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BALTIC PERSPECTIVES: THE DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE WEST AND THE CHOICES AHEAD

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This article elaborates upon Baltic strategic concepts which were first presented in *Acta Baltica* (1966), a journal of Institutum Balticum, Koenigstein/TS., West Germany.

A nation conscious of its identity will probably aspire to an independent existence, and a nation deprived of that kind of existence is likely to endeavor to regain it. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are the typical examples of this national consciousness and purpose. Despite the demise of those three states as a result of the Russian onset in 1940, a significant portion of the Baltic population is actively and continually engaged in the search for ways and means to recover the lost freedoms. Thus, this article will examine the views of the Baltic leaders in the past and consider some of the alternative courses that confront them at the present.

I

In the backwaters of World War II Baltic leadership was not profoundly troubled by any basic strategic problems. The doctrine of liberation which was then espoused was grounded in two major propositions. First, here was reliance on the West for tangible aid rather than merely tea and sympathy. Second, future armed conflict between East and West was given a high probability. The distinction between the two propositions is important. To a large extent, the reliance of faith in the West was induced by the Western moral and purposive posture, but the expectation of war was generated by aggressive Russian policies, not those of the West. Western powers had merely tried to contain communism where it exceeded their limits of toleration, but there was no Western military crusade for freedom. This position was consonant with the nature of Allied commitment in the war against Germany and the disintegration of the American - Soviet alliance soon after the end of the war. There was among the Baltic peoples — as indeed among most Eastern Europeans — an affinity with and a faith in the West. The moral overtones of the Allied war effort fortified that faith and transformed it into a political doctrine. On the other hand, the beginning of the Cold War and its heightened intensity made the expectation of an armed confrontation equally feasible.

Thus, couched in these terms, as the postwar period began, Baltic strategic thinking was relatively simple. Eventually, however, problems appeared, which required reexamination of this simplistic approach. One of the main propositions was no longer tenable. The possibility of an armed conflict between the USSR and the United States as an important factor in devising the doctrine of Baltic liberation became virtually nil. The politics of peaceful coexistence was bringing the Cold War to an end and the consequences of the use of thermonuclear weapons made the concept of all-out war too repellent a factor for any rational decision-maker. Therefore, of the two major propositions only the faith in the West was left. The implications of such a reliance invite closer scrutiny.

Before 1918. — During the century preceding the establishment of the Russian-held Baltic provinces as independent states, liberal and nationalist movements spurred the people in Poland, Lithuania, Greece, Hungary, and elsewhere to rise in arms against their foreign masters. The American attitude toward these sporadic uprisings showed a dichotomy between moral support and direct action.

It is generally presumed that the American people are fond of freedom and that they abhor despotism. They have that predisposition from the time of their inception as a nation. Thus, it is not suprising that a nation struggling to cast off foreign

rule usually receives ample sympathy from the American public. Thomas Jefferson believed that the disappearance of Poland in 1795 was no less important an event than the French Revolution. The suppressions by Tsarist armies of subsequent uprisings usually hurt the otherwise adequate American-Russian relations. The Greek revolt against the Turks in 1821 reverberated in the United States and prompted former President Madison to suggest that his country support publicly the cause of Greek independence. A group of enthusiasts in the United States founded the "Young America" organization for the purpose of supporting actively the efforts by European nations to rid themselves of foreign rule. It is also believed that Louis Kossuth, the leader of the Hungarian insurgents, was greeted in America in 1851 as no other foreigner with the exception of Lafayette.[1] These and many other examples indicate that both the American government and the general public have much sympathy and compassion for the oppressed.

Ordinarily, such support was only moral. It would not lead to any kind of resolute action in behalf of the victimized nation, and it would not result in the kind of material assistance to the insurgents that would have a visible effect on the outcome of the struggle. When the Spanish colonies in America revolted in the beginning of the 19th century,, their northern neighbor responded only with the assurance of its "most cordial feelings of fraternal friendship.[2] - Louis Kossuth sailed from the United States without any concrete gains. The Greek revolutionaries failed to elicit a public statement of support from the United States government. The Polish rebels, too, had to be content with the utterly ineffectual professions of sympathy. Thus, the American attitude in the event of such problem-situations may contain the ideological affinity with the struggling nations but not the desire to get entangled in their quarrels. The predilection for a policy of noninvolvement — only so recently abandoned — probably emanated from two sources: the spiritual separation from Europe; and, generally, a kind of moral exultation that frowned upon the character of continental diplomacy.

