DANSK KULTUR-INSTITUT

DANISH CULTURAL INSTITUTE

ROYAL DANISH EMBASSY
Riga

Ties Through Time: Denmark-Latvia

Denmark and Latvia

100 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Contents

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Ties through time: Denmark and Latvia

The jubilee year 2021 is an important moment in the relationship between Denmark and Latvia.

We celebrate the 100th anniversary of Denmark´s recognition de iure of Latvia and establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries on February 7th, 1921. Denmark was among some of the first countries to recognize the new Latvian state.

We also celebrate the 30th anniversary of restorations of diplomatic relations in August 1991. Denmark never recognized the Soviet occupation of Latvia. The first Danish ambassador to Latvia after the restoration of independence arrived in Riga on 26th August 1991, only two days after the restoration of diplomatic relations.

Over a century of shared history, many moments and events deserve to be remembered. For this reason, the Danish embassy in Latvia in cooperation with the Danish Cultural Institute in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, and the National Library of Latvia organized a historical conference in Riga on 25th August 2021 to highlight some of these historical moments. As time pass, some events merit to be told again by the people who took part and experienced them first hand. Other moments are little known, perhaps just discovered, or go even further back in time.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the prominent Latvian and Danish experts who have contributed in this booklet with such interesting stories on Danish-Latvian historical ties:

The development of Danish-Livonian political and economic relations already from the XIII century as well as Denmark's relations with the Dutchy of Courland in XVI-XVII century.

Connections were close many centuries ago.

The close ties between Denmark and Latvia that came into existence during the Latvian war of independence in 1918-1920. 200 Danish volunteer soldiers fought for Latvian independence and the establishment of the Latvian nation in 1919. A "Danish factor" in Latvia´s struggle for independence.

The relationship between Denmark and Latvia developing during the first Republic of Latvia. During the occupation, the publishing house Imanta was an island of Latvian culture in Denmark.

Together these elements can give us new understanding of the shared history that ties us together through time.

The jubilee year 2021 was also marked at a high-level event in Copenhagen on June 4th, 2021 where the foreign ministers of Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania agreed on a new joint vision for the future cooperation between the countries. A new vision focusing on climate and green transition, economic recovery, culture and much more. A shared platform for continued strong cooperation between Denmark and Latvia for the coming many years.

Simon Drewsen Holmberg,

Director DCI Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

Common Ties Common Thoughts - Denmark Latvia

The cultural dialogue fostered by the Danish Cultural Institute between cultural actors from Latvia and Denmark (as well as Lithuania and Estonia) could in 2020 celebrate 30 years of continued cultural exchange. The story is one of new beginnings, overcoming obstacles and navigating the difficult political landscape of the cold war and its aftermath. Since then, there has been an institute in Riga making several thousand cultural projects: from small but important projects to big projects such as Urban Cultural Planning changing the way we build and develop our cities. In the last couple the years, DCI in addition to its local activities – the Institute has as many major project as ever – has together with partners from Latvia (and the other Baltic States) cooperated to develop civil society and cultural life in Belarus and the other countries in what used to be the "Eastern Partnership" as part of the New Democracy Fund. The importance of this effort is obvious when you look across Latvia to Belarus, where the country's own government is ferociously trying to destroy its civil society.

In the late 1980s, the Cultural Institute was being set up under the still-existing Soviet Union, whose occupation of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, Denmark never accepted and therefore never recognized, and major official governmental moves or statements were made. In those crucial years of transition, the role of the Danish Cultural Institute, tied to its unique position as a non-governmental diplomatic institution, became indispensable in strengthening Danish-Latvia/Baltic ties and showing support for their struggle. The commitment of DCI and Denmark to Latvia was furthermore made easier.

Stemming from an initiative from DCI's then Secretary General Per Himmelstrup with the approval of the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Uffe Ellemann Jensen, the first Baltic branch of DCI was set to be opened in Riga, a year before Denmark had an official embassy in Latvia. A fundraising campaign was established by the DCI and Chief Editor of the Danish newspaper Politiken, Herbert Pundik, and support from all nooks and crannies of private and cultural Danish society started pouring in, making the opening on August 18th, 1990 by Danish Minister of Education Bertel Haarder a reality. The Institute was off to a rocky start with the attempted re-occupation of Latvia by the Soviets in January 1991. However, under the guidance of the newly elected DCI director Rikke Helms, the institute weathered the storm and assisted greatly on Latvia's road to independence.

What followed has been 31 years of resurgence of Danish-Latvian cultural ties, and at the **Ties Through Time** (**TTT**) conference it will become evident just how deep those roots go.

Some of the most important cultural work has been in the form of music. Therefore, it is becoming that a Danish-Baltic string quartet has been created uniquely for the anniversary celebrations where four Danish, Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanians musicians together will perform music from our region. Denmark and Latvia also boast a long line of literary tradition, stretching back to the first Danish prayer books, and the bible being translated into Latvian. TTT will look into *Imanta*, a Latvian publishing house established in Denmark. The tradition can also be seen in the many books translated into Latvian, especially by Atena, a publishing house which for many years was run by Karsten Lomholt and Peteris Jankavs in Riga.

Many other important tales should and will be told. The common ties are becoming wider and still tighter. The many students and the economic cooperation are also crucial pillars in our co-operation. Our joint travel is an inspiration inside and outside our countries. It is a fantastic journey to be part of but let us keep the dialogue and commitment to each other and our values going, ensuring that what happens in Belarus and other places around the world will never happen again in the joint Nordic-Baltic Region.

PREFACE

Andris Vilks,

Director,
National Library of Latvia

Ever since the restoration of Latvian independence the National Library of Latvia has played a special part in the relationship between Denmark and Latvia. Through all these years this has been so due to the active work of the Danish Cultural Institute. Soon after The Danish Cultural Institute opened a new office in Riga in 1989, Rikke Marianne Helms was appointed as its first director. Upon arrival in Riga in the autumn of 1989 she got in touch with me as the director of the National Library and immediately offered me to go on a working visit to Denmark to meet some of the country's leading organizations in the library field, as well as specifically to visit the Birkerød Public Library. Starting from then and up until 2014 Danish Cultural Institute (which has been for a number of years successfully headed by Simon Drewsen Holmberg) and the National Library of Latvia maintained a close cooperation, even as our offices in Riga were located literally just a few blocks apart.

During a visit to Riga by former Danish ambassador to Latvia and President and Secretary General of the Danish Cultural Institute *Michael Metz Mørch*, an initiative was coordinated to include office space for the Danish Cultural Institute in the future new building of the National Library, on the basis of the premises of the discontinued Information Center of the Council of Europe. Thus DCI has moved into the new premises in 2014 and continues to work there. Important was the contribution to this cooperation by former Director General of the Royal Danish Library, Erland Kolding Nielsen (1947 – 2017). Starting from the year 2000 he performed as representative of the UNESCO international expert panel for the project of the new National Library of Latvia and in this capacity offered a major contribution to the successful development and completion of the new building project. Thanks to E.K.Nielsen the responsibility for acoustic systems in the big auditorium of the National Library – Ziedonis Hall - was entrusted to the outstanding acoustic engineer Anders Christian Gade. At the inauguration ceremony of the new building of the National Library in Riga, Erland Kolding Jensen was the first among library representatives to address the audience. His remarks at the ceremony were accompanied by a brilliant exhibit from the Royal Library – an XVIII century globe, once crafted by Gotthard Friedrich Stender (1714 – 1796).

The collections of the National Library of Latvia feature several hundred of valuable rarities connected to Denmark, these include XVI – XVIII century books, booklets, maps, engravings and other material. Let me mention the Danish Chronicles or „Danorum Historiae" by Saxonis Grammatici in the form of copy of the second edition of 1534 (meanwhile a copy of the same title from its original edition in 1514 was generously lent to our National Library by the Royal Danish Library for the occasion of the exhibition „Books 1514 – 2014"), as well as a copy of the first secular play published in Latvian in 1790, namely Ludvig Holberg's (1684 – 1754) comedy „Jeppe on the Hill" (*„Jeppe på bjerget"*), translated into Latvian by Alexander Johann Stender (1744 – 1819).

The Latvian War of Independence 1918 – 1920: the Danish Factor

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At the end of World War I in 1918, while the war-shattered empires were falling apart and the new principles of the right of self determination of nations were affirmed, there arose a whole new group of newly independent nation-states in Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, also the fall of the Russian and German empires lead to the establishment of three independent Baltic countries. All three had to endure severe fighting to secure their independence and national borders, however, the details and circumstances of this fight differed in each of the Baltic countries. Lithuania and Estonia managed to declare their national independence already in February, 1918, while Latvia – later in November, 1918 (reason for this was that the front line had been within the territory of Latvia ever since 1915, there was massive damage and devastation and also much bigger numbers of refugees etc.). True establishment of sovereignty did not, however, begin in all three Baltic countries before the end of the final war battles in November, 1918.

The territory of Latvia remained in a highly complicated situation during the following years 1918 – 1920, due to diverse strong interests there by the Republic of Latvia, Soviet Russia, Latvian local Bolsheviks, Baltic German nobility, Germany who had lost the war, contra-Bolshevik Russia, the newly independent neighbour countries and finally, also Western European Allied interests. Notable was also a strong presence of the Belorussian People's Republic, still struggling to consolidate its own independence, Ukrainian People's Republic and other European countries which had their own particular interests due to diverse pre-war time economic and other connections. Among such countries was, obviously, also Denmark, who had prior to the war developed a significant economic activity in Riga, Liepaja and other parts of Latvia. The strong economic links motivated the functioning of active consular departments in both Liepaja and Riga cities.

Situation in the territory of Latvia was particularly complicated as evidenced by the simultaneous existence there of three different governments, each with their own armed forces: The civil governance by the army under commander Pavel Bermont-Avalov, certain territories of Latvia were during certain periods of time under the jurisdiction of Estonia, Poland and Lithuania, a major part of the territory was for a while in the hands of the Bolsheviks. Also active inside Latvia during this time were a number of political and military missions and commissions by Great Britain, France and the United States of America, as well as representatives and charitable organisations of certain other foreign countries. Significant in the process of the Wars of Independence were the aspirations of the neighbouring countries (Estonia, Lithuania and Poland) to ensure their own independence by supporting the Provisional Government. Within the armed forces of these countries there existed a number of national sub-units,

for instance, there was a Belorussian battalion in the Lithuanian army, French unit within the Polish armed forces, Estonian and Latvian units in the Red Army etc. Most notable among them was the Finnish volunteer battalion and the Danish volunteer unit in the Estonian army, many of these soldiers demonstrated courage and for their military contribution in liberating Northern Latvia from the Red Army were later awarded the Latvian military order – Lāčplēsis War Order.

