

LATVIA

under

German Occupation in 1943

During recent months very little news has seeped abroad from the Baltic States in general, and particularly from Latvia. The Germans are exerting every effort to isolate completely the three Baltic States not only from the outer world but also from each other. Naturally, that applies also to communications between the Baltic States and neutral countries such as Sweden. Postal communications with the latter have been almost completely suspended. For example, last July there were several cases of innocent letters, sent from Stockholm to Latvia and containing only information of a purely personal nature, being returned to the sender in Stockholm with an attached slip of paper bearing the following printed words: "Postal communication between Latvia and Sweden is prohibited."

Formerly certain possibilities of exchanging letters existed—one had only to ignore the official prohibition of postal communication. It is true that in the main post office in Stockholm no letters were accepted for Latvia, and in Riga, in accordance with the regulations, every letter addressed abroad had to be delivered personally by the sender to the postal authorities. However, if one disregarded these official regulations and simply dropped one's letter in the mail box on the street corner, one could almost be certain that the letter would reach the addressee, as long as the address had been written somewhat "skillfully". Recently this "skill" has helped no longer, and the mail prohibited between Latvia and Sweden now appears to be consistently enforced.

As regards newspapers printed in Latvia, it should be observed that also before, only two newspapers reached Sweden, viz., the semi-official organ of Reichs Minister Lohse—*Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland* (German Newspaper in Ostland)—and the newspaper in the Latvian language corresponding to it—

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Tevija (Fatherland). Moreover, the latter was sent very irregularly, and the subscriber received it only now and then. Since November 1942 the “*Tevija*” is no longer received in Sweden in general. The “*Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland /DZO/*”, however, was received quite regularly until February 1943. Its delivery was then also cut off. It is said that the German occupation authorities no longer permit the DZO to be sent to neutral countries because the entirely official decrees and announcements of the authorities published in the newspaper are made use of to discredit the management of the Germans in the Baltic. If one or two issues of the DZO ever do reach Sweden, they do so in a very round about way.

All the radio broadcasting stations in Latvia are under the direct control of the German occupation authorities and their agents. News is broadcast in Latvian three times daily, but it furnishes very little actual material about Latvia, as twice daily the news read is simply a translation into Latvian of the bulletins of the “International Bureau of Information.” Formerly one could sometimes hear something of interest in the third Latvian news broadcast, the so-called “Current events”, but for several months now also this broadcast has been swamped with German propaganda. At present the “Current events” consist principally of translations of Goebbels’ essays from “the Reich”, editorials from the “*Essener Zeitung*”, “*Völkischer Beobachter*”, etc. The material of these propaganda broadcasts is selected with one special purpose, namely, to prove to the inhabitants of Latvia that the goal of the policy of Roosevelt and Churchill is to turn over all Europe to the Bolsheviks.

Once in a while, although not often, the “Current events” furnish a little information regarding occurrences in the cultural, economic and social life of Latvia, interpretation of decrees and announcements of the occupation authorities, etc. These broadcasts do enable one to draw certain conclusions as to what is taking place in the country.

Since March 1943 in Stockholm a new source of information has appeared: the refugees from Latvia, whose number is constantly increasing. Most of them are seamen who have sailed for some time on German vessels until they find an opportunity in the vicinity of the Swedish coast to flee ashore. These people, naturally, can give little information about actual events and principally repeat what they have heard from others. However, a few of the refugees have been in Latvia themselves comparatively recently, and their reports, of course, are extremely interesting, as they can furnish rare current information, objectively describing the state of affairs in the country and characterizing the attitude of the extensive circles of inhabitants.

If one adds a few private letters received once in a while “through unknown means”, it gives the sum total of the information received in Sweden in 1943.

From all the above mentioned information one can observe that two principal problems form the focal point of discussion of the inhabitants of Latvia, namely:

- (a) mobilization, and
- (b) restoration of private property.

Of these two problems the inhabitants, naturally, find the first problem to be of greater importance than the second.

THE TRUTH ABOUT LATVIAN “VOLUNTEERS”

On February 10, 1943, an announcement by Hitler appeared in which it was stated that also Latvia was “allowed” to organize an SS-legion of volunteers. It was to be commanded by Latvian officers, to have all types of armament and to be stationed in the vicinity of the Latvian border.

One could assume that this newly organized national legion would become a center of attraction for heavily tried Latvian people, in view of the fact that by the time the legion was organized the Russians had approached very close to the Latvian border, no one desired the return of a Bolshevik era, and the entire nation fondles the ardent hope of seeing the revival of a Latvian national army, and it appeared that the legion could serve as the first step toward this goal.

As usual, however, the German occupation authorities saw to it that this undertaking initiated by themselves suffered a fiasco in as much as it was to be voluntary: the consciousness of being disliked conquerors kept the Germans constantly worried of losing power, which finally resulted in quite the contrary to what had been hoped for in the beginning.

