treaty was to create a state of affairs between the eastern Baltic Sea countries in which all possible conflicts would be resolved peacefully. The history of the first months of independence explained why this kind of treaty was needed. There had been an inexcusably large number of mutual disputes during the first two years of independence and these had formed a significant obstacle to the development of co-operation. The situation needed to be transformed and the method which the treaty offered could be described as an effort to create a mutual security community.⁵⁷

The events that followed the conference showed there were very many reasons for trying to achieve that community in one way or the other. The Bulduri treaty was not however the right method—or at least it did not resolve the old disputes or prevent the emergence of new ones during the final months of 1920. Characteristic of the atmosphere after the Bulduri conference was the emergence of a new dispute on the *de jure* recognition of Latvia. The three Baltic States still lacked *de jure* recognition by the Great Powers, while even Poland and Finland—both generally recognised eastern

Baltic states—had not recognised Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. Finland made only one exception when it recognised Estonia on 7 June 1920. Poland and Finland had, however, promised at the Helsinki conference that they would support the *de jure* recognition of the Baltic States, and the same statement was repeated at Bulduri.⁵⁸

Finland, and especially long-term Foreign Minister Rudolf Holsti, had engaged in active propaganda for the recognition of the Baltic States in 1920, and this form of support surely helped influence the Western powers when they outlined their attitude towards the three Baltic States.⁵⁹ The Baltic States thus had at least one supporter among the European states. The Poles, however, wanted to gain advantages from recognition and the situation became critical at the end of October. At this time the Poles presented the Latvian government with their conditions for recognition. These were tough, including the creation of a defensive alliance with Poland, extraterritorial rights in Latvian harbours, modifications in land reform as it affected Polish landowners in Latgale, and cultural autonomy for Latvia's Poles.⁶⁰ The Latvian position was not, however, so desperate that the government felt compelled to accept the Polish ultimatum. This conflict, in any case, received a natural solution in January 1921 when the Western powers recognized Estonian and Latvian independence *de jure* and after that the Poles were forced to do the same without any conditions.⁶¹

The Polish-Latvian conflict was not the worst confrontation between Baltic states and the Polish-Lithuanian conflict took on even worse dimensions during the autumn. The conflict reached its peak on 9 October when General Żeligowski conquered Vilnius district which had been incorporated into Lithuania just a month and half earlier. Vilnius district was declared an independent Central Lithuanian Republic but everyone knew that in reality Piłsudski was behind the operation. The conquest of Vilnius finally broke Polish-Lithuanian relations and after this final episode there were no longer even postal or railway connections between these two countries.⁶²

The Polish-Latvian and Polish-Lithuanian conflicts showed clearly that the use of force had not been surpassed in the relations between the Baltic states, and that all dreams of common security were blown away within a couple of months of the Bulduri conference ending. In fact, perhaps there had never been so serious a set of conflicts between the states in the eastern Baltic Sea area as those occurring in the autumn of 1920. As a result, the foundations of the Bulduri treaty collapsed. Hence, there was no realistic possibility of the Bulduri treaty finally being ratified. Consequently, when the original deadline for signing arrived—the middle of December—, no state had verified the treaty. In January 1921, the Latvians finally declared officially that the Bulduri treaty had been dropped.⁶³

After Bulduri: the Baltic Council and beyond

Even if the Bulduri conference in many ways failed in its ultimate goals, it

did create some institutions of a new kind between the Baltic states. The most remarkable achievement undeniably was the creation of the permanent council of the Baltic states, an organisation that was envisaged as being a controlling and planning institution of Baltic co-operation in between big conferences.⁶⁴

The council held its first meeting on 7 September, a day after the conference ended and attention was focused on its methods and organisation. The Baltic Council held two further meetings the same month where the implementation of the Bulduri agreements was dealt with and the fate of Belarus discussed. The council met several times towards the end of the year and it tried to carry out the tasks given to it. The on-going conflicts were discussed several times, a budget was drawn up for the conference and council, the Finns and Poles informed the other states of their peace negotiations with Soviet Russia, the publicising of Bulduri's outcomes was discussed, and attempts were made to sort out traffic and transit questions. All these issues had been given to the council at Bulduri. Meierovics, the Latvian foreign minister, chaired most of the council's meetings. Estonia was represented by Aleksander Hellat (the Estonian minister in Riga), Lithuania by Dovas Launius, Poland by Witold Kamieniecki (the Polish envoy in Riga), and Finland by Reino Sylvander (the Finnish envoy in Riga). The Ukrainian representative, Mr. Kedrovsky, also participated in early meetings. The Latvians, the host-nation, took quite seriously the Baltic Council's work, while perhaps the others—at least the Finns—took part largely because they wanted to stay well informed about what was happening. The problem facing the Baltic Council, however, was that discussion and exchange of information were more characteristic of its work than the really effective implementation of the Bulduri agreements by all the participating countries.⁶⁵

Even if the influence of the Baltic Council on the realisation of the Bulduri agreements in all five Baltic states was a minor one, the organisation's existence was in itself important. The Council held seven official meetings during 1920 and continued to exist into the following year. After a break lasting two and a half months, it met on 5 March 1921 when the next Baltic conference was discussed. The most dramatic subject of mutual deliberation was, however, the conquest of independent Georgia by the Red Army—an event which aroused fears among the Baltic States just as happened ninety years later in the wake of the Russian-Georgian War of August 2008. The Baltic Council even drew up its own note on that question as the Baltic politicians did 87 years later.

During the spring of 1921, the Baltic Council held six official meetings in which it reverted to the question of implementing the mutual treaties. In addition to the official meetings, it assembled on ten further occasions. Both Lithuania and Poland were still participating in the organisation even in March 1921, when the Lithuanians finally stayed away. At the same time, the Finnish representative, Reino Sylvander, stopped

participating in every meeting. The Baltic Council was never officially abolished, but its last general meeting was held on 25 April 1921. Even so, two further meetings were held in the autumn of 1921, but it is unclear whether anyone other than the Latvians participated in these. Nonetheless, the Baltic Council represented an important symbol for the unity of the Baltic group of states. When Riga was the seat of the council, the Latvians could dominate its activities and managed to promote its relative success. Even so, it remained primarily a forum for discussion rather than a really effective planning organisation. This was particularly because participants other than the Latvians were not so eager to develop the council into an institution organising effective Baltic co-operation and so it was not used as a tool to coordinate foreign policy internationally.⁶⁶ But even with all of this said, in a period when relations between Baltic states were awkward, the very existence of the council was significant in itself.

At Bulduri, it was decided to form a council of military representatives too, but the fate of this body was different to that of the Baltic Council. The first meeting was planned for 1 October in Riga and it was originally intended that the representatives at the meeting would be given authority to draft a military treaty. Though the military council met, the different Baltic states reacted to it in different ways. The Lithuanians and Ukrainians did not send any representatives at all and Finland was represented only by its military attaché in Latvia, Colonel Karl Helsingius. The Estonian government, on the other hand, appointed Lieutenant-General Johan Laidoner and the chief of staff, General Paul Lill, which showed how ready they were for a military treaty. The military council, however, disappeared from view during the late autumn soon after its foundation when Polish-Latvian relations became strained.⁶⁷

The creation of a Baltic Council was an exception among the decisions taken at the Bulduri conference. As far as its decisions were concerned, the best results were accomplished over questions involving the adoption of international treaties and practices. But these achievements were not really realised for the sake of mutual co-operation *per se*, but because they were the necessary for sovereign states entering the European state system. Hence in this case the Bulduri conference was only really a means to an end. The worst results involved decisions and proposals relating to mutual relations between states, and most of these were never realised. Most of these proposals were so vague that they were easily forgotten and no mutual treaty was ratified in the form it was prepared at Bulduri. There were, however, a few recommendations that were put into effect. For example, the National Boards of Health did exchange monthly information on epidemics as was decided at Bulduri.⁶⁸ Also all the protocols and decisions of the Bulduri conference (leaving aside some political issues) were published in French by the Latvians—a step approved by other states in the Baltic Council.⁶⁹ This reflected the new, sincere diplomacy of the period and the public circulation

of the documents helped strengthen the image of a united Baltic group—even if the impression was not matched by the reality.

Consequently the Bulduri conference should not be regarded as a failure. At a time when the Baltic States had not yet received *de jure* recognition, it served as an important mechanism demonstrating the sovereignty of the young Baltic states. It also created the impression that something important was going on.⁷⁰

In the wider context, bringing up so large a variety of questions on economic, social and everyday relations was something exceptional in international co-operation. Within other quite similar state groups—for example the Little Entente—there was no similar initiative in the early 1920s. Hence the Bulduri conference marked a new opening in international relations. It reflected not only the attempt to organise everyday relations among Russia's successor states, but also the goal of achieving unification and integration. Thus, even if the Bulduri system never came into being, it tells us much about the expectations of the time and how European peace was conceptualised. For instance, the Bulduri system that was planned reflected the early idealistic views epitomised in the League of Nations according to which lasting peace should be best guaranteed through international organisation. At this moment, many prominent Baltic politicians looked towards integrationist and inclusive models of international political development. However, these integrationist views clashed with more nationalistic and exclusive ideas of security, with the result that, in the end, the Bulduri system could not be realised as a possible alternative future for the Baltic region.

Notes

1. “Baltic States” refers only to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, but “Baltic states” is a more open notion and may include also Finland and Poland.
2. Lehti 1999, pp. 243–59.
3. The minutes of the organizing committee, LVVA f. 1313, apr. 2, I. 63, Ip. 3; Letters concerning the drafting of the Riga conference, April 1920, ERA f. 957, n. 11, s. 422, I. 1–8; Eeltood Riia konwerentsiks, PO 28.2.1920; Balti riikide konwerents, PO 25.5.1920.
4. See also the article in this collection by Housden.
5. The minutes of the organizing committee, LVVA f. 1313, apr. 2, I. 63, Ip. 3.
6. Tallents’s report from Riga 6.7.1920, PRO 371/3620/452-453; Rumbold’s report from Warsaw 10.7.1920, PRO 371/3620/458–459.
7. Conférence des États Baltiques, Bulletin 3.8.1920. See also Revue de la presse (Latvijas Sargs), Bulletin 19.8.1920; The material concerning the preparations for the Bulduri conference, L VVA f. 1313, apr. 2, I. 64, pp. 3–8.
8. The minutes of the Bulduri conference 6–20.8.1920, MBC, 4, pp. 18–19. On Polish policy see Dziewanowski, 1969, p. 302.
9. The meeting of the Estonian delegation 6.8.1920, ERA f. 957, n. 11, s. 296, I. 21.
10. The minutes of the Bulduri conference 6.8.1920, MBC, 6. See also Baltijas walstu konference, BZ 8.8.1920.
11. Conférence de Riga. Projet d’ordre du jour, Bulletin 3.8.1920; Riia konverents paevakord, ERA f. 957, n. 11, s. 422, I. 9–10b.
12. Conférence de Riga. Projet d’ordre du jour, Bulletin 3.8.1920.
13. D’Helsingfors a Riga, Bulletin 4.8.1920.
14. La presse Lettone sur la conférence, Bulletin 5.8.1920.
15. Lehti 1999, pp. 121–27.
16. Les travaux de la Conférence Baltique (Meierovics’s writings), Bulletin 17.8.1920; Riia konwerents. Meierowitsh Balti liidust, WM 18.8.1920. See also Klive 1935, pp. 39–40; Rodgers, 1975, p. 17.
17. Vers une plus haute union des peuples, Bulletin 22.8.1920. See also Kas panahktas Bulduru konferenz?, BZ 5.8.1920.
18. La presse Lettone sur la Conference, Bulletin 5.8.1920; La presse Lettone et la paix, Bulletin 13.8.1920. Especially in the *Latvijas Sargs* was the significance of military cooperation stressed.
19. Material concerning the preparations for the Bulduri conference, ERA f. 957, n. 11, s. 422, I. 87; ERA f. 957, n. 11, s. 380, I. 1–34; The meeting of the Estonian delegation 11.8.1920, ERA f. 957, n. 11, s. 296, I. 24. The secret decision of the Estonian government nr 39 31.8.1920, ERA f. 31, n. 1, s. 14, I. 23; The Estonian government to the foreign minister 1.9.1920, ERA f. 957, n. 11, s. 378, I. 91.

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20. For Pusta's opinion on the Bulduri conference and generally on the Baltic Union, see Pusta 1927, pp. 11–13.
 21. Riia konwerents, WM 29.6.1920, Werner Liik, Balti riikide konwerents tööde lõpetamise puhul, WM 10.9.1920.
 22. Ulkoministerion poliittisen osaston tiedotuksia no.13 30.9.1920, KA, RHK 29; Memorandum on the resolutions of the Riga conference, KA, RHK 29; Instructions to the Finnish delegations at the Riga conference, UM 12 A 7.
 23. Balttilaisten maiden Riian konferenssi, HS 11.9.1920. The Bulduri conference was often called simply the Riga conference by contemporaries.
 24. Riia konwerents paevakord, ERA f. 957, n. 11, s. 422, I. 1–8. On Estonian preparations see also ERA f. 957, n. 11, s. 422, 1.87; ERA f. 957, n. 11, s. 380, I. 1–34.
 25. Balti riikide konwerentsi ruumidest Bilderlinghofis, PO 14.8.1920; Residence de la Conference Baltique a Bulduri, Bulletin 10.8.1920; Baltialaisten maiden Riian konferenssi, HS 11.9.1920.
 26. Tallents's report from Riga 23.8.1920, PRO 371/3621/335.
 27. Kirjeitä balttilaisten valtioiden konferenssista, HS 7.8., 26.8.1920.
 28. List of participants of the conference, ERA f. 957, n. 11, s. 668, I. 1.
 29. Telegrams between Astrom and the foreign ministry, KA, RHK 29. The tactics of the Finnish delegation sometimes looked even more negative than instructions would have required. The disjointed connections between Bulduri and Helsinki gave more power to the delegation at the conference and so with respect to Astrom it is clear that his personal attitude was a significant factor that influenced the work of the delegation. Astrom had been an opponent of the German orientation, but, on the other hand, what he had proposed as the alternative was a policy of turning Finland inwards. In his small book *Suomen valtiollinen orienteeruus* (The Orientation of the Finnish State), he did not even mention Estonia or other Baltic States and he was not regarded as being among the warmest supporters of the Baltic orientation. (Astrom 1918, 17–18.)
 30. Meierovics's telegram to Holsti, KA, RHK 29.
 31. The minutes of the Bulduri conference 6.8., 7.8., 9.8., 20.8.1920, MBC, 1–18.
 32. The memorandum on the resolutions of the Riga conference, KA, RHK 29; The minutes of the Bulduri conference 21.8.1920, MBC, 43, 48.
 33. Pesonen, 1980, pp. 382–84, 498, 521–22, 579–80.
 34. The minutes of the Bulduri conference 20.8., 3.9.1920, MBC, pp. 24–26, 77–83; The resolutions of the Riga conference on economic issues. Ulkoministerion poliittisen osaston tiedotuksia no 13.30.9.1920, KA, RHK 29.
 35. The minutes of the Bulduri conference 20.8., 2.9., 3.9.1920, MBC, pp. 20–21, 35–41, 57–61, 69–70, 84–92.

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36. Resolutions of the Riga postal conference and its draft treaty, UM 40 A Baltian maat; Memorandum 14.2.1922, UM 40 A Baltian maat; Postal conference of the Baltic states in Riga 17–26.9.1920, ERA f 957, n, 11, s. 297, I. 57–58.
37. The minutes of the railway conference of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Ukraine and Finland, UM 85 B.
38. Mangone, 1954, pp. 67–97; Pollard, 1974, pp. 49–51, 55, 118–21, 123–29
39. The minutes of the Bulduri conference, MBC, pp. 24–26, 43, 47–48, 69–70, 77–92; The railway conference of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Ukraine and Finland, UM 85 B; The resolutions of the Riga conference on economic issues. Ulkoministeriön poliittisen osaston tiedotuksia no. 13 30.9.1920, KA, RHK 29.
40. Tallents's report from Riga 7.9.1920, PRO 371/3622/38-39; Åström's memorandum, KA, RHK 29; Memorandum on the resolutions of the Riga conference, KA, RHK 29; The minutes of the Bulduri conference 6.9.1920, MBC, 103; Balti riikide wolnikude nõukogu, PO 10.9.1920.
41. The minutes of the Bulduri conference 20.8.1920, MBC, pp. 24–26; Memorandum on the resolutions of the Riga conference, KA, RHK 29; Åström's memorandum, KA, RHK 29.
42. The railway conference of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine and Finland, UM 85 B. Regional railway conferences were not exceptional during the post-war years but the idea of a common central bureau was unique.
43. The minutes of the Bulduri conference 3.9., 4.9.1920, MBC, pp. 72–76, 93–95. In the draft version of the nationality law the right to nationality was reserved to those persons whose parents and ancestors had lived in the country. For newcomers, five years' permanent residence before the war was expected. Nationality questions did not, after the First World War, form a similar question of principle as after the Cold War in the 1990s.
44. The meeting of the Estonian delegation 6.8.1920, ERA f.9S7, n.11, s.378, 1.89; the secret decision of the Estonian government nr 39 31.8.1920, ERA f 31, n.1, s.14, 1.23.
45. Ulkoministerion poliittisen osaston tiedotuksia no. 13 30.9.1920, KA, RHK 29; Memorandum on the resolutions of the Riga conference, KA, RHK 29; Instructions to the Finnish delegation, UM 12 A 7.
46. Dziewanowski, 1969, pp. 295–302; Zamoyski 2008.
47. Dziewanowski, 1969, p. 302; Arumae, 1983, pp. 49–51. Arumae has argued that the main aim of the Poles was to receive help. However, no sign of this kind of activity during the first critical weeks of the conference were seen. The Poles still perhaps aimed at guarantees from the Baltic States for a right of passage to the Polish troops led by General Żeligowski through Latvian and Lithuanian territories against the Red Army. A mysterious and obscure document is the only evidence preserved. (*Itämeren valtioiden*

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- kokouksen salainen sopimus* (The Secret Treaty of the Baltic States) 16.8.1920, KA, EK-VALPO XXXVII, folder 698; Baltijas waists konferenzes slepenais 16.8.1920, LVVA f. 1313, apr. 1, I. 155, Ip. 8. See also Tallents's reports 14.8, 6.8 .1920, PRO 371/3620/586-589, 371/3621/15-18. . 48. Dziewanowski, 1969, pp. 303-04; Davies, 1972, pp. 195-225.
49. On the general shift in the conference atmosphere see Dziewanowski, 1969, pp. 321-22; Hovi, 1980, p. 98. See also Tallents's report from Riga 23.8.1920, PRO 371/3621/308-22; Åström's telegram 25.8.1920, KA, RHK 29.
50. The minutes of the Bulduri conference 21.8.1920, MBC, 49-50; Åström's report 11.9.1920, KA, RHK 29.
51. The treaty of Riga, 31.8.1920, KA, RHK 29.
52. Instructions to the Finnish delegation at the Riga conference, UM 12 A 7; Minutes of the Bulduri conference, 31.8.1920, MBC, 52; Decisions of the Estonian government nr 39, ERA f. 31, n. 1, s. 14, I. 23; The meeting of the Estonian delegation at Bulduri 18.8.1920, ERA f. 1582, n. 1, s. 71, I. 10-13.
53. Tallents's report from Riga 31.8.1920, PRO 371/3621/422-40; Holsti's telegram 27.8.1920, KA, RHK 29; Åström's telegram 25.8.1920, KA, RHK 29. Military co-operation had its own difficult problems. The Poles and Latvians were afraid that the Lithuanians might use the information received for wrong purposes and the Lithuanians were afraid of the aims of the Poles.
54. Pusta's telegram 31.8.1920, ERA f. 31, n. 1, s. 1578, I. 337; Estonian delegation material concerning border questions, ERA f. 1622, n. 1, s. 296, I. 124-34.
55. The minutes of the Bulduri conference 31.8.1920, MBC, 53-54; Tallents's report from Riga 12.8.1920, PRO 371/3621/49-50; Rumbold's report from Warsaw 17.8.1920, PRO 371/3621/223-28; Pusta's telegram 31.8.1920, ERA f. 31, n. 1, s. 1578, I. 337. British observers saw the Poles as the main obstacle to the success of cooperation at Bulduri. On the general development between Poland and Lithuania see Senn, 1966, 32-36.
56. The treaty of Riga, KA, RHK 29.
57. The concept of *security community* was introduced by Karl Deutsch and it was not used by contemporaries but, on the other hand, it provides a concrete model for their efforts. The existence of this kind of community is, of course, a relative question, but it could be used as tool of study. The Nordic countries after the Second World War were for Deutsch an example of a security community. Deutsch, 1957, pp. 5-6.
58. The resolutions of the Helsinki conference, UM 12 A 2; Tallents's report from Riga 30.8.1920, PRO 371/3621/421-26; Holsti's telegram 25.8.1920, KA, RHK 29.
59. The resolutions of the conferences were given immediately to the British representatives. See Acton's report from Helsinki 24.1.1920, PRO

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- 371/3617/582–85. On Holsti's activity see Tallents's report from Riga 19.10.1920, PRO 371/5373/23–31.
60. For more detail on these demands see Tallents's report from Riga 26.10.1920, PRO 371/5373/32–37; Hovi, 1984, pp. 146–48.
61. Hovi, 1984, pp. 149–50.
62. Senn, 1966, pp. 49–51, 59.
63. Balti riikide liidu konstrueerimine wiibid, WM 10.1.1921; Balti riikide konwetsioonide saatus, WM 23.1.1921.
64. Credentials, LVVA f. 1313, apr. 2, I. 123, Ip. 2–5; Tallents's report from Riga 7.9.1920, PRO 371/3622/38–39.
65. The protocols of the meetings of the Baltic Council, LVVA f. 1313, apr. 2, I. 122, Ip. 9–34; Protocol of the list of names of the Baltic Council, LVVA f. 1313, apr. 2, I. 124, Ip. 2–7. On Finnish attitudes see Åström's memorandum, KA, RHK 29.
66. The protocols of the meetings of the Baltic Council I, LVVA f. 1313, apr. 2, I. 122, Ip. 9–72; Protocol of the list of names of the Baltic Council, LVVA f. 1313, apr. 2, I. 124, Ip. 2–7.
67. Memorandum on the resolutions of the Riga conference, KA, RHK 29; Åström's memorandum, KA, RHK 29; Sylvander's telegram 12.9.1920, KA, RHK 29; Holsti to the chief of staff 23.9.1920, KA, RHK 29; Helsingius's report 3.12.1920, Sark 1407/14; Holsti to the chief of staff 16.11.1920, KA, RHK 29. The decision of the Estonian government, ERA f. 31, n. 1, s. 215; The protocol of the Baltic Council 14.10.1920, LVVA f. 1313, apr. 2, I. 122, Ip. 23; Tallents's report from Riga 18.10.1920, PRO 371/5374/261–62. See also Skrzypek, 1972, pp. 69–71.
68. A good example was the Baltic postal treaty, which was drawn up in the postal conference held just after the Bulduri conference. The Latvians ratified the treaty on 3 January 1921, but no other nation followed them. See Piip's memorandum on the Riga conference, ERA f. 957, n. 11, s. 1127, I. 1–2; Settlement of the results of the Riga conference, ERA f. 957, n. 11, s. 379, I. 19; The list made by the Finnish Foreign Ministry on the Implementation of the Decisions of the Baltic Conferences, UM 12 A 2.
69. The minutes of the Bulduri conference 21.8.1920, MBC, 44; Bulletin 3.B. 5.9.1920; The protocol of the meeting of the Baltic Council 27.10.1920, LVVA f. 1313, apr. 2, I. 122, Ip. 27; Budget du Conseil des Delegates plenipotentiaires des Etats Baltiques, ERA f. 957, n. 11, s. 671, I. 3.
70. For the contemporaries' views, see, e.g., Kas panahktas Bulduru konferenze? BZ 5.9.1920.

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KA: Kansallisarkisto, Helsinki.

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Securing the Lives of Ordinary People. Baltic Perspectives on the Work of the League of Nations

Martyn Housden

More than just collective security

The League of Nations is best known for promoting “collective security”. The phrase, apparently, was coined by Czech politician Eduard Beneš in 1924, that is to say some years after the League had already begun addressing sources of international antagonism.¹ Collective security’s central elements were contained in the Covenant of the League of Nations, where—for example—Article 8 committed the organisation’s members to “the enforcement by common action of international obligations”. These obligations included mutual guarantees for the territorial integrity of member states, also a readiness to abide by given systems of conduct should international tensions arise. According to this approach, negotiations and arbitration, backed by the threat of economic or even military sanctions supported by the combined weight of the League’s membership, would dissuade a potential aggressor from disrupting the peace of the world.

Defined in this way, however, collective security did not encompass the full extent of the League’s efforts to prevent conflict and underpin peace. To some minds, it even risked being doomed to failure sooner or later since, as international relations stood in the inter-war period, no matter what you did, a rogue state might nonetheless decide to precipitate war at a time of its choosing. Given that the League had no independent armed force, it was impossible to guarantee against such an eventuality. Furthermore, since the League was no super-state able to control the actions of its members swiftly and easily, but an organisation of independent sovereign states each of which had to authorise its initiatives separately and individually, the solidarity required by collective security could not be taken for granted. So, rather than put too much faith in collective security, a selection of statesmen and thinkers aimed to do more than solve international disputes as they threatened to break out. They wanted to remove the very causes of war. This is why at least some proponents of the League of Nations did not just talk about “collective security”, but “the organisation of peace”.²

The idea behind “the organisation of peace” is easy to find in the minds of men such as Jan Smuts, Robert Cecil and Gilbert Murray.³ As Smuts put it in his early polemic in favour of a League of Nations:

“...there is no doubt that mankind is once more on the move. The very foundations have been shaken and loosened and things are again fluid. The tents have been struck, and the great caravan of humanity is once more on the march. Vast social and industrial changes are coming, perhaps upheavals which

may, in their magnitude and effects, be comparable to war itself. A steadying, controlling, regulating influence will be required to give stability to progress, and to remove that wasteful friction which has dissipated so much social force in the past, and in this war [i.e. the First World War] more than ever before. These great functions could only be adequately fulfilled by the League of Nations. Responding to such vital needs and coming at such a unique opportunity in history, it may well be destined to mark a new era in the Government of Man, and become to the peoples the guarantee of Peace, to the workers of all races the great International, and to all the embodiment and living expression of the moral and spiritual unity of the human race.”⁴

For someone like Smuts, the League had to do more than provide a vehicle for traditional diplomacy; it had to address emergent social and economic pressures in order to ensure they did not jeopardise international relations. In the process, it had to act on the basis of “human ideals” which included the “principles of freedom and equality”.⁵ Robert Cecil recognised something similar when he noted that the “products essential to the welfare and prosperity of mankind must by its [the League’s] agency be made available for all.”⁶ Anything else would lead to advantaged and disadvantaged living side by side, with all the attendant jealousies and instabilities that implied. In similar vein, and employing a memorable turn of phrase, Gilbert Murray voiced the increasing realisation that “no man can prosper in another’s ruin”. International arrangements simply had to take account of these realities of life.⁷

Smuts, Cecil, Murray and many others were clear that the post-war security order had to include efforts to foster the social and economic bases of peace. Like collective security, this idea was also expressed in the Covenant of the League of Nations, albeit in a more understated way. Article 23 called for fair and humane conditions of labour, justice for the native inhabitants of any given territory, measures against people trafficking and the drugs trade, and freedom of communications around the world; Article 25 demanded improvements to world health and a fight against human suffering around the globe. The underlying assumption maintained that once pressing sources of social and economic discontent were removed, ordinary people would live such satisfied and fulfilling lives that they would never be enticed by the promises of adventurous, war-like political leaders. On this basis, ordinary people would become a force for good in the world. Again to quote Robert Cecil, “What we rely on is public opinion (...) and if we are wrong about it, then the whole thing is wrong.”⁸

As the period of general European war drew to a close, the League of Nations began to embark on a major project to organise the peace of the

world. Given the site of some of the most protracted fighting and, indeed, major political upheavals associated with the emergence of a set of new states out of the ashes of the old Romanov and Habsburg Empires, it was natural that many of its energies would be directed towards Central and Eastern Europe. Desolated by years of conflict, dislocated by the collapse of imperial structures, in some cases demoralised after military defeat, and in close proximity to the new and largely unknown revolutionary Bolshevik state, the region was understood to be absolutely critical to the maintenance of world peace. In this context, Central and Eastern Europe became a practice ground for many of the sort of humane initiatives we take for granted today—steps designed to deal with social crises before they could provoke national disaster and international turmoil. This essay will explore how the League of Nations intervened to address dissatisfaction at the slow repatriation of former prisoners of war; how it helped check the spread of epidemic disease; and how it took steps to try to prevent some minority communities feeling swamped by national majorities. The examples all involved the Baltic region.

Returning soldiers home: Narva and Stettin

At the end of the First World War, approximately 1.5 million prisoners of war (POWs) were left on the territory of the former Russian Empire.⁹ Roughly nine out of ten were from former Habsburg lands, and most of the rest were Germans. Red Cross reports showed they were dispersed far and wide, with 120,000 in southern Russia, 30,000 in Turkestan, 90,000 in western Siberia, 35,000 in eastern Siberia and 11,000 on the Siberian coast. Far-flung locations, coupled with general disruption to Russia's communications caused by war, revolution and civil war, meant that although in 1919 Lenin declared all POWs free, hundreds of thousands were quite unable to return home.

Many of these people had been captured during the Russian offensives of 1915–16, and since then had endured abominable conditions. Ordinary soldiers lived in over-crowded barracks which could be little more than holes in the ground. Food was minimal, clothing scarce, camp officials were corrupt and disease was rife. As a consequence, roughly half of the POWs kept in Russia died, while more still had their health damaged permanently. If all of this was not enough, as civil war engulfed Russia, POWs faced the threat of being pressed to fight for White forces or else to toil in Bolshevik munitions factories. Under the circumstances, it was hardly surprising that emotions ran high among Central European families who were still missing loved ones over a year after the end of the war. In 1920, a British peace activist called Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, witnessed a public meeting in Vienna town hall which was addressed by former POWs who had recently returned home. A packed crowd stood for 4 ½ hours “in a state of intense emotion”, hearing about the privations facing their unfortunate fellow countrymen.¹⁰

Of course, if Central Europeans could not leave Russia, neither could Russian POWs in Central Europe return home. They too were dissatisfied with their situation and many living in camps in Germany channelled their frustrations into political activity. They became involved in both the right-wing and left-wing risings which typified the German political scene of the time. Nevertheless, by the start of 1920, these POWs were so dispirited at their lack of prospects for return home that rumours began to circulate of a plan for them to leave their barracks *en masse* in order to walk towards Russia. This raised the unappealing prospect of literally hundreds of thousands of destitute men hiking across Germany and the lands to its East.

By early 1920, therefore, the POW question promised nothing but problems and on 7 February 1920 the Supreme Economic Council requested that the League of Nations take action. Just a few weeks later, the General Council of the League of Red Cross Societies called for “immediate action...in the name of humanity” to assist especially those still languishing in Russian camps.¹¹ Citing Article 25 of the Covenant, which mandated action “in mitigation of suffering”, the Council of the League of Nations moved swiftly to appoint a High Commissioner to deal with POWs. The role fell to Norway’s most famous son, Fridtjof Nansen. Since the world-renowned polar explorer and scientific researcher had travelled across Siberia in the years prior to 1914, it was assumed that he knew the terrain and could anticipate some of the difficulties which repatriation was likely to encounter.

As he tackled the project, Nansen began to realise that several possible transport routes were impossible. POWs could not transit Poland by train because they would be too close to the front in the Russo-Polish war; also the Polish Corridor was just too sensitive to permit the implementation of a major international initiative across its territory. Meanwhile in the Far East, Nansen managed to bring only 6,851 POWs out of Vladivostock and to return only 2,753 Russians through that city. This was not because of the distance and costs involved, which were bearable. Difficulties concerned the existence of White Russian forces in eastern Siberia which were expected to recruit any returning POWs. Hence Moscow was not content to have repatriation run through Vladivostock.¹² Russian ports on the Black Sea also proved unsuitable owing to difficult transport links between coast and interior, not to say a lack of reliable information about the number of people awaiting League ships there. As a result, only 12,191 Central Europeans were brought out of Russia via the Black Sea, and no Russian POWs were returned through it.

So what was the only possibility left? In late spring 1920, as Nansen took up his post, German authorities were in the process of establishing a transport link across the Baltic Sea. Four German ships were scheduled to run between Narva and Stettin (today Szczecin, Poland).¹³ With Russia’s fragile internal transport system finally starting to function, POWs began to emerge from the Russian interior and crossed the border into Estonia. The first few

hundred embarked on a repatriation ship on 14 May 1920. Meanwhile in London, Nansen set up an office of largely British staff to collect much-needed funds from interested governments to finance repatriation. Noting the German achievements, the High Commissioner also decided to take over and expand the Baltic initiative. British shipping experts were called on to locate suitable vessels from German fleets and to identify additional routes for the project.

Fresh connections were established between Stettin and Björkö (Finland), Ino (Finland) and Riga, but the most important non-German port by far remained Narva. Its old Swedish fortress became the centre of a major international effort as humanitarian agencies created a tented village to shelter exhausted former soldiers.¹⁴ Intended to accommodate 600 souls, in September 1920 it had to cater for 3,700. Yet, even though Nansen's repatriation system could be stretched tremendously, it never broke down. As a result, by September 1920, 100,000 POWs had already been returned home, with 10,000 per week crossing the Baltic.

When Nansen made his final report to the Council of the League of Nations in September 1922, he deployed an impressive array of statistics. 427,886 POWs drawn from 26 different national groups had been returned home under the League's aegis. Of these, 406,091 had transited the Baltic Sea, mostly via Narva. It had been a peculiarly international undertaking, with a Norwegian High Commissioner relying on British civil servants who tasked German ships to pick up multi-national POWs from especially an Estonian port, with them having transited an international aid camp. Remarkably (and perhaps reflecting the infamous parsimony of British officialdom), the POWs were brought home at a cost of less than £1 per head. It was no wonder that the Council of the League of Nations responded by heaping praise on Nansen and requesting that he continue working with other people displaced from their homes.¹⁵ But it was equally incontestable that without the Baltic Sea region providing an effective channel of communication between East and West at a time when all other possibilities were bedevilled by chaos and conflict, his success would have been impossible—and the suffering of families in Central Europe and Russia would have endured much longer than it did.

The fight against typhus: Poland, Latvia and Lithuania

Population displacement creates security challenges, but so does a phenomenon which can be associated with it: the spread of epidemic disease. In Europe, the First World War had turned disease into a distinctly international matter. Moving armies, evacuated populations and refugees had all carried infections with them. The privations of the period left populations too weak to fight off viruses and bacteria, while many states were slow to reconstruct public health systems left ruined by years of conflict.

In the wake of the First World War, typhus emerged as a major challenge to the reconstruction and security of Central and Eastern Europe. The disease is carried by fleas, thrives in cold conditions and, if its victims are already weak, can produce mortality rates of between 10% and 50%. As two representatives of Lithuania's government noted, typhus was little known in the region prior to 1914, but war changed everything.¹⁶ Russian troops spread the disease during the offensives of 1914–15, producing an outbreak of 150,000 cases in Serbia alone. Their retreat in 1916 was associated with 154,000 additional cases across Central and Eastern Europe. Russia's post-war upheavals only intensified the incidence of the disease. The country's official statistics indicated that in 1919 some 2,229,071 cases occurred in European Russia, the figure rising to 2,649,816 in 1920. Bearing in mind that Russia's official statistics were far from complete, League of Nations staff later estimated that the actual incidence could even have been 25 million cases over the same two year period. In other words, it was possible that a quarter of European Russia's population fell prey to the disease at this time.¹⁷

The significance of the epidemic was heightened because populations were in such a state of flux. Hundreds of thousands of POWs were desperately trying to get home from Russia, joined by similar numbers of civilians who had been evacuated from their homes by Russian authorities as their armies retreated. On top of all this, the Russo-Polish war stimulated fresh sets of refugee movements. The result was that, between November 1918 and February 1922, at least 3 million people swamped Polish quarantine stations—and many had travelled on unsanitary trains, passing through typhus-infested regions. As a result, between 1918 and 1922, Poland experienced roughly 4 million cases of typhus. Clearly an epidemic on such a scale posed a substantial risk to the surrounding countries too, including the Baltic States.¹⁸

Reports about the threat of disease to especially Poland were compiled by Red Cross organisations in autumn 1919. In due course, they were forwarded to the League of Nations. Given its obligation framed in the Covenant to improve the health of the world, the organisation established an Epidemic Commission to co-ordinate international responses to typhus. It was staffed by a number of personalities who later would play influential roles in its organisation, including Dame Rachel Crowdy (head of the section for social affairs and opium), Norman White (the Epidemic Commission's medical commissioner) and Ludwik Rajchman (who went on to head the League's health organisation). The commission organised a conference which took place in Warsaw in March 1922. It was attended by 27 states (including the Baltic States, Soviet Russia and Ukraine) and planned the best response to the disease. The event gave people such as Crowdy the chance to inspect frontline medical facilities at first hand—including ones in Vilnius—and in time its resolutions were recognised by the Genoa Conference.¹⁹

Admittedly the League's response to typhus was not as extensive as had been hoped originally, not least because only 5% of the desired £2 million funding was forthcoming from the member states. Nonetheless, Poland spent 1.5% of her national revenue fighting the disease, private organisations contributed supplies and manpower, while the League made available medical experts. Consequently a notable medical response was still possible. A sanitary cordon of 152 facilities was set up between Poland and Russia, while Rajchman and White took the fight to the source of the disease.²⁰ In September 1921, they travelled to Russia to negotiate with Soviet authorities the best way to manage evacuees and refugees as they travelled through infected areas.

Although Poland, Ukraine and Russia bore the brunt of this period's typhus epidemic, the Baltic States (particularly Latvia and Lithuania) were affected too. So although Estonia only saw 345 cases of typhus in 1921, incidences in Latvia and Lithuania for 1920–21 were 2,952 and 8,366 respectively.²¹ During this period, Baltic refugees and evacuees were returning home and bringing infection with them. They were travelling out of Russia by rail to Narva in Estonia, or else to Rēzekne and Daugavpils in Latvia. Lithuanian refugees travelled through the main Latvian termini before going on to Obeliai. Riga was used as a transit site for Baltic peoples returning by sea. The main transport centres all had quarantine facilities in which refugees could be checked for disease, and the numbers involved were substantial. So although far fewer Baltic peoples returned home than did Poles, nonetheless 67,000 people transited Obeliai in 1921, while 180,481 returned to Latvia.²²

Lithuania and Latvia both wanted assistance from the League of Nations in the fight against typhus. It was generally recognised that Latvian and Lithuanian quarantine facilities needed to be updated, a situation made all the more necessary because in February 1921 it was estimated that 170,000 people were awaiting return to Lithuania alone.²³ In summer 1922, repatriation movements were still expected to last for at least another twelve months.²⁴ That the necessary work outstripped the capabilities of the two new states quickly became apparent. Responding to reports from the Lithuanian Red Cross and to a request from the Lithuanian government, the Warsaw conference agreed that the country needed support to extend the Obeliai facility from 1,200 to 1,500 beds. In the end, however, the League was unable to offer funding for the project. It seems to have given Lithuania little more than moral support and advice, since her situation was considered much less serious than that of Poland.²⁵ The Warsaw conference also considered plans to extend the Daugavpils quarantine facility at a cost of £20,000, and to build a new maritime sanitary institution at Liepāja. In the event, expected costs for the initiatives rose to £35,000 and so they became impossible to fund in full. The League only made a smaller grant to Latvia which at least permitted the development of the Liepāja facility.²⁶

There was a strong impression that Western European countries wanted protection from typhus, but were unwilling to pay Central and Eastern European states to make systems of defence really effective. Consequently, just as Poland had to fund her own participation in the League's campaign against the disease, so too (for the most part) did Lithuanian and Latvia. It was later estimated that Lithuania contributed £2,000 towards the project (a figure which seems so low that it is likely to be an under-estimate), while Latvia's work was valued at £70,000.²⁷

Moreover, the Baltic States participated in a political response to the health crisis. In February 1922 their representatives met with Polish counterparts in Riga to draft an international sanitary agreement outlining steps to prevent the spread of disease across frontiers. It allowed for the observation and isolation of individuals suspected of carrying disease, and recognised the need to communicate information about infectious diseases from government to government as quickly as possible. The principles recognised in Riga were agreed at the Warsaw conference which followed in March. The next year, a series of comparable conventions followed involving Poland, Russia, White Russia and Ukraine. The realisation that states had to collaborate closely to defeat disease was underlined just a few years later. In 1926 League of Nations authorities organised an exchange of sanitary staff working at Baltic and North Sea ports. The aim was to spread awareness of good practices in the fight against infectious disease, and Riga, Liepāja, Danzig (today, of course Gdańsk) and Stettin were all involved.²⁸

By this point, the typhus outbreak was well and truly over. It had begun to fizzle out as early as the end of 1923; but as they had tackled the epidemic, League of Nations staff had always been clear that their fight had not just been about the welfare of Central and Eastern Europe, but about its security too. Norman White once commented that the war-time devastation of the region could never be repaired so long as typhus was at large; but Brazil's representative to the League and member of the Council, Gastão da Cunha, put it better still. In spring 1920 he said that "health and wealth, prosperity and peace, are closely bound up with one another". Inadequate hygiene would only lead to disease and consequently "social and political troubles". He thought it was impossible to restore "social equilibrium" to important parts of the globe until health was taken seriously. Furthermore, he was clear that no one in Europe could remain unaffected by the crisis of the time:

"If an epidemic breaks out in any region, laying hold of its inhabitants, it threatens all surrounding countries which have commercial or other relations with the infected areas. The civilised countries of the present day cannot in their interest afford to dissociate themselves from the fate of the region which forms the centre of the infection."²⁹

In other words, the fight against typhus in Central and Eastern Europe had been a fight for the post-war stability and reconstruction of Europe as a whole. More than this, it began establishing practices which are taken for granted today around the globe. Recognising the importance of timely information about the spread of disease, in January 1922 the League of Nations began publishing situation updates about health in Central and Eastern Europe. Within a few months, extensive reports were being published about Russia too. The initiatives proved so successful that the Japanese representative to the League requested that something similar be done for the Far East. As a result, an epidemiological intelligence office was opened in the shipping hub of Singapore.³⁰ So, in this instance, success in Central and Eastern Europe paved the way for global practices and benefits.

National minorities, territorial autonomy³¹ and the management of international tensions

The challenge of national minorities

As we have seen, in the early 1920s Narva and the Baltic provided a channel for the repatriation of POWs, while Latvia and Lithuania played a part in protecting Europe against the spread of epidemic disease. More than this, however, the Baltic region became a kind of socio-political laboratory as the League of Nations attempted to identify forms of government suitable to the preservation of peace in multi-national lands.

Old empires had crumbled and new nation states were being formed as part of the peace-making process, but the drawing of fresh political borders could never be straightforward. A number of territories remained hotly disputed, a reality which in large measure reflected the utter impossibility of producing national frontiers without creating set after set of national minorities. For all manner of reasons, these could have difficult relations with national majorities, while their treatment would be watched carefully by the governments of the nation states inhabited by their co-nationals.³² The difficult position of national minorities was compounded by the fact that national self-determination had been one of the watchwords of the peace-makers. The idea had stood behind Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points as they applied to the Romanov and Habsburg Empires. Lloyd George recognised that the Allies should fight for a territorial settlement "based on the right of self-determination or the consent of the governed".³³ Jan Smuts, too, had identified "the self-determination of nations" as of central importance in peace-making.³⁴ Such rhetoric only helped encourage unrealistic sets of expectations about the creation of ethnically homogeneous states and the unification of all members of given national groups within a single state.

The League of Nations took up the challenge of multi-national lands as guarantor of the peace settlement. Article 92 of the Treaty of Versailles had paved the way for the creation of a regimen of rights for national minorities established under international guarantee. According to this article,

the Principal Allied Powers would protect the national, linguistic and religious minorities inhabiting the new Polish state. Analogous clauses were included in the peace terms of St. Germain, Neuilly, Trianon and Lausanne. They were present in treaties agreed between the Allied Powers and Poland (signed 28 June 1919), Czechoslovakia, Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia. Consequently, when they joined the League of Nations, Albania, Estonia, Finland, Latvia and Lithuania all stated their readiness to protect minorities on their territories. The rights of minorities were also part and parcel of conventions agreed over Upper Silesia.³⁵

The Åland islanders: Swedish Finns

Yet the League of Nations found itself having to do more than supervise the implementation of rights for the national minorities of Central and Eastern Europe; it had to try to defuse international tensions over a number of sensitive territories inhabited by some of these people. The Åland islands was a case in point. About 300 of these islands lie between Sweden and Finland, and in the early 1920s, roughly 95% of the 25,000 inhabitants were ethnic Swedes. The problem was that in 1809 Sweden had ceded the islands to Russia and, when Finland gained independence in 1917, they became part of that country. Before long, the islanders were becoming restless at the prospect of life in a Finnish state. As two of their number put it in a letter to Sir Eric Drummond, Secretary General of the League of Nations, on 22 July 1920: “the Finnish race suffocates the Swedish mind, and no law can give us protection against this.”³⁶

In February 1918 the islanders sent a petition with 7,000 signatures to the Swedish government asking for union with that country. Next the islands’ governing *Landsting* wrote to the Principal Allied Powers asking for the same thing. Islanders also attended the Paris peace conference making the same request. Even though the Finnish government passed a law on 7 May 1920 granting the Ålanders extensive autonomy within its state, when they kept up the campaign to secede, police arrested two ethnic Swedes for high treason.³⁷ It was inevitable that developments such as these generated increasing levels of ill-will at the international level, namely between Helsinki and Stockholm.

Enough was enough, and in June 1920 Great Britain, in the form of Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon, referred the case to the Council of the League of Nations. He maintained that it fell under Article 11 of the Covenant and was a problem which “threatens to disturb the good understanding between nations upon which peace depends”. As the Council began to address the situation, Sweden issued call after call for a referendum to be held among islanders about their future, while Finland stressed that the administration of the islands was purely a domestic affair. Mediation between two such polarised views required a detailed investigation of the legal and practical position of the islands, something which was provided first by a

committee of jurists (to determine whether the Åland affair really was of international concern), and then by a specially appointed commission of inquiry to recommend a fair course of action.³⁸ The League's approach to the Åland case proved particularly noteworthy because on one occasion, not only representatives of states were allowed to attend Council meetings, but two islanders were allowed to make a presentation. This was probably the only time members of national minorities appeared formally before the Council and the men, called Karlsson and Eriksson, emphasised the danger of the islanders losing their traditional culture under Finnish government.³⁹

In the end, the Council decided it could only accommodate the wishes of the Ålanders up to a point. It was held that separating the islands from Finland completely would "be to destroy order and stability within states and to inaugurate anarchy in international life."⁴⁰ The islanders were only one among many Swedish communities living in Finland; it followed that if they were detached from the state, other communities might try to follow their example and Finland's very viability might become compromised. Indeed, detaching the islands might provoke other national minorities around Europe to pursue comparable aims, so risking the stability of other sensitive border regions. Rather than raise the possibility of such dire consequences, the Council decided it was best to shore up the rights of the Ålanders inside Finland.⁴¹

On 24 June 1921, to the disappointment of the Swedish representative present, British member of the Council H.A.L. Fisher announced the decision that the Åland islands should remain under Finnish sovereignty.⁴² To balance the outcome, the Council also outlined ways in which the autonomous rights of the islanders had to be strengthened to secure their traditional lives. Language, culture and traditions were all to be underpinned in an extended version of the Autonomy Law of May 1920. Local authorities on the islands would only be required to support Swedish-language schools; islanders would be given preferential rights when it came to buying property on the islands; in-comers would only be able to vote there after five years' residence; the local government (*Landsting*) would have a say over the appointment of the islands' governor; steps would be taken to ensure that taxation revenue was not drained away from the islands; and the islanders were given the right to appeal to the League of Nations if they felt these rights were not being respected.⁴³ Steps were also taken to maintain the neutrality and non-fortification of the islands, a situation which had been in place since the mid-nineteenth century.⁴⁴

Of course there were critical voices over the autonomy granted to the Åland islands. Swedish representative to the Council Hjalmar Branting maintained that the solution would not offer long-term security to the Baltic region (since dissatisfactions would continue to simmer), and political scientist Frances Kellor argued that the happiness of the islanders had been sacrificed to the dictates of geo-politics.⁴⁵ But actually the Council had

responded to a difficult situation with creativity. Borders had been maintained, so no precedent had been set likely to inspire groups interested in ripping up the Treaty of Versailles. At the same time, the islanders had been provided with a context in which they could pursue their national culture with so little interference from Helsinki that they were Finnish citizens largely as a matter of formality. It was not a bad solution to a difficult question.

Vilnius as Swiss canton?

The Åland case was the first international dispute which the League of Nations had to deal with. In the next few years, it faced two further disputes in the Baltic region over territories inhabited (at least in part) by national minorities. In both cases the Council responded with attempts to apply the principle of autonomy, albeit with mixed results. The first of these other cases was probably the more difficult: Vilnius. In autumn 1920 the League had been engaged defining Lithuania's western borders when Polish General Żeligowski took matters into his own hands and occupied Vilnius and the area around it. He maintained that his troops were ethnic Poles drawn from the area who wanted it become part of Poland, not Lithuania.⁴⁶ Thereafter, Żeligowski set up an independent government while the international community was left to deal with the fall-out from the *coup de main*.

Vilnius region had a complicated population consisting of Poles, Lithuanians and Jews, hence any attempted solution to the area's problems had to take this into account. When Paul Hymans (the Belgian representative to the Council) made recommendations over the Vilnius dispute in September 1921, he specified that both Polish and Lithuanian should be recognised as official languages there. He also proposed that all national minorities should have equal rights over education, religion, language and association; furthermore he recommended that steps should be taken for Lithuania and Poland to co-ordinate their foreign, economic and defence policies. In essence, he was hoping that all individuals would receive such respect in the disputed area, and interested governments would work together so closely, that tensions over Vilnius would melt away in time and it would not really matter which state it belonged to. More radically still, however, he proposed that Vilnius should be established as an autonomous canton on the Swiss model (perhaps like Bern) within the Lithuanian state. It would be administered by a diet made up of delegates numerically representative of the different nationality groups living there, and there would be clear recognition of language rights for all the different groups.⁴⁷

This was an interesting idea which recognised that the diverse ethnic composition of Vilnius brought special political requirements. Unfortunately neither Poland nor Lithuania found Hymans's plan acceptable. Although initially the Lithuanian representative to the Council (called Galvanauskas) liked the idea of autonomy for Vilnius inside Lithuania, he thought that Bern's independence was too extensive and that language rights in the area

would have to be more limited. As a model for possible autonomy, he looked to the treatment of Ruthenians in Czechoslovakia.⁴⁸ Poland, by contrast, was unenthusiastic about consigning the disputed territory to Lithuania, even on condition of extensive autonomy.

Despite Hymans's recommendations, therefore, the League of Nations never brokered a deal over Vilnius. The Council recognised as much in January 1922, making a statement of defeat and calling on all concerned to keep the peace nonetheless.⁴⁹ The Polish occupation could not be undone and eventually, in March 1923, the region generally was recognised as part of Poland.⁵⁰ Although clearly the League of Nations would have favoured a different outcome, at least war did not break out over Vilnius. Instead, ill-will continued to be worked out between Lithuania and Poland in a series of diplomatic appeals to the Council as well as a series of complaints about the way national minorities were treated in the two countries concerned.⁵¹

Klaipėda's distinctive heritage

The League had better fortune over Klaipėda (Memel), where autonomy was also called on to solve the challenge of another complicated territory. Before the First World War, the region had been part of the German Empire. Appropriately, the majority of Klaipėda's urban population were ethnic Germans. By contrast, the rural population had a Lithuanian majority which led to roughly a 50:50 split of nationalities among the area's total population of 140,000. As part of the peace-making process, Klaipėda had been detached from Germany and it was expected to be incorporated into the new Lithuanian state. Nevertheless, no final decision had been made by the start of 1923.

In early January 1923, Lithuania took things into her own hands as troops dressed in civilian clothes occupied the city, ousting 200 French troops operating on behalf of the League of Nations. Next month, the Conference of Ambassadors recognised Klaipėda as part of Lithuania, but this was not the end to difficulties associated with the area. In the first place, it was understood that Klaipėda was very different to the rest of Lithuania. A report to the Conference of Ambassadors put it as follows:

“The eastern frontier of the Memel Territory, which coincides with the former Russo-German frontier, marks an abrupt and sudden change from one civilization to another, with at least a century in between them. It is the true frontier between west and east, between Europe and Asia.... Many Lithuanians who belong to Memel fear the consequences of annexation to Great Lithuania without secure guarantee of autonomy. They know that annexation will mean military service, heavy taxation, an increase of 400% in the cost of living (partially due to the imposition of extremely high Customs dues), the

disorganisation of economic life, and that system of bribery and concessions which is common to all countries formerly included in Russia....”⁵²

Moreover, Klaipėda was (and still is) a major port lying at the mouth of the Neman River and, as such, serviced substantial amounts of Polish trade. Given the poor relations existing between Lithuania and Poland in 1923, it was inevitable that steps had to be taken to ensure that access to the port was not manipulated by Kaunas in order to put pressure on Poland in retaliation for the loss of Vilnius. It was no surprise, therefore, that, in December 1923, the Conference of Ambassadors requested that the League of Nations take steps to define Klaipėda’s exact status.

A commission was set up which visited Klaipėda, Kaunas and Warsaw before reporting in March 1924. It acknowledged Lithuania’s sovereignty over the area but, echoing the concerns previously expressed over the needs of the Åland islanders, emphasised the need to respect the “traditional rights and culture” of Klaipėda’s various inhabitants. Hence the region was to be guaranteed substantial autonomy within Lithuania, including its own diet and governor. Poland’s concerns over the flow of trade through the port were also addressed, as a three-man harbour board was set up consisting of representatives from Klaipėda, Lithuania and the League’s transport organisation. The body would ensure that all goods were allowed free transit.⁵³

Summarising about territorial autonomy

In other words, during the early 1920s, the League of Nations tried to foster the welfare of national minorities in Central and Eastern Europe not least by promoting autonomy for at least some of the distinctive and sensitive regions they inhabited in the Baltic region. On two occasions the organisation was more or less successful, with interesting political solutions being found for the situations faced by the Åland islanders and the inhabitants of Klaipėda. In the case of Vilnius, however, Polish intransigence meant that Paul Hymans’s innovative proposal never got off the ground. In all cases, however, the League’s ambition had been to remove a source of international tension by ensuring that ordinary Europeans could go about their lives in decent, civilised ways, free from discrimination owing to their national background. And even in the least promising of the three cases, namely Vilnius, at least the guarantees of minority rights undertaken by Warsaw meant that the area’s Lithuanian inhabitants (as well as other nationalities) were still supposed to be treated properly, and that the international community was supposed to maintain an interest in their fate.

Conclusion: the League of Nations and the anticipation of contemporary security

For a long time, analysts have recognised a distinction between “hard” and “soft” security. The former concerns the military aspects of security, while the latter involves the social, political and economic pre-requisites of peace. In the last few years, security analysis has developed further to take account of Human Security. This approach was announced by the United Nations in 2003 and represents an attempt to view security less from the point of view of states and more from the perspective of the ordinary people who suffer the worst consequences of instability and upheaval.⁵⁴ As such, it builds particularly on the idea of soft security by emphasising that the conditions of life enjoyed by ordinary people determine their readiness to go to war.

There is much about the UN’s Human Security agenda that is reminiscent of the work of the League of Nations as characterised in this essay. Take the following quotation from former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan which is cited in the final Human Security report:

“Human Security in its broadest sense embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and healthcare and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her own potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment—these are the building blocks of human, and therefore national, security.”⁵⁵

Something about the tone of the extract, conveying a distinct idealism, recalls the convictions of League advocates such as Smuts, Cecil and Murray; but the parallels go further than this. As even the few lines hint (and as the report explains at length), Human Security highlights that societies cannot be secure if their health is parlous (for instance, if they live in the shadow of epidemics) or if they are poorly administered (for example, if some communities are excluded from decision-taking processes and are not empowered to look after themselves).⁵⁶ More than this, the full report emphasises the importance of return home for those displaced by conflict, since repatriation allows individuals to take up their lives again. It also maintains that people forced to move by upheaval must have their rights protected just like anybody else while they are experiencing displacement.⁵⁷

Repatriating prisoners of war, fighting typhus, attempting to secure the rights of national minorities, and trying to define territorial autonomy for certain communities: as long ago as the 1920s, the League of Nations was pursuing all of these strategies in Central and Eastern Europe, not least in the

Baltic. In these ways at least, the organisation was anticipating the UN's "new" security agenda for the twenty-first century; and in the process it was championing a very inclusive model for creating peace. It was addressing the needs of ordinary families left dislocated after the First World War; it sought to protect impoverished and destitute populations from the spread of disease; and it attempted to protect vulnerable communities from the possibility of unreasonable external pressures. In all of these ways (and indeed more), the League of Nations pursued progressive projects in Central and Eastern Europe that defined the region as a laboratory for humanitarian and security enterprise. Since the role of the Baltic region in this strategy has too seldom been commented on over the last eighty years or more, the story rightfully can be described as one of the forgotten pages of Baltic history.