The various armies and military units involved in the developments on Latvian soil had their own particular agendas: for the independent Latvian army and the armies of neighbouring countries it was to secure the national independence and protect the external borders of the respective country (where some serious disputes also existed), for Bolsheviks – to spread the „world revolution" by capturing more new territories, for the German army – to safeguard German interests in the region and perhaps to re-establish the Empire by joining forces with the anti-Bolshevik Russia, for Baltic German nobility – to preserve their status and historic privilege in the newly established country of Latvia and, possibly, create a close link with Germany and the anti-Bolshevik forces with the objective to reconstruct the Empire or at least resurrect a non-Bolshevik Russia with the Baltic states as part of it.

At the end of 1918, when the sovereignty of the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed, the Provisional Government under Kārlis Ulmanis had no other option than to collaborate with the German army and Baltic German military units in order to fight against the Red Army. However, soon enough the whole of Latvia, except for Liepaja and a tiny area around this city, fell in the hands of Bolsheviks, who proceeded with the ideology of Latvia as „a bridge in the lighting up of the fire of world revolution", and followed the orders of the Soviet Russia government to establish a formally independent state-like unit „Soviet Latvia", which would in reality be part of Soviet Russia. What immediately followed there was merciless terror and radical land reforms, why the Bolshevik government soon, within a matter of months, lost support of the population. This could not be remedied even by the lavish numbers of the Soviet Latvia army (mostly reached by means of forced mobilisation of soldiers). In early 1919 the situation in Liepaja was almost completely controlled by German military governance, which mistrusted the Kārlis Ulmanis Provisional government and did not allow free universal mobilisation. On April 16th, 1919 the Baltic German nobility organized a coup d'état in Liepaja to overthrow the Kārlis Ulmanis Provisional government, with the aim of establishing a pro-German government that would be favourably inclined towards the dominance of Baltic German nobility. The organizers of the coup d'état managed to take control of a number of government buildings and arrest several ministers. Kārlis Ulmanis and some other cabinet members found refuge in the premises of the British mission, later they moved their dislocation onboard the steamship *„Saratov"*. The organizers of the coup d'état set up a new pro-German puppet government under Andrievs Niedra, but in parallel the Kārlis Ulmanis Provisional government continued, within a limited scope of what was possible, its activity onboard the steamship *„Saratov"* in the Liepaja harbour under military protection of the British navy.

In January and early February Estonian army liberated several other Latvian towns and villages, but on February 12th launched a greater military offensive. On February 18th, an agreement was signed in Tallinn between Latvia and Estonia, envisaging assistance for the liberation of Latvian territory and the establishment of North Latvian Brigade as part of the Estonian armed forces. This was agreed upon under the condition that the town of Valka and a number of other Latvian villages will be added to the territory of Estonia (later this agreement was not recognized by Latvian government). Following this treaty, special Latvian units were established within the Estonian army, which were politically subject to Ulmanis government.

On May 22nd, 1919 German forces took hold of Riga and soon after the Soviet Latvian army collapsed, due to increasing numbers of deserters and soldiers who crossed over to Estonian army or the Latvian units of the Landeswehr. After taking Riga the German forces did not follow the Soviet Latvian army in the direction of Latgale, as was expected, but instead clearly tried to take over the Vidzeme part controlled at that time by Estonian and Latvian forces. Meanwhile international peace talks were in progress in Paris and by that time reached a critical moment, when there existed a real chance of renewed military hostilities. This was something that German military leadership in Latvia had great hopes for when they planned the invasion of Vidzeme as a possible base-camp for eventual further military operations.

Following the end of the ceasefire which had been negotiated by the missions of Western Allied countries, a new conflict erupted in the beginning of June. On June 19th hostilities escalated into open battles that lasted several days and were fought close to the town of Cēsis. As a result of severe fighting German forces were beaten. Following a serious pressure by the Allied forces a new armistice was reached at Strazdumuiža, according to which German army had to gradually withdraw out of Latvia. By then the Andrievs Niedra government and German military units had already escaped out of Riga.

The victory at Cēsis let Kārlis Ulmanis government return first to Liepāja and later, in the beginning of July – to the capital city Riga. Then Ulmanis government could take over control of the regions of Latvia that were already liberated from Bolsheviks. Andrievs Niedra government ceased to exist, Soviet Latvian government lost its influence and by the middle of June the Soviet rule was reduced to the area surrounding Latgale. In July the united Latvian Army was formally established in Riga.

Under the Strazdumuiža armistice German armed forces had to be withdrawn from Latvia, however the German military leadership still hoped for a chance of renewed fight to re-establish the German Empire. With that in mind later in September they allowed German soldiers to join the newly established West Russian Volunteer Army under command of Pavel Bermont-Avalov (its goal was the re-establishment of Russian Empire). On October 8th this army launched an offensive against Riga in order to secure back-up before joining the North-West Russia Volunteer Army under command of Nikolai Yudenich in Estonia.

For a while initially the Bermont army was victorious and it was with huge effort that their advance was finally stopped, as the invading army was much better equipped in terms of artillery and other weapons. Latvian army was in these battles supported by two Estonian armoured trains and from October 15th and onward – by warships of the united British –French navy squadron.

On October 15th Latvian army succeeded to cross the river Daugava and to take over the Daugavgriva fortress as well as the Bolderaja area. The whole of Pārdaugava area was liberated on November 11th and on November 14th – Latvian army successfully stopped the offensive on Liepaja city. By the end of November the whole of Latvia was liberated. Latvian side did not follow the attempts by Germany and other Western superpowers to reach a ceasefire by letting Germany formally take over the command of Pavel Bermont-Avalov army. Germany had announced take-over of the command over Bermont forces. On November 25th Latvian government responded by cutting diplomatic relationships, which was to be perceived as a declaration of war. Later in 1920 the two countries signed a new agreement about renewal of relationships. Meanwhile the Danish consulate in Riga temporarily undertook the duty to protect the interests of German citizens in Latvia.

Following the victory over Bermont forces Latvian government took a decision about the operation to liberate Latgale. For this Latvia needed support of the neighbour countries. Negotiations with Lithuania were unsuccessful, so at the end of December Latvian military leadership agreed on cooperation with the Polish army. In the beginning of January, 1920 joint Latvian and Polish forces launched an offensive to Southern Latgale. Polish army successfully liberated the town of Daugavpils and Latvian army successfully took Northern Latgale on January 9th. All of the territory of Latgale was liberated by early February. Meanwhile in late January a secret cease-fire between Latvia and Soviet Russia was reached in Moscow, but the commanders in the battlefield did not know anything about it, thus some limited fighting still persisted until the signing of Peace treaty later on August 11th, 1920.

The Danish Factor

Even though the interests of Super Powers were more visible during the Latvian War of Independence, the Danish Factor was a significant presence as well. One example is the Danish volunteer company as part of the Estonian army, which has been briefly mentioned before, but there were also other important episodes manifesting the presence of the Danish factor. The strongest and most symbolic of these has to do with the steamship *Saratov* in Liepāja, which for several months in April to July, 1919 functioned as the official residence of the Kārlis Ulmanis Provisional Government and its armed forces.

Steamship *Saratov* was built in 1888 in Copenhagen at the shipyard *„Burmeister & Veng"* initially as steamship *Leopold 2nd*, but in 1911 it was leased to North-West Russia Shipping Company, given the new name *Saratov* and registered in the Liepaja harbour. The ship maintained regular traffic between Liepaja and Hull in Great Britain, but during the Word War I go under the auspices of German military authorities. In early 1919 German occupation powers agreed with Danish consular representation in Liepaja about eventual bushing of the steamship to Copenhagen in Denmark. On January 13th, just one day prior to the planning movement of the ship, the ship's assistant captain Aleksandrs Derums asked the Provisional Government to take steps in order to keep the ship in the hands of the government, despite the fact that Danish representatives had already arrived. The ship crew successfully played a trick on approaching Danish representatives to prevent its moving away, and the steamship eventually went down into history as the base for the Latvian government and event its residence after the coup d'état of April 16th. It was aboard this same ship that the government with a solemn ceremony returned triumphant to the capital city Riga on July 8th the same year. From the memories of the captain of the ship Aleksandrs Remess-Veics: „When the world war ended my major aspiration was to regain back the ship from the Germans, as the occupation powers were using it for a variety of military support tasks in the Baltic sea and finally had even turned it into a point for disinfection. The Germans were preparing to take it away from Liepāja harbour. I wrote an application to get back the ship based on the decree by German marine authorities that all obviously privately owned ships had to now be returned to their righteous owners. This decree reached us in Liepaja in November, 1918. My application was, however, not successful in the beginning. „If you cannot prove your application rights with one hundred cannons, you are not going to get anything," thus sounded the refusal letter. In the end Germans gave in. The exterior of the ship was in pretty miserable condition, the ship owner – North-West Russian Shipping Company announced to me that Denmark was sending out a crew and equipment in order to move the *Saratov* ship away. They really arrived after some time, but we were smartly playing with the chains and anchors, thus it turned out that it was impossible to move the ship away. All German attempts to move the ship away from Liepaja by other means did not help: it was and remained in the hands of the Latvian provisional government with our national flag on it. So we proceeded to repair the ship and soon enough the old *Saratov* turned into a „floating arsenal" for our army in the making."[1]

