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## GREAT CHANGES AT HOME. LATVIANS ABROAD AND THE PROCLAMATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA IN 1918<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

This paper examines how Latvian communities abroad reacted to and were influenced by a change of the first magnitude in the political life of their homeland, namely, the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia on November 18, 1918. News of the proclamation, first of all, necessitated diaspora Latvians choosing attitudes towards the new phenomenon, which highlighted the political pre-dispositions of the different groups within the diaspora. Polarisation of opinions was followed shortly by a wave of activities both in support of and against the new Republic. These activities included gathering financial resources for war victims and state institutions in Latvia, public relations campaigns in diaspora host countries, political lobbying etc. The establishment of the Republic of Latvia also profoundly influenced and intensified the internal formation processes within the diaspora. A marked increase of activity is observable in all fields of engagement that are characteristic of an active ethno-national diaspora: the internal organisational structure was further developed; contacts with the homeland intensified; mutual links between geographically distant diaspora groups became closer. The great political changes in the homeland gave the Latvian diaspora the push necessary to fully develop and become an active ethno-national diaspora.

**Key words:** Latvia, 1918, postimperial transition, transformation

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The Great War brought about profound political, social, and economic changes to the whole of Europe. The region around the Baltic Sea in general and the territory of the todays' Republic of Latvia in particular were not exceptions to this influence. One certainly very important change was the proclamation of a national state – the Republic of Latvia on November 18, 1918.

As with many other nations and nationalities, at that time there were a certain number of Latvians permanently living outside the territory of the newly founded state, among them also a notable number of Latvians living even on other continents. The political changes at home asserted a certain influence on this group of people. Latvians living in the USA, Canada, South America, Australia, Western European countries and also elsewhere in the world were suddenly no longer just an ethnic group, a stateless diaspora, but a diaspora with their own state. There was no avoiding the necessity of coming to terms with this new reality in one way or another.

The aim of this study is to analyse how Latvian diaspora communities reacted to and were influenced by a change of the first magnitude in the political life of their homeland, namely, the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia on November 18, 1918.

To be able to evaluate reactions to the events in homeland prevalent in different Latvian diaspora communities around the globe, it is first of all necessary to be aware of the principal characteristics of those communities, mainly what considers their formation and the level of community organisation at the time in question. Next, the obvious increase in organisational activity at the period under review is to be examined. A further factor in evaluating the reaction of the diaspora to the events in the homeland is the level of information circulation, which illustrates the connectivity to the homeland and availability of the information on the events in homeland and at the same time also gives an understanding of the internal information circulation within the community, e.g., the ties with co-nationals in other parts of the country or even on different continents. Analysis of the information flow not only allows us to observe the changes happening within the community, but also to a certain extent to explain and understand their particular reactions to the events. Obviously, Latvians abroad based their reactions not on what was really happening in the homeland, but on that information that was available to them, what they got to know was happening there.

Lastly, the reactions of the Latvians abroad to events at the homeland at large can be best characterised by considering two main types of reaction: assertive and negative. Therefore, activities to support the homeland, such as gathering financial aid and political lobbying, and also activities that were directed against the newly founded republic are analysed.

The term 'diaspora' will be here used in its broader sense, as proposed by G. Sheffer<sup>2</sup>, understanding this term to mean an ethno-national diaspora, and not in the more specific and detailed approach offered by R. Cohen and W. Safran,

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<sup>2</sup> Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora politics. At home abroad* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

where a diaspora corresponds to several specific criteria.<sup>3</sup> The Latvian diaspora after World War II will be fully correspondent with these more specific criteria, while for the communities of Latvians abroad before World War II, the term is certainly best applicable in its broader sense.

The main characteristics of an ethno-national diaspora need to be kept in mind and used as reference points to identify the changes wrought by this period of transition and change: the intensity of ties with the homeland; the institutional character of such ties; the complexity of the organisational structure; the ties with the co-nationals in other geographic areas; and common goals and activities<sup>4</sup>

The Latvian community in the USA is in the foreground of this study (although where possible examples from other countries are given), as it was the largest and also the most organised of the Latvian diaspora communities at the time. The same has been the case as regards previous research in this topic: the Latvian diaspora in the USA has received by far the most attention. Ēriks Jēkabsons has studied U.S. Latvians' attitude towards Latvia's statehood after 1918,<sup>5</sup> also in the context of the relations between Latvia and the USA.<sup>6</sup> Biographical works on important proactive U.S. Latvian public figures of that time period have been published,<sup>7</sup> as well as several books combining both memories and documentary sources.<sup>8</sup> Several researchers have addressed the history of Latvians living in Brazil, including the time period before the mass immigration of Latvian Baptists in the 1920s and the establishment of the well-known colonies "Vārpa" and "Palma" in the state of São Paulo.<sup>9</sup>

In preparing this study, documents from the Latvian State Historical Archive of the National Archives of Latvia have mainly been used. The most important information source is the correspondence of Latvian diplomatic missions in Great Britain and France with a number of diaspora Latvian organisations.<sup>10</sup> This cor-

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Cohen, "Four phases of Diaspora Studies," in *The Routledge Diaspora Studies Reader*, ed. Klaus Stierstorfer, Janet Wilson (London; New York: Routledge, 2018), 19; William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies. Myths of Homeland and Return," in *The Routledge Diaspora Studies Reader*, ed. Klaus Stierstorfer, Janet Wilson (London; New York: Routledge, 2018), 5–6.

<sup>4</sup> Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora politics. At home abroad* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 73–99.

<sup>5</sup> Ēriks Jēkabsons, "Latvieši Amerikas Savienotajās Valstīs 1918.–1922. gadā: attieksme pret Latvijas valsti," *Latvijas Vēsture*, no. 3 (2013): 22–35; Ēriks Jēkabsons, "Latvieši Amerikas Savienotajās Valstīs 1918.–1922. gadā: attieksme pret Latvijas valsti," *Latvijas Vēsture*, no. 1/2 (2014): 29–37.

<sup>6</sup> Ēriks Jēkabsons, *Latvijas un Amerikas Savienoto Valstu attiecības 1918.–1922. gadā* (Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> Austra Truce, *Mācītāja Kārļa Podiņa dzīves gājums, 1872–1944* (Nujorka: [s.n.], 1944); Osvalds Akmentiņš, *Lielais kurzemnieks Amerikā* ([s.l.]: Gaujas apgāds, 1944).

<sup>8</sup> Osvalds Akmentiņš, Lidija Bērziņa, *Latvijas ideja Amerikā: Amerikas Latviešu tautiskās savienības 50 gadi, 1918–1968* (Bostona: Amerikas Latviešu tautiskā savienība, 1969); Osvalds Akmentiņš, *Es solījos atriebt* (Rīga: Gaujas apgāds, 1991); Sandra Bondarevska, *Pētersoni Īrijā* (Rīga: Vesta LK, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Nora Vilmāne, *Latvieši Brazīlijā. Vārpas kolonija* (Rīga: Madris, 2019); Jānis Rimšāns, "Brazīlijas latviešu sabiedriskā dzīve (1890–1940)," *Latvijas Arhīvi*, no. 2 (2010): 118–164.

