Latvia 1988 - 2015: a triumph of the radical nationalists

The victory of the Western countries in the “Cold War” with the Soviet Union, formation of a unipolar world led by the US and revision of arrangements of the USSR, the USA and Great Britain in Yalta and Potsdam in 1945 and the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Declaration) of 1975 – as the main reason of the Evolution of the Republic of Latvia of the 4th May 1990 starting from cancellation of the universal suffrage to the relapse of totalitarianism: the construction of the so-called “Latvian Latvia”, Russophobia, suppression of the rights of ethnic minorities, restrictions on the freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, revision of the results of the World War II and the Neo-Nazi propaganda.

Book 3. Formation of a new historical memory, or the Whitewashing of Nazism in Latvia

Riga 2017
The book Latvia 1988-2015: a triumph of the radical nationalists is dedicated to Latvia’s most recent history. On May 4, 1990, the Supreme Soviet (Supreme Council) of the Latvian SSR adopted the Declaration on the Restoration of Independence of the Latvian Republic without holding a national referendum, thus violating the acting Constitution. Following this up on October 15, 1991, the Supreme Soviet deprived more than a third of its own electorate of the right to automatic citizenship. As a result, one of the most fundamental principles of democracy, universal suffrage, was eliminated.

Thereafter, the Latvian parliament, periodically re-elected in conditions where a significant part of country’s inhabitants lack the right to participate in elections, has been adopting laws on citizenship, language and education that discriminate against the national minorities and lay the foundation for the construction of a so-called «Latvian Latvia», or Latvia for Latvians. Simultaneously, there is an active campaign for establishing a new historical memory, the main aim of which is rehabilitation of Karlis Ulmanis’ ethnocratic regime (1934-1940), rehabilitation of Nazism and denigration of Latvia’s history as part of the USSR (1940-1941, 1944-1945-1990). On November 8, 2002, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe assessed the political development of the Latvian Republic and concluded that the country is prone to a «long-term democratic deficit».


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Book 3

Formation of a new historical memory, or the Whitewashing of Nazism in Latvia

The Guardian: “Where Nazis are heroes”
13 March 2000
March 16. A path of glory for the former soldiers of the Waffen SS Latvian Volunteers Legion.

Photo by Victor Gushchin
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Chapter 1

Karlis Ulmanis is not dead yet...

In Latvia in 2006, there was an article “Nevardarbīgā pretošanās Latvijas pieredze” (“Latvian experience of non-violent resistance”) published in Latvian language. In 2008, an expanded version of this book was published in English – for English-speaking readers (Regaining independence: Non-violent resistance in Latvia. 1945-1991). Noting the absolute importance of a scientific understanding of the history of Latvia within the USSR, it should be admitted that the publication of the books mentioned above had also pursued a political purpose – to present both for Latvian Western readers, the history of the post-war Latvia as the history of never-ending struggle against the Soviet power.

But in fact, not only was there not any active resistance, there wasn’t almost even any dissident movement in Latvia in 1960-1980-ies. Writer Yuriy Abizov notes in this regard that “the “sedition” was not from Riga to Moscow but vice versa: a large amount of clandestine copies of suppressed literature came here, this was very demanded, every word of Russian dissidents was caught, but their own were not put forward (repressed individuals could be easily counted on fingers, and they were closely associated with Moscow)”.

A competent expert, the deputy chairman of the KGB of the Latvian General Janis Trubinsh supports the opinion of Yuriy Abizov. “There were very criminal proceedings against dissidents in the 70-80s. Yes, and they were very few dissidents actually ... The vast majority of Latvians lived and worked quietly, and they were not engaged in any fight,” – said the former KGB officer.

Among Latvian dissidents there can be only few people mentioned. Among them: Vladimir Slushny, who opposed the suppression of the revolution in Czechoslovakia in 1968; Gunars Astra, Ints Calitis, Juris Ziemelis and some more people. However, the general public knows almost nothing about them. It is noteworthy that even the Riga City Council, in its response to the proposal to name one of the streets in honour of Juris Ziemelis, indicated that it had no information on the “wide popularity and great signification of persons mentioned above in the history of Riga and...
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The union of the National Radical part of the western Latvian emigration and the new local political elite, with the support from the part of Latvian folk defined during the Third Latvian National Awakening and continues defining the logic of the development of the today’s ethnocratic political regime in Latvia, i.e. the political support for the resumption of construction of utopian “Latvian Latvia”, interrupted after June 1940, and this time – with clearly defined trends borrowing some of the elements of the political arsenal of Nazism and fascism in the policy of the Latvian state.

The main spokesmen of these radical non-democratic views of the western Latvian emigration after 1988 were at first the Congress of citizens and the Movement for National Independence of Latvia (LNNK), later – the union of two extremely radical nationalist parties for “Fatherland and Freedom” and LNNK (TB/LNNK), and today – the union of parties “All – for Latvia!” and TB/LNNK.

Ideology of the national dictatorship, which is professed by this political union since the early 1990s, became, in fact, the state ideology, i.e. not only is it shared by all other political parties, except for the “Harmony Centre” and For Human Rights in United Latvia, but it is also supported by a significant part of the Latvian population. As the President of Latvia Guntis Ulmanis noted in 1998, in an interview with the newspaper “Diena”, the impact of TB/LNNK on political processes in the country is so great that “if there is no other party, which is strong enough, somewhere near, then TB/LNNK does what it wants”.8 But “for other parties the position of TB/LNNK is actually convenient as it allows getting warm in the sun of the national flag of the members of TB/LNNK ... After gaining independence, anger and hostility, which had been quietly sitting in our souls, suddenly broke free. And when a person loses all senses of proportion – it becomes very scary. Anyone who was not lazy, spat all the garbage that was in him out, and shouted: Russians, go back to Russia, Armenians – to Armenia, Ukrainians – to Ukraine, Jews – to Israel; only Latvians can stay in Latvia, but not all, but only the true nationals!” Although, according to G.Ulmanis, “the time has shown that these nationals are not the best part of the population” 9; in 2000s, just like in 1990s, radical nationalists had been defining the political development of the Second Republic of Latvia.

Today the national ideology of the Latvian state is based on the following principles:

1) The regime of K.Ulmanis in 1934-1940, with all its downsides, was “humane” and “gentle”;

2) The Republic of Latvia founded on 18 November 1918, legally has never ceased to exist. From 1940 to 1991, Latvia was occupied by the Soviet
Union, Nazi Germany and then again by the USSR. Occupation regime of Nazi Germany, in comparison with the occupation regime of the USSR, was a lot softer. Demographic, economic, social and other losses of the Latvian folk are mainly associated with the policies of the totalitarian Soviet Union. The so-called “non-citizens” – is nothing but a consequence of the USSR occupation, and the limitation of their political rights from the point of view of the international law is fully justified;

3) Soldiers of the Latvian Volunteer Legion Waffen SS in the World War II did not fight for the ideals of Nazism and Fascism, but for the independent Republic of Latvia, and thus, the outcome of the World War II should be revised and the ex-soldiers of the Latvian Legion politically rehabilitated;
4) The most important task of the Latvian state is the construction of the so-called “Latvian Latvia”, i.e. construction of a mono-ethnic Latvian state, without national minorities;

5) For all the problems of Latvia are only external forces to blame, primarily Russia, rather than internal policy of the Latvian state, and, on this basis, the whole world not only just should, but MUST understand the pain and problems of Latvia and help politically and financially to resolve them, implying political and economic pressure on Russia, so that Russia would compensate Latvia the losses during all those 50 years of occupation;

6) All inhabitants of Latvia should be loyal to the state, or, in other words, to the existing political regime in the country.

Such ideology is nothing but a manifestation of revanchism and neo-Nazism in the political life of modern Latvia. In the part, which deals with national issues and the policy of the historical memory (in particular, the assessment of the political regime of Karlis Ulmanis, reforms in 1940, the history of Latvian Volunteer Legion of SS and the history of the Latvian SSR in 1944-1945-1990), the state ideology is totalitarian, i.e. it refers to a type of mythological entities, “as it doesn’t focus on the display of reality, but on the popularization of an artificial picture of the world, telling ... what is necessary to build and what to believe in with full devotion”.10 However, this ideology meets support among some part of the Latvian population and among all Latvian parties represented in the parliament. In this regard, a Latvian political analyst Iveta Kazhoka noted in April 2013 that today “even a political philosopher (not even talking about an average policeman) would not always determine where fascism ends and where one of the parties represented in the Saeima begins”.11 Wanting to preserve and strengthen this situation, the ruling elite provides political, economic and other pressure on all those who criticize the manifestations of ethnocracy and neo-Nazism in the political life of the country.

Such state ideology and policy of the ruling elite seriously weaken the Latvian state not only in the international arena, but also within the country, as they not only do not fit into the general democratic framework, but are also without any legal or historical justification. That is why the ruling nationalist political elite, which has been in power only thanks to non-democratic elections and active exploitation of historical myths among Latvians, is interested to impose on the society such an interpretation of the history of Latvia, which would faithfully serve its interests and maintain the power as long as possible.

### Ideology requires heroes

After 1991, the Latvian state hadn’t only revived an undemocratic national policy, which was carried out by an authoritarian and ethnocratic regime of Karlis Ulmanis in the period from May 1934 to June 1940. The slogan “Latvia for Latvians!” adopted as the basis for the state ideology, revived a whole heap of problems of an ideological nature, which indicate an attempt of the Latvian state to dignify and re-adopt the ideological relics of the past rejected by the democratic community, and that today Latvia is not ready to evaluate its own history and prospects of its political development from the standpoint of democracy. This is exactly the main reason for the determination of the Republic of Latvia to rehabilitate the Latvian Volunteer Legion of the SS on the state level, which is inseparable from the rehabilitation of Nazism and fascism, which turns to the main reason to the fact that the Latvian state had put the rebirth of the cult of Karlis Ulmanis in the centre of its official ideology.

It is strange but the fact that – in Latvia, the cult of a “State Leader”, who liquidated the parliamentary democracy in the country as a result of a revolution on 15 May 1934, is officially confirmed by the state ideology.

It is difficult to imagine that in some other countries, who had proclaimed the choice of democracy as the basis of development of the state, there would be monuments erected and streets named in honour of a dictator, but in Latvia, not only the streets are named, but monuments are erected and museums opened in honour of a person, who dispelled the Saeima, banned work of political parties and created concentration camps.

“The authoritarian regime of Karlis Ulmanis claimed to be in charge to control culture, education, creative activities and thoughts of people completely. Therefore, a system of management and control of the ideology and propaganda was created. With no doubts, one of the most important ideological centres in Latvia was the Ministry of Education, – said Professor University of Latvia Ilgvars Butelis. – Protectors (Latvian name “aizsargi”) were declared as true educators of the folk. And in 1938, “professional cameras” were created – for journalists, surveyors, chemists ... In fact, all the intellectuals was brought under control of the cameras ... Then Karlis Ulmanis said: “There can be only one culture in Latvia – Latvian culture”.12

And here is what the Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain Cyril James Wensesl Torr wrote about Karlis Ulmanis in the beginning of 1935 in a secret telegram to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Viscount James Allsbrook Simon: “Just like Hitler, he is trying to awaken national feelings and
encourage Latvians to feel like masters on their own land. The Decree defines the mandatory use of the Latvian language. According to the Nazi model, with this goes a tendency to pursue the Germans, Jews and emigrants. Once in power, he follows the example of Hitler and Mussolini. He is also called the leader ...” 13

So, was Ulmanis a dictator? Many Latvians believe that if he didn’t eliminate people physically, as did Hitler did in Germany and Stalin in the Soviet Union, he cannot be a dictator. But it is not so! In fact Ulmanis shot and destroyed the enemies of his regime! But of course – not with his own hands. But it was him who grew this ideology of denial of rights of national minorities, and in general – no respect towards democracy, which caused the participation of Latvians in the mass murder of Jews and representatives of other ethnicities, including Latvians in 1941. So the demands from Ulmanis-Senior are greater than from an ordinary killer.

Karlis Ulmanis – “a state criminal, a traitor who gave his country to the invaders without any fight, without a single shot!” – thinks Juris Paiders, a well-known journalist, the former editor of the newspaper “Dienas business”. According to him, “if we consider the constitution of 1922 as sacred, if we respect it, and thus had to erect a monument to Karlis Ulmanis”, then shouldn’t have done it in the park in front of the building on the Krisjana Valdemara Street, where the “former leader of the country” had an apartment in the 1930s, but in the “chamber” of the Riga Central Prison ... K.Ulmanis trampled the constitution. In fact, he prepared a framework for the activities of the Soviet regime ... K.Ulmanis’s actions led to a massive loss of lives among residents of Latvia. Deportations, repressions caused Latvia to loose every third inhabitant! This is the result of activities of K.Ulmanis! Today I would have put him on trial!” – said J.Paiders.14

A former dissident (was in a camp in Mordovia until 1964) and a former member of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia, Ints Calitis, agrees with J.Paiders. “Karlīs Ulmanis was indeed an illegal president, – he wrote in the newspaper “Neatkarīga” in 2007. – He grabbed this state, which he had created with devoting work and under dramatic circumstances. There can be no justification for the destruction of a democratic polity in favour of a dictatorship. In 1934 in Latvia, there were no internal or external threats, which could at least a little bit justify the dissolution of the Saeim and termination of force of the Constitution.”

“The myth about the great K.Ulmanis’s success in uniting the folk is widespread, – continues I.Calitis. – But in the world there is no dictator who would unite his folk, he would just gather around him a crowd of hangers-
on, which would support him. Dictators gathered around them incapable, but obedient ones ... For Latvia it meant – creation of the cult of a leader, rewriting of the history books and glorification of the regime ...” 15

But today, when the official ideology is in the need of heroes, and they are nowhere to get, the official and therefore obliging historical science diligently whitewashes the regime of Karlis Ulmanis, and also separates him from the genocide of 1941, where Latvians took the most active part, and from the mass Latvians’ support of the Latvian Volunteer Legion of the SS.

In 1988, a well-known Soviet historian and philosopher Mikhail Gefter (1918-1995) published an article “Stalin died yesterday”, which spoke about how hard it was for the generation of Soviet people, who grew up during the Stalin’s regime, to overcome the ideological legacy of totalitarianism. In Russia, after 1991, this process became irreversible, although it came to certain difficulties, because “totalitarianism penetrated minds and opinions too deeply to get rid of it in one stroke, to get clean by a public repentance”.16

In Latvia, it’s different! The ideology of a non-democratic regime of Karlis Ulmanis actually made to a state ideology of the country today. So, to paraphrase M.Gefter, we can say that “Karlis Ulmanis hasn’t dead yet ...” in Latvia.
Chapter 2
Dictatorship of K.Ulmanis was “gentle” and “humane”...

Ulmanis’s dictatorship was “gentle” and “humane” – such an assessment of an authoritarian and ethnocratic political regime of K.Ulmanis, which was established in Latvia after the revolution on 15 May 1934, is provided in the book “History of Latvia. The twentieth century” published in early 2005. By this, the authors of the book, famous Latvian historians D. Blejere, I. Butulis, A. Zunda, A. Stranga and I. Feldmanis, openly justify undemocratic policies of the Latvian state from 1934 to 1940. If it was only the opinion of historians themselves, it could have been accepted as an unfortunate fact, but the book is preceded by the article the president of Latvia V. Vike-Freiberga, who indicates that this book “provides the reader with an objective picture of the history of Latvia of the last century”, and this shows that this opinion is an official position of the Republic of Latvia, which should be respected and taken into account by other countries.

Sample of Russophobia

A common ideological concept of the book can be considered as extremely unfriendly towards ethnic minorities and Russia, i.e. as Russophobia. But other separate assessments, included in the book fully correspond to what was published earlier in the books “Nevienam mēs Latviju nedodam” and “Par Latvijas dekolonizāciju” by the leader of the far-right National Front of Latvia Aivars Garda; and these books not only insult the national dignity of Latvian non-Latvians, but also provoke the ethnic hatred. One can only wonder that the publication of this book has also been financially supported by the Commission on Democracy of the Embassy of the United States of America in Latvia.

For example, on page 155 one can read that the main reason, why there was no street fighting in Latvia in 1920-1930, just like in Germany, Austria or France, “was the fact that together with the rest of the gang of Bermondt, THE MOST CRIMINAL PART OF THE SOCIETY (marked by the author Viktor Gushchin) – German and Russian White-Guards, the mercenaries, the Black-Hundreders, gangsters, even some thousands of Balts, being hostile to the independent Latvia, left it in the end of 1919”; but page 206 shows that “the majority of the Russian society failed to identify themselves with the fate of Latvia.” Russian Latvians, who are assessed as “the most dedicated Salinists”, also caught it bad (page 239).

Reticence as the basis of tendentiousness

According to V. Vike-Freiberga, the book, which claims to dispel the rooted myths, in fact is full of meaningful silences. Thus, there is no word about the “Latgale issue” in the history of Latvia in the book. Latgalian as a folk, who gave the name to the country, as if had never existed. As a result, when we speak about why in January 1922, the second part of the Constitution (the Constitution of Latvia) was not passed, it is impossible to understand, because there is no word about the position of the representatives of Latgale. Their activity is only rated as “demagogic.” (page 146) Which is not surprising! After all, the new government was not going to assign Latgalian as an official language, as the government of P. Stuchka did in 1919, and Latgale – as a national cultural autonomous territory, on what Latgalian so much insisted. Otherwise, it would just be impossible to talk about Curonians, Semigallians and Selonians, who lost their ethno-cultural characteristics and united on the basis of a common language, as a titular Latvian nation, or, in other words, the national majority.

18 November 1918

The authors of the book write about the proclamation of an independent Latvian state on 18 November 1918 the following: “Historians have different opinions on legal conditions for the formation of the Latvian state. Some
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qualify November 18 as a non-democratic act, calling it a coup. Some mostly criticize the usurpation of the power and have doubts about the legitimacy of the historic decision adopted on November 18. They also suggest that the idea of independence was not very popular among Latvians and that the masses reacted with indifference to the proclamation of the statehood.

Reproaches and objections about the issue of 18 November mainly don’t have any foundation and cannot withstand serious critics. Usually, the fact of the formation of a new state is both a legitimate and revolutionary act. Formation of the National Council of Latvia was very closely linked to the right of the Latvian folk to self-determination "...". However, representatives of the Latvian bourgeoisie didn’t ask for the opinion of the Latvian folk on formation of an independent Latvian state, because, as noted by the authors of the book, “Latvian folk – the only sovereign power in the state – could not freely express their will in some specific historical conditions. The presence of the occupation forces and the impending attack of the Bolsheviks did not provide any opportunity to organize democratic elections of the Constituent Assembly in the territory of Latvia”.

Presence of German occupation forces on the territory of Latvia, in fact, made the organization of general and democratic elections impossible. But there was another reason why the Latvian bourgeoisie did not consider it possible to organize the expression of the folk’s will – the Latvian folk did not support neither the National Council of Latvia, nor its decision to announce the establishment of an independent Latvian state, nor its decision to assign K.Ulmanis to form a government in Latvia.

The head of the American mission in the Baltic States wrote about the government of K.Ulmanis: “The current de facto government of Latvia is very weak and does not represent the Latvian people. It would have been immediately overthrown, if the national elections took place. It is a self-proclaimed government, established by party leaders and people who took matters into their own hands in Riga and were subsequently expelled from the city by the Bolsheviks.”

It is noteworthy that in 1990, at the end of the existence of the Latvian SSR (!), Doctor of Law Juris Boyars also assessed the government of K.Ulmanis. He wrote in the pamphlet “On the national question in Latvia, according to Lenin’s creative heritage”, published by the Latvian Society “Knowledge”: “Germans permitted to call the bourgeois National Council on 17 November 1918 in Riga, inviting also the Mensheviks. On 18 November, the Council proclaimed Latvia as an independent Republic and created the ‘Provisional Government’, which should have been led by the leader of the Peasant Union, K.Ulmanis. However, at the time this government did not enjoy sufficient support from the people, and failed to establish control over Latvia. Latvians did not want to serve in the military units of the government, and by the end of 1918 the government managed to form only a few Latvian troops...”.

And after the establishment of Ulmanis’s Government, the German occupation regime was the only real force in Latvia, – said Leo Dribins, Doctor of Historical Sciences.
It is characteristic that no senior officer of the Latvian rifle battalions and troops took part in Latvian armed groups, created by order of the German command. As to the lieutenants Oskars Kalpaks and Janis Balodis, who were serving in Landwehr, both of them were captured by the Germans in the beginning of 1915, and after that they moved to the side of Germany, — stated Ojars Niedre, Candidate of Historical Sciences, and Emars Pelkāns, Doctor of Historical Sciences.\textsuperscript{5}

Lawyer Janis Chakste, who was elected as a chairman of the National Council, wasn’t present at the meeting on 18 November and did not give his consent to the election. Adolfs Klīve states that Chakste was quite negative about Ulmanis in the conversation with him and announced that “from the legal point of view, actions undertaken by K.Ulmanis together with the socialists M.Valters and P.Kalninš, had to be considered as a coup against the legitimate and internationally recognized state power – the National Council”.\textsuperscript{7}

Latvian Provisional National Council (LPNC) was formed already on 16 November 1917 in Valka by nineteen Latvian politicians. Woldemars Zamuels, lawyer and editor of the newspaper “Latvija”, was elected as chairman of LPNC, and Karlis Pauluks – as deputy chairman. Committees were established in the structure of LPNC: the Committee of Foreign Affairs – Chairman Janis Goldmanis, the Financial Committee – Chairman Sigfrīds Anna Mejerovic, the Committee of defence – Chairman Janis Rubulis, the Committee of Agriculture – Chairman A. Kalninsh, the Committee of Culture – Chairman Fricis Vitolinsh. There were also two commissions: the Commission on Elections of the Constituent Assembly (Chairman V.Zamuels) and the Commission (the largest in terms of the number of its members) on the development of the Constitution of Latvia (Chairman V.Zamuels).\textsuperscript{6}

LPNC was recognized as the supreme authority on the territory of Latvia on 12 July 1918 recognized by Sweden. On 23 October 1918, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Great Britain, Arthur James Balfour, officially informed the delegate of the LPNC Z.A.Mejerovic that the UK recognizes LPNC as the supreme authority on the territory of Latvia de facto, and Z.A.Mejerovic – as an authorized representative of the supreme authority in Great Britain. On 11 November, A.J.Balfour gave Z.A.Mejerovic a written certificate of recognition of Latvia de facto. Thus, Sweden and Great Britain recognized Latvia as a state already before 18 November 1918.

“In this regard, reports Latvian historian-emigrant Adolf Shilde, the question is whether there was a need at all to declare the establishment of the Latvian state on 18 November?” \textsuperscript{9}

For Ulmanis, who strived for the one-man rule, it was definitely necessary and the task was to remove LPNC from running the country. Especially because the leaders of LPNC did not want to cooperate with Ulmanis, as he based on the Germans. In the period from 22 November 1918 to 4 January 1919, the German occupation institutions transferred to the Provisional Government of Karlis Ulmanis 3 million 750 thousand occupational marks.\textsuperscript{10}

In the First Republic, the date of 18 November 1918 performed the task to praise Karlis Ulmanis, created the basis for the formation of his personality cult. This date carries the same task also after 4 May 1990. At the same time, this date cancels any other initiatives to address the issue of Latvian statehood, including the establishment of the Soviet Latvia in 1918-1919 and the existence of the Latvian SSR in 1940-1990 from the history. The role of the Constituent Assembly, or, in other words, the people’s will is actually diminished or even nullified by 1920-1922. However, on 27 May 1920, the Constituent Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Latvian State, which proclaimed Latvia as democratic and independent republic, where the power belongs to people. This Declaration, in contrast to the one that was adopted on 18 November 1918, is completely legitimate in legal terms. A year later, on 15 June 1921, the Constituent Assembly adopted the Law on the flag and coat of arms of the Republic of Latvia. Finally, on 15 February 1922, the Constituent Assembly adopted the first part of the Constitution of Latvia. During 213 meetings of the Constituent Assembly it adopted 205 laws, including laws on agrarian reform, ratified a peace treaty with the Russian Federation and approved two governments – led by K.Ulmanis and Z.A.Mejerovic. In other words, the Constituent Assembly formed the legal basis for the existence of an independent and democratic state of Latvia.\textsuperscript{11}

It should be underlined that 18 November 1918 is actually followed by an anti-democratic regime of 15 May 1934, as well as by the ethnocratic political regime of the Second Republic of Latvia, established on 4 May 1990.

The revival of the personality cult of K.Ulmanis and the non-democratic ideology of his political regime in the Second Republic of Latvia is caused by an absolutely unscientific, revenge-seeking concept of the persistence of the legal continuity of the Latvian State from 1918 to 1990, established by a West German lawyer of Latvian origin Egils Levits. Basing on this concept, on 15 October 1991, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia adopted a resolution “On the restoration of the rights of citizens of the Republic of Latvia and on the fundamental principles of naturalization”, which divided the inhabitants of Latvia into citizens and persons without Latvian citizenship. Assessing the political implications of this decision, adopted by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia, it should be admitted that its adoption not only led to a sharp increase in strengthening of political positions of radical
nationalists and neo-Nazis in the ruling elite, but it made it impossible to form a democratic political regime in Latvia. We can actually put assign of equality between the dates 05.15.1934 and 15.10.1991.

National Policy

The national policy of the Latvian state, although subjected to criticism in the book, is still considered solely from the standpoint of justification of the construction of “Latvian Latvia”, i.e. from the standpoint of justification of the ethnocratic political regime that existed in Latvia from 1934 to 1940 and then was re-established after 15 October 1991. For example, the fact that already in June 1921, the government of Z.A.Mejerovic announced the slogan “Latvia – for Latvians!” is not seen as something chauvinist or racist (page 146). And the fact that during the period of parliamentary democracy (i.e. until 1934) it was allowed to perform, apart from Latvian, also in Russian and German in the sessions of the Saeima, was considered as non-sense, as “a European political mystery” by the authors of the book.” (page 148). So when, after 15 May 1934, this practice was abolished, it was “extra valuable”, and the Law on the State Language from 5 January 1935, which proclaimed a strict language policy, according to the authors, “was not considered to contain any unfair regulation.” (page 204)

The authors of the book regret that passing the Constitution, the Article 116 was not adopted, which provided passing of the law, which determines which ethnic groups in Latvia are national minorities and can claim the cultural-national autonomy. From the point of view of the authors, the adoption of this law “would enable not to mix each ethnic group with a national minority”! (page 148)

In fact, the policy of the regime of Karlis Ulmanis had an explicit anti-minority nature. Not only schools for children from families of national minorities were closed, but also newspapers, public organisations. A contemporary of those years Leonid Lyubimov wrote in his book “Enlightenment in the darkness” (Riga, 2000): “The under-graduate Minister of Public Affairs A.Berzins ... came to Rezekne at the end of October (1939 – Viktor Gushchin) and as if being under someone’s influence closed the charitable and educational society of Pushkin ... Helpful people also noted that there is another Russian Educational Society not far from this place. Berzins closed it as well”. 12

“Opening”

On page 210 of the book you can read that “until the very end of the Latvian State the Jewish culture had been developing and flourishing.” Since this is quite a bold conclusion claims for a scientific discovery, we shall briefly comment on that.

In the 1920’s – early 30-ies, nationally-cultural autonomy was the largest in the field of education. With regard to educational institutions of national minorities, the autonomy was implemented as follows. Educational institutions of national minorities were under the jurisdiction of the Department of National Minorities of the Ministry of Education, within which there were appropriate offices opened, including the Office of Jewish education, which had been working since December 1919.

After the coup on 15 May 1934, the rights of minorities and the national-cultural autonomy had been significantly cut: the number of Jewish schools was reduced (for example, in 1932 there were 122, and in 1939 – only 77), their funding were tightened, penalties for violations of the law on the State Language were toughened, the choice of the possibility to have education in the native language decreased (for example, if one of the parents was Latvian, the child should have been given to the Latvian school), although in general, the system of national schools had not been eliminated completely.

However, already in 1933, funding for the schools of national minorities was reduced by 143 thousand Latvian Lats, including funding for Jewish schools – reduction for more than 55 thousand Latvian Lats. The number of Jewish students from the academic year 1919/1920 had been steadily declining. If in the academic year 1931/32, there were 769 Jewish students, then in the academic year 1936/37 – there were only 463. At the end of the 20s, the Jewish Folk’s University was closed. In the newspaper “Segodnya” it was explained by the fact that some of the staff and students of the University were engaged in some illegal activities.
The visit of Karlis Ulmanis to Jelgava, May 11, 1937. Photo from the Latvia State Archive of Audiovisual Documents.
Alfreds Berzins, the minister of public affairs of Latvia and the supremo of Latvian sports. Cover of the “Atputa” magazine, No. 697, March 11, 1938.

The Nazi-like greeting of the members of the “Mazpulki” youth organisation. Cover of the “Atputa” magazine, No. 774, September 1, 1939.
After the coup, the Ber Brokhov Jewish Working Youth Organization was closed. As you can see, all these facts cause doubts about the conclusion that until 1940 “the Jewish culture in Latvia had been developing and flourishing”.13

**The dictatorship of Karlis Ulmanis**

Despite the fact that Karlis Ulmanis with his “excessive lust for power” destroyed democracy in 1934, he was, according to the authors of the book – “a prominent Latvian politician” (page 152), a “serious person” (page 155). In 1925, when he ran for the position of the president under the slogan “Latvia – Latvians”, it turns out that he wasn’t acting from the racist point of view of the Latvian National Club, but only from the point of view of providing Latvians with economic, social and political support (page 155); however, a bit further on page 156, this position is considered as chauvinistic. But the dictatorship of the “15 May”, set by K.Ulmanis as the result of the coup, even if characterized by a pronounced anti-democratic nature of the government of the country, it still wasn’t bad, as it was “gentle” and was not “anti-human.” (page 168)

Since the dictatorship of K.Ulmanis was “humane”, it is understandable why the book says nothing about the Kalnciema prison and the concentration camp near Liepaja, where the opponents of the political regime were sent. Certainly the book doesn’t mention the fact that according to the historical data, the party Peasant Union, the head of which was K.Ulmanis, received financial support from soviet structures through some company in Riga.14 However, the book mentions that the growth of national consciousness of the Latvian people should be considered as the main outstanding achievements of K.Ulmanis. “On 15 May 1934, Latvians for the first time felt like real masters of their country” (page 169), – is emphasized in the book. How should the reader evaluate the coup organized by K.Ulmanis on 15 May 1934? The Latvian reader will definitely justify it. Especially because in the book, there is nothing said about the fact that in the basis of this national consciousness there is a totalitarian ideology, which doomed all the people of Latvia, and not only Latvians, the huge losses of human life.

**Non-aggression pact between Germany and the USSR from 23 August 1939**

The authors of the book “History of Latvia. The 20th century” wrote: “The fate of Latvia was decided during the negotiations between the USSR and Germany, which ended on 23 August 1939 by signing the Non-Aggression
Pact and a secret additional protocol” (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact). The first article of the secret protocol stated that Latvia, just like Estonia and Finland, “would be passed” to the Soviet Union: “In case of a territorial and political rearrangement of the regions belonging to the Baltic States (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the northern boundary of Lithuania shall represent the boundary of interest areas of Germany and the Soviet Union ...” 15

But in the first article of the secret additional protocol, the text of which is quoted by the authors of the book, there is no such word as “passed to”.16 Germany “did not pass” and could not “pass” to the USSR territories of Latvia, Estonia and Finland. It was only about the division of spheres of influence, what constantly occurs in the history of international relations. If until 1939 Latvia in its foreign policy orientation manoeuvred between the UK and Germany17, and after 5 October 1939, when a treaty of mutual assistance between Latvia and the Soviet Union was signed, it ended up in the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, then after 1991, Latvia, Lithuania Estonia, after becoming an independent state, they entered in the sphere of influence, first of all, of the United States and NATO. In other words, being an independent country, or being a part of the Soviet Union, Latvia had always been in the area of some geopolitical influence. Of course, for a small country being in the sphere of influence of a large state or a bloc of states, the independence is limited.

Next, the authors of the book write: “Agreement from 23 August was an illegal and cynical deal, an agreement at the cost of third countries. The adoption of the pact, which provoked aggression, a conquest war against the third country, the Soviet Union and Germany violated the Paris Pact signed in 1928 on renouncing the war, as well as many other bilateral agreements signed by them. The Non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union was the prelude to the Second World War. It was a pact of war, division and destruction”.18

Evaluation of the Non-Aggression Pact between Germany and the USSR from 23 August 1939 as “a prelude to the Second World War”, “pact of war, division and destruction”, “illegal and cynical deal”, as well as the conclusion that “the fate of Latvia was resolved during the negotiations between the USSR and Germany, which ended on 23 August 1939 by signing the Non-Aggression Pact and a secret additional protocol” (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), reflect the common point of view of a part of the researchers in the West, as well as among the radical part of the western Latvian emigration about the causes for the start of the Second World War and change in the Baltic States in 1940, but they contradict historical facts, as well as international law, which was in force during the period between the two world wars. The ideology of this point of view is to silence the negative consequences of the so-called “Munich Agreement” of 1938 for the peace in Europe, when the leaders of Germany, Italy, France and Great Britain agreed to give the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia to Germany, and to declare Germany and the USSR as initiators of the Second World War, in addition also equating Nazism and Stalinism.

But we must remember that the non-aggression pact with Germany in the 1930s was also signed by Poland, Estonia and Latvia. German-Polish agreement was signed on 26 January 1934. The Non-aggression pact between the German Reich and Estonia was signed on 7 June 1939 in Berlin by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia K.Selter and the German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop. The Non-aggression pact between the German Reich and Latvia was also signed on 7 June 1939 in Berlin. This document is signed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia V.Munters and the German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop.

In terms of the purpose these agreements did not differ from the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 23 August 1939. Russian historian A.S.Orlov emphasizes that the German-Soviet non-aggression pact “was legal, valid and lawful. It was published, ratified, was recognized by other states and international organizations and lost force on 22 June 1941”19. German historian Ingeborg Fleischhauer agrees with this opinion and notes in her book “The Pact. Hitler, Stalin and the initiative of German diplomacy. 1938-1939” that “the non-aggression pact ... did not go beyond the frames of traditional agreements of this kind”.20

As to the secret protocol of 23 August, then according to the opinion of A.S.Orlovs, “it was illegal, invalid, unlawful ....” But “according to the international law it can not be considered as a part of the contract.”

In the same time A.S.Orlov notes that “the texts of the nonaggression pact, the secret protocol and the records of negotiations in Moscow on 23-24 August 1939 did not specify the nature of future relations between the USSR and the countries of Eastern Europe.” When it’s said that “this protocol predetermined (or even foresaw) the division of Poland, the accession of Bessarabia, Bukovina and the Baltic states to the Soviet Union, then such an approach does not reflect the complexity of the ongoing events. When the secret protocol of 23 August 1939 was signed, the Soviet-German relations were characterized by uncertainty and it was still not at all clear how they would develop,” – emphasizes the historian.21

This uncertainty did not disappear after the German attack on Poland. “Since the beginning of the war, Stalin in his plans and actions acted more according to the course of events, not according to the complex agreements associated with the pact of 23 August. The most important factors, which influenced the subsequent
decisions of the Soviet government, were an instant defeat of the Polish Army by Wehrmacht, which petrified the entire Europe and the “Phoney War” in the West instead of the expected active actions of the opposing sides”.22

Russian historian O.V. Vishlev also believes that the documents signed by the Soviet Union and Germany did not contain provisions, “which would oblige the parties to carry out military actions against states and territories, which were parts of the interest spheres, succeed their occupation and territorial and political rearrangement. The secret additional protocol prescribed only the possibility of such actions (this is twice stated by the phrase “in case ...”)... Soviet occupation of the sphere of its interests and its “territorial and political rearrangement” was not prescribed by the Soviet-German agreements”.23

“The statement that the German-Soviet agreement allegedly gave Germany “the green light” to attack Poland cannot be considered as convincing. The final decision on the war against Poland was taken by Hitler in February and formalized by the corresponding Directive in early April 1939, i.e. at a time when the Soviet-German rapprochement was not even the issue. As documents show, Hitler never claimed that the campaign against Poland depended on reaching agreements with the Soviet Union, neither at that time nor later. Moreover, in June 1939, confirming his intention to achieve a “radical solution to the Polish question”, he underlined (as it became known in Moscow through agents’ channels) that even the Anglo-Franco-Soviet military-political union, i.e. not only the absence of agreements with the Soviet Union, but even its participation in the anti-German coalition, would not stop him...

Allegations that the German-Soviet treaty provoked Hitler's attack on Poland did not stand up to critics also from a military point of view. Preparation of any war takes time, because it is necessary to develop a plan of operations, to concentrate troops, deploy them into battle formations, conduct mobilization activities, etc. It is inconceivable that within a few days after signing the agreement with Moscow, and even within a month – starting from the end of July 1939, when some changes had been designated during the German-Soviet negotiations, – the Nazi leadership was able to conduct the entire set of activities to prepare for the war. All of this work had been done much earlier. By 23 August 1939, the German armed forces, in fact, had already completed an armed deployment for the attack on Poland in accordance with the operation plan approved already by 15 June 1939,” – emphasizes O.V. Vishlev.24

The Non-aggression pact allowed the Soviet Union to avoid war with Germany in September 1939. Moreover, division the spheres of influence according to the secret additional protocol not only ensured the non-involvement of Lithuania and Latvia in the war in Europe, which started on 1 September 1939 (note here that Hitler’s directive from 3 April 1939 indicated the possibility of occupation of a part of the territory of the Baltics up to the “old border of Courland” during the war against Poland25; but on 20 September, Hitler decided to turn Lithuania soon into a protectorate of Germany, and on 25 September signed a directive number 4 on the concentration of troops in Eastern Prussia to be ready to invade Lithuania26), but also provided Germany’s recognition of the sovereignty of Lithuania over Vilnius area annexed in 1920 by the Poles.

The authors of the book “History of Latvia. The 20th century” claim that the Soviet Union and Germany violated the Paris Pact on renouncement of the war, signed in 1928. Certainly it is about the attack of Nazi Germany on Poland on 1 September 1939. But the Soviet Union did not attack Poland and not declare war to Poland.

The Government of Poland, assessing the course of events from 1 – 17 September 1939, came to the conclusion that there are no conditions for the recognition of the existence of a reason for war with the Soviet Union, i.e. Poland is not in a state of war with the Soviet Union.27

Vladimir Makarchuk, Professor of Department of the Theory and History of the State and Law of the Lvov State University of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, in his book “State-territorial status of the Western Ukrainian lands during the Second World War” (Moscow, “Historical Memory” Fund, 2010) writes that “the introduction of Soviet troops onto the territory of Eastern Poland can be (from a position of de lege lata) justified in legal terms by the need to protect the vital interests of the Soviet Union, regarding an explicit aggression and unpredictability of the behaviour of Nazi Germany.” 28

In the international law of the interwar period there was a doctrine rebus sic stantibus – on the preservation of validity of the contract only within a fixed position of things. After the occupation of the greatest part of the Polish territory by the troops of Nazi Germany, such an issue was on – the cardinal change of circumstances. And exactly this cardinal change of circumstances had served as justification for the invasion of the Red Army on the territory of Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia. The objective is to ensure the protection of the borders of the USSR.

Rules of the international law of the interwar period were not violated by the decision of the USSR to place an extra contingent of the Red Army units on the territory of the Baltic States in the summer of 1940. These actions (after the occupation of a large part of Europe by Nazi Germany and the defeat of France) are also subject to the doctrine of rebus sic stantibus. In addition to that, as noted by the head of the International Court of Justice in 1976-1979, the well-known authority of the international law E. Archeaga, the international...
law of the interwar period only prohibited the outbreak of war, but in the same time it based on the fact that “enforcement actions, which do not lead to a state of war, even if they were committed in a large scale, are legitimate, as long as the parties to the conflict are held back from a formal declaration of war between them ...”. It is known that there was no state of war between the Soviet Union and the Baltic States in the summer of 1940, and launching additional troops of the Red Army on the territories of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia was carried out with the consent of the authorities of these countries.

Finally the authors of the book “History of Latvia. The 20th century” promote the thesis that the Soviet-German non-aggression pact predetermined the development of political events in the Baltic States, or, in other words, the process of the Sovietization of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in 1940. This thesis convincingly denies the example of Finland, which defended its independence by force of arms in 1939-1940. Unlike Latvia, where the army did not fire a single shot and where there were large masses of people, including that army, who were supporting the slogan to include Latvia into the Soviet Union in 1940.

Non-aggression pact between Latvia and Germany from 7 June 1939

Frankly demonizing the so-called “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact” of 23 August 1939, the authors of the book “History of Latvia. The 20th Century”, at the same time, actually justify a similar non-aggression pact, which was signed on 7 June 1939 in Berlin, Germany by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia Vilhelms Munters and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany Joachim von Ribbentrop. The treaty itself consisted of two paragraphs. In the first paragraph of the treaty, the contracting parties took a commitment not to fight with each other and not to use force in the relationships in any case. The most important for Germany in this case was the fact that Latvia was obliged to abandon the Anglo-Franco-Soviet guarantees. The second paragraph determined the term of the contract – ten years, which should be automatically extended for another ten years, if the contract was not terminated within a year before the deadline.

Before signing the contract, there were rumours that the document contains secret items. Berlin immediately began to deny these rumours. Nevertheless, as the Estonian researcher Magnus Ilmyarv notes, there is a source, indicating the presence of the secret annex. This is Dertinger memorandum from 8 June 1939. This memorandum declares that in addition to the contract, Estonia and Latvia had agreed on a secret agreement, which obliges both countries to agree with Germany on military security measures and, at the request of Germany, all other security measures against the Soviet Union. The memorandum also stated that Estonia and Latvia felt the danger coming exclusively from the Soviet Union, but the maintenance of a reasonable policy of neutrality requires the development of the defence forces to act against this threat. At the end of the Dertinger memorandum it is noted that as far as Estonia and Latvia are not able to protect themselves, Germany agrees to help them.

In the book “History of Latvia. The 20th century” there is nothing said about additional secret issues to the Latvian-German non-aggression treaty from 7 June 1939. According to the former diplomat and journalist, and at present – a political scientist, historian, head of the research programmes of the Fund “Historical Memory”, an expert in Russian-Latvian relations Vladimir Siminė, this is due to the reluctance of the ruling elite of Latvia to focus the population of the country on an explicit pro-German influence in the foreign policy of Ulmanis-Munters in 1939, at the culmination of rapprochement of Latvia with the Third Reich in the spring – summer this year, that is, on the eve of the outbreak of World War II by Hitler. After signing the agreement, Latvian
Latvia 1988-2015: a triumph of the radical nationalists

Book 3. Formation of a new historical memory, or the Whitewashing of Nazism in Latvia

and Estonian delegation (Estonia had also signed a similar non-aggression pact with Germany) was awaited with a warm welcome with Reichsführer SS Himmler and the chief of the “storm troopers” C.A.Lutze, and with an inspection of Nazi institutions. The Western press had met the conclusion of these contracts very negative, noting not only the growth of dependence of Latvia and Estonia from Germany, but also the focus of pacts against the Soviet Union. Ulmanis’s government, in the absence of a parliament, ratified the pact itself on 21 June.31

1940: “the death of the state” or the birth of a new type of the state?

The chapter on the changes in 1940 is called “The Death of the state”. In this chapter, which is the smallest in this book (only 17 of 474 pages, the author – Head of the Department of History of Latvia of the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the University of Latvia, professor A.Stranga), states that already on 17 June 1940 Latvia was occupied (page 231), however, on page 234 it is stated that on 21 July Latvia was still a “formally independent” state.

In the evaluation of the events of 1940, the prevailing is the thesis on an external threat, external pressure, etc., but there is no word about the mass demonstrations in support for the Soviet government and the accession of Latvia to the Soviet Union. And also about the fact that in the same year, the changes in 1940 were recognized by 17 countries in the world.

The assertion that in June 1940, the Latvian state survived the catastrophe, after 1991, it became the common place in works of the “official” Latvian historians. But to what extent does this conclusion go in accordance with what actually happened in the summer of 1940? And also, how did the Latvian SSR develop from 1940 to 1990?

The answer to the first question is obvious: the restoration of the Soviet power in Latvia and Latvia’s inclusion into the Soviet Union – it was a choice made by the people of Latvia in the specific historical conditions of the initial period of the Second World War, and taking into account the historical traditions of Russian and Latvian people living together. Many residents of Latvia considered that their rights would be better protected in the Soviet Union than in bourgeois Latvia. And besides, the entrance into the USSR postponed the start of the war in Latvia that had already been raging in Europe.

To answer the second question, it is necessary to compare, how the country was developing and how the ordinary people were living until 17 June 1940, with how the country was developing and how the ordinary people were living...
in the period from 17 June 1940 to 4 May 1990. And this comparison largely will not be in favour of an independent Latvia until 17 June 1940.

During the 50 years of the Soviet power in Latvia, the Latvian statehood and the Latvian people have made a huge leap in their development. Intra-national differences, poverty and unemployment were gone. Latvian SSR became an economically developed state. During the same period there was a revolution in the field of culture, education, science and technology.

Taking into the account all the mentioned above, it is absolutely illegal to consider the changes in 1940 as “a tragic page in the history of the country”, as “the death of the state” (magazine “Open City”, publishing in September 2010 an article by Dr. Eric Jekabsons “How Latvia lost its independence. Chronicle of the summer of 1940”, makes a conclusion that “the events of the summer of 1940, when Latvia lost its independence and became one of the republics, – is a tragic page in the history of the country” 32).

Soviet statehood in Latvia from 1940 to 1990 (excluding the four years of Nazi occupation) had been constantly evolving, having gone the way from the regime of Stalin’s dictatorship to the regime of Khrushchev’s thaw, Brezhnev’s “Perestroika”. By the middle of 1980s, the standard of living in the Latvian SSR was one of the highest in the Soviet Union, and is comparable to the quality of life in the advanced countries of the West. Year after year, the absolute number of the Latvian nation had been growing. And in the end of the 1980s, the political system of the Latvian SSR, as well as the entire USSR, started being democratized on the Western model. But all this, however, does not mean that during the Soviet period there were no problems. This is not so. A deep imprint in the minds of the people was left by Stalin’s and Khrushchev’s repressions. The absence of private ownership of the means of production seriously hindered the development of the economy. Serious shortcomings were in the policy of placement of enterprises subordinate to the Union on the territory of Latvia, and, therefore, in the policy of immigration of people from other republics of the USSR. The pace of penetration into industrial and agricultural production of new technologies seriously lagged behind Western countries. Providing the population with food and household goods also left much to be desired. The level of improvement of cities and towns remained low. Frankly speaking, the state of roads was bad. Finally, the learning of the Latvian language to students from schools with Russian as an instruction language was in a bad condition. As the process of democratization succeeded, the party the Soviet bureaucracy was capable to a lesser extent of an adequate response to the challenges of the time. By the end of the 1980s, the need for political and economic reforms became more and more apparent.

Analysis of the deportation of 14-15 June 1941

Without questioning the tragic deportation of inhabitants of Latvia on 14-15 June 1941, we have to note that the book “History of Latvia. The 20th Century” simply indicates that at night from 14 to 15 June, 15,424 people were deported from Latvia, among them almost 100 children up to one year and more than 3,000 children under the age of 16, but there is nothing mentioned about the fact that among these 15,424 deportees, according to the documents of the Security Police and the Security Office of the period of the Nazi occupation of Latvia, there were about 5,000 members of the Nazi underground who were willing to start military action against the Soviet Union immediately after Hitler’s army attack on the USSR. Deportation of these 5,000 supporters of the Nazis, according to historian S.Chuev, did not allow the anti-Soviet and pro-Nazi underground to capture the 16 major military installations, including the radio stations of Riga, Kuldiga, Madona, Liepaja, rail and road bridges in Daugavpils and Jekabpils, the main Post Office in Liepaja, and in Priekule – the post office, telegraph and telephone exchange office in the first days of the war.31

The subject of deportation is not considered on the general background of international politics in 1930-1940’s. Professor of the Department of Theory and History of the State and Law of the Lvov State University of Internal Affairs Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine Vladimir Makarchuk, describing the attitude existing in 1930-1940 in different countries towards the mass migrations of people, notes that “relocations, or rather deportation was common practice during that historical era. The vast masses of Hungarian, Romanian, German and Polish population had been moving for various reasons (but almost always against their will) in 1938-1946. In particular, the heads of the states of the Big Three in Yalta and Potsdam authorized the forced deportation of the German population from their territories, which belonged to Poland and Czechoslovakia after the Second World War.” 34

Latvia during the war

The chapter about Latvia during the Nazi occupation (1941 – 1945), whose author is the advisor of the President of Latvia Vaira Vike-Freiberga on the history issues professor Antons Zunda, also arises many questions. The description of the period of the Nazi occupation in Latvia (1941 – 1945) is provided with the full compliance with the new official concept on history of Latvia during the Second World War.
First of all, it is necessary to underline the obviously condolent tone of the description of the German occupation, which is very different from the description of the period of Soviet power in 1940-1941. If the story about the Red Army soldiers, who were in the territory of Latvia at that time, highlights their stupidity, ignorance, alcoholism, then, referring to the soldiers of the German army, then primarily is spoken about the great hope to which they were met by the Latvian people. “In many places, the Germans were welcomed as liberators from Soviet tyranny ... The hatred towards the Soviet regime was caused by the seizure of property, general Sovietization, repressions and persecutions committed by the communist occupation regime”. (page 250).

The chapter notes that the time of German occupation is considered almost the heyday of Latvian art and Latvian culture, as more than 30 books of Latvian poets were published, theatres were packed, “the German authorities as if almost didn’t interfere in the life of the Latvian theatre as it looked on the outside” (page 301), the art continued developing the old traditions, and “the most productive years for the fine arts were 1942-1943, when there were two large-scale exhibitions of Latvian art” (page 303).

The desire to play down the scale of the German fascist terror against Latvians, Jews, Gypsies, Russians and other ethnic groups, as reflected in the story of the Salaspils concentration camp. Even in the name of the Salaspils concentration camp, the author uses the Nazi terminology – “Extended police prison and correctional labour camp”, which “re-educated” “political prisoners of different categories: members of the Resistance movement, Jews, deserters, shirkers, gipsies, etc.” (page 265), not even saying a word about the fact that thousands of people, including children were killed in the camp. Such “interpretation” of one of the most difficult pages in the history of Latvia during the Nazi occupation has caused literally a storm of indignation literally in the whole world.

“For Jews, – indicates Alexander Bergmann, a chairman of the Latvian Society of Jews – Former Prisoners of Ghettos and Concentration Camps, – exactly Salaspils was a death camp.” 35

Professor of History Margers Vestermanis also believes that “In the first period of its existence, Salaspils had been a pure death camp. In December 1941, there were brought thousands of Jewish men from the Czech Republic, Austria, and the majority – from Germany. On an empty place they built the camp – 50 barracks and gallows – a death city. Since the spring of 1942, the camp began to settle those who sympathized with the Soviet government. They were
A propaganda poster for the first anniversary of the beginning of the Nazi occupation of Riga.

Propaganda posters of the Nazi Germany, calling to the fight against USSR.
Latvia 1988-2015: a triumph of the radical nationalists

Book 3. Formation of a new historical memory, or the Whitewashing of Nazism in Latvia

Liepaja city, 1941. Local Nazi collaborators, guarding the detained Jews

Right from the beginning of the Nazi occupation of Riga, Jews had been ordered to wear yellow Stars of David on their clothes
“Resettling” the Jews to the Riga Ghetto

The fence of the Riga Ghetto. The inscription in German and Latvian reads: “Persons, who cross the fence, or try to contact the residents of the ghetto through it, will be shot at without warning”
The Great Choral Synagogue in Riga was located at Gogol Street 25, at the crossing with Dzirnavu Street. At the beginning of the World War II, it was the biggest of more than ten synagogues in the city. On July 4, 1941, the Great Choral Synagogue was burned down by the Nazis and their local collaborators, like all the other synagogues of Riga. In 1997, a memorial was unveiled in the place of the former synagogue. Photo by Victor Gushchin

In 1941-1944, from 35 to 46 thousand people had been shot in the Bikernieki Forest near Riga, mostly Latvian Jews. The memorial has been unveiled on November 30, 2001. Photo by Victor Gushchin

On November 30 and December 8, 1941, Einsatzgruppe A and local collaborators, from Arajs Commando and Latvian nationalists, had killed approximately 24,000 Latvian Jews from Riga Ghetto, and a thousand of Jews brought by train from Germany a day before, in Rumbula forest near Riga. According to testimony of several witnesses, Herberts Cukurs, a Latvian pilot and a member of the Arajs Commando, took part in the action.

In 1941-1944, from 35 to 46 thousand people had been shot in the Bikernieki Forest near Riga, mostly Latvian Jews. The memorial has been unveiled on November 30, 2001. Photo by Victor Gushchin
living in more tolerable conditions and were treated not like the first inhabitants. On the third stage – in the summer of 1943 – women and children from the so-called partisan villages were brought to the camp.36

Elvira M.Ilijahina was brought to the camp in Salaspils from Belarus, when she was 10 years old. She was lucky – she remained alive, when 7,000 other juvenile prisoners were killed.37

In end of 1942, Hitler punishers kicked out on the street the entire village Kartenevo in Vitebsk region, which is almost on the border with Latvia, where Elvira Ilijahina was living with her parents. There was a terrible cold, and a little Elvira did not experienced the horror only because her mother was standing next to her and for her as a little child, it seemed that since her mother was standing next to her, then nothing bad would have happened, everything would have been fine.

Meanwhile, the Germans burned alive a few men in a shed in one part of the village, and killed the Sosnovski family in the other part of the village. Other residents of the village were set in the column and led away. The Latvian station Robežnieki they were put in the shed. The punishers ordered to fill the shed with the straw, saying: “You will burn faster like this!” All night long people were waiting in the shed to get burned alive. But in the morning they were driven to the station Bigosovo and put in wagons. They drove very slowly and reached Salaspils only within three days. Elvira Ilijahina survived only because she was in the middle of the wagon. Those who were in the beginning and in the end of the wagon died from frostbite.

When Elvira Ilijahina arrived with the rest in Salaspils, some men were chased in a circle on the square and ordered to: Run! Fall! Stand up! Run! One man on a stretcher, being unable to rise, was only moving his hands, showing that he could move them. Later E.Iljahina found out why he did it. Exhausted, malnourished people were thrown into the pit and buried alive.38

As a chairman of the Society of former underage victims of the Nazi regime, residing in Latvia, E.Ilijahina had been collecting documents on the history of the Salaspils concentration camp for many years.

Her archives also contain a certificate from the Latvian State Historical Archives, prepared in May 2004 at the request of the deputy of the Saeima Andrej Klementjev.39 This certificate indicates that at different times there were different names used for the Salaspils concentration camp: - Salaspils Concentration Labour Camp (Arbeits- und Erziehungslager Salaspils) – according to the documents of 1942, 1943 and 1944; - Concentration labour camp and expanded police prison Salaspils (das Arbeitserziehungslager und erweiterte Polizeigefangnis Salaspils) – according to the documents of 1943;
Salaspils concentration camp. Drawing by Karlis Buss, its former prisoner

- Salaspils camp (Lager Salaspils) – according to the documents of 1943;
- Lager Kurtenhof (Salaspils) – according to the documents of 1943.

Salaspils camp was under the command of the Security Police and the Security Service of Latvia. Custodial control of all prisoners of the camp was very harsh and severe. That is why, a memorandum of a commander of the Security Police of Latvia and the Security Service in Latvia from 3 December 1942, explicitly states that “no matter what the name of the Salaspils camp is, its conditions of detention and nutrition can be attributed to the concentration camps in Germany”.

According to estimates of the Extraordinary State Commission for the Investigation of Crimes of the Nazi occupiers on the territory of Latvia, during the period from 1941 – 1944, 53,700 people were killed in the Salaspils concentration camp, including 3,000 children (according to other sources – 6,000 or at least 7,000). Pre-school children were taken 500 millilitres of blood and more, making them injections of poison, various diseases, and making them starve to death.

After the war, one of the surviving prisoners, who got into Salaspils as a child, told a story about his first day in the concentration camp. He, being a seven-year-old boy, was taken away from his mother and brought in cold dark barracks. He was taken all clothes off, washed with ice water with bleach and given a bowl of horrible brew, which was thrown to his feet (it was called a soup, which was actually made from rotten vegetables and fish waste). The smell coming from it was so horrible that it could cause only strong nausea. The boy could not eat that. And then from somewhere out of the darkness one boy of his age, thin and bleak, appeared and said: “Remember! You’ve got to eat it, if you want to live. And now, please, give me this soup, I am very hungry”.

On 25 August 1943, residents of the Naujene Parish from the Daugavpils district were brought to the Salaspils concentration camp. Among them there was the family of Ivan Gavrilov – mother, father, brothers – Jacob, 12 years old, Arkady, 8 years old, Timofey, 4 years. In that terrible time Ivan was only 6 years old.

“We were taken blood by force many times, – he recalled in 2005. – And no one adhered to any rules. After these “medical” procedures my brothers and I could not move independently, and our mother was carrying us in her hands back into the barracks”.

In 1943, a family of Natasha Lemeshonok from Asweya District of Belarus was also sent to the Salaspils concentration camp. There were six children in the family – Sasha, Zhenya, Galya, Boris, one-year-old Anna and Natasha, who was only 9 years old at that time. In 1944, after the liberation of Riga from the Nazis, Natasha recalled: We, all children, lived alone in a barracks. We

Salaspils concentration camp in 1944
were not able to go anywhere. We were hungry all the time. Little Anya cried all the time. A few days later, the soldiers brought us all out of the barracks and led us through the courtyard of the hospital. There we were lined up. I was holding Anya in my arms. We did not know that they would do to us. Then a German doctor came, a big and angry man with another German. They said they would inspect us.

I did not see what they were doing in the front. But some girl suddenly began to cry and scream so loud, but the doctor was stamping his feet. When I came closer to him, I saw that he was sticking into girls’ and boys’ hands a long needle, taking blood from them and putting it through a tube in a bottle. Then I began to scream and cry too. I was really scared, but I was afraid to run away.

We were all standing in a line and everyone was crying and screaming. When my turn came, the doctor pulled out Anya out of my hands and put her on the table. Then the doctor stuck the needle into my hand. I began to scream and cry again. And Zhenya, Sasha and Boris too. We were sorry for our sister. The German looked at us and said something in his language. We did not understand anything. A soldier who was standing nearby, laughed, and said in Russian: “Mr. Doctor said you should not cry – the girl is going to die anyway, so now there will be at least a little benefit from her.”

After one day they took us to the doctor again to take blood from us into a bottle. And soon Anna died in the barracks. We were often called to the doctor. All our hands were punctured with the injections. We were all sick. Dizzy. Every day, someone from the boys or girls died…” 44

So was Salaspils the death camp? After a loud international scandal, which followed the release of the book, Professor A.Zunda was still claiming: No, it was not. According to him, “people were brought there not to be killed. This camp had another function than to kill. They were trying to re-educate people, so that they would not support the Soviet regime…” 45

Even I.Feldmanis, A.Zunda’s colleague from the history workshop and a team of authors of the book, admitted there were about 2 thousand people killed in Salaspils 46, however the archives indicate that there were much more victims.
By the way, the wish to present Salaspils not as a concentration camp, but as a labour camp with a moderate regime – is not a “discovery” of the historian A. Zunda. First it became an issue for negotiations in 2001, during the consideration of the case of the first lieutenant Konrads Kalejs in the City Court of Melbourne city in Australia, who was accused of serving in the security troops of the Salaspils concentration camp, where he was a commander of the change and ordered his subordinates to shoot 6 prisoners. So, exactly in 2001, according to the Australian Sydney Morning Herald, lawyers of Kalejs specially invited to the legal proceedings one of the world’s biggest specialists in the history of the Holocaust in Latvia, an American professor of history Andrievs Ezergailis to convey to the court the idea that Salaspils was not a copy of Auschwitz, and it was not a concentration, but only a labour camp. However, Ezergailis refused to fly to Australia, and the Australian Attorney Geoff Nettle said at the trial that “behind the thorn wire of Salaspils 68 thousand people lost their lives.”

Could such things happen in the “labour” camp? Certainly not. So the attempt of the Latvian community in Melbourne to present Salaspils only as a place where people were re-educated with labour, ended in failure.

Nevertheless the authors of the book “History of Latvia. The 20th century” continued the case of the lawyers of Konrads Kalejs and again tried to imagine the Salaspils concentration camp as a place where the Nazis were re-educating only with labour, not killing.

However, the particular point in assessment of the Salaspils camp in the chapter about the war – is not the only fact, which causes objection or doubts.

Doubts are caused, in particular, by the data, provided by A. Zunda, on the number of losses of the population of Latvia during the Nazi occupation. A. Zunda mentions 80-100 thousands of people murdered by the Nazis, and he includes 70.000 Jews (page 267), about 2.000 Gypsies and 2271 mentally ill (page 269). It turns out that in addition to the Jews, Gypsies and the mentally ill, 5-25 thousand people died in Latvia, which is not true, as the true numbers of the losses were much higher. The materials of the Nuremberg trial, for example, state that during the years of occupation, the Nazis and their local collaborators took lives from 313.796 civilians, including 39.835 children. In addition to that, the 279.615 inhabitants of Latvia were taken to Germany to work and more than 330.000 red-army prisoners were killed in concentration camps created on the territory of Latvia.

One can not agree with the conclusion that “the Nazi regime would not be able to create the Latvian Legion, if Latvia hadn’t been occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940, if the occupation hadn’t been accompanied by (brutal – page 245) repressions against the civilian population.” (page 278)

Indeed, elimination of the old and formation of a new socio-political system, especially in the context of nationalization of private property, elimination of market relations and beginning of mass repressions after 5 August 1940, surely was not supported by the entire population. However, it is not true to state that it could have been the main reason for an active participation of Latvians in the genocide of 1941, as well as for a massive support of formation of the Latvian Volunteer SS Legion. Why? Because since the middle of 1930s the Nazi ideology found a response in the ruling circles and among the population of Latvia.

As noted in one of the secret analytical reports prepared by specialists of the military intelligence of France, “by the beginning of 1936 the state of mind of the Latvian leadership was extremely prone to the ideas of Germanism, ... and the German ambassador personally exerted a substantial influence on the political life of the country ...”. The situation in Latvia was similarly characterized by the Soviet military attaché in Latvia Colonel Vasiliev, who reported 7 May 1939 to Moscow: “Boys in white stockings walking the streets of Riga and Nazi greetings are common occurrence. Moreover, the minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia (V. Munters, German by ethnicity – V.G.) was walking in white stockings on the second day of Easter.”

Ulmanis’s government gave permission for a wide distribution of the book “Mein Kampf” and Hitler’s speeches. On 13 February 1939, Riga newspaper «Brīva Zeme» heralded that there are no ideological differences between Germany and Latvia.

A similar situation prevailed until April 1939, when the police had discovered a plot of Latvian Germans that made an effect of a bombshell in the German-Latvian relations. These events, which caused a lot of noise, woke up the old hostility of Latvian people towards Germans.

Nevertheless, on 7 June 1939 Latvia and Germany signed a non-aggression pact, attaching a secret additional protocol, obliging Latvia to negotiate with Germany on the matters of the military security and, upon the request of Germany, on all other security measures against the Soviet Union.

So the main reason why thousands and thousands of Latvian residents voluntarily joined the police battalions and the SS Legion, and did not join, say, a non-communist anti-fascist underground, which actually did not exist during the German occupation, unlike the Communist underground, – this close relationship between the ideology of authoritarianism and nationalism of Karlis Ulmanis regime and the ideology of German Nazism, as well as collaboration between Germany and Latvia in the pre-war period.

The number of anti-Nazi partisans mentioned by A. Zunda, who were fighting with the Nazis, is doubtful. The textbook for secondary schools “Essays
Here and on page 65: The solemn ceremony of Waffen SS Latvian legionnaires

swearing loyalty to Adolf Hitler. “Laikmets” magazine, No. 14, April 2, 1943
on the History of Latvia from 1940 to the present day” (Riga, “Zvaigzne”, 1991) states that “the guerrilla movement greatly stiffened in 1944. Additional troops came from the non-occupied territory of the USSR, and soon there were already three partisan brigades and 57 independent groups operating in Latvia. The total number of guerrillas and their supporters in Latvia during this period was about 20 thousand people” (page 88). The figure of 20,000 partisans was given also in other works.51 But Zunda writes that “according to the latest Russian archival materials, there were only few partisans in the beginning of 1944 in Latvia: 11 guerrilla groups consisted of just 812 fighters. More serious underground groups operated in Riga, Daugavpils, Liepaja, Rezekne. There were three partisan brigades in the summer of 1944 in Latvia.” (page 286). It is not clear what these latest Russian archives are and where they are published? But there is an extremely big difference: 11 units or 57 units, 812 guerrillas and nearly 20,000 guerrillas and their supporters.

A. Zunda also writes that “except Latgalia (Latgale), Red partisans in Latvia did not have strong support from the population.” Moreover, the actions of the guerrillas caused suffering to the civilians. Thus, “in January 1942, 200 villagers of Audrini of Rezekne County were shot for giving the shelter and

According to the data of the Republican Extraordinary Commission on Investigation the Crimes of the Nazi Occupants during the Nazi Occupation of Latvia (1941-1945), 313,798 civilians had been murdered, from them 39,831 had been children. 279,818 (according to specific acts) or 103,404 (according to lists) had been moved to Germany for forced labour. Also, 330,092 prisoners of war, having earlier served in the Red Army, had died under the occupation. State Archive of the Russian Federation. Fund 7021. Clerical work 93. File 3691. Sheet 1.
support of the Red Army” (page 286). But for some reason he does not write that the performers of the event in the Audrini village were local policemen.