For these reasons, the conclusion emerges that, leaving aside the narrowly interpreted national interests of the United States, any revolt against alien rule was likely to produce American interest and support which would fall short of enough United States involvement to assure the success of the rebellion. Those who failed to understand this response and expected more were bound for disillusionment.

Between the wars. — Before 1918 disenchantment with the West resulted from the failure to receive effective material aid. In the interwar decades, however, the nature of that disillusionment changed somewhat, acquiring faint ideological overtones. Georges Clemenceau is reported to have once said that Woodrow Wilson talked like Jesus Christ but acted like Lloyd George. Such irre-verency helps to illuminate the crisis that plagued international politics in the interwar years — "the dichotomy of purpose and fact", as one perceptive writer called it.[3]

Wilsonianism meant a new international order, a "new diplomacy". The American President "appeared as the rophet of a new era, making a dramatic appeal to peoples and governments; he symbolized the idea that the anarchy of power politics should be ended by the injection into international relations of the highest values evolved by political man." [4] The establishment of the League of Nations was the height of diplomatic idealism. Like many other states, the Baltic republics were under the sway of Western ideas, institutions, and procedures. They based their quest for independence on the principle of national self-determination; endeavored to manage their internal affairs in a most democratic way; and prepared themselvs for a worthy membership in "the herald of the millennium", as the League of Nations was called by some, where statesmen were expected to rely upon law and morality and not the politics of power. However, after only a several years, the era of hope began to fade. It became obvious that visionary projects (political Utopia) — the great expectations, the new methods of dealing with international problems, the lofty principles — did not determine fully the meaning of the West. More and more "politics as usual" (political reality) — or the question of who gets what, when, and how — was beginning to supplant the ethical norms of the 1920's and redefine that meaning. Even though this retreat from idealism disenchanted the Western countries no less than it did the others, the Baltic states saw in that crisis a distinctly Western breach of faith. Once again disaffection from the West intensified. A disappointed nationalist confided:

> In the speeches of the "great" Western statesmen we once looked for lofty ideas and a true concern with the needs of mankind. Now we merely skim through those speeches. Now we are almost sure that we will find there either the official and insincere statements about the "great principles" which no one believes any more and which are never put into effect, or demagogery, or a formal justification of some evil, or finally, the betrayal of importance.[5]

This is further evidence of the increasingly anti-Western sentiment of the 1930's, a time when the nationalists in many central and eastern European countries were beginning to counter vigorously and persistently all the basic tenets of the Western liberal democracies. Convinced that Western ideas were alien to the native soul, nationalist authors insisted that each nation would have to discover not only its own form of government but also its own way of life.

After 1945. — World War II was the climax of adversity. The new international order built upon the foundations of law and morality crumbled, and Eastern Europe lost its independence. However, the cataclysmic events also augured a new beginning. Once more, the hope for an improved and more effective system of international organization emanated from the West. The basis of such a hope was founded in the body of principles and objectives contained in several wartime documents, including the Atlantic Charter (1941), the Declaration by the United Nations (1942), and the Declaration of Four Nations on General Security (1943). Again the Baltic countries looked toward the West and, as indicated earlier, their expectation of effective Western support against the encroachment of the Soviet Union became one of the major tenets in their strategy of liberation. However, the disappearance of the possibility of war as a factor for determining the strategy of

liberation left the Baltic leadership in a quandary. The strong attachment to purpose and morality appearing in the Western countries assures the Baltic people of sympathy and generous support but does not promise any resolute action in their behalf. Unfortunately for the Baltic states, while moral support is necessary, it is not sufficient to restore Baltic independence.[6] To the Baltic states, Western assistance meant more than moral support. Failure to realize that distinction has produced bitter disappointment among the Baits. Politically, it has meant a crisis of confidence and a disillusionment with the West.

