

The Notional and Real Political Aspects in the Reflection of the Baltic Question in American Archival Sources (1945-1963)

By Leo Jansons

I was granted The Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund's (SYLFF) Research Abroad fellowship for two months period (September - November 2012) in order to conduct an archival research at The National Archives of the United States of America (US NA; Washington D.C., College Park, MD). The research trip took place in accordance with plans set during the period of application, and its first results are already available for the review.

As the proper exploration of my PhD topic (working title: *The Notional and Real Political Aspects in the Reflection of the Baltic Question in American Archival Sources (1945-1963)*) fully depends on information gained in this particular institution, I did my best to process significant amount of document collections crucial for successful finalization of the work.

The research conducted with SYLFF results in several ways. Firstly and foremostly, the PhD Thesis now include vital part of primary sources that carry slightly different practical and political message than those explored and used before. I would like to name just a few major documental holding of this kind, where Baltic post World War II issues are not seen only as separate, sporadic phenomena, but also as elements of European/global geopolitical or geostrategic framework. These are holdings of: Records of House of Representatives, 83rd Congress, Select Committee on Communist Aggression; General Records of the Department of State, Records Relating to the International Refugee Organization (IRO) and the Displaced Persons Commission (DPC). Every archival fund mentioned above helps trace another aspect important for accurate and holistic reconstruction of the American institutional position toward the Baltic after 1945.

Taking into account that Baltic situation at that period was rather extraordinary, and the political and legal dimensions within it were not absolutely determinable in accordance to existing system of the international law and diplomatic practices, it is more than mandatory to try to take a closer look on Baltic matters with regards not only to general (umbrella) politics, but also to its legal and practical implications. As

the matter of fact, during research performed with SYLFF, I have dedicated significant efforts to both analysis of purely legal dimensions beyond the *Baltic question* in the early *Cold War* period, and to step by step reconstruction of most prominent aspects of their practical manifestation within the sociopolitical reality of the United States. Every collection under review highlight different angle in actual understanding of American Baltic policy as a complicated, intertwined structure of political categories, propaganda rhetoric, economical and socio-legal matters.

For instance, Records of House of Representatives, 83rd Congress, Select Committee on Communist Aggression covering time span between mid 1953 and late 1954 is the only collection of documents actually dealing with reconsideration of the Baltic annexation of 1940 both on the state and “common folks” levels. It reflects two different visions on how existing political, economical and social system in three Baltic States came to an end, and how gradual transformation of these territories into new Soviet Socialist Republics was seen by people and by former Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian State officials.

Select Committee on Communist Aggression is the only known example of America’s attempts to initiate political investigation on Soviet actions taken in the Baltic during mid 1940 and early 1941 (till the German invasion of June, 1941). In some aspects reestablishment of full Soviet rule over the Baltic after May 1945, and forced collectivization of the agricultural sector (1946-1949), which is better known as a triggering factor of so called “kulak” (wealthy peasantry) deportations 9 of March 1949, also became a subject of close attention.

Committee’s papers consist of specially gathered and processed eyewitness accounts with fairly minimal input of other institutional documentation (memos, summaries, case studies etc.). On one hand, they reflect wide range of Soviet atrocities in the Baltic during 1940-1941, 1945 and beyond, and from the other - tell extremely interesting story on how the anti-Soviet propaganda of the early *Cold War* period and particularly - of *McCarthy era*, shaped and formed the Baltic path of the American policy. The committee held public hearings in the US and several European countries receiving the testimony of over 300 witnesses and approximately 1500 exhibits. The identity of some of the witnesses was not disclosed (and remains unknown up to this day), for fear of reprisals against relatives and friends back in the USSR. Other witnesses - also these of Canada, Australia, Sweden, Brazil and even New Zealand, submitted written

statements to the committee upon a pledge of anonymity.

Another archival fund - Records relating to the International Refugee Organization (IRO) and the US Displaced Persons Commission (DPC) also has its particularity: these documents are of the paramount importance for proper reconstruction of the American immigration policy, as the US was desired new home for millions of European war refugees - including Balts. These documents let the researcher to follow interdepartmental discussions on this matter and evaluate actions taken in relation to the Baltic immigration to The United States between 1948 and 1952. Documents provide vital statistical information regarding groups of refugees, their national (state) breakdown and legal and economical problems faced during their resettlement in America.

Under provision of Displaced Parsons Act of 1948 in period of four years the United States admitted a huge number of European emigrants of different ethical, religious and socioeconomic background, and among them - a significant group of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian refugees previously located in the DP camps in Germany. IRO and DPC files are very helpful in terms of tracing legal or political burden American side was dealing with when making decisions about admission of former members of certain military and paramilitary groups (The Latvian and Estonian Legion and *Latvian Home Guard* members) as well.

Finally, Records of the Office of Alien Property (till 1948 - an agency under The Department of Treasury, from 1948 - 1950 - an agency under The Department of Justice; since 1950 - independent Governmental agency) highlights problems with frozen Baltic assets (funds). Blocking of these assets kept in several major US banks on the name of the Governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, took place on July 15 (or 10) 1940. In results of this, about 15 million American Dollars in monetary equivalent were blocked in Riggs Bank in Washington, Federal Reserve Bank in New York and National City Bank of New York respectively.

Later on, the procedure of the release of money from the blocked funds was described rather precisely by stating that the United States Government would authorize the release of limited sums from the blocked accounts only to enable the Baltic diplomatic and consular establishments in the United States and in a few other countries to carry on their work.