We cannot not agree with the conclusion of A.Zunda that the communist resistance against the Nazis, supported by the Soviet Union, “based on the state interests of the Republic of Latvia”, was not the resistance, but “actions of saboteurs, guerrillas, underground, inspired by Moscow for its own interests,” and the citizens of Latvia, who had cooperated with the Soviet partisans or underground for various reasons, should be rather considered as among the collaborators, not as the members of the Resistance. (page 279)

Such an evaluation of the Second World War on the territory of Latvia reflects interpretation of the history of Latvia adopted among Latvian emigration to the West. The basis of this interpretation is the principle of legal continuity of Latvian statehood and the thesis of the two, Stalin’s and Hitler’s occupations, which does not cohere with what actually happened in 1940, because the restoration of the Soviet power and the entrance of Latvia into the Soviet Union was a voluntary choice of the people. Judging from the consequences of this choice, we can discuss the topic, whether he was right or vice versa, wrong, but the fact is that it was the choice of the people of Latvia, made under specific historical conditions, and Soviet Latvia in 1940 had the same right to exist, as the Republic of Latvia in the EU today.

The validity of this assessment, in particular, is attested by the fact that during the war, in Latvia there was practically no national underground, unlike the communist one; but the Latvian Central Council, unlike the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion, was not at all popular. These facts clearly refute the idea that the majority of the population in this period wished restoration of the independent state of Latvia, wished that “Latvia was saved both from the clutches of the Third Reich and from the clutches of the Soviet Union” (page 310). During the Nazi occupation, as in 1940, the atmosphere in Latvia was dominated by very different moods: either by pro-Soviet or pro-Nazi, or by a desire not to intervene in anything and remain by the side. At that time there were very few people who were willing to actually defend the idea of independence.

Chapter 3

Course for political rehabilitation of Nazism

“The latest update of the theme of fascism comes from where it was least expected – from restructuring ... It is necessary to distinguish between how obsolete fascism is historically and how politically ... In the first case – the historical – the sense of fascism is really already obsolete and there is no question about its revival. This means that as an idea and a political practice, claiming for the discovery of a new path for humanity, a new world order, a higher sense of human life, fascism collapsed completely and forever ... However, it does not imply that it is politically obsolete, i.e. that under certain conditions the ruling elite of a country will not turn to borrowing some of the elements of Nazi practices, or means of its political arsenal. No one can give such a guarantee ...” 1

“Unfortunately, our country is becoming browner ...”, – Janis Urbanovics, chairman of the fraction of the Party of the national consent in the 8th Saeima. 2

“The Baltic States – is the most dangerous region in Europe, because here there were no conclusions drawn from the history of the Second World War, fascism and the Holocaust. Under the banner of the SS soldiers and politicians, a younger generation was growing, which is morally ready to repeat the Holocaust.”

Steinsalz, the interpreter of the Talmud. 3

A course on political rehabilitation of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion, which creates political conditions for the political rehabilitation of Nazism and fascism, was introduced in Latvia after 1988 by the radical part of the western Latvian emigration.
“In general, the legion was a national tragedy...” – states the political analyst Ilze Ostrovksa. – But how did the glorification happen? During the break of the established order there is always a question of construction of a new identity. And what to do if almost since the time of the Battle in Saule (relatively speaking) Latvians hadn’t been winning anyone, however, every nation needs its own heroic page linked to the military history. But binding it to the side which lost the war (with the ideology which is condemned by the whole civilized world), politicians made a gross mistake, actually a provocation.”

In 1995, Doctor of History, the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the University of Latvia Aivars Stranga, agreed with this opinion. “Now the so-called “national partisans”, who fought on the side of Nazi Germany, claim that they were fighting for the independence of Latvia. How justified were these statements from the historical point of view?” – He was asked by a correspondent of the newspaper “SM-segodnya.” And A.Stranga replied: “To put it mildly, such statements do not have any basis. I repeat: during the Nazi Germany the Latvians could only perform the role of slaves any kind of independence was out of question. Latvia would have never existed, if there would have been Ostland. And Hitler made no secret of his intentions... The leaders of the SS Legion, colonels, generals – everyone knew whom they were serving. They were war criminals.”

**Course – to review the results of the Second World War**

The course on the glorification of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion emerged most clearly during the second presidential term of Vaira Vike-Freiberga (2003-2007).

Becoming in the President of Latvia 1999, Vaira Vike-Freiberga started an active campaign to promote the international condemnation of “two occupations” of Latvia and began to revise the results of Second World War. In fact, the intention was that the international community would not only adopt the thesis of the “Soviet occupation” in 1940, but would also condemn it, and that the international community would agree that the Soviet Union has the same responsibility for the outbreak of the Second World War as Hitler’s Germany. Simultaneously, a new historical concept had to show that the inhabitants of Latvia, who joined the police battalions or the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion for one reason or another, in fact, not only had nothing to do with Nazism and fascism, but actually fought for the restoration of the state independence of Latvia. What was happening in the armed forces of Nazi Germany is not so important, as there was no other option. For a better perception of the concept there was a myth that Latvians were lining well with the Germans, in contrast to the year 1940, when the Russians were in power and when it was impossible to live; that the Germans were well mannered and educated, and the Russian soldiers were rude, dirty and always drunk. So, in this way the political and historical background for the political rehabilitation and non-prosecution of Latvian collaborationists and Nazi war criminals was formed. So, the conclusion about that it were not for the victory of the Red Army, then today there would be no Latvian people, no free and independent Latvia, not just stood back to the background, but it completely disappeared from the arguments of those historians who had served this concept.

**Nuremberg verdict**

The verdict of the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, announced on 1 October 1946, states: “The Tribunal declares as criminal a group, which consisted of persons officially accepted as members of the SS organization and who became members of the organization, or remained in it, knowing that the organization is used for conduction of activities deemed as criminal, or those who, belonging to this organization, directly participated in the commission of crimes, however, excluding those, who were included by the government into the organization in a way that left them with no other choice, as well as persons who had not participated in the commission of crimes.”

The Tribunal also “noted” the activity of the SS divisions, indicating that the “SS divisions were responsible for many massacres and atrocities on the occupied territories...”

The Tribunal ascertained that “it is impossible to mark out any part of the SS, which would not be involved in this criminal activity.”

**Official position of Latvia**

The official position of Latvia results from the fact that the Latvian legionaries did not joined the legion voluntary, they were mobilized, i.e. included into this organization in a way that left them with no other choice.” Latvian legionaries were not involved in the punitive actions against the civilian population, and therefore there is no reason to consider Latvian legionaries as war criminals. Latvian legionaries fought against the Bolshevik Soviet Union, but not against the countries of the West, who were fighting against Hitler. Latvian legionaries were not committed to the ideology of Nazism. The main reason why the inhabitants of Latvia joined the legion was hope to restore the independent Republic of Latvia.
Latvia 1988-2015: a triumph of the radical nationalists

Book 3. Formation of a new historical memory, or the Whitewashing of Nazism in Latvia

The decision on the formation of the Latvian Volunteer Legion was a result of specific historical circumstances. The decision was based on the efforts of the individual members of the organization, and the competent national authorities.

However, this decision was taken in the context of the USA Congress' decision on the formation of a new historical memory. The Latvian Volunteer Legion was formed in order to overcome the consequences of aggressive and criminal policy of the Soviet Union in the Baltic states.

The Legion was formed with the aim of restoring the independence of Latvia, repressed its citizens, and later threatened to re-occupy Latvia. The Legion was formed about a year after the last mass extermination of Jews in Latvia.

Many Latvians considered the Legion as a means to fight against the hated Soviet Union.

However, in contrast to the volunteers from the Germanic peoples, the Latvian soldiers were not "political soldiers of the Fuhrer." Opinion on National Socialism as an ideology of the "New Europe," which was put forward by Germans, did not influence the Legion.

In Latvia, just like in Estonia, the formation of the Legion was mostly under the influence of the public and the media. The Legion was formed in order to restore the independence of Latvia, which was lost during the Soviet occupation.

The fight of Latvian legionnaires on the German side certainly had an imprint of collaborationism and co-operation with the German occupation authorities. However, this was inspired to a great extent by the results and socially psychological consequences of aggressive and criminal policy of the Soviet Union in the Baltic states.

Comparative historical studies have shown that the most important motives for the formation of a new historical memory, or the Whitewashing of Nazism in Latvia, were the following:

- The decision of the Commission on the displaced persons of the USA Congress, which was announced on October 14, 1945. The decision contradicts the article 10 of the Statute of the Nuremberg Military Tribunal, which states that "There are no reasons for the assertion about the direct connection of the so-called SS Legion with the criminal organization SS. This excludes those who were mobilized by the SS Legion, but it does not make the whole legion a criminal organization..."

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authorities of each Signatory shall have the right to prosecute in national, military or occupation courts for belonging to the group or organization, and in such cases the criminal nature of the group or organization is considered as proved...”.

Declaration of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia “On Latvian legionnaires during the Second World War”

Adoption of the document mentioned above by the Commission of US Congress – this is certainly an attempt to reconsider the decision of the Nuremberg Tribunal, stating that “it is impossible to single out any part of the SS, which would not be involved in criminal activity.” The resolution of the US Congress laid the groundwork for the political rehabilitation of fascism and Nazism in Latvia after 50 years.

Basing exactly on this resolution of the Commission of US Congress, on 29 October 1998, the Latvian Saeima adopted the Declaration “On the Latvian legionnaires of the Second World War”, which has the aim of “restoration of historical justice and good memory of Latvian soldiers.” The declaration emphasized that “the purpose of those Latvians, who were called or joined the Legion voluntary, was protection of Latvia from the return of the Stalinist regime” and that “they (the legionnaires – V.G.) never participated in the punitive actions of the Nazis carried out against civilians.” By this, the Saeima accounted for the responsibility of the government “to take care of the removal of encroachments on their honour and dignity of Latvian soldiers in Latvia and abroad.”

After the adoption of the mentioned “Declaration on Legionnaires”, the Saeima included the “Day of Remembrance of Latvian soldiers” into the calendar as a holiday and anniversary in the same year 1998, timed to the major battle of the Legion of the Red Army on the Great River near Opochka in 16 March 1944 (the territory of the Russian Federation).

Political consequences of the adopted decision negative for the image of the Latvian state in the world became evident already in 1999. In official celebrations and the procession of the former SS men in the city centre that year on 16 March, officials of the Latvian state participated again. The response to this march and these celebrations by the victims of fascism both in Latvia and abroad was so severe that the authorities, concerned about the international scandal, took off the official status of this “memorable day” in 2000. However, the format of the event, which has now become a “private affair of the citizens”, remained the same and from year to year is accompanied by worship services at the Dom Cathedral and laying of wreaths at the Monument of Freedom in Riga.

“Processions of former SS-men and position of the West

“In a democratic society, there are no significant restrictions on organization of activities, if these do not bother or trouble anyone. Therefore, the fact that on 16 March at the cemetery in Lestene, legionaries of the SS Legion gather to commemorate their fallen comrades, most of whom were forcibly mobilized into the Nazi army, does not cause any objection... It is quite another thing when there is an attempt to make heroes, fighters for freedom of Latvia or images to strive for from soldiers, who were forced to join the army of SS legionnaires. When some festive processions are organized in their honour through the centre of the capital of Latvia, and there are glorifying speeches pronounced at the Monument of Freedom. When a festive prayer for the glory of the “heroes” is arranged almost at the state level, and the Latvian media present it as a great event, providing direct and hidden praise for the “true national soldiers,” – points a political analyst of the newspaper “Hour” Leonid Fedosejev.11

Processions of former Latvian SS men in the Latvian capital were organized throughout the 90s. As long as the officials of the Latvian state did not participate, these processions did not cause the high-profile international resonance. Everything changed after 16 March 1998, when the Commander of the National Armed Forces Juris Dalbinsh, the Naval Commander of the Republic of Latvia Gaidis Zeibots, the Head of the military orchestra of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Latvia Daintis Uskans and a number of deputies of the Saeima and the Riga City Council, including the Chairman of the parliamentary faction “For Fatherland and Freedom” / LNNK Janis Straume, the Vice chairman of the Saeima Aigars Jirgens (“For Fatherland and Freedom” / LNNK), the Chairman of the Saeima on education, science and culture Dzintars Abikis (“Latvia’s Way”), deputies of the Saeima Karlis Cermans (“For Latvia!”), Juris Dobelis, Oskars Grigs, Peteris Tabuns (all – “For Fatherland and Freedom” / LNNK) and the deputy of Riga City Council Maris Kimenis attended the procession of former legionaries in Riga.12

Already on 19 March, a negative assessment of the event in memory of the Latvian legion Waffen SS, as well as of the participation of deputies of the Saeima and high-ranking military officials in it was given by the Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, on 26 March – by the State Department of the USA. On 1 April, the bewilderment in connection with the participation of senior high-rank military officials and deputies of the Saeima in the events on March 16 in honour in the memory of the Latvian legion Waffen SS was also expressed by the German government. The State Secretary of the Ministry of
Who is to blame?

The continuing semi-official celebration of former soldiers of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion is, in fact, not only a mass, but also an open political manifestation of ethnocentric political regime, whose main objective is to review the outcome of the Second World War and to rehabilitate former soldiers of the Latvian SS Legion politically, which creates certain conditions for the political rehabilitation of Nazism and fascism in Latvia.

In this case, since during the period of the German occupation of Latvia, almost 146,000 Latvian citizens were mobilize in the various armed forces of the German fascist army, and, we emphasize, a significant part of them – by force; besides many Latvian families have relatives or friends who served in the Latvian Legion. The rehabilitation of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion does not cause psychological rejection in large parts of the Latvian society. Today, approximately 65% of Latvians and 23% of non-Latvians take public honours to SS veterans for granted.14

Striving to justify and whitewash foreign players in any possible ways, the Latvian media undertake massive ideological attacks on the minds of an average man from year to year. Among the articles on this subject we shall select the publication in the newspaper “Diena”, entitled “Do not express any concern and make it clear to our Latvian partners during the talks, how we perceive these events”. “The federal government is perplexed by the fact that today, knowing about the crimes of the SS, the members of parliament and high-ranking military officials are involved in such activities,” – said the Secretary of State.13

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The subtitle of this article came from the idea that “it was incorrectly to associate the Latvian legionaries with the German SS organization”, besides this thesis was explained by Professor Aivars Stranga – a known historian, head of the department of history of Latvia of the University of Latvia, who in 1995, as mentioned above, opposed the assertion that the Latvian SS Legion fought for the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Latvia.

Dear Professor stated: the cause of all miseries, i.e. incorporation of Latvia into the Soviet Union, repressions and, as a consequence, anti-communist moods in the society, which pushed many people to join the legion, – the so-called “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact” concluded on 23 August 1939 between the Soviet Union and Germany. Therefore, according to A.Stranga, even if “the activities of SS units surely were condemned at the Nuremberg trial, it is politically incorrect to assume that these two Latvian divisions (the 15th and the 19th) are equivalent to the SS and that the reason for their formation is the ideology of the national-socialism.”

Let us not agree with this opinion. The example of Finland conclusively shows that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact did not give an absolute guarantee for the expansion of the USSR by the addition of new territories. Why did Finland find the strength to resist the Stalinist Soviet Union, but in Latvia the Red Army tanks were greeted with flowers by the population?

The answer to this question can only be one: the nationalist and anti-democratic policy of the authoritarian and ethnocentric regime of Karlis Ulmanis led to the fact that in the summer of 1940, there was a variety of political forces, which united against it and were ready to do anything to overthrow the hated rule.

Nevertheless, the year 1940 is considered as a clear division of the Latvian society into supporters and opponents of the changes, and, which is not the same, supporters and opponents of the Soviet regime.

If the majority of the society wanted changes, then supporters of the Soviet regime were predominantly urban proletariat and the poor peasants, presented both as a titular nation and as national minorities. Without any doubt, an important role in their behaviour in 1940 played a tradition of fight for the Soviet power, formed in 1918-1919, as well as sympathy towards the Soviet Union. But the opponents of the Soviet regime were mainly those political forces, which were serving K.Ulmanis’s regime until 1940, professing the ideology of authoritarianism and nationalism. After nationalization of private property conducted by the Soviet government, many of the former owners, who previously were for the overthrow of the regime of Karlis Ulmanis, joined them. Representatives of this part of the population (not all, but many) made the anti-communist underground in 1940-1941, and from the first days of the Great Patriotic War they started to faithfully serve the Nazis, also participating in actions to destroy the local inhabitants.

Finally, some part of the population took a neutral position with respect to the changes.
Thus, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was not the main reason, which can be used to explain the events of 1940. The influence of the Pact or deportations of 14-15 June 1941 cannot explain why after the entrance of Hitler’s troops, many people of Latvia started to voluntarily sign themselves into the police battalions, and later – into the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion, and to participate in repressions or military operations that had nothing to do with the protection of the Latvian statehood. Local collaborators of the Nazis perfectly knew the goals of the Nazi Germany as Hitler’s elite had never revealed its goals about Latvia and its people.

So, we shall emphasize once again that the main reason why thousands and thousands of Latvian residents voluntarily joined the police battalions and the SS Legion, and did not engage in, let’s say, a non-communist anti-fascist underground, which did not exist during the German occupation, unlike the Communist underground, – a close kinship of the ideology of authoritarianism and nationalism of Karlis Ulmanis’s regime and the ideology of German Nazism.

**Executioners**

Baltic collaborationist military units appeared on the territory of Russia already since the end of 1941. Professor of the Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University, Boris Kovalev in an interview with the Analytical portal RuBaltic.Ru notes in this regard that, together with the Spanish “Blue Division”, which fought near Novgorod, and then near Leningrad, in the military actions also participated the Belgian, Latvian and Estonian units. Upon that a lot of Latvians and Estonians served in the base. And what is astonishing: the local population of Spaniards, who survived the occupation, are recalled as hooligans and thieves, but the representatives of the Estonian and Latvian divisions are described as sadistic, animals and murderers. That is, in the memories of villagers of Novgorod when it comes to their relationships with collaborators, the national component is very clearly manifested.

B.Kovalev: “At first I thought it was some kind of manifestation of phobias, rejection of the neighbour of another ethnicity (because we had Latvian and Estonian villages, many of which had been practically eliminated before the war, in 1937-1938, as a result of Stalin’s repression), I asked about it, but it turned out not to be like this: many people of the north-west of Russia were taken to the Baltic States in 1943, behind the line “Panther”, and these evacuees tell that they communicated with the local inhabitants in different ways, some even helped the evacuees, but they recall soldiers from the Baltic states as the most evil invaders...”

We had a small extermination camp – the village Zhestyanya Gorkal (a village in the west of the Novgorod Oblast – comment of RuBaltic.Ru), where some thousand people were eliminated... First, solely Germans were blamed for these actions, they were blamed for that on the so-called “Novgorod Nuremberg” in 1947 (the trial on German war criminals). But in the 1960s, it was found out that among these punishers Germans made a small part, only from the top, but the most of the performers were from the Baltic States. 16

The assertion that the Latvian collaborationists were only fighting against regular troops of the Red Army and did not take part in punitive actions against the civilian population, does not correspond to the historical truth. From the very beginning the Legion included police battalions, which were actively involved in the punitive actions, guarded the Jewish ghettos and concentration camps.

So, on 12 June 1943, the police from the 273rd Latvian police battalion, in accordance with the instructions given on 11 June 1943 at a meeting in Riga by the command of the gendarmerie of Latvia and Security services, participated in evacuation (executions were called like this in reports) of families, one or several members of which came on the side of “bandits” from the village Shkyaune. Evacuations took place in the villages of Shkyaune, Rundeni, Paspene and Briti. 224 people were shot within three hours. 17

In Ukraine, the punishers of the 22nd Daugavpils police battalion ruthlessly acted in the Zhitomir and Lutsk area; of the 23rd Gauja police battalion – in the areas of Dnepropetrovsk and Kerch; of the 25th Abava police battalion – in areas of Korosten and Ovruch and of the 28th Barta Police Battalion – in the area of Krivoy Rog.

In Belarus, in the summer of 1942, the German security police handed over the protection of the town of Slonim to the 18th Latvian police battalion. His commander Rubenis practically on the same day ordered to eliminate the whole ghetto (2000 people). 18

In the summer and autumn of 1943, the 25th police battalion and the troops of Lidums were sent to carry out punitive operations against the Soviet partisans in the Pinsk Marshes (Belarus). The 18th police battalion was especially famous for extra big atrocities. 73 most “active” punishers of this battalion were awarded for their “exploits” by the Chief of the SS and police of Belarus with a medal “For Valour” of the 2nd degree.

In 1944, in Belarus, punitive operations were conducted by already three police regiments. The 1st Riga Volunteer Regiment was operating near Nevel, the 2nd Liepaja Regiment – along the railway Daugavpils-Polotsk. Punitive operations took place until the end of May 1944. The 3rd Cesis Regiment destroyed, according to his military records, the “terrorist forces estimated at
against guerrillas in Poland and Latvia. Tatjanas and involve young people in forced labour in Germany. The 316th battalion in the punitive expedition in Lithuania and Poland in order to destroy the par-

In early March 1944, Latvian police regiments, together with some 20 Estonian and German police battalions participated in the major punitive operation against the guerrillas in the area of Vetrino (Belarus). Belarusian villages, remaining in that area were burnt by punishers, and the inhabitants were shot. From August to December 1943, the Police Battalion 282-A participated in the punitive expedition in Lithuania and Poland in order to destroy the partisans and involve young people in forced labour in Germany. The 316th battalion of the 2nd Liepaja Police regiment participated in the punitive expeditions against guerrillas in Poland and Latvia.

The 278th Police Battalion (Dobele) was in Poland, where it, supported by the aviation, was going through and checking the forests and villages to discover individuals, who were fighting against the Nazi occupiers.

Division of the Latvian Legion took part in the operation “Winter Magic”, organized from 15 February till early April 1943, which is more known as Osveysk tragedy. The aim of the operation was to create a neutral zone with the width of 40 km between Driss on the south and Zilupe and Smolnatai in the north, which included the area of Osvey – Driss – Polets – Sebez – Rassoni (Belarus, Russia). This strip of land without any inhabitants and settlements was meant to deprive the guerrillas of their defensive bases. 7 Latvian battalions, one Ukrainian troop and one Lithuanian troop participated in the operation, which was personally led by the SS-Obergruppenführer F.Ekkel. In addition to that, they were given special units. The total number of punishers was approximately 4.000 people.

According to records, the operation developed as follows: after entering the village, the police and the attached units of the Security Service were shooting everyone, who could be suspected of belonging to the partisans (such were considered almost all male residents aged from 16 to 50 years), as well as the elderly and disabled who could not afford to take such a long journey by foot. Others – mainly women and children – were sent by foot to the place of the so-called “second-locking”. Those who had no forces during the way were shot. From the assembled camps people were sent to other camps, such as Salaspils near Riga, where women were separated from their children and sent to work in Germany.

In total, there were several hundreds of villages destroyed, among those, where there were up to one thousand or more inhabitants. Just in the Osvey area 183 villages were burned, 11 thousand 383 people were shot and burned (including 2.118 children under the age of 12 years), 14 thousand 175 people were deported to work – adults to Germany, children to the Salaspils concent-

tration camp. The Justice of the Federal Republic of Germany qualified the operation “Winter Magic” as a crime against humanity.20

Latvian SS brigades and divisions participated in the punitive operations. For example, in 1942 the 2nd Latvian SS Brigade burned the village Fedora of the Chudsky area of Novgorod Oblast and the village Osino. In addition to that, the personnel of the brigade organized mass burnings and shootings in the settlements of Lubnity, Ossets, Kreechno 60 km north-west of Novgorod, as well as in a Prisoner of war camp in the Red Village near Leningrad.

The 19th Latvian SS division, in addition to its common functions on the Eastern Front, performed the following tasks: to fight against Soviet partisans in the rear areas of the German troops; to carry out raids against civilians suspected of supporting the partisans; to destroy innocent Soviet citizens; to confiscate cattle, grain, food from the population; to burn settlements. In general, these tasks were performed by the troops of the police gendarmerie, which was part of the organizational staff of the 19th Latvian SS division, but often additional personnel of other combat units was attracted for solution of these tasks.

The division had been closely involved in the punitive actions against the Soviet citizens on the territory of the Leningrad and Novgorod Oblast. In 1943, some parts of the division took part in punitive operations against the Soviet partisans near the cities of Nevel, Opochka, Pskov (560 people executed 3 km from Pskov). On 18 December 1943, in the village of Zala-Gora, west of Novgorod, 250 civilians were shot.

In the beginning of January 1944, the troops of police Gendarmerie Company conducted mass executions in the town Chudovo of the Leningrad Oblast. On 21 January 1944, in the village Gluhaya, Latvian punishers pushed 200 people in the barracks and shot. The same team executed 500 people, who were in the concentration camps near the city Porohovo in Belarus.

Totally, from 18 December 1943 to 2 April 1944, the private troops of the 19th Latvian SS Division during punitive actions destroyed 23 villages, in 13 of which 1300 people were shot.21

Participants in the wartime events confirm that the Latvian legionnaires are also responsible for extermination of the civilian population, in particular, murdering civilians of Knyazevo (Red), Barsuki, Rozalino of the Vitebsk province, Mirokovo and Kobyniki villages in 1944.

Soldiers of the Latvian SS divisions also participated in the brutal murders of the captured Soviet soldiers, including women. In particular, on 6 August 1943, private troops of the 43rd Rifle Regiment of the 19th Latvian SS Division tortured 15 prisoners from the 65th Guardian Rifle Regiment of the 22nd Guardian Rifle Division, who were captured near the village Bobryn (Latvia).
Legionaries left their footprints also in central regions of Poland. As a German general J. Strop stated, Latvian units were also used in the operation of destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942-1943. Totally, there were 56,065 people destroyed in Warsaw.22

The story of Lieutenant V. Baltinsh

In 1956, the Latvian emigrant military-historical magazine “Chasovoy” published an article by a former officer of Special Assignments of the Russian Liberation Army Lieutenant V. Baltinsh (a Latvian) entitled “I do not dare to remain silent”. This story is about the actions of Latvians in Belarus (Vitebsk region): “… At the end of 1943, I was sent by one Latvian institution to Russia – the former Vitebsk province. I saw much myself, learned a lot from the villagers of Knyazevo (Red), Barsuki, Rozalino and other. When German troops who occupied these villages and were quite tolerant to the population, were gone, they were replaced by Latvian SS troops. And immediately there was a terrible irrational terror. Residents were forced to flee into the forests at night and hide like wild beasts.

In 1944, I came to the village Morochkovo. All of it was burned. Latvian SS were located in cellars. On the day of my arrival, they had to be changed by the newly arrived German unit, but I still managed to speak Latvian with some of the SS-men. I asked one of them – why there were unburied corpses of women, children and old people around the village – hundreds of corpses, even dead horses. There was a very strong smell of the dead bodies. The answer was: “We killed them in order to destroy as many Russians as possible”. After that, he took me to a burnt house. There were also a few burnt bodies, half-buried with straw and ashes.

And these, – he said – were burned alive...

When the Latvian was leaving, they took several Russian women as concubines. These women were obliged to wash clothes for the soldiers, to warm up baths, to clean rooms etc. When these troops left, me and some other people took away the straw and ashes from the burnt house and pulled out half-burnt corpses. They were 7, all women and their legs were tied up with a wire, the other end of which was nailed to the door jamb. How much anguish did they suffer before they died...

We removed the wire from the stiff and burnt legs, dug seven graves and buried the bodies, reciting “Our Father” and singing the “Memory Eternal”. A German lieutenant went to meet us. He pulled out the nails and boards, gave us some soldiers to help, and we made seven Orthodox crosses and out them over the graves, writing on each: “Unknown Russian woman, burned alive by enemies of the Russian people – the Latvian SS.”

The next day we crossed a small river and found near some wooden houses and local people, who survived. When these people saw us, they were frightened, but we managed to calm them down quickly. We showed them seven new crosses and told them about what we had seen and done. The peasants cried and told us what they had to experience during the stay of the Latvian SS army.

In May, in the village Kobylniki, I saw in a ravine about three thousand bodies of executed peasants, mostly women and children. The residents, who managed to survive, told that people who performed executions “spoke Russian, had images of a skull on their caps and a red-white-red flag on the left sleeve” – the Latvian SS army.

I do not remember the name of the village, which attracted my attention with was a cloud of flies circling above a wooden barrel. When I looked inside the barrel, I saw men’s heads cut off. Some had moustaches and beards. We found a lot of corpses of executed peasant women around the village. After speaking with the residents, who had survived, we did not have any doubt that Latvian SS men had been there, showing their courage and fearlessness in the massacres of defenceless population…” 23

Trial of Vasily Kononov

Today the Latvian state, not only denies the fact of the Latvian SS men crimes against civilians in different countries occupied by Nazi Germany, but also, as shown in the trial of the Second World War of veterans of the Great Patriotic War, the former partisan Vasily Kononov, also denied the involvement of some local residents of Latvia in the fight against the guerrillas who fought against fascist scum. Moreover, in order to substantiate the thesis of equal responsibility of Stalin’s and Hitler’s regimes for the outbreak of the Second World War, as well as to rehabilitate Nazi collaborators politically, since the end of the 1990s, the Latvian state engaged in activities aimed at bringing to justice the former veterans of the Second World War, who fought on the side of the anti-Hitler’s coalition, as if for war crimes against humanity.

In 1998 Vasily M. Kononov, a former commander of the guerrilla unit of the 1st Latvian partisan brigade, a bomber personally derailed 16 German military trains, and after the war – he, being a chief of the Criminal Investigation Department and the head of the transport police of the Latvian SSR, a retired police colonel, was arrested for the murder of nine civilians in the village of
Malie Bati in 1944. The veteran himself did not deny the fact of the murder, but he stated that these people were Nazi collaborators, as the Germans had issued them weapons, i.e. they were no civilians.

In Malie Bati, Germans have created a defence point from the number of local collaborators. From 10 households of this village, six owners served in the auxiliary police service, which was later transformed into a group of police “C”, i.e. they were German SS police officers. The Commander of German SS police officers Bernat Shkirmant took an active part in the execution of Jews in Karsava. German SS police officers searched for illegal immigrants, who had escaped from captivity of the Red Army, or deserters from the SS Legion, they also patrolled roads at nights, sometimes carried out arrests. One night, they broke into a house of one of their fellow villagers Donat Loganovsky and killed him because of the suspicion of being connected with the guerrillas.

At night of 29 February 1944, a group of partisans entered the village of Malie Bati. Not knowing that the villagers cooperate with the Germans, the partisans stopped to rest in a shed in the yard of the house of Modest Krupnik, who was a neighbour and the right hand of Shkirmant. The son of Modest Krupnik, Meykul, immediately reported about guerrillas to Shkirmant, who then reported about them to the nearest German garrison. In the morning, the shed with the guerrillas was surrounded by the Germans, set on fire and everyone who was in it died in the fire. A radio operator and Katya Dolgopolova with a small baby tried to escape from a locked shed, but they were shot by the machine-gun bursts. Totally 12 guerrillas were killed – the whole special group of major Chugunov.

On 27 May 1944, partisans revenged. All nine Nazi collaborators, who directly or indirectly participated in the murder of partisans on 29 February, were sentenced by the tribunal of the guerrilla unit to execution. Among the dead there were three women, including Tekla Krupnik, a young woman on the ninth month of pregnancy, who actively helped her relatives from police on 29 February.

After 1991, while in the process of rewriting the history of the Second World War and political rehabilitation from former Nazi collaborators, the Latvian state made great efforts to condemn the commander of the guerrilla unit V. M. Kononov for the as if committed “war crime”. The investigation was led by the Head of the General Prosecutor’s Office Strelis and the Public Prosecutor Rubene. The main witnesses in this case were children of German SS police officers, who were 3 to 5 years old at that time and could not really explain and fully recall those events. Then, Maria Kuznetsova testified as the main witness, whose testimony, as she admitted later, was just invented and did not correspond to what happened in the reality.

In the course of investigation, the prosecutor Rubene included the reference to the so-called “double occupation” of Latvia in the case materials. This was done to justify a political thesis that V. M. Kononov as a representative of the as if occupant country – the Soviet Union – fought against the other occupant country – Nazi Germany. Or, in other words, V. M. Kononov did not fight for the liberation of his homeland from the “double occupation”, so therefore de facto and de jure, his actions were directed against the so-called independent Latvian state, which continued existing.

On 21 January 2000, the Riga District Court declared V. Kononov guilty and sentenced him to 6 years in a closed prison for “genocide and crimes against humanity”. The court order did not say anything about the murder of 12 partisans by Nazi collaborators in February 1944. And there was nothing said about that in the village Malie Bati, the Nazis created their fortified place from local residents. The concluding certificate of the court, the Nazi collaborators were called “civilians”.

At the cassation appeal, the Supreme Court acknowledged the allegations as insufficient and not proven. Returning the case for further investigation, the Supreme Court ordered the prosecutor’s office to determine the status of the base point of the Germans in the village Malie Bati.

The next case review took place in the Latgale District Court. At the hearing, M. Kuznetsova apologized in front of Kononov and admitted that all her previous testimony was invented. The Judge A. Straus – he is also the chairman of the Judicial Board of Criminal District Court – read the verdict, which said: The Criminal Division of the Court came to the conclusion that international conventions, listed in the indictment, can only refer to the military units of the states which occupied the territory of other states...” And then: “V. Kononov can not be declared as the representative of the occupation authorities in 1944 under any circumstances. On the contrary, he fought against these authorities, which occupied Latvia...
According to the laws of war and articles of war, actions of V. Kononov, regarding the inhabitants of Malie Bati who were loyal to the occupation regime, were justified, and he, as a soldier, had done his duty.

Taking into the consideration that six armed men of Malie Bati, working with the occupational regime and actively supporting it, entered into an armed struggle against the guerrilla movement, they should be regarded as combatants.

Their physical destruction on 27 May 1944, led by the division of V. Kononov based on the decision of the partisan Tribunal according to the laws of war, is justified and declared as appropriate and necessary.26

Taking into the account that the acquittal of the Latgale District Court was contrary to the policy of the State on the revision of the results of the Second World War, on 30 April 2004, the Trial Chamber for Criminal Cases of the Supreme Court reversed this verdict in the appellation order and sentenced V. Kononov to one year and eight months of prison for “war crimes”.27

Condemning the anti-fascists Latvia is trying to correct “shortcomings” of the Nuremberg Trials

The case of Vasily Kononov caused a loud international outcry. The fact of prosecution of a veteran of the anti-Hitler coalition is scandalous, because Latvia became the only country in the world, where after more than 50 years the winners in the war against Nazi Germany were brought to justice. After 1945, Austria and Italy, where there were fascist regimes during the war, tried to perform the same actions, but without success.28

In 2000, V. Kononov was granted the Russian citizenship, and in August 2004, his complaint of a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights was registered in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Two years later, on 25 July 2006, the representative of the Latvian Government in international organizations of human rights Inga Reina presented her objections to Kononov’s complaint in the 38-page document.

Latvia justified the condemnation of the veteran of anti-Hitler coalition, denying one of the reasons provided in the complaint, according to which a person can be convicted for international crimes only if the country is found guilty. For example, that was the case of Nazi Germany, which had been recognized by the Nuremberg Tribunal as a criminal state. In accordance with this sentence, the war criminals who participated in the punitive actions against the civilian population, were brought to justice on the territory of the state, where they committed their crimes. In the case of Vasily Kononov Latvia tried to introduce some innovations in the international law, stating that it is not necessary to find the state guilty, it is sufficient to conduct the applied legal proceeding. As a result V. Kononov was convicted for actions, which according to national and international legal standards of rights are not considered as crimes. He was convicted for execution of the sentence of the Tribunal of the guerrilla unit regarding nine Nazi collaborators who contributed to the destruction of a special group of major Chugunov. Even the Nuremberg Tribunal did not interfere into judgments of national courts against the traitors and their accomplices. However, Latvia assigned itself an authority “to correct the shortcomings of the Nuremberg Tribunal”. Paragraph 99 of the official explanation of the Latvian authorities, presented to the European Court of Human Rights, states: “Thus, the domestic criminal lawsuits against individuals responsible for serious violations of the international public law, partly correct the deficiencies of the Nuremberg Trial, which was more victors’ justice, allowing the criminals from the Allies’ side to remain punished under the condition of general reluctance from the part of states to prosecute their own nationals for such crimes”.29

By the decision from 24 July 2008, the Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights passed a decision on the ineligibility of Vasily Kononov’s prosecution based on the Article 7 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which states: “No person shall be convicted of the commission of any act or omission, which according to the national or international law, which was in force at the time when it was committed, was not considered as a criminal offense”.30

Assuming that the death of three women from the village Malie Bati was the result of excess of partisans’ authorities, the Court established that, as in the case of the six men, the decisions of Latvian courts do not specify the exact degree of involvement of the plaintiff in their execution.31

In January 2009, Latvia disputed the decision of the Strasbourg Court, and the case was passed over for consideration to the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The Latvian side insisted that the Soviet Union was an occupier, just like the Third Reich. However, the Court noted that it was not in its competence to assess the legality of the incorporation of Latvia into the USSR in 1940 (paragraph 210 of the sentence of the Court).

On 17 May 2010, the Grand Chamber passed a decision in favour of Latvian authorities by the majority of 14 votes against 3. In the judgment, the court stated that if Kononov believed that the residents had committed a war crime, he only had the right to arrest people to provide them with fair trial proceedings afterwards. Condemnation of people in absentia, without their awareness and participation followed by death, can not be considered as fair.
The Court also pointed out that Kononov performed “betrayal and treachery” prohibited by the international law, by dressing in a German military uniform, and that he violated articles of the international law, which guarantees women, especially pregnant women, special protection during the war.32

The decision of the European Court of Human Rights to cancel its previous verdict and accept the verdict in favour of Latvia was considered by a number of lawyers in Russia and in the West as political, not legal, because there was actually no legal justification for it. Firstly, during the war, the warring parties always use each others uniforms to cause one another as many losses as possible. There is nothing new or unusual in this. Secondly, where have you seen that during the war, on the occupied territory, partisans would judge their opponents under the laws of peace time? Third, the Latvian side had not presented the court the evidence of personal involvement of Kononov in the elimination of Nazi collaborators. Thus, the decision of the Grand Chamber of the ECHR testifies in favour of the fact that the judges, following the official Latvia, actually supported a line on the review of the decisions of the Nuremberg Military Tribunal.

**The Guardian: “Where Nazis are heroes”**

In March 2000, the newspaper “The Guardian”, one of the largest and the most influential in the UK, its daily circulation is about half a million copies, published an article in which Latvia was called the country “where the Nazis are heroes”.33

The main hero of the article was the former commander of the guerrilla unit Vasily Kononov, who was convicted by the Latvian court for war crimes. Conviction of V. Kononov became a scandal not only because he did not fall under the definition of a war criminal, formulated by the Hague Convention on the Laws and Customs of War – he was not a representative of the occupier, or because many testimonies of the witnesses were not based on, what they really saw, rather than what they heard from others (in the verdict it is said: “Many people have said…”), but also because Latvia at the same time refused to put on trial Konrads Kalejs who during the German occupation was serving on the occupying side and his actions, without any doubt, fall under the definition of a war crime, formulated in the Hague Convention. Kalejs was a commander of the unit, who shot Jews in Latvia, then a commander of the punitive unit of the Security Service, who burnt out entire villages; he also guarded the Salaspils concentration camp, where six prisoners were executed upon his orders.

Kalejs could be convicted of war crimes, as there is no statute of limitations for these crimes. However, the witnesses who heard how Kalejs was boasting about his “achievements” were not questioned by Attorney General’s Office, when V.Kononov was sentenced. Testimonies collected at the end of the 40s by the Soviet investigative bodies, were not requested either, and testimonies collected by investigators from the United States and Canada – were ignored.34

The question is why? The Centre of Simon Wiesenthal, answering this question, indicates that of those in power in today’s Latvia, including judicial bodies and the police, there are many of those who do not want a fair investigation, because their relatives actively served the Nazis and participated in war crimes during the war. Thus, according to the data of the Centre, the father of the former head of the Security Police of the Republic of Latvia Janis Apelis actively participated in mass executions during the Second World War – his case is kept in the State Archives of the Republic of Latvia. A relative from the father’s side of the senior prosecutor of the investigation department of crimes of the totalitarian regime of the General Prosecutor’s Office of Latvia Janis Osis, in 1941 voluntarily joined the troops of V.Arais and for the crimes committed on the territory of Latvia and Reichskommisariat “Ostland” he received the Hitler’s Cross with ribbons in 1943 as a reward for military service – reported the newspaper “Tevija” from 29 February 1944.35

**“Kalejs’s case”**

Newspaper “The Guardian”, which paid a special attention to the fact that Latvia has not condemned anyone fighting on the “other side”, also quoted the former Minister of Justice Valdis Birkavs, who said that this had been done in the Soviet Union era, when about 20.000 Nazi collaborators were convicted.

But in fact, after 1991 Latvia not only condemned, but also rehabilitated many former Nazi collaborators.

On 26 January 2000, in Stockholm at a conference on the Holocaust, Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga met with the director of the Jerusalem office of the Centre of Simon Wiesenthal E.Zuroff, who told her that at least 41 Nazi collaborators were rehabilitated by Latvian Themis and, moreover, received additions to pensions and social benefits as a politically repressed. E.Zuroff promised to pass the information on the “Kalejs case” and a list of still-living members of the “Arajs’s team” to the Latvian prosecutor’s office.36

Conrad Kalejs, being a law student at the University of Latvia, volunteered for the special team of Viktors Arajs and became the commander of the 2nd unit. In this service, he served in the protection of Salaspils. From the case, started by the KGB and which is available in the State Archives of Latvia, it is clearly seen that the unit of Kalejs travelled and participated in anti-partisan events and
shot civilians. The magazine “Laikmets” from 10 April 1942 states that the 2nd unit participated in the punitive action in Nasva, near Pskov, where 385 civilians were executed. In the battle with the guerrillas, the commander of the Task Force “A”, the SS Brigadeführer Walter Stahlecker was mortally wounded and died in the hands of Kalejs. Kalejs was mentioned in the magazine in this regard.37

After the war Kalejs lived in Australia. In 1959, when receiving a visa for permanent residence in the United States, he concealed the fact of his cooperation with the German security service and V.Arajs’s unit. When the United States government found out about it and started the case on deportation, Kalejs changed his place of residence, sold his property and continued living under a different name, he tried to change his nationality, but was finally expelled from the United States and then from Canada and the UK. Thereafter Kalejs settled in Australia.38

E. Zuroff learned about Kalejs’s case back in 1980 when he was working in Israel, in the department of special tasks of the Department of Justice of the United States. After 1991, he has repeatedly appealed to the government of the Republic of Latvia with a request to bring K.Kalejs to responsibility, but, as he admitted in 2000, he “faced considerable resistance in response to our request to file a charge against ... Konrad Kalejs”. The prosecutor of the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Latvia Uldis Strelis systematically opposed the persecution of Latvians who committed crimes during the Second World War.39

Since by 2000, Latvia’s unwillingness to bring Kalejs to responsibility for war crimes gained the international attention and became a negative impact on the image of Latvia in the world, on 16 and 17 February 2000, in Riga, there was an international meeting of prosecutors from seven countries (Latvia, Australia, USA, Germany, Britain, Canada and Israel) to discuss issues related to the prosecution of former Nazis. The initiator of this meeting was the President of Latvia Vaira Vike-Freiberga, because even during her meeting with E.Zuroffom on 26 January she “agreed to review many cases of Latvian citizens, regarding war crimes and examination of which was interrupted by the Latvian courts”.40

At the international meeting Latvia was represented by General Prosecutor Janis Skrastinsh, chief prosecutors Olgerts Shabanskis and Janis Osis, one relatives of which, as already mentioned, served in the unit of Victor Arajs’s, a professor of history Heinrich Strode, as well as officials from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Latvian archives. Russia, in the archives of which there are a lot of materials on war crimes in general and on the “case of Kalejs” in particular, was not invited to the meeting. General Prosecutor

Janis Skrastinsh decided for some reason to invite Russian colleagues to a separate meeting – at the end of February or the beginning of March.

The first day of the conference, which was meant to be a quiet meeting of professional “Nazi hunters”, began with recriminations. First, the Americans accused Latvia of “insufficient enthusiasm” in the investigation of cases of former Nazi collaborators, and then the chief prosecutor Olgerts Shabanskis stated that his agency was dissatisfied with cooperation with the Centre of Simon Wiesenthal.

The main topic of the meeting on 16-17 February was “Kalejs’s case”. J.Skrastinsh acknowledged that some of the documents and evidence available to Latvia was not sufficiently evaluated.

In addition to “Kalejs’s case”, there were about several other cases on crimes committed during the war discussed at the meeting. J. Skrastinsh refused to tell the names of the five suspects (on the eve of the meeting, the press reported that there is information about 10 Latvians, who, perhaps, were involved in the Nazi crimes, was at the disposal of law enforcement agencies of other countries41): “This is the responsibility of the countries where the cases were filed – Canada, Australia, Germany,” – he said.42

It is possible that one of this “five” was the 87-year-old Karlis Ozols, the Australian magazine “Review” mentioned about him exactly one day before the meeting.

K.Ozols just like K.Kalejs, at the end of the 30s studied at the University of Latvia. There he met V.Arajs. And on 1 July 1941, he became a member of a team organized by him. A month later K.Ozols already was a lieutenant and commander of the unit in the Latvian auxiliary security police. In terms of his career, Ozols grew rapidly: there is a signature on the certificates issued to Kalejs in fall of 1942; “Captain K.Ozols”.

In 1941 together with his subordinates Ozols shot the inhabitants of Jewish ghettos. But he “outstood” in particular in 1942-1943 during the mass executions in the ghettos of Minsk and Slutsk, as well as during actions against the Belarusian partisans.
Once being in the American occupation zone after the war, Ozols managed to escape from justice of the allies and moved to Australia in 1949. Seven years later he got the citizenship of Australia, and in 1958 he even won the chess championship in Australia.

Ozols’s case was started in the late 80’s by the Department of Special Investigations. However, in 1992 the department was eliminated.43

The result of the meeting of prosecutors from seven countries was conclusion of an agreement, which prescribed an action plan for the nearest future. Namely: the Latvian investigators in “Kalejs’s case” shall go to Scotland Yard; Latvia and Australia will continue negotiations on a treaty for extradition of suspects; Australia, Germany, Canada and the United States will provide technical support to Latvian; Israel is ready to provide information on non-governmental organizations and individuals.44

Despite of a promise of J.Skrastinsh to invite representatives of Russian law enforcement to Riga in the end of February or March, this visit, however, did not take place. In May of the same year, a head of the assistance programmes of the Enforcement to Riga in the end of February or March, this visit, however, did not take place. In May of the same year, a head of the assistance programmes of the Federal Security Service of Russia, Major General Alexander Zdanowich in an interview with the newspaper “Vesti Segodnya” stated that Russia is ready to provide the Latvian investigators and historians with archival materials about the crimes of the Nazis and their Latvian collaborators on the territory of Latvia, if the Latvian government would show an appropriate interest. But until May there was no inquiry to the archive department of the Federal Security Service of Russia.45

This attitude clearly illustrated the lack of interest of the Latvian General Prosecutor’s Office in judicial punishment of accomplices of German Nazis in Latvia, who are still alive. Certainly the General Prosecutor’s Office was not independent in this matter, but was based on a political line, which was followed by the majority of Latvian Saeima and the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia.

In October 2000, in the Saeima of Latvia, there was a draft law discussion on ratification of the treaty with Australia on mutual extradition of criminals. The adoption of this law meant that Australia would extradite K.Kalejs to Latvia, and Latvia would have to judge him as a war criminal. By this time, the General Prosecutor’s Office already had evidence that according to Kalejs’s orders, 6 prisoners from the Salaspils concentration camp were shot. However, the deputies from the nationalist parties stood absolutely against the ratification of the treaty. Social Democrat Labanovskis, in particular, said that prosecutors have no proof of Kalejs’s guilt. At the same time Kalejs as an Australian citizen, should be put on trial in Australia. Especially since the crimes alleged against Kalejs, were committed at the time, when Latvia was occupied, and therefore, the Latvian people are not responsible for the crimes of the Stalinist and Nazi regimes. “And all claims that Latvians are guilty of the Holocaust – is a pure lie!” – concluded Baldzens. He also held up to shame the head of the Centre of Simon Wiesenthal, Zuroff, who, according to the deputy, urged Latvia to act ... implementing the methods of Wyshynski, Yezhov and Beria!

The “Social democrats” Labanovskis and Baldzens were supported by the representative of the People’s Party Aleksandr Kirštejns and the representative of the Party for Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK Juris Dobelis. A.Kirštejns said that Australia is trying to pass the unpleasant “Kalejs’s case” to Latvia, and Juris Dobelis suggested not to follow the “not very advanced foreigners”.46

**Campaign of Cukurs “Cukuriade”**

Herbert Cukurs – another executioner of Jews during the German occupation of Latvia.47 On the website of the Jerusalem Memorial Complex Yad Vashem there are excerpts from testimonies of 9 Holocaust survivors, who explicitly accuse Cukurs of killings and other atrocities. Thus, the former Riga town dweller Rafael Shub, who emigrated to Canada, says that on 2 July 1941 Cukurs burned eight Jews in the New Jewish Cemetery, and lists the names of the dead – a synagogue sexton Feldhem, his wife and four children and a synagogue cantor Mintz and his wife.

Abraham Shapiro was detained at the headquarters of Arjas’s troop in Riga, on Krisjana Valdemara Street 19, after Cukurs had “expropriated” his apartment. Shapiro was a witness to how Cukurs shot two Jews, including the one called Leytmann, who could not stand in line, as it had been ordered, as well as how Cukurs and his senior officer tortured and sexually harassed one young Jewish girl. Shapiro was ordered to play the piano during this act.

Max Tukatser also witnessed how Cukurs ordered to torture and then to kill many Jews. On 15 July 1941, Tukatser saw and heard that Cukurs gave an elderly Jew an order to rape a Jewish girl in front of a crowd of policemen and prisoners.

When the old man could not do it, he was forced to endlessly kiss different parts of the body of a naked girl. Prisoners, who could not bear the sight, were beaten by Cukurs with the gun handle, beating to death 10-15 people.

Labanovskis’s opinion was also supported by other deputies. His fellow colleague from the party Egils Baldzens also stated that the prosecutors have no proof of Kalejs’s guilt. At the same time Kalejs as an Australian citizen, should be put on trial in Australia. Especially since the crimes alleged against Kalejs, were committed at the time, when Latvia was occupied, and therefore, the Latvian people are not responsible for the crimes of the Stalinist and Nazi regimes. “And all claims that Latvians are guilty of the Holocaust – is a pure lie!” – concluded Baldzens. He also held up to shame the head of the Centre of Simon Wiesenthal, Zuroff, who, according to the deputy, urged Latvia to act ... implementing the methods of Wyshynski, Yezhov and Beria!

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Tukatser also testifies that Cukurs took an active part in the punitive actions on 30 November and 7 December in the ghetto of Riga, beat and killed men, women and children who could not keep going in the line.

Another witness – Isaac Crum – also personally saw how Cukurs shot an elderly woman, whose daughter was not allowed to sit with her mother in the train. This train carried away the Jews to Rumbula on 8 December. There was an anguishing crying of small children all around the area, who were suddenly separated from their mothers ...

This is really incredible, how, after all of that, Latvian national radicals tried to rehabilitate this murderer, who disgraced Latvia by his terrible crimes.

In spring 2005, when, on the one hand, the whole world was preparing to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the victory over fascism, and, on the other hand, there were great efforts made in order to start the process of the revision of the results of the Second World War, and Latvia was actually one of the leaders in this issue, the Latvian national radicals organized a number of activities aimed at the rehabilitation of Herbert Cukurs. These included:
- Publication of envelopes with a portrait of an airman-executioner Herbert Cukurs in mass circulation;
- Opening of an “anniversary” exhibition in Liepaja dedicated to H. Cukurs;
- Creation of the website www.cukurs.lv and preparation of a documentary video about Cukurs under the title “The presumption of innocence”.

Ideological authors and performers of this project were a Swedish film director Carl Borshmark and Latvian artist Kristine Briede and actor Martins Vilsons.

Assessing these actions, the Council of Jewish Communities of Latvia issued a statement on 20 May condemning activities of this kind. “The Latvian Jewish community is deeply concerned, watching the flow of events and publications dedicated to the personality of Herbert Cukurs, who was an executioner of the Riga Ghetto, – it was said in a statement. – The premiere of the “documentary”, the “anniversary” exhibition, articles in the major Latvian daily newspapers – all of these events are united by an attempt to apply the “objectivist”, apparently historical and “impartial” approach to the assessment of this odious personality. However, most of these materials are prepared and presented in a polemical form; the point of view, condemning Cukurs, is presented vaguely and not everywhere.

In the background of these activities it is clearly visible that there is an attempt to cause doubt on the fact of Cukurs’s crimes against humanity in 1941-1944, giving him the possibility “to tell the story himself”, and, eventually, to cause historic (and maybe even legal) justification of Cukurs.

The surnames of Cukurs and Arajs are known by every Jew. Jewish, who survived the Riga Ghetto, have brought to the current generation the memory of these two-legged beasts – executioners of the Jewish people.

Materials published now are apart of the campaign to rehabilitate Cukurs and his accomplices. This campaign has its customers and “directors” who seem to believe in their impunity, and that their activities would not receive a proper response from the state and the majority of Latvian society.

The current “Cukuriade” – this is not the first attack on the historical memory in Latvia, not the first attempt to revise the moral lessons learned from the tragedy of the Holocaust...
We are particularly concerned that the extreme right-wing nationalists are trying to base on the support from the members of the parliament of Latvia and already have it, for example, from the deputy Kirshteins.

Kirshteins’s support of Latvian “ultra” is wider than purely moral or ideological. It has already acquired the state of a patronage and political cover...

We see that the situation with anti-Semitism is now deteriorating. It is especially obvious after the attack on Rabbi Glazman committed in a crowded part of the Old Town. Many members of the community had lost a sense of security after that: the city centre has been a place of regular meetings of extremist youth groups, dressed according to the fashion of European neo-Nazis, already along time. They easily gather near the shopping centre “Centrs”, the Dome Square and elsewhere – with complete indifference from the police side.

Anyone visiting public Internet portals and reading the comments on news of the Jewish community, or related to the history of the Holocaust, can feel the situation of the anti-Semitism....”

Following this declaration, the deputy of the 8th Diet, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Aleksandrs Kirshteins distributed his statement, in which he openly threatened the Jews in Latvia, through the news agency LETA. He, in particular, stated: “Taking into the account the historical experience ... it was not necessary to repeat the mistakes of 1940 and openly cooperate with the enemies of the Latvian people”.

Professor A.Stranga, the Head of the Department of History of Latvia of the University of Latvia, in response to this has rightly observed that “the connection between crimes conducted by Cheka (Emergency Commission) and Jewish people was one of the components of the propaganda of the Nazi occupation regime, justifying the destruction of Jews in Latvia.”

On 26 May, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement condemning the content and the tone of the statement of A.Kirshteins, and in the same day A.Kirshteins was expelled from the People’s Party by the decision of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Board, which would automatically cause the resignation of the chairman of the Saeima on foreign Affairs.

The adopted rule of the head of the People’s Party said that “in recent months the party member Aleksandrs Kirshteins started conducting provocative and extremist activities, which do not correspond to the program of the People’s Party. Declarations of Aleksander Kirshteins are very close to anti-Semitism”.

On 2 June at the initiative of the People’s Party, the Saeima was considering a draft-law on revocation of A. Kirshteins from the position as a chairman of the Committee of Foreign Affairs. However, on the basis of a secret voting it was revealed that Russophobe and anti-Semitic statements of A. Kirshteins have strong support in the Latvian parliament. For revocation of A. Kirshteins from the position as a chairman of the Committee of Foreign Affairs voted only 35 MPs, 26 were against and 22 abstained. This meant that the proposal of the People’s Party was not supported even by all the members of the government parties. Contrary to expectations, A.Kirshteins remained at his post, and in this situation the Israeli Embassy in Latvia was forced to declare that “as long as Aleksander Kirshteins will be head of the Committee of Foreign Affairs in the Saeima, the Embassy of Israel will find it difficult to cooperate with it”.

Only two weeks later, after political pressure from the United States, the controversial politician was removed from his post – reported the news agency “Regnum”. At the same time the Saeima revoked A. Kirshteins from the Latvian delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. The radical right-wing “Latvijas Avize” in response to this decision, published a collection of letters of its readers. “Something incredible happened!” “The People’s Party expelled its most distinguished, courageous and wise politician...” “Why do the Jews have the status of a sacred cow in the vision of our politicians?” “Mr. Kirshteins, if you want to, even now can get the trust and support straight away ... in the battle for the 9th Saeima...” – this was the reaction of readers of the newspaper to the revocation of A.Kirshteins from his posts and the exclusion from the People’s Party.
“Latvia stands out for its complete indifference towards the search of war criminals”

Former USA ambassador to Latvia, Brian Carlson, in his speech on 30 November 2002 at the opening of a memorial in Rumbula, said: “On 30 November and 8 December 1941 executioners killed more than 25,000 Jews in the forest Rumbula. Among the 1,700 murderers there were from 1000 to 1500 Latvian residents from the Security Service, Riga and District Police, Police Battalion, which were trained for military actions in Russia, as well as about 100 security guards of the Riga Ghetto ... It is sad that in today’s free and democratic Latvia someone can justify such crimes, saying that “these were difficult times”, or that the perpetrators were not volunteers ...”.58

As it turned out, such position of “somebody” – is a serious obstacle to the prosecution of citizens of Latvia, the perpetrators of the Holocaust and other war crimes. Efraim Zuroff, the representative of the Centre of Simon Wiesenthal, gave the Latvian Prosecutor’s Office a list of 67 possible suspects in the murder of Jews during the Nazi occupation. In this case, none of the 67 people was brought to justice in the Soviet times. In addition to that, in January 2000, the Wiesenthal Centre gave the president of Latvia Vaira Vike-Freiberga the list of 41 suspects of war crimes, which were assigned by the Latvian state with the status of persons, who were politically repressed by the Stalin’s regime. However, neither in the first nor in the second case, had the Wiesenthal Centre received any reply. As E.Zuroff noted, “in many other countries, the authorities and law enforcement agencies are also quite reluctant to deal with the investigation of crimes of the Nazis and their collaborators. Latvia is no exception. But Latvia stands out with a perfect indifference to the search for war criminals.” 59

According to the annual report of the Centre of Simon Wiesenthal promulgated in 2007, which assessed the actions of states in the period from 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007, Latvia was included in the group of countries where nothing is being done to prosecute members of Nazi crimes. Latvia, along with Australia, Austria, Canada, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, the United Kingdom, Poland and Ukraine got in group F-2. This group includes countries where there are no legal barriers for studies and prosecution of crimes suspected in Nazi war crimes, but who refused it, primarily because of the lack of political will, as well as due to / or lack of adequate resources and / or experts.60

The Mayor of Riga A.Aksenoks: “Processions of legionnaires cannot be prohibited!”

“Veterans of the SS on the streets of Riga”, “March of the SS veterans in Latvia”, “Dead Head”, “The dispute over the SS legionnaires”, “Again the Nazis win in Riga” – these were the headlines of the newspapers in Austria, Sweden, Germany, Poland and Russia which came out on 17 March 2005. Newspapers wrote about the fact that when the former legionnaires and their modern successors under the red-white-red national flags of Latvia went to lay flowers at the Monument of Freedom with a festive parade, their way was crossed by about 200 of inhabitants of Riga. Including several dozen of men dressed in uniforms of prisoners of Nazi concentration camps. And then the police interfered in this parade; it began to break the masses of anti-fascists, who grappled their hands forming a single chain. A brawl started, as a result of which 32 anti-fascists were arrested and sent to the police station.

Videos about how the police in Riga was arresting anti-fascists, clearing the way for former SS legionnaires and young neo-Nazis were shown in “Euronews”, broadcasting from France in the main European languages, as well as by the American news agency “Associated Press” and by almost all Russian TV channels. The conclusion – once again before the international community Latvia appeared as a country where the authorities condone neo-Nazism.

The Prime Minister A. Kalvitis immediately described the main culprit of what happened as “badly-thought and irresponsible actions of the Riga City Council, which did not take into the account the recommendations of security agencies”.61 However, the main cause of the incident (once again!) was absolutely not the fact that the Riga City Council authorized the ultra-radical organization “Klubs 415” to hold a march in memory of the SS legionnaires and at the same time did not allow the anti-fascists to hold a protest march against it, but the attitude of the state towards the history of the Second World War, i.e. the pursuit of the ruling political elite to revise the outcome of the war and actually rehabilitate the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion. None of the officials of the Latvian state has questioned this problem yet. On the contrary, on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the Victory over fascism in Second World War, Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga gave about 160 interviews to the Western media, where she explained the need for revision of previous assessments of the Second World War.

Such position of the president of Latvia allowed A. Aksenoks, who became the mayor of Riga from the right-nationalist party “Jaunais laiks” (“New Time”) after the municipal elections on 12 March 2005, despite the criticism from the Prime Minister Kalvitis to speak for support of the processions of
16 March, 2005. Police detaining Anti-Fascists protesting against the procession of the former Waffen SS legionnaires and their modern admirers
former legionaries, who during the war as if fought for the independence of Latvia. He stated in the newspaper “Diena”: “I met with the legionnaires in the pre-election time. I feel the offense to these people very well. We learn more about how the situation was in reality, when the legion was called. For many, it was probably the only way to somehow defend their country. There was no local army. It is impossible to prohibit such processions. This would mean to humiliate the own history. We must seriously consider how to ensure the safety of these activities.” 62

“Hitler did a bad job ...”

“For the breach of public order” during the procession of veterans of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion to the Freedom Monument in Riga on 16 March 2005, the court of the first instance on the base of the testimony of the police and the Security Police (SP) has fined 32 anti-fascists applying different fine amounts. 24 people did not agree with this decision and filed an appeal. On 30 November 2005 a series of appellate processes began. And it all started... with classification – on the demand of the Security Police (SP) the process had been declared closed, because the proof for the probable malicious intent of the accused was supposed to be the video with the operational record of the Security Police. However, in the second trial the security classification was removed, because the video submitted by the Security Police was of a very poor quality. Now as evidence the police presented an informative video of the LNT channel, in the end of which an indignant voice of one of the Latvian pseudo-patriots can be clearly heard: “Hitler has not done his job right, if these Jews are here again!” But the court decided not to take into account this part of the video.

Joseph Koren, one of the accused anti-fascists, hereditary citizen of Latvia, many of whose relatives had disappeared without a trace in Bikernieki forest, asked the court to confirm the decision of the Nuremberg Tribunal, which declared the SS and all its structures as criminal organizations, and stated in the courtroom: “I am a Jew. Hitler killed 30 million people, among which 6 million Jews. I will not block the passage of transport, but I will always interfere and try to stop such events always. It is my duty to save my country “from the brown plague”.” 63

On 12 December, the court issued the final decision. The most part of the sentences of the court of first instance had been left unchanged, some defendants received reduction of the amount of monetary penalties, and three people were fully acquitted. 64

The Vice-Speaker of the Saeima Janis Straume:
“On the state level we have to support the legionnaires in all possible ways ...”

Despite of absolutely negative evaluations of the marches of former Waffen SS legionnaires and their modern followers on 16 March 2005 in Riga and Liepaja in the world press, as well as despite of the protest declared by Russia and Israel in connection with these marches, the official course of actions of the Latvian government for support of legionnaires had not changed.

On the contrary, there was a special position created in the government of Aigars Kalvitis – Advisor to the Minister of Defence on work with the legionnaires and national partisans. This position was appointed to “Black Karlis” – Karlis Shadurskis, the Minister of Education in the government of E.Repshe, and later on – the leader of the largest faction in the Saeima “Jaunais laiks”. 65

On 31 October 2005, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia decided to provide additional tax relief to invalids, politically repressed (in this category there are also legionnaires of Waffen SS, who served a sentence in prisons in the USSR), and the participants of the national resistance movement (“Forest Brothers”), who fought against Soviet power since 1945.

As reported by the news agency Regnum, for politically repressed and participants of the national resistance movement, who received pension, the tax relief would increase up to 456 ($ 900) Latvian Lats per year, and for those who did not receive pension the tax relief would increase up to 840 Latvian Lats ($ 1,680) per year. In addition to tax relieves, the former allies of the Nazis would receive a monthly allowance to the pension from the Ministry of Defence in the amount of 50 Latvian Lats ($ 100). 66

It should be noted that the contingent of the so-called “forest brothers” was formed primarily from the former legionnaires of Waffen SS, deserters, as well as on the basis of subversive groups, which were left in or sent to Latvia by Hitler’s troops retreating under the blows of the Soviet Army. This fact is not denied even in the scandalously famous book “History of Latvia. The 20th Century”, which reflects the official interpretation of the history of Latvia during the Second World War and the post-war years. In the book (see paragraph 6.3. Resistance to the Soviet regime), in particular, it is stated that “the guerrilla movement included many legionaries (according to some sources, nearly 4.000 legionaries changed to the illegal position), who refused to accept the capitulation on 8 May 1945.” 67
On the general background of the material and political support of the former SS Legionnaires, Latvian authorities continue simultaneous demonstrations of negligence towards the veterans of the anti-Hitler coalition. Veterans of the anti-fascists do not have any benefits in Latvia, but the proposals for introduction of such are not supported by the majority of the members of the Saeima. So, on 17 November 2005, the Saeima rejected the draft-law prepared by the association “Harmony Centre” (at that time this organization consisted of the People’s Harmony Party, the Daugavpils City Party, the Party of Sergey Dolgopolov and the Socialist Party), which provides for a special status for those who fought during the Second World War in the anti-Hitler coalition.

The “Harmony Centre” offered to recognize inhabitants of Latvia as fighters of the anti-Hitler coalition, who fought in the Anti-Hitler coalition, guerrilla groups or those involved in the underground movement against the military forces and the administration of the occupation regime of Nazi Germany, contributing to the armed underground struggle, as well as those who saved people who suffered under the occupation of the Nazi Germany during the period from 1 September 1939 to 2 September 1945.

