



# Latvians in United States, 1918–1922: Attitude towards Latvia

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*Anotation.* The article covers the main directions of the activities by the Latvian émigrés in the United States in 1918–1922 in the context of Latvian state proclamation. It is done by reviewing the attitude demonstrated towards Latvian statehood as expressed through political activities, including the activities opposing the Latvian statehood and the context of general USA attitude towards the Baltic States. The example of the Latvian émigrés is noteworthy both as regards the history of ethnic minorities in the USA, where under the circumstances Latvians formed a distinctive group, and as regards the history of Latvia: different attitudes towards the statehood in the homeland highlight the plurality of opinions among the Latvian émigrés.

**Keywords:** *U.S. Latvians, Latvian state, Latvian War of Independence, ethnic minorities in U.S., political radicalism, recognition of Baltic states.*

*Anotacija.* Straipsnyje apžvelgiamos pagrindinės Latvijos emigrantų Jungtinėse Valstijose veiklos kryptys 1918–1922 m. Latvijos valstybės paskelbimo kontekste. Tai daroma peržiūrint požiūrį į Latvijos valstybingumą, išreikštą per politinę veiklą, įskaitant veiklą, prieštaraujančią Latvijos valstybingumui ir bendrą JAV požiūrį į Baltijos šalis. Latvijos emigrantų pavyzdys yra pastebimas tiek kalbant apie etninių mažumų istoriją JAV, kai tokiais aplinkybėmis latviai sudarė savitą grupę, tiek apie Latvijos istoriją: skirtingas požiūris į valstybingumą tėvynėje išryškina nuomonių įvairovę tarp Latvijos emigrantų.

**Esminiai žodžiai:** *JAV latviai, Latvijos valstybė, Latvijos nepriklausomybės karas, etninės mažumos JAV, politinis radikalizmas, Baltijos valstybių pripažinimas.*

This research was supported by the Latvian Council of Science research grant nr. lzp-2018/2-0147 “War and Society 1914–1921”. The author would also like to express his thanks to Ph.D. Jānis Arveds Trapāns. His careful reading, editorial suggestions, and comments on the content, certainly enhanced the article and were greatly appreciated.

## Introduction

At the moment of proclamation of the Republic of Latvia in 1918 and during the following Latvian War of Independence a considerable amount of Latvians lived outside Latvia. The greatest part of them were located in Russia, Ukraine and other parts of the former Tsar Empire, which fact was determined among others by the refugee movement during the First World War. Nevertheless, a number of Latvians lived in Western European countries, and in Australia and Canada. By far the greatest number of Latvians, who were living outside of the former empire territory, was situated in the United States of America where 30 to 40 thousand people of Latvian descent lived. This community was a specific group among the population of the United States not only from the national viewpoint, but also from political characteristics. A considerable part of them were left-minded people, who arrived in the USA in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially many of them arrived after the revolution of 1905.

This article covers the time period from 1918, when the statehood of Latvia was proclaimed, to July 1922, when with the recognition of the Baltic States by the USA a new period in the mutual relations of these countries began. During the period in question the attitude of the USA government towards the events in the Baltic States was mixed: on the one hand it delayed the recognition of the Baltic States independence much more noticeably than other Allies; on the other hand, American humanitarian work in Baltic lands was the most extensive from all Allies.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this article is to disclose the main directions of the activities by the Latvian émigrés in the context of the Latvian state proclamation; this aim is to be achieved by reviewing the attitude demonstrated towards the Latvian statehood as expressed through political activities or different forms of mutual aid. The activities opposing the Latvian statehood will be mentioned here only slightly, as this topic requires more proper detailization in a separate article. Overall, the context of general USA attitude towards the Baltic States is given. The example of the Latvian émigrés is noteworthy both as regards the history of ethnic minorities in the USA, where under the circumstances Latvians formed a distinctive group, and as regards the history of Latvia: it should be stated that

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<sup>1</sup> See more: SKIRIUS, Juozas. *U.S. Government Policy toward Lithuania 1920–1922: Recognition of Lithuanian Independence*. Chicago: Lithuanian Research and Studies Center, 2000; JĒKABSONS, Ēriks. *Latvijas un Amerikas Savienoto Valstu attiecības 1918.-1922.gadā*. Rīga: Latvijas Vēstures institūta apgāds, 2017.

different attitudes towards the statehood in the homeland highlight the plurality of opinions among the Latvian émigrés.

## Prehistory

The greatest numbers of people to emigrate from the Baltic region were the Lithuanians. There also were the Latvian émigrés, who began to arrive during the 1880's. By 1918, their number had grown but is uncertain, various estimates have been made, ranging from 30.000 to 70.000; the lower number, probably, is the more accurate. In some of the larger cities, they founded organizations. In 1889, in Boston, they founded a Latvian Society; however, in 1893, there was a dissension among its members, and the dissenters established their Latvian Workers Society. In 1896, the first Latvian language newspaper *Amerikas Vēstnesis* (*American Messenger*) appeared. Its editor, until 1919, was Jēkabs Zībergs, the most prominent and active American Latvian.

In 1896, there came a second wave of émigrés, a political one. A left wing movement had emerged in Latvia, toward the end of the century, popularly known as the *New Current* (*Jaunā Strāva*). Many, though not all of its followers, had entered fledgling Social Democrat organizations, which were discovered and pursued by the Tsarist secret police. Some members were arrested, imprisoned, or exiled; others fled abroad. Some left wing émigrés found their way to America, among them Davids Bundža, who gathered his fellow socialists and founded a Latvians Social Democratic Union in 1898. It also had its own publications, a monthly *Auseklis* (*The Dawn*), issued from 1898 to 1901 and, thereafter, a newspaper *Proletārietis* (*The Proletarian*), from 1902 to 1918, the official publication of the Latvian social democrats.<sup>2</sup> Then there came the third wave of radical revolutionaries, an exodus after the revolution of 1905. Many of whom had been the leaders and who had fought, with arms, in the revolution which, in Latvia, had been furious and bloody, suppressed by the Tsarist punitive forces with extreme ferocity and brutality. Some of the émigrés never lost their enraged outlook and violent behavior, joining the radical American *The International Workers of the World* (the “Wobblies”). As a result, the Latvian workers were viewed, with suspicion, by American authorities as dangerous anarchists.<sup>3</sup>

Not all of the political émigrés were radicals. The most notable among them was Kārlis Ulmanis, later the first Minister President of Latvia. While in the United States, from the University of Nebraska he received a Bachelor of Science degree and was a lecturer there,

<sup>2</sup> For further details regarding Latvian and Lithuanian ethnic press, see: ANDERSON, Edgar; SLAVENAS, M. G. The Latvian and Lithuanian Press. In: MILLER, Sally (Ed.). *The Ethnic Press in the United States*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1987, pp. 229–246.

<sup>3</sup> JĒKABSONS, Ēriks. Latviešu anarhisti terorizē Bostonu. *Ilustrētā Vēsture*. 2015, Decembris, 52.–59. lpp. See for example: Jan Pouren Case. *The Independent*. 1908, Sept. 17; Plaude Is in Riga, Russia. Friend of Gutman, the Slain Bandit. *Boston Daily Globe*, 1908, Oct. 28; Dead Desperado Edmund Gutman. *Boston Daily Globe*, 1908, July 25; Plaude, Jekapson, the Yeggs Sought. *Boston Daily Globe*, 1908, July 27, etc.

and then he had own business, dairy, in Texas. However, in 1913, the political situation was such that he could return to Latvia. Another notable émigré was Voldemārs Salnais, who, as a youthful Social Democrat had been an active revolutionary, then imprisoned and exiled to Siberia, from where he escaped to the United States. Later, Salnais would serve as Latvia's Foreign Minister and Ambassador to Sweden.

In 1909, a number of the Latvian Social Democrat groups entered the American Socialist Party, maintaining their distinct identity as an autonomous section of the larger organization. From 1909 to 1919 they published the newspaper *Strādnieks (The Worker)*. According to some unverified data, there were some 11.000 Latvians in the United States, of whom 1001 were members belonging to [left-wing] organizations, counting those in Canada as well as the United States. By 1915, the organized membership had grown to some 1600. There were, however, disagreements and divisions among them, and in 1911 a group, headed by Jānis Ozols, another prominent Social Democrat and a former Duma deputy, separated, and from 1916 to 1917 published their own journal *Darba Balss (The Voice of Labor)*.