This also happened with the organization of the Latvian legion. The Latvian general, Bangerskis, who in the beginning had been selected as commander-in-chief of the legion, was soon transferred to the position of inspector of the legion, and a German Major General Hansen was put in his place as Commander of the Legion. The so-called Latvian local administration also failed to receive from the leading representatives of the occupation authorities clear and definite guarantees that the legion would be stationed in the vicinity of the Latvian border. Rumors of this spread very quickly throughout the country, and the result was a general abstinence from the legion. The first group of legionnaires who had registered and had to swear an oath to the Fuehrer consisted of barely 300 men, which is clearly

shown by the photograph taken of this act on the Dom Square in Riga. The Latvian officers and non-commissioned officers have been particularly passive in joining up with the legion which has been quite frankly admitted by the Inspector of the legion, General Bangerskis. It is therefore not at all amazing that the so-called *first* director general, General Dankers, upon whom had been placed the main responsibility as representative of the Latvian local administration for the recruiting results of the legion, felt called upon to issue a public statement, in which he appealed in particular to the reserve officers and others and reminded them that it was their duty to join the legion of *volunteers*. Ten days later, i.e., on March 19, an announcement appeared by General Schröder, Commander of the SS-Police forces in Latvia, which stated:

“During the past weeks all young men born in 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923 and 1924 who have registered with the police or the labor authorities have been sent induction notices. Every man born in these years who has not yet received such notices or does not receive it within the next few days is hereby summoned to appear on the dates given below during states hours at the pertinent recruiting office with the necessary documents of identification in a sober condition. Food for one day should be brought . . .

“Whoever fails to comply with this last summons will be *punished in accordance with existing military laws.*”

The occupation authorities felt in advance, however, that the mobilization would not give the desired results on a “voluntary basis.” Therefore Dr. Drechsler, the Commissar General in Riga, hastened already on March 8 to issue a strictly confidential instruction to the recruiting headquarters, whereby the commanders of these headquarters were instructed how they were to discharge their duties. The full text of this instruction is as follows:

Commissar General in Riga

Riga, March 8, 1943

— III Aso —

District 2: Labor Division

To the Herrn Commanders of the Recruiting Stations established
in the General District of Latvia

Re: Muster of the years 1919-1924.

Past experiences give rise to fears that the muster does not create the desired spirit among the manpower on a voluntary basis in favor of the three services. It is particularly conspicuous that recruiting for the Army has far from attained the necessary proportions. Consequently, I cancel the notice contained in my instructions of February 26, 1943, under Number 10, according to which recruiting for the Army is to be done only voluntarily, effective immediately.

Simultaneously, article 9 of the instruction of the Reich Commissioner dated February 16, 1943, is now exclusively and fully effective in the general district of Latvia. Therefore in carrying out the muster the following is to be observed : The manager of the recruiting headquarters sees to the distribution of the conscripts among the three services. Wishes can be expressed, but they shall be taken into consideration only within the limits of necessity. The following basic rules are to be observed in the distribution:

(a) Equal preferences to all three services (SS-Legion, Army, Labor force). As my inquiry in the SS-training headquarters in Riga showed, although the assignment of demobilized forces to the SS-Legion should be done only on a voluntary basis, nevertheless considerable influence should be exerted by the recruiting manager in order to lay the proper emphasis on inclusion in the SS-Legion.

(b) All "kv" men over 168 cm tall should then be assigned to the Legion, and all others under this size and all "gvf" men should be assigned to the Army, if they are not included under article c.

(c) All "gvf" men fundamentally belong to the labor force, and also qualified workers, in accordance with article 13 of the instruction of the Reich commissioner, which is to be conformed with. Workers that after having completed their training have had at least two years of experience in their profession should be assigned according to their profession in the labor force, particularly qualified workers in the metal and woodworking industry.

(d) Should it appear that in regard to personnel of article 7-g of the instruction of the Reich commissioner a new mobilization is necessary, this shall be achieved through the Commissioner general.

(Signed) WURTHMANN,

Senior Government Counsellor

The notice of General Schröder, Chief of the SS-police forces in Latvia, dated March 19, 1943, actually converted recruiting for the Legion into compulsory mobilization, from which no one had the right to abstain. Thereupon the local district commissars on the basis of the above mentioned notice soon issued their own decrees in order to carry out the mobilization in the various districts of the land.

As to how this mobilization is actually being carried out, certain refugees who were still in Latvia in the end of May relate the following:

Already at the end of February and in the beginning of May young men 19 to 24 years of age began to receive written summons which, however, bore no signature. The summons stated that the addressee was to appear at a certain time and certain place for a "muster." What the goal of this "muster" was the summons did not say.

When the persons in question found themselves in the stipulated place and had been “mustered” by a medical committee, they were offered the choice of one of three possibilities: either

- (1) to join the Latvian Legion as a “volunteer,”
- (2) to sign up with one of the branches of the German SS, or
- (3) to join the German army as a so-called “Hilfswilliger” (auxiliary).

The latter were destined for various auxiliary work near the front, for example, to dig trenches, build airfields, etc. They wear the uniform of the German army and are armed with a rifle. After a certain time and under certain circumstances, however, they are sent to fight in the front lines.