II

Disillusionment with the West is evidently a recurring phenomenon. In the past very little was said about it. The Baltic writers were disinclined to probe the causes of that disillusionment, because they felt that Western culpability was so blatant that proving it was, in truth, proving the obvious. They simply looked upon the Western politicians as international hypocrites.

The causes of disillusionment, however, are more complicated than the Baltic writers were willing to admit and are traceable to both sides. The conduct of the United States, which first induced, the Europeans to institute "the herald of the millennium" and then deserted them by spurning that "evil thing with a holy name", could easily invite moral censure. However, some blame might also accrue to the Baltic leadership, particularly for its failure or unwillingness to discern the sources of Western conduct.

For one, the Baltic mentality has never fully understood the Anglo-Saxon conception of diplomacy, which Harold Nicolson has labeled as "mercantile". It rejects the notion that diplomacy is war by other means and, instead, stresses the need for a frank discussion, mutual concessions, conciliation, appeasement, credit, reasonableness.[7] Baltic decision-makers should be thoroughly familiar with the character of Anglo-Saxon diplomacy when trying to answer the question of what can reasonably be expected from the West. Failure to do so will inevitable result in disillusionment with the West. For it is only natural that if the Americans and the British approach the solution to their first-rate problems in such mercantile terms, then there is little justification to expect them to be more forceful in dealing with matters of secondary importance, such as the restoration of independence to the Baltic states. In general, the purpose of such a diplomacy is a peace of accomodation, not victory, and it is certainly more conducive to international stability than a theory which sees negotiation as a military campaign. However, the Baltic decision-makers should be thoroughly familiar with the character of Anglo-Saxon diplomacy when trying to answer the question of what can reasonably be expected from the West. Failure to do so will inevitable result in disillusionment with the West. For it is only natural that if the Americans and the British approach the solution to their first-rate problems in such mercantile terms, then there is little justification to expect them to be more forceful in dealing with matters of secondary importance, such as the restoration of independence to the Baltic states.

Furthermore, the Baltic leaders have not fully understood that in time of national emergency the United States, perhaps more than any other Western democracy, is prone to idealize its involvement in the war. Perhaps to overcome the belief that there is something wrong in fighting only for one's national interests, these interests get transformed into lofty principles. It was not enough for United States to enter the war in 1917 in defense of American interests; instead, it set out "to make the world safe for democracy" and to end war finally and completely. A national war effort became a crusade for a free world order. This almost spiritual exuberance then gave birth to the era of great expectations that followed the end of the war.

A similar excess of visionary hopes transcending the crude considerations of power and interest arose during World War II. The vision of a more perfect world order became the ideal that would rally and inspire the Western peoples for the military challenges that awaited. For example, President Roosevelt felt that the Yalta conference "spells the end of the system of unilateral action and exclusive alliances and spheres of influence and balances of power and all the other expedients which have been tried for centuries — and have failed."[8] Secretary of State Cordell Hull hoped that in the future "there will no longer be need for spheres of influence, for alliances, for balance of power, or any other of the special arrangements through which, in the unhappy past, the nations strove to safeguard their security or promote their interests."[9] The United States, in short, planned to purify the world of the imperfections of an unhappy past. However, George F. Kennan believed that this "legalistic -moralistic" approach to international problems would lead to disaster if

you indulged yourself in the colossal conceit of thinking that you could suddenly make international life over into what you believed to be your own image; when you dismissed the past with contempt, rejected the relevance of the past to the future, and refused to occupy yourself with the real problems that a study of the past would suggest.[10]

Despite such warning, profuse idealism and morality has distinguished much of United States foreign policy of the last fifty years.

It cannot be said, although at times it has been so stated, that all these purposive principles, charters, and declarations were only empty words. Standing alone, neither the moral tenets nor the qualities of power and interest define the totality of political endeavor. Rather, that totality contains both. "Mature thought combines purpose with observation and analysis", concluded a prominent scholar. "Utopia and reality are thus the two facets of political science. Sound political thought and sound political life will be found only where both have their place."[11] Such a view is congruous to the Anglo-American

tradition in foreign affairs. Baltic leadership failed to perceive and draw appropriate conclusions from such a balance between purpose and fact. That it was overly impressed by an inflated sense of morality implies an insufficiently erudite quality in that leadership.