When Russia's autocracy collapsed in 1917, many of the political exiles from Russia, including Latvians, left America for their homeland. It is estimated that some 3500 Latvians, many of them Social Democrats, did return to Latvia after 1917. The radical extremists, in particular, hastened to depart. Some of them would later have prominent roles in Soviet Russia, and in the short-lived government of Soviet Latvia in 1919. Frīdis Roziņš, one of the most prominent Social Democrats since the late 1890's, who had been imprisoned but had escaped to the United States, became the Commissar of Agriculture in the Soviet Latvian Government. Davids Beika, the Commissar of Industry, was notable for his narrow fanaticism. Jānis Ozols, however, remained in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

The situation in Latvia at the time was difficult. Since 1915 half of the territory of Latvia was under the German, occupation and the front line crossed Latvian territory for several years. In August 1917 German forces entered Riga, but in February, 1918, all the territory of Latvia was already controlled by the German forces. Only after the collapse of the German empire and the end of the war, it became possible to proclaim the state independence of Latvia in November 1918. After the proclamation, the Temporary Government commenced a military and political struggle with external (Soviet Russia, Germany, anti-Bolshevistic white Russian forces) and internal (bolshevics, Baltic Germans) foes for actual independence and borders, which lasted for two years. Only in August 1920 a peace treaty was signed with Soviet Russia, but in January, 1921, Latvia achieved international recognition.

<sup>4</sup> See: AKMENTIŅŠ, Osvalds; BĒRZIŅA, Lidija. *Latvijas ideja Amerikā*. Bostona: Amerikas latviešu tautiskā savienība, 1968; DŪMA, Lidija; PAEGLĪTE, Dzidra. *Revolucionārie latviešu emigranti ārzemēs 1897–1919*. Rīga: Liesma, 1976; AKMENTIŅŠ, Osvalds. *Vēstules no Maskavas. Amerikas latviešu repatriantu likteņi Padomju Krievijā 1917–1940*. Īstlansinga, Mičigana: "Gaujas" apgāds, 1987.

Among those Latvians in the USA later supporting the cause of Latvia's national government, notably energetic was Kārlis Ozols, an engineering expert, who had been sent to the United States by the Russia's Ministry of War in 1916.<sup>5</sup> After the revolution, the Russian engineers founded a business enterprise to further their interests, with Ozols as its executive officer. However, he was devoted to the cause of Latvia's independence. He wrote a number of articles on Latvia and the Latvians, which appeared in the *New York Times*: no small achievement. He was aware that the American public knew little about his country. His initial article was written to dispel convincingly the notion that the Latvians were given to Bolshevik radicalism; on the contrary, Ozols argued, they were a fully developed and well-educated nationality. Another article explained that the German oppression of the Latvian people caused their radical temper. A subsequent article explained that bolshevism was incompatible with the particular nature of the Latvian agrarian society. Given his prominent office representing Russia's engineers, Ozols met the Russian Ambassador Boris Bakhmetev, who represented Kerensky's Provisional Government. Later, Ozols would recall that in the conversation with Bakhmetev: he advised the Ambassador to take "a more far-sighted political course, to not reject the aspirations of the small nations and, even with clenched teeth, publicly declare, at least, the recognition of their autonomy." Ozols pointed out, that only this approach would lead to a victory over bolshevism. But to Bakhmetev, this was "difficult to comprehend and not possible to accept politically." Ozols then approached another Russian in the Embassy, Korff, who previously had served as Russia's Vice Governor of Finland and, hence, as Ozols had assumed, would have some sympathy for the strivings of the smaller nations. However, Korff had even "a more optimistic belief on Russia's future political course of events and regarded all national efforts toward separatism as a transitory phenomenon, which did not deserve serious attention".<sup>6</sup>

The Latvian community was paying close attention to the events in their native country. After the war had ended, the organizations began political activities. On June 30, 1918 the Latvians of Massachusetts convoked a meeting and voted on a resolution addressed to President Wilson. At this time, it should be noted, Germany, victorious in the East, had forced Soviet Russia to sign the Treaty of Brest Litovsk and, according to its terms, Germany would have possession of the Baltic States. Appealing to the President, the Address, said to represent the Latvians, loyal citizens of America, who still hold their native land in cherished memory, and are devoted to its independence and self-government, desire to express their grateful support to the cause of the United States as

<sup>5</sup> The personal data of K. Ozols see: Personal file, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1919–1940. *Latvijas Nacionālā arhīva Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs (National Archives of Latvia, State Historical Archives of Latvia, further: LNA LVVA)*, 2570. f., 14. apr., 1138. l., 2.–13. lp.; JĒKABSONS, Ēriks; ŠČERBINSKIS, Valters (sast.). *Latvijas ārlietu dienesta darbinieki 1918–1991*. Biogrāfiska vārdnīca. Rīga: Zinātne, 2003, 231.–232. lpp.

<sup>6</sup> OZOLS, Kārlis. *Amerika Latvijas tapšanas sākumā. Jaunākās Ziņas*, 1922. 4. aug.; OZOLS, Kārlis. *Darbs un atmiņas Latvijai topot. Latvijas Kareivis*, 1934, 5., 10. aug.

well as that of the Allies, and their intent to provide equal human rights and independent self-rule for every nation, large or small. Therefore, we, the Latvians of America, do express our sincere gratitude to the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, for his dedication to the establishment of Latvian independence, and every one of us will support the United States and its Allies in this arduous battle, financially, morally, and physically. That said, the address stated a protest against Germany and its Allies, who oppress the Latvians, intending “to deprive them of their independent self-government as well as to any attempt made by Germany to bring a German ruler to our former native land. As we have, during the three previous years, financially, physically and morally, supported the Latvian Rifle Regiments, who, alongside the Allies, have fought for the independence of our country. Moreover, we protest against the attempt of any European state or nation, which interferes in the affairs of the Latvian nation... which today is wrongfully ruled by the Central Powers.”<sup>7</sup>

## Lettish League of America

From Boston, Pēteris Roze wrote to Zigfrids Meierovics, next foreign minister of Latvian Provisional Government on November 8, 1918 telling him of the foundation of a *Lettish League of America*. (Roze was employed by the *Young Men's Christian Association* in Boston.) He was happy, he said, that there were those in our fatherland who had not converted to Bolshevism. He assured Meierovics that the purpose of the newly established organization was “to support Latvian interests in the Baltic and help in every way possible.” He was happy to hear that Meierovics intended to visit the United States, even assuming that the Allies would do their best to defray his travel expenses. An approach to America was to be encouraged, because “America is the best friend of our native land and America wages war in order to secure democracy for the entire world.”<sup>8</sup>

The Boston newspaper *Amerikas Vēstnesis* on December 15 published the news that information had been received from Copenhagen: a Latvian Republic had been proclaimed in Riga by a National Council and a great part of the Latvian people. The newspaper was astonished and pleased: “To us, the Latvians in America,” it wrote, “the news comes as a bolt of lightning from a clear sky.” Some Latvians do hope to see the so-called Lenin-Trotsky system of government in Latvia at the head of the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat. According to the editors, the declaration confirmed the fact that a majority of the Latvians definitely wanted the creation of a democratic state. In January, the newspaper published two important documents pertaining to the recognition of Latvia's Government: a letter sent by Zigfrids Meierovics, soon to be Latvia's Foreign Minister, to

<sup>7</sup> Bostonas Latviešu Rezolūcija. *Amerikas Vēstnesis*, 1918, 15. jūl.

<sup>8</sup> P. Roze to Z. Meierovics, Nov. 8, 1918. *LNA LVVA*, 2575. f., 1. apr., 159. l., 27., 28. lp.

Britain's Foreign Secretary Balfour, and the Secretary's reply of November 11, extending *de facto* recognition to a Provisional Government in Latvia. Meierovics had been in touch with the newspaper's editor Jēkabs Zībergs; on October 27 he had sent a letter, relating his talks with the Foreign Secretary. Shortly afterwards, from January 3 to 5, 1919 the first conference of the Latvian National League, where the participants, some 30 in number, decided to support Latvia's *de facto* Provisional Government, although there seems to have been some uncertainty among the [participants] whether Latvia would be entirely an independent and sovereign state. Nonetheless, the conference sent a congratulating telegram, congratulating Meierovics and, more importantly, a message to President Wilson, asking the President to confirm his principle of self-determination for nations, specifically when it came to the Baltic nations, and to raise "the Baltic question" at the Peace Conference, which would decide it. There was a lesser, although bothersome matter. The letter drew the President's attention to Lithuanian demands of Latvia's territory, in the southwest to a part of Courland and in the East, parts of the province of Latgale. Such demands had already been voiced in Lithuanian newspapers. Ozols would respond to them in major newspapers.<sup>9</sup>

On February 22, 1919 Meierovics sent a request to the American Ambassador to France to issue a diplomatic visa to Kārlis Zariņš, who was to represent the Provisional Government in the United States. Having received no reply, Meierovics repeated his request on February 27. The principal purpose of the representative's endeavors was to secure the funds from Latvians in America, which would be used to buy military supplies and food; request the American Government to permit solicitation for loans and donations to help overcome the wartime destruction in Latvia and, most importantly, permit summoning of volunteers among American Latvians for Latvia's armed forces, which were battling the Soviet invasion, primarily among those who had served in the United States Army.<sup>10</sup> However, in such a case (unrecognized country) the Embassy would only issue a visa to a private citizen; therefore, Zariņš did not go.