Deputies of the “Harmony Centre” offered to equate the status of the fighter of the Anti-Hitler coalition to the status of a politically repressed person and give them the rights to the same benefits – free health care, social rehabilitation and preferential use of public transport. But the majority of deputies of the 8th Saeima rejected the proposal.

**“Baltic Nazism”**

On 14 December 2005, in the premises of the parliamentary faction “For Human Rights in United Latvia” (PCTVL), there was a documentary of the Russian producer centre “Third Rome” – “Baltic Nazism” shown to reporters.

A fifty-minute movie directed by Boris Chirtkovs tells about the past and present of the Latvian Legion Waffen SS: about the “deeds of arms” during the war and honouring of the SS veterans in today’s Latvia, as well as their supporters and admirers from the number of Latvian youth organizations. In the movie there are comments and testimonies of direct participants of the events: former legionnaires of the Nazi concentration camps and ghettos, soldiers of the Latvian Division of the Red Army, as well as of historians, journalists, and public figures of Latvia. Authors of the movie draw a clear line: SS legionaries were not ordinary soldiers, as they are tried to be presented today. The film is divided into chapters: “Oath of Allegiance”, “Penal SS battalions”, “Salaspils”, etc. Shots of German newsreel of executions of civilians are interchanged by quotes of documents about the executions and punitive operations conducted by the 19th Latvian SS Division. The story about the oath of allegiance to Adolf Hitler, which was given by legionaries, is followed by a confession of the deputy of the Saeima from the association “For Fatherland and Freedom” / Movement for National Independence of Latvia (TB / LNNK) Juris Dobelis: “Russia and Germany were the belligerent countries, and we had to choose one: so we did”. The filming crew also visited the Brother’s Cemetery in Riga, where at the foot of the monument to the “Mother Latvia” on one of the most honourable places there are the remains of the SS Gruppenführer Rudolfs Bangerskis – the General Inspector of the Latvian SS Legion, as well as a well-kept memorial in Lestene, where there are remains of former legionnaires.

Demonstration and following discussion of the movie then in the media caused a strong reaction on the part of the “Union of National Forces” (NSS), a neo-Nazi organization, which regularly organizes processions in honour of the soldiers of the Latvian Waffen SS legion and, who, moreover, was the initiator of the spreading of envelopes with a picture of Herberts Cukurs, who was accused in Holocaust, and whose crimes are described in a detailed way in the movie. Already on 15 December, the Chairman of NSS Aigars Prusis sent a letter to the Chairman of the Saeima, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Internal Affairs of Latvia, in which he wrote that the documentary shown on 14 December in the parliamentary faction of association For Human Rights “Baltic Nazism” incorrectly emphasizes the role of Latvians in the extermination of the Jews and the fact of a voluntary accession of Latvia to the Soviet Union. NSS leader demanded “to prevent the demonstration and distribution of the documentary in Latvia” and expressed bewilderment about the “denigration of the Latvian people and the premiere of the picture inciting hatred indoors of the fraction of the Saeima”.

A few days later the NSS initiative was supported by the parliamentary faction of the Union of the “green” and peasants, who sent to the General Prosecutor’s Office of Latvia a request to assess the Russian documentary “Baltic Nazism” shown the premises of the Saeima. The General Prosecutor’s Office forwarded this request to the Security Police.

However, the Security Police refused to start criminal proceedings against the authors and distributors of the film “Baltic Nazism”. According to the press secretary of the General Prosecutor’s Office Andrejs Vasks, not only were the materials assessed, which are available to the Security Police, but also the conclusion of the Latvian Commission of Historians, signed by Inesis Feldmanis obtained. According to the obtained materials, a part of the historical events in the film are reflected absolutely in an inadequate way, however, to comment...
the depicted facts there were people invited, whose opinion is different, and in some cases, is even contrary to the opinion of the filmmakers. The fact that these views were reflected in the film, does not suggest that the authors of the film deliberately tried to reflect only those facts and opinions that cause ethnic strife between Latvians, Jews and representatives of other ethnicities.

As a result, the General Prosecutor’s Office decided that there is not any reason to cancel the decision adopted by the Security Police on 9 January 2006, and that there would not be any criminal proceedings launched against the filmmakers.

On 19 January, an Internet published findings of the President’s committee of historians of Latvia. In contrast to the legal approach of the Security Police and the General Prosecutor’s Office of Latvia, the findings of the committee of historians were based on ideological approach, introduced in Latvia after 1991 by western Latvian emigration, many representatives of which, as noted above, served the Nazis during the war. Since this response of the commission of historians is a kind of quintessence of the official interpretation of the history of Latvia during the Nazi occupation, we shall give it in full:

“Baltic Nazism” – film shot by the Russian film company “Third Rome”, continues the false tradition of the Soviet propaganda. This film is absolutely unacceptable for Latvia. It is provocative and contains explicit anti-Latvian propaganda. “Baltic Nazism” incites intercultural hatred and ethnic strife. The purpose of the film is obvious – to convince the audience that during the Second World War, many Latvians were Nazis and committed war crimes, as well as to create the impression that the modern Latvia is the successor to the Nazi regime. The main idea of the film is “Rebirth of Nazism in the Baltic states”.

In the stream of propaganda it is not easy to find the truth, because there is hardly any truth in this film. The film has practically nothing to do with reasonable understanding of history. This is an attempt of a rough misrepresentation of facts, which prevents an objective assessment of the events of the Second World War. Obviously, the authors of the film are trying to divert attention from the terrible crimes of Stalinism against the peoples of the Baltic region and hide the undeniable fact that the Soviet Union is partially to blame (if not more!) for causing the beginning of the Second World War, and that the Soviet Union had been an ally of Nazi Germany for 22 months.

The film includes materials that are not available to other researchers, as they are stored in special closed-end funds of Russian archives. Methods, which are used by the authors, are well known since the Soviet times, when the most important was not the truth, but statements, the accuracy of which was virtually impossible to verify. However, this does not interfere with an objective assessment of the total content and the ideological direction of the film.

“Baltic Nazism” is different in the way that it contains a number of factual errors, which is atypical for such a tendentious work, not to mention the absolutely absurd interpretation of events. For example:

1. The occupation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union in 1940 is presented as a “revolution” in the film. In this case, it is also falsely claimed that 80% of Latvians opposed the “pro-fascist” regime of Karlis Ulmanis. In order to confirm the “fascist tendencies” in Latvia, the spectators are shown the publications of right-wing organizations (“Ugunskrusts” and “Perkonkrusts”). Immediately after the coup on 15 May 1934, Karlis Ulmanis banned the radical organizations and sought to suppress any manifestations of extremism, including anti-Semitism. Jews who were persecuted on the territory of Nazi Germany could hope to gain asylum in Latvia. Not to forget that, for various reasons, many European countries refused to accept refugees from Germany.

The statement that deportations of 1941 were carried out in order to avoid the civil war is incredibly absurd. It’s hard to imagine a more cynical attempt to justify inhumane policies of the Soviet regime. Do the filmmakers really have such a perverted imagination to state that 15.424 deportees, 46.5% of which were women, and 15% – children under 10 years old, could be potential participants in the anti-Soviet uprising?

2. Evidence of medical experiments in the Salaspils concentration camp, digging out the prisoners and the defeat of the Germans near, which is all shown in the film, can be called a myth. Other sources do not support these data. Important historical sources also do not provide the evidence that “Arajs (leader of the largest Latvian Sonderkommando – Author’s comment) and Cukurs (member of this team – Author’s comment) would be tearing apart Jewish babies and Cukurs would shout during these deeds: “Give me to drink some more blood”. The assertion that Latvians played a significant role in the suppression of the Warsaw ghetto uprising does not have any basis. The thesis that without the participation of local activists, the Nazis would have not been able to carry out large-scale Holocaust in Latvia is not proved. An attempt to compare the Turkish genocide of Armenians (1915-1916) and the activities of Latvians directed against Jews is absurd.

3. The film cites an order of the Chief of the State Security R. Geidrihs from 29 June 1941, where it is said that one should not interfere with the fight of the local population against the “communists and Jews”. But at the same time, the authors of the film ignore the report of the Head of the German Security Police and Security Service V. Shtallekera from 15 October 1941, which states that it is necessary to create an impression that as if “liberated residents on their own initiative had committed the most brutal acts against the Bolsheviks and Jews ... without revealing the role of German structures”.

...
4. The film constantly demonstrates scenes unrelated to Latvia. For a simple spectator it is hard to guess that the SS-men marching in the film are actually not Latvians and that the extermination of the Jews was not filmed on the Brother’s cemetery. These are widespread scenes from Poland, Estonia and other countries occupied by Nazis.

5. In the middle of the film there is a story about the Latvian legionaries. Materials are mounted in such a way that it would seem to the audience that the voluntary Latvian SS Legion (15th and 19th Divisions) was not a front-line formation, fighting against the so-hated Soviet army in order to prevent re-occupation, but a punitive body exercising repression against the civilian population. The authors’ statements that the 19th Division took part in the mass repressions against civilians are absolutely unjustified. The statement that only one division of the Legion fought on the territory of Latvia for two or three weeks, and that the Latvian worriers could not take part in the defence of their country contradicts the facts.

6. The decision of the United States that the formation of the Baltic SS can not be equated to the German structures is questioned in the film. The authors explain this decision by the political interest. The judgment of the Nuremberg Tribunal (in fact, much more politicized), according to which all SS units are recognized as criminal organizations, is placed in the foreground. However, the authors forget to add that the sentence contains a clause which states that the decision does not apply to persons who were “had been involved in the activities of these organizations not voluntary, as well as persons who did not participate in the commission of crimes”.

7. There is a deliberately incorrect use of wartime newsreels in the film. For example, the scenes from the Russian archives, in which residents of Lithuania allegedly greeted the Red Army with flowers, are presented as “unique”. In fact, these scenes show the return advanced units of the Lithuanian army to Vilnius in October 1939.72

The publication of the conclusion of the Latvian President’s commission of historians did not end the scandal around the film “Baltic Nazism”. On 2 February, the Saeima of Latvia decided to exclude the deputy of the party For Human Rights Nikolajs Kabanovs, who initiated the demonstration of the film in the building of the Saeima, from the Committee on Foreign Affairs. Unlike the case with A.Kirshteins, this decision was taken without any pressure from the Brother’s cemetery. These are widespread scenes from Poland, Estonia and other countries occupied by Nazis.

Fraction For Human Rights assessed this decision as “shameful and not meeting the basic norms of democracy” and called all international organizations, where there are representatives from Latvia, to assess the anti-democratic step of the Saeima of Latvia and express their opinion about the exclusion of the deputy Kabanovs from commission of the Saeima on Foreign Affairs, as well as about the danger of the revival of neo-Nazism in Latvia.

“Legionnaires are the conscience of the nation!”

On 14 March 2006, when media’s attention was once again drawn to the Day of Commemoration of the legionaries, the authors of the programme “What is happening in Latvia” asked the audience a question: “What does 16 March mean for you?” And 6617 people from the callers to the editor’s office (only 200!!! against) stated that it is the day that they are proud of.74

“16 March for Latvia – it is a day of Commemoration of legionaries,” – said the Minister of the Interior Dzintars Jaundzhejkers. The Speaker of the Saeima Ingrīda Udre, who also believes that it is necessary to remember Legionnaires, especially in this day, on 16 March, echoed his words. “Legionnaires were fighting against communism, and we should remember them,” – that is the opinion of the executive director of the Riga City Council Eriks Shkapars.

A common position of the Latvian state was announced in the programme by the Vice-Speaker of the Saeima and the leader of the right-wing political party “For Fatherland and Freedom” / LNNK Janis Straume: “We have to fully support Legionnaires at the state level ... Those who speak and act clearly against the interests of the state, have to be put in jail”.

Opinion of the Vice-Speaker of the Saeima and other officials of the state coincided with the opinion of the leader of a neo-Nazi organization NSS Victors Birze who declared in the live transmission: “Legionnaires are the conscience of the nation”.75

A Latvian Ambassador in Russia, Andris Teikmanis even pointed that “the SS march does not exist in Riga”.76

16 March 2006

“The 16th of March has become an event not only of the elderly who are over eighty years of age, but an advertising campaign of Latvian ultra-radicals” who “receive the place in the headlines of the newspapers” – wrote Leonids Fedoseyevs, a political columnist for the newspaper “Chas” in 2007.77

In 2006, a far-right organization “National Power Unity” (NSS – in Latvian) appealed to the Riga City Council with a request to permit the march on 16 March to the Monument of Freedom already on 6 January, i.e. long before the “X hour”. The National Front of Latvia of the publisher-Russophobe
Aivars Garda and the “415 Club” expressed willingness to join the march and to provide support to NSS.78

In turn, the Riga City Council received a requirement to prevent marches of the former SS men and their supporters on 16 March from the political union (on 10 January), the United Congress of Russian Communities in Latvia (on 6 February)79, the Russian Community of Latvia and the Russian Society of Latvia (on 13 February)80, as well as a number of social and political organizations of Liepaja – Liepaja branch of For Human Rights and the “Harmony Centre”, the Liepaja Russian community, the Ukrainian society “Svitanok”, the Belarusian community, the Jewish religious community, the department of veterans of the war and labour, etc. .

A letter of similar content addressed to the embassies of foreign countries in Latvia was sent by representatives of 14 organizations, which are members of the Coordination Council of NGOs of national minorities (now – the Council of NGOs of Latvia) – ambassadors of 20 countries received a letter and a CD with the video with the record of police dispersing anti-fascist rally on 16 March 2005.

As the “X hour” was approaching, the behaviour of the ruling elite, facing the choice – either to ban a march and lose support of a significant part of the national-radical Latvians before the elections of the 9th Saeima, or not to impede the march and once again to get a guaranteed international scandal – was getting more nervous.

On 15 February, the Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis in an interview with a television channel LNT invited “all patriots and all those responsible persons not to succumb to provocations, for which extremists from abroad and the inside the country use this date (i.e. 16 March – V.G.)”. In the same day, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia suddenly made a very strong statement, for the first time condemning the Holocaust, genocide and those who continue to express these ideas, and urging governments to prevent the marches of former SS men and their fans in the centre of Riga and other cities.81

Many experts have linked the disclosure of the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia with the upcoming official visit of the President of Latvia Vaira Vike-Freiberga in Israel in the second half of February, which, as you know, has been always very negatively evaluating marches of the former SS men.
Besides at about the same time, it became known that the London police restarted the investigation of the activities of the former soldiers of the 114th Infantry Division “Galicia”, who currently reside in the UK. This division was formed mostly from the Ukrainian volunteers. A US Ambassador to Estonia Aldona Wos, declined the invitation to the opening ceremony of the new building of the Art Museum in Tallinn in late February, as Harry Myannil had to participate there, who, according to the authorities of the United States, served in the Estonian Political Police during the Second World War. “In accordance with the Nuremberg Charter this is a crime against humanity,” emphasized the press secretary of the Embassy of the United States in Estonia Eric Johnson.

Taking into account the reaction of the international community on the marches of former SS men, on the eve of 16 March, the President Vaira Vike-Freiberga has repeatedly appealed to the people of Latvia with an insistent request not to participate in the commemorative events of legionaries.

On 15 March, Vaira Vike-Freiberga has again asked the people of the country not to participate in procession to commemorate the Latvian legionaries on 16 March, considering such actions as cooperation with forces hostile to Latvia. “I absolutely do not care about the reasons they hold a march, even though according to the most sublime. Anyway, this means cooperation with people who want to tarnish Latvia...”, – said the president.

As a result of the position taken by the country’s leadership, as well as of pressure from non-governmental organizations, political parties of the Left Opposition and the embassies of other countries (the ambassador of France in Latvia Michel Foucher spoke with the condemnation of the annual marches of former SS legionnaires and young neo-Nazis in the centre of Riga), on 13 March for the first time in the history of the Second Republic, the Riga City Council has decided not to allow the march of the former SS legionnaires and their supporters on 16 March in the centre of Riga. At the same time all activities of anti-fascists, including a meeting at the Dome Square, which was planned to be held on March 15 by the members of the Latvian society of juvenile prisoners of concentration camps, have been banned.

To prevent the marches of former SS legionnaires to the Monument of Freedom, it was announced in early March that until 16 March the area around the monument would be fenced. The reason for this was the most non-political – the necessity to begin restoration works of the Freedom Monument and to repair the pavement adjacent to it. On 6 March, the spokesman of the mayor of Riga A. Aksenoks, Laila Spalina told the press that the works would start immediately after 9 March.

- This summer in Riga there will be a lot of important events, but the Monument of Freedom, as stated the Minister of Culture Helena Demakova on the meeting of the Government, is not in the best condition now, so it needs to be repaired. By 4 May the repairs should be completed, – said Laila Spalina.

However, masons and conservators were immediately against the decision of the Town Hall, saying that it is absurd to start repairs in early March, when there is snow, it is cold and wet.

At the same time, the far-right nationalist organizations have confirmed their willingness and readiness to organize the movement to the Monument of Freedom on 16 March.

The far-right organization “National Power Unity” (NSS) accepted a statement, which declared: “We have non-officially received information that the ruling elite, being in a paranoid fear of the commemoration events of Latvian legionaries on 16 March, in cooperation with the Riga municipality decided to spoil by any means a very memorable day significant for many Latvians”. According to the information available to the NSS, on this day, the authorities plan to arrange “repairs of the asphalt and the pavement” on the territory adjacent to the Monument of Freedom. And in this regard, they should close the access to the monument and make it unreachable for Legionnaires and their supporters. But no matter what, “there was not, there is not and there will not be any 16 March... The history of the Latvian Legion, full of glory and victims, is an integral part of Latvian national identity,” – said the co-chairman of NSS Viktors Birze.

V. Birze also announced the creation of a special unit, which would protect the former legionaires and their young comrades from the “provocations of the “fifth column” on 16 March. The co-chairman of NSS openly threatened with punishment of all those who try to prevent the “peaceful march” of the former SS legionnaires and their supporters. “We will be ready to eliminate the interference by means which seem the most appropriate to us” – warned the leader of the radical organization.

On 14 March, the press conference was held by anti-fascists, i.e. those who, a year ago putting on convicts’ uniforms with the stars of David, stood on the way of former SS men. “We have not filed any applications for organization of the march on 16 March. The Latvian authorities at all levels previously publicly asked to prevent the SS march in our city. Therefore, we shall arrive at 9 am to the “Laima” clock and at 16.30 to the Museum of the occupation, in order to control the situation. If the police do not stop them – we shall put on the uniforms and block the access...” – said deputies of the Riga City Council Vladislavs Rafalskijs, Viktors Dergunovs, entrepreneur Joseph Koren and others.
The Mayor of Riga A. Aksenoks after warnings of the ultra right-wing parties and anti-fascists panicked and said that there might be some acts of terrorism in Riga on 16 March. The mayor called the Minister of Interior Affairs Dzintars Jaundzheikars and security services of the country “to take all possible measures to prevent provocations on the commemoration day of Legionnaires”. 97

Extremely nervous behaviour of A. Aksenoks did not remain unnoticed by the Latvian press. The Newspaper “Neatkariga” wrote that the mayor of Riga spreads panic,[92] and the newspaper “Diena” even called him a provocateur.95

On 15 March, “due to the possible unplanned events, taking into account the statements of the Police Headquarters, in accordance with the law on the police”, the executive director of the Riga City Council made a decision: on 16 March from 00.01 to 24.00, the Riga Police Headquarters together with municipal police, in case it is necessary, would prohibit the movement and stop the transport on the Aspazijas Boulevard, Basteja Boulevard and Raina Boulevard. Parked cars shall be moved to the nearest suitable place. The police shall also restrict the movement of pedestrians on the square at the Monument of Freedom, the traffic on Aspazijas Boulevard, Basteja Boulevard Aspazijas Basteja, except for public transport.94

Fulfilling this decision at night of 16 March, there was a large fence erected to a very wide perimeter around the Monument of Freedom, at the Basteja Hill and on the square between the Hotel de Rome and the cafe Macdonald’s, and there were around 1.000 police officers in the city centre.95

On 16 March at 9 am, there was an unauthorized picket in front of the Cabinet of Ministers: about 20 boys and girls gathered from ultra-radical organization “All for Latvia!” of Raivis Dzintars. Young radicals dragged a jackstraw of Minister of Foreign Affairs Artis Pabriks to the building of the Cabinet of Ministers, which was dressed in a Soviet-style military uniform that, according to organizers, had to give evidence about the full dependence of Pabriks before ... the West. This was the revenge towards the Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Pabriks, who was the first of officials who asked municipalities not to allow the march of legionaries.

By 10 am, the protesters had moved to the City Hall, where there should have been a worship service in honour of the former SS legionnaires. Members of the “All for Latvia!”, NSS and “Club 415” lined up in two rows at the main entrance to the cathedral with bowed red-white-red national flags of Latvia. When the worship was over, the gray-haired SS-men passed through this corridor of honour and glory, and received white roses from their young fans as recognition of Military Merits. After that some of the former SS men decided to lay flowers at the Monument of Freedom, but the police did not let them. The old men were indignant, shouting: “Worse than with Russians!”

By 13.00 most of the former legionaries went to the cemetery in Lestene, which is Tukums area. Many of the Saeima deputies from the right-wing parties went together with the legionaries to the cemetery: the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Vaira. Paegle (“People’s Party”), the comrade of the Secretary of the Saeima Inguna Ribena (“New Time”), Juris Dobelis and Peteris Tabuns (“For Fatherland and Freedom”/ LNNK) and others.96 The presence of Saeima deputies in Lestene provided the event with an official character.

At 16.00 the event continued at the Town Hall Square and the Monument of the Latvian Riflemen. Despite it was known that the march was scheduled for 17.00, there were already many people. Radicals from NSS, “Club 415”, Aivars Garda with his team, representatives of neo-Nazi organizations in Lithuania, Estonia and Finland, Igors Shishkins from Thunder Cross organization and also Leopolds Ozolins, the Saeima deputy from the “Union of Greens and Farmers”, who openly joined the ultra-right-wing party, gathered between the Museum of the Occupation and the Monument of the Latvian Riflemen. And in front of the Town Hall there were representatives of the political association “For Human Rights in United Latvia”, the Russian School Defence Staff, the Joint congress of Russian communities in Latvia. There were also about 20 of the National Bolsheviks, and not less than 100 correspondents of Latvian and world media.

At 17.00 the followers of the ultra-right-wing party began to build a column. There were only few former legionaries among them. Basically – the young neo-Nazis. In the first rank there was A. Garda with his girls, Viktors Birze, representatives of neo-Nazi organizations from Lithuania, Estonia and Finland.

Then the column started to move in the direction of the Town Hall Square, but came across with to a double police cordon. The column stops, people start to argue. After that the column turns around and returns to its original position at the Monument of the Latvian Riflemen.

After a short time there was an unexpected breakthrough in direction of Grečinieku Street. But here on the way of the column there is a crowd of photographers. In the crowd there are following comments: “Fascism is stopped by the free press!” Time is lost, and the road in front of neo-Nazis is again covered by the police.

After that the followers of the ultra-right-wing party decide to break through the chain of police in front of the Town Hall by force. But fail. Retreating, they gather on the steps of the Museum of Occupation and sing the national anthem. They are drowned by the song “Arise, the great country!”
Finally, one of the activists of NSS takes a megaphone and offers “to sing Latvian folk songs right here, and then to lay flowers at the Museum of the occupation”.

Results: the police detained 65 people, from which 18 – National Bolsheviks and their sympathizers, the rest – from the ultra-right-wing party.97

“Today all true Latvian patriots are celebrating the Legionnaire’s Day”

These words belong to the deputy of the Saeima from association “For Fatherland and Freedom” / LNNK Juris Dobelis. And pronounced them exactly on 16 March 2006, at the morning plenary session of the Saeima, when deputies were debating about the proposal of the faction For Human Rights, the Socialist Party and the “Harmony Centre” to include in the agenda the question of the adoption of the Declaration on the inadmissibility to justify Nazi crimes, the glorification those who fought on the side of Hitler, and attempts of revival of fascism.

In the draft declaration it was stated that “... in the country there are active individuals and organizations, pushing and promoting ideas of ethnic superiority, which are contrary to the Constitution of Latvia. They are trying to make national heroes out of persons, who voluntarily or involuntarily fought on the side of Hitler and directly or indirectly supported the bloody crimes of the Nazi regime ....”

The Declaration called the Saeima to join the opinion of the General Assembly that such actions as “the glorification of the Nazi movement and former members of the Waffen SS, also by erecting monuments and memorials, as well as holding public demonstrations in the glorification of the past Nazi and neo-Nazism, is a clear abuse of the right to freedom of peaceful assemblies and associations; it also leads to escalation of contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance related to it, and contributes to the spread and multiplication of various extremist political parties, movements and groups”. The Declaration calls on behalf of the Latvian Saeima to encourage all state institutions and local governments not to support such activities and, in addition to that, to express gratitude to those residents of the Republic of Latvia, who participated in the struggle against Nazism.

However, the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia with the majority of votes suggested not including the question on adoption of the Declaration on into the agenda of the plenary session. The speech of the chairman of the fraction for Human Rights J.Pliner, who called deputies to support the Declaration, was repeatedly interrupted with shouts from the audience: “Red Fascists!” And later the podium was given to the representative from the party “For Fatherland and Freedom” Juris Dobelis, who spoke about the most important: “Today, all true patriots of Latvia are celebrating the commemoration of Legionnaires! And everyone else should shut their mouths!” He called the text of the Declaration “a daub, which cannot be called a document”. And sternly added: “This piece of paper must be submitted to the Ethics Commission, and its authors have to be punished!”

Characteristic is that most of the members of the Saeima agreed with Juris Dobelis and opposed the adoption of the Declaration. The opinion of the UN was of no significance for them. 61 deputies voted for the exclusion of the declaration “On the inadmissibility of the justification of crimes of the Nazi regime, the glorification of individuals who fought on the side of the Nazis, and of the attempts of revival of Nazism” from the agenda.98

Taking into account the result of this vote, one would assume that there is some kind of confrontation between legislative and executive authorities of the Republic of Latvia. In fact, as mentioned above, on 15 March, Vaira Vike-Freiberga asked people in the country not to participate in the procession on 16 March to commemorate the Latvian Legion and even said that she considers such action as cooperation with forces hostile to Latvia. “I do not care for what reasons they organize the march, even if these are to the most sublime. Anyway, this is cooperation with people who want to besmirch ... Latvia,” – said the president then.99 It turns out that by refusing to condemn the crimes of Nazism and attempts to revive it, the 61 deputies from the People’s Party and the First Party, the party “New Era”, the union “For Fatherland and Freedom” / LNNK and the “Union of Greens and Farmers”, as well as “The National Front of Latvia” of Aivars Garde, the “National Power Unity” of Viktors Birze, “All for Latvia!” of Raivis Dzintars, “Thunder Cross” of Igors Shishkins and the “Club 415” of Ivo Rubins are the “force” that is “hostile to Latvia”. Exactly 61 deputies and several right-wing organizations “wish to besmirch Latvia”...

The course remains unchanged

 Desire to follow the same course to revise the results of the Second World War and at the same time the necessity to listen to the Western countries put the ruling elite of Latvia in the dual position in February-March 2006. For the first time, in fact, the ruling elite was forced to recognize the criminal nature of the actions of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion, and hence that the political course of its justification, which had been conducted from the beginning of the 1990s, contradicts the position of the international community and does not meet the objective of building a democratic state in Latvia.
end of the Second World War was not only a victory over fascism, but also the
beginning of a new occupation, Vike-Freiberga declared in the programme of the
Latvian radio “At the Intersection” that consideration should be given at the state
level on how to create a documentary that would explain and change the accu-
sations against Latvians, put forward in the movie “Baltic Nazism”. “It’s about
time Latvia invested in order to process visually the existing historical materials,
so that we could offer them – at least to the Russian TV,” – said the president.101

Several days after the 16 March, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs clearly
stated about maintaining the same course on the revision of history of the
Second World War and rehabilitation of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion. In
response to the criticism of the newspaper “Latvijas Avize”, blaming the
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Artis Pabriks, for “retreating from his position” under
pressure from Moscow (lets recall that from officials A.Pabriks, was the first
who urged not to hold mass demonstrations of SS veterans on 16 March), For-
eign Service presented an official report on its activities in connection with the
“Day of Legionnaires” on the pages of this newspaper. This document, which
is signed by the director of the Department of Information and Public Relations
of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia Atis Lots, in fact, had to dispel any
doubts about the consistent work of the Latvian diplomats to justify the Latvi-
an SS Legion, many of whose members, as evidenced by archival documents,
participated in war crimes of the Nazis.

A. Lots, in particular, wrote: “In connection with the publication of the
article of Aija Calite “Do we give up in the propaganda war” on 14 March I
would like to clarify information about the activity of the Ministry of foreign
Affairs of Latvia in connection with 16 March.

First I would like to emphasize that the statement of the Minister Artis
Pabriks on 15 February caused the so-much-needed debate about the impor-
tance of the Day of Commemoration of the Latvian legionaries in the Latvian
society. In addition to this step and the statement of the Ministry of Foreign
Affairs of 7 March about the necessity to create films, which objectively reflect
Latvian historical events, the Ministry conducted following activities:

1) On 15 February, the Embassies of Latvia abroad received standpoints
of the Minister and the relevant information materials for use in clarification
work related to 16 March;

2) On 17 February, representative offices abroad were ordered to intensify
the work with the media;

3) On 24 February, we have instructed the embassies to actively monitor
the publications in the media of the host countries and inform us about ex-
pressed opinions in connection with the 16 March;

However, it is still wrong to consider the following statements of the leaders
of the state and the decision of the Riga City Council to ban the procession of
legionaries as a confrontation of the Saeima and the executive power, because
in fact there was no conflict and could not possibly be. The President of
the Republic of Latvia and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, both
politically and ideologically are derivatives of the Saeima. What the Saeima is
– the same are the President and the Cabinet of Ministers. Thus, the Riga City
Council has no right to promote an ideology different from that followed by the
Saeima. Therefore, it is obvious that the position of the President of the Republic
of Latvia and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, as well as the
position of the Riga City Council – it was not an independent position but adopt-
ed under pressure from the West and the Latvian public. That is this position is
forced, not voluntary. This conclusion is confirmed by the words of the mayor of
Riga A. Aksenoks a year ago that “it is impossible to ban such marches” and that
“it would have meant to humiliate the history" 100, and the words of Vike-Frei-
berga, who after the translation of the movie “Baltic Nazism” on 16 March on
the Russian TV channel “TVC-Moscow”, has again urged to intensify work on
clarification the history of Latvia in Russia. Noting, as always, that in 2005, Lat-
via moved far forward, explaining to the world community that for Latvia the
4) On 7 March, in the presence of foreign ambassadors, the Minister presented the English version of the book “History of Latvia. The 20th Century”, published at the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with the support of the Ministry of Defence (the book is intended to make foreign readers understand the complex issues of the history of Latvia of the 20th century);

5) On 13 March, for use in contacts with officials and media of the host countries, the embassies received standpoints of Foreign Service on 16 March along with information about the expected events during this day;

6) On 13 March, on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there is a historical section, which reflects views of professional Latvian historians about the Latvian Legion, commentary of the director of the Latvian Institute Ojars Kalnins, as well as statements of officials. I cannot agree with the statement that the studies of authoritative historians, as well as complex and controversial issues of the history of Latvia, could be reduced to the format of 3-4 short answers. In order to provide objective information to foreign audiences, historical sections were also activated in the English and Russian versions of the home page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and new materials of the “Museum of Occupation” were added;

7) On 14 March, accredited foreign journalists in Latvia were sent information about materials connected with 16 March and the legion, as well as the standpoints of officials about the events on that day available on the website of Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

8) Active work is done by foreign representations in Latvia. The embassy of Latvia in Russia should be noted: the head of the diplomatic mission Teikmanis had been spreading myths related to the history of Latvia, also in connection with the film “Baltic Nazism” at various events in the Russian media. Embassy in Ireland is preparing a response article to the local newspaper about the legion. The rest of the embassies are working in a similar way. It should be noted that the Ministry supported the film mentioned by your newspaper – “Latvian Legion”, filmed by “Studio 9” in 2000, providing it with subtitles in Russian.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our diplomats abroad constantly clarify questions on Latvian history. This work shall be carried out in a variety of forms after 16 March as well. Therefore it is difficult to agree with the statement that in this “war” we surrender “without firing even one single shot”. It is important to note that not all active diplomatic events may get reflected in the media. 102

We shall note here that in 2008 the public was openly introduced with the Russophobian film of the Latvian director Edvins Shnore “The Soviet Story”, which is was filmed at the initiative of the Latvian deputies Inessa Vaidere and Girts Valdis Kristovskis and financed from unification of political parties “Union for Europe of Nations” (this association was eliminated after the elections to the European Parliament in 2009). The film tells the story of Stalin’s repressions, about cooperation between the USSR and Nazi Germany, about the manifestations of Nazism in contemporary Russia.

The film of E. Shnore was praised by the Latvian authorities, as well as by the magazine “The Economist”, where it was written in an editorial: “The film “The Soviet Story” is the most powerful antidote to sanitize the past ... The film is gripping, audacious and uncompromising”. 103

However, Russian historians have rated it highly critical. Even Boris Sokolov, one of those whose opinion is presented in the film, said: “I acted there only as an expert and I can only be responsible for what I say there. I told Shnore that some of his storylines is an obvious fake and he believed in that. For example, an agreement between Beria and Muller on joint destruction of the Jews”. 104

Historian Alexander Djukov in his book “The Soviet Story. The mechanism of lies” presented a detailed analysis of false statements, false documents and manipulation of visual images, which he found in the film. “A special trick of authors of the film – first showing raised hands greeting the German Nazis and then someone from the Soviet leadership, whose gesture is like that greeting. Even better: to show the Victory Day parade in Moscow interrupting it with pictures of corpses. Actually the demonstration of corpses from all sorts of angles takes a large part of the movie <...> As to the fakes: after the first viewing there following fakes can be seen: “General Agreement between the NKVD and the Gestapo”, pictures of a mad official of the Interior Ministry Danzig Badaev, Melnikoff’s fake about “medical experiments in the GULAG”, scenes of famine in the Volga region in 1921, which was famous for famine and deaths, excerpts from a Nazi propaganda film “The Year of Terror” with the corpses of “victims of Bolshevism” mutilated by Latvian collaborators <...>, – said A. Djukov. 105

Despite the fact that the opinion A. Djukov found a wide support among other historians, neither the government of Republic of Latvia, nor the author of the film were confused by that. The film “The Soviet Story” was shown on TV channels in Latvia, Slovenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland, Estonia, was also demonstrated in the European Parliament, in cinemas of Latvia and the United States, as well as in schools and universities of Latvia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, the USA and other countries. 106
Row above: March 16, 2007. The column of former Waffen SS legionnaires and their modern admirers going to the Freedom Monument. Photo by Victor Gushchin

Row below: March 16, 2007. Latvian Anti-Fascists led by Joseph Koren, protesting against re-habilitation of Nazism in Latvia. Photo by Victor Gushchin

Estonian far-right activists in Riga. Procession of March 16, 2010, in Riga. Photo by Victor Gushchin
Judging from the above, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the executive power in the person of the President of the Republic of Latvia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia and the Mayor of Riga City Council had never questioned the actions and the projects of the Saeima on the political rehabilitation of legionaries, and therefore had never questioned the plan to review the results of the Second World War and the actual rehabilitation fascism and Nazism in Latvia. That is why the legislative powers on behalf of deputies from the right-wing parties, demonstrating the true attitude of the state to the problem of legionnaires, openly ignored the calls of V. Vike-Freiberga and A. Pabriks, and on 16 March 2006, took part in the commemorative ceremony in Lestene, and the deputy from the “greens and farmers” Leopolds Ozolins even “made himself popular” during the attempt of a march undertaken by neo-Nazis to the Monument of Freedom from the Riga City Council, he was detained by police, but then immediately released.107

At the same time in 2006, for the first time after 1991, the ruling elite actually had to admit that on 16 March in Latvia’s history is a day of shame, and not glory. For the first time since 1991, the authorities banned a march of former soldiers of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion in Riga, and the main funeral ceremony was held not at the Monument of Freedom, but at the cemetery in Lestene. For the first time during the years of independence, the police dispersed not Russian students and not anti-fascists, but Latvian radicals. For the first time it was said on the streets in Latvian language that “it was better with Russians”.

However, in the subsequent years, the ultra-right organizations again started organizing marches on 16 March to the Monument of Freedom in the centre of Riga. The reason for this was the decision of the court to cancel the ban of the Riga City Council to organize movements on 16 March. This court’s decision was most actively used in the political interests by political parties, who created the so-called “National Association” on 4 July 2010.

Creating a right-wing National Association

As noted in Chapter 1, in the beginning of the 1990s, the main agents of policy on revision of the outcomes of the Second World War and the rehabilitation of the Latvian Waffen SS Volunteer Legion with the tacit support of all the other right-wing parties were the party “For Fatherland and Freedom” and the Movement for national independence of Latvia. In the early 2000s, the initiative was taken by the party of extremely nationalist Latvian Youth “All for Latvia!”

In spring 2000, a student of the Riga secondary school number 77 Raivis Dzintars begins to gather the youth with a strong national mood around him.
On 18 August of the same year, an informal group called “All for Latvia!” was formed, abbreviated – “AL!”.

In 2002, “AL!” began to cooperate with the explicitly pro-Nazi youth organization “Club 415”. On 10 December 2002, there was a social organization “All for Latvia!” founded, which in January 14, 2006 was reorganized into a political party with the same name.

Parliamentary elections of the 9th convocation, held on 7 October 2006, were the first elections in the history of the Republic of Latvia, where ultra-right pro-Nazi parties – “All for Latvia!”, “Latvian Latvia” and “National Power Unity”, participated legally. These parties openly advocate the construction of a mono-

An appeal to the President of Latvia: “Can extremists be in the government of Latvia?”. On the photo: Raivis Dzintars and Evgeni Ospov

ethnic state in Latvia, without foreigners. And these parties openly require political rehabilitation of Latvian SS Volunteer Legion, calling the former SS-men heroes who fought for the independence of Latvia and at the same time denying their involvement in the genocide of the civilian population.

Another feature of the elections in the 9th Saeima was election of the former assistant officer of the Latvian SS legion, a well-known journalist and author of several books about the Latvian Legion Visvaldis Lacis into the parliament, who got famous in the early 1990s, when he said to the non-citizens: “You are not second-class citizens, you are nobodies!”

It is noteworthy that V. Lacis stood for election into the Saeima not from the ultra-radical association “For Fatherland and Freedom” / LNNK, but from the lists of an apparently respectable political association the “Union of Greens and Farmers”. This indicated that the virus has struck many Latvian neo-Nazi political parties.

In the elections to the Parliament of the 9th convocation, the “VL!” receives only 1.48% of the votes. In fact, already in December 2006, the party “All for Latvia!”, being defeated, began the process of unification with the “New
Democrats” of Maris Gulbis, and in January 2007 – with the Party of Pensioners and seniors. It is interesting that the head of the “New Democrats” M.Gulbis recently positioned himself as a liberal. But, as reported by the press, after the meeting of the leader of “All or Latvia!” Raivis Dzintars and M.Gulbis, there had not been any fundamental differences between the parties.108

On 31 March 2010, begins the process of unification of “VL!” with other Latvian nationalist political party – “For Fatherland and Freedom / LNNK”. On 4 July 2010, during the Day of Remembrance of the genocide of the Jewish people, on the day when in 1941 the local Nazis burned almost all the synagogues in Riga, a single political union “AL-For Fatherland and Freedom / LNNK”, or National Association was created.

In the elections to the European Parliament and local governments, held in 2009, the National Association received 2.81% of votes in the elections to the European Parliament and 1.87% in the elections to the Riga City Council. At the same time the National Association receives seats in 7 other municipalities in Latvia, and in the cities of Ogre and Limbazhi its representatives sit in chairs of vice-mayors.

The political scientist Einars Graudinsh notes that the party, which openly organizes annual processions of SS legionnaires, the idol of which is a dictator Karlis Ulmanis, who organized a coup on 15 May 1934, is approaching its high point.109

In elections to the 10th Saeima on 2 October 2010, the National Association received already 7.67% of the votes, which brought the Party 8 seats in the parliament of Latvia. New, extraordinary elections to the 11th Saeima on 17 September 2011 brought the National Association 13.88% of the votes, which means 14 seats in the Parliament. Their representation in the Parliament of Latvia had increased almost 2 times in hardly one year! In the political history of the country it is an unprecedented and unparalleled success. The National Association became part of the Cabinet of Ministers of Valdis Dombrovskis, where its representatives received portfolios of Ministers of Culture and Justice.

In the municipal elections on 1 June 2013, the National Association got the second result in Riga after the “Harmony Centre”: 17.94% of the votes and 12 seats out of 60 in the Riga City Council. The National Association has now 157 deputies in 54 municipalities across Latvia out of 119 municipalities in Latvia.110 Finally in January 2014, the National Association once again became a part of the coalition government. In the government of Laimdota Straujuma, the ultra-nationalists have now three ministerial portfolios – being heads of the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Justice and regional development and the environment.111

**Manifestations of neo-Nazism in 2012-2014**

First neo-Nazi manifestations in Latvia are dated by the beginning – the middle of the 1990s. In 1992, in the Military Museum of Latvia, there was a special room opened in honour of the SS Standartenführer Plensner. He was in command of the Latvian collaborator formations which killed many thousands of Jewish citizens, mostly women and children summer of 1941 in Latvia.

In 1993, in the auditorium of the Riga Technical University, a former officer of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion Andrejs Freimanis was given the Knight’s Cross, which was awarded to him by Adolf Hitler during the defence of Courland Pocket and which he was not able to receive at that time. When Freimanis accepted the award, he exclaimed: “Hi, Hitler!”

On 16 March 1995, during the Day of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion, the remains of the former Inspector-General of the Latvian SS Legion, the Gruppenführer of the SS Rudolf Bangerskis were brought from Germany are buried in the Riga Brethren Cemetery, at the place of honour, at the foot of the sculpture of the Mother Latvia. Not far from this burial there is still the grave of the SS Standartenführer Voldemar Weiss, who in the early period of the Nazi occupation was the leader of “self-defence groups” created by the German authorities and being subordinate to the German command, then he was the chief of police of the order in Riga, held leading positions in the Self-Government Lands in Latvia, designated by Nazis. Later he commanded the 281st Abrene battalion of the service of order and the 42nd Regiment of the 19th SS Grenadier Division from the
On 4 July in Limbazi, the National Association and the organization “Hawks of Daugava” celebrated the anniversary of the battle against the Soviet army in 1941.\textsuperscript{116}

On 4 July, the Day of Remembrance of the victims of Holocaust, radical nationalists tried to hold a picket against “crimes of international Zionism” in the centre of Riga, but after negotiations with the municipality agreed to postpone their event.\textsuperscript{117}

On 17 November 2013, on the eve of the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Latvia, in Riga exactly before the matches between “Dynamo – Riga” and “Jugra” of the Kontinental Hockey League (KHL), some dancers came out on the ice with national flags. And at one point of the dance show, they made a sign with the flags very similar to swastika. Commenting on this case, the management of the KHL first claimed that the formation of the “Symbol of the Sun”, which is an element of the spiritual heritage, has no relation to the Nazi ideology, but is used in the traditional symbols and ornaments of the Latvian folk. However, with an increase of the scandal, the leaders of KHL changed their minds and decided to fine Riga “Dinamo” in the amount of 1 million Rubles (about 17 thousand Latvian Lats) for putting a symbol resembling a swastika in the pre-match show. Latvian club was found guilty of violation of technical regulations of the League and the “principles of mutual respect, which are the base of KHL philosophy”. The popular statement in the media was following: “The use of any graphic forms to show Nazi symbols and characters, as well as images similar to them from the side of KHL clubs and from the side of their fans, is unacceptable”.\textsuperscript{118}

On the New Year’s eve of 2014, the member of the board AL-For Fatherland and Freedom / LNNK Janis Iesalnieks decorated his Christmas tree with symbols similar to swastika, and posted photos in his microblog on Twitter.\textsuperscript{119}

On 1 March 2012, a few days after a referendum on giving the Russian language the official status, there was a photo newspaper placed in the hallway of the building of the Latvian TV with a large picture of swastika.\textsuperscript{113}

On the eve of 9 May 2012, armed young men Normunds Erums and Ivo Lembergs from the organization “Latvian soldiers” dressed in uniforms of the Latvian legion Waffen SS came to the Riga private kindergarten “Pucite” (“Owl”), and “introduced three-four year olds with military weapons of legionnaires, clothes, equipment, daily routine and daily duties of soldiers”.\textsuperscript{114}

On 1 July 2013 in Riga, there was a march of radical nationalists with participation of around 30 people, dedicated to the anniversary of the “liberation” of Riga by the German army in 1941.\textsuperscript{115}

\begin{flushright}
\textbf{Poster of a theatrical performance “Cukurs. Herberts Cukurs”}
\end{flushright}
On November 17, 2013, before a Kontinental Hockey League game between Dinamo Riga team and Yugra team from Khanty-Mansiysk, the 95th anniversary of the Republic of Latvia was celebrated in the Arena Riga. In the dancing part, a swastika was shown, among other ornaments. A “patriotic” calendar for 2014.

Swastika on a magazine cover and in the office of the Latvian Television.
On May 10, 2012, a patriotic lesson for three- and four-year-olds in a Latvian kindergarten named Pucite (“Little Owl”) was held by young armed men in the uniform of the Waffen SS Legion.
Latvia 1988-2015: a triumph of the radical nationalists

Here and on page 135: March 16, 2012. Chairman of the political party “All for Latvia”, from the right: Janis Dombrava, Raivis Dzintars, Einars Cilinskis, Dzintars Rasnach, are leading the column. Photo by Victor Gushchin
In February 2014, the Latvian media reported that by the fall in one of the theatres in Riga there will be a musical dedicated to the famous Latvian pilot Herbert Cukurs. The creators of the musical, the producer Juris Millers and the poet Andra Manfelde told the newspaper “Latvijas Avīze” that the plot reflects the tragic events in the history of the country “through the prism of a life of the Latvian patriot”. “This is a story about a legendary aviator born in Liepaja, his adventures and tragic end”, – was said in the annotation to the future performance. Author of the libretto A.Manfelde noted that she feels deep sympathy to the “simple guy who made an airplane sitting in a barn”. According to her words, there is no conclusive evidence that Cukurs participated in the executions of Jews during the war. And this, given that in 1941 Cukurs voluntarily entered the “command of Arajs” – the police unit, who was directly involved in the extermination of the Jews. In Israel Cukurs is considered accomplice in the murder of 25,000 Jews in Riga and Rumbula.121

Information about the musical dedicated to H.Cukurs aroused great public interest. This initiative was controversially evaluated by Latvians. As a result A.Manfelde publicly refused to participate in this project.122

In early June 2014 the Latvian popular portal of group purchases “Pērkam Kopā”, which operates within a group “Draugiem.lv”, published a proposal to buy a bracelet with a discount with an image of swastika. As it is indicated on the webpage “Pērkam Kopā”, the company offers a discount for buying a handmade bracelet of thick genuine leather with an engraved image of a powerful sign that strengthens the spirit and gives confidence, protects and brings happiness, health and strength. It is also noted that the decoration with a swastika is a “Latvian design”.123

In the same month, near the St. Peter’s Church, in a stone throw from the building of the Riga City Council on the Town Hall Square, there was a children’s slide built in a form of a soldier of the Waffen SS. The bloggers identified the belonging of the figure of a soldier to the Waffen SS by forms of helmets and weapons (stating that in the hands of a soldier there was an assault rifle Stg.44 or MR-44).124

It is worth noting that it has been a couple of years that in bookstores of Riga you can easily buy large wall calendars and diaries, with illustrations of the period of the Nazi occupation of Latvia in 1941 – 1945.

All these neo-Nazi manifestations contribute to the fact that the appearance of the swastika in the public space and the glorification of Nazi collaborators become commonplace, to which many people do not pay any attention. Moreover, they find that it is the way it should be. There is a gradual reconciliation of social consciousness first with the attributes, then the ideology, and then the
practice of Nazism, which carries a very serious threat to the final degeneration of Latvia into the Nazi state.

**16 March 2014**

On the eve of an annual procession on 16 March, the law enforcement authorities in Latvia have taken unprecedented efforts to prevent mass protests. Latvian Anti-Fascist Committee, which scheduled the presentation of the “White Book of Nazism” on 15-16 March (the book provides an overview of the manifestations of neo-Nazism and xenophobia in 18 European countries) and the international historical conference with participation of experts from the USA, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, could not find a room to organize their events for a long time. Four Riga Hotels (“FG Royal Hotel”, “Astor Riga”, “Konventa Seta” and “Avalon Hotel”), which were addressed by the anti-fascists, refused to offer their premises. The direct question about the causes of the refusal in two hotels was responded to the antifascists in the following way: “There was a phone call...,” managers of the hotels did not give any names or names of the institution from which the call was made. In the fifth hotel, “Radisson Blue Hotel – Latvia”, the administration agreed to provide premises to hold a conference, but put a condition not to use anti-Nazi symbolism and not to invite the media. When at last the hotel for the conference was found, already the sixth in a row, companies providing equipment for simultaneous translation began to refuse to cooperate one after another. Among them there were two Latvian and three Lithuanian companies.

The co-chairman of the Latvian Antifascist Committee and the member of the Presidium of the International Human Rights Movement “World without Nazism” Joseph Koren announced to the media that “the conference will take place in any case. If we do not find a room, we will submit an application to the Riga City Council to hold two public meetings on 16 March. This will be a public presentation of the “White Book of Nazism” – we will give it away on the streets, as well as carry out a public conference whether at of the Monument of Freedom or near the Cabinet of Ministers ... Everyone knows the names of regular provocateurs on 16 March – Dombrava, Dzintars, Paradnieks, Tsilinskis. Everyone has seen this. Internet is full of videos. We have been warning for many years that the threat of neo-Nazism is bigger in Latvia than in some other countries. I have been to Kiev, have seen the “Right sector” – they walk under the Bandera flags. Apparently, our politicians want something similar”, – underlined Joseph Koren.

The delegation of the Union of German anti-fascist organizations was invited to participate in the historic conference. At the same time, media did not publish any information on the participants and the date of the delegation’s visit in Riga. However, the bus with the delegation was stopped three times for different tests. For the first time – in Berlin, where the police only checked the documents of the delegation. The second check was on the Lithuanian-Latvian border, where there have not been any controls performed since 2004, but this time the bus was stopped by the Latvian border guards, who not only checked the documents of the delegation, but also conducted a thorough inspection of the entire property, including books and posters of the anti-Nazi content. At the entrance to Riga the bus was stopped again, this time by technical control of the passenger traffic, and when the delegation after five hours driving managed to arrive to the hotel, journalists of one Latvian television channel had been already waiting for them.

Certainly, refusal of many hotels to provide premises for the presentation of the “White Book of Nazism” and conduction of the international historical conference, as well as long and numerous checks of the bus of the delegation of the Union of German anti-fascist organizations travelling to Riga, and awareness of the Latvian TV were not accidental. Behind this were the law enforcement agencies of the Republic of Latvia. On 10 March, the head of the Security Police, General Janis Reiniks stated to the news agency LETA that “on 16 March, events of anti-fascist organizations, as in previous years, will focus on the split of society under the guise of a fight against the myth, cultivated by activists, about the glorification of fascism in Latvia to represent Latvia as a country where fascism is “as if” reviving”. At the same time there was an assessment of the “White Book of Nazism”, which, in the opinion of the Security Police, is a “biased” research.

The Minister of Internal Affairs Rihrds Kozlovsks told the media the same day that the police are ready for the risks that may occur during the events on 16 March and do not exclude acts of provocation in connection with the events in Ukraine. R.Kozlovsks informed that on 16 March, the police would operate in the emergency mode, and the Border Service had already strengthened the control.

In the context of the unprecedented pressure on anti-fascists, the Latvian Anti-Fascist Committee decided to hold an open press conference on the street, close to the Monument of Freedom in Riga, on 15 March. Here, among other things, it was announced that the boarder guards of Latvia did not allow the delegation of antifascists from Estonia to come to Riga. The participants of the press-conference also reminded about the Statement from 6 March of
the Youth Human Rights Movement “World without Nazism”, in which, in particular, it was announced that “in Latvia there are serious problems with freedom of speech, which is tried to be limited by means of all truths and lies in relation to anti-fascist and other human rights organizations. Conversely, the neo-Nazis and former SS-men are given the “green light” to carry out their frankly provocative actions aimed at the glorification of Nazism and the further break of the society”. It was noted in the statement that “this year these events are given extra attention – 16 March 2014 is the 70-year-anniversary since the first “baptism of fire” of the Latvian Waffen SS divisions in battles against forces of the anti-Hitler coalition, so the government aims to provide a “decent” organization of this anniversary. According to our sources, the marches of neo-Nazis will be attended not only by deputies of the right-wing faction “All for Latvia”, but also a member of the government from that party Cilinskis who speaks about the real political support of the SS-men also from the part of the government, who sympathizers them”.129

Despite the fact that the Prime Minister L.Straujuma did not allow the members of the government to take part in the procession, E.Cilinskis together with his colleagues from the National Association participated in all the events on 16 March. As a result, he was forced to resign, but his place was taken by another representative from the right-wing radical union, which once again confirms the fact that the Latvian government is ready to further cooperate with the right-wing radical political forces.

Anti-fascists turned to be in a different situation. They were allowed to hold a protest, aside from the route of the movement of supporters of the Legion of the SS – at the building of the Radio on the Dome Square and at the foot of Bastion Hill. In both cases the protests of anti-fascists were barely visible and audible.

**The state puts pressure on human rights defenders**

Latvian state is constantly putting pressure on anti-fascist activists and human rights organizations in order to discredit them personally, and the social movement they represent. If earlier activists of the Latvian Anti-Fascist Committee and the Latvian Committee for Human Rights (FIDH) Joseph Koren, Eduards Goncharovs, Aleksejs Sharipov, Natalia Jolkina and others, who were rejected to enter Estonia to participate in the anti-Nazi activities, were subject to pressure from law enforcement agencies, in March 2014 in the “black list” of the law enforcement agencies of Latvia were also included the Vice-President of the International Human Rights Movement “World without Nazism” Valeri Engel and the coordinator of the Council of NGOs of Latvia, a member of the World Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots Victor Gushchin. When V. Engel and V. Gushchin travel abroad, their personal documents and luggage are subject to a long and very thorough border and customs control.

On 17 June at the border of Lithuania and Latvia, a Lithuanian citizen, human right activist Karlis Bilans was detained. The human rights defender was given the decision of the Ministry of the Interior of Latvia that he is banned to enter Latvia for three years. K.Bilans, an ethnic Latvian, is now deprived of the opportunity to meet with his relatives in his ethnic homeland.

The only “crime” of the human rights activist was an intention to participate in the Round Table in Riga, dedicated to the problems of human rights violations in the South-East of Ukraine.

In May 2014, the Security Police of Latvia published a report for the year 2013. The report states that, although the official purpose of the Russian Federation is to support and defend our compatriots abroad, in fact it is all about the strengthening of Russia’s geopolitical position and its impact on the processes within Latvia. In particular, Russia is trying to create the impression that Latvia violates the rights of citizens of Russian ethnicity, and that in Latvia there is a “glorification of Nazism”. According to the Security Police of Latvia, the most active representatives of the policy of compatriots in 2013 were Alexander Gaponenko, Victor Gushchin, Valerijs Engels, Joseph Koren, Jelizaveta Krivtsova, Illarion Girs, Margarita Dragile, Jelena Bachinska and others.

The Security Police of Latvia critically assessed activities of political parties “Russian Union of Latvia” and “For the native language”, as well as such organizations as the International Human Rights Movement “World without Nazism”, the Congress of Non-Citizens, the Latvian Human Rights Committee (FIDH), the Institute of European Studies, the Baltic Centre of historical and socio-political studies, the Jelgava society of Russian Culture “Veche”, the Russian community of Liepaja, the Russian community of Ventspils, “Motherland”, “Oxygen”. “There are reasons to believe that activists, who would stand for elections to the Saeima in autumn 2014, can take part in provocative actions or their organization,” it is groundlessly stated in the report of the Security Police of Latvia.130

In June, the Latvian counterintelligence – the Constitution Protection Bureau (SAB), reported about its vision of threats to the national security of Latvia. Since May 2013 the Constitution Protection Bureau is led by Janis Maizitis, who held the position of the General Prosecutor of the Republic of...
Latvia from 2000 to 11 May 2010. Exactly during the leadership of J.Maizitis, the veteran of the Second World War on the side of the Anti-Hitler coalition V. Kononov was convicted.

In the annual report of the Security Police of Latvia for 2013 it is stated that the Federal Security Service and the Foreign Intelligence Service of the Russian Federation are actively performing their work in Latvia. One of their target audiences – young people connected with Russia, including students who are studying in Russian universities. In this connection, the special services of the Russian Federation are in favour of the active development of academic contacts. Russian special services contribute to the career growth of such individuals in order to achieve greater influence in Latvian structures.

Another important area of work is the formation of public opinion with the help of NGOs. Here an important role is played by social structures associated with the Russian special services – Kaliningrad Centre for Public Policy Research “Russian Baltics”, “Centre for International and Regional Policy”, “Russian-Baltic Centre of mass media”, Russian Institute for Strategic Studies.

According to the Constitution Protection Bureau (SAB), one of the objectives of the policy of Russia is to open a representative office of the Federal Agency “Russian cooperation” in Latvia in order to get additional opportunities to implement their policies in support of Russian compatriots. And among non-governmental organizations, whose activities may pose a threat to the national security of the Republic of Latvia, the Constitution Protection Bureau (SAB) names the International Human Rights Movement “World without Nazism”, the Latvian Human Rights Committee (FIDH), the Institute of European Studies and the Baltic Centre of historical and socio-political studies.

**Neu-Nazi threat in Latvia is equal to the neo-Nazi threat in Ukraine**

Why have the law enforcement authorities of Latvia taken such strict measures to prevent the carrying out of events of anti-fascists in March 2014, including a large public presentation of the “White Papers of Hate”? And why do the law enforcement authorities of Latvia continue to put pressure on human rights and ethno-cultural community organizations of Russian compatriots in Latvia? This question is easy to answer, if you open the “White Papers of Hate” and read the section devoted to Latvia. It turns out, according to the authors of the book, the level of the neo-Nazi threat in Latvia is equal to the level of neo-Nazi threat in Ukraine, where on February 22-23 as a result of an armed violence there was a state coup, and militant nationalists and neo-Nazis from the “right sector” came to power. The level of the neo-Nazi threat in Latvia and Ukraine is – 57.5 percent. Only in two countries – Estonia (-60%) and Greece (-67.5%) the level of the neo-Nazi threat is higher.

The level of the neo-Nazi threat in Latvia and other countries was evaluated according to 14 criteria by experts. As a result, for Latvia we can observe the following picture:

1. Legislation (central, regional, municipal) and law enforcement practices, which contribute to the development of radical nationalism (-20);
2. Xenophobia and provocative statements of representatives of the authorities and the media (-5);
3. The law and the law-enforcement practice, impeding the development of radical nationalism (+ 12.5);
4. Performance of the authorities and the ruling party, authoritative politicians against xenophobia and radical nationalism (5);
5. Events aimed at promoting tolerance and prevention extremism (+ 5);
6. Situation of migrants and the society’s attitude towards migrants, foreigners, different ethnic groups (+5);
7. Inciting ethnic and religious hatred (-10);
8. Ultranationalist groups and parties (- 22.5);
9. Public actions of extremists and radical nationalists (- 10);
10. Racist attacks, violence, terror (- 5);
11. Availability, popularity and massiveness of anti-fascist and anti-racist movements (+15);
12. Glorification of German National Socialism and collaborators of Nazi Germany, revisionism, Holocaust denial (- 20);
13. Pursuit of veterans and partisans of anti-Hitler coalition and anti-fascists (- 10);
14. Country’s participation in the most important international agreements to combat racism and discrimination against ethnic minorities (+2.5).

Total: activities aimed at preventing the development of radical nationalism and extremism – plus 37.5; activities aimed at the development of radical nationalism and extremism – minus 57.5.132

The main reason for waking up and the spreading of radical nationalism and nationalist extremism in Latvia – is that a quite large part of Latvian society supported the ideology of revanchism and neo-Nazism cultivated in the West among the part of the Latvian emigration. The support of this ideology from a large part of Latvians predetermined that on 15 October 1991 the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia adopted the decree “On the restoration of
the rights of citizens of the Republic of Latvia and the Fundamental Principles of Naturalization”, according to which more than a third of residents were denied the right to automatically become citizens of Latvia. The adoption of this decision caused the elimination of universal suffrage and the formation of ethnically oriented legislation (laws on citizenship, language and on education). The rapid spread and then the dominance of revanchist ideology in Latvian society predetermined the return to the national ideology of the political ethnocratic regime of Karlis Ulmanis (1934-1940) and conduction of the policy to revise the results of the Second World War, including the political rehabilitation of the Latvian Waffen SS Volunteer Legion.

**Statement of the Council of non-governmental organizations of Latvia**

On 15 April 2014, i.e. approximately one month prior to the publication of the official records of the Security Police and the Constitution Protection Bureau about the threats to the national security in Latvia, at the meeting of the Council of NGOs, which is composed of nearly 80 non-governmental organizations, a Declaration was adopted, which, inter alia, states: “Already in August 2012, the 5th conference of organizations of Russian compatriots in Latvia, the participants of which were representatives of the Union of Belarusians in Latvia, Ukrainian, Azerbijani, Armenian and Uzbek national-cultural societies, adopted a statement “About the rise of totalitarian trends in the ideology and practice of the Latvian State”. Unfortunately, over the past year and a half, the departure from the norms of democracy and the consolidation of a totalitarian ideology and practices of the Latvian state policy have been further developed. Refusal to give the Russian language the official status, the ban on organization of a referendum on the issue of the elimination of the mass statelessness, support of undemocratic preamble to the text of the Constitution in the Saeima, which mentions the Latvian State instead of people in Latvia, and the amendment to the Criminal Law of the Republic of Latvia, which provides the punishment for “denial, justification, glorification or gross trivialization” of “aggression of the USSR against Latvia” in 1940; campaign of psychological terror against Russian schools and unwinding of another so-called “school reform – 2018”, designed to permanently eliminate education in Russian language in Latvia, – all these are examples of totalitarian approaches in thinking and actions of the right-wing ruling elite.

The current government does not want a democratic point of view to assess their own policies regarding the observation of rights of national minorities, the manifestations of neo-Nazism and restrictions of the freedom of speech. The authorities see that the reason for the increase of ethnic tensions in the country is not in the decisions of the Saeima or the Cabinet of Ministers, which, in fact, are the sources for all the initiatives, which split the Latvian society, but in the social organizations, political parties and the media, which advocate the return of the Republic of Latvia to a democratic path. Activities of law enforcement agencies and the Latvian media, which denigrate Russian public organizations, which conduct cultural, scientific or human rights activities, are aimed on support of totalitarianism and not on support of democracy.

The dramatic events in Ukraine at the beginning of this year brought in lives of those in power inescapable feeling of fear of losing what ensures their current existence and well-being, i.e. the proper power. At the same time the country’s leadership is not intended to back off its anti-democratic course in domestic and foreign policy, refusing to accept any criticism of the international community, addressed to it, be it criticism from the European Union, United Nations or Russia.

It is impossible not to see that the further retreat of Latvia from the norms of democracy happens on the background of an expanding state’s support of the ideology and practice of totalitarianism.

How else can one evaluate the decision of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Latvia to “blacklist” the fighters against the manifestations of neo-Nazism and the interest of the Constitution Protection Bureau towards human rights organizations solely due to the fact that not only did they dare to express their attitude towards the Latvian pseudo-democracy at the meeting of the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva, but they were also heard? How else can one assess the government’s decision to suspend broadcasting of the RTR channel for 3 months on the territory of the Republic of Latvia, despite the fact that this decision is contrary to the Article 100 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, as well as to the foreign liabilities of the country?

The Council of NGOs of Latvia noted with concern that the actions of the Latvian state are leading the country towards totalitarianism, which would affect all the inhabitants of Latvia, regardless of the ethnicity and whether they do or not have citizenship. Interethnic harmony and integration of the society, the democratic development of the Latvian state and the rise of the Latvian economy are only possible through the elimination of mass statelessness and coming back to the general elections into local authorities, national and European parliaments, and also provided a real, i.e. not only in words but in deeds, observation of the rights of national minorities, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly”.133
Chapter 4

“Alyosha, when do you think Riga would follow the footsteps of Tallinn?”

The decision of the Estonian government to dismantle a monument to “the Bronze Alyosha” in Tallinn in April 2007, and police’s violent suppression of the protest against this barbaric action of the population, both Russian and Estonian speaking ¹, was met with the full approval of the majority of the Latvian media.

Moreover, the Latvian journalists started to actively discuss the issue about when Latvia would act the same as Tallinn. Regarding this, particularly significant were publications in the journal “Nedēļa”, especially from 7 May (Nr. 19), on the cover of which there were photos of the “Bronze Alyosha” of Tallinn and the question “when do you think Riga would follow the footsteps of Tallinn?”

“Today in Latvia there are about 250 monuments and memorable signs, which remind of the Soviet Army and military actions in the Second World War. All of them can be assigned a status of Tallinn “Alyosha”. This means that their demolition or movement to another place may cause resentment from Russia and from the Russian speaking population living in Latvia”, – writes in Elmars Barkans in the article “Red Army Monuments live and win”, published in the journal “Nedēļa”.

At the same time, “most of these monuments are not included in the lists of those protected by state”, which means that their maintenance lays on the shoulders of local governments – says the deputy of the head of the State Inspection on Protection of cultural monuments Janis Asaris. “Theoretically, until there is no contract between Latvia and Russia on the burial sites, it is possible to change some kind of the Brethren Cemetery, for example, to carry out the reburial … And the governments can take decisions on the monument, which is not protected by the state, on its dismantling or transference. This applies to many (monuments), which are now “included” in the environment of most cities, such as the monument to the Liberators of Liepaja, the complex
“Eternal Flame”, set in Daugavpils, or the monument to the Liberators of Pardaugava, as well as to others. Governments have all the rights to demolish or move all these monuments” to another location.