Notes

1. Letter of 28 June 1937 from Abraham to Heald. R4211. Disarmament General. 7A / 29805 / 29805. LoN Archive.
2. *League of Nations, Ten Years of World Co-operation*, p.49; Rappard, 1931, p. 69.
3. Jan Smuts helped establish the Union of South Africa and participated in the British War Cabinet before becoming a member of the British Commonwealth delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. Robert Cecil represented both South Africa and Britain in the League of Nations. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1937. Gilbert Murray was a Classics scholar who publicised the idea of a League of Nations during the First World War before representing South Africa in Geneva.
4. Smuts, 1918, p. 71.
5. *Ibid*, p.14 and p. 70.
6. “Cecil sees wide field for League of Nations”, *New York Times*, 28 December 1918.
7. Northedge, 1988, p. 168.
8. Cecil quoted in Sharp, 1991, p. 62.
9. The story is given in detail in Housden, 2007. See also Housden (in press), chapter 4.
10. 23 June 1920, Lawrence to Cecil. R 1702. Repatriation of Prisoners of War. 42 / 5397 / 5213. LoN Archive.
11. Repatriation of Prisoners in Siberia. Memorandum by the Secretary General and Nansen’s report of 14 June 1920. *Correspondence and Accounts concerning the Repatriation of Prisoners of War. Commission files*. C 1119. LoN Archive.
12. Nansen also encountered problems of organising transport for POWs from the Russian interior to the Siberian coast. The Chinese Eastern Railroad in Manchuria expected significant payment for the transport of POWs. See Housden, 2007, p. 72.
13. The essay uses the German name for the port because it is the less confusing option. At the time, it was a German city involved in the repatriation of, amongst others, German POWs.
14. For film of the camp, see *Humanitarian Action and Cinema*.
15. Fridtjof Nansen went on to become the first High Commissioner for Refugees when he took up the challenge of dealing with the Russians who flooded Europe and Asia Minor especially after the collapse of the White armies in 1920.
16. *League of Nations. Official Journal*. May 1921. pp. 349–53. As two Lithuanian doctors put it in a letter to the Epidemic Commission, “Typhus was unknown in Lithuania before the war.”
17. For a recent study of the epidemic, see Piana, 2009.
18. *New York Times*, 27 June 1920. Balinska, 1998, p. 43.

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19. Memorandum by Rachel Crowdy. R822. Health. 12 / 12462 / 12462. LoN Archive.
 20. Balinska, 1995, p. 92.
 21. Epidemiological Intelligence. No. 3. June 1922. R 829. Epidemiological Intelligence. 12 B / 21620 / 17928. LoN Archive.
 22. Numbers passing through quarantine and entering Lithuania were 60,000 in 1918, 32,000 in 1919 and 34,000 in 1920. Report by Dr. R. Sliupas of the Lithuanian Red Cross. R 836. Warsaw Conference, March 1922. 12 B / 19927 / 19927. LoN Archive.
 23. Dr. Sliupas, Lithuanian Red Cross, 21 February 1921. R 823. Typhus in Lithuania. 12 / 12618 / 12618. LoN Archive.
 24. "The Problem of Repatriation in Latvia and Lithuania" in the Second Annual Report of the Epidemic Commission of the League of Nations, 1 August 1922. R823. Health. 12B / 15002 / 15002. LoN Archive.
 25. 1 July 1921, Norman White to Rachel Crowdy. R 823. Typhus in Lithuania. 12 / 12618 / 12618. LoN Archive.
 26. League of Nations Health Committee. Fifth Session held at Geneva, January 8th to 13th 1923. R 819. Health. 12 B / 25549x / 11346. LoN Archive.
 27. The Work of the Health Organisation. Report presented by the Second Committee. September 1922. R 819. Health. 12 B / 23519 / 11346. LoN Archive.
 28. R 983. Baltic and North Sea Interchange. 1926. 12 G / 52523 / 52515. LoN Archive.
 29. Report by G. da Cunha, *League of Nations. Official Journal*. June 1920. pp. 128–31.
 30. *League of Nations. Ten Years of World Co-operation*, p. 236.
 31. For discussions of *cultural* autonomy, see the chapters in this collection by Garleff, Hackmann, and Housden and Smith. Incidentally, Articles 100 to 108 of the Treaty of Versailles left a lot unsaid about the ethnic composition of another "autonomous" territory not discussed here: Danzig (Gdańsk).
 32. For a brief discussion of the rights of national minorities in Central and Eastern Europe in the inter-war period, see Housden, in press, chapter 3. For extended studies of the history of national minorities in the inter-war period, see Jankowsky, 1945; Claude, 1955; Scheuermann, 2000; and Fink, 2004.
 33. "British War Aims. Mr Lloyd George's Statement", *The Times* 7 January 1918.
 34. Smuts, 1918, p.12.
 35. Aun, 1951, pp. 25–26. *League of Nations. Ten Years of World Co-operation*, pp.358–59.
 36. Bendiner, 1975, p. 173.
 37. Barros, 1968, p.240. During the process of planning for the law of May 1920, Finland asked Britain for copies of the draft constitutions of the

Channel Isles and the Isle of Man. They were supposed to provide ideas of how best to establish autonomy. Foreign Office note of 13 February 1920. R544. Åland Islands. 11 3066 / 468. LoN Archive.

38. The jurists' report from September 1920 can be found at Report of the International Committee of the Jurists entrusted by the Council of the League of Nations with the Task of Giving an Advisory Opinion upon the Legal Aspects of the Åland Islands' Question. R546. Åland Islands. 11 / 6561 / 468; the report of the commission of inquiry dated 16 April 1921 can be found at The Åland Islands Question. Report submitted to the Council of the League of Nations by the Commission of Rapporteurs, 16 April 1921, R547. The Åland Islands. 11 / 12233 / 468. LoN Archive.

39. The meeting happened on 23 June 1921. *League of Nations. Official Journal*. September 1921, p. 692.

40. Kellor, 1924, 1924, p. 291.

41. In addition, and amongst other things, the rapporteurs investigating the situation of the Åland islands also felt it would be wrong to remove the islands from Finland given the good work the country had done in fighting Bolshevism and preventing its spread westwards. League of Nations, The Åland Islands Question. Report submitted to the Council of the League of Nations by the Commission of Rapporteurs, 16 April 1921. R547. The Åland Islands. 11 / 12233 / 468. LoN Archive.

42. *League of Nations. Official Journal*. September 1921, p.699.

43. *League of Nations. Official Journal*. September 1921, pp. 701–02.

44. *League of Nations. Official Journal*. September 1921, p. 699. Also proceedings of 30 August 1921 reported in *League of Nations. Official Journal*. December 1921.

45. *League of Nations. Official Journal*. September 1921, pp. 701–02. Kellor, 1924, p. 297.

46. *The Times*, 12 October 1920.

47. *League of Nations. Official Journal*. November 1921, pp. 990–92.

48. *League of Nations. Official Journal*. November 1921, pp. 995.

49. *League of Nations. Official Journal*. February 1922, pp. 9–100.

50. The Conference of Ambassadors recognised Vilnius as part of Poland. Lloyd, 1995, p. 165.

51. See for example *League of Nations. Official Journal*, April 1922, p. 327 and May 1922, p. 437.

52. Report to the Conference of Ambassadors by the Extraordinary Commission at Memel, 6 March 1923, reproduced in *League of Nations. Official Journal*. January 1924, pp. 127–28.

53. See *League of Nations. Official Journal*. April 1924, pp. 515–18 and pp.598–624.

54. I am thankful to Patricia Clavin of Jesus College, Oxford for drawing my attention to Human Security in the first place. The Human Security report is

available at the following web site: <http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/finalreport/index.html> (consulted 6 April 2010).

55. Final Report of the Commission on Human Security, *op cit.*, p. 4.

56. Ibid, pp. 6 and Chapter 6, “Better Health for Human Security”.

57. Ibid, pp. 63–64 and Chapter 3, “People on the Move”.

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The Historiography of Paul Schiemann

Michael Garleff

Introduction

“Epilogue and Epitaph” is the last chapter of an extensive and outstanding biography of the minorities politician and publicist Paul Schiemann. In it, John Hiden provides the only evaluation of this significant personality available in post-1945 historical literature. In the process, he shows the varied way Schiemann has been dealt with.¹ Hiden is quite right that Baltic German historians have been reticent in their dealings with Schiemann, something which is reflected in the fact that it has taken six decades since his death for such a biography to appear—also that it is written from a European point of view rather than from a Baltic German one. The decades-long controversies over how to read Schiemann’s personality, not to say his political ideology and practices, provide important contributing reasons for this.

In a contemporary assessment made on the occasion of his 60th birthday, colleagues described Schiemann as a man “without whose engagement the fateful course of our land cannot be imagined and who can await calmly the judgement of history.”² With this said, in March 1936 they also had to admit that, in many respects, present times had failed to understand his “ultimate goal”; but three years previously the misunderstanding and opposition of contemporaries had already excluded Schiemann the politician and commentator from his homeland’s politics, and the honorific address had already been couched in the fatal terms of an obituary. So how did “the judgement of history” on the life and work of this significant personality take place?

On the whole, writing the history of an important individual only begins with his or her death; but someone like Paul Schiemann (born on 17 March 1876 in Mitau; died 23 June 1944 in Riga) experienced the full scale of possible reactions when he was still alive. Ranging from extreme recognition through vehement rejection to ideologically and politically motivated deliberate silence, these attitudes went on to influence his treatment long after his death. Hence the reactions he provoked among contemporaries must be regarded as fundamental to how he has been treated in historical literature. The assessment of Paul Schiemann’s commentaries and politics can be divided into several phases. Initially these reflect the different periods of his life and what he did in each. After his death, our discussion’s structure can reflect significant political events such as the end of the Second World War and the post-war period, as well as transformations within the discipline of History and of its key ideas. Finally, the most recent international engagement with Schiemann’s work marks the start of a new

dimension in the treatment of this Baltic German personality who was, without question, outstanding.

Treatment by Schiemann's contemporaries before the First World War

Schiemann's treatment by contemporaries reflects the two phases of his life separated by the First World War. Before the Great War, contemporary discussion concerned his role as a literary and theatre critic, while during the inter-war period it concerned his career as a political theorist and practitioner.

Even during his early years in Estonia—while editor of *Revalsche Zeitung* from 1903—, Schiemann developed a dual ability which gave his later activity its unmistakable stamp: he was engaged in the modern literature of his day just as much as in politics. So the knowledgeable theatre critic and journalist was also founder of the Estonian Constitutional Party and of the German Association. In 1906 he was involved in the work of the Estonian provincial council and supported reform of the regional constitution. In 1907 Schiemann became editor of *Rigasche Rundschau*, where—up until 1914—his leading articles contributed to the enormous increase in the newspaper's circulation. Nonetheless, the sometimes bitter arguments he had with conservative circles earned him the open opposition of the aristocracy and big business. Later he spoke of an "official ostracism".³

Apart from his numerous theatre criticisms and book reviews, one of Schiemann's few coherent published works was *Auf dem Wege zum neuen Drama*. It appeared in 1912 and found a broad resonance. The author Bruno Götz belonged to Schiemann's circle of friends in Riga and praised this essay as having the special merit of identifying many of the roots of modern literature and of demonstrating its lines of development. Far from indulging in abstract theorising, Schiemann described the creativity of representative artistic personalities. His "stark, profound factuality" addressed correctly the connection of the artist to his time and environment, and took the criteria for evaluating a piece of work from that work itself.⁴ Schiemann's "sure and knowledgeable familiarity with the requirements of the stage" deserved particular recognition—a judgement in no way shared by all of Riga's Baltic German theatre-goers, as shown by the debates published in *Baltische Monatsschrift* and as described in his memoirs.⁵ Meanwhile, in his own memoirs the author and translator Johannes von Guenther discussed Riga's artistic circles "to the centre of which belonged, among others, the highly intelligent but eccentric journalist, Dr. Paul Schiemann", who, "with his incisive historical insight and his political agility (...), has been involved in an often aggressive conflict with the morality of Baltic society which, as a rule, is strictly Protestant."⁶

Above all, Schiemann's political articles from the period between 1907 and 1914 display a constitutional optimism about the deadlocks experienced in the affairs of liberal-bourgeois state and society when it came to achieving understanding with the majority Estonian and Latvian

populations over nationality issues. The political confrontation was played out on many stages. In his Baltic homeland, initially it took place in Tallinn, while from 1907 it happened in Riga, involving especially disputes with conservative and age-old Baltic interests. The arguments even extended to Germany, taking the form of controversies with Baltic German emigrants around especially the end of the First World War. Following Paul Schiemann's warning against the pursuit of any kind of policy of Germanisation, a particularly bitter argument broke out with his conservative uncle, Theodor Schiemann.⁷ In a number of letters written before 1918, the latter rejected strenuously his nephew's stance, although ultimately he had to respect it.⁸

At the beginning of the Weimar period, controversies continued with the Baltic German circles politically active in Germany. Max Hildebert Boehm grew into a chief opponent. In 1918 he not only attacked Schiemann's support for the right of self-determination for Latvians and Estonians, but from the mid-1920s he also contested Schiemann's objectives in European nationality politics.⁹ The main disputes revolved around the different theoretical principles, political strategies and actions to be applied internationally.¹⁰ Even at such an early point as this, Paul Schiemann counted some of his aristocratic compatriots amongst those he disliked (even hated) most of all.

The inter-war period

Schiemann's significance as a politician is located in this period and concerns especially his ability to gather almost all of Latvia's Baltic German interests behind the slogan "national and social solidarity". The Baltic States' early declaration of independence, as well as their timely commitment to parliamentary democracy, facilitated his co-operation with the different political orientations found in Latvian politics. This collaboration extended to the other national minorities, which he united quickly into a minorities block in the *Saeima*, and which he led more slowly to different kinds of parliamentary co-operation. Schiemann had to argue tirelessly for his principles and, in some respects, he could only implement them with difficulty.

Along with Ewald Ammende and Werner Hasselblatt, Schiemann was one of the leading nationalities politicians of his day. A publication appearing in Germany emphasised his rich journalistic, political and literary experience, qualities which were united with "statesman-like vision and practical knowledge of the politics of Latvia's neighbours".¹¹ He did, however, face resistance in his homeland where conservative circles accused him of organising "his politics according to numerical relationships", "according to which the so-called intellectual capital of Germandom was not always given appropriate consideration."¹² Above all, his political co-operation with the country's other minorities such as Russians, Poles and Jews brought him stiff

opposition, since “their service to the country could not be compared in any way to that provided by our national group” and association with them “weakens our position”. One conservative circle demanded that a special position be accorded Latvia’s Germans, but Schiemann rejected the view on account of his democratic convictions.

Apart from opposition to Schiemann’s practical politics, there was also a clear rejection of his theoretical ideas—especially of the anational state. His efforts to provide a logical separation of national-cultural affairs from more general matters falling to the state, met with no kind of general approval at all. Not least, he encountered opposition even from Baltic German comrades-in-arms such as Werner Hasselblatt, from whom he was separated by far more than just personality differences.¹³ Despite everything, however, Schiemann’s ideas defined the general theoretical discussion of the times.

Conservative commentator Max Hildebert Boehm regarded Schiemann’s liberal position on minorities issues as a critical weakness and distinguished himself from his opponent fundamentally in 1933 with his theory of nationality. Boehm’s position received official approval when he was given a chair at the University of Jena.¹⁴ At this time, Boehm articulated a judgement which he would maintain from 1933 until the early post-war decades. Subsequently Schiemann seemed to be contradicted by the fact that even democratic nation states oppressed minorities and the so-called transnational people’s community ostensibly had been defeated. In this light, Schiemann had “failed” in terms of both his politics and his theory—even if his national achievements for the German national group in his homeland and in Europe met with general recognition. The end of the “Schiemann era” was proclaimed among Latvia’s Baltic Germans even before parliamentarianism was toppled by Kārlis Ulmanis’s coup. Helmut Kause has summed up the situation aptly: “The actions, theory and personality of this man, the stringently pacifist logic of his liberal doctrine clearly provoked either spontaneous solidarity or the most bitter opposition”.¹⁵

Schiemann’s ostracism during the Third Reich

The general political rivalry experienced by Schiemann involved controversies that were more or less “normal” until the 1930s, at which point they took on a new dimension—not least by assuming personally damaging forms. After he resigned his offices—which was as a result of more than just ill health—, and following the attempted resistance by Austria against Nazism, he was branded an heretical “enemy of the people”. The independent *Volksdeutsche Presse- und Informationsdienst* which appeared in Vienna, referred in a biographical sketch of May 1937 to that “flood of unjustified allegations about Paul Schiemann” which could be found in several named National Socialist newspapers. It replied “that serious insults such as betraying the people, being of Jewish origin, being a Marxist, being a

Catholic separatist and so on, are being applied to any German man who stands closer to his nation than to the Party. They [the insults] can be counted among the sad achievements of a time which is heading along the best path for the destruction of our nation in nameless misery.” Much rather, Schiemann—who had been honoured with the Goethe Medal—deserved respect as “one of the very best ethnic German intellectuals.”¹⁶

Schiemann returned to his home country where he was placed in “exile” during the German occupation. He refused resettlement and was placed under official supervision as well as being banned from working and publishing. Now an officially ostracised person, the Baltic Germans who lived in Riga hardly had any contact with him during his final years of life. Hugo Wittrock worked as Commissarial Mayor of Riga from 1941 to 1944. When he wrote his memoirs, he left a very special testimony about the desperate situation facing the sick and outlawed politician: “Although I was separated from Dr. Schiemann by my conservative attitude and my ideological convictions, I was constantly impressed by his open, noble way of fighting and was enthralled time and again by his intellectually outstanding art of speaking. Even during my final years in Riga, I had the opportunity to delight myself with his intellectual freshness and to spend hours in conversation with him.”¹⁷ If Wittrock also says that he laid a wreath saying “Riga’s last farewell” at “the burial of the man who provided great service to our homeland”, then we encounter in the former National Socialist a partial, limited appreciation of Schiemann which went hand in hand with the repression of the time. In fact, in a modified form, this way of thinking determined the treatment of Schiemann far into the post-war period.

Generally speaking, during the Third Reich Schiemann was excluded and cut off from every kind of activity. Consequently no obituaries about him were published in German publications. The neutral *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* did, however, honour him officially and in characteristic fashion, stressing amongst other things: “As leader of the German minority in Latvia, he attempted to fight the influence of the National Socialists and also refused to participate in the resettlement initiative of winter 1939–40, which caused the other Baltic Germans to ‘return to the Reich’.” The obituary ended forcefully: “...and in the hour when Paul Schiemann closed his eyes for ever, the evil which he foresaw and which he fought has assumed a tangible form: the German position in the Baltic has become untenable in the face of the advancing Russian armies and without doubt, after the events of recent years, that denotes the end of German minorities in the Baltic territories.”¹⁸

Re-discovery in the 1950s

In 1981, Hans Rimscha established with hindsight that “the verdict of memory” continued to have an effect after the Second World War among Schiemann’s former critics and political opponents.¹⁹ Admittedly he was not quite right when he said that these circles made certain that, after

Schiemann's death on 23 June 1944, "no word would appear in German-speaking lands honouring his work or even simply recalling his memory", since there had been the article in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. Nonetheless, obstacles to his memory endured. In the same essay, Rimscha reported the rejection which he had encountered from a politically compromised Baltic German when, in 1954 (on the tenth anniversary of Schiemann's death), he wanted to confront in published form "this deadly silence about Schiemann among the general public". He was told there was no interest in the forgotten politician. But Schiemann's former colleague on *Rigasche Rundschau*, and now historian, Hans Rimscha knew how to awaken the general public's interest in Schiemann's political activity and above all his ideas. He used both a large national newspaper and appropriate specialist journals. Having been initiated from the Baltic German side, subsequently this re-discovery was taken up more generally by the discipline of History.

Meanwhile, according to Rimscha, attitudes about Schiemann and the place he should hold in Baltic memory were changing even in Baltic German circles "which had belonged to Schiemann's followers either incompletely or only very conditionally". Wolfgang Wachsmuth began the process in 1951–53 with his extensive collection of material *Von deutscher Arbeit in Lettland*, the third volume of which expressly mentioned Schiemann's memory. For a long time, this entire work (and above all in its unpublished typescript version, which was more extensive in a number of important ways) provided an advanced introduction to Paul Schiemann's work. It was supplemented by Wachsmuth's study of Schiemann, subtitled *Justice before Power*, which was included in a collection of portraits of prominent Baltic Germans.²⁰ The start of a transformation was particularly evident in the fact that Paul Schiemann had not even been included in the first edition of the work. This had been published during wartime and was prepared by editors and authors who, for the most part, belonged to or sympathised with the National Socialist "movement".²¹ These accounts, which were circulated in at least Baltic German circles, were supplemented by the memoirs of Schiemann's brother-in-law, Wilhelm von Rüdiger, which were published in 1955.²² He analysed in depth internal Baltic resistance to Schiemann from the end of the First World War, the events of the parliamentary period, and added an appendix describing his last visit to see Schiemann in 1943–44.

In the mid-1950s, Hans von Rimscha made a breakthrough not only in scholarly journals, but also in the nationally significant *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.²³ In 1954, writing a brief portrait for the "new series" of the *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, he emphasised the liberal foundations of Schiemann's policy in two particular areas which were closely associated: first, as a "nationality politician" active "specifically in his Baltic homeland", and second, as the "leading mind of the European nationalities' movement" who worked "in the broad field of international European policy".²⁴ In his day, Schiemann had been thoroughly "successful politically"

thanks to his “strong sense of justice”, and Rimscha went on to stress the relevance for the 1950s’ political agenda of Schiemann’s thinking about an international, pan-European legal system.

The author soon wrote two further, more extensive essays. The first appeared in *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* and publicised Schiemann’s own description of his politics during the foundation of the Baltic States. Not least, it drew on recollections contained in several letters exchanged between Paul and his uncle Theodor Schiemann.²⁵ In a short commentary, Rimscha said that, for the most part, the Baltic politics of the time had been dealt with from the standpoint of the leading aristocratic actors, not from the perspective of the liberal-democratic opposition; on the other hand, precisely the latter group soon took over the “responsible leadership of Baltic German politics”.

That same year, Rimscha also published a detailed analysis of Paul Schiemann’s minorities politics in the renowned *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*. He described Schiemann as “the most important personality for both the movement’s political ideology and its practical leadership”.²⁶ For the first time, this article informed contemporary research about the Latvian parliamentarian and the European dimension to the minorities politics he represented. With it, discussion of Schiemann had appeared in Germany’s three best known modern history journals. From now on, these articles would provide an indispensable foundation for any further engagement with the topic. Of comparable importance was the first intensive analysis of the theory of the “anational state”, which Margarete Dörr published in the popular journal *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* the following year.²⁷

Rimscha highlighted as Schiemann’s special achievement the fact that, during the period of profound social upheaval experienced by the Baltic Germans around 1919, under his leadership there occurred “the organic incorporation of landed Baltic Germandom” into the newly founded Latvian state. When the Baltic nobleman, “with his aristocratic style”, who had played a leadership role for decades handed over most of this to the bourgeoisie, “the new leadership class had to establish itself on the soil of parliamentary democracy, gain and secure its influence through general elections, and all in a land without a formal democratic tradition, as well as among people who generally viewed democracy with scorn, indeed even as something disreputable.” After a detailed description of Schiemann’s rejection of a “revolutionary” course, and of the principles of national and social solidarity which he represented, Rimscha recognised especially the practical political aim for which he had striven: the implementation of national cultural autonomy as a public legal corporation. What’s more, Schiemann had demanded active, “wholehearted” participation in the state and its institutions, consequently the loyalty of minorities.

The concept of the anational state provided the foundation for a pan-European order and was particularly important to the European Congress of Nationalities. When he discussed the idea, Rimscha made no attempt to

conceal that it “remained highly theoretical and on the drawing board”, also that Schiemann definitely had undervalued the “growing strength” of many factors—for instance, the “the great nations’ instincts for national power and the national vanity of the small ones”, for whom becoming a sovereign nation state had become a “question of prestige”. By the same token, he had overestimated the “sense of European community” that existed at the time—perhaps also “the strength of moral idealism”. If Schiemann’s “politics failed in practice” in the 1930s, it was nonetheless wrong to conclude that “consequently his objective was wrong and the goal itself unachievable”. The countervailing forces of the time, especially that of Fascism which ultimately proved victorious, had been stronger than expected. This was especially so for the collapse of a Schiemann-style politics Europe-wide, as caused decisively by “the victory train of fascist and nationalist ways of thinking”.²⁸ Consequently Schiemann’s attempt to implement his politics in Vienna in 1936—which involved collecting together elements from the German national groups opposing National Socialist policies of control and force—seemed condemned to failure from the outset. According to Rimscha, even the inaugural meeting of a league of nine minorities which took place in Vienna that February had something about it that was “ghostly”. Schiemann thought of it as “a public manifestation of the will to resist” but, contrary to his wishes, “on account of the National Socialists’ economic terrorism”, the event assumed “the character of a conspiracy”.

Regarding Schiemann’s personality, Rimscha explained that he had “gone a new way politically” but “unconsciously had retained the old, aristocratic standards which still held sway in his homeland, and regarded them as obligatory”; he had become a “democrat in the English sense of the word, a *democratic leader*”. In conclusion he maintained that, “ten years after his death”, judgements of Schiemann were “already surprisingly unified”; even his former and most severe critics from the National Socialist camp “today largely agree with the assessment of Paul Schiemann as a politician which his supporters have long represented.” In actual fact, that was not completely the case in the 1950s and to some extent was wishful thinking on the author’s part.

At about the same time, chairman of the Baltic Historical Commission Reinhard Wittram gave a decisive assessment of Schiemann’s multi-faceted character and the richness of his personality. He described him as follows: “A convinced democrat from an old family (the staunchly conservative historian Theodor Schiemann was his father’s brother), a free spirit with strong bonds to the *Landsmannschaft*, a national patriot with an aristocrat’s feeling of solidarity, a bitter and logical opponent of National Socialism, a modern politician of ideas and at the same time an inheritor of a very old tradition of the landed aristocracy and landed politics; Schiemann was one of the most interesting figures from old Europe who transformed themselves rapidly

during the age of the masses.”²⁹ Later Schiemann’s former colleague, Hans Donath, criticised this description heavily in a letter—and not without some good reason.³⁰ He felt it was a “composite of slogans” and, amongst other things, criticised Wittram’s conflation of “convinced democrat” and “old family”, which to Baltic ears sounded like “the black sheep of the family”.³¹ Even the expression “free spirit” was ambiguous: “was he talking about the youthful bohemian or the fighter against outdated sexual morality or Schiemann’s personal Christianity?”—and Donath asked: “Why did he mention the “modern politician of ideas” but not the “outstanding *Realpolitiker*” who, thanks to his intelligence, understood how to weld into a unity the five rather divergent Baltic [German] Parties? Wittram had a very ambivalent attitude towards Schiemann. Partly he admired him (as did most Balts from his period, early on); but as a convert to conservatism, since Schiemann was a liberal, he also believed he had to be combated—and in the process of doing so, he applied methods which I could not really describe as academic (not to put it more severely).”³²

Precisely in Wittram’s omissions—in what remained unsaid—there still resonated reservations already evident in Boehm. The then doyen of Baltic German historical research neither mentioned nor appreciated the political accomplishment of that “modern politician of ideas”, the endurance of his theory or his visions of Europe.

His judgements concerned predominantly Schiemann’s national achievements. Apart from the group around Erhard Kroeger (who at the time had been National Socialism’s regional leader), former opponents and friends had more or less reached a consensus recognising his successful defence and assertion of nationality rights. On the other hand, most people viewed Schiemann’s liberal minorities theory as either just an abstract doctrine or a personal moral conviction. Consequently in 1969, in a commemorative article written on the twenty fifth anniversary of his death, Wilhelm Lenz senior described Schiemann as doubtless “the most important democratic Baltic German politician of the inter-war period”.³³ Alongside his assessment of the consistently courageous and skilful way Schiemann represented interests—which generally only happened in defence of attacks—, there is also mention of his outrageous and “thoroughly disreputable lifestyle”. He deserved to be commemorated and memorialised with honour, even though his politics had only been “wise” and “had elicited no lasting success”. The conclusion to this memorial essay typifies continued distancing from Schiemann. With the words, “Resettlement would not have been possible under his leadership”, Schiemann’s alleged failure is almost given a kind of historical justification.

Wide resonance in the 1970s

The underlying thesis that Schiemann's politics failed was also represented directly or indirectly in other Baltic German statements, but it was once again questioned and rejected during the interpretative phase of the 1970s and 1980s. Firstly this was due to Dietrich A. Loeber. In 1973 he published not only extracts from an unpublished manuscript which Schiemann had written in Riga in spring 1940 and which was found among his papers, but also a general essay which went out of its way to have contemporary relevance and which opposed energetically the thesis of failure.³⁴ One comment speaks for itself: "had Schiemann's politics been proven to be deficient, he would have had to succumb in the political fight."³⁵ But that was not the case. In actual fact, National Socialist Germany's power politics opposed the realisation of Schiemann's goals, both in Latvia and on the international plane of European nationality politics. Consequently Loeber was correct to say: "Given the political means at Schiemann's disposal, not much could be done against an opponent in the form of a totalitarian state."

As "one of the most significant Baltic German politicians of this century", Schiemann really had been "the most convincing and logical opponent of National Socialism among the Baltic Germans of his time". Like Hans von Rimscha some two decades earlier, Loeber also questioned whether, in the 1970s, the verdict on Schiemann really was "largely unanimous today". Nonetheless, his Baltic German supporters and opponents alike would have agreed that "due to his honourable, spirited and dedicated fight, he won a commanding position in the minorities politics of the inter-war years." Furthermore, for the first time Loeber oriented the assessment of Schiemann towards a pre-war Latvian publication, as well as towards post-war Jewish and Polish publications, which shared this view.³⁶

Referring to Schiemann's attitude towards the resettlement of the Baltic Germans, Loeber introduced a new emphasis into the discussion which he stimulated about these events. In line with his theory, Schiemann viewed the resettlement as a result of the way nation states regulated the minorities problem. In the debates which followed the appearance of the crucially important collection of documents edited by Loeber himself—debates which sometimes were pursued bitterly among Baltic Germans—, he believed "the voice of Paul Schiemann should not be omitted."³⁷

If Rimscha had already referred to the contemporary relevance of Schiemann's ideas, Loeber took up the theme against the background of the concerns about European integration which typified the early 1970s and asked explicitly after "the significance of Paul Schiemann's ideas to our present-day world". His ideas and demands—propounded half a century beforehand—had not at all been surpassed by time, but "they were as applicable as ever, and especially to all states with national minorities." Precisely in the context of concerns about European integration, Schiemann's way of thinking took on an "astonishing proximity to the present".

Loeber also created a new tone by referring to the significance of this heritage “for the intellectual and political debate which is happening among the Soviet intelligentsia today”, since decisive questions about implementing democratic and nationality rights for Soviet citizens involved the population of the Baltic Soviet Republics in particular. At an early point, therefore, he discussed the problem of “infiltration (...) by non-Baltic citizens” and the associated danger facing Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians that in the future they might become minorities in their own lands—which later became a central motive for the “singing revolution” of the 1980s. At a time when this still could not be foreseen, Loeber said that “through his ideas, Schiemann could identify a way for the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian people to preserve their national existence.”

As a member of the younger generation of Baltic German historians, since the 1970s Helmut Kause has been analysing intensively Paul Schiemann’s papers. In part, these were located in Bavaria with his widow, Charlotte, before being taken by the archive-collector Otto Bong to Lüneburg, and later to Riga. In 1979 Kause edited Paul Schiemann’s memoirs—which were so important for further research—, but before this he wrote several profound essays which extended especially our view of the inter-war period as well as Schiemann’s activity before 1914.³⁸ In so doing, he brought many established interpretations into question and became the first person to concern himself intensively with how Baltic Germans had reacted to Schiemann.

In 1975 Kause established accurately that, among Baltic Germans, the assessment provided by Schiemann’s opponents had lasted from 1933 into the post-war decades—that is to say, “Schiemann stood alone and failed, but the service he provided his nation, Latvia’s Germans and German national groups in Europe, requires recognition”.³⁹ Even in Wilhelm von Rüdiger, the President of the “Baltic German national community” and Schiemann’s brother-in-law, Kause saw a conflict between “familial loyalty and Baltic German conservatism”. Lasting judgements about Schiemann included not only that he was an extremely able politician, but also that he was a social outsider and a loner whose life-style contradicted Baltic German morality and tradition; ultimately he was judged a “constructive theoretician of the lives of minorities”.

Baltic German assessments of Schiemann were limited to his “national achievements”, since the “consensus of friend and enemy” involved largely his defence and assertion of autonomous national rights. On the other hand, his liberal minorities theories were dismissed as “a whim, doctrinaire abstraction or private moral conviction”. In actual fact, Schiemann’s theory of the anational had already been given a preliminary assessment by the international lawyer Rudolf Laun, but it had not been addressed at length by Baltic Germans before Rimscha and Loeber.⁴⁰ Kause also said that, in his three volume work, Wachsmuth was guilty of “reducing” the actions of the

National Socialist movement “to an episode”, and of hanging Schiemann in “a national gallery of Baltic German personalities”. According to Kause, previous attempts to systematise and critique the theory of the anational state were inadequate, since they did not take account of the historical motivation of its originator. Kause himself did not manage to produce an extensive biography dealing with the pre-1945 period addressing questions of contemporary concern, although he planned to do so. Before that could happen, there had to be a comparative analysis of contemporary ideas about minorities and the integration of local politics into the network of connections with Germany—both of which investigations were only taken up years later and, after three decades, were publicised and combined sympathetically by John Hiden in his Schiemann biography.⁴¹

In any case, Kause’s judgements from the 1970s sometimes seem slightly exaggerated, for example when he proposes that the Baltic Germans should have reclaimed Schiemann’s minorities politics and theory as a Baltic contribution to a European problem, but cultivated “the emotional consciousness of having been displaced from their homeland and culture”, and failed to update their experiences of the inter-war period in a way appropriate to their incorporation into German society after 1945.⁴² In Kause’s partly justified demand for a revision of recent Baltic German history to take account of social history, and in his determined rejection of “the personal literature of a generation of scholars”, we encounter—not least—the expression of the generational conflict among Baltic Germans which typified the 1970s, also of theoretical historical discussions common at the time.

Schiemann’s treatment since the 1980s

Further concern with Schiemann’s work was defined by general alterations in the situation facing researchers, by a fresh updating of research agendas and by a widening of the interests leading researchers. The key developments involved:

- a. an attempt to create a proper bibliography of Schiemann’s newspaper articles, which were strewn all over the place, and a deepening of biographical research based on newly available sources in Latvia;
- b. the interpretation of his theories of minority rights in the light of the vibrancy of the most recent nationality problems in East Central Europe;
- c. an emphasis on Schiemann’s rigorous anti-totalitarian convictions, in association with a nuanced analysis of his concept of liberalism;
- d. an appropriate evaluation of Schiemann’s stand against National Socialism;
- e. a fresh assessment of Schiemann’s vision of Europe;
- f. an expansion from German-language historiography into international research—from Schiemann’s homeland of Latvia to Great Britain.

Alongside the commemoration of Schiemann by the above-mentioned authors on the occasion of anniversary years, another of Schiemann's former colleagues came to the fore during the 1980s.⁴³ Owing to his "affinity with Schiemann's political programme", in the 1930s jurist Hans Donath had already planned to publish his hero's speeches and leading articles, but could only take up the project anew after he retired in the 1960s.⁴⁴ In the 1980s, Donath came to the fore in two areas. He produced articles and speeches which were determined to contemporise Schiemann's ideas for present-day Latvia, and he undertook the extensive and arduous project of copying the essays published in *Rigasche Rundschau* so they would be made generally accessible. His extensive self-published collection covered the full extent of subjects (from literature, education and ideology to politics), and included the 1,500 or so leading articles from *Rigasche Rundschau* written between 1914 and 1933, not to say hundreds of shorter essays such as theatre criticisms.⁴⁵ Donath organised this tremendous wealth of articles by Schiemann systematically and added a rich commentary. He published them as bound photocopies consisting of *no fewer* than 25 individual volumes. His collection provides an important historical source and forms an indispensable foundation for any detailed engagement with Schiemann's work—notwithstanding several gaps or sections of the copies which are difficult to read. This collection was extended initially by systematic bibliographies compiled by Michael Garleff and Michael Imhof.⁴⁶ In addition, Donath gave a series of talks, for example at the Baltic German cultural conferences in Stettenfels in 1987 and in Döttingen in 1994, with titles like "What Schiemann would have said to the Latvians today".⁴⁷ He structured these around specific sources and provided explanatory evidence from his publication.

Schiemann's memoirs, edited by Helmut Kause and drawn from Schiemann's estate, must also be recognised as an important source, even if they only deal with the years 1903 to 1919.⁴⁸ These memoirs, by "one of the best journalists of Baltic descent", come complete with a well-informed introduction and a careful commentary. In his review, Gert von Pistohlkors maintained that "younger readers in particular might find great profit in Paul Schiemann's many-sided report on his life".⁴⁹ This broadening of knowledge among young people was taken up by Michael Garleff and, above all, Detlef Henning. On several occasions they were able to establish Schiemann's life and work as central during the introductory events of the Baltic Historical Commission's annual conferences of Baltic historians. Henning has continued these activities right up to the most recent seminars and workshops associated with the Baltic Youth and Student Congress, which have taken place in Lüneburg since 2008 as part of "Schirren Day". Furthermore he, along with others, is interested in anchoring Paul Schiemann's name in the future work of the Baltic German Educational Charity.

In Riga, on 10 June 1994, as part of Riga Cathedral Day, Michael Garleff gave a speech, “Democrat—Patriot—European. Paul Schiemann on the Fiftieth Anniversary of his Death”, which dealt with his activity in Latvia as well as on the European level. Later, the text was published in Latvian.⁵⁰ At the turn of the year 1999–2000, Percy Gurwitz, who was an aged Jewish author and historian living in Russia (also a “Jewish disciple of German culture”), reported his personal encounter with Schiemann in *Baltische Briefe*. After the resettlement action of autumn 1939, “everyone with liberal or left-liberal convictions” regarded him as “the conscience and the saviour of Baltic German honour”.⁵¹

In the context of a major research project about *Baltic Germans, the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich*, which produced edited collections of essays in 2001 and 2008, Helmut Kause addressed Schiemann’s resistance to National Socialism as it was carried out in the press,⁵² while John Hiden dealt with the significance of his conception of nation and state for Europe⁵³—a theme which he also discussed elsewhere.⁵⁴

The recent treatment of Schiemann in Latvia

After Dietrich A. Loeber had explained the significance of Schiemann’s interpretation of the national question for the present day in a Latvian academic journal at the start of 1994, at his initiative, on 11 June 1994, a memorial plaque was mounted on the building of the former editorial offices of the *Rigasche Rundschau* in Riga.⁵⁵ In his speech given in Latvian and German, Loeber described him as “a famous politician and statesman of the Latvian Republic”, whose life’s work had covered three levels: parliamentary deputy and co-author of the constitution which was once more in force—politician and publicist who supported cultural autonomy, particularly the preparation of school autonomy in Latvia—liberal democrat who battled “force and violence”, which led him logically to reject participation in resettlement.⁵⁶ In conclusion, Loeber stressed Schiemann’s “intellectual heritage” which had become relevant once more, above all in respect of the question of loyalty. He believed this provided the foundation for national minorities rights and a “lukewarm” or “diluted” loyalty was not good enough. Here, Loeber did not shy away from what he considered the “instructive” comparison between the “white stockings” of 1939 and the “black leather jackets” of 1994.

The day before, in a speech also commemorating the 50th anniversary of Schiemann’s death, Jānis Stradiņš had emphasised that he had been well-known in politically active Latvian circles as a parliamentary deputy and chief editor of *Rigasche Rundschau*, but his ideas had not.⁵⁷ Even today, he said, Schiemann was known to only a relatively small circle of academics in Latvia, as the preparations for mounting the memorial plaque had shown. Stradiņš himself had only heard about Schiemann’s work in December 1988 during his participation in the “Forum of Latvia’s Peoples”, and had pointed

out that his ideas could provide a “good lesson even for contemporary Russians”; they might even serve as “a model for co-existence in the future”. In any case, there was “no perfect analogy” between the Russians and the Baltic Germans, a point which Stradiņš established with a detailed analysis of the differences between the two groups. He described the contemporary situation as “co-existence without harmony” and regretted that at the moment unfortunately there was “no politician of the calibre of a Dr. Schiemann among Latvia’s Russians”. Stradiņš concluded with a call for the re-discovery of Paul Schiemann: “We welcome respect for Dr. Schiemann and his thinking, just as understanding is to be sought between Latvians and Baltic Germans. This is also true of his ideas which could not be put into effect because of the way history developed. We honour Dr. Schiemann as a bearer of the Baltic German intellectual tradition in Latvia... We welcome respect for Schiemann as a man of letters and a humanist who was not afraid to fight a superior power with his convictions alone. Power always wins—but intellect is decisive.”

In the 1990s, not only Latvian historians discussed Schiemann in German journals, several personal testimonies contributed to the enrichment of our knowledge about him.⁵⁸ In 1994, Valentina Freimane published her brief recollections of that year and a half before Schiemann’s death in the Riga magazine *Literatura un Maksla*. During this period she—a persecuted Jew—was hidden by the Schiemanns in their house in Thorensberg and consequently was saved from the Holocaust.⁵⁹ She didn’t just think of him “as a remarkable politician, publicist, democrat, anti-fascist and anti-communist”, but “primarily as a unique individual, as a human being—as a person, without whom, perhaps I would not be here today.” “From this outstanding personality” she learned “how to discipline oneself to view everything from an analytical, historical distance.” “He wanted to remain true to his principles to the end, knowing how dearly he would have to pay for it.” There, Schiemann had dictated to her his memoirs which later were published in Lüneburg. It was thanks to the efforts of Valentina Freimane that on 21 November 1999 Yad Vashem in Jerusalem decided to recognise Paul and Charlotte Schiemann as “Righteous among the Nations” and to immortalise their names on the wall of honour.

This public honour led to an academic conference held of 26 September 2000 at the Riga Academy of Sciences. It addressed *Paul Schiemann’s Historical Contribution to Conciliation and Agreement between Ethnic Groups in Europe and Latvia*, and was organised by the Academy and the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the University of Latvia. After the official opening by the Academy’s President, Jānis Stradiņš, and several welcoming addresses (given by President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, among others), the outstanding distinction “Righteous among the Nations” was bestowed on the relatives of Paul Schiemann and his wife, Lotte, by the representative of the Israeli Embassy. The award took the form of a medal of

honour and a document which, among other things, says “Whoever saves one life saves the whole world.”⁶⁰

The subsequent six talks dealt with the most important aspects of Paul Schiemann’s political, legal and journalistic activity.⁶¹ Historian Inesis Feldmanis (Riga) began by assessing him as “the most visible and influential German politician in Latvia” during the 1920s and 1930s, and described him as a “politician of European importance”. As chief editor of *Rigasche Rundschau* he had guaranteed the “extraordinarily high professional standards of the newspaper”; as a “liberal democrat” he had pursued a “realistic political strategy” which demanded of the Germans the capacity to adapt to the new political and social situation. According to Feldmanis, his “historical achievements” included especially the strengthening of “ideas of loyalty” among the Baltic Germans, not to say demands for cultural autonomy for his own, as well as for every, national minority. Schiemann’s logical opposition to National Socialism did not, however, find “boundless approval” among his Baltic German contemporaries. Regarding the present, Feldmanis stated: “Today, historians of Latvia value highly both his political activity and the theoretical heritage he left behind.”

The deputy chairman of the constitutional court of the Republic of Latvia, Romāns Apsītis, discussed Schiemann the jurist and legal theorist, stressing the “steadfastness, courage and logic” with which he supported “the state built on the rule of law”. In the light of his demand for an independent legal system, Schiemann had to be “recognised as a spiritual father of the current constitutional court.” As a parliamentary deputy, he had developed Latvia’s constitutional law expertly and in a highly qualified way, as well as analysing the competences of the legislature, executive and judiciary as they existed at the time. Apsītis also emphasised the contemporary relevance of Schiemann when he said: “Even today his ideas would make a valuable contribution to the compilation of comprehensive commentaries about the *Satversme* [the constitution], both concerning constitutional law in general and assisting the practice of jurisprudence, e.g. in the everyday work of Latvia’s constitutional court.” Based on his newspaper articles and especially the edited collection of essays published in Latvian the year before by Detlef Henning (*Eiropas Problēma*), it was concluded that Schiemann had developed his rejection of National Socialism based on the legal foundations of his Latvian homeland.⁶²

The historian Helēna Šimkuva (Riga) dealt with the period from 1933 to 1939 which had hardly been addressed in Latvia. At the time, Schiemann was based in Austria and fought against the National Socialist take over of German national groups. Under the heading “the alignment of existing relationships in Europe”, he had extended his ideas about cultural autonomy and of the nation state, rejecting especially the anti-Semitism practiced in Germany. As an “active opponent of National Socialism and totalitarianism” he stood among Europe’s “democratic forces” of the period. Conference

participants were given a collection of Paul Schiemann's work from the critical years 1933–39 which was compiled by Helēna Šimkuva and edited by Dietrich Loeber—the man who had done so much to promote the recognition of Paul Schiemann. They also received copies of his articles from those difficult to find newspapers in which he could still publish at this time.⁶³

Philosopher and sociologist Leo Dribins (Riga) analysed Schiemann's "formula for a constructive solution", with which he sought to reach a compromise between the demands of the state and those of the national minorities. This involved "respect for the rights of the Latvian ethno-nation to create its own state, likewise the maintenance of the rights of national minorities regarding their collective identity, cultural traditions, language and associations, also their participation in social life." This could be achieved "if, on the one hand, the state was not based on ethnic purity and if, on the other hand, the minorities avoided political and economic separatism." After analysing in detail the arguments between Schiemann and his Latvian and German opponents, Dribins came to the conclusion that Schiemann's demand for a "new type of nation state", in which the titular nation shared power with the minorities according to the principles of democracy and of international law, was now thoroughly suited to a future Europe.

As one of the two foreign commentators on Schiemann, John Hiden (Bradford—now also Glasgow) dealt extensively with this European dimension to his ideas. Having already supported the right of Latvians to self-determination in 1907, from 1925—in the framework of the European Nationalities Congress—Schiemann promoted cultural autonomy and the limitation of state power. In delimiting the rights and duties associated with the given areas, he re-defined the nation state as a state of nationalities. Schiemann understood more clearly than his Pan-European contemporaries that the way to a European Union ran via economic union—something which, in turn, required a solution to the nationalities conflict. Faced with the National Socialist and Fascist tide, Hiden saw Paul Schiemann "as a tragic figure whose life's work and ideas were swept aside by the forces of extreme nationalism", and yet also "as a fortunate man, who had right on his side and who maintained his ideals to the very end of his life." These ideas had survived him and, in so far as the minorities problem is a European issue, "Schiemann speaks directly to us today." In the process of Europe's expansion towards the East, "it is vital to remember that traditions of thought from Latvia and the other Baltic States also have much that is important to contribute. Schiemann reminds us of this truth." Lastly, Michael Garleff (Oldenburg) concerned himself with the principles of Schiemann's treatment in Baltic German historiography. Finally the conference participants commemorated Paul Schiemann in the chapel of the Jacob Cemetery in Riga. Unfortunately the exact site of his grave cannot be identified today. All in all, this conference showed: "Latvia has re-discovered Paul Schiemann and is

continuing his positive European tradition”, as his great Niece, Monika von Hirschheydt put it at the end of her report in *Baltische Briefe*.⁶⁴

It seemed almost paradoxical, however, when in April 2003 Paul Schiemann was made use of in his former homeland by quite different interests. As Detlef Henning reports, of all people, the post-Socialist leadership of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia found this liberal democrat to be “a great political model in their battle against the Latvian Republic’s present political system” and illustrated an essay in *Vesti segodna* with a photograph of Schiemann as an officer in the Tsar’s army.⁶⁵

The international character of Schiemann’s treatment

In 2004, Inesis Feldmanis emphasised afresh at the 16th Baltic Seminar of the Carl Schirren Society held in Lüneburg that the increasing loyalty of the Baltic Germans during the 1920s had been assisted by, on the one hand, the accommodation of the Latvian state and, on the other hand, the attitude of the Baltic German leadership. “Paul Schiemann, the most prominent and influential German politician in Latvia in the 1920s and early 1930s, campaigned for mutual understanding between Latvians and Germans. He also strengthened the idea of loyalty among Baltic Germans.”⁶⁶

At the same conference, John Hiden provided a fine portrait of Schiemann as the “minorities lawyer”. Thanks to the research for his major biography which appeared that same year, he not only tracked Schiemann’s career but, by dealing with his theoretical principles, paid tribute to him as “the thinker of the minorities movement” at the European level.⁶⁷ As a result, it became increasingly important to discuss the ever deepening rift between Schiemann’s idea of cultural autonomy and ideas of Greater Germany which were represented by Werner Hasselblatt and Max Hildebert Boehm, likewise his judgement on the Third Reich’s Jewish policy. In answering the question of whether Schiemann’s ideas had been right, ultimately Hiden referred to the work of an all-European commission from 1991. This established that since the area of a state had never coincided with the area of its national settlement, it had proved impossible to overcome the discrepancy between state and nation over the last 150 years; also, since it was morally unacceptable to shift people across borders, the only solution left was “to secure the different autonomies of national minorities within current state boundaries”. The usefulness and effectiveness of Schiemann’s minorities theory for reality could not be expressed more clearly than this.

Time and again reviews of Hiden’s Schiemann biography emphasised the contemporary relevance of this “forgotten European’s” minorities theory.⁶⁸ Extracts include: “even today, as the European Union strives to overcome the conflictual legacy of nation states”,⁶⁹ or “John Hiden’s pioneering biography (...) opens up a little-explored chapter of European history in the first half of the twentieth century, in a region seen once more as the litmus test of the new Europe.”⁷⁰ Jörg Hackmann emphasised particularly that, in this

“extraordinarily commendable venture”, Hiden describes Paul Schiemann’s life and effect “with much sympathy, admittedly without adopting a Baltic German perspective which above all is typified by the preservation of the German nation”.⁷¹ If the reviewer means that in comparing the Baltic German “triumvirate” of Ammende, Hasselblatt and Schiemann, that the latter “quite obviously is the only positive figure in the field of Baltic German minorities policy”, then this criticism might be exaggerated and unfair to the efforts of many other Baltic minorities’ politicians.

Summary

The transformation in Schiemann’s treatment has been mirrored in lexicons and reference books. The *Deutschbaltische Biographische Lexikon* was published in 1970 under the aegis of the Baltic Historical Commission and is regarded as authoritative even today, yet it barely mentions the posts Schiemann held during his life and limits its conclusions to the following: “liberal democrat, opponent of Bolshevism and National Socialism”.⁷² It was longer still until more recent reference works—albeit with the necessary brevity—could recognise his personality more fully and provide extensive literature references. Occasions for this included commemorative days or fresh editions of general lexicons,⁷³ such as the extensive *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, which recognised his achievements unequivocally.⁷⁴ Most recently of all, Schiemann was included in a literary lexicon with an extensive bibliography of works about him.⁷⁵ At first Schiemann’s treatment was clearly restrained and honoured him only in part, but this changed inside the Baltic Historical Commission as the chairmanship passed from Reinhard Wittram to Georg von Rauch, before being consolidated under Gert von Pistohlkors, who held the post for several years. With few exceptions, almost all German researchers into Schiemann’s career belong to this academic organisation.

Six decades of steadily growing research have provided the basis for the long overdue paying of attention to Schiemann’s life’s work, as well as for its appropriate description. At first, since his personality was controversial among his contemporaries, he was dealt with only hesitantly. As a result, an impetus to begin the necessary work was only provided in the 1950s by his former colleague Hans von Rimscha. Research became more intensive in the 1970s due to Dietrich A. Loeber and entered a new phase thanks to the engagement of a new generation of researchers such as Helmut Kause, Gert von Pistohlkors, Michael Garleff and Detlef Henning—all supported by the last living member of Schiemann’s colleagues, Hans Donath. Finally, research about Schiemann received further stimuli from the broadening of interest beyond the Baltic German research circle, a development which displayed two characteristics. On the one hand, in his former homeland of Latvia, speeches given there and smaller publications by Loeber, Garleff and Henning awakened the interest of Latvian historians such as Inesis Feldmanis

and Helēna Šimkuva, not to mention academics from other subject areas such as Jānis Stradiņš. On the other hand, improved access to archives since the end of the 1980s allowed the “discovery” of Schiemann by John Hiden, who could then interest Anglo-Saxon research successfully in the topic.

This internationalisation of research about Schiemann did not just concern the academics, but also the topics they addressed. Initially interest had focused basically on Schiemann’s achievements for his own Baltic German national group, but it was extended to include his international work as a minorities politician dealing with European minorities law. This resulted in a fresh evaluation of his consistently anti-Nazi activities. The transformation of Eastern Europe, with the re-gaining of independence by the Baltic States plus the re-orientation of historical research about them, kindled interest in the significance of Schiemann’s theories for the reorganisation of the state’s constitution, especially in connection with minorities rights. A final extension of interest in Schiemann concerned the detailed analysis of his ideas and their implications for the future shaping of Europe as it expands eastwards. John Hiden’s research and impulses have contributed decisively to this contemporary dimension of Schiemann’s work, such that assessments about him could be deepened significantly and important new areas dealt with too.

If, at times, this important personality’s life’s work was threatened with being forgotten, by this point Paul Schiemann’s cultural and political activity, also his theoretical work, have acquired a secure place in international historical research.

Notes

This article was translated by Martyn Housden, with the assistance of John Hiden.

1. Hiden, 2004, p. 248.
2. “Eine Würdigung Dr. P. Schiemanns” (1953), pp. 428–29.
3. Schiemann, 1979, p. 116.
4. Goetz, 1912, p. 118.
5. Schiemann, 1979, pp. 111–15.
6. Guenther, 1969, pp. 308–09.
7. Schiemann, 1918.
8. Letters published by Rimscha, 1956a; see also Meyer, 1956.
9. Boehm, 1918a and 1918b.
10. On this, see Prehn, 2008.
11. Wertheimer, 1930, p. 72.
12. Intelmann, 1984, p. 13.
13. Hasselblatt, 1932/33; Garleff, 1980.
14. See Schiemann’s delimitation in Schiemann, 1927.
15. Kause, 1975, p. 34.
16. V.P.D. Volksdeutscher Presse- und Informationsdienst, Wien, No. 3, 28.5.1937.
17. Wittrock, 1979, p. 89.
18. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* Nr. 1212, 17.7.1944.
19. Rimscha, 1981, p. 192.
20. Wachsmuth, 1953.
21. Taube, 1943.
22. Rüdiger, 1955.
23. Rimscha, 1954a, p. 2.
24. Rimscha, 1954b.
25. Rimscha, 1956a.
26. Rimscha, 1956b.
27. Dörr, 1957.
28. See Rimscha, 1956c.
29. Wachsmuth, 1954.
30. Letter from H. Donath to the author, 20.7.1994.
31. Letter from H. Donath to the author, 1.9.1994.
32. Donath is referring to R. Wittram’s critique in *Baltischen Monatsschrift* 1929, pp. 60–64 concerning the essay by Schiemann, 1928.
33. Lenz, 1969, p. 4.
34. “Paul Schiemann †. Die Umsiedlung 1939 und die europäische Minderheitenpolitik.”
35. Loeber, 1973.

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36. *Es vinu pazistu. Latviesu biografiska vardnica*, 1939, pp. 472–73; Michaeli, 1971; Lossowski, 1972a; Lossowski, 1972b.
 37. Loeber, 1972.
 38. Kause, 1982; Kause, 1980.
 39. Kause, 1975.
 40. Laun, 1949; Laun 1954.
 41. Grundmann, 1977.
 42. Kause, 1975, p. 39.
 43. See also Garleff, 1976.
 44. Donath, 1988, p. 33.
 45. Donath, 1986–92; Donath, 1986.
 46. Garleff, 1994; Garleff and Imhof, 1998.
 47. Donath, 1987; Donath, 1994.
 48. Schiemann, 1979.
 49. Pistohlkors, review in the *Jahrbuch des baltischen Deutschtums* 29:1982 (1981), pp. 193–95.
 50. Garleffs, 1996.
 51. Gurwitz, 2000.
 52. Kause, 2001.
 53. Hiden, 2008.
 54. Hiden, 2005.
 55. Lēbers, 1994b.
 56. Lēbers, 1994a; the author has a German language press summary.
 57. The author has a translated copy of the text by D. A. Loeber.
 58. Levans, 1994.
 59. Short version in *Literatura un Maksla* 1994, No. 41–42, p. 8; the author has a long version which is translated into English; see also Freimane, 2000.
 60. Report and copy of the document are in the possession of M. v. Hirschheydt, 2000, p. 3.
 61. The author has abstracts of the speeches.
 62. Šīmanis, 1999.
 63. Schiemann, 2000.
 64. Hirschheydt, 2000, p. 4.
 65. A reference to *Vesti segodna* No. 99 dated 29.4.2003 is in Henning, 2009, pp. 9–10.
 66. Feldmanis, 2009, p. 204.
 67. Hiden, 2009.
 68. Hiden, 2004, p. 250.
 69. Brüggemann,
<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/paper/bruggemann.html>. Other reviews include L. Donskis in *Slavonic and East European Review* 84 (2006), vol. 2, pp. 344–46 and T. Tegeler in *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 55 (2007), p. 151–52.

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70. Griffiths, <http://diemperdidi.info/nordicnotes/vol10/reviews/hiden.html>.
71. Hackmann, *Nordeuropaforum* 15 (2005), pp. 107–09
72. Lenz, 1970, p. 676.
73. Garleff, “Paul Schiemann. 50. Todestag”, *Ostdeutsche Gedenktage 1994*, Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1993, pp. 90–94.
74. Garleff, 2005, pp. 743–44.
75. Gottzmann and Hoerner, 2007, pp. 1129–32.

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Werner Hasselblatt on Cultural Autonomy: A Forgotten Manuscript

Jörg Hackmann

Werner Hasselblatt and cultural autonomy

During his years in Estonia, while pushing the well known project of cultural autonomy for Estonia's national minorities, Werner Hasselblatt was also working on an accompanying book project. It would seem that the manuscript remained unfinished in Estonia, as Hasselblatt headed for Berlin in 1931 to take up new responsibilities in Germany, and was rediscovered only in the 1990s. Although the text was far from finished, it offers the opportunity to examine Hasselblatt's notion of cultural autonomy first against the background of politics in Estonia and second with regard to Hasselblatt's move towards Nazi minority and nationality politics after 1933.