Before an accredited representative of Latvia's Government would be recognized by the State Department, the American Lettish League strove to promote Latvia's interests. Already on December 26, 1918, it submitted a declaration to the State Department that it would do its utmost to promote economic relations between the United States and "the Baltic provinces". A following message, sent on January 21, professed the same intention.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See: The correspondence of American Latvians with the governmental offices of Latvia, 1919. *LNA LVVA*, 2575. f., 1. apr., 202. l., 1.–62. lp.; *Latviešu Republika. Amerikas Vēstnesis*, 1918, 15. dec.; *Amerikas Latviešu pirmais nacionālais kongress. Amerikas Vēstnesis*, 1919, 15. janv.; OZOLS, Kārlis. Darbs un atmiņas Latvijai topot. *Latvijas Kareivis*, 1934, 19., 23. sept.; Sk. arī: OZOLS, Kārlis. *Latvijai topot. Darbs un atmiņas Amerikā un Eiropā Latvijas tapšanas sākumā*. 1. daļa. Rīga: Erva, 1935, 60.–63. lpp.

<sup>10</sup> Z. Meierovis to US Embassy, Paris, Febr. 22, 1919. *LNA LVVA*, 1313. f., 1. apr., 5. l., 8., 9., 10. lp.

<sup>11</sup> TARULIS, Albert. *American-Baltic Relations 1918–1922: The Struggle Over Recognition*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1965, p. 168.

On January 17, Ozols and two other representatives for the Latvian National League called at the Department. No record exists of their talk. However, on January 21 the League presented to the Department its aims in writing. The basic purpose was to “employ all legal means available in order to assist the Baltic provinces in their struggle for political freedom, and in their attempt to re-establish and develop their industries and commerce.” They asked the State Department to reiterate the fact that the United States government believes in the principle of self-determination, to allow the delegates of the Latvian Provisional Government to present to the Peace Conference the facts in regard to the Latvian inhabitants of the Baltic provinces at the time when the question comes up, and to assist the authorized representative of the Latvian National League, Mr. Charles Ozols, in securing proper interviews with the representative of the American Commission in Paris. Furthermore, the United States should publicly oppose any attempt of the Lithuanians to annex any territory inhabited by the Latvians. These successive requests of the American Latvian National League would receive attention in the State Department and, eventually, elicit a response. Early in 1919, Ozols departed for Paris, to join the Latvian Mission there as a representative of the National League. On his way, on February 21, while in London, he forwarded a lengthy communication to President Wilson, as well as to Herbert, as the head of the American Relief Administration and Latvia’s Minister president Kārlis Ulmanis. (According to Ozols, the document was drafted by Arveds Bergs, a member of Latvia’s mission in London.) Only upon his arrival in Europe, Ozols declared, he came to comprehend the appalling destruction and suffering of his native land.<sup>12</sup>

During the spring of 1919, Kristaps Rāviņš, of Philadelphia, sent frequent communications to the Paris Latvian delegation. He sent books to “the brave Latvian soldiers”. These were given to the Latvian soldiers who were in France, hundreds of them, the former German war prisoners and some others, who had served in a Russian contingent that had been sent to France, and who were awaiting for the return to Latvia. Rāviņš wrote that the Latvians in America “were ready to do everything they could do to help, in any way, to help morally and materially our soldiers and our native land.” He drew the Mission’s attention that in order to secure assistance, it was necessary to send a representative to the United States, and asked the Mission to issue a “general address” to all the Latvians in America. He reiterated this request, noting that otherwise a considerable number of Latvians would be swayed by radical propaganda, which claimed that Russia, and the areas of Latvia under Soviet control, were well off. Indeed, at the end of June, the Mission did issue a declaration, which related Latvia’s distressing situation and asked for donations of goods, to be forwarded to responsible American organizations, and in funds, to be sent directly to the Mission in Paris. Furthermore, Rāviņš wrote to

<sup>12</sup> Latvian League to State Department, Jan. 21, 1919. *Hoover Institution Archives* (further: *HIA*). American National Red Cross, box 178-22; K. Ozols to W. Wilson, Febr. 21, 1919. *LNA LVVA*, 2575. f., 1. apr., 31. l., 57.–59. lp.; OZOLS, Kārlis. Darbs un atmiņas Latvijai topot. *Latvijas Kareivis*, 1934, 19., 28. sept., 5., 12. okt.



the delegation, that some enterprising Latvians had established an American Lettish Commercial League, although the undertaking had not been particularly successful. The Latvian Society for Assistance, on June 14, had an event, where 75 persons participated, and 127 dollars were provided to poverty stricken in Latvia. The Philadelphia Free Latvian Society disseminated copies of two Latvian newspapers, *Latvijas Sargs* and *Strādnieku Avīze*. Rāviņš informed the Latvian representative in Paris, Bergs, that the address had been received, 500 copies printed, and distributed, and, in consequence, “it will dispel the lies and rumors disseminated by the local Latvian Bolsheviks.” He sent clippings from American newspapers that mentioned Latvia and the Latvians. He also was in touch with the Latvian mission in London, the counselor Juris Kēmanis, informing him about the activities and forwarding clippings from American newspapers and some Russian language ones.<sup>13</sup>

During the spring and summer of 1919, the Latvian National League supported the Latvian delegation at the Peace Conference with funds. The sums were not large but, particularly in the spring and summer, very welcome, as the delegation was desperately short of funds. Meierovics sent a letter to Zībergs, on June 21, concerning the League’s readiness to support the delegation, and advised Zībergs to forward the payments directly to Paris, where it would be spent to support the delegation. Thereafter, until the end of 1919, the Latvian delegation received regular financial support, for which the delegation expressed its sincere appreciation.<sup>14</sup>

The League’s efforts reached in various directions. In America, it sought to support the cause of Latvia’s independence; it provided support to the Paris delegation, and it collected and sent money for the needs in Latvia. For example, for Christmas, the Latvian Red Cross received 300 dollars; for children in need, 300 dollars, and for soldiers, 200 dollars.<sup>15</sup> The League informed Latvia’s Foreign Ministry it could help forward letters from Latvians to their relatives in America, locating their addresses, if these were not known. Accordingly, the Ministry Publisher spread information in Latvia’s newspapers that letters could be sent to the organization in Philadelphia responsible for this undertaking.<sup>16</sup> Celebrating one year since Latvia’s independence had been declared, the Latvian organizations in Chicago and Philadelphia gathered funds, sent to the Latvian mission in London a present, a painting by a Latvian American artist Gustavs Āboltiņš, a portrait of President Wilson “in a frame with national ornaments”.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Correspondence of K. Rāviņš and Delegation in Paris, spring 1919. *LNA LVVA*, 1313. f., 1. apr., 16. l., 53., 56.–58., 65.–68., 72., 83. lp.; 2575. f., 1. apr., 156. l., 1.–35. lp.

<sup>14</sup> Mission in Paris to G. Dancis, Sept. 2, 1919. *LNA LVVA*, 2575. f., 7. apr., 10. l., 87. lp.; Latvijas Ārlietu ministra vēstule J. Ziebergam. *Amerikas Vēstnesis*, 1919, 15. jūl.; [14. oktobra] Vēstule no Parīzes. *Amerikas Vēstnesis*, 1919, 15. nov.; [26. novembra] Vēstule no Francijas. *Amerikas Vēstnesis*, 1920, 1. janv.

<sup>15</sup> Latvian League to G. Bisenieks. Febr. 20, 1920. *LNA LVVA*, 2570. f., 2. apr., 63. l., 10. lp.

<sup>16</sup> Vēstuļu sūtīšana uz Ameriku. *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 1920, 19. Febr. Par Tautisko savienību un tās locekļiem sk. arī: *Amerikas latviešu patriots. Jaunākās Ziņas*, 1920, 16. martā.

<sup>17</sup> Amerikas latviešu dāvana. *Brīvā Zeme*, 1919, 6. dec.; *LNA LVVA*, 1313. f., 1. apr., 16. l., 55., 74. lp.