Although E. Barkans concludes that “after the events in Tallinn ... no government would dare to start a discussion on this topic”, and this, they say, “is also confirmed by the last week announcement of the Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis that currently in Latvia it is not planned to move or remove any monument associated with the Soviet Army”4, the reference in the article that local authorities have the full right to dismantle or relocate the existing monuments of the Soviet Army, can be rightly regarded as a provocation, i.e. as a call for radically-minded politicians to follow the example of Estonia.

The war with the memory of war

And this appeal has been heard, as it turned out, long before the April events in Estonia. Thus, the municipality of the city Bauska already in early 2007 decided to move the monument to the Soviet soldiers from the centre of the city to the Brethren Cemetery. On 9 August, works on dismantling of the memorial stone, on which there is an inscription “1944. 14. IX. To the Liberators of the city Bauska”, were launched despite of the protests from local residents.

Salaspils municipality, the city, next to which was the former Salaspils concentration camp, and now – Salaspils Memorial, and the former Salaspils camp for prisoners of war, invented a truly fanatical, different from the Estonian, approach to “maintain” the memory of the war. Moreover, the mayor of Salaspils Juris Putninsh, just like the Bauska municipality, declared war on the memory of the war long before the events of April 2007 in Estonia. He began with the decision to build a cottage settlement on the territory of the former concentration camp for prisoners of war. During the years of war, 47,400 (according to other sources – 46 400) soldiers of the Red Army were killed in the camp, and a new cottage settlement was built literally on human bones. And in June 2007, when the Salaspils municipality announced a vacant position of the Director of the Salaspils memorial complex, notorious popularity was given to another way of dealing with the memory of the tragedy of the Second World War. As it turned out, in the basis of professional requirements for candidates for the position of the director there was a requirement to implement in life the official conclusion of historians, expressed in the book “History of Latvia. The 20th century”, about the fact that Salaspils concentration camp was not a death camp, and that the Salaspils camp should be a place reminding of the crimes of two totalitarian regimes – the Nazi and the Soviet.

Such interpretation of the history of the Salaspils concentration camp has been popularized since 2005 in the guidebook to Salaspils memorial complex. The guidebook author Lilita Vanaga writes: “It should be noted that the research of the last decade suggests that the Salaspils concentration camp was the camp of the victims of the Nazi regime, which killed several thousands of people, but it was not a death camp with an aim to kill the prisoners, as it is interpreted in many editions of the Soviet era, and the death toll, which is mentioned, is much exaggerated. Since 1990, a unique Salaspils memorial became a memorial place of remembrance of the victims of the concentration camps of the two totalitarian regimes (the Nazi and the Soviet)”.

The June initiative of the Mayor of Salaspils J. Putninsh, who only jealously supported the course of the ruling elite for revision of the results of the Second World War, on the background of the coming easiness in relationships between Latvia and Russia after the signing of the agreement on 27 March on the border, has led to a great scandal, also on the international level, as in Riga at this time there was the official delegation of the State Duma of the Russian Federation headed by A. Starkovs (from the faction the “United Russia”). And just over a month after the events in Estonia, Latvian politicians from the ruling elite, who prior openly supported the policy of rewriting the history of Latvia, now condemned J. Putninsh, stating: “This is nonsense!” (Andris Berzins, the Chairman of the Committee of the Saeima on Foreign Affairs, the faction “First party” / “Latvia’s Way”), “The Soviet occupation has nothing to do with it!” (Karlis Lejshkalns, the deputy of the Saeima, the faction “People’s Party”), “Politics sometimes interferes somewhere where it should not” (Linda Murniece, the deputy of the Saeima, the faction “New Time”), “The attitude is negative” (Andris Berzins, the deputy of the Saeima, the faction “Union of Greens and Farmers”), etc.

However, it has been known for a long time that one should not believe the words, but deeds. And the deeds, in this case, cause doubts on the sincerity of politicians.

The example of the Salaspils municipality shows that the fights with monuments erected in honour of the Great Victory over fascism can be different. You can demolish monuments, as the Estonian authorities did to the monument “The Bronze Alyoasha” on the square of Tynismyagi in the centre of Tallinn, and remove them far away. So, as they say, out of sight – out of mind. Such path was chosen by Bauska municipality. And it is possible to declare the principle of respect for the past, but also in the same time to organize a platform for loud games within a stone’s throw from the monument. This is what the Riga City Council did to the monument of Liberators of Latvia.
from fascism, which is located in Victory Park on the other side of the river. Not being able to take down the monument (the Estonian precedent has learnt something), the authorities of Riga decided to demonstrate their true attitude to the Great Victory of 1945 in a different way, and, in fact, they repeated the already used example of the Mayor of Salaspils Juris Putninsh how to abuse the memory of the tragedy of the war. If the mayor of Salaspils signed the permit for construction of cottage village on the place of the former concentration camp for Red Army prisoners, the authorities of Riga allowed build a wide karting track just twenty meters from the Monument to the Liberators of Latvia from fascism.

But the events in Estonia triggered a new surge of attempts to directly destroy the Soviet-era monuments, including the monuments erected in memory of the last war. Moreover, these attempts have not always had political and ideological context. There were a few cases when the cause of abuse was the desire to get a few dozen of Latvian Lats from the sales of the parts of the monument or the desire of outright bullies to crush everything. But there were more cases, the cause of which was the ideology of today’s Latvia. These cases once again reminded of the merciless war between Latvian state and its own history, which has been ongoing throughout the years of the Second Republic of Latvia. The war started in the early 90s, when many the monuments of the Soviet era were removed from the town square, and it was continued by separate pro-Nazi and revanchist groups of people or just hooligan faces. Since 1991, the total number of officially sanctioned demolition of monuments, as well as cases of abuse of the monuments from the vandals was probably at least several hundred.

After the events in Estonia, at night from 12 to 13 May, on the territory of the train station Ikshkele, the vandals again desecrated the monument to the Soviet diplomatic courier Theodor Nette.8

Less than a month later, at night from 2 to 3 June, at the Old Believers’ cemetery in Rezekne some teens aged from 12 to 15 destroyed 110 tombstones.9

On 18 June, bronze bas-relief, which depicted six weeping Jews, was gone from the tomb of the saviour of Jews during the war, Zanis Lipke, at the Second Forest Cemetery. The same day, police arrested three suspects. They were a 30-year-old woman, previously convicted 6 times, and two men (26 and 33 years old). As it turned out, the detainees have no permanent place of residence. During the investigation it was found out that the stolen bronze bas-relief was given to a collection point of non-ferrous metal. Thus, the Vandals earned 100 Latvian Lats.10

Twice, in July and the early August, vandals desecrated and destroyed commemorative plates at the cemetery of Soviet soldiers in Kekava.11

After 20 August in Liepaja at the Central Cemetery, vandals poured green paint onto the memorial wall with the inscription “Motherland will not forget the heroes”; and in same days 17 kilometres from Saluds on the highway Riga – Liepaja, vandals also desecrated the monument to Soviet soldiers. Unknown vandals have filled it with gray paint.12

Finally, in October in the premises of the former VEF factory, vandals broke into pieces the monument to the VEF veterans, who fought in the Great Patriotic War.

But this was not the end of the actions of vandalism. At night of 1 May 2008 in Bolderaja at the old cemetery, where there are mass graves next to the former Naval Base of the USSR, some unknown freaks cut the anchors and chains from the monument to the Baltic sailors, who died in 1941 and 1945.13

In August (the exact date is not known) at the Pokrov cemetery in Riga, the monument to the children from the Salaspils concentration camp was desecrated. According to the member of the Pushkin society, the well-known
radio journalist Svetlana Vidyakina, somebody must have thrown a bottle with some incendiary onto the monument. Moreover, the target was the bottom of the monument to destroy it completely. After the explosion, the monument became black from the soot, and many whole chunks broke off from the granite.

On 20 August in Liepaja, unknown persons took off the plaster and two boards from the wall of the memorial to the victims of the Great Patriotic War on the boulevard on the 14th of November.

Around the same time, a famous Latvian writer Aivars Tarvids performed on the website apollo.lv with an appeal: “At the moment there is a favourable historical situation, and celebrating the 90th birthday of a state with honour is not only about crying and lighting the lights on bridges, but also about the decision of the higher authorities to take down carry a well-known art work at the other side of the River. Estonians are done with “Alyosha”, and we – are we too soft?” By the well-known artwork at the other side of the River A.Tarvids meant the Monument to the Liberators of Riga and Latvia from the Nazi invaders, which was set in the park of Victory in Riga at the other side of the River in 1985.

On 7 March 1997, Latvian nationalists made their first attempt to blow up the Monument to the Liberators of Riga and Latvia from the Nazi invaders located in the Park of Victory on the left side of the Daugava River. But only 5 kilograms of TNT smashed the paving stones, without causing the monument any significant damage.

At night of 6 June of the same year, there was the second attempt. The performers of the action were members of a neo-Nazi organization “Thunder Cross”.

On 3 June members of the “Thunder Cross”, Valdis Raups, Aivars Viksinsh, Eduards Kumpinsh and some Aldis B. gathered in a safe house in Riga, in a house on the Grivas street. Members of the “Thunder Cross” discussed the plan for the destruction of the hated symbol of the Soviet regime – the stele of the memorial complex to Liberators of Riga and Latvia in 1941-1945. They decided to blow up the monument using explosive liquids, which was in 12 cans of different capacities. After the meeting the explosives were transported in an apartment on the Shaulu street.

On 6 June at night, Andris Ligeris and Igor Shishkin came with their cars to the monument. Valdis Raups brought Janis Ligeris, Eduards Kumpinsh and Aldis B., and Aivars Viksinsh brought an explosive device (60 litres of a mixture of TNT), a clockwork and two batteries. Then Janis Ligeris using the sapper shovel dug a hole at the foot of the stele and set the bomb. At this time, the rest members of the “Thunder Cross” walked around the monument, watching carefully to ensure that no one else would come close to this place. Exactly at 00.56 Aivar Viksinsh and Valdis Raups finished installing the clockwork and connected the electric circuit. At the same moment there was a deafening explosion. Both members of the “Thunder Cross” died in the fires of hell, and their followers fled. The monument was damaged in the amount of 28 902 Latvian Lats, but the stele remained.

Six members of the “Thunder Cross” were arrested almost immediately. However, three of them fled: Juris Rechs (now is visiting Latvia from time to time, working somewhere abroad, like many Latvians), Vilis Lininsh (a 81-year-old senior) and Igor Shishkin. Rechs and Lininsh had been lurking in the province for a long time, growing vegetables in the garden and eating them. All who fled remained in hiding from six months to almost a year.

After 1997, the theme of the demolition of the Monument to the Liberators of Riga and Latvia disappeared out of sight of the Latvian media for 10 years. But in 2007 it re-entered the top news stories.

“**We need to pull down the monument to the Liberators of Riga and Latvia from Nazi invaders!**”

March 24, 2017. Unknown persons have smeared with paint the obelisk on the Nazi victims burial site in the Dreilini neighborhood of Riga.

On March 24, 2017, unknown persons smeared with paint the obelisk on the Nazi victims burial site in the Dreilini neighborhood of Riga.
In January 2007, Latvian nationalists, leaders of the so-called “Forest Brothers” and the National Front of Latvia Ojars Stefans and Aivars Garda appealed to the Parliament and the Government of the country to follow the example of neighbouring Estonia and adopt the law on the demolition of monuments to the soldiers of the Red Army. They also spoke about the demolition of the monument to the Liberators of Riga and Latvia in the Victory Park in Riga. In a letter to the chairman of the Saeima of Latvia, members of parliament and the head of the government, the Victory Monument has been called “a pillar of humiliation and shame”, symbolizing “the inability of the nation to free themselves from the presence of the invaders and become true masters of their own land”.

The proposal of the right-wing-radicals did not include anything new. In the spring of 2006 the party “For Fatherland and Freedom / Movement for National Independence of Latvia (LNNK)” begun to develop the law, which would allow “to remove monuments glorifying the Soviet occupation from public places”, including the monument in the Victory Park. The right-wing-radicals were only hurrying their supporters in the parliament of Latvia, stating that “there is no guarantee that the Latvian patriots would not have a wish to demolish the monument of occupants using illegal means”.19

After the transfer of the Monument to “Alyosha” in April 2007 in Tallinn, the leader of the national-radical party “All for Latvia!” Raivis Dzintars proposed to hold a public debate on the further destiny of the Monument to the Liberators of Riga and Latvia, which is located on the other side of the river. According to Dzintars it is strange that this issue is not being discussed in Latvia, especially taking in to the consideration the fact that the mayor of Riga is the representative of the association “For Fatherland and Freedom” / LNNK Janis Birks. However, the mayor of Riga J. Birks said that despite that the Monument to Liberators of Riga is on the other side of the river (Pardaugava – the left side of Riga) and is associated with the notion of the Occupation of Latvia he is not going to talk about its demolition.20

New impetus to the debates on the future of the Monument to Liberators of Riga and Latvia was given by the referendum on assignment of Russian language with the state of the second official language, held on 18 February 2012. The discussion of this question involved not only journalists, but also historians, political scientists, politicians and even members of the government and the country’s president.

On 28 August 2012, the Minister of Defence Artis Pabriks stated in an interview with the “Neatkarīga” that “the so-called Victory Monument” in Riga deserves demolition, but it would entail a lot of dangerous consequences.
A publicist of the newspaper Diena Maris Zanders, appealed to the readers with a question: “The celebration of 9 May causes Latvians discomfort, as it turns out that among them there is a number of people with a completely different self-identification. How can people celebrate the Victory Day, if this day is associated with a monstrous Stalinist regime?” 24

On the eve of 9 May 2013, the President of Latvia Andris Berzins spoke about the Victory Monument in the capital of Latvia. Commenting on the initiative of the nationalist party “All for Latvii!” to demolish the Victory Monument, A. Berzins gave a short replay: “This is unacceptable!”

The President also said that he does not see anything wrong with the fact that the Red Army veterans or their relatives celebrate the end of the Second World War in Europe not on the 8th, but on the 9th of May. “The fact that these two hours vary by the time zone does not derogate this event. There was the allied victory over the Nazi Germany regime. This important event, remains as such”, – said Berzins.25

However, the statement of A. Berzins did not stop, but, on the contrary, it stimulated Latvian nationalists. In order to further intensify the discussion on the demolition of the Monument to the liberators of Riga and Latvia, which is placed in Riga on the other side of the river, Roberts Krastins, Emis Gailis and Maris Ruks started collecting signatures for the demolition of the monument on the special of surveys. The initiative was called “Restoring the true image of the Victory Park”. Organizers of this act pointed out that originally the Victory Park was created in honour of the Latvian army, which defeated the troops of Bermont, in the period of independence, and said: “It is a Victory the Victory Park was created in honour of the Latvian army, which defeated the troops of Bermont in the period of independence. It is a Victory Monument to Soldiers-Liberators from the Nazis in April 2007 in Tallinn. The idea of the proposal is to remove the monument from the centre of the city, to give the celebration of the Victory Day a local and unobtrusive nature.” 28

Right-wing radical National Union came up with another initiative – to rename the monument. A Member of the Parliament from National Union Janis Dombrava proposed two options: 1) the Monument to the defeat of Nazism, and 2) the Monument to the end of the Second World War. According to Dombrava, the current name of the monument (its full name is: “To the Soviet Army soldiers – liberators of the Soviet Latvia and Riga from fascist invaders”) contains “delusional, untrue data, based on the traditions of the Soviet historiography”.29

The initiative of the National Union was supported by one of the authors of the nationalist newspaper “Latvijas Avīze” Agris Liepins and the Defence Minister Artis Pabriks (party “Unity”). A. Liepins proposed to continue calling the monument on the other side of the river a “Russian gag”, but Pabriks proposed to rename the monument to the “sovkovyatnik”.

In an interview with news agency BNS Pabriks said: “I think we should not call this a monument the Victory Monument on 9 May. During the times of the Popular Front the monument to Lenin was called “leniniklis”. And this monument is nothing but the “sovkovyatnik” because gathers people who are still living in the Soviet Union and the Soviet system, around it. Unfortunately this is reality”. But some Latvians also remain the “sovki”. “Unfortunately, we have not only Latvians of Russian origin who live in the Soviet Union. This also applies to many Latvians of Latvian origin. Perhaps they do not go on 9 May to the “sovkovyatnik”, but they live with the Soviet mindset, attitudes of the Soviet system and support authoritarian government”.30

In August 2013, the discussion about the Monument to the Liberators of Riga and Latvia received a new development. A famous Latvian and Soviet composer Zigmars Liepins suggested not to blow the monument – he said it would be “rude”, but to move it outside of the city, on the shore of lake Kishezers. According to the composer, this will not cause big problems. “There will not be more noise than because of Alyosha of Tallin”, – said Liepins, referring to the unrest in Estonia in connection with the demolition of the Memorial to Soldiers-Liberators from the Nazis in April 2007 in Tallinn.

The proposal of Liepins had its rationale. The thing is that the liberation of Riga by the Soviet troops in 1944 began with forcing at the lake Kishezers. Also today there are commemorative events organized on this place, though incomparably of a smaller magnitude comparing to those at the Monument in the Victory Park. The idea of the proposal is to remove the monument from the centre of the city, to give the celebration of the Victory Day a local and unobtrusive nature.28
The Minister of Culture Dace Melbarde did not remain behind (from February 2014 – a member of the National Association). In an interview with the newspaper “Telegraph” she said: “The question about the monument to the liberators on the other side of the river is difficult just like all questions relating to the story. It is a sensitive issue and it must be treated very cautiously. One should understand that it touches the different parts of the society with different views on the history. It affects those who were associated with the time of the second occupation of Latvia, as well as with those who had been exiled to Siberia … In terms of planning of building of the city, the situation is certainly controversial, because a symbol associated with the Soviet times can be seen from the windows of the National Library. But let us take into the account that Latvia has an agreement with Russia on the responsibility for this monument”, – said Melbarde.

“If a monument is demolished, the problem will not go away. There will still be many people who celebrate not the 8 May, just like in Europe, but the 9 May. This should be thought about. We should think about how to make people grow to be loyal to Latvia and Europe. As for the monuments, the time will resolve everything. I know monuments to foreign conquerors, which still look good even today, despite the contradictions in the history. For example, the monument to Barclay de Tolly”, – Melbarde made an example.32

On 21 November in Moscow, there was a meeting of the foreign ministers of Russia and Latvia, Sergei Lavrov and Edgars Rinkevichs. Shortly before the meeting, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia Karlis Eihenbaums said that the initiative of the demolition of the monument to Liberators, which has already been supported by the signatures of more than 10 000 citizens of Latvia, is in contradiction with the Latvian-Russian agreement on protection of monuments. On 30 April 1994, the governments of Latvia and Russia signed an agreement on social security of Russian military pensioners and their families living in Latvia, which entered into force on 27 February 1995. The text of this Agreement also includes an article on protection of monuments.33

Nationalist hysteria around the monument to Liberators of Riga and Latvia from the Nazi invaders, which is located on the other side of the river in Riga, is increasing each year on the eve of the Victory Day. In the past few years up to 160 thousand inhabitants of Latvia participate in annual celebrations of the Victory Day. Both Russians and Latvians go to the monument. Today it is the most popular and the biggest holiday of Latvia, which actually opposes the state ideology of “occupation” and policy of the state to rewrite the history of the Second World War. Any public calls to demolish this monument, to move it or to give it anew name cause categorical rejection not only among the democratic community, but even among the leadership of Latvia. But a quiet assault on the monuments of the Great Patriotic War continues in the regions of Latvia. One of examples of such a policy is Jelgava, where the monument to the liberators of the city from the Nazi occupiers was first “cleaned” from commemorative plates, on which there were some parts of the Red Army mentioned, who participated in the battles for the liberation of Jelgava in July – October 1944, and then officially renamed to the “Monument to the victims of the Second World War”.

...
Chapter 5

Latvia tripped over its own story...

“If we give up the concept of occupation, it jeopardizes our policy regarding nationality, regarding non-citizens and their rights (prohibition of participation in municipal elections) and other key issues. It is clear that we cannot make such a step”.

Vaira Paegle, the chairman of the Commission of Foreign Affairs of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia.

“If Latvia was occupied, then we should not have the Occupation Museum, but the Resistance Museum”.

From the comments in the Internet.

After 1991, in the teaching system of social sciences in secondary and high schools, the communist ideology was replaced by the ideology of radical nationalism, the private expression of which was the use of estimates of the radical part of the western Latvian emigration and local nationalist organizations in relation to the period 1939-1991 in the history of Latvia. The new program of the Movement for National Independence of Latvia, which was adopted at the 6th Congress on 6 March 1993, stated: “In the humanities one should primarily contribute to the study of the Latvian history, Latvian language and culture in the spirit of nationalism”.

This approach affected public universities in the first place.

So, the teachers of the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the University of Latvia actively defend the thesis of the occupation of Latvia in 1940, which states that the SS Legion and the so-called “forest brothers” fought for the independence of Latvia, and the Soviet period from 1945 to 1991 is considered as one continuous black band in the life of the Latvian people.

A similar situation developed at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Latvia. The thesis of the Occupation of Latvia in 1940 is presented here to students as a dogma that can not be questioned. Some teachers openly praise the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion and, contrary to that, strongly defame the Red Army and blacken the Soviet period. Any attempt from the part of the students to express a different point of view on these issues is not only immediately suppressed, but also causes the fact that such “disloyal” students get lower marks and results in exams. In other words, students’ study results are put in a direct dependence to their attitude to the various issues of the ideology of the Latvian state today. If the student agrees with everything, he can expect to have good results, but if he tries to protest or express a different point of view, he can only expect to have a bad mark.

Displaying Russia and the Russians in Latvian school textbooks of history and literature

As noted in December 2007 at the Institute of CIS countries in Moscow at an international scientific conference devoted to history textbooks for schools published in the CIS and the Baltic States (the conference was attended by scientists and teachers-practitioners from the majority of the CIS countries, as well as Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia), there are three main tendencies traced the history books, published in the new states that emerged after the collapse of the USSR in 1991: 1) the glorification of the titular ethnic group, 2) a desire to touch the unpleasant issues of our common history, which, no doubt, is a public order, and 3) the unwinding of anti-Russian moods.

After the formation of the independent Republic of Latvia, the history as a subject has become an essential tool in the hands of the ruling elite to form the
population of the new historical consciousness. In this case, the main role in formation of the position of the ruling elite in issues on the history has played and continues playing the radical part of the western Latvian emigration, many of whose representatives were serving the Germans during the Second World War. Radical views of the western Latvian emigration on the history included the following main points.

1. Latvians as a nation and Latvia as a state have always existed.
2. For many centuries, there had been various political forces, which prevented, hindered the historical development of the Latvian people and the Latvian state. But extra negative role has been always played by Russia.
3. Regarding the presence of non-Latvian population on the territory of Latvia, primarily Russian, this population was formed on the territory of the country mainly after 1945, and its role in the history of the country was usually negative, because Russia has been always pursuing the aim to colonize Latvia.
4. The period of the government of Karlis Ulmanis in 1930s is connected not only with economic prosperity of Latvia, but also with an increase in the development of national minorities.
5. The main reason for the events of 1940, when Latvia joined the Soviet Union and lost its independence, is the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 23 August 1939.
6. “The awful year” in the history of Latvia (i.e. the Soviet period from 5 August 1940 to 22 June 1941) was much more severe and bloody than the period of the Nazi occupation from 1941 to 1945.
7. During the Second World War, following one after the other, two opposing totalitarian regimes occupied the Latvian state and its people became victims of Nazi and Communist regimes.
8. During the occupation of the Nazis Latvians were better off than when occupied communists.
9. Liberation of Latvia from the Nazi occupation is the beginning of the second, Soviet occupation, which lasted from 1945 to 1991. During the repeated Soviet occupation there was a big irreparable damage done to the Latvian people and the Latvian state.

These are views on the history of Latvia in the twentieth century accepted and pro-Soviet movement in summer of 1940, the theme of collaboration during the Nazi occupation, and other. Simultaneously the population losses were reducing, the importance of the Communist underground and guerrilla movement during the Nazi occupation was diminishing, and the contribution of the USSR in the development of Latvia after 1945 was assessed mainly from the negative point of view.

In the late 1980s – early 1990s, a wide popularity and acceptance among the Latvian public was gained by the works of authors of the western Latvian emigration such as Adolf Shilde, who actively served the Nazi regime during the Nazi occupation, Adolf Bilmanis, Lajmonis Strejps, Agnis Balodis.

In the second half of the 1990s, the ideology presented in these papers, roamed into the books on the history of Latvia and school books on history, written by the local Latvian authors, among them: Odysseus Kostanda (Latvian-speaking Greek, the head of the Latvian author society), Gunars Kurlovichs, Andris Tomashuns and others.

Books on the history of Latvia, recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), and whose authors are Latvian Russian historians, have not been published since 1991. The only exception – a textbook for secondary school “Russians in Latvia since the Middle Ages until the end of the nineteenth century”, the authors of which were Oleg Pukhljak and Dmitry Borisov. But this allowance had no sign of “Recommended by the MES of the Republic of Latvia”.

Work to promote the concept of Latvia’s history in the 20th century accepted among western Latvian emigration, including the history of the Russian community and assessment of its contribution to the development of the country, is significantly activated after the creation of the Historians Commission under the President of Latvia, introduced by the decision of the first president of the Republic of Latvia Guntis Ulmanis on 13 November 1998. The main objective of the Commission was the conduction of the relevant historical researches and writing the textbooks on history on the on the basis of these studies.

The quintessence of the main conclusions of the work of the Commission of Historians was an openly Russophobe book “History of Latvia. The 20th Century”, where all the conclusions of historians of the radical part of western Latvian emigration were formulated in a clear and even harsh way. Let us remind you that in the book, the authoritarian and ethnocratic regime of Karlis Ulmanis, which existed in Latvia from 15 May 1934 to 17 June 1940, is characterized as a dictatorship, but a “gentle” and “humane” dictatorship. Regarding the events of 1940, these events are considered only as occupation, and not as the free will of the people of Latvia or as their incorporation. Nothing is said about the pro-Soviet movement, which was in Latvia at that time.
A separate issue is the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion. The Commission of historians under the President of Latvia actively defends their point of view that the Latvian Volunteer Legion was only participating in the fight on the Soviet-German front and had nothing to do with punitive actions against the civilian population. Moreover, contrary to the historical facts, it is stated that the entrance of Latvians into the Legion was supposedly the only way to fight for the future independent Latvia. Finally, it is concluded that the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion cannot be attributed to the general SS Nazi Germany and therefore can not, according to the decision of the Nuremberg Tribunal, be considered as a criminal military unit.5

Conclusions of the Commission of historians – it is actually the government’s position, which creates a beneficial ground for the rehabilitation and promotion of the ideology of Nazism and Fascism in the country. Attempts to rehabilitate the ideology and practice of Nazism and fascism have already mentioned above, including in connection with the annual “marches of Legionnaires” on 16 March. Regarding the promotion of Nazism and fascism, we can mention as an example the book “Scaffold” of a prominent Latvian lawyer Andris Grutups. Russian and Jewish communities of Latvia rated this book as openly anti-Semitic. However, the Latvian society not only exposed it to criticism, but, on the contrary, evaluated it very positively. Positive reviews were given by a member of the Commission of the Historians of the President of Latvia, the head of the History Department of the Western Europe and the United States in the modern and contemporary time of the historical and philosophical faculty of the University of Latvia, Professor Inesis Feldmanis, the ex-president of the Academy of Sciences of Latvia, Academician Janis Stradinsh, P.Bankovskis and others. The book “Scaffold” was given by the author to all Latvian schools. Moreover, after some time the Russian edition of the book appeared.6

From 1998 until 2007, the Commission of historians under the President of Republic of Latvia has published more than 20 books, aimed at creating a new concept of Latvia’s history in the twentieth century. The first volume of articles under the auspices of the Commission of Historians was published in 2000, the 20th – in 2007.

According to the Commission of Historians, the Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga has received a letter from the Latvian society of history teachers, signed by over 140 teachers of various schools, asking them to donate the full edition of books of the Commission of History to the school libraries. The letter emphasizes that the published books would be very useful for the students to understand the actual issues of the history of Latvia of the 20th century.

On 26 April 2007, at the University of Latvia in the framework of the forum organized by the Commission of historians for teachers of Latvian schools “History and time”, a full set of books was given as a gift to all secondary schools, high schools, evening (shift) schools and special educational establishments with a programme of the secondary schools, also vocational education schools, private schools and grammar schools, music and art schools, led by the Ministry of Culture and the Interior, the State Police College and vocational training institutions of local authorities – totally 518 school libraries. As explained by the press secretary of the president of Latvia Aiva Rosenberga, the books were published and presented to schools from the funds budgeted by the Commission of historians to popularize its activities.7

It should be recognized that in Latvia, actually just like in Lithuania and Estonia, as well as in many countries of the CIS and Eastern Europe (except, perhaps, only Armenia and Belarus), there is a real war on the issue of the history, which today has a pronounced anti-Russian orientation.8

One of the results of this war on the issue of the history is the duality of historical consciousness among the population. Latvians (at least, a considerable part of them) today perceive the history of Latvia from the point of view of the radical part of the western Latvian emigration and non-Latvian population (again – a considerable part of it) – from a position of the concept of the history of Latvia, which existed during the Latvian SSR.

**What is the reason for such situation?**

**Firstly**, you need to speak about active positions of Russian media in Latvia, bravely defending the historical truth. According to the calculations of the Professor Leo Dribins, annually in the Russian media there are 350 articles published on historical topics, including the critics of the new concept of Latvia’s history in the twentieth century promoted by the government.9

**Secondly**, we have to mention the dynamism of the Russian speaking historical community and communities of writers and journalists, as well as communities of Russian artists and social activists, thanks to whose efforts, dozens of documentaries, dozens of books and hundreds of articles on the history of Latvia, as well as on the history of Russian and Jewish communities in the country came into light after 1991; over 100 photo documentaries and art exhibitions on the history of Russians in Latvia and the history of Latvia during the First Republic, the Nazi occupation, the period from 1945-1991 and the period from 1991-2013. Among these historians, writers, journalists, artists, politicians and social activists there are Boris Infantjev, Yuri Abizov, Boris Ravdin, Tatiana Feigmane, Svetlana Kovalchuk, Svetlana Vidyakina, Antonina Pikul, Leonid Koval, Gregory Smirin, Joseph Shteiman, Joseph Rochko, Mey-

Thirdly, it is necessary to speak about the active publishing activities of political parties representing the interests of the Russian community (“For Human Rights” and “Harmony Centre”), as well as of the Russian public research organizations, which published dozens of books and pamphlets on the history of Latvia, including the history of the Russian community, country’s history during the Second World War after 1991. We shall mention here the books of Boris Cilevich, Janis Urbanovich, Juris Paideris, Igor Jurgens, Oleg Shchiptsov, Alfreds Rubiks, Vladimir Buznev, Nikolay Kabanov, Jakov Pliner and Valery Buhvalov, Vladimir Sokolov, Alexander Gaponenko, Viktor Gushchin and others, as well as publications of the Fund of Tatiana Zhidanok, the Baltic Forum, the Latvian Society of Russian culture, the Society “Vedi”, the Old Believers society named after Zavoloko, the Pushkin Society, the Seminarian Hortus Humanitatis, the Institute for European Studies, the Baltic Centre of historical and socio-political studies, the Russian Community of Latvia, the Russian Society of Latvia, the Russian community of Liepaja, the Jelgava Society of Russian Culture “Veche” and others.

Fourthly, it is necessary to talk about the position of the parents who pass to their children their historical experience and their vision of the history of Latvia, which is inconsistent with the state propaganda.

Fifthly, we should also speak of the active position of individual representatives of Russian business in Latvia, who invest money in recovery of once lost monuments of Russian history of Latvia. In the first place, we should put an emphasis on the unprecedentedly active participation of a businessman Eugene Gomberg, who restored monuments to the Russian Emperor Peter the Great, the hero of the War of 1812 the Field Marshal Barclay de Tolly and others at his own expense. We should also mention entrepreneurs who have come together in the Russian Business Club (Vladimir Solomatkin, Ivan Tyshchenko, Eugene Voloshin, Alexander Oskin and others), and, at their own expenses, restored and continue to taking care of the monument to the soldiers the army of Peter the Great, who died in a battle with the Swedes on the island Lucavala on 9 July 1701. Here it is also worth mentioning that many travel companies offer for students of Russian schools special routes associated with the Russian history of Latvia.

On the whole, this dynamic activity of the Russian business in Latvia on preservation of Russian history and Russian culture in Latvia has been giving a profound influence on the formation of historical consciousness of the Russian community in the country.

Sixthly, we should speak about the position of history teachers who either soften (at their own risk!) biased historical interpretations offered in textbooks, or offer their students an alternative vision of history.

Seventhly, we need to talk about a significant intensification of activities of historians of Russia and other countries after 2000, who have published a number of monographs and collections of documents on the history of the Baltic States in the twentieth century.'
These books, which can be bought in bookstores in Latvia and which you can also get in the Internet, have a major influence on the formation of the historical world perception of the Russian linguistic community of Latvia.

Eighthly, an important role is played by the Russian TV (ORT, RTR, TV Centre, NTV, etc.), which are universally available in Latvia, and which quite often address to issues of Latvian history in the twentieth century.

Combination of all these factors determines the fact that today the Russian school students perceive the history of Latvia differently than students from schools with Latvian language of instruction.

If we assess the situation on the basis of centralized examinations in history in the secondary school, then Russian school students idealize the USSR in their responses, and see today’s Latvia as a state where there is the apartheid and glorification of former SS men. The works of Latvian students, on the contrary, mention the eternal existence of Latvia, which is constantly being captured with attempts to destroy the Latvian folk, which is understood as a monolith, and that Latvians have always been and will be the victims of history.

This position was confirmed in a survey conducted in 2008 by the order of the Soros Foundation-Latvia, where 400 students from Latvian and Russian secondary schools of Riga were questioned.

The question of how to evaluate the events of 1940 in Latvia, 54% of Latvian students told that it was an occupation. In turn, there were only 29% of Russian students who gave the same answer to this question. The question of how to evaluate the entry of German troops into the territory of Latvia in 1941, the students of Latvian schools had the following answers: the Germans liberated Latvia – 8%, the Germans occupied Latvia – 45%, and the Germans
both occupied and liberated Latvia – 42%. Different answers were given by the
most of students from Russian schools: the Germans liberated Latvia – 3%, the
Germans occupied Latvia – 81%, and the Germans both occupied and liberated
Latvia – 15%. The same significant discrepancy was observed in the responses
to the question of how to evaluate the entry of the Red Army into the territory
of Latvia in 1944-1945. Latvian students responded as follows: The Red Army
troops liberated Latvia – 12%, occupied Latvia – 62%, and both liberated and
occupied – 20%. In turn, the Russian students gave the following answers:
The Red Army troops liberated Latvia – 65%, occupied Latvia – 5%, and both
liberated and occupied – 25%. At the same time 72% of the students from
Latvian schools positively evaluate the organization of Day of Remembrance
of Waffen SS legionnaires on 16 March.11

Explaining the reasons for the idealization of the Soviet Union by Russian
schoolchildren, a history teacher of one of the schools in Daugavpils Galina
Petrova noted on for the above-mentioned international scientific conference
on history textbooks held in December 2007 at the Institute of CIS countries in
Moscow that such results are not only due to the influence of views of parents
or history teachers, but also a defensive reaction of the children from non-
Latvian families against the guilt complex and immoral behaviour, which is
announced in school textbooks, exams and centralized examinations imposed
on them by the Latvian state.

As an example of the imposition of such guilt complex and immoral
behaviour we shall provide questions from a test for the primary school, held
on 3 June 2002. Some questions of this test contained an overtly political,
ideological subtext, aimed not at strengthening inter-ethnic harmony and
integration of Latvian society, but at causing the teenagers aged fifteen, being
still pure in their souls and maximalists in their moral position, to have feelings,
which contain a ground of destruction rather than creation and reconciliation.
In particular, in the task 13 the students were offered to analyse two quotes
from works written in 1950 and 1994.

Quote 1 (From the youth resistance group of Bauska in 1950):
- Youth of Latvia! Your Fatherland is in the power of the enemy. Every step
tells you about violence and brutal hatred of your enemies and the enemies of
all the people towards the Latvian people – the Bolsheviks. The loudest tells
you about it the crying of your countrymen, recently exiled to Siberia, where
they remember their homeland, which remained far away, on the shores of the
Baltic Sea. Bolsheviks are hostile to the Latvian people, but they would need
an international crowd, sandwiched by the dictatorship of Kremlin. But to no
avail: the day is inexorably approaching, when the Western troops would inflict

a crushing blow to Bolshevism and bring freedom to the Latvian people. We
should also be part of this struggle.

Youth of Latvia, this day is coming! But do not take freedom as a gift, you
have to win it in the battle ... Latvian youth! At the moment when the arms
will be taken by the nations of the West, you will not be able to go against our
companions and assistants in the liberation struggle. Your place is in the ranks
of national partisans. In order to live free afterwards, you’ll have to learn how
to shoot. Remember! You have to fight with the enemy. Every nation is fighting
the enemy everywhere and always. (Retained in the style of the original).

Let us underline the main idea of this quotation: In order to live free you
have to shoot! – And let us address it to the non-Latvian teens aged fifteen.
What would he understand from this quote, which is addressed to LATVIAN
boys and, in fact, directed against him, the non-Latvian?

Quote 2 (From the memoirs of a writer and publicist Andrejs Dripe,
1994):
- I was laughing about all these pioneers and Komsomol members, and the
party members in my eyes were all idiots and minions. And yet, despite this
attitude, I joined the Communist Party in 1975. Why? Of course, some kind of
faith in the ideals of communism was out of the question, I could not suddenly
become crazy, but I could clearly understand ... that without being in the party,
I would not be able to actively fight against the party. Politically uncommitted,
in fact, were considered as second-class citizens... Of course, there was still a
clear path of a dissident and almost a guaranteed opportunity to get into a camp
or in a psychiatric hospital, but this way did not attract me absolutely...

And what could have a fifteen-year-old teenager understand from this
quote? That you need to play the role of “a complete idiot and a servant”, not
to be a second class citizen?... 12

Unfortunately, it had been happening in all times: the new government
was always starting with “rewriting” the history. The power of the Second
Republic of Latvia was not an exception, which had launched a massive effort
for ideologization, politicization and mythologization of the history of Latvia
in the 20th century. The object of these efforts, in particular, has become the
school youth, who today is forced to study the history of Latvia according to
the historical facts thorn out of the context, the main task of which is to justify
ideological myths imposed by the state.
Chapter 6

Russian-Latvian commission of historians: what is on the agenda?

Back in 1997, the Russian Ambassador to Latvia Alexander Udaltsov (a historian) announced that the Latvian-Russian commission of historians should be created that at the initiative of the Russian Embassy. The scientists would explore the most “difficult subjects” of our shared history, resume bilateral exchange of professors and graduate students.

The initiative of the Russian embassy was approved by the Latvian President Guntis Ulmanis and the Speaker of the Saeima Alfreds Chepanis. Both politicians have hosted the Director of the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Science the academician A.O.Chubaryan and promised to facilitate the work of the commission. At the same time A.O.Chubaryan expressed with a great optimism that the cooperation of historians of the two countries can prevent the increase of negative stereotypes in the minds of the younger generation, really opening to the young Latvians and Russian their shared history.1

However, the international commission of historians was neither created in 1997 nor later. For this reason, the academician A.O.Chubaryan agreed to join the Commission of historians of the President of the Republic of Latvia as its foreign member. But in 2006, he stopped the work in this commission, because, as he told the media, his Latvian colleagues did not take his opinion into account.2

On 27 February 2007 in Riga, there was an international conference “The Legacy of the USSR: what is the main idea of the legal succession of Russia and other countries?” organized by the Latvian NGO “Baltic Forum”. It was attended by experts from Russia and Latvia, the deputies of the Latvian parliament from the left and left-centred parties, public figures, journalists, and the Russian Ambassador to Latvia Viktor Kalyuzhny. The academician Chubaryan was among the Russian experts, who once again proposed the establishment of the Latvian-Russian commission of historians in his speech. Besides he mentioned that such commission has already been established in Lithuania.

However, even after that the things did not change. The reason was explained by V.Kalyuzhny: “I have been offering Latvia to create a joint commission of historians with Russia for one year and a half. To do this, it is just necessary to write a letter to Russia. But no, for one and a half years Latvia is not able or does not want to offer its alternative, nor respond to this proposal – to create the commission. The question is why Russia does not do this? Very simple, (...) Russia sees it (i.e. the commission – V.G.) at the level of the Academy of Sciences, professionals who have to deal with this case, perhaps, under some auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In Latvia, this issue is dealt with by the Presidential Commission of the country. And in order to maintain this level, it was necessary to write a letter from president to the president. This has not yet been done, and the result is a complete fantasy about the historical facts, which still exist today and appear in the history books...” 3

In October 2008, the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov once again offered his Latvian colleague Maris Riekstinsh to convene a bilateral commission of scientists to understand all the “complex issues of the shared history”.4 But this proposal did not lead to the creation of the commission.

In December 2010, academician A.O.Chubaryan commented on Latvia’s position: “The question on establishment of the Russian-Latvian Commission of Historians was raised a long time ago. Russia already has a corresponding commission together with Lithuania. It has been working very fruitfully for several years. Just recently there has been a meeting with the Estonian historians, where they decided to create such a bilateral commission. Until recently, the Latvian colleagues have been very sceptical about our proposals to combine work and cooperate”.5

At the same time at the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia and the Commission of the Historians of the President of Latvia, there were repeatedly expressed wishes addressed to Russia to allow Latvian historians work in Russian archives. Latvia’s position actually was following: we do not need a joint commission of historians, but we want to conduct our researches in the archives of Russia, moreover, we insist that the closed funds would be open to us.

We shall note here that some of the members of the Commission of historians of the President of the Republic of Latvia have already worked in the Russian archives. In particular, Professor Heinrich Strods, being the Head of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR, a specialist in the field of agrarian history and ethnography of Latvia in XVIII-XIX centuries until 1991. In 1993, H.Strods published a very interesting book
Aivars Stranga, who was denied a visa in 2005.

Both, in the 1990s and early years of 2000, Professor H. Strods repeatedly worked in the Russian archives. But in May 2007, he was denied an entry visa to Russia. The newspaper “Russian News” wrote in this context: “Strods is a well-known historian, having long-standing ties in Russian scientific community, in particular, at the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Science. His works from the beginning of the 1990s always reflected officious approach to interpretation of complicated questions of history, accepted in modern Latvia. In this case, the tendentiousness of Professor Strods in selection of documents, which can be easily demonstrated by the magazines of introduction with archives, and the predetermination of their interpretation on the basis of the concept of “Soviet occupation of Latvia” has never led to a ban on his entry into Russia for work in archives and participation in scientific conferences. Recently, however, he began to abuse the hospitality of Russia, using the archival materials obtained in Moscow, not only in his publications, but also to support the political and financial claims against our country. Pretending to be a “tourist”, or a “personal guest” of the Latvian Ambassador to Russia, Andris Teikmanis, Mr. Strods tried to get a visa for further access to our archives for the interests of the so-called Commission of the Government of Latvia on “counting the damage caused by the occupation regime of the USSR”, the member of which he is”.6

Professor Strods became the second Latvian historian, who was denied a Russian visa. The first one was the head of the department of history of Latvia of the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the Latvian University, Professor Aivars Stranga, who was denied a visa in 2005.

The dialog between the Institute of the World History of the Russian Academy of Science and the Commission of Historians during the leadership of the President of the Republic of Latvia in 2000-2010

It is impossible not to mention that for the past two decades, there has been no scientific dialogue between historians, who are members of the Commission of the President of the Republic of Latvia, and Russian historians. But hardly anyone would dispute the assertion that the dialogue took place sporadically from case to case and, moreover, it was highly politicized from the Latvian side. In the period from 2000-2010, there were only a few meetings of the Latvian and Russian historians, and the initiative to promote the dialogue usually came from Russia.

On 16-17 October 2000, at the University of Latvia there was an international scientific conference on the studies of the Holocaust. It was attended by the director of the Institute of the World History of the Russian Academy of Science, Academician A.O. Chubaryan.7

The next meeting of scientists from the Institute of the World History of the Russian Academy of Science and from the Commission of Historians of the President of the Republic of Latvia took place only five years later. But this time the stay of Latvian historians in Moscow was not only due to the participation in the regular scientific conference of the Institute of the World History of the Russian Academy of Science, but also due to the presentation of an extra Russophobic and falsified book entitled “History of Latvia: the 20th century”, which received a notorious fame”.

Let us recall that on 25 January 2005 in Riga, there was an official presentation of the book, and on 27 January, the International Holocaust Remembrance Day (on this day in 1945, the Soviet army liberated the largest Nazi death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland), the President of Latvia Vaira Vike-Freiberga presented the book to the President of Russia V.V. Putin.

On 3 February of the same year in Moscow, the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Embassy of Latvia in Russia held a conference on the “International Crisis 1939-1941: from the Soviet-German treaty in 1939 until the German attack on the Soviet Union”, which was attended by Professors I. Feldmanis and A.Zunda from the Commission of Historians of the President of the Republic of Latvia. And the day before, i.e. on 2 February, in the All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature named after M.I. Rudomino, they also made a presentation of the above-mentioned controversial book.8

According to experts, the book “History of Latvia: the 20th century” – this is a blatant attempt to rewrite the history from the standpoint of the ruling political elite of today’s Latvia. Objective presentation of the facts interlinked in it with numerous omissions and outright falsification. Nationalist dictatorship of Karlis Ulmanis in the period of 1934-1940 is characterized in the book as “gentle” and “humane”; changes of 1940 in Latvia are assessed as occupation, and at the same time there is nothing said about the folk’s movement for restoration of the Soviet power in Latvia; crimes of Latvian SS legionnaires towards civilians remain unreported; the death camp in Salaspils is called an educational and labour camp; the history of the communist underground and guerrilla movement on the territory of Latvia is falsified, etc. etc. Among the authors of
this scandalous “work” there are members of the Commission of Historians of the President of the Republic of Latvia Professors I.Feldmanis A.Zunda, A.Stranga and others. The Book is preceded by an article of the President of Latvia Vaira Vike-Freiberga, who indicates that its readers would now “be able to get a real idea about the events of the recent past”.9

On the day of presentation of the book in the Library of Foreign Literature named after M.I.Rudomino, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation published a comment, which stated: “A couple of days ago, there was an official presentation of the book “History of Latvia: The 20th century” in Riga. Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga organized this presentation in her Presidential Palace in the presence of ministers, educators, historians and diplomats. This showed that this publication was approved and “sanctified” by the country’s leadership, and it is given the status of the official interpretation of Latvian history.

Traditionally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation does not comment on the release of various historical publications, but in this case we are talking about events, which are part of a unified concept of propaganda of the “true story of Latvia”, implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, and which all countries should recognize as such. This year on 2 February, the presentation of this book is aimed to be organized in Moscow by the Latvian embassy.

We will not argue with the authors of the publication, who, clearly guided by an ideological setting, try to put a mixture of facts, information with no evidence and outright fraud in the depth of their own interpretations of the history. Let’s leave it to the experts and professional historians.

Surprising is the fact that the president of Latvia considered as appropriate to distribute this book during the mourning events in the former Nazi death camp of Auschwitz. It is not difficult to imagine how would react the former prisoners of the camp, who were also present at the ceremony, if they knew that the Salaspils concentration camp, which many consider as “the Latvian Auschwitz”, promoted by Vike-Freiberga in the book, is only called a “corrective labour camp”.

In the book, there is a special place given to discredit of the role of Russians in the Latvian history. “Once, – it was stated later in the comment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, – we highly recommend the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, apart from the Museum of Occupation, to visit other museums in Riga, such as the Museum of Music and Literature, the National Art Museum, the Maritime Museum, the Russian Drama Theatre. To this advice should be also followed by the authors of the “History of Latvia”. Then they would have learned much more about the Russian culture and the Russian

contribution to the development of the current territory of Latvia. Unfortunately, it seems that the authors, as well as members of the Commission for Democracy of the USA Embassy in Latvia, with whose financial support this book was published, did not take our advice into consideration.

We have to admit that the mood of historical revenge is still actively supported in Latvia, also at the highest political level of our state…” 10

A critical evaluation of the book “History of Latvia: The 20th century”, provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia and by Russian historians from Latvia11, had no effect on its content in future editions. Moreover, the book has been translated into English, German and French, and assigned to the libraries of Germany, France, Great Britain and other countries.

The next meeting of scientists of the Institute of the World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences and members of the Commission of Historians of the President of the Republic of Latvia was held in May 2008 – the Russian Academy of Sciences held a joint scientific meeting (a “round table”) of the representatives of historical sciences and archivists of Russia and Latvia. The delegation was headed by the director of the Institute of the World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences A.O.Chubaryan and the advisor of the President of Latvia on the history of the country professor A.Zunda. In the delegation there were representatives from academic institutions and universities of Russia, the Russian State Archive, the Department of History of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, representatives of the University of Latvia, the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Latvia, the State Archives of Latvia.12

Summing up the results of the “round table”, the academician A.O.Chubaryan stated in an interview with the press: “This is the first time we hold a “round table” of Russian and Latvian historians at our institute – a quite sharp discussion. They proposed to organize the joint conference devoted to the 70th anniversary of the “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact” next year (i.e. in 2009 – V.G.). But we have consulted with our colleagues and offered to do so within the framework of a commission of historians of Russia and Germany, with the participation of not only Latvians, but Lithuanians and Estonians. The Germans agree to it. And I would not call it “the 70th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact”, but rather “Problems of international relations and development of the events of 1939-1941”.13

International Scientific Conference “The Tragedy of Europe: from the crisis in 1939 to Nazi Germany’s attack on the Soviet Union” was held in Moscow at the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences on 9-10 July 2009. The organizers of the conference, which was the fourth meeting the Latvian and Russian historians, were the Joint Commission for
the study of the modern history of Russian–German relations (the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Contemporary History (Munich–Berlin, the Federal Republic of Germany), the University of Latvia and the Russian State University of Humanities. At the conference Latvia was represented by: Professor I. Feldmanis (the theme of the speech: “The Munich Agreement and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: A Comparative Analysis”), Professor A. Zunda (“The issue of guarantees to the Baltic countries at the Moscow negotiations of the three Powers in spring and summer of 1939”) and Professor H. Strods (“Mutual deliveries of the USSR and Germany in 1939-1941”).

Finally, on 15-16 November 2010, there was the fifth meeting of the Latvian and Russian historians: the National Committee of Russian historians, the Academic Education Association of the humanities and the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences organized an international scientifically practical conference “History, historians, and the modern society: in search of understanding”. As reported in the press release, the conference was designed to find ways of understanding between the contemporary society and professional historical community, to answer the question whether it is possible to have a dialogue between them? Can professional historians change the mythological perception of history in the society? Can a historian compete for the mass consciousness with publicists? Can the story be interesting, exciting and really useful to the society without losing its academicism?

The conference was attended by prominent historians, journalists and writers from Russia and Europe: Professor A. O. Chubaryan (Director of the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences), Academician Y. S. Pivovarov (Director of the Institute of Scientific Information in Social Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences), Corresponding Member J. J. Pivovar (Russian State University for Humanities), Professor Dominic Liv- en (London School of Economics). The Commission of historians of the President of Latvia was represented on the conference by Professor A. Zunda, who made a 20-minute presentation on the “Study of History of the Second World War in Latvia. 1990-2010”.

On 11 November, he formulated the purpose of his participation in the conference in an interview with the right-wing radical newspaper “Latvijas avize”: “I would like to draw your attention onto the fact that the Latvian Legion created in 1943 was not involved in the crimes against the civilian population nor to the Holocaust. I also intend to raise the issue of collaborationism and resistance, because in the Soviet times, it was assumed that only the Soviet underground fought the Germans”. In other words, as his main task A. Zunda considered the rebuttal adopted in the Russian historical science of assessment of the history of Latvia during the Nazi occupation.

Thus, in the period of 2000-2010, there were only five meetings of scientists of the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Commission of Historians of the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Commission of Historians during the leadership of the President of the Republic of Latvia

There is following information published on the website of the President of the Republic of Latvia on the Commission of Historians: “The Commission of Historians of Latvia was founded on 13 November 1998 at the initiative of the former President G. Ulmanis. It began its work in end of 1998, consisting of 11 members – the Commission included professional historians from the Institute of History of the University of Latvia, the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the University of Latvia, the State Historical Archives, the Museum of Occupation and the staff of the Office of the President of the country. The Director of the Institute of History Professor Andris Caune (archaeologist by profession – V.G.) was elected as the chairman (first – V.G.) of the Commission. In collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there was a selection of a foreign committee members and their inclusion into the Commission. Meetings of the Commission with the participation of foreign members are meant to be held twice a year. Attracting foreign scientists and public figures should facilitate the objectivity of the Commission, as well as allow to get better acquainted with the historical research methods developed in the West.

The main task of the Commission at the initial stage of their work was to study and comprehend the problem of “crimes against humanity during the two occupations, 1940-1956” and the organization of the development of the final report. Only a few members of the Commission were engaged in the direct study of the subject, as the main work is carried out by about 25 professional historians.

The work planned for several years, this is connected with the need to embrace the new archival materials in Latvia and foreign countries, and with the need to get the most objective assessment of the issues on this topic.

There are five established working groups, which operate independently from each other:

1. Crimes against humanity on the territory of Latvia in 1940-1941 (Head of the group Professor I. Schneider).  
2. Holocaust in Latvia in 1941-1944 (Head of the group Professor A. Stranga).
3. Crimes against humanity on the territory of Latvia during the Nazi occupation of 1941-1944 (Head of the group Professor I. Feldmanis).

4. Crimes against humanity in Latvia during the Soviet occupation of 1944-1956 (Head of the group Professor H. Strods).

5. Latvia in the Soviet Union during 1956-1990 (Head of the group Dr. hist. Daina Bleiere).

At this stage of work of the Commission the most actual issue is the detailed study of the policy of the Nazi’s regime and the Soviet regime, the understanding and evaluation of the Holocaust...

In recent years, the Commission has been drawing more attention to the problems of development of Latvia in the Soviet Union. The objective study of the history is important in the context of the inter-state dialogue between Latvia, Israel, Russia and other countries.

The Commission’s task for the future is to contribute to teaching history at schools, preparing the base for development of new textbooks, and also to facilitate popularization of information about the events of this period in the society, to explain the history of Latvia abroad”.17

In order to resolve discrepancies in evaluations of the history of Latvia among Latvian and Russian students of schools and to increase the influence of “occupational ideology” on the minds of non-Latvians, in autumn 2010, the “Foundation of a small library of the Latvian history” was established. Professor I. Feldmanis was elected as the Chairman of the board of the Foundation.

On 3 December, in an interview with the right-wing radical newspaper “Latvijas avīze” he frankly explained why it was necessary to create a new fund: “... we have established the “Foundation of a small library of the Latvian history” to resist the policy of propaganda, which Russia leads against Latvia and other former Soviet republics. Their goal is to change our national identity... The purpose of the propaganda is to achieve a friendly attitude of Latvians towards Russia and to make Latvia more Russian”, – he said.18

According to the newspaper “Latvijas avīze”, the leaders of the foundation have ambitious plans – to publish about 60 books on the basic problems of the history of Latvia “to strengthen the national and state identity” and “to oppose to the Russian information field”, but in 2011 to hold the first Congress of Historians of Latvia. According to Feldmanis, “Latvian historians ought to take more aggressive positions in response to things that affect the statehood of Latvia and historical values of the Latvian identity, especially in relation to the events of the twentieth century”. The new fund will be working closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, a number of employees of which prepare their brochures for the foundation.19

Creation of the joint Latvian-Russian Commission of Historians

On 19-22 December 2010, there was the official visit of the President of Latvia Valdis Zatlers in Russia. On 20 December, after the meeting with the President of the Russian Federation, Valdis Zatlers told the media that “the main achievement of the present day is an agreement on the establishment of an interstate commission of historians, to which Medvedev promised to contribute personally”.20

Why did the Latvian party eventually agree to the creation of the Latvian-Russian commission of historians? According to the head of the research programmes of the Fund “Historical Memory” Vladimir Simindev the author of the book “Historical Politics of Latvia. Materials for the study”, “this commission was supported by the Latvian establishment only because of the fact that it is considered as part of the whole infrastructure of the historic policy in Latvia, which is aimed at changing the facts on the patterns of the official ideology... Starting from 1990-1991 a complete revision of the events, associated with the period of inclusion in the USSR, began to be used in Latvia at the state level as a tool to reformat the public consciousness and consolidate the new government... The ideological foundations that guide the official Latvian historiography, are documented in a number of politically declarative acts of the government, which should also include the declaration of the Saeima “On the Occupation of Latvia” from 22 August 1996, “On the Latvian legionaries in the Second World War” from 29 October 1998, “On the condemnation of the totalitarian communist occupation regime of the USSR in Latvia” from 12 May 2005. These documents remain valid until now”.21

Securing the ideology of the Latvian state on the level of political declarations adopted by the Parliament prescribed a very high level of politicization in work of Latvian historians. The Chairman of the Commission of Historians of the President of Latvia Professor I. Feldmanis, both before Zatlers’s visit to Russia in December 2010 and after that, pointed out that the main theme of Latvian historians is the question of the occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Union in 1940. On 3 December, in an interview with “Latvijas avīze” he said: “I want to throw a stone here in the Garden of the Latvian journalism. I do not understand why the media, particularly the Latvian Radio, dare to hold an ambiguous discussion about whether there was or was not the (Soviet) occupation. It is more than obvious that there was! There is nothing more to hide! This is a red line, which cannot be crossed! The fact of occupation cannot be argued about! Why should the activity of the USSR be assessed differently than the activities of Nazi Germany?”22
On 22 December, in an interview with the news agency BNS, professor Feldmanis once again stated that “the first subject, most likely, would not touch the occupation, but we shall not give up the case ... Occupation is a red line in our history ... Our position in relation to the events in 1939-1940 of the last century is certain and unchangeable. The Commission’s work will be placed in the way, which is useful for Latvia”.23

The Academician A.O.Chubaryan stated in an interview with the “Rossiyskaya Gazeta” on 21 December: “We think we should speak about the fact that the controversial issues of the history should be discussed at the highest level.” In this case, “it is important that all the planed would not become an element of political speculations, that the story would not become a hostage of modern politics”.

The correspondent of “Rossiyskaya Gazeta” asked the Academician a question on the occupation of the Baltic republics in 1940: You certainly remember what a rapid response was caused by the publication of the Russian historian Natalia Lebedeva, who wrote that in 1940 the Soviet Union “began the process of occupation, which was followed by the annexation of Lithuania and other Baltic countries” ... Will it be possible to find the common language on this formulation? Academician A.O.Chubaryan gave the following answer: “We have our own point of view on this matter. Most Russian historians are of the opinion that there was no occupation. Recently there has been a release of the second volume of the collection of documents “the Soviet Union and Lithuania” (in the first volume, there was just a preface of Lebedeva published). So in the second volume the preface was written by our Lithuanian colleagues, who called this process of accession as incorporation. I personally prefer this formulation. By the way, the term “incorporation” was used in the decision of the British government immediately after the events of 1939-1940”.24

Academician Alexander Chubaryan: “Does Latvia want to experience the second Nuremberg? That’s outrageous!”

At the end of September 2012, Professor Inesis Feldmanis, who stood out with his repeated and extremely Russophobic and anti-Russian statements, resigned from the position of a co-chairman of the Latvian-Russian Joint Commission of Historians. Professor Antonijs Zunda was appointed as a new co-chairman, who was listed as an advisor to the President of Latvia on the issues of history until July 2012. The Russian side was expecting that the change of the Latvian co-chairman of the commission would make its work less politicized. But it wasn’t like this. On 31 May 2013 in Riga, on the initiative of the deputy of the Saeima of Latvia, the Head of the Latvian delegation to the OSCE PA Vineta Porina, the deputy of the European Parliament Inese Vaidere and with the support of the European People’s Party and the European Centre of the Study of the East European Politics (Latvia), there was a conference “Community of security OSCE from Vancouver to Vladivostok: Reality or illusion?” Speaking at the conference, Professor A.Zunda said that the valuable contribution of the OSCE in promoting the Latvian-Russian dialogue and achieving reconciliation in matters of history would be a real and objective international assessment of both totalitarian regimes and their crimes. For example, it would be appropriate to hold a second Nuremberg trial in order to assess the impact and consequences of the communist regime.25

The statement of Professor A.Zunda caused a sharp reaction from the academician A.O.Chubaryan. “This is an outrage, – said A.O.Chubaryan. Anyway, if he is offering it, this is his personal opinion, and we will never go for it”.26

In December 2013, there was the third meeting of the Russian-Latvian Commission of Historians. Discussing the preparation of the volume of collected archival documents “Economic and political relations and cultural relations between the Republic of Latvia and the USSR in the interwar period. 1918-1939”, the edition of which is scheduled for 2015. According to the assessment of the Co-Chairman of the Russian side, the academician A.O.Chubaryan, “the last meetings we had were quite constructive. Colleagues are now working in our archives – three people; we are preparing a book on the Latvian-Russian relations during the interwar period”. (27) In turn, A.Zunda said that this would be a unique collection as no archival documents from both countries were published together before. In the collection, there will be separate sections dedicated to the economic, political and cultural relations between Latvia and the Soviet Union, documents on refugees, re-evacuation, and ideological issues and other.28
Chapter 7

Political and international legal aspects of the evaluation of the thesis about permanency of the legal continuity of the Republic of Latvia in the period from 1918 to 1991

The lawyer Konstantin Matveev notes that “not only the political system, but much broader – the entire legal system of Latvia, which has been developed during the last 20 years, is based on the assumption of the presence of the occupation in 1940, and not only of the year 1940, but also the Soviet occupation – which is more important – as it has been lasting for 50 years. This is the cornerstone. The fundamental fact of division of the Latvian people into citizens and non-citizens, which was legally embodied in the text of the judgment of the Supreme Council of Latvia on 15 October 1991, determines exactly the fact of occupation of Latvia as its only motivating moment.

Therefore, this thesis leads to all legal consequences and derivatives of the document from 15 October 1991: deprivation from participation in the political life of a very large part of the people, the lack of universal suffrage in the country de facto, the lack of a legitimate authority, because there cannot be any legitimate authority in the country where there is no universal suffrage”.1

The thesis of the Occupation of Latvia in the period from 1940 to 1991 is a key thesis also for the legal basis of the concept of continuity of the Republic of Latvia (LR) in the period from 1918 to 1991 year.2 In order to promote this thesis and to incorporate it into the public consciousness, in 1993 in the building of a former Memorial to the Monument to the Latvian Red Riflemen, there was the so-called “Museum of the Occupation” opened. Museum funds today include about 30 thousand documents, pictures, written, oral and material evidence, reflecting the history of Latvia from 1940 to 1991, as well as memorabilia from prisons and special settlements. Scientists from Latvia, Sweden, the UK, the USA and Russia participate in the research work of the museum. The Museum also created traveling exhibitions (in several languages): “Latvia in 1939-1991: from occupation to freedom” (exhibited in museums and schools of Latvia); “Latvia is returning to Europe” (exhibited in the building of the European Parliament, in Australia, Canada); “Latvia is returning to the free world” (exhibited in the United States). The museum publishes a periodical – “Yearbook of the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia”.

However, questions about the occupation of Latvia in the period from 1940 to 1991 and on the continuity of the Republic of Latvia in the period from 1918 to 1991 have not been and are not considered by countries and any international organizations alike, due to the different assessment of the changes in 1940 year in the Baltic States.

Let us remind that in 1940, the entry of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union was not recognized by the United States and the Vatican. But it was recognized de jure by Sweden, Spain, the Netherlands, Australia, India, Iran, New Zealand, Finland, and de facto – by the United Kingdom and some other countries.3

Consequently, as noted in the book “History of Latvia. The 20th century” (Riga, 2005) prepared by the Historians Commission of the President of the Republic of Latvia, after 1991, some states have recognized the succession of the Republic of Latvia, proclaimed on 4 May 1990, with the existing state until 1940. However, Russia, China, Cuba, Sweden and several other states have recognized the Republic of Latvia as a new independent state.

Positions of international organizations were also different. The UN Security Council calculated a fee for participation in the UN proportionally to the former contributions of the USSR to this organization. Latvia had to enter again in the International Labour Organization. At the same time, the Council of Europe recognized the succession of the Baltic countries.4

On the history of the origin of the thesis of the Occupation of Latvia

From October 2008 to April 2009 in the National History Museum of Latvia, there was an opening of an exhibition “The Republic of Latvia is 90 years old”, dedicated to the anniversary of the state. The main theme of the exhibition was the consolidation and continuity of the Latvian state within 90 years of its existence.2

And in October 2010, the ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, the co-chairman of the Association for other policy (block “Unity”) Artis Pabriks expressed an opinion on the theme of continuity of the existence of the State of Latvia as a subject of the international law, pointing on a key role in the recognition of the fact of occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Union in June 1940. “The recognition of the “occupation” of Latvia – it is a matter of recognizing the legal status of the Latvian state. Most people understand
the issue of legality of the existence of Latvia “somewhat primitive” – “there was occupation, there was no occupation”. The word “occupation” for me personally does not matter if I know that people think of our country in the same way as I do, about its succession, about the fact that the State did not stop existence in the Soviet era. That’s the main thing”, – pointed the politician.6

The basis for the recognition of permanence of the continuity of Latvia from 1918 to 1991 for the countries that have recognized such continuity after 1991, are statements of the leaders of the United States that the United States had never recognized the fact of voluntary accession of Latvia to the Soviet Union and had always supported the struggle of the Latvian people for the restoration of an independent state. In this issue they usually refer to the Declaration of the United States from 23 July 1940, which was signed by Deputy of the Secretary of State of the USA, Sumner Welles.