<sup>10</sup> Collection no. 2575 (Latvian diplomatic and consular missions abroad).

respondence contains information about the flow of donations to Latvia, as well as more general information about the living conditions and political mood of Latvians in different countries. To a lesser extent, but also significant, correspondence on similar issues with Latvians abroad is also stored in the collection of documents of the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia.<sup>11</sup>

## BRIEF CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LATVIAN DIASPORA IN 1918

Only very general and often partly assumed information is available as to the numbers of Latvians living abroad right before or after World War I. Calculations often differ widely. The most reasonable hypothesis as of today is that directly before World War I there were up to 300,000<sup>12</sup> or even more Latvians living outside Latvia (there was a total of 1 318 600 Latvians in Latvia as of January 1914<sup>13</sup>). The number of Latvians living abroad includes also about 225,000<sup>14</sup> Latvians living in other territories of the Russian Empire, outside the later territory of the Republic of Latvia. These Latvians and their activities are not analysed in this article, as this group was altogether different in their composition and character and, during and after the war, in completely different circumstances than Latvians in Western Europe, South and North Americas and Australia.

It is evident that the largest diaspora community (outside the Russian Empire not analysed here) was that of the USA, where at the time of World War I up to 50,000 Latvians had taken up their residence. The main areas of settlement were Boston, San Francisco and its vicinity, New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. The first considerable numbers of migrants had arrived in late 19th century. In 1897, there were about 1,000 Latvians in the US, but by 1900 this number had swelled to 4,000, with their reasons for emigrating being mostly economic. An even more marked increase is seen after the revolution of 1905 in Latvia, when a large number of people emigrated from Latvia for political reasons.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, Latvians who came to the United States were very different in their ideological beliefs and value orientation with two major groups of views clearly discernible within the diversity of opinions. Some immigrants were strongly religiously oriented (mostly Baptists) and their activities were mainly centred

<sup>11</sup> Collection no. 2574 (Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia).

<sup>12</sup> Jānis Bērziņš, "Latvieši pasaulē 1918.–1940. gadā," in *Vēsturnieks profesors Dr. phil. LZA ārzenju loceklis Andrievs Ezergailis: biobibliogrāfija, darbabiēdru vēltījumi 70 gadu jubilejā* (Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2000), 65.

<sup>13</sup> Jēkabsons, Ēriks, "Latvijas iedzīvotāju skaita un sastāva izmaiņas militāro un politisko procesu iespaidā 1914.–1920. gadā – priekšstati un realitāte," in *Karš un sabiedrība Latvijā 1914–1920*, ed. Ēriks Jēkabsons (Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, 2021), 17.

<sup>14</sup> Jēkabsons, *Latvijas iedzīvotāju skaita un sastāva izmaiņas*, 17–18.

<sup>15</sup> On the events of 1905 in Latvia, see, for example: Līga Lapa, "The 1905 Revolution in Latvia," in *Latvia and Latvians*, Vol. II (Rīga: Latvijas Zinātņu akadēmija, 2018), 377–405.

around religious organisations and religious values. By far the largest count of immigrants, however, were supporters of socialist ideas of different types and intensity.<sup>16</sup> Some of those who emigrated in late 19th century were supporters of the "New Current", a broad leftist social and political movement that followed the First Latvian National Awakening in the second half of the 19th century. But by far the largest number of immigrants were left-wing political refugees who had left Latvia after the events of 1905, among them a number of highly radical leftists.

It is also to be noted that some cases are known when immigration into USA happened not directly from Latvia, but after a longer or shorter sojourn in some other host country, usually in Europe. Such cases are known among Latvians in California.<sup>17</sup> Also, a notable diaspora member in Philadelphia, Ernests Minka, arrived in the USA in 1916 with his whole family after almost 20 years residence in London, United Kingdom.<sup>18</sup>

Some Latvians lived also in several Western European countries, mainly the United Kingdom, France, Switzerland, and also Scandinavian countries.

In South America, the oldest Latvian settlement was the Rio Novo farmers' colony in Brazil, established in 1890 by 25 families from Riga.<sup>19</sup> Little information about the life and history of this colony has survived to today. The main wave of emigration to Brazil, however, happened only in 1920s when a large number of Baptists emigrated to Brazil for religious reasons. As to other South American countries, a notable number of Latvians arrived in Argentina after 1905. Latvians founded their colony "Austra" ("The morning star") of about 250 people in Patagonia in 1907. More Latvians arrived in Argentina only in the 1920s, also the first organisations there were founded only in late 1920s: the Latvian Society in Argentina (1928) and the Buenos Aires Latvian Club (1930).<sup>20</sup>

Canadas' first Latvian organisation was the Latvian Lutheran congregation in Josephsburg in Alberta province, founded in 1897. In 1903, the congregation built a church, which was also utilised by a German congregation. The Winnipeg Latvian Friendship Society was founded in 1911, and in 1913 it began publishing its newspaper "Kanādietis" (The Canadian). Latvians settled primarily in the provinces of Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario, mostly geographically widely separated, on farmsteads.<sup>21</sup> There could have been up to 10,000 Latvians in Canada in 1920.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Helga Zālīte, "Exploring the Library of Latvian Socialists in San Francisco, California: Activities of the Early Latvian Political Emigration, 1905–1917," *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, no. 2 (2014): 18.

<sup>17</sup> Zālīte, *Exploring the Library of Latvian Socialists*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> Osvalds Akmentiņš, *Es solījos atriebt* (Rīga: Gaujas apgāds, 1991), 98.

<sup>19</sup> Ilgvars Veigners, *Latvieši Rietumzemēs* (Rīga: Drukātava, 2009), 494–495.

<sup>20</sup> Ilgvars Ozols, Mudīte Restberga-Zalta, *Latvieši Arģentīnā: īsas ziņas par latviešiem Čīlē un Urugvajā* (Buenos Aires: Imanta, 2001), 5–10.

<sup>21</sup> Osvalds Akmentins, *Latvians in Bicentennial America* ([Waverly, Iowa]: Latvju Grāmata, 1976), 230–231.

<sup>22</sup> Latvian National Archives, Latvian State Historical archive (Latvijas Nacionālais arhīvs, Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs - LNA LVVA), 2575–7–60, 259.

Australia, the same as other host countries, saw the first significant immigration wave of Latvians in the 1890s: by 1891, there were about 158 Latvian-born persons living in Australia, primarily Jews.<sup>23</sup> A greater number of people arrived in Australia after the events of the 1905 revolution in Latvia and most of them settled near Sydney. The first Latvian organisation in Australia — the Lettish Association of Sydney — was founded in 1913, and a few years later similar organisations were founded in Brisbane and possibly in Melbourne. Most of these early organisations were short-lived and new, more permanent ones were founded in the late 1920s.<sup>24</sup>

All in all, apart from a steady small stream of individual emigrants acting on economic or adventurous reasons, two main emigration waves are clearly distinguishable. The first significant Latvian communities outside Latvia emerged at the end of the 19th century, with the second wave following in the beginning of the 20th century, particularly after the events of 1905 Revolution in Latvia. As already mentioned, some further migration between these waves, particularly from European countries to USA is also observable.

The characteristics of Latvians abroad at the time are most clearly seen by considering the waves of immigration by which these communities were formed and the reasons for each wave, which give an insight into who these people were – both socially and in regard of their political views. In the second half of the 19th century – at the end of the century Latvians emigrated in search of religious (Baptist) or political ("New current") freedom, as well as in search of a better economic life. The second great wave of emigration followed the events of 1905, when the reasons for emigration were expressly political and consequently there were many left-wing Latvians among the emigrants.

