

AMERICAN LATVIAN ASSOCIATION  
in the United States, Inc.

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8/16/72  
2:45

August 16, 1972

FROM: Ilgvars J. Spilners, President  
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SUBJECT: Statement on behalf of the American Latvian Association  
with reference to the formulation of the foreign policy  
plank of the Republican Party Platform.

Status of Latvia and Other Baltic Nations

In June 1940, the Soviet Union forcibly occupied and later annexed the three Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. This war-like act terminated the independence of the Baltic States and violated their inherent rights for freedom and self-determination, and also broke a peace treaty of August 11, 1920, and a 1932 non-aggression pact.

Despite the fact that the Soviet Union is a co-signer of the Charter of the United Nations, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is still continuing the occupation and exploitation of the Baltic States.

"The incorporation of Latvia by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is not recognized by the Government of the United States of America."(1) This has repeatedly been reaffirmed by past Secretaries of State, and former Presidents. The latest such written affirmation came from Secretary of State William P. Rogers in a letter to Latvian Charge d'Affaires, Dr. Anatol Dinbergs, dated November 8, 1971.

The wish of the Baltic people to be independent of the Soviet Union was shown in earlier years of the occupation by armed underground resistance. Since this resulted in large scale deportations of the Baltic population, the resistance has taken more recently the course of secret as well as open protest and demonstrations. Protests against suppression of religious freedom, Russification by planned excessive industrialization, and denial of civil rights have come from workers, students, believers and even members of the Communist Party. (2)

- (1) State Department Document 1855-3, 29 May 1957.
- (2) In "A Letter by 17 Latvian Communist Leaders," Congressional Records, 92nd Congress, 2nd Session, February 21, 1972, remarks by Honorable Edward J. Derwinski.

Earlier this summer thousands of young people demonstrated in Kaunas, Lithuania, against the Soviet policy of converting the Baltic people into national minorities in their own countries, disregard of the most common civil rights and suppression of national culture. The Red Army reinforcements were called in from the outside of Lithuania and more than two hundred young demonstrators were arrested. This summer three cases of immolation in protest against the Russian policies in Lithuania have taken place.

#### Freedom of International Information and Communication

Changes for greater freedom in countries under a dictatorial and foreign rule are in the interests of the United States and the world peace. Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe by their gathering and dissemination of news to the Russian and other peoples in the Soviet Union and in other countries under the Soviet control are one of the most effective means for maintaining peace. Operations of these radio organizations, therefore, should be expanded and improved. The Baltic people are the only significant nationalities under the Russian Soviet rule who do not receive Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe broadcasts.

The easing of tensions and increase in freedom can be improved also through greater mutual personal contacts and by a flow of publications. Such exchange between the United States and other countries should be based on the principle of mutual balance. At the present time practically all published materials are allowed into this country and the travel of visitors inside the United States is virtually unrestricted. However, the Soviet Union severely restricts the travel of United States citizens and prohibits regular entry of any non-technical publications.

#### Ethnic Heritage Studies and International Understanding

Our nation is composed of people with many diverse heritages and backgrounds. This is a positive diversity from which many different talents contribute to the strength of the United States. Ethnic Heritage Studies Program which was recently approved by the United States Congress will improve understanding of our own backgrounds and also those of other people in the world.

An effective United States foreign policy can be conducted only with the help of officials and specialists who are intimately familiar with languages, cultures, histories and customs of the people we have to deal with. In the past there has been a tendency to pay excessive attention to the larger nations and ignore the smaller ones which in sum constitute the majority of the people of this world. An extreme example of this tendency is the misconception which we encounter almost daily when such terms as "Soviet people" and "Russian people" are used. There is no Soviet language, culture, traditions, or anything that justifies to describe all or any part of the people living in the Soviet Union by these terms. Furthermore, only slightly over 50% of the people residing in the Soviet Union are Russians. Nearly one-half of the people belong to different non-Russian nationalities. They are proud of their own identity, language, and culture.

Suggested Principles of the U. S. Policy in Regard to the Baltic States and  
International Understanding and Communications

It is in the interests of the United States, the avowed leader of the free peoples, to adopt a realistic long-range foreign policy which, in addition to safeguarding America's own freedom and guaranteeing a just and lasting peace, would lead to the re-establishment of the principle of self-determination of peoples -- a doctrine proclaimed and long championed by the United States -- and restoration of the independence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as other captive nations.

It should not be forgotten that, when in Moscow, President Nixon and Communist Party Chief Leonid Brezhnev in the Joint Communique stated:

"The U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. are prepared to make appropriate contributions to the positive trends on the European continent toward a genuine detente and the development of relations of peaceful cooperation among states in Europe on the basis of the principles of territorial integrity and inviolability of frontiers, noninterference in internal affairs, sovereign equality, independence, and renunciation of the use or threat of force."

Also taking into consideration the fact that July 28th of this year 1972 marks the Fiftieth Anniversary of the de jure recognition of Latvia and her sister states Estonia and Lithuania by the United States of America, the Latvian American community, which, in its entirety, is represented by the American Latvian Association in the U. S., respectfully asks the adoption of the following principles at the Republican Party's National Convention:

1. We pledge to maintain and improve the national defense of the United States which guarantees that no enemies could dare to attack.
2. The policy of non-recognition of the forced annexation by the Soviet Union of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia shall continue to be in the interests of the United States and in accordance with the principles of international justice.
3. Since acceptance of prevailing conditions is threatening to obliterate the national identity and existence of the Latvian, Estonian and Lithuanian peoples, a more concrete long-range approach shall be sought in order to facilitate the withdrawal of the Soviet occupational forces from the territory of the Baltic States as an initial step in re-establishing the independence of these countries and restoring the human rights to their citizens.
4. It is in the interests of the U. S. to conform with H. Con. Res. 416, unanimously approved by the Eighty-Ninth Congress. Therefore, the United States shall insist that a) the United Nations enforce its charter provisions which guarantee

self-determination to all peoples; b) the Soviet Union be made to abide by its United Nations membership obligations concerning aggression and colonialism by ordering the withdrawal of all Soviet troops, agents, colonialists, and controls from the Baltic States, and returning to their prospective homelands all political prisoners and exiles now in slave labor and prison camps.

5. On the question of European Security Conference the United States Government shall not recognize the "status quo" in Europe because it violates the rights of self-determination of the Baltic and other people.
6. We pledge to seek removal of listing of the country of birth in the United States passports because such information is used by some countries to deny protection and privileges generally accorded the United States citizens.
7. The future cultural and other similar mutual exchanges between the United States and the Soviet Union shall be evenly balanced to allow more freedom of movement of the U. S. citizens within the Soviet Union and a better representation of the American point of view.
8. The operations and radio programs of Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberty shall be increased and improved. We shall initiate Radio Liberty broadcasts in Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian languages in the very near future.
9. We recognize that the United States Government should not use and should discourage others to use the designation "Russians" or "Soviet" in describing the non-Russian nationalities under the Soviet rule.
10. The United States Government shall encourage and support studies in this country of cultures of different people. Special support in this respect shall be given to those cultures which are suppressed by foreign occupations.