In the summer of 1919 in the US parliament the grand struggle over that part of the Versailles Treaty took place which proposed the establishment of a League of Nations, bitterly opposed by Senator Lodge. The Senator, however, did not neglect his concern for Baltic independence. He invited national representatives to testify before a hearing of the Committee on August 29, 1919. It was the first time in the Senate's history, it may be noted, that such representatives of this kind were invited to appear before the Senate: a Latvian, Estonian, Lithuanian, and a Ukrainian. Lutheran pastor from New York Kārlis Podiņš spoke for Latvia. He did note he was an American citizen and had lived in America for many years; nonetheless, he told of Latvia's social conditions, the Latvian level of education, heartrending past, a promising economic future, as well as a summary of the extant conditions. While noting that some 20 to 25 per cent of the Latvians had veered toward Bolshevism, the reason, for that, was the suffering they had undergone during the German occupation of their country. He concluded, saying, "Latvia deserves the recognition of our great nation, because our forbearers have never suffered as much as the Latvians have." In all, Podiņš's presentation, on the one hand, might have been entirely accurate as to economic and social facts, but, on the other, was convincing in its emotional presentation. It was noted that it moved his listeners, and some Senators "warmly shook his hand and promised to support the cause of Latvia's independence."<sup>18</sup>

Since mid-1919, the League had sought to have a permanent Latvian representative in the United States, to be appointed by the Latvian Government and was disappointed when that did not take place. (The hesitation in the State Department as to the level of recognition to be accorded to any such representative was one of the reasons for delay.) In June 19, Gustavs Dancis, an active promoter of Latvia's recognition, in New York, wrote to Bisenieks in London: "All last year we waited for a Latvian representative with great anticipation but, unfortunately, until now no one has arrived, there only is Mr. [Charles] Ozols and there are some Latvians who do not wish to see him here." Evidently, there were disagreements, even disputes among the Latvian organizations and individuals, and Ozols. The delay of an official representative was hindered by the attitude of the State Department. Dancis went on to say that "lately everyone here had been encouraged, having heard that [Gustavs] Zemgals would soon arrive, but now we are downcast, since our hope was in vain. Considering that there is no full-fledged Latvian Representative here, all efforts we have undertaken by the National League as well as other bodies, are coming to a close, just because that we cannot expect a Latvian mission and there is no one who can provide us with the correct information about the conditions in Latvia or its needs."<sup>19</sup> Bisenieks forwarded Dancis complaint to the Foreign Ministry, supporting his views, adding that Estonia was preparing to send a representative to deal with economic matters. "The need for similar Latvian representation in America is just as necessary,

<sup>18</sup> K. Podiņš, speech, Aug. 29, 1919. *LNA LVVA*, 5969. f., 1. apr., 15. l., 1.–2. lp.; TRUCE, Austra. *Mācītāja Karļa Podiņa dzīves gājums 1872–1944*. Ņujorka: [-], 1944, 13.–14. lpp.

<sup>19</sup> G. Dancis to G. Bisenieks, June 19, 1920. *LNA LVVA*, 2575. f., 1. apr., 387. l., 61. lp.

and even more so, because the number of the Latvians in America is much larger than that of the Estonians.”<sup>20</sup>

The Latvian organizations, notably their officials, attentively observed the course of events in Latvia. By this time, the American press followed the military situation in the Baltic. Late in 1919, there was a fierce and prolonged battle in Latvia, against the so-called Western Army, a German and Russian force commanded, nominally, by a Russian commander Bermont. Pleased by the favorable news coverage, one of the Latvian activists, Gustavs Dancis, in November sent a letter to the Latvian mission in London, happily relating that before Bermont's attack, the American newspapers “thought of the Latvians as radicals, claiming that the Latvians were Bolsheviks, but they no longer write that, having understood that the Germans are the aggressors, not the Latvians.”

## Relief to Latvia

Some modest assistance was provided in cooperation with the American Red Cross. Late in 1918, on December 14, the initial meeting of a “Latvian Assistance Society” to America's Red Cross in New York collected 2140 dollars in donations.<sup>21</sup> Although the assistance efforts were under way for some time, a Lettish Auxiliary of American Red Cross was formally established on August 1, 1919.<sup>22</sup> Its purpose was to provide assistance “to Latvia, our suffering country, within the provisions of the Red Cross”. The Auxiliary was headed by Kārlis Bukrots, the pastor of a Boston Latvian congregation, and later by Pavils Roze. On August 12, Bukrots could notify the Latvian mission in London that the work of the section was under way.<sup>23</sup> It engaged in various undertakings. On October 18, a concert was organized with the proceeds for orphanages in Latvia. Moreover, there was a political aspect to these events. Bukrots could inform the London mission that the “hall was decorated with flags, America's, the flag of the new Latvian Republic, with the Red Cross flag in the middle”. When the origin and the history of Latvia's flag was related to those present, it left a deep impression. Indeed, until now, the Americans knew little about Latvia and her efforts. The Auxiliary continued to sponsor various events, public concerts, in order to encourage support. Thus, on November 29, a successful major effort in the fund gathering campaign was given a broad coverage in the Boston newspapers, informing their readers about Latvia and the existant conditions there. There were other activities as well. A group of women, most of them from Bukrots's congregation, collected clothing for children and adults, and sewed and knitted as well. The results of their labor

<sup>20</sup> G. Bisenieks to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 5, 1920. *LNA LVVA*, 2575. f., 1. apr., 378. l., 110. lp.

<sup>21</sup> OZOLS, Kārlis. Darbs un atmiņas Latvijai topot. *Latvijas Kareivis*, 1934, 2. sept.

<sup>22</sup> K. Bukrots to Z. Meierovics, June 22, 1919. *LNA LVVA*, 1313. f., 1. apr., 13. l., 22. lp., etc.

<sup>23</sup> K. Bukrots to Mission in London, Aug. 12, 1919. *LNA LVVA*, 293. f., 1. apr., 160. l., 16., 17. lp.; See also: BURNEVICA, E. Ko Latvieši darijuši priekš Sarkanā Krusta. *Amerikas Vēstnesis*, 1919, 15. aug., 1. sept.

were given to the American Red Cross, so that it could be shipped to Latvia. Eventually, the Latvian Auxiliary got directly in touch with Latvia's Red Cross.<sup>24</sup> Shipments were under way. The Latvian newspapers would report in May of 1920, that a cargo of food and clothing had arrived in Liepāja and another was under way.<sup>25</sup>

However, the small Boston organization was not in touch with Sēja, the Latvian representative, which hampered its efforts, according to Sēja. He sent a critical report concerning the organization which, so he claimed, had only a handful of members and its chairman, Roze, was a dubious background, suspected of communist leanings. Roze even was said to have been sentenced in an armed attack.<sup>26</sup> Possibly, Sēja was influenced by the suspicions among the Latvian society, where allegations concerning Bolshevism were not uncommon.

Organizations in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, in other cities, and individuals as well, donated goods and money.<sup>27</sup> In May of 1920, the Boston section of the Latvian League forwarded to the Latvian delegation, still at work in Paris, 1.233 Francs for the "Latvians suffering from deprivation". In June, the Lettish Relief Society of Philadelphia sent 1.655 Francs to Latvia's Red Cross to aid wounded soldiers and needy children.<sup>28</sup> A major undertaking was collecting sufficient money to buy a freight truck for the Red Cross.<sup>29</sup> The head of the Latvia's Red Cross had sought help from the Philadelphia Latvians for this need. Already on December 20, 1919 Oļģerds Grosvalds, the Latvian representative in Paris, was told that the Philadelphia Latvians had already donated 800 dollars of the amount necessary, and the rest would soon be met.<sup>30</sup> In June, the Latvian Red Cross got the freight truck. This help was appreciated. General Jānis Balodis, the Commander-in-Chief of Latvian Army, in December of 1919, would write how happy he was "that our fellow countrymen, far across the sea, understand Latvia's desperate situation. Our native land will never forget the heartfelt compassion with which the Latvians of Philadelphia have extended to [the cause] of Latvia's freedom and independence, helping the orphans, widows, and near relatives of those soldiers who died for it, and who, left without support, are in a hopeless situation."<sup>31</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Correspondence of K. Bukrots with Z. Meierovics and Latvian Missions in London and Paris, autumn, 1919-April, 1920. *LNA LVVA*, 2570. f., 2. apr., 63. l., 2.-9. lp.; 2575. f., 7. apr., 1. l., 440.-442. lp.; K. Bukrots to G. Bisenieks, Dec. 2, 1919. *LNA LVVA*, 2575. f., 1. apr., 160. l., 4.-7. lp.; K. Bukrots to Z. Meierovics, July 10, 1920. *LNA LVVA*, 2574. f., 4. apr., 19. l., 31.-34. lp.

<sup>25</sup> Amerikas latvju palīdzība Latvijai. *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 1920, 5. maijā.

<sup>26</sup> L. Sēja, Report, Aug. 19, 1920. *LNA LVVA*, 2574. f., 1. apr., 76. l., 98. lp.