Since the revolutions of 1989–91 a new interest in minority politics has shaped political and scholarly debates in Europe and beyond. As a reason to explain the re-emergence of minority topics, one may point first and foremost to the regulation of national conflicts in post-socialist Europe. Secondly, questions relating to national, ethnic or linguistic minorities are now also being more widely addressed in Western Europe. Thirdly one has to mention scholarly debates on multiculturalism as political theory, which has been developed first of all in Northern America by Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka independent of the changes in Eastern Europe.¹ Finally, historical debates on minority issues before the Second World War have been rediscovered and have regained relevance in the last decade: John Hiden has made a significant contribution through his biography of Paul Schiemann,² furthermore one should mention Xosé Manoel Núñez's publications on national minority issues between the world wars.³ Aside from these international debates, there has also been a specific (West) German debate, in which minority issues and the post-war fate of Germans from East Central Europe have been intermingled, based on the claim of a "right of domicile" (*Heimatrecht*), which was said to have been withheld from the German expellees.⁴

The Estonian German Werner Hasselblatt has played a crucial role in both of the aforementioned historical threads: on the one hand he was closely involved in developing the Estonia's 1925 law on "cultural autonomy for national minorities", which has been frequently addressed as the most successful application of the Habsburgian concept of cultural autonomy. On the other hand, Hasselblatt's notion of nationalities politics was always very closely tied to the interests of German governments, from the Weimar Republic through to Nazi rule, and he finally tried to adapt his ideas to the situation after the Second World War. As some scholars have already pointed out, Hasselblatt is an interesting object of study,⁵ since his activities as a

politician and publicist encompass both constructive and less constructive aspects of minority politics. Nevertheless, a biography or a larger biographical study covering his political activities is still lacking.

The manuscript's fate

Among Hasselblatt's large number of publications⁶—he wrote articles and memoranda extensively until 1945—there is a lengthy unpublished manuscript, which is preserved in the files of the Preparatory Committee for German Cultural Autonomy in the Estonian State Archives in Tallinn.⁷ The existence of this manuscript was seemingly first brought to the attention of the international scholarly community by the Estonian historian Rein Helme. The microfilm I have used⁸ was commissioned on August 22nd, 1989—at the high point of the “revolution from the past” in the Baltics, to quote Rein Ruutsoo's phrase.⁹ Previously, Erik Thomson, a Baltic German journalist, had stated that according to information from Werner Hasselblatt's family the manuscript had been lost.¹⁰ In his non-published memoirs, Hasselblatt mentioned two copies that were destroyed in Berlin at the end of the war.¹¹ In fact, it seems that Hasselblatt had tried to recall parts of it after 1945 in West Germany, which implies that he no longer had a copy to hand. Since then, the manuscript has been mentioned by many authors. A closer analysis, however, has not been undertaken so far, and an attempt to edit the manuscript has remained unfinished. Here, I will try to shed some light on the contents and discuss the relevance of the manuscript for understanding the politics of cultural autonomy (in inter-war Estonia) and Hasselblatt's notions of minority and nationality politics.

The Tallinn manuscript is in a file entitled “*Hasselblatt. Über die Kulturautonomie. Buchmanuskript und Anlagen*” and consists of 355 typewritten sheets. The information about the file's beginning and end dates as provided by the archive—1921–31—is obviously formal, and as we will see, does not match fully with the contents. The manuscript itself bears the simple title *Buchmanuskript*, parts 1–3, chapters 1–8 (1),¹² and had thus not been definitively named at the time Hasselblatt stopped working on it. The table of contents (2–8) suggests that the main text (chapters 1–7) may have been completed, but from the list of 46 source attachments 15 had not been added, thus the manuscript as a whole was not yet finished. It seems that the bibliography was also incomplete, as it contains only literature from Estonia, and has no information on other topics and regions referred to by Hasselblatt in his text. Furthermore, even the structure is confusing, especially in part 3, which should deal with the law on cultural autonomy and also contain “commentary, regulations, sources of the law, materials” (3). Actually, this part consists of only one chapter with a translation of the law and some commentaries (168–86), which would rather belong to the annex.

Not only these facts indicate—contrary to what Hasselblatt and Thomson, the author of a biographical sketch of Hasselblatt, pretended—that

the manuscript was not ready for print.¹³ Even the shape of the main text of chapters 1–7 suggests the same conclusion. Deletions and additions in chapter 1–3 cannot always be put in a clear order that would produce a continuous text. Chapters 4–7 have only corrections of typing and dictating errors, and one may therefore assume that they have not been as thoroughly checked as the earlier ones. The language in large parts of the manuscript is rather complicated and unpolished, but one may notice some attempts to replace foreign words with German terms. Aside from the aforementioned breach in the chapter structure, there is also a lack of clarity in the argumentation within the chapters—in parts the author assumes that the reader is familiar with the Estonian case; sometimes he uses a collective “we” for the Estonian Germans (in chapter 7); elsewhere he appeals to readers from outside, which may be explained by the fact that Hasselblatt presumably collected heterogeneous texts. Further detail is not needed here, as it has already become clear that the manuscript had not reached the stage of being ready for publication.

If it is obvious that the manuscript was left in an unfinished state, one might ask when Hasselblatt stopped working on it. Throughout the text, he made several references to the year 1930 (20, 47v), and in particular in chapter 7, he refers to data from that year. On the other hand, he did not yet refer to the death of Carl Georg Bruns (35), Hasselblatt’s predecessor as legal advisor to the association of German national groups in Europe, who died on February 27, 1931. Among the attachments, however, we find several references also to 1931¹⁴ and even to December 1932.¹⁵ This implies that Hasselblatt at least occasionally worked on the manuscript until 1933, at a time, when he had already moved from Estonia to Berlin in order to succeed Bruns. Thomson’s claim that the manuscript had not been accepted for print by the Nazi authorities cannot therefore be proved and seems to be fictitious, if we do not speculate on whether the copies destroyed in Berlin had been revised later on. Hasselblatt himself wrote after 1945 that friends had advised him not to publish the manuscript,¹⁶ which might be taken to imply that it had already ceased to be of political utility to the author. If the reason for stopping the work on the manuscript is far from obvious, the initial impulse behind it is quite clear. By Hasselblatt’s own account, such a text had been suggested already in 1925 by Karl Christian von Loesch, the president of “Deutscher Schutzbund”, at a conference of that organization on German minorities during that same year.¹⁷

The manuscript’s contents

The text itself consists of three parts entitled: “Nationalitätenpolitische Nachkriegsprobleme“ (chapters 1–3), “Die Durchführung der Kulturautonomie in Estland“ (chapters 4–7) and “Gesetz über die ‚Kultur-Selbstverwaltung der nationalen Minoritäten“ (chapter 8). In the first three chapters, Hasselblatt intended to give an overview of the political situation of

national minority groups after the First World War and to discuss fundamental terms and concepts. What becomes visible almost from every line is his fundamental criticism of the post-war political order in Central and Eastern Europe. He criticizes not only nationalist tendencies among the dominating titular nations, but in particular the use of the terms “majority” and “minority”. His rejection did not only refer to allegedly inherent connotations of superiority and inferiority, but also to the simple application of quantitative reasoning, which Hasselblatt denounces as neglecting the cultural values and historical and sociological situation of different nationalities. He thus underlines the sharp distinction between state community on the one hand and ethnic community on the other, which had allegedly been subordinated to the agenda of the new states. When Hasselblatt claims that state tasks have to be regarded as polynational in essence (14), it is hardly surprising that he proceeds to a partial glorification of multicultural empires (11–12), even though the situation of the Germans in the Baltic provinces of Russia before 1914 was far from being free of restrictions.

In fact, Hasselblatt clings to a traditional euro-centric perspective, rejecting on equal grounds influences from the West and from Bolshevism. Furthermore he also argues against Coudenhove-Kalergi’s idea of Paneurope (9) and against Paul Schiemann’s notion of the a-national state (21), on the grounds that these would lead to an artificial separation of cultural issues from the state. Obviously, Hasselblatt feared that any measures taken against nationalism could not be limited to that of majority peoples, which he attacked so fiercely, but would also undermine the national identity of minority groups. However, he was convinced that the emergence of nationality as a basis of forming contemporary communities cannot be reversed, hence it had to be accepted for all ethnic groups in education and culture. Thus he demands a “healthy national consciousness” also amongst minorities. (14)

Hasselblatt’s theoretical reflections on the sociology of nations went in the same direction. Besides his polemics against the term “minority”, he also rejects sociological concepts of the nation as well as those of constitutional law¹⁸ and refers to Rudolf Kjellén’s concept of ethnopolitics (39),¹⁹ where he found support for his ethnocultural understanding of the nation. Hasselblatt’s opposition between “*Gesamtvolk*” (including all co-nationals) and “*Staatsvolk*” underlines his priority of ethnic boundaries before political borders. According to Hasselblatt, the *Gesamtvolk* should be regarded not only as a cultural, but also as a legal entity.

In fact, Hasselblatt expresses the vision of a state based on the rule of law and not on the power of the majority (15). However, he obviously did not expect to see such a development within the system created by Versailles. On the contrary, his rejection of modern majority nationalism went along with a criticism of the minority protection treaties, because in his view they treated

minorities as a general obstacle to the realization of nation states. Further criticism is directed at the defects of the protection mechanisms introduced by the League of Nations. Hasselblatt followed a similar line of argumentation when outlining his own preferred vision of a new order. Analysing his writings, one discerns the strong influence of Max Hildebert Boehm's "Volk" sociology (23), as well as approval of the concept of *Führerkult*: the demand for a powerful leader, who could transcend state borders and be a leader to the whole nation, also beyond state borders. Otherwise, a decision between "Heimat" or "Volkstum" (28)—entailing the negative scenario for (German) minorities of either emigration or assimilation—would be the only alternative. Whether Hasselblatt was already thinking of Hitler in this context is not the really the issue—what seems certain is that he saw Hitler's policies towards national minorities as representing the realization of his own ideas. This can be noticed quite clearly in his activities and writings after 1933. In any case, if nations could be regarded as quasi-natural groups, whereas state borders were artificial and contingent, then there should in consequence also be a difference between minority and nationality rights. In fact, Hasselblatt strongly underlined the latter notion, as evidenced for instance by the change he made to the subtitle of the journal "*Nation und Staat*" after becoming its editor in June 1938.²⁰ Nationality rights meant the delegation of state rights to a given ethnic group in the sphere of national cultural administration. It was this concept that led Hasselblatt to promote cultural autonomy as a concrete political strategy. Yet, for all his emphasis on the national cleavages and economic problems besetting the new Eastern Europe after 1918, he did not see any obvious connection to similar models of nationalities rights found in Britain and Switzerland as well as in the Habsburg monarchy prior to 1918 (22). The same is true of his comparisons with the situation of other ethnic groups and minorities found in the second chapter, which are based in particular on the discussions within the European Nationalities Congress: these other cases are secondary to the fate of German minorities.

In some brief historical remarks Hasselblatt actually points to the Habsburgian origin of the notion of cultural autonomy, but makes only indirect references to Karl Renner, claiming that Renner's idea had been adopted by leaders from all parties and nationalities. Thus, Hasselblatt regards autonomy first and foremost as a national (German) concept rather than something derived from social-democratic thought. However, Hasselblatt does not go into details and does not mention, for instance, the "*Mährische Ausgleich*" of 1905. This leads to the conclusion that he was not very much interested in the origins of the idea, although in 1948 he claimed that he had tried without success to get hold of Renner's book on "the struggle of the Austrian nations over the state" after the First World War.²¹ Nevertheless, Hasselblatt does discern some similarities between the fate of Germans in Austria and that of those living in the Baltics: most significant in

this regard was the fact that both groups had lost their hitherto dominant role after 1918—or, in Hasselblatt's interpretation, had been deprived of the responsibility for administering the land. As the Baltic Germans' commitment to "*Stamm*" and "*Heimat*" had been challenged, they had developed a mental predisposition towards "*Ausharren*" (standing firm) (84). This allusion to Carl Schirren's well-known polemics with the Slavophil Jurii Samarin²² clearly reveals Hasselblatt's sympathy for the feudal estate society and a call for recognition of the Germans' special role in the Baltic region.

Only against this background does Hasselblatt see the relevance of cultural autonomy. The main points that he highlights in this connection refer to native language school instruction without financial disadvantages, to national-cultural self-administration, and to the formation of a national estate ("*Nationalstand*") (70). Thus, the minority should be organized not only as a kind of voluntary association, but as a corporative institution, which obliges its member as well as the state. In this part of his reflections, Hasselblatt then turns to practical political issues: he opts for a bottom-up process of minority formation, hence the Latvian solution of introducing a special department in state administration could be seen only as a first step (74). In a departure from his initial criticism, Hasselblatt is now willing to discuss the practical details of the relationship between national minorities and the new state administration. A major issue in this context is the question of how to define the membership of national groups. Hasselblatt rejects objective criteria of race and argues instead for a national-cultural delimitation, drawing among other things on a close and conscious link to the state where the minority's co-nationals form a majority population (72). At the same time he accepts a quantitative definition of minorities as a precondition of cultural self-administration, as was implemented in the law of 1925 (122). This raises the questions of who might legitimately be regarded as members of a nationality and how to register them. The practical solution in Estonia had a double focus—on the one hand it was based on statistical information from a census, on the other it included individual confession, which could, however, be disputed by representatives of the ethnic group, e.g. if a person did not speak the language adequately (133–34). In fact, Hasselblatt openly supported more compulsory regulations, because he was convinced that belonging to a minority was not based on individual choice and hence could not be changed. In this connection, Hasselblatt also addresses another crucial issue that he had left aside so far in his general discussion: the question of loyalty of the minority towards state institutions (79). This issue, however, he approaches rather indirectly, arguing that it should be in the state's interest to provide such conditions that would give no grounds for complaint on the part of minorities and would thereby foster positive attitudes among the minorities. In this perspective, loyalty was less seen as a legitimate demand by the state, but as a consequence of respecting the minorities' interests.

The concrete development of the concept of cultural autonomy in Estonia is presented in the second part of the manuscript. Here, Hasselblatt

gives a detailed account of the negotiations in the *Riigikogu* and of the debates within the German minority. Looking back to aftermath of the Estonian declaration of independence on 24 February 1918, he raises the question of whether this declaration would not in itself have constituted a sufficient as basis for the formation of cultural autonomy. Whereas the German minority was convinced that no further law was necessary, the government rejected German proposals for a simple self-declaration of cultural autonomy, insisting also that the scope of autonomous institutions should be limited to culture and social welfare and their activity governed by a special law to be implemented for the purpose. Hasselblatt outlines the debates surrounding successive drafts of the autonomy law, which could not be ratified during the term of the first *Riigikogu* and had to be re-submitted in 1923. He starts by describing the political objections and how fears among the majority parties that the law would confer too many privileges on minorities led to its being given a framework character which was open to later adaptations. Secondly, he points out that instead of full autonomy, the regulations implemented self-government on the basis of district administration. Thirdly, a separation between culture and politics was introduced (118). Finally, the cadastre issue was addressed: against Hasselblatt's own preference for a compulsory register of the minorities' members, the law introduced a more "labile" conception which allowed for later changes to individuals' registration and thus made autonomy more vulnerable to political pressure, as Hasselblatt suggests. Unlike later accounts of the law's implementation,²³ Hasselblatt does not mention the impact of the attempted communist coup of December 1924 as a major reason for the quick closure of the debates. Rather he argues that by 1924 alternative plans were already in place for an independent German *Volksgemeinschaft* (127), which would have addressed the same tasks as the cultural self-administration established according to the law. Although Hasselblatt praises the activity of Estonian politicians as Konstantin Päts, Karel Einbund (later Eenpalu), and Eugen Maddison (later Maddisoo), he nevertheless regards cultural autonomy first and foremost as a German project. Its implementation and discussion among other minorities is alluded to only briefly (164–67). In his judgment of cultural autonomy, however, Hasselblatt not only stresses its benefits for the Germans, but also presents it (albeit in a rather convoluted way) as a model for developing equal conditions for all ethno-cultural groups and their mutual relations. This carries echoes of what we might today call multiculturalism, although in Hasselblatt's vision it was still clearly Eurocentric (163).

Hasselblatt's subsequent commentary on the text of the law repeats arguments from previous chapters—for instance his criticism of the "unstable" cadastre (178). Among the source material in the annex is the report on the law's motivation ("*Motivenbericht*" (189–203)), which had been edited by Hasselblatt as chairman of the parliamentary commission. The

motivation for the selection and the order of the compiled source materials is only partially explained: they should comprise firstly—besides the already mentioned report—legal documents concerning cultural autonomy and the German minority in Estonia; these materials are however only partly attached to the manuscript. Secondly, there are general legal documents from Estonia. A third group is simply titled “materials” and should comprise according to the table of contents further documents on minority issues in Estonia, Latvia and Austria as well as materials on the legislation referring to the Danish and Polish national minorities in Germany. This annex thus once again illustrates that Hasselblatt’s focus was primarily on German minorities and on the minority politics of the German state.

A critical assessment

By way of conclusion, two issues remain to be addressed: the first is to situate Hasselblatt’s manuscript within the context of his other writings; the second is to discuss how novel the manuscript’s contents and argumentation appear in relation to further publications on cultural autonomy. Looking at the place of the manuscript within Hasselblatt’s writings, it fits with his argumentation in papers directed to political institutions in Germany as well as in his published writings between 1925 and 1930. In a letter to the German minister of the interior Hasselblatt had already argued in June 1926 that the concept of cultural autonomy was perfect for German minorities and would thus only be of only limited utility for other groups. Hence, it could be used by the German government in order to strengthen the international role of Germany by emphasizing the international importance of minority protection.²⁴ In this regard, the stress on cultural autonomy as a German contribution to the solution of minority problems could be combined with a sharp criticism of the new nation states in Eastern Europe and of the policies of the western powers. The alternative of “*Heimat oder Volkstum*” (28), alluded to earlier, had been mentioned by Hasselblatt publicly already in 1930.²⁵ Although it did not yet advocate forced migration as a solution to minority problems, it at least could be linked to such an idea, and one might even see here a connection to Hasselblatt’s writings and suggestions after January 1933. All in all, it seems that in the manuscript analyzed here, Hasselblatt was focusing more closely on German positions and interests than he did in his writings connected with the European Nationalities Congress, which were published in “*Nation and Staat*” before 1933. This conclusion would fit with the observation that Hasselblatt usually adapted his arguments to different audiences, the audience in this case plainly being a German one.

Regarding the second issue, it should be emphasized that Hasselblatt was far from being the only person to address the notion of cultural autonomy. On the one hand the law and its accompanying report on motivations had been published and described in German several times following its initial publication in the Tallinn newspaper “*Revaler Bote*” on

February 23, 1925—for instance in Tallinn presumably by the German *Kulturrat* and also by the German law professor Friedrich Kraus.²⁶ In addition, the Estonian politician Eugen Maddison gave an early report on the emergence and implementation of cultural autonomy.²⁷ On the other hand cultural autonomy was the subject of scholarly publications in the field of international law, both in Germany and in the Baltic states during the inter-war years.²⁸ Thus, basic information on the law and its implementation, as well as on the accompanying legal discussions, including the report on the law's motivation and bylaws had been already published in German language soon after cultural autonomy came into being.²⁹ A second wave of publications emerged after the Second World War, when Estonian politicians and scholars began to point to the law as an example of Estonia's high political culture, at a time when the country had recently been transformed into a soviet republic.³⁰ Interestingly, the writings of Aun and Angelus make almost no mention of Hasselblatt—Aun cites him only twice, in footnotes—thus underlining the existence of a parallel Estonian national discourse on cultural autonomy. The two threads of the debate, however, did not merge, for Hasselblatt did not react to these publications, merely stressing once again the German connection in a short article he published in 1948.³¹ Furthermore, during recent years scholars such as John Hiden—of course—, David Smith, Martyn Housden, Kari Alenius and recently also Kaido Laurits have taken up the issue of cultural autonomy,³² meaning that Hasselblatt's manuscript has to be seen first of all as a source for the history of cultural autonomy rather than as a relevant contribution to the political shaping of the notion. Nevertheless, it reveals the dichotomy of Hasselblatt's thinking—besides clearly Germano-centric and nationalistic threads, one might also detect some core elements that shape the later theory of multiculturalism, such as the warning that minority rights cannot be bound solely to the rules of democracy and liberalism (51).

Against this background, an evaluation of the manuscript and its fate leads to ambivalent results. From a scholarly point it does not add a great deal to the understanding of minority politics. Rather, it explains Hasselblatt's political predispositions, which were firmly rooted in the conviction of the need to strengthen the German *Volksgemeinschaft*. All in all, the fate of the manuscript corresponds to that of Hasselblatt's role in minority politics. In so far as the manuscript still represents in parts the constructive elements of the Estonian debates, it was already an outdated project when Hasselblatt became increasingly implicated in Nazi population politics and developed his ideas into concepts of how to deprive non-German groups in Central and Eastern Europe of their basic rights. Thus, his Estonian manuscript reflects first and foremost the process of turning away from constructive minority politics in the 1920s towards negative nationality politics in the 1930s.

Notes

1. Taylor, 1992; Kymlicka, 1995; see also Nimni, 1999.
2. Hiden, 2004.
3. E.g. Núñez Seixas, 1994; Núñez Seixas, 2001.
4. See e.g. Kimminich 1989; Blumenwitz, 1995.
5. The first to do so was Myllyniemi, 1973. I have given brief sketches in Hackmann, 2004, and Hackmann, 2008. See also Michael Garleff's contributions: Garleff, 1980; Garleff, 1976.
6. A bibliography of his publications may be found in: Garleff, 1994, pp. 201–15.
7. New archive signature: f. 85, n. 3, s. 60. There is also a file "Materialien zum Manuskript 'Autonomie' von Hasselblatt", f. 85, n. 3, s. 59, but—despite its name—it does not contain materials directly related to the manuscript. The basic manuscript currently is being edited and translated into English by John Hiden, Martyn Housden and Jörg Hackmann. It will be published by Rodopi.
8. I am very grateful to Michael Garleff for lending the microfilm to me.
9. Ruutsoo, 2002, p. 170; Garleff, 1994.
10. Thomson, 1990, p. 14.
11. See Archive of the Herder-Instituts Marburg, Mss., no. 53: Werner Hasselblatt, *Von der Kulturautonomie zum Nationalitätenkongress*, fol 1–2. This text had been compiled after 1945.
12. References and quotations follow the sheet pagination by the archive.
13. Hasselblatt wrote that the manuscript was completed in 1932, see Hasselblatt, *Von der Kulturautonomie zum Nationalitätenkongress*, fol 1; Thomson, 1990, p. 14.
14. For instance in attachements no, 2, 4, 25, 29.
15. In attachements 4 and 5.
16. Hasselblatt, *Von der Kulturautonomie zum Nationalitätenkongress*, fol. 1–2.
17. Hasselblatt, *Von der Kulturautonomie zum Nationalitätenkongress*, fol. 1. See also Hasselblatt, 1926.
18. In fact, Hasselblatt did only refer to two German texts by Hertz, 1927 and Fels, 1927 (40).
19. Hasselblatt was referring to Kjellén 1917, besides geopolitics as impact of geography on state politics, ethnopitics ("Demopolitik") was focusing on the relation between nation and state. Nations were regarded as living organisms, an idea which obviously influenced Hasselblatt.
20. This title change shifted the focus of the Journal from minority to nationality issues. Hackmann, 2008, p. 74.
21. Hasselblatt, 1948, p. 34.
22. Schirren, 1869.
23. Rauch, 1986, 137, Hasselblatt, 1996, p. 49, cf. Alenius, 2007, p. 446.

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24. Hackmann, 2008, pp. 77–78.
 25. Hasselblatt, [1930].
 26. *Gesetze und Verordnungen betreffend die deutsche Kulturselbstverwaltung*, 1926; Kraus, 1927, pp. 189–208.
 27. Maddison, 1926, Maddison, 1930.
 28. For instance: Gerber, 1926; Mintz, 1927.
 29. *Gesetze und Verordnungen betreffend die deutsche Kulturselbstverwaltung*, 1926—all 12 documents there were also selected by Hasselblatt for his collection. Until 1937 three supplements have been published, which presumably contain further documents listed by Hasselblatt.
 30. Angelus, 1951, Aun, 1951.
 31. Hasselblatt, 1948.
 32. Hiden and Smith, 2006, Alenius, 2007, Laurits, 2008. One might also mention: Vasara, 1995.

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A Matter of Uniqueness? Paul Schiemann, Ewald Ammende and Mikhail Kurchinskii Compared

Martyn Housden and David J. Smith

Introduction

In this collection, Michael Garleff maintains that Paul Schiemann (1876–1944) should not be seen as the only positive figure associated with Baltic German minorities politics. Other historical literature likewise brackets Schiemann with contemporaneous minorities activists, especially two who hailed from Estonia, Ewald Ammende and Werner Hasselblatt. Taube, Thomson and Garleff maintain that all three made positive contributions to nationality politics in inter-war Europe, while in an independent article Michael Garleff unites Schiemann, Ammende and Hasselblatt under the banner “Three Baltic German Publicists”.¹ But how appropriate is it to link these personalities? Would Schiemann be better associated with nationalities activists drawn from other national groups based in his home region? Or is he best viewed as standing alone on the moral high ground of national tolerance—a figure left isolated at a time of challenges so severe that they compromised even fundamentally well-intentioned individuals?

Short shrift has to be given to comparisons between Schiemann and Hasselblatt. For a long time it has been recognised that the latter’s thinking about the nation was much more “organic” and *völkisch* than ever was the case with Schiemann.² Absolutely decisive, however, was Hasselblatt’s choice during the war years to submit memoranda to National Socialism’s occupation authorities with a view to participating in policy development and implementation. His ideas categorised Jews among peoples “whose home is not Europe”.³ Behaviour like this hardly bears comparison to Schiemann’s experience of wartime house arrest by the National Socialists establishing a “new order” in Riga.

Less clear cut is comparison with Ewald Ammende (1892–1936). Hiden’s celebrated Schiemann biography maintains that Ammende’s taste for self-promotion led to his importance for the European nationalities’ movement being exaggerated after 1945.⁴ While it is true that Ammende’s work lobbying for cultural autonomy in Estonia, helping to create the Association of German Minorities in Europe and organising the European Nationalities Congress have received exposure in recent literature, significant gaps in our knowledge about his life remain such that a final assessment of his endeavours is barely possible yet. Most importantly, the frequent representation of his practical work has not been matched by careful analysis of the ideas which moved him. This is true not only of studies in which Ammende appears in the margins, but also where he is centre-stage.⁵ One

study, for instance, simply categorises his ideas as lying somewhere between those of Schiemann and Hasselblatt; but this identifies a very large space indeed. Otherwise, rare essays trying to get to grips more fully with Ammende's intellectual world ended up as distinct introductions.⁶ The unfamiliarity of the nuances, categories and connections characterising the mind of someone like Ammende mean it is all too easy to sketch a biography one week, only to have to correct it before the month is out.⁷ The problems implicit here reflect the fact that Ammende was consumed by a complex of conflicting and fluctuating priorities. His situation is only rendered more complicated still given his engagement in an area (i.e. minority rights) which was new and regarding which—as a result—, on the one hand, everyone's thinking was developing quickly and, on the other hand, ideas could be contested heatedly even for the best of motives. A widespread international regimen designed to protect national minorities had only been institutionalised as part of the post-war settlement and even Jewish commentators could not agree how best German Jews should respond to persecution in their homeland—by emphasising their assimilated credentials or claiming the rights of a separate national minority.⁸

What of comparisons with minority activists from outside the Baltic German camp? As part of his long-standing research collaboration with John Hiden and Martyn Housden around issues of inter-war cultural autonomy, David Smith has carried out research on Mikhail Kurchinskii (1876–1939), the Tartu University Professor of Russian origin who in the late 1920s and early 1930s worked alongside Paul Schiemann and Ewald Ammende as one of the Vice Presidents of the nationalities congress. Described as “the most important theoretician and practical advocate of cultural autonomy amongst the [inter-war] Russian minority in Estonia”, Kurchinskii served as a member of the country's parliament during 1926–29 and again in 1938–39. He was also internationally renowned as an academic and journalist.⁹ Smith's 1999 article in *Nationalities Papers* tries to give a flavour of Kurchinskii's multifaceted career. However, the account barely scratches the surface of the professor's life and work, and in so doing perhaps raises as many questions as it answers.¹⁰ The same could be said of other existing publications, mostly in Russian, which tend to focus on specific aspects of Kurchinskii's political activity either within Estonia or abroad.¹¹ Much work therefore still needs to be done on the careers of both Ammende and Kurchinskii. In what follows, we draw on the available materials in order to characterise the two men and to compare them to Paul Schiemann. Some reference is also made to others who worked within the inter-war minorities movement, most notably the Jewish activist Leo Motzkin.

The strength of Paul Schiemann

It is easy to heap praise on Paul Schiemann. The title of John Hiden's biography, *Defender of Minorities*, identifies a moral courage to stand up for

marginal people threatened with disenfranchisement, an unflinching readiness to champion a cause because of its moral worth, a commitment to tolerance and progressive values. Schiemann, it would seem, was consumed by an intellectual mission to supersede divisiveness based on nationality and to create a liberal, democratic polity offering a home to all equally. It would be easy to declare his vision of the “anational” state utopian, had he not done so much practical work tailored to bringing it about. He championed school autonomy in Latvia, engaged in that country’s parliament (the *Saiema*), harangued dyed-in-the-wool Baltic Germans to play a constructive role in their country (through the pages of *Rigasche Rundschau*) and promoted cultural autonomy internationally.¹² In so doing, he understood himself to be championing open-minded, productive attitudes and defining institutions appropriate to dynamic, nationally diverse societies. These were vital prerequisites for the social and political stability of Central and Eastern Europe which reflected the impossibility of peace for the region—hence for the continent—until the issue of national minorities was solved comprehensively and inclusively.¹³

His ideological foundation was clarified in “National Community and State Community”, appearing in 1927 in *Nation and Staat* (the journal of the Association of German Minorities in Europe).¹⁴ Following extensive historical persecutions of religious minorities and reflecting the Enlightenment’s drive to replace intolerance with tolerance, religious freedom had been instituted across Europe. It involved a division emerging between Church and state with the result that contemporary democratic states were essentially a-religious. In theory, their populations were at liberty to worship however they saw fit. Schiemann felt this development offered a model for the treatment of nationality, a theme still associated with division and persecution. While Schiemann believed the state served the legitimate function of creating order within a given territory and maintaining economic sovereignty there, he identified membership of a national group as falling to another realm. The existence of a national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) was said to rest on awareness of common spirit, intellect and feeling. It was a community which people chose to join according to their particular conscience; it had to be a *Willensgemeinschaft*. Logically, Schiemann maintained there was no reason why notions “state” and “nation” should be bound together so tightly that any given state should be home to just one national group. In other words, he took issue with the trend of structuring Europe into a system of “nation states”. Drawing on the model of religious freedom, he argued that a state need belong to no single nation—not even to an overwhelming majority—and that membership of any national group should be decided with complete freedom and without the least fear of persecution. He looked to a future in which all national groups—including minorities—would practice their cultures as they saw fit, with all society benefitting from the diversity and personal satisfaction that would accrue.

Perhaps Schiemann's discussion did not lack all self-interest. He was a member of a former imperial élite traumatised by lost war, revolution, the break up of empire and the evaporation of centuries' old social, political and economic primacy. Under these circumstances, claims to national freedom would benefit him personally, likewise those close to his life. Moreover, in a recent study Ivars Ijabs argues that Schiemann's defence of liberal ideals went hand in hand with a hierarchical conception of national cultures. His understanding of individual liberty, Ijabs maintains, derived not from the western Enlightenment thought embodied by the likes of Locke, Bentham and Mill, but rather from German Romanticism. Liberty therefore did not imply the equal worth of every individual, but the opportunity to become a "personality"—a concept Schiemann defined in terms of "excellence, self-cultivation, culture, spirituality (*Geist*), and the ability to rise above the triviality and mediocrity of everyday life".¹⁵ In this regard, Ijabs argues, Schiemann remained convinced of the superiority of German culture and of the German cultural "mission" in the Baltic. So although a staunch advocate of the Latvian state and of the cultural rights of Latvians, Schiemann took it as read that Latvians would draw on German models when developing their own culture.¹⁶

But, in all honesty, there was more to Schiemann than this, and he elevated himself out of the ranks of those who would use the rhetoric of minority rights simply for selfish, partial ends. Schiemann drew on the work of Jewish, and especially Zionist, authors such as Elijah Ben-Zion Sadinsky to explore alternative conceptions of how national groups might exist independently within a state, so giving his thoughts a wider framework and more general currency than was often found within the confines of Baltic Germandom.¹⁷ Using his position as editorial chief of *Rigasche Rundschau*, Schiemann was also prepared to take up the cudgels against commentators, such as Max Hildebert Böhm, seeking crassly to prioritise German culture over that of other Central and Eastern European nationalities. He maintained that such a position was self-defeating because it would only incite others to assert their superiority over German minorities living among them—so damaging the German nation as a whole. And Schiemann showed some success here. Even the same long-standing opponent of Schiemann recognised that, although his inclinations were too liberal to define his as a typical Baltic German, in the end his incessant promotion of liberalism helped increase its respectability in a typically conservative community.¹⁸

Schiemann's convictions dictated that he reject the National Socialist politics which grew increasingly raucous as the 1920s ended. Prejudiced attacks on Jews and ideas of racially-defined citizenship were anathema to him, as he said most famously in a speech delivered to the Association of German National Minorities in Europe (from 1928 re-named the Association of German National Groups in Europe) and duly published in *Nation und Staat*.¹⁹ In "The New Nationalist Wave" Schiemann emphasised that

dangerous forces were trying to capitalise on social tensions. Increasingly peace was seen as an opportunity to implement war by other means, the result being that individuals were encouraged to ally themselves with different and conflicting political communities. With the individual succumbing to the collectivity, Schiemann feared reason would give way to irrationality and loyalty to symbols. Worse, he thought a motive force left over from the war would appear at the heart of community consciousness: the will to annihilation (*Vernichtungswille*). In this way, nationalism would be defined as something marked less by love of one's own people than hatred of others. With such a dire prospect in mind, Schiemann spoke of a "new nationalist wave" rolling from Central Europe over the lands to the East, forcing together ideas of nation and state in a region more usually attuned to different peoples sharing the same space.

With memorable turns of phrase, Schiemann denounced "priests coming from the West" teaching nationalism to Baltic German youth. They were cutting the ground from beneath the feet of the region's nationalities movement, since its whole justification relied on claims to tolerance by majority populations. Making his point absolutely unambiguous, he observed that Jews in Central Europe faced similar dangers to those confronting Germans in the East.²⁰ The self-preservation of German national minorities could dictate only one course of action on the part of their community leaders: the rooting out of nationalism found in their own camp.

This speech was a high-profile but far from isolated protest by Schiemann against Hitler's politics. In September 1932 he delivered a keynote address to the European Nationalities Congress identifying the time as one of critical crisis. The spirits of peace and war were locked in battle, with the latter gaining the upper hand.²¹ Echoing his words to the leaders of the German minorities, he emphasised that hatred was dominating the life of states and providing grounds for people to align themselves politically. Recalling that the congress had been established through an overwhelming desire to pacify Europe and recognising it had to enshrine a genuine will to the same end, he identified the most important task of the hour as to gather together all the healthy forces of the world. In the face of those who measured patriotism by the depth of hatred meted out to others, right-thinking people had to stand strong in their quest for equal treatment for minorities.

The obvious power of Schiemann's words makes you wonder why on earth his contributions are not much better known among those interested in Central European history. His remarkably clear-sighted anti-Nazism makes it inexplicable that his prose has not been marketed widely—including in an English-language format for educational audiences. A series of essays he wrote for *Rigasche Rundschau* in the wake of the NSDAP's electoral breakthrough in 1930 is even less well-known and accessible than "The New Nationalist Wave".²² His contributions struck just the right tone—something

approaching contempt—as, for instance, Schiemann mocked the primacy of race for the state and the policies pursued in its name:

“Germany for the Germans! What a well-known sound for every politician in the East! Latvia for the Latvians! Poland for the Poles! Romania for the Romanians! Greater Serbia for the Serbs! It is the call to arms of ‘national’ economic policy across the whole of East and South East Europe! Economic autarky and nation state thinking are the foundations of this policy. A policy which threatens to bring a series of new states to the edge of economic breakdown through corruption and lack of productivity.... A policy against which especially the German minorities at the Geneva nationalities congress have protested particularly forcibly and with good reason.”²³

This refusal to see either novel or genuinely-believed principles in the NSDAP’s programme anticipated historical interpretations that became particularly popular during especially the 1980s—although one element of National Socialism always stood out. To cite Schiemann again: “The only unambiguous programmatic point of National Socialism is anti-Semitism. But you can only destroy a state with pogroms, certainly not construct one.” On this basis he identified Nazism as form of brutal nationalism without precedent in world history, something which appealed to the very worst elements of society—as the Black Hundreds had done.²⁴

Unswerving opposition to political alignment from Berlin, admittedly coupled with ill health, lost Schiemann the editorship of *Rigasche Rundschau* in 1933 and saw him sidelined from the heart of German minorities affairs. In 1939 he refused anything at all to do with the grubby deal that saw Baltic Germans “resettled” from their homeland. Schiemann’s moral convictions made it quite impossible for him to countenance relocation to a home stolen from an unlucky Polish family in the Warthegau. Instead, he ended up enduring Soviet dominion followed by house arrest under Nazism. Perhaps his increasing isolation was symbolic of Schiemann’s very personality; maybe intellectually he was always isolated from those he encountered on a daily basis. Yet even under these most trying of conditions, he managed to save the life of a Jewish girl whom he employed as a servant. Her statement that Schiemann fostered an “ethical microclimate” serves as unique testimony to a life transcending whatever the world threw at it. At a time when the stakes were particularly high, his personal principles and practical achievements still moved in harmony.

The irresponsible *Bürger* from Pärnu: Ewald Ammende’s early career

How could other minorities activists from the Baltic region compare? Talking in even the most general of terms, there was rarely any danger of Schiemann

being confused with Ewald Ammende (1892–1936). A generation younger, those who knew the latter described him in terms which could never be applied to the man he recognised as, in a number of ways, his mentor. A German diplomat described Ammende as the “very industrious, but irresponsible and fanciful *Bürger* from Pärnu.”²⁵ Max Hildebert Boehm saw him as “the perpetual motor” of the national minorities movement, but also as a “racing Roland” dashing from pillar to post as he fought against injustice. He was a “passionate”, “tendentiously optimistic soul” who was competitive by nature and likely to be dressed bizarrely. Boehm also called him “doctor fatso”, yet recognised that his sheer energy—perhaps workaholicism—led Ammende to understand more about Europe’s nationalities affairs than anyone else alive.²⁶ In other words, Ammende presented a frenzy of energy at work on behalf of Europe’s national minorities. He was constantly on a train or a boat, travelling the length and breadth of the continent and beyond, yet he alienated people and invited humorous but barbed jibes in a way that did not apply to Schiemann. He lacked the elder man’s gravitas and, ultimately, his rigour.

Born into a successful trading family, the young Ammende travelled on business around southern Russia and Ukraine. He attended university in Riga, Moscow and several German centres. Researching for his doctorate, he developed an interest in the ethnic German communities strewn across Eastern Europe and into heart of the Russian Empire. As the First World War ended, he travelled among them extensively, making valuable contacts with Transylvanian Germans in particular. His connections helped provide the foundations for the Association of German Minorities in Europe which was set up by, amongst others, himself and Schiemann in 1922.

At this early point there were comparabilities between the two men intellectually. The memorandum drafted by Ammende and used as the basis for establishing the Association was basically progressive.²⁷ The organisation of specifically German national minorities was not presented solely as a means to promoting the German nation. Instead, Ammende proposed the project was the first step on the way towards organising *all* Europe’s national minorities. He went out of his way to stress that the venture should not lead to irredenta movements, but had to be carried out on the basis of loyalty to the states in which the groups lived, as well as to the majority populations surrounding them. To this end, minorities should assert their rights using only legal means. Critical was the commitment to campaigning for independent *cultural* lives and for the creation of *cultural* associations between the various minority groups and their home states. *Political* relationships, however, had to be left to one side, since they would open the way to allegations of national minorities becoming separate units within foreign bodies politic—in effect “fifth columns”, to use an anachronistic phrase. This suspicion would be counter-productive. Hence Ammende specified that “no

political connection” could exist between German minorities and the German state.

Nor was his position limited to public statements. In private letters Ammende re-iterated the need to maintain a “loyal and upright minorities policy”.²⁸ Moreover he was committed to addressing national minorities affairs within a democratic framework, a position underscored by his attitude to the competing political systems of the time. Although Ammende was sympathetic towards the Russian people and believed that Russia had an important role to play in the reconstruction of Europe’s economy after the First World War, he was horrified by the chaos and lawlessness consequent upon the Russian revolution. He helped Gorky publicise the dreadful conditions afflicting St. Petersburg in 1921 and denounced the arbitrariness of the Bolshevik secret police.²⁹ In due course he publicised the Ukrainian famine (especially as it impacted on ethnic German communities located around the Volga), also the conviction that Moscow was trying to foment revolution in the states along its western borders.³⁰ Among its revolutionary strategies, Ammende believed Bolshevism was trying to exploit the dissatisfaction of national minorities in order to destabilising countries such as Poland, Romania and his own Estonia. The belief increased Ammende’s desperation to find a *liberal* solution to Europe’s minorities question. In no way, however, did his profound anti-Communism lead Ammende to sympathise with Italian Fascism. A trip to the South Tyrol allied to research into assimilationist policies practiced against the region’s ethnic Germans (including the closure of German-language schools), convinced him that Fascism was outrageous.³¹

It was logical that Ammende would play an important part inside Estonia promoting cultural autonomy. Although not himself a parliamentary deputy, he organised and participated in formative meetings between ethnic German deputies and Estonian politicians which helped steer the law through the democratic minefield. He met with nationalist politician Tõnisson in March 1924 and January 1925, as well as State President Jaakson in January 1925.³² To maximise support for the legislation, Ammende wrote article after article for *Revaler Bote* listing everything the project had to offer Estonia’s Germans. As soon as the law was passed by the legislature, he published an article addressing the main enduring points of opposition among Baltic Germans and dismissed them decisively. Far from a strategy producing “a state within a state”, it would promote conditions conducive to confident co-operation between different nationalities. Was the law compelling people to belong to one nationality rather than another? No, it allowed anyone to leave a minority national group any time they wanted; in other words, national affiliation was a matter of personal choice. Would the system be too costly for minorities, since they would have to pay for their own cultural lives—including their schooling? Well, they would just have to organise their finances effectively, raise their cultural taxes appropriately and at least would

have the freedom to prioritise things for themselves.³³ In other words, he made a compelling, coherent case supportive of a project he considered ethically correct.

It was characteristic of Ammende that as soon as one thing had been achieved, he threw himself totally into another initiative. In fact, the next project was to be his most famous one. It built logically on his prior work with both the Association of German Minorities in Europe and cultural autonomy, and involved the construction of the European Nationalities Congress. Now wanting to create a forum bringing together the full spectrum of national minorities from across Europe, he travelled the length and breadth of the continent meeting community leaders. From Vilnius to Trieste, Kishinev to Barcelona, he spent the early summer of 1925 meeting with Germans from Poland, Jews from Austria, Hungarians from Romania and Slovenians from Yugoslavia. Having discussed the possibility of a general minorities congress with people like Paul Schiemann, Josip Wilfan (a Slovene from Italy) and Géza Szüllö (an Hungarian from Czechoslovakia) who gathered at Dresden in August 1925, Ammende sent out a memorandum both inviting participation and outlining its terms of reference.³⁴ The event would be held in Switzerland, since the country was said to welcome oppressed minorities and offered a model of organising multiple nationalities under one roof. Furthermore, the location would facilitate lobbying of the League of Nations which was mandated to supervise the treatment of national minorities in the new and extended states of Central and Eastern Europe. Very clearly indeed the memorandum stated that the congress would enshrine entirely peaceful, lawful principles. It would not discuss the possibility of border changes and would not be used as a platform for polemics or incitements to aggression between national groups. Taking Estonia's cultural autonomy law as a model of what minorities could achieve, it would concern itself with the individual's right to practice his or her own culture freely, on this foundation seeking the participation of minorities in the civic life of states and reconciliation between formerly hostile national groups. The memorandum also spelled out that Jewish groups should participate in the congress—at least in so far as they constituted national minorities.³⁵ It expected to assemble Jewish groups from Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia.

The European Nationalities Congress first met in Geneva in October 1925 and was a remarkable achievement. It comprised 50 delegates from 34 national groups representing 17 nations distributed among 14 states.³⁶ The meeting, which elected Ammende General Secretary, endorsed the key principles outlined in the memorandum. It also made plain that, in order to promote a dignified and objective atmosphere, there would be no discussion of specific cases of discrimination, only of principles relevant to minorities protection in general.³⁷ Although initially some spectators and participants alike were concerned that the organisation was a front for German nationalist

interests, the worries were soon dispelled. One report sent to the German Consul in Geneva said the congress's leaders, including Ammende, were not Pan-Germans. It added that the sheer diversity of national groups in attendance militated decisively against a biased agenda.³⁸ In the end, German government figures, such as the ambassador to Latvia, decided the initiative was worth supporting since it originated from the minorities themselves and their satisfaction was a prime element in securing Europe's peace.³⁹

At this time, Ammende was committed to a rational minorities politics. When the Italian government once again attempted the forcible assimilation of German and Slovene minorities, he not only rejected the action on principle, but pointed out its illogic. Concurrently with denying national freedom to these groups, Rome was demanding full rights to national cultural development for Italian minorities abroad—for instance in France, Malta and Yugoslavia. Quite rightly Ammende described the position as showing a “contradictory mentality”. It amounted to the principle “What is permitted for me, is not allowed for others.” He said exactly this style of thinking had typified pre-1914 imperialism and had poisoned relations between European states. He quoted Sir Willoughby Dickinson, Vice President of the League of Nations Union, that it could only generate war and revolution. Ammende feared that such ways of thinking remained too common in the 1920s and could only be challenged by the principles of the Geneva congress.⁴⁰

Trying to ride two horses: Ammende in the 1930s

In the post-war decade, Ammende achieved much laudable work in minority politics, but his legacy was seriously tarnished by his actions in the 1930s. What happened and why? In the first place there is a suspicion that, for all his endeavours to promote the welfare of Europe's national minorities as a whole, he was always susceptible to bias favouring German qualities and interests. His memorandum establishing the Association of German Minorities in Europe recognised, for example, that Germans were not just the most widely-spread of national communities, but also “in many cases culturally the most developed element”.⁴¹ This was not an isolated comment. Elsewhere he mentioned that national cultures could be organised hierarchically, the obvious implication being that he considered German characteristics superior to others.⁴²

Maybe this point is unsurprising. Had Ammende not valued his personal national identity highly, he would hardly have become involved so keenly in nationality politics. This pride at membership of the extended German nation remained unproblematic so long as it stayed within limits. Unfortunately, as the 1920s turned into the 1930s, the checks and balances on it were eroded gradually. As was the case with other minorities activists such as Paul Schiemann, Ammende became disillusioned with the League of Nations. Frustrated by its failure to generalise nationality rights to all

countries, alienated by an obscure way of working based on diplomatic pressure and behind the scenes deals rather than public and legally-based interventions, angered by the feeling that some countries—such as Poland and Italy—were getting away with murder in their treatment of minorities, Ammende attacked the League with increasing frequency and vitriol. His outpouring of spleen reached a high point during the 1932 congress.⁴³ But if Geneva would not offer minorities, and especially German ones, the protection they needed, to whom should Ammende look for assistance?

The mood among especially German minorities was affected by two important deaths. Stresemann's demise in 1929 removed a balancing figure from German foreign policy discussions. Next was the central organiser of the Association of German Minorities in Europe, Carl Georg Bruns, who died in February 1931.⁴⁴ He had been a traditional conservative and was replaced by more of a man for the times emerging in Germany since the NDSAP's electoral success in September 1930. Ewald Ammende knew Werner Hasselblatt well, since both originated in Estonia and had long co-operated over cultural autonomy and international minorities affairs. Despite Schiemann's objections to Hasselblatt as Bruns's replacement, Ammende supported him as a strong leader required by difficult times.⁴⁵ Hasselblatt henceforth acted as a go-between linking the Association of German National Groups in Europe (the name had been changed no longer to use the word "Minorities") and Berlin's Foreign Office. The post was critical because funding was transmitted from the German government to the Association and, through its medium, helped support the European Nationalities Congress. The point was recognised by the German Foreign Office and a memorandum of August 1930 noted the practice was acceptable so long as the congress's organisers took account of the German state's interests, sounding out policy-makers before embarking on important policies.⁴⁶ But with Hasselblatt settled in Berlin and Hitler's star on the rise, how long could political independence last for the minorities relying on this money—particularly given that Ammende used Foreign Office funds to run a small minorities office in Vienna?

Against this background, one issue above all emerged as vital for the minorities movement—and it would have particular importance for German groups. It was anti-Semitism. Leo Motzkin was a long standing Jewish member of the European Nationalities Congress who belonged to its managing committee.⁴⁷ In June 1932 he wrote to Ammende as follows:

“As you know perhaps better than I, an outrageous and brutal anti-Semitism is raging in a series of countries in Eastern and Central Europe; ever since Hitler has collected such large crowds around himself, it cannot be denied that the sedition has assumed the very worst of pogrom forms even in Central Europe. Not only in Eastern Europe, therefore, but also in

Central Europe the Jewish population is facing the greatest danger. In my opinion the European Nationalities Congress cannot let such a phenomenon pass by in silence if it wants to stay true to its basic principles.”⁴⁸

The depth of Motzkin’s concern was patent in a speech he gave to the World Jewish Congress that August. In a fashion as prescient as it was pessimistic, he likened events in Germany to what he witnessed in Ukraine prior to the pogroms of the 1880s and prophesied the onset of mass physical persecution. In this context, Motzkin went out of his way to criticise the response of Germany’s Central Association of Citizens of Jewish Belief which fought discrimination on the grounds of assimilation. While Motzkin recognised it was hard for hundreds of thousands of German Jews to give up the feeling of belonging to the German nation, he thought assimilation encouraged them to forget thousands of years of Jewish culture and experiences. He also accepted that you could not belong to a national group if the majority did not want you, and thought that insisting on assimilation gave anti-Semites the opportunity to point out lots of ways in which German Jews were different, so justifying persecution.⁴⁹

But the European Nationalities Congress which met in September 1932 did not really respond to these concerns. When it dealt with persecution and religion, it addressed specifically matters to do with Christian churches. It was as if the management group had deliberately chosen to sideline Jewish issues, while those present seemed to be operating with a set of intellectual blinkers. A Jewish representative from Latvia called Nurock hinted at as much in an intervention stating that Jews had to keep quiet in debate because religion and persecution raised a set of different issues for them.⁵⁰ So although Motzkin did give a speech to the congress emphasising that anti-Semitic persecution should be of concern to the whole nationalities movement, General Secretary Ammende did not take up the issue.

Concern among Jewish representatives to the congress accelerated in November 1932 following the publication of an anti-Semitic article in the German national minorities journal, *Nation und Staat*.⁵¹ Motzkin wrote letters to the congress’s leading figures, including Ammende, spelling out this was unacceptable. The minorities movement, he said, was incompatible with anti-Semitism since allegations against Jews could be levelled against any other minority. He asked whether Jewish groups could participate in a minorities movement that took such prejudice seriously.⁵²

Ammende and the President of the European Nationalities Congress, Josip Wilfan, did respond to events in Germany following Hitler becoming chancellor, most notably the boycott of Jewish shops and the gradual removal of civil rights from Jews. That summer, Wilfan gave a speech to a minorities conference in Montreaux premised on the desirability of German Jews leaving—or “dissimilating” from—the German nation, setting up their own

national group and claiming the rights due to any national minority.⁵³ Ammende took the same line in a rare article discussing the Jewish question in published form.⁵⁴ Given the congruence between this idea and Motkin's criticism of the assimilationist response of the Central Association of Citizens of Jewish Belief, we have to be careful about how we criticise Ammende for representing the idea, nonetheless the line must strike contemporary readers immediately as feeble. Too much was left unaddressed.

With this said, there is no question that Ammende had genuine difficulty conceptualising a proper relationship between the European Nationalities Congress and assimilated groups, indeed he experienced some confusion about the precise relationship between "national minorities" "traditionally-conceived" (such as Germans in Poland or Russians in Estonia) and Jewish minorities as such (which did not necessarily use their own language, or which might be divided between use of Hebrew or Yiddish).⁵⁵ In private letters he also represented the view that, having spoken to German Jews, he had been told that it would be disastrous for them to claim the status of a foreign national minority.⁵⁶ Still, this did not stop him, at a later date wishing that "a few courageous Jewish men" would turn events inside Germany into a fight over the rights of a Jewish national minority. Less fortunately, however, the same letter also commented that a fight about Jewish nationality rights would not involve a fight to maintain the position of assimilated Jewry.⁵⁷

There was a definite problem about Ammende's attitude to Germany's assimilated Jews and the wider context of his actions clearly showed the man guilty of failing to deal with the Jewish question properly. This was most striking when the European Nationalities Congress met at Bern in September 1933 and did not discuss Hitler's government. Mealy-mouthed statements from Wilfan, hopelessly inappropriate declarations by the German deputies, and an unexpected focus on the emerging Ukrainian famine forced the Jewish groups to leave the proceedings. At this time Ammende certainly was troubled and experienced deep personal conflicts. He said very little during the Bern congress and was recognised to be under considerable stress for fear that his life's work would explode apart. After the event he had to go to a clinic for a cure for his already parlous health.⁵⁸ But nothing could deflect the realisation that he was now standing too close to Nazism's agenda.

Ammende was trying to ride two horses. He needed the German minorities inside the congress to keep necessary funding alive; but he needed the Jewish groups to lend the forum credibility. Particularly after Polish groups left the congress in the late 1920s, the presence of Jewish groups had emphasised that the European Nationalities Congress was not just a platform for German interests. As someone who had helped bring Jewish groups to the congress from the outset, Ammende faced a terrible dilemma, but still responded to it inadequately. His obvious deficiency led to razor-sharp

criticism by Emil Margulies, another long-time Jewish representative to the congress who was based in Czechoslovakia.

Writing to congress president Wilfan, Margulies stated clearly that Ammende had become a representative of Germany's politics.⁵⁹ Noting that Schiemann had already lost the editorship of *Rigasche Rundschau*, Margulies maintained that since Ammende drew significant funding from Berlin, it was impossible for him to be a free man. He emphasised his opposition to Ammende's readiness to deal with the Ukrainian famine at Bern, stating that anti-Soviet views had nothing to do with the work of the congress and that it was inappropriate for the General Secretary of the organisation to use his post to promote such an agenda. Margulies identified Ammende as a "paid tool of the Hitler-Rosenberg policy directed against Soviet Russia" and spelled out "I do not have trust in Dr. Ammende". Margulies continued to make telling points as he emphasised that Ammende's readiness to equate Germany's treatment of Jews as comparable to a persecution of any other national minority was wholly misguided. Italy, for instance, might try to assimilate Germans minorities by force, but the "whole nationality is not defamed, they are not ejected from the ranks of nations and national minorities into a despicable, shameless exceptional existence."⁶⁰ He went on saying the ultimate issue was "not about nationality rights. It's about being human!"

This was an absolutely blistering attack. Ill at the time, Ammende did not respond to it for several weeks, although eventually he denied all charges on the grounds that he had been interested in humanitarian action in Russia for many years and pointed out differences between his personal views and those of National Socialism.⁶¹ His words only provoked Margulies to hit back, maybe even harder. He stated that, by this point, Ammende's ignoring of the Jewish problem could only be deliberate, that under the circumstances Jews could have no confidence in him, that it was time for them to go their separate ways.⁶²

The very existence of letters like these highlights the difference between Schiemann and Ammende. We might feel some pity for Ammende as an initially and basically well-meaning man trapped by circumstances—a feeling underlined by Schiemann's enduring respect for Ammende's work despite its obvious flaws—but no one could ever have attacked Schiemann's moral character as Margulies did Ammende's.⁶³ And when Schiemann addressed the "dissimilation" of Germany's Jews, it was with greater sensitivity than Ammende could achieve. A text still exists called "Dissimilation and the Rights of Nationalities" which was prepared by Schiemann either for the Bern congress (which he did not attend on account of ill health) or sometime soon afterwards. Although Schiemann accepted that a nation had the right to stipulate the boundaries of its own community, he was sensitive to the consequences of the view. After all, the congress stood for the principle of an individual's freedom to choose his or her nationality and so had to reject either compulsory assimilation or the forcible

ejection of people from a national body.⁶⁴ If anyone should have their national membership removed, it could only be on the grounds of their personal statement of identity being fraudulent. The psychological reality of group membership was what mattered, certainly not “objective characteristics of descent”—and Schiemann questioned how easily any government institution could rule on psychological issues. Acknowledging the horrendous impact that forced removal from a national group could have on individuals, he spelled out that victims had “their emotional and rational foundations of their mental existence pulled from under their feet”. He re-iterated that the congress had the duty to campaign consistently against the denial of civic rights to anyone on the grounds of nationality.

In at least one private letter Ammende recognised that “properly assimilated elements among the Jews” (“*wirklich assimilierten Elemente unter den Juden*”) should not be removed from the majority population in Germany.⁶⁵ As General Secretary of the European Nationalities Congress—a body which, by its very nature, could only provide a forum for ethical argument about all issues of importance and relevance to the rights of national minorities—his tragically unfulfilled duty had been to make this point loudly and in public.