Meanwhile Copenhagen became one of the main channels of communication with the outside world for the Latvian government in the first half of 1919. When the Bolsheviks were approaching, one part of the government left Liepaja in order to go on a support finding mission to Western Europe. On January 9th, onboard a Danish ship also the head of the Provisional Government Kārlis Ulmanis, Minister for Agriculture Jānis Goldmanis and Minister of Finances Jānis Puriņš sailed out of Liepaja and reached Denmark. From the memoirs of Edvards Freijvalds who accompanied Kārlis Ulmanis in negotiations in Copenhagen in January, 1919, written down somewhat later: „After 9 days of an extraordinary voyage from Liepaja across the Baltic sea onboard a Danish cable ship the delegation of the Provisional Government, consisting of Mr. Ulmanis, Mr. Goldmanis and Mr. Puriņš and their assistants reached of the Bornholm island, from there they moved over to a Danish passenger steamship and arrived in Copenhagen on January 21, 1919. […] Now it was important to find out what success Mr. Meijerovics had had with the peace conference and to deliver to him the necessary information or eventually even go to assist him. Further, it was important to speak with representatives of the Allied countries in Copenhagen, which was also the base for the British Navy in the Baltic Sea, this included any observations regarding what Latvia could hope for in order to protect the country against Bolsheviks. Copenhagen – with its broad connections to the West, to the North and to the South – was a perfect spot to gather such information. Here is where a window for Latvia to Europe opened. And it remained open."[2]

And thus it really was for the Latvian government during the extremely hard first months of the year 1919. Latvian representation mission in Copenhagen was still in the process of being set up, and Kārlis Ducmanis was appointed both the secretary of this mission and national representative on refugee matters. Later publicist Jānis Lapiņš described Ducmanis activity as follows: „The only way that Latvian government could during that time communicate with the outside world was via the sea cable Liepaja – Copenhagen. Ducmanis was in charge of informing Ulmanis government and the North Latvian army, and on the other hand also Clemaenceau, Lloyd-George and all the political circles, including obviously also the Danish society." Kārlis Ducmanis continued his duties in Copenhagen until the year 1922 (in November 1919 he was appointed interim head of the representation mission, an office he took over from the very first head of mission Mārtiņš Liepa, and in February 1920 he was appointed Latvian Consul General in Copenhagen). This is how he himself described these times: „There was a constant need to translate and to render into correct format for presentation to foreign representatives and the press all the aspects of the coming into being of the Latvian state: the joys and sorrows, the triumphs, suffering, victories and debunking of false allegations. It was an interesting, exciting, but also difficult and nerve-wrecking task. I had to be able to reset my vibration anew every single day, while now and then things really hung by a thread and every single detail mattered. The main post between Copenhagen and Liepāja and vice versa was the occasions of the allied warships. So also in March [1919] warships were used for returning home to Liepāja for Zemgalis, Bēnuss, Juraševskis, Birznieks, Danbekalns and others." Kārlis Ducmanis quickly mastered the Danish language and soon started to regularly publish articles about developments in Latvia for the Danish newspapers (among these were "Illustreret Tidende", "Politiken", "Nationaltidende", "Kirkelig Dagblad"), and in 1922 even published a brochure „Lettland" in the Danish language.[3]

The first head of the Latvian representation office in Copenhagen, Mārtiņš Liepa wrote on July 14th, 1919: „Preparations for setting up the Latvian legation started this year, in the middle of February. Money was extremely scarce and a suitable location UNAVAILABLE. The premises where we are situated right now belong to a certain Danish company which hopes to get some kind of agency for which it has received such promises. Relations with the Danes are supremely good. I can only explain it with the democratic mindset of the Danish people and a general sympathy for other small nations, but also with my personal contacts and connections in Danish government and commercial circles. We have always been received with more welcome and warmth than e.g. Estonians, Finns and others. It was particularly noticeable in how the permissions were issued to export commodities."[4]

Truth to be said, situation was and remained highly complicated. Throughout the first half of 1919 the Danish government treated the Latvian question with utmost precaution. Latvian government officer Jānis Zankevis, who was on duty in Copenhagen in February and March, 1919 later wrote: „ Me and Justice minister P.Juraševskis, Andrejs Bērziņš, R.Bēnuss and A. Birznieks went by ship first to Stettin and from there further to Copenhagen, where there already were G.Zemgals, [Riga police] prefect Dambekalns and other Latvian officials. The Danes were very cautious, because of huge respect for Russia. The mother of Tsar Nicholas I had been a Danish princess, and Denmark still enjoyed many privileges in the trade with Russia. I stayed in Denmark for about a month and then returned to Liepaja via Germany, when serious political activity really began."[5]

The representation office in Copenhagen continued to carry out very important foreign policy functions for the Latvian government also after the year 1919. For instance, at the end of January 1920 the mayor of Liepaja city – Social Democrat Ansis Buševics – arrived on an official visit to Copenhagen, where he made repeated visits to the Latvian representation office at Soenderboulvard 47, and on one such instance during a meeting with R.Liepa and K.Ducmanis left an unfavourable impression about himself

by questioning the political course of the Latvian government. So much so that R.Liepa sent a special report back home about it to the Ministry."[6]

Meanwhile in Riga the Danish consulate and Consul Jens Herskind personally developed an active stance ever since the end of 1919, when he in correspondence with the Latvian government upon request from the German consulate, represented the interests of German citizens and the German Red Cross. German consulate had to delegate this duty after the break-up of diplomatic relations between Germany and Latvia following a declaration of war by Latvia. Thus for instance on January 5th and 16th, 1920 (regarding transit of German captives of war from Soviet Russia across front line to Eglaine railway station which was at the time under control of Lithuania, for which the Danish Consulate had obtained the necessary permits, but to which nevertheless objections were raised by the local Latvian commandant in Krustpils.)[7], in February (regarding the inventory and assets belonging to the Riga manufacture „Ferdinand Mühlens", which was destroyed by Latvian army in the summer 1919, and regarding certain other issues related to German citizens' interests)[8]. The consulate was busy with similar duties and activities all the while until the summer of 1920, when Latvia officially renewed diplomatic and consular relationship with Germany.

The close ties between Latvia and Denmark that came into existence during this period of interest – the years of the Latvian War of Independence – continued on a reasonably active level during the following interwar period, and a particular significance in that was also added by the military factor. In the summer of 1925 Danish Royal navy ships made an official visit at the harbour of Riga. When the delegation departed from Riga on July 8th, Latvian War ministry newspaper „Latvijas Kareivis" published an article with the following story: „The name of Denmark is for Latvians dear and close to heart – dear because as a small country Denmark has much in common with Latvia. We regard Danes as our teachers in those areas of economy that make up the foundation for the welfare of our fatherland. That is why so many people have come to pay farewell to the guests. The Daugava river embankment - all the way from the Muitas garden to the pontoon bridge – is full and vibrant of people already before 8 o'clock in the morning. There is much activity also on the navy ships. Crew members walk up and down adjusting things and placing items in the right places. Some of them even go out to talk to the local public. First to leave the harbour are the smaller vessels. Soon after follow the bigger ships – cruisers *„Geyser"* and *„Heimdal"*, and finally the flagship - frigate *„Niels Juel"*. It is no small task to get the mighty sea giants out of the river Daugava waters. Two tugboats are needed. All is well prepared in advance. The front tugboat tightens the rope and slowly, with extraordinary sound, moves the navy ship a tiny bit away from the shore. As the ship starts moving away on its journey home navy orchestra begins to play… motives of Latvian folk songs. Then follow some Danish melodies. People are waving good-byes, gentlemen raising their hats, big hats and ordinary working class hats. Sailors onboard wave their hats in return. Among the crowd on the river bank can also be seen representatives of the local Danish colony. Some people are looking for something to step onto for better visibility. Finally Latvian navy ship *„Virsaitis"* sets sail to honour the guests. As it slides away beyond the Muitas garden, the crowd of people starts to loosen up and people walk away vividly discussing their impressions. [..][9]

It is worth mentioning here that one of the leading military doctors in the Latvian army was Richard Hjordt, who was born in 1884 in a family of a Danish landlord in Riga and later studied medicine at the Russian Academy of War medicine. This is another symbol of the ties between our two nations. Following his studies and forced mobilisation to the Red Army of the Soviet Russia he finally succeeded to get a permit to return to his homeland Latvia in September, 1920. From December 4th, 1920 he served in the Latvian armed forces as senior physician with the military rank of doctor-lieutenant colonel of the Vidzeme Artillery regiment. Sadly his further story was a tragic page in the complicated history of our country from that time. During the wave of emigration of Baltic German nobility in late 1939, also Richard Hjordt moved away to Germany, where he was mobilised to German army and served as division doctor during the war. On January 22, 1945, as the war was coming closer to the end, Richard Hjordt committed suicide as a refugee in West Prussia, at Kartzig.[10]

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During the time of the Latvian War of Independence Denmark observed the developments in Latvia cautiously, which was partly due to its close economic and maritime links with the Russian Empire (including via Riga and Liepaja harbours), but another factor was certainly the instable military and political situation in Latvia. While the status and situation for the Latvian Provisional Government was at an extremely vulnerable point in the first half of the year 1919, Danish capital Copenhagen became one of its prime communication channels to the international community – thanks to the underwater telegraph cable from Liepaja, but also to the strategically good geo-political location of Denmark, where for a certain time period the Latvian representation office worked and briefly even the head of Latvian government Kārlis Ulmanis. The Danish factor was very visible also in the active work of its consular offices, especially from the late 1919 and until the summer of 1920, when the Danish consulate in Riga practically functioned as the representation of the superpower Germany. Likewise, the Danish factor manifested in the participation of the Danish volunteer troops as part of the Estonian army in the independence wars, in the close bilateral trade links which included both overseas trade and in regular shipments from Copenhagen of international aid from the Allied countries. All of these aspects together created favourable pre-conditions for the full-fledged political and economic relationship after Denmark's official de jure recognition of the three independent Baltic countries in 1921.

□

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Danish-Latvian political and military relations 1918-1921

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On February 7, 1921, Denmark officially recognized the republic of Latvia, which allows us to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the event this year. Today, Latvia is a member of NATO and the EU, and as such, an integrated part of Western Europe. A hundred years ago, however, the situation was very different. Danish-Latvian relations developed in the wake of the Latvian war of independence 1918-1920, in which Latvia fought a political and military battle to gain sovereignty. Under those circumstances the first political and military relations to Denmark were established.