<sup>27</sup> Correspondence of Latvian organizations and Latvian Mission in Paris, 1919. *LNA LVVA*, 4712. f., 1. apr., 1392. l., 2. lp.; 2575. f., 1. apr., 369. l., 99. lp.

<sup>28</sup> Boston section, Latvian League to Mission in Paris, May, 1920. *LNA LVVA*, 2575. f., 7. apr., 41. l., 80. lp.

<sup>29</sup> Latvijas Sarkanam Krustam. *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 1920, 11. jūn.

<sup>30</sup> Lettish Relief Society, Philadelphia to O. Grosvalds, Dec. 20, 1919. *LNA LVVA*, 2575. f., 7. apr., 1. l., 345.-346. lp.

<sup>31</sup> J. Balodis, letter, Dec. 29, 1920. *LNA LVVA*, 3601. f., 1. apr., 299. l., 123. lp.

According to the League's records, it sent to Latvia food, medical supplies, and clothing, estimated to have the value of some 10.000 dollars. Most of it came from Philadelphia, with Boston in the second place. Only a few hundred of some 30.000 Latvians residing in the United States had participated. Later, in 1922, some assistance was given to the Army's Sports Club, 50 dollars, by the Boston Ladies section of the Lettish National League.<sup>32</sup> Latvia's legation in Washington initiated some gathering efforts. In 1922, it solicited donations to erect a monument near the city of Cēsis, where a decisive battle had taken place during the War of Liberation.<sup>33</sup> However, it must be recognized that, overall, the support provided by America's Latvians was not considerable, particularly when compared to that given by the Latvians, and public opinion in Latvia thus appraised it.<sup>34</sup>

Herbert Hoover's American Relief Administration intended to engage the Latvians in its undertakings. The ARA overviewed various efforts, one of them named *Children Inc.*, and sought help for its assistance programs in Eastern Europe. Hoover received a request from the ARA representatives in New York to find Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian representatives, with whom the ARA could work together.<sup>35</sup> In August, 1920 ARA representatives in Riga suggested to Latvia's Government to help establish in America "a Latvian organization engaged in welfare", which would provide assistance to the Latvian population. Foreign Minister Meierovics wrote concerning this matter to the Latvian mission in Paris, but without results.<sup>36</sup>

Nonetheless, ARA did receive some support. In December 1920, the European Assistance Council, also headed by Herbert Hoover, conducted its annual campaign, in order to provide assistance to children in Europe. Shortly before Christmas, Congressman Chandler took over the task of gathering funds for children in Latvia. On December 24, Jānis Ozols, the commercial representative of Latvia in New York, and brother of Kārlis Ozols, received Chandler's request to travel to Washington, accompanied by Latvian women "in their folk dress", and participate in the fund collection action. Despite the short notice, Ozols did manage to find four Latvian women who arrived in on time. In the event, the Washington newspapers paid particular attention to them.<sup>37</sup> The other nationalities were little in evidence. The Poles showed up for one evening, the Czechs and Slovaks had one representative, and there were no Lithuanians and Estonians at all. Herbert Hoover was "greatly moved"; he could only wish that other nationalities would do

<sup>32</sup> Sports armijā. *Latvijas Kareivis*, 1922, 7. martā.

<sup>33</sup> Delegation in Washington to Latvian organizations, Jan., 1922. *LNA LVVA*, 293. f., 1. apr., 760. l., 1.-17. lp.

<sup>34</sup> Sk. A.[leksandrs] G.[rīns]. Amerikas latvieši. *Latvijas Kareivis*, 1921, 15. nov.

<sup>35</sup> ARA administration to H. Hoover, July 10, 1919. *HIA*, American Relief Administration, European Unit, box 332-34.

<sup>36</sup> Z. Meierovics to Mission in Paris, Aug. 1920. *LNA LVVA*, 2575. f., 7. apr., 2. l., 9. lp.

<sup>37</sup> *The Washington Times*, 1920, Dec. 29; *Ilustrēts Žurnāls*, 1921, Nr. 3; Hopeful of Early Lettish Freedom. *The Washington Herald*, 1921, Jan. 4. See: W. Chandler to J. Ozols, Dec. 24, 1921. *LNA LVVA*, 2574. f., 4. apr., 133. l., 193., 194. lp.

the same. The Washington event was successful, and the American Relief Administration could continue support *Children Inc.* in Latvia.<sup>38</sup>

## Leftist forces

Simultaneously the radically inclined Latvians went their separate and different way. Some of them, confused by the course of events, such as the *Lettonian Workingmen's Association of Boston*, sought information from the Latvian mission in London, writing to Georgs Bisenieks (Head of Mission). The correspondence reveals a blending of revolutionary radicalism with nationalism, the legacy of 1905. Thus, one of the members of the Association, notary Rudolfs Zālītis, queried Bisenieks:

“I do not understand your stand against the so-called Bolsheviks [Zālītis asked] because, as I understand the Russian language, the word Bolshevik means majority or the greater part of a nation. Personally, I believe that this means the workers, just like all the workers in Latvia, and I do see why they should be fought with machine guns and other deadly weapons, because our great enemy is the German nobility<sup>39</sup>, from whose yoke every Latvian wants to cast off but, as I see, the so-called Latvian Government has a friendlier attitude toward the Germans than the Bolsheviks. As far as I know, the Bolsheviks are fighting for Latvia's independence, that is, to liberate it from every oppressor, whether Latvian or German overlords, who hope to exploit the Latvian working people. Zālītis continued to query Bisenieks.”

In a following letter, he asked:

“Could you explain, to some extent, why the Latvian Government has German and Jewish members? In my view, they have no concern with Latvia, because the Germans have Germany and the Jews have Palestine. Moreover, I think that the inclusion of such elements in the Government membership will end up with the estates in the hands of the barons, as in the former times. I cannot understand why the Latvians would want to remain under the boot of the German barons. If “the Bolsheviks” are good in confiscating [their] land, then, I think, they should really be called to come to the Baltic and ordered to cleanse the land of barons and other oppressors of the

<sup>38</sup> J. Ozols to K. Ulmanis, Jan. 3, 1921. *LNA LVVA*, 2574. f., 4. apr., 133. l., 190., 191. lp.

<sup>39</sup> The intricacies in relations between the two national groups – Germans and Latvians in the territory of Latvia developed over the centuries. Since Middle Ages Germans were the economic, political and social elite, while Latvians were mostly peasants. With the awakening of the Latvian national self-awareness in second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, conflicts and rivalries between the two groups (distinct both socially and by their national belonging) became more and more pronounced and reached their peak in the time period discussed in this article.

Latvian working people, and then Latvia will be free and clean and will be able to stand, with pride, before other nations.”<sup>40</sup>

There was uncertainty among the radical left as to whom they could assist. During the summer of the year, they collected some 1.600 dollars, and donated them to support the Latvian Social Democratic Party in Liepāja, and the Party’s newspaper *Strādnieku Avīze* (*Worker’s Newspaper*).<sup>41</sup> At this time, the American Communists were under way, and the Party was formally established in a founding Congress in Chicago on September 1. The Latvian comrades were a significant share of the membership; there were 1606 of them; however, that includes membership in Canada and the United States. Indeed, three members of the Central Committee were Latvians and, as the Party noted, the “Internationale” at the Congress was played by a Latvian band. The band’s enthusiastic rendition was not well timed: the Communist Party was outlawed in January 1920.<sup>42</sup>

The views of some Latvian groups is revealed in an extensive communication of the Lettish Alliance of Chicago, sent to Latvia’s Constituent Assembly in July 10, 1920. The communication related, in some detail, the Alliance’s efforts to secure money and clothing to be sent to Latvia. The writers complained that more could be done, if there was an appropriate response from the respective government offices and officials in Latvia. No reports had been received as to how the money that had been spent. Unfortunately, that helped the propaganda efforts of the Latvian Communists, who claimed that the funds were embezzled by the civil servants in Latvia, or used in their fight against the proletariat. Nor was there information concerning otherwise forwarded money to Latvia. The report found fault with the consular representative Jānis Kalniņš, and with Kārlis Ozols as well. (Ozols had been appointed the official responsible for commercial affairs.) The Alliance voiced a suspicion that Ozols had diverted the money meant to help the poverty stricken in Latvia to some commercial projects in London. In all, in this communication, authored by nationally inclined persons, the Government was criticized for neglecting democratic norms and using oppressive measures. An excerpt from the wide-ranging letter will indicate that some American Latvians, not in the least having Bolshevik sympathies, failed to understand the extant Latvia’s conditions. “It is repeatedly stressed,” [they wrote] in every announcement and proclamation, that Latvia enjoys freedom to its fullest extent. However, to those of us, familiar with the American democracy, some of the Latvian practices appear peculiar and hard to comprehend. News, arriving from various sources, are discouraging news. Letters repeatedly claim that one cannot write about political matters. We cite some of them: “We have much to write about, but we do not dare... Whoever would write about political affairs best be ready to sit behind bars. The local Latvian Bolsheviks

<sup>40</sup> R. Zālītis to G. Bisenieks, July 29, 1919. *LNA LVVA*, 2575. f., 1. apr., 159. l., 4., 10. lpp.