#### INCREASE OF ORGANISATIONAL ACTIVITY

The process of diaspora organisation had already begun prior to the year 1918 and also prior to World War I. Some organisations were in existence in Canada and Australia in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Also in the USA, the first Latvian societies were founded already at the end of the 19th century. The Boston Latvian Society was founded in 1889, and a few years later, in 1896 the first Latvian periodical in the US, "Amerikas Vēstnesis" ("The American Herald"), began to be published. Latvian congregations of various denominations were founded in Philadelphia (1883), Boston (1884), New York (1896), and elsewhere.

The Philadelphia Society of Free Letts was founded on February 22, 1892 and is the oldest Latvian diaspora organisation still operating today and has functioned

<sup>23</sup> Aldis L. Putniņš, "Early Latvian Settlers in Australia: Setting the Scene," in *Early Latvian Settlers in Australia*, ed. Aldis L. Putniņš (South Yarra: Sterling Star, 2010), 10.

<sup>24</sup> Aldis Putniņš, "Pirmā latviešu bibliotēka Austrālijā," in *Archīvs: raksti par latviskām problēmām*, 20. sēj. (Melburna: Pasaules brīvo latviešu apvienība; K. Zariņa fonds, 1980), 139–141.

without interruption since its founding. The goals of this society were to render assistance to Latvians, while at the same time promoting education and the preservation of Latvian culture in diaspora conditions. In addition, the oldest Latvian library in the US is still part of the Societies' structure.<sup>25</sup> During World War I about 2,000 Latvians lived in Philadelphia and already several other organisations had been founded. Of course, not all these people were socially active and participated in community life. The Philadelphia Society of Free Letts were the proud owners of their own building since 1904. In 1917, there were 150 active members in the organisation.<sup>26</sup> At the time of the war and also in 1918, most of its members were political refugees, socialists who had left Latvia after the events of 1905 and their political views in the society were in the majority and determined the society's attitude towards events. (This situation changed only in the 1950s.)

The period around and directly after the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia saw a wave of activity in creating the organisational network indispensable for providing an answer to the new circumstances. The first successful attempt to create one common head organisation for all USA Latvians is perhaps one of the most noteworthy episodes in the whole process of internal organisation, as it clearly testifies to a certain level of community organisation achieved.

On September 7, 1918, the American Latvian National Union (Amerikas latviešu tautiskā savienība, ALTS) was founded in Boston and the members of its branches convened for the First American Latvian Congress in New York on January 3–5, 1919.<sup>27</sup> The second and third ALTS congresses followed soon in September 1919 and September 1920, respectively. ALTS quickly became the Latvian central organisation in the United States for the nationally-minded part of the diaspora. Following the Second Congress of the ALTS, the seat of its Central Board was moved from Boston to Philadelphia. In 1920, the Philadelphia branch of the ALTS had 140 members<sup>28</sup> and the organisation was generally very active.

A number of new organisations were established for the specific purpose of collecting funds for relief work. Already during the war, the American Red Cross Lettish Auxiliary was founded.<sup>29</sup> On 20 September 1917, the Lettish War Association of America was founded with the aim of "helping, supporting and providing for the Lettish people in any way"<sup>30</sup>; however, this organisation was apparently not particularly active later. The Lettish Relief Committee was active in Winnipeg, Canada in 1919.<sup>31</sup> In Nova Odessa, Brazil, the Latvian National Relief Society was established (it formally considered itself part of the American-Latvian National League, one of the biggest Latvian organisations in the USA at

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<sup>25</sup> Niklāss Lazdiņš, "Vecākā latviešu grāmatu krātuve ASV," in *Archīvs: raksti par latviskām problēmām*, 20. sēj. (Melburna: Pasaules brīvo latviešu apvienība; K. Zariņa fonds, 1980), 135–138.

<sup>26</sup> Roberts Līdums, *Latvieši – Brīvības meklētāji* (Vilmingtona: Autora izdevums, 1973), 8–28.

<sup>27</sup> Līdums, *Latvieši – Brīvības meklētāji*, 56.

<sup>28</sup> Līdums, *Latvieši – Brīvības meklētāji*, 56–58.

<sup>29</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–202, 49–52.

<sup>30</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–202, 62–63.

<sup>31</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–157, 2.

the time;<sup>32</sup> a similar society was also active in the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil,<sup>33</sup> as well as the Latvian youth society "Auseklītis" in Nova Odessa, Brazil.<sup>34</sup> On 23 June 1920, the Relief Committee for Latvian Refugees in Bern, Switzerland was established with the aim of collecting funds for the relief of Latvian refugees in Switzerland.<sup>35</sup>

The boost of activity in organising was not limited to the organisations only. Several examples of individual cases are also of importance to show here, as they highlight examples of how diaspora members who had lived outside Latvia for a very considerable time and had, as it were, successfully integrated into the societies of their host countries, became actively involved in the homeland events as a result of the War and proclamation of a national state.

There are several such examples, the most prominent being John Jones (Latvian name prior to emigration – Jānis Jankovskis) in Canada and Charles Peterson in Ireland. The aforementioned Jones was a producer and dealer in fish in the province of Alberta. Born in Jelgava, he had lived outside Latvia, mainly in the United States and Canada, for thirty years, apparently leaving Latvia around 1890 or a little earlier, at the age of eighteen.<sup>36</sup> After the declaration of independence of the Republic of Latvia, he actively corresponded with the Latvian embassies in Paris and London,<sup>37</sup> provided information about Latvians in Canada, disseminated information about Latvia in Canada, collected donations to support Latvia's needy and generally supported the idea of Latvian statehood. Charles Peterson<sup>38</sup>, on the other hand, had lived in Ireland for fifty years (that is, since about 1870) and was a co-owner of a large company, Kapp & Peterson, Ltd. in Dublin, who made smoking pipes. Peterson expressed his sincere enthusiasm for the establishment of the Latvian state, wished good luck to the embassy and later visited it, and also sent a 10-pound donation to the embassy in London to use at its discretion.<sup>39</sup>

A less typical, but vivid example of the sense of belonging to the newly established Latvian state that arose in Latvians living abroad is the case of Eduards Ābelškalns (in the Latvian passport – Ābeļkalns, b. 1888). This Latvian served in the Australian Provost Corps, had reached the rank of sergeant and in August 1919 was in Great Britain with his unit. In a letter to the Latvian Embassy in Great Britain, Ābelškalns described his wish not to return to Australia, but to go to Latvia, although he found that the service was going very well and the Australian government promised him bright prospects, or "honey pots" in the writer's words<sup>40</sup>. It is not known how Ābelškalns arrived in Latvia, but on De-

<sup>32</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-1-150, 13.

<sup>33</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-1-393, 22.

<sup>34</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-1-393, 53.

<sup>35</sup> LNA LVVA, 2498-1-70, 35.

<sup>36</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-1-157, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Sk. saraksti: LNA LVVA, 2575-1-157; LNA LVVA, 2575-1-385.

<sup>38</sup> For more on Peterson family, see: Sandra Bondarevskā, *Pētersoni Īrijā* (Rīga: Vesta LK, 2019).

<sup>39</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-1-18, 6-10.