The refugees claim definitely to know that the young men who appeared at the “muster” were no longer offered a choice between military service and labor service, as was formerly the case in recruiting volunteers.

Those youths who were mustered in the end of March were quite frankly told in the recruiting stations that they must join the Legion—there was no other alternative for them.

As it was generally known what the so-called “muster” and “medical examination” actually meant, the young men of the stipulated mobilization years attempted by all manner of means to avoid the mobilization. In the beginning they denied having received the summons. In this connection the Latvian newspaper *Tevija* published an explanatory article which stated that appearance at the “muster” for young men of the military years was mandatory, regardless of whether they had received a personal summons or not. Whoever refused to observe this warning would be severely punished.

After this explanation a mass flight of young men began from their registered homes to their friends in the forests. Then, however, in order to impress the young men into the “three service branches,” a true manhunt began—a repetition of the manhunts already known from Poland, whereby whole city sections were surrounded. The young men were then dragged out and deported in freight trucks.

This compulsory mobilization drove the inhabitants into deep despair. They backed up their youth to protect them. In this the farmers were of particular assistance, helping the refugees to find a hiding place or furnishing those who had fled to the forests with food and other indispensable objects.

What the youths, subject to the mobilization themselves, thought of it, is clearly shown by the enormous number of young men escaping from the mobilization and by the mass flights to the forests. In the legion, however, both among the officers and the men, a strongly marked national spirit existed, tinged with a feeling of deep opposition toward the Germans. This

spirit frequently has led the legionnaires almost to the point of open revolt against the occupation authorities, and only the realization that thereby the aims of the Bolsheviks might be furthered has held them back from such a step.

By the end of 1943 the lists of the Latvian Legion were filled, and the young men who were mobilized last summer have been simply detailed to the German Army. It should be observed here that Alfred Rosenberg, Minister of the occupied Ostland, as early as May 11, 1943, signed an announcement according to which all inhabitants of Ostland were recognized as being "worthy" of admission to the German Army.

Officially it is unknown how many "volunteers" actually have been assigned to the Latvian Legion; according to various information it is between 25 and 45 thousand men. In case of mobilization this figure does not seem to be exaggerated. It is estimated that there are approximately 15,000 people in Latvia 20 years of age. If this figure is taken as an average and granted that one half of them avoided the mobilization, it would still leave some 7,500 persons available for mobilization. As six years were drafted, the multiplication of this figure by six gives the already mentioned figure 45,000.

Moreover, the Riga broadcasting station officially announced that the Latvian Legion consists of six regiments, and that the following Latvian officers had been appointed regimental commanders: 1) Colonel Apsitis, 2) Colonel Januks, 3) Colonel Kripens, 4) Colonel Skaistlauks, 5) Lieut. Colonel Veiss and 6) Lieut. Colonel Lobe.

The legionnaires of the Latvian Legion receive their military training in camps some 20 kilometers behind the front. The students of universities, high schools and other higher institutions detailed to the Legion are trained as commissioned and non-commissioned officers, at first in Latvia in four different places, after which they are sent to Germany where they receive further military training in the vicinity of Munich and where they finally receive officer's rank.

Wounded legionnaires and those in Riga on leave from the front relate that the sector of the front between Leningrad and Velikie Luki is principally assigned to Estonian, Latvian and Finnish legionnaires. It appears that the demand raised by the national volunteers from the very beginning, not to be scattered in small groups throughout the German Army, has to a certain extent been taken into consideration by the Germans by the creation of the Legion.

The only weapons of the "volunteers" until the formation of the Legion were rifles. On the front, however, they soon captured machine guns from the

Russians and refused to turn them over to the Germans. Already the original "volunteers" demanded from the Germans that they be furnished with all necessary equipment mechanical and automatic weapons, artillery, etc. Evidently the Germans have been compelled to comply with these demands, for at present the Latvian Legion is equipped with all types of automatic weapons and artillery.

The Latvian legionnaires now wear the uniform of the German Army, and in addition wear only the small badge of the Latvian Legion. At first the "volunteers" were sent to the front in the old uniform of the Latvian national army, so that the Russians immediately recognized them. When any of these volunteers were captured by the Russians, they were horribly mistreated. Near Velikie Luki corpses of Latvian volunteers were found who had been scalped; from some of them the Russians had pulled the skin off their hands like gloves, others had had their eyes gouged or burned out. Near Stalingrad some of the Latvian volunteers had been stuck on poles. The reason for these tortures is that Soviet Russia continues to consider Latvia a part of the Soviet Union after Latvia's forcible annexation in August 1940. Thus the Latvians are between the devil and deep sea: the Germans mobilize them, the Russians kill and torture them if captured.

UNFULFILLED PROMISES

Restoration of the private property nationalized by the Bolsheviks has been one of the principal demands of the Baltic population since the very first days of the occupation of the Baltic by the Germans. Moreover, the restoration of private property and an extensive self-government bordering on independence were the slogans and promises that the Germans had inscribed in their banners in the war against the Bolsheviks before they had reached the Baltic. They were also the characteristic principles emphasized by the Germans, who claimed that thereby they basically differed from the Bolsheviks. During the entire period, however, the fulfillment of these promises has been postponed.