“Russia will remain”: Mikhail Kurchinskii and the European Nationalities Congress 1927–39

Due to Ammende’s actions not least, the Nazi regime was spared any direct criticism at the 1933 nationalities congress meeting in Geneva. The closest the gathering came to condemning the persecution of Germany’s Jews was a declaration put forward by Mikhail Kurchinskii in the name of the non-German minorities within the congress. This stated that “the surge of expressly anti-semitic measures currently to be seen in certain countries we regard as infringing general human rights and contradicting the ideals of our congress.”⁶⁶ How should one interpret Kurchinskii’s intervention? In the absence of additional evidence it is difficult to formulate a definite view. On the one hand, the declaration suggests a genuine distaste for Nazism and a principled commitment to upholding the rights of all minorities. Set against this, however, is the fact that at the same meeting Kurchinskii was quite content to stand up and deliver a speech on the Ukrainian famine that explicitly attacked the actions of the Soviet regime. Why not, one might ask, issue an equally unequivocal condemnation of events in Nazi Germany? Also on the minus side is the fact that Kurchinskii, unlike Paul Schiemann, did not leave the congress after the decisive turn of 1933. He attended five more meetings before his death in June 1939, even though the other minority groups represented had by this time clearly fallen under the dominance of the Nazi-directed German caucus within the organisation. Seen in this light, the 1933 declaration might equally seem a piece of tokenism adopted by

someone for whom anti-communism counted for more than defence of liberal principles.

Mikhail Kurchinskii was born in 1876, the same year as Paul Schiemann. A native of Radom in the Polish provinces of Russia, he spent his teenage years in Kaluga before studying law at the University of St Petersburg. Having obtained a master's degree in financial law in 1902, Kurchinskii spent extensive periods in Berlin, Paris and Dresden during the early 1900s, collecting material for a doctoral dissertation on municipal finances in Prussia (*Gorodskie finansy*, 1911) and on municipal government in Europe more generally (*Munitsipal'nyi sotsializm*, 1910). Kurchinskii's work in this area meant that he was well qualified to engage in the discussions surrounding Estonia's cultural autonomy legislation after he opted for Estonian citizenship and settled permanently in the newly-established Baltic republic during 1921.

An economic liberal by conviction, Kurchinskii was also evidently well-versed in the German intellectual currents of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The final work he published before leaving Soviet Russia was a study of the philosophy of Max Stirner, the nineteenth century German "individualist-anarchist" and author of *The Ego and his Own*. While rejecting Stirner's nihilistic denial of all moral values, Kurchinskii emphasised the anti-authoritarian spirit of Stirner's study. The latter, he maintained, was a work in which "the human personality is raised to unaccustomed heights. It recognises no earthly or heavenly tsars, whom it strips of the thrones which hold back the human spirit".⁶⁷ Here one clearly sees echoes of Paul Schiemann's own emphasis on "personality" as the defining characteristic of the free individual. Another striking similarity can be found in Kurchinskii's assertion that "to the fundamental principles which humanity has elaborated in its cultural evolution (...) such as religious and personal liberty (...) must now be added national liberty and the possibility of free development of national culture, not only for the single individual, but also for every national group."⁶⁸ In Kurchinskii's further assertion that without "national-cultural self-government, enshrined in law", Russians risked denationalisation and transformation into "human dust", one also sees how his conception of nationality was shaped by romanticist thought.⁶⁹

In the context of early twentieth century Russia, Kurchinskii was clearly on the political left. His earliest publications and involvement with societies promoting economic liberalisation landed him in trouble with the tsarist authorities, earning him a period of banishment from St. Petersburg to Archangelsk in 1902. Upon his return, Kurchinskii affiliated himself politically to the Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) and witnessed tsarist Russia's experiment with parliamentary politics as a correspondent to the first *Duma* and member of the legislative department of the second. Having worked at the University of Dorpat (Tartu) during 1915–18, Kurchinskii was able to opt for Estonian citizenship following the 1920 peace treaty between

Estonia and Soviet Russia. He left Petrograd in 1921 following an invitation to take up a Chair in Tartu. Once settled in his new homeland, Kurchinskii joined the centre-right Russian National Union and became an outspoken opponent of the Bolshevik regime whose policies had driven him to emigrate. The Soviet OGPU would later paint Kurchinskii as someone who had undergone a political journey from “Leftist Professor” to reactionary upholder of “Russia One and Indivisible”.⁷⁰ The latter depiction hardly rings true when one considers Kurchinskii’s work to build up the Estonian Republic and his contribution to its political life. With regard to Russian nationhood, however, he was able to assert that if a nation can be called a “unity of historical fate”, such fate had bound together the Great Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians into a single nation.⁷¹ Many residents of Ukraine and Belorussia would doubtless have concurred with Kurchinskii’s assessment. Nevertheless, his insistence on this “historical fact” appears firmly at odds with his insistence on the possibility of free development for all national groups and disregards the aspirations of Ukrainian national minority activists within the nationalities congress.

Kurchinskii, however, was no narrow Russian nationalist. In his journalism and in his interactions with Russian minority leaders across Europe, he emphasised that minority activism should not be seen as directed towards struggle with the majority or with states that rightly cherish their own cultural values. Minorities, argued Kurchinskii in 1929, understand best of all the cultural values and statehood of other nations and are least of all inclined towards conflict. Rather, their ideal is the peaceful resolution of all relevant questions and disputes within the context of a domestic legislative framework. Resolving minority disputes was first and foremost a question of international peace and the construction of a United Europe, an ideal that Kurchinskii evidently felt passionate about.⁷² In his most important work on the subject—*Soedinienie Shtaty Evropy*, published in 1930—Kurchinskii insisted that any talk of a future “United States of Europe” would be meaningless were Russia to be excluded from the equation. In this regard, he differed sharply from Coudenhove-Kalergi and from Paul Schiemann, both of whom defined Russia as a “Eurasian” rather than a European entity. Kurchinskii did not dispute the claims of “Eurasianism” in relation to the Soviet regime. However, he insisted that “Bolshevism will disappear but Russia will remain!” This post-Bolshevik Russia would inevitably be required to return to the more “natural” path of drawing upon the experiences of its western European neighbours.⁷³

In reviewing Kurchinskii’s, printed output from the late 1920s (and indeed beyond) one comes back to the question of how he was able to reconcile these ideals with his continued participation in a congress that by the mid-1930s was little more than a tool of Nazi German foreign policy. Kurchinskii’s death from heart disease in June 1939 was premature but also spared him from a terrible dilemma that would have been arisen further to the

Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in August of the same year. As a prominent Russian émigré, Kurchinskii would have been amongst the very first to be arrested and almost certainly executed following the Soviet takeover of June 1940. Faced with this clear prospect after August 1939, could he have brought himself to join the Nazi-instigated exodus of Baltic Germans from Estonia at the end of that same year? Kurchinskii's descendants in today's Estonia insist that he could not have subscribed to such an arrangement. But, like so much else about the man, this must remain the object of speculation.

Conclusion

So was Paul Schiemann unique? Certainly he had touching points with men like Ammende and Kurchinskii. This is only to be expected given that for years they lived in the same region, tried to work for the benefit of national minorities and promoted their causes in the media. Comparabilities exist, but miss something important. The impression remains that Schiemann had a clarity of intellect, independence, consistency and commitment to transferring his principles into practical life which was not so evident in those around him. Deficiency left Ammende using a vocabulary of ethics and nationality rights to cover up the reality of dire anti-Semitic persecution implemented by his own national group. He became guilty of professional hypocrisy, a moral entrepreneur behaving in an immoral way.

Leo Motzkin once put it like this:

“...the right sort of nationalism only begins at the point you act on behalf of a different national group. If you only act for your own benefit, creating a religion which declares your own race the most superior one, then it is an anti-national idea; it is a misuse of nationalism.”⁷⁴

Although talking in general terms, he could have been describing Ammende's ultimate failing specifically. The General Secretary's saving grace is that, if he were reading this article today, he would probably admit his fault and declare an intention to do better next time. As a younger man at an earlier stage of his development, perhaps he had been aware of being in Schiemann's shadow. Maybe this characteristic bred a desire to assert himself and—coupled with a liking for adventure—fed an unhelpful ambition. But whatever the precise reason, had he known where he would end up, most likely Ammende would not have started the journey. In retrospect he would also have had to admit that Schiemann lived as a moral ideal-type to which most people—Kurchinskii included—could only aspire.

Notes

1. Taube, Thomson and Garleff, 1995 also Garleff, 1994.
2. Garleff, 1980 also Nunez Seixas, 2001, p. 450. See also Hackmann's essay in this collection.
3. See memoranda referenced at NG-3908. They are on microfilm at the Institute for Contemporary History, Munich.
4. Hiden, 2004, p. 114.
5. For general studies in which Ammende appears at some length, see Garleff, 1976 and Schot, 1988. For a study where Ammende's work is central, see Bamberger-Stemman, 2000.
6. Nunez Seixas, 2001, p. 450.
7. See Housden, 2000 followed by Housden, 2004.
8. For example, at the World Jewish Congress of 1932, Zionist Jew Leo Motzkin (who originated from Ukraine) criticised the *Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (representing German Jews) for combating anti-Semitism in the wrong way.
9. Shor, 1998, p. 1.
10. Smith, 1999.
11. See: Isakov, 1996; Shor, 1998; Boikov, 2000.
12. For a discussion of the anational state, see Schot, 1988, pp. 123–25.
13. See, for example, his discussion in Schiemann, 1927b.
14. Schiemann, 1927a.
15. Ijabs, 2009, p.498.
16. Ibid, p.502.
17. Schiemann, 1927a and Sandinsky, 1921.
18. *Nachlass Boehm, 1077 / 14, Koblenz.*
19. Schiemann, 1932.
20. Schiemann, 1932, p. 809.
21. *Sitzungsbericht* of the 1932 congress. The full set of the reports are available at the Herder Institute, Marburg.
22. Schiemann, 1932 is at least available in translation at www.ceer.org.uk, *Central and Eastern European Review*, volume 1.
23. Schiemann, 1930a. The series of essays about National Socialism can be found in Donath, 1992. II, p. 14.
24. Schiemann, 1930b.
25. Weyrauch quoted in Grundmann, 1977. p. 287.
26. *Nachlass Boehm, 1077 / 14, Koblenz.*
27. This was reproduced in Ammende, 1932.
28. Ammende to Oerl, 25 June (1923?). Ammende papers, 1502–1–23, Moscow.
29. "Gorky—The Humanitarian", pp.351–3. Ammende, 1921a, chapters 3 and 5.

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30. Ammende, 1921b and 1921c. Copies of *Revaler Bote* are available in Tallinn. For Moscow's attempts to stir up revolution, see famine articles, 1922. Moscow's plot articles. Also Ammende, 1925a.
 31. For an example of his journalism about the South Tyrol, see Ammende, 1923. His early papers are full of material about this issue, see Ammende papers, 1502-1-61, 1502-1-23 and 1502-1-60, Moscow. His voluminous handwritten notebooks recording his travels in South Tyrol are also present in Moscow but are extremely difficult to read.
 32. Ammende, 1924 and 1925b.
 33. Ammende, 1925c.
 34. Copies of the memorandum "Gründe, Richtlinien und Programm für eine Tagung der Vertreter aller nationalen Minderheiten in Europa" are located at R60462, Berlin also Ammende papers, 1502-1-53, Moscow.
 35. The nationalities movement experienced some difficulty Jewish fitting groups into their frame of reference. Zionist groups clearly fitted, but the relationship with more assimilationist-minded groups was difficult, most obviously because they would not claim simply to be a separate national group. This issue became critical for the congress in 1933. But the question of whether or not Jewish groups were national groups generated genuine thought even before Hitler's politics was important, see Schiemann, 1927.
 36. *Sitzungsbericht* of the 1925 congress, p.79.
 37. Ibid.
 38. Junghann, memorandum of 27 October 1925. R60463, Berlin.
 39. Köster, memorandum of 22 February 1926. R60463, Berlin.
 40. Ammende, 1928.
 41. Ammende, 1932.
 42. Ammende papers, 1502-1-110, Moscow.
 43. *Sitzungsbericht* of 1932 congress.
 44. Bruns's papers are located in Marburg.
 45. Hiden, 2004, p. 184.
 46. Memorandum of 28 August 1930. R60528, Berlin.
 47. Motzkin originated from the Ukraine but had offices in Paris.
 48. 24 June 1932, Motzkin to Ammende. *Nachlass* Wilfan. 1250, FC4407, Koblenz.
 49. Motzkin to the World Jewish Congress, August 1932. MS341, A4013, Cincinnati.
 50. *Sitzungsbericht* of 1932 congress. See page 91 for comments by Nurock.
 51. Guerke, 1932.
 52. 16 November 1932, Motzkin to Ammende. *Nachlass* Wilfan. 1250, FC4407, Koblenz.
 53. Kahany, 1932 available *Nachlass* Wilfan. 1250, FC4407, Koblenz.
 54. Ammende, 1933.

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55. In one private letter, he expressed the hope that events in Germany would lead to a clarification of the relationship between Jews and other nationalities in Europe. 16 August 1933, Ammende to Wilfan. *Nachlass Wilfan*. 1250, FC4407, Koblenz.
56. For example 11 April 1933, Ammende to Feinberg. A306/113, Jerusalem.
57. 8 October 1934, Ammende to Goldmann. A306/113, Jerusalem.
58. For a description of Ammende's worries, see Krabbe, "Neuvieme Congress des Nationalites Européennes tenu a Bern du 16 au 19 Septembre 1933". 4/6638/6638, S338, Geneva. For comments about Ammende being in poor form, see Graebe to Schiemann, 21 September 1933. Schiemann papers, Riga.
59. 1 January 1934, Margulies to Wilfan. *Nachlass Wilfan*. 1250, FC4407, Koblenz.
60. Perhaps not totally free from all prejudice himself, Margulies added "To that place where the gypsies stand."
61. 6 February 1934, Ammende to Margulies. *Nachlass Wilfan*. 1250, FC4407, Koblenz.
62. 16 February 1934. Margulies to Ammende. *Nachlass Wilfan*. 1250, FC4407, Koblenz.
63. 2 July 1935, Schiemann to Ammende. Schiemann's papers, Riga. Schiemann wrote to Ammende: "Today you are one of the few of whom it may be said that his work is necessary."
64. Undated text by Paul Schiemann. *Nachlass Wilfan*. 1250, FC4407, Koblenz.
65. 8 October 1934, Ammende to Goldmann. A306/113, Jerusalem.
66. *Sitzungsbericht des Kongresses des Organisierten Nationalen Gruppen in den Staaten Europas, Bern, 16 bis 18. September 1933*, pp. 70–71. In response, Josip Wilfan simply remarked that Kurchinskii had surely voiced the opinion of all members of the congress, and repeated his hope—absurd under the circumstances—that Motzkin and other Jewish colleagues would continue their participation. *Ibid.*
67. Kurchinskii, 1920, p.251.
68. *The Congress of the European National Minorities, London Meeting 14th-15th July 1937*, p.32.
69. Kurchinskii, 1930a, pp.8-12.
70. "No.1 Russkie v Estonii (Svodka Inostrannogo Otdela OGPU SSSR)", cited in Abyzov, 1999.
71. Kurtschinsky, 1929, p.255.
72. "Do not let it be thought that our whole movement and the work of our congresses could in any way threaten this or that state formation, that minorities are directing their efforts against majorities. On the contrary, (...) it is in essence a peace movement: in valuing and respecting its own culture, it appeals for the respect of all other cultures; and in this regard the minority

movement is one of the cornerstones of the future peaceful development of Europe, it works for the task of preserving peace". From a contribution by Kurchinskii to the Estonian newspaper *Staryi Narvskii Listok*, 1 October 1929, cited in Boikov, 2000, p. 64.

73. Kurchinskii, 1930b, esp. pp. 27–33.

74. Motzkin to the World Jewish Conference, 1933. He was referring to a speech he had made some years earlier to the European Nationalities Congress. *Protocole de la IIe Conférence Juive Mondiale. Genève, 5–8 Septembre 1933*. p. 84. Copy located in Cincinnati.

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Leaders, Divided Society and Crisis. The Coup d'État of 1934 in Latvia, its Causes and Consequences

Valters Ščerbinskis

The historiography of the coup

A divided society leads to political instability, and this, in turn, opens the way to various social and political upheavals. In the 1920s and '30s the nations of Eastern and North-Eastern Europe, having just obtained statehood, were at the start of their development. They had major internal differences, in some cases even strife, and their political systems have been described as unstable. The aim of this paper is to analyse the events in Latvia in 1934 that turned the course of the country's development from democracy to authoritarianism—with far-reaching consequences for state policy, the economy and society as a whole. Why did the coup happen, how did it happen, and what were the immediate consequences? These are the questions which frame this paper.

The 1920s and '30s were a period in which changes of a similar nature took place in many European countries, so the events in Latvia were not unique. In terms of the causes and course of the coup, there is much in common with other coups. At the same time, there were specific reasons for these events in each particular country. Many researchers have tried to explain why such fateful developments occurred at this time, why democratic regimes in many countries suddenly collapsed and why, generally speaking, there was a neutral or favourable attitude in society towards the new regimes. There are three main historiographical interpretations of the coup. First, in bringing about the coup, Kārlis Ulmanis was motivated mainly by self-interest, since there were no other sufficiently serious reasons for abolishing democracy. Second, the situation forced Ulmanis to take action, and he was encouraged in this by various ancillary conditions, some authors considering the coup to have been the lesser evil. (Additional possibilities at the time included a coup by the far right "*Pērkonkrusts*", far left Communists and the "*Legions*"—which were populist and difficult to define—, but all of these groups criticized Latvia's democracy openly.). Finally, Ulmanis's role in the coup is not highlighted, and, applying a structural approach, the causes of events are sought in socio-economic determinants. To a large degree, all the authors have tailored the range of sources they use to whichever interpretation they favour.

The historiography of the causes of the coup has changed over time, although recent authors have in many cases borrowed heavily from works written in earlier years. There are also striking differences in the assessment of the coup between accounts by professional historians and those given in memoirs. In general, the contemporaries emphasised the existence of

conditions in society likely to generate authoritarianism, for instance pointing to the highly fragmented condition of parliament and its inability to work effectively. The participants in the coup and opposition figures also mentioned external factors, that is to say the influence of the so-called *Zeitgeist* phenomena—regime changes in neighboring countries and the rise of international discourse generally critical of democracy. Although in the early 1930s political conditions were characterised in the newspapers of the day and in statements by politicians as a “parliamentary crisis”, today many researchers deny that such a crisis existed. The majority of researchers (most prominent of them Edgars Dunsdorfs, Aivars Stranga, Mārtiņš Virsis, Jānis Peniķis) emphasise the immense role of Ulmanis’s personality in the implementation of the idea, pointing out that definite causes of the collapse of democracy were absent in Latvia.¹ These authors recognise that there were certain deficiencies in the parliamentary system, but reject the idea that this was a cause of the coup. A different view is expressed by historians Indulis Ronis, Edgars Andersons, and partly also by Ēriks Žagars and Antonijs Zunda, who emphasise the decisive role of external factors (particularly the rise of the authoritarianism in Europe) and the parliamentary crisis.² They consider that to some degree the coup was inevitable, that the preconditions for it were created by the inadequacies in the way democracy was functioning in the country, and that the takeover of power by Ulmanis was the lesser evil for the country—better, at least, than a coup by the far right. Overall, however, by analysing the causes of the coup and contrasting the various readings of them, it is possible to identify several of the most important groups of preconditions that affected the stability of democracy in inter-war Europe. These were: socio-economic factors, a country’s social structure, institutional factors, political culture, the role of the military, political violence and external factors.

Socio-economic development was significant in determining whether conditions in the country promoted change in the direction of authoritarianism. Essentially, the collapse of democracy is less likely in socio-economically developed countries than in less developed countries. However, as indicated by the example of Germany, which was at the forefront of European economic development, and the examples of Ireland and Finland, which were relatively weak economically, socio-economic conditions cannot always serve as the sole—or even main—factor in the development of authoritarianism. In the early 1930s, Latvia had experienced a serious economic crisis, but by 1933 and 1934 all of Europe was gradually starting to recover from the economic depression. In terms of the general indicators of economic and social development (unemployment, inflation, etc.), Latvia cannot be placed unequivocally among the countries where conditions for the continued existence of democracy were critical. Arnolds Aizsilnieks, author of *The Economic History of Latvia (Latvijas saimniecības vēsture)*, considers that 1932 was the most difficult year experienced by the

country, but that in 1933 the situation was already beginning to improve. He concludes that the economic circumstances presented in the manifesto issued by the government after the coup could not provide the reason for that event.³

Social structure is an important factor to be considered in analysing the collapse of democracy. Ulmanis emphasised the reduced role of the farmers, which he strove to increase by means of the coup. It is not entirely clear what he meant by this.⁴ Quite possibly, he meant the farmers' political influence which decreased if we look at the Farmers' Union's electoral results. However Ulmanis Farmers' Union was not just a purely agrarian party and by the early '30s a certain shift of votes had taken place towards smaller agrarian parties. Stranga has developed the idea that there was a contradiction between the Latvian farmers and democracy. He considers that the farmers could not accept the success of the democratic urban population, and because of this "15 May had to come."⁵ However, it would be simplistic to regard the farmers as a homogenous mass unsuited to capitalist competition, and therefore as desiring privileges within the state. The weakness of the workers during the economic depression is emphasised by a contemporary, the Social Democrat K. Lorencs in his memories.⁶ The country's social composition—the ethnic, linguistic, religious and regional elements—could not serve as a serious cause for such radical changes. Latvia did not have profound cultural or linguistic conflicts that could have created the preconditions for a national crisis, so stimulating a search for a solution through the abolition of democracy. It is impossible to agree with I. Ronis when he emphasises concern about the role of the Baltic Germans in the realisation of a policy of expansion in Latvia, and the tendency towards the Nazification of this minority—which was seen as a threat to national stability.⁷ Raimonds Cerūzis gives a candid account of the antagonistic relationship between the Baltic Germans and Latvians, but he does not consider that the Baltic Germans became a threat to national stability.⁸

A special, oft-cited cause of the coup is the political culture in the country. Latvia had an underdeveloped democratic tradition. The mere 15 years of the country's existence did not provide politicians or the public with sufficient experience and comprehension of the advantages of democratic administration. Ruthless criticism of the work of the *Saeima* and other elected institutions was a popular theme of the early 1930s. At the same time, however, the country's citizens participated actively in politics, both in the 1920s and in the early 1930s. The parties and various political organisations enjoyed a high membership. In 1934, the country had 11,071 associations and 109 political organisations,⁹ testifying to a high level of social organisation. A substantial proportion of citizens turned out to vote in parliamentary elections, and from this perspective it does not appear that society had become apathetic towards democratic means of bringing about change. However, while the citizens were active in utilising their rights, it is hard to find indications of tolerance and social consensus in political life. There is no

denying that in the early 1930s there was a predominant dissatisfaction in a large section of society with the deficient decision-making capacity of parliament. Parliament and politicians had a poor reputation, and people's faith in the democratic mechanism of passing political decisions was low, which helped subvert the democratic government's popular legitimation but contributed to authoritarian trends in society. Eric Hobsbawm writes that in those cases where democracy was lost, unanimity among the citizens regarding the acceptability of the state and the social system as well as the possibility of compromise was open to serious doubt.¹⁰ Without denying that Latvia, like most of the rest of Europe, was in a state of political crisis at this time (also true of those countries where democracy was saved), there is nevertheless no convincing proof of unequivocal preconditions for a coup d'état.

Were there institutional factors that exacerbated the weakness of democracy and hastened the coup? The constitution provided guarantees to all citizens of the country. Of course, the law enshrined extensive civil and political rights, as well as freedom of the press and political association. Latvia was a parliamentary republic, in which the president had what can be regarded as quite limited power. Executive authority was clearly separated from legislative authority. However, the Electoral Law permitted highly fragmented party representation in parliament, which made setting up governments and decision-making in the *Saeima* very difficult. Lack of a percentage barrier when Parliament was elected resulted into high number of different groups entering Parliament and sometimes representing very obscure ideologies. Therefore a string of researchers have pointed to the weakness of the parliamentary system. Baltic German historian Georg von Rauch even said that there was a real danger that parliamentary democracy could have degenerated into clashes between the supporters of various parties—which was, however, an exaggeration.¹¹

The military usually plays a significant role in the realisation of a coups d'état. This is a very important factor, since in all cases in inter-war Europe where democracy was safeguarded the army was under effective civilian control, while in almost all cases where it collapsed the military intervened in politics directly or indirectly (i.e. tacitly co-operated with forces opposed to the system and did not stand in their way). Thus, the army participated directly in Spain, for example, and indirectly in Germany, Austria, Estonia and Lithuania. In Latvia, the army was not involved in political developments directly, but at the same time there is no foundation for the view that the majority of the army officer corps would have voiced their sympathy for democracy and would have been prepared to defend it. Even before the coup, military personnel on active service were involved in political activities. It is clear that without the participation of the army, the coup would have been impossible. Support for the plans of the conspirators,

or else benign restraint, on the part of the army leadership and the officer corps is clearly demonstrated by the actual events of the coup.

We must also consider the relationship between the possible growth of political violence and the coup. In the majority of countries where democracy was abolished, there existed a variety of aggressive paramilitary organisations that provoked and carried out political violence. Of course, we may ask what kind of organisation can be regarded as paramilitary. In the case of Latvia, the largest and most important paramilitary organisation was the *Aizsargi* Organisation of Latvia. Formally, it remained outside the political process, and in fact quite a large number of members of the most extreme organisations were expelled from its ranks as late as the early 1930s. Apart from this, contrary to widespread misconceptions, in legal terms the *Aizsargi* organisation cannot be regarded as a social (i.e. private) organisation, but rather was a state service in which citizens of the country participated on a voluntary basis. The illegal *Leģions* Society of Bearers of the Order of *Lāčplēšis* and Freedom Fighters, which was preparing to bring about a coup d'état, also undeniably exhibited paramilitary traits. The belligerent Social Democratic organisation "Workers' Sport and Defence" (*Strādnieku sports un sargs*) also showed elements of paramilitarism, as did some equally pugnacious active nationalist organisations. However, in spite of this, it cannot be asserted that these organisations brought about major political violence. In the 1920s and early 1930s there were several episodes in which politics was taken onto the streets and turned into mass violence, even with lethal consequences—as in the case of a shoot-out occurring in the early '20s between far-right-wing Latvian National Club members and Social Democratic sportsmen which resulted in the death of Aleksandrs Masaks (a Social Democrat). In the early '30s, conflict on the streets took place after a football game between "*Universitātes sports*" (university sports team) and "*Hakoah*" (a Jewish sport club). The clashes, which undoubtedly had an anti-semitic under-current, were interrupted by the police. These were isolated cases, but they showed that certain groups were prepared for violence. At the same time, the police were very effective at monitoring these developments, and the attitude in society did not suggest that such events were likely to escalate.

Regarding external factors, Latvia was not isolated in Europe. There is no doubt that other countries had their own interests in developments in Latvian domestic politics. However, there is still no proof that the coup was instigated or supported by other countries (the USSR, Germany or Britain), even though certain contemporaries and historians have suggested as much. At the same time, events beyond the country's borders really did have an indirect influence on political developments in Latvia. There was the *Zeitgeist*—the spirit of the age. Juan Linz writes that this was strongly influenced by the success of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, which in turn affected faith in the legitimacy of democracy in many countries.¹² The

psychological aspects of the spirit of the age in the early 1930s are described expressively by writer Pāvils Klāns in his historical account *Karstā dzelzs* (*Hot Iron*). Thus, the Riga newspapers gave long accounts of panic in foreign stock exchanges, bank collapses and the rapid rise in unemployment, while cinema newsreels showed demonstrators on the streets. European literature and art expressed ruin and hopelessness of a kind not seen since the First World War, and the public “gave vent to bitter irony about the inability of governments and parliaments to deal with this social calamity.”¹³ Many people came to think that, in the European context of the time, firm executive power, rather than democracy, would ensure the country’s welfare. A situation in which undemocratic regimes had come into being all around in Europe undoubtedly encouraged the conspirators to decide in favour of abolishing democracy. The majority of studies and the available archive material demonstrate unequivocally that Latvia was not under serious threat of a coup by the *Leģions*, the *Pērkonkrusts* movement, the Communists or the Social Democrats. The assertions made directly after the coup that insurgents had aimed to topple the existing authorities were untrue, although the idea was spread widely by the new regime in order to give itself at least a semblance of legitimacy.

One of the most extensive and profound studies of the interaction between authoritarianism and democracy, and of the conditions that led to the collapse of democratic regimes in European countries, is the work *Authoritarianism and Democracy in Europe, 1919–39. Comparative Analyses* edited by Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Jeremy Mitchell.¹⁴ Here, a group of authors analysed 18 countries of Europe—ones that succeeded in maintaining democracy, as well as countries where dictatorial regimes were established. Although the case of Latvia is not discussed in this work, neighbouring Estonia is. It is concluded from these examples that there were several factors determining structurally the inevitability of a coup, but it is recognised that in some countries—namely Estonia and Greece—the structural indicators were balanced, and that changes to the state system were created by conditions “dependent on political actors”.¹⁵ A clear example that to some degree also applies to Latvia is the comparison between Finland, on the one hand, and Estonia and Germany, on the other. Although there were differences between these three countries in terms of the fragmentation of parties, the existence of strong social movements, anti-system parties and political culture, overall they do not point to a specific trend that led to the survival of democracy in Finland and the collapse of democracy in Estonia and Germany. The authors of the report conclude that the most important explanatory factors are not to be found in general conditions. Decisive elements that accelerated the outcome of events should be sought in the actions of the main political actors and the reactions to them. Thus, in Finland President Eivind Svinhufvud took a strong stand against the *Lapua* Movement and preserved democracy, while in Estonia State Elder Konstantin

Pāts set up an authoritarian regime, “pre-empting” the *Vaps* Movement, while in Germany Paul von Hindenburg appointed the future dictator Adolf Hitler to the chancellorship.¹⁶ In Latvia, too, particular individuals and their actions were of decisive importance in framing the specific historical conditions. Accordingly, it is very important to analyse the actions and views of Ulmanis. He was the one who decided in favour of establishing authoritarianism in Latvia, and he undertook the practical direction of the preparations and implementation of the coup. At the same time, democracy was maintained in those countries that had a broad democratic coalition. There was no such coalition in Latvia. The Social Democrats constituted the opposition in parliament and were unwilling to form a coalition with right-wing parties, even with those that might have become their allies in the cause of “preserving democracy”.

So, in the present state of research on the causes of the coup, we may conclude that, although there were conditions threatening the stability of democracy, they were not so pronounced as to constitute a threat to democracy itself. Consequently several authors have reached the relatively unanimous and well-argued view that the personal characteristics of Ulmanis played a major role in the destruction of democracy. E. Dunsdorfs and A. Stranga write that, along with disappointment in the previous elections, and the loss of popularity and a degree of hunger for power, it was the fear of political defeat that created the preconditions for the choice in favour of authoritarianism. Also very clearly significant in this context was the loss of popularity by the Farmers’ Union along with the growth of nationalist tendencies in its traditional electorate. It was becoming increasingly likely that this electorate would partly be lost, because the *Pērkonkrusts* movement, the Democratic Centre with its orientation towards state officials and the New Farmers’ and Smallholders’ Party championed radical nationalism. At the same time, Ulmanis was prepared to assume responsibility, did not expect others to assume it, and acted as he himself saw fit. Undeniably of importance too was Ulmanis’ assessment of the situation, and his view of the country’s development in the context of the day. Hence although conditions favourable for a coup had developed in Latvia, the abolition of democracy was determined by one particular individual—Kārlis Ulmanis.

Bringing together all the evidence, it is possible to suggest with a fair degree of confidence that Ulmanis himself may have had the idea of organising a coup at least by 1931–32, and that definite preparatory work was undertaken in the summer of 1933, i.e. the first talks took place with Jānis Balodis, who had been commander-in-chief during the War of Independence and was a *Saeima* deputy. By September, as we learn from the diary of V. Munters, the gathering of required information was already fully underway. The submission of proposed constitutional amendments by K. Ulmanis’s party to the *Saeima* in the autumn constituted only a secondary measure. It is clear that earlier dates for the coup were initially proposed, but in the end the

night of 15 to 16 May was chosen as the decisive moment. Several senior officers and officials were brought into the circle of conspirators, and shortly before the coup the top leaders of the police also agreed to participate. Ulmanis headed the conspirators, and his closest aides were V. Munters (an official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who prepared the theoretical concept for the events) and A. Bērziņš (a politician who coordinated the actions of the military).

Events

The coup began late in the evening of 15 May. The conspirators—Ulmanis, Bērziņš, Balodis and some others—arrived at the Foreign Ministry building, from where the coup was led. Shortly after midnight, separate military units occupied strategically important locations in Riga. At the same time, *Aizsargi* from rural areas were awoken as in an emergency situation and went to the capital where they, together with the police, began to enforce order and arrest potential opponents. On the morning of the coup, 16 May, a public announcement was made about the changes that had taken place in the state. A government manifesto stated that the “Legionnaires” and “other groups” had been preparing to create disorder in the country, and that parliament and the quarrelling between the political parties had made it impossible to resolve matters of state. The foreign policy situation was mentioned as an additional justification in the manifesto, emphasising the growing insecurity in the international arena. On 17 May the ministers of the previous government resigned by telephone, and by 1 p.m. the new government had been formed. This new government convened for its first meeting at 2.30 p.m.

The morning after the coup came as a surprise to most members of the parliamentary faction of Ulmanis’s own party, the Farmers’ Union of Latvia. On 16 May a meeting was called, at which Ulmanis made a short announcement. Apart from a remark regarding the constitution, made by deputy Eduards Laimiņš, everyone remained silent. As noted by eyewitness Jānis Lejiņš, only between two and four of the deputies present were enthusiastic about the coup or supported it. The rest, about 10 deputies, had mixed feelings, although nobody came out against it. Apparently, there were reservations only concerning the personality of Ulmanis.¹⁷ On 16 May, Jūlijs Druva, Secretary General of the Farmers’ Union, issued an instruction that all party branches should discontinue their activities, and at the end of May he instructed the branches to transfer all their funds to the Treasury of the Central Board and put in order the lists of members, records and treasuries.¹⁸ Abolition of the party took place without any problems.

We do not have much information about the reaction of the leading figures of other political parties. Aloizs Budže, a deputy from the Christian Farmers’ Party, describes in his memoirs the actions of the Latgalian political representatives on the following day. On the morning of 16 May at a railway station in Latgale the *Aizsargi* detained deputy Jezups Trasuns, but

freed him after a sharp exchange of words. At 9 a.m. Bishop Jāzepts Rancāns, Second Deputy Speaker of the *Saeima*, called a meeting of the Christian Peasants' and Catholic deputies in his apartment, attended by eight deputies. After a brief discussion, they decided to telephone the President in order to establish what had actually happened. President Alberts Kviēsis replied to Bishop Rancāns that he did not know anything, and that Prime Minister Ulmanis and Jānis Balodis had taken responsibility for the events. Before they managed to get through to Ulmanis, the Latgallian deputies were surprised by the arrival of the police, led by the prefect. The prefect ordered everyone to disperse, and placed Jāzepts Rancāns under arrest. A few days later a meeting of deputies was held at the Roman Catholic Curia, at which Vladislavs Rubulis, Minister of Welfare in the new government, tried to convince the Catholics to join the new government, but no decision was taken.¹⁹

On 16 May various Social Democratic organisations—the party, as well as the co-operative, trade union and sporting bodies—also held a meeting. Only two *Saeima* deputies from the Party Central Committee participated. Towards evening, a second meeting was held in the city carpentry workshops by the Railway Bridge. It was recognised that organising a general strike would be impossible and, in order to avoid fruitless bloodshed, the participants in the meeting also rejected the idea of armed struggle. It was decided that collaboration would begin with the Communist Party of Latvia, and that a Latvian Socialist Workers' and Farmers' Party should be established.²⁰

After the coup, deputies from other *Saeima* fractions also discussed the events informally among their acquaintances. Up to 15 May, the deputies of the Democratic Centre and the New Farmers' and Smallholders' Party had been among the most ardent defenders of democracy in parliament. However, after the fateful event, they came to terms with what had happened and did not put up any resistance. This is partially explicable in terms of the fact that they did not have any objections in principle to the policies of Ulmanis, only to particular individuals and the manner in which the system had been changed. "The government's first steps are entirely satisfactory," admitted Pēteris Juraševskis, leader of the Democratic Centre, in a conversation with an informer of the Political Board.²¹

The members of the extra-parliamentary radical nationalist organisation *Pērkonkrusts* were caught unprepared by the coup d'état, and their attitude towards it varied. The majority of the active nationalists took a favourable view of Ulmanis's actions, and supported the slogans and policies of the new government. One of the leaders of *Pērkonkrusts* wrote in a testimony to the political police that after the coup the members of his organisation had thought that the new government would not be able to do without the participation of such a widespread organisation as theirs, and that *Pērkonkrusts* was not prepared to put up any opposition.²² Characteristic of

their stance is a remark by Gustavs Celmiņš, leader of *Pērkonkrusts*: “A new system has been created, and new slogans, albeit stolen ones, have been announced.”²³ All the same, *Pērkonkrusts* had previously been very critical of Ulmanis’s policies, and the organisation could not accept or endorse them completely now. Accordingly, in an announcement of 23 May, the leaders of *Pērkonkrusts* came out against the coup.

Regardless of the widely differing moods in society subsequently portrayed in memoirs, it seems that most of society regarded the coup pragmatically—as a fact that could not be altered. Writer Jānis Veselis recorded in his memoirs that on the next day he went to his local authority office to get the newspapers and learned that the *Saeima* had been dissolved. “The Socialists together with the Communists had apparently wanted to rise up; four hundred revolvers had been confiscated from the *siseņi* (as the workers’ sports unit was known). “Little Bruno” had been arrested.²⁴ The farmers explained the causes of the coup in this manner: had the Left not wanted to rebel, then there’d have been no reason to do away with the *Saeima*. They did not even consider that Ulmanis might have done it because of his own greed for power or for some other unimportant reason,” wrote Veselis on the mood among the people in the Mēmele area.²⁵ He added that a variety of views were expressed on the coup among the writers: some praised it, some feared the consequences, and some denounced it.

The State Historical Archives of Latvia preserve a large number of reports from *Aizsargi* and police officials concerning the mood in the countryside. Overall, the reports state that people viewed the events positively, and in many cases with enthusiasm, emphasising their joy that the age of party promises was over. At the same time, the reports mention population groups unhappy with the coup: officials dismissed from office and members of political parties that had been closed down. However, open expressions of dissatisfaction with the new order were observable hardly anywhere.²⁶

As indicated by the press, on the day after the coup life in Latvia went on as normal.²⁷ In Riga there was almost no indication of the changes that had taken place. Only an observant passer-by might notice that the police standing at their posts now had guns and helmets. Early on the morning of 16 May a radio announcement of the developments was made. Telephone communications were restored only after 8 a.m. In a few hours, the police and *Aizsargi* had put up announcements in the towns about the introduction of a state of war in the country, and later also about the prohibition against the possession of weapons and the holding of meetings. The newspapers wrote that people were gathering around these announcements to read them, but were then peacefully dispersing.²⁸ Some of the papers had special issues giving more detailed reports about the events. On 16 and 17 May, flags were flown at buildings in the towns and parishes, affirming support for the changes. However, as the archive documents show, flags did not fly

everywhere, and not all the flags were put up voluntarily. The buildings of the Social Democrats and other left-wing organisations had already been seized, and the Houses of the People had been turned into Houses of the *Aizsargi*. The police were strictly controlling the trade in alcohol.

Persecutions started when a large number of political activists were arrested on 16 May and their homes searched. The politicians, taken by surprise, did not put up any resistance to arrest. Exceptionally, a dramatic break-in took place at the apartment of V. Bastjānis, deputy of the Social Democratic faction: here the door had to be forced open.²⁹ At the house of Pauls Kalniņš, the Speaker of the *Saeima*, police broke in through a window. Both were arrested, although Pauls Kalniņš was soon set free. Kārlis Pauļuks and Jāzevs Rancāns, Deputy Speakers of the *Saeima*, were placed under house arrest. At the time of their arrest, the *Saeima* deputies expressed their consternation at the disregard for constitutional procedure and the violent changes occurring to the system. During interrogation by the political police, the Social Democrats pointed out that those who had arrested them were actually the ones guilty of breaking the law. All those arrested on the first night were taken to the political police. From there, some were sent to Riga Central Prison, but the majority were placed in Liepāja Concentration Camp.

Arrests of people regarded as possibly hostile to the new regime continued for several weeks after the coup. A large number of Social Democrats, *Pērkonkrusts* members and a variety of activists from certain other political parties ended up in temporary places of imprisonment. Also, more than ten émigré socialists from Austria and Germany were arrested and expelled from Latvia. During the summer at least 503 members of social democratic organisations, including members of the Jewish social democratic organisation *Bund*, were arrested, along with 126 members of the illegal Latvian Communist Party and its youth organisation. It should be added that several of them were incarcerated after being caught participating in illegal meetings. Large numbers of weapons were discovered in the possession of the Social Democrats. Some individuals with Communist leanings were also found to have unregistered weapons.³⁰ Ninety seven members of *Pērkonkrusts* were arrested at their headquarters on 13 June 1934, followed by the arrest of a further 14 members on 15 July by the water towers on *Matīsa iela*.³¹ Altogether, 128 *Pērkonkrusts* members were arrested that summer, along with one member of the Active Nationalist Club. Members of ethnic minority political organisations were also arrested (15 members of Jewish organisations, two members of Belorussian groups and one member of a German organisation), as were members of the right-wing New Farmers' and Smallholders' Party (six people), the centrist Democratic Centre (one person), the populist New Farmers' Union of Pēteris Leikarts (three people) and the Labour Party of Kārlis Balodis (one person). Significantly, only six members of the illegal "*Leģions*" organisation were arrested: the other leading members of the group were simply already in prison.

After the coup, in the period up to 31 December 1934, when the last mass dismissals took place, a total of 3983 people were dismissed from state and municipal institutions. About half the staff of rural municipalities were dismissed and replaced with new people. In the urban municipalities, the proportion of staff dismissed was much lower. The dismissals mainly affected those institutions that had a significant number of members of left-wing parties. The majority of those dismissed were accused of belonging to the Latvian Social Democratic Party, or of holding left-wing views. However, this was not the only reason. Also dismissed, although in much smaller numbers, were people belonging to other political parties—even members of Ulmanis's own party, the Farmers' Union of Latvia, if they did not act in accordance with the demands placed on municipal employees after the coup. In addition to the political grounds, which certainly did predominate, a fairly large proportion were dismissed for various professional failings: inability to ensure the collection of taxes, alcoholism or lack of knowledge of the official language, Latvian. In some cases an important reason for dismissal was affiliation to a particular ethnic group, but except in the case of Germans, the ethnic factor was very rarely the sole or decisive reason.³²

Only a small number of arrestees ever came to trial. Most attention was focussed on the trial of the Social Democrats Pauls Kalniņš, Bruno Kalniņš, Jūlijs Celms and Pēteris Ulpe, who were accused of anti-state activities and illegal possession of weapons. Already on 13 June 1934 the Political Police prepared a 14 page long statement giving the grounds for arresting the Social Democrats and binding them over for trial. On 18 February 1935 in a bogus trial that was absurd in legal terms, Bruno Kalniņš was sentenced to three years in a house of correction, Jūlijs Celms received a four month prison sentence, Pēteris Ulpe was given three months in prison, and Pauls Kalniņš was acquitted. At the trial the Social Democrats pleaded not guilty.³³ At the trial on 28 February 1935 against the *Pērkonkrusts* members, their leader Gustavs Celmiņš was sentenced to three years in a house of correction, and a group of other active *Pērkonkrusts* members received sentences of between two years and four months in a house of correction. The *Pērkonkrusts* members pleaded guilty and considered themselves punished for their political ideals. Soon after the coup the Liepāja Concentration Camp (actually an internment camp) was set up, where a total of 369 people, mostly Social Democrats, were held during the time it was in operation. Initially it was not at all clear, either to the army leaders or the Prisons Department, how long the camp would operate. It was planned that after 11 April 1935 career non-commissioned officers of the army would take over responsibility for guarding the camp, but the new army commander Krišjānis Berķis protested against this, emphasising that responsibility and guarding of such a camp “has nothing do to with the military”.³⁴ The situation was resolved through the abolition of the camp.³⁵ The existence of

such an internment camp was yet another sign that the new élite did not have complete trust in society and wished to isolate potential opposition figures.

After the coup some officers and NCOs were discharged from the army, and at least two conscripted soldiers were arrested. Six members of the police force, three customs officials and five officials from the prison service were dismissed. However, not all the dismissals of officers were politically motivated: some were dismissed because of poor appraisal results. In early June the commander of the Vidzeme Division ordered the regimental commanders to submit, by 6 June, a list of those lieutenant colonels and captains who had taken part in the War of Independence and had been assessed as “good” or “very good”, but who could not be kept in military service for various reasons. Because of the dismissal of officials after the coup, the military planned to give these officers civil service posts with a salary of at least 300–400 Lats, mainly in the police and in municipal authorities.³⁶

There were places in the civil service for discharged officers because the state and municipal authorities had dismissed officials not trusted by the new regime. Former members of various parties, mainly left-wing parties, lost their posts in the capital and outside it, not only on the basis of investigations by the Political Board, but sometimes also as a result of denunciation by colleagues and neighbours. Officially, the dismissals took place in accordance with the Law on the Dismissal of the Staff of State Civil Institutions and Municipal Authorities during a State of Emergency. These restrictions served to increase the numbers of those disaffected with the new regime, but they did help make the state structures more homogenous. Usually the potentially untrustworthy staff of official bodies were identified on the basis of a report from the Political Board stating that they were listed in the board’s records as members of left-wing organisations or other groups banned after the coup. However, affiliation to a left-wing labour organisation or the Latvian Social Democratic Party did not always mean dismissal. For example, after the coup, there were six warders working at Riga Central Prison who had been members of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers’ Party up to 15 May. Only one of them was dismissed. Another was demoted, and the rest were appraised by the prison administration as competent staff and kept their jobs, albeit, they were to be “inconspicuously watched and gradually dismissed from the service in cases of disciplinary infringements.”³⁷ “Gradual” dismissal evidently meant that the regime was striving not to demonstrate excessive harshness. True, the state institutions never succeeded in eliminating *Pērkonkrusts* members. In the second half of the 1930s, when efforts were made to stamp out their activities, more and more members of the organisation were discovered among those officials previously regarded as loyal to the Ulmanis regime.

As part of the suppression following the coup, all 109 political parties in existence up to that time were closed down. In addition, 46 associations

were “presented with a proposal to dissolve themselves”. 37 actually did cease their activities and 54 organisations had new administrative bodies appointed and changes made among the leading personnel. It was envisaged that in 1935 approximately 1,000 more associations would be abolished or merged.³⁸ Publication of several periodicals was prohibited. This included all the leftist press, most periodicals owned by political parties, and some minor publications which might somehow have created opposition to the regime. Even the conservative “*Latvis*”, which wholeheartedly supported coup, was closed in September. On 16 May 1934, prior censorship was introduced for all periodical publications and was changed on 17 November to post-censorship.³⁹ Although there is a view that censorship was liberal, it did give rise to a reaction. It should be noted that censorship was gradually introduced: initially, the coup organisers were not able to censor all publications. For example, as late as 17 May, *Jaunais Vārds*, the newspaper of the Latgale Farmers’ Progressive Association, criticised the Latgalian politician Turkopols, who advocated dictatorship and was opposed to political parties.

Immediately after the coup, 50 periodicals were suspended. Under the Law on a State of War, literature could be taken out of circulation without court sanction on the order of the Minister of Internal Affairs. Such bans were imposed following statements from the Censorship Service of the Press and Associations Department of the Ministry of the Interior, although in some cases the prohibition was based on a recommendation or statement from another ministry. After the coup, publications were impounded or confiscated. These included newspapers and magazines connected with the Social Democratic Workers’ Party, the trade unions, other left-wing organisations, *Pērkonkrusts* or the National Socialists, as well as publications deemed “destructive of family life”.⁴⁰ Up to 25 June, a total of 99 press publications were suspended,⁴¹ although in two cases suspension was subsequently annulled.

Virtually the only documented case of active opposition to the conspirators took place in the village of Eleja. The local postmaster Oto Ziemelis and his wife Alvīne, who worked as the telephone operator, listened in to telephone communications during the coup, heard the reports of the *Aizsargi* and reported these to the local Social Democrat officials.⁴² Of course, in some cases people did try to avoid arrest by fleeing or hiding. During the summer of 1934, administrative punishments of imprisonment for periods ranging from a few weeks up to six months for voicing dissatisfaction with the new regime were imposed on at least 238 people who cannot be identified as affiliated to any party, as well as several dozens of individuals belonging to various organisations, mainly left-wing groups. These people were charged with anti-state pronouncements directed against the *Aizsargi*, Ulmanis, the existing regime and government, a contemptuous attitude

towards the national flag, resisting the *Aizsargi*, spreading rumours or incitement to strike.

In the 16 May issue of *Valdības Vēstnesis*, the people of Latvia were informed that a state of war had been introduced in the country. This order, signed by Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis and Minister of War Jānis Balodis, explained that internal unrest threatened to break out in the country, constituting a danger to public safety, and that because of this a state of war was being introduced in the country for a period of six months.⁴³ On 18 May the government issued a declaration stating that, pending the implementation of a reform of the constitution, from 11 p.m. on 15 May 1934 the functions of the *Saeima* had been taken over by the Cabinet of Ministers, and announcing the composition of the new government. This declaration thereafter served as the legal basis for legislation. After this, acts of law were passed in order to create a legal framework for legislation in the new conditions, with no parliament or elected municipal authorities, and to provide a legal basis for mass dismissals. Such acts included the Changes to the Procedure of the Cabinet of Ministers, Amendments to the Law on the State Audit Office, the Regulations on the Limitation of the Activities of Town Authorities during a State of Emergency, the Law on the Dismissal of the Staff of State Civil Institutions and Municipal Authorities during a State of Emergency, and others. On the second day of the coup, instructions were also issued aimed at limiting possible resistance or unrest: the activities of the parties were suspended, public gatherings and marches were banned, a variety of public events and the sale of alcohol were restricted, and censorship was introduced. This was followed a few days later, on 19 May, by the suspension of the activities of sickness funds and sickness fund associations, powers to punish people for spreading rumours or disturbing the peace (with particular attention to the discovery of illegal weapons), as well as a Law on the Closure, Abolition and Procedure for Registration of Societies, Associations and Political Organisations During a State of Emergency.

Immediately after the coup, changes were also made in various state services. For example, in early June 1934 at a meeting of army divisional commanders several decisions were taken that directly related to the recent changes. These decisions involved the strengthening of patriotic education, the elimination of illegalities and intrigues, and the creation of work teams for politically untrustworthy soldiers. These decisions also affected people's personal lives. Thus, career soldiers were permitted to marry non-Latvian women only if they had a knowledge of Latvian.⁴⁴ Already on 19 May the government issued an instruction that all schools that had not already done so were to hold a meeting to explain the changes that had taken place. A week later school headmasters were instructed to remove from the walls of school buildings pictures of people who had been arrested.

Discussion

In assessing the technical aspect of the preparations and implementation of the coup, it has to be admitted that Ulmanis brought off an almost perfect take over of power. Although we still do not have reliable information about certain episodes in the preparations for the coup, we can say with confidence that the technical side had been carefully thought out and prepared.⁴⁵ Such a coup was impossible to prepare in a short space of time: all the required people were gradually brought into the ring of conspirators, the plan was considered and was implemented faultlessly. Although the coup was unexpected for the public in Latvia, nevertheless, as the newspaper *Pēdējā Brīdī* wrote, all the sparrows were twittering about the possibility of such an event.⁴⁶ And as a result, nobody really believed it any more. The swagger by the Social Democrat Sport leader B. Kalniņš at the 19th Congress of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party in early May that "it is better to fight and fall than to surrender ignominiously without a fight" turned out to be empty words.⁴⁷ Ulmanis was familiar with the political élite, was a good psychologist and was sufficiently able to predict the élite's reaction. Being an experienced, but at the same time cautious politician, he was able to avoid bloodshed, although this is not to say that he would have shirked from resorting to weapons, had this been necessary.

The events after the coup, first and foremost the widespread persecution, had to do with the elimination of possible opposition. The course of this persecution showed very clearly that the new regime had scant respect for legality. This, in turn, created a large group of people dissatisfied with the new regime. Evidently, as Ā.Šilde writes, Ulmanis was simply afraid of opposition, something he had already come up against inside his own party.⁴⁸ Although he concentrated great power in his own hands, he was unable completely to stamp out opposition, which assumed different forms and went underground. On 16 May and the days after that, a new government was formed, which announced the dissolution of the *Saeima* and restrictions on political freedoms. This included a ban on the activities of political parties and the closure of political periodicals.

The participation of quite a wide section of the top army officers guaranteed the support of the armed forces at least. The senior police officials had also agreed to the changes. However, the majority of other officers, enlisted men and lower-ranking police officials learned of the coup only when it was already underway and submitted to the orders issued by their superiors. The conspirators expected active involvement on the part of the army and the police, although apparently it was the *Aizsargi* who were entrusted with the main role in the planned scenario. Yet the army was the main executive force behind the coup and the view that the *Aizsargi* organised events was wrong. The large numbers of enthusiastic members of the *Aizsargi* organisation demonstrated support and acceptance among the masses in a way that was necessary for a new regime to obtain legitimacy.

But taking things further, there was a view of the *Aizsargi* as having played the leading role in the coup, as can be seen, for example, in the words of a *Pērkonkrusts* member to an informer of the Political Board in September 1934: “Now there will be a coup from another quarter, which will be organised not by the *Aizsargi*, but by the armed forces. The most trustworthy *Aizsargi* units will serve only as ancillary forces.”⁴⁹ Yet Indulis Ronis is right when he writes that the main instrument behind the coup was the army, not the *Aizsargi*.⁵⁰ The masses of enthusiastic *Aizsargi* members provided a clear demonstration that, in the words of Alfrēds Bērziņš, the attitude in the countryside towards the parties and the Saeima was “even more hostile” than in Riga.⁵¹ The energetic participation of the *Aizsargi* in the coup, and likewise the mobilisation of many thousands of supporters of the Farmers’ Union earlier, in 1931, at the time of a party mass meeting, seemed to indicate acceptance of the events on the part of one section of the people.⁵² The *Aizsargi* served as a front. The emphasis on the role of the *Aizsargi* came about as a result of the propaganda by the regime of 15 May, thus keeping alive the view that there had been “mass popular participation”. This is confirmed by an interview by Lidija Torgani, senior official in the *Aizsardzes*, the women’s organisation within the *Aizsargi*. Characterising the role of the *Aizsargi* in the coup, she added that “some kind of popular backing was required”.⁵³ But ultimately the success of the coup was guaranteed by the active participation of the army and the loyalty of the police.

On-going events showed that minorities’ involvement in the coup was passive, with some leftist minorities’ groups subjected to repressions—i.e. the abolition of political organisations, the closure of some periodicals, and also the arrest and dismissal of a number of individuals from their positions in municipal and state institutions. It is generally agreed that one of the coup’s goals was to eliminate the “minorities’ economic power”. Ulmanis’ and his government’s rhetoric on Latvianisation left few if any doubts about the intentions of the authoritarian regime. There were no formal restrictions on minorities but the primary losers were Germans and Jews, some of whose large enterprises were later nationalized under the pretext of Latvianization of the economy. After the coup all ethnic groups (like the Latvians themselves) were excluded from the decision-making process in Latvia. However, there were some sections—or rather some individuals—who had special relations with the authoritarian leader and thus retained some access to the corridors of power (for instance, the Jewish conservative politician and rabbi Mordehajs Dubins who was on good terms with Ulmanis: see, for instance Stranga (2002, pp. 200–01).

But Ulmanis’ coup also resulted in the exclusion from power of previously influential ethnic Latvian groups, namely most of the earlier political élite, including his own co-members of the agrarian union and urban bourgeoisie. During the course of the coup it appeared that a special role

might be given to the farmers, that is to say landowners whose primary political representatives were divided into a few agrarian parties before 1934 and whose representatives actively and visibly participated in the coup as *Aizsargi* members. There was an open question about the working class, particularly in Riga. In spite of social democratic rhetoric about the readiness to fight back against fascists, neither strikes nor armed resistance took place. During the coup itself, a general strike was not considered as serious option at the level of either the party élite or the grassroots. This suggests that the working class attitude was not simply hostile to the coup, but that there were also authoritarian and nationalistic sentiments among them which were touched by Ulmanis's rhetoric and first steps of the new government. In general, however, as Nancy Bermeo concluded aptly—ordinary Latvians played a peripheral role.⁵⁴

After the coup, the new government immediately began working in two directions. First, the transformation of the country's administration was implemented to suit the needs of the authoritarian regime. Secondly, decisions were taken concerning society which were intended to win broad public support for the new government. The new order really was welcomed by a large numbers of people. Police and *Aizsargi* reports on the mood in the towns and countryside indicated that the majority of the population had accepted the changes. However, in spite of this, the widespread persecution and unlawful seizure of power created bitterness towards the new regime in a significant section of society. The comments of E. Dunsdorfs, a prominent researcher on Ulmanis, are most apt for a conclusion: 15 May caused a deeper rift among the people than any other event in Latvian history.⁵⁵ The new regime did not resolve the political problems existing before the coup, it only shelved them. The consequences of Ulmanis's coup for society, in terms of its attitude towards democracy and the development of the nation, have been felt not only under the totalitarian occupation regimes that followed and within the large exile community in the free world after the war, but even in the time after independence was regained at the close of the twentieth century.