<sup>41</sup> Amerikas biedri – Latvijas Sociāldemokrātiskajai Strādnieku Partijai. *Sociāldemokrāts*, 1919, 15. sept.

<sup>42</sup> DŪMA, Lidija; PAEGLĪTE, Dzidra. *Revolucionārie latviešu emigranti ārzemēs 1897–1919*. Rīga: Liesma, 1976, 284.–286., 296. lpp.

have repeatedly claimed that the Government has hired 10.000 spies in order to seize the rebels. This army of spies is led by hangman Davuss, the bloodhound of 1905. Everyone, who dares to speak about concluding peace with Russia, who criticizes the behavior of governmental officials, who opposes the political program of the Agrarian Union, who demands the expulsion of the Baltic nobles and the sequestration of their properties, is accused of rebellion.” The letter also dealt with the political state of affairs in Latvia, which its authors had some difficulty in understanding. And the letter pointed out that although every proclamation and declaration issued by Latvia’s Government insisted that Latvia enjoyed democratic liberties to the fullest extent, the American Latvians, familiar with the American practice of democracy, found the Latvian approach deficient. It was written there: “The more Latvia’s Government will attempt to subdue the people [so one writer expounded], the higher the flames of unrest will rise. We believe that the Government’s use of repressive measures only encourages bolshevism in Latvia. A [newspaper] article that starts and ends with an assertion that Latvia is free, also states that in Riga all the inhabitants must register where they reside. Such registration books were required during the revolution of 1905, and then these registration books were regarded as an implement of utterly reactionary Tsarism; now they are a part of Latvia’s liberties. We want to remind you of a truism of long standing: “You answer to cannons with cannons, to arguments with arguments. Replying to cannons with arguments is foolish. In 1917, Russia’s Bolsheviks used arguments against cannons, and the German forces almost reached Moscow. If the Allies had not defeated Germany in the West, Russia would now be under the German fist. However, it is just as foolish to reply to arguments with cannons. The Tsar and other oppressors and tyrants used cannons against reform demands and revolutionary slogans; they could, for a brief time, smother the voices of opposition, but in the end they lost and fell from their thrones. We advise Latvia’s Government to counter Bolshevik arguments with theirs. Let them speak freely, and then reveal the foolhardiness of their theories and excessive revolutionary recklessness. The letter then went on to criticize some current decisions of Latvia’s Government: failure to divide the estates of the Baltic barons; keeping their Landeswehr in Latvia, and “selling Latvia to foreigners”.<sup>43</sup>

Some of the radical Latvian leaders had left, excited by a Russian revolution and enthused by the prospect of bringing it to Latvia. Others remained, and participated in establishing the American Communist Party, which, as it happens, shortly afterwards was suppressed. Overall a general anti-communist sentiment in the USA was prevalent at the time.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Lettish Alliance of Chicago to Latvia’s Constituent Assembly, July 10, 1920. *LNA LVVA*, 2575. f., 1. apr., 387. l., 30.–47. lp.

<sup>44</sup> More on the so called “Red Scare” and anti-communism in the USA see, for example: POWERS, Richard Gid. *Not without Honor. The History of American anti-Communism*. New York: The Free Press, 1995; HEALE, Michael. *American anti-Communism. Combating the Enemy Within, 1830–1970*. Baltimore, London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990.



Nonetheless, the Latvian communists in the USA continued their endeavors in a hope to influence the political situation in Latvia with publications, printed in America and then sent to Latvia and there distributed. It should be mentioned that Latvia at this time was negotiating a peace treaty with Soviet Russia; the negotiations were prolonged, and lasted from February to August, 1920. The Latvian Government demanded a halt to the dissemination of the Soviet propaganda. However, it could be smuggled in from the West. Latvia's Government detected the offenders and sought the help of American authoritarians to suppress them. Foreign Minister Meierovics informed John Gade, the American representative in Riga, that the newspaper *Strādnieks* (*The Worker*), published in New York, a Bolshevik publication, was being sent to Latvia, as well as other Soviet propaganda. Gade answered readily. Matters of this kind were of particular interest to the American government, he replied. He would be very grateful if he would continue to be informed about such occurrences. "I believe that no one can better serve our Governments than to put a halt to the dissemination of Communist doctrines between Latvia and the United States." Shortly afterwards, Gade's deputy, Major Edward Curtis, on April 8, could inform the Foreign Minister that according to a telegram from the Secretary of State "The newspaper *Strādnieks* is no longer published. Similar newspapers are closely examined by the postal authorities."<sup>45</sup> However, the efforts of the American Latvian Communists were not easily subdued. In June, the Foreign Ministry had to notify Evans Young, who had taken Gade's place, that a Baltic Publishing Company in Boston was printing Lenin's writings, and those of his other Communists as well, and sending them illegally to Latvia. Young was asked to inform American authorities so that they "could take the necessary steps to stop the importation of Communist literature in Latvia from the United States." The necessary steps were readily taken. Young informed Latvia's Foreign Ministry that the American authorities had closed the publishing house.<sup>46</sup>

Nonetheless, the radical activities continued. The Intelligence section of the Latvian Army reported, that a Latvian Communist weekly newspaper, *Rīts* (*The Dawn*) published in Boston printed openly hostile attitude toward an independent Latvia. Furthermore, the Communist propaganda was being regularly sent from America. The Intelligence Section directed that "until that segment of our fellow nationals in America continues to cling to such views and have not undergone a salutary lesson in the Soviet Russia's paradise, their return here is entirely undesirable." Thereupon, Foreign Ministry Meierovics informed the American representative in Riga, John Gade, and, on a subsequent occasion, Young, requesting them to take action against the troublemakers. It seems that the Latvian radicals persisted. In July, *Rīts* published an extremely defamatory article "The White Terror in Latvia", which exasperated the Latvian Government. Meierovics asked the American representative Young to close down the publishing house. The Bolsheviks persisted. For

<sup>45</sup> E. Curtis to Z. Meierovics, Apr. 8, 1920. *LNA LVVA*, 2570. f., 2. apr., 49. l., 51.-53. lp.

<sup>46</sup> Correspondence of Z. Meierovics and E. Young, June 26-28, 1920. *LNA LVVA*, 2570. f., 4. apr., 6. l., 40.-47. lp.

one more time, Meierovics had to notify America's representative Young. Thereupon, the offending publishing house in Boston was closed by American authorities.<sup>47</sup>

The divided opinions among the nationally inclined and the left expressed when the editor of *Rīts*, R. Zālītis, invited Kārlis Ozols to give a presentation on the extant situation in Latvia, to be followed by a public discussion. (Ozols had been designated as Latvia's economic representative in the United States.) Ozols agreed, but requested that any proceeds from the meeting would be given to Latvia's Red Cross, for the support of refugees or children. Zālītis refused the request. He claimed it had come to his attention that Ozols did not represent Latvian working class but the petty bourgeoisie, the exploiters of the working class, and a government, which, with few exceptions, continued to rely on the laws of the bloodstained Tsar, according to which innocent young Latvians were slain and murdered. It was, he wrote, utterly absurd to erect and strengthen a "free" Latvia on the foundation of the laws of the Tsardom.

## The participation of Latvians in achieving the recognition for Latvia, 1921–1922

This participation continued, still, events in Latvia elicited certain disapproval from some who were quite patriotically minded. One of them, writing to the newspaper *Kurzemes Vārds*, voiced his annoyance because some Latvian currency was inscribed with German and Russian language, as well as in Latvian. (In fact, during the initial years of the new Republic, various forms of currency, issued by Russian and German were in circulation, and the government found it necessary to regulate it, until Latvia's own currency could be issued.) The writer found this practice offensive to many Latvians in America, who, for the most part, had accepted an American outlook and hoped that Latvia would be founded on the same basic principles. Therefore: "[We] again, state the watchwords, well known here: 'America for the Americans!' Money and postage stamps must be inscribed with words solely in the Latvian language. All governmental institutions should use only the Latvian language." He also suggested that the names of streets and public buildings in Liepāja, his native city, should be given names in the Latvian language.<sup>48</sup>

Similar views were held by one Peteris Volmars, who had been active in Latvian undertakings and visited Latvia in 1921, where he remained for some months. In an interview to *Kurzemes Vārds* Volmars found that, on the one hand, he had not anticipated to see Latvia already so soundly recovered, nonetheless, he was somewhat astonished to find little of Latvian presence. Among the better off in Liepāja he had encountered, well

<sup>47</sup> Correspondence of Interior Ministry, Foreign Ministry and US Commission, March–August, 1920. *LNA LVVA*, 2574. f., 4. apr., 19. l., 46., 127. lp.; 2570. f., 2. apr., 63. l., 84. lp.