Danish policy of neutrality

A hundred years ago Danish security was based on the policy of neutrality, and it was considered unwise and even risky to get involved officially in the Baltic fight for freedom. As a result, the Danish stance towards Latvia was quite hesitant in the years 1918-21, for both security and foreign policy reasons. But the Danish government was under heavy pressure from the Entente powers to help stop the advance of Bolshevism in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, and it was very important to the Danish government to be on good terms with the victorious Great Powers. There was indeed a strong Danish wish to re-annex the southern part of the kingdom of Denmark, The Duchy of Schleswig, or Southern Jutland, which Denmark had lost to Germany in the war of 1864, and which Denmark might get back with the help of the Entente Powers after World War I. This meant, that the Danish government came to lead double politics in the Baltic region. On one hand, the Danish government rejected a British request for an official Danish military presence in the Baltics, because of the Danish policy of neutrality which meant that Denmark was fundamentally opposed to sending Danish weapons and soldiers to the Baltics. On the other hand, a secret export of 900 state of the art Danish Madsen light machine guns was authorized, and the Royal Navy was allowed to use Copenhagen as a naval base for British activities in the Baltics. Furthermore, the Danish government decided to turn a blind eye to the recruitment of Danish volunteers, as long as it was done discreetly. This made it possible to begin preparations for a privately organized Danish military expedition to the Baltics.

A Danish expeditionary corps to Latvia?

The military aid to the Baltics was organized by Danish nationalists who considered the Danish involvement in the Baltics a matter of self-interest. If the Bolshevists were not stopped, they would come to Denmark and Western Europe. Therefore, it would be best for both the Baltic countries and Denmark if the Bolshevists were stopped in the Baltics. At first, the Danish expeditionary force was meant for Estonia, but that changed for Latvia in January 1919, where the Danish organizers met with the Latvian Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis in Copenhagen.

Ulmanis in Copenhagen

In November 1918, Latvian nationalists had declared independence for Latvia and formed a government led by Kārlis Ulmanis. However, the military situation in Latvia very soon became desperate. On January 4, 1919, Riga was conquered by red forces, and Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis and the Latvian government had to leave the capital and by mid-January, 1919, three Latvian ministers departed from Latvia to ask for help and volunteer troops in the Scandinavian countries. The Latvian delegation, led by Ulmanis, arrived in Copenhagen on January 21. The Latvian envoys, of course, knew all about the Danish policy of neutrality, so when arriving in Copenhagen, the delegation did not expect military help from the Danish government. But perhaps there were other solutions?

In the Danish capital, the Latvian delegation first turned to the British Embassy to ask for military assistance and loans to pay the wages for foreign or Scandinavian volunteers. The British ambassador in Copenhagen reported the Latvian requests to the Foreign Office in London. But the answer he received was not very optimistic: *"It is difficult to do much for the Letts when practically their whole country is in the hands of the invading or local Bolschewiks, and they have no real base from which to work, or organized army to undertake operations."* But the Latvian delegation in Copenhagen did not give up. They turned to the Danish press and asked for volunteers, and in this way the Latvian delegation made contact with the Danish organizers of the volunteer corps which at that time was planned for Estonia. A meeting between Ulmanis and Aage Westenholz – one of the organizers of the Danish volunteer corps – was quickly arranged, and it turned out that the chemistry between Westenholz and Ulmanis was very good. At the request of the Latvian Prime Minister, Westenholz now began the construction of a 1,000-man strong Danish expedition corps to Latvia. The Latvian delegation also wanted a Scandinavian or Finnish general as supreme commander, and Westenholz agreed to assist in finding a suitable Danish army chief for Latvia through his large network in the Danish military. While trying to help the Latvians find a suitable Danish commander, a search for a qualified leader for the proposed volunteer corps of 1,000 men was on-going. Here, later Danish army Chief Erik With was strongly considered. And With was very positive towards the idea. In an answer to Westenholz's suggestion, With wrote on January 25: *"In connection to the director's initiative for the organization of a voluntary corps for the help of the Latvians, I hereby offer my service as Head of the Corps."*

It all seemed to turn out as a great success for Ulmanis and the Latvian delegation. The Danish government seemingly kept their promise to turn a blind eye to the organization of the Danish volunteers, and the Danish organizers of the corps would take care of the recruitment in Denmark and the related expenses. But there was one major problem: The Latvians themselves had to find the money for wages and insurance for the Danish volunteers, and this money was never found by the Latvians. That meant that the Danish organizers shifted the destination for the corps back to Estonia.

However, the Danish volunteers came to fight in Latvia after all. By agreement with the Latvians, Estonian forces attacked into Latvia together with the North Latvian Brigade and the Danish volunteers. The Danish corps was part of the attack wedge advancing on Jēkabpils. Because of the Landeswehr-war, the Danish corps was pulled out of Latvia immediately after taking Jēkabpils on June 5th. Diplomatically, Denmark could not risk having Danish and German forces fighting each other in open battle.

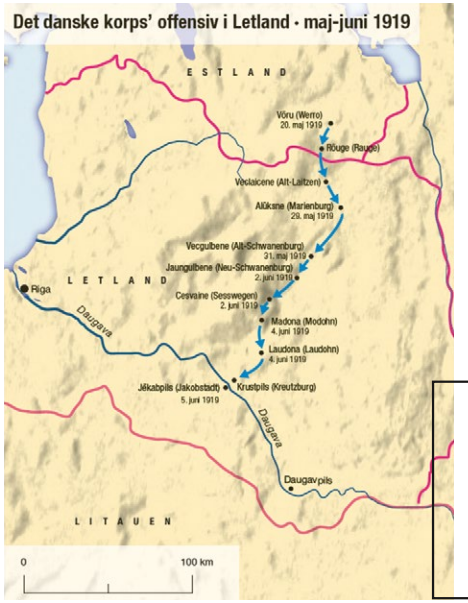
Past and present

The contributions of the Danish volunteers were not militarily decisive for the Baltics, but morally the Danish expeditionary force had a huge significance. The Danish military presence was welcomed as a sign that the Balts were not alone in their struggle, and that they had friends and supporters in Western Europe. It is, though, of historical interest that the Danish support to the Baltic a hundred years ago was driven by volunteer initiatives.

During the time around the Baltic independence wars, Denmark led what Norwegian historian Tom Kristiansen has termed a "minimal policy" towards the Baltics: Denmark would never do *more* than what was required, and never *before* it was required – and relations were defined by the relationship to the Great Powers. Foreign policy towards the Baltics was defined by practical matters, not by solidarity or moral and idealist concerns. This decidedly pragmatic political approach to foreign policy also affected the question of a de jure-recognition of Latvia. For example, the comprehensive agricultural reforms in Latvia were causing anger with politicians and other people of influence in Denmark. Large estates and land possessions had been nationalized with virtually no reimbursements to the previous owners, which had negatively affected a number of Danish possessions in Estonia and Latvia. The Danish foreign minister felt that these matters had to be resolved before the question of a de jure-recognition of the Baltic countries could be considered. But the pointed Danish rhetoric had little real significance, as Denmark decided to follow the other Scandinavian countries in recognizing Latvia de jure on February 7, 1921 – but only after the Entente Powers had taken the same position. The moral and idealistic thinking was left to Danish private initiatives.

However, the official Danish stance towards the Baltic region changed significantly over time. In 1949, Denmark abandoned its policy of neutrality and became a member of NATO. This meant that Denmark's national security goal was no longer to be neutral, but rather the opposite: to create a barricade against communism. And following the end of the cold war, Denmark was a driving force in integrating the Baltic countries into the Western European community, through memberships of the EU and NATO. Today, Denmark is leading an active and supportive Baltic policy, which is in stark contrast to the realpolitik of 1918-1921. The Danish government and Danish military are making significant political and military contributions, demonstrating to friends and enemies alike that Latvian security must be a high priority. The most significant difference between 1918-1921 and 2021 is that the current Danish effort in the Baltics is state sanctioned, and not left to private initiatives. Today, the political and military bonds between Denmark and the Baltic countries are stronger than ever. Accordingly, it must be concluded, that one hundred years of diplomatic relations has been spent well and is definitely worth celebrating.

Danish voluntary soldiers in a moment of rest during the attack operation Southward. Note that soldiers have taken off their boots to care for bleeding wounds. Note also that they have their Madsen machine guns nearby, as any moment they had to be ready to meet the enemy's attack. Especially the part of the operation in Latvian territory was physically highly demanding. From the Estonian border in the North to the final goal in the South – town of Jēkabpils – the total march was about 170 – 200 km long. It was covered by foot within eight days. It would mean about the same as a half-marathon in uniform and carrying full packing every single day. In reality, though, there were some resting days in between the marches, so the soldiers actually had to cover longer distances on the days of marching – up to 30 – 40 kilometers a day.



Together with Latvian North Latvian brigade and Estonian forces the Danish voluntary corps participated in the first stage of the Northern offensive across Latvia. With a powerful consolidation of forces they finally succeeded in taking Jēkabpils on June 5th, 1919.

Livonian – Danish Relations: Three Episodes

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In the research on Livonian history its relations with Denmark have up to now received lesser attention. Danish kings and leaders have historically had political and economic interests with regard to Livonian lands ever since the XIII century. Looking back at the history of relations between Livonia and Denmark, we can for simplicity' s sake devide them into three main episodes. The first has to do with the times of the crusades to christianize this region, where we can observe both cooperation and competition, as well as the fact that the Northern parts of the territory of presentday Estonia came into the sphere of interests of the Kingdom of Denmark. The second episode is from the times when Denmark had already sold to Germany the Northern part of what is now Estonia which had belonged to it. The third episode is from the period of the Livonian War (1558–1583), when a part of Livonian territory belonged to the Kingdom of Denmark. This humble report will aspire to provide a brief summary of some important landmarks in the relationship history of Livonia and Denmark, without going into deeper analyses of these relations.