Notes

1. Dunsdorfs, 1992, pp. 264–66; Virsis, 1990, pp. 176–85; Stranga, 1998; Stranga, 2002; Peniķis, 1984, pp. 3–15.
2. Ronis, 1994, pp. 72–112; Andersons, 1982, p. 397; Žagars, 1988, pp. 52–69; Zunda, 2001, p. 50.
3. Aizsilnieks, 1968, pp. 582, 600. Aizsilnieks considers as one of the main reasons for the failed economic policy the effort to maintain the Lat at its earlier high exchange rate whatever the cost. This resulted in excessive budget cuts, the collapse of exports and the reduction of foreign currency reserves to a minimum.
4. Ulmanis, 1993, pp. 124–25.
5. Stranga, 1998, p. 100.
6. The recollections of K. Lorencs about the coup of 15 May are in the State Historical Archives of Latvia (*Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs—LVVA*), 4020. f., 1. apr., 6. l., 3.–9., 11.–23. lp.
7. Ronis, 1994, pp. 73–75.
8. Cerūzis, 2004, pp. 241–44.
9. LVVA, 3724. f., 1. apr., 11 739. l., b. p. In 1932 there were 10,635 societies in the country, and in 1933 there were 11,123 societies and 120 political organisations.
10. Hobsbawm, 1997, p. 136.
11. Rauch, 1974, p. 147.
12. Linz, 1978, p. 18.
13. Klāns, 1968, pp. 514–15.
14. Berg-Schlosser and Mitchell, 2002.
15. Ibid, p. 323.
16. Ibid, pp. 262–263.
17. Lejiņš, 1971, p. 100.
18. Instructions from J. Druva, Secretary General of the Farmers' Union of Latvia, on 16, 24 and 29 May 1934 in LVVA, 3283. f., 1. apr., 167. l., 400–04. lp.
19. Budže, 1973, 5: 343. Budže later recollected that a few days later a Catholic deputy urged him to come to the Riga Curia. There Vladislavs Rubulis, leader of the Latgale Democratic Farmers' Party gave a speech in which he “assessed the events with great confidence”. Budže considered that he had been sent by Ulmanis.
20. The recollections of K. Lorencs about the coup of 15 May in LVVA, 4020. f., 1. apr., 6. l., 32.–36. lp.
21. Latvian War Museum, 4465/ 10369–VII.
22. 1937. g. 5. September, LVVA, 3235. f., 3. apr., 118. l., 194. lp.
23. Ibid., 114. l., 1. lp., Paeglis, 1994, p. 101.
24. In fact, “*siseņi*” was a contemptuous contortion of the initials of the workers' sports unit—SSS. It means “locusts”. “Little Bruno”—or Bruno

Kalniņš—was the leader of the SSS. He was the son of famous leading Social Democrat.

25. Veselis, 1956, p. 281. Veselis writes that he himself “had generally taken the side of the new regime”.

26. See, for example, the report of 16 August 1934 on Latgale by the inspectors of the Political Board, LVVA, 3235. f., 1/ 22. apr., 531. l., 50., 51. lp.

27. See, for example: *Kurzemes Vārds*, 18 May 1934; *Ventas Balss*, 18 May 1934.

28. See, for example: “Jauno stāvokli Liepājā uzņēma ar sajūsmu” in *Kurzemes Vārds*, 17 May 1934; Sv. “16. maijs Jelgavā” in *Zemgales Balss*, 18 May 1934.

29. Bastjānis, 1954, pp. 33–38.

30. For example the search of the apartment of Jānis Āboliņš on 17 May, when a *Parabellum* automatic revolver and 15 rounds of ammunition were found, LVVA, 3235. f., 1/ 6. apr., 606. l., 93. lp.

31. List of arrested *Pērkonkrusts* members, 1935, LVVA, 3. apr., 116. l., 83., 84. lp.

32. See further: Ščerbinskis, 2007, pp. 63–68. The number of people released and also of those arrested was determined in collaboration with Dr. hist. Ē. Jēkabsons by checking all the catalogue cards of the Political Police kept at LVVA.

33. See further: Stranga, 1998, pp. 170–73.

34. Army Commander K. Berķis to Director of the Prisons Department Vanags, 17 January 1935, LVVA, 3275. f., 2. apr., 36. l., 226. lp.

35. On the camp, see further: Ščerbinskis, 2009.

36. LVVA, 1494. f., 1. apr., 943. l., 46. lp.

37. Director of the Prisons Department Vanags to the Head of Riga Central Prison, 14 September 1934, LVVA, 3275. f., 2. apr., 36. l., 94. lp.; Head of the Riga Region of the Political Police A. Aprāns to the Head of Riga Central Prison, 6 September 1934, *Ibid.*, 97. lp.

38. *Ibid.*, 1380. f., 3. apr., 1343. l., b. p.

39. *Valdības Vēstnesis*, 16 May 1934 and 17 November 1934.

40. On the suspended publications, see: Paeglis, 1996, pp. 31–41. The study gives a detailed overview of the suspended periodicals, analysing the reasons for suspension and attempting to determine the precise number of publications affected during the time of the authoritarian regime.

41. List of suspended periodicals up to 25 June 1934 in LVVA, 3724. f., 1. apr., 1514. l., 1. lp.

42. *Ibid.*, 5604. f., 1. apr., 7217. l., b. p.

43. *Valdības Vēstnesis*, 16 May 1934.

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44. Order from K. Berķis, Commander of the Vidzeme Division, to the unit commanders of the Vidzeme Division, 6/7 July 1934, LVVA, 1492. f., 1. apr., 421. l., 114. lp.
 45. Classic concepts on how coup d'état should be organized see for instance in: Luttwak, 1968, pp. 53–57; Farcau, 1994, p. 7.
 46. *Pēdējā Brīdī*, 10 June 1934.
 47. *Sociāldemokrāts*, 6 May 1934.
 48. Šilde, 1976, p. 196.
 49. LVVA, 3235. f., 5. apr., 113. l., 219. lp.
 50. Ronis, 1994, p. 99.
 51. Bērziņš, 1963, p. 153.
 52. On 21 June 1931 a mass Farmers' Rally was held in the Esplanāde (a square in the centre of Riga), attended by 15,021 people, according to estimates by the organisers. Before the meeting, the participants, who were organised and carried flags, were addressed by the President at Riga Castle and by the Prime Minister at the government building (ignoring the *Saeima*), after which they marched to the Military Cemetery and then back to the Esplanāde. This event was clearly connected with the elections held that autumn, but it demonstrated to Ulmanis the mood among a large section of the politically active farmers and their readiness for a “march on Riga” on the analogy of Benito Mussolini's Fascist march. After this rally, the paper *Brīvā Zeme* (25 July 1931) wrote that at last “the farmers have entered Riga as a force so powerful that all of life succumbs in front of it”.
 53. Interview with L. Torgani by Dr. hist. I. Butulis and V. Ščerbinskis at Skrīveri in 1992, video. LKM, 6-522-PF.
 54. Bermeo, 2003, p. 46
 55. Dunsdorfs, 1992, p. 266.

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The View from the Top: German Soldiers and Lithuania in the Two World Wars

Joachim Tauber

Introduction

During the First and Second World Wars, Lithuania became a battleground. German troops advancing eastwards crossed the country during spring and autumn 1915, as well as in June 1941. Having launched a counter-offensive, the Red Army re-entered Lithuanian territory in summer 1944. Both these battles and the periods of occupation gave many German soldiers the opportunity to become acquainted with Lithuania and its inhabitants.

The following essay will present and evaluate the impressions which the German conquerors had of the land and its inhabitants. Above all, it will make use of contemporary press reports, documents and memoirs. Notwithstanding censorship and restrictions on the press, reporting—especially by the various press organisations and the newspapers distributed to the troops—mirrored the opinions and beliefs of many of the Germans who entered the land. In order to guarantee their credibility, the newspapers distributed to soldiers had to rely on reports which seemed realistic based on their own views.¹ This analysis is connected to the observations of Gabriel Vejas Liulevicius who, in his book *War Lands on the Eastern Front*, made plain how clearly the Germans staffing the administration and the army during the First World War understood themselves to be the representatives of a superior culture and tutors for the indigenous people, such that their goals went far beyond pure administration and the land's exploitation.² Although Liulevicius only discusses the similarities and parallels with the German occupation of 1941–44 towards the end of his book, the comparison is of central importance.

The feeling of superiority

In both the First and Second World Wars there was an obvious difference between the soldiers' attitudes towards the Western and Eastern Fronts. In the latter case, the soldiers experienced a significant cultural difference between themselves and the native inhabitants. They consistently felt superior to the inhabitants in almost every respect: power, culture and erudition.

The first distinct impression during the advance of 1915 was that the land had an almost medieval primitiveness: "In the majority of cases, the water supply to the towns in Lithuania takes the most primitive form. It consists almost only of draw-wells located near to manure pits—often even right next to those places where the inhabitants of the land answer the call of nature. Latrines are almost completely absent. Their dreadful condition explains why they are not used even by inhabitants unaccustomed to luxuries..." Almost automatically this situation created new tasks that had to

be dealt with at once: "...care will be taken to dispose of waste products regularly, also to keep the streets clean—especially by digging deep ditches at the side of the road and constructing bridges at the entrance to courtyards and houses which permit water to flow underneath them. These silt up gradually in Lithuania's villages and hamlets, while in towns the gutters become blocked, such that effluent is dammed up in the vilest way."³ Animal husbandry in Lithuanian villages is described eloquently: "According to age-old custom, in so far as they fit through the door, household animals have their share of the space in which the farmers live. Chickens and goats come in freely and, along with dog and cat, make sure that no left-over morsel of food remains lying on the only room's hard-trodden earth floor. That they leave behind other traces of their presence does not concern the animal-friendly Lithuanian farmer."⁴

Even in June 1941, right at the start of the invasion, there were striking perceptions: "Regiments are marching and columns are rolling across Lithuania's miserable roads. The borders of the Reich already lie far behind us, and the memory of the last clean billet in the East Prussian military zone seems almost like a dream. Admittedly the meadow landscape's luscious green fields, which are broken up repeatedly by coppices and woods, have a certain charm. And the low grey wooden cottages with their straw thatches might be nice too—so long as you don't actually go inside. But this dust..."⁵ It is "a land in which roads in our Central European sense are an unknown concept."⁶ "For the most part, it is not worth hanging around. The villages are dirt poor, and the towns are large villages. Many have been burned down and the street is strewn with splinters of glass, cement and chunks of brick, and sagging wires, which sway in the wind, chinking gently if you touch them.... Today we dream from time to time (...) dream of our distant homeland in which—it almost seems like a remote fairytale to us (...)—there are dust-free roads, with a dark, smooth asphalt surface, across which lorries glide silently without clunking, bouncing and jarring (...) and somewhere the great wizard Todt has laid Reich motorways through beautiful green land like shining double ribbons (...) but the further East we go, the more are we inclined to suppose that there cannot really be such a thing, rather that our imagination is playing a trick on us here, and a mirage has deceived our dusty eyes in the shining sun's reflection from the road's surface which, in much diluted form, floats in the air in front of and above us."⁷ A description from autumn 1918 is similar: "Quite deliberately all lorries drive more slowly when they approach a Lithuanian village. It is on account of the road usually becoming worse here than in other places and having potholes which only dry out after eight days of unbroken sunshine—and consequently they almost never do so under this changeable sky. The farmer in Lithuania does not worry a great deal about the roads. He leaves them to the hens, the cattle and the people who travel around the world rather than stay happily at home as he does. It is much more pleasant in his cottage or on the bench than on the dirty road. He is not

worried about the outside of his buildings...”⁸ Also conspicuous was: “...the phenomenal infestation of most fields by weeds, which is an unavoidable consequence of the backwardness of the agrarian culture as a whole. Here, the battle between culture and nature is still in its infancy.”⁹

War reporter Lothar Papke experienced the opening days of the German-Soviet war with the 18th Army as it advanced along the Baltic coast to Liepāja, Latvia. He described the “Lithuanian badlands” eloquently: “The war takes hold throughout the forests of Bolshevik Lithuania, across the barely tilled cornfields, across the long-rising and long-falling hills of large fallow meadows, through the pitifully primitive settlements which it would be an exaggeration to call villages.... The hot day-time wind whips up clouds of dust from the road like plumes of white flour over the fields. Dust, dirt and all the inhospitality of primitive life accompany war and the gaining of ground. But the swastika flag shines on our motor vehicles—on the bonnets—as a recognition symbol for the German *Luftwaffe* and as a symbol of our whole action. With it we strike irresistibly into the centre of the European treason called the Soviet Union.”¹⁰

Perceptions of the local population

Obviously the Lithuanian landscape was perceived uniformly. So far as the soldiers of the Imperial and National Socialist armies were concerned, Lithuania was monotonous and primitive. The image of a sparse, untapped landscape was in line with testimony about the population. Not just rustic primitiveness, but a proverbial native cunning was attributed to them. The long-standing chief of the German administration in Lithuania, Franz Josef Fürst von Isenburg-Birstein, spoke about the “deftness with which the borderland population goes to work” smuggling.¹¹ An article in the *Vilnius News* (*Wilnaer Zeitung*) focused on idioms, from which conclusions were drawn about the Lithuanian national character: “Quite naturally, their [i.e. the proverbs’] contents are mostly to do with their own primitive national living conditions.... The Lithuanian is not at all unskilful at business and often pits himself successfully against the Jew. Perhaps as a result of a natural disposition, he is distrustful....”¹² Even love songs were interpreted as characteristically Lithuanian: “The Lithuanian lives quietly, happily and with satisfaction among the fields and meadows which are enough for him. He is not inclined to scale heights; he prefers a languishing dependency to dissatisfied hunting and struggling after superior things.”¹³ Associated with the Lithuanian race’s simplicity and connectedness to nature, there was also empathy with those in need of help¹⁴ and mildness of character.¹⁵

The simplicity of the population was also central to a scene which war reporter Werner Lahne conjured up on 22 June 1941. He describes the joy of the Lithuanian population in the little border town of Naujamiestis when the Germans invaded: “The big red soviet star on the front of the posh Bolshevik party building—which Moscow stuck right in the face of the Lithuanians as

their first ‘gift’ after annexing their land—is no longer in its place. No one is happier about this than the indigenous population which waves to the invading German troops. The farmers’ wives eyes are filled with great amazement. They cannot comprehend the great transformation of this proud hour—and who can blame them?”¹⁶ Another war reporter, who also made his observations in Naujamiestis, describes a thoroughly traumatised Lithuanian population. “The typical picture of an enemy town just occupied without too much resistance. And how different it is! A year under the soviet regime has left its mark on the people. Shy, intimidated, they look out from behind their curtains into the street with a suspicious gaze.”¹⁷

The population was regarded as rather lacking independence even in 1916. In the first volume of “Correspondence B”—a collection of articles which appeared weekly and was prepared for the German press by the German military administration *OberOst* (the abbreviation stands for *Oberbefehlshaber Ost*, or Supreme Commander in the East)—, the central, laconic essay entitled “*Ob.Ost*” says: “Through the activity and energetic support of the German administration, a population which is willing, but barely able, to make decisions for itself has re-discovered quickly the basis of adequate employment.... But you would be demanding the impossible if you expected the population to understand the spirit of the new times all at once. Their memory is of disappointment; their lodestar is an unmistakable mistrust of new things.”¹⁸ In October 1918, Herbert Eulenberg¹⁹ conveyed a similar picture of the Lithuanian farmer: “Usually people in Lithuania go around bare-foot.... Little men and women scurry through the house without a sound, offspring of a nation which once was free and proud, but which unfortunately was all-too-much enslaved by the Russians. In contrast to those who belong to us²⁰ and who were allowed to walk around freely and to develop themselves, it has given non-German Lithuanians something timid, intimidated, indeed—as their enemies say—obsequious.”²¹

If you disregard the friendly reception afforded to the German soldiers, the first impressions of the indigenous population from June 1941 could have come from 1915: “The road went past wretched wooden cottages. Bare-foot people wearing shabby clothes stood in their doorways with astonished but open faces.”²² The Lithuanians “are all dressed in rags—we still have not seen any people dressed properly, not even a woman dressed reasonably nicely, even though we have passed through four larger towns already.”²³

Another observation concerns the pre-modern, almost childlike naivety of the indigenous people. When the *OberOst* administration introduced identity passes in its area, the German “pass office” included the local inhabitants in the system: “Photography is something new and previously unknown to them. As far as most are concerned, it provides cause for celebration.... A piece of paper with a number is stuck onto the chest of every individual who is photographed with it. Frequently this process gives

rise to the most wonderful confusions when the piece of paper is swapped from one person to the next—something which for the most part happens unintentionally since many cannot read a single number. Now the junior officer checks yet again (...) the piece of paper held by the victim who is beaming with happiness.... To use an extreme comparison, generally speaking the people must be led like a herd of old sheep. Otherwise there would be utter chaos and rapid, reliable work would be impossible.”²⁴ Who can fail to notice European stereotypes of “natives” in descriptions such as these?

The underlying image is also clear in the following example. In their newspaper, the soldiers of the 16th Army were given an introduction to the history of Lithuania and its people by war reporter Wilhelm Krüger: “In Prussian territory north of the Memel, the Lithuanian part of the population mixed with Germans participated in cultural progress, while stagnation and regression predominated among the one very clearly defined by the border [i.e. the Lithuanian population beyond the German frontier].” Krüger applied the metaphor of the simple farming people once again: “The Lithuanian national character is bound to the soil, is a little sluggish and thoroughly in need of leadership. Here, we don’t really have a pure Lithuanian nation as it once developed from an Indo-Germanic group of nations. Rather it is mixed with eastern, Baltic and indeed Slavic elements.... Among those Lithuanian circles which have been kept most pure nationally-speaking, you find a great deal of feeling for folk art, for music and for Romantic poetry, likewise for rural traditions and, to a great extent, a deeply religious quality.... For all his lack of independence and initiative, as soon as he finds himself in a well-ordered social system, the Lithuanian is diligent and frugal. What has just been said proves well enough that the ‘Lithuanian economy’, which our soldiers have become familiar with during the invasion, is everything other than well-ordered.”²⁵

People’s agricultural roots were already given special emphasis in 1916: “The Lithuanian is a thoroughly rudimentary person. He derives from the spacious landscape without separating himself from it. He leads a simple, self-sufficient existence among the trees and bushes, the hills and river valleys.”²⁶ Similar observations were made at a village dance: “You dispense with grace, dispense with the beauty of lines, the refinement of faces, of fine feet which are beautifully restrained. You see the opposite and take pleasure in simple, rustic joy.... Their tunes, the form they take, is a reminder of the landscape, the harsh climate, the deep, earnest stimulus of the forest—of their tough, sad fate. I stayed there fully two hours and it was no hardship; whoever wants to understand the Lithuanian people should not watch them at work or in their meagre crofts having still more frugal meals, but should listen to them at church and delight in them playing and dancing.”²⁷ Even Lithuanian folk songs and proverbs²⁸ mirror this characteristic: “In the olden-days, Lithuanians loved poetry and pursued it assiduously. This is proved by

the many songs which live in the nation even today. Up to now, over 500 folk songs—which the Lithuanian calls *dainos*²⁹—have been collected. Such a large number exist for such a relatively small nation because, in the past, the Lithuanian farmer—a cheerful chap—used to accompany every job, even the very smallest, with songs. Lithuanian songs are distinguished especially by their simplicity of form and content, their purity, to which everything crude is alien, and their touching naivety which is often associated with an inner sentiment....³⁰ Even Lithuanian art has a foundation defined fundamentally by proximity to the soil³¹ and, in addition, the architecture of the farmers' houses mirrors an "innate vigour" of the Lithuanian which "is only comprehensible in terms of the character of the nation and the landscape."³² To some extent the statements recall the language popularised in the German-speaking world by Karl May's adventure novels³³ set in the Wild West and in the Orient: "Tenderness of feelings, a property of all *dainos*, rings out from Lithuanian love songs with particular clarity. They are so gentle, so coy, so melancholy, that you might conclude the nation almost lacks sensuality. But that is not the case. The Lithuanian possesses a good, distinctive carnality. Whoever scrutinizes the products of Lithuanian art, encounters almost immediately instances with erotic impact. They do not derive from the area of that modern eroticism which turns the means into the end, but from a healthy, natural sexual instinct."³⁴ The Catholic priest, Johannes Wronka, summarised his experiences with Lithuanians as follows: "...they are a healthy, strong national lineage with lots of children. Their spiritual aptitude is very good. They are filled with a deep religious piety. Not yet weaned from obedience, they are frugal and honest...."³⁵

The Lithuanian's "deep sensitivity" led to misunderstandings when he dealt with "practical people": "...the whole value of the person is seen in terms of emotional tenderness. Consequently the Lithuanian often assesses other nations incorrectly. The often unkind, sometimes harsh character of the German is regarded as a sign of lower standing which should be despised. This explains the common and apparently instinctive dislike of Lithuanians for Germans, which only disappears when the former has learned to grasp the true value of Germanism."³⁶

The perception of Lithuanians as "noble savages" cropped up time and again subliminally and could be seen in Prince Isenburg's fight against the *Taryba*'s demands which—from his point of view—far exceeded what was permissible. In a letter to Ludendorff dated 27 October 1917, the administrative chief of Lithuania explained why there was no question of the land's direct annexation: "Decisive domestic political concern: after a short transitional period, inevitably the Lithuanians incorporated into the Reich would have to receive active and passive rights for Reichstag elections, for which they are not ready...."³⁷ Staff Chief *OberOst*, Major General Hoffmann, who was at the fore-front of the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations—where he became notorious thanks to his alleged punch—

refused to discuss Lithuanian independence with the words: "...the Lithuanians could 'govern themselves independently as well as, for instance, my daughter Ilse could educate herself.'"³⁸ *OberOst*'s circles would not have agreed with the view of Vydūnas—the Lithuanian philosopher who lived in East Prussia—that Lithuanians "must be spoken of as a strikingly intelligent nation".³⁹ Even von Heppe, the successor to Isenburg-Birstein in the German administration's leadership who was thoroughly well-disposed towards Lithuanians, thought they lacked energy: "Despite their intelligence, Lithuanians were conspicuously backward in the economic leadership, since as a rule they were deficient in diligence, energy and thirst for progress."⁴⁰

Proximity of Russia

If you take an overview of the sources discussed here, it is striking how little the image of landscape and people had altered in the approximately 20 years between the first and second German occupation. The width of the cultural divide had not diminished in the least. Obviously the hierarchical division between "German" and "Lithuanian" culture, education and technology was still palpable.

These interpretations are closely connected to another German stereotype. The associations are made manifest when a war report from 1941 says the following laconically: "The Russian world is nearby. You can find traces of it even before Kaunas."⁴¹ The similarity of this point to an observation from 1916 is striking: "Vilnius still lies between Europe and Asia. In cultural terms, not geographically-speaking.... Here, no one would believe that you are already a little way into Russia, unless at every step you did not encounter conditions which we describe as Russian."⁴² This introduces another theme central to the new masters' perceptions, since in their eyes Lithuania was—put in modern terms—a developing country: "Led by the commanders of the German military bases, the Lithuanians go to work bravely and with eagerness.... They want to work hard at their 'new life'. Having previously been a transitional zone between Europe and Asia, and—during the Jewish-Bolshevik period—oriented exclusively towards the East, in so far as it lies within their power, they want to achieve union with the West.... In order to achieve this union with European culture and civilisation—the Lithuanians' youth and more far-sighted members of the intelligentsia hope to reach this goal—they work bravely and optimistically despite the serious blows which the Jewish-Bolshevik government—and now the war—have dealt the land."⁴³ Nonetheless: "In contrast to the Russian who has governed him for so long, the Lithuanian celebrates Christmas with particular festivity. He shows he is a member of Western Europe even in this respect...."⁴⁴ In an essay "Lithuania" published in 1916, Adolf Höllriegel reduced his impressions to one observation: "Sea, sand, marsh, fever, Russians, burned homes. Lithuania has been like that for the last millennium."⁴⁵ In a literary essay written while on home leave, the sight of

Vilnius's many churches moved Lieutenant Paul Lingen to phrases which amounted to a classic ideological expression of cultural decline: "Every style of tower and cupola.... Monstrosities from a profligate imagination—solidified, ecstatic dreams. Here, Asia's excess mingled with the practicality and distorting limitations of the West."⁴⁶

In a rapturous allegory of Vilnius, the ideas culminated in an image of the "rape" of the town by Russian domination: "Poor Vilnius! Once queen of Lithuania's cities, what has been done to you? You are like a fairytale princess condemned to be a servant or maid, from whom the soft royal bed has been taken away.... The West and the East fight over you, over your proud estate. And when the West became tired and pulverised itself in battles of division and inner annihilation, there arose the young, awakening fellow in the East who was clumsy through being still half asleep, and fell on you who was defenceless. He was still a barbarian and envied you your jewellery. He was a despot and commanded you to bend to his will. He forced upon you—weeping, appealing, pleading—his coarse sensibilities from the steppe and robbed you of the expressions of your soul.... What he gave, you did not want. You knew it did not suit you. It was something alien. And what he left you—with a sneering tyrant's grin—, they were, and today still are, hidden beauties of singular magnificence and glory."⁴⁷

Uniting the image of Russia⁴⁸ with that of Lithuania gives rise to a complicated ambiguity: on the one hand "Asiatic" primitiveness, on the other hand a "Western" orientation towards Germany. This crystallised especially in the reaction to the German attack of 1941 which moved the "Lithuanian expert" of the 16th Army's military newspaper, Friederich Blunck, to lyrical flights. He stitched together different impressions of Lithuania under the title "Lithuanian Town":

Blackened houses, smoke in front of the sun,	Geschwärzte Häuser, vor der Sonne Rauch,
Wafting from the burning courtyard buildings	der drüben von den brennenden Lagerschuppen
Over everything, like the burning dust of the wide	herüberzieht, wie brandiger Staub des weiten
Lithuanian roads from the troops' wandering step.	litauischen Wegs, des Wanderschritts der Truppen.

Yes, along the broad streets there gather	Doch auf den breiten Straßen sammeln sich
The citizens in their best clothes, in the doors	Im Festgewand die Bürger, in den Türen
Which just a few hours earlier stood bare before the Russians	Die noch vor Stunden vor den Russen öd'
Gaping like empty spaces, there are	Wie leere Löcher gähnten, steh'n mit

decorations.

Zieren

Giggling, thronging, in their Sunday
clothes
Merry girls raise little flowers
And—are they allowed to do
it?—and they throw them to us
And break bread and catch the
crumbs.

Kichernd, bedrängt, in ihrem
Sonntagskleid
Fröhliche Mädchen, heben kleine
Blumen
Und—dürfen Sie's—und werfen sie
uns zu
Und brechen Brot und fangen noch
die Krumen

And, curtsying, they hand over
bouquets. Old mothers
Snatching the soldiers' hands, want
to kiss them,
And flags, here, there and soon
everywhere!
And while we still are listening, the
final gun shots.

Und reichen knicksend Sträuße. Alte
Mütter
Haschen die Kriegerhände, woll'n sie
küssen,
Und Fahnen hier und da, bald überall!
Und während wir noch horchen,
letzten Schüssen

Listening from the edge of the town,
a woman's voice sings
A religious song, there is another
sound like a dance.
The squaddie listens earnestly,
solemnly. But his eyes
Mirror his good fortune. Is he right?
Just listen to that violin!⁴⁹

Vom Stadtrand lauschend, singt ein
Frauenmund
Ein frommes Lied, ein anderes klingt
wie Reigen.
Ernst, festlich lauscht der Landser.
Doch die Augen
Spiegeln sein Glück. Gilt's ihm?
Horch nur, welch Geigen!

There were similar images on the road to Kaunas along which the troops advanced: "Farmers and their wives have donned their glad rags. Apart from the yellow, green and red flag of Lithuania, houses often display a swastika banner drawn by a nimble hand. Women and girls refresh the German soldiers with drinking water—hand them flowers and cigarettes."⁵⁰ Erich Kuby had similar experiences: "The civil population has stayed where it is. In the first small town girls—pretty ones at that—brought flowers to the lorries, and the national colours were hung from houses: yellow, dark green and antique red—a harmless combination of colours."⁵¹

German mission

These observations and judgements led to a view recognisable during both world wars: this land is located between East and West, its population exists between primitiveness and Russification (relatedly sovietisation)—both depend on German "cultural work". An article from 1917 construed a

continuity beginning in the 14th century: “the most up-to-date kind of economic work has always been brought from Germany “to the still undeveloped land...” “It must be emphasised consistently that the individual examples we cite are not at all isolated cases, but are typical. In Lithuania, there is an unbroken chain of German economic work, German educational activity and peace work, which stretches across the centuries without a break. This is a fact which we have too long overlooked. Here, as elsewhere, the Germans have given from the fullness of their riches, lavishly, without drawing up an account or demanding anything in return.”⁵² Looking back, Erich Ludendorff made the same point in 1919: “In the occupied territories, I decided to appropriate the cultural work which the Germans had accomplished in those lands over four centuries. The colourfully diverse population had created no culture of its own accord. Left to its own devices it would decay into Polishness.”⁵³ The editorial of *Vilnius News*’s first edition, dated 20 January 1916, formulated the task in elegiac words: “It is German nature...to let the occupied territories partake of German culture’s blessings. German culture...! Its brilliance will shine even over this land. It will bring liberation and joy here as well.”⁵⁴

A poem marking the second anniversary of the capture of Vilnius honoured German dominion in the style of a hymn:

German for two years!—For two long years	Zwei Jahre deutsch!—Seit zwei langen Jahren
The German administration has delivered justice here.	Spricht die deutsche Verwaltung hier Recht,
It protects the town from need and danger	schützt die Stadt vor Not und Gefahren
Eradicates everything out of place and bad.	Merzt alles aus, was mißlich und schlecht.
Wounds, once caused by battle, Are healed with careful consideration and strength,	Wunden, die einst die Schlacht hat geschlagen, Heilt sie mit sorgender Mühe und Kraft,
Supported constantly and only from the concern,	Stets und nur von der Sorge getragen, Dass sie für alle das Wertvollste schafft,
That it is creating something most valuable for everyone,	Ordnung und Reinlichkeit, jedem sein Brot,
Order and purity, giving each his bread,	Ist für sie immer das höchste Gebot.
This is always its most important command. ⁵⁵	

The economy was a special area: “German colonisation has a difficult job here. Official supervision of economic life has already achieved notable results, but German schools will solve the greater part of the problem, putting

paid to the spirit of mis-education.”⁵⁶ In this respect the economy and cleanliness were two sides of the same coin: “Will you not soon surprise yourselves in similar fashion—you Lithuanians, Latvians, Jews, Poles, White Russians from the Eastern territory—if only you get used to damned cleanliness? Will you not overcome the difference between the Russian and German economy...?”⁵⁷ Lastly, the occupying power emphasised clearly the cultural deficit of the time in the district administrator’s “vote of thanks” delivered during the celebratory investiture of the *Taryba*. His comments had been edited by the Germans beforehand: “We are counting on the help of the German administration.... Thus we are endeavouring to gain for all the inhabitants of our land those rights which citizens of ‘cultured states’ (*Kulturstaaten*) have long enjoyed.”⁵⁸

Such arguments were also deployed in 1941 when the “Greater German Reich” was glorified as the “guardian and conscience of Europe”⁵⁹, as well as being confronted with an historic mission: “As in the war against the Huns and Avars, the German soldier serves a European purpose: the salvation of culture and civilisation.”⁶⁰ The following saying from 1917 was formulated laconically for Reich German readers and encouraged their fantasies: “On average, compared to Germany the state of national culture in the *OberOst* territory is a good hundred years behind the times.”⁶¹ Even when National Socialist dominion was drawing to a close, cultural hierarchy remained firmly fixed in ways of thinking. Admittedly, German-Lithuanian cultural associations were established in Kaunas and Vilnius under the motto “close and friendly co-operation between German and Lithuanian”. When they first met, Dr. Dahmen from the General Commissariat of Lithuania noted that even in the Middle Ages Lithuanian dukes had the tradition “of sending young people from their territory to study at the universities and academies of the Reich and they strived in every way to learn about cultural affairs from their western neighbour”.⁶² The Lithuanian side stated dutifully that “without doubt, in the first instance the Lithuanian nation would play the role of recipient in the intensification of cultural relations.”⁶³

It was no surprise that alongside “cultural work” (*Kulturarbeit*) “order” was the second key concept which, from the German point of view, proved difficult to convey to the indigenous population.⁶⁴ According to the self-conception held in the summer of 1941, the word “order” belonged to those German virtues which were emphasised particularly, even in quite a specific context: “The red year—as the past year will be called in the history of the Baltic—has been a thoroughly sufficient educational year to implant an eternal yearning after European order in even the intelligentsia which once sympathised with the Soviets.”⁶⁵ After the start of 1916, when street signs had been erected around in Vilnius “in a thoroughly model way”, it was recommended that residents put up house numbers. A big black number was supposed to be placed on a white background and the sign, perhaps 15 cms. by 20, was to be fixed “directly on the house door at a height that would be

easy to read”.⁶⁶ And the current state of the “German street” was recorded in Vilnius, where it was hard to recognise “...that a German character had once governed here. Instead, the scene looked oriental with an abundance of businesses and small shops, with glaring tawdriness and the indiscriminate mixture of advertising shop signs. By contrast, the concept ‘German’ combines order and symmetry.”⁶⁷ When the first anniversary of the German invasion of Vilnius was celebrated in 1916, “German work” was at the mid-point of its self-expression and was included in a celebratory poem:

Then take a look at this city,
Which has been in our hands quietly
for a year,
Which we have ruled just as we
captured it,
Where we have worked with
diligence and love
Taking great pains which have
served as our reward,
As over a noble gift bestowed on us.

Dann sei auf diese Stadt auch
hingedeutet,
Die nun ein Jahr schon still in unsrer
Hand,
Die wir beherrscht, so wie wir sie
erbeutet,
An die wir Fleiß und Liebe selbst
verwandt
Mit Mühen, die zu unserem Lohn
gediehen,
Wie an ein edles Gut, das uns
verliehen.

If people are silent, then the stones
will tell,
What German strength has done for
this city.
And may the hatred which people
still have the audacity to feel,
Be vanquished by truth, one day
ending every illusion.
So we celebrate the day, with
lowered sword,
And remembering Germany’s
greatness, Germany’s spirit.⁶⁸

Wenn Menschen schweigen, werden
Steine sprechen,
Was deutsche Kraft für diese Stadt
getan.
Und mag der Haß sich noch so
erfrechen,
Die Wahrheit siegt, einst endet jeder
Wahn.
So feiern wir den Tag, den Degen
senkend
Und Deutschlands Größe,
Deutschlands Geist gedenkend.

Almost all the key ideas are in a verse which contrasts Kaunas, vacated during the invasion, with the transformation that began immediately:

The great silence did not last long,
And overnight there arrived
German spirit, and with it German
will,
German labour, and German power.
Where yesterday the hand still rested

Doch lange währte nicht die große
Stille,
und es hielt Einzug über Nacht,
der deutsche Geist, mit ihm der
deutsche Wille,
die deutsche Arbeit und die deutsche

in the lap,	Macht.
Already today things are being created with diligence,	Wo gestern noch die Hand im Schosse ruhte,
With an ever new, ever fresh courage,	da wurde heute fleißig schon geschafft,
German strength unleashed itself with pride.	mit immer neuem, immer frischen Mute,
Window, gate and doors were opened wide	entfaltete sich stolz die deutsche Kraft.
Light penetrated inside with unforeseen power.	Es weiteten sich Fenster, Tor und Türen
With every day you can feel anew German order and German discipline. ⁶⁹	Licht drang hinein mit ungeahnter Wucht. Mit jedem Tage konnt man neu verspüren Die deutsche Ordnung und die deutsche Zucht.

A self-assurance bordering on hubris could already be sensed in Vilnius's German administration in April 1916: "Even those who honour the German name behind the front in the enemy's land—while they go about planting German order, German custom and the German sense of community in a nation with a foreign essence—play their part, such that the poet's words must become true: one day German character will heal the world."⁷⁰ Captain Scharwächter also did not suffer from excessive modesty when he reported the situation behind the front: "Thus the Germans found a land where it was necessary to re-build almost everything from scratch. And how beautifully they have achieved this task. German diligence, German perseverance, organisation and an eye for detail have done a tremendous job in reconstructing the land over the last nine months. You only have to look at the towns and villages, fields and roads, and you can see the spirit that is abroad. It is different to the previous one under Russian servitude. Order and cleanliness, active beneficial labour—as we are used to it—have gained the upper hand: away with inefficiency and corruption in the economy. Is it any wonder that the insightful inhabitant of the land is increasing his respect for us?" Hermann Eulenberg put his belief into the mouth of a Lithuanian wood cutter: "Do you know why the Jerries [*Germanski*] have won?" he asked his Lithuanian friends confidentially, when he sat down with them after work with a freshly charged pipe. 'I will tell you. It's very simple.' And he took the first puffs of the beautiful tobacco. 'It's because they do twice the work of the Ruskies.'⁷¹ One theme certainly could not be missing from this conceptual world:⁷² "As German culture penetrated *Ob.Ost*, there was an attempt to spread German cleanliness too. But the centuries' old habituation to dirt and disorder on the part of the population—which never saw good role models in

the government—caused long, if unsuccessful resistance.”⁷³ Reluctance provided a popular narrative of how the population responded to the concerns of the German government. Karl Strecker stresses the point in his travel report from the end of 1916: “This cleanliness has cost a great deal of work, since the majority of the population not only lacks the desire for cleanliness, but also any kind of understanding about it. Compulsion was the only suitable means and it does not go too far to say that no measure applied by the German administration has aroused such strong clandestine dissatisfaction among the population as in this case.”⁷⁴ The moment the German administration got to work in *OberOst*, however, the picture changed.⁷⁵ Dr. W. Brönn reported from Kaunas during the start of this new period: “What a difference there is between Kaunas after the invasion (...) and Kaunas today.... There are still monstrous amounts of dirt.... But the whole lot that was there last August, at the time of the invasion, is no longer there today.... The sub-soil was investigated with a view to [improving] drainage—and look! To the population’s bewildered astonishment, there was a complete, unused cobbled surface.... In all eternity the Russians would never have re-discovered their own cobbled street.... Today—a year later—at least the streets in the city centre are utterly clean. The trees along the boulevards (well, those that still have them) are pruned, as are the shrubs in the parks.... The gaze wanders freely over the long rows and the local inhabitants see with astonished eyes how German soldiers have laid out ornamental gardens and allotments (...), how they remove shutters and curtains from the bleak and neglected windows and let light and even air into all the rooms through all the available openings.”⁷⁶ When the mayor of Kaunas, Pauly, went to Vilnius in June 1917, *Kaunas News* said the following about his time in office: “The external image of the city has changed completely after barely a year of his local activity. The considerable cleanliness of the streets tells even a casual observer that an energetic and purposeful hand is running business here.”⁷⁷ Also in a book about cultural sites published in 1917, Paul Weber summarised the general impression of the city laconically: “The German eye misses cleanliness and order.”⁷⁸

Colonial mentality

The picture of Lithuanian backwardness described in the preceding pages—which in a certain way describes a specific characteristic of the primitive nature of the land and its people—together with German superiority and the tasks associated with it, were nourished by colonial ways of thinking. This is shown in the following description of a harvest festival held at an equine veterinary facility, during which the “noble savages” prove the point to their masters: “Shortly after three o’clock the procession marched up the streets decorated with triumphal arches. At the front was a band of the home guard; then came the young worker girls from the farm dressed in Lithuanian national costume bringing the big harvest crown; next were the staff from the

equine veterinary centre and lastly the indigenous workers and villagers. Even the chief Jew was present along with his daughters.... Then the girls gave the centre's officers the harvest crown and wreaths whilst reciting Lithuanian poems. In a speech given in German, the agriculture officer from the farm emphasised what beautiful fruits the common labour of the soldiers and local people had yielded. True, at the start it had required many a friendly request from the gendarmerie to accustom the inhabitants to a German's order and diligence, but the large number of peasants who have turned up are the best proof for the good understanding which exists between them and the German barbarians." Then there was the dance: "...the picture was always colourful. The peasants in thick sheepskins, Lithuanian women in their charming costumes, and amongst them officers and soldiers in field grey who, surrounded by shouts of encouragement from the on-lookers, did not hold back from difficult Lithuanian national dances...."⁷⁹ These ideas might also have been relevant when, in January 1916, the German administration criticised the only officially approved Lithuanian-language newspaper, because its orientation was too intellectual: "On the other hand there is the accusation that *Dabartis* publishes almost exclusively political articles which the Lithuanians don't understand. Unfortunately scientific essays also appear which frequently are just as incomprehensible for Lithuanians who have only received a low level of education. They cannot have any conception of Serbia or Egypt. Whatever is happening there interests them just as little as the development of the aeroplane."⁸⁰

Lieutenant General von Trotta, district inspector of the 10th Army, also assumed that the German and indigenous world were separate. "The cultural level of different national groups of our territory—particularly those on the plains—explains recent events without any need to go into the reasons which lie more deeply in the necessities of war."⁸¹ He emphasised especially the Lithuanian's limited horizon: "The above-mentioned educational level of the Lithuanian does not permit his sense of community to extend beyond the family—at very most beyond the locality. As a result, political impact relating to higher national aims is absent from every goal which, consequently, relates only to his farm. His child-like ideas of freedom correspond to the rejection of any kind of personal coercion...."⁸²

Naturally under these circumstances co-operation with the indigenous population was strictly limited from the outset. In the book *The Land of OberOst*—a self-depiction of the military administration for the German public—, it says: "Owing to the considerable cultural backwardness of the population, indigenous inhabitants can only be used for administrative tasks involving subordinate services."⁸³ In this respect the Lithuanian parliament, which grew out of a German initiative, was viewed with a mixture of nonchalance and good-natured ridicule. In 1918, Cavalry Captain von Heppe was administrative chief of Lithuania. He characterised the *Taryba* as a group which "existed partly from good-natured, but fanatical and under-developed

dreams, partly from coffeehouse politicians and adventurers of comparable ilk." It had "neither the inclination nor capacity for practical co-operation in the administration."⁸⁴ The German liaison officer to the Taryba, Kügler, frequently referred to it as "his circus".⁸⁵

The masters' self-conception, which the district officer of the equine veterinary centre exemplified in such patronizing fashion towards the indigenous population, was extensive and took many different forms. A report mocked the peculiar business practices of the—mostly Jewish—entrepreneurs, who operated with little empathy towards their customers; at the same time it said that regular work was the exception not the rule. It concluded: "German colonisation is facing a tough job here."⁸⁶ The areas which had to be colonised were utterly inexhaustible: "The difference between the Western European nations and the Russian borderlands can be seen in the way popular sport has developed on the different sides of the border. On the one side you find whole classes of the population participating actively—so that, for instance, in Germany there are millions of members of football and gymnastic clubs—while, on the other side of the border, there is indifference towards any kind of sporting activity." In fact German soldiers brought enthusiasm for sport with them: "And now something surprising happened: initially the Lithuanians, Poles and Jews did not participate [in sport], but they assembled in ever greater numbers to watch training sessions and competitions. And when teams play a game of football somewhere, you can be sure that a large circle of locals soon will have gathered around them, following the game with lively interest. But they are not content just to watch. In the afternoon, when the sports field is empty, frequently you see senior school children chasing a ball with enthusiasm and skill. Young people will grow up here knowing the value of sport. Our soldiers can be proud to have played the part of educator and bringer of culture even here. Sport not only steels the body, it stimulates the mind and makes it nimble. And it won't do them any harm if the nationalities in *Ob.Ost* lose some of their clumsiness."⁸⁷

Even metaphysical intellectual games were not unknown among Lithuania's German observers. The Cathedral's bell tower prompted the following comments: "No one gave it this barbaric and almost savage form (...) and one is inclined to preserve it for the sake of the secret soul of the city which, by virtue of blood and nationality, which (beneath all of Vilnius's piety) still loses itself in the gloominess of the primeval forest, as is typical of the Slavic soul—a soul which is immutable and which is ready to defend its character with hidden ferocity: Lithuanian blood, over whose instincts culture and the church are laid.... For this Lithuanian character, which we can understand most readily in its religious form, in truth remains secret, alien, unrecognised and full of possibilities. Those who know the language and the people, German soldiers with academic minds, speak with respect about the strong, still undeveloped characteristics of the Lithuanian soul, and of the

intellect of a nation whose language originally touched on the secrets of Sanskrit, whose ornamentation bravely, independently and modestly expresses an innate feeling of form, and which today—still without schools—is exhausting itself in the twilight of an agricultural existence....”⁸⁸

The above mentioned long-serving chief of the German administration in Lithuania, Isenburg-Birstein, was a particularly staunch proponent of the colonial mentality. As early as one of the first reports of January 1916 he took the opportunity to make a statement which speaks for itself: “The Lithuanians are farmers and labourers and behave in thoroughly peaceful ways. They are not Russophiles, have no ideas about a Greater Lithuania and will not have any in the future, unless they are whipped up artificially (by agitation and the press). Any attempt to play on their good nature is based on a misunderstanding. It is taken to be weakness and consequently results in the opposite of the desired aim. Strong, consistent and quiet politics is appreciated, even if it takes into account the necessities of the war.”⁸⁹ The commander of the armed forces in *Ostland*, Cavalry General Braemer, argued something similar at the end of 1942 in a memorandum which otherwise was very critical about German policy. He believed he recognised behaviour typical of the indigenous population: “The administration’s organisational activity and methods are too ‘perfect’ and therefore too slow-moving. They are unsuitable for an indigenous population used to primitive and direct administration.”⁹⁰ This way of thinking is particularly clear in a description of German policy drawn up after the First World War. It says the following about the alleged use of violence against the civil population: “...*Ob.Ost* remarked initially correctly that a brutal or severe treatment of helpless prisoners or indigenous people was not at all in the nature of the German soldier, much more that he would act good-naturedly towards people who were suffering through no fault of their own. On the other hand, police institutions had to apply the threat of force as well as its actual use since severe fines and prison sentences were unsuccessful. This was and had been the case during the Russian period and certainly was not regarded the same way in Lithuania as, for instance, in Germany. The inhabitants were very well able to distinguish between mistreatment and a certain patriarchal punishment.”⁹¹

The image of a *terra incognita* was suggested to a German reader: “Conditions in *OberOst* were just like in a colonial land lying unexplored before its acquirer.”⁹² And a correspondent from Berlin went so far as to suppose as follows: “Even the Teutonic Knights did not describe the Lithuanians as very different from how they are today.”⁹³ In this respect it is unsurprising to find occasional talk of the civilising mission reminiscent of the “white man’s burden”.⁹⁴ “Now we have been here for two years since Hindenburg’s victory train led us to this place. We have stamped our character on the city [i.e. Kaunas]. We have always done it surrounded by the din of war, and so have not been able to do and to keep everything just how we

wanted it. The time was too difficult and too short, the tasks were too numerous. In this light, what has been achieved appears so much the greater.”⁹⁵

In this connection, high crimes rates were not just interpreted as the result of war, but also as a characteristic of the people and their backwardness. Not only cattle rustling was the order of the day in Lithuania: “A raw and violent mentality is related to an inclination to thieve in broad circles of the uneducated population and this explains the shocking frequency of robbery and robbery with murder.”⁹⁶ In revenging the crimes, the German authorities generated further relevant experiences with the native population: “In all aspects of their activity, the courts encountered a particular difficulty owing to the unreliability of the population and its poor love of truth.... The situation can only be ameliorated (...) by improving the intellectual and especially the moral education of the population.”⁹⁷ Administrative chief of Lithuania, von Heppe, maintained in his memoirs that the “moral obligation to be truthful” has not been spread among Lithuanians.⁹⁸

Little unexpected was to be said about the cultural quality of the land. A report about the press system in *OberOst* said: “This [i.e. the translation of administrative ordinances] was a particularly difficult job owing to the poor development of the individual languages, all the more so if it is a matter of translating concepts which were foreign to the impoverished culture of this land.”⁹⁹ At the end of 1917 there was a certain transformation in thinking such that people living in Lithuania were no longer regarded as only an appendix to the Polish question, but rather an independent object of German influence. Naturally this change derived from the general re-orientation of German policy. It was no mere chance that Lithuania suddenly at this point was counted among the “cultured nations”, whose fate had been decided particularly by the predominant Polish influence.¹⁰⁰ The simple, happy locals mutated into a “strong, war-like people” which formed the true heart of Polish-Lithuanian power.¹⁰¹ This re-evaluation¹⁰² found its ultimate expression from a famous mouth: “Speaking with the warmth of the sun, the Kaiser said that he only got to know a national group more fully on his last journey in the East and he still seemed impressed by its character. He spoke about the upright bearing of the Lithuanians, the dignity of their men and the healthy charm of their women and girls: ‘They have something of an aristocrat’s pride about them: without becoming servile, they approach everything with a noble sense of decency. This differentiates them noticeably from other eastern lineages. You could discover something of Spanish grandeur in these simple people.’ Anyone who knows something of the Lithuanians will see how sharply the Kaiser has observed things. They are a national group which has nothing in common with the Slavs who live all around them.”¹⁰³

Conclusion

The convictions displayed by Captain Pellner in July 1941 about Lithuania's future show how little German impressions and ideas of mission had changed in more than 20 years: "When the German crusade against the mindlessness of the East is over and more questions need clarification, the responsible offices will see clearly that the direction of development lies in an agricultural framework which will lead to a better, more intensive exploitation of the land and hence will also benefit the population. German territory, which is rich in both people and industry, will be able to make full use of all the agricultural production. Even the woodsman will learn to manage the forest properly in the extensive wooded areas, as we have done for a long time already throughout the German East.... The Russian economy, which compelled many people to emigrate from here, made development along the lines of the neighbouring Reich impossible. But from now on new work begins in a new historical period. Land and soil are similar to East Prussia and the climate is the same. The pride of our age must be to make possible here the same blessings as in eastern German territory. Moreover, improved education will be necessary for its people. A new order will have to come to life as it exists in Germany. There will be improved primary schooling for the peasantry. Whoever has gone shopping knows how difficult shop assistants find it to add up even small bills and how often they use adding machines. He knows what needs to be done. A good agricultural foundation is only possible on the soil of an education suited to the national group which prepares the farmer for his work—which begins in childhood—then the paths will be opened which the vestiges of war have helped obliterate, and the German crusade against Red mindlessness will bring victory for the liberated territory."¹⁰⁴ *OberOst* could not have put it better, although as early as late summer 1916 the chief of the German administration felt obliged to record his observations on the Lithuanian national character in one of his reports: "It [i.e. the Lithuanian population] has shown a surprising degree of understanding for the implementation of the strict administrative orders concerning farming and which have demanded far more than the usual amount of work which the Lithuanian sustains by virtue of his nature. With satisfaction, he views the reward for his increased activity in the well-ordered fields."¹⁰⁵

Comparison of the sources used here makes obvious the parallels and continuities between 1915–18 and 1941–44. The impressions of a sparse, impoverished land and of a primitive peasant population were the decisive characteristics of both occupations. At best, Lithuanians were discovered to be a simple natural people (noble savages), at worst a population "lacking in culture" but with peasant cunning. There is little surprising about the contrasts highlighted by the image of the German homeland. It took the form of a completely paradisiacal exaggeration which only served to highlight more than ever Lithuanian backwardness. The concept "culture" was a code

for this difference, subsuming the contrasts between Germany and Lithuania. The cultural hierarchy created in this way lent the conquerors superiority not only in terms of power-politics and military strength, but also ideology and idealism. From this idea it followed necessarily that they could stimulate and provide a model for the Lithuanians, so rationalising their own presence in the land. In the last analysis, the cultural hierarchies between the two nations were so marked, that political co-operation could not take place between equals. This is why the soldiers and the administrators only had one way of looking at the Lithuanians: the view from the top.

Notes

This article was translated by Martyn Housden, with the assistance of the author and John Hiden.

1. The war reporter was set to work in the Second World War in order to create this direct link. Their reports based on direct observation of battlefield events were supposed to be especially attractive to soldiers and the Home Front. On this topic, see Vossler, 2005.

2. Liulevicius, 2000.

3. Verwaltungsbericht der Deutschen Verwaltung für Litauen vom 13. Oktober 1915, BAMA, PHD 23/44, p. 12.

4. Herbert Eulenberg, "Aus Litauen, Teil I" in *Kownoer Zeitung*, Nr. 291, 19. Oktober 1916, reprinted in *Korrespondenz B 134*, 23 October 1918, p. 1.

5. *Feldzeitung von der Maas bis an die Memel*, Nr. 151 vom 27. Juni 1941, BAMA RHD 69–15, p. 6: Dr. Werner Lahne, "In Staub und glühender Hitze durch Litauen. Die Offensive hat 'polnische Formen' angenommen —Niederträchtige Kampfweise der Bolschewisten."

6. *Feldzeitung von der Maas bis an die Memel*, Nr. 152 vom 28. Juni 1941, BAMA RHD 69–15, p. 3: Dr. Werner Lahne, "Verfolgungsgefechte im litauischen Grenzgebiet. Dem weichenden Gegner hart auf den Fersen."

7. *Feldzeitung von der Maas bis an die Memel*, Nr. 158 vom 4. Juli 1941, BAMA RHD 69–15, p. 3: Hauptmann A.E. Frauenfeld, "Die Straße."

8. Herbert Eulenberg, "Aus Litauen" in *Korrespondenz B 134*, 23 October 1918, p. 1.

9. Oberbefehlshaber, 1917, p. 190.

10. Lothar Papke, "Das bolschewisierte Litauen atmet auf" in *Die Front—Feldzeitung einer Armee* Nr. 69, 25 Juni 1941, p. 3.

11. Verwaltungsbericht der Deutschen Verwaltung für Litauen vom 13. Oktober 1915, BAMA PHD 23/44, p. 13.

12. *Wilnaer Zeitung*, Nr. 45, 15. February 1917: "Sprichwörter und Redensarten aus Samogitien."

13. *Kownoer Zeitung*, Nr. 311, 9. November 1916: "Litauische Liebeslieder."

14. *Kownoer Zeitung*, Nr. 233, 24. August 1917: "Mitleid—eine Charaktereigenschaft des Litauers."

15. See Vidunas, 1916, p. 74.

16. *Feldzeitung von der Maas bis an die Memel*, Nr. 148, BAMA RHD 69–15, p. 3: "Hakenkreuz verdrängte den Sowjetstern."

17. *Feldzeitung von der Maas bis an die Memel*, Nr. 149, BAMA RHD 69–15, p. 3: "Ein unfehlbares Uhrwerk läuft ab. Brückenschlag der Pioniere auch ohne Stukas von KB Heinz-Dieter Pilgram."

18. BAMA 8/23 ,Ob.Ost, *Korrespondenz B*, Nr. 1, 11. Oktober 1916, p. 1.

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19. Herbert Eulenberg belongs to the circle of intellectuals assembled by Ludendorff in Kaunas to work on his culture policy. See Liulevicius, 2000, p. 115.
20. i.e. the Lithuanian minority in East Prussia, the so-called Little- or Prussian Lithuanians.
21. Herbert Eulenberg, “Aus Litauen” in *Korrespondenz B* 134 (now *Litauische Mitteilungen*), 23 October 1918, p. 1.
22. *Feldzeitung von der Maas bis an die Memel*, Nr. 160, 6. Juli 1941, BAMA RHD 69–15, p. 4.
23. *Feldzeitung von der Maas bis an die Memel*, Nr. 149, BAMA RHD 69–15, p. 4: Dr. Joachim Fischer, “Harter Straßenkampf tobte in Wylkowyßki—Hinhaltender Widerstand der Sowjetrussen—Ständiger Vormarsch auf Kowno.”
24. *Land Ober Ost* (as cited in note 9), p. 174.
25. *Feldzeitung von der Maas bis an die Memel*, Nr. 150, BAMA RHD 69–15, p.4: Wilhelm Krüger, “Schamaiten—Schalauen—Litauen. Geschichtliche Betrachtungen zum gegenwärtigen Kampf im Ostraum.”
26. Hans Heinrich Schaefer, “Ciurlionis, ein litauischer Maler” in *Korrespondenz B* Nr. 4, 1 November 1916, p. 2.
27. *Wilnaer Zeitung*, Nr. 17, 5 February 1916: “Litauischer Tanz.”
28. See, for instance, *Wilnaer Zeitung* Nr. 45, 17. February 1917: “Sprichwörter und Redensarten aus Samogitien.”
29. *Daina* (plural *Dainos*) means “song” in Lithuanian.
30. “Litauische Dainos” in *Korrespondenz B* Nr. 1, 11 October 1916, p. 2 (BAMA PHD 8/23).
31. *Kauener Zeitung*, Nr. 140, 17 June 1942: “Volkstum befruchtet litauische Kunstkräfte.”
32. *Kauener Zeitung*, Nr. 222, 22. September 1942: “Bauten aus Bauernkunst,” by Dipl.-Ing. Georg Gettner.
33. See, for example, Schmiedt, 1992.
34. *Kownoer Zeitung*, Nr. 311, 9. November 1916: “Litauische Liebeslieder.”
35. Wronka, 1917, p. 170.
36. Vidunas, 1916, p. 65.
37. BAMA FC 1179 N (NL Isenburg), Nr. 0391.
38. Cited by Linde, 1965, p. 100.
39. Vidunas, 1916, p. 66.
40. BAMA-N 196-1: Theodor v. Heppe, *Aus der Rückschau*, vol. V: *Im Weltkrieg* (mss.), p. 124.
41. *Feldzeitung von der Maas bis an die Memel*, Nr. 149, BAMA RHD 69–15, p. 4: KB Dr. Joachim Fischer, “Harter Straßenkampf tobte in Wylkowyßki—Hinhaltender Widerstand der Sowjetrussen—Ständiger Vormarsch auf Kowno.”