III

Currently Baltic strategic thinking faces serious problems. The relatively simplistic postwar doctrine of liberation, anchored in the faith in the West and the possibility of war with the Soviet Union, has come under sharp criticism. However, no alternative course of action is yet clearly in sight. Some Baltic politicians, especially the older ones, continue to look toward the West for effective support, while others begin to examine new vistas. Both appreciate and depend upon the continued moral support from the West, including non-recognition of the incorporation of the Baltic states into the USSR, financial aid to emigre activities, and the Captive Nations Weeks. However, those who continue to lean on the West and those who are inclined to test new routes differ on the ultimate relevance of their respective propositions to the cause of Baltic independence. Two possible options are presented: reliance on developments within the communist realm and the force of anticolonialism.

The view that developments in the East are more significant to the Baltic states than those in the West rests on two circumstances: the lack of effective material aid from the West and the notable success of the Eastern European states in benefiting by the strains vexing the communist realm. The proponents of an Eastern orientation hold, for example, that a visit by Romanian officials to Peking means more to the future of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania than a Baltic pilgrimage to Washington, and that the Polish "spring in October" has greater consequence than the now defunct American policy of liberation had.

The new strategy has not yet crystallized into a concrete course of action. However, its contours are already perceptible. Culturally, this orientation intends to capitalize on those elements in the intellectual heritage of the three countries that are distinctive in character, hoping thereby to consummate a spiritual secession of those from the Soviet Union. Politically, it aims at making the Baltic states susceptible to the general pattern of change now taking place in Eastern Europe. In short, the over-all immediate objective is to take those states out of the Russian orbit and return them to the fold of Eastern Europe.

The supporters of such a strategic turn emphasize the tension between the Russians and the Chinese. They assume that just as the postwar global bipolarity had helped the African and Asian nations to win and maintain their independence, so the present communist intrabloc bipolarity will facilitate the emancipation of Eastern Europe. Consequently, counting on a protracted Sino-Soviet antagonism, they tend to depreciate any strong initiative by the Western Powers aimed against China. Some of the historically-minded Lithuanians, in particular, see a parallel between the way in which one brand of Asiatics (Tartars) at time cooperated with the old Lithuania against Moscow in the past, and the way in which another brand (Chinese) might be willing to do the same in the future. Similarity of interests, namely, opposition to Moscow, had made them occasional allies then and may make them partners now. The Chinese challange to the USSR is agreeable to the Baits; on the other hand, the possibility of nationally assertive communities (such as the Baltic states, the Caucassus) becoming centers of disaffection within the Soviet Union may be of some interest to China.

Anticolonialism, the conceptual framework of Afro-Asian recrudescence, baffles Baltic writers. Central to the controversy is the assumption that the powerful anticolonial thrust has virtually ended the colonialism of the West and is bound by the logic of things to do the same thing to the Soviet Union, the last of the great colonial empires. Appearing in many papers, this expectation attracts numerous supporters and generates sizable related political activity.

Others, however, have lass confidence in this assumption. They believe that it is unwise to separate broad principles, such as "the right to national self-determination" or "anticolonialism", from the historical setting that originated them and determined their meaning and then to apply them in a different context. Such broad guiding principles are frequently woven together with national or state interests and thus lose most of their effectiveness if detached from them. The origin of the idea of national self-determination and the different effects it was intended to produce illustrate that intimate tie between such concepts and practical considerations.