I

The Kingdom of Denmark was involved in the events of this part of Europe long before Livonia was even established as such. Before Christianizing the Livs, Bishop Albert von Buxhoevden (ca 1165–1229) first reached an agreement with the Danish king about Christianization in the Baltic region. Denmark had responsibility for christianizing the following territories: Saaremaa island, Courland region and Estonian seaside territories. Denmark was already a Christian country, and initially was regarded as a cooperation partner and advisor by bishops in Riga and Estonia. At the beginning of the XIII century the situation was such: Kingdom of Demark was the one to begin crusades for Christianization of Estonia from the side of its Northern territories, while from the South another crusade was lead by the Bishop of Riga, and later even the Livonian branch of the German Teutonic Order. Both sides periodically staged attacks against the non-Christians, but eventualy in 1238 the sides signed the Treaty of Stensby, in Denmark, whereby the Kingdom of Denmark obtained control of the Northern maritime part of today's Estonia (Revel region, Harju and Virumaa lands). Under the same treaty knights from the North-Estonian regions had the duty to participate in any military crusade operations organized by the German Teutonic Order. Later, during the second half of the XIII century the Livonian Order staged joined crusades to Russia with knights of the Kingdom of Denmark. There is also evidence that some Danish crusaders even participated in battles in the territory of presentday Latvia.

There was a certain halt in Denmark's involvement in the major political events of the region, probably due to homeland events and developments in the kingdom. However, in 1329 the Danish kings issued a royal statement, certifying that Northern Estonia would remain an integral part of the Danish kingdom for all times, and would be neither sold, nor used for exchange or pledge. It is possible that Estonian nobility had observed the weakness of the Danish king and asked for a solid foundation for the existence of this territory. After the St. George's Night uprising in Denmark, the king was unable to cope with major problems and sold the Nortern Estonian territories to German Teutonic Order for 19 000 silver marks in 1346. The reason for this trade is believed to be due to a major economic and policitical crisis within Denmark at that time.

II

Relationship did not end after the take-over. In 1397 Denmark together with Norway and Sweden established the Kalmar Union and

under the leadership of Queen Margrethe I (1353–1412) succeeded in once again reaching stability in the homeland politics. Danish economy was interested in developing a trade route to Russia, thus there was a growing interest about the Livonian territories. Soon Denmark took over control of the Gotland island as well, which further diminished the strength and power of the German order in the Baltic sea region.

Due to internal political instability in Livonia and frequent conflicts among bishops of the various lands and the Livonian Order (a branch of the German Teutonic Order), cathedral chapters of bishops sought support from the Kingdom of Denmark. In reaction to this the Danish king chose to provide support and from his side ordained a blockade of several ports belonging to the Livonian Order. Interesting to note is that it was at this time, during the XV century, that the full name of the Danish king was also made to include the title *Dux Estonie*, or the duke (ruler) of Estonia. It implies that even though Denmark no longer owned the Estonian lands, its intervention in Livonian foreign policy was obvious and real. These actions can to a certain degree be viewed as an attempt to renew former Danish sphere of power and dominance and further promote its economic interests in the region.

III

The XVI century brought tremendous change to the Baltic region. A number of new powerful countries around Livonia had already established themselves or were well into making. Kingdom of Sweden, Russian Empire, Kingdom of Poland all had their eye on the Livonian lands at that time. Livonia itself was split in many parts and lacked a powerful central ruler. Situation became more severe in the late 1550-ies after the invasion of the Russian Tsar Ivan IV (1530–1584). Thus in the new difficult political circumstances some of the local landowners in Livonia asked Denmark for help. Denmark's response was rather cold, as it was by no means willing to get intself into a war against Russia. Danish envoys did go on a visit to Riga, but it became clear that the local nobility were hoping for bigger support from Denmark than it was willing to offer, so the hope for cooperation stopped there. In order to safeguard its own interests, Denmark could not agree to the condition raised by the Livonian Order, namely that Denmark shall agree to defend all the lands of the Order in case of an invasion of the Russian Tsar. Aspirations of the other landowners were likewise unsuccessful. In the end, the Polish king Sigismund II Augustus agreed to defend the Livonian lands.

There was, however, one exception – negotiations with representatives of the Bishop of Saaremaa – Wiek. As a result of these talks the son of the Danish king Christian III (1503–1559) – prince Magnus von Oldenburg (1540–1583) was installed as Bishop of Saaremaa – Wiek in the beginning of 1560. Later in spring Duke of Holstein, Magnus von Oldenburg also purchased the territories of Courland Bishopric, later known as the Piltene Bishopric, this because the administrations of bishoprices in Saaremaa – Wiek and Courland were very closely connected. That very same year Duke Magnus also purchased several of the Order' s estates in Saaremaa, but this trade was concluded behind the back of the Master of the Order. In addition to this the duke also purchased the rights to title of Bishop of Reval (now Tallin). His older brother, King Frederick II of Denmark (1534–1588), who had acceded to the Danish throne after their father's death, strongly disliked these activities of Magnus and deemed them to be hasty and inappropriate. He regarded such actions as unfavourable for Danish general interests, especially so because Duke Magnus had by these steps brought upon him the rage of the Master of the Livonian Order, whose political interests were now at risk. Even though Magnus succeeded in evening out the relationship with the Order for a while, they could never again be called friendly. This had a negative impact also on Magnus relationship with his older brother, as the Danish king now viewed Magnus' activity as separatist. After their mother intervened into the feud of the two brothers, their relationship became settled, but for the benefit of the king, because the new conditions considerably restricted Duke Magnus' freedom of action in the future.

It was positive for Danish foreign policy of the time that the Russian Tsar Ivan IV in 1562 recognized its properties in the presentday Estonia, Saaremaa island and Courland. Later, as a conflict between Denmark and Sweden broke out in 1563, Swedish troops gained control of the Northern part of Estonia, that had previously belonged to Denmark. Denmark kept control of Saaremaa island and part of Courland. Around the year 1566 Duke Magnus once again started taking autonomous steps. Initially he tried to reach an agreement about the lost territories with the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania, but that was unsuccessful. After that he negotiated the issue with Russian Tsar Ivan IV, and reached success. In 1570 Magnus was installed by Russian Tsar as the King of Livonia and married a relative of the Russian emperor. The duties of the Livonian king involved the governance of the existing territories and territories which had yet to be conquered. This step helped Magnus to get free from the supremacy of his elder brother, even though he kept frequently informing his brother about major activities. Parts of Northern Estonia were directly subordinated to the elder brother Frederick II. When Magnus, the King of Livonia, cut relationship with his brother and thus with the Danish Kingdom, Frederick chose to not return these estates to Magnus, but instead to administrate them via a trusted administrator.

Later Magnus suffered frequent problems in his political activity, which finally made him discontinue the vasal status and cooperation with Russian empire and instead start a relationship with the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania. Theoretically he was now a vasal of the king of Poland – Lithuania Stefan Bathory, but when the time approached for him to swear the solemn oath to the Polish king in 1582, he did not do it, which meant that the former Bishopric of Courland, now Bishopric of Piltene, remained a property of Denmark.

When Magnus died in 1583, ownership of Piltene Bishopric went – according to his will – to Friedrich Kettler (1569 – 1642), the son of the Master of the Livonian Order Gotthard Kettler (1517–1587), who later became the first duke of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia. The local landowners in the Piltene bishopric belonged to Lutheran faith, thus they were strongly against the dominance in Piltene by the catholic Poland – Lithuania. For this reason they actively supported Denmark's interests in the region. Gradually this lead to a conflict between Denmark and the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania, which lasted from 1583 to 1585. Poland – Lithuania won the conflict and paid to Denmark 30 000 thalers for its lost territory. Thus Denmark lost its ownership rights to former territories in Courland forever.

The Danish – Livonian relations are an interesting subject, well worth further deeper reasearch. It would be valuable to better understand the various interests of Livonian landowners and to find out just what kind of direct influence Denmark enjoyed at that time upon the administration and economic governance of the territories. Likewise, it would be valuable to obtain better understanding of the details of the policy of Danish kings in Livonian lands, what was the impact and what were the consequencies. It is in general right to conclude that there were close ties between Livonia and the Kingdom of Denmark during the Middle Ages. The Kingdom of Denmark was, although quite distant, still a neighbouring country to Livonia. It was an important powerful player in the foreign policy of Livonia. Therefore historically the developments in Denmark influenced the developments in Livonia, and thus the history of Estonia and Latvia.

□

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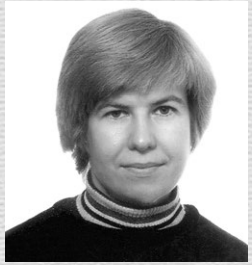

Links between the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia and Denmark-Norway in the XVII Century

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This year we celebrate the centenary of bilateral relations between the independent Republic of Latvia and the Kingdom of Denmark, but there are historic links between the two countries that date back several centuries before that. These relations have passed through the trials of many centuries, starting at least from the times of the Vikings. One period of more intensive interaction happened in the XVII century between the Denmark–Norway union and the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia.

The Duchy of Courland and Semigallia (*Ducatus Curlandiæ et Semigalliæ*) represented the first blossoms of modern statehood on the territory of present-day Latvia. The Duchy of Courland, as it is often called, was established in 1561/1562, when an inheritable duchy was established on the basis of former lands of the Livonian order in Courland and Semigallia. The last Master of the Livonian order Gotthard Kettler (1517 – 1587) became a vassal of the Polish king and a local ruler. For the state to endure for a long time it was important to have leaders with a powerful dynasty, thus in 1566 Gotthard got married to Anna (1533 – 1602), daughter or the Duke Albrecht of Mecklenburg (1486 – 1547). Anna's arrival to Courland marked also the beginning of the Kettler dynasty of the Dukes of Courland, a family tree with branches reaching out all the way to Mecklenburg, Brandenburg-Prussia, Sweden, Saxony, Poland, Hessen– Kassel, Hessen - Homburg, Nassau - Siegen and other European lands.