1940 was the year of the presidential elections in the United States. Roosevelt claimed for the third presidential term, and therefore wanted to ensure the support of people from the Baltic States, the total number of which at that time amounted to 500 thousand people. Some members of this community negatively evaluated the changes that had occurred in republics of the Baltic States. Lithuanians acted particularly active in this respect. On 29 June, the delegation of Lithuanian Americans met the Lithuanian envoy in Washington Povilas Zhaleykis. As the result of this meeting, on 13 July, Zhaleykis sent a letter to the US Secretary of State, in which he emphasized that the elections to the Saeima, conducted under the auspices of the Communist Party, do not represent the free will of the Lithuanian people. It is quite possible that Roosevelt, giving an indication to the US Secretary of State Sumner Welles to sign a corresponding declaration, took into account this letter, but, as indicated by the Estonian historian Magnus Ilmyarv, a very important role in adopting this decision was played by the economic interests of the United States in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

On July 13, the state-owned banks in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania reported to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York that the gold reserves of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania is sold to the Central Bank of the USSR. Two days later, on 15 July, President Roosevelt issued a decree and ordered the Ministry of Finance to freeze all assets of the Baltic countries, stored in the United States. On the basis of this order, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York refused to hand over the gold reserves of the USSR, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The ships of the Baltic republics were not meant to be given back, which happened to stay in the ports of the United States at this crucial juncture.7

### Sumner Welles Declaration

The text of the Declaration was written by Lou Henderson, Director of the Bureau of European relations of the US Department of State, under consultation with S.Welles and President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Sam S.Welles, at the time of illness of the Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who was his Executive Officer, had been busy at this time with the writing of the so-called “Atlantic Charter”, one of the main policy documents the anti-Hitler coalition. This Charter was discussed and adopted by the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the American President Franklin D. Roosevelt a year later at the Atlantic Conference “Riviera”, what was announced on 14 August 1941. Later, on 24 September 1941, the USSR joined the Charter.

The Atlantic Charter was designed to determine the structure of the world after the Allied victory in the Second World War.
of reason, justice and law – in other words, the foundation of the modern civilization – cannot be saved”.

Analysing this document, we must pay attention to the fact that it does not use terms such as “annexation”, “incorporation” or “occupation”. This is not just an accident. At the time of signing and publication of the Declaration Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were still independent states, i.e. subjects of the international law. Let us remind you that after the elections on 14-15 July 1940, the highest authorities of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, decided to restore the Soviet regime on 21-22 July and to ask the supreme legislative authority of the Soviet Union to take the Baltic republics of the Soviet Union. The acceptance into the USSR took place only in the beginning of August at the session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Therefore, the Declaration of Welles, in fact, was about the non-recognition of decisions of the higher authorities of the Baltic republics to restore the Soviet power, i.e. the Declaration had initially political, ideological and anti-Soviet rather than legal reasoning.

Reaction of European and Asian countries towards the changes in the Baltic States

As noted by M.Ilmyarv, “the United States became the only country, which, using political means, spoke in defence of the Baltic countries without being requested to do so by their governments, and the only state that categorically voted against such actions of the USSR”. Excluding the Vatican and Portugal, all other countries in one form or another (whether de facto or de jure) recognized the carried out changes. Already on 17 June, Germany declared that the activities of the Soviet Union in the Baltic States refer only to the Soviet Union and the Baltic republics, and that Germany has no reason to worry about what happened.12 Similar statements were made by Italy, Hungary, Romania, Japan.13

Switzerland and the United Kingdom also announced recognition of the changes, and the UK press indicated the voluntary nature of the entry of the Baltic republics into the Soviet Union.14 A similar decision was taken by Sweden and Finland.15

The Control Commission of the League of Nations put the Baltic Republics “into the category of members of the League of Nations with a special status”. But the secretary general of the League of Nations, Sean Lester avoided official contacts with the diplomatic representatives of the former governments of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, who stayed in Geneva. Britain encouraged the League of Nations to deny these representatives the right to pay dues to
Lou Henderson was intimately familiar with the Baltic countries. After the First World War, he spent 18 years working in the Department of the Eastern Europe of the State Department. He was the officer who opened in the capital of Lithuania Kaunas the Red Cross office. Finally, it is important to note that with the Baltic countries, particularly with Latvia, he was bound by ties of kinship – his wife was Latvian.

During the conversation in the morning of 23 July, Wells asked Henderson to prepare a press release, “expressing our sympathy to the peoples of the Baltic countries and condemning the Soviet action”. When the text was ready, S.Welles noticed that the expressions were not strong and hard enough. In the presence of Henderson Wells called Roosevelt and read him a draft of the document. Roosevelt agreed that the document should be changed. Welles re-wrote a few sentences and added a few new ones that seem to have been proposed by the president.

According to Henderson, “President Roosevelt was outraged by the way the Soviet Union annexed the Baltic States and personally approved the accusing text of a statement of the deputy of State Welles on this topic”.

On the same day, the Declaration was published and transmitted by telegraph to the American Embassy in Moscow.⁹

The text of the Declaration states:

“Over the past few days the process of political independence and the territorial integrity of the three small Baltic republics – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – were deliberately destroyed by one of their more powerful neighbours...

From the very beginning, as soon as the people of these republics gained their independence and a democratic form of government, the people of the United States had been observing the remarkable progress of self-government with a deep and sympathetic interest.

The policy of the present government is well known. The people of the United States are against predatory methods of operation, regardless whether they are carried out through the use of force or threat of force. The people of the United States are against any forms of intervention of one state, no matter how powerful it may be, in the internal problems of any other weaker but sovereign state.

These principles form the foundations, on which the existing relationships between the 21 republics of the New World are based.

The United States will continue to support these principles, because the American people believe that if the doctrine, to which these principles are innate, does not govern the relationship between the countries, then the rules

the League of Nations. The League of Nations followed these indications. Money given to it by former members of the Baltic states as membership fees in 1943, were sent back to them. Technically, as noted by M. Ilmyarv, the representatives of the Baltic republics have acted under the League of Nations until its liquidation in April 1946. But they were not allowed to participate in the session, which ended the activities of the League of Nations, which was explained by the fact that the parliaments of the three countries voted in favour of joining the Soviet Union, and there are no longer any internationally recognized governments of the Baltic republics. Objections in the sense that the voting in 1940 was held under the pressure of the USSR, was hard to prove.¹⁶

**Thesis on the occupation of the Baltic States and the Nazi Germany**

Although on 17 June 1940, Germany announced that the activities of the Soviet Union in the Baltic States apply only to the Soviet Union and the Baltic republics, and that Germany has no reason to worry about what happened, after 22 June 1941 the situation radically change. To configure the local population against the Soviet Union, the thesis of the Soviet occupation of the independent Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in 1940, after the Nazi Germany’s attack on the Soviet Union, became the main one in the Nazi propaganda. In Latvia, the date of 17 June 1940 was annually referred to as the date of the Soviet occupation. In May 1942, the propaganda book “Baigais gads” (“The Terrible Year”) was published, in which the year of the Soviet power in Latvia was presented as the year of terrible terror against the Latvians. This book was prepared for publication on an initiative of the Gestapo “Commission of Investigation of the atrocities of the Bolsheviks in Latvia”. The content of the commission was published in the collection of archival documents “Latvia under the yoke of Nazism” (Moscow, 2006). The commission included:

- Otto Zutis, born in 1900, during the government of Ulmanis he worked as an assistant of the prosecutor of the Riga Regional Court, during the Nazi occupation he was the chief prosecutor of the Riga Regional Court – the chairman of the commission;
- Edward Pukitis, born in 1889, the former admiral of the Latvian fleet in the period 1926-1935, he was the organizer and leader of the nationalist organization “Vilnis” (“Wave”) – a member of the Commission;
- Marts Gruzis, born in 1887, the former captain of the Latvian army, before the start of the Great Patriotic War, he worked as an orderly at the Riga psychiatric hospital – a member of the Commission.
At the disposal of “Zutis’s commission”, there was a team of 40 people, which was engaged in a special “treatment” of corpses, disfiguring them in every way, after what, basing on this, the members of the “commission” drew up and signed fictive acts on “atrocities” of the Bolsheviks.

To hide the fact of intentional vandalizing of corpses, the Germans shot 10 Jewish women taken by them out of the ghetto to work in Zutis’s team.

“The Zutis’s Commission” worked under the direct supervision of the Commissioner General of the General District “Latvia” of the Reich Commissariat “Ostland” Otto-Heinrich Drexler and the chief of the Riga Gestapo Obersturmbannführer Rudolf Lange.17

In June 1941, Rudolf Lange was appointed as a chief of the Gestapo department Einsatzgruppe “A”. He was involved in the destruction of civilians on the occupied territory of the USSR. From 3 December 1941 – he was the Commander of the Security Police and the Security Service (SD) in Latvia (headquarters – Riga) and at the same time – the commander of Einsatzgruppe 2 “A”. In December 1941, he organized the mass executions of Jews in Riga. On 20 January 1942, he participated in the Wannsee Conference, which discussed the ways and methods of the “final solution of the Jewish question”. Rudolf Lange is largely responsible for the destruction of the Jewish population of Latvia.

German propaganda had been actively using “materials” of “Zutis’s commission” for the anti-Soviet campaign in the Baltic States. There were festive funerals of the “victims of the Bolsheviks”, the anti-Soviet demonstrations, and there was also a release of the propaganda film “Red Mist”, the main scenes of which were made by the laboratory, where from single pictures of the corpses there were fabricated shots of the “mass graves of the victims of the Bolsheviks”. In the Riga film studio, for the same film, a sham condemned cell was built as if in the NKVD (The People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs) prison with inscriptions of convicts on the walls.18

During the four years, the Soviet occupation of Latvia and the crimes of the Bolsheviks in 1940 were described by pro-Nazi newspapers “Tevija” (“Fatherland”), “Zemgale”, magazines “Darbs un zeme”, “Ostland” and others. In Latvia in the second half of 1941 in Latvia there were 43 legal newspapers published, which were controlled by the Nazis. In 1942 their number exceeded 50 units.19 “The Nazis strived to cultivate a sharply negative attitude to the Russians among Latvians” – noted the Russian historian Y.Z.Kantor.20 In the minds of the local population there was always a myth that the Bolshevik Soviet Union wanted to destroy the Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians totally, unlike the Nazi Germany that saved Latvians, just like Estonians and Lithuanians, from destruction. As a result of this propaganda many Latvians, even 70 years later, continue to believe that the year of the Soviet power in Latvia had far more severe consequences for the Latvian nation than four years of Nazi occupation.

“The Baltic question” at the conferences of the leaders of countries of the anti-Hitler coalition

On the meetings of the leaders of the Anti-Hitler’s coalition during the Second World War – the USA, Great Britain and the Soviet Union – the topic of the Baltic States was discussed only once – during the meeting of the President of the USA Franklin D. Roosevelt with the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR I.V.Stalin on 1 December 1943 in Tehran. Roosevelt then told Stalin that the United States may raise the question on the inclusion of the Baltic republics into the Soviet Union. “I believe that the world public opinion would consider it as desirable that sometime in the future, the people of these republics would express their opinion on this issue in some way. So I hope that the marshal Stalin would take this request into account. Personally, I have no doubt that the people of these countries would all vote to join the Soviet Union, as they did in 1940”, – said Roosevelt. “In the United States there is also a number of Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians. I know, – added the president the United States, – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia had formed part of the Soviet Union in the past, and, when the Russian army again enters into these republics, I will not fight over this with the Soviet Union. But the public opinion may require a plebiscite there”. Stalin replied: “As for the wish of the people of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, we will have a lot of occasions to give the folks of these republics the opportunity to express their will”. Roosevelt: “It will be useful for me”. Stalin: “It certainly does not mean that a plebiscite in these republics should take place under some form of international control”. Roosevelt: “Of course not. It would be useful to make a statement at the relevant point that there will be elections n these republics”. Stalin: “Of course, it can be done ...” 21

That was practically the whole conversation between Roosevelt and Stalin on annexation of the Baltic republics into the USSR in 1940. In 1945, it seemed, the question on the Baltic States was closed forever. The Potsdam Conference, which confirmed the integrity of the borders of the USSR on 22 June 1941 and the cogency of the post-war borders, excluded any legal and socio-political “inconsistencies” with respect to the Baltic republics and their annexation to the Union of the SSR, – said Y.Z.Kantor.22

The United States, Britain and other Western countries maintained a rigid rejection of communist ideology of the USSR throughout the period after October 1917. This situation has not changed, even after a short collaboration of the United States and Great Britain with the Soviet Union in the framework of the anti-Hitler coalition during Second World War. In contrast, the political strengthening of the Soviet Union after 1945 became the major cause of the outbreak of so-called “Cold War” in the West.

On 5 March 1946, in a provincial college of a small American town of Fulton, Winston Churchill gave a speech that became the official announcement of the Cold War between the West and the USSR. And on 15 April 1950, the President of the United States H. Truman approved the secret directive number 68, developed by the Security Council, in which the Soviet Union was announced an enemy number 1.

As long as the Soviet Union did not have nuclear weapons, the United States and its allies had been developing plans of a “hot” war, but after the Soviet Union got its own atomic and nuclear weapons, the United States began to focus on psychological war.

In its confrontation with the Soviet Union the United States administration had actively referred to the issue of the Baltic States.

In 1953, the House of Representatives of the US Congress adopted a resolution number 346, calling for a special investigation of the fact of annexation of the Baltic States to the Soviet Union. On 27 July 1953, a Special Baltic Committee was established, chaired by Charles J. Kersten.

On 30 November and 11 December 1953, the Special Committee held hearings, the report of the results of which was presented in February 1954. During its work, the Special Committee interviewed approximately 100 witnesses, including Klesman, the former Estonian government official; Chernius, the former Prime Minister of Lithuania, Juozas Brazaitis and the former President of the United States Herbert Hoover.

Subsequently, the Special Baltic Committee was transformed into the Special Committee on Communist aggression, which continued its work until 31 December 1954.

On 17 July 1959, i.e. at the peak of the anti-Communist hysteria in the United States, the United States Congress decided to mark annually the “Oppressed Nations Week”. A little later, this decision became the law PL.86-90, obliging the presidents to annually confirm the purpose of the United States to release the victims of the “imperialist policy of Russia, causing by direct and indirect aggression, starting from 1918, the creation of a great empire, which represents a direct threat to the security of the United States and all the nations of the world.”

In relations between the USSR and the USA, this law did not just provoke conflict situations. A typical example: during the visit of the Vice President Richard Nixon in the USSR in 1959, Nikita Khrushchev accused him of the fact that in the federal law of the United States (the law P.L.86-90), the demand for the dismemberment of the USSR – the state, to which he pays a visit, is absolutely contrary to the international law. In response Richard Nixon embarrassedly made excuses and even called this requirement of the Congress “stupid”.

Since 1982, the US support of the thesis of the alleged illegal accession of the Baltic States to the Soviet Union was getting much more active. This was due to secret US CIA activities on support of the forces, which are for radical economic and political weakening of the Soviet Union until its territorial division. In accordance with the secret directive “NSDD – 32”, approved by the President Ronald Reagan in 1982, the official aim of the United States from that time was the elimination of the Soviet influence in the Eastern Europe and in the Baltic republics. It was about the financial support of organizations and individuals, who spoke from anti-Soviet positions.

President Reagan had discussed with his advisers not only the question of the support of the Polish “Solidarity”, but also the question of the elimination of the decisions of the Yalta Conference, which defined the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union and the United States in Europe after the Second World War. “Reagan did not have time to discuss the Yalta Conference, – said Richard Pipes. – He found it unfair.”

American pressure on the Soviet Union on the issues of the Baltic States was further enhanced, when “Perestroika”, announced by Gorbachev in the mid-eighties, encountered serious economic difficulties, which led to a dramatic surge in ethnic tensions, and then to the growth of separatist sentiments first in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and then in the other republics of the USSR. At this stage, the United States directly push the demand to “let the Baltic states go.”

As the crisis in the Baltic States was increasing, the American press and the Congress began to put more pressure on President Bush, demanding that he would not give in to Gorbachev. Senators and congressmen demand immediate diplomatic recognition of Lithuania. Even Senator Nancy Kassenbaum, a moderate Kansas Republican, “hit” the drums, demanding independence for Lithuania.
In these circumstances, on 11 March 1990, the Supreme Council of Lithuania decides to restore the independence of the Republic of Lithuania. Lithuania was the first Soviet republic to declare its independence from the Soviet Union.

On 22 March 1990, speaking at a press conference, Bush repeated that the United States had never recognized the Soviet annexation of Lithuania. “However, – he added – there are certain realities of life, and Lithuanians are well aware of them, and they should negotiate, which they do, with Soviet officials to reconcile the differences”.

On 1 May 1990, the Senate of the US with 73 votes against 24, decided to deprive Moscow of MFN trade until it would start negotiations with Vilnius.

Feeling the support of the United States with respect to Lithuania, on 4 May, the Latvian parliament also declared independence and separation from the Soviet Union.

In the morning of 18 May, the Secretary of State John Baker met with Gorbachev in the Kremlin. Baker reminded Gorbachev that he and Bush did not have much room to manoeuvre: “as long as the Kremlin will use the tactics of force towards the Baltic States, the trade agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union will be under threat.

Gorbachev said that he wanted to “change the climate”. But he would have to solve “difficult problems”: “We shall create together with the Lithuanians such status, which they want.”

On 30 May started the official visit of Mikhail Gorbachev in the United States. The Soviet delegation arrived in Washington from the Air Force Base Andrews, accompanied by the escort of motorcyclists, where it was met by demonstrators with different placards: “We support Gorbachev” ... “Get away from Lithuania” ... “Stop attacking Armenians” ...

M.Beshloss noted that “these conflicting appeals reminded that there are opposing forces in relation to the Soviet Union in American society: the widespread endorsement of Gorbachev and his policy went hand in hand with a more critical attitude of the various ethnic groups such as Americans of Baltic origin and American Armenians, who saw in the Soviet leader a strangler of their relatives, who were still living in the “prison of nations”.

During the negotiations, Bush agreed to sign a trade agreement with the Soviet Union – under the condition that Gorbachev would confirm his promise to settle the Baltic crisis through a peaceful dialogue and not by force. But Bush lingered with the adoption of this decision until the last moment. No one thought to bring the relevant documents to the White House – it was necessary to send for them a carrier to the Ministry of Trade.

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Support of the US position in the Western Europe

After 1945, many Western European countries willingly supported the position of the United States on the issue of changes of 1940 in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. And there is nothing surprising. At this time the Western Europe did not only develop according to the economic scenario elaborated in the United States (the Marshall Plan), but also actively participated in the ideological confrontation between the West and the USSR.

On 29 September 1960, the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe heard a detailed report of the representative of Denmark on the fate of the Baltic countries. At that time, a resolution number 189 “On the situation in the Baltic States on the anniversary of their forced incorporation into the Soviet Union” was adopted. It was about the illegal incorporation of territories of independent states without giving people the opportunity to express their will. The resolution contained a statement of the fact that most of the governments of the free world continue to recognize the existence of independence of the Baltic States de jure. At that time the Council of Europe included 15 countries: Austria, Belgium, Britain, Germany, Greece, Denmark, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Turkey, France, Sweden.

On 13 January 1983, the European Parliament with the participation of deputies of 10 States have adopted a resolution, which condemns the occupation of former independent and neutral Baltic States by the Soviet Union, which began in 1940 as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and allegedly lasted until the adoption of the document.

On 28 January 1987, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted another resolution on the situation of the Baltic States, which recalled that the incorporation of these countries into the USSR is a flagrant violation of the rights of nations to self-determination.

Helsinki Final Act of the CSCE in 1975

We shall note here that all the above-mentioned resolutions wore politically-declarative, i.e. expressed certain political attitudes of the political elite of the West during the Cold War. In the international law, these resolutions were not reflected. Unlike the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Helsinki in 1975 which recognized the inviolability of the existing post-war borders between the states in Europe.
The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe began in Helsinki on 3 July 1973, it was continued in Geneva from 18 September 1973 to 21 July 1975 and was completed in Helsinki on 1 August 1975 by the High Representatives of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Iceland, Spain, Italy, Canada, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, the Holy See, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Turkey, Finland, France, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and Yugoslavia.

The Final Act of the Conference clearly articulated principles of inviolability of borders in the post-war Europe. In this document, in particular, it is said:

“I. Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty

The participating States will respect each other's sovereign equality and individuality as well as all the rights inherent in and encompassed by its sovereignity, including in particular the right of every State to juridical equality, to territorial integrity and to freedom and political independence. They will also respect each other's right freely to choose and develop its political, social, economic and cultural systems as well as its right to determine its laws and regulations. Within the framework of international law, all the participating States have equal rights and duties. They will respect each other's right to define and conduct as it wishes its relations with other States in accordance with international law and in the spirit of the present Declaration. They consider that their frontiers can be changed, in accordance with international law, by peaceful means and by agreement. (…)"

III. Inviolability of frontiers

The participating States regard as inviolable all one another's frontiers as well as the frontiers of all States in Europe and therefore they will refrain now and in the future from assaulting these frontiers. Accordingly, they will also refrain from any demand for, or act of, seizure and usurpation of part or all of the territory of any participating State.

IV. Territorial integrity of States

The participating States will respect the territorial integrity of each of the participating States. Accordingly, they will refrain from any action inconsistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations against the territorial integrity, political independence or the unity of any participating State, and in particular from any such action constituting a threat or use of force. The participating States will likewise refrain from making each other's territory the object of military occupation or other direct or indirect measures of force in contravention of international law, or the object of acquisition by means of such measures or the threat of them. No such occupation or acquisition will be recognized as legal.”

Based on the text of the Final Act of the CSCE in Helsinki, the thesis on the occupation and on the continuity of the existence of the Republic of Latvia de jure from 1918 to 1991 do not have justification from the point of view of the international law, as 33 states of Europe, the USA and Canada recognized the territorial integrity of the USSR in 1975, or, in other words, the legitimacy of the post-war borders of the USSR. The Holy See (the Vatican City) and Portugal, which in 1940 refrained from recognizing changes in the Baltic States, as well as the United States agreed with this.

The President of the USA Gerald Ford, signing the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference, said that “the United States of America gladly subscribe to this document because we subscribe to each of these principles”, i.e. in 1975 the United States unconditionally recognized the territorial boundaries of the states in the post-war Europe, including the Soviet borders.

The thesis in the Final Act about that “frontiers can be changed, in accordance with international law, by peaceful means and by agreement” indicates the theoretical possibility of future changes in the boundaries of any European state. That is what happened in the late 1980s – early 1990s as a result of the end of the existence of the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the USSR and the formation of the new states, including Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian state.

Baltic emigration

Despite the fact that the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe signed in 1975 the Helsinki confirmed the inviolability of the post-Second World War borders in Europe, the reluctance from the part of the United States and several countries of the Western Europe to recognize the choice of the peoples of the Baltic republics made the summer of 1940, at the ideological level, indicated on a wide use of double standards in the West.

This, in turn, created a comfortable political environment for activities for Baltic emigration, settled after 1945 in the West, the most radical part of which was closely associated with pre-war non-democratic political regimes in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia and the Nazi policy of extermination of civilians during the war.
According to current estimates, there were from 120 to 265-280 thousand people, who emigrated from Latvia to the West during the last period of the war. Some of them fled their homes for fear of Stalin’s repressions. But many left with the retreating Nazi troops, because during the Nazi occupation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia they actively served the Nazis and also participated in the destruction of the civilian population. After 1945, this part of emigration began to perform from the point of view of the revenge, actively promoting the thesis about the alleged illegal accession of the Baltic republics into the USSR in 1940, and also the fact that the service in the Nazi formations and government bodies actually had an aim to restore the independence of the Baltic countries. Naturally, the topic of participation in the mass murders of civilians at the same time remained unrevealed.

According to the Russian historian Boris Kovalev, only among those who, in accordance with the Law on Displaced Persons and the Refugee Protection Act, in the early post-war years, entered the United States, and those were about 550 thousand people (including people from the Baltic countries accounted for about 19 percent), there were from 1 thousand to 10 thousand people, who cooperated with the Nazi regime during the Second world War. But many of the refugees settled in Latin America, in Australia and Canada. And among them, there were also a lot of people from the Baltic States.

During the Cold War, the activities of the radical part of the Baltic emigration were actively supported by the West. In the same United States government continued to fund the activities of the pre-war Latvian diplomatic mission in Washington. The Head of Mission Anatols Dinbergs not only refused to accept the choices made by the people of Latvia in 1940, but performed from active anti-Soviet and Russophobic positions.

The thesis of the Occupation of Latvia was actively promoted and the Latvian exile radio in the United States and Britain, whose activities were paid by the American and British intelligence agencies and employees of which were officially considered to be members of these security forces.

In Germany, the anti-Soviet and Russophobic position was presented by the former member of the political party “Thunder Cross” and Nazi collaborator Adolf Schilde, also known as a prolific historian. Up until 1990, A.Shilde was the so-called “representative of the interests of Latvia” in Germany.

**Ditrihs Andrejs Leber**

A special place in the promotion of the thesis of the “occupation” of Latvia belongs to the legal scholar and one of the former members of the military sabotage and intelligence unit of the Abwehr “Brandenburg – 800” in 1941-1945 Ditrihs Andrejs Leber.

“The question on “the recognition of the occupation” of Latvia continues to excite the public. There is still no consensus, as from the legal point of view, how to assess what happened in 1940 ... – notes D.A.Leber in the book “Latvijas atmodas priekšvēsture (1940-1985) (History of Latvian National Awakening 1940-1985).

- “The new government of August Kirhenshtein, founded in June 1940, is sometimes characterized as a puppet ..., because it is believed that the new government had been formed as a result of threats and therefore had no legal power. However, you should keep in mind norms of international law recognized in 1940. Practice of those times comes from the fact that “coercion, applied in the process of signing contracts does not have the legal force of these contracts. In the scientific literature, this tradition is described as a “necessary evil”, because otherwise the war would continue forever...

Latvian government accepted the Soviet ultimatum on 16 June 1940. This occurred in the form of a written reply of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, which was handed by the Ambassador of Latvia in Moscow Frics Kocinsh to the Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov. In the reply it was stated about the Government’s commitment to ensure the free passage of the Soviet troops...

The Government of Latvia did not consider the Soviet ultimatum as an attack... The agreement of the Government of Latvia with the requirements put forward by the ultimatum, are legally qualified as an agreement with the Soviet Union... Ulmanis’s government... agreed... without ... protests... The government’s consent cannot be explained only by the personal opinion of Karlis Ulmanis. The government’s decision was an act of a governmental power in Latvia....”

Then D.A.Leber makes a dizzying somersault, stating “that in Latvia there was a military intervention and occupation in peacetime....” And then he admits: “But the armed intervention was not an armed aggression or armed
violence, as an additional contingent of the Red army was introduced into the territory of Latvia with the consent of the Government of Latvia...

Is it correct to assume that the government of Karlis Ulmanis and Karlis Ulmanis, himself as the president of the state, legitimized the occupation and annexation of Latvia? Edgars Andersons states in his major work on the foreign policy of Latvia (1984): “Remaining the President of the Republic until 21 July 1940, Karlis Ulmanis practically sanctioned the “takeover” of the Soviet power in Latvia”. The leader of the people should take on the blame for the loss of independence.”

Thus, even D.A. Leber stating that Latvia was occupied by the Soviet Union, at the same time recognizes that in terms of the international law that was in force at that time, the term “occupation” is actually inapplicable to what happened in Latvia in summer 1940.

“The truth” of Mavriks Vulfsons

In Latvia, the thesis of the “occupation” of the country by the Soviet Union in 1940 was widely used in the period of the Third Awakening (Atmoda in Latvian – revival) in 1988-1991.

The fact that there was no revolutionary situation in the summer of 1940 in Latvia was first announced at the plenum of creative unions on 2 June 1988. In fact, it was said at the plenum – the Stalin’s USSR, following the secret additional protocol to the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the USSR of 23 August 1939, according to which the Baltic countries were included in the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, occupied the Latvian state, forcibly interrupting its independent development.

Herald of this version of the events of 1940, widespread in the West, was the teacher of the Latvian Academy of Arts Mavriks Vulfsons. In his speech at the plenary session he said: “We must learn to face the truth, whatever it may be – sometimes difficult and even unbearable. Following this call ... I would like to express a few thoughts as to a distorted interpretation, what we still give the events of 1940 in Latvia, which became a historical turning point in the fate of the Latvian people. In recent months, I have received hundreds of letters from all over the country, the authors of which are – teachers, cultural workers, agronomists, historians, farmers, people of the older generation who survived the summer 1940. They categorically reject our version of a revolutionary situation. They have a very large impact on the younger generation. And express the belief that the establishment of the Soviet power was prescribed by the first paragraph of the secret protocol attached to the Treaty on the Non-

Aggression Pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany from 23 August 1939. It determined the fate of Latvia.”

After such ideological “breakthrough” in the assessment of the changes in 1940, the Popular Front of Latvia, formed in the autumn of that year, abandoned the concept of the “socialist revolution” and has adopted the concept of “occupation”. Moreover, the new ideology was adopted uncritically. Why did it happen? There are three main reasons.

The first reason – during the years of Soviet power, the studies of authoritarian and ethnocratic regimes that existed in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia before 1940, were given apparently lacking of attention. In addition, the topic of Soviet repression in 1940-1941 remained undisclosed, and in the post-war years, the topic of support of the policy of the Nazi Germany in 1941-1945 by many representatives of the peoples of the Baltic States, as well as the topic of an armed resistance in 1945-1953 also remained undisclosed. The researches on the history of the events of 1940, published in the West, were not published in the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian SSR. Many of these books, appearing in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, were immediately sent to Spetzkhran (“Special Storage Section”) and were available only to a very narrow circle of researchers. Such approach to the ideological work of the Soviet regime was an obvious error as it stimulated the formation of illusions among one part of the population about the true intentions of those who in the name of all emigrants from the Baltic States in the West spoke of the Occupation of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in 1940. In the minds of the part of population, especially the one that was connected by ties of kinship with the pre-war authoritarian regimes, or with Nazi collaborators during the war, a desire to idealize the emigration settled in the West was clearly formed.

The second reason – the lack of a wide dissident movement in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia during the years of the Soviet Power, resulting in the
fact that in these republics there was no development of its own, democratic ideology, as an alternative ideology to the Soviet regime, and to the “occupation” ideology, which was used by the radical part of the emigration from the Baltic countries settled in the West.

The third reason – a fierce ideological struggle of the Western countries against the USSR in 1946-1991, during which the thesis of the occupation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union in 1940 has always been given great importance as an important tool of weakening of the Soviet Union.

As a result of the combination of these three reasons – the ideological vacuum created after the rejection of the Soviet ideology, the idealization of western emigration and support of the “occupation” ideology from the Western countries – “the occupation” ideology was adopted first by the Popular Front of Latvia and Estonia and by the Movement “Sąjudis” in Lithuania, and after August 1991 by the new political elites in the newly formed Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian states, grown from opposition movements.

However, the “occupation” ideology, to the surprise of many countries, which supported the separatist movements in the Baltic States in their quest to secede from the Soviet Union, was adopted by the Nazi “appendage”. This fact is not surprising, if we take into account the Nazi “biography” of the radical part of the western Baltic emigration. As a result, in the Baltic countries at the level of state policy, there was an active course of reviewing of the results of the Second World War, some of the elements of which were political rehabilitation of the Nazi collaborators and prosecution of those who fought in the war on the side of the Anti-Hitler coalition.

Unfortunately, the “occupation” ideology directly or indirectly was supported by some pro-Western scholars, public and political figures of the USSR and Russia, who were familiar with the situation in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in 1940 only from promotional publications of activists for the independence of these countries. A striking example of such support is the activity of A.N.Yakovlev Commission on the political and legal assessment of the Soviet-German Non-aggression Pact of 23 August 1939.

Commission of A. N. Yakovlev made a fatal mistake in the issue of the Baltic States

In the official history of the Baltic States, today the Non-aggression Pact between the Soviet Union and Germany of 23 August 1939 today is directly linked to the changes of 1940, when the Soviet power was restored in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and the Baltic countries joined the USSR as Soviet republics. Moreover, today the official historiography in the Baltic States from June 1940 to June 1941 is regarded as the period of the Occupation of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia by Stalin’s Soviet Union, and the year of the Soviet power according to the consequences is assessed as a more severe period than during the Nazi occupation from 1941 to 1945. In Latvia, in relation to the period from June 1940 to June 1941, there is an official term “Terrible Year”, borrowed from the arsenal of Nazi propaganda in 1942 and approved in the historiography.

This interpretation of the consequences of Non-aggression Pact between the Soviet Union and Germany on 23 August 1939 is not new, it has been widely used immediately after the Second World War, when the short period of cooperation of the USSR, Britain and the United States within the framework of the anti-Hitler coalition was replaced by a long period of the Cold War. The idea that the changes of 1940 in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were nothing but the Soviet occupation of the independent Baltic States, and the obvious precursor of the occupation was the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, promoted by former supporters, new residents of the West, of authoritarian regimes of K. Ulmanis, A. Smetona and K. Pyats after 1945, and former Nazi Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian collaborators. Naturally, this thesis was actively supported by the anti-Soviet and Russophobian political forces in the West.

In fact, the same point of view was supported in December 1989 by the Commission of A.N.Yakovlev, established on 2 June 1989 at the 1st Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR for political and legal assessment of the Soviet-German Non-aggression pact of 1939.

In the Explanatory Note of 14 December 1989 to the Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR, the Commission noted that in the eyes of wide layers of population of the Baltic States the Soviet-German agreement of 1939 is the starting point for evaluation of subsequent events in 1940, which led to the inclusion of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia into the USSR”.44

And in the Commission’s note on the political and legal assessment of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact of 1939, which was read aloud at the 2nd Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR on 23 December 1989 by the chairman of the commission, A.Yakovlev, it was stated: “By entering the path of the division of the loot with the predator, Stalin began to communicate the language of ultimatums and threats with neighbouring, especially small countries. He did not consider it shameful to use the force of arms – as it happened in the dispute with Finland. He facilitated the return of Bessarabia to the Union, the restoration of the Soviet power in the Baltic republics. All this deformed Soviet policy and public morality”.”45
The Commission not only suggested to condemn the secret additional protocol to the non-aggression pact of 23 August 1939, but at the same time concluded that “… the subsequent events developed exactly according to the protocol”.46

At the same time, neither in the Explanatory Note, nor the report of A.N.Yakovlev there was anything said about the mass folk’s movement for support of the Soviet power in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, as well as about the fact that this movement was actually an expression of not only the pre-Soviet sentiments, which were preserved since 1918 and strengthened by the end of 1930s, but also an expression of traditions of prolonged cohabitation of peoples of Russia and the Baltic republics.

Refusing to take into account the inter-political processes in the Baltic countries in the assessment of the events of 1940, and focusing only on the foreign policy factor, namely, on the Soviet-German agreements of 1939 as the main cause of these events, the commission of A.N. Yakovlev, as a result, went on the side of those political forces in the West, which not only denied the decisive role of peoples’ masses in the events of 1940 in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, but also strove to the political and national revenge, to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the restoration of ethnocratic political regimes in the Baltic republics.


Protocols did not create a new legal framework for relations between the Soviet Union and third countries, but were used by Stalin and his entourage for the ultimatum and military pressure on other states in violation of the commitments of legal obligations”.

This issue of organizing the Congress by national radical (extremely nationalist) forces in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, as well as in the West was clearly seen as recognition of the fact of occupation of the Baltic States in 1940 by the USSR. Thus, the delegates of the Congress, succumbing to persuasion of their colleagues from the Baltic States, according to the well-known saying, “threw out the child along with the bath”.

The Congress delegate, writer Marina Kosteneckaja, the USSR People’s Deputy from Preili district of the Latvian SSR, in one of her articles described the preparatory work for the adoption of this resolution. “Big politics, – she said, – is done in the smoking rooms of the toilets, in hotel rooms, in the hotel corridors ... Still to explain to an ordinary deputy why he should vote for the recognition of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact can only be done in the secret smoke of the men’s room. Well, not exactly in the men’s room, but in the smoking room, where G.Starovoytova, M.Kostenetskaja stood, choking from thick smoke. The discussions were conducted whether in smoking rooms, or people gathered in the evenings in someone else’s hotel room, where at the table there was generally the mandatory Ukrainian bacon, Moldovan cognac and some Georgian greens. And at this common table it was sorted out, what exactly happened in the reality”.

That’s the way it was – it was not a scientific conference and it was not organized in the circle of historians, the discussion was about the consequences of the Non-aggression Pact with annexed additional secret protocols, which was signed in August 1939 by the Foreign Ministers of the USSR and Germany, for the Baltic republics. And it was not an accident. People’s Deputies of the USSR from Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, representing the Popular Front and the Movement “Sąjudis” did not need a scientific discussion of the problem. They sought to impose on the rest of his deputies their own politicized truth about the events of 1940 in the Baltic States, which was reduced to a definite conclusion that there were no revolutions in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, it was just that the Soviet Union occupied the territory of the independent Baltic states.

M.Kostenetskaja recalls that in order to draw this conclusion more convincing, “Estonians during the summer holidays printed the text of the pact with the secret protocols in Russian, attached maps printed in 1939 in the Soviet Union marking the Baltic States as part of the USSR. Although, by that time, officially the Baltic countries – Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania had not yet been occupied, no annexed ... And we bring these documents to the Secretariat of the Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR to be copied and distributed among the deputies. According to the regulations, if the deputy brings any document, he asks to copy it and distribute to all the deputies of the Congress. But this time it’s not the case! (...) We were denied the right to copy documents. We were told that these were bad documents and that they would not distribute them. However, the documents were offered by the deputies and not by some crooks from the street. What did we do? All deputies, except for the Muscovites, were staying in the hotel “Russia” and the hotel “Moscow”. I was staying in a hotel “Moscow”. We were walking in the hotel at night and throwing to all deputies the texts under the doors! It worked! If we handed out the documents in the hall, then the deputies
would have been ashamed of the public atmosphere and most likely would not be reading the texts ... And so during the morning coffee, the deputies went through the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which we will speak about at the Congress today or tomorrow. That’s how we worked! ...” 49

In other words, the representatives of the intelligence of the Baltic republics, who had never been professionally involved in politics, also decided to substitute historians for the sake of their own understanding of the policy itself. Naturally, such an approach has nothing to do with the professional approach to the assessment of one of the most difficult document of the world diplomacy in terms of its geopolitical consequences; this could be just an emotional approach.

An example of such a non-professional and emotional approach is the aforementioned story of the Atlas of the USSR, in which Latvia and Estonia had already been incorporated into the Soviet Union. “From the point of view of logics, this fact shows that Latvia and Estonia has not been attached yet, but the maps with these states in the USSR have been published. That’s right, with one small exception. When we take this atlas – it is written in a small format, almost imperceptible that the maps of Latvia and Estonia with the entry into the Soviet Union were glued into the atlas after the events of July 1940. That is, the atlas is telling us the truth, but we do not want to see it. We do not want to notice these small letters. We put them aside as non-existent, and prefer to take into account the historical document in accordance with our early consciousness” – said the Latvian historian Boris Ravdin. 50

But in 1989, the Baltic delegation did not think of any professional discussion and therefore mislead the participants of the Second Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR, which resulted in the fact that the Congress adopted the mentioned ordinance.

How is it possible to assess the actual recognition of the Second Congress of People’s Deputies of the fact that in 1940 the Baltic republics were occupied by the Soviet Union today, two decades later?

M. Kostenetskaja is right, having written that “only after adoption of the document on the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on 25 December 1989, the events of 4 May 1990 could happen”. In other words, after the adoption of this decision there was nothing that could keep the Baltic republics of the USSR. “A noisy disclosure of the biggest mysteries of Stalin’s diplomacy – the secrets of the Secret Additional Protocol, whose existence had been denied for so long and so persistently by all the Soviet leaders, has played a major role in the collapse of the Soviet empire”. Publication of this document, “causing a domino effect”, led “to a series of irreversible global changes”, – said the doctor of historical sciences, the senior researcher at the Institute of World History Jahangir Najaif.

However, the consequences of the political interpretation of the events of 1939-1940 in the Baltic States adopted by the Congress of People’s Deputies were not limited by the break of the Soviet Union. The Resolution adopted according to the report of the Commission of A.N. Yakovlev was also the document that actually liberated nationalist movements in the Baltic republics of the responsibility for the fate of national minorities after Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia gained their independence de jure and de facto. What kind of liability can be discussed if according to the new political terminology minorities became masses of civil invaders, who should not have any rights? The Resolution of the Second Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR, based on the rejection of internal political reasons for changes in 1940 in the Baltic States, actually gave the carte blanche for the start of the formation of ethnocratic regimes in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia a half year later. But that’s not all. The resolution adopted by the Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR was also the reference point from which the world has begun debates on the need to form a new system of international law. And as a result, many in Europe were openly talking about the need to review the political and territorial results of the Second World War, but in Latvia the revision of the history of the Second World War was formed not only as the opinion of many influential politicians from the ruling National Radical (National extremist) political elite on the illegality of inclusion of Abrene territory in 1945 into Russia, but also as a course on the political rehabilitation of local accomplices of Nazism and Fascism. In other words, the clearly controversial conclusion about the direct relationship of the Soviet-German treaty of 1939 and the changes of 1940 in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, which is included in the resolution of the Congress (for example, Finland that got its independence, refutes this conclusion convincingly), largely predetermined the development of the right radicalism in Europe and Latvia in particular.

Finally, the resolution of the committee of Yakovlev was a political support from the side of the Soviet Union to the thesis of the United States and the western Baltic emigration on the alleged permanence of continuity of the Republic of Latvia.

Declaration of the Occupation of Latvia

On 16 May 1996, there was a scandal in the Latvian parliament. During the discussion of the draft-law presented by the fraction “For Latvia” “On the Occupation of Latvia”, the deputy of the Socialist Party Alexander Golubov stated from the platform of Parliament that Latvia met the Soviet troops as
liberators, not as occupiers. This statement has caused “outrage and whistling in the hall of the plenary session of the Saeima”.52

From the 77 deputies present at the meeting there were 69 deputies, who voted for and 7 (A. Bartashevich, M. Bekasov, O. Denisov, A. Golubov – who did not belong to factions, J. Jurkans, L. Stash – People’s Harmony Party and V. Kalnberzs – the Party of Unity), and the deputy M. Luyans (not belonging to any of these factions) abstained.

The text of the bill contained two main conclusions: 1) there are solely external forces, which are guilty in the events of 1940 in Latvia and 2) the actions of the USSR against Latvia led first to the occupation, and then to the elimination of the independent Latvian state. Both of these conclusions had a strategic character, because: a) contained an indirect justification of national policies of the authoritarian and ethnocratic regime of K. Ulmanis, b) had to justify the post-1991 policy of the division of society into citizens and persons without citizenship of Latvia, as well as the expulsion of stateless persons from the country. In 2005, Vaira Paegle, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, frankly stated that “if we abandon the concept of occupation, it jeopardizes our policy with regard to the citizenship, non-citizens and their rights (prohibition of participation in municipal elections) and other key issues. It is clear that we cannot take such a step”.53

The text of the bill said:

“The Saeima of Latvia addresses all people and all the nations of the world. Latvian state was founded on 18 November 1918 and consists of Vidzeme, Kurzeme, Latgale and Zemgale with the capital Riga. The secret and criminal of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (agreement) of 23 August 1939 between the two totalitarian states – the communist Soviet Union and the National Socialist Germany – doomed Latvia to destruction, depriving it of its independence. On 17 June 1940, in accordance with the mentioned Pact, violating international law and mutual agreements, the Soviet Union occupied Latvia, changing the governance and social order, repressing the state government, and on 5 August, attached Latvia to the Soviet Union without a popular vote, starting the massive displacement and destruction of innocent people, which is against to the Constitution. In summer of 1941, Latvia, in turn, was occupied by the Nazi Germany that started a new terror.

At the end of the Second World War Latvia was under the Soviet occupation once again. This was partly legitimized in February 1945 at the Crimean (Yalta) conference with the agreement between the leaders of the UK, the USA and the USSR, who defined the boundaries of the zone of influence in the post-war Europe.

This last long occupation, during which the genocide was conducted purposefully, and Latvia lost a significant part of the population as a result of deportation, was legally stopped in autumn of 1991 due to the strong and noble actions of Russian democratic forces, the desire of the Latvian people for independence and the support of the world.

The 6th Saeima of the renewed independent Latvia assures the people of Latvia, as well as other peoples and nations of the world that will always adhere to the holy idea of democracy, freedom and the rights of people, not looking back to the past with hatred and vengeance, but will always remind steadily and ask to understand the tragic fate of Latvians, the consequences of a long and ruthless occupation and inevitable differences in solving the matters of citizenship, language and other issues of national self-preservation in Latvia related to that.

Being aware of all this, the Saeima of Latvia declares that in the period from 17 June 1940 to 21 August 1991, Latvia was an occupied State, and calls Germany and Russia, as well as the UK and the United States to recognize the fact and the results of devastating occupations and together with other democratic countries in the world to get involved in the liquidation of consequences of the last occupation” 54

On 22 August 1996, deputies of the Saeima adopted the Declaration “On the Occupation of Latvia” in the final version. The text approved by the deputies was as follows:

“The highest representative body of the people of Latvia, the Saeima, addresses the countries of the world and international organizations with this declaration, to remind of the tragic fate of our nation and the state in the twentieth century.

The Republic of Latvia was proclaimed on 18 November 1918 and on 22 September 1921 it became a member of the League of Nations. Development of Latvia as an independent state was ended by the Non-aggression Pact (the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), signed on 23 August 1939 by two totalitarian powers – the National Socialist Germany and the communist Soviet Union – , and the goal of which was the division of Europe into spheres of influence. Violating the basic principles of international law, as well as treaties between Latvia and the Soviet Union, on 17 June 1940, the Soviet armed forces occupied Latvia, and it was illegally incorporated (annexed) into the USSR. As a result, the political regime and the legal system of the USSR were introduced in Latvia.

In the summer of 1941, with the outbreak of hostilities of the Second World War on the territory of Latvia, it was occupied by the National Socialist Germany, which established its regime, performed deportations and other repres-
sions against residents, and also used the territory of Latvia for the destruction of the population of the occupied countries.

At the final stage of the Second World War, the Soviet Union renewed its occupation regime in Latvia.

In 1944, a part of Abrene district (about 2000 square km) was illegally annexed to the territory of Russia.

During the whole time of occupation, the USSR purposefully committed genocide against the people of Latvia, thus, violating the Convention on the inadmissibility of genocide and punishment for it, adopted on 9 December 1948. The occupation regime destroyed innocent people, repeatedly performed mass deportations of people and other repressions, violated those, who advocated the restoration of Latvia’s independence by armed or any other matters, unlawfully expropriated the property of Latvian citizens and suppressed the expression of free thought. The Soviet leadership deliberately flooded Latvia with hundreds of thousands of migrants and tried to destroy the identity of the people of Latvia with their help. As a result of this policy, the number of Latvians as the main part of nation declined from 77 to 52 percent.

Ten years after the end of the Second World War, an armed resistance to the Soviet occupation continued in Latvia. Over 30,000 national partisans and their supporters attended the resistance movement. After its suppression, despite the repressions of the Soviet regime, the resistance continued in other forms...

The Saeima of the Republic of Latvia confirms that Latvia, which does not keep the evil and does not demand for revenge because of the past, will always keep on reminding and calling for an understanding of the tragic fate of its people, as the occupation, which lasted half a century, caused severe consequences, difficult to overcome with own forces...

Therefore, the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, on behalf of the people, calls the world and international organizations:
- Recognize the fact of occupation of Latvia;
- To help Latvia eliminate the consequences of the occupation by rendering political and economic support;
- To support the efforts of those, who wish to return from Latvia to their ethnic homeland and from foreign countries – to their native land, Latvia.

Chairman of the Saeima I. Kreituse, Riga, 22 August 1996”

As you can see, the final text of the Declaration was “enhanced” by the reference to the illegality of the annexation of Abrene district (about 2000 square kilometres) to Russia, i.e. contained explicit territorial claims against Russia.

In addition, in order to emphasize that the people of Latvia did not want to put up with the so hatred Soviet occupation, the text of the Declaration was added by the fact that “ten years after the end of Second World War, the armed resistance to the Soviet occupation continued in Latvia. The resistance movement was attended by over 30,000 national partisans and their supporters”. But, of course, the text did not mention the fact that a significant part of the “national partisans” were soldiers of the Latvian SS Volunteer Legion gone into the woods, hoping that the United States and Britain would launch a new war against the USSR.

**Radicalization of positions of the US and Western Europe after the collapse of the USSR**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the newly formed states and countries of the Western world were captured by the wave of Russophobia. Russophile political forces, as well as anti-Soviet, and to some extent, the neo-Nazi western Baltic emigration significantly increased their efforts to promote the thesis of the occupation of the Baltic republics in 1940. This activity was directed against ethnic minorities, primarily Russian minority, in the new states formed in the post-Soviet space, as well as against Russia, which once again confirms the political rather than legal nature of the thesis of the occupation.

On 8 May 2005, during his stay in Riga, the President George W. Bush said: “The United States refused to recognize the occupation undertaken by empire. Flags of free Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, banned in the home country, proudly developed over the diplomatic missions in the United States”.

The words of George W. Bush on the occupation of the Baltic States serve as a signal for the USA and Europe. Already on 20 May, the Senate of the USA on the initiative of a Republican of Lithuanian origin John Shimkus and a Democrat Dennis Kucinich, the co-chairmen of the so-called “Baltic faction”, established in 1997, adopted a resolution calling on Russia to acknowledge the “occupation” of the Baltic States; and about a week later the same calling was made by the European Parliament. “Being fully aware of the enormous efforts and sacrifices, which were brought by the peoples of the Soviet Union in the battles for the liberation of many countries and peoples of Europe from the Nazi terror regime, ... but at the same time expressing regret over the victims of hardship for some countries and peoples, including the Baltic States, occupation and subsequent annexation and tyranny of the Soviet Union; with the hope for a full recognition of these facts as a basis for a full reconciliation between Russia and all EU member countries” – on the initiative of right-wing politicians of the Baltic States...
and Poland this text was included in the report of the European Parliament “On the relations between the European Union and Russia”.57

Following the Congress of the United States and the European Parliament, the resolution, which condemned the fact of “the Soviet occupation” of the Baltic States, was adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The Saeima of Lithuania, having adopted the resolution on 30 June, which called on Russia to recognize the fact of the “occupation” of the Baltic States, also offered Russia to reimburse “the damage caused by the occupation regime”, in the amount of 80 billion Litas (20 billion Euros).58

mentioned The resolution of the Senate of the United States, the report of the European Parliament and of the PACE resolution, mentioned above, put into question not only the legitimacy of the agreements reached by the countries of the Anti-Hitler coalition in 1945 in Yalta and Potsdam, but also the legitimacy of the Final Act of the European Conference on Security and Cooperation, because one of the central provisions of the Final Act, which was signed on 1 August 1975 by the leaders of European countries, Canada and the United States, was the recognition of the territorial integrity of the states and the principles of inviolability of borders in Europe.

In fact, we can say that the aim of the United States to revise the Yalta and Potsdam agreements of 1945, declared back in 1980 by President Ronald Reagan, met support in Europe in 2005. And this despite the fact that the Yalta and Potsdam agreements in 1945 were taken jointly by the leaders of the USSR, the USA and the UK, and despite the fact that these agreements were the basis of international legal relations and national borders in Europe after 1945, and allowed Europe to live in peace during the post-war years.

Critics of the concept of “occupation” of Latvia in 1940

The entire legal system of the Republic of Latvia that gained independence in 1991 is based on the assertion that in summer of 1940 Latvia lost its statehood solely because of the fault of external forces. Thus, the legal status of the state that lost its sovereignty and independence should be assessed as occupation, which lasted until the actual restoration of the state independence of the summer of 1991. It is necessary to recognize that the people of Latvia, which became such after 17 June 1940, and their descendants are none other than the occupants and descendants of the occupants, and it is absolutely fair to apply the restrictions in the political and economic rights regarding them, in order to compensate what the oppressed citizens of Latvia did not get during the years of occupation. However, this legal structure crumbles to dust, when one gets more familiar with the historical facts.

History, unfortunately, shows that the population of Latvia and Latvians in the first place, were once again grossly deceived by political forces, which came to power after 4 May 1990. And there is one purpose of this deception – to ensure the redistribution of political and economic power in the country in favour of the new Latvian political elite, which professed ideology of national revanchism and neo-Nazism.

International law and the events of 1940

Taking into the account the political declaration “On the Occupation of Latvia”, adopted by the Latvian Parliament in August 1996, as well as political assessments, which were adopted in Europe and the United States after 1945, the answer to the question, whether the fact of occupation of Latvia in summer 1940 is recognized by the international law, would have its legal basis.

At the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992 there was a conflict between the future first president of Estonia, then Foreign Minister Lennart Meri, who got the position of the minister in April 1991, i.e. during the Soviet regime, and his deputy – a famous jurist of international affairs, Professor Rein Mullerson. The reason for the conflict was that R. Mullerson, when analysing documents related to the accession of Estonia to the Soviet Union, came to the conclusion that there was no occupation. All agreements with the Soviet Union were signed by President Konstantin Päts – the legitimate head of state during that time – without any reservations, comments or subsequent statements.59

Similarly, President K. Ulmanis authorized the changes in Latvia in 1940 by his signature.

However, after 1991, the ruling elite of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia decided (among other states) at the level of the United Nations to secure an official statement on the issue of recognition of the occupation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union in 1940. However, three years later, it was recognized that it is impossible not only to solve the problem, but even to discuss it at the UN level.60

The ex-prime minister and the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, the deputy of the 7th Saeima Valdis Birkavs suggested his explanation of this situation in October 2001. During the discussion, which was devoted to the 10th anniversary of work of the UN Mission in Latvian, V. Birkavs admitted: “We realized that it is better not to require recognition of the occupation in the UN. The thing is that half of the UN member countries are former occupants, and the other half – the former occupied states. And if there is a voting on the issue of Latvia, it is likely that the voting results would be equally
divided in two. The neutral result will be interpreted as negative. So you see (they would tell us), the UN refused to recognize the fact of occupation of Latvia. So at the moment we should not come up with this question.61

Thus, the fact of occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Union in the summer of 1940 has not been recognized at the level of the UN and, moreover, it cannot be recognized, despite all the appeals of the ruling elite of Latvia to the countries of the world and international organizations to recognize the fact of the occupation. Why is the international community not ready to accept the fact of occupation of Latvia? In answering this question, let us leave aside the calculations of how many members of the UN states, which previously were occupants and how many – the occupied, and try to give an answer from the standpoint of international law, as well as from the analysis of how the events in Latvia unfolded in the summer of 1940, i.e. from the standpoint of the internal political history of the country.

Definition of occupation

The Convention on the Laws and Customs of the War on Land, signed in Hague on 18 October 1907 (see Part III On the military authorities on the territory of an enemy state. Article 42), provides the following definition of occupation: “Territory is considered as occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of the hostile army. The occupation extends only to the territory where such authority has been established and can be exercised”.62

Types of occupation

International law distinguishes three types of occupation:

- Imperial, during which the occupied territory gets attached to the territory of a State-occupant, losing its full sovereignty. During the imperial occupation, the legislation of the country-occupant (metropolis), is applied to the occupied territory, or, in other words, to the colony, but the population of the colony does not get the rights of citizens of the metropolis;

- Military, during which the occupied territory is not attached to the territory of the State-occupant, but the local legislation and local authorities lose their force on the occupied territory, and they are replaced by a military occupation regime, during which the population of the occupied territory does not enjoy the rights of citizens of the State-occupant;

- Guarantee, which comes as a result of the invasion of the military troops of one state on the territory of another state in order to ensure by means of this (i.e., other) state the conditions of an agreement, previously concluded between the two states. With the guarantee occupation the occupied State does not lose its national sovereignty, it experiences only its limitation. The occupied territory is not included in the territory of the State-occupant and, thus, the legal system of the country-occupier is not imposed on the occupied territory, but the force of local laws is temporarily (until the occupied state fulfils conditions of an international agreement) limited or even suspended.

The situation in Latvia in summer 1940 does not fall under any of these types of occupation, including the guarantee occupation63, because, this is very important to keep in mind that the Red Army troops were on the territory of Latvia already in October of 1939 (according to the agreement between the USSR and Latvia of 5 October 1939), since the deployment of additional

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* On the basis of the agreement between the USSR and Latvia on 5 October 5 1939, the territory of Latvia was supposed to be entered by the 25000 members of the Red Army, including: the management of the 2nd Infantry Corps, the 67th Infantry Division, the 6th Armoured Brigade, the 10th Armoured Regiment, management of the 18th air Brigade, the 31st and the 15th Fighter Aviation Regiments, the 9th aviation Regiment of Security and other troops. Start of the input – 3 November 1939. On 1 January 1940, the amount of the Red Army troops in Latvia totalled 19.339 people, including 2.210 officers.64

The behaviour of the personnel of the Red Army, dislocated in Latvia, was governed by the relevant order of the People’s Commissar of Defence of the USSR Marshal K.E. Voroshilov. A similar order for the 65th Special Infantry Corps, which was put into the territory of Estonia, stated:

“... 1. The Commander of the 65th Special Infantry Corps, the Commander of the Division Comrade Taurin and the Commissar of the Brigade Comrade Zhmakin are obliged to accurately take all necessary measures to ensure that all personnel of our units in Estonia, starting from an ordinary soldier of the Red Army to the higher command personnel and faithfully fulfil each statement and regulation of the pact on mutual assistance, and not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Republic of Estonia.

2. Explain to the entire personnel of our units the friendly policy of the Soviet government towards Estonia. Mutual assistance treaty with Estonia aims to ensure a long lasting peace in the Baltic States, security of Estonia and the Soviet Union. The entire staff of our units should know exactly that according to the pact of mutual assistance, our troops stationed and live on the territory of a sovereign state, and has no rights to interfere in political affairs and the social system of that state...

Moods and talks about the “Sovietization” of Estonia fundamentally contradict the policy of our party and the government, and certainly are provocative. The Soviet Union will honestly and punctually fulfil the criteria of the mutual assistance pact and expects the same from Estonia. If there are moods and talks about the “Sovietization” among the military, you have to eliminate them at the start and to suppress them in the most ruthless way, because they are in favour for the enemies of the Soviet Union and Estonia.

3. Any meetings of our units, separate military groups or individuals, be it the leader or just the soldier of the Red Army,...., with the workers and other Estonian organizations; or organization of mutual meetings, concerts, receptions, etc. are categorically prohibited. Do not allow any interference of our people in the inter-party or any other public affairs of Estonia...
troops was done with the consent of the Cabinet of Ministers of Latvia led
by K.Ulmanis, and the agreement of 5 October 1939 was recognized by the
League of Nations.

After 17 June 1940 Latvia maintains the status of a subject of international
law. Such state institutions as the institution of the president (until July 21 this
position was held by K.Ulmanis) and the Cabinet of Ministers continue to
operate in Latvia. The legislation of the Latvian state continues being in force
on the territory of Latvia until 5 August 1940.

Proponents of the thesis of the “occupation” of Latvia, justifying their
position, stated that the Cabinet of Ministers of A.Kirhensteins was formed
under the ordinance of A.Vishinskiy and therefore cannot be considered as
legitimate. However, K.Ulmanis, being the highest official of the State,
legitimized the power of the Cabinet of Ministers by approving of its members.
It was impossible to argue with it.

However, recognizing that there was a dictatorship of A.Vishinsky in
formation of the Cabinet of A.Kirhensteins, it should be also recognized
that in the history of Latvia such dictatorship from other states was not the
first, and obviously not the last case. In 1919, the “content” of the Cabinet
of Ministers of K.Ulmanis was “written” under the dictation of Entente,
and in 1998 as a result of the unprecedented pressure from European
countries and the United States, the Saeima of Latvia adopted amendments
to the citizenship law, which makes this law much more liberal. However,
obody questioned the legitimacy of the legality of the Cabinet of Ministers
formed in 1919 and the legitimacy of the adopted amendments to the law
on citizenship in 1998.

By the way, in January 2007, there were a few more publicly announced
cases, where the foreign state dictated Latvia how it should solve its
domestic inter-political issues. Deputy of the Chairman of the Saeima
Karina Peterson then publicly stated that the United States Ambassador to
Latvia Catherine Todd Bailey lobbied one of the candidates for the post of
Ombudsman “rather abruptly”. In the presence of many people K.T.Bayley

sharply objected to the nomination of Ringolds Balodis for the position
of an Ombudsman and expressed support for another candidate – Rasmai
Shilde-Karklina. Journalists of “Neatkarīga” Ritums Rozenbergs and Uldis
Dreiblats went for more and reminded the readers that, after the pressure
from the Embassy of the United States posts several employees from special
services and even from the Office of the President of Latvia were released
from their positions.

The Embassy of the United States has repeatedly opposed the candidates
for the post of the Minister of Defence and the Foreign Minister. Thanks to
the pressure from the Embassy of the United States the government Ejnars Repshe
was saved, after the fact that many politicians of the former coalition were
against Repshe’s style in September 2003. And when the “New time” left
the government in April 2006, the United States Embassy put a lot of pressure on
the governing politicians so that the “New time” would be again taken to the
government. All these facts were seen by many deputies of the Saeima as gross
interference in the internal affairs of Latvia.66

Mood and attitude of the political elite
and the masses in the late 1930s

The Russian historian Yuri Emelyanov states that signing the Naval
Agreement between Great Britain and Germany on 18 June 1935 meant that
the Baltic States moved into the sphere of influence of Germany. Economic
positions of Germany in Latvia in the middle of 1930s were rapidly increasing
at the cost of other countries, particularly the UK. If in 1935 imports from
Germany to Latvia amounted to 37.2 million Latvian Lats, then in 1937 – 92.4
million Latvian Lats. In the state apparatus of the country there were more
than 1.000 Germans employed. The assertion that “the general secretary of
the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Munters is a German agent, and Latvian
President Ulmanis is entirely dependent on Berlin” became quite widespread.67
“Ulmanis bought an estate in Germany and a large house in Berlin, only for
the interest received from licenses for imported goods in Latvia” – indicates
academician A.L.Drizulis.68

In 1930s in the German press, there were frequent and repeated publications,
which claimed that Latvia is an “old German land”, “the former German
colony” that it is included in the “old German national borders”. On 25 March
1935 during a meeting with the British Foreign Minister Simon, Adolf Hitler
announced his intention “to move to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia during
his struggle against Bolshevism” and establish its authority over “barbarous

4. Do not lead any discussions about life and orders in the Soviet Union or about our
Red Army with any of the citizens of Estonia. Do not provide any information and have no
conversations about the Red Army with the Estonian press...

8. Commanders and commissars have to be aware and conscious that the units of the Red
Army are in a foreign country, with which we have a particular contractual relationship... Our
leading and common soldier personnel of our units must be an example of organization, good
behaviour and discipline for the local population...

The People’s Commissar of Defence of the USSR, Marshal of the Soviet Union K.Voroshilov”. 65
peoples” living there. A. Rosenberg repeated Hitler: “The war between Germany and the Soviet Union is inevitable. The Germans will go through the Baltic States. The wall of the new states is too narrow, so that they can resist the collision of two great powers. Therefore, the Latvians have to agree with the Germans and become friends and allies of Germany”.

Propaganda of such views became particularly active after the Anschluss of Austria in March 1938 and the Munich Conference in September 1938, when the so-called “Sudeten question” was settled in favour of Germany.

The Magazine “Deutsche Arbeit”: “The task of the Germans in the Baltic States is the location of the German colonists – German farmers, as it was at the time of Catherine II, when there was the first German colony in Vidzeme, the so-called “German colony”. Unfortunately, the upper class (nobles), which were very few and being without a solid base (German peasants) failed to Germanize Latvians”. Now, as it was said in a magazine article, this task has to be given to the Germans in the Baltic States.

The newspaper “Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung”: “There is no force that could erase Germanism from the history of this land, or dispute its future”.

The newspaper “Magdeburger Zeitung”, 28 March 1938: “German folk groups have been living at the junction of the Daugava River for already 700 years, and they settled there at a time when there had not been any Latvians”.

Magazine “East Europe”, January 1939: “The only natural act of its (i.e. Latvia’s – VG) future can only be annexation to Germany”.

Pro-German orientation of the political leadership of Latvia (Munters called the Munich agreements “a historic event” and offered “to congratulate their creators”) was at odds with the sentiments of the people and the army, “troubled with German danger and therefore striving for more friendly relations with the Soviet Union”. In May 1937, the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Latvia, General J. Balodis said: “Despite the fact that in the Soviet Union, there is another system, and in case of war, it is necessary to go along with the Soviet Union”. On 28 October 1938 in a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador Zotov, General J. Balodis reiterated: “The native Latvians have never had and will never have the German-Polish orientation, especially in the army... The Latvian people will never go with them, and we know it perfectly... Our people have good feelings only to you – Russians, and we must accept this”. In his assessment of the sentiments of the people of Latvia General J. Balodis was not alone. The Advisor to the German mission in Latvia in a conversation with the American envoy stated that “80% of Latvians feel sympathy for the Soviet Union, not Germany.” French ambassador in Latvia wrote: “I know that Latvians will go with the Soviet Union, and if they are attacked, they will enter the USSR – that is what all say except for the rich”.

On 7 May 1939, i.e. more than a year before the events of the summer of 1940, the Soviet military attaché in Latvia Colonel Vasiliev reported to Moscow: “The general opinion of the working people – we wish the Red Army had arrived. The intelligentsia reasons in the following way: “It is better to have the Soviet power than the Germans”... The working masses are for the direct annexation of Latvia to the Soviet Union. Anyway, Latvia shall soon face great events”.

The same view was shared by the head of department of Scandinavian and Baltic countries, the German Foreign Ministry Grundger who reported to his superiors in the early 1939: “The mood of the Latvian people was such that if the Red Army would come to help Latvia against Germany, it would have been met by the population with open arms”.