<sup>40</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-1-208, 68-69.



ember 1, 1919, he wrote to the legation already from the 1st Kurzeme Division in Latvia: “As you can see, I am already serving in the Latvian Army and although my life here is not like it was in the Australian Army, but I think of it now that I am working for our own people. That's why we need to be at peace with what we have”<sup>41</sup> Apparently, he survived the war, as it is known that Ābelškalns lived in Riga after the war and in 1937 was engaged in buying local fruit in Latvia and exporting it abroad.<sup>42</sup>

Such cases of returning to Latvia to personally take part in the war in the Latvian army were rather exceptional cases and were probably very few. In the majority of cases foreign Latvians supported the Latvian state from afar, operating in their host countries. Both the sudden activity of organising and the individual responses of the cases sketched above combine to show the overall galvanising effect that the great changes at home had on the diaspora communities.

#### INFORMATION EXCHANGE WITH THE HOMELAND

The exchange of information between the homeland and the diaspora is of great importance, as the success of information exchange contributes greatly to the level of understanding between the two parties involved. It was even so much more important in the particular circumstances of Latvia after the proclamation of its statehood in 1918. During the War of independence the situation in Latvia sometimes changed not daily, but hourly and events were of grave importance and potentially could influence the very existence of the state itself. On the other hand, the attitudes displayed by diaspora members could not be otherwise but interlinked about what they knew about the circumstances in the home country.

With the postal and telegraph system to Latvia still only partly functional or not functional at all during the War of Independence, communication with the diplomatic representatives in Europe was not only a logical, but also the most practical solution. Extensive correspondence between diaspora and these diplomatic missions (and later, when they were established, also others) is preserved in the archives until today and clearly testifies to the important role the representatives had in the information flow between the diaspora and the homeland and also to the considerable lack of knowledge about the particulars of the statehood at home among diaspora people.

For the diaspora, the availability and further dispersion of information in host countries was important both as a means to circulate information among the community itself and also, as a part of information campaign for political reasons, to the so host countries' societies.

**Latvian Information Bureaus.** After the establishment of the Republic of Latvia, state institutions also focused on promoting the dissemination of in-

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<sup>41</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–208, 17–18.

<sup>42</sup> *Valdības Vēstnesis*, December 24 (1937).

formation. Official Latvian Information Bureaus were established. In August 1919, there were a total of six information offices: Latopress in Riga (a structure of the Latvian government), information offices in Stockholm, Copenhagen, London, Paris, and Basel. The offices in Stockholm, Copenhagen, London, and Paris were closely linked to the Latvian diplomatic missions in these countries.<sup>43</sup>

Information offices played a major role in providing foreign Latvians with information on what was happening in Latvia. One of the methods was to send to those diaspora individuals with whom a successful correspondence exchange had been established in some other matter, Latvian periodicals, such as the magazines "Ekonomists" ("The Economist"), "The Latvian Economist", "Ilustrēts Žurnāls" ("An Illustrated Journal"), or various brochures, such as "Facts about Latvia" for sale and distribution to other local Latvians in the host country. Such magazines and brochures were sent to, for example, the United States,<sup>44</sup> Canada<sup>45</sup> and Brazil. The price of magazines ranged from 25 to 40 cents.<sup>46</sup>

The flow of information in the opposite direction was also important, namely, the information collected by foreign Latvians about publications concerning Latvia in foreign newspapers was sent to Riga in the form of newspaper clippings. The collection of such excerpts was mostly done by the Latvians themselves and was not too systematic, sending only certain excerpts with especially important articles to the Latvian diplomatic representatives. For example, in December 1919, J. Ozols from New York sent a page from the New York newspaper "The Evening Post Magazine" to the Latvian delegation in Paris<sup>47</sup> with an extensive article about K. Ulmanis, who was then Prime Minister of the Provisional government of Latvia.<sup>48</sup>

**Information publications.** Several information periodicals about the Baltic States were published abroad, not counting Latvian-language periodicals for diaspora Latvians themselves. One of such periodicals expressly meant to inform non-Latvians was "The Baltic Review". It came out in French and English. The magazine was published in English in the United Kingdom from August 1920<sup>49</sup> and in French by Latvian journalist and writer Artūrs Tupiņš in Paris, France. The publication of the magazine was also financially supported by the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Latvian Legation in France.<sup>50</sup> The Baltic Review was distributed and used not only in Europe, but also in the United States<sup>51</sup> and elsewhere. It was useful, for example, in informing Brazilian civil servants about Latvia.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>43</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-7-16, 146-147.

<sup>44</sup> For example, ALTS. See: LNA LVVA, 2575-7-64, 80-88.

<sup>45</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-1-385, 4.

<sup>46</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-7-64, 88.

<sup>47</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-7-15, 53.

<sup>48</sup> "A talk with Ulmanis of Latvia," *The Evening Post Magazine* (New York), December 13 (1919).

<sup>49</sup> The Baltic Review, *Brīvā Zeme*, August 19, 1920.

<sup>50</sup> Sk. LNA LVVA, 2575-7-68, 154-195.

<sup>51</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-1-156, 25.

<sup>52</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-7-58, 1.

A useful tool for disseminating information about Latvia was also various small-format brochures in English, French, etc. in languages important for international circulation, as well as various visual aids: photographic reproductions, drawings, maps, postcards, etc. In Europe, several such brochures were published by publicist A. Ozolina-Krauze in Switzerland, for example, the brochure “Latvian National Council against German Policy in Latvia”,<sup>53</sup> as well as a series of articles on Latvian freedom and the political situation between Germany and Russia, consisting of five articles in German and five in French.<sup>54</sup>

An insight into the range of information publications available in the USA in 1920 is provided, for example, by the offer of the Central Committee of the American Latvian National Union to purchase the following books and visual aids: K. Balodis’ book “The Creation of Latvia”; Provisional Government edition “Objectives of the Provisional Government of Latvia”; the memorandum submitted by the Latvian delegation to the Peace Conference in English and a large-format map of Latvia.<sup>55</sup>

Some of the brochures, cards, postcards, etc. were received by diaspora Latvians from Latvia, with Latvian diplomatic missions acting as sending intermediaries. For example, in September 1919, the embassy in Paris sent Boston Latvians for distribution “25 artists’ cards from the lives of Latvian riflemen and 50 cards with Latvia’s state borders”,<sup>56</sup> most likely postcards. But as such materials were often not available in sufficient quantities, as well as their transfer taking considerable time and costs, such materials from Latvia were only a small part of all. Especially in the USA, most of the propaganda publications were printed by Latvians on the spot, based on the original sample, which was often only one copy in the USA. In this way, in December 1919, the ALTS Central Committee printed, for example, the brochure of Professor K. Balodis “The Establishment of Latvia”.<sup>57</sup> The rarest brochures, such as the brochure “Proclamation of the State of Latvia” published in Riga in 1918, the Latvian Legation in Paris was willing to send to the United States for use as a model, but asked it to be returned after use, as they also had only that one copy.<sup>58</sup>

Texts suitable for informing the public but available originally only in Latvian were also translated into English by Latvians in the United States and then distributed.<sup>59</sup>

**Lack of information.** A constant problem in information work was the lack of information, unreliability, and the very long time it took to receive news. With technologies like radio and telephone still in their infancy, the printed press was by far the main medium for informing masses at the time. The world market of news was dominated by large news agencies, who supplied news to the newspa-

<sup>53</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–15, 8–12.