One among these countries was Denmark. Duchess Anna's brother Ulrich (1527 – 1603) got married to Princess Elisabeth (1524 – 1586), daughter of Frederick I, the King of Denmark (1471 – 1533), but their daughter Sophie later got married to her cousin Frederick II, the King of Denmark (1534 – 1588). Duchess Anna maintained close ties with her family and thus also with the royal court of Denmark. The youngest daughter of the first Duke and Duchess of Courland, Elisabeth (1575 – 1601) got named in honour of Ulrich's spouse, but the youngest son Wilhelm (1574 – 1640) got sent by his mother to study at the University of Rostock in the territory governed at the time by Duchess Anna's brother Ulrich. In March, 1591 in Lübeck Wilhelm together with his uncle had a meeting with his cousin Sophie who by that time was already a widow and in the status of regent governed over Schleswig – Holstein on behalf of her underage son, future king Christian IV (1577 – 1648). According to historical sources, the Dukes maintained close ties with their family members in the royal court of Denmark also in their later life, especially with the queens and princesses. Thus Wilhelm went on an overseas journey in 1605 and visited Denmark, as well as established a friendly relationship with the King of England James I (or Jacob, 1566 – 1625) and his royal spouse the Danish princess Anna (1574 – 1619). It is known that Duke Wilhelm later named his only son Jacob in honour and homage to the King of England. This son was to become

the great Duke Courland Jacob (1610 – 1681). Duke Wilhelm's marriage to Sophie (1582 – 1610), daughter of the Duke of Prussia Albert Frederick (1553 – 1618) was greatly supported by the Danish court.

The dukes of Courland cherished and continued to uphold their ties with the Danish royal court during all of the XVII century. Both sides frequently exchanged Christmas greetings, notes about special events in the family, diverse gifts and parcels. In the early years of the XVII century Charlotte Amalie (1650 – 1714), widow of the Danish king Christian V (1646 – 1699), felt care for the three daughters of her newly deceased cousin Duke of Courland Friedrich Kasimir from his first marriage and turned to the current regent of Courland Ferdinand (1655 – 1737) with a proposal to send the three young girls to Kassel to her sister-in-law Maria Anna Amalia (1653 – 1711), born Kettler. The queen was worried as she believed the second wife Elisabeth Sophie of Brandenburg (1674 – 1748) still lacked enough experience and maturity to undertake the education and upbringing of the three young girls, particularly with regard to the training in matters of faith. By the end of summer 1701 the three young daughters really travelled to their aunt's estate in Kassel and it is believed they were also in contact with the queen. The Danish queen Charlotte Amalie's mother Landgravine Hedwig Sophie of Hessen – Kassel (1623 – 1683) was a sister of Louise Charlotte (1617 – 1676), mother of the Dukes of Courland Friedrich Kasimir and Ferdinand, and they both came from the nobility of Brandenburg. As we see there existed close family ties with the Danish royal family throughout the time of regency of the Kettler dynasty.

However this very same factor also lead to some serious trouble for the dukes of Courland Jacob and Friedrich Kasimir, as we now see from historic documents in the Latvian history archives. It appears that Duke Jacob had a debt to Landgrave Charles I of Hessen – Kassel (1654 – 1730) for unpaid dowry for his daughter Maria Amalie, which he had to pay to the landgrave in accordance with the marriage contract from 1672. In 1681 Landgrave Charles ceded the debt to the Danish king Christian V, who was married to the same landgrave's sister Charlotte Amalie, because of Charles' own debt from unpaid dowry and other unsettled obligations towards Denmark. The debt issue was never really settled during the lifetime of Duke Jacob, so later the Danish kings demanded that the debt now amounting to 136 000 taler be paid by his successor to the throne Duke Friedrich Kasimir. During negotiations of 1682 in Copenhagen duke's chancellor Christoph Heinrich von Puttkamer reached agreement with Denmark that 30 000 taler, accrued from the interest rate on the unpaid debt, be deducted from the sum total payable, and the basic newly negotiated debt be paid off in instalments within a four year period by means of supplying the Danish court with certain goods: linseed, rye, but also cannon bullets and grenades. Due to various obstacles there were further delays in paying off the debt, and in 1688 King Christian V demanded that not only cannon bullets and grenades be supplied, but also cannons. Because of this duke's envoy Magnus Gotthard Korff from Copenhagen sent to Duke Friedrich Kasimir exact drawings of 12 ponder and 18 pounder cannons and three kinds of grenades, according to which the necessary items had to be produced.

In the 1680-ies the Danish king attempted to expand the territory of Schleswig – Holstein by military means, thus he had an interest to obtain from Courland not only ammunition, but also soldiers. This can be seen from several requests by the king to receive permission to recruit soldiers in the territory of the Duchy of Courland. We see also agreements with Duke Friedrich Kasimir about the formation of infantry battalions as part of the above mentioned debt settlement. Such documents can primarily be found in the collections of the Latvian State History Archive. Among those who got recruited to Danish military service at that time were sons of Courland nobility families, e.g. von Puttkamer, von Vietinghof, von Hann and others, but also some Latvian and Lithuanian men. However, it was forbidden to recruit enserfed peasant men from the duke's own estates, especially not married men.

Any study into the trade and colonial politics of the Duchy of Courland would be incomplete without mentioning Denmark and especially the Strait of Oresund. The Duke of Courland and his sons employed permanent trade agents in Copenhagen, and often in Denmark sailors were recruited for the duke's ships, but also soldiers and colonizers for the Duchy of Courland's properties in Gambia and Tobago. Around the year 1662 Duke Jacob got visibly interested in taking over some Norwegian territories governed by Denmark, as he was seeking to look to a broader perspective in his attempts to renew Courland's economy after the damage inflicted by the Polish – Swedish war of 1655 – 1660. Among the archive materials we find a document from July 12th, 1662 - Duke Jacob's appeal to the Danish king Frederick III (1609 – 1670) to grant permission to the duke to build ships in Flekkeroy and to grant him any of the Norwegian iron mines. Late in 1663 the Danish king granted the right to the Duke of Courland to establish a shipping warehouse in Flekkeroy and to freely enter Iceland with three ships per year. Subsequently on May 13 and May 25, 1664 followed royal privilege bestowed on the duke, granting him the right to search for minerals in Norway and to use respective manufactures in accordance with Denmark's mining laws and regulations. In return the duke had to pay a certain fee into the Danish treasury for every ounce of iron mined. There is no data available as to whether Duke Jacob actually launched search for new potential mines in Norway, however already that very same summer duke's representatives were given access to Eidsvoll mine and steel manufacture in Norway. The Duke of Courland likewise was granted the rights to Julsrud and Vik manufactures. The duke sent workers to the newly acquired factories in Norway: both workers from Courland, including some Latvians, and recruited staff from Poland – Lithuania. Majority of the produced steel was sold nearby in Denmark – Norway, but a certain part was used by the duke for his own needs.

It has been previously claimed in some history books that iron ore was being shipped from Norway to Courland, but any proof of this claim has not so far been found in the historic sources available. There is further proof of Duke Jacob's rights to these manufactures as evidenced by royal privileges granted to him by the king in 1669 and 1674. These documents are being preserved in the Latvian State History Archive. The same archive collection also includes deals with craftsmen whom Duke Jacob sent for work abroad in Norway. In general there are only quite a few historic sources available, thus we have so far found only quite limited information about the practical work and activities of Duke of Courland's companies in Norway.

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Island of Latvian Culture in Denmark: Publishing House Imanta (1946-1971)

Viesturs Zanders

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A wide range of books were published in Latvian after the World War II outside Latvia, and a prominent name among these publishers is *Imanta*, a publishing house founded in the 1940-ies in Copenhagen by publisher of Latvian descent Imants Reitmanis (1919 – 1966). Other publishers in the Latvian diaspora community abroad – Helmars Rudzītis, Miķelis Goppers, Jānis Abučs – already had experience of book publishing from before the war in their homeland Latvia. Imants Reitmanis, however, had no such previous experience when he started out, neither directly from publishing, nor from printing business. This could partly explain why Imants Reitmanis has not gained wider acclaim as a publisher in Latvia, at least not to the extent he would have deserved. Full archives of the publishing house *Imanta* have regretfully not been preserved. Apart from the legacy of all the titles published, some insight into the creative and intellectual agenda of the times can be found in archived correspondence of Imants Reitmanis himself, his editors, authors and other staff. These letters are kept in separate manuscript archives of writers, artists and researchers in the collection of the National Library of Latvia, the Academic Library of the University of Latvia and in other collections. Historian Indulis Zvirgzdiņš has written somewhat more extensively about the book publisher Reitmanis, who like himself came from Dzelzava village in the Vidzeme part of Latvia.

Imants Reitmanis never got to conclude his higher education as it was interrupted by the World War II. In 1944 he was recruited to the Latvian Legion. Injured in battle Reitmanis got sent to Denmark in 1945, and Denmark remained his homeland until the end of his life. The very first book he published already in 1946 was a simple, humble edition of a Latvian – English dictionary, meant for the urgent needs of displaced persons from Latvia. Similar to other titles published in the first post-war years in Sweden and in West Germany, it was a rather plain looking volume. Two years later, in Copenhagen he published another book – poet Andrejs Eglītis famous wartime cantata „Dievs, tava zeme deg"! – „God, your land on fire!" in translation to Danish, complete with illustrations by Juris Soikans, foreword by Danish bishop Halfdan Høgsbro, and a special tribute by Latvian refugee preast Arnolds Grosbahs.

In 1951 his publishing house gave out its first three books under the company brandname *Imanta* and the logo specially designed by artist, poet and editor of the newly establshed publishing house Ojārs Jēgens. The logo depicted a young man riding a fast horse. In a graphic depiction the designer managed to include in a coded way both Reitmanis' name and his daring and adventurous personality. Among the first books published by Reitmanis in Denmark are a novel by Latvian diaspora writer living in Sweden, Ingrīda Vīksna „Mums jābrien jūrā" (*„We must walk into the sea"*), another novel „Katrīna" by Finnish author living in Denmark, Sally Salminen, which had been translated into Latvian and already published in 1930-ies winning wide acclaim of the readers, and also a collection of Latvian folk tales, illustrated by Ojārs Jēgens. After these first books followed a broad range of original literature, translated works and publications of folklore material.

Only after when several other books were successfully published Imants Reitmanis dared to launch an ambitious initiative: publication of Latvian folk songs in 12 volumes (1952 – 1956). Eminent editors ensured high quality of this edition: historian Arveds Švābe, philologist Kārlis Straubergs and linguist Edīte Hauzenberga – Šturma. They provided both editorial work and wrote special essays and commentaries about the folk song lyrics for each subsequent volume. Meanwhile, in the occupied Latvia these authors were censored out and could never even as much as be mentioned. When *Imanta* sent a registered post shipment to Riga with copies of the published volumes, they all got confiscated by the Sovjet authorities in line with the same censorship policies. Motivation for confiscating

books: they were said to contain dangerous propaganda against the Sovjet regime.