Latvian police reported on the pro-Soviet sentiments among the population of Latvia. On 20 March 1939, the chief of the secret police of Liepaja district pointed out in his report on the “harsh anti-German sentiments... Farmers are willing to fight with the Germans even with spurs in their hands...”

On 4 April 1939, the Head of Tukums district police reported to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Latvia: “At the moment, the mood among the Latvian population, including among the workers, is that in case it should be necessary... all men would rise to fight against Germany”.

Latvian police acknowledged in the report for summer 1939: “Workers are set very hostile towards Hitler’s Germany and their only saviour is considered to be the Soviet Union”.

Moods of the masses during 1939-1940 are eloquently described by the following fact: in the morning on 1 May 1940, quite unexpectedly for many the streets of Riga were filled with buses, the black walls of which were plastered with posters with slogans: “Long live the Soviet Latvia! Ulmanis Down!” The organizers of this action were members of the Union of the Riga working youth of Latvia.

Thus, the fact that the events of the summer of 1940 had deep internal reasons cannot be put into question, in the first place – the country’s ruling elite lacked mass support among the population, in other words – the loss of legitimacy, as well as people’s fear facing the threats of a new German occupation and the sympathy of a large part of the population towards the Soviet Union.

The final line of revolutionary changes in Latvia – the first week of August 1940. Then society faces with the first arrests initiated by the new government, and the robbing nationalization, which caused the euphoria of summer hopes to quickly disappear, and a lot of people, who voted on 14 and 15 July for the Unit of the working people in Latvia, begin to feel being cheated.
“This is an entirely political revolution ...”

The government of A.Kirhensteins formed after 17 June 1940 reinstates the Constitution, which was suspended by K.Ulmanis after the coup of 15 May 1934, and announces elections to the Saeima, which was dismissed by K.Ulmanis in 1934.

Foreign diplomats in Latvia evaluated the recovery of the validity of the Constitution and the organization of elections to the Saeima as positive changes for the Latvian state as evidence that Latvia is undergoing a transition from an authoritarian regime to democracy. It is very important to emphasize that the impetus for changes in the country, according to diplomats, was not only the presence of the Red Army (which, I remind you once again, was in the country in October of 1939) in Latvia, but also the revolutionary movement of the masses.

That is what, for example, the British councillor in Latvia K.Ord reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the UK on 5 July 1940: “The new government is actually temporary and its objectives (many of which have already been implemented) are following: the restoration and modification of the constitution suspended after the K.Ulmanis coup in 1934; the abolition of the six class chambers – those that have been established by the former dictator to create the appearance of a wide national representation; the purification of the state body from the elements associated with the former regime; the amnesty of political prisoners; the provision of freedom of the press, speech and organizations; the organization of elections in which the Latvian people would freely choose their representatives ...

This entirely political revolution – and nothing else – is performed with relatively little costs and victims, extremely limited by its first days ...” 76

Summer of 1940 in Jelgava

Early in the morning on 17 June, a plane with red stars on the wings appeared in the sky above Jelgava. It circled over the city and without noticing anything suspicious, flew away. And after some time, the noise of tank engines could be heard on the side of the Lietuvas Street and Dobele highway. The city was entered by the Red Army tank columns. One of the columns moved through the Air Bridge on the Lietuvas Street, then turned to the railway station (some witnesses recall that one tank crashed into a tree at the station), then marched to the city centre through the Akademijas Street, followed by tankers who withdrew their cars into the Riga highway, heading towards the Soviet Union agricultural Exhibition, which was organized in Jelgava during those days. The second column of tanks was moving practically the whole day from the Dobele to Riga.77

Despite the early hours, there were people on the streets of Jelgava. Many of them joyfully welcomed the Red Army.

This is what an inhabitant of Jelgava Anna Klekere remembers of the events of that day: “On 17 June 1940, at about 10am, the news of the appearance of the Red Army tanks spread quickly among the residents of Jelgava. Excited and happy residents of Jelgava immediately gathered on the Lithuanian highway and Jelgava Air Bridge, as well as on the Akademijas Street. Many were holding flowers. Red scarves, which were tied up by the girls for the honourable occasion, were flashing. When the first tanks, appeared, they were literally showered with flowers. There were a lot of cheerful exclamations: “Long live the Red Army!”, “Long live the Soviet Union!”, “Down with fascism!” People were embracing each other with joy. Many had tears in their eyes. In the evening, by the end of the day, all the streets, on which the tanks had driven, were full of people. One tank stopped at the market square. People immediately gathered around it. They were welcoming the soldiers. The crowd raised the young man in their hands. Addressing the Red Army, he finished his brief speech by saying: “I urge everyone to fight for freedom and democracy! Down with fascism!” 78

Here is some more of the evidence of Jelgava residents – witnesses of the events of summer of 1940:

Jefrem Romanov: “When the tanks of the Red Army came to Jelgava, half of the city came out to meet them”.79

Anna Salna: “We met with joy the tanks of the Soviet Army. The unemployed and low-paid workers were cheering the loudest...” 80

Austra Lucevich: “In 1940, the society was highly politicized. Everyone understood that there would be no independent Latvia anymore. Latvia shall be whether under Joseph, or under Adolf. Many wanted to be under Joseph”.81

Rudolf Vilkarsis: “In 1940, many people were dissatisfied with the regime of Ulmanis and welcomed the changes. We thought things would be better...” 82

Entry of major units of the Red Army, the army of the state with a totalitarian government regime, in which the main role was played by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), into the territory of Latvia, created favourable conditions for the fast legalization and active work of the Communist Party, which was prohibited in the republic before. The small Latvian Communist Party, which enjoyed little support from the population in the 20-30's, becomes an active participant in the organization of the rotation
June 17, 1940. The Red Army units met at the square near the railway terminal in Riga.

June 17, 1940. The Red Army units met at the square near the railway terminal in Riga. June 21, 1940. Political prisoners getting freed.
Latvia 1988-2015: a triumph of the radical nationalists

1940, summer. Rallies expressing support for joining the USSR

1940, summer. Rallies against the regime of Karlis Ulmanis and in favour of the USSR Bolshevik party
1940, summer. Rallies against the regime of Karlis Ulmanis and in favour of the USSR Bolshevik party.

July 14 and 15, 1940. Elections of the People’s Parliament of Latvia. A queue at the polling precinct. Rally dedicated to the elections of the People’s Parliament of Latvia. Riga, Kristijana Valdemara Street, the National Theatre.
August 13, 1940. The delegation being met in Daugavpils. A greeting by the secretary of the Latgale Regional Committee of the Communist party, Neilands. – “Atputa” magazine, No. 825 (23.08.1940).

August 14, 1940. The delegation being met in Riga. First secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist (Bolshevik) party of Latvia, Janis Kahlberzins (alias Zakis) speaking. – “Atputa” magazine, No. 825 (23.08.1940)

July 21, 1940. The first plenary of the People’s Parliament of Latvia in the National Theatre building. Two decisions adopted on that plenary were: to restore the Soviet rule in Latvia, and to request the USSR Supreme Soviet to admit Latvia to the Soviet Union. On August 13, 1940, a plenipotentiary delegation of the Parliament of Latvia has returned from Moscow. The delegation, including the Minister President and acting President Augusts Kirhensteins, war minister Roberts Dambitis, member of parliament Aleksandrs Eizaks and others, is greeted by a worker from Indra village.

Book 3. Formation of a new historical memory, or the Whitewashing of Nazism in Latvia
of the country from capitalism to socialism according to the example of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1940.

**Jelgava organization of the Communist party in Latvia in June 1940**

What exactly represented the Jelgava organization of the Communist Party of Latvia in June 1940? A.Klekere writes in her memoirs: in the middle of 1938, the Jelgava Committee of the CPL was crushed by the secret police. The connection with the Central Committee of the CPL and between the party cells broke. Some communists stopped working underground, and some (R.Klekers, T.Birgele, E.Ozolina, E.Shnore, B.Skarbulis, P.Strelcov, P.Zemnieks, E.Rozentals, K.Shuba, A.Suschenko, Z.Brambergs and others), continued the party work individually.83

In the fall of 1939 and in January 1940, the political security service conducted searches and arrests of Communists again; therefore, by June 1940 there was just a small group of the underground, which remained free.84

The arrival of the Red Army in Jelgava encouraged the city party organization and its members for active actions.

The Jelgava City Council, led by Kristaps Frickaus, still retains the executive power in its own hands on 18-20 June. On 19 June, the Regulation of the Minister of the Interior, forbidding to go into the streets from 22 pm to 4 am, and also to gather in groups of more than 4 people, was published in the newspaper “Zemgales balss”. The City police tried to implement this decision in life. But the paralysis of the old structures of power is becoming more evident. Already on 19 or 20 June, in Jelgava, pro-communist proclamations and posters appeared, in which the government of K.Ulmanis was characterized as fascist, and in which there was a call for his immediate overthrow (On 20 June, on the walls of many houses there were posters with following pictures and texts: K.Ulmanis is sitting on a bent back of a worker and saying: “I will stay in my place, and you will stay on yours”. The worker asks him: “For a long time?”).

On 21 June, Jelgava city gets to know about the formation the People’s Government in Riga one day before, headed by the scientist microbiologist Professor of the Jelgava Academy of Agriculture August Kirhenshteins. On the same day, in the afternoon, when the radio reported that the People’s Government adopted the law on amnesty of political prisoners, many workers stopped working and went outside on the streets. There was a non-planned demonstration, which was attended by about one thousand people. The column was formed at the flax spinning mills of Goff brothers. The list of its participants included J.Ava, Z.Bramberg, J.Straumanis, B.Skarbulis, F.Blok, F.Vincevich, E.Ozolina, F.Sietin, J.Rasa and others. The columns were raising red flags and slogans “Down with the fascist government of K.Ulmanis!”, “Long live the People’s Government!” “We demand the release of political prisoners!” Singing revolutionary songs, the demonstrators went to the Duke Jacob Square, where the meeting took place.

It was a bazar day, so the meeting was attended by many villagers, totally about 5000 people. R.Klekers climbed on the cart and began to speak the first. He welcomed and praised the Red Army, the People’s Government, the adopted Amnesty Act and demanded further democratization of Latvia and the legalization of the Communist Party, urged the protesters to continue the march to the prison of the Jelgava City to celebrate the release of political prisoners. After R.Klekers the word was given to the representative of the Jelgava organization of the Union of Working Youth of Latvia (UWYL) J.Straumanis and some of the villagers.

After the meeting, the column of demonstrators walked down the Akademijas Street to the city jail. When the demonstrators, as A.Klekere
recounts, “came to the prison gate and knocked on the window at the entry door, inquiring about political prisoners, the frightened watchman replied that they had been already set free”. We did not want to believe, – writes A.Klekere, – but it turned out that this was true – indeed, the political prisoners were released shortly before our arrival. Most of the prisoners had been previously sent to Riga prisons. Here were only few left. And we saw them, because they had not gone far yet. On behalf of political prisoners with the words of gratitude for the meeting, Richard Schneider addressed the demonstrators. Then together with the whole column we headed to the place, where Richard Schneider the troops of the Red Army were located, in order to celebrate the Red Army”...

Elections to the National Saeima

In July, the political activity of residents of Jelgava increased dramatically. Firstly, this was due to the prohibition of the Organization of Protectors (Aizsargi) on 8 July (this organization was a stronghold of the authoritarian regime of K.Ulmanis. The weapons of the protectors (aizsargi) was taken by the Ministry of Military Affairs, and the other property – by the Ministry of Public Affairs. In Jelgava the 16th Regiment of protectors was disarmed already on 26 –28 June. Aizsargi handed pistols and other weapons to the police station. The commander of the Red Army, who participated in this procedure, exclaimed: “How many weapons do your citizens have?”). And, secondly, this happened due to the announcement of 14 and 15 July about elections into the National Saeima.

In July residents of Jelgava were actively going on meetings, participating in the demonstrations, and the attitude of many of them to a new, still developing power was generally approving. The minds of the people were overtaken by euphoria, in which only a few could predict the terror of the NKVD and the mass deportation in less than a year, but very many were ready to actively promote changes in order to elimination of unemployment, poverty and to stop political persecution from the part of the authoritarian regime of K.Ulmanis.

On 5 July, the newspaper “Zemgales bals” published the law on elections to the National Saeima. The same day the Election Commission of Zemgale region was formed, which was headed by K.Platers. In Jelgava there were four stationary and one mobile election stations created. The members of precinct election commissions were R. and A.Klekers, A.Shnore, A.Grejers, J.Buks, Z.Brambergs, V.Sasha-Zasha and others.

On Sunday, 7 July in Jelgava, there was a demonstration organized by the Communists in support of the elections. About 8000 residents of Jelgava marched on the streets. On the Duke Jacob’s Square there was a meeting, on which K.Platers had a speech, and from servicemen – Rutenberg, from the youth – R.Smile.

On 9 July, the nomination of candidates for deputy positions began. Communists called to vote for the following deputies: K.Platers – the Secretary of the Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Zemgale, 45 years of age, who served three years in the Red Army, was a member of the communist underground, was sentenced to 6 years in 1935 and was released only 21 June 1940; K.Shuba – a member of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Jelgava, 35 years of age, until June 1940 – a driver in the expedition office, served time in prison twice: in 1930 for communist activities, was sentenced to 1 year and 9 months, in 1934 – to 3 years and 9 months; E.Shnore – a member of the District Committee of the Communist Party of Jelgava, 37 years of age, was arrested many times for communist activities, worked in the factory of Goff brothers for 17 years; T.Birgele – a member of the Communist Party, an employee at the Jewish Hospital; A.Rogulis – a doctor with an annual income of 9300 Latvian Lats. He wrote on the eve of the elections in the newspaper “Zemgales bals”": “I support the alliance with the Soviet Union. I understand that this alliance will be associated with the need of conduction of political and social changes in Latvia”; F.Deglavs – a member of the Communist Party of Latvia; V.Strautnieks – a teacher; O.Auguste – a member of the Communist Party of Latvia; J.Kronitis – a forester; V.Leja – a worker of the self-government; R.Lapin – a shoemaker; D.Kruze – a farmer; A.Mazecis – a worker; D.Komisar – a farmer.

On 10 July, about 800 residents of Jelgava gathered in the hall of the Jelgava Latvian Society to meet with the candidate K.Platers, and on 12 July, there were election meetings in the Jelgava garrison at the train station, where K.Platers and D.Boitmanis held speeches, and on the Palace Island, where there were gathered about 1.000 young residents of Jelgava and where D.Boitmanis and agitators of the Jelgava Branch of the UWYL told about the upcoming elections to the National Saeima.

On 14 July, that is, after only five days after the start of the nomination of candidates for deputy positions, elections to the National Saeima started. July 15. The voting results of 15 July showed the certain winning of candidates of the Bloc of working people of Latvia. From 27359 residents of Jelgava, who had voting rights, 22605 voted for candidates of the Block of working people of Latvia, 267 – voted against, and the rest did not come to the voting stations.

On 18 July in Jelgava there was a demonstration with 15.000 participants and a meeting in the Victory Park, on which there were requirements to annex Latvia to the Soviet Union as the 14th Union Republic.
On 20 July, in the Park there was another meeting, which was attended by about 5,000 residents of Jelgava.

On 21 July, on the Duke Jacob’s Square and then in the Victory Park there was a new mass meeting, attended by about 20 thousand people, i.e. almost the entire adult population of the city. Participants of the meeting were holding red flags and banners, which said: “We demand to establish the Soviet power in Latvia!”, “We demand to annex our republic of the Soviet Union!”, “Long live the friendship between the peoples of the USSR and Latvia!”, “Long live the Communist Party and its Central Committee!”.88

Such an active participation of residents of Jelgava in political demonstrations can be explained by only one fact, namely that in summer 1940 the political and economic programme of the Block of the working people of Latvia enjoyed the support of a significant part of the electorate, and that an essential part of the population of Latvia was hoping to find protection in Stalin’s Soviet Union at the beginning of the Second World War on 1 September 1939. And the changes were supported both by Latvians, and by the representatives of national minorities.

Janis Vagris from Naudite parish of Jelgava district, who began his working career in Jelgava in July 1955 having the position as the technologist at a machine engineering plant and subsequently working as a deputy of the chairman of the executive committee of Jelgava (from August 1958 to April 1961) and the second secretary of the City Committee of Jelgava (from May 1962 to September 1964), evaluates the elections of 1940 as following:

- We have to hear the saying that those elections were held forcibly, that people were almost pushed by the Soviet soldiers to the voting boxes. What can one answer to that... I can state only one thing: my parents and relatives, who were almost pushed by the soldiers and commanders of the Red Army to vote, went to the voting boxes with big hopes that Latvian farmers would finally get a piece of land, with hopes to become full citizens of the state, regardless of their property state...89

**Evaluation of the elections on 14 and 15 July**

In analysis of the events of summer 1940 the main importance is given to the estimation of the elections on 14 and 15 July to the National Saeima. In 1990, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia denied the legitimacy of the elections and, thus, the legitimacy of the Declaration on the restoration of Soviet power in Latvia, and the Declaration on the annexation of Latvia to the Soviet Union, adopted by the National Seima on 21 July 1940, was based on the following considerations:

- Elections were held under the “occupation and political pressure from Moscow”, so they cannot be recognized as legitimate;
- From 17 lists of candidates there were only 5, who were admitted to the elections, and representing the Block of the working people of Latvia, which indicates that the elections were not democratic;
- The results of the elections were falsified. Let us consider these ideas carefully.

As mentioned above, the parts of the Red Army were on the territory of Latvia not from 17 June 1940, but since October 1939, however, neither in 1939 nor in the first half of 1940 did the Latvian government state that the presence of troops of another State does not allow it to make decisions independently. Just like after 5 October 1939, also after 17 June 1940, the Red Army did not intervene in the political life of the country, and if we speak specifically about the elections of 14 and 15 July, the Red Army did not participate in them.

Moreover, if we follow the logics of the Supreme Council in 1990, then the elections to the Supreme Council in March 1990 were illegal, comparing to the elections to the National Saeima in July 1940. The explanation for this conclusion is simple: soldiers and commanders of the Red Army did not participate in the elections to the National Saeima89, while the elections to the Supreme Council were attended by all the inhabitants of Latvia, including the soldiers and officers of the Soviet Army, which, according to the point of view of the Supreme Court, was considered as the army of the country – occupant, which allows to recognize the election results invalid.

Refusal to register the 12 of the 17 electoral lists (in 9 lists there was only one candidate nominated, and in 3 lists – several candidates), certainly must be seen as violation of the principles of democracy, unless it is not about violations of a procedural nature. But here it is worth remembering the decision of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia, which banned after August 1991 (without a court order!) the activities of the Communist Party of Latvia and several other organizations, and the VI Saeima, and which did not allow the former officer of the KGB J.Bojars and other “former” officers to participate in the elections. So, accusations towards the organizers of the election in 1940 from the new ruling elite after 1991 are not very appropriate.

As for the conclusion on falsification of the election results, the Supreme Council did not provide any evidence in support of this version. And this is not by an accident, as in the summer of 1940 the mood of the population had an anti-Ulmanis and pro-Soviet character.
K. Ord, recognizing the pro-Soviet mood of the population of Latvia in summer 1940, wrote to the British Foreign Office that “in the present circumstances, there is a real possibility that there will be the majority in the new legislative body ... which will vote for the immediate annexation of Latvia to the Soviet Union with the rights of one of its republics ...” 91

Another British diplomat, the Secretary of the Embassy, Douglas MacKillop, stated in a telegram sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of his country on 19 July 1940: “The mass demonstrations, with many thousands of participants, were held last night to celebrate the success of the working class in Latvia ... Electoral unit of the labour nation requires organization of Soviets in Latvia as in the 14th Soviet republic or alliance with the Soviet Union ...”. 92

On 26 July, MacKillop analysing the current situation in the Latvia noted that “many workers would vote for a block the working people, even if he had an alternative. Despite the merits in front of the Latvian people, Ulmanis, according to the diplomat, was not a personality, able to unite his people and die for the country independence: “Not even an important social class expresses any love or loyalty towards Ulmanis”. From the point of view of the Secretary of the Embassy, the entire 20-year history of the independence of the Latvian state consisted of a primitive battle and corruption, a bloated state apparatus, a grotesque disproportion of civilian and military spending... Latvian nationalism, despite its romanticism and militant tendency, turned to be a simple spinning of the air ...” 93

In September 1940, being one thought of this conclusion, the Finnish delegate in Riga Palin, wrote: “When in the autumn of 1939, Moscow launched an offensive against the Baltic States, the Russians saw the internal discrepancy of Latvia, the dissatisfied government and the folk, who did not trust this government and the political system, a very few of whom were willing to protect it”. 94

Reasons of the complaint

There is no doubt that in the summer of 1940 in Latvia there was a revolutionary situation, since no pressure from Moscow could make thousands of people in different cities participate in the demonstrations under the slogans “Long live the Soviet government!”, and “We demand to annex our republic to the Soviet Union!”

Among the factors which contributed to the formation of a revolutionary situation in the country, were:

- Dissatisfaction of democratically minded part of the population with the fact that on 15 May 1934, K. Ulmanis made an unconstitutional coup and, by destroying weak roots of democracy, established an authoritarian regime;
- Dissatisfaction of the poorest population layers with the maintenance of social inequality in Latvia, in which the rich got richer and the poor, as before, barely made ends meet;
- Dissatisfaction of national minorities with sharp restriction of their rights to cultural and national autonomy under implementation of the policy of a building of a mono Latvian State after 15 May 1934;
- A sharp deterioration in the economic situation in the country after the start of the Second World War, i.e. after 1 September 1939, as the external economic relations of Latvia were mainly aimed at the West after 1920. If at the end of 1939, according to official figures there were 4.000 of registered unemployed, then in March of 1940, according to the data of “Latvijas darba centrale”, their number already reached over 44 thousand. 95
- The presence of illusions about the possibility of the restoration of the democratic republic with the beginning of the government of A. Kirhensteins among the part of population with democratic or centric political views, and illusions about the establishment of a social equality and common welfare society in Latvia following the example of the USSR, where such society as if had already been created, among the left politically oriented part of the population;
- Dissatisfaction of broad layers of the society with the pro-German policy of leadership of Latvia and the fear of biggest part of the population from the possibility of recovery of the century long German government as a result of the new German occupation in Latvia;
- The absence of a fear from the Soviet Union, because a significant part of the population retained a memory of the Soviet Latvia of 1919, and sympathized with the Soviet Union and the Russian people, with whom Latvians connected centuries-old historical and cultural traditions of coexistence, as well as the memory of the act that Russia supported the First and Second Awakening of Latvians.

Latvians supported changes

Documents show: Stalin’s USSR was not only interested in the political control over the Baltic States, but was also ready to go for an armed aggression for the sake of this. 96 Moreover, this readiness was expressed in very specific preparations. Thus, in early June 1940, the deputy of the National Commissariat of the NKVD (The People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs) of the USSR
Vasily Chernyshev signed a certificate of readiness of POW camps to receive 38 thousand people. On 13 June, there were dozens of evacuation hospitals and the military hospital train set in military camps. On 14 June, the command of the Belorussian Special Military District (BSMD) issued an order on the treatment of prisoners of war. On 16 June, trophy commissions were created “for organization of the recording of weapons, ammunition, military equipment captured on enemy territory” in the BSMD.97

At the same time, the establishment of the political control, in the opinion of the Soviet leadership, did not necessarily mean the Sovietization of these countries and their integration into the USSR. P.A.Sudoplatov, who was the deputy chief of the foreign intelligence service of the NKVD, stated in his memoirs that in June 1940, it was about creation of a broad government coalition in Latvia, which had to represent both German and Soviet interests. It was assumed that the head of the government might become the Minister of Foreign Affairs Vilhelms Munters – a “perfect implementer” of this task.

In June, P.A.Sudoplatov came to Riga on board of a high-speed bomber for negotiations on this issue, where, together with the counsellor of the Soviet embassy Vetrov he secretly visited Munters, and during the meeting expressed “the wish of the Soviet government to make changes in the composition of the Cabinet Republic as soon as possible, so that Munters could be able to lead the new coalition government”.98

However, the events in Latvia were developing not quite as planned in Moscow or Berlin. Instead of the government of V. Munters the government of A. Kirhenshteins was formed. And then something happened that was not absolutely not planned. K. Ulmanis’s resignation from the position of the head of the government opened the way to a long-heated discontent of the folk. There were mass manifestations in support of the changes. In the book “Latvija: neatkarības mijieresl. Okupācija. 1939. gada septembris – 1940. gada jūlijs”, historians A. Stranga and I. Gore emphasize in the titles under the pictures that mainly ethnic minorities took part in mass demonstrations in support of the changes. In the book “Latvia 1988-2015: a triumph of the radical nationalists Book 3. Formation of a new historical memory, or the Whitewashing of Nazism in Latvia”...

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Jelgava at that time, 25 700 represented the titular nation. And if we speak about who participated in demonstrations and meetings in Jelgava, these were primarily the Latvians. That is why, answering the question, how Latvia became Soviet, we must recognize that this happened with the support of the majority of the population of Latvia, and, first of all, thanks to most of the Latvians and only later non-Latvians.101

“After the arrival of the Red Army, many hoped that Latvia would be truly democratic and sovereign. There was unrest among the people, and many were against the regime of K. Ulmanis,” – emphasizes the American historian of Latvian origin Edgars Andersons.102

It is obvious that because of that there was a revolutionary situation in the summer of 1940 in Latvia. And this revolutionary situation predetermined the outcome of the elections of 14 and 15 July to the National Saeima, while in Moscow nobody was hundred percent sure of success. P. Sudoplatov indicates that “... at first it was unclear how events with the elections in Latvia would develop, how it would be possible to fully control the situation”.103

Why did the population of the country, both Latvians and non-Latvians, support the process of Sovietization of Latvia in 1940? Answering this question, we should remember that the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia in November 1918 and formation of the Karlis Ulmanis government basing on the support of the Kaiser’s army were not seen authority among the population, which in that period gave their preferences to the of Soviet power.

There is no doubt that a part of the population preserved the memory of the Soviet Latvia of 1919 also during the first years of the Republic of Latvia. And the state coup of Karlis Ulmanis on 15 May 1934 not only weakened, but on the contrary, contributed to further preservation and strengthening of this memory. And this memory is one of the reasons for voluntary Sovietization of Latvia in 1940, i.e. the creation of the Latvian SSR in July 1940 was nothing but a continuation of the traditions of the Soviet Latvia, formed back in 1917-1919.

There is one more aspect. Speaking about the reasons for the public support of processes of Bolshevisation and Sovietization, we cannot skip the fact that by 1940 the experience of social reconstruction in the USSR spread around the world by thousands and thousands of media, and was regarded by many millions of people as a symbol of social justice, just like the bright goal, which should be strived for by all progressive mankind.

Events of 1940, in fact, can be described as failure of the policy of K. Ulmanis of forcible creation of “Latvian Latvia”. As a result of this policy, the Latvian society was split not only according to the national but also according to social and class characteristics.
Working class and farmers, and some part of the intelligence were supporting the Soviet power, because they were idealizing the Soviet system and hoping for better living conditions. Some part of the intelligence was hoping for democratization of the political regime. Those who succeed in an authoritarian regime and advocated the so-called “Latvian Latvia” turned to be in an unenviable position because the new power of “workers and farmers” did not welcome them. And exactly these people, who lost their former political and financial situation after 17 June 1940, later began talking about the “occupation” of Latvia, as they were hoping for the return to old times.

Taking this into account, it is possible to conclude that the attempt of the Latvian official historical science after 1991 to explain the changes in 1940 only by external pressure, i.e. threats from Stalin’s Soviet Union, ignoring meanwhile internal political processes in the country and the historical memory of the folk, fulfils a political task, i.e. is needed to justify a political revival of the ideology and practice of undemocratic and ethnocratic regime of K.Ulmanis in the ideology and practice of the Second Republic of Latvia and has nothing to do with the objective assessment of events.

“We fought for the Soviet power in Latvia!”

In February 1990, the newspaper “Soviet Latvia” published a letter of 79 veterans of the Communist Party and members of the revolutionary movement in Latvia, soldiers and partisans of the Great Patriotic War, addressed to the Congress of National Deputies of the Soviet Union. This letter stated that “on 11 November 1989, the Commission of the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian SSR, established to study the prerequisites, conditions and consequences of the treaty between the USSR and Germany (the so-called Molotov – Ribbentrop Pact), signed on 23 August 1939, at the session of the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian SSR, informed about the results of their work ... The information clearly stated that as a result of this pact Latvia was occupied by the Red Army, that there was no socialist revolution, that the Soviet power in Latvia was imposed by force, that the elections to the Saeima on 14-15 July 1940 were not free and democratic, as the Constitution of 1922 was not taken into consideration, by force, that the elections to the Saeima on 14-15 July 1940 were not free and independent were just an empty phrase. No one persuaded anybody to go to the polls, nobody even campaigned. The Red Army soldiers were in garrisons, not in barracks or polling stations... Elections to the Saeima on 14 – July 15 were a true expression of the will of the Latvian people...”

From proletarian internationalism to the idea of independence and radical nationalism

There is still a question of why some participants in the events of 1940, who then actively campaigned for the Soviet power – Eduard Berklavs, Mavriks Vulfsons and Pyotr Krupnikov – supported the thesis of the Occupation of Latvia after 1991, and some of them (Eduard Berklavs) even became followers of radical nationalist views.

Let us remind that during a debate organized in Riga in July 1989, a member of the Movement for the National Independence of Latvia (LNNK) Eduard Berklavs frankly admitted being “a fanatical member of the Komsomol and Communist” in 1940. Mavriks Vulfsons, who was the first in Latvia to speak publicly about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, said: “Let’s be honest. I have kissed these tanks (i.e. tanks of the Red Army – VG)”.

As for E.Berklavs, then among the factors, which stipulated the changes in his views, was also the collapse of his personal career of the party and the Soviet leader, when in July 1959, on the wave of the termination of the process of de-Stalinization, he not only lost his post as a Chairman of the Council of Ministers and was removed from the Bureau of the Central Committee of the CPL, but also administratively expelled from the country; until 1985 his name was not allowed to be mentioned.

But the main reason that led to such a radical change in views of E.Berklavs, M.Vulfsons, P.Krupnikov and events of the summer of 1940,
obviously lays in the fact that they were aware of their responsibility for what happened after 5 August 1940, i.e. for the establishment of Stalin’s totalitarian regime and the beginning of massive repressions. And the sense of guilt was automatically transferred on the events until 5 August, in which all of them actively participated. M. Vulfsons directly stated: “... what happened to us then, it was a tragedy for all of us.”

However, such an approach to the assessment of the historical past cannot be considered objective, since according to this logics people should know what will happen to them tomorrow or the day after, and this is impossible.

As an example, we can mention the Resolution of the Supreme Council of Latvia from 15 October 1991, which divided the whole population into citizens and residents of Latvia, who are non-citizens. If future non-citizens had known that in a few months the radical nationalist politicians, who came to power, would make them people without citizenship rights, then none of them would have voted for SUCH an independent Latvia. But people did not know it, and that is why, they voted as they did and not otherwise. And the result of this voting, i.e. nobody would dispute or argue with the fact of future non-citizens’ mass support of the idea of independence.

The same thing is with the events of 1940. People did not know and could not know then what would follow the annexation of Latvia to the Soviet Union, but they were hoping to have a better and safer life – as there was war in Europe. Thus, the prevailing mood of the society and the decisions that were taken should be evaluated only from this point of view. However, the official historical science that tries to justify the thesis of the occupation, finds this approach nowadays as non-acceptable, and that is why it ignores and conceals the fact of participation of hundreds of thousands of people in demonstrations in the summer of 1940 with slogans demanding the restoration of the Soviet power in Latvia and annexation of Latvia to the Soviet Union.

**What does recognition of the occupation of Latvia mean from the historical and political point of view?**

On 17 September 2011, there were early parliamentary elections in Latvia. The main winner was not any particular political party or two, three political parties, but the tendency of the right-wing political development with its ideological basis in the form of a thesis about the “Soviet occupation” of the country from 1940 to 1991. Actually, we must admit that the main theme of the pre-election campaign, of the elections and the first weeks after the elections was the theme of occupation, which, by its presence on television and in the printed media was clearly outshining any other theme. And this was the time of the economic crisis, when, if speaking logically, the topic of economic development should prevail.

Abstracting from the legal definition of the term “occupation” we shall focus only on the issue of what actually “occupation” means for Latvia from the historical and political point of view. The answer to this question could be following:

- The recognition of the “occupation” leads to a denial of the historical role of the national masses, or, in other words, to the denial of people’s right to self-determination. Whatever the folk decides, its will is of no importance, since the right to decide belongs only to the “chosen ones”, i.e. only the political elite, regardless of how it was formed, by democratic means, as a result of an authoritarian coup on 15 May 1934 or as a result of the elimination of universal suffrage on 15 October 1991. This approach to the question is not only anti-democratic, anti-national and unhistorical (otherwise it would be necessary to cancel the outcome of any revolution, which is actually impossible), but also serves to confirm the thesis of the existence of the alleged continuity of the Latvian statehood from 1918 to 1991;

- The recognition of the “occupation” supposedly leads to the recognition of historical rightness of the USA, which, starting from 23 July...
1940, refusing to accept the choice of the people of Latvia, made by them in specific historical conditions of the initial period of the Second World War, and taking into the account the historical traditions of cohabitation of Russian and Latvian people;

- The recognition of the “occupation” supposedly leads to the recognition of historical rightness of the radical West, including Latvian emigration settled in the USA, – the ideological heir of the political elite and the authoritarian and ethnocratic regime of K. Ulmanis. It is useful to recall that in the late 1980s – early 1990s, the radical part of the western Latvian emigration imposed on the National Front of Latvia a radical solution to the question of citizenship, and in the second half of the 1990s it largely determined the radical content of the laws on the language and education;

- The recognition of the “occupation” inevitably leads to the use of Nazi propaganda arsenal, because exactly during the Nazi occupation of Latvia, the themes of the “Soviet occupation” and Soviet repressions were actively drummed into the consciousness of the population. Thus, the recognition of the “Soviet occupation”, not only has the same goal as the Nazi propaganda, but also leads to the revision of the results of the Second World War;

- And finally, the recognition of “Soviet occupation” leads to the approval and support of all Russophobes in the world, who were thinking yesterday and still keep thinking today only think about how to loosen and break down the USSR, and nowadays in the same way how to weaken and destroy Russia. I hardly need to remind you that these Russophobes are in abundance in the USA, Europe and in the small Latvia, especially considering the historical traditions of Russophobia in Europe, as well as the fact that there was actually no denazification in the post-war Europe.

The question of the so-called “Soviet occupation” can be seen from different angles. The way this question is solved by a political party or a particular person, not only determines their attitude towards Russia, but also answers the question, whether this party or that person is a carrier of democratic ideology, or they (consciously or unconsciously) support anti-democratic, anti-national, Russophobe, and sometimes even neo-Nazi political forces.

What does recognition of the occupation of Latvia mean in terms of the international law?

The implementation of the concept of “restoration of citizenship” into practice has led not only to the appearance of the Institute of mass statelessness in Latvia and Estonia, but this concept itself based on the thesis of the so-called “occupation” of the Baltic republics by the Soviet Union in 1940, as well as on the thesis of continuity the existence of the State of Latvia de jure in the period from 1918 to 1991, came into conflict with the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Helsinki in 1975. The thesis of the continuity of the existence of the Latvian and Estonian states de jure in the period from 1918 to 1991 disputes the principle of inviolability of borders in Europe, established after the Second World War, allowing the ruling elites of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania to make territorial claims against the Russian Federation and other countries.

In other words, today the ruling revanchist elites in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania refuse to recognize the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Helsinki, which was signed by the leaders of 33 countries in Europe, as well as the United States and Canada.

It can be surprising, but the same position is supported by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) – the successor to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), because in the early 1990s, the CSCE represented by Max van der Stoel, supporting the concept of a “restored citizenship”, actually supported the thesis of the continuity of existence of the state of Latvia de jure in the period from 1918 to 1991. This situation, i.e. that the CSCE in fact identified itself with the position of new ruling elite of Latvia concerning the non-recognition of the provisions of the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on the inviolability of borders in Europe, established after the Second World War, can be qualified as violation of the regulations of international law recognized in the world, by the CSCE. This situation cannot be described as nothing but scandalous.

Why did the notion of the Occupation of Latvia become popular in the world?

The thesis about the occupation of the Baltic republics by the Soviet Union in 1940 has no historical and legal justification. This thesis has only political and ideological justification and is used by current ruling revanchist elites of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia to save their position in power. Take this thesis, away and “King shall remain naked”. The whole model of the division of the society into “invaders” and “occupied”, built after 1991, would be destroyed at the same moment. In May 2005, this was very clearly shown by the Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the 8th Saeima of the Republic of Latvia Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, who in the newspaper “Vesti Segodnya” (“News Today”) stated
the following: “If we abandon the concept of occupation, it jeopardizes our policy with regard to citizenship, non-citizens and their rights (prohibition of participation in municipal elections) and other key issues. It is clear that we cannot undertake such step”.

Important thesis in the concept of the occupation of the Baltic republics is the assertion that the Soviet-German non-aggression pact of 23 August 1939 with the secret protocols predestined the development of the events in Latvia in summer 1940. However, this statement does not withstand critics, since the decisive role in the events of 1940 in Latvia was played by the reasons domestic policy.

The statement about the continuity of existence of the Republic of Latvia as a subject of international law in the period from 1918 to 1991 is also false, since there is no international treaty signed by the USSR after 1940 with the Western countries, where the countries of the West would discuss the principle of non-proliferation of this agreement onto the Baltic republics, as they allegedly continued to exist as an independent states de jure.

But today in Latvia there are only few scientists who dare to speak about it. Among them – the head of the Foreign Policy Institute of Latvia Andris Spruds. Giving a presentation in the programme “Razvorot” (“U-Turn”) on the radio Baltcom on 24 January 2013, he stated: “We always say that Latvia continues its existence and that there is no first or second republic, but there is only one republic. And this is sacred. I am critical of this. We are still the second republic and this is normal. This is a different society and a different state”, – emphasized Spruds.

Supporters of the thesis of the illegality of the annexation of the Baltic states to the Soviet Union in 1940 have always been the USA and a number of Western countries – allies of the United States and also the revanchist emigration from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, which developed in the West after 1944-1945, the most radical part of which until 1940 made the basis of the support of authoritarian and ethnocratic regimes in the Baltic States, and after the occupation of the country by the Nazi Germany in 1941 it served the Hitler regime. This part of the emigration from the Baltic countries is responsible for crimes against their people during the war.

The entire period of the Cold War, the USA and its allies did not neglect the Baltic theme in the relations with the Soviet Union. The policy of anti-Sovietism and Russophobia, which defined the attitude of the West towards the Soviet Union during the entire time of its existence as to a state with a different social system and a different state ideology, ensured a long life of the Baltic theme. Moreover, the policy of the Stalinist and post-Stalinist Soviet Union, which began mass repressions immediately after the Baltic States had received the status of union republics in August 1940, and which continued with them until the beginning of the 1960s, created serious preconditions not only for conservation, but also for strengthening the policy of Russophobia and anti-Sovietism.

Thus, the political and ideological (rather than historical and legal) assessment of the events of 1940 in Latvia as occupation in the USA and Europe – is the result of global ideological confrontation between the Soviet Union and the capitalist world and the desire of the last to destroy the USSR. Exactly this confrontation had eventually led to the fact that in the West in the minds of many people, especially politicians, the thesis about the occupation of the Baltic States in 1940 became the unquestioned ideological dogma that did not require any historical and legal evidence. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, this ideological dogma, not only lost its political relevance, but, on the contrary, became the basis for Western support of the policy of Russophobia, which was followed by the political elite of the Baltic countries in its relations with Russia after 1991.
Chapter 8

Decision of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Latvia (Constitution Court) of 29 November 2007 and the doctrine of the “international legal continuity” of the Latvian State from 1918 to 1990


The initiators of this case were 21 deputies of the Parliament of Latvia of the 9th convocation in the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Latvia: Arturs Krishjanis Karinsh, Solvita Aboltina Silva Bendrate, Ingrīda Čircene, Ilma Chepeane, Ina Druviete, Uldis Grava, Sandra Kalniete, Artis Kampars, Ausma Kantane, Sarmita Kikuste, Gunars Laicans, Ainars Latkovskis, Visvaldis Laci, Linda Murniece, Janis Reiris, Ējinars Repshe, Ingunā Ribena, Anna Seile, Karlis Shadurskis and Dzintars Zakis.

Applicants asked to:
1) Recognize the Law on the full power of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia to sign a Border agreement with Russia and the words “with the principle of the inviolability of borders, adopted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe” of Article 1 of the Ratification law as not appropriate for the preamble and Article 9 of the Declaration of the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian SSR “On the Restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia” from 4 May 1990;
2) Recognize the Border agreement and the Ratification law as not relevant to Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia.

Reason: 1) The Border agreement referring to the question on the belonging of the city Abrene (Russian name – Pitalovo) and surrounding townships contradicts the doctrine of continuity, as in the contract Latvia agrees that the mentioned territory is the territory of the Russian Federation, however, according to the peace treaty between Latvia and Soviet Russia from 11 August 1920, this territory was recognized as the territory of the Republic of Latvia, and 2) the words of the Article 1 of the law on the ratification of the Border agreement “in compliance with the principle of the inviolability of borders, recognized by the Organization for Security and cooperation in Europe” are nothing other than the Parliament’s recognition of the Russian official interpretation of the Helsinki Final Act. “The reference to the principle of inviolability of borders of the OSCE, in accordance with the official Russian interpretation of the mentioned principle puts into question the recovery of the Latvian state and should be evaluated as an action that does not match the doctrine of the state continuity” – that is the opinion of the applicants.

In its conclusion the CC of the Republic of Latvia decided to:
1. Declare the law “On the full powers of the Cabinet of Ministers to sign the initial draft treaty from 7 August 1997 between the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation on the state border between Latvia and Russia” as corresponding to the preamble and paragraph 9 of the Declaration of the Supreme Council of the Latvian SSR from 4 May 1990 “On the Restoration of Independence the Republic of Latvia”.
2. Recognize the agreement between the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation on the State Border of Latvia and Russia, signed on 27 March 2007 as corresponding to Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia.
3. Recognize the law “On the agreement of the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation on the state border between Latvia and Russia” as corresponding to Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia.
4. Recognize the words “with the principle of the inviolability of borders, adopted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe” of Article 1 of the Law “On the agreement between the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation on the state border of Latvia and Russia” as not appropriate to the first part of Article 68 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia and not in force from the moment of publication of the decision.²

During the preparation of its decision the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Latvia based on opinions of both Latvian and foreign lawyers and historians, expressed specifically in connection with the case, as well as on a wide range of historical publications (total text of the resolution of the CC is 163 pages). Not considering the conclusions of the CC mentioned above, justifying the right of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia to sign a Border treaty with Russia and the correspondence of the border treaty to the text of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, we shall stop only on the argumentation, which the CC of the Republic of Latvia applied to historical and legal justification of the doctrine of the “international legal continuity” (permanence of continuity de jure) of the Latvian state from 1918 to 1990.

“I Internationally recognized continuity of the Republic of Latvia”

The paragraph 1 of the Recital of the decision of the Constitutional Court states: “... taking into the account the internationally recognized state continuity of the Republic of Latvia”.³ To support this thesis the decision of the CC mentions the position of the USA and some other countries, the position of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament on the assessment of changes in 1940 in the Baltic States. It is also mentioned that the diplomatic missions of the Republic of Latvia in the West continued to operate after 1940.⁴

During the Cold War, the “Baltic question” was considered by the Western countries as one of the most important tools to fight against the USSR, thus, there were many corresponding declarations of non-democratic character of the changes of 1940 in the Baltic States. However, despite the fact that the “Baltic question” remained a serious irritant for the Soviet leadership until the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Western countries in their policy toward the USSR never proceeded from the fact that the Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian Republics allegedly continued their existence de jure.

There is no agreement, signed by Western countries and the Soviet Union, where the action of the agreement would not apply to the Baltic republics, for the reason that they allegedly continue to maintain the status of subjects of international law as the pre-war independent states.

As for the fact that some foreign diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Latvia retained some support, including financial, from the governments of the West also after the changes in 1940, it only applies to those cases, when during the period of the Cold War, their activities are used by the West to lead the fight against the Soviet Union. In other words, this situation was based on purely political, not legal reasons.

Specific facts characterizing the position of the West in the “Baltic question” in 1940-1946 state the following: immediately after the changes of 1940, the USA and Great Britain froze all bank accounts of diplomatic representation of the former Republic of Latvia, which made it impossible for them to continue their activities.⁵

On 12 August 1940, the former Honorary Consul General of Latvia in Copenhagen Jørgen Olsen handed the archive of the Latvian Embassy to the representatives of the USSR. At the same time, diplomatic representations of the Baltic countries were closed in France, and their archives were given to the USSR. On 1 January 1941, the Swedish government announced that it would no longer consider the former Latvian Ambassador J.Feldmanis as the representative of Latvia.⁶

In September 1940, the former Ambassador of Latvia in the UK K.Zarinsh sent a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain with a request to support the establishment of the Government of Latvia in exile, but this request was denied. With the same request was made at the same time by the former Ambassador of Latvia to the United States A.Bilmanis, but his request was also refused.⁷

On 4 January 1942, the former Ambassador of Latvia to the United States A.Bilmanis on behalf of the alleged existing Republic of Latvia expressed a desire to join the Declaration of the United Nations, signed on 1 January in Washington. The Declaration was signed by 26 countries, which joined together for a joint struggle against Nazi Germany and its satellites. However A.Bilmanis’s request was denied.⁸

As already mentioned above, during the conferences of the three Allied powers – the USSR, the USA and the UK – held in the war times, the “Baltic question” was discussed only once – during the interview between the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR I.V. Stalin and the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt in Tehran on 1 December 1943.

Roosevelt’s requirement to hold a referendum in the Baltic republics on the accession of these countries to the USSR is fully consistent with Sumner
Welles Declaration of 23 July 1940, which spoke about the fact that the USA did not recognise the changes in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, performed as a result of the threat of force. Such position of the US President on the “Baltic question” can be seen, rather, as a political declaration, once again addressed to the Baltic part of the electorate. In 1944, presidential elections had to take part, and Roosevelt again had to take into account the moods of Latvians, Lithuanians and Estonians living in the USA.

In the same time, the United Kingdom and the United States did not allow the former Latvian diplomats, despite their requests, to participate in conferences of the countries of the Anti-Hitler coalition, which discussed plans for the post-war world. Before the completion of the conference in Potsdam, former ambassadors of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia sent a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain, asking to acknowledge the fact of the triple occupation of the Baltic States (Soviet, Nazi and Soviet again), but this letter remained unanswered. The conference in Potsdam with participation of G. Trumena confirmed the integrity of the borders of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 and the cogency of post-war borders.

US and Britain’s recognition of post-war borders of the USSR determined the attitude of the US and Great Britain towards the former ambassadors of the Republic of Latvia abroad in the early post-war years. In particular, the former ambassadors of the Baltic countries tried to protest against the fact that on the Paris Peace Conference, which was held from 29 July to 15 October 1946 and ended with the signing of Paris peace treaties with Italy, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Finland on 10 February 1947, the USA, Britain and France did not mind the fact that the Soviet delegation would include the National Commissars of Foreign Affairs of Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian SSR G. Kroos, P. Rotomsky and P. Valeskalns. But the objections of the former ambassadors of the Baltic States were not taken into account. This meant that the Western countries recognize the representatives of the Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian SSR as the only legitimate representatives of their countries, and changes in 1940 – as legal and legitimate.

Was there the “Soviet occupation” in the understanding of the Constitutional Court?

Seems like a strange question. Moreover, the thesis of 50-years-long occupation of Latvia from 1940 to 1990 was the fundamental thesis in the doctrine of permanency of the legal continuity of the Republic of Latvia from 1918 to 1990, which was taken as the basis by the Constitutional Court (CC) in its judgment. But still.

Paragraph 61.2 of the CC Resolution states: “The Supreme Council of the Latvian SSR was elected on partially free elections. It expressed political will of not only the citizens of the Republic of Latvia, but also of other residents of the Latvian SSR. The Supreme Council as the government body of the Latvian SSR was actually unlawfully established authority of the Latvian SSR and could not adopt regulations that are binding on the Republic of Latvia”.

This conclusion of the CC completely corresponds meets the doctrine of “continuity”, which does not allow to recognize the Latvian SSR legal and legitimate, and also points to the fact that the country was occupied in 1940-1990 and, thus, was not free to make decisions of a constitutional nature. However, hereinafter the text of the CC states that “the elections of the Supreme Council were voting for the independence of Latvia, during which, despite the shortcomings of the electoral system, the supporters of the independence of Latvia won a landslide victory. Taking into the account the aims of the election platform of the Popular Front of Latvia and the fact that the processes of the Third awakening had clearly shown the will of the majority of the population of Latvia to live in a free and independent State, the deputies of the Supreme Council were empowered in the elections to take the decision to restore the independence of the Latvian state”. From the above it can be followed that the constitutional foundations of the doctrine of continuity of the First Republic of Latvia have been violated by the fact that the Constitutional Court (the Court of the Constitution) acknowledged the legality and legitimacy of the Supreme Council, elected on the basis of the Constitution of the Latvian SSR in 1978, as well as by the fact of acknowledgement of the legality and legitimacy of the Declaration on the restoration of the state independence of the Republic of Latvia adopted by the Supreme Council on 4 May 1990. In other words, in its decision the CC recognizes the legality and legitimacy of the Latvian SSR, contrary to the concept of “occupation” and the doctrine of continuity, which suggests that the CC puts into question their own conclusions about the occupation of Latvia in 1940 and about internationally recognized state continuity of the Republic of Latvia from 1918 to 1990.

The following argument of the CC contradicts the Doctrine of “continuity”: “The fourth paragraph of the Preamble (the Declaration on the Restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia on 4 May 1990 – V.G.) was dedicated to the Resolution the National Saeima on the elimination of the independence of the Republic of Latvia and annexation of the Republic of Latvia to the USSR. The Supreme Council indicates that the National
Saeima did not express the will of the Latvian people and did not have the constitutional right to make a decision on changing the state system and the elimination of the sovereignty of the Latvian state. Indirectly referring to Article 77 of the Constitution, the Supreme Council emphasized that decisions on such matters can be only made by Latvian folk, but there was no national voting, or referendum, on the annexation of the Republic of Latvia to the USSR.”13

Why is this argument inconsistent to the doctrine of “continuity”? Simply, because there was neither national voting, nor referendum on question of the restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia in 1990. In 1990 the decision was made on the basis of “the clearly expressed will of the majority of the population of Latvia”, just like in 1940. Thus, the reproach of the CC towards the National Saeima of 1940 has completely no basis behind it.

At the XXV meeting of the Communist Party of Latvia (on the platform of the CPSU) in December 1990, the secretary of the CPL G.K.Gerkis stated in his report “On the historical path of the Communist Party of Latvia”: “The declaration of 4 May 1990 announces the Declaration of the Saeima of Latvia of 21 July 1940 “On annexation of Latvia to the Socialist Republics of the Union of Soviet” to have no legal force since its adoption, and, on this basis, (announces) that Latvia’s presence in the USSR has been unlawful for all these years, proclaims the renewal of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia of 1922, declares that the relations between the Republic of Latvia and the Soviet Union are based on the Treaty between Russia and Latvia on 11 August 1920”. But “contrary to the requirements of Article 5 of the Constitution of the Latvian SSR about the fact that the most important issues of state life shall be submitted for public discussion and put for national voting (referendum), ..., there was no referendum on the main question of the status of the republic. At the same time, there are complaints in the Declaration of 4 May 1990 that in 1940, the question of changing the state system of Latvia had to be decided only by people in a referendum and not by the Saeima ....” 14

The Constitutional Court, realizing the above mentioned problem that the Declaration “On the Restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia” adopted by the Supreme Council on 4 May 1990, was not in accordance with the norms of the Constitution of 1922, considered it possible to justify the adoption of the Declaration mentioned above by actions, which were committed not before but after its adoption.

Paragraph 61.3 of the Resolution of the CC, inter alia, states: “The policy on restoration of the statehood of Latvia conducted by the Supreme Council, was supported by Latvian residents already on 3 March 1991, when there was a national Latvian survey conducted. One of the leaders of the National Front of Latvia Dains Iviņ mentions in his memoirs the following: “– Are you for a democratic and independent Latvia? – That was the question of the survey, and on 3 March it was answered affirmatively by 73.6 percent of participants of the plebiscite from 87.6 percent of registered voters in Latvia. Only 24.7 percent voted “against”, and we thought such affirmation of loyalty of the national multi-coloured society of the Republic on 4 May was fantastic. Even in Daugavpils, with its 13 percent of Latvian residents, 63.4 percent said “yes” (Iviņ D. Gadījuma karakalps. Riga: Vieda, 1995, p. 350).

In connection with the foregoing, it must be concluded that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitutional Law are legally binding, despite the fact that these acts were not adopted in accordance with the procedure established by the Constitution”.15

Even without referring to the question of how legally correct it is to justify the decision of the Supreme Council to adopt the Declaration of Independence by the results of the population survey conducted almost a year later, it should be noted that the decision on the independence of the state must be taken in terms of a referendum, not a survey, which has no binding power. Therefore, it is obvious that the decision of the CC has no legal basis according to the Constitution of 1922. In other words, the argumentation used by the CC is contrary to the doctrine of “continuity” and “occupation”.

**Evaluation of the historical reasoning of the notion of the “Soviet occupation” of Latvia**

The number of historical and legal documents, mentioned in the resolution of the CC, which are designed to prove the fact of occupation of Latvia and the legal validity of the doctrine of “continuity” of Latvia from 1918 to 1990, refers only to the issue of political pressure from abroad, i.e. the question about the pressure on Latvia from the part of the Soviet Union, and completely ignores the issue of domestic political reasons for changes in 1940, and also does not examine the use of the thesis about the occupation of Latvia in 1940 by Nazis during the Nazi occupation of Latvia for the purpose of an ideological struggle with the Soviet Union.

This approach is not accidental. This is the cornerstone of the position of the ruling elite on the issue of evaluation of changes of 1940, which defines the content of the studies of the so-called “official historians” and the justification of the decisions of judicial authorities. But this approach makes the Resolution of the CC initially politicized and not justified from the historical perspective.
Meanwhile, the domestic political reasons, rather than the external pressure, determined the nature and general direction of changes in the summer of 1940 in Latvia. We have already noted that peoples and governments of the Baltic countries and Finland responded somehow quite differently on the pressure from the USSR. Finland defended its independence with weapons in its hands, but Latvia, i.e. the president, the government and a significant part of the population, supported and approved the entrance of additional troops of the Red Army. The Constitutional Court ignores this issue in its historical and legal analysis.

**Notion of the “Soviet occupation” of Latvia and the international community**

After 1991, the ruling elite of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia decided (among other countries) to get an official statement on the issue of recognition of the occupation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union in 1940 at the UN level. However, three years later, it was recognized that it was impossible to solve and discuss this problem at the UN level.

The ex-prime Minister and the former head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, the deputy of the 7th Saeima Valdis Birkavs suggested his explanation of this situation in October 2001. At the discussion on the tenth anniversary of the UN Mission in Latvia, V. Birkavs admitted: “We realized that it is better not to require the UN recognition of the occupation. The fact is that half of the UN member countries were former occupants, and half – formally occupied states. And if there is a voting on the issue regarding Latvia, it is likely that the votes would be divided into 50-50. Neutral result would be interpreted as negative. So you see, they would tell us, the UN refused to recognize the fact of the occupation of Latvia. So today we shouldn’t raise this question”.18

Thus, the fact of occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Union in the summer of 1940 has not been recognized at the level of the UN. Moreover, the Latvian authorities do not plan to apply to the UN with a plea to recognize the fact of the occupation.

Can this position of the ruling elite of Latvia find an explanation not only in words V. Birkavs? Let us recall that the entry of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union in 1940 was not recognized by the United States and the Vatican. But it was recognized de jure by Sweden, Spain, the Netherlands, Australia, India, Iran, New Zealand, Finland, and de facto – by the United Kingdom and some other countries.

Accordingly, some of the states, as stated in the book, presented by the Commission of historians of the President of the Republic of Latvia “History of Latvia. The 20th century” (Riga, 2005), after 1991 recognized the law of succession of the Republic of Latvia, proclaimed on 4 May 1990, with the existing state until 1940. However, Russia, China, Cuba, Sweden and several other states recognized the independent Republic of Latvia as a new state.

The positions of international organizations were also different. The UN Security Council calculated the UN participation fee proportionally to the former USSR contributions to the organization. Latvia also had to enter again into the International Labour Organization. At the same time, the Council of Europe recognized the law of succession of the Baltic countries.

**How to explain the differences between the position of the West in dealing with the issue of the persistence of the continuity of the Republic of Latvia de jure from 1918 to 1991?**

Obviously the answer to this question could be found not exactly in the different legal interpretation of the changes of 1940 in the Baltic States by the Western countries, but in the degree of dependence of individual countries and international institutions on the USA position on the “Baltic question”. After the beginning of the Cold War, this position was getting tougher every year, but after the collapse of the Soviet Union it became, in fact, an important political tool of the support of the anti-Russian policy, which was adopted by the ruling elites of the Baltic countries after 1991.

The contribution to the strengthening of the thesis about the occupation of the Baltic republics in the late 1980s was made by the political leadership and activists of the democratic movement of the former Soviet Union, and today this line is continued by individual lawyers and historians of modern Russia and the new independent states that emerged after the collapse of the USSR. At the same time, they ignore the internal political reasons for changes in 1940, and the emphasis is put on the analysis of the foreign policy situation.

Thus, the researcher of the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Science Natalia Lebedeva believes that the summer period of 1940 in the Baltic States has features of a “bloodless” occupation, similar to the seizure of Czechoslovakia by Germany.

The thesis about the occupation of Baltic States in 1940 was actively supported by the literary historian and critic Boris Sokolov, who published about 60 books on philology and modern Russian history. B. Sokolov is a
frequent guest in Latvia, where he participated in historic conferences devoted
to the evaluation of changes of 1940 in the Baltic States.22

The Doctor of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor of the
Department of International Relations and Area Studies of the Faculty of International Relations of the Voronezh State University Maxim Kirchanov
also supports this thesis.23

In 2011, Rhine Müllerson unexpectedly announced the recognition of the
fact of occupation of the Baltic States in 1940, which he was actively denying
in 1991. In an interview with the Internet portal Stolitsa.ee he stated: “I do not
deny the Soviet occupation of Estonia, this is history”.24

Rhine Müllerson Doctor of Juridical Science is legal expert with the
world known name, the author of 11 books and about two hundred scientific
articles on international law and politics in the leading scientific journals in the
world. In 1989-1990 – Adviser on International Law at the Office of the USSR
President Mikhail Gorbachev; in 1988-1992 – Member of the UN Committee
on Human Rights; in 1991-1992 – First Deputy of the Minister of Foreign
Affairs of Estonia; in 1992-2009 – Guest professor at the London School of
Economics and Political Science; in the 1994-2009 – Head of the Department
of International Law at the London King’s College. In September 2013, the
President of the Academy of Law of University of Tartu Rhine Müllerson was
elected as the president of the authoritative international legal organization –
the Institute of International Law. We must admit that the support of the
thesis of the occupation of the Baltic States in 1940 of such experts as Rhine
Müllerson significantly strengthens the position of supporters of this thesis.

The thesis of the occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Union is actively used
by human rights defenders. In particular, this thesis is used by the international
non-governmental human rights organization “Freedom House” in its annual
report on the situation of civil liberties and human rights in the world in 2010.25

As a result, today, when considering the continuity of the existence of the
Latvian State as a subject of international law, the international community
was divided into two camps: the USA and its allies, who, using the thesis of
permanence of the continuity of Latvia, are now leading a political fight for the
weakening of Russia, and other countries, whose political influence is much
less and who believe that there is no reason to speak about any permanence of
continuity of the Republic of Latvia.

It should be recognized that the political influence of the USA and its allies
on the issue of the occupation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union has been
intensified in recent years. The position of Russia, which had repeatedly stated
that the question of the occupation of the Baltic countries is closed to it in the
sense that there was no occupation in 1940, has not provided the necessary
influence on the international community yet.

In these circumstances, the doctrine of permanence of continuity of the
Republic of Latvia de jure from 1918 to 1990, was challenged for a dispute in
Latvia only by very few scientists of the Baltic countries. Among them – the
head of the Foreign Policy Institute of Latvia Andris Spruds. Speaking in the
programme “Razvorot” (“U-turn”) on the radio Baltkom on 24 January 2013,
his: “We always speak about the fact that there is continuation of Latvia
and that there is no First and Second Republic, there is only one Republic. And
this is sacred. I am critical of this. We are still the Second Republic and this is
normal. This is a different society and a different state”, – underlined Spruds.26

CSCE Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and the doctrine
of the persistence of the legal continuity
of the Republic of Latvia

The thesis of the permanence of the legal continuity (existence) of the
Republic of Latvia from 1918 to 1990 is fundamentally contrary to the
international law, formed after 1945, and, in particular, to the Final Act of
the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe of 1 August 1975,
which was noted by the deputies of the Latvian parliament in their Claim to
the Constitutional Court of Latvia. The Constitutional Court of the Republic
of Latvia, considering the case of “On the conformity of the law “On the
authorization of the Cabinet of Ministers to sign the draft treaty on the state
border between Latvia and Russia initialled on 7 August 1997 by the Republic
of Latvia and the Russian Federation” and the words “with the principle of
the inviolability of borders adopted by the Organization for Security and
Cooperation in Europe” of Article 1 of the Law “On the agreement Republic
of Latvia and the Russian Federation on the state border between Latvia
and Russia” to the preamble and Article 9 of the Declaration of the Supreme
Council of the Latvian SSR “On the restoration of Independence of the Republic
of Latvia” dated on 4 May 1990, and to the treaty on the state border between
Latvia and Russia, signed on 27 March 2007 by the Republic of Latvia and
the Russian Federation and conformity of the “Law on the Agreement of the
Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation on the state border between
Latvia and Russia” to Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia”,
decided: “4. To recognize the words “with the principle of the inviolability
of borders adopted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in
Europe” of Article 1 of the Law “On the agreement Republic of Latvia
and the Russian Federation on the state border between Latvia and Russia” as not corresponding to the first part of Article 68 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia and invalid from the date of publication of the decision”.27

The decision of the Constitutional Court was made, despite the fact that the text of the decision states that the Helsinki Final Act allegedly does not apply to the Baltic States. Paragraph 72.3 of the decision of the CC in particular states: “After the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, the Western States also continue pursuing the recognition of the annexation of the Baltic countries as illegal, and that after the signing of this act the Western States also continue pursuing the policy of non-recognition.”28

If the conclusion of the non-applicability of the Helsinki Final Act to the Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian SSR would actually have justification from the point of view of international law, then the CC could legitimately refer to the Helsinki Final Act as a document that confirms the doctrine of “continuity”. However, the fact that the Constitutional Court excluded the words “with the principle of the inviolability of borders, adopted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe” from Article 1 of the ratified law “On the agreement the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation on the State Border of Latvia and Russia” (after the ratification of the law 17 May 2007!!!), suggests that this was done because of the fact that the reference to the political declarations of the Western countries was not sufficient to justify the fact of occupation and the doctrine of continuity in terms of international law, according to the understanding of the Constitutional Court.

Taking into the account what was said above, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that today there is no legal basis for claiming that the Republic of Latvia, proclaimed on 4 May 1990, is the same state as the first Republic of Latvia. Actually the Republic of 4 May 1990 is the Second Republic, which is a different state formation than the first Republic of Latvia, which existed until the summer of 1940.

The sovereign – are these only Latvians or the whole folk?

One of the most important issues, which is solved highly controversial in the Resolution of the CC is the question about the owners of the sovereign power in the Latvian State – to Latvians only (read: to the Latvian political elite only), or to all the people of Latvia.

The CC, rephrasing to the statement of 21 deputies of the Parliament of Latvia, states that “the state of Latvia was proclaimed by the implementation of the principle of self-determination of peoples. The idea of self-determination of peoples was defined during the struggle of the North American colonies for independence and the French Revolution. During the First World War, this idea was widely recognized and over the time it became the most important rule of international law (see: Cassese A. Self-Determination of Peoples. A Legal Reappraisal. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp 11 – 66).”29

18.1. In the interwar period, the principle of self-determination of peoples was defined as a political requirement according to which the population of the territory should be granted the right to freely decide the question of the state affiliation of the populated areas (see.: Giese F. Der Verfassung des Deutschen Reiches. Berlin: Karl Henmanns Verlag, 1931, S.43).30

The principle of self-determination of peoples includes three elements: the right for independent decision-making, the right for self-organization and the right for self-government.

People’s right for independent decision making as an element of the principle of self-determination means the right of people to freely and independently decide on their political status, on annexation to any State on the basis of autonomy or secession from other states and creation of their independent state in accordance with the national legal norms.

The right of the people to self-organization is the right to freely and independently determine their own political system in the constitution adopted during the popular voting or the constituent assembly.