In the winter of 1942-43, when the situation at the front was not very favorable for the Germans, bitter reality compelled the conquerors to smile upon the Baltic inhabitants in order to restore at least the minimum faith that they themselves had destroyed. It is therefore not astonishing that in order to attain this they resorted to the idea of the restoration of private property, which is so popular among the population.

Moreover, one can assume that the German conquerors both by granting permission to organize national legions and the loud propaganda about the

forthcoming restoration of property wanted to split up the inhabitants and thereby to paralyze the demand for the independence of the Baltic States, a demand that was raised. in. the summer of 1942 by the. Lithuanian intellectual representatives in their memorandum, and was also emphasized in the memorandum submitted by the Latvian Director General Valdmanis to the German occupation authorities in November 1942 and later supported by the entire Latvian Directorate General. The German authorities had promised to give a reply to the memorandum last mentioned not later than by March 1943.

Consequently, on February 18, 1943, Alfred Rosenberg, Reichsminister for the occupied eastern areas, issued a *“Decree regarding the Restoration of Private Property in the General Districts of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania”* which reads as follows:

In the General Districts of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania the following premises are hereby established in regard to the forcible economic measures created by the Soviet Union.

It is expected that the owner of the private property restored will observe the obligations emanating from the property, particularly those applying to the German war economy.

In accordance with Article 8 of the Führer's edict regarding the administration of the newly occupied eastern areas, dated July 17, 1941, and also in accordance with Section 2, Article 2, of the Decree regarding the economic private property in the occupied eastern areas, dated May 28, 1942 (VB1. R MOst S. 21), I order in conformity with the Deputy for the Four Year Plan that:

1. Private property in the General Districts of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on general principles is again permissible. The land officials shall again resume their functions upon the reopening of the land and mortgage records.

2. The native inhabitants who were deprived of their property by the forcible measures of the Soviet government shall upon claim be restored the ownership of built and vacant real estate lots and enterprises. The transfer of private property shall be done in an administrative manner. It shall become effective with the issuance of a title of ownership.

3. In disputes claimants who have proved to be politically and economically trustworthy shall be granted preference.

4. The transfer of private property, is excluded if and as long as it is against public interests, particularly the interests of the war economy. On the same basis the transfer of private property may be connected with taxation.

5. Should the former owner be dead, the property shall be transferred to the heirs.

6. The property rights to land are again revived with the transfer of the property in favor of the entitled person or his heirs.

7. Special regulations shall apply to nationalized property formerly belonging to private or public juridical persons, German settlers, other German citizens or returned settlers (Nachumsiedlern).

8. The Reich Commissar for Ostland shall issue the necessary legal and administrative regulations for the execution of this decree.

9. The Decree shall go into effect upon the date of its promulgation.

Berlin, February 18, 1943.

Reichsminister for the occupied eastern areas

(Signed) A. ROSENBERG

This basic decree of Reichsminister Rosenberg was followed by the "First Decree regarding the Restoration of Private Property in the General Districts of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania," which Reich Commissar for Ostland, Lohse, signed on February 27, 1943, and which characterized the general practical measures taken to restore private property.

One does not need to be a trained lawyer to grasp the core of the articles of this decree. To anyone who knows how to read it is clear that what is "permissible," for instance, in accordance with article 1 of Rosenberg's decree is to the same degree restricted by articles 3, 4, and 7, that the entire matter fails to attain its purpose. In accordance with the unanimous reports of refugees, this decree has raised hatred against instead of trust in the Germans, and any observer receives unmistakable evidence of the existence of a deep mistrust of the authorities of occupation and that the inhabitants have understood how to read the decree correctly.

Even more. The decree served as the basis for the beginning of new rumors and assertions regarding the "inherent deceit and falseness of the Germans." Moreover, many people, particularly from the intellectual circles, saw in the decree of Rosenberg an intentional attempt of the authorities of occupation to arouse disunity within the nation, for in accordance with article 3, in restoring private property a privileged class would be created which would be granted preference by the occupation authorities before all others. This was considered to be an open insult to the sense of justice of the entire nation, for the people deemed the return of the property nationalized by the Bolsheviks to be not a favor granted by the occupation authorities, but an indisputable right.

One can therefore fully agree with the views of the refugees when they unanimously assert that after the announcement of Rosenberg's decree, hatred against the Germans has grown in all classes of the population. *And it is generally emphasized that the Germans will never again be trusted, no matter what they might promise and what they might pretend.*

The authorities of occupation themselves have admitted that the decree regarding the restoration of private property in the form presented by them has served to undermine still more the trust of the Baltic population in the Germans. In his speech of June 22, 1943—the third anniversary of the Russo-German War—Commissar General Drechsler complained bitterly, for example, of the ungratefulness and malevolence of “certain elements” of the Latvian people. These people who demanded the restoration of private property found it possible the very next day after the announcement of the decree to that effect to undermine the trust in the German organs of administration and their honesty in carrying out their intentions. In order to prove the contrary, Drechsler seized upon statistics and announced that during the period from February 27 to the beginning of June 1943, 19,700 farmers had had their property restored to them.