When the 1950-ies came, lives and social activities of the Latvian diaspora abroad finally stabilized, people settled into their respective countries and reached some level of prosperity. Thus book publishers could venture to produce more monumental book series consisting of many volumes. Publishing house *Daugava* in Stockholm launched a series of books about Latvian history, while in another Swedish city, Västerås publisher Jānis Abučs gave out the collected works of the great Latvian poet Rainis, in several volumes. These publications were a manifestation of the intellectual aspirations and activity of Latvian diaspora communities at that time. Directly and indirectly they were also a reason why soon after similar publications started to come out also in the occupied Latvia. For publishers such book series and multi-volume publications spanning over a number of years meant certain additional trouble to manage and even out the financial flows. Despite these practical difficulties, Imants Reitmanis' publication of Latvian folk songs became the largest edition of Latvian folklore published outside Latvia in the postwar period. It remains also a hallmark publication representing the ideals and values of *Imanta Publishers*.

This edition earned a special place in the history of Latvian – Danish friendship and cultural ties for one more reason. Latvian diaspora community in Denmark presented a full 12-volume collection of „Latviešu tautas dziesmas" *(„Latvian Folk Songs")* as a symbolic gift to the King Frederick IX of Denmark on his 60th birthday in 1959. This is how some years later it was described by Pāvils Klāns, author and editor at the Imanta Publishing house in a publication for a Latvian periodical news edition „News of Latvians in Denmark": „May this gift presented by Latvians in Denmark to the Danish king on his birthday be a sign of our gratitude to the Danish royal court, to the Danish goverment and to all the Danish people for their generosity offering shelter, refuge, work, bread and protection of rights to all Latvian people who have now found a new home here." When a bad fire broke out at one of the printing houses, all copies of 4 out of 12 volumes of this edition were destroyed. Now it was a problem to be able to sell a full set of all 12 volumes. Major financial help to the publishing house in this devastating situation came from the Danish public research support authority for humaniora, the SHF *(Statens Humanistiske Forskningsråd)*, which granted *Imanta* a support grant of 340 000 Danish crowns for re-printing of the missing volumes of the book series in 1972.

The Latvian diaspora in Denmark was not too big, and the number of the intellectuals among them was also small. Therefore it seems logical that majority of the authors, whose books were published by *Imanta*, were residents in other countries, predominantly – Sweden. From this country came the prolific author Osvalds Freivalds, who had been the manager of humanitarian support organization „Tautas palīdzība" and who subsequently wrote a number of recent history books about the first wave of Sovjet mass deportations in 1941, battles in the Courland Pocket in the final stages of World War II, as well as about the Swedish extradition of Baltic soldiers in 1946. Other Latvian authors in Sweden, published by *Imanta* in Denmark, include - poetess and historian Lija Kronberga, who had compiled an anthology of children's poetry „Runča vezums" and a collection of translated tales by Hans Christian Andersen, and last but not least literary critic Kārlis Dziļleja who's poetry collection under the title „Latvju sonets 100 gados" *(„100 years of Latvian Sonnets")* took the reader on a journey into the development of this poetic genre in Latvian literature since 1856 when the chrestomatic first poetry volume by Juris Alunāns was published.

Not all of the published translations of contemporary fiction were just a commercially good segment earning money that Reitmanis could then invest into less profit generating publications. Some of these books actually deserve a special mention, as for instance the two volume edition of Giovanni Boccaccio's „Decameron" in Latvian translation by specialist in Roman languages Ofēlija Sproģere, which came out in a beautiful publication with artful design created by Ojārs Jēgens. This was a high quality edition on par in its sophistication with books by the famous publishing house „Zelta ābele". Also worth mentioning is Boris Pasternak's „Doctor Zhivago" in Latvian translation by Pāvils Klāns – this book stirred emotions in the exile Latvian community and lead to a publicized debate on the necessity to publish in the diaspora context translations of literary works created in the Sovjet Union.

An interesting publication was a book called „Tā mums iet" *(„This Is How We Are Doing")*, a compilation of personal letters sent over 10 years

to Latvian literary classic Jānis Jaunsudrabiņš, while he spent the final part of his life in exile in Germany. It may be classified as a book in epistolary form about great cultural personalities, yet it was quite an unusual one. The destinies of victims of Sovjet repression was documented in several volumes by lawyer Ādolfs Šilde. In the 1950-ies *Imanta* published faximile editions featuring some of the oldest texts in Latvian book publishing history of the XVII century: a collection of sermons by Georg Manzel and *Oratio Dominica XL linguarum*, a collection of Lord's prayers in 40 languages by Jānis Reiters, originally published in Rostock in 1675. Among other notable books on history that came out thanks to *Imanta Publishers* let me mention general Rūdolfs Bangerskis memoir series „Mana mūža atmiņas" in 4 volumes and colonel Arturs Silgailis book „Latviešu leģions" about the Latvian legion, which came out first in 1962 and saw several re-publications and was later even translated and published in English. Altogether in the 25 years of the existence of Imanta Publishing house over 100 different books came out.

It is important to mention that Imants Reitmanis was not just a book publisher, but also a known socially active leader in the exile Latvian community of his time. From 1951 to 1956 he headed the Danish division of the organization „Daugavas vanagi", after which he was elected chairman of the Latvian National Committee in Denmark (1957 – 1964). Imants Reitmanis himself with all the books he publised was like a red rag to a bull to the Sovjet propaganda agents, who went out of their way to demonstrate that Latvian books could only develop in the occupied Latvia, not abroad. So they tried to diminish, ignore or devalue the work of publishers in the Latvian exile community. In September, 1965 they organized a book exhibition in Copenhagen to prove to the outside world that literature and publishing in the occupied Baltic countries was flourishing now, 25 years after their incorporation into the USSR. Sovjet propaganda heavyweights had prepared publications for print in the Danish newspaper *Berlingske Tidende*, presenting among other things even falsified book statistics. Imants Reitmanis responded to that by sending the Danish media his article „Russification of books and media in the Baltic countries". Paralell to that he hosted a press conference in the premises of the publishing house *Imanta*, which seriously enraged the Sovjet representatives. A month after coming home from Copenhagen, the editor-in-chief of publishing house *Liesma*, Pēteris Bauģis wrote an article entitled "Velti pūlaties, Reitmaņa kungs!" *(„Trying in vain, Mr. Reitmanis!")* questioning the professional qualifications of Imants Reitmanis. Bauģis was already well-known as an avid follower of the Sovjet occupation regime. Other attempts to discredit Imants Reitmanis included a broschure printed the same year in Latvia and the following year – in Sweden: „Kāpēc viņi bēga: patiesība par latviešu nacionālo fondu Zviedrijā" *(„Why Did They Flee: Truth about the Latvian National Fund in Sweden")*. Those who wrote this propaganda broschure were well trained in applying denial and disinformation technique, certainly when they claimed that Reitmanis was a fascist and shoud therefore be declared persona non grata in Denmark, as Denmark had suffered so much from this ideology during the World War II.

After Reitmanis' death the number of published books at *Imanta* went on sharp decline. Reitmanis widow Enita Reitmane still produced a series of beautiful mini-books, where works of such outstanding Latvian authors as Velta Sniķere, brothers Grasis, Juris Kronbergs, Margita Gūtmane were presented. A symbolic gesture was a memorial ceremony at the monument to Danish writer Ludvig Holberg in Copenhagen in June, 1968. This event was organized by Reitmanis widow Enita Reitmane. That year marked the centenary of the first theatrical performance in Latvia, were Ludvig Holberg's play "Jeppe på berget eller den forvandlede Bonde" (English: "Jeppe in the Hill, or The Transformed Peasant") was staged in a localized version in Latvian translation by Aleksandrs Stenders under the title "Žūpu Bērtulis". This is regarded as the beginning of Latvian professional theatre.

Imants Reitmanis' name was virtually unknown to Latvian audiences still 30 years ago, due to severe censorship by Sovjet authorities both of Reitmanis himself and of the books he published. In the 1990-ies Imants Reitmanis returned back to his homeland, as his remains were reburied in Biksene cemetery, in his native Dzelzava parish. The current grave is now next to the burial place of writer Doku Atis, who was brother of Reitmanis' grandmother. But the books he published have taken up an important place on the shelves of our libraries. A certain part of these books are still valuable material both to book lovers and to researchers of book history in Latvia.

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Photo - Stig Stasig

The First Republic of Latvia and the League of Nations

Charlotte Flindt Pedersen,

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The international order and the system for protection of national and ethnic minorities

World War I and the Russian Revolution mark one of the great geopolitical events of this century. The multinational empires - the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Russian Empire – which had dominated Europe for hundreds of years all disintegrated and new states and forms of government emerged. This also formed the geopolitical context of the first Latvian republic.

Latvia's geographical position as a bridge between Soviet Russia and Germany and access to the Baltic Sea gave Latvia a political significance that went far beyond its size and population base. After the First World War, Latvia's security depended on the balance of power between Germany, Poland and Soviet Russia - neighboring states, all of which had their national populations living in Latvia.

One of the important issues emerging from this new order in Europe and therefore also for Latvia was the relationship between the various nationalities and ethnic groups within and between the new state borders, the relationship between minority and majority groups had a prominent place in the state to state relations and the creation of a new order and was on the political agenda in many of the new states. This required a proper arrangement of post-war political and judicial regulation of the world.

The question of national and ethnic minorities was seen as a potential danger both to the security of the state as well as to the internal stability of the newly formed democracies. The international community sought to address this issue through the League of Nations, which demanded a declaration of respect for minority rights in return for the recognition of the new member states.

The basic premise of the treaty regulation was simple: The state's territorial sovereignty (or another form of political authority) was recognized, while the state on its part recognized certain minority rights and/or accepting an obligation to guarantee a particular form of treatment (i.e. non-discrimination) of persons belonging to the minority.

The dominant method of international judicial regulation of the post-war system was a system based on individual cases rather than a system based on general principles applicable to minorities in all states.

The substantive norms for the protection of minorities provided the protection of life and liberty of persons belonging to minorities, as well as non-discrimination. The persons concerned were given access to public office and the right to use their mother tongue in private and economic life, as well as cultural autonomy. The states were obliged to help minority schools and cultural institutions.