<sup>48</sup> Vēstule no Amerikas. *Kurzemes Vārds*, 1921, 6. jūl.

dressed, in better establishments, had spoken in Russian or in German. He was astonished by the great number of newspapers published in the Russian language because the number of Russians in Latvia was very small. He thought that Latvia should free itself from this "Russianness", for it made an ill impression abroad. Volmars spoke of the Latvians in America, telling the newspaper that "many Latvians, who had arrived in America before the war, were well off. Those who love their native land speak in Latvian with their family members, and their children know their mother tongue. But there are others as well, where the children know only a few Latvian phrases and who, thereby, easily assimilate with the local inhabitants. The first group is greatly interested in Latvia and cherishes the hope to return there, sooner or later. However, as to the political attitudes, American Latvians could be divided in two groups, i.e. moderates and socialists. The former made every effort to have the United States Government recognize Latvia's independence; however, most of the socialists were inclined toward Communism, who dreamt of a Communist Latvia. Volmars also believed that Latvian Government had not made a proper decision, choosing Ludvigs Sēja, a Social Democrat as the Latvian representative in the United States, albeit he belonged to the Party's moderates. Nonetheless, American government representatives would be unwilling to enter official relations with Sēja."<sup>49</sup>

A significant and politically effective undertaking, made as a joint effort of the Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians was a joint address (May 31, 1921) to President Harding.<sup>50</sup> In fact, it was, largely, a Lithuanian undertaking. (Upon finding out the activity was under way, the Latvians engaged intensive effort to join, and it was agreed to have a number of them, at least some twenty, American citizens participate). The address, a formal petition, reportedly, bore one million signatures. The President would not ignore an undertaking of a huge number of constituents, particularly one who had a hard-fought electoral campaign behind him. To the presenters, the President stated that „the question of recognizing the Baltic States was „currently under consideration”,<sup>51</sup> so Sēja reported in a despatch to the Foreign Ministry, „but he noted that while the President would not state anything that would [definitely] commit himself or the American Government,” nonetheless, the overall impression of all the participants was very positive.<sup>52</sup>

Another undertaking was participation in the America's Making Exposition in New York from October 29 to November 12, 1921, which presented goods manufactured in the United States. Members of various nationalities, émigrés, were responsible for the affair. The New York Latvian Society, supported by other Latvian organizations, did

<sup>49</sup> Saruna ar Amerikas latviešu sabiedrisku darbinieku. *Kurzemes Vārds*, 1921, 3. nov.

<sup>50</sup> L. Sēja, Reports, May 12, 17, 1921. *LNA LVVA*, 2574. f., 4. apr., 19. l., 30., 31. lp.; R. Latvieši pie Hārdinga. *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 1921, 28. jūn.; TARULIS, Albert. *American-Baltic Relations 1918–1922*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1965, pp. 334, 343–344; Amerikas Latviešu, Igaunu un leišu deputācija pie Prezidenta Hardinga. *Amerikas Atbalss*, 1921, 9. jūn.

<sup>51</sup> L. Sēja, report, June 4, 1921. *LNA LVVA*, 293. f., 1. apr., 453. l., 27. lp.; Latvijas priekšstāvis Savienotās Valstīs. *Valdības Vēstnesis*, 1921, 4. jūn.

<sup>52</sup> L. Sēja, Report, May 31, 1921. *LNA LVVA*, 293. f., 1. apr., 454. l., 1. lp.; 460. l., 1.–4. lp.

the work.<sup>53</sup> There was a Latvian Executive Committee with 25 members with Neimanis and Podiņš the most active among them. An architect Albert de Leon arranged the Latvian display. Ludvigs Sēja was the honorary chair, the Latvian mission provided some financial support, and Latvia's consular representative J. Kalniņš arranged a Latvian choral concert.<sup>54</sup> A formal document, an address, was also designed by de Leon and was presented to President Harding when representatives of the exhibition were received by the President upon the formal opening of the exhibition, on October 16.<sup>55</sup>

The dedication of some of the more active Latvians and their sincere effort to advance the cause of Latvia's independence is witnessed in the correspondence between Ludvigs Sēja and a doctor, Jānis Eihvalds in Philadelphia, and a pastor, Kārlis Podiņš, in New York. Eihvalds's engagement is particularly noteworthy. He would write to Sēja, on June 2, 1921, that he had discussed the case of an independent Latvia with George Orledy, a judge of Pennsylvania's Supreme Court, who was very favorably disposed toward the recognition of an independent Latvia. Orledy was ready to arrange a meeting of Sēja with some leading Senators. Furthermore, Eihvalds could have Sēja meet Senator Joshua Wolcott, a good friend of Eihvalds' father-in-law. Sēja gladly accepted the offer. However, the meetings did not take place; the Senators, it seems, did not evince much interest in having them. However, it should be noted that some of those who had lived in the United States for many years, and had no relationship with an organized Latvian community, displayed interest and willingness to support it. Thus, one Grīnvalds, who had lived in America for some 40 years, in January 1922 wrote to Sēja, noting that he was a railway engineer, living in New York, expressing his interest and willingness to help.<sup>56</sup>

Early in 1922, Augusts Saviņš of New York, prominent in Latvian social activities, founded a company, naming it the Latvian Commercial Bureau, which was to engage in commerce between Latvia and the United States. The name of the company caused a problem. It could be assumed that it was a Latvian governmental undertaking (evidently, it was); there had been a commercial representative in the Latvian mission, but that position had been abolished, as there were no legal grounds to make Saviņš change the name of his business, and he declined to do so.<sup>57</sup> There, however, were words of warning

<sup>53</sup> See: Latviešu diena Amerikā. *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 1921, 11. aug.

<sup>54</sup> See: LVVA, 293. f., 1. apr., 1809. l., 8.–11. lp. See also: *LNA LVVA*, 293. f., 1. apr., 3987. l., 1.–34. lp.

<sup>55</sup> Reports of Delegation in Washington, Oct.-Nov. 1921. *LNA LVVA*, 2574. f., 4. apr., 143. l., 139.–143. lp.; 293. f., 1. apr., 3978. l., 1.–84. lp.; Amerikas svētki. *Brīvā Zeme*, 1921, 30. jūn.; Amerikas Making. *Amerikas Atbalss*, 1921, 21. jūl.; Latvija Making izstādē. *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 1921, 8. sept.; President Harding Receives America's Making Delegation. *Amerikas Atbalss*, 1921, 27. okt.; J. St. Latviešu diena Ņujorkā. *Latvijas Sargs*, 1921, 11. nov.; America's Making izstāde Ņujorkā. *Amerikas Atbalss*, 1921, 17. nov.; America's Making Ņujorkā. *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 1921, 12. dec.

<sup>56</sup> Correspondence of L. Sēja with J. Eihvalds, F. Grīnvalds and other, 1921–1922. *LNA LVVA*, 293. f., 1. apr., 1291. l., 1.–5., 11.–12. lp.

<sup>57</sup> OZOLS, Kārlis. Darbs un atmiņas Latvijai topot. *Latvijas Kareivis*, 1934, 2. sept., etc.

in Latvia's newspapers, that Saviņš had little to do with commercial matters, and his undertaking might be fraudulent.<sup>58</sup>

The Latvian mission had to devote some time to such matters as the inheritance of properties of the deceased and their surviving relatives in Latvia. If the latter did not have a legal representative for their affairs, the representative in Washington or the consular representative in New York carried out that function.<sup>59</sup>

The great change in the policy toward the Baltic States came with Harding's administration in office, and formal recognition of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia was extended in July 1922. In his message to the Foreign Ministry, Sēja mentioned the response among the Latvian American community. Although Sēja, like other Latvian Government officials, tended to have a critical view toward them, as a whole, he did observe that many of them evinced great satisfaction. In Boston, the Central Committee of the League participated in a demonstration, sponsored by the Lithuanians, on August 6.<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusions

During the period described, those Latvians living in America had divergent attitudes toward the decisive political events in Latvia. We may divide them in three groups. To some extent, this separation arose from the reason of their coming to America, dividing those who had emigrated in search for a better life, and those who had fled to find a political refuge. The first group consisted of the economic émigrés, who had come to America over the course of decades. A considerable number of them lived in large cities, i.e. New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago, and had, before the war, established their organizations and societies. When the sudden and enthralling prospect of Latvia's independence arose, this part of American Latvian community became active in promoting it. The second, a radical one, largely consisting of political refugees, who had taken precipitate flight after the revolution of 1905, generally, was hostile toward an independent, national Latvian republic, although we find some instances where their radicalism was tinged with national feelings. The later wave of radical political refugees, with recent, hard memories of a revolutionary struggle, imbued with fervent radicalism, was guided by rigid convictions. They were devoted to a cause, an international revolution. They had established their own organizations, which frequently worked together with, or domestic American radical ones. There also were other factors furthering the activities of both groups. The presence of organizations was a distinct one. There needs to be a certain number of persons in one place and one time to establish organizations, and

<sup>58</sup> See: Latviešu Centrālbirojs Amerikā. *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 1920, 2. martā; Vēl par Savinu. *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 1922, 24. maijā.