<sup>54</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–15, 12 o.p.

<sup>55</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–60, 256.

<sup>56</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–9, 112–113.

<sup>57</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–16, 19.

<sup>58</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–16, 12–13.

<sup>59</sup> LNA LVVA, 2574–4–133, 126.

pers and accordingly their policies and mutual agreements largely determined what news was disseminated through these official channels.<sup>60</sup> The other possible way of information exchange besides physically sending written or printed material to one's correspondents was telegraphy. However, sending telegrams was a costly procedure, the amount of text to be easily submitted was relatively small and the service was not always reliable. Even in Europe, telegrams arrived irregularly, and the time spent on their journeys was often unpredictable, often some of the telegrams sent from Copenhagen were delayed and arrived in Switzerland only after several others, which had been sent later, had already been received. The telegram from Copenhagen to Switzerland could take from 16 hours to 4 days.<sup>61</sup> Other times, messages on this route could be delayed for up to a week or more.<sup>62</sup> Incoming news with a week's delay was often no longer relevant, especially in the rapidly changing conditions of the War of Independence in Latvia, when the situation could have completely changed in a few days.

In addition, delays were not a problem for only one country or institution and did not improve during the period under review. In 1921, the Latvian Legation in France noted that telegrams from Riga arrived either too late or that the information contained therein was not interesting to the international public. As an example, the Latvian diplomatic representative in Paris, O. Grosvalds, mentioned the news of changes in the departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: a telegram with this information arrived at the Legation in Paris "exactly one day after we had read it in all Latvian newspapers which had spent 5 days underway"<sup>63</sup>

It was also difficult to provide the visual aids needed for effective information dissemination, such as photographs depicting the devastation of war in Latvia or the course of the war, portraits of Latvian statesmen, and so on. Latvians from various parts of the United States, as well as from Brazil, repeatedly sent requests to the embassies in Paris and London to procure and send them such visual aids. Embassies were often forced to refuse or postpone the request because the materials were not available to them or, for example, were already "busy" – handed over to various French newspapers for publication and had to wait for the original images to be returned.<sup>64</sup>

The lack of information was a hindering factor not only in the dissemination of current news in the host countries, but also critically needed for informing diaspora Latvians in their communities and influencing them to support the idea of Latvian statehood. This issue was brought to the attention of the Information Bureaus repeatedly by diaspora Latvians from USA, Australia, Brazil, and Canada. Some Latvians even blamed the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the government for not understanding the need for current news and the importance

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<sup>60</sup> On the system of news distribution through news agencies, see: Heidi J. S. Tworek, *News from Germany. The competition to control world communications, 1900–1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 45–69.

<sup>61</sup> LNA LVA, 2176–1v–273, 71.

<sup>62</sup> LNA LVA, 2176–1v–273, 91.

<sup>63</sup> LNA LVVA, 2574–4–121, 78.

<sup>64</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–16, 12.

of information dissemination abroad as such.<sup>65</sup> A more plausible explanation, however, is that the responsible services of the newly formed state simply did not have the capacity or material resources to provide information and organise public relations campaigns on a larger scale. The difficulties in exchanging information are also related to the overall world situation in communications and the market of news at the time. Latvian institutions and individuals often operated, as it were, on the margins of the global news network.

#### ACTIVITIES TO HELP THE HOMELAND

Activities by the Latvian diaspora to help the homeland took many and diverse forms. Such episodes as giving information to the Latvian state institutions about the Latvian co-nationals in one country or another, diaspora conditions, community organisation and such is not only a gold mine of information for today's historians but was also of real meaning to the state at that time. Such information helped state authorities to form at least some idea about the diaspora life and provided an opportunity to plan the involvement of the diaspora in the homeland's interests. The diaspora was also actively involved in some economic ventures with the homeland, though not always successful.

Two fields of activity – gathering of donations and sending them to the homeland and political lobbying in the host countries – merit a closer investigation as being both important for the homeland and also most actively carried out.

**Political lobbying.** One of the ways in which Latvians living abroad, and only they, could support the newly formed Latvian state was to lobby for political decisions favourable to Latvia in their host countries. Undoubtedly, the most important international political issue and accordingly the main task for the diaspora political lobby was to achieve international *de jure* recognition of the Republic of Latvia, and first of all from the USA.

To a certain extent, all information dissemination activities carried out by Latvians in their host countries were part of the political lobby, as they were means to provide the support of the general public necessary for successful political lobbying.

Latvians in the United States themselves were also aware of this interconnection of efforts. Pastor Kārlis Buchroth, head of the American Red Cross Lettish<sup>66</sup> Auxiliary in the United States, wrote: "For this people [Americans] to get to hear more about our old dear Fatherland, publication [of information] is needed to be carried out far and wide and with all means available, not only as up to now has been done in Latvian newspapers, but in English [language] press publications. We ourselves know and are acquainted with Latvia, by such means non-Latvians

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<sup>65</sup> For example, LNA LVA, 2176–1v–273, 99; LNA LVA, 2176–1v–273, 162; LNA LVA, 2176–1v–273, 167.

<sup>66</sup> Meaning – Latvian. At the time this germanised form of the word was often used instead of "Latvian" in English language.

will also get to read about the sad fate of our country. [...] through such activities some senators in the American Congress will be alerted and will take up the talk about the recognition and support of Latvia's autonomy"<sup>67</sup>

However, the Latvian diasporas' activities were not limited to dissemination of information. They also initiated or participated in a number of direct political lobby activities. The lobbying activities of Walter M. Chandler, a member of the US Congress, was one political action the diaspora took part in. Chandler, on behalf of the Baltic governments and for a certain fee, tried to settle the issue of de jure recognition of the Baltic States through political lobby activities. Despite some divisions of opinions which resulted in the Latvian government paying only part of the planned amount for Chandler's services,<sup>68</sup> Chandler was quite active in the USA.<sup>69</sup>

An example of cooperation activity is that Chandler, together with ALTS chairman Christopher Roos, attended a meeting of "Central European and non-Russian" nationalities in Washington, where participants agreed on a joint programme of further activities in promoting Latvia's interests.<sup>70</sup> Chandler also participated in certain events organised by Latvians with the aim of raising funds for the war victims in Latvia.<sup>71</sup>

Chandler's activities were also used for general informative purposes to raise public awareness of Latvia's political requirements. For example, Chandler's speech to the Committee on Ways and Means in Washington on January 19, 1920 (about a possible US loan) was afterwards printed in 250,000 copies and widely distributed in the United States.<sup>72</sup> Chandler himself had offered to print a million copies of this brochure in a large edition, which, together with the dissemination throughout the country by mail, would cost "only" ten thousand US dollars, of which Latvians would have to cover a fifth or 2000 dollars.<sup>73</sup> Of course, such sums were not at the disposal of diaspora Latvians in the United States, nor were they available to the Provisional Government for this purpose and the offer went unused.

In their political activities, Latvians in the United States also sought allies of other nationalities. The participation of Latvians in the American Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian Union, which was founded in May 1919 after the rally of these four nationalities in the famous Carnegie Hall on May 25, was significant. The Union consisted of four member organisations: The American Estonian League, ALTS, The Lithuanian National Council of America, and The Ukrainian National Committee of the United States. The tasks of the Union were: to help the American people and government to better understand the political,

<sup>67</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–9, 118–120.