The newly formed League of Nations, the predecessor to the UN, took on the role of guarantor of the substantive rules and gradually developed procedures for implementing these rules. These procedures were essentially based on a) the right to petition in favor of the minorities, and (b) minority committees seeking negotiation solutions on minority issues. The League of Nations and the Permanent International Court of Justice had jurisdiction to hear cases concerning minorities in accordance with their normal procedures. A section for minorities in the League of Nations were established for minority protection under the leadership of the Spanish diplomat P. De Azcarate.

It was at the Paris Peace Conference 1919-1920 the system was drawn up to protect the minorities in the newly formed countries coming out of the dissolution of empires in Europe after World War I. Attempts were made to set the boundaries according to the principle of self-determination, but this did not apply to the German minorities in areas that Germany had to give up after the war. It was therefore especially Germany that was concerned about its minorities in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland and Czechoslovakia, referring to how Poland had treated its Jewish minority in the war. Some measures were taken to help protect Europe's racial and religious minorities. Although it is claimed that the great powers more or less made sure that it did not apply to their own minorities. The commitments were not universal, they only covered the new member states.

Neither Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were party to the peace treaty and they were not directly indebted to the great powers for their status as a sovereign state or their territorial configuration. Still, in order to be admitted to the League of Nations, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were required to take on obligations regarding minority

protection as part of the admission process.

In the First Latvian Republic, diversity was great. Approx. 25% of the population were of non-Latvian descent, and there were many different religious orientations and great social differences. The largest minority groups consisted of people from the former majority cultures, who suddenly had to get used to being in a minority position: Russians, Germans and Poles. The population of the newly formed Latvian Republic had been through six years of uninterrupted war; World War I, the struggle between Bolsheviks and White Guards and finally a Latvian war of liberation, which had ruined the economy and forced some 800,000 people to flee. It was on this basis that Latvian politicians began their work in 1919 to build the nation-state of Latvia in which membership of the League of Nations was seen as a crucial cornerstone and therefore also the international obligations with regard to minority protection and how to balance this with the newly won Latvian statehood.

The Latvian road to membership in the League of Nation

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were some of the most ardent candidates for membership in the League of Nations, campaigning for more than two years to become members, which would imply a final confirmation of them as sovereign states and guaranteed security from outside aggression due to article 10 of the Covenant of the League of nations. The League of Nations had much to offer for a small state. First of all, a chance to meet with other and bigger states on more equal terms. The delegations of small states could appear before the delegates, the Assembly of the League of Nations and be heard by representatives of the great powers. In Geneva, they had equal access to the world press and, not least in the case of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, the opportunity to act internationally was a confirmation and recognition of their existence as states in their own rights.

Although, of course, it was the great powers who had the last say in matters, which they thought were of their decisive interest, the small states had the opportunity to participate in the discussions and adjust decisions which the great powers would otherwise have made, they could create a public discussion and it gave them a tactical advantage.

Alas, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia's applications for membership of the League of Nations was first rejected. This was linked to their status as emerging independent states coming out of the Russian Empire, which still had an uncertain future. Russia was not admitted as a member in the League of Nations due to the Bolshevik revolution. Only in 1934 the USSR was admitted as a member. The League of Nations prioritized Czarists Russia interests over Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia joining the League of Nations, even though most of the member states were positive. According to senior lecturer at University of Boston/Mass and associate at Davis Center for Eurasian and Russian Studies, Rita Putin Peters one of the reasons for rejecting immediate accession was that "*the Baltic countries are vulnerable to reabsorption into Russia, while each member of the League of Nations under Article 10 of the League of Nations is obliged to support another Member State in the event of aggression against that State.*" That is, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia were left to fend for themselves until they could prove that they did not need help - which must be said to be a slightly inverted form of rationale. But according to Rita Putin Peters, it was first and foremost about Russia's future. A memorandum from the US Representation, even though the US was not member of the League of Nations, attached to each of the three Baltic countries' application for membership stated:

"*The United States is confident that restored, free and united, Russia will again take a leading place in the world.... until that time shall arrive the United States feels friendship and honor require that Russia's interest must be generously protected, and that, as far as possible, all the decisions of vital importance to it, and especially those concerning its sovereignty over the territory of the former Russian Empire, be held in abeyance*". (Also known as the Colby note, a policy on Russia formulated by Bainbridge Colby, US president Wilsons last secretary of state).

However, as time passed it became clear that the Czarist or non-Bolshevik Russia would not re-emerge and the Bolsheviks would remain in power in Russia, therefore Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia legitimacy as sovereign states remained uncontested for the time being. By 1921, the League of Nations was ready to accept all the three states.

In the meantime, the Jewish minority in Lithuania and the German minority in Latvia had used their right to petition in the League of Nations claiming that individual minority rights had been or could be violated.

Therefore, before Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were given membership to the League of Nations, they were asked to sign identical declarations of September 22, 1921, in which they agreed to abide by the resolution of the League of Nations of 15 December 1920 and to be willing to negotiate with the League of Nations Council on the scope and details of the application with regard to the international obligations regarding the protection of minorities.

As the governments of Estonia and Latvia found they had not directly benefited from the peace treaties signed in Versailles after the First World War, they were of the opinion that they should not be obliged to guarantee minority rights on their territory. In addition, they considered it sufficient that they confirm to the Council of the League of Nations that they had taken steps to secure their minorities through relevant constitutional measures, which had been sufficient in the case of Finland.

Likewise, they could not see reason in the fact that the minority guarantees did not apply universally to all League of Nations countries. They believed that in this way two kinds of members were created. First-class members without international obligations and second-class members with international minority obligations.

They emphasized that they were very willing to recognize and commit internationally to protecting the national minorities of their respective states as long as these were universal, i.e. applicable to all League of Nations Member States.

Estonia and Latvia were presented by the League of Nations with draft minority declarations identical to the Lithuanian except for two paragraphs regarding the Jewish minority, which were omitted from the Estonian version. But neither Estonia nor Latvia were prepared to accept such far-reaching restrictions on their national sovereignty. Both became involved in lengthy negotiations with the League of Nations which lasted almost two years. Negotiations were held in which Latvia and Estonia willingly handed over material and information to the League of Nations about the minority situation, but the two countries refused to sign the Declaration.

Their reluctance went more on the implications of the warranty clause than on the content. At the time, their own legislation and constitution contained more comprehensive minority rights than the League of Nations' minority regime included. Although the Latvian Constituent Assembly had not adopted the clauses concerning the rights and obligations of citizens, where the minorities were specifically mentioned, these were provided for in a number of specific laws.

The most notable of all the laws was the School Autonomy Act, which allowed each minority to set up a council with full control over the budget and what kinds of schools were to be created. In addition, on 17 March 1922, Estonia, Finland, Latvia and Poland signed a mutual agreement, which included a clause to protect and respect each other's minorities within their borders. On 14 May 1921, Latvia and Lithuania signed a similar agreement.

By the beginning of 1923, the League of Nations Council and Latvia had reached a compromise on the wording of the Latvian commitments. And on July 7 1923, the Latvian representative in the League of Nations issued a declaration in which Latvia officially approved the League of Nations minority regime for new states but in a somewhat modified form. Phrases such as "Obligations of international concern" and "That they are recognized as fundamental laws of the state" were avoided. In other words, twists that could cause physical interference from other countries were avoided as far as possible. In return, Latvia declared its willingness to report regarding national minorities.

As mentioned above, while the League of Nations were processing the application for membership of Latvia, a number of complaints were sent to the League of Nations from the minorities in question. A few days before the incorporation, the Joint Jewish Committee sought to raise awareness of minority protection in general in Latvia. In February 1921, a joint complaint on behalf of the German landowners in Estonia and Latvia was presented to the League of Nations by Baron Alfons Heyking. They asked the League of Nations to make a minority commission.

But after the League of Nations had approved the Latvian declaration of minority protection, there were no more complaints from the Jewish minority. Yet another petition was launched from the German minority with regard to the

confiscation of the land of the German nobles and whether they were entitled to compensation. In all three countries, the land reform was aimed almost exclusively at the minorities. But first and foremost, the Baltic barons in Estonia and Latvia, although the Poles in Lithuania were also affected. The German landowners tried to stop the process by appealing to the international community.

In April 1925, the German landowners came up with another complaint in the League of Nations, based on the fact a law had been passed in which it was stated that no compensation would be given for the confiscated land. The complaint stated that the law of April 1924 was not in accordance with the Latvian constitution and that they argued that their country had been confiscated because they belonged to a certain minority. That is, they accused the Latvian government of violating the principle of equality before the law as they had otherwise committed themselves in their statement to the League of Nations.

The Latvian Government responded to the complaint by submitting all legal texts and agreements concerning minority protection which Latvia had concluded. In addition, the whole story of the German colonization of Latvia. The Latvian government also argued that land reform was necessary to counteract the communist influence among the large number of landless peasants. Land reform was necessary for internal stability because dissatisfaction among the peasants would invite external intervention and threaten international peace and that it affected all large landowners equally.

In Germany, there was no support to the complaint either. Gustav Streseman, Germany's representative at the League of Nations was either unable or did not want to interfere on behalf of the German landowners.

The complaint was rejected in the Council of the League of Nations on the grounds that the land reform was necessary for Latvia's social stability. But the fact that the council did not follow up on the complaint did not mean that there was nothing about the matter at hand. There is no doubt that land reform in Latvia was carried out in a discriminatory manner.

P. De Azcarate the director of the national minorities section at the League of Nations later stated: "The text and the implementation of the land reforms are typical examples of legislation aimed at one or more minorities and are therefore a direct breach of the clause in the minority agreement, which deals with the right to the law." But he concludes that there was not the slightest doubt that such a reform was necessary to stabilize the country economically and socially.

Latvia had high hopes for the League of Nations. They hoped that the League of Nations would be able to ensure stability between the great powers. They falsely assumed membership would imply that the great powers would come to the rescue if there was a danger of losing their independence. Notwithstanding this, there are still important lessons to be learned from this period in Latvian history both in relation to the protection of rights of minorities as well as the possibilities and advantages for small states in active participation in international organisations.

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