<sup>59</sup> Latvijas priekšstāvis Amerikas Sav. Valstīs. *Latvis*, 1921, 22. nov.

<sup>60</sup> L. Sēja, Report, Aug. 19, 1922. *LNA LVVA*, 2574. f., 1. apr., 76. l., 92.–100. lp.

these arose in the large urban centers. As to the third, numerically the largest group, properly speaking it really was not a distinct group, with a structure or a set of beliefs. It contained individuals indifferent to the events in their native land. There was the fact that national identity was not necessarily the primary defining factor for an individual in America, which was beginning to become a melting pot of nationalities. There was a factor of education. Many of the economic émigrés possessed only an elementary one, and an individual's political national consciousness tends to have a relationship with education. Finally, many Latvians — we do not know their number — lived beyond the urban centers, dispersed throughout much of America, and could not join the established organizations, if they had been inclined to do so.

In retrospect, many Latvians in America, notably the nationally inclined societies, were devoted to the future of their native country, did what they could to assist it becoming an independent state, and did so moved by patriotic feelings. They encountered difficulties. There were the years spent away from their homeland, where history was taking a sudden, unexpected, at times astonishing, direction. From late 1918 onwards, the events in Latvia moved speedily, with unexpected twists and turns. News came from Latvia in a fragmentary fashion, sometimes in letters from relatives and friends. In such circumstances, there were difficulties in finding out what was really taking place and agreeing on what action should be taken. There also was the unyielding opposition of the revolutionary radicals, who were bent on furthering a great international revolution, with Latvia only a part of it.

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## Latviai JAV 1918–1922 m.: požiūris ī Latvijā

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### Santrauka

1918–1922 m. dauguma latviu, gyvenusių už buvusios imperijos teritorijos, įsikūrė JAV; ten gyveno 30–40 tūkst. latviu kilmės žmonių. Ši bendruomenė buvo specifinė JAV gyventojų grupė ne tik nacionaliniu, bet ir politiniu aspektu. Nemaža jų dalis buvo kairuoliškai nusiteikę žmonės, atvykę į JAV XIX a. pabaigoje – XX a. pradžioje, ypač po 1905 m. revoliucijos. Šiame straipsnyje apžvelgiamas laikotarpis nuo 1918 m., kai buvo paskelbtas Latvijos valstybingumas, iki 1922 m. liepos, kai, JAV pripažinus Baltijos šalis, prasidėjo naujas šių šalių tarpusavio santykių laikotarpis. Tuo metu JAV vyriausybės požiūris į įvykius Baltijos šalyse buvo įvairialypis: viena vertus, JAV daug labiau uždelsė pripažinti Baltijos valstybių nepriklausomybę nei kitos sąjungininkės, kita vertus, amerikiečių humanitarinis darbas Baltijos šalyse buvo plačiausias iš visų sąjungininkių.

Straipsnio tikslas – atskleisti pagrindines Latvijos emigrantų veiklos kryptis Latvijos valstybės paskelbimo kontekste; šio tikslo reikia siekti įvertinus požiūrį į Latvijos valstybingumą, išreikštą politine veikla ar įvairiais savitarpio pagalbos būdais. Latvijos valstybingumui prieštaraujančios veiklos minimos tik fragmentiškai, nes šią temą vertėtų labiau pagvildinti atskirame straipsnyje.



Apskritai šiame straipsnyje pateikiamas bendras JAV požiūris į Baltijos šalis kontekstas. Latvijos emigrantų pavyzdys yra pastebimas kalbant apie etninių mažumų istoriją JAV. Latviai sudarė savitą grupę, tiek apie Latvijos istoriją: skirtingas požiūris į valstybingumą tėvynėje išryškina nuomonių pliuralizmą ir Latvijos emigrantų gretose.

Apibūdinamu laikotarpiu latviai, gyvenantys Amerikoje, labai skirtingai vertino lemiamus politinius įvykius Latvijoje. Galima juos suskirstyti į tris grupes; tam tikru mastu šį susiskirstymą nulėmė jų atvykimo į Ameriką priežastis: vieni emigravo ieškodami geresnio gyvenimo, kiti pabėgo ieškodami politinio prieglobsčio.

Taigi, pirmąją latvių grupę sudarė ekonominiai emigrantai, per dešimtmečius atvykę į Ameriką. Nemaža jų dalis gyveno dideliuose miestuose: Niujorke, Bostone, Filadelfijoje ir Čikagoje, ir prieš karą buvo įkūrę savo organizacijų bei draugijų. Kai staiga atsivėrė viliojanti Latvijos nepriklausomybės perspektyva, ši Amerikos latvių bendruomenės dalis ėmė aktyviai ją propaguoti.

Antrąją, radikaliają, grupę sudarė daugiausia politiniai pabėgėliai, kurie po 1905 m. revoliucijos ėmė plūste plūsti į Ameriką. Paprastai jie buvo priešiška nusiteikę nepriklausomos nacionalinės Latvijos Respublikos atžvilgiu, nors būta atvejų, kai jų radikalumas buvo susijęs su nacionaliniais jausmais. Vėlesnė radikalių politinių pabėgėlių banga, turinti naujausių sunkių prisiminimų apie revoliucinę kovą, persmelktą karšto radikalizmo, pasižymėjo griežtais įsitikinimais. Šie pabėgėliai buvo atsidavę tarptautinei revoliucijai: buvo įkūrę savo organizacijų, kurios dažnai bendradarbiaudavo su radikalėmis vietos organizacijomis Amerikoje. Abiejų grupių veiklą skatino ir kiti veiksniai. Pažymėtina, kad organizacijų sukūrimo sąlygos buvo savitos. Vienoje vietoje tam tikru metu turėjo būti tam tikras skaičius asmenų, kad būtų galima įkurti organizaciją, o tokių atsirado dideliuose miestuose.

Trečioji, gausiausia, grupė, tiesą sakant, nebuvo atskira, turinti struktūrą ar aiškiai apibrėžtus įsitikinimus. Į ją įėjo asmenys, neabejingi įvykiams gimtajame krašte. Tautinė tapatybė nebūtinai buvo pagrindinis individą apibūdinantis veiksnys Amerikoje, kuri ėmė virsti tautų katilu. Reikšmingas buvo ir išsilavinimo veiksnys: daugelis ekonominių emigrantų turėjo tik pradinį išsilavinimą, o individo politinė, tautinė sąmonė yra glaudžiai susijusi su išsilavinimu. Be to, daugelis latvių (nežinome jų skaičiaus) gyveno toli nuo miestų centrų, išsiskirstę po Ameriką ir negalėjo įsijungti į įkurtas organizacijas, net jei ir būtų norėję.

Žvelgiant retrospektyviai, daugelis latvių Amerikoje, ypač tautiškai nusiteikusios bendruomenės, buvo atsidavę savo gimtosios šalies ateičiai, iš visų jėgų, skatinami patriotinių jausmų, stengėsi padėti jai tapti nepriklausoma valstybe, nors ir patyrė sunkumų. Per kelerius metus, praleistus toli nuo tėvynės, jos istorija staiga ir net neįtikėtinai ėmė suktis kita kryptimi. Nuo 1918 m. pabaigos reikalai Latvijoje vyko greitai, lydimi netikėtų įvykių. Naujienos iš Latvijos atkeliaudavo fragmentiškos, kartais – giminių ir draugų laiškais. Tokiomis aplinkybėmis buvo sunku sužinoti tikrąją padėtį ir susitarti, kokių veiksmų reikėtų imtis. Taip pat nebuvo pastebėtas pasipriešinimas revoliucinių radikalų, linkusių tęsti didelę tarptautinę revoliuciją, kurioje Latvija atliko tik dalinį vaidmenį.

Gauta / Received 2019 09 04  
Priimta / Accepted 2020 01 28