<sup>68</sup> For more on agreement with W. Chandler, see: Jēkabsons, *Latvijas un Amerikas Savienoto Valstu attiecības 1918.–1922. gadā*, 117–119.

<sup>69</sup> Jēkabsons, *Latvijas un Amerikas Savienoto Valstu attiecības 1918.–1922. gadā*, 401–408.

<sup>70</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–10, 3.

<sup>71</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–64, 63.

<sup>72</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–64, 47.

<sup>73</sup> LNA LVVA, 2574–4–15, 137–138.

economic, and social conditions in Eastern Europe; urge the US Government and the main Allied countries to recognise the sovereignty of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine; to help protect the four republics from aggression and invasion by Polish and German imperialists and Bolsheviks; and to promote trade between the United States and Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine.<sup>74</sup>

The first "Congress of the Four Nations", which took place on 17–18 November 1919 was comprised of 24 representatives of each nationality. Latvians were represented by three members of the ALTS Central Committee, one Siberian Latvian representative, one delegate from the ALTS Chicago and Cleveland branches, as well as six delegates from New York, Philadelphia and Boston each.<sup>75</sup>

The "Congress of the Four Nations" passed a number of political documents. On the first day, the Congress formulated and sent a telegram to US President Woodrow Wilson asking whether the right to self-determination applies to the republics of the former Russian Empire and inviting the President to speak publicly on the steps to be taken towards recognising Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine.<sup>76</sup> The Congress also passed a series of resolutions, which were sent to the President of the United States, the Secretary of State, members of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The most significant of these declarations in the context of Latvia's interests were the "Resolution on Recognition", which required the United States to grant full diplomatic recognition to the four republics, and the "Sovereignty Resolution", which required the United States to recognise only such government of Russia, which would entail recognising the sovereignty of the four republics. Also important was the "Resolution on Trade" which called for the establishment of direct trade relations between the United States and the four republics of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine.<sup>77</sup>

The Union of Four Nationalities also drew up a work plan for further political action to achieve recognition of the independence of these republics, such as an audience with President Wilson and further hearings in the US Senate. The Union's plan also included extending the Union's activities to other Eastern European republics.<sup>78</sup>

It should also be noted that extensive activities with similar political goals as the Latvian diaspora were also carried out by, for example, the significantly larger Lithuanian diaspora in the United States, especially the American Lithuanian National Council.<sup>79</sup>

In other countries apart from the USA, political lobbying by Latvians took place only occasionally and as a result of private initiative. For example, in Canada, a Latvian diaspora member John Jones (assumed name upon settling

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<sup>74</sup> LNA LVVA, 2574–4–12, 49.

<sup>75</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–11, 132.

<sup>76</sup> LNA LVVA, 2574–4–12, 50.

<sup>77</sup> LNA LVVA, 2574–4–12, 51–54.

<sup>78</sup> LNA LVVA, 2574–4–12, 51–56.

<sup>79</sup> More on Lithuanian activities, see, for example: Albert N. Tarulis, *American-Baltic Relations 1918-1922: The Struggle over Recognition* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1965).

in Canada) tried to inform politicians about Latvia and what was happening in the Baltic States to the best of his ability by distributing paper-based information materials about Latvia to the Alberta Provincial Government and several lower executive bodies in Alberta. He also received a written thank you from a member of the Alberta Provincial Legislative Assembly for the materials submitted.<sup>80</sup>

**Financial help.** As is observable already from the names and fields of activities of the many organisations, the establishment of which was described previously, humanitarian aid for the homeland was perhaps the most voluminous part of diaspora Latvians' activities to help the homeland. There are some examples of sending aid by U.S. Latvians to refugees and victims of war. Already during the war,<sup>81</sup> several calls for providing assistance to fellow Latvians in their homeland also appeared in the U.S. Latvian press in 1917 and in the summer of 1918.<sup>82</sup> However, the relief work grew significantly both in volume and circle of people involved after the independence of the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed.

Foreign Latvians used various means to collect donations for aiding Latvia.<sup>83</sup> They often held various social events, balls, and draws, with the proceeds going to donations. Aid to Latvia was mostly sent in the form of money, especially from more remote locations such as the USA, as sending physical items (clothes etc.) was more costly; in addition, during the uncertain period when hostilities raged in the Baltics, it was initially nearly impossible or, at the very least, unpredictable. Sending material aid became much easier in early 1920, when a direct shipping line linking the USA and Liepāja was unveiled.<sup>84</sup>

After the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia and the establishment of the first diplomatic representations abroad, sending the collected funds to Latvia via diplomatic representations was the safest way. They acted as intermediaries both in the cases of private monetary remittances (for example, when the money was sent to relatives in Latvia) and general donations. The sender had to send the desired amount of money as a cheque either in francs (if addressed to the legation in Paris) or in pounds (if addressed to the legation in London). Legations notified the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the received amount and the intended recipient; the Ministry paid out the amount requested according to the exchange rate of that day, converting the money into Latvian roubles.<sup>85</sup>

By far the largest part of the donations were general and were addressed either generally, for example, for the people in need in Latvia, for war victims, for orphans in Latvia etc., or they were addressed to a particular charity organisation.

<sup>80</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–385, 45.

<sup>81</sup> Līdums, *Latvieši – Brīvības meklētāji*, 42.

<sup>82</sup> Akmentiņš, *Es solījos atriebt*, 114–115.

<sup>83</sup> For more detailed description of collecting and transferring the funds, as well as to recipient organisations, see: Kristīne Bekere, “Financial Help for War Victims and Latvian State Institutions by Latvians Abroad, 1917–1921,” in *Acta Humanitaria Universitatis Saulensis Vol. 27: The Region: History, Culture, Language* (2020): 16–28.

<sup>84</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–361, 32.

<sup>85</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–64, 52–53.



Of the charity organisations, the four larger were the Latvian Women's Relief Corps, Latvian Red Cross, Latvian War Invalids Society and the Society for the Reevacuation of Latvian Refugees. These were the main recipients of the donations.

It is practically impossible to calculate the total amount of donations made by foreign Latvians, as it was sent to Latvia in various forms, to various recipients, and the calculations in the available archival sources are given in different currencies. Also, the currency exchange rate to Latvian roubles was highly unstable at the time and considerable changes could occur almost daily, rendering the calculation of the purchasing power of the money sent nearly impossible. It is however evident, that the amount of individual donations sent by separate individuals and organisations tended to be small or medium, but all together the amounts donated were considerable and certainly helped to alleviate the dire humanitarian situation of the time to an extent. For example, in only the first half of 1920 more than 26,000 French francs had been sent to Latvia via the legation in Paris.<sup>86</sup>

It is important to highlight cases when financial assistance was provided not only to poor or war victims, but also to encourage some state-related functions. For example, in September 1919, the Latvian legation in Paris received 1,500 francs from Latvians in New York for the needs of the Latvian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference.<sup>87</sup> A number of donations were intended for the support of the activities of the Latvian Information Office in London<sup>88</sup>; individuals often sent small sums of money in gratitude for the informational materials received.<sup>89</sup>

From the first half of 1920 and onwards, when the freight transport and remittance systems were gradually stabilised and sending of goods became more reliable, increased activity is observable in the sending of relief packages to specific individuals, namely, friends and family of Latvians living abroad. Some Latvian organisations in the U.S. provided necessary support and actively encouraged the sending of such private donations to Latvia. In February 1920, the "Lettish bureau "Latwia"" in the USA sent out a letter addressed to about 1,500 Latvians in the USA known to the bureau at the time, informing them of the establishment of shipping traffic between the U.S. and Latvia. The announcement invited compatriots to send home the relief they had long been wanting to send to their relatives, as well as reminding them not to forget that valuable exportable trade goods were available in Latvia.<sup>90</sup> Thus, this organisation was particularly instrumental in attempting to strengthen ties between diaspora members and the homeland.