At the first glance this figure may appear quite impressive. However, that is only upon the first glance, for

(a) Drechsler failed to mention that before the Bolshevik nationalization there were 237,350 private farms in Latvia. The figure given by Drechsler therefore represents not more than 8 % of all farms.

(b) Drechsler furthermore did not mention with a single word that the given number of farms was restored to that category of farmers who in the eyes of the occupation authorities either were themselves or members of their families were “politically and economically trustworthy.” Everyone knows that this selection is observed, for in issuing the documents authorizing the restoration of property the motives as to why property is restored to the pertinent person are openly given.

(c) Drechsler also cleverly failed to mention that this policy, which attempts to split up the Latvian farmers into sheep and goats and turns the natural and inalienable rights of the people to their property into an object of haggling, is in principle unacceptable to the Latvian nation and is the actual reason for the criticism of the “malevolent instigators.”

That the Baltic population deeply resents the conversion of the restoration of property rights into an act of favor and grace is also understood by the “bearers of sovereignty” in the Baltic. One clearly observes that in the attempts made by them to justify themselves. In his address at the 500 year anniversary of the City of Bauska, Drechsler casually protests that it is quite wrong to think that the Germans look upon the restoration of property rights as upon an act of favor,—it lies in the nature of the matter that the farmer occupies his farm.

However, what is the Latvian farmer to think of these protestations when in the same spot, after the address of the Commissar General, a number of farmers from Bauska County received their titles to restored property in a special ceremony, wherein the following words were openly read to each of the favored ones: "You receive the property rights to your farm for such and such service rendered?" One of the refugees, an elderly mechanic, who had recently deserted from a German ship, undoubtedly expressed the general feelings of the Latvian farmers when he somewhat crudely but unmistakably said: "The Germans are scoundrels and cheats of an even worse type than the Bolsheviks, only they are subtler . . ." And another refugee concluded with the statement: "The difference between the Bolsheviks and the Germans is only that the first fell upon us like wild beasts, whereas the others give us drops of poison mixed with sweet syrup—the purpose of both nevertheless is one and the same . . ."

PROMISED RESTORATION OF CITY BUILDINGS ALSO NOT REALIZED

The "First Executive Decree" regarding the Restoration of Nationalized Private City Buildings was signed by Reich Commissar Lohse on March 1, 1943. The announcement is worded as follows, as given in the "Kauener Zeitung" of March 5 1943:

1) In accordance with Article 2 of the Property decree, those natives are entitled to submit petitions who were inscribed as owners in the real estate records (mortgage records) at the time of their closing. *Those alien returned colonists (Nachumsiedler) who have received their final certificates of repatriation (Germans who were repatriated in 1939-40 and now return) are comparable to natives.* Should the registered owner be dead, the petition may be submitted by his heirs. If the trustee of the estate is present, only he may submit the petition. The trustee of the absentee may submit the petition for deported persons and for persons whose residence is unknown.

2) The petition for transfer of property rights to real estate is to be submitted to the county commissar in whose county the land lies. The petition must contain: (a) occupation, name and address of the petitioner, and a precise description of the real estate. The petition should have attached to it a certificate from the land records official giving a description of the land in accordance with the land records and of the registered owner. If the petitioner is the heir of the registered owner, an inheritance certificate should also be attached to the petition. For this purpose certificates should be issued free of all dues.

3) A petition is unnecessary if the former owners after the decree regarding the administration of city buildings dated December 15, 1941, (VB1. RKOS. 96) have received back the administration and use of their city buildings. The petition requesting the administration and use of property serves also as the

petition foreseen in article 2 of the property decree, if two weeks after the promulgation of this announcement the notified person has not informed the real estate association in writing that he renounces the transfer of the property. Renunciation is final. If the request for administration and use has been rejected, the person authorized by the real estate association may submit the renewed copy of the request after the Property decree.

4) Only inscription in the real estate or mortgage records is of decisive importance for the transfer of property. If the inscribed owner or his heirs for some reason prove not to be the entitled owner, claims may be raised as soon as the violation of property rights has been disclosed. In accordance with Article 5, Section 2, of the First Executive Decree, the person authorized to raise the claims may do so in a juridical manner before the local courts. The local court shall determine the change in the inscription in the real estate records and the legality of the decrees previously made.

This decree was followed by a "Second Decree," which was signed by Reich Commissar Lohse on April 20, 1943. Its first articles read as follows:

"1) In accordance with the stipulations of this decree, the real estate records (mortgage records) are to be reopened for the built real estate lots whose buildings have not been nationalized.

"2) City buildings having a usable floor space of not more than 170 sq. meters, or in communities specifically determined by the Commissar General of not more than 220 sq. meters, which are administered in their own name by the former owners or their legal heirs, may be treated as not having been nationalized."