The future fidelity of a recently freed nation to the conceptual framework that had inspired and guided its quest for independence does not **ipso facto** follow from its earlier attachment to that framework. Rather, the future link between principle and policy is also to a large extent dependent upon that nation's current needs. Before its eventual triumph, the European **risorgimento** of the 19th century was basically liberal and idealistic in intent and aimed at constitutional liberties at home and a comity of nations abroad. However, when the formerly oppressed and divided nations became independent and united states their disposition changed. The exalted professions of the past thus had to be reconciled with the mundane demands of the present. Modern Lithuania also provides an instructive example. With long history of independent existence, deprived by the Tsars of extensive territories once ruled and oppressed by a Russian yoke that lasted over a century (in short, colonized), Lithuania might well have been expected to assume a posture of enmity toward the Soviet Union. But such was not the case. To the contrary, its relations with Russia in the interwar years were not only normalized but also repeatedly applauded, by both sides, as reflecting "traditional friendship" between the two countries. Badly in need of support against Poland, Lithuania quelled its deep-seated animosity toward Russia and established its interstate relations with that country on a new basis.

Those who are skeptical about anticolonialism becoming a vehicle for Baltic independence also point out that the realization of ideas with a claim to universality is to a large extent dependent upon an objective reality. For example, the political renaissance of Eastern Europe in 1918 is intimately related to the disintegration of three empires. The failure of Lithuania to free itself from the Russian occupation in 1944-1951 and the inability of Hungary to do the same in 1956 was due to the proximity and preponderance of Soviet armed strength. A political leadership that relies primarily on the efficacy of principles, without paying careful attention to the objective conditions environing and decisively affecting the chances of implementing those principles, indulges in risks bordering on irresponsibility.

Present-day anticolonialism seems to be tailored to suit the needs of a certain group of nations and is lacking in universality, much to the regret of those working toward Baltic independence. Witness the difficulties in extending the scope of anticolonialism beyond the political and social milieu of the emergent Afro-Asian peoples to the nations subjected to Russian domination. Anticolonialism is not a neutral concept. Rather, it imparts motion and meaning to the awakening of the formerly dormant nations of Africa and Asia. In more specific terms, the contents of anticolonialism include the unwillingness to participate in the military blocs of the East or the West, the emphasis on social and economic problems of the developing countries rather than those of the Cold War, the hope of making an end to imperialism, and mirrors the aspirations of those nations.

The rising nations of Africa and Asia have received and continue to receive much by way of moral and material support from the Soviet Union. For this reason, it is difficult to make anticolonialism universally applicable. Broadening its range of applicability would render the adoption of anticolonialism imprudent politically, because it would probably result in a divorce of an idea from the interests of states. There is little reason to expect that to occur. The postwar attitude of the Soviet Union, no less than that of the United States, was a necessary condition for the emergence of Africa and Asia. While the global picture is no longer the same, there is little basis for thinking that the impairment of relations between the Soviet Union and the Afro-Asian states, which consistency would require, would suddenly become beneficial to the latter. The opposite is more likely. As the emancipation of African and Asian nations nears its completion, the potential of universality inherent in anticolo-nialism will probably diminish. Needs of security, political immaturity, regional ties, economic considerations — the weight of such factors can force the newly independent states to accept a *modus vivendi* with their former masters and, generally, to desist from a hazardous course in their foreign policies.

Notes:

1 See Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (6th ed., New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., (1958), pp. 181, 268, 271.

2 President John Quincy Adams quoted in John Bassett Moore, *The Principles <if American Diplomacy* (New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1918), p. 375.

3 Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939* (London: Macmillan and Co Ltd, 1956), p. 20.

4 Inis L. Claude, Jr., *Swords Into Plowshares : The Problems and Progress of International Organization* (2nd ed., New York: Random House, 1959), p. 55

5 Jonas Aleksa, *Lietuviškų gyvenimo kelių beieškant* (In Quest of Lithuanian Ways of Life; Kaunas: Privately Printed, 1933), p. 271.

6 For an analysis of independence as a circumstance essential to the preservation of national identity, see Algimantas P. Gureckas, "Laisvės kovos metodiką peržiūrint," (Reviewing the Methodology in the Struggle for Freedom), *Metmenys* (Patterns), No. 10 (1965) pp. 128-144.

7 See Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy* (2nd ed., London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 51-54.

8 B. D. Zevin, ed., *Nothing to Fear: The Selected Addresses of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1932-1945* (Cambridge, 1H46), 'p. 453.

9 *The New York Times*, November 19, 1943, p. 4.

10 George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 69.

11 Carr, *op. cit.*, p. 10.