All in all, individual gift packages were much more numerous occurrences than general humanitarian donations to the state institutions or to the war victims.

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<sup>86</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-7-65, 26-27.

<sup>87</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-7-10, 86.

<sup>88</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-1-24, 4-5.

<sup>89</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-1-110, 1.

<sup>90</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575-1-329, 15.

That is also easily understandable, as motivation to help one's impoverished parents or relatives in Latvia was purely personal and regardless of one's political views or attitude towards the current form of statehood.

#### ACTIVITIES AGAINST THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA.

The ideological sentiment of the majority of Latvians living in the United States is best expressed by the following assessments of fellow diaspora Latvians living in the United States: "Latvians living in America are in their majority Bolsheviks and many do not participate in any venture that could help in the construction of Latvia or to give help to the needy in Latvia";<sup>91</sup> "Almost all Latvians living in America are ill with the Bolshevik fever. And those who have fallen to this malady are trying to harm the current Latvian [national] movement."<sup>92</sup> Similarly, a grouping was offered by a contemporary according to an adherence to one or another newspaper with certain agenda each: "Before the war, American Latvians were divided into 4 groups: 1) Social Democrats with "Strādnieks" ("The Worker")<sup>93</sup>; 2) socialist revolutionaries (mostly members of the "Union", with "Proletārietis" ("Proletarian")<sup>94</sup>; 3) anarchists with "Cīņas Balss" ("Voice of the Fight"), "Melnais Karogs" ("Black Flag"),<sup>95</sup> etc; 4) liberal nationalists with the "Amerikas Vēstnesis". The first three bodies have ceased to exist and most of their Latvian members were unable to agree with the supporters of the "Amerikas Vēstnesis".<sup>96</sup>

A similar situation, e.g., that the nationally minded Latvians were a minority in the local diaspora community, was also the case in other countries outside Europe, where most of those who left after the events of 1905 had settled: Brazil and Australia. In Brazil, the Latvian Bolsheviks "... show such hatred towards Latvia that the name of Latvia may not be mentioned in front of them, and we, who also want to help something in the restoration of Latvia, are called patriots, as if it were a name of disgrace and also our Baptists act the same. Just a few loud phrases time and time again, but no help."<sup>97</sup> A nationally minded individual from Australia, on the other hand, wrote: "I have a hard time with Latvian affairs here,

<sup>91</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–10, 88.

<sup>92</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–157, 1.

<sup>93</sup> The newspaper "Strādnieks" was published by the American socialist party (since 1919 – communist party) Latvian organisation and appeared from 1906 to 1919 in Boston. See: Edgar Anderson, M. G. Slavenas, "The Latvian and Lithuanian Press," in *The Ethnic Press in the United States*, ed. Sally M. Miller (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1987), 230–232.

<sup>94</sup> The newspaper "Proletārietis" was published by the Latvian Socialdemocrat society, later by the Federation of American Latvian Social Democratic Workers. The newspaper appeared from 1902 to mid-1917; at first in Boston, later briefly in Switzerland, again in Boston and from August 1912 in New York.

<sup>95</sup> The anarchist newspaper "Melnais karogs" appeared from 1911 to 1914, at first in Paris, later – New York.

<sup>96</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–23, 15.

<sup>97</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–150, 12–13.

because the Latvians have a Bolshevik spirit here and do not want to hear about other parties. I try to clarify to them the goal of [the Republic of] Latvia and the wishes of the Latvian people, but I have very few supporters; though there are some who are willing, they have empty pockets (...)”<sup>98</sup>

Proponents of various views with an attitude against statehood not only did not take part in activities aimed at supporting the Latvian Provisional Government, but often also actively opposed such activities by their community members. One of the most common methods used by Latvians opposed to Latvia's independence was to try to discredit nationally minded Latvian organisations and their efforts. In Nova Odessa, Brazil, in 1919, Latvian-Bolsheviks distributed printed leaflets entitled “The Statutes of the American Latvian National Union, Philadelphia chapter”.<sup>99</sup> However, instead of the real statutes, it contained a humorous text criticising the American Latvian National Union. The overall content and character of these “statutes” is well made clear of, for example, by the following points: “a. The leadership of the association consists of: smart Latvian shopkeepers, reactionary side-kicks, middle-way pedestrians<sup>100</sup> and double-sided lames; b. pub frequenters, who can show a bluish-red nose<sup>101</sup> when joining the association”.<sup>102</sup> Unfortunately, no further details are known about this rather witty propaganda leaflet, so it is only possible to guess whether these leaflets were made in Brazil on the initiative of local Latvians there, or made elsewhere and imported into Brazil. The second option seems more plausible, with the most probable origin of the leaflets being the USA. It is also impossible to tell the number of the leaflets produced and distributed.

Those opposed to Latvian statehood used every opportunity to popularise their views and hinder the efforts of Latvian state supporters, including skilfully using their mistakes or weaknesses. In connection with the not always regular announcements about receiving donations sent to Latvia, the publisher of the “Amerikas Vēstnesis”, J. Siebergs (the Latvian version of his surname – Zībergs, was also often used), notes: “There are too many here who spread rumors, make people careful and harms our whole affair”<sup>103</sup> Some of the rumours and biased information were also the result of the activities of the Baltic German nobility who had moved to the United States.<sup>104</sup>

One of the main media outlets of diaspora Latvians in the USA that was unfavourable to Latvia's statehood was the newspaper “Rīts”.<sup>105</sup> This newspaper was published in Boston from January 20, 1920, to December 30, 1922, by the Latvian Union of the American Communist Party. The newspaper was published

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<sup>98</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–70, 5.

<sup>99</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–151, 3.

<sup>100</sup> Expression meaning people that always choose the safest, middle course in disregard of right or wrong and do not have any individual beliefs and values.

<sup>101</sup> Expression used to denote a chronic drunkard.

<sup>102</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–151, 5.

<sup>103</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–16, 121.

<sup>104</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–385, 73.

<sup>105</sup> On radical activities of the newspaper “Rīts,” see: Ēriks Jēkabsons, “Latvians in United States, 1918–1922: Attitude towards Latvia,” *Istorija/History*, Vol. 114, No. 1 (2020): 20.

once a week and its editor-in-chief was Rūdolfis Zālītis. From January 1923 until 1934, the newspaper continued to be published under the title “Strādnieka rīts” (“Workers' Morning”).<sup>106</sup> The newspapers “Strādnieks” and “Rīts” were the most common periodicals among Latvians living in Canada.<sup>107</sup> This is also understandable, because the ideas presented in both of these editions were the most popular among low-skilled workers, as most Latvians living in Canada were. It stands to reason to suppose that various leaflets mentioned before and after were printed at the facilities of one or another of these newspapers, as they possessed the technical means and certainly the sentiments.