In regard to this article the D.Z.O. on May 4, 1943, published the following explanation: "Petitions for the return of property rights to buildings which have a larger usable floor space and have nevertheless not been nationalized must be submitted to the proper county commissar in accordance with the stipulations of the First Executive decree, just as if they had been nationalized by the Bolsheviks."

No official figures have yet been published as to how many buildings and lots of land have been returned to their former owners in the cities of Latvia. However, if one makes an estimate of the figures which have been announced over the Riga broadcasting station regarding individual cases of real estate restored in individual cities, one can definitely say that this figure lies between 1,500 and 2,000, and in no case can it exceed the last figure.

If one then takes into consideration (a) that Riga alone had some 15,000 apartment buildings, Jelgava (Mitau) more than 2,000, etc.; (b) that all the best pieces of property are occupied by the occupation authorities, and that not a single word has been ever said by the authorities regarding their restoration,

it should be more than clear that the decree of Rosenberg and its practical effectuation will least of all in the cities give cause for any further trust in the policy of the Germans and in their promises.

RESTORATION OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISES CAMOUFLAGED ECONOMIC GANGSTERISM

Even more convincing of its hidden real aims is the Nazi attitude toward the owners of shares in commercial and industrial corporations, which have the status of juridical persons. A decree relating to them the "Third Decree" was signed by Reich Commissar Lohse only on June 24, 1943, and went into force on July 1, 1943.

This extremely complicated and involved decree, consisting of 27 articles and each article of 3-5 paragraphs, is too long to be inserted here word for word. Its purpose obviously is to facilitate the expropriation of Latvian industrial establishments by Germans.

Moreover, not enough time has passed from the announcement of the above mentioned "Third Decree" to judge of the consequences of this procedure. During the past two years the Germans have placed the stock companies and corporations in such confusion, partly by reorganizing them in their own manner and partly by transporting their property to Germany, that they have already caused the shareholders too great a loss to correct it by the involved procedure emanating from the "Third Decree." After all the chaos created by the Germans in the field of the stock companies, they can no longer improve their evil reputation in the eyes of the shareholders.

REPAYMENT OF SAVINGS DEPOSITS DISGUISED ROBBERY

In connection with the question of the restoration of property rights, a few words must be said about the credit system of the present occupation authorities, particularly in regard to their attitude toward bank deposits in general. Concerning this question one can speak only of small deposits, for in regard to deposits in trust companies, state and other banks the same principle has remained in force that the Germans announced in 1941 immediately after they marched into the Baltic, viz., that the government of the German Reich considers itself to be the heir of all property nationalized by the Bolsheviks, and as is well known, all banks and larger credit institutions without exception had been nationalized by the Bolsheviks.

In view of the fact that the mass of small depositors come from the most varied classes of the population, so to say from the depths of the nation, the occupation authorities considered it advisable to display their "goodwill" to this mass, and in the end of May 1943 they loudly announced that the small

depositors would be refunded their deposits if they would apply for them between June 1 and November 1, 1943. In accordance with the announced decree, to be sure, deposits were to be repaid only to “Aryans” and only to “politically not compromised” persons. According to the estimates of the occupation authorities themselves, the total sum of such deposits amounted to approximately 29 million lats.

At the first glance this sum would appear quite considerable, and in order to soften the hearts of the small depositors the occupation authorities particularly emphasized the “many millions” that would now, so to say, be tossed into the lap of the Latvian people by their “liberators” and “saviours.”

Upon giving this matter second thought, however, one sees that actually very little remains for the small depositors of their “millions.” One must not forget that at the time of promulgation of the Bolshevik decree regarding the nationalization of banks, deposits in savings banks amounted to some 156 million lats. True, according to the assertion of the authorities, the depositors have already received 20 million lats of this sum. That took place in 1942, when it was announced that those depositors whose deposits did not exceed one thousand late could receive their deposits back if they applied for them between June 15 and November 1. According to the stipulations of the Bolshevik decree, these deposits were not subject to nationalization.

Even if this were the case, after November 1, 1942, there still remained at the disposal of the occupation authorities in the banks savings deposits to the amount of 136 million lats. If the authorities were now to repay 29 million lats of this sum, 107 million lats would still remain in their hands—a very pretty sum amounting to twice the total of the deposits already repaid and those destined to be repaid. Obviously it consists of deposits which belong to “non-Aryans and politically untrustworthy persons.”

However, that is not all. As is known, the Bolsheviks placed the lat at the level of the ruble. The Germans, on their part, have placed the value of the ruble at ten pfennigs, so that at present one lat is valued at ten pfennigs. Thereby the Germans with one stroke of the pen converted 49 million gold lats, which were to be returned to the depositors, into 4.9 million almost worthless German marks. In other words, the German occupation authorities have torn the last shirt from the backs of the small depositors. And at the same time they are brazen enough to preen themselves before the Latvian people as “generous saviours” and “benefactors.”