The right of the people to self-government is the right to exercise the state power in accordance with the constitutional provisions. (Dišlers K. Tautu pašnoteikšanās principa tiesiskais sатurs. Rīga: Latvijas Universitāte, 1932, pp 134-135)”31

When reading the response of CC, it still remains unclear, who is behind the definition of “people” according to the CC – only Latvians or Latvians and minorities all together. The Article 2 of the Constitution of Latvia of 1922, referred to by the CC, states: “The sovereign power of the Latvian State belongs to the people of Latvia”. Taking into consideration that the Constitution does not specify that the Latvian folk are only Latvians, and considering that in other articles of the Constitution it is also spoken about national minorities, it can be concluded that in the Constitution under the people of Latvia are considered both Latvians and ethnic minorities all together. But such interpretation does not follow from the response of the CC, because it, and in particular paragraph 18.3, states that “the Latvian
people, like most of the peoples of Europe, began to realize themselves in their first rebirth in the second half of the XIX century. With the time, basing on the right of peoples to self-determination, the people strongly demanded the right to freely and independently decide their fate. 32

Taking into account that on 23 May 2013, the deputies of the Saeima voted for inclusion of the provision on Latvians as a state nation into the text of the Law on Citizenship 33, and that, despite the strong criticism of this provision by the Council of Europe 34, in the same year, the representative of the western Latvian emigration and the chairman of the Commission on Constitutional Law at the President of the Republic of Latvia Egils Levits presented a draft preamble to the text of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, which at the level of the Basic Law proposed to consolidate the idea that Latvia is a state, which is created not by the people of Latvia, but by the Latvian nation, and that the main goal and objective of this state is to protect the interests of the Latvian nation, not of the people of Latvia, the uncertainty of the CC in the interpretation of the term “people of Latvia” does not seem accidental! 35

The sovereign – is it the folk or the political elite?

When analysing the conformity of the decision of the CC to the Constitution of Latvia, the extremely important issue is the question on the competence and authority of foreign Latvian diplomats to speak on behalf of the people of Latvia after the changes in 1940. Given that the CC in its argumentation constantly refers to the various initiatives of the former Latvian diplomats aimed to justify the occupation of Latvia as well as the continuity of the legal existence of the Latvian state, it can be concluded that the CC entitles former Latvian diplomats to act on behalf of the Latvian people. But does this legal position of the CC correspond to the Constitution of Latvia?

Until 1940, Latvia had 16 embassies abroad. Latvian ambassadors were accredited in 25 countries. Besides that, there were 194 consuls working. 36 After the changes in 1940, the absolute majority of Latvian diplomats did not recognize the education of Latvian SSR and stayed in the West. During the years of the Cold War, many of them were active supporters of the concept of “occupation” and the doctrine of “continuity”. However, it is important to keep in mind that they were representing the government authorities, which were not elected democratically, but formed after the coup of 15 May 1934 and, thus, could not express and did not express the will of the people of Latvia. In other words, the desire of the former appointees of the authoritarian regime of K. Ulmanis to speak on behalf of the people of Latvia has no legal justification, as it contradicts Article 1 of the Constitution of Latvia, which states that “Latvia is an independent democratic republic”. In interpretation of K. Dishlers this means that the people of Latvia was denied the right to self-government on 15 May 193, or, in other words, the right to exercise the state power in accordance with the constitutional provisions. However, the CC provides former representatives of the undemocratic regime of K. Ulmanis with the right to speak on behalf of the people of Latvia, because not the people of Latvia, but these representatives required the recognition of the fact of “occupation” and the continuity of the legal existence of the Republic of Latvia.

There is no doubt that the CC excluded the analysis of internal causes of the changes of 1940 in Latvia from its historical and legal explanation of the doctrine on “continuity” for the same reason. But such an approach contradicts Article 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, which states that the sovereign power of the State of Latvia belongs to the people of Latvia. In other words, the CC actually refuses the people of Latvia, as the sole bearer of the sovereign authority in the country, to decide the fate of their state independently. Actually it is about the fact that since the ruling elite of Latvia formed after 1991, does not recognize the right of people for power, believing to be the only supreme judge in deciding the fate of the people, then the Constitutional Court, following the ruling elite, too denies the people of Latvia, as the only carrier of the sovereign authority in the country, also refuses the people for the right to decide on the fate of their state. In other words, the Constitutional Court does not only dispute, but it also supports the ruling elite’s usurpation of the people’s right to supremacy of power. This situation gives rise to doubts about the independence of the Constitutional Court.

Conclusions

Taking into account that the Constitutional Court of Latvia (Constitutional Court) in its judgment of 29 November 2007 in the case “On the conformity of the law “On the powers of the Cabinet of Ministers to sign the draft treaty on the state border between Latvia and Russia, initialed on 7 August 1997 by the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation” and the words “with observation of the principle of the inviolability of borders, adopted by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe” of Article 1 of the Law “On the agreement of the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation on the state border between Latvia and Russia” to the preamble and Article 9 of the Declaration of the Supreme Council of the Latvian SSR “On the restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia” on 4 May 1990 and the treaty on the
state boarder between Latvia and Russia, signed on 27 March 2007 between the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation and on the conformity of the Law “On agreement between the Republic of Latvia and the Russian Federation on the state boarder between Latvia and Russia” to Article 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia” in argumentation of the theses about the “occupation” of Latvia in 1940 and on the continuity of the existence of the Latvian State de jure from 1940 to 1990

1) does not consider domestic political reasons for changes in 1940, but is based only on the evaluation of the pressure of the Soviet Union on Latvia in 1940 in terms of the political position of the Western countries, based primarily on the attitude to the Soviet Union as to the state with a different political, social device and other (non-bourgeois) ideology;

2) in its argument on the thesis of the “occupation” of Latvia is indirectly based also on the Nazi propaganda of the period of Nazi occupation of Latvia 1941 – 1945;

3) contradicts as it denies the legal and legitimate character of the Latvian SSR, and recognizes the Supreme Council of the Latvian SSR as legal and legitimate, which was elected on 18 March 1990 on the basis of the Constitution of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1978, because it is necessary to prove the legality and legitimacy of the Declaration “On the restoration of independence of the Republic of Latvia”, adopted on 4 May 1990 by the Supreme Council of the Latvian SSR;

4) actually gives the former representatives of the undemocratic and authoritarian regime of K. Ulmanis the right to speak on behalf of the people of Latvia, which contradicts the Article 1 of the Constitution of Latvia, which states that “Latvia is an independent democratic republic”;

5) actually denies the people of Latvia, as the only carrier of the sovereign authority in the country, to decide the fate of the state independently, which contradicts the Article 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, which states that “the sovereign power of the Latvian state belongs to the people of Latvia”;

6) refuses to imply the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 with its principle of inviolability of borders established in Europe after the Second World War, on the territory of Latvia, it can be concluded that:

1. Resolution of the CC indicates the lack of independence of the judicial power in Latvia and its dependence on the ideology professed by the ruling right-wing radical political elite, which was formed under the influence of ideology of the radical part of western Latvian emigration – the successor of the ideology of the ethnocratic political regime of K. Ulmanis and former Nazi collaborators of the period of Nazi occupation of Latvia in 1941 – 1945, and also as the result of the elimination of universal suffrage on 15 October 1991. In other words, the decision of the CC suggests that today Latvia is not a legal state.

2. Being between “the hammer and the anvil”, i.e. between the requirements of international law and the requirements of the ruling right-wing radical political elite made the document highly controversial internally, and contradictory to international law and the Constitution of Latvia.

3. Indirectly the CC resolution is aimed at political rehabilitation of the authoritarian and ethnocratic political regime of K. Ulmanis.

4. Indirectly the resolution of the CC is aimed at confirmation of the thesis of former Latvian Nazi collaborators about the fact that the 4 years of the Nazi occupation of Latvia had much softer consequences for the people of Latvia than a year of “Bolshevik occupation”, which contradicts the historical facts.

5. “The doctrine of continuity” contradicts the constitutional norm, which states that the Republic of Latvia is a democratic state, because this doctrine refuses people as the only carrier of the sovereign authority in the country, who have to decide their own destiny independently.

6. Argumentation provided in the resolution of the CC does not actually prove, but rather refutes the thesis on the “occupation” of Latvia in 1940 and on the “international legal continuity” of the Republic of Latvia from 1940 to 1990.
Chapter 9

Why did the US recognize the occupation of the Baltic States?

During my conversation with Richard Holbrooke, one of the deputies of Warren Christopher, I told him: if you had not recognized the incorporation of the Baltic States for 50 years, then why don’t you want loudly enough and openly disagree with the fact that the Baltic States were occupied? But then, as usual in such discussions, it came down to a political discussion about numerous legal standards of the occupation. This is the main issue – you had not recognized the incorporation for 50 years, and now do not want to admit that there was an occupation.

From an interview with the President of Latvia Guntis Ulmanis to the newspaper “Diena”.

“The United States refused to recognize the occupation undertaken by the empire. Flags of free Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, which are prohibited in the country, were proudly hanging over the diplomatic missions in the United States.”

From the speech of the US President George. W. Bush in Riga, on 8 May 2005.

Only about 10 years passed between these two statements, but they nevertheless indicate a substantial change in the US position on the so-called “Baltic question”.

International law, if we leave the legal definition – is certain agreements adopted by the international community, which reflect the current world political balance. When this balance is changing, and new players appear on the political world arena, there is an attempt to formulate new agreements, which would reflect the new balance of political forces in the world.

That is what we are seeing after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, which had been playing one of the major roles in the world. With the end of existence of the territorial giant there was a great stimulation and increase of the world political forces interested in formation of a new system of international legal relations and revision of state boarders adopted in Europe after 1945. In the first place it is about revision of the Yalta and Potsdam agreements in 1945, in favour of the United States and subordination of countries of Eastern Europe to political and economic influence of the United States – this is described in detail by the Professor N.A.Narochnitskaya in her book “For what and with whom we fought”.

The US President George W. Bush spoke for the first time about the illegitimacy of the Yalta agreements at the celebration invitation of Lithuania into NATO on 23 November 2002: “We knew that arbitrary borders drawn by dictators would be erased, and these borders disappeared. Munich and Yalta would no longer exist”.

Then, during his visit to Riga in May 2005, George W. Bush repeated the idea that “the Yalta agreements had become as unfair as the Munich agreements and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Again, during the negotiations of the great powers, the freedom of small countries was the subject of bargaining. But this attempt to sacrifice freedom for the sake of stability caused the division and instability of the continent. This temptation of millions of people in the Central and Eastern Europe will be remembered as one of the greatest crimes of history... When you united in the protest and the empire collapsed, the legitimacy of Yalta was finally buried – once and for all....”

On 17 July 1959, i.e. at the highlight of anti-communist hysteria in the US, the United States Congress decided to annually celebrate the “Captive Nations Week”. A little later, this decision became the law P.L.86-90, which obliged the presidents annually to confirm the purpose of the US to release victims of “the imperialist policy of Russia, which since 1918 with the help of direct and indirect aggression caused the creation of a huge empire, which represented a direct threat to the security of the United States and all the nations of the world”.

However, until the visit of US President George W. Bush in May 2005 in Riga, there had not been even one word about the occupation of the Baltic States, it had been only spoken of incorporation.

In May 2005 everything changed. The words of George Bush on the occupation of the Baltic States serve as a signal for the USA and Europe. As already mentioned, on 20 May, the US Senate on the initiative of the Republican John of Lithuanian origin John Shimkus and the Democrat Dennis Kucinich, the co-chairmen of the so-called “Baltic faction” established in 1997, adopted
a resolution calling on Russia to acknowledge the fact of “occupation” of the Baltic countries; and about one week later a similar appeal was made by the European Parliament. Following the US Congress and the European Parliament, the resolution condemning the fact of the “Soviet occupation” of the Baltic States was adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The resolution of the US Senate, the report of the European Parliament and the PACE resolution are questioning not only the legitimacy of the Yalta agreements, but also the legitimacy of the Final Act of the European Conference on Security and Cooperation, because one of the central provisions of the Final Act, which was signed on 1 August 1975 by the leaders of the European countries, Canada and the United States, was the recognition of the territorial integrity of states and the principle of inviolability of borders in Europe.

While there was the Soviet Union and the world remained bipolar, nobody could put into question the territorial results of the Second World War.

A typical example: During the visit of Richard Nixon in the USSR, Nikita Khrushchev attacked him with accusations that the requirement of the US federal law (the law P.L.86-90) about the dismemberment of the USSR, the state to which he paid a visit, was contrary to international law. Being embarrassed Richard Nixon responded with excuses and even called this requirement of the US Congress “stupid”.

Another example: Signing the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference, the former US President Gerald Ford said that “The United States will gladly sign this document because we sign under each of these principles”, i.e. in 1975, the US once again recognized the territorial borders of the states in the post-war Europe.

**The US carries out redivision of the world**

Why did the voyage of US President George W. Bush in May 2005 ran through Riga? The Director of the Institute of Economics of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, Professor Raita Karnite believes that after 1991 “Latvia has gradually become a field of action of global external forces, besides the main conflict occurs because of the world influence between the EU and the US. It is possible that Latvia ... might be used as a tool to weaken the EU”.

In her book “For what and with whom we fought” N.A. Narochnitskaya quotes a prominent Russian political geographer V.P. Semenov-Tien-Shansky: Eastern Europe is a key region between the “two Mediterranean seas – the Baltic and the Black” and whoever controls the region is ensured with the role of the “lord of the world”.

The collapse of the USSR in 1991, which was described by Russian President Vladimir Putin as a disaster, led to the beginning of the struggle for political and territorial heritage of this giant state. With the end of the Soviet Union and the change of political forces in the world resulting from this collapse, the United States openly declared the non-recognition of agreements in Yalta and Potsdam, and, thus, the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act of the European Conference on Security and Cooperation.

According to N.A. Narochnitskaya, the words of the American president “neither Munich nor Yalta” literally mean: “Henceforth, the Eastern Europe will not be the sphere of influence of Germany or Russia – it will be the sphere of influence of the US”.

Time has proved the correctness of this assessment. The US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, speaking on 3 May 2006 in Washington in front of the newspaper editors, said: “Russians must recognize that we have legitimate interests and our own relations with their neighbours, even if these countries were once part of the Soviet Union”.

It is absolutely obvious that these “legitimate interests” explained the US position in the issues of agreements in Yalta, Potsdam and Helsinki, and not the mythical “occupation” in 1940 and the desire to eliminate the alleged historical injustice concerning the Baltic States and other European countries.

However, the US imperial aspirations spread today not only in the countries of Eastern Europe, but also in the region of the Caucasus, Central Asia and Russia.

As a consequence, historical, ethnic and border problems, not only in Europe but also in other regions, are getting extremely acute. The world is getting less stable, and the democracy is getting replaced by double standards and violence.

The USA, formerly actively using the military force when protecting their interests in the Central and Southern America, and Western Europe, are now actively using this experience in the Eastern Europe and Asia. Without the UN sanction the US started military action first in Yugoslavia and then in Afghanistan and Iraq. As a result of these actions the authority of the United Nations as the internationally recognized regulator of international legal relations was damaged.

With the help of the United States, who were interested in forming political regimes in the countries of the Former Soviet Union, which would be under their control, double standards in the approach to the organization of the elections and double standards in matters of human rights began to be actively applied.
Double standards in the evaluation of elections and human rights

The last most vivid evidence of application of double standards to the evaluation of the elections was “free and democratic” parliamentary elections in Iraq on 30 January 2005.

What are the similarities between the elections in Latvia in July 1940 and in Iraq in January 2005, and what distinguishes these two events?

**Similarities:**
1. Elections in Latvia and in Iraq were held in the presence of military troops; 2) “disloyal” political forces were not allowed to participate in elections in Latvia and Iraq.

**Differences:**
1. During the elections of 1940 in Latvia, as in Iraq, there were no tanks, but armed soldiers around the polling stations. In 1940, in Latvia the Soviet troops were in barracks, while their opponents did not show any resistance, unlike in Iraq, where during the election day there were explosions and people were dying; 2) In 1940 people in Latvia knew who they can vote for. In Iraq, the voters did not know the candidates, because there was no pre-election campaign. They just threw the lists they were given in the box at the polling station. Besides, about a third of voters believed that they were choosing the president of the country.

The question arises: why the elections of 1940 in Latvia are considered illegal, but the Iraqi elections in 2005 – a manifestation of democracy? There can be only one answer – there are double standards in the assessment of the elections.

Double standards in the evaluation of the elections do not allow assessing the political development of Latvia after 1991 adequately. After all, if you follow the logic of the West, which is fully supported and shared by the Latvian ruling elite, then the elections in the 5th Saeima in June 1993 are also... illegal... because until 31 August 1993, the “occupation” troops of the USSR, and then later of Russia were present on the territory of Latvia, and because the political forces, which were disloyal to the new regime, were not allowed to participate in these elections.

However, the official West somehow recognizes these elections as legitimate despite the fact that PACE and the OSCE in 2002 came to the conclusion that a “long-term deficit of democracy” formed in Latvia because of the lack of participation of non-citizens in the elections.

At a press conference on 23 December 2004, Russian President Vladimir Putin speaking of double standards in the assessment of the elections and the absence of political rights of almost half a million of people in Latvia, called to end up mocking at the common sense.
The US policy – a threat to peace

The transition of the US from the policy of non-recognition of incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union to the policy of non-recognition of the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – is just a part of the overall strategy to weaken Russia, “the great empire, which represents a direct threat to the security of the United States and all the nations of the world”, and the broadening of the US influence in the world.

The refusal to recognize the Yalta-Potsdam and Helsinki agreements, which was once again clearly proclaimed in the speech of George Bush in Riga, – this is a direct road to a serious political crisis in Europe. Moreover, this is a serious threat to the peace in Europe. And not only because such position makes the split in the relationship between Russia, the US and the UK – the former allies in the anti-Hitler coalition, but also because now other countries, following the example of the United States can send these agreement to the trash can, which will be followed by the chaos in Europe.

However, for the Latvian Russophobes such position today turns to be very reasonable since, denying the existence of the Soviet Latvia and describing the period from 1940-1941 and from 1945-1990 only in black tones and with terms of occupation, as well as presenting territorial claims to Russia, they may feel themselves quite confident.

International law in relation to the United States, Russophobia and the war

In the practice of international relations of the twentieth and the early twenty-first century, there is still a radical contradiction between the principle of the inviolability of borders, recognized in international law, and the right of people to self-determination, recorded in Article 1 of the UN Statute. Today, this contradiction becomes even more volatile as a result of the imposition of a geopolitical confrontation of the US and Russia on it.

While there was a bipolar world, in the former USSR and in countries of Eastern Europe the contradiction between the principle of the inviolability of borders and the right of people to self-determination remained largely latent and hidden. This was facilitated, in particular, by the fact that the human rights issue was not that sharp as it appeared in the eyes of anti-Soviet and Western propaganda
and how it became after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the transition of many newly formed states towards the political influence of the United States.

After 1991, with the beginning of the formation of a unipolar world headed by the United States, the compliance of the principle of the inviolability of borders and the right of people to self-determination in the international practice, as well as observation of human rights were fully subordinated to the political and economic interests of the US and its NATO allies, who, when considering themselves necessary, were easily redrawing Europe’s state borders without even slightly considering the opinion of the local population and the basic human right to life.

The same way it was, in particular, in Yugoslavia, which disintegrated under the pressure of the United States in the 1990s into various states. It is thanks to US policy in Bosnia, the former Nazis came to power, and ethnic cleansing started, which killed 200 thousand people. In 1999, the NATO aircraft without having the UN mandate started the bombing of Belgrade as if revenging for the independent position of Serbia regarding Kosovo’s independence. At the same time, NATO used the radioactive depleted uranium in munitions.

The USA and the Western countries openly ignored the opinion of the Serb population regarding Kosovo’s independence, where within the framework of the acute Serbian-Albanian ethnic conflict, there was no referendum on the independence of the region. On 17 February 2008, the Parliament of Kosovo, regardless of the opinion of Serbia and the Serb population of Kosovo, declared unilaterally the independence of Kosovo, and on 22 July 2010, the International Court of Justice of the UN recognized the legitimacy of the decision of the pro-American government of Kosovo to proclaim independence from Serbia, despite the fact that those political forces who came to power in the province were guilty of the genocide of the local Serb population.

Today when the politicians the US and other Western countries refer to the principle of the inviolability of borders recognized in international law, and on the basis of this principle deny people the right to self-determination, which, for example, happened in the case of a referendum in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) on 16 March 2014, which resulted in the fact that the ARC and Sevastopol became part of Russia, and in the case of a referendum in the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts of Ukraine on 11 May 2014, which resulted in announcement about the creation of independent Republic of the Donetsk Ukraine and the Lugansk National Republic, then this is, in the first turn, a manifestation of anti-Russian policy of the USA, the evidence of the global geopolitical conflict between Russia and the United States and Western countries subordinated to the United States.

This policy is nothing but the protection of the ruling political elite of the US and other Western countries of their own political interests, which have nothing to do with the interests of people of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Ukraine. In other words, this policy causes great damage to the people of Ukraine. Moreover, this is obviously an antidemocratic policy because it denies people the right to decide their own fate independently and is expressed in support of pro-American political forces, which came to power in Ukraine as a result of an armed rebellion, the main sponsor of which again were the United States.

In this regard, the referendums organized in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, as well as in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions – this is the struggle of the peoples of these territories against the imperial policy of the US and its allies for the formation of genuinely popular, truly democratic and socially oriented political regimes which ensure the observation of human rights, not in words but in deeds. Therefore, sharply negative reaction of the US and its allies on the outcome of a referendum is not accidental, as there was a severe hit on the US imperial plans. The US support of the so-called “Anti-terrorist operation” (ATO) in the south-east of Ukraine, which is nothing but a crime against the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine, is not accidental.

Today, if the US and other Western countries do not consider the concept of democracy as an empty phrase, the main issue between “the principle of the inviolability of borders and the right of people to self-determination” should be definitely the right of people to self-determination.

The supremacy of right to power belongs to the people, not to the ruling elite. The claims of the ruling elite on supremacy of right to power – this is, in fact, feudal, not a democratic understanding of the supremacy of right to power. Only if people have the supremacy of right to power there can be actual observance of human rights. And only when the supremacy of right to power belongs to the people it is possible to approve of the state borders not by the will of individual politicians pursuing this or that “Curzon Line”, but in accordance with the consideration of the national composition and the national interests of the population of a particular territory. A different approach, demonstrated, for example, by the Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union in Ukraine, led to the formation of an artificial Ukrainian state after 1991, i.e. to unification of territories that had never been Ukrainian, and, thus, to unification of a population of different ethnic cultures and different ethnic memory in one state. So, it is not a surprise that after the fact that in February-March 2014 in Ukraine there was an anti-constitutional coup causing the formation of an anti-democratic and actually half-Nazi political regime with
an aim to undertake a large-scale offensive against the rights of the Russian-speaking population, led to the beginning of the Civil War. The end of the war and the normalization of the political situation in the region are only possible if the authorities in Kiev take into account national interests of the population of Donetsk and Lugansk regions. In other words, Ukraine must undergo political and territorial reforms, which would result in redistribution of the powers of the Kiev authorities in favour of the Donetsk and Lugansk National Republics.

There is nothing new in the formulation of this issue. Moreover, in 1918 the US President Woodrow Wilson in his famous 14 points of the draft of the peace treaty, which was to end up the First World War, supported such an approach. Points 5 of the draft announces: “A free, open-hearted and absolutely impartial solution of all colonial disputes, based on a strict observance of the principle that while resolution of all issues relating the sovereignty, the interests of the population must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government, the rights of which should be defined”.14

President Wilson suggested that during the resolution of any disputes regarding the sovereignty of a territory, it is necessarily to take into account the interests of the population. In other words, there was a referendum on the matter which state the people would prefer to live in.

In addition, if in a particular state the ruling elite is really interested in a stable and long-term development of its population and its territory, the representatives of all nations and peoples living in this State shall enter into the Social Contract, which would clearly define guarantees of observation of rights of residents of any nationality and any religion. The Ohrid Agreement – the Framework document, signed by the Macedonian government and the Albanian political forces on 13 August 2001, confirms the possibility of signing such a Social Contract.

If the ruling elite violate the Social Contract, and, basing on the fact that it is the people that are the sovereign of the supreme power in the state, not the ruling elite, the people can exercise their right to self-determination repeatedly. In this case it is not about the fact that the solution of the solution of the problem lays only in the area of the federalization of the existing and formation of the new state. Not at all! Although it is not impossible. But in the first place, the question is that people not just simply have the right, but are obliged at all available legal means to fight for observation of the Social Contract, agreed on previously and which would meet people’s interests.

All the peoples living in the State have to enjoy the same rights, and the right to maintain their language and cultural identity should not simply be guaranteed by law, but it should be implemented in real, i.e. the state should be dominated by democratic ideology and principles of tolerance, respect for all peoples inhabiting its territory. In case, if people see that life in this or that state does not satisfy them, if the authorities systematically violate their rights, if the ruling elite believes to be the sovereign of power, not the people, then the people have every right to revise the earlier adopted decision on self-determination. The residents of Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine did so on the referendum on 11 May 2014.

As for the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, here we should not focus on the revision of the earlier decision on self-determination, but on the confirmation of the decision, which was adopted in January 1991. Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE A.V.Kelin, speaking at a meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna on 12 June 2014, noted that “after the unconstitutional change of government in Kiev in February, actually a coup, the inhabitants of the Crimea took advantage of a unique opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination, which is enshrined in Article 1 of the UN Statute. This right is confirmed in Article 1 of the Covenant of 1966 on Civil and Political Rights, in Article 1 of the Covenant of 1966 on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and it is also one of the fundamental principles of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975”. A.V.Kelin also recalled that “in January 1991, there was a referendum in the Crimean region of Ukraine on secession from Ukraine. From 81% of the residents present at voting 93% voted for secession from Ukraine. However, there was no such possibility during more than 23-year history of being the part of Ukraine”.15

In full accordance with international law, the Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine fully implemented the right to self-determination on the referendum on 11 May 2014. So did the people of Latvia in 1940, stating their desire to live together with the peoples of the USSR.

Political engagement of opposition of the principle of inviolability of state borders and the rights of people to self-determination, as well as the use of the theme of human rights for political interests of the United States is particularly well illustrated on the example of the former Soviet Union. The attitude of the United States and other Western countries towards the collapse of the Soviet Union into 15 newly independent states was certainly positive. Moreover, constantly expressing their special position on the issue of Baltic States, the United States and other Western countries actually pushed the USSR to collapse. Violation of the principle of inviolability of borders did not bother neither American nor European politicians. And this despite the fact that at the referendum on 17 March 1991 the people of the USSR unequivocally
spoke in favour of maintaining a single country. The USA and other Western countries were not bothered by bloody ethnic conflicts, which suddenly erupted throughout the former USSR and took away thousands of lives.

However, the historical experience of the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century teaches that any agreements reached by the heads of state without considering the opinion and interests of residents in these states, have a short life in terms of the unipolar world. This is not an accident that the notorious “Belovezha Accords”, signed in December 1991 by the presidents of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus B.Yeltsin, L.Kravchuk and S.Shushkevich, contrary to the results of the all-Union referendum on 17 March 1991, led to the collapse of the USSR and appeared in the public consciousness of the peoples of the former USSR as “shameful”.

Now when the peoples saw that life in independent states in many cases led to the impoverishment of the population, to the formation of corrupt, oligarchic, anti-democratic, pro-American political regimes, and started to speak for the strengthening of political, economic and cultural ties, or even reunification with Russia, this caused a strong protest among the Western countries, especially the US. It turns out that, just like in the case of the former Soviet Union and now in the case of Russia, the opposition of the principle of inviolability of borders to the right of the peoples to self-determination is expressed only in one thing: the West has always supported and will always support all the things, which lead to territorial disintegration and political and economic weakening of Russia, and, vice versa, it will strongly protest against what leads to political and economic strengthening of Russia, to reunion of peoples, who have lived for centuries in the Russian state, within its borders. The Western rhetoric about human rights has always corresponded and will always correspond to the same goal. In this case, the official West has never been interested in the opinion of the people, the views of ordinary people!

In other words, international law and human rights once end-up being hostages of anti-Russian, Russophobic, anti-democratic political forces. And this despite the fact that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and actually only since the early 2000’s, Russia is considered the only democratic state in the entire post-Soviet area. In all other former Soviet republics, there was formation and strengthening of authoritarian, ethnocratic or oligarchic political regimes. In the Baltic States, Ethnocracy has become the basis of the existence of these regimes – the construction of nation-states based on the suppression of human rights and forced assimilation of national minorities and the revival of Nazism.

Such political development of post-Soviet states and such attitude of the West to this political development contain a very large potential of conflicts. The West, as the time shows, constantly throws up firewood in the smouldering fire of conflicts, swelling a real fire (like in Ukraine) from time to time. But the peoples of the post-Soviet states, as well as the nations of the West, unlike their own corrupt political and economic elites, which are subordinate to the hegemonic policy of the US, are absolutely not interested in the conservation of this potential of conflicts. For this reason, for the sake of the actual observation of human rights, the people’s right to self-determination will be used more often in the foreseeable future, and not only in the area of the former USSR, but also on the territory of the “old” Europe.

But if you select only the post-Soviet space, then the referendums in the Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk – this is not the beginning of the process of its reintegration. This is a continuation of what had already happened in Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Reverse process of political, economic and cultural reunification of peoples of the former USSR is not over yet. It is not yet clear how would be the new state formation, which would form as a result of this process. And when will it be formed? One of the most important steps in this direction was the signing of the treaty on creation of the Eurasian Economic Union on 29 May 2014 in Astana, Kazakhstan. This document was signed by the presidents of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Armenia and Kirgizstan have already announced the readiness to join the treaty.

The United States have always considered the process of reintegration of post-Soviet space as a threat to their hegemony in world politics. Already on 13 December 2012, the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, speaking in Dublin in front of a group of human rights activists during the conference of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in fact, announce the death sentence to the reboot in Russian-American relations. Commenting on the Russian proposals on the establishment of the Eurasian Union as a part of Russia and other former Soviet republics; she called this plan “a new attempt of Sovietization of the region” and said that the United States were trying to develop effective ways to slow down or prevent this process”.

However, the US could not prevent the creation of the Eurasian Union. They also could not do anything to stop the creation of financial institutions in July 2014 in the framework of BRICS in order to ensure the economic development of China, India, Russia, Brazil, the South-African Republic and many other countries, regardless of the dollar. And this despite the fact that the United States is in the situation of a constant threat of financial default and can maintain their hegemony only under the condition of a constant printing of unsecured dollars. In these circumstances, the United States chose war instead
piece in the hope that this war will enable them to solve their own economic problems and as a result to maintain the monopoly in the world hegemony.

The United States began to increase its military presence in the Eastern Europe, while trying to destabilize the situation in Ukraine, i.e. in close proximity to the Russian borders in order to involve Russia in armed conflict and thereby to weaken or even destroy it. On 3 June 2014, during the visit to Poland, the President of the US Barack Obama announced that provision of security in Eastern Europe is the sacred duty of the United States, and that the US is ready to invest up to one billion dollars (735 million Euros) for placement of additional land, air and naval forces of the United States in the new Eastern Europe countries of the Union.18

US policy aimed at the outbreak of a full-scale war in Europe with the mandatory involvement of Russia was especially supported by the political elite of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, which carry out an openly puppet, pro-American foreign policy, but within their own countries – a policy of suppressing the rights of national minorities and the revival of Nazism. This is not accidental that the response from the ruling elites in the Baltics on the placement of additional land, air and naval forces of Russia of Vladimir Putin and the United States, which are in a state of constant threat of default. This period is likely to be characterized by increasing international tensions. This is confirmed by the information war against Russia, which was started by the US and the EU countries long before the Ukrainian crisis of 2014, and by a few packages of economic sanctions, which the US, Canada, Australia, Japan and the European Union brought down on Russia.

The United States and its allies have been always leading the information war against Russia, but in 2014, this war has become extremely active and huge. The reasons for the sharp surge of anti-Russian information hysteria were referendums in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on 16 March and in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine on 11 May conducted in full accordance with Article 1 of the UN Statute.

Information war and sanctions against Russia as a tool for maintenance of the hegemony of the United States

Today it is obvious that, in the light of the Ukrainian events, the world has entered into a new, very difficult period of relationships between the democratic Russia of Vladimir Putin and the United States, which are in a state of constant threat of default. This period is likely to be characterized by increasing international tensions. This is confirmed by the information war against Russia, which was started by the US and the EU countries long before the Ukrainian crisis of 2014, and by a few packages of economic sanctions, which the US, Canada, Australia, Japan and the European Union brought down on Russia.

The US and its allies have been always leading the information war against Russia, but in 2014, this war has become extremely active and huge. The reasons for the sharp surge of anti-Russian information hysteria were referendums in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on 16 March and in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine on 11 May conducted in full accordance with Article 1 of the UN Statute.

The purpose of the United States, as well as of pro-American political regimes in Europe, Canada, Australia and Japan became the delegitimization of the outcomes of the mentioned referendums by means of accusations of Russia of interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine. The US and its allies, including the Baltic States, accused Russia in the occupation of the Crimea and in the military support of the Donetsk and Lugansk National Republics. After 17 July, when a passenger plane “Malaysian Airlines”, going the route “Amsterdam-Kuala-Lumpur” (killing all 298 people who were on board the aircraft), was shot down in Ukrainian airspace, Ukraine, the United States and its allies accused Russia of the plane crash and death of people. This accusation has been in the centre of attention of Ukrainian, North American, Australian, Japanese and European media for a whole month. When the attempt to blame Russia for the destruction of a passenger plane “Malaysian Airlines” failed, and, moreover, when Ukraine and the Western media began to suppress information about the presence of a military aircraft of the Ukrainian Air Force next to the plane “Malaysian Airlines”, when Malaysian experts expressed the view that the passenger plane was shot down by the military aircraft of the Ukrainian Air Force, Kiev officials and the media of the US and their allies immediately switched to accusations against Russia claiming that the Russian Armed Forces allegedly invaded the territory of Ukraine. These accusations were heard so often that there was an impression that the official Kiev and the governments of the US and the European Union were literally pushing Russia to invade Ukraine, so that they could later accuse Russia of all mortal sins and begin a full-scale war against it. This situation was clearly manifested on 28 August, when the President of Ukraine Peter Poroshenko announced the invasion of the Russian into Ukraine.19 On the same day, the NATO officials said that there were about 20 thousand Russian soldiers near the border with Ukraine, and more than one thousands Russian soldiers were already participating in hostilities on the territory of Ukraine. The disinformation spread by the President of Ukraine P.Poroshenko and NATO was actively supported in the Baltic countries.

“Russian aggression is a threat to the entire region”, – said the Prime Minister of Latvia Laimdota Straujuma.20 “Latvia condemns the invasion of the armed forces of the Russian Federation onto the territory of Ukraine. This is an open aggression of the Russian Federation in relation to the state sovereignty of Ukraine and its territorial integrity and it undermines the basic principles of international law. Russia’s ongoing aggressive actions threaten peace and stability in the entire European continent ... Latvia urges Russia to immediately withdraw its military forces from the territory of Ukraine, as well as to stop the delivery of weapons and mercenaries to the so-called terrorist
groups of Donetsk and Lugansk “National republics”, – this was the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia. The opinion that Russia sent troops to Ukraine was supported by the President of Latvia Andris Berzins and the chairman of the parliamentary commission on national security, the former President of Latvia Valdis Zatlers. Even after the UN, the US State Department, the European Union, the OSCE and the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine stated that they did not possess any data about entrance of thousands of Russian troops on the territory of Ukraine, a former foreign minister and ex-Minister of Defence, and now a member of the European Parliament Artis Pabriks continued to demand that the EU leaders recognized the participation of the Russian army in the Ukrainian conflict.

On 29 August, the Chairmen of Parliamentary Commissions of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania Marko Mihkelson, Ojars Eriks Kalnins and Benediktas Yuodkai, despite the fact that the post of the President of Ukraine P. Poroshenko about Russia’s attack on Ukraine was just a fake, issued a joint statement condemning the invasion of Russian armed forces on the territory of Ukraine and called for increased sanctions against Russia. On 16 September, the 69th session of the UN General Assembly, which is the main advisory, directive and representative body of the United Nations consisting of 193 members-states, started their work in New York. The Assembly is a forum for multilateral discussions of the full spectrum of international issues covered by the Statute of the UN.

The US President Barack Obama, speaking on 24 September on the UN General Assembly, said that Russia’s actions in Ukraine are among the principal threats to the peace in the world. The US president has put Russia on the same row with the epidemic of Ebola and militants of the “Islamic state”. On 27 September, in his traditional Saturday speech to the American people, President B. Obama once again spoke about the Russian aggression, against which he would now unite the whole world. “America is leading the efforts to unite the entire world against Russian aggression in Ukraine. Together with our allies, we will support the people of Ukraine in the development of democracy and economy. This week, I appealed to more countries to join us in our common fight on the right side of the history,” – said Obama.

Latvian President Andris Berzins, who spoke at the session of the UNGA on 25 September, fully supported anti-Russian position of the president of the USA. The president of Latvia stated “This year we commemorated the mourning anniversary of the start of the First and the Second World Wars. Both wars started in Europe, but they quickly spread around the world, destroying the lives of countless millions of people. The League of Nations and the United Nations were formed on the ruins of war. Today again the global security and peace are challenged by forces, which are willing to rewrite the history and rules of the international order. Russia’s aggression against Ukraine disregarded the basic principles of the UN, uprooting the very foundations of the international system. It captured the part of the sovereign European state, using previously unseen war tactics and a huge propaganda against its neighbour. It allowed the shooting down of the civilian aircraft. It showed that the agreements and commitments are irrelevant. It pointlessly ignores and manipulates the international public opinion. These actions can only be qualified as a threat to global peace and security. The whole world, including the United Nations General Assembly, supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine. International community condemns and does not recognize the illegal annexation of the Crimea and Sevastopol to Russia”.

Unfortunately, the Latvian President again mixed up everything in his speech, because it was not Russia who attacked Ukraine, but these were the United States and Western countries, including the Baltic States, who first informatively and financially supported the unconstitutional seizure of power in Ukraine by ultranationalist and neo-Nazi political forces, and then they also informatively and financially supported the genocide of the local Russian-speaking population living in the south-east of Ukraine, provoked by Kiev authorities. As to the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to Russia, then this was the will of the people of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and this decision is entirely consistent with Article 1 of the UN Statute.

Latvian President A. Berzinsh in his speech reiterated ideologeme about the occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Union in 1940. “The collapse of the international system 75 years ago was already proved to be fatal to the Baltic countries. Two totalitarian regimes – of Hitler and Stalin – divided Europe, and we lost our freedom for 50 long years”, he said. Thus, the Latvian President took away the right to decide their own destiny, not only from the people of Crimea, but also from the people of Latvia.

The thesis on the armed invasion of Russia into Ukraine was actively exaggerated also at the annual conference of the OSCE on Human Dimension, which was organized in Warsaw from 22 September to 3 October. Representatives of the US, the EU and Germany expressed an accusing tone against Russia when discussing the topic. Official representative of Latvia, the Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia Viktor Makarov sided with this position, stating that the presence of Russian armed forces on the territory of Ukraine “does not cause any doubt.”
It is noteworthy that the opinion, expressed by the Russian delegation at the same conference, that the referendums in Crimea on 16 March and in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine on 11 May fully comply with international law, in particular with Article 1 of the UN Statute, has been ignored by the delegations of the United States, European Union, Germany, Latvia and other countries supporting the US perspective.

Political support to Ukraine was also expressed by the European Parliament, which on 17 July 2014 passed a resolution condemning Russia’s actions and supporting the Ukrainian government. On 18 September, the European Parliament adopted another resolution on the situation in Ukraine, which even more condemned the as if continuing Russian military invasion in Ukraine and urged the EU to strengthen sanctions against the Russian Federation.

The anti-Russian position of the European Parliament is not random. The existence of the ruling elites in many countries of the European Union is very much dependent on the political support of the United States. Thus, if we talk about the Baltic countries, then the foundation of the state ideology here are Russophobia, radical nationalism and neo-Nazism. It is for this reason that the Baltic States, following the US and the EU, actively supported the unconstitutional coup in Ukraine on 22-23 February. And after the new Ukrainian authorities launched a war against its own people living in the south-east of the country, the supposedly “democratic” West and supposedly “democratic” Baltic countries started strongly justifying the policy of destruction of the civilian population conducted by the Ukrainian authorities, although in the beginning of the year they were criticizing the President Yanukovych for an excessive use of force during the so-called “Euromaidan”.

“The Anti-Russian propaganda of the US and the EU is absolutely ridiculous ... If you ask me, whether now there is an attack on freedom in Europe, I would say “yes”, – said the former Czech President Vaclav Klaus in an interview with the British edition “The Spectator”. The former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, in an interview with the German magazine “Der Spiegel” said that the West had made a mistake in the Ukrainian crisis. “Crimea is a particular case ... And if the West wants to be honest, it must admit having made a mistake. Annexation of Crimea had nothing to do with an aim to rule the world, and it cannot be compared with Hitler’s invasion of Czechoslovakia”. Putin, according to the words of the ex-diplomat, “spent tens of billions of dollars to the Olympics in Sochi. Thus, Russia wanted to present itself as a leading country, open to the West and its culture, a country that considers itself as a part of the West. It was not convenient for Putin to occupy the Crimea and start a war with Ukraine one week after (after the event)”. “So why did he do it?” – Kissinger asked this rhetorical question. The former head of the US State Department is sure that Europe and the US “did not understand the significance of the events, which began with the negotiations on the economic relations between Ukraine and the EU, and then turned into demonstrations in Kiev. It was supposed to be the subject of the dialogue with Russia”. “Ukraine has always had a special significance for Russia. And it was a fatal mistake not to realize it”, – said Kissinger.

However, the opinion of some politicians and a part of the population of Europe, which are calling to take into account the interests of the population of the south-east of Ukraine, as well as the interests of Russia, the belief that it was not Russia, but the US and NATO, who actually provoked the conflict in Ukraine, have sounded quite loud recently, yet have almost no effects on the anti-Russian policy of the US, nor on the policy of political elites of Western countries and the Baltic States, supporting the US.

Having an aim to achieve economic weakening of Russia, the United States and the European Union agreed to impose economic sanctions against it. However, the US Vice President Joseph Biden noted in his speech at Harvard University that the US and President Barack Obama personally forced the EU to impose sanctions against Russia in response to the situation in Ukraine. “They (the EU countries) did not want it. But America won, the US president insisted on this. Sometimes he even had to put Europe in a difficult situation to make it force Russia to pay, despite the risk of economic losses for the EU countries”, – said Biden.

The first package of sanctions against Russia, the EU and the US imposed on 17 March immediately after the referendum in the Crimea. The sanctions lists included deputies and officials: the Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, Deputies of the Russian State Duma Yelena Mizulina and Leonid Slutsky, the Assistant of the Russian President Vladislav Surkov, the Advisor of the Russian presidential Sergei Glazyev, the Chairman of the Federation Council Valentina Matviyenko and the Member of the Federation Council, the head of the Committee for Constitutional Legislation, Judicial and Legal Affairs of the Upper Chamber Andrey Klishas.

There were 21 people in the list of the EU. Among them there were Deputies Sergei Zhelezniak, Sergei Mironov, Leonid Slutsky, senators Andrey Klishas, Oleg Panteleyev, Nikolai Ryzhkov, Viktor Ozerov, Vladimir Dzhabarov, Yevgeniy Bushmin, Alexander Totoonov. There are also three soldiers in the list – Russian Black Sea Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Alexander Vitko, commanders of the Western and Southern Districts Anatoly Sidorov and Alexander Galkin.
After that the lists had been repeatedly renewed. The last time the governments of the US and the EU expanded sanctions on 12 September. The European sanctions hit companies “Rosneft”, “Transneft”, “Gazprom Neft”, Ural Wagon Factory. There were actions taken against following state banks – Sberbank, VTB, Gazprombank and VEB Rosselhozbank. From 1 August, all EU citizens and companies are not allowed to buy or sell securities issued by these Russian banks with a maturity of more than 30 days.

In the list published on 12 September by the Office of Foreign Asset Control of the OFAC of the Ministry of Finance of the US there were in the first place “Gazprom”, LUKOIL, “Transneft”, “Gazprom Neft” and “Surgutneftegaz”. American companies were not allowed to supply the goods and technologies necessary for the development of oil fields in deep waters and in the Arctic shelf, as well as in shale formations.

The Baltic States and Poland did not remain apart from the general anti-Russian trend. As reported by the German magazine “Der Spiegel”, even earlier they made a proposal to target the system of anti-missile defence, which NATO is creating in Europe, not only at Iran and North Korea, but also at Russia.

On 24 September, a new package of sanctions against Russia was introduced by Japan. The measures adopted in Tokyo include a ban on the circulation of securities of five Russian banks with state participation, including Sberbank on the territory of Japan, and limitation of export of weapons.

It is a paradox, but the EU, the US and Japan imposed additional sanctions after the Russian President Vladimir Putin announced his proposals aimed at ending the military actions in the south-east of Ukraine on 3 September, and on 5 September in Minsk, on the basis of these proposals the Contact Group on Ukraine agreed to stop the fire, to withdraw troops and to exchange the prisoners. So it is not the piece in Ukraine that was the strategic goal of the US and its allies, but the economic and financial weakening or even destruction of Russia as a geopolitical rival.

The former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in an interview with the German television channel N24 on 16 May 2014, pointed very clearly American interests in Europe. “Europeans are very dependent on energy resources from Russia. But if we do not stop Putin now, the Europeans can be involved in a serious conflict with Russia... Now we need to impose harder sanctions against Russia... The Russian economy is very fragile. 80 percent of Russian exports are oil, gas and petroleum products. People tell us that Europe will lose the oil and gas supply in case of sanctions against Russia. But Russia will run out of money from the absence of exports faster than Europe will run out of energy. I regret that the sanctions will hamper economic relations between Europe and Russia, but it is one of the few ways we have. And actually, in the long term perspective it is necessary to change the global structure of energy supply. Europe can consume energy resources from North America. In North America, we have a huge energy reserves. And then there is no need for pipelines that cross Ukraine or Russia. Already for many years we have been trying to convince Europe to use pipelines from other countries. And now is the time to do it. Actually, it is the matter to just start acting as soon as possible” – emphasized K. Rice.

A number of European countries against their own interests are ready to support the new sanctions against Russia. But it is impossible not to see that Europe in its relation to anti-Russian sanctions is not the only one. Austria and Hungary, despite the political pressure from Washington, declared their support for the construction of the gas pipeline “South Stream”, through which gas will be supplied to Europe, bypassing the politically unpredictable Ukraine. Today Luxembourg, Greece, Cyprus, Slovenia, Slovakia, Italy and Serbia are against the expansion of economic sanctions against Russia.

Bulgaria’s position is extremely unstable. First, the authorities of this country have declared the impossibility of building a gas pipeline up until the dispute is settled with the EU. Then, after having thought, the authorities of Bulgaria announced that the construction of the pipeline does not violate the laws of the European Union. But finally, having succumbed to the pressure from the US and the EU, they returned to their former position.

Also, the French President Francois Hollande said on 16 October that Paris would give Russia helicopter carriers of the type “Mistral” only under the condition of the full compliance with the plan of a peaceful regulation of conflicts in Ukraine, including the armistice. Meanwhile, the regime of the ceasefire is violated by both sides of the conflict on a daily basis, and this does not allow France to pass the ships to Russia.

Approving the new package of EU sanctions against Russia, the chairman of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy said that “depending on the development of the situation in the EU, he is ready to reconsider the agreement on sanctions fully or partially”. He pointed that until the end of September the progress of armistice in Ukraine shall be examined, and on this basis the European Union shall make a decision. However, at a meeting in Brussels on 30 September, ambassadors of 28 countries of the European Union decided not to cancel sanctions. German Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke against cancellation of restrictive measures from Russia. She said that she sees no possibility for relief of the sanctions regime regarding Russia. “Unfortunately, we are far from it”, – she said.
On 15 October, the candidate countries for membership in the European Union Montenegro, Iceland, Albania, as well as Liechtenstein, Norway, members of the European Economic Area and Ukraine joined the last package of the EU sanctions against Russia.41

Performing on 24 October 2014 at a meeting of international discussion club “Valdai”, the Russian President Vladimir Putin noted that “sanctions already undermine the foundations of the world trade and the WTO rules, the principles of the inviolability of private property, undermine liberal model of globalization based on market, freedom and competition – the model, the main beneficiaries of which, ..., are just the Western countries. Now they risk losing credibility as leaders of globalization. The question is why do they need to do so? After all, the welfare of the United States is largely dependent on the confidence of investors, foreign holders of dollars and the US securities. The confidence is clearly undermined, the signs of frustration in the outcomes of globalization are now present in many countries”. Replying on this question, Mr Putin said: “Now we see attempts to shatter the world, draw the dividing lines, put together coalitions according to principle of being not for but against someone, form again the image of the enemy, as it was in the years of the “cold war”, and get the right to such leadership, and if you want, the right to dictate”.42 Speaking about the right to leadership, V. Putin was referring to the United States, who does everything in order to prevent the formation of a multipolar world.

What unites Latvia and Ukraine?

What happened in Ukraine on 22-23 February 2014, where the power was seized by militant nationalists and Neo-Nazis with the support of the USA and other Western countries, in Latvia it happened 23 years ago – on 15 October 1991. However, in Latvia the radical nationalists and neo-Nazis came to power in a peaceful, parliamentary way, not by force of arms. And then they did not behave as militant as the current Ukrainian followers of Nazi war criminals Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych. This is not an accident. The formation of a unipolar world in 1991 has not yet been completed. A lot was still unclear. But the most important thing, just like in the case of the armed seizure of power in Ukraine in 2014, in 1991, the official West did not protest, but actually supported the elimination of the universal suffrage – the cornerstone of any democratic state, performed by new authorities of Latvia.

Assessing the political consequences of adoption of the decree “On the restoration of the rights of citizenship of the Republic of Latvia and the Fundamental Principles of Naturalization” on 15 October 1991 by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia, which divided the Latvian society into citizens and persons without Latvian citizenship, we should recognize that its adoption has led to a sharp increase of political positions of radical nationalists and neo-Nazis, and most importantly, made it impossible to form a democratic political regime in Latvia. In other words, taking into account that the basis of democracy are universal suffrage, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, independence of the judiciary, guarantees of observation of the rights of national minorities etc., the adoption of this resolution was actually a crime against the democratic political system of the Latvian state. Just like an armed seizure of power in Kiev in February 2014 by neo-Nazi troops of the “right sector” became the crime against democracy.

On 15 October 1991, the ruling elite of Latvia was concentrated on the creation of the so-called “Latvian Latvia”, or, in other words, building a Nazi state. One of the most important foundations of this policy is to create a new historical memory, which should rehabilitate the dictatorial regime of Karlis Ulmanis and Nazi collaborators of the period of the Nazi occupation of Latvia and at the same time it should put any actions connected with the USSR outside the law, democracy and humanism.

Despite the fact that in the 1990s the political coalition in Latvia was formed by representatives of the Liberal Party “The Latvian way”, this did not prevent the new ruling elite to adopt in 1996 the Declaration on double occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Union in 1940-1941 and in 1944-1991, and in 1998 – the Declaration on Latvian SS Volunteer Legion, which denied the criminal role of the Latvian Legion of the Waffen SS and spoke exclusively about the combat of legionnaires for freedom and independence of the Republic of Latvia.

At the same time there was a start of a powerful propaganda campaign in support of the new policy of historical memory, now based on two basic postulates: the first – everything that was associated with the Soviet Union is a terrible crime against the people of Latvia; after the war Latvia was occupied by the Soviet Union for 50 years, the people of Latvia never stopped fighting against the hated Soviet regime, and for Latvians the Second World War ended only in 1991 (and actually not for everyone); and the second – the Latvian SS Legionnaires were in no way connected with the war crimes of the Waffen SS, they never participated in punitive actions, they fought only on the front and did not fight for the ideals of Nazi Germany, but for the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Latvia.

By 2014, this propaganda campaign, including at the level of school education, has brought its results, forming the younger generation Latvians
who strongly believe in the ideological dogma mentioned above. Namely, on the annual basis on 16 March, on the day of the Latvian SS Legion, the younger generation of Latvians are marching from the Dome Square to the Monument of Freedom in Riga. The representatives of the Latvian youth, which united in the early 2000s in the organization “All for Latvia!”, which was later transformed into a political party and is now represented in the Latvian parliament, together with their like-minded fellows from other parties of the militant nationalism, are actively putting into practice the slogan “for Latvian Latvia”, the slogan, which in 1930s guided an authoritarian and ethnocratic political regime of Karlis Ulmanis, and with the beginning of the Nazi occupation of Latvia the same slogan guided the local Nazi collaborators.

How can you evaluate the policy of the ruling elite of Latvia, aimed at creating mass statelessness and, as a consequence, at elimination of the country’s universal suffrage? How can you evaluate the policy of the ruling elite of Latvia, aimed at elimination of the traditional school system with Russian as the language of instruction (the first school was established back in 1789)? How can you evaluate the fact that the Russian language is declared as foreign in Latvia, although more than 80 percent of the population is fluent in Russian, and for at least 28 percent of the population (in fact for a much larger part of the population), Russian is the mother language? How can we evaluate the involvement of the Security Police of Latvia to the total cleaning of school libraries from ideologically harmful literature, according to the Ministry of Education and Science, certainly all this is nothing but manifestations of neo-Nazism in the internal policy of the Latvian state!

How can we assess the decision of the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, which categorically prohibits the students and teachers to participate in the festive events on 9 May, when the Russian linguistic community together with many Latvians celebrates the Victory Day over Nazism? How can we assess a campaign, started by individual Latvian journalists and political analyst in April 2014, on reformattting the meaning of George’s ribbons – a symbol of the Russian military value (because of the events in Ukraine for some Latvians and Ukrainians the George’s Ribbon suddenly became the symbol of the invader, the symbol of Russian aggression)? And this, with no doubt, is nothing else but the manifestation of neo-Nazism in modern Latvia!

And how to evaluate constant calls in the Latvian media for the demolition of monuments of the Soviet period, including the monuments of the Great Patriotic War, including the main monument – the Monument to the Liberators of Riga and Latvia from Nazi occupiers on the other side of the river in Riga? And these calls are symbols of increasing manifestations of neo-Nazism in Latvia!

How can you evaluate the words of the President of Latvia Andris Berzins, who in a broadcast on 3 March 2012, i.e. in anticipation of the march of former SS legionnaires and their modern followers on 16 March, called to bow heads before the soldiers of the Legion? “They struggled with an aim to protect Latvia. Latvians in the Legion are not criminals. To consider them as criminals – is beyond common sense ... Instead, we must bow our heads in front of them”, – said Berzins.43

How can you evaluate the words of the President of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia Laimdota Straujuma about the fact that in the history of Latvia the 9 May is not the Victory Day, but the day of the beginning of the next Soviet occupation?44

And these statements are nothing but the manifestation of neo-Nazism in the political life of the Republic of Latvia, because during the Nazi occupation the thesis of the “Soviet occupation” had been actively promoted by the Nazis for the formation of anti-Soviet and Russophobian moods in Latvia, and Straujuma, following the official Latvian historians, simply repeats the Nazi propaganda!

How to evaluate the words of L.Straujuma, addressed to defenders of Russian schools: “As long as they have not committed anything illegal, let them live here. But I have a proposal for them: if they do not like Latvia so much, there are other ways to find a place of residence”.45 That is, instead of taking into account the opinion of national minorities, when making decisions about education of minorities, Straujuma offers them just to get out of the country, because “Latvian Latvia” is being built, and those who do not agree with this policy should not be in Latvia! And this policy, just like L.Straujuma’s statement in its support, is nothing but a manifestation of neo-Nazism in modern Latvia!

How to evaluate the amendments to the Criminal Law of Latvia adopted on 15 May 2014 by the Saeima of Latvia, which stipulate criminal liability for public denial, justification, glorification or gross trivialization of the occupation of Latvia by the Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union?46 This amendment, according to experts, is meant to prevent any criticism of the official position of the Latvian State on the evaluation of the events of 1940 in Latvia. What is this, if not the restriction of freedom of speech, which is so natural for the policy of neo-Nazism?
Chapter 10

On 8 July, 2014, Latvia became a de jure ethnocratic state

On 19 June, 2014, during the third and final reading, the Latvian Saeima (Parliament) adopted the preamble to the Constitution of Latvia. The text of the preamble states: “Latvia, proclaimed on 18 November 1918, was created by combining the Latvian historical lands on the basis of an uncompromising state will of the Latvian nation and its inherent right of self-determination in order to ensure the existence and secular development of the Latvian nation, its language and culture, to ensure the freedom and support the well-being of every person and of the whole nation.

Latvian people defended their country in the fight for freedom. The freely elected Constituent Assembly enhanced the nationhood and created the Constitution. Latvian people did not recognize the occupation regimes, resisted them and on the basis of continuity of state on 4 May 1990 regained their state’s independence, restoring their freedom. Latvian folk honours its fighters to freedom, commemorates the victims of a foreign power, and condemns crimes of Communist and Nazi totalitarian regimes. Latvia as a democratic, legal, social responsibility and the national state is based on human respect and freedom, recognizes and protects fundamental human rights and respects ethnic minorities. The people of Latvia defend their sovereignty, independence, territory, unity and democratic structure of the Latvian state.

Identity of Latvia in the European cultural space is formed by Latvian and Livonian traditions, wisdom and universal and Christian values. The Latvian language as the only official language, freedom, honesty, justice, solidarity, equality, family, work and loyalty to Latvia is the foundation of a cohesive society.

Everyone cares about themselves, their families and general well-being of the society, has a responsible attitude towards other people, next generations, the environment and nature. Seeing itself as a full-fledged part
of the international community, Latvia protects its interests and promotes longevity and democratic development of Europe and the world. God, bless Latvia!”

It is obvious that the adoption of such a preamble by the Saeima strengthens the policy of the ruling elite on constructing a so-called “Latvian Latvia” on the level of the basic law, which is based on the thesis of the superiority of the Latvian nation over the other peoples living in Latvia. In other words, Latvia has adopted the rejection of equality of human rights regardless of ethnicity de-jure.

Preamble creates a confrontation between the notions “people of Latvia” and “Latvian nation”. Based on the text of the preamble, the main thing in this confrontation is now a concept of “Latvian nation.” This is contrary to the current Constitution, Article 2 of which states: “The sovereign power of the Latvian State belongs to the people of Latvia”, not to the Latvian nation. On 5 June, Andrejs Elksnins, a member of the Saeima, noted in the debates on the draft preamble during the second reading before voting in the Saeima (“HC”), that the preamble affects several articles of the Constitution, which are allowed to be changed only by popular vote. By the decision to adopt the preamble, the Saeima actually usurped the right that belongs only to the people.

On 16 October 2013, the non-governmental organization “Congress of Non-citizens”, whose main task is to eliminate the undemocratic institution of mass statelessness in Latvia, had a panel discussion on “The Preamble to the Constitution – a step towards a political nation?”, which was attended by the co-chairmen of the Board of the Congress of non-citizens Elizaveta Krivtsova and Aleksander Vasiliev, the centre for the Centre of Public Policy “Providus” Linda Curika, the sociologist Olga Procevskaya, the media expert, Professor of the Stradinsh University Sergei Kruk, the lawyer Yury Sokolovsky, the publicist Victor Avotins, the Latvian University researcher Andrey Berdnikov, and – via Skype from Estonia – the Russian ombudsman of Estonia Sergei Seredenko. Commenting on the fundamental question of the debate, E.Krivtsova said: “I think the main problem can be formulated as following: Latvian democracy or democratic Latvianness? What is the main task of the state – freedom, equality, fraternity, or the prosperity of the Latvian language and culture?”

On 25 January 2014, the Parliament of the Unrepresented – the supreme body of the Congress of Non-citizens, elected in May-June 2013, at the general elections, the first in the history of Latvia after 1990, adopted a resolution “On the significant decline of standards of democracy in the EU because of the presence of the Republic of Latvia as a member state.” The resolution states:

“After joining the European Union Latvian authorities practically curtailed efforts to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria and systematically violated their obligations, creating a ground for discrimination of national minorities, the number of which is more than a third of the population of the country.

Currently, about 14 percent of the population are completely excluded from participation in the political life because of their assigned status of the non-citizens. Practically all non-citizens belong to national minorities.

Practically all non-citizens belong to national minorities. The status of the non-citizen represents a special category of Latvian nationals, who are subject to more than 80 restrictions of political, economic and social rights.

Non-citizens have no citizenship, and, despite the fact that they were born or lived most of their lives in Latvia, they are subject to the same rules of naturalization as immigrants who came to Latvia after the proclamation of independence. The unfair naturalization process and putting the responsibility for preparation for it on the non-citizens actually caused the standstill in this process.

Stubborn and conscious unwillingness of Latvian authorities to fulfill their obligations according to the Copenhagen criteria set out in the Strategic Note and the report on the progress of the candidate countries in preparation for the entry into the EU, prepared by the European Commission in 2002, and final decisions of the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament on the entry of Latvia into the EU in 2003-2004, creates a long-term democratic deficit and reduces the possibility of the population to influence the government, artificially divides the Latvian people according to the ethnic principle. All this hinders the achievement of the main goal of EU membership – the progress of democratic institutions of the state, the creation of a common space of the economy and welfare.

The fact that Latvian authorities violate their promises is due to impossibility of overcoming the chronic and systemic diseases of the society: one of the lowest living standards in the EU, catastrophic outflow of population, extremely high levels of corruption, and as a consequence, a significant degradation of many public institutions.

Latvia’s failure to fulfill commitments as an EU member significantly lowers standards of democracy, human rights and the supremacy of law adopted in the European Union, which largely questions the ability of the European Union to ensure sustainable development and feasibility of the idea of European integration.”

On 15 April 2014, the Council of Non-Governmental Organizations of Latvia, in activities of which there are 80 Russian-speakers’ non-governmental
organizations involved, spoke against the expected adoption of the preamble to the text of the basic law of the Republic of Latvia, and on 8 May, the Central Council of the Old Orthodox Pomorian Church of Latvia (CCOOPCL) appealed to the Latvian government. In this appeal, signed by the chairman of the Central Council of the Old Orthodox Pomorian Church of Latvia father Alexiy Zhilko, it is stated, in particular, about the following: “The adoption of the current Constitution in 1922 was not an easy task, therefore, taking into account the interests of the majority of citizens and political forces represented by them, the founding fathers of the state chose, in our opinion, a very successful, simple and absolutely fool-proof option: “The people of Latvia, in freely elected Constituent Assembly, have adopted the following State Constitution”.

The text proposed now is a weird and pretentious fantasy of Egils Levits and the company on events of almost a century ago with the introduction of elements of modernism, which are highly questionable in terms of historical accuracy. The reasonable and comprehensive term “people of Latvia” is changed into “Latvian nation”, which contradicts the main text of the Constitution and does not contribute to the social cohesion. National minorities are briefly mentioned somewhere ... Which clearly emphasizes the presence of one major Latvian nation and all others. In this connection it is necessary to recall the lines from the Scripture: “... Every kingdom divided against itself is ruined; and every city or household divided against itself will not last” (Matthew 12; 25).

“Writing a new preamble to the historical text of the Constitution, in our view, is unacceptable and even harmful. And it will not be beneficial neither for the Latvian nation, nor for ethnic minorities, nor the country as a whole”, – emphasizes the Appeal of the CCOOPCL.3

The parliamentary faction of the political association “Harmony Centre” during the voting on 19 June for the draft preamble to the text of the Basic Law voted against, in full composition. Valery Ageshin, a member of the Saeima, has explained the decision of the faction as following: “Today the members of the political association “Harmony Centre” in the 11th Saeima voted against the so-called complement to the Constitution, the preamble, in which the concept of “the people of Latvia” actually narrows to the notion of only “the Latvian nation”. MPs of the “Harmony Centre” believe that adding the preamble to the Constitution is a step to a conscious deepening of ethnic division in the society during the pre-election period. The new preamble states that the Latvian state was created thanks to the will of the Latvian nation and for the sake of existence of the Latvian nation. We believe that the text of the new preamble contradicts Article 2 of the Constitution, which states: “The sovereign state power belongs to the people of Latvia”. This article does not indicate the ethnic origin of the people of Latvia, it is about the community of all Latvian citizens – regardless of their ethnicity. We believe that in 1922, the fathers of the Constitution consciously included the notion of “the people of Latvia” and not “the Latvian nation” into the Constitution – at the level of the Basic Law, introducing the recognition of the multi-ethnic society in the foundation of the state. The attempt to abandon the concept of “the people of Latvia” in favour of “the Latvian nation”, firstly, means to actually undermine the foundations of the state, secondly, enters in conflict with the text of the Constitution, and, thirdly, exacerbates ethnic tensions in the dramatically divided society. The parliamentary majority is ready to divide citizens into “right” and “not right”, “genuine” and “non-genuine” ones, at the legislative level.

Valery Ageshin also indicated that by adding the preamble to the Constitution, the ruling majority of the Saeima actually relieved itself from an important duty – to care for residents of the country. “There is a phrase in the preamble, which states that the duty of every citizen is to take care of oneself. This thesis is extremely ambiguous and gives ample room for interpretation. Isn’t it that this phrase is an attempt of the ruling majority to absolve themselves of responsibility for the fact that one third of the population lives in poverty, and that the state does not provide those who cannot objectively take care of themselves with a necessary level of social security? For example, how can an elderly person, who receives a miserably little pension and cannot work because of his health state, take care of his well-being? The state should take care of his welfare!” – emphasized Valery Ageshin.6

The adoption of the preamble to the text of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, strengthening the superiority of the Latvian nation over the representatives of other nations living in Latvia, as well as the adoption of the amendments to the Criminal Law of the Republic of Latvia mentioned above, is nothing but an attempt to consolidate the ethnocracy, Russophobia and the course for the revision of the results of the Second World War in the legal and constitutional systems of the Republic of Latvia.