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42. "Gedenkblatt Wilna. Ein Jahr unter deutscher Flagge", supplement to *Wilnaer Zeitung* Nr. 239, 18 September 1916: "Das west-östliche Wilna" by Dr. Manfred Bühlmann.
43. Georg W. Kruse, "Juden müssen arbeiten! Vertauschte Rollen—Litauer helfen sich selbst" in *Die Front—Zeitung der 10. Armee* Nr. 73, 29 June 1941, p. 3.
44. Herbert Eulenberg, "Weihnachtsbräuche in Litauen" in Korrespondenz B Nr. 11, 20. December 1916, p. 4 (BAMA 8/23).
45. "Scheinwerfer" pictorial supplement to *Die Front—Zeitung der 10. Armee*, Nr. 189, 31. Julmond (December) 1916: Adolf Höllriegel, "Litauen."
46. "Scheinwerfer" pictorial supplement to *Die Front—Zeitung der 10. Armee*, Nr. 76, 19 May 1916, "Meine Reise."
47. Supplement to the *Die Front—Zeitung der 10. Armee*, Nr. 363, 15 Scheiding (September) 1917: Walter Jäger, "Alt-Wilna."
48. On this topic, see especially Volkmann, 1994.
49. *Feldzeitung von der Maas bis an die Memel*, Nr. 167, 13 July 1941, BAMA RHD 69–15, p.4.
50. *Kauener Zeitung*, Nr. 144, 22 June 1942: "Auf der Straße nach Kauen."
51. Kuby, 1975, p. 109.
52. Professor Dr. Bergsträsser, "Deutsche Kulturarbeit in Litauen" in Korrespondenz B, 24. January 1917, p. 1.
53. Ludendorff, 1919, p. 138.
54. *Wilnaer Zeitung*, Nr. 1, 20. January 1916: "Ein Kriegs-Friedenswerk."
55. *Kownoer Zeitung*, Nr. 227, 18 August 1917: "18. August 1915–1917."
56. *Kownoer Zeitung*, Nr. 68, 10 March 1917: "Kaufleute ohne Kunden."
57. Strecker, 1917, p. 30.
58. *Wilnaer Zeitung*, Nr. 262, 24 September 1917: "Ein Landesrat für Litauen."
59. Lothar Papke, "Das bolschewisierte Litauen atmet auf. Kämpfe im litauischen Ödland—Deutsche Infanterie stürmt vor" in *Die Front* Nr. 69, 25 June 1941, p. 3.
60. Georg W. Kruse, "Sowjet-Sadisten. Herrschaft des Untermenschentums" in *Die Front—Zeitung der 10. Armee* Nr. 71, 27 June 1941, p. 3.
61. Oberbefehlshaber, 1917, p. 189.
62. *Kauener Zeitung*, 17 November 1943: "Im Zeichen des Verstehens."
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Wilnaer Zeitung* started this job in an editorial dated 20 January 1916: "It [the newspaper] wants to deepen understanding of the German spirit and the German nature, for German discipline and order."
65. *Feldzeitung von der Maas bis an die Memel*, Nr. 156, 2 July 1941, BAMA RHD 69–15, p. 7. Günther Kaufmann, "Erstes Ergebnis des Vormarsches in Litauen."
66. *Wilnaer Zeitung*, Nr. 13, 1 February 1916: "Deutliche Hausnummern."

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67. *Die Front—Zeitung der 10. Armee*, Nr. 412, 11 Nebelung (November) 1917: “Die Deutsche Straße in Wilna.”
68. “Ein Jahr unter deutscher Flagge”, memorial edition of the *Wilnaer Zeitung* Nr. 239, 18 August 1916: “Wilna.”
69. *Kauener Zeitung*, Nr. 239, 10 October 1942: “Die Kauener Zeitung unserer Väter. Das Gedicht aus der Zeitung vom 23. Januar 1916 ‘Aus dem Leserkreise’.”
70. “Scheinwerfer” pictorial supplement of the *Die Front—Zeitung der 10. Armee*, entitled “Das Gouvernement Wilna” Nr. 55, 7 April 1916.
71. *Zeitung der 10. Armee*, Nr. 109, 24 Heumond (July) 1916: “Hinter der Front.”
72. Struck, *Skizzen*, chapter “Litauischer Holzfäller” (without page numbers).
73. *Wilnaer Zeitung*, Nr. 6, 7 January 1917: “Zivilentlausung in Ob.Ost.”
74. Strecker, 1917, p. 27 f.
75. *Kownoer Zeitung*, Nr. 11, 12 January 1917: “Zivil-Entlausung in Ob. Ost.”
76. *Wilnaer Zeitung*, Nr. 158, 29 June 1916: “Das Kowno von heute.”
77. *Kownoer Zeitung*, Nr. 173, 25 June 1917: “Wechsel in der Kownoer Stadtverwaltung.”
78. Weber, 1917, p.10. For a particularly dramatic description of the conditions which were encountered, see Strecker, 1917, p. 9.
79. “Erntefest in Ob.Ost” in Korrespondenz B, 22. November 1916, p. 2. Also see BAMA-N 196-1: Theodor v. Heppe, “Aus der Rückschau”, vol. V, *Im Weltkrieg* (mss.), p. 129f.
80. Verwaltungsbericht der Deutschen Verwaltung für Litauen, January 1916 (BAMA 23/45), p. 29f.
81. BAMA Nachlaß Trotta N 234-7, letter of 31 August 1917, concerning “Unruhen im Etappengebiet—Behandlung von Einwohnern”, p. 2.
82. BAMA Nachlaß Trotta N 234-7, letter of 31 August 1917, concerning “Unruhen im Etappengebiet—Behandlung von Einwohnern”, p. 3.
83. *Land Ober Ost* (see note 9), p. 93.
84. BAMA-N 196-1: Theodor v. Heppe, “Aus der Rückschau”, vol. V, *Im Weltkrieg* (mss.), p. 139. Likewise the description in *Verwaltungschef Litauen, Abwicklungsbehörden*, 1921, p. 12.
85. BAMA-N 196-1: Theodor v. Heppe, “Aus der Rückschau”, vol. V, *Im Weltkrieg* (mss.), p. 139.
86. Fritz Zielesch, “Kaufleute ohne Kunden” in Korrespondenz B Nr. 22, 7 March 1917, p. 5f, here p. 6.
87. “Sport im besetzten Gebiet” in Korrespondenz B Nr. 46, 22 August 1917, p.1f. Similar article, albeit oriented more towards military exercise is in the supplement to the *Die Front—Zeitung der 10. Armee*, Nr. 385, vom 11. Gilbhart (October) 1917: “Feldsportfest des Feldrekutendepots Wilna, Gruppe I.”

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88. “Der Turm von Wilna” in Korrespondenz B Nr. 98, 8 March 1918, p. 1.
89. Verwaltungsbericht der Deutschen Verwaltung für Litauen, Januar 1916 (BAMA 23/45), p. 30.
90. Wehrmachtbefehlshaber Ostland concerning “Lage im Ostland”. Memorandum of 26 December 1942 (BAMA RW 41, no page numbers, annex to sitrep. Ic of 16.7.1944–8.8.1944, p. 6).
91. *Verwaltungschef Litauen* (see note 86), p. 16.
92. Oberbefehlshaber Ost, 1917, p. 93.
93. Michaelis, 1917, p. 191.
94. See Münkler, 2006, p.132ff. For the famous quotation from Rudyard Kipling, see p. 144.
95. *Kownoer Zeitung*, Nr. 227, 18 August 1917: “Wir.”
96. Oberbefehlshaber Ost, 1917, p. 118.
97. *Ibid.*
98. BAMA-N 196–1: Theodor v. Heppe, “Aus der Rückschau”, vol. V, *Im Weltkrieg* (mss.), p. 124.
99. Oberbefehlshaber Ost, 1917, p. 147.
100. *Kownoer Zeitung*, Nr. 244, 4 September 1917: “Die Polonisierung Litauens.”
101. *Ibid.*
102. For a different opinion ,see Wronka, *Kurland*, p. 77.
103. *Kownoer Zeitung*, Nr. 265, 25 September 1917: “Der Kaiser über die Litauer.” For Wilhelm II’s meaning, see Vidunas, 1916, p. 70.
104. *Feldzeitung von der Maas bis an die Memel*, Nr. 168, 14 Juli 1941, BAMA RHD 69–15, S. 3. Hauptmann Pellner, “Eindrücke in Litauen.”
105. Verwaltungsbericht der Deutschen Verwaltung Litauen vom 1. August 1916 which extends Verwaltungsbericht vom Mai 1916, Tilsit o.J. (1916), p. 22 (BAMA PHD 23/47). Likewise, Verwaltungsbericht für die Zeit vom 1.Juli bis 1.Oktober 1916, p. 33f (BAMA PHD 53/48).

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Soviet Genocide in Latvia? Conflicting Cultures of Remembrance of Stalin's Policy, 1940–1953

Erwin Oberländer

Introduction

Since the fall of the Iron Curtain and the political developments in Europe since 1991, new issues have surfaced concerning the historical memory of National Socialism and Communism. Today, three different forms of historical memory regarding the Second World War and its consequences compete with each other: an emphasis on National Socialist occupation and the Holocaust predominates in Western memory; the myth of liberation and victory in the Russian one; while the suffering inflicted by two totalitarian regimes shapes the memory of the peoples of Eastern Europe. These divergent memories not only reflect different experiences of war and dictatorship, but also the suppression of national memory cultures by Communist rulers. Whereas the perception of occupation, collaboration and resistance in Western Europe has undergone immense changes during the last 60 years, in Eastern Europe (including the Baltic States) it has only been possible since 1991 to articulate openly the experiences of dual dictatorship. This experience is still denied by official Russian policy, and in Western Europe it is by no means yet accepted as an evident part of twentieth-century European history.

The evaluation of Stalin's policy in East Central Europe, and especially in the Baltic States from 1940 until 1953, is central to this debate. The liquidation by murder, incarceration and deportation of almost the entire élite—that is to say the most important representatives of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian national consciousness—, the mass settlement of Russians in Estonia and Latvia, together with the Russification of public life as a whole: were all of these “only” crimes against humanity, or were they in fact an attack on the very existence of three nations which deserves to be called genocide? At least Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian historians and politicians maintain the latter position so, for example, the Republic of Latvia commemorates not only the victims of the Jewish genocide on 4 July, but also has designated the first Sunday in December “Memorial Day for the Victims of Genocide against the Latvian People by the Totalitarian Communist Regime”. The accusation of genocide against the Stalinist Soviet Union has been rejected unanimously in Russia, but it also irritates historians in western countries because intensive study of the Holocaust has led many to demand that the Holocaust be regarded as a singular crime. Any comparison between this and crimes against other peoples must be considered an attempt to relativise the Holocaust. In Eastern Europe, however, things are seen precisely in the reverse, that is to say, emphasis on the Holocaust leads to the relativisation of the suffering of all other victims such as the peoples of East

Central Europe under Hitler *and* Stalin. It even leads to them being forgotten altogether. Before I discuss these controversies in detail, however, I want to recall briefly those factors relating to the experience of dual dictatorship which continue to have a critical effect right up to the present day not just on Latvians, but Estonians and Lithuanians too—factors which have given them the impression of having been victims of a Stalinist attempt at genocide.

I

From 1918 until 1940, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were independent states. From 1926 Lithuania was subject to authoritarian rule, Estonia and Latvia from 1934. These regimes clearly were not democratic, but neither were they fascist since they were characterised neither by terror nor by mass movements or ideologies, in fact they did not involve a commitment to expansionism either.¹ Even today, all three of the dictators are given considerable respect in their countries and critical debate about their regimes is not appreciated by large sections of the public. If, however, you consider the catastrophic effects of the Second World War on this region and the decades of political oppression by the Soviet Union which followed, then it is easy to understand why the members of the peoples living there look at the two decades of independence experienced before the Second World War through rose-tinted glasses, regardless of the political system which existed. The secret protocols of the German-Soviet treaty of autumn 1939 allocated all three states to the USSR's sphere of interest. The consequences of the co-operation between Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union were traumatic for the Baltic nations: three occupations within five years which, at least until Stalin died, were characterised in equal measure by terror, mass murder, deportations and exploitation. The occupations, of course, were by the Soviet Union from 1940 to 1941, by Nazi Germany from 1941 until 1944, and then came the second Soviet occupation lasting from 1945 until 1991.

In the wake of the rapid German victory over France, in 1940 Stalin embarked on the annexation of the Baltic States. The ultimatum demanding new governments loyal to Moscow was followed in mid-July by the military occupation of the three states. High ranking Soviet emissaries implemented the re-organisation of government offices. Grotesque pseudo-elections with one-party lists produced the desired 92 to 99% majorities. Then, in August 1940, the "newly elected parliamentarians" voted for the transformation of their country into a Soviet Socialist Republic and for absorption by the USSR. In order to achieve this—as we now know from, for instance, the archive of the Estonian Communist Party—, many deputies were given orders backed up by tremendous threats against life and limb, since not even those elected from the workers' one-party lists were willing to vote as required voluntarily.² As if the violent loss of independence had not been sufficiently humiliating, for the next 50 years those affected were also confronted by Moscow's use of language, according to which in 1940 the

Baltic peoples had joined the USSR completely of their own accord, indeed thanks to a socialist revolution. Over the decades, the creed-like repetition of this brazen falsification of history kept awake in those affected the memory of the actual circumstances of the loss of independent statehood and of union with the USSR.

Immediately after annexation, the complete re-structuring of society according to the Soviet model began. This was accompanied by mass imprisonments, as well as the murder or deportation of almost all members of the previous élites. By rendering the population defenceless, it was intended to destroy once and for all the seed-bed of ambitions for independence. The project culminated in the long-prepared mass deportations of 15,424 citizens of Latvia, 10,861 citizens of Estonia and 16,246 citizens of Lithuania to East Siberia and Kazakhstan as “undesirable, anti-soviet and socially dangerous elements”. This happened during the night of 13–14 June 1941, i.e. just a week before the German invasion.³ These deportations effectively destroyed the political, legal, social, economic, cultural and moral foundations of the Republics which had been independent until then. They involved practically the entire upper class of the three nations, including their families (among them 2,400 children under 6 years of age from Latvia), and became a national trauma which entered the collective memory as the start of genocide. Transportation often lasted for weeks, was carried out using cattle wagons and was inadequately provisioned; consequently numerous deaths were mourned during the journey itself. Directly after the German attack on the USSR on 22 June 1941, an additional 3,458 political prisoners were taken from Latvia to the interior of the Soviet Union as quickly as possible.⁴ When the victims of this terrorism were “granted an amnesty” (although by no means rehabilitated)—at the Twentieth Party Congress of the USSR’s Communist Party (1956) when Nikita Krushchev drew up an account of Stalin’s actions—, only 15 to 20% were left to return home. The majority had fallen victim to hunger and cold as early as the first winter, while almost all fathers of families and deported political prisoners had been killed in special camps.

These events must be kept in mind in order to understand why large numbers of Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians initially welcomed Germany’s invasion of the USSR which began only a week after the mass deportations. Indeed, the German army was welcomed as a liberator. Hatred of Bolshevism, specifically of Soviet rule, seemed to provide a basis for reaching an accommodation with the Germans, the aim being at least to maintain or create focal points around which national sentiment could crystallise and which, at a later time, could lead to the re-establishment of independence. But German actions soon led to the sober realisation that the supposed liberators were not prepared to make any concessions apart from limited and strictly controlled self-administration.⁵ Rather, Soviet terror was replaced by German terror which frequently was supported by home-grown

police units and directed against Jews (92,000 in Latvia, of whom between 65,000 and 70,000 were murdered),⁶ Communists, Soviet occupation collaborators and Soviet prisoners of war. It was accompanied by the unscrupulous exploitation of the three countries for the benefit of the German war effort, including the sometimes violent deportation to the Reich as labourers of 75,000 Lithuanians, 35,000 Latvians and 15,000 Estonians. It quickly became clear that no matter who won the war—whether Hitler or Stalin—there would be no chance for the nations of this region to develop further and freely the independent statehood which they had consolidated with difficulty between 1919 and 1939. Nonetheless, many regarded German dominion as the lesser evil and collaborated with it, since the Germans seemed less of a threat to the very existence of the titular nations than did Soviet rule—although long-term German plans did not recognise the existence of Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians, but these plans of course were unknown to those affected. On the other hand, others maintained the hope that, after a Soviet victory, a war would break out between Stalin and the Western Powers, opening up new prospects for self-determination for Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians.

In 1944 the Red Army returned to the Baltic, and so began the third period of occupation within five years. Until 1991 this had to be celebrated as “Liberation by the Red Army”, but broad circles of the three nations only remembered it as a change of occupying power. It certainly did not bring real liberation, only terror, deportations and gulag. As the Red Army approached, tens of thousands attempted to flee westwards with the German troops. Roughly 130,000 people did this from Latvia, 70,000 from Estonia and 60,000 from Lithuania—predominantly members of the educated classes. Along with Poland, at the end of the war Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania belonged to those European nations which had suffered the greatest proportional losses of population, that is to say well over 20% of the pre-war figure. In any event, the blood-letting was in no way over. Post-war Soviet terror culminated in 1949’s forced collectivisation which was strongly opposed by farmers, leading to renewed mass deportations to Siberia. These were far more extensive than the deportations of 1941. The Soviet Union also tried in the process to destroy support for the thousands of so-called “Forest Brethren”—“bandits” in Soviet terminology. In the hope of an imminent military confrontation between the USSR and the USA, these were waging guerrilla war from the forests against the Red Army and, as a result, were tying up large numbers of Soviet troops. The last of the “Forest Brethren” gave up only in the mid-1950s. At the end of March 1949, within a few days 43,231 people were deported from Latvia alone to the regions of Omsk, Tomsk and Amur. Representing 2.28% of the entire population, without exception they were farming and “bandit” families.⁷ 33,500 and about 40,000 people were affected in Lithuania and Estonia respectively. Even according to Russian estimates, however, total numbers of Latvian victims of Soviet

repression between 1944 and 1953 were much higher than in the other two countries: 2,000 people were sentenced to death and shot, while 88,000 were imprisoned or consigned to penal camps (apparently this number includes the inmates of filtration camps). Of the 88,000, 8,000 lost their lives and 43,000 were deported (of whom 5,000 died). Consequently at least 148,000 people were affected, although Latvian historians say the number is far higher.⁸

The second mass deportation also entered the collective memory as an assault on the existence of the three nations—as a continuation of genocide. Almost every family was affected by it. This impression was reinforced when, just a little later, the expansion of industry in Latvia and Estonia led to the settlement of tens of thousands of Russians to off-set the loss of labour and also to bind the region more closely to the rest of the Soviet Union in ethnic terms. In Latvia, the proportion of the population comprised by Latvians sank dramatically, that is to say from 77% in 1939 to 52% in 1989, while the proportion of Russians rose from 8% to 34% (in 2005 the figures were 59% and 29%). If, in 1934, the figures for Estonia were still 88% Estonians and 8% Russians, today they are 68% Estonians and 26% Russians. Only Lithuania was spared significant alteration, since the leadership of the Lithuanian Republic managed to prevent mass immigration from other Soviet Republics, albeit at the cost of achieving only small-scale industrialisation. The population's composition remained roughly at 84% Lithuanians, 6% Poles and 5% Russians.

II

The Sovietisation of the Baltic States was halted in the mid-1950s because by this time every independence movement seemed to have been stamped out. Nonetheless, at the first sign of Glasnost' and Perestroika Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians also raised demands for more freedom and, ultimately, for re-establishing the independence of—as they say in the Baltic—"the last colonies from the Hitler-Stalin era". In 1991 independence was regained as the Soviet Union collapsed. This gave political leaders and historians from all three states the first opportunity since 1940 to interpret and write about their history for themselves—in particular the history of the last 50 years. As you would expect, the focus now was on the victimhood of the three nations under two dictatorships imposed from abroad. This emphasis on the two-fold experience of dictatorship and the associated role of victim corresponded to the three nations' requirements both for self-confidence and for the legitimisation of the restored nation states. As an external symbol of new historical understanding, straight after the re-gaining of independence the terms "Soviet time" or "Soviet period"—which hitherto had been used to describe the years between 1944 and 1991—were replaced by the term "Soviet occupation". Above all, this emphasised the continuity of the three states under international law, even if the designation "Soviet regime" would have been more correct given that it had lasted for almost 50 years, and

especially in view of the fact that innumerable Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians had supported the system.⁹

Now the circumstances surrounding the annexation of the three states by the USSR became central to both public interest and historical research, as did Soviet terror, deportations and the Russification of the whole of public life—all themes until then strictly taboo. In this connection, harsh criticism was also levelled at the western powers who won the Second World War. They were accused of, for decades, only stigmatising and prosecuting the crimes of the Nazis and their allies; by contrast, the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by their one-time ally, the Soviet Union, had been ignored or else swept under the carpet. Recently the leading contemporary historian of Latvia and the current chairman of the international *Commission of the Historians of Latvia for the Investigation of Crimes against Humanity on the Territory of Latvia under Two Occupations 1940–1991*, Inesis Feldmanis, also accused German historians of shying away from an unbiased comparison of Hitler's and Stalin's regimes by referring to the possible "relativising" of National Socialist crimes, in particular the Holocaust. By way of contrast, he stressed that historical experiences made it impossible for people in Latvia to remember the past in such a biased and imperfect way. "They suffered at the hands of the two equally criminal totalitarian regimes, but first and foremost this had to do with the Soviet Union, which initially could pursue its criminal aims against Latvia and her people specifically because it was the ally of Nazi Germany. There is absolutely no reason to claim that the Soviet regime was less evil or terrible than Nazism."¹⁰

Estonians and Lithuanians start from the same premises, although as a rule they formulate them rather more moderately. The Executive Secretary of the *Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity*, Toomas Hiio, stressed the following in autumn 2009 at a conference in Riga: "We cannot say that only Germans were bad although it could be the easiest way to become loved by the majority of our Western Allies in this context",¹¹ while in October 2008 the Executive Director of the *International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania*, Ronaldas Račinskas, posed the following simple question: "Two totalitarian regimes, two criminal ideologies—two different attitudes. Why?"¹² Here you can see a fundamentally different perception of Stalinism and National Socialism than that which is prevalent in Western Europe. For the western nations, 1945 marks a sharp caesura as Hitler's Germany was defeated with the assistance of Stalin's Soviet Union. For the Baltic nations, however, this break had already happened in 1940, when they lost their independence owing to co-operation between Hitler and Stalin. What followed was, from their perspective, two totalitarian occupations which both denied them the right to self-determination and which threatened their existence through a policy of

excessive violence. Consequently it is emphasised repeatedly in all three lands that the war only ended there in 1991.

The widespread equating of German with Soviet occupations has provoked major reactions in the Russian Federation where in terms of historical policy there has been no revival of critical discussion of the Stalinist past since Putin came to power.¹³ Both official Russian sources and many historians alike simply denounce talk of “Soviet occupation” of the Baltic States as the “rehabilitation of fascism”. Just as in earlier times, Stalinist myths are regarded as official truths and include the ideas that the Red Army liberated Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania from “fascism” twice—in 1940 from “national fascism”, in 1944 from German fascism; that the three countries joined the USSR voluntarily in 1940; that the mass deportations of 1941 were unavoidable because of the supposedly pro-German attitude of the three countries’ élites; that the mass deportations of 1949 were unavoidable as a means for the pursuit of class conflict; and that almost 50 years of Soviet rule had benefited the three countries in obvious ways as well.¹⁴ Anyone criticising these positions will be challenged by the *Commission against the Falsification of History to the Disadvantage of Russia’s Interests* which was set up by President Medved’ev and also by a law recently introduced in the Duma by the Minister for Protection against Disasters, Sergej Schojgu, which envisages severe fines and up to five years in prison for criticising the liberating role of the Red Army in the Second World War.¹⁵ Behind all of this stands above all Putin’s search for a “positive” view of history which, in the face of the fragmentation of the Russian Federation, is supposed to create pride in the nation and its history leading to social cohesion. And since victory in the “Great Patriotic War” represents, as it were, the single positive inheritance left from the USSR, it is instrumentalised tirelessly for political purposes as one of the most important sources of strength for national consciousness—just as it was in Soviet times. Apparently this is accepted by the majority of the population in the context of a “patriotic consensus”. At the same time, in respect of public opinion abroad, emphasis on the “myth of victory” is supposed to maintain the prestige that Russia inherited from the Soviet role in the defeat of Hitler’s Germany, it also serves as a broad defensive shield against remembering the victims of Stalinist terror.

Nonetheless, there are commendable exceptions even in Russia, most notably the organisation MEMORIAL which, in defiance of all major obstacles, fights for a critical re-consideration of the Stalinist past which time and again officially is depicted as “a Russian *Sonderweg*”.¹⁶ In summer 2008 MEMORIAL demanded “that, without giving up their justifiable pride in victory, the citizens of the Russian Federation should know and understand what this success brought the Baltic nations (for instance) beyond liberation from National Socialism. On the other hand, given their own tragic history, these should not forget what the great international conflict with National Socialism meant for Russia, indeed for the whole world.”¹⁷ Nonetheless,

there is no sign of either side calming down; in fact, the situation is the reverse. The more stubbornly Moscow invokes the old myths, the more irritated become the reactions of those affected. This “war of memories” is not just an intellectual debate, however, it is also an existential threat to the social integrity of a multi-national state like Latvia. Since the official culture of memory in Latvia is fixated specifically on the Latvians, the result is that, for instance, the Russians who make up almost 30% of the land’s inhabitants are hardly given any chance of historical contact promoting identification with the state. Consequently, to a large extent Latvia’s Russians have adopted the version of history for the years 1940 to 1991 represented by Moscow. This also offers the Russian government the possibility of instrumentalising Latvia’s Russian inhabitants in respect of its politics of memory and the demands which accompany it—thus to interfere in Latvia’s domestic affairs. Up to now, no initiatives have been developed by the Latvian side to overcome this alienation of the non-Latvian population. This can only be achieved through a lengthy and direct dialogue between intellectuals and historians from the different ethnic groups which could, for instance, enable the Russians in Latvia to develop their own culture of memory as Latvian citizens of Russian origin. Such a dialogue is unavoidable if the integration of the non-Latvian population is to succeed.

In the West especially, there is opposition to the excessively one-sided emphasis on the victimhood of Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians evident in the re-interpretation of Baltic history on the grounds that it has largely overshadowed the suffering of other population groups—especially the Jews. On the Baltic side, initially there was little inclination to diminish the importance of their historical role as victim, which was of formative importance to their identity, by admitting a certain share of the blame for the fate of other persecuted people. Consequently the impetus to reinterpret fundamentally culpable collaboration by members of the three Baltic nations in the National Socialist mass murders of Jews, Roma, Soviet prisoners of war and patients of psychiatric clinics—likewise in the Stalinist terror against their co-citizens—came predominantly from abroad. In 1998 the above-mentioned historical commissions were set up in the three countries under the aegis of the state presidents of the day. There was general agreement about its purpose, namely to clarify as completely as possible all the crimes *of both* occupying powers on the territory of the three countries, to determine the extent of participation by citizens of these lands in the crimes *of both* occupying powers, to inform society about the events, to draft corresponding curricula for schools and universities, to advise political decision-making bodies about related issues and, above all, to inform other states about the results of the research and the special historical problems of the three countries concerned. In the past 12 years, these commissions have accomplished important work such that the research of central events like the Holocaust, the Soviet mass deportations, the terror which accompanied

sovietisation in 1940–41 and 1944–53, collaboration with both occupying regimes and so on has been advanced intensively and the results have been made public through conferences and publications.¹⁸ In particular, the participation of indigenous people in the genocide of the Jews has been explained at length. The idea that only a few criminals were to blame—as several Latvian historians still maintain—, has been contradicted to the same extent as has the cliché still broadcasted in many western studies about “Jew-murdering East Europeans” which derived from the National Socialist propaganda.

III

The accusation of genocide against the Stalinist Soviet Union is absolutely central to these controversies. First of all, it is not contested—at least among Baltic and Western historians, but also a number of Russian historians—that the deportations and mass murders carried out by the Soviet Union in the Baltic in 1940–41 and 1944–53 constituted crimes against humanity. Soviet policy in the Baltic seems to fit the internationally accepted definition quite precisely: “For the purpose of this Statute ‘crime against humanity’ means any of the following acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against any civilian population with knowledge of the attack: (a) Murder; (b) Extermination; (c) Enslavement; (d) Deportation or forcible transfer of population; (e) Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law; Torture (...); Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender as defined in paragraph 3 (...) or other grounds; Enforced disappearance of persons; (...)”.¹⁹ Latvia’s parliament, however, went a step further and, in its “Declaration on the Occupation of Latvia” of 22 August 1996, pronounced: “During the whole occupation period, the USSR purposefully realized the genocide of the people of Latvia, violating the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, dated 9 December 1948”.²⁰ Apparently this declaration originated in the desire to accommodate the collective memory of the majority of Latvians, in which the mass repressions against the Latvian leadership class, the mass settlement of Russians and the Russification of all public life are remembered as attempted genocide by the Stalinist Soviet Union against the Latvian people. The assessment of Soviet policy as genocide was very common among Latvian politicians and historians in the 1990s, although the concept was employed arbitrarily and its applicability to Latvia was never examined in a fundamental way. Since then, historians at least have started speaking with greater restraint about “features of genocide”. It is also interesting that, in their official statements none of the three above-mentioned international historical commissions have classified expressly either the whole set of events, or individual measures undertaken by the USSR in the Baltic Republics, as genocide. Apparently this is because

of the growing realisation during the course of research that the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide”—which was proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 9 December 1948 and which up to the present day provides the definition of genocide recognised in international law—does not permit such a judgement.

The definition says: “In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”²¹ This definition produces two problems in regard to assessing Stalin’s policy towards the Baltic States as genocide: (1) the convention only recognises national, ethnic, racial and religious groups as worthy of protection, not political and social ones. Stalin’s apologists, however, have declared consistently that his deportations and mass murders were social measures—phenomena accompanying the class struggle—and to some extent still do so today. This interpretation was also very widely accepted in Western research until the 1990s. An additional factor to be taken into account, of course, is that a certain timidity existed about comparing the crimes of Hitler and Stalin intensively, or even talking about them in the same breath, given the massive sacrifice the Soviet Union made in the war against Hitler’s Germany. (2) The definition of genocide, like the legal judgements based on it, concedes a high priority to the intention— and to the knowledge of the intention—“to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such”. In order to be able to talk about genocide, there would have to be proof that the Soviet leaders in Moscow *and* Riga, as well as their henchmen, disputed the right to existence *in itself* of the Latvians or larger groups of Latvians—i.e. they wanted to exterminate them as completely as possible. Since both aspects—the definition of genocide as well as Stalin’s policy towards non-Russian nationalities—are essential in our context, it is necessary to take a closer look at their historical development.

Throughout the academic literature on the genocide convention there is reference to its greatest weakness being that, alongside national, ethnic, racial and religious groups, it does *not* offer protection to political groups too.²² A look at Stalin’s “cleansing actions”, or perhaps Pol Pot’s murderous regime, shows clearly that the convention has a dangerous loophole in its enumeration of criminal acts. There is an historical and a political explanation for this. Viewed historically, the authors of the convention still thought predominantly in the categories of minorities protection as it had stood on the inter-war agenda. They included political groups in the draft of the convention but, in comparison to the other groups which deserved

protection, they were not accorded adequate significance. Politically, in the responsible *ad hoc* sub-committee of the General Assembly, the Soviet Union above all argued vehemently against the inclusion of political groups in the convention. The Soviet representative, Platon D. Morozov, maintained that political groups do not have the stability or homogeneity of ethnic ones, also that crimes committed from political motives belong to a different category of crime and have nothing to do with genocide. He was supported by representatives of such different states as Sweden, Brazil, Venezuela, Iran, Egypt, Belgium and Uruguay, which apparently all seemed to fear equally the Soviet Union interfering in their domestic affairs. Led by the USSR, ultimately they deleted mention of political groups from the draft, since the other states did not want to endanger the USSR's agreement to the convention. At the same time, Stalin roundly rejected the idea of an international court; there should only be an obligation to report relevant events to the Security Council.

Over the last 60 years, despite many attempts to revise the Genocide Convention, none have proved successful and as a result, for instance, political groups—and maybe social ones as well—have not been included in the definition of genocide. Meanwhile a small number of states, including the Baltic States, have begun to include “political” genocide in their criminal law. Consequently, for example in 1998 Latvia established punishment for genocide in its criminal law for the following groups: national, ethnic, racial and social groups, as well as ones defined by “a common conviction or a common belief.”²³ If you include political and social groups in the definition, then individual Soviet measures such as the deportations of Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians fulfil completely criteria (a) to (c) of the definition of genocide, even if, as before, the intention to commit genocide would have to be proven first. But such extensions of the definition of genocide are still not recognised internationally. The overwhelming majority of states adhere to the wording of the 1948 genocide convention in their domestic legislation, and—despite many opposing recommendations—its definition has been confirmed anew and unchanged in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court of 1998.²⁴

Meanwhile the discipline of History has attained knowledge which demands a re-consideration of the Stalinist policy of mass killings and deportations in the light of the prevailing definition of genocide. Since the so called “turning-point” (*Wende*), based on new archive materials both Russian and western historians—building on older works by Robert Conquest and Aleksandr Nekrič²⁵ amongst others—have concerned themselves intensively with the Stalinist repression and deportation of whole nations, or parts of national groups, which occurred between 1937 and 1953. These studies confirm that, from the mid-1930s on, the social classification of those affected was no longer consistently the decisive thing about these acts of terror; ever more frequently it was precisely their ethnic classification that

mattered most. In this light, Stalin's measures against so-called "enemy nations" are suspected of being genocide, because they were directed against national, ethnic or racial groups and so "came very close to the essence and legal status of a genocide".²⁶

From the point of view of the Communist Party, Stalin's transition from a policy of integration to one of oppression towards non-Russian nationalities marked a tactical rather than a fundamental change. In theoretical terms the Soviet leaders always remained true to the conviction that national differences are a sign of bourgeois capitalist society. This yielded the expectation that, in the process of Socialism's construction, they would vanish of their own accord and make way for an international society. In the 1960s, this was designated as "the Soviet nation" (*sovetskij narod*) and was to emerge from the "fusion of nations" (*slijanie*). In the face of the unexpected virulence of the national principle, however, after the end of the civil war the Party decided initially for a rather cautious integration of the non-Russian peoples, especially since the Communists possessed virtually no support among these national groups. With the help of the policy of "*korenizacija*", "the putting down of roots" by the Soviet order, the development of loyal indigenous élites would be promoted, so they could be inserted into the party and administrative apparatus in the union's republics, autonomous republics, national circles, and so forth. In order to cultivate this end, support was given to the language, education and culture of non-Russian nations.²⁷ This policy, which was clearly differentiated from the Russification policy of the late Tsarist Empire, proved to be successful, such that at the end of the 1920s, in terms of linguistic and cultural policy, the Soviet Union looked like a multi-national state oriented towards the ethnic pluralism and cultural self-realisation of its peoples.

It soon emerged, however, that the national communist cadres fostered by this policy would not be satisfied for the long-term with the cultural-linguistic autonomy on offer. Rather they began to demand the broadening of their competences in respect of economic and political autonomy. This called into question not only the complete political and economic control of the centre which Stalin led in dictatorial fashion, but also the very goal of a Soviet society homogeneous in every respect. Ultimately the trigger for conflict was provided by Stalin's so-called revolution from above, that is to say the forced collectivisation of agriculture and the cultural revolution which, at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, transformed fundamentally the national societies—which for the most part were structured in agrarian ways—and their lifestyles. Furthermore, also among non-Russians the revolution was implemented with the most extreme brutality and produced enormous numbers of victims—you only have to think about the famine in the Ukraine of 1932–33 which had between 3 and 6 million victims and which was tolerated, even if not caused deliberately, by Moscow.²⁸ A bit later, "*korenizacija*" was replaced with a rigorous policy of Russification in

the name of Soviet patriotism. This was promptly given a Great Russian character, involving the transfiguration of Russians into the “elder brother” of all the Soviet Union’s other nations and the primacy of Russian language, which now became a compulsory subject in all schools. Although no Soviet leadership ever expressly renounced aspirations for a world revolution, now ever more strikingly they linked their social revolutionary slogans with imperial claims and behaved in ways typical of the predominantly Russian élites.

It was predictable that the new communist élites of the non-Russian nations would hardly co-operate in this policy. But the more the policy came up against the robust resistance of the nationalities, the more the “capacity to resist as a national property” (Barth) was targeted by the Soviet leadership—and especially Stalin. Soon the Soviet leadership under Stalin thought themselves surrounded by not only “class enemies” and “enemies of the people”, but also by “enemy nations”. On account of their supposedly “hereditary” counter-revolutionary attitude, it was presumed that such nations rejected the attainment of Soviet ideas of order based on a homogeneous and centrally planned society—in fact, at any moment they could turn into “spies”, “agents”, “traitors”, “dissidents” and so forth. In the second half of the 1930s this led to a gradual “ethnicsing and biologising of the Bolshevik rhetoric of the enemy”,²⁹ in fact to “racial politics without an overt concept of race”.³⁰ One of the goals of the Great Terror of 1937–38 involved disempowering the leadership classes of the non-Russian peoples in order to accelerate the formation of homogenous, international Soviet society. It should not be forgotten that Russians also suffered seriously during the Great Terror, above all the Russian communist cadre, but incomparably more of them survived than among non-Russian leadership classes. For the most part, the now vacant positions among the non-Russian peoples were freshly occupied by loyal junior members of staff who were Russian.

Among the 1.3 million or so people who were imprisoned in 1937–38, of whom 680,000 were executed while the rest vanished into camps or else were deported, about a third were victims of “ethnic cleansing”.³¹ Among these were thousands of Latvians who, as a rule, had been resettled to Russia along with Riga’s industry during the First World War, or else who had fled there ahead of the Germans and who had not returned to Latvia after the war. The 1926 population census showed 151,410 Latvians were Soviet citizens. They ran numerous cultural institutions, perhaps 12,000 were party members and some had achieved influential positions in the party and state apparatus. In the general atmosphere of mistrust and hatred towards foreigners typical of the mid-1930s, they were included in the category of “unreliable”, even “counter-revolutionary” elements among the non-Russian inhabitants of the union. On 30 November 1937, Ežov ordered the liquidation of the “nationalist, counter-revolutionary organisations of the Latvians.” In the course of the so-called “Latvian Operation”, Latvians were dismissed from

all offices, and thousands were imprisoned, deported or shot. We do not have the final numbers, since NKVD documents have only been analysed in part, but we have evidence of 22,369 sentences of Latvians so far, including 16,573 death sentences. Thousands were deported under conditions which also cost them their lives. Survivors felt exposed to a massive pressure to assimilate, something they could hardly refuse to do. Björn Felder believes this fulfilled the conditions of “ethnocide”—i.e. the “violent dissolution of an ethnic group through the elimination of its cultural foundation”—owing to “direct and indirect bans on language, the annihilation of culture and of élites, along with forced assimilation”.³² “Ethnocide” or “cultural genocide” is not, however, a criminal act demanding a sanction under international law; rather, the measures which lead to “ethnocide” are classified predominantly among crimes against humanity. Destruction of identity and compulsory assimilation are not included in the definition of genocide, which—as the discussions in the run-up to its development also showed—is characterised by the idea of the physical and biological annihilation of the members of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.³³

From the mid-1930s on, the deportations assumed ever more clearly the form of “ethnic cleansing” actions. A precedent was set by the deportation of the 171,781 Koreans living in the Soviet Far East. In 1937, they were deported *en masse* to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as potential “Japanese agents”.³⁴ In terms of thorough planning and ruthless implementation, this deportation served as a model for all subsequent deportations of ethnic groups. Of greatest importance, however, was the fact that for the first time a whole national group was deported without consideration of age, social position or party membership. Its members were defined as potential traitors simply because they belonged to a specific ethnic minority living in a border area, so that without exception they had to be rendered harmless “as a preventive measure”. The issues that at first concerned mainly the inhabitants of border areas with co-national living outside the Soviet Union (e.g. Finns, Poles and Germans) soon concerned almost all the members of the Soviet Union’s non-Russian national groups. For the period 1937 to 1953, Russian historian N.F. Bugaj has counted 58 national groups with perhaps 3 to 3.5 million people who were deported because of their ethnicity.³⁵ This policy, which apparently involved the acceptance of tens of thousands of deaths, was directed not only against whole nations such as the Chechens (378,479), Ingushetians (91,250) and Crimean Tatars (183,155)³⁶—who without exception were deported to Siberia or Central Asia in 1944—, but above all against larger groups of individual nations. In 1941 and again in 1949, it included Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians. “At the outset of the 1950s, more than 90 percent of those classified as ‘special deportees’ represented members of ethnically deported populations.”³⁷ Central Asia and parts of Siberia were transformed into a “reservation for outcasts”, they became a “ghetto for enemy nations and

‘socially foreign elements’.” It was supposed that they were not suitable for integration into Soviet society.³⁸

Without doubt, Stalin’s mass murders, deportations and gulag fulfilled all internationally recognised criteria for crimes against humanity. So far as the definition of genocide is concerned, however, whether they, in connection with the non-Russian peoples of the USSR, can also be described as genocide, depends on neither the measure of the terror nor the number of victims. Above all, it depends on the intent, and the knowledge of the intent, “to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such”. In the dispensing of justice, and in line with the definition of genocide, high priority is given to intent and the knowledge of intent. This must be proven for the perpetrators in each individual case, as is shown by the judgements of the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda.³⁹ Up to now, this stipulation has barely been noticed by Baltic historians and politicians who speak of Stalinist genocide against their nations. In the three great genocides of the twentieth century—of the Armenians, Jews and Tutsis in Rwanda—the intention to commit genocide can be proved thoroughly. But this is much more complicated even in the case of the Former Yugoslavia. Here you have to prove on every occasion beyond doubt whether the perpetrators had implemented a so-called ethnic cleansing “only” to settle an area occupied by another ethnic group themselves, or whether they wanted to annihilate completely the existence of the ethnic groups living there. This difficulty is also the reason why the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has convicted the accused almost exclusively for crimes against humanity, which are easier to prove.

Conclusion

This leads us to the conclusion that the Stalinist murder projects and deportations carried out against the Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians cannot be described as genocide according to the present-day legal view and according to the current state of research. Up to now it has been impossible to prove that Stalin and his local Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian henchmen contested the very right to life itself of the three nations or parts of them—i.e. that in the end there was a desire to annihilate them completely. We do not have any written testimonies showing genocidal intent and, notwithstanding the large number of victims, even the deportations do not really display a genocidal aim regarding the three nations. For example, it has been shown in Latvia that the ethnic composition of those deported in 1941 mirrored faithfully the ethnic composition of the population as a whole, and that consequently the deportations did not only involve Latvians.⁴⁰ The picture is the same in Lithuania. And if, for instance, you look at western Ukraine, where at about the same time mass deportations were instituted of the upper classes which were predominantly Polish and Jewish, then you can see that

they were replaced primarily by Ukrainians from the eastern parts of the lands. Consequently the deportations there even served to strengthen the titular nation. In the area of Lviv, for example, the proportion of Ukrainian inhabitants rose from 59.3% in 1931 to 86.3% in 1959.⁴¹

The purpose, therefore, of the social and national terror in the Baltic clearly was not annihilation, but the subordination and rendering defenceless of the nations in question. The policy of terror was directed towards “the extension of dread through the threat of force or its injurious and lethal application, in order to achieve the subordination of the living—the survivors—to the political will of those implementing the terror.”⁴² The Stalinist regime always had use for the “human material” which was left over. The (non-Russian) nations, however, had to be forged (*slijat*) into a “Soviet nation” which would be as homogeneous as possible and which ultimately had Russian characteristics. This required the destruction of their identities and forcible assimilation.⁴³ No doubt the methods with which Stalin proceeded against all actual or potential representatives and propagandists of national identity and self-determination showed “features of genocide”, but genocide was not the intention. This was to create a “Soviet society” which would be as homogeneous as possible and in which there was no place for national movements. In this sense, Latvians were victims of crimes against humanity, but not victims of genocide.

In the future, this conclusion might well be disputed between Latvian, Russian and Western historians and politicians. For Latvians, the trauma of attempted genocide and the consciousness of having suffered more than other European nations during the history of the twentieth century are component parts of their cultural memory and national identity. On the other hand, Russia refuses to recognise officially any crimes by the Stalinist regime in the Baltic, while Western historians are concerned as much as possible to objectify the discourse about Stalin’s crimes (which often is very emotional) through intensive research and the application of the framework of international legal principles. Of course, there will always be different, possibly mutually contradictory recollections of historical events. Consequently our primary goal must be to ensure they are not instrumentalised for political purposes, so leading to new discord between nations. This requires a readiness for dialogue based on tolerance as, for instance, the Russian organisation MEMORIAL demanded in a call made in 2008: “In our view, the growing alienation between nations can only be overcome through a free, unbiased and civilised exchange of opinions about all questions where there are differences about our common history. The goal of this exchange is not to get rid of all differences of opinion, but simply to get to know the other person’s position better and to learn to understand it. If in this way we reach a common evaluation of a particular issue in our history, so much the better. If not, that is no misfortune either: each person retains his opinion, but we also develop understanding for the historical views shaping

the consciousness of our neighbours. The only pre-condition for such a dialogue is the readiness of all participants to respect the standpoint of the other person, no matter how 'wrong' it might appear at first sight, as well as an honest interest and an honest desire to understand."⁴⁴

Notes

This article was translated by Martyn Housden, with the assistance of John Hiden.

1. Oberländer, 2001, pp. 3–19, 95–141 (Lithuania), 163–213 (Estonia), 249–98 (Latvia).
2. Keerna, 1989, p. 153.
3. Caune, Kļaviņa, Feldmanis, 2002; Nollendorfs, 2005, pp. 62–74; Nollendorfs, 2007, pp. 57–59.
4. Bleiere, Butulis, 2006, p. 260.
5. Felder, 2008, pp. 189–319; Bleiere, Butulis, 2006, pp. 263–322.
6. For the Holocaust in Latvia see Caune, 2000–2009, Vols. 4, 8, 12, 18, 23.
7. Caune, Feldmanis, Kļaviņa, 2003, pp. 162–70; Nollendorfs, Oberländer, 2005, pp. 248–51; Nollendorfs, 2007, pp. 112–15.
8. The Russian figures by Erlichman, 2004, quoted by Bleiere, Butulis, 2006, p. 349. Latvian historians speak of a number of victims of political repression between 140,000 and 190,000 with some estimates as high as 216,000–240,000. See also Mälksoo, p. 766.
9. In contrast to the involvement of Latvians in the German occupation-policy and crimes including the Holocaust, there is nearly no research so far on the involvement of Latvians in the Soviet regime as well as in the crimes of that regime.
10. Feldmanis, 2009, p. 3.
11. Hiio, 2009, p. 6.
12. Račinskis, 2009, p. 496.
13. Karl, Polianski, 2009; Dubin, 2008; Scherrer, 2004.
14. Djukov, 2007; Krysin, 2004; Vorob'eva, 2009/10.
15. Margolina, 2009.
16. “*Sonderweg*” is a German word meaning “special pathway”. Typically it has been applied to readings of Germany’s past, especially whether it had a “special path” which helps explain National Socialism.
17. MEMORIAL, 2008, p. 79.
18. Caune, 2000–2009, Vol. 1–25; Iber, Ruggenthaler, 2007.
19. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Art. 7. Paragraph 3 says: “‘Gender’ refers to the two sexes, male and female, within the context of society.”
20. Pelkaus, 1999, p. 563.
21. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Art. II.
22. See Schabas, 2003, pp. 139–201; Vest, 2002, pp. 229–31.
23. <http://www.preventgenocide.org/lv/kriminallikums.htm>, Part IX, § 71.
24. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Art. 6.
25. Conquest, 1970 and Nekrich, 1978.

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26. Naimark, 2007.
 27. Simon, 1986, pp. 34–82.
 28. Simon, 2008.
 29. Baberowski, Döring-Manteuffel, 2006, pp. 17, 50–58.
 30. Weitz, 2002, p. 3.
 31. Felder, 2009, p. 62; Martin, 2002, p. 338; Suny, Martin, 2001, p. 14.
 32. For the “Latvian operation” and the results see Felder, 2008, pp. 63–75.
 33. Schabas, 2003, pp. 250-51; Selbmann, 2002, pp. 211–23.
 34. Bugaj, 1992, p. 6.; Pohl, 1999, pp. 5, 9–20.
 35. Quoted by Weitz, 2002, p. 14; see also Bugaj, 1991, p. 122. Pobel’, Poljan, 2005, p. 13 come to a different conclusion: “Out of 52 deportation-campaigns 38 or 73% were ethnic deportations.”
 36. Naimark, 2004, pp. 111–37; Alieva, 1993, Vol. II.
 37. Weitz, 2002, p. 14.
 38. Baberowski, Döring-Manteuffel, 2006, pp. 89–90.
 39. Barth, 2006, pp. 18-20; Schabas, 2003, pp. 284–328; Selbmann, 2002, p. 160; Mälksoo, 2001, pp. 780–81.
 40. Caune, Kļaviņa, Feldmanis, 2002, pp. 35–50.
 41. Simon, 1986, p. 251.
 42. Jahn, 2004, p. 28. Mälksoo, 2001, p. 784.
 43. Nollendorfs, 2007, p.117; Naimark, 2004, p. 135; Mälksoo, 2001, p. 784.
 44. MEMORIAL, 2008, p. 83.

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The Convergence of Two Worlds: Historians and Emerging Histories in the Baltic States

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Introduction

When thinking about issues of diversity and inclusion in the writing of 20th century Baltic history and connecting them with the work of John Hiden, my thoughts turn first to issues of minority history; to ethnic or religious minorities, or to other socially (and politically) marginalized groups and individuals, whose stories rarely find their way onto the pages of Baltic history books. It is, perhaps, the most important duty of the professional historian—and it has, no doubt, been John’s interest over the years—to make some of these voices of the past heard and to give them the place in history that they deserve. However, my current reflections on the emerging historiographies in the Baltic States since 1991 in relation to questions of diversity and inclusion will not so much focus on issues of minority representation in historical accounts. Instead, I wish to draw attention to the *creators* of these accounts, i.e. to professional historians, both within and outside the Baltic countries. More specifically, I want to reflect on the relationships between them—between local and foreign historians as well as between younger and older scholars of contemporary Baltic history. What are the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion here and what do they mean for the historical discourse as it has evolved over the past twenty years?¹

The idea for this essay came during an October 2009 conference in Riga on “Occupation, Collaboration and Resistance”, organized by the Commission of the Historians of Latvia.² Set up with the aim of encouraging a direct dialogue between Latvian historians and their colleagues from across Europe, the conference sought to establish a comparative pan-European perspective on the three perhaps most controversial, yet central categories of 20th century European history listed in the title. Moreover, the key organizers, Valters Nollendorfs and Erwin Oberländer, expressed their wish to contribute to a “broad multilateral discourse marked by an honest desire to understand and to respect the historical memories of others” (Oberländer, 2009). My own role was to comment on the intervention by Inesis Feldmanis, one of Latvia’s leading contemporary historians, who discussed the concepts of collaboration and resistance within the context of Latvia’s 20th century experience of two totalitarian occupations. John Hiden chaired this final panel of the conference and soon enough the two of us found ourselves in the midst of a heated debate about conceptual boundaries and the dangers of collective categorisations in the understanding of past individual motivations and actions. It was interesting to see that the old battles of the 1990s—in particular, how to historically evaluate the role of Latvians fighting for both occupying powers—were still alive and the extent to which collective

accusations and out-dated notions such as betrayal of “national interest” were still bandied around. The question of (political and social) inclusion and diversity is of course central to these kinds of Baltic history battles. Who is defined as hero and who as villain in national history accounts is clearly part of a wider symbolic politics of recognition that aims at constructing the political community. It can, however, also become an issue in rather concrete resource allocation conflicts. Yet, what really struck me was the peculiar silence or disinterest of established Latvian historians in relation to arguments and suggestions put forward by Western colleagues; and the barely concealed frustration that this elicited amongst some of the Western scholars of Baltic history. It seemed like a dialogue of the deaf: Western scholars were eager to step beyond the historical details of particular events and developments to draw comparative conclusions from Western and Eastern European experiences with totalitarian occupation, while Latvian historians continued to stress (and defend) the historical uniqueness of their country’s experience and refuse to engage in comparative efforts. Moreover, they more or less openly implied a lack of historical understanding or even a deliberate ignorance of the Latvian experience on the part of their non-Latvian colleagues. In his contribution to the conference Feldmanis complained that Western historians “are indecisive and passive in researching specific aspects of World War II, choosing instead to accept the views of the so-called victors”, and thereby ignore the particular experience of Central and Eastern European countries (Feldmanis, 2009). By making such a statement, however, he himself ignores much of what has been written over the past twenty years by Western historians. Some people in the audience went even further by suggesting that only those who had experienced Soviet totalitarian occupation could ever comprehend the past. In other words, there was a straightforward attempt to exclude non-Baltic scholars from the study of Latvia’s most recent history altogether.

To be sure, most of the conference took place in a professional atmosphere of mutual respect and constructive discussion. The truly emotional debates, largely triggered by participants in the audience, arose when Latvian historical and conceptual perceptions became the focus of discussion and received criticism. The members of the Latvian historical “establishment”, however, did little to dilute the heated discussion. Instead, they were either altogether absent for most of the conference or they contributed very little to the comparative and conceptual debates. In my opinion, this is to a certain degree symptomatic for how the field of history in the Baltic States and the relations between local and foreign contemporary historians have evolved over the last few years. As usual, the mutual accusations of ignorance are true to some extent. When Feldmanis complains about Western ignorance of local historical particularities as well as of research findings by local historians, he is just as correct as Oberländer, who criticises Latvian historians’ rather exclusive, self-centred way of studying

the past and their avoidance of broader comparative discussion. In sum, the 2009 conference suggested to me that little has really changed in the relationship between contemporary historians since the early 1990s; it is as if the relationship is still marked by Latvian defensiveness and inferiority complexes on the one hand and, on the other, a Western “know-it-all” attitude that sometimes comes across as rather patronizing and out of place.

In the rest of this paper, I would like to discuss whether this is true and explore the relationship further. The 2009 conference will serve as a kind of backdrop against which I will try to trace the nature of the discord of recent years and some of the reasons behind it. In this context, two aspects appear to be of particular interest. First, the conference took place under the name of the Commission of the Historians of Latvia (CHL). This organisation was established in 1998 by the Latvian president to undertake research and evaluate the crimes of both totalitarian regimes in Latvia. For the past ten years the CHL has brought together historians and other scholars as well as experts and politicians from within and outside the country to achieve this task. In fact, the two organisers of the Riga conference each represented one branch of the CHL—Prof. emer. Erwin Oberländer (University of Mainz) the international membership and Prof. emer. Valters Nollendorfs (Latvian Occupation Museum) the local. Also in 1998 similar presidential international history commissions were established in Estonia and Lithuania. As an institutionalised form of regular historical exchange between Baltic and non-Baltic scholars these commissions, their structural dynamics and practical operations become highly interesting for my discussion. As a first step I will therefore compare the three History Commissions with a focus on the interaction between the local and foreign members and the factors that influenced it.

The second aspect that emerges from the 2009 conference in Riga concerns inter-generational relations, i.e. the relationship between the established circles of historians in Latvia and Estonia (the two countries I have the most knowledge of) and younger, non-established scholars and students of history. As it was, most Latvian contributors to the conference were younger historians and many more were sitting in the audience. Interestingly, many of them worked as researchers outside the walls of academia and during the discussions I sensed a degree of tension between them and the more established historians present. My interest in this essay will, therefore, be on the more recent developments in the study of the past, both in terms of content and of personnel, that have emerged outside the well-established scene of history writing at universities and research institutes—and, perhaps, even outside the discipline of history.

I will end this second section with some concluding remarks on the possible future developments of 20th century history writing and cross-cultural dialogue among historians.

Baltic history commissions: promoters of cross-cultural scholarly exchange?

One feature of the 1990s was recurrent, harsh criticism by the international community about post-Soviet Baltic commemoration practices concerning the Second World War and the Holocaust (Onken, 2003; Budryte, 2005; Weiss-Wendt, 2008). When the three Baltic presidents finally decided to establish Historical Commissions they did so mainly in response to outside pressure to confront many still open questions about the recent past. Their own interest most certainly was to be able to base future reactions to outside criticism on more sound scholarly research and to refute some of the myths that still surrounded the two totalitarian occupations of their countries. All three Commissions involved in one way or another international “experts”, scholars of history and other disciplines as well as public figures. Charged with researching the crimes of both the Soviet and Nazi periods, these commissions represented a new way for the young Baltic democracies to handle history-based political controversies both in- and outside the country. At the same time they provided an institutional setting (and the financial means) for Baltic and non-Baltic historians to get together on a regular basis. They can therefore be considered an honest effort to achieve rapprochement or even reconciliation, at least on a scholarly level, of the different historical narratives that have existed for over fifty years on the two sides of the Iron Curtain—whether these were émigré or local Baltic, German or Baltic-German, local or diaspora-Jewish, or otherwise.

Yet while apparently similar on the surface—all three were founded as presidential, non-judicial, investigative bodies around the same time, for the same reasons and tasked with more or less the same research objectives—the three Baltic commissions differed immensely when it came to their structural and procedural character, as well as ultimately the outcome of their investigatory and discursive efforts.