The refugees relate, however, that the small depositors see clearly through this German “generosity,” and it is being said in Latvia that “the Bolsheviks robbed us openly, whereas the Germans also rob, but in doing so

treat the Latvians as fools who can be persuaded that the occupation authorities honestly intended to help them retrieve their deposits.”

GREEN AND RED GUERRILLAS

According to the refugees, the “red guerrilla movement” so often mentioned by the Moscow broadcasting stations is almost unknown to the Latvian population. The sabotage of the Kegums power station by “guerrillas,” as announced by Moscow in a telegram, has never taken place, and the city of Riga with its surrounding district is to this very day supplied with electricity by the Kegums power station. The sensational news of an attack on Daugavpils (Dunaburg) by guerrilla cavalry forces, with which the Bolsheviks astonished the world several months ago, is also just a dream. All this news is simply the fruit of the over-heated imagination of overzealous Moscow propagandists.

Until May 1943 no serious acts of sabotage had taken place in Latvia, for the great majority of the population, including the active patriots, were of the firm opinion that under the circumstances any acts of sabotage would only be to the advantage of the Bolsheviks, and no one in the country wanted to do them this favor. It is true that in May rumors were circulating in Riga that in the vicinity of Sigulda (Segewold) two trains filled with soldiers fully equipped for the front had been stopped and partly blown up. However, according to the same rumors, this act had nothing whatever to do with any Bolshevik guerrillas, but had been perpetrated by those Latvians called “the greens” who were for the time being hiding in the forests to avoid the military and labor mobilization. This act had two purposes: (1) it represented a protest of the population against the mobilization, and (2) it was to be a way of obtaining weapons for those hiding in the forests.

This last purpose were successfully achieved. Those Latvian “green guerrillas” are now well armed, and they maintain friendly relations with the farmers, who supply them with all they need. Most of the refugees hiding in the forests. of the western and central parts of Latvia are guerrillas of this nature.

Nevertheless, it is also true that in the forests to the northeast of Vec-Gulbene (Alt-Schwannenburg) as well as in the east, along the Russian border, there are “red guerrillas” of quite another nature in hiding. They consist of small groups of Bolsheviks who have remained there after the flight of the Russian army from Latvia in 1941. Since March 1943 the Bolsheviks from time to time have also dropped parachutists in this vicinity. Moreover, the peasants, of whom the majority in this district are Russians, frequently

gave refuge to the remnants of the fleeing Russian army. However, the number of these "red guerrillas" is comparatively small.

FOOD RATIONS ON PAPER

The food supplies in the cities have become still smaller than they were in 1942. Officially the rations of the Latvians are from two to three times smaller than those of the Germans. In this respect everything has remained as it was in 1942. However, far worse is the fact that it is very difficult to obtain these already small rations in the stores designated for the Latvians. In this respect the Germans also enjoy a privileged position: they receive their rations in stores assigned to them alone, in which no Latvians are admitted.

Particularly the workmen and in general the laboring classes of the city population suffer from a lack of provisions and insufficient rations, as they have neither time nor money to seek for food on the "black market." (The average workman works ten hours daily and earns from 60 to 100 marks monthly.)

Those city inhabitants who have any connections with the farmers in the country are a little better off as concerns food, as the farmers are extremely helpful and find the most unusual means of smuggling food into the cities.

Even coffins are used for this purpose, relate the refugees. For instance, the police once stopped a farmer on the highway with a coffin in his wagon, and ordered the coffin to be examined. When they raised the cover they saw in the coffin a corpse dressed in woman's clothing and covered with a neat veil. All would have ended well if one of the policemen had not taken it into his head to raise a corner of the veil. Underneath it a pig's snout stared at him! Upon examining the coffin more carefully a whole pig clothed in a woman's dress was found.

At home the farmers eat better now than they did before, in normal times. Before they were eager to send all their best produce to market, whereas now they try to keep everything they can. This is due to the extremely low ceiling prices fixed for agricultural products as compared with the cost of the industrial products which are necessary for the farm. The farmer tries to "realize" his products on the black market by trading them for industrial commodities, such as nails, soap, wire, kerosene, tobacco, etc., or else he simply presents them to his friends and relatives in town.

During March and April 1943 the rations for Latvians were approximately as follows:

- (1) Bread 1500 grams weekly
- (2) Flour 400 " monthly

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------|---|-------------------|
| (3) Peas | 360 | “ | “ |
| (4) Meat | 250 | “ | weekly |
| (5) Fish , | 500 | “ | monthly |
| (6) Sugar | 400 | “ | “ |
| (7) Cheese | 150 | “ | “ |
| (8) Eggs | | | 2 eggs monthly |
| (9) Butter, lard or jam | 160 grams | | every three weeks |
| (10) Liquor | | | ¼ liter monthly |
| (11) Potatoes | 80 to 100 kilograms | | annually |
| (12) Milk—issued only to children in the following quantities: | | | |
| a. Under one year old – ¾ liter daily | | | |
| b. Up to 3 years old – ½ liter daily | | | |
| c. Up to 6 years old – ¼ liter daily | | | |

To be sure, these rations are only on paper. In most cases they are also issued, but only if the appropriate commodities are in stock in the stores assigned to the Latvians. During the course of the winter, for example, fish was obtainable in Riga only two or three times. In the summer of 1942 it was announced that every person was entitled to one-half liter of strawberries (for the entire summer!); it appeared, however, that they were not to be had in the Latvian stores. The growers had delivered all the strawberries to the German stores.