The course on the construction of “Latvian” (to read: ethnocratic) Latvia remains unchanged despite any criticism from opposition, formally still existing. On 8 July 2014, the President of Latvia Andris Berzins promulgated (announced the entry into force) the preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia by the Saeima, and from that date the preamble became the part of the Main law of the country. Accordingly, from that date, Latvia has become an ethnocratic state de jure. A week later, on 15 July, the Latvian media reported that the Constitutional Court (CC) refused to
initiate proceedings at the request of the deputies of the parliamentary faction “Harmony Centre” (HC), who sought the acceptance of invalidation of amendments to the Criminal law on criminal liability for the public denial, justification, glorification or gross trivialisation of crimes of the USSR and Nazi Germany, adopted by the parliament. According to the assistant of the chairman of the CC, Lina Kovalevska, the request does not comply with the requirements of Point 4 of Part 1 of Article 18 of the Law on the Constitutional Court, namely, the HC did not provide any legal justification of the request.7

A few days later, on 19 July, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia Edgars Rinkevichs announced the decision on introduction of his own sanctions against Russia. The so-called “black list” of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, which lists persons who are denied entry to Latvia, also includes popular Russian artists and musicians Joseph Kobzon, Oleg Gazmanov and Valeria.8 This decision was immediately supported by the Latvian President Andris Berzins and the Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma. In turn, the mayor of the Latvian capital city, Nil Ushakov, ironically remarked that “the “black list” of Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgars Rinkevichs should also include the name of the Russian artist-clown Yuri Kuklachev and his chauvinistic cats”, thus underlining the idea of absurdity of the decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia.9

It should be honestly admitted that all foreign and domestic policies of the Republic of Latvia today is aimed to build the so-called “Latvian (i.e. ethnocratic) Latvia” and on the cultivation of a hostile attitude to the local Russian and Russian-speaking community. Starting from 4 May 1990, when the Declaration on the Restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia was adopted, the Latvian state started, in fact, waging a war against the Russian linguistic community, and the aim of this war is not only the total destruction of the old historical memory of the Great Patriotic War, which until 1988 was one of the braces of Russian and Latvian linguistic communities. The aim of this war is the total destruction of democratic ideology and any legal mechanisms for the protection and preservation of democracy. The aim of this war is also crushing the Russian linguistic community, and then, the total destruction of its linguistic and cultural identity.

It should be also honestly admitted that in this anti-democratic policy, Latvia relies on the support of the United States. But it is only for the reason, that today in the international arena Latvia stands as a geopolitical ally of the USA in the fight against the democratic Russia. If Latvia took a different position, instead of support it would receive not only criticism, but would experience the full political and economic pressure from the US and its allies.

The United States has been never interested in the opinion of the peoples of the Baltic States or Ukraine, nor of any other country in the world. In 1940, the United States refused to recognize the choice made by the people of Latvia. In 2014, the United States and other Western countries, ignoring Paragraph 2 of Article 1 of the UN Charter on the rights of people to self-determination, refused to recognize the results of the referendum on 16 March 2014 in Crimea, and then the results of the referendum on 11 May 2014 in Lugansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine. Guided solely by their geopolitical interests, the countries of the West, and especially the United States, close their eyes to the fact that both in Latvia and Ukraine, radical nationalists and even Neo-Nazis are gaining force, based on Russophobia, trampling the rights of national minorities and taking the course on political rehabilitation of former Nazi collaborators. And they do not just turn a blind eye – if we talk about the US position, then everything is placed upside down: for them, the present Latvia is an example of a democratic state, and the new Ukrainian authorities deserve full support. But Latvia is actually gradually but fairly quickly becoming an ethnocratic state de facto, just like the after-February Ukraine, recognized and fully supported by the West, moves towards Neo-Nazism. This suggests that the “democratic” West does not care about radical nationalism and neo-Nazism in the Baltic States, nor in Ukraine. The issue number one for it is the struggle with Russia! Both radical nationalism and Neo-Nazism can be quite appropriate allies, although not very decent, perhaps, for the achievement of the set goal.
Chapter 11

Significant deterioration of democratic standards in the European Union due to participation of the Latvian Republic

Presence of mass statelessness in Latvia since 1991 and the consequent lack of a fundamental democratic principle of universal suffrage, accompanied by legislation that infringes on the rights of national minorities on the one hand and aims to politically rehabilitate local Nazi collaborationists (1941 to 1944-45 period) on the other, raises doubts whether the current policies of the Latvian state are compliant with the European standards of democracy. It is no accident that on 8 November 2002 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) concluded that Latvia has a “long-term democratic deficit”.

Latvia heading the European Union

In January 2015, Latvia received the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the next six months. On January 22, Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgars Rinkevics presented an annual report in the parliament about progress made in 2014 and future plans in foreign policy and European Union affairs, where combatting Russia’s disinformation was listed among the main tasks. It was reported that in 2014, Russia continued to disseminate “biased information” regarding the situation with human rights in Latvia and “misinformed the public” by spreading the myth about the alleged “revival of Nazism”. The report emphasised that Latvia has consistently denied these allegations and pointed to the numerous undemocratic processes in Russia itself. According to the report, “concrete steps have been taken to limit the effect of the Russian propaganda.” (This, in all likelihood, alludes to measures such as banning the Stolen Childhood exposition, the so-called “blacklists”, as well as constant intervention and hindrance by the Security Police of Russian compatriot organisations in conducting cultural, educational and other events.)

The report further states that “measures have been taken to counteract Russian propaganda activities in international organisations and media”. “With regard to Russia’s increasing use of the so-called ‘Russian world’ concept, Latvia opposes all attempts to split the society or endanger the democratic structure of the state and its security. Latvia will continue to take coordinated actions with its partners in the European Union and on the regional level in order to strengthen the information space in the EU and members of the Eastern partnership.”

“The USA has been and remains Latvia’s main ally and a guarantor of security,” Foreign Ministry report says. The NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, established in Latvia together with its 6 allies following the Wales Summit in 2014, was highlighted among the elements that would help the alliance to strengthen its resistance against the risks posed by hybrid warfare.1

Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated that Latvia along with other countries strongly condemns “Russian aggression” in Ukraine. At the same time, the report said nothing about mass statelessness and the consequent “long-term democratic deficit” (PACE, 8 November 2002).

Parliament of Unrepresented on Latvia’s presidency of the EU

As was already mentioned above, a different view of domestic and foreign policy of the Latvian state was presented in the resolution “On the significant deterioration of democratic standards in the EU due to participation of the Latvian Republic”, adopted on 25 January 2014 by the Parliament of Unrepresented – the highest body of the Non-Citizens Congress. On 19 January 2015, Parliament of Unpresented gathered for a regular session, where it noted the continued relevance of the year-old resolution and pointed to further degradation of the human rights system in the world.

In its new Resolution, the Parliament of Unrepresented draws attention to the fact that “since 2010, members of the Non-Citizens Congress have been informing the European Union about Latvia’s failure to comply with its obligations and the non-compliance of the institute of non-citizenship with the EU standards. However, the European Union has been denying that such issues are within its competence…

“Taking into account the systematic neglect of the Latvian government for issues related to national minorities and statelessness, the Parliament of Unrepresented expresses concern that Latvia’s presidency of the EU Council may delay the development of the EU initiative regarding human rights monitoring.
and weaken European Union’s moral authority in the world. The Parliament of Unrepresented categorically rejects Latvian government’s approach to internal and external security, which is isolated from the consolidation of democratic principles and human rights in the country as fundamental principles of any EU member state. Parliament of Unrepresented believes that both security and internal stability in the country are intricably linked to the confidence of its residents that all issues can be resolved within the framework of democratic institutions, without recourse to the outside. It is this confidence that many residents of Latvia currently lack…”

The document then states that statelessness is not an unprecedented phenomenon. An increasing amount of governments around the world is using this instrument to guise ethnic discrimination. For example, 200,000 people in the Dominican Republic were deprived of their citizenship in 2013, the UK government made controversial initiatives to deprive of citizenship some of its residents and to tighten the visa regime with respect to Latvian non-citizens in 2014 – all of these only serve as unfortunate evidence of deterioration of human rights and rule of law.

In this regard, Parliament of Unrepresented welcomed the UN’s Global Action Plan to End Statelessness within 10 years, initiated by UNHCR in 2014. The organisation drew attention to the fact that “Latvia ranks fourth in the world in terms of total number of stateless persons” and that “Latvian non-citizens make up for about half of all stateless persons permanently resident in the EU”. The resolution adds, “Parliament of Unrepresented believes that elimination of statelessness should be a priority in EU’s foreign policy as well as in domestic dialogue on ensuring the rule of law.”

Latvia blocks “Stolen Childhood” exposition

The Latvian state is methodically implementing the course towards political rehabilitation of former Nazi collaborationists from the Nazi occupation period. Simultaneously, it makes considerable efforts to prevent objective assessment of Nazi collaborationism in not just Latvia, but also in temporary Nazi-occupied Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian and Polish territories.

In January 2012, the State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia (Moscow) launched an exposition titled “Stolen Childhood: fates of children deported to Latvian territory, 1943-1944”. The Russian Historical Memory Foundation, which organised the exposition, gathered unique documents about the punitive operations conducted by the Nazis and their Latvian collaborationists in Russian and Belarusian territories and fates of young children who were deported to the Salaspils concentration camp and then exploited by Latvian farmers.

Stolen Childhood received wide publicity and on January 22, 2012, the US Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul visited the exposition. The Historical Memory Foundation was also planning to launch the exposition in Riga’s Moscow House by the end of March. However, on 2 March, the director of Historical Memory Foundation Alexander Dyukov and the Foundation’s head of research Vladimir Simindey have been “blacklisted” by the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Latvian Ministry announced that activity of Russian historians is harmful to the European state and its citizens, and therefore their entry to Latvia is prohibited. Director of the Moscow House was subsequently summoned to the Ministry, where he advised not to host the “undesirable” Stolen Childhood exposition. Thus, Latvian authorities had openly blocked the launch of an exposition that represents an actual historical study that revealed some dark pages of the Latvian history during the Nazi occupation in 1941-1945.

This story continued in January 2015, when Latvia – now presiding in the EU – blocked the exposition at UNESCO headquarters, Paris, titled “Stolen Childhood: Victims of the Holocaust through the eyes of juvenile prisoners in the Nazi concentration camp Salaspils”. According to UNESCO rules, Latvia’s permission was required, as its contents were directly related to the country and its history.

Director of the Historical Memory Foundation Alexander Dyukov told RuBaltic.Ru about the reasons behind the ban on the exposition, which was timed to mark the International Holocaust Remembrance Day – 70th anniversary
since the liberation of Auschwitz. “As you know, the semi-annual period of Latvia’s presidency in the EU starts in January. Basically, Latvia has started its presidency by banning an exposition on the Holocaust in Salaspils on the eve of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. I was most struck by the reasoning of Latvian diplomats. They said this exposition could supposedly damage Latvia’s image during its presidency in the EU. That’s some alternative logic, which I can’t understand. After all, banning an exposition on the Holocaust is what could actually damage Latvia’s image more than the exposition itself. Maybe they think that Salaspils was not just a Nazi concentration camp located on the Latvian territory, but a Latvian concentration camp – I don’t know. In any case, such reasoning is completely beyond me and I don’t think that anyone in Europe will understand it.

“Meanwhile, there is an ongoing musical play showing across Latvia that glorifies a Nazi criminal, [Herberts] Cukurs,” Dyukov added. “And this musical hasn’t been banned by anyone; Latvian authorities are loyal to it. How could you explain this? Honestly, I can’t say”.5

Latvia is not prepared to abandon the policy of whitewashing the Nazis

There are several reasons why Latvia has consistently banned *Stolen Childhood* exhibitions.

**First reason.** During the Great Patriotic War, part of the Latvian population was actively collaborating with the Nazi occupational regime. Many volunteered in police battalions at first and then in the Latvian Waffen SS volunteer legion. Some of these people were responsible for civilian massacres and other war crimes in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Poland. After 1991, people who were related to these Nazi collaborationists, either by kinship or by ideology, came to power and started methodically rewriting the World War 2 history. Fromthenon, themainobjective was complete moral and political rehabilitation of former Nazi collaborationists and refusal to bring to justice those who were responsible for civilian and prisoner massacres. This was accompanied by denigration of the Soviet period, as well as criminal and moral prosecution of those who fought in the Red Army – because in 1940 Latvia was supposedly occupied by the USSR and therefore serving in the Red Army is equated to serving in the army of a hostile state. On October 29, 1998, the Latvian parliament adopted a “Declaration on Latvian Legionnaires in World War II”. The document instructs the Latvian government to demand from the occupying states and their legal successors compensation for damages caused by mobilisations to the occupying armies, and to combat encroachments upon the honour and dignity of the Latvian soldiers in Latvia and abroad.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Latvia had blocked the *Stolen Childhood* exposition, or how its ruling elite reacted to the opening of a monument in Bauska dedicated to the Latvian legionnaires from training and sanitary units, police battalions and Bauska separate battalion soldiers, who resisted the Red Army from July 28 to September 14, 1944, belongs to a surviving participant of the battle – the chair of the local branch of Latvian National Soldiers Association (uniting former Waffen SS Latvian legionnaires), Imants Zeltins. Two of the three Latvian police battalions immortalised in Bauska were punitive units which in 1942–44 participated in the Nazi genocide in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.
Soviet occupation”. Underneath, follows a quote by Karlis Ulmanis: “Latvia should be a Latvian state.” Opening of the monument was attended by city officials and members of the far-right All For Latvia party, which is part of the ruling coalition.

This situation is unprecedented, as this is the first monument in the Baltics to be dedicated to punitive police battalions who were responsible for hundreds of civilian deaths. Head of research at the Historical Memory Foundation Vladimir Simindev noted in Rossiyyskaya Gazeta (The Russian Gazette), “Two of the three Latvian police battalions immortalised in Bauska were punitive units which in 1942-44 participated in the Nazi genocide in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. This is evidenced in Russian and Belarusian archives, including the captured German documents. Thus, the 23rd Latvian police battalion, established in February 1942, since May of the same year became actively involved in the Nazi extermination policy around Dnepropetrovsk. It was also involved in the destruction of civilians in the Russian and Belarusian border zone with Latvia and in the area of Pitalovo-Abrene (now – Pskov region). In April 1943, it was joined by the remnants of the 27th battalion which was defeated in Ukraine and which had been involved in punitive actions in Brest, Belarus. As for the 319th Latvian police battalion, from November 1943 to March 1944 it was involved in civilian massacres in Pskov region, around Sebezhi, and in the abduction of women and children to Latvia, where they were sent to Salaspils concentration camp or to slave labour on Latvian farms.

“Thus, skirmishes against the Red Army near Bauska wasn’t the defining ‘feat’ of the Latvian police, the backbone of which was involved in war crimes outside of Latvia,” Simindev concludes. “It is worth noting that the 23rd, 27th and 319th Latvian police battalions were an integral part of the Latvian Waffen SS legion”.

Second reason. When the new citizenship law was adopted on 22 July 1994, around 155 thousand permanent residents did not receive Latvian citizenship. These people were deported to Latvia from Russia and Belarus by the Nazis in 1942-1943, to make up for losses in workforce. Many of those 155 thousand people started their life in Latvia in the Salaspils concentration camp. An accurate number of Russian and Belarusian people who passed through Salaspils camp is unknown, but is estimated around 20 to 40 thousand.

When the first law concerning the politically repressed was adopted in the early 90s, this status was given to everyone who suffered from the Nazi or Stalinist regime. However, in 1995 a new law was passed, according to which only citizens could claim the status of politically repressed person. Politically repressed non-citizens lost this status along with whatever benefits it provided.

In September 2006, Harmony Centre association of political parties introduced a new bill, which provided for automatic citizenship to all residents that suffered from Nazi or Stalinist repressions. “Official treatment of prisoners of Nazi concentration camps and veterans of the anti-Hitler coalition is a shame for our country,” Harmony Centre MP Boris Cilevics said at the time. “Attitude towards prisoners of Nazism is particularly outrageous – many of them are still not recognised as politically repressed and are deprived of corresponding benefits. Left-wing opposition has been fighting to correct this injustice for the past ten years. Right-wing politicians, constantly appealing to ‘historical justice’, prefer to forget about the very recent history… We have repeatedly proposed amendments to the law on the politically repressed persons, which would extend this status to non-citizens. But right-wing parties blocked us every time. Even when we got the support of the Centre for the Documentation of Consequences of Totalitarianism, which substantiated our position with serious arguments.

This time we are proposing to solve the problem dramatically. If the right-wing politicians don’t want to recognise non-citizens as political repressed persons, let’s recognise the politically repressed persons as citizens and solve this issue once and for all”. Despite all efforts, the Latvian parliament rejected the left-wing initiative once again.

Six months later, a similar initiative – to recognise the victims of Nazism who do not have Latvian citizenship as politically repressed persons and provide them with a range of social benefits – was presented by the For Human Rights in United Latvia (For HRUL or ZaPChEL). Jakovs Pliners, head of the faction, noted that equal treatment of the communist and Nazi regimes, officially declared by the Latvian Republic, is not being observed by the state. “Unnatural preference to Nazism over communism is clearly seen in various laws – and the one being currently discussed is no different, unfortunately. Obtaining a status of a politically repressed person who suffered from the communist regime is much easier than be recognised as a victim of Nazism,” Pliners said. He added that communist terror, which ended in Latvia almost 55 years ago, resulted in 140-190 thousand people deported, 10-30% of whom died in prisons and places of exile.Meanwhile, according to Jakovs Pliners, the Nazis killed around 600 thousand people in Latvia, including about 100 thousand Latvian citizens, which is 15 times more than the communists did. Therefore, For HRUL proposed to strike from the law the ‘illogical restrictions’ regarding victims of Nazism who apply for the status. These restrictions include: the compulsory requirement for Latvian citizenship, restriction on the period of deportation (between 1942 and 1943), restriction on place of deportation
has been re-elected as MEP in 2014 for the third time.

Latvian Russian Union – a political party co-chaired by Tatjana Zdanoka who refused by several hotels, antifascists held the round table in the office of the Latvian Antifascist Committee and not to provide their venues for the round table. Same as in 2014, Estonian antifascists were denied entry into the country. Round table was attended by politicians, public figures and human rights activists from 5 different countries. Heading "Round table" dedicated to countering the spread of Nazi ideas in modern Europe. The event was once again attended by neo-Nazis from Lithuania, Estonia and Slovakia.

The day before this unofficial Waffen SS Legionnaires Day, Latvian Antifascist Committee arranged a tour of the Latvian War Museum, followed by a "round table" dedicated to countering the spread of Nazi ideas in modern Europe. The round table was attended by politicians, public figures and human rights activists from 5 different countries.

Same as in 2014, the Latvian Security Police attempted to disrupt antifascists’ events. All hotels in Riga had received strict instructions not to lodge guests of the Latvian Antifascist Committee and not to provide their venues for the round table. Same as in 2014, Estonian antifascists were denied entry into the country.

Nevertheless, the tour and round table took place regardless. Having been refused by several hotels, antifascists held the round table in the office of the Latvian Russian Union – a political party co-chaired by Tatjana Zdanoka who has been re-elected as MEP in 2014 for the third time.

16 March 2015

On March 16, 2015, former Waffen SS legionnaires and their young supporters once again marched through the central streets of Riga. This year, however, due to Latvia’s presidency of the Council of the EU (1 January to 31 July), Latvian authorities have taken measures to mitigate the negative effect of this procession and the event was not as massive in scale as it was in previous years. Nonetheless, there was the traditional “Walk of Fame” through the alley of Latvian flags and with full presence of the extreme right parliamentary faction All For Latvia – Tevzemīne un Brīvības/Latvian National Independence Movement (TB/LNNK). Heading the procession was once again a Lutheran priest Guntis Kalme, whose sermons have long resembled speeches of an extreme nationalist politician. The event was once again attended by neo-Nazis from Lithuania, Estonia and Slovakia.

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Book 3. Formation of a new historical memory, or the Whitewashing of Nazism in Latvia
Next to Aleksandrs Plensners’ display there is a stand dedicated to the formation of Latvian aviation. However, neither the stand nor anything else in the hall talks about the Nazi occupation period in Latvia. Not a single word is mentioned about the famous in 1930s Latvian pilot Herberchts Cukurs, who was involved in mass executions of Jews in the Nazi-occupied Latvia. When asked about these omissions, museum staff said that there is very little information about Herberchts Cukurs currently available (!!!). This is despite the fact that in 2010 Baiba Saberte published a detailed biography of Herberchts Cukurs, titled “Let Me Speak! Herberchts Cukurs” (Baiba Šāberte. Laugiet man runāt! Herberchts Cukurs. — Rīga, Jumava, 2010). Furthermore, in 2014 Māris Ruks issued a book based on archival materials about Viktors Arajs’ firing squad, which Cukurs was a part of (Māris Ruks. Arāja komandas Lettonia). Finally, there is a musical play produced in 2015 and dedicated to Herberchts Cukurs, still showing across Latvia.

Even more surprising is that the museum hall dedicated to the Nazi occupation has absolutely NOTHING about Viktors Arajs’ firing squad. There were no photographs, nothing said about Arajs’ command of the battalion in the 15th division of the Latvian Waffen SS volunteer legion. There is nothing about Martins Vagulans’ units, who “decisively resolved the Jewish issue” in Jelgava in August 1941 – first such incident in Latvia.

There are a few things more to note about the exhibition on the history of Nazi-occupied Latvia. The Holocaust has been presented as a general subject, but definitely not to an adequate extent and not as a tragedy on a European scale, but rather as one of the episodes of the Nazi occupation. In addition, the exposition places the entire responsibility for the Holocaust on the Nazi Germany. It was as if Latvians who participated in this crime had never existed.

The history of pro-Soviet underground and partisan movement, which grew fairly large by 1944, was barely represented at all. The history of Latvian prisoners of war and concentration camps was presented inadequately and the Salaspils concentration camp was literally only mentioned in a single line. Nothing was said about how children in this camp had their blood forcibly transfused into injured German soldiers. Neither was there any information about Konrads Kalejs, who served as a guard in Salaspils.

Meanwhile, there are whole sections dedicated to concentration camps in Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen and Stutthof, from which it can be concluded that, same as with the Holocaust, the primary responsibility for the destruction of the civilian population and prisoners of war is given to the German Nazis, while local Nazi collaborationists supposedly have nothing to do with it. The exposition gives equal attention to the establishment and activity of the Latvian War museum are silent on the service of Aleksandrs Plensners as a Standartenführer of Waffen SS Latvian Volunteers Legion.

On the image – Plensners’ uniform from the time of his service in the Latvian army.

Photo by Victor Gushchin
On March 16, 2015, Latvian Anti-Fascists have cleaned the square before
the Freedom Monument with a slogan “Latvia needs disinfection”, shortly after the march
by the former SS legionnaires and their modern followers.

March 16, 2015. On the photo: a wreath from the Latvian Anti-Fascist Committee
to commemorate those killed by Nazis during the war.
an Waffen SS volunteer legion and the establishment and activity of the 130th Latvian Rifle Corps of the Red Army. However, exposition does not even hint at the fact that some members of the Latvian Waffen SS legions had participated in civilian massacres – Viktors Arajs, for example. Naturally, nothing was mentioned about the participation of individual units in punitive actions against the civilian population and atrocities committed against prisoners of war in the territories of modern Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and Poland.

After seeing this exhibition, unprepared visitors would remain unaware about the true history of Latvia during the terrible years of the Nazi occupation. Should visitors compare the exposition dedicated to the Nazi-occupied Latvia with the exposition on Latvia in 1940-1941, i.e. the first year since the restoration of dress uniform the Soviet rule, many would get the impression that under the Soviet Union everything was much worse that under the civilised Germans dressed in beautiful military uniforms who, as many Latvians recall, often handed out chocolate and candy to their children…

**Latvia is in need of “disinfection”**

March 16, 2015 was a warm and sunny day in Riga... After the procession of Waffen SS legionnaires and their modern followers came to an end, the Latvian Antifascist Committee started its own event that had been previously coordinated with the Riga City Council. Around 20 antifascists went inside the police cordon, dressed in white disposable suits that are commonly used in decontamination works. On their chests and backs, they wore a large logo – DEZINFĒKCIJA [DISINFECTION]. In their hands, antifascists held buckets, brushes and cylinders with a cleaning solution. They proceeded to symbolically clean and disinfect the area, moving along the square near the Freedom Monument as if cleansing it from the Nazi ideology that was left behind by the Waffen SS processionless than half an hour ago. Having finished the “disinfection”, antifascists installed a large wreath decorated with a black ribbon on a special stand under the Freedom Monument. On the ribbon, it was written in Latvian and English: “In memory of the victims of Nazism”.

There were no less people watching antifascists “clean” the square than there were during the legionnaire procession. The antifascist action turned out to be very impressive, despite the minimum means of expression. It was hard to misunderstand its meaning – the Freedom Monument is not the only thing that needs “disinfecting”. The whole country needs to be cleansed of Nazism – its institutions and its domestic and foreign policies.

Several hours after the action at the Freedom Monument had ended websites were overflowing with reports and photos describing this year’s Waffen SS Legionnaires Day in Latvia. Mayor of Riga, leader of the Social Democratic Harmony Party Nils Ushakovs, thanked citizens of Riga for supporting his call to ignore the procession and not to come out to the Monument on March 16. (15) Commenting on the day’s events, Mr Ushakovs said nothing new. He reiterated his party’s position that the neo-Nazi disease in Latvia will pass by itself, if people stop giving it attention. This is a very dangerous fallacy. There is nothing wrong with war veterans who fought for the Nazi Germany commemorating their fallen comrades at the place of their burial – if they refrain from demonstrating the symbols of its military units, of course. But these processions cannot be regarded as anything other than political demonstrations glorifying the Nazi ideology. Ignoring political manifestations of the former Nazi collaborationists and modern neo-Nazis has never helped to eradicate the problem of Nazism. On the contrary, when certain political forces in the world tried to turn a blind eye to Nazism in Germany it resulted in a worldwide tragedy – the Second World War. It is unacceptable not to take this dreadful experience into account!
Chapter 12

Europe between Russia and USA, or anti-Russian sanctions in February – April 2015

Despite the 12 February 2015 Minsk Agreement, where the leaders of Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia agreed to a package of measures to alleviate the ongoing war in the Donbass region of Ukraine (eventually signed by a contact group consisting of representatives of Russia, Ukraine and several regions of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine), on February 16 the European Union had extended the “blacklist” against Russia by including additional 19 individuals and 9 legal entities.

With the new restrictive measures in place, the number of companies that have fallen under sanctions has reached 37 and the number of Russian and Ukrainian citizens “blacklisted” by the EU has reached 151 people – including members of the Russian administration and security forces, Russian deputies, entrepreneurs, members of the Crimean administration and several Ukrainian opposition politicians and leaders of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics. Blacklisted persons are denied entry to all 28 EU member states, while their financial assets in European banks are frozen.

On February 16, Prime Minister of Canada Stephen Harper announced additional sanctions against Russia. “These measures are enacted as a response to a series of escalated acts of aggression perpetrated by Russian-backed militants in recent weeks, including the indiscriminate attacks in and around the Ukrainian city of Mariupol on January 24,” his statement said.

Canada’s new blacklist included the director of Rostec Sergey Chemezov, journalist Dmitry Kiselev, pop singer and politician IsosifKobson, biker Alexander Zaldostanov (aka “Hirurg”), Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation Andrei Kartapolov, Rear Admiral Alexander Nosatov, Major-General Alexei Naumets, Donetsk People’s Republic Defence Ministry spokesman Eduard Basurin, vice-president of Luhansk People’s RepublicVladislavDeinego, Defence Minister Oleg Bugrovand others.

Several days later, it was reported that the USA and its allies are considering further sanctions against the Russian Federation. Defending this decision, US Secretary of State John Kerry said that Russia’s position is completely contrary to what the international community has been trying to achieve for in recent time.

On February 24, British Prime Minister David Cameron supported additional sanctions against Russia. He said that he had always advocated for a tougher approach towards Russia and held out the possibility of excluding Russia from the Belgian-based international Swift banking payments system, saying there was a logic to such a move if Moscow continued trying to “dismember” Ukraine.

On March 4, US President Barrack Obama extended the anti-Russian sanctions for another year. These included all restrictive measures imposed by the US government on March 6, 16 and 20, as well as December 19, 2014. In addition, on March 11 the United States decided to extend the sanction list, including additional 14 private and 2 legal entities. Among them was the Eurasian Youth Union and the Russian National Commercial Bank that started its operations in Crimea in spring 2014.

On March 6, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini also held out the possibility of additional sanctions against Russia. According to her, the European Union will not cancel the sanctions “until the security situation improves. If necessary, we will strengthen them”.

On March 6 and 7, anti-Russian sanctions were discussed at an informal meeting of EU Foreign Ministers in Riga, attended by Ministers from EU member states and candidate states, as well as the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Despite the official information from the Latvian Foreign Ministry, there was no consensus regarding anti-Russian sanctions at the meeting. Participants of the meeting split into two camps. Those in favour of increasing pressure on Moscow to resolve the Ukrainian crises included the UK, Poland and the Baltic States. Other countries, including Austria, Italy and Cyprus were sceptical of continuing the sanctions policy. Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz said that the acting ceasefire in Eastern Ukraine is a “glimmer of hope”. He suggested that his colleagues should first observe how the situation develops and then decide whether to increase or decrease sanctions. German Foreign Minister agreed with Mr Kurz. Frank-Walter Steinmeier said that it is “too early” to make decisions on the extension or tightening of anti-Russian sanctions.

However, these disagreements did not prevent the EU Ministers to adopt a statement on March 16 – a year after Crimea was voluntarily incorporated
We did find that the Russian did not place any command posts, nor of the rear, Ukraine, while according to DRM, data to support this hypothesis is not was.

"NATO claimed that Russian are going to invade the ance, while with the French intelligence services are considered only greater difficulty in relations with NATO is that US intelligence is crucial in the alli

false information about the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine. "The real

A two-day EU summit started in Brussels on March 19. It was assumed that the summit will make a decision to extend the sanctions against the Russian Federation, as was lobbied by Great Britain, Scandinavia and the Baltics. Italy, Greece and Cyprus along with Spain, Austria, Hungary and Slovakia advocated for reducing the sanctions. As a result, the corresponding document on extending the sanctions for another six months was not drafted, because the decision must be made by consensus – i.e. it has to be supported by all 28 EU member-states. Thus, the consideration of extending anti-Russian sanctions was postponed to July, when another summit is due to take place.

The Baltic States did not hesitate to express their dissatisfaction with this outcome. At an informal meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Baltic States, held in Vilnius on April 10, heads of Baltic states reiterated the need to “maintain the current European unity and common belief that Russia must fulfil the Minsk agreement” and until this happens, lifting of the sanctions “is out of the question”.

USA wants to prevent the union of Germany and Russia

On April 11, a scandal broke out in the EU anti-Russian policy. French intelligence chief Christophe Gomart appeared at the National Assembly and said that the American intelligence is using its authority in NATO to provide false information about the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine. “The real difficulty in relations with NATO is that US intelligence is crucial in the alli-

Given that the allegations of Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea and its alleged military invasion in Ukraine is the cornerstone of the anti-Russian sanctions, Gomart’s statement have dealt a serious blow to the already non-uniform sanctions policy of the European Union.

Why would the United States mislead its NATO partners? Head of the US private strategic forecasting company Stratfor (sometimes called “private CIA”) George Friedman answered this question at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (February 2015). He said that for the United States, the war in Ukraine is not the main goal, but only a wedge that the US can drive between Russia and Europe. America wants to prevent a union between Russia and Europe – prevent an economic and political union of Germany and Russia, which would inevitably put an end to the political hegemony between the US and Germany.

Friedman said, in particular, “The point is that the United States is prepared to create a ‘cordon Sanitaire’ around Russia, and Russia knows it. Russia believes that the United States intends to break the Russian Federation. I think that as Peter Lory put it, ‘we don’t want to kill you, we just want to sort of hurt you a little bit’. Either way, we are back at the old game.” He also added: “The issue to which we don’t have the answer is what will Germany do. The real wild card in Europe is that as the United States builds its cordon sanitaire, not in Ukraine, but to the west, and the Russians try to figure out how to leverage the Ukrainians out, we don’t know the German position.”

Germany is in a very peculiar position, it’s former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder is on the board of Gazprom, they have a very complex relationship with the Russians. The Germans themselves don’t know what to do, they must export, the Russians can’t take up the export. On the other hand, if they lose the free trade zone, they need to build something different. For the United States, the primordial fear is Russian capital, Russian technology, I mean German technology and German capital, Russian natural resources and Russian manpower as the only combination that has for centuries scared the hell out of the United States.

“So how does this play out? Well, the USA has already put its cards on the table. It is the line from the Baltic’s to the Black Sea. For the Russians, their cards have always been on the table, they must have at least a neutral Ukraine, not a pro-western Ukraine”. Cordon sanitaire between Russia and Europe has already been established de facto. Both the Baltic States and Ukraine play a very important role in this
regard. As a result, we observe a growing “detachment” if not concealed hos-
tility between Moscow and Berlin. Russian political scientist Sergey Kara-
ganov says that today one of the most important foundations of peace and
order in Europe – friendly relations between the two states and two nations,
build by Brandt-Schmidt-Kohl-Schroeder and their Soviet and Russian part-
ners – are in danger.10 His American counterpart, Alan Cafruny, believes that
the anti-Russian policy of the US and EU have no solid foundation and Ber-
lin’s “pro-American” policy will end after Chancellor Merkel leaves her post
in September 2017. Furthermore, according to him, “Europe may even switch
to Russia’s side”.17

The fact that the United States is losing influence in the world contributes
to this hypothesis. While recently the US was positioning itself as a leader of
the democratic world, today even some people in the US admit that the country
itself is not democratic anymore, let alone a leader of the democratic world.
This is partially mentioned in a study by Princeton University conducted in
April 2015. Authors of the study, Martin Gilens (Princeton University) and
Benjamin Page (Northwestern University) studied several public opinion polls
and concluded that the main principle of the US Constitution – the majority
rule – is not realised in practice. Instead, powers in the United States are guid-
ed by the interests of small groups of the economic elite. Researchers noted
that if America gets involved in a conflict, such as the one with Russia, the US
government acts not in the interests of the American people, but only in the
interests of profits for certain economic groups.18 As a result, despite the fact
that the United States had not officially declared war on other states since 1942
and President Obama being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, in the past six
years the US forces had bombed the territories of seven countries. Syria was
the last in the list of countries that the United States had bombed without any
coordination with the sovereign government of this state.19 In the past 10 years,
the US and its NATO partners had used military force more than 50 times.20
A democratic country does not behave that way. Only an aggressor behaves
that way, a country that seeks to destroy other sovereign states and seize their
national wealth.

Chapter 13
70th anniversary of the capitulation
of Nazi Germany as an arena for
ideological confrontation

In the first months of 2015, the informational and political opposition
between Russia and the United States along with its Western allies continued
to escalate. As the 70th anniversary of the capitulation of Nazi Germany was
approaching, the history of World War Two became the arena for ideological
confrontation. Pressured by the United States, many Western leaders refused
to attend (Russian) Victory Day celebrations in Moscow on May 9th. Leaders
of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania and Ukraine
gathered in Gdansk, Poland, on May 8 to celebrate VE (Victory in Europe)
Day separately from Moscow. The event was attended by the Polish President
Bronislaw Komorowski, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and the President
of the European Council Donald Tusk. Meanwhile, Latvia was represented by
Parliamentary Speaker Inara Murniece.1

Debates around Victory Day celebrations have started in the media and
politics long before May 9th and were frequently linked to relations between
Latvia and Russia. Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgars Rinkevics made a
particularly heavy remark in this regard, comparing Russia to the Third Reich.
He tweeted, “The more I look at modern Russia the more I am convinced that
it will end like Germany after First and Second World Wars”.2

Foreign Minister’s remark provoked a sharp reaction from Russia. Deputy
Director of Information and Press Department of the Russian Ministry of Foreign
Affairs, Maria Zakharova, said: “Latvian ‘diplomat’ no doubt knows better –
given that it is in Latvia where the annual march of Waffen SS legionnaires
takes place. This country knows first hand what is the Third Reich.” She added
that ‘no Euro-repair’ can cover up the SS symbols. Chairman of the Foreign
Affairs Committee of the Russian State Duma Alexei Pushkov said, in turn, that
Latvia’s anti-Russian statements must be ‘responded with sanctions’ towards
specific politicians and the state as a whole.3
Despite criticism, including from Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma, Rinkevics did not withdraw his words. In May, Russian Ambassador to Latvia Alexander Vishnyakov wrote in Vest’ Segodnya that until Mr Rinkevics apologises, he will remain an unwelcome person among the Russian diplomats.¹

May 9 Victory Day celebrations take place in Latvia every year, involving hundreds of thousands of people of different nationalities. May 9th is celebrated not only by Russian-speaking Latvians, but by many ethnic Latvians as well. However, Latvian government has been making repeated attempts to change the focus of celebrations from May 9th to May 8th. The latter date is widely celebrated across European countries as the VE Day, and according to Latvian officials, it includes not just celebrations of victory over Nazism, but also commemorations for all victims of the War – including those who fought for Nazi Germany. It is no accident that on May 8th senior Latvian officials attended the ceremony at the Brotherhood Cemetery, where Latvian Red Army soldiers are buried alongside with Nazi war criminals Rudolfs Bangerskis and Voldemar Veis. Latvian government believes that May 9th – celebrations of the victory of the Soviet people over Nazi Germany and the victory in the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) – is an inaccurate date for the end of World War Two, imposed by the Soviet Union. According to the government, this date not only divides the Latvian society, but also removes it from the united Europe.

Some politicians and certain Latvian media outlets sought to contrast the role of the Soviet Union and the role of the Western countries in the victory over Nazi Germany. The most common thesis, besides the Soviet occupation of Latvia in 1944-1945, was the equal responsibility of the USSR and Nazi Germany for starting the Second World War.

On May 8, Prime Minister of Latvia Laimdota Straujuma spoke at the Salaspils concentration camp memorial, saying that even though the war in Europe had ended 70 years ago, Latvia and several other European countries did not get the long-awaited freedom and peace. “Unfortunately, for a large part of Europe the war was followed by many more years of non-freedom”.²

Secretary of the Latvian Foreign Ministry Zanda Kalnina-Lukasēvica and Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Justice Janis Iesalnieks agreed with Prime Minister Straujuma. Kalnina-Lukasēvica appeared on LTV’s Morning Panorama programme on May 8th and said that Latvia will not take part in “Russia’s pompous [Victory Day] celebrations”, because for Latvia that victory meant another 50 years of non-freedom. However, she said, there will be a Foreign Ministry representative present at the commemorations to victims of fascism. Kalnina-Lukasēvica added that there are ‘clear signs’ of revival of Nazism in Russia.³ Meanwhile, member of the far right National Alliance, Janis Iesalnieks, tweeted that the 70th anniversary of the victory in World War Two can only be celebrated in Western Europe, because the suffering of Eastern Europe lasted till 1991”.⁴

Victory Day celebrations were also preceded by several “May 8th vs May 9th” debates, including those initiated by the Foreign Ministry of Latvia. One of such discussions, “May 9th – history, politics or propaganda? Why history is also today” took place on May 7th in the Latvian Military Museum.⁵ Speaking at this debate, the executive director of the Centre for Eastern European Policy Research Andis Kudors noted that even though Latvian authorities do not explicitly prohibit May 9th celebrations, Latvians would never accept this holiday because of its relation to the Soviet occupation. According to him, May 9th is an important day for many people who celebrate and commemorate the end of the Second World War, but it is also exploited by Russian politicians to mobilise people in support of their foreign policy.

“The specific interpretation of history is used in Russian foreign policy, including the policy conducted in Latvia,” Kudors said. “Unfortunately, Russia is not helping unite the Latvian society – we see what is being done through the compatriot policy – this supports the social split between Russians and Latvians”.⁶

Prior to Victory Day celebrations, members of the radical nationalist minority presented two resonant and provocative initiatives with tacit support of the Latvian authorities.

On April 20 – Adolf Hitler’s Birthday – polling website www.peticijas.com published a petition by Kaspars Mezavilks regarding relocating ‘members of the fifth column to areas controlled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and intelligence services.” By fifth column, author of the petition meant non-citizens and all persons who are disloyal to the Latvian state. Mazavilks’ petition gathered 1424 signatures in one day.

Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at University of Latvia, Professor Juris Rozenvalds, called this initiate a ‘complete absurdity’. “If God wants to punish someone, He takes his mind. It is worth noting that almost 320 thousand people fall under this initiative. I can vividly image how it might look like, and I sincerely hope that it will never happen. I won’t even mention the analogies with totalitarian regimes of the 20th century…” ⁷

Mezavilks’ initiative has a certain history. The first one to talk about resettling non-citizens and all supposedly disloyal persons to special camps was Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Defence Veiko Spolitis. On 16 November 2012 he told Baltic Radio: “According to the law, during the war non-citizens cannot serve in the army, but they can be given certain

⁵ Latvia 1988-2015: a triumph of the radical nationalists
⁶ Book 3. Formation of a new historical memory, or the Whitewashing of Nazism in Latvia
nothing that constitutes a crime”. This can be regarded as indirect evidence of different ways. However, if we consider it in terms of criminal law, there is and gave the following response: “Of course this petition can be assessed in various ways. However, if we consider it in terms of criminal law, there is nothing that constitutes a crime”. This can be regarded as indirect evidence of the fact that should Russian-Latvian relations deteriorate further, the Latvian authorities can indeed take certain undemocratic and forceful actions against non-citizens and dissidents.

The second provocative initiative also involved Veiko Spolitis, though now as member of the Latvian parliament (Saeima). On May 5, Spolitis proposed prohibiting the display of St. George Ribbons in public. These ribbons are a symbol of the victory of the Soviet people over German Nazism during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. Veiko Spolitis proposed fining those who display St. George Ribbons for 350 to 700 euros or by administrative detention for up to 15 days. Fortunately, Latvian government did not support this initiative.

Despite the efforts of the Latvian authorities and the extreme right nationalist minority to blemish the image of May 9th, the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the Great Victory of the Soviet people over Nazi Germany in the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945) was celebrated at a greater scale than ever before. The events near the Monument to Liberators of Riga in the Victory Park was attended by 220 thousand people. The music festival dedicated to the holiday ended with colourful fireworks. The “Immortal Regiment” marched in Riga for the first time, consisting of more than a thousand people. NGO Maja.lv raised almost 64 thousand euros in donations for gifts to veterans of the Great Patriotic War. Each veteran received 20 euros and a gift card. Celebratory rallies and concerts were also held in other Latvian cities: Daugavpils, Rezekne, Jekabpils, Liepaja, Ventspils, Ogre and Olaine. The only city where May 9th events were met with fierce resistance of the authorities was Jelgava.

It is not the first year that Jelgava administration lays flowers at the memorial to the fallen Latvian SS legionnaires on May 8th – VE Day, celebrated as a day of unity and peace in the European Union. Although previously this was done without much publicity. This year, however, Latvian and Russian-language press reported that on May 8th Jelgava City Council will officially com-
ies. In this regard, the Russian-speaking locals decided to organise a rally on October 24 to protest against the play, but were rejected by the city council.

Given Jelgava Council’s attitude towards marking the 70th anniversary of liberation of Jelgava from the Nazis, the prohibition of the protest rally against the play about Herberts Cukurs is further proof of local government’s policy aimed at rehabilitation of Nazism.

Unfortunately, this position also manifested with regards to May 9th events in 2015. Veche once again applied to the city authorities to sanction a festival to commemorate that date. After the council rejected the application, Veche changed the venue of the concert and reapplied. This application was attached to an open letter to the council, signed by heads of most non-governmental organisations in the city, a member of Latvian parliament and two members of the Jelgava Council. Nevertheless, Mayor Andris Ravins rejected this application. In a series of telephone conversations with Mayor Andris Ravins, Chairman of the Board of Trustees at Veche Sergejs Zakrevskis proposed various different venues for the events – Station Park, Rainis Park, House of Culture and others. All of them, according to Mayor Ravins, were busy on May 8 and 9. Ravins did not hide his attitude towards the May 9th holiday. He openly said that he does not consider it a holiday, he is grateful to the Red Army for liberating Jelgava from the Nazis, but why did it stay in Latvia afterwards? This is given the fact that Jelgava was also liberated by the troops from 130th Rifle Corps. Did these soldiers also have to leave Latvia in 1944?

As a result, May 9th in Jelgava was marked only with a celebratory rally in the Station Park. The rally and the small concert was attended by around 300 people, who were addressed by a war veteran, Alexei Shushpanov and leaders of civil society organisations. Representing the Jelgava Council was deputy Sergejs Stolarovs. Mayor of the city, however, made no official greetings at the event. The venues that were supposedly “busy” to accommodate Veche’s festival in really had no events planned for that date. Thus, Jelgava City Council managed to disrupt the celebrations on the 70th anniversary of the capitulation of Nazi Germany and demonstrated its true attitude towards the victory of the Soviet people over the Nazi Germany in the Great Patriotic War (1941 – 1945).

Victory Day celebrations across the country were largely attended by young people, which outraged Minister of Culture Dace Melbarde, who represents the far right nationalist movement All For Latvia / For Fatherland and Freedom / National Independence Movement of Latvia (VL-TB/LNNK). Talking to Latvian press, she was surprised how young people who studied in modern Latvian schools with specific curriculums and patriotic education can participate in this event. “The question then is – what are these people taught about Latvian history and its symbols? Family is one thing, but state education in schools is another,” Minister said and added that she is saddened by the fact that for many Russian symbols seem to be more important than Latvian.15

Current MEP from the Unity party and former Minister of Defence Artic Pabriks also commended on the Victory Day celebrations on Twitter: “I doubt that naturalisation is of any worth if it does not go alongside with realisation of loyalty. What good are citizens who are willing to speak out against their country?”16 National Alliance (VL-TB/LNNK) MP Janis Dombraiva agreed with Pabriks, calling the monument to Liberators of Riga and Latvia from Nazi occupiers a “pillar of shame”. Mr Dombraiva tweeted: “Don’t even try to explain to me that people who gather near the Pillar of Shame are integrated and are subjects of the Latvian state. If we were living in a safer country, they wouldn’t have been here”.17

On May 13, Mr Spolitis’ initiative to prohibit St. George Ribbons received further development. Members of Parliament Janis Dombraiva, Gunars Rusins, Einars Cilinskis, Karlis Kreslins, Gaidis Berzins (all from VL-TB/LNNK) and Veiko Spolitis himself (Unity faction) presented a corresponding bill to the parliament. In annotations to the draft law, they wrote that the orange-black ribbon is becoming a “symbol of glorification of Russian imperialism and is the only visible distinction of people who are influenced by the Russian propaganda and advocate for Russia’s territorial expansion throughout the former USSR”. They also mentioned that the ribbon was used during the annexation of Crimea, and to identify “allied” “terrorist and gang groups in Eastern Ukraine”.

“Given the specifics of this ideology and the fact that Russian propaganda has a huge influence in the former Soviet territories,” authors of the bill proposed restricting the public use of St. George Ribbons as a “symbolic presence of the hostile towards Latvian security totalitarian ideology”.18

Several days earlier, Latvian Parliamentary Commission for Education, Culture and Science supported the consideration of new amendments to the Education Law in the final reading. The amendments were developed by former Minister of Culture and current MP Ints Dalderis (Unity party). He proposed that heads of education institutions should prove their loyalty to the state on a regular basis. According to Mr Dalderis, only a person who is loyal to the Latvian Republic and its Constitution has the right to work as a teacher”.19

There is nothing surprising in the reaction of the nationalist parliamentary majority towards the increasingly popular celebration of the Victory Day in Latvia and the virtual disregard towards the state-organised events by the
Russian-speaking community. The extreme right majority in Latvian politics, formed after the elimination of universal suffrage in 1991 when more than a third of Latvian residents lost the right to automatically become citizens of Latvia, today depends on the support of a small part of the Latvian society. Maintaining power in these conditions is only possible with constant incitement of nationalist hysteria and continuous assault on the foundations of democracy, while expanding the practice of totalitarianism.

In Place of a Conclusion

In the 20th century, Latvia had twice received independence from the hands of Russia. What has followed twice, was the beginning of creating a so-called “Latvian Latvia”, or “Latvia for ethnic Latvians”, an undemocratic state where the rights of the Russian and other national minorities to preserve their language, schools and culture were substantially curtailed. In the first half of the century, this course began after a short democratic intermission – with the coup d’état of May 15, 1934. In the second time, it was launched, in fact, right with the adoption of the Declaration “On the Restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia”, on May 4, 1990. The main provisions of the declaration were the de iure continuity of the existence of the First Republic of Latvia from 1918 until 1990, and on the 50-year occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Union. They have repeated the main ideas of the radical part of the Western Latvian exiles. These provision did not only negate the international law as it was at the relevant time. They were also creating a legal basis for resurrection of the ideas and practices of the ethnocratic political regime of Karlis Ulmanis of 1934-1940, and for re-habilitating, politically and historically, former Latvian Nazi collaborators from the time of German occupation of Latvia in 1941-1945.

One can only build a “Latvian Latvia”, i.e., a monoethnic and monolingual state in a multietnic and multilingual country, if national minorities get forcibly assimilated and those, who do not wish to assimilate, get forced to leave the country. For this purpose, citizenship and language policies have a crucial role.

This is why the first step after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on May 4, 1990, was the adoption of the resolution of the Supreme Council of Latvia «On the renewal of Republic of Latvia citizens’ rights and on basic rules of naturalization» on October 15, 1991. It has denied for 893 thousands of permanent residents of the Latvian SSR the right to become citizens of the Republic of Latvia by optation, i.e., by their free choice. This resolution has not just led to the abolition of the universal suffrage. From that moment, one can say that the new, overwhelmingly ethnically Latvian,
political elite has made the state of Latvia its own property. That is, the elite has become de facto irreplaceable, as there have been no universal elections in the country anymore. Another consequence of that decision has been the gradual formation of an Anti-Russia foreign policy and Anti-Russians internal policies, with unwavering escalation of the information war waged against the national minorities in Latvian-language media. Step by step, blatant Russophobia has been made state ideology and state policy.

This was the information and policy background for the adoption by the Latvian parliament of two ideological documents of utmost importance - Declaration on Latvia’s Occupation (1996) and the Declaration on Latvian Legionnaires (1998), as well as the laws on language and education. The latter laws declared Russian to be “foreign” in Latvia and designated 2004 as the intended end of the existence of public Russian-language high schools.

Dr. Lawrence Britt, a political scientist, has identified 14 features of Fascism in his article “Fascism Anyone?”, published in the journal “Free Inquiry” in 2003. We shall name some of them:

1. Powerful and continuing expressions of nationalism.
2. Disdain for the importance of human rights.
3. Identification of enemies/scapegoats as a unifying cause.
4. The supremacy of the military/avid militarism.
5. A controlled mass media.
6. Obsession with national security.
7. Rampant cronyism and corruption.
8. Fraudulent elections.

Latvia is not a Fascist state today, i.e, there is no open terrorist dictatorship here now, unlike the Fascist Italy or the Nazi Germany. However, all the features listed above are “working” ones for Latvia. That is, they reflect, to some extent, the real policy of the state of Latvia towards national minorities, towards national history and oppressing dissent. This policy, if one views radical nationalism as a form of Nazism, like a Russian social scientist Zhan Toshchenko does, allows to characterise the state of Latvia today not just as an undemocratic and ethnocratic one, but also as a Neo-Nazi one.

The signs of ethnocratic practices and ideology in the modern Latvia are:

1) the claim of de iure continuity of the existence of the First Republic of Latvia from 1918 until 1990;
2) the claim of a “Soviet occupation” in 1940-1941 and 1945-1990;
3) creation of mass statelessness and refusal from universal suffrage in the elections on all levels;

4) defining Russian language as a foreign one, although the Russian national minority is traditional in Latvia, having existed for more than 300 years;
5) the policy of dismantling the schools with Russian language of instruction, traditional for Latvia, and having existed since 1789, i.e., for more than 200 years;
6) language-related repressions;
7) political support for Anti-Russian and Neo-Nazi political forces in Georgia, Ukraine and other countries;
8) blatant Russophobia;
9) deliberate slandering of the USSR period of Latvian history.

The signs of Neo-Nazi practices and ideology in the modern Latvia are the political and historical re-habilitation of the Waffen SS Latvian Volunteers Legion, the refusal from bringing to court Latvian Nazi collaborators guilty of numerous crimes against humanity, and, as a contrary action, bringing to court former guerilla fighters having fought on the side of the Allies. Here also belongs the claim that the “Soviet occupation” was by its consequences much worse for the Latvian people than the occupation by Nazi Germany, which de facto leads to a political and historical re-habilitation of the practices of the Nazi occupation regime.

It should be recognised that the ideological ethnocratisation and nazification of Latvian society impacts ethnic Latvians, first of all. Among ethnic Latvians, there is discontent with the policies of the ruling establishment in managing economy, healthcare, education and social security. However, the ethnic policy, or the policy towards national minorities (mass statelessness, the status of the Russian language as a foreign one, the policy towards abolition of basic and high schools with instruction in Russian, blatant Russophobia etc.) is not seen, or even is supported, by a majority of ethnic Latvians now. As a result, the far-right political forces in Latvia feel just fine, especially with support from the far-right political forces in Europe and the US.

As concerns the ethnic minorities, they mostly remain democratically oriented.

Now, one can name several forms of non-violent resistance by the democratic (mostly Russian-speaking) forces in Latvia to the policy of creating a so-called «Latvian Latvia». They include:

- drawing attention of the international community to the fact of creation of mass statelessness in Latvia, the preservation of which has been calling into question the legitimacy of all authorities and their decisions for over 25 years already;
- drawing attention of the international community to the fact of the undemocratic pseudoelections to local councils, national and European parliaments being conducted in Latvia;
- organising mass protest rallies against the status of the Russian language as a foreign one. On February 18, 2012, a referendum had been held on the issue of granting a status of a second official language to the Russian language. All the Russian community of Latvia had supported that request in the referendum;
- organising mass protest rallies against dismantling the system of schools with instruction in Russian. In 1998-2005, there had been large gatherings in Latvia to support preservation of Russian schools, including the First, Second and Third Parents' conferences, the so-called School Revolution of 2003-2005, and others. In October, 2017, protest rallies began once again, to resist the decision of the government to switch national minority high schools to Latvian as the only language of instruction, by the beginning of the academic year 2020/2021;
- organising protest rallies against annual processions of the former soldiers of the Waffen SS Latvian Volunteers Legion and their modern followers;
- scientific criticism of the official conceptions of Latvia’s history of the years 1940, 1941-1945 and 1945-1990. Latvia’s Russian historians publish books and articles, and conduct scientific conferences to subject various expressions of historical revisionism in Latvia to critical scrutiny, year after year;
- applying to the Prosecutor General’s Office and Security Police in order to bring to court Neo-Nazis and extreme Russophobes. The most recent example of such activity is the attempt to bring to court a member of parliament from the far-right National Alliance, Edvins Snore, who compared Latvia’s Russians with lice. However, the Security Police declined to initiate criminal proceedings on that statement by Mr Snore. Afterwards, a rights activist Vladimir Linderman has turned to the Office of the Prosecutor General of Russia, asking to bring Edvins Snore to court. In their turn, Alexander Kuzmin, the secretary of the Latvian Human Rights Committee (FIDH), and Tatyana Favorskaya, the chair of the Russian Society in Latvia, had requested the Latvian Chapter of Orders to withdraw the Order of the Three Stars from Snore. In accordance with the law, this can be done if the recipient of the order has committed a shameful
March 16, 2016. Representatives of the Ukrainian Neo-Nazi Azov Regiment in Riga. Photo by Victor Gushchin
deed (on October 20, 2017, the Chapter of Orders has refused the request by Kuzmin and Favorskaya).

A special role in the struggle of Latvia’s democratic forces against the Nazi offensive has been played by the Russian-language media. However, their number is falling, and the readership is shrinking swiftly.

To summarise, the democratic and Anti-Fascist forces in Latvia aren’t currently experiencing their best times, far from that.

Today, the key issue in the conflict between the far right in Latvia and the Russian-speaking democratic forces is the destiny of Russian schools. One can only defend the Russian school, if the mass statelessness gets abolished unconditionally, and the first universal elections since March 18, 1990 get conducted, to local councils, national and European parliaments. The next
crucial step is to elaborate and adopt a new, democratic Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, without ethnocratic amendments and preamble present in the current one. It is clear that such proposals are on the verge of fiction in the conditions of the current local politics and the escalating international tensions between Russia, on one side, and the US and their satellites, on the other. However, if one wishes to build a democratic Latvia, one will have to solve these issues anyway, earlier or later!

If one fails to do so, there is no good reason to doubt that the Latvian far-right will go on till the end in dismantling the schools with partially preserved instruction in Russian. This will undoubtedly lead to a speedy replacement of ethnic Russian teachers to ethnic Latvians. This will, in turn, provoke a new wave of emigration of both Russian-speaking pupils and their parents, as well as Russian teachers left unemployed. Afterwards, the far right will strengthen their positions in Latvia even more, also by involving the “well-taught” Russian-speaking youth (the best evidence for that is the example of Ukraine), and the positions of the democratic forces will continue to grow weak. As a result, the far right will achieve their aim declared in the times of the Third Awakening – building of a “Latvian Latvia”. On the northern border of Russia, a “Baltic Ukraine” will appear, much more uncompromising to Russia than now, with all the related negative international policy consequences for Russia and Europe. Those will include the invariable provocative attempts of Latvian far right to involve Russia and Europe in a large armed conflict. The one responsible for such a development will be, first and foremost, Europe itself, for those are the Europeans and the US who haven’t formed legal mechanisms to oblige Latvia to strengthen democratic institutions, since the very acquisition of independence by Latvia in 1991 (in particular, to end the mass statelessness and to ratify Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities without reservations undermining the essence of that document). Moreover, they have de facto turned a blind eye on the consecutive strengthening of the political positions of the Latvian radical nationalists.

November 20, 2017

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Documentation

COUNCIL OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS OF LATVIA

Appeal
of the Council of non-governmental organisations of Latvia to the Council of Europe, OSCE, the European Parliament, United Nations and the Russian Federation

Let’s stop the formation of an ethnocratic state in Latvia!

On 9 October, 2017, the ruling coalition of Latvia has supported the proposal by the Ministry of Education and Science to teach all general subjects in national minority high schools in Latvian language only, starting from academic year 2020/2021.

We find this decision of the Latvian ruling coalition to run counter to the agreements reached in 2004-2005, after mass protests of Russian schools pupils against the dismantling of Russian-language schools. Besides, it also violates a Council of Europe treaty, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, ratified by Latvia in May, 2005. Moreover, this is one more step in implementing the policy of the ruling coalition – to build a so-called “Latvian Latvia”, or “Latvia for ethnic Latvians”, where national minorities should either be forcibly assimilated or thrown out of the country, if they dare to stand for their rights.

The formation of the state of Latvia as an ethnocratic (meaning that the rights of ethnic Latvians are put above rights of all other ethnicities of the country) state, after acquisition of independence in 1991, was pre-determined by the content of the Declaration “On the Restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia”, adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the Latvian SSR on May 4, 1990.

Representatives of the radical part of the Western Latvian exiles had hoped to restore an ethnocratic Latvia, based on examples from 1934-1940. On their

* The Council of Non-Governmental Organisations of Latvia includes 84 non-governmental organisations.
initiative, statements on the de iure continuation of the Republic of Latvia from 1918 until 1990 and on the occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Union from 1945 until 1990, although incompatible with international law provisions, have been included in the text of that Declaration. This has pre-determined: the creation of an undemocratic institute of mass statelessness; designation of Russian language as a “foreign” one; the policy of dismantling the Russian-language schools, which have existed since 1789; smearing the heroism of the Red Army which liberated Latvia from Nazism; smearing the times when Latvia had been part of the USSR, while re-habilitating politically and historically the ethnocratic political regime of Karlis Ulmanis of 1934-1940 and former Nazi collaborators from the time of German occupation of Latvia in 1941-1945.

Consecutive implementation, after 1991, of a policy of forming the state of Latvia as an ethnocratic one, has resulted, in the evaluation of the PACE of 8 November, 2002, in forming of a “long-term democratic deficit” in Latvia.

The European Parliament, supporting that conclusion, has pointed on 9 September, 2015, that the continuation of mass statelessness in certain European countries is a form of political discrimination.

Based on those conclusions by the PACE and the European Parliament, one should recognize that after 1993, when the first parliamentary elections in the Second Republic of Latvia took place without universal suffrage, not a single parliament and neither any local council has been elected in universal and democratic elections. This makes questionable the legitimacy of all Latvian authorities and their decisions taken from 1993 until now.

The preservation and further development of schools with Russian language of instruction and other national minority schools, ensured by law, can only be possible if the state of Latvia returns to the democratic way of development.

The necessary conditions thereof are:

1. To abolish the mass statelessness, immediately and unconditionally.
2. After the abolition of mass statelessness, to conduct, without delay, the first universal elections since March 18, 1990, to local councils, national and European parliaments.
3. To recognize the Declaration on Latvia’s Occupation of 22 August, 1996, the Declaration on Condemnation of the Totalitarian Communist Occupation Regime Implemented in Latvia by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of 12 May, 2005 (as far as it claims Latvia had been occupied by the USSR), and the Declaration on Latvian Legionnaires in World War II of 29 October, 1998, to be incompatible with international law provisions.
4. To edit the text of the Declaration “On the Restoration of Independence of the Republic of Latvia”, by removing from it the statements on the de iure continuation of the Republic of Latvia from 1918 until 1990 and on the occupation of Latvia by the Soviet Union from 1945 until 1990, as incompatible with international law provisions.
5. To abolish the preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia.
7. To grant to of the Russian language an official status – that of a language of one of national minorities traditionally living in Latvia.
8. To adopt a law on national-cultural autonomy of national minorities, which would:

- ensure preservation and further development of schools with Russian language of instruction and all schools of other national minorities. Create a Department of National Minority Schools under MES, with wide competence on preservation and development of national minority schools;
- ensure preservation and development of languages and cultures of the national minorities of the Republic of Latvia.

The issue today must be not only the immediate and unconditional return of international law supremacy and the democratic principle of forming the country’s political elite based on universal suffrage to the legal and political life of the Republic of Latvia. It must also concern staffing local authorities and state institutions based on professional experience and professional competence, not based on ethnicity, nepotism and corruption. The issue must also be the immediate and unconditional refusal from anti-Russian foreign policy and Russophobia in internal policies. Anti-Russian foreign policy and Russophobia have stalled the development of the country. It is necessary to restore friendly neighborly relations with the Russian Federation.

We believe, that in case the establishment of Latvia will refuse from returning the state of Latvia to the democratic way of development, the country might get to the brink of a deep civic conflict and even downfall of the state. Let us remember the prophetic words of a Latvian national poet Rainis: “Latvia can either be democratic, or it will not exist at all!”.

We appeal to the world community – the Council of Europe, OSCE, the European Parliament, UN and the Russian Federation – calling to support our demand to stop the development of the state of Latvia as an undemocratic and ethnocratic one.

Adopted on the meeting of the Council of Non-Governmental Organisations of Latvia on October 24, 2017.
Declaration

The Parliament of the Republic of Latvia currently considers the bill “On the Status of a Participant of the World War II”, already approved in the second reading on November 2, 2017. Along with public bodies, non-governmental organisations of former soldiers of Waffen SS Latvian Volunteers Legion and so-called “forest brothers” who fought against the Soviet rule between 1945 and 1953, were involved in drafting that bill. Non-governmental organisations of former soldiers of the Red Army, including its 130th Latvian Rifle Corps, and of participants of Anti-Nazi underground and guerrilla fighters of Latvia, who liberated Latvian SSR from Nazi occupation by great sacrifice, were not invited to participate in drafting that bill.

Besides, the concept of an “occupation” of Latvia by the Soviet Union in 1940-1941 and in 1944/45-1991, while not recognised by the international community at international law level, is a foundation of that bill. Based on that concept, only those World War II participants who lived in the territory of the Republic of Latvia before June 17, 1940, may apply for the status of a World War II veteran in Latvia. As a result, most former Red Army soldiers and participants of Anti-Nazi underground and guerrilla units, who, in accordance with USSR laws, settled in the territory of the Latvian SSR after June 17, 1940, will not be able to apply for the status of a World War II veteran.

Taking into account the above, we find it necessary to declare:

1. The elaboration of the bill “On the Status of a Participant of the World War II” without taking into account the opinion of the Allies representatives (former Red Army soldiers and participants of Anti-Nazi underground and guerrilla units in Latvia) is not in line with interests of a democracy, and its adoption will de facto create additional conditions for further political and historically cultural re-habilitation of former Nazi collaborators from population of Latvia.

2. The use of the thesis, not recognised by the international community at international law level, on an “occupation” of Latvia by the Soviet Union in 1940-1941 and in 1944/45-1991, in the bill will be conducive to further strengthening of the policy of Russophobia and social disintegration, led by the state of Latvia since 1991. It will further the division of the society into “insiders” and “outsiders”, i.e., contribute to a continuing splitting of the society and deepening of interethnic tensions in the country.

A. Pyatnitsky,
Latvian Association of the Allies Fighters
Association of the Veterans of the 130th Latvian Rifle Corps and Latvian guerrilla brigades
Y. Gribun,
Latvian Association of Former Prisoners of the Nazi Regime
“Memory for the Future”
M. Dombrovsky,
Latvian Association of Leningrad Siege Survivors
L. Tess,
Association of Residents of the Besieged Leningrad

Riga, November 21, 2017
Baltic Center of Historical and Socio-Political Research
Aims: research of history of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, conducting academic conferences and seminars, book publishing.

Reg. No. 40008132147, Riga

CONFERENCES:


December 14-15, 2006, Riga. 1st international conference “World War II and the Baltic Countries. 1939 – 1945”. Organisers: Baltic Center of Historical and Socio-Political Research (Latvia), Baltic International Academy (Latvia), Russian Club (Latvia), DVINA association (Latvia). Proceedings of the conference have been published.

May 6-7, 2010, Riga. 2nd international academic conference “World War II and the Baltic Countries: between the Nazi Germany and the Allies”. Organisers: CIS Countries Institute (Russia), “Historical Memory” Foundation (Russia), Baltic Center of Historical and Socio-Political Research (Latvia).

October 29, 2010. Seminar “On the tasks most urgent for preservation of the Russian-speaking world in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (including resistance to history forgering, defence of the rights of “non-citizens” permanently residing in Estonia and Latvia)”. Organisers: CIS Countries Institute (Russia), Baltic Center of Historical and Socio-Political Research (Latvia).


E-mail: viktor.gushchin@gmail.com