As the name suggests, the “Commission of the Historians of Latvia” (CHL) was primarily a Latvian assembly of twelve well-established historians and other scholars, among them also the émigré Latvian Nollendorfs and Marģers Vestermanis, head of the Jewish Museum in Riga. From the beginning, however, an equal number of international scholars and public figures were also asked to serve as members of the Commission. Ten years after regaining independence and with the powerful backing of Latvian president Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga behind it, the CHL undertook and coordinated a wide range of research activities, organised international conferences and published a good two dozen volumes of both conference proceedings and archival documents. Regular joint meetings as well as almost annual international conferences ensured that multiple perspectives were given on various questions relating to the crimes of past regimes, the evaluations including also the extend of local complicity in these crimes. However, the interaction between local and foreign commission members

remained rather formal. Ultimately, the main work and responsibility of historical investigation lay with the local branch of the Commission and its researchers on the ground. Until funding was radically cut in 2008, the local Commission members had met an average of ten times during the academic year to discuss the ongoing research in the various sub-commissions or to present their latest results. The foreign members, meanwhile, were convened twice a year in joint meetings, where they were presented with the main conclusions of the investigations by their Latvian colleagues. They were not really supposed to contribute to the Commission's historical research and deliberation. Instead, their comments and suggestions were tolerated rather than appreciated and they were "kept at arm's length", as one of the commission members put it.³

Even less conducive to any kind of dialogue between equal partners was the situation in the Estonian History Commission, the "Estonian International Commission for Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity" (EICICH) that was officially dissolved with the completion of its final report in 2008. The membership of this presidential institution was, in fact, purely non-Estonian and even non-professional in the sense that none of the six commission members was an active historian. Instead, it was a group of political and civil society representatives from Finland, Sweden, Germany, Russia, Denmark, and the USA, whose task was to survey the research reports of local Estonian researchers and draw conclusions that were published in English and aimed at an international audience.⁴ (Weiss-Wendt, 2008; Onken, 2007) The EICICH thus remained entirely external to society. It did not engage in international scholarly discussions, nor did it get involved in internal Estonian controversies. Its contribution to a broader conversation between Estonian and non-Estonian historians and thus to an emerging multi-dimensional historiography remained obscure. Compared to this, the Latvian Commission's activities seemed like an epitome of inclusiveness, as official Commission publications featured authors coming from a large range of ethnic, biographical and ideological backgrounds as well as several generational cohorts. The variety was also reflected in the language of CHL publications including texts in Latvian, English and German. Nevertheless, both Commissions serve as examples of how not to succeed in generating a conversation about the difficult past that involves equal partners and a process of mutual give and take, listening and being listened to. What both Commissions did—one more bluntly than the other—was to reinforce further a particular national perspective on the events of the past and on questions of guilt and responsibility, while seeking the international (Western) stamp of approval for this in order to avoid future situations in which their countries could be reprimanded for not doing enough to unearth the facts of the past.

This ultimate lack of inclusiveness and interaction between local and foreign historians in the Estonian and Latvian Commissions becomes even

more apparent when we look at the third Baltic commission, the “International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania (ICL).”

The ways in which this commission was set up and established its goals and procedures did a lot to encourage interaction and conversation as defined above. Similar to the LCH, the ICL had local and foreign members in equal number, professional historians and public figures on both sides. Moreover, the rules of procedure, meticulously outlined in a nine-page document approved by the ICL in June 2000, included a painstaking procedure of 2–3 reviews of each research report before it was released, together with a final approval statement by the full Commission. A closer look, however, reveals that most of the foreign members of the ICL were experts in Holocaust history and thus active in only one of the two ICL sub-commissions—the one that focused on the period of Nazi occupation. The other sub-commission that researched the Soviet period was dominated by local Lithuanian historians. The foreign members, however, were far more involved in the actual research process than in the other two Commissions. They contributed reports on particular research areas themselves and/or assisted in finding experts on a particular period or question. As a consequence, the reports on the crimes committed under Nazi occupation were written both by Lithuanian and international scholars, young researchers as well as well established scholars. Here, at both the investigative as well as deliberative stages the Commission benefited from the insights both of Lithuanians and non-Lithuanians, Commission members and external experts. Unfortunately, the “bifurcated nature” of the Lithuanian commission somewhat casts a damp over this positive evaluation, as such international scholarly interaction was not ensured in the other sub-commission. Though diversity of interpretations and conclusion may have been present also here, the chance to take “a more international approach to evaluating the Soviet past” was missed (see Budryte, *forthcoming*). In a way, this reflects on another fundamental dilemma of the Baltic History Commissions: the divergence of research interests among the historians involved. While “Western” scholars and activists were mostly concerned about the period of Nazi occupation and the Holocaust, their Baltic colleagues frequently felt the overarching need to stress their own nation’s victimization and suffering under Soviet rule.⁵

The Lithuanian History Commission’s efforts for interaction and controversy—though mostly in respect to one particular time period—ultimately failed. For once, active research was discontinued in 2006 despite the fact that the Commission’s own research goals had not yet been met. Though the commission published its findings in eight volumes altogether (five on the Soviet period, three on the Nazi period), the research done so far leaves many questions and research areas open as can be seen in the half empty ‘research works database’ on the Commission’s website

(<http://www.komisija.lt>). A second reason for the lull in activities relates to a significant cut in funding since 2005. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, in 2007 the Commission suffered a dramatic political setback—or even “deliberate sabotage” as its Chairman Emmanuelis Zingeris termed it in a media interview (Whewell, 2008). In 2007 the Lithuanian prosecutor general’s office started a criminal investigation against one of the Commission members, Yitzhak Arad, the long-time director of Israel’s Holocaust Memorial Authority, Yad Vashem and himself a survivor of the Holocaust in Lithuania. The case for which he was to be summoned for questioning concerned the activities of anti-Nazi partisans against civilians in a village in Eastern Lithuania in 1944. As a 16-year-old, escaping from the ghetto in Vilnius, Arad had joined the partisans, but claimed not to have been involved in any killings of civilians. (Whewell, 2008; Melman, 2008) Arad, who is a renowned scholar of the Holocaust in the former Soviet Union (Arad, 2009), had until then actively participated in the ICL’s research and contributed to scholarly exchange and deliberation. However, in the face of this judicial assault Arad withdrew his membership, as did some of the other foreign members. The international outcry about Lithuania’s attempts “to re-write history” and start prosecuting Holocaust victims as criminals ultimately led to the *de facto* suspension of the Commission’s research activities altogether. Things had become too political and the presidential Commission crumbled.

So, keeping issues of diversity and inclusion in mind, what can we learn from these three examples of “institutionalised interaction” between Baltic and non-Baltic historians? First, we might conclude that these commissions are not in fact the right place to look for true scholarly exchange, as they are primarily political bodies. Established by the Baltic heads of state, primarily they served the political purpose of refuting old myths and false historical assumptions used against the young democracies. Moreover, the results of the commissions’ investigations were supposed to enable Baltic officials to respond more adequately to outside criticism, both from Russia and the West, concerning the legal and political handling of past crimes. The historians among the commission members certainly did not like this political dimension to their work and many tried to present themselves as non-political truth-seekers. The Lithuanian case, however, demonstrates all too clearly how quickly their efforts would collapse under political pressure.

Looked at from this perspective, the Estonian commission’s work becomes the most consistent. Scholarly deliberation that would have aimed at including contradictory voices and painting a complex historical picture open for continuous revision was totally kept out of the game. Instead, there was a clear-cut division of labour, with Estonian researchers providing historical facts without any critical discussion on the one side and, on the other, external actors giving a political assessment of these facts, based on international legal norms and their own estimations. No professional historian

was therefore forced to do the difficult balancing act between his professional ambitions and ethics and political constraints from in- and outside the country. Such a purely fact-finding purpose, however, was not the original task as it had been formulated during the constitutive meeting of the EICICH.

This brings us to a second point that I would like to stress: the unclear mandates of the commissions. In the Estonian case this concerned the public role of the commission. On the one hand, Lennart Meri created an external (exclusive) commission charged with “objectively” assessing historical facts about past totalitarian crimes. On the other hand, he set the commission the task of helping to “overcome the stereotypes about groups that were at the basis of many of these crimes” and to “contribute to reconciliation within our society” (Meri, 1999). He left it open, however, how the EICICH could possibly achieve such a task without including the wider Estonian public in the interpretation and assessment process.

In the Latvian case the lack of mandatory clarity was more related to the exact role that the foreign members were supposed to play in the CHL. Consequently, there were rather divergent expectations among the commission members about what the international commissions could and should achieve. These expectations concerned first of all the commission’s ability to contribute to serious scholarship and cross-cultural scholarly exchange. Norman Naimark, one of the foreign members of the CHL, once remarked that he viewed the role of foreigners in the Commission as primarily serving to help the Latvian historians talk *with each other* on difficult issues of the past.⁶ This assessment might be correct when looking at the early years of Latvian re-independence, when the mass murder of Jews during the Nazi occupation as well as possible Latvian involvement in these atrocities were totally new questions for local historians. In those years it was, indeed, often at externally organised events that local scholars talked about the more uncomfortable questions in relation to their country’s past. However, by 1999 when the three commissions were first convened such outside assistance was no longer really necessary. Thus, to limit the role of foreign members in the History Commission to that of merely facilitating national historians’ conversation would be too narrow. In fact, such an assessment is most certainly not shared by other foreign members of the CHL, such as Erwin Oberländer. As I noted earlier, he organised the 2009 conference in Riga precisely in order to go beyond the exclusive, Latvian-centred historical discussions and:

“...to encourage Latvian historians to concentrate more than hitherto on the international comparison as a basic method of historical research.” (Oberländer, 2009)

In the Lithuanian case, the lack of mandatory clarity had less to do with the Commission’s role in wider Lithuanian society. Quite the opposite,

for right from the beginning and to a much greater extent than its two northern neighbour organisations, the ICL engaged actively in educational activities, in teacher training and tolerance education. In this area the ICL, in fact, still continues its work, resembling more and more the function of a middle-size NGO, not least given its limited budget. What ultimately caused the ICL to end its research efforts was more the lack of a political mandate. Though chaired by a long-time MP and political heavyweight (E. Zingeris), the ICL largely stayed out of broader history-related political controversies, even when these directly concerned one of its members. Expectations obviously differed widely about the political role this presidential commission should play, both domestically and internationally, in- and outside the commission. We can only speculate about the political motivation behind those who filed the request to investigate the involvement of commission member Arad in wartime partisan actions. But it seems quite likely that these people did not appreciate the rather inclusive character of the ICL's research activities (concerning Holocaust research), marked by a true willingness of all parties involved to find an understanding and compromise if necessary. For some people this was not acceptable and the Lithuanian "national" perspective was too little respected.

There is a third lesson that I would draw from the comparative analysis of historians' relations in the three Baltic history commissions. It has less to do with practical issues of politics and commission mandates than with deeper philosophical questions concerning different traditions of history. Let us assume for a moment that the commissions, at least those where foreign and local historians sat together, had all the practical means and political leeway to engage freely in scholarly exchange, joint research and negotiation of divergent assessments of the crimes that were committed under two totalitarian regimes. Would they have found a common language and understanding of each other's viewpoints? Or would it rather have been like Andrejs Plakans (2010, p. 10) once described it:

"The fact that we can sit in the same rooms around one table for any length of time and converse at length about a wide variety of subjects, perhaps even in a common language, is in itself no guarantee whatsoever that we have had a meeting of minds."

This is not to be misunderstood as implying that there should be a "unanimity of views" or even a coherent story. As Saulius Suziedelis, an émigré Lithuanian member of the ICL, rightly states, "this is neither possible nor desirable" when faced with genocide and totalitarian terror regimes (Suziedelis, 2007, p. 4). Rather, what Plakans meant and what I would like to draw attention to are the different traditions in the study of history that would most likely prevent a "meeting of minds" among Western-educated and Baltic historians even under ideal conditions. In what can now be called an

historic and most anticipatory speech to the opening of the 12th Conference on Baltic Studies in 1990, Plakans, then president of the American Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS) discussed different forms of “convergence” in future homeland- and émigré-Baltic academic relations. He mapped out three main areas: the physical, the institutional and the intellectual convergences. While the first two, he predicted, would be easily achieved due to modern means of transportation and communication, the intellectual conversion of two fundamentally different academic traditions would be much harder—especially in the field of history. Latvian historians, he continued, had a “habit of thinking about the past in terms of historical laws of development and of the historian’s obligation to uncover those laws.” He counterposed this tradition with that of Western “relativism in making statements about the past” and with “the general erosion of the belief in absolutes” among Western historians (Plakans, 2010 [1990], p. 12).

With regard to the Baltic History Commissions, the tension between two traditions of scholarly history, that of “truth-believers” and “relativists” if you will, might not have been the main factor that obfuscated scholarly work on the practical research level. All sides were equally interested in documenting the hitherto undocumented and unrecorded crimes of past regimes and individuals. However, as soon as it came to interpreting and contextualizing the facts, the discussions became controversial.⁷ Differing opinions about the extent to which historical sources can really speak for themselves, about the selectiveness of the interpretative process and, last but not least, about the predisposition of the historian himself in this process, might have further complicated the conversation. The idea that the truth about the past can be established once and for all very much reflects the spirit in which many Baltic historians perceive their own professional activity.

The Baltic History Commissions certainly went a long way towards realising the physical and institutional “convergence” of historians interested in 20th century Baltic history. Their ability also to reach intellectual convergence was rather more limited due to the above political and mandatory factors. In order to find out what has nevertheless been achieved in this respect over the past twenty years, we need to step beyond the frameworks of the presidential commissions and take a broader look at what has been otherwise going on in the field of history.

Generational shifts and an emerging dialogue of equals

The history commissions in the Baltic States are, of course, not the only places where cross-cultural exchange between historians of Baltic and non-Baltic background has taken place over the past years. As I noted earlier, they are perhaps not even such a good place to look for honest scholarship and exchange of views. Moreover, looking at the average age of the commission members, both local and international, these institutions were clearly

dominated by historians who were educated and socialized at a time of rigid ideological divisions. In a recent study, Pertti Grönholm and Meike Wulf distinguished several generations of historians in post-Soviet Estonia, based on their early socialization and shared experiences (Grönholm and Wulf, 2010). Of the four generational cohorts they identify, the so-called “Post-War Children” and the “Transitional Generation”, born in the 1950s and 1960s, have dominated the history scene in the Baltic States during the first twenty years of re-independence. Grönholm and Wulf characterize these two generations as being “raised, educated and fully socialized in the new Soviet system” (Ibid, p. 355). They often accommodated or resigned themselves to the reality of the undemocratic state, which included a way of “double thinking”—a discrepancy between public and private narratives of the past. The historians of these generations chose different ways of coping with this reality and with intellectual and ideological restrictions: professional coping strategies ranged from conformism and opportunism to inner emigration and passive resistance. According to Grönholm and Wulf, these different strategies manifested themselves not only in written texts, but also in “professional choices and social relations”, including calculating social networks and the use of irony and “double-talk” (Ibid., p. 356).

During the independence movements of the late 1980s especially, many historians of the “Transitional Generation” took an active part in the events that evolved around dates of historical significance and that had been kept alive in private narratives. This was a short period of extreme openness, when not only hitherto forbidden memories and historical documents could be publicly revealed, but also hidden, often uncomfortable stories could be told (such as that of local participation in crimes of foreign powers). However, this period quickly ended once state independence had been achieved:

“The logic of the newly ‘nationalizing state’ (...) imposed different constraints on the work of post-Soviet historians as they had to abide by the principle of national restoration and consolidation. Since the late 1980s national history writing has been increasingly hegemonised by new orthodoxies and one-dimensional thinking” (Ibid, p. 369).

As a result of this, the field of professional history—and especially that of 20th century history—in all three Baltic States has over the past 20 years become largely dominated by a focus on political (national) history, on state leaders, policies and structures. Moreover, the former ideological grip on the discipline of history now keep many of the leading historians in the Baltics from approaching the past from more ideational or conceptual perspectives.⁸

All of this might help to explain some of the origins of early discords between Western-trained and Baltic historians. However, it does not explain why the established Baltic 20th century history is still dominated by political history and themes such as subaltern and minority histories, everyday-life or cultural history, economic history or ideas and actions of non-state actors still remain marginalized. The narrow approach of current Baltic history becomes even more apparent in regard to projects that cross the disciplinary boundaries towards the social sciences and philosophy. One of the reasons for this is quite practical: Baltic academic societies are small and so is the academic market. Those historians who filled the newly established institutional positions in the early 1990s were predominantly of the above-mentioned "Transitional Generation." They are thus rather young and far from leaving these positions any time soon. Historians of a younger generation (born in the late 1960s and 1970s), are educated under totally new conditions, many studied abroad and bring fresh ideas to their studies. Yet, they are often forced to pursue their academic interests outside their own discipline, in semi-academic institutions such as museums and archives or outside academia altogether. Though this deprives them at times of certain institutional benefits and useful contacts, the experience might prove beneficial for the future development of historical writing in the Baltic States. The question in this context is whether, with this new generation of historians, the communication between historians in- and outside the Baltics is moving towards a more even partnership and "intellectual convergence."

I will limit my reflections here to historical circles in Estonia and Latvia, rather than taking in the whole picture that would include young Baltic scholars studying and working in the field of history at Western universities. Due to the practical reasons mentioned above, many students of history have, indeed, decided to pursue careers at Western European or American universities. Their perspective on the Baltic past has adapted naturally to the necessities of the respective academic communities (and publishing formalities) in which they work, often forcing them far more than their peers at home to view Baltic history from a more distanced and comparative perspective. The fact that they have become part of Western, mostly English-based, discourses often alienates them further from the discussions pursued at home and limits their contribution to them. Yet some of these younger scholars have returned and have tried to find a niche in their native societies. This means that it is, in fact, rather difficult to distinguish clearly between homeland- and international-Baltic historiographical developments or between "Baltic"-educated and Western-educated historians. Nevertheless, I will still concentrate on local developments.

Again, the conference in Riga might provide us with an initial clue. As it turned out, the format envisaged for this conference, which paired up foreign with Latvian scholars as presenter and commentator, proved rather difficult to implement. Whether initially intended or not, the conference

organisers ended up asking primarily young, up-coming researchers to comment on the foreign historians' presentations. Interestingly, most of these young historians worked outside universities, at the State Archive or the Occupation Museum. Only one held a position as associate professor at the University of Latvia. Several other young scholars of history sat in the audience. Of course, this is only a subjective impression, but it seemed as if they truly enjoyed engaging in comparative discussions on conceptual questions. These included, for example, the delineation of boundaries of collaboration and resistance in a context of alternating totalitarian occupations or the different Western countries' decades-long experiences with the 'politics of memory.' The latter issue is increasingly attracting the attention of young Estonian and Latvian scholars of history and political science, not least due to recurrent controversies surrounding Second World War monuments and commemoration practices as well as other representations of the past (cf. M. Mälksoo, 2009; Petersoo and Tamm, 2008; Strenga, 2007 and 2008; Ijabs, 2010). Moreover, in Estonia young historians are exploring theoretical and philosophical questions of "how to study history" in general and Estonian history in particular and have started to communicate this also to the wider public (Tamm, 2007; Kreem, 2007; Piirimäe and Piirimäe, 2000). Finally, the field of studying the past in the Baltics has been largely enriched by the works of young researchers partly active in other disciplines, studying social and cultural history, doing oral history as well as carrying out textual and socio-psychological analysis of autobiographical narratives (Kõresaar, 2010; Kõresaar, Lauk and Kuutma, 2009; Bela-Krūmiņa, 2006; Kaprāns, 2009).

Not many Baltic contemporary historians include the results of these studies and discussions in their own work. There is still a certain professional reservation about studies that focus on subjective historical accounts or on the philosophical dimensions of history, not to mention the politics of their field of study. Yet, in this the Baltic historians are not so different from their colleagues in the West. In other words, the scholarly reality of Western history that has to accept that other disciplines are staking out a claim to the study of the past, with sometimes rather interesting results, has reached the Baltics as well. Whether a younger generation of historians is taking this as a chance to break up the old paths of how Baltic historians "do" history, or whether they continue to view their discipline in rather narrow terms, remains to be seen. In my encounters with younger Baltic historians I no longer sense the defensiveness I felt whenever I talked with historians of the older generations. Sure enough, some of them still think that an outsider does not really understand the predicaments of recent Baltic history and thus arrives at wrong conclusions. However, the predominant attitude is that of eagerness to engage in an exchange of views.

How much of a chance young Baltic researchers get to have such exchanges, however, depends on more than just generational change,

institutional and economic factors are equally crucial. In terms of institutional provision for young researchers, Estonian academia is quite well positioned as it contains a transparent system of grant and employment opportunities that is open to Estonian and non-Estonian scholars alike. Indeed, it has attracted quite a few returning Estonians as well as foreigners, not least in the field of history. Moreover, through external review and high benchmarks, Estonian researchers are encouraged to publish their findings in international, competitive journals and thereby participate in a larger discourse. Whether this has any concrete bearings on the character of local historical discourses and public debates, however, is another question that is anything but easily answered.

In Latvia, such a competitive system of research funding does not yet exist. The academic system still lacks a functioning system for supporting a young generation of scholars—what the Germans would call *Nachwuchsförderung*—through grant opportunities that would allow young researchers to undertake independent work and take part in international conferences. For outsiders (including émigré Latvians) it is also rather difficult to find a place within the existing university structures. As a consequence the young generation of Latvian historians (with a few exceptions) has not yet gone far beyond the narrow frames of the native academic community, both in physical terms as well as in intellectual. The current economic situation, unfortunately, limits the local resources for undertaking research especially in the humanities and social sciences even further.

The wheel, however, will not turn back. Twenty years of historical research and (even if sometimes turbulent) international scholarly exchange has changed the landscape of history writing about the 20th century significantly. Relations between Baltic and non-Baltic scholars of contemporary history will remain beset by controversy, if only for the reason that looking at a particular region from outside always reveals aspects that the local researcher considers irrelevant or even wrong—and *vice versa*. But increasingly, the conversation about dissonances and conflicts of opinion takes place in a spirit of inclusiveness, of:

“...a deep appreciation of each other’s thought processes and then a decision to minimize the importance of those aspects of them that can never be merged.” (Plakans, 2010, p. 10)

This is what Plakans described twenty years ago as a fundamental requirement for “intellectual convergence” in academic relations between Baltic and Western historians. I think that this is something we are slowly moving towards.

Notes

1. In this essay I reflect on questions that I have continuously encountered in the course of my studies on the emerging Baltic historiographies since the early 1990s. As it is my aim to raise and discuss recurrent issues of Baltic historiography in- and outside the Baltic States, I chose deliberately to taper some of my arguments and perhaps exaggerate slightly. I do not, however, intend to give a complete account of Baltic 20th century historiography, nor do I engage in theoretical considerations about the deconstruction of Baltic historical memory or the development of epistemological communities. My thanks go to Valters Nollendorf and Joachim Tauber for providing me with valuable information about the internal workings of the History Commissions in Latvia and Lithuania as well as to Karsten Brüggemann and Dovile Budryte for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Financial support for this research came from a Targeted Financing Grant, no. SF0180128s08, from the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research.

2. See the recently published conference proceedings: Nollendorfs and Oberländer (eds.), 2010.

3. Private conversation with Valters Nollendorfs, September 2009.

4. All final reports were subsequently translated also into Estonian and Russian. The Commission members were the former diplomat and journalist (Finland) Max Jakobson (Chairman), the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Uffe Ellemann-Jensen (Denmark), an political analyst and columnist Paul Goble (USA), the Chairman of the American Jewish Committee's Foreign Policy Commission Nicholas Lane, (USA), Professor Emeritus of Political Science at George Washington University Peter Reddaway (USA), the Chairman of the human rights organisation Memorial Arseny Roginsky (Russia), and the former conservative Member of Parliament Freiherr Wolfgang von Stetten (Germany). See also the Commission's website at: <http://www.historycommission.ee/>

5. The irritation among Lithuanian historians about the obvious lack of interest in "Lithuanian issues" on the part of their Western colleagues was also observed by Joachim Tauber, one of the foreign members of the ICL. Private conversation, Lüneburg, 8 March 2010.

6. Naimark pointed this out during a conference on "Historical Commissions: Comparative Perspectives,"organised by Columbia University Seminar on History, Redress, and Reconciliation, the Center for the Study of Human Rights, and the East Central European Center, Columbia University, 12/13 March 2010. See also: <http://hrcolumbia.org/historical/> (last accessed 4.5.2010).

7. This assessment was confirmed during several private conversations with commission members active in both the Latvian and the Lithuanian commissions.

8. This is not to imply that conceptual approaches to the past are so popular amongst many Western historians either. Especially in public discourses about the past, political history clearly dominates also in “the West”. However, within the academic field of history a healthy diversification of different approaches has long taken place, opening history towards philosophy, cultural studies and the social sciences.

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“You’ve got to know History!” Remembering and Forgetting the Past in the Present-Day Baltic

David J. Smith

Introduction: the war of monuments

This essay deals not with History as such, but with the present-day politics of collective memory. It examines which elements of Estonia’s past are being commemorated and which marginalised, and the implications this carries for political and social cohesion within the re-established independent state.

Commemoration of the past is central to the enterprise known as nation-building, wherein newly-created or radically reconfigured states seek to bolster their legitimacy and authority through efforts to nurture a shared national consciousness or—to use Benedict Anderson’s phrase—an “imagined political community.”¹ According to Anderson’s celebrated definition, the nation is imagined as sovereign but also as inherently limited: it always has finite boundaries beyond which lie other nations.² Nation-building thus necessarily entails the creation—through political discourse and political practice—of new categories of social exclusion as well as inclusion. It is invariably a fraught and contested process, and this is especially so in “plural society states” that are already home to several fully-developed national communities at the time of their formation.³

In the case of the Baltic States, contemporary nation-building has taken place against the background of 50 years of externally-imposed Soviet domination, interspersed by three years of Nazi occupation during the Second World War. Among the majority or “titular” peoples of the Soviet Baltic Republics, the onset of democratisation in the late 1980s allowed for the public articulation of a long-suppressed collective memory of forcible annexation and subsequent repression at the hands of the Stalinist regime. In Estonia and Latvia especially, this collective memory became implicated in an avowedly post-colonial approach to nation-building, which focused on delivering restorative justice for the majority ethnicity following half a century of “illegal occupation” by the USSR. Within this frame of reference, Soviet-era settlers and their descendents (primarily Russian-speaking and around one-third of the total population by 1989) were branded “colonists” and “illegal immigrants” who had no automatic claim to membership of the political community. Not only the settler community, but also the neighbouring Russian Federation was implicated in the post-colonial project: the politics of “othering” that was practised within Estonia and Latvia after 1991 was basically legitimised by casting local Russians as a domestic extension of an external threat.

The policies and practices of the restored Estonian state towards Soviet-era settlers and their descendents and the relations between Estonia and Russia have been extensively analysed elsewhere, and do not need to be

revisited here.⁴ Prior to 2004, the voluminous literature on nation-building and ethnic relations within the country focused for the most part on issues of citizenship and on the political and socio-economic status of Russian-speaking “resident aliens”. The politics of memory, by contrast, received comparatively little attention prior to EU accession, but its significance has since become increasingly clear, during what has come to be referred to as Estonia’s “War of Monuments”.

Disputes over the commemoration of the past have predictably focused on the Second World War and its aftermath. During the Soviet period, the officially sanctioned collective memory of these events referred uniquely to the liberation of Soviet Estonia from fascism: there was no public space for the articulation or commemoration of any alternative narrative of the past. Privately, however, most ethnic Estonians plainly adhered to a different view: for them the Soviet rule established in 1940 had no legitimacy, and 1944 thus spelled not liberation, but the replacement of one occupying regime by another. Moreover, this private Estonian collective memory of the war held the Soviet occupation to be far worse than the Nazi.⁵ When the Estonian narrative of the past returned to the public sphere during the 1990s, it increasingly came into conflict with the dominant “memory regime” within the EU, where most of the political class still dispute the contention that Stalinism ought to be placed on a par with Nazism when it comes to condemning the crimes of past regimes.⁶

This emerging clash of memory regimes is exemplified by the events surrounding the monument erected in the western Estonian town of Lihula at the behest of extreme Estonian nationalist Tiit Madisson (then Mayor of Lihula) and Second World War veterans’ organisations shortly after the country joined the EU in 2004. These groups were evidently concerned that the specifically Estonian narrative of the past was again being marginalised as part of the rush to integrate politically with the West.⁷ In what can only have been a deliberate disregard of international opinion, they put up a stone dedicated to “Estonian men who in 1940–45 fought against Bolshevism and for the restoration of independence”, but bearing an image of a soldier wearing the uniform of the Estonian *Waffen-SS* Legion. The decision by the Estonian government—in response to external protests—to remove the monument clearly touched a nerve within broader Estonian society. The episode quickly became a *cause célèbre*, which turned the public spotlight back onto remaining Soviet-era war memorials, most notably the “Bronze Soldier” monument which continued to stand in the very centre of the capital Tallinn.

The erection of the Lihula monument elicited protests from a range of states and international organisations. Yet it was also troubling to the significant proportion of Estonia’s population for which liberation from fascism still remained the defining frame of reference with regard to the Second World War. Under Soviet rule, the Bronze Soldier (official title the

Monument to the Liberation of Tallinn from Fascism) provided the centrepiece for the annual 9 May commemoration of the Soviet Union's final victory over Nazi Germany. In 1995 the Soviet-era plaques on the monument were replaced by ones marked simply "to the fallen of World War Two". Official commemorations of Victory Day ceased after independence, yet the monument continued to be the focus for unofficial commemorations of the anniversary every year on 9 May. In 2005, however, this monument ceased to be a simple war memorial, and was again cast in Estonian public discourse as a symbol of Soviet occupation and repression. Numerous attacks upon and threats against the monument elicited a counter-mobilisation amongst local Russian-speakers, many of whom belonged to the generation raised in the post-Soviet period. The statue issue provoked an escalation of the long-standing war of words between Tallinn and Moscow, and this international dimension to the dispute soon became the main focus of attention. Some Estonian commentators would later maintain that they were "simply unaware" of the depth of the attachment to the "Bronze Soldier" amongst the local Russian-speaking population, and of the problems that removing the statue from the centre of Tallinn would cause. However disingenuous such comments may appear, the events of 2006–07 plainly testify to the separate social worlds that the vast majority of Estonians and Russians have continued to inhabit following the collapse of the USSR.

Much has already been written about the War of Monuments and the three nights of rioting that followed the relocation of the Bronze Soldier in April 2007. Relatively few accounts, however, have examined these events specifically from the standpoint of the local Russian-speaking minority, as opposed to that of the governments in Tallinn and Moscow. In Estonia, official statements on the issue have generally dismissed any suggestion of independent voice or capacity for agency on the part of local Russians: the focus has been squarely on the criminal actions of the rioters, while the protests against the relocation of the monument were seen as having been entirely orchestrated by external forces in Russia.⁸ Opinion polls in the aftermath of the riots suggest that most Russian-speakers were appalled by the riots but were nevertheless alienated by the removal of the monument from central Tallinn. Yet, the voice of this silent majority seems to have gone largely unacknowledged. Generally speaking, Russian-speakers' perspectives on commemoration of the past have yet to attract the same measure of attention as those of the Estonian majority.⁹ This essay thus seeks to fill something of a gap in the literature, by investigating a distinctly Estonian-Russian perspective on the recent politics of memory. The focus for my discussion is the mainly Russophone city of Narva, which sits on Estonia's eastern border. In what follows, I examine public debates and perceptions surrounding the commemoration of key aspects of the city's past. Here I look especially at public monuments, which—as recent developments in Estonia

have highlighted so graphically—serve as a particularly tangible manifestation of “memory work” processes within any given society.

Historical memory in Narva

Present-day Narva (population 67,000) constitutes a fascinating case study of historical memory and identity and the ways in which these are being inscribed in the urban landscape. Originally established during the 1100s, the city experienced periods of Danish, Livonian, Swedish and Russian rule during the centuries prior to the Russian Revolution. Notable for the architecture of its Swedish-era old town and for its industry (its Kreenholm Mill was the largest in Europe during the late 19th century), the city had acquired a narrow overall majority of ethnic Estonians within its population by 1917. It opted for inclusion in the autonomous province of Estland following a referendum in spring 1917 and formed part of the independent Republic of Estonia between the wars. In 1944 the city was destroyed in its entirety, as Soviet forces advanced to re-conquer Estonia from the occupying forces of Nazi Germany. The existing residents of the city, evacuated by the Nazis, for the most part did not return after the War. Narva was resettled almost entirely with new inhabitants from the Russian, Belorussian and Ukrainian republics of the USSR, and was rebuilt as an architecturally modernist “Soviet place” suffused with the ideology of “socialist internationalism”.¹⁰

Within the dominant collective memory of the re-established Estonian Republic, Narva has essentially been configured as a site of mourning, emblematic of the destruction wrought upon the country by the Soviet regime. This framing of the city is perhaps most strikingly evident in a series of small monuments and commemorative plaques installed by the Old Narva Society (a group consisting of the city’s pre-war inhabitants and their descendents), which mark the site of notable buildings and landmarks destroyed in the bombing of 1944. It is also apparent in the numerous calendars and collections of photographs dedicated to “Old Narva”, whose images also adorn the fence which surrounds the external terrace of the city’s main hotel, refurbished during the past decade. As regards the current aspect of the city, ethnic Estonians tend to see this as an unwelcome reminder of continued Soviet legacy and of the failure to realise fully the vision of a restored Estonian nation-state. For instance, in a survey of ethnic Estonian students at Tartu University students carried out by the present author in spring 2008, respondents described the city variously as “a good place to scare foreigners”, “an architectural monstrosity of the Soviet period”, a place full of “drugs, Russians and AIDS” where “you seldom hear Estonian spoken”.¹¹

Seen from a “nationalising state” standpoint, Narva does indeed occupy an anomalous place within the Estonian Republic. While the cityscape exhibits the standard everyday “banal” markers of national identity

such as the Estonian flag on public buildings and street signs solely in the official state language, it is indeed rare to hear Estonian spoken when walking around the town. As regards monumental sites of memory, Narva remains intriguingly diverse: new monuments of "cosmopolitan" memory such as those erected by the Old Narva Society and the monument to Stalinist-era deportees in front of the railway station share the city's public space with numerous Soviet-era memorials to the fallen of the "Great Patriotic War" and to the "Liberation of Narva from Fascism". There are also remaining monuments to visible Soviet-era figures and representatives of the pre-1917 labour movement, as well as tsarist-era war memorials and a restored German military cemetery. What we see here, to quote one recent study, "is not a policy of difference and opposition [typically found in border zones], but a policy of identity in connection with (...) the most diverse forms and images".¹²

While some notable steps have been taken to "de-sovietise" Narva's public space, efforts in this regard have remained only partial. The new city government elected in October 1993 was far better disposed to co-operation with the central government than its predecessor, which was carried over from the late Soviet era. Yet subsequent leaders have necessarily had to adopt a rather measured and pragmatic stance in their running of the city, and this is equally true in their management of public space.¹³ In the autumn of 1993, Narva's Lenin monument—the last remaining one in Estonia—was removed from the main square, later reappearing in a quiet corner of the grounds of the city's historic fortress.¹⁴ It is revealing that no permanent memorial has since been installed in the place where Lenin used to stand, testifying perhaps to the absence of any obvious coherent "usable past" capable of supporting a new identity for the city in the post-Soviet present.

Into this void stepped political entrepreneurs from nearby Sweden, which since 1991 has increasingly aspired to a leading economic and political presence within its Baltic "Near Abroad".¹⁵ Swedish "assistance" was deemed to be especially important in Narva and its surrounding region, which is 83% Russian-speaking by population overall. Aside from the socio-economic and environmental challenges posed by an industrialized region hard hit by the post-communist transition to a market economy, rising nationalism in neighbouring Russia in the early 1990s fostered a perception amongst outsiders that the local inhabitants might look eastwards towards Moscow rather than westwards towards Tallinn, with drastic implications for the stability and security not just of Estonia, but of the region as a whole.¹⁶

Narva, of course, figures prominently within the national collective memory of Sweden's early-modern "Great Power period". From the late 16th to the early 18th century the Baltic provinces of Estland and Livland formed part of the extended Swedish realm, and Narva became one of its most important commercial and administrative centres. In November 1700 the city provided the setting for a remarkable military victory by Swedish monarch

Charles XII against the numerically superior forces of Russian Tsar Peter I. This ultimately proved to be the victorious opening to a disastrous war, which led to Sweden's loss of the Baltic provinces and marked the end of its dominion in Northern Europe. Still the memory of 1700 lived on within nationalist circles. In the 1930s, a monument of the Swedish Lion—funded through public donations—was gifted to the city of Narva and inaugurated in 1936 during a visit to the city by the Sweden's Crown Prince. The original "Swedish Lion" was destroyed in 1944 during the Soviet bombardment of Narva. As contacts with Sweden resumed during the early 1990s, Swedish representatives in Estonia—notably the first cultural attaché Hans Lepp—joined with local heritage activists in calling for the monument to be re-instated.¹⁷

These Swedish overtures were greeted enthusiastically by Estonian central government and by representatives of the local authority in Narva. Popular narratives of history among Estonians still make reference to a "Happy Swedish Time" that is supposed to have brought relative freedom to an en-serfed indigenous peasantry. As economic engagement with Sweden intensified during the 1990s, Narva's city government also began to speak of the Swedish past as a "Golden Age" of peace and economic prosperity. Funds to restore the Swedish Lion monument were duly procured from Sweden and in November 2000 the inauguration of this sculpture became the centrepiece of "the Swedish Days", a three-day festival (the largest since the restoration of Estonia's independence) to mark the 300th anniversary of the 1700 Battle of Narva.¹⁸

One of the Narva city officials involved in the Lion project described the monument—and the wider festivities—as a "visiting card" symbolising revived links with Sweden and hope for their continued development in the future. The Swedish Days, the Council and its partners insisted, were not about the celebration of an historic Swedish military victory, but were intended as a symbol of modern-day friendship and a tribute to everyone who perished in Narva during the Great Northern War, regardless of which side they were fighting on.¹⁹ To underline the point, the Swedish Ambassador laid a wreath at the tsarist-era memorial to the Russian fallen of the battle, just as the Swedish Crown Prince had done in 1936. Such rhetoric and actions, however, could not mask the obviously nationalistic intent that had lain behind the original inter-war monument, and which was so plainly at odds with the then emerging image (subsequently dominant during the Cold War) of Sweden as a progressive welfare democracy and embodiment of progressive multilateralism. This fact, it seems, was not lost on representatives of the Swedish state who attended the inauguration—Lena Hjelm Wallen, attending on behalf of the government, called the Lion and its setting "a wonderful panorama for living history". Six years later, however, the former Deputy Foreign Minister, now the Chair of a Forum for Living

History would not consent to an interview with the present author, insisting that she could not remember anything about the events in question.

The aforementioned Narva official, meanwhile, openly acknowledged the sensitive nature of this commemoration in a city where the overwhelming majority of the population was now ethnically Russian. In this respect, he added, the organisers did their utmost to avoid any possible pretext for a “cheap political scandal”.²⁰ Indeed, it appears that the organisers not only downplayed but even deliberately obscured the symbolic link between this monument and the 1700 battle. The 2000 Lion was smaller and different in form to the 1936 original, and was erected not on the battlefield site at the western approaches to Narva (as the original had been), but within the city at a vantage point overlooking the Narova River and the fortresses of Narva and the neighbouring Russian town of Ivangorod. While proximate to the centre, this site could hardly be considered one of the main public spaces in the city, where the monument would have been visible to residents on a daily basis. As for the monument itself, this bore only the date of the battle in Roman numerals, and the Latin inscription *Svecia Memor* (“Memory of Sweden”).

If the intention was indeed to obscure the original commemorative intention behind the Swedish Lion, then this ploy would seem to have paid off. A guide book published in 2005 claimed that the monument was “barely tolerated” by Narva’s population;²¹ however, this is not the picture that emerged from a survey of 100 local inhabitants organised by the present author and his co-researcher Stuart Burch in August 2008. When shown a picture of the monument and its surroundings and asked to talk about it, most respondents spoke of this small park as a nice place to walk, rest and observe the famous view over the border and the two fortresses. Only rarely did people allude to the commemorative function of the Lion statue, and even then there was frequent confusion and uncertainty as to its meaning. In this respect, it could be argued that the Lion has been included within a peculiarly local narrative of the city and its cultural identity, one that subverts the meta-historical understandings ascribed to it by outsiders.²²

Yet, the Lion did unquestionably act as a catalyst for renewed public discussion around Narva’s history and public space. In the weeks that followed the inauguration of the monument, one local journalist alluded to these debates, drawing particular attention to the still vacant site of the former Lenin statue on the main square. This the author described as an “empty place that had to be filled”, a kind of symbolic void at the heart of the city.²³ As the article makes clear, the erection of the Swedish Lion had predictably led to the spotlight being turned onto Narva’s tsarist Russian past. From 1993 onwards some local circles had been calling for a monument to Peter I to be installed in place of Lenin, on what had now reverted to its original pre-war name of Peter’s Square. With a monument to Swedish King Charles XII now in place, local commentators asserted that it was only right and proper that his Russian adversary should also be commemorated in this way. After all,

they noted, a monument to the Tsar had been erected in front of the city's town hall during the late tsarist era and had thus formed part of the "authentic" landscape of Old Narva prior to its removal in 1922 following the establishment of the Estonian Republic. With independence restored in 1991, the tsarist era was again cast as a period of oppression at the hands of a foreign conqueror. Any attempt to commemorate the actions of Peter I in Narva would therefore almost certainly run counter to the dominant narrative of history at the state level. When it came to acknowledging the city's Russian past, the post-1993 local authority preferred to focus on the less contentious and more universally identifiable figure of Aleksandr Pushkin. In 1999 a bust of the celebrated poet was unveiled on the street that bears his name, as part of a festival of Russian culture which was apparently construed by the local élite as an important prelude to the much larger Swedish Days that were scheduled for the following year.

It would seem that the November 2000 festivities—with their "inclusive" reference to the fallen of all sides—were originally intended to serve as the definitive commemoration of the Great Northern War. Conspicuously absent from the official record was any reference to the second Narva battle of July 1704, even though this event was—in the words of the aforementioned local journalist "no less significant to local people."²⁴ As the 300th anniversary of 1704 drew nearer, the city government apparently approached "the Russian side"—presumably the Consulate of the Russian Federation in Narva and local authorities in the neighbouring Leningradskaja Oblast' of Russia—with proposals for a major event that would serve to "balance" the earlier Swedish days. In September 2004 Narva did host a "Days of St. Petersburg" cultural festival, yet the commemoration of the July anniversary of the 1704 battle was seemingly rather muted. The major event connected to the anniversary was a small-scale re-enactment of the battle staged in the castle grounds by local military history enthusiasts who in 2003 formed their own company of the St Petersburg-based Preobrazhenskii regiment.

Members of the Preobrazhenskii Group insisted that their activity had nothing to do with politics—merely the amateur historian's desire to recreate the past as faithfully as possible.²⁵ Nevertheless, the founders of the group were allegedly motivated at least in part by a concern that the Russian dimension of Estonia's past was being increasingly marginalised within the re-established independent republic. This, at least, was the view of one local respondent with links to the regiment.²⁶ Interestingly, the society first announced its existence publicly in November 2003 on the 303rd anniversary of the first Battle of Narva, when its members went on a parade through the town which began at the Swedish Lion and ended at the tsarist-era memorial to the Russian fallen of the 1700 battle on the outskirts of town. The choice of the Lion as a starting point was not coincidental, but was intended to convey the message that this event commemorated everyone—Russian and

Swedish—who had fallen during the Great Northern War. At the same time, the members of the group announced that they would be organising a re-enactment of the 1704 battle the following summer in the castle grounds to which fellow military history enthusiasts from Sweden had been invited.

Swedish enthusiasts were absent from the Narva battle held in July 2004, when an Estonian group from nearby Rakvere stood in as opponents for the Preobrazhenskii Regiment. A year later, however, a Swedish contingent did come, while in summer 2006 groups from Estonia, Russia, Sweden, Finland, Latvia and Germany took part in what has now become an annual historical festival, popular with local residents and a growing number of tourists. The use of local monuments (both Swedish and Tsarist) to the Great Northern War as a backdrop to this spectacle supports the view, expressed by one local commentator, that:

“...the significance of the [Lion] monument is cultural, and I would say the same about the meaning of the other Great Northern War monuments for Russians. We're not talking here about the seizure and destruction of the town in 1704, we're talking about other things. This is a symbol connected with history, culture and our cultural environment.”²⁷

The fluidity of historical meaning

The meanings that are attached to particular monuments, however, are shifting and contingent, and depend very much upon the particular context within which they are viewed. In this respect, political changes in the present can radically alter the significance of a monument, even if its position and appearance remain unchanged. Just a few months after the above interview was conducted, the events of the Great Northern War in Narva became implicated in the escalating disputes surrounding the Soviet past and the Bronze Soldier monument in Tallinn. By autumn 2006, Estonia's ruling Reform Party had made the “Bronze Soldier” issue a key element of its campaign ahead of the March 2007 parliamentary elections. After scuffles broke out at the site in May 2006, Estonia's Prime Minister Andrus Ansip asserted that the role of monuments was to unite and not to divide; since the Bronze Soldier had become a factor of division in society, it should now be moved from its current location to a cemetery.²⁸ Above all, Ansip sought to transform the statue question into an issue of national sovereignty, asking whether decision-making power resided in Toompea or in Moscow.

Elements of the opposition Centre Party (which garners the votes of most of the Russian-speaking part of the electorate) responded in a similarly populist vein. In Narva the Head of the City Council Mikhail Stalnukhin now proposed active steps to erect a monument to Peter the Great, noting that within the city “there is a monument to the Swedish King, the Swedish Lion. Why should one not also put up a monument to Peter I, who did battle with

Charles XII?”²⁹ Such a monument, Stalnukhin argued, would attract additional tourists and additional revenue to the town. He added that none of the figures in Estonia’s history with connections to Narva were entirely uncontroversial: inter-war President Konstantin Päts, for instance, had been made Narva’s first honorary citizen. Any suggestion for a monument in Päts’s honour, however, would also elicit mixed reactions amongst today’s inhabitants.³⁰

If Stalnukhin’s initiative was intended to provoke his political opponents in the national government, it clearly had the desired effect. In a furious retort, Andrus Ansip retorted that neither Narva nor Estonia as a whole had any reason to be thankful to Peter I, whose forces had killed or deported a significant proportion of Narva’s population after the city fell in 1704. More tellingly, the Prime Minister referred to the removal of Peter the Great monuments from Tallinn and Narva in 1922, and alleged that re-establishing these would be to “spit in the face” of Estonia’s inter-war leaders. Putting up monuments to conquerors, he insisted, showed disregard for national consciousness: while upholding such consciousness should not imply isolation, it did entail the need to “keep order in one’s own backyard”. In recent times, Estonia had allowed the infiltration of signs and symbols absolutely alien to its culture: “we have been ultra-tolerant during this time, but tell me: what should foreigners admire when they come here? That which is already familiar to them from their homeland?”³¹

The proposal to erect the Peter the Great monument was subsequently withdrawn—at least temporarily—after Stalnukhin and other local Centre Party representatives came under pressure from their central leadership in Tallinn. However, the dispute surrounding the Bronze Soldier had now been explicitly widened to encompass a broader frame of Estonia’s past. In April 2007, as disquiet at the relocation of the Bronze Soldier spread outwards to the Russian-populated north-east, an abusive reference to Prime Minister Ansip was scrawled on the base of the Swedish Lion monument. What for most local people was either a mute monument or a purely cultural object thus acquired a political connotation against the background of the dispute, becoming the locus for an act of symbolic resistance, to use Peter Nas’s phrase.³² The same, incidentally, could be said of the two Soviet-era monuments that still stand on Narva’s main square: in April 2007 these acted as the rallying point for an estimated 3,000 local people who came out to protest at the removal of the Bronze Soldier in the capital 200 kilometres away. On an August day the following year, however, not a single person made reference to these monuments when shown a picture of the square as part of a survey carried out for the purposes of the present research.

When asked to talk about pictures showing particular “sites of memory” in Narva, many people made absolutely no reference to commemoration of the past, focusing instead on more everyday functions of the places in question. Most, however, were well attuned to “memory

politics", and here there were numerous expressions of discontent at the removal of the Bronze Soldier from Tallinn and at what was seen as a more generalised marginalisation of Soviet and Russian history within present-day Estonia. Only in one or two cases, however, did the researchers conducting our survey come across exclusionary nationalist rhetoric that would deny any space to alternative histories: what came across most strongly was a desire for "memory pluralism" or "democratisation of memory", whereby each individual should be free to maintain his or her own view of the past and commemorate it as he or she sees fit.

For instance, when locals were shown a picture of the empty plinth on Peter's (formerly Lenin) Square in Narva, a typical range of responses was as follows:

"I wouldn't have taken Lenin away. It was history, it happened!"

"Put Lenin back! They stuck him in a corner! And I'd also say: don't pretend history didn't happen—it did!"

"You know, I was against the removal! Throughout the world people put up monuments to remember their history, whether it was bad or good! It simply shouldn't have been taken away! Everyone would understand for themselves: should you bow before this Lenin, or not. But you've got to know history."

As already indicated, "memory pluralism" has been a defining characteristic of Narva's landscape since 1991. By the time of the annual historical festival in August 2008 (during the course of which our research was conducted), "normal" service within the town seemed to have been resumed following the "history wars" of the previous year. Once again, military re-enactors and visitors congregated from across Northern Europe: the Swedish and Russian "armies" pitched camp in the grounds of Narva Castle set up theirs, and the stage was thereby set for a mock battle during the evening that attracted hundreds of spectators. Alongside the military camps on this occasion stood a mock-up of an Estonian peasant homestead, which bore an explanatory plaque entitled "Estonian peasants in the tumult of wars". This explained how:

"...in the 13th century the Estonians were deprived of their ancient freedom. The last Estonian kings...were assassinated in the stronghold of Paide after the uprising of St George's Night in 1343. In this way the foreign kings from Denmark, Sweden, Russia and Poland came to the power. The peasants did not play any important role in the wars waged on the Estonian

territory. Yet at the same time the acts of warfare greatly affected their daily life. Tilling was disturbed, famine was often accompanied by diseases, the soldiers of the defeated armies looted the villages.”

Ironically the plaque and the reconstructed camp sat underneath the Soviet-era Lenin memorial, now relocated to a quiet corner of the castle grounds.

The scene just described in the Narva Castle grounds could in many ways be portrayed as a metaphor for the overall course of inter-ethnic relations and “memory politics” in the restored Estonian Republic. For most of those who belong to the “titular” nationality within today’s Estonia, the period since 1991 has been synonymous with re-establishing a genuinely independent “state of one’s own” and re-articulating a history that was banished to the private sphere during the half a century within the USSR. The flip side of this development has been the political marginalisation of the large Russian-speaking population established on the back of Soviet rule, and the official designation of the Soviet past as a period of darkness, counterpoised to the Golden Age of national freedom between the two World Wars. One effect of Soviet nationalities policy was to create a plural society in which Estonians and Russians—broadly speaking—inhabited different social worlds. This experience has persisted following the restoration of independence and the reversal of power relations between the two groups, with Narva in particular taking on the quality of a peripheral enclave within a putative unitary nation-state.

Conclusion: the diversity and commonality of historical memory

For the most part, however, the experience has been one of peaceful—if sometimes uneasy—co-existence between different ethnicities. This was evident in the practices with regard to the Bronze Soldier prior to 2005: despite the symbolic de-sovietisation of much of Estonia’s public space, Soviet-era memorials to the Great Patriotic War were left *in situ* after 1991. These were re-classified as neutral memorials to the fallen; Soviet holidays such as the 9 May and 22 September were no longer officially observed; however, local people were allowed to observe their own unofficial commemorations at the site on the dates in question. In Narva, meanwhile, Estonian language and culture have essentially retained the minority status that they had acquired during the Soviet period. This can be seen not least in the city’s highly variegated places of memory, which continued to encompass key elements of the city’s Soviet past within an approach that did not prioritise any single coherent grand narrative of history.

The ethnic Estonian collective memory of repression at the hands of the Soviet regime nevertheless remained a potent resource available to nationalist political forces, as became apparent through the events of 2004–07. The increased visibility of radical right groups in Estonia following EU

accession fed on parallel developments in Russia, where the government became more assertive in its dealings with neighbouring former Soviet republics during Vladimir Putin’s second term as president. Russian representatives were highly outspoken during 2006–07 regarding the proposed removal of the Bronze Soldier, and this fact was seized upon by the Estonian government by way of justification for its own uncompromising line on the issue. Yet, the discontent that ethnic Russians in Estonia voiced in relation to the statue’s removal should not be taken to imply political affiliation to Russia or opposition to Estonian statehood *per se*. According to one commentator, the opposition was directed primarily at the existing contours of nation-building and was about asserting one’s place *within* the imagined political community.³³ This was especially so for those ethnic Russians, who had made efforts to integrate themselves more fully with the now dominant Estonian societal culture. For them, the removal served as an indication that their opinions and concerns did not matter to the government.

In our Narva survey research, too, the dominant frame of reference that came across was not irredentist or nationalist, but “multiculturalist”—that is to say, based on a claim that the Baltic States are not the homelands simply of a single ethnic “titular” nation, but also of a variety of minority groups, including the Russian diaspora, who “...can legitimately claim to have a relationship with the region that stretches back centuries”.³⁴ While keen to preserve and introduce symbols and rituals underlining the historic Russian presence in the region, most local residents have not objected to the appearance of symbols associated with the titular nation and the Swedish past.³⁵ Indeed, many of the local people we interviewed were able to identify clearly with Narva’s Swedish heritage, as manifested in the surviving remnants of the pre-war old town. These cultural artefacts were described by one prominent local commentator in 2006 as “integral to the identity of every Narvitian”.³⁶ Our subsequent survey appears to bear this out. Similar trends, it should be said, have been observed in the Kaliningrad region, where official efforts to instigate a Soviet “Year Zero” in 1945 could not prevent local people from identifying unofficially with the German cultural heritage of the city in which they lived.³⁷

When it came to our own survey, what people in Narva seemed to be arguing above all—to paraphrase one of the survey respondents—is that “we were history, we happened!” Implicit in this is a fear that if a community is deprived of its past, it might cease to have a meaningful future. This fear, of course, became all too familiar to many Estonians during the Soviet era, and it remains present today, six years after EU and NATO membership has been achieved. The bodies charged with promoting and upholding democratic development across Europe are seeking to promote a democratic multicultural vision of the nation-state that fosters integration without allowing assimilation, or, put another way, gives cultural recognition to national minorities without undermining the civic cohesion of multiethnic

countries. This constitutes a live issue and significant challenge for all European societies in an age of multicultural globalisation. In the UK, for instance, recent suggestions that a more coherent single national narrative of history needs to be taught in schools have been countered by those who maintain that Britain “lacks a strong enough common culture to support the sustainable teaching of a common history.”³⁸

The issue is even more salient in the post-colonialist environment of the former USSR, where—unlike in Britain—newly-created or restored states have in most cases yet to achieve even minimal convergence around a common culture. Here, as we have seen in relation to Estonia, the scope for conflictual politicisation of the past remains considerable. With regard to the post-Soviet case, numerous commentators—including a contributor to the current volume—have highlighted the need for a “democratisation of history” that will take these societies beyond a continuing preoccupation with ethnocentric narratives of the “suffering and fighting” nation.³⁹ In a post-Soviet context, this would seem firstly to imply a move away from casual stereotyping of entire groups towards a mutual appreciation of the complexities of recent history and the diversity of individual experiences and behaviours found within it. This entails a recognition that representatives of “other” ethnic groups were not simply perpetrators but also experienced persecution and repression themselves; by the same token, it means accepting that one’s “own” group did not consist uniquely of heroes and victims, but also contained perpetrators and collaborators, while others remained largely untouched by or aloof from the momentous political events going on around them.⁴⁰

Also crucial from the standpoint of democratisation are those recent works exploring the more positive multiculturalist legacies from the region’s past, which are still all often overlooked. It is this latter area, of course, that John Hiden has made one of his most important contributions to the fields of Baltic and East European history. Anyone truly intent on “knowing history” in the Baltic cannot do this without reading about Paul Schiemann, who was first and foremost a Baltic German, but also a thinker of European stature on minority rights, an “opponent of totalitarianism of any kind” and a tireless campaigner for reconciliation between Latvians and Germans inhabiting the “shared territorial space” of the Republic of Latvia. However different the situation in today’s restored Baltic States, there is still much that can usefully be gained from revisiting Schiemann’s ideas.

Notes

1. Gillis 1994; Anderson, 1991.
2. Anderson 1991, p. 1.
3. Berg 2001.
4. See, inter alia, Smith, D.J., 1998; Smith, G. et al, 1998; Lauristin & Heidmets, 2002; Budryte, 2005.
5. Mertelsmann et al, 2009.
6. Onken, 2007.
7. On Lihula, see Feest, 2007; Brüggemann and Kasekamp, 2008; Smith, 2008.
8. Especially notable in this regard have been efforts to draw a parallel between these events and the abortive, Comintern-initiated communist putsch that was mounted in Tallinn on 1 December 1924.
9. Feest, 2007, p. 243. See, however, the recent contributions by Brednikova, 2007; Kaiser & Nikiforova, 2008; Norman, 2009.
10. On the 20th century history of Narva, see: Weiss-Wendt, 1997; Kaiser and Nikiforova, 2008.
11. In this regard, see also Lunden, 2004, pp. 141 and 149; Peil, 2005.
12. Brednikova, 2007, p. 60.
13. On the politics of Narva post-1993, see Smith & Wilson, 1997; Smith, 2002.
14. In a further testament to the varied commemorative landscape in Narva, the relocated Lenin monument sits adjacent to the plaque commemorating Finnish volunteers who helped to drive the Bolsheviks from Narva in 1919.
15. Smith, D.J., 2003.
16. Burch & Smith 2007, pp. 919–20,
17. Burch & Smith 2007, pp. 920–21.
18. Burch & Smith 2007, pp. 920 & p.928.
19. Burch & Smith 2007, pp. 926–28.
20. Burch & Smith 2007, p. 926.
21. Bousfield 2004, p. 374.
22. In this respect, see also Kaiser & Nikiforova, 2008.
23. Burch & Smith 2007, p. 929.
24. Burch & Smith 2007, p. 930.
25. Burch & Smith 2007, pp. 930–31.
26. Anonymous communication to the present author, April 2006.
27. Eldar Efendiev, interview with present author and Stuart Burch, Narva, 28 March 2006. Cited in Burch & Smith 2007, p. 926.
28. Smith, 2008, p. 426. This was despite survey results prior to the election which suggested that nearly all ethnic Russians and around half of ethnic Estonians wanted to see the monument left in its original place.
29. Burch & Smith, 2007, p. 932.
30. Burch & Smith, 2007, p. 933.