The Latvians do not receive regular rations for shoes and clothing. In order to receive them a special application must be submitted, and only after much deliberation in each individual case is the application either approved or rejected. Moreover, according to the regulations, no one may have more than two pairs of shoes. If a search should disclose that one has more shoes than that, the best shoes are confiscated and the “criminal” must pay a heavy fine.

There is a shortage of paper and books. Even newspapers are delivered to the news stands in insufficient numbers. People have to stand in line in order to purchase a newspaper or a book. Not more than 5 sheets of stationery are sold to a customer. All this despite the fact that those textile and paper factories whose machinery was not removed to Germany in 1941 and in the beginning of 1942 are going full blast.

The reason for this is that all textile, paper and wool products are shipped to Germany and do not remain in the country. Obviously Goering was not joking when in one of his speeches he declared that Germany would never lack anything, for others would work for her.

In consequence of the shortage of goods as well as of the fact that in various fields of production prices are not proportionate, speculation and dealings on the so-called "black market" have attained unbelievable proportions. Everyone speculates with everything in that all the refugees who have reached Sweden are unanimous. The workman speculates whenever he has a spare moment; the white collar worker, the official and the farmer speculate; also the German soldier, the German officer and even the German commissar speculate. The only difference is that the latter category speculate on a larger scale and partly involve their subordinates in such operations.

As usual when dealings on the black market flourish, prices have risen to dazzling heights. In Riga on the black market, for example:

1 kilogram butter sells for 50 Marks

1 kilogram bread for 7 Marks

1 *single* more or less usable cigarette for 2 Marks

1 bottle of liquor for 60 Marks

1 pair of ordinary ladies stockings for 80 Marks

1 suit-from 1,000 to 2,000 Marks

1 silver 5-Lat piece (the size of a silver dollar) for 50 Marks etc., etc.

NATIONAL CULTURE

In connection with the question of national culture, the Germans love to contrast themselves to the Bolsheviks. It is true that if certain individual aspects of cultural life in the Baltic are taken out of the general sphere, it might appear that to a certain extent the Germans are right. Undoubtedly the National Opera is now again functioning regularly and properly, and all grand opera is presented in the Latvian language, with the exception of a few operas of Wagner, and even those are presented and sung by Latvian opera singers. Once again the National Theater, the Theater of Art (Dailes Teatris), the Liepaja Opera (in Libau), and most of the former Latvian provincial theaters have renewed their activities. Many of the glee clubs which had been closed by the Bolsheviks have been reopened. All schools have been reopened, a normal course of studies has been established, lessons take place in the Latvian language, and also religion is again being taught. The same must be admitted in regard to the churches: they are no longer subject to chicanery, and the priests and ministers no longer need fear persecution as long as they do not speak against the "Weltanschauung" of the Germans. Even more, the Germans are now trying to restore certain such cultural aspects which have been highly esteemed by the Latvians for a long time. To such aspects belong the Singing Festivals, which have always been very

popular among the Latvians and which were, enthusiastically held even under the Czar. During the period of the free republic, however, they developed into splendid demonstrations of a free national spirit, into incomparable national festivals. The national spirit of these festivals did not appeal to the taste of the bearers of Soviet imperialism. Fearing that these glee clubs and singing festivals might draw together the national forces of the country, the Bolsheviks not only prohibited but also ridiculed them. The Germans have not only permitted the revival of these singing festivals, but have even supported and promoted them, particularly last summer.

However, this is only one side of the coin. The other side presents quite another picture of the attitude of the Germans toward the cultural life of the Baltic peoples in general, and toward that of the Latvians in particular.

In brief this picture can be characterized as follows: it is a picture of the previously planned and systematically conducted policy, whose goal is to root out everything nationally Latvian and to see to it that the Latvian people look upon matters and events as they are looked upon at present in Nazi Germany.

This policy was introduced in July 1941, i.e., on the very first day when the Germans marched into the Baltic, and has been systematically and energetically pursued to this very day.

In practice this policy expresses itself in the following manner:

(a) Determination of the trend and spirit of the program of studies in all educational institutions, beginning with public schools and up to the university, lies in the hands of the Reich Commissar and of his subordinates.

(b) By means of general regulations and practical methods of execution, studies in public and high schools have been drawn up in such a way that comparatively few Latvians are able to obtain a higher humanitarian education. Most of them must be content with the study of agriculture and forestry, veterinary medicine, and other such practical professions.

(c) The University has been reopened, but a whole row of Latvian professors have been eliminated. Internationally known and esteemed Latvian professors, particularly of the philological, historical and law departments, who in some manner have