Opponents of statehood publicly circulated a number of essays outlining their accusations. The text “Reprimand to Latvians”, written in July 1920 and signed by the names Līdumnieks and Edvard Pilsums was widely distributed in New York. The article spoke very strongly against the Latvian Trade Representative in the USA Kārlis Ozols, the consul and the Latvian government as such, calling it the “Latvian People's Inquisitor”, united with “German barons, conspiracies of large industrialists and the colonial-political whip of England”. The text also accused the Provisional Government of Latvia of “dishonest exploitation of Latvian emigrants” and called on compatriots in the United States not to send any goods or money to Latvia through current Latvian representatives under any circumstances.<sup>108</sup> It is not known what exact circulation of this text had been printed, but it was apparently considerably widespread, as copies had reached Latvian diplomatic missions in both Paris<sup>109</sup> and London<sup>110</sup>. K. Ozols himself was also well informed about this article in the USA<sup>111</sup>.

The already mentioned Līdumnieks or, by his adopted name in the USA – John P. Stack, also held up correspondence with the Women's Aid Corps in Latvia. Although much of his correspondence consists of lengthy reflections about how the failures and shortcomings of the Latvian Provisional government hindered aid to Latvia's needy and how much it would be possible to raise in the US if the government's failure did not interfere, he also expressed confidence, at least in words, that there existed the need to help Latvian children.<sup>112</sup> The criticisms made in this case focused specifically on the Provisional Government and its actions and were largely based on the political views of the critic.

Some other examples of widespread propaganda leaflets criticising the work of the Provisional Government is the Latvian Freedom Party leaflets entitled “Nemiers” (“Turmoil”)<sup>113</sup> and “Naids” (“Hate”)<sup>114</sup>, both of which were printed

<sup>106</sup> Edgar Anderson, “Latvians,” in *The Immigrant Labor Press in North America, 1840s–1970s. Annotated bibliography*. Vol. 2. *Migrants from Eastern and southeastern Europe*, ed. Dirk Hoerder (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1987), 194–195.

<sup>107</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–385, 57.

<sup>108</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–63, 106.

<sup>109</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–63, 106.

<sup>110</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–385, 31.

<sup>111</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–62, 186–188.

<sup>112</sup> LNA LVVA, 2498–1–70, 261–262.

<sup>113</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–385, 32.

<sup>114</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–385, 33.

in a very large circulation – 25,000 copies of "Turmoil" and as many as 30,000 copies of "Hate". The texts of both leaflets are strongly socialist, written in the spirit of the propaganda of the workers' revolution with their characteristic slogans and value system. The texts criticise the nationally-minded American Latvians, provide opposition to religion in all its forms and the German barons as a social order, criticised the involvement of the British colonial power in Latvian affairs and refused to acknowledge the existing Latvian government: "To this government of your 'free' Latvia we announce today the commencement of revolution, turmoil and hate, and her crushing will be the triumph of the working people of all of Latvia, Latgale and, consequently, Lithuania! Not a penny to the Latvian government and its representatives or agents! Everyone is an enemy of freedom and labor, a traitor and Judas who helps the Latvian government – the offspring of the remnants of the reaction."<sup>115</sup> The wide distribution of these leaflets is testified to by the fact that although the leaflets were undoubtedly made in the United States, they were also circulated among Latvians in Canada.<sup>116</sup>

It is very probable that the negative attitude of a large part of Latvians towards the Latvian national state can be explained by the lack of information and ignorance of the real conditions in Latvia, as well as the ideologically determined inconsistency of ideals and reality. Two main topics particularly hard to grasp were the certain level of cooperation with Baltic Germans in the government of the newly founded state and the fight against the Bolsheviks.<sup>117</sup> Lack of both reliable information and general understanding of the particularly complex events happening in the territory of Latvia were certainly the primary reasons for this.

In addition, there were also disagreements and divisions among nationally minded Latvians. In particular, the Latvian Union of Chicago and the ALTS, both of which were nationally minded and supported the Latvian Provisional Government, were not on particularly good terms and sometimes did not get along at all.<sup>118</sup> It is however curious to note that both strongly nationally-supportive Latvians and some of the sharpest critics of the Latvian Provisional Government were able to agree on a common critique of the Latvian Consul in the United States, Jānis Kalniņš.<sup>119</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

With the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia on November 18<sup>th</sup> 1918, Latvians permanently living abroad in North and South America, Australia and Western Europe suddenly became a diaspora with their own national state. Though theoretical research argues that both stateless and state-bound diasporas

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<sup>115</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–385, 33 o.p.

<sup>116</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–385, 68.

<sup>117</sup> Jēkabsons, *Latvians in United States*.

<sup>118</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–1–158, 5.

<sup>119</sup> LNA LVVA, 2575–7–62, 184–185.

in their general acting principles do not differ in any substantial way, it is evident that the change from one status to the other in the case of Latvian diaspora brought about some profound changes.

First of all, the great change in the homeland awakened the previously partly dormant and only incompletely formed diaspora structure, gave a push to establishing new organisations and to actually become an active ethno-national diaspora. At the same time and for the first time, contacts with the homeland state authorities were taken up – indeed such contacts became possible only after the proclamation of the republic. For many diaspora Latvians, especially those that fled for political reasons and to avoid prosecution after the events of 1905, this was the first government in their home country with which they could even consider taking up some sort of conversation. Contacts with the homeland intensified many-fold when compared to the time before the war. After the proclamation of independence in 1918, in a very short time a mutual relationship structure was created between the new government and the diaspora with the diplomatic representations of Latvia in Great Britain and France being key links in this structure. The diaspora sent resources and offered help to the homeland and the state institutions accepted and even expected such help to come.

As regards the changes within the diaspora communities itself, these were also marked. The proclamation and subsequent flourish of activity intensified contacts among the Latvians in different continents, not only through the homeland administrative structures (diplomatic representations in this case), but also among themselves.

If a certain unifying (in a sense) and development-inducing influence of the Proclamation is evident, at the same time a clear division of opinions is also visible among the active part of the diaspora members and is most clearly demonstrated through the activities either to help or against the new state. Although patriotic Latvians were not a majority among the socially active diaspora Latvians, this fact was largely offset by their activity, and they managed to achieve significant results. Collecting and sending of financial help to Latvia was one of the areas of activity where these results are most demonstrable. Attempts at political lobby work and general information distribution are also noteworthy. Activities against the statehood of the Republic of Latvia, on the other hand, mostly were attempts to hinder other diaspora community members in helping Latvia.

These developments were, of course, not equal in all communities. Obviously, the size, level of organisation and activity of each particular regional community was an influencing factor. In the case of the USA the impact is most clearly observable, while, for example, in Australia or Canada the Latvian community was smaller and more divided and there is much less reaction to the events in Latvia (also the preserved information about the community life at the time is much scarcer). That is not to say that Latvians in Australia or the Canadian wilderness did not form some sort of private reaction to the events in the homeland, provided they got news of them. There certainly are examples of at least some remarkable individual initiatives.

The proclamation of the Republic of Latvia in the wake the World War I and the War of Independence asserted a profound influence on the Latvian diaspora, intensified the internal formation processes within the diaspora communities and brought them into much closer contact with the homeland than before.

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