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31. Ibid.
32. Nas, 1998, p. 547.
33. Astrov, 2009, p. 73.
34. Smith, G. et al, 1998, p. 98.
35. Similar observations have been made regarding Russian-speaking “non-titulars” living in Kazakhstan—see Danzer 2009. This suggests that for this group, a specific local identification to one’s Republic (or even city) of residence was a far more salient feature of identity politics than is often supposed
36. Eldar Efendiev, interview with present author and Stuart Burch, Narva, 28 March 2006. Cited in Burch & Smith 2007, p. 932.
37. Sezneva, 2002.
38. Kettle, 2010.
39. Onken, 2003; Budryte, 2005. In a similar vein, Jan-Werner Müller (2004, p. 33) has spoken of the need for a state of “negotiated memory” within ethnically divided societies, which do not sit easily with “thick” totalising narratives of history.
40. In this respect, see also Lehti et al, 2008.

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The Unbearable Lightness of Incessant Change: The Predicaments of Modernity in Lithuania

Leonidas Donskis

Who is suffering the most?

The American historian and political scientist Alfred Erich Senn once pointed out that one of the most characteristic features of Central and Eastern European consciousness is a sense of vulnerability and fragility. This results, in his terms, in a “comparative martyrology”, best expressed by the question, “Who is suffering the most?” One working hypothesis might be that feelings of innocence and victimisation—both very widespread in post-Communist countries—are nothing but an inversion of what J. L. Talmon once described as political messianism, meaning an awkward nineteenth century blend of post-revolutionary fervour and nationalism that originated in France and then was transmitted to Central and Eastern Europe.¹

Experiences of depression and despair usually call for symbolic compensation. For example, the new and allegedly vulnerable nations of Central and Eastern Europe appear to be determined by a kind of inadequacy of self-consciousness and collective identity and, as a result, tend to look backwards in an obviously messianic manner—although, of course, this is not exclusively the case. For example, the Third Rome of the Russian Slavophiles or the Athens of the North extolled by Lithuanian neo-Romantics—among them the French poet of Lithuanian-Polish origin, Oscar Miłosz—are both symbolic constructs that seem grounded in a fundamental denial of modern Western civilisation and an emphasis on personal heritage. This was evident in the ideological disputes that took place, from the time of Peter the Great, between the anti-Western, anti-modern Russian Slavophiles and the Hegelian *Zapadniki* (Westerners), who were sympathetic to Western reforms.

This sort of Central and Eastern European messianism has common roots in purist, ethnocentric ideology that is inherently wary of modern, and in particular Western, conventions. The messianic tendency undoubtedly penetrated Lithuanian consciousness and culture through the works of Adam Mickiewicz—whose poetic vision of Poland as a crucified nation and redeemer of other nations can be considered the climax of messianic thought—and of Polish Romanticism in general, not to mention Jules Michelet’s revolutionary messianism and Giuseppe Mazzini’s vision of *Roma Terza*, which, in turn, grew out of the *Risorgimento*.

The Russian pan-Slavist Nikolai Danilevsky’s enormously influential comparative study of civilisations, *Rossia i Evropa* (*Russia and Europe*, 1869), not only anticipated the morphological conception of culture later elaborated in Leo Frobenius’s *Ursprung der Afrikanischen Kulturen und Naturwissenschaftliche Kulturlehre* (1898) and *Paideuma* (1921), and

Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918–22), but also conceived the development of a completely independent Russian culture, which would replace Western civilisation after its inevitable collapse. Instead of using such terms as “culture” and “civilisation”, Danilevsky proposed a new vocabulary and a new theory of cultural-historical types based on a cyclical theory of history. Unwilling to claim full credit for this new perspective, he acknowledged his debt to Heinrich Rückert's *Lehrbuch der Weltgeschichte in organischer Darstellung* (1857).

From the perspective of Danilevsky's historical analysis and model for the future, the case of modern Lithuania is provocative. Throughout the twentieth century, Lithuania's self-image as the Athens of the North has peacefully coexisted with a moderate messianic construct, casting this small nation as an important bridge between East and West (the former often reduced to Slavic civilisation or Russia). This concept of a synthesis of civilisations—East and West—was elaborated and promoted by the Lithuanian philosopher Stasys Šalkauskis, particularly in *Sur les confins de deux mondes*, a book on Lithuania written in French in Switzerland. Later it was severely criticised by other Lithuanian philosophers and essayists, including Šalkauskis's disciple Antanas Maceina.

Yet the myth of Lithuania as a bridge between the East and the West persists, and Lithuanians are still inclined to describe their country as combining unique qualities of the two opposing civilisations. Even if the civilisational mission fails, Lithuania, in this perception, would be able to serve at least as a kind of economic bridge between Eastern Europe (primarily Russia) and Western Europe. The recent accession of Lithuania to the European Union might have corrected this vision slightly, yet it would be premature to play funeral music for it. More than a few Lithuanian politicians and public figures are still tempted to use this concept and rhetoric which is far from genuinely Lithuanian—on closer examination it appears that the idea of Lithuania positioned between the East and the West is nothing more than a variation on the time-honoured Russian theme.

Roughly speaking, Šalkauskis's vision of Lithuania as a bridge between the civilisations of East and West is just another term for the specifically Russian notion of Eurasia, though this concept is usually reserved exclusively for Russia and its historic mission. Therefore, Šalkauskis's concept of a synthesis of civilisations is merely a Lithuanian variation on a classic theme in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian social philosophy. “Eurasianism”—both as a philosophical tendency and as a model of cultural/civilisational identity—was a central concept in the works of Russian religious philosophers Vladimir Solovyov and Lev Karsavin. The latter spent much of his time in inter-war Lithuania where he established himself as a noted scholar, a Professor of History at Vytautas Magnus University, and a major influence in the intellectual life of that time.²

The emergence of modern Lithuania

Interestingly enough, Šalkauskis argued that Lithuania should never confine herself to one particular pattern of culture. Instead, he insisted, Lithuania should reconcile and embrace—within the limits of her identity and trajectories of consciousness—Germanic, Romance and Slavic influences. The more cultures and influences Lithuania embraces, the more conscious of her complex history and culture she becomes.

Much ink has been spilt since then arguing whether it makes sense to take this vision seriously—particularly now that Lithuania has become a member of the EU and NATO, qualifying for membership of clubs that were supposed to be beyond her reach for such a long time. Yet we should not forget that Šalkauskis's concept of Lithuania as a bridge between the civilizations of East and West stressed the importance of culture conceived of as a concert of nations and their educational process, instead of as political domination or power.

Lithuania's accession to the European Union, and also joining NATO, is arguably one of the pivotal events in Lithuanian history. It invites reconsideration of what happened to Lithuania over the past sixteen years. There is little doubt that Lithuania has already achieved a turning point in her history, which might be compared only to her baptism in the fourteenth century. A latecomer to Christianity and modernity, a country with several planes of cultural and civilisational identity, Lithuania seems finally to be on her way to integration in the Western system of trade and security.

Historically speaking, Lithuania is an old polity, which dates back to the early Middle Ages. It has an ancient language and an old culture, both of which were recalled and revived during the national re-birth movement of the nineteenth century. One of the greatest powers in medieval Europe whose territory stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, she eventually crumbled and lost her influence in modern Europe.

Bearing in mind the fact that the country was part of Tsarist Russia from 1795 to 1918, that the Lithuanian élite adopted the Polish language and, finally, that Lithuania underwent considerable Russification in the nineteenth century, the emergence of the Republic of Lithuania in 1918 was nothing short of miraculous. Yet Lithuania enjoyed parliamentary democracy for just eight years, before a coup in 1926 saw it replaced by mildly authoritarian rule which lasted until 1940. Incidentally, all three Baltic States followed a similar pattern.

At the same time, Lithuania would be unthinkable without its magnificent Jewish legacy. Prior to the Second World War, Lithuania was famous for her very large Jewish community. About 240,000 Jews lived in Lithuania; only 20,000 survived the Holocaust. The Lithuanian capital, Vilnius—occupied by Poland from 1920 to 1939—was known around the world as the Jerusalem of the North, and many internationally eminent Jews lived in or were from Lithuania. Needless to say, the history of Jewish

civilization would be unthinkable without Lithuania's Jews—the Litvaks. Suffice it to recall those who inscribed the names of the Litvaks and Lithuania on the cultural map of the twentieth century world—the philosophers Emmanuel Lévinas and Aron Gurwitsch, the painters Chaïm Soutine (a close friend of Amedeo Modigliani in Paris), Pinkus Krémègne, Michel Kikoine, Marc Chagall (all these painters were related to Belarus and, in one way or another, to Lithuania—most importantly, all were Litvaks) and Neemija Arbitblatas, the sculptor Jacques Lipchitz, the violinist Jascha Heifetz and the art critic Bernard Berenson.

To cut a long story short, Lithuanian cultural history reads like an exciting novel, if not an adventure story. Small wonder, then, that much of it remains to be discovered by our fellow Europeans. The same applies to us—only now does Lithuania appear to be capable of truly challenging herself and offering new interpretations of her complex historical past.

What happened in 1940 was a tragedy for the Baltic region: the Baltic States were occupied and annexed by the Soviet Union. Having experienced the worst nightmares of both totalitarian ideologies and regimes during the Second World War, Lithuania was occupied once more by the Soviets in 1945, condemning the country to five decades of isolation from the Western world. Lithuania lost considerable groups from her society: as mentioned, hundreds of thousands of Lithuanian Jews perished in the Holocaust, the most educated and prosperous part of Lithuanian society was either exterminated or exiled to Siberia. Tens of thousands of Lithuanians fled to Germany after the Second World War. Having spent several years in Displaced Persons camps in West Germany, some of them moved to the US, Great Britain, Canada, and Australia; others found their shelter in continental Europe.

Modern Lithuania has emerged as a characteristically East-Central European nation with an emphasis on a strong sense of history and also on the critical role of culture and language in the process of political emancipation. Quite legitimately, Lithuania might be described as a nation of language, culture, and historical memory. Having been confined to a world of total control, severe censorship, violent politics, cynical lies, sinister ideological indoctrination, and brutal violation of all basic human rights, Lithuania, like other nations of Central and Eastern Europe, knows the taste and value of freedom better than any Western European country. Torn away and isolated from the family of free nations for half a century, Lithuania had finally made her return to where she belonged for centuries, namely, the Western world as a shared space of common values.

Since the nineteenth century, literature in Lithuania has become something incomparably more than a sheer matter of fiction and aesthetic experience. For a small people—whose native language and Latin alphabet was banned by Tsarist Russia's administration for forty years (1864–1904) and whose book smugglers were engaged in what was regarded as illegal

activities, becoming legendary as heroes of national rebirth and political rebels—literature was bound to become a form of self-assertion and self-discovery.

Czesław Miłosz, himself born and brought up in Lithuania, once wittily remarked that modern Lithuania was created by a bunch of philologists. If we can assert that culture precedes and anticipates politics, Lithuania would exemplify this better than anything else. The struggle for the survival of the Lithuanian language unavoidably led to its modernization and also to the political mobilization of the intelligentsia.

Modern Lithuanian literature has experienced a number of important influences—Polish, Russian and Scandinavian literatures should be mentioned first. Interestingly enough, two fine writers in pre-war Lithuania, Ignas Šeinius and Jurgis Savickis, had much to do with the Nordic countries—the master of Lithuanian impressionist prose, Ignas Šeinius, served as the Lithuanian Ambassador to Sweden, whereas Jurgis Savickis, a skilled writer of political memoir, before he was appointed the Lithuanian representative to the League of Nations in Geneva, acted as a diplomat in Denmark and Finland.

One of the most enigmatic traits of Lithuanian literature emerged during the Soviet period. Lithuanian poets ceased being merely poets. Instead, they were perceived as the very embodiments of truth, honour and conscience. Their readership and the audience of the poetry reading nights would engage in a form of covert action; a conspiracy of souls against the totalitarian regime's cynical lies and contempt for human individuals, peoples and their freedom. The emergence of poetry readings and theatre performances as a sort of silent conspiracy against brutal oppression, evil and cynical lies sheds new light on the elusive side of existence in Soviet Lithuania, particularly in the early 1970s.

At the same time, Lithuania has a sensitive grasp of political and cultural pluralism by virtue of once having been a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural country. Although political, linguistic and cultural nationalism has considerably changed the character of modern political existence in Lithuania and beyond, Lithuania still has much to say about a peaceful co-existence of religions, cultures and ethnic groups. This is undoubtedly one of the assets and sources of strength of Lithuanian political culture, which reaffirms its roots in the Central European tradition of cultural diversity.

Lithuania is a country of emigrants, and it has always been so. Despite the country's relatively small size, Lithuanian culture is disseminated all over the world. Throughout the twentieth century, Lithuanians were a nation of emigrants, settling in Western Europe, North America, South America and Australia—forming a particularly active and influential diaspora in the United States of America. It is therefore worth mentioning some émigré scholars who were and continue to be active in Lithuanian culture.

To name just a few: the archaeologist and student of mythology Marija Gimbutas in the USA, the civilisation theorist and sociologist of culture Vytautas Kavolis in the USA, the semiotician and literary scholar Algirdas Julius Greimas in France, the art historian Jurgis Baltrušaitis in France (whose father Jurgis Baltrušaitis, a Lithuanian diplomat in Moscow, established himself as a Russian poet writing in Russian and joined the great Russian symbolists), and the political theorist Aleksandras Shtromas in the UK and the USA. All of them had a great impact on Lithuanian culture.

Lithuanian émigrés played a critical role in twentieth-century Lithuanian politics and culture. If they had not championed the Lithuanian cause in the West, Lithuania would have had difficulty restoring her independence. Probably even more important was their role in creating an alternative vision for the future of the country or “yet another Lithuania.” They made a major contribution to what has been termed by Tomas Venclova—a great poet and literary scholar who teaches literature at Yale University—the second voice of culture, the voice which acquires crucial significance when the first voice either remains silent or sings the wrong or imposed melody.

What is the relationship between Lithuania and the other two Baltic nations? In more than one way, Lithuania differs from Latvia and Estonia. No matter how rich in its historically formed religious communities and minorities, the Roman Catholic Lithuania, due to its historic liaisons with Poland and other Central and Eastern European nations, is much more of an East-Central European nation than the Lutheran Latvia and Estonia. It would be quite misleading to assume the seemingly identical paths of the Baltic States to their role and place in modern history. Lithuania’s history and its understanding would be unthinkable without taking into account such countries as Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, among others, whereas Latvia is inseparable from major German and Swedish influences, and Estonia from Swedish and Danish, not to mention her close cultural ties with Finland. As mentioned already, Lithuania is an old polity with her strong presence in Mediaeval and Renaissance Europe, whilst Latvia and Estonia emerged as the new political actors in the twentieth century.

It was with sound reason, then, that after 1990, when Lithuania and the other two Baltic nations became independent, politicians and media people started making jokes about the unity of three Baltic sisters, which was achieved by them through their common experience of once having been three inmates in the same cell of that same prison. This led the former foreign minister (now president) Toomas Hendrik Ilves of Estonia to go so far as to describe Estonia as a Nordic country, rather as a Baltic nation. In fact, the Baltic States, having come into existence, underwent considerable political change in the twentieth century. It is worth recalling that Finland, before the Second World War, was also briefly considered a Baltic State during the early 1920s. This is to say, four Baltic States existed in inter-war

Europe—the fact that only three entered the twenty-first century, is a trick of recent history.

Yet some similarities and affinities of the Baltic States are too obvious to need emphasis. All three nations stood at the same historic crossroads after the First World War; all were linked to the fate of Russia in terms of (in)dependence and emancipation; all three existed as independent states from 1918 to 1940; at that time, all three introduced liberal minority policies granting a sort of personal, non-territorial cultural autonomy to their large minorities—Lithuania to her Jewish, Latvia to her German, and Estonia to her German and Jewish minorities; all three sought the source of strength and inspiration in their ancient languages and cultures; all have a strong Romantic element in their historical memory and self-perception; last but not least, all benefited from émigrés and their role in politics and culture.

Suffice to mention that presidents of all three Baltic States were or continue to be émigrés who spent much of their time abroad and who returned to their respective countries when they restored independence after 1990—Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania, Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga of Latvia, and Toomas Hendrik Ilves of Estonia. Most importantly, the trajectories of Lithuanian and Baltic identity allow us to understand the history of the twentieth century better than anything else.

The culture of determinism

The phenomena of innocence and self-victimisation are instrumental in shaping what might be termed the culture and determinism of poverty. Victimised consciousness is moved by the belief in malevolent and sinister forces of the universe—allegedly manifesting themselves through secret and elusive human agencies—that come to manipulate and dominate the world through their subversive activities immediately targeted at a single actor, the most vulnerable and fragile one. The principle of evil is permanently ascribed to the big and powerful, while reserving the principle of good exclusively for the small, vulnerable and fragile.

By implication, I cannot err or sin because I happen to belong to a small, vulnerable and fragile group—or vice versa, I can never be on the right side if I, by birth and upbringing, belong to a privileged or powerful one. This means that my human value and merit are pre-determined and, subsequently, can be lightly judged by my race, gender, nationality, or class.

This sort of modern barbarity, which takes all human beings as irreversibly shaped and moved by biological or social forces with no moral or intellectual choice involved, stands powerfully behind conspiracy theory. Regrettably, modern barbarity, which deprives humanity of the sense of human fellowship and tends to replace it with the concepts of natural animosity and ever-lasting struggle between irreconcilable groups or forces, tends to surface and extend its influence beyond underground consciousness.

Far from being qualified as social pathology, it assumes its status as what is supposed to be normal and even progressive.

The conspiracy theory allows no room for critical self-reflexivity and critical self-discovery. At this point, it is a mortal enemy of moral philosophy. Whereas modern political philosophy, if properly understood, is an extension of moral philosophy, the conspiracy theory's point of departure is the radical denial of theoretical reflection, critical judgment and moral accountability. Instead, the conspiracy theory's assumption is that the agencies of good and evil are established once and for all, that the only distinction between good and evil is that good is powerless and condemned to suffer endlessly, while evil is all-powerful and solely motivated by the hunger for power.

Infinite manipulation and unlimited power are the ultimate ends that motivate evil forces. The world is too naïve, vulnerable and fragile to unmask the real masters and their dirty manipulations with which they keep that world in the darkness of ignorance, stupidity and self-deception—this is the revealing message conspiracy theory conveys to its adherents.

Vytautas Kavolis, an eminent Lithuanian émigré sociologist, suggests that this phenomenon is deeply rooted in a modern system of moralisation, which he termed the culture of determinism. Kavolis puts it thus:

“A modern amoral culture, in the sense that it tends to eliminate the notion of individual moral responsibility without taking collective responsibility seriously, is the *culture of determinism*. In this culture it is assumed that individuals are shaped and moved by biological or social forces in all essentials beyond the control, or even the possibility of major choices, of individuals affected by them. The four major intellectual foci of this culture are the theory that ‘biology (or racial inheritance) is destiny’; the belief that the human being is and should be nothing but a utility-calculating, pleasure-maximizing machine; the conviction that the individual is, in currently existing societies, only a victim of the ‘oppressive’, ‘impoverished’, ‘devalizing’, or ‘traditionally constricted’ social conditions of his or her existence (without the ability to become an agent of his fate and assume responsibility for her actions); and the notion that he can be helped out of such conditions solely by the ‘guidance of experts’ who have a ‘rational social policy’ at their disposal, in the determination of which those who are to be helped participate merely as instruments of the experts.”³

Kavolis's concept of a modern amoral culture sheds new light on why victimised groups or societies relate to the ruling élites as patients to

diagnosing and curing specialists. At the same time, it allows us a point of entry into the crucial focus: we can understand why and how victimised culture manifests itself as the culture of destiny and determinism—in contrast to the culture of freedom and choice.

This concept reveals the links between all kinds of deterministic theories, especially in the social sciences. Kavolis starts by quoting Sigmund Freud's dictum, "Biology is destiny", and then goes on to show other modes of discourse that speak out in favour of inexorable laws of racial inheritance, history, milieu, societal life, social organisation, and so forth. A modern amoral culture denying individual responsibility and moral choice, or the culture of determinism in Kavolis's parlance, is a system of moralisation disseminated in the modern moral imagination.

It is characteristic of anti-modernist reactions, including racism, technocracy and other forms of deterministic consciousness. It also includes a belief in inexorable historical laws, a phenomenon that Popper described as historicism. It is too obvious to need emphasis that the culture and the spirit of determinism are a driving force behind totalitarian regimes; totalitarianism without deterministic consciousness would be merely a contradiction in terms. At the same time, the culture of determinism penetrates all "minor" forms of organised hatred. It appears wherever the quest for enemies is in demand. The culture of determinism is not only a perfect home for conspiracy theories of all shades; it is just another term for what I call modern barbarity. It might be suggested that totalitarianism and the spirit of technology are both the offspring of modern barbarity.⁴

This model of cultural determinism and amoral logic appeals not only to a large (but maybe to the largest) part of modern anti-Semitism, but to many other forms of anti-modern sentiments and hatred of modernism. On the other hand, the culture of determinism has evidently incorporated the Medieval demonological, quasi-animistic and exorcist principle that allowed the easy justification of personal sins due to the embodiment of the Devil or demons in women (i.e. witches) and other manifestations of evil—after all, passion for a woman and the adultery or even rape which it gave rise to, was easily justified by an explanation that supposedly sinister and seductive powers lay in the body of a woman.

Along with that, the culture of determinism incorporates into its symbolic (anti)logic, a phenomenon pre-dating even the medieval period: the accusation of *maleficium* (a secret act of collective evil and magic). Ironically, in the Roman Empire this accusation, directly incriminating incest and usage of blood for a religious ritual, was ascribed to the First Christians, but since medieval times Christianity has reserved the accusation only for the Jews. (After all, even at the beginning of the twenty-first century in Lithuania there are people who truly believe that Jews use the blood of Christian babies for baking matzo—but this is a perfect example of *maleficium*.)

Hence, what might be called natural innocence and victimisation: according to this attitude, people cannot in principle control biological or social forces. On the contrary, particular individuals and even entire societies are shaped and moved by those forces.

Since the world is controlled and dominated by powerful groups, clandestine international organisations, or secret agencies and their elusive experts, individuals cannot assume moral responsibility for their actions; nor can they influence or change the state of affairs. Such an attitude is characteristic of marginalised and victimised groups, but it is equally characteristic of the kind of consciousness shaped by anti-liberal and anti-democratic regimes.

The culture of poverty

In fact, the culture of determinism is also characteristic of what Oscar Lewis described as the culture of poverty.⁵ The culture of poverty is not identical to real poverty—according to Lewis, who for many years had studied the trajectories of the identities of people living in the shanties of Puerto Rico and Mexico, their value orientations and evaluations of the world. There are cases, when groups living in poverty have their social networks, conspicuous co-operation and social forms (for instance, East Europe's Jews during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century or craftsmen from India). The culture of poverty manifests itself first of all in an absolute distrust of institutions and the state, unwillingness to participate in the state's life, and the conviction that everything in the world is predetermined—social roles, distribution of power, wealth and poverty.

Let us say that the culture of poverty was not characteristic of Fidel Castro's post-revolution Cuba, since the society (even the poorest layers of it) acquired its value and a sense of the meaning of life, as Lewis had noticed, in the revolution. A strong sense of fatalism, a low level of social trust, a matriarchal family, a man's distancing of himself from the most important family problems: these are all characteristic of the culture of poverty. In other words, this whole anthropological complex of the culture of poverty clearly points to the fact that it is a variant of determinism.

Incidentally, Lewis has discovered that the main characteristics of the culture of poverty—isolation, disbelief in the possibility of social linkage, fatalism, distrust of everything—have been encountered even in wealthy people's thinking and worldviews. At this point, it is worth remembering that Kavolis, as early as 1996, once asked rhetorically whether the culture of poverty exists in Lithuania.

In fact, ample evidence shows the solid foundations that the culture of poverty has in Lithuania. As recent sociological polls suggest, a strong sense of helplessness, fatalism and failure is accompanied by a growing hostility to liberal democracy and democratic institutions—quite a few Lithuanians would prefer the authoritarian leader instead of parliamentary democracy,

and would favour the strong man's rule, rather than the rule of law, representation, and the division of powers.

Powers of association have deteriorated considerably. Social atomisation and the fragmentation of society have gone so far as to allow us to talk about new forms of cultural colonisation, isolation and marginalisation. The Soviet regime seems to have transformed Lithuania into a kind of low-trust nation where disbelief in authorities and institutions threatens the fragile foundations of civil society, yet where people—oddly enough—place an enormous amount of trust in the media and TV in particular.

This sort of explosive and destructive potential was revealed and successfully exploited by Lithuanian populists during the presidential election in 2002 and afterwards. People of the older generation often feel that their lives have been spoiled, if not totally wasted. Many of them have lost their jobs and savings. Their children have left the country and settled in Ireland or Spain, whereas they have to live on a miserable pension. It is hardly possible to convince these people that Lithuania has a vibrant economy or that it is “a Baltic tiger” (as Poland's Leszek Balcerowicz recently described it). Although this is actually the case, quite a large segment of Lithuanian society lives beyond the EU reality.

In fact, Lithuania has the highest suicide rate in the world—quite a sad and scary fact that might shed new light on the degree of social depression, alienation and despair in Lithuanian society. Moreover, growing emigration has deprived the country of many young and highly qualified people—nearly 500,000 have left Lithuania over the past twenty years settling in the USA, Great Britain, Ireland, and Western Europe. Consequently the country has lost much of its potential, and the countryside has been deprived of some prospects for more rapid economic and social development.

The fragmentation and segmentation of Lithuanian society has reached dangerous limits and can become a threat to democracy, not to mention social cohesion and civic solidarity. During the Paksas scandal, which ended in 2004 with the impeachment of Lithuanian President Rolandas Paksas, some political commentators and politicians coined the phrase “two Lithuanias”, thus dividing Lithuanian society into the “sugar-beets”—the term *runkeliai* in Lithuanian is a far from innocent word, and in this context appears as a derogatory term—and the “élite.”

At this point, great uncertainty hangs over Lithuania's future. As the presidential scandal has shown, there are still all too many temptations to talk of two Lithuanias. On the one hand, there is the westward-looking and dynamic Lithuania, celebrating its dynamism and rejoicing over the accession of Lithuania to the European Union and NATO. On the other, there is the élite-abandoned, long-suffering, divided and depressed Lithuania, longing for something like the equality-in-misery it knew in the Soviet Union.

Each time it comes to an election, a certain segment of society perceives the vote as an opportunity for revenge against the much-hated and semi-mythical élite. Usually these voters of despair and revenge are described as the aforementioned “sugar-beets”, although it would be naïve to reduce this problem to the depressed countryside. Not a few Lithuanian tycoons and public figures overtly supported Rolandas Paksas and then Viktor Uspaskich, another populist who founded the Labour Party (made up by the graduates of the Higher Institutions of the Communist Party, former functionaries, and the *nouveau riches*) and who now serves as the minister of economy.

Even so, it does not explain the roots of the culture of poverty in Lithuania—bearing in mind Lewis’s idea that the culture of poverty does not necessarily coincide with actual poverty. At this point, most telling is the fact that 34.2% of Lithuanians—according to the results of sociological poll conducted by the market analysis and research group *Rait* on December 2–5, 2004—think that the period of 1990–2004, that is, the period of the newly gained independence of Lithuania, was the most unfortunate period in the country’s entire history. Only 29.7% of respondents reserved this honour for the Soviet period, and even fewer—22.7%—for the period under Tsarist Russia (1795–1915).⁶ Small wonder, then, that many commentators shocked by this outcome jumped to conclusions diagnosing a new social disease and suggesting that Lithuania is suffering from an identity crisis, amnesia, political illiteracy, the loss of the sense of history, and, ultimately, the disappearance of national pride.

The culture of complaints coupled with the culture of poverty goes so far as to depict Lithuania as an unfortunate, corrupt, cynical, predatory, amoral country devoid of justice, benevolence, fairness, and respect for human dignity, the country which does not have a future among civilised countries of the EU, etc.. Yet on a closer inspection, it appears that the main characteristics of the culture of poverty—isolation, disbelief in a possibility of social link, fatalism, distrust of everything—are stronger in Lithuania than ever. Most probably it is the high price Lithuania has to pay for an incredibly fast and drastic socio-cultural change.

This became especially obvious from 2009 on, as Lithuania—and Latvia as well—suffered a dramatic slowdown of their economies accompanied by a backlash of far-right, xenophobic, homophobic, and anti-Semitic attitudes.⁷ Lithuania went so far as to challenge core European values, such as human rights and civil liberties, and to question the moral validity of the EU.

14 July 2009 was an historic date that indicated two hundred and twenty years from the beginning of the French Revolution. One would have expected a celebration of the date trying to embrace the new reality of Europe—first and foremost, its unique and historically unprecedented solidarity. One would have thought that the day marked the reconciliation of Europe, the Old and the New—to use Donald Rumsfeld’s parlance—,

especially in the light of the election of the Polish MEP Jerzy Buzek, the former prime minister of Poland and one of the heroes of the Solidarity movement, President of the European Parliament. A unique chance opened up to put many things behind us, including the frequent clashes of the moral and political sensibilities of the “two Europes”, meaning the Old Europe’s liberal and tolerant attitudes towards human diversity, and the New Europe’s old-fashioned infatuations and reactive conservatism. Yet this was not to be. It would have been too good to be true.

How ironic that on that same day when the newly elected European Parliament opened its plenary session, the *Seimas*, that is, Lithuania’s parliament, adopted the law which turned down, almost overnight, everything that today’s Europe stands for and is all about. The new Lithuanian Law on the Protection of Minors from the Detrimental Effects of Public Information adopted on 14 July 2009 struck human rights defenders and media people, both in Lithuania herself and in the EU, as overtly homophobic and profoundly undemocratic. This law was vetoed twice by the former President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus, yet he was overruled by the *Seimas*. In addition, the law was severely criticised by the current President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė.

More than that, the law in question has been assessed in vigorous terms by the Lithuanian media, political commentators, and several civil liberties and human rights defenders who have stressed its homophobic substance along with its dangerous political implications, such as censorship and self-censorship. Needless to say, this law had little if anything to do with the protection of children. Instead, it was against gay and lesbian citizens of the country. Whatever the case, the equation of homosexuality to physical violence and necrophilia is morally repugnant and deeply disgraceful.

Still, it was difficult to believe that the adoption of such a law was possible in an EU country at the beginning of the twenty-first century. One can take this law as an unfortunate move or as a profound misunderstanding, to say the very least. Changes to articles 310 in the penal code, and 214 in the administrative code were debated in the *Seimas* that would criminalise—with the threat of a fine, community work or imprisonment—anyone involved in the “promotion” of homosexuality in “any public space”. If this is not the slide to state-sponsored homophobia and the criminalisation of public self-expression by Lithuania’s gay and lesbian citizens, what is it? Is it not a sad reminder of the cycle of abuse in a country that suffered isolation and humiliation for more than five decades?

This law was a disgrace, but even more so would be an attempt to obfuscate, trivialise, and, in effect, justify it. This is why a sort of *déjà vu* appeared on hearing how some conservative politicians in the European Parliament (hereafter EP) tried to depict the EP Resolution on this law as a blow allegedly dealt by the EP to the national parliament of a sovereign country. In their understanding, the idea to ask for the Human Rights

Agency's expert opinion on whether this law contradicts fundamental rights would jeopardise the independence and sovereignty of Lithuania.

If we apply double standards refusing to react to the violations of human rights within the EU, yet simultaneously engaging in verbose assaults on Russia, China, or Iran, are we not in peril of closing ranks with those profoundly undemocratic countries? What would be the dividing line between the EU and Russia if we had adopted the principle of non-interference with national parliaments on such matters as human rights?

This would signify the end of Europe the way it is now. If so much sound and fury comes defending the "holy" rights of the national parliament to criminalise diversity, are we not at risk of transforming the EU into merely an amoral trading bloc?⁸

All in all, European values, norms and solidarity prevailed, and the EP sent a powerful message re-asserting the simple truth that civil liberties and human rights can never be confined to domestic affairs. They are not the property of the state, no matter how just and democratic that state might be. And they never will be so as far as the EU is concerned.

What happened to us? Did we decide to use the package of democracy in a nonchalant and selective way, appropriating some parts that suit us while discarding what we dislike? Had it become the enthusiastic "yes" to the simplistic notion of democracy as a 50 + 1 methodology, yet the strong "no" to minorities? "Yes" to the right to practice our mainstream Lithuanian culture, national identity, and the Roman Catholic faith, yet the resolute "no" to gay and lesbian rights? If so, not a single chance exists that such a selective and arbitrary concept of democracy will be ever accepted in the EU—and rightly so.

It turned out to be difficult to be independent and responsible for the social and moral order that allows every citizen to experience their sense of pride and dignity. It is hard to extend our modern political and moral sensibilities to the extent of every human being, regardless of his or her creed, faith, or gender. The simplest things, as we thought of them in the 1990s, turned out to be the most challenging ones. We have had a valuable lesson of democracy.

Faster than History

Our contemporaries are obviously tempted to proclaim the twentieth century to have been the era of the end of nearly everything that relates to historical, moral, and political imaginations. Post-modernism, post-materialism, post-ideological politics, the post-Christian era, post-industrial society, the post-capitalist economy.... No aspect of politics and culture remains untouched by this post-modern propensity, not to say obsession, to relegate the phenomena of modernity to the margins of history.

Nowadays it is difficult to imagine any sort of modern social phenomenon pronounced or written without this sonorous "post" that

indicates the death or at least the symbolic end of the modern moral imagination and modernity itself. Yet this is not the end of the story. Now we have to put into question the validity and existence of history itself.

Of the temptation of many writers and commentators to write off our stage in the history of modernity as passing away—or dying away, or bowing out in terms of the end of history—, Zygmunt Bauman writes:

“What prompts so many commentators to speak of the ‘end of history’, of postmodernity, ‘second modernity’ and ‘surmodernity’, or otherwise to articulate the intuition of a radical change in the arrangement of human cohabitation and in social conditions under which life-politics is nowadays conducted, is the fact that the long effort to accelerate the speed of modernity has presently reached its ‘natural limit’.”⁹

Societies that experienced the terror of ideology are naturally tempted to deny or at least to call into question the History with a capital “H” as just another term for Ideology. Central and Eastern European artists and intellectuals know better than anybody else what it means to live under the terror of the Inexorable Laws of History.

Too much history can become a burden. Territorial claims, bloodshed, and education of hatred are nearly always justified by referring to history and religion: the subordination of both to politics is a disease of our time. The same applies to the clashes over the exclusive right to possess holy sites or to have the final say in the rivalries of politically exploited religions over this-worldly matters or in the encounters of violent ideologies.

Competing memories, loyalties, pains, and sufferings have no better justification and reference point than history. Too much history may be at odds with our modern intellectual and moral sensibilities, although it is obvious that our infatuation with history is itself a sign of modernity. We respect and cherish a strong sense of history in ourselves and in others; yet when it comes to a kind of conservative disdain for present politics and culture, we tend to object strongly to the domination of the “eternal yesterday” (to use Max Weber’s term) over today or tomorrow. Whereas the liberal imagination speaks out in favour of today and tomorrow, the conservative imagination raises its voice in defence of yesterday. Hence the dividing line between the liberal and conservative approach to history.

However, suffice it to recall the dystopian world of Yevgeny Zamyatin, George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, and Arthur Koestler where history is but an empty sound. History does not signify anything anymore, since it is thrown to the mercy of the will-to-power and the metaphysics of the will, which identifies reality with its conscious transformation or “rationalisation.”

According to this design of thought, history has to be measured in hours and minutes, instead of decades and centuries. Moreover, history has to

be made and unmade every day. If so, we have to treat human lives as clay or bronze or oil on our brush: we have to clean the canvas or dismantle the construction instantly as the need for an adjustment or new configuration arises. How on earth can we abolish art only on the basis of someone's claim that we consume too much oil or bronze?

As the character O'Brien from Orwell's *1984* points out, empirical reality does not exist other than through the Party, its politics, and its interpretation of that reality. If so, the human being is merely a construct of the Party's metaphysics of the will. A particular human individual has no independent existence. The Party supplies the only means through which he or she can identify and express him or herself as an individual—self-identification, perception of reality, memory, and language. In fabricating these, the Party forges consciousness and human existence. History does not exist either. It is merely constructed by the politically predominant modes of discourse.

Yet it is quite possible to belong mentally and intellectually to mutually exclusive symbolic designs of memory, loyalty, participation, and self-comprehension. Some people claim to act in a post-modern world and, accordingly, to think within the framework of post-modernism, whereas others speak out in favour of modernity. As Bauman reminds us, the history of time began with modernity; moreover, modernity is the history of time—or to put it in another fashion, modernity is the time when time has a history.¹⁰

There is another problem here, though. Post-modernism with its well-known inclinations towards historical and ethical relativism is capable of putting into question what undoubtedly constitutes the moral substance of many people. We can call into question the existence and validity of nearly every social and political phenomenon, but if we doubt the historical validity of the Holocaust, then we are at risk of losing our grounding. If we deny the Holocaust, then we deny history, and the other way around. What is behind such a stance is value, rather than sheer fact. History exists insofar as value precedes truth. A narrator of history is therefore a moralist, rather than a sheer dispenser of a scholarly technique, scientific method, or truth.

The news of the end of modernity, of modernity's decline and passing away along with history itself appears to have been premature.

“And yet (...) the news of modernity's passing away, even the rumours of its swan song, are grossly exaggerated: their profusion does not make the obituaries any less premature. It seems that the kind of society which has been diagnosed and put on trial by the founders of critical theory (or, for that matter, by Orwell's dystopia) was just one of the forms that versatile and protean modern society was to take. Its waning does not augur the end of modernity. Nor does it herald the end

of human misery. Least of all does it presage the end of critique as an intellectual task and vocation; and by no means does it render such critique redundant.”¹¹

Interestingly enough, the “faster than history” idiom acquires a special meaning when dealing with social change in Central and Eastern Europe. The speed of time in what Czesław Miłosz and Milan Kundera, each in his own way, described as “yet another Europe” is beyond the historical, cultural, and political imaginations of Western Europeans and North Americans. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, post-Soviet and post-Communist countries underwent considerable social and cultural change. To paraphrase the title of Kundera’s novel that became one more admirable idiom to express the East-Central European sense of history and grasp of life, all this leads to the experience of the unbearable lightness of change.

What happened in Western Europe as the greatest events and civilisation-shaping movements of centuries acquired a form—in Central and Eastern Europe—of mandatory and rapid economic and political programs that had to be implemented by successor states of the Soviet Union. This is to say that the new democracies had to catch up with Western European history to qualify for the exclusive and honorary club of Europe. Moreover, “yet another Europe” had to become even faster than history, transforming itself into a more or less recognizable collective actor of the global economy and politics.

Capitalism, which had long been presented in Soviet high school textbooks as the major menace to humankind, now seems more aggressive and dynamic in post-Soviet societies than in far more moderate, timid, egalitarian, social-democratic, welfare-state-orientated, and post-capitalist Western European countries.

Sweden, Finland, and the rest of the Nordic countries, for instance, can only marvel at what they perceive as a sort of old-fashioned, historically recycled, and ruthless capitalism of the Baltics, or, to put in more conventional terms, the libertarian economy of Estonia and other Baltic countries. The countries that used to symbolise to Soviet citizens the embodiment of “wild capitalism” with its overt glorification of the winners and contempt for the losers now appear to them as astonishingly communitarian, warm and humane.

Indeed, they are pure and innocent to compare to the “first come first served” or “grab the stolen” or “catch it all” type of mentality that paradoxically, albeit logically, blends with a sort of Marxism turned upside down—this extremely vulgar variety of economic determinism and materialism in Lithuania and other East Central European countries barely surprises those who know quite well that the last thing one could expect to be named among priorities there is culture. Although quite a few pay lip service to it without giving much consideration as to how to foster intellectual

dialogue among countries, somehow almost everybody agrees there that the West has to pay for “the culture, uniqueness and spirituality” of post-totalitarian countries—generous grants in exchange for suffering and unique experience.

Lithuania seems locked mentally somewhere between the discovery of the intrinsic logic of capitalism characteristic of the nineteenth century and the post-Weimar Republic period—an incredibly fast economic growth and a passionate advocacy of the values of free enterprise and capitalism, accompanied by a good deal of anomie, fission of the body social, stark social contrasts, a shocking degree of corruption, and the culture of poverty with all its indications—low trust, self-victimisation, disbelief in social ties and networks, contempt for institutions, cynicism, and the like.

If we want to imagine a blend of nineteenth and twentieth century phenomena of consciousness, politics and culture, then we can safely assume that our post-modern and post-totalitarian era proved capable of squeezing two centuries of uninterrupted European history into one decade of the “transition” of Lithuania from the planned economy of Communism to a free-market economy and global capitalism.

In a way, Lithuania appears to have become a kind of laboratory where the speed of social change and cultural transformation could be measured and tested. Indeed, Lithuania is far ahead of what we know as the grand historical narrative, or, plainly, predictable and moralizing history; nay, these societies are faster than history.

They are faster than history, yet slower than a lifetime. People often complain here that their lives and careers have been ruined by this rapid social change and grand transformation. They take it as a tragedy arguing (and not without reason) that their lives, energies and works have been wasted, if not completely spoiled. A lifetime of a human being proves insufficient to witness a thrilling and sweeping transformation of society.

Vytautas Kavolis worked out a theory of post-modernism as an attempt to reconcile what has been separated by modernity. At the same time, the idea of post-modernism served, for Kavolis, as an interpretative framework for the split between the modernist and the anti-modernist. He accorded the concept of the post-modern to the process of de-sovietisation, too:

“If desovietisation, in its diversity of forms, continues relatively unhindered and does not become complacent with its own rhetoric, it has the potentiality of becoming a first-rate (that is, ‘enriching’) civilisational movement. If the concept of the ‘postmodern’ can still be retrieved from the cultists who have made it a monopoly of their own exuberance, desovietisation could even be considered, in some of its cultural emphases, as ‘postmodern’. (I conceive of the

‘postmodern’ not as antimodernist, but as the building of bridges between the ‘modernist’ and the ‘antimodernist’.)”¹²

Indeed, modernity has come to split up the human world. How to react to the challenge of modernity? How to accept it? How to reconcile and bridge what have been ruthlessly separated by modernity: truth and value; rationality and emotional intimacy; expertise and sensitivity; hierarchy and equality/individualism; tradition and innovation; the classic canon and the released creative experiment; metaphysics and science; a particular individual and community; a particular community and universal humanity?

Artists and humanists in Lithuania might fill many gaps and bridge some parts of human sensibility divided between disciplines and scattered across the universe of our global culture. They are ahead of many social and political processes that are on their way to Lithuania. They predict and passionately deny these processes, laugh at them, make fun of them, anticipate and critically question them. The contemporary art has become a sort of social and cultural critique in our postmodern world—yet this applies to Central and Eastern European societies better than to anybody else.

At the same time, contemporary art and culture may prevent the spread of one more disease of our time—unlimited manipulations of public opinion shamelessly performed in the name of freedom and democracy. It can do this by calling into question everything that fails to do justice to humanity or respect human dignity. In doing so, contemporary artists and scholars would be able to find their *raison d'être* in our age of the divorce of words and meanings, power and politics, politeness and sensitivity—along with their efforts to help restore the damaged sociability and power of association crucial for their societies. In the twentieth century, modern artists hated the crowd intensely and spoke up in favour of the individual. Post-modern art, if properly understood, could advocate community, thus attempting reconciliation of the individual and community or society.

Whatever the speed of life and the intensity of change, our epoch can be faster than history—especially, if measured like it was measured a century ago. Yet it will always be slower than a lifetime of a particular human individual. The efforts within contemporary culture to reconcile the individual with him or herself, with community, society, and history would therefore come as a perfect tribute to what always remains beyond or ahead of history—values, humanity, and the miracle of human dialogue.

Intellectuals: roles and identities

What is the role of intellectuals in the nation- or community-building process? Some scholars of nationalism suggest that intellectuals invent traditions, work out interpretive frameworks for collective identity and self-comprehension, establish collective identities, forge political and moral vocabularies, and even shape their respective nations. At the same time,

dissenting intellectuals may challenge their nations by offering an alternative vision or critique of their societies and cultures.

In the early 1990s, some Lithuanian intellectuals were quite optimistic about their social roles in society. For instance, Ričardas Gavelis, a recently deceased Lithuanian writer, who might well be described as a caustic public intellectual and libertarian-minded critic of society and culture, responding to the journal *Metmenys* 1993 questionnaire, wrote about the role of what he termed the free intellectual in the following way:

“I nevertheless have some hope. It is precisely thanks to the fact that Lithuania dropped out of the general development [of Western culture] that we have managed to preserve a now almost extinct species—the free intellectual. Such creatures are virtually extinct in Europe, and even more so in America. There the intellectual is almost always part of some kind of academic circle. And that means that he unavoidably becomes a member of the state hierarchy, even if he teaches at a private university. Whether they like it or not, they must accommodate the rules of the academic career, of the narrow world of academia, of a narrow context of specialised reference. The era of the free intellectual—of the kind that Russell and Sartre were—has long passed in the world.... In Lithuania, for now, the true intellectual is free whether he wants it or not, because there is basically no influential academic world. For that reason, individual intellectuals have a greater influence on overall cultural development than anywhere else.... I would consider this to be a positive thing. In times of change and confusion free intellectuals are more useful than inflexible academic structures. Individuals are more flexible, more inclined to take risks, are not afraid to lose their academic positions or authority. It is my hope that free intellectuals will be the ones to launch the process of synchronizing Lithuanian and world culture.”¹³

Yet quite different positions were expressed regarding the social role of the intellectual in society. Donatas Sauka, a conservative literary scholar, wrote, as early as 1995, that Lithuanian intellectuals had forgotten their mission to preserve cultural traditions and to defend the nation, offering the exhausted paradigm of the building and defence of the nation against those who tarnished its image and international reputation. Small wonder, then, that Sauka, in doing so, also warned that “the liberals of the younger generation and their older colleagues among émigrés” threatened the injured nation. Sauka put it thus:

“Who, then, defends society’s conservative opinions—who speaks in the name of the injured nation, who expresses its historical insults, who mythologizes its rural moral reputation? Who, really? What is the point of trying out the sharpness of one’s arrows when attacking a monster created by one’s own imagination; but please give us a true picture of its traits, give us its first and last names! The liberals of the younger generation and their older colleagues among émigrés, who often hold condemnatory trials, do not have a concrete target which could embody the essence of such an ideology. And the target of their polemic is not too fresh—but faded ideas and moral directives, statements by the current leaders of the nation that were expressed during the euphoria of the Rebirth period.”¹⁴

Here we have two opposing concepts of the intellectuals—whereas Gavelis suggests the concept which depicts the intellectuals as critics of the establishment, society and culture, Sauka takes them as defenders of the nation’s pride and prejudice. What lurks behind the critique of society and culture offered by intellectuals—loyalty or dissent? Fidelity or betrayal?

Last but not least, what is the real *raison d’être* of modern intellectuals? Personification of conscience? Dedication to the nation and its historical injuries and moral traumas? Advocacy of individual reason and conscience? Social and cultural criticism? The politics of loyalty or the politics of dissent? The work for the sake of sustainable society? Preservation of historical memory? The defence of the nation from the attacks of liberals? The struggle against cosmopolitanism?

The essence of the populist struggle against cosmopolitanism is perfectly expressed by Romualdas Ozolas, the founder and the former leader of the Centre Union: “I am a nationalist. Nationalism is the sole source of my strength. Each, according to the level of his stupidity, is free to decide what that means.” The following maxim is a unique pearl of nationalist wisdom: “The cosmopolitan cannot be moral. The cosmopolitan is a-subjective; for that reason, he is incapable of imperative self-questioning.”¹⁵

The nature of this kind of ghost-chasing is very well expressed in an introductory passage of an issue of the journal of cultural resistance *I laisvę [To Freedom]*:

“A spiritual gap is growing between the sincere Lithuanian intellectual, for whom Lithuanian-ness, Lithuanian culture and the nation’s interests are of the first order, and that new creature—probably a product of the Soviet period—the super-cultural-activist-intellectual, who, supposedly in the name of Western culture, offers obscene trash to television programs,

books and theatre festivals of a questionable nature. Unfortunately, together with these self-named intellectuals comes another threat to the Lithuanian nation—cosmopolitanism.”¹⁶

Interestingly enough, one thing that has long been taken for granted in Lithuania—the idea that the real intellectual is a dedicated educator, builder, and shaper of the nation, rather than public thinker or social and cultural critic—underwent considerable change and was put into question over the past ten years. If very few have critically questioned the idea that the intellectual is or at least ought to be instrumental in the nation-building process, things started changing around 1995. The mainstream Lithuanian nationalism was challenged by a new approach, which brought about the concept of civil society instead of the people or the nation.

This is to say that some Lithuanian intellectuals began increasingly associating themselves with civil society, the community-building process, and the public domain—this tendency was extremely timely and important, bearing in mind the deterioration of social links and networks, anomie, and the atomisation of Lithuanian society. The eminent Lithuanian philosopher Arvydas Šliogeris anticipated and aptly described this shift, calling into question Gavelis’s enthusiasm for individual intellectuals, and placing more emphasis on the community-building instead of personal emancipation. Despite some undertones of *Kulturpessimismus*, that is, a sort of extremely harsh and exaggerated critique of Lithuanian public life, Šliogeris’s standpoint sheds new light on the critical importance of public debate for society in transition. According to Šliogeris:

“Several years of independence have proven our inability to order our present *rationaly*, our lack of common sense, and even any sense. What can that pitiful handful of active and thinking people—still capable of seeing the world clearly, simply, with a sober and cold eye—accomplish? Some such individuals exist, but they are powerless, because the parade is being led by the *mobile vulgus* and its idols. Is there any hope? Yes, there is, but that hope is hazy and cannot be transformed into a technical project, because in its deepest essence it is non-technical, anti-technical. My hope is all tied to the spontaneous emergence of small communities in which organic future forms of communal existence can begin to grow. However, these new forms of community can only develop somewhere beyond the boundaries of existing ‘organised’ forms of (political, religious, economic, educational) life. The instigators of these communities must say a determined *No* to all, absolutely all, currently dominating structures of public and private life,

because those structures are in fact dead and continue to exist only from habit. Democracy, freedom, prosperity, spirituality, truth, conscience, Christianity, culture, tradition—all of this has turned into ideological chatter and self-deception. If ‘values’ and forms of existence remain as they are, it is no longer possible to breath life back into these things. Why do I speak about the creation of new types of communities? For, after all, here remains the danger that such a newly created community will be nothing but a herd of slaves and schizophrenics ruled by paranoid and cynical Rasputins. There are already more than enough such sects in today’s world. The formation of authentic communities involves enormous risk. But there is no other option, because individuals are ultimately helpless.”¹⁷

It is widely and rightly assumed that loyalty and betrayal are among the key concepts of the ethic of nationalism. The marriage of state and culture, which seems the essence of the congruence between political power structure and collective identity, usually offers a simple explanation of loyalty and dissent. Within such an interpretative framework of nationalism, loyalty is seen as a kind of once-and-for-all commitment of the individual to his or her nation and its historical-cultural substance, whereas betrayal is identified as a failure to commit him or herself to a common cause or as a diversion from the object of political loyalty and cultural/linguistic fidelity. However, yawning gaps exist between different patterns of nationalism.

For conservative or radical nationalists, even a social and cultural critique of one’s people and state can be regarded as nothing more and nothing less than treason, whilst for their liberal counterparts it is precisely what constitutes political awareness, civic virtue, and a conscious dedication to the people, culture, and state. Upon closer inspection, it appears that the concepts of loyalty, dissent, and betrayal can be instrumental in mapping the liberal and democratic facet of nationalism.

Loyalty, dissent, and betrayal are political and moral categories. It is impossible to analyse them without touching upon crucial issues of the twentieth and twenty first centuries, such as political culture, liberal democracy, poverty, hatred, populism, manipulative exchanges and deliberate political manipulations, social criticism, and political commitment. The analysis of the aforementioned phenomena may reveal what it means to live in a changing society where all these things increasingly tend to become the nexus of social and political existence. History, socio-cultural dynamics, and the dialectic of identities can be properly understood only where the acceleration of the speed of change reaches its climax, and where social change becomes faster than history.

Memory wars

We are witnessing how a sinister tendency is increasingly getting stronger in the United States and in Europe. Politicians find themselves preoccupied with two domains that serve as a new source of inspiration: namely, privacy and history. Birth, death, and sex constitute the new frontiers on the political battlefields.

Since politics is dying out nowadays as a translation of our moral and existential concerns into rational and legitimate action for the benefit of society and humanity, and, instead, is becoming a set of managerial practices and skilful manipulations with public opinion, it is not unwise to assume that a swift politicisation of privacy and history promises the way out of the present political and ideological vacuum.

Suffice it to remember the hottest debates over abortion, euthanasia, and gay marriage over the past twenty or so years to conclude that the poor human individual, no matter whether (s)he is on the way to the world, or is dying, or consummating her or his marriage, continues to be regarded either as a property of the state and its institutions or, at best, as a mere instrument and hostage of a political doctrine.

There is nothing new under the sun, though. If we are to believe such incisive dystopian writers as Yevgeny Zamyatin, Aldous Huxley, and George Orwell, or such groundbreaking social theorists as Michel Foucault and Zygmunt Bauman, modernity always was, and continues to be, obsessed with how to get as much control over the human body and soul as possible without physically exterminating people. The same is true with regard to society's memory and collective sentiment.

As we learn from George Orwell's *1984*, history depends on who controls those archives and records. Since human individuals have no other form of existence than that which is granted by the Party, individual memory has no power to create or restore history. But if memory is controlled or manufactured and updated every day, history degenerates into a justificatory and legitimizing design of power and control. Logically enough, this leads the Inner Party to assert that who controls the past controls the future and who controls the present controls the past.

If you think that it does not make sense to refer to the Orwellian world any longer, please think about the memory wars in present-day Europe. That Russia has already become a revisionist power is obvious. Moreover, it attempts to rewrite the history of the twentieth century by rehabilitating Stalin and depicting him as merely a wise, albeit sometimes cruel, moderniser of Russia. As we can see, Stalin appears here to have been just another version of the Great Moderniser of the State like Peter the Great.

Needless to say, an attempt to outlaw what is regarded in Russia as historical revisionism, that is, the criminalisation of any effort to put into question whether the Soviet Union with its labour camps, overtly fascist practices and anti-Semitism (for those who have doubts about this, please do

recall the Holodomor in Ukraine or the methodical extermination of Russian Jews and Jewish culture under Stalin) was any better than Nazi Germany, has its logic.

By no means is all this about the past. As early as under Mikhail Gorbachev, a plethora of decent and courageous Russian historians exposed the Soviet Union as having been a criminal state. Stalin was explicitly regarded as a criminal and paranoiac dictator who committed the most horrible crimes against humanity. The fact that Vladimir Putin's Russia changed the interpretation of the past nearly overnight shows that everything is about the present, rather than the past.

Although the denial of the Holocaust is too complex a phenomenon to be confined to legal practices and administrative measures, Germany outlawed the denial of the Holocaust out of its firm commitment never to repeat its past. Russia cynically denies its occupation and annexation of the Baltic States, as well as its numerous crimes against European nations, because it is sending a message to us that it would gladly repeat recent history restoring the past and rehabilitating political doctrine which Gorbachev's and Yeltsin's Russia regarded as overtly criminal and hostile to Russia itself.

Hence, we have seen an attempt by the Baltic States and the East Central European nations to work out a viable antidote to Russia's revisionism. However understandable and logical this attempt, the idea of the political and moral equivalency of Communism and National Socialism is not the most convincing way to do it—for Western Europe and the USA will always take a deep exception to the claim that the Holocaust and Soviet crimes were of the same nature.

Therefore, something has to be done to untie this Gordian knot of history. I propose that our politicians and public figures stop romanticizing the political forces of 1941 that tried to save the independence of the Baltic States by collaborating with the Nazis. The tragedy was that our countries were "liberated" from the Nazis by the Soviets, instead of Great Britain or the USA.

All in all, only our political courage and moral integrity, rather than selective interpretation of history, can end our memory wars with Russia or with the far Left of Western Europe. We cannot allow Russia to distort history spreading ugly lies about the Baltic States as crypto-fascist countries, yet we have to be fair and sympathetic to the Holocaust survivors, who fear, and rightly so, that a simplistic and relativistic approach to the Shoah as, supposedly, one of many Holocausts in Europe becomes a sort of obfuscation and trivialisation of the tragedy.

History can never be left solely to politicians, no matter whether democratic or authoritarian. It is not a property of a political doctrine or of a regime it serves. History, if properly understood, is the symbolic design of

our existence and moral choices we make every day. Like human privacy, our right to study and critically question history is a corner stone of freedom.

Professor John Hiden's work reminds us of this better than anything else.

Notes

1. For more on this issue, see Talmon, 1960, pp. 242–77.
2. For more on this issue, see Donskis, 2002, pp. 13–34.
3. Kavolis, 1993, p. 48.
4. Leszek Kołakowski describes totalitarianism and the spirit of technology as forms of modern barbarity. For more on this issue, see Kołakowski, 1990, pp. 14–31.
5. For more on this issue, see Lewis, 1996.
6. For more on these data provided by the market analysis and research group *Rait*, see <http://www.rait.lt/>.
7. For more on this, see Donskis, 2009.
8. See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/sep/14/gay-hate-laws-lithuania>.
9. Bauman, 2000, pp. 10–11.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.
12. Kavolis, 1995, p. 166.
13. Gavelis, 1993, pp. 80–81.
14. Sauka, 1995, p. 123.
15. Ozolas, 1996, p. 211.
16. *I laisvę*, p. 2.
17. Šliogeris, 1995, pp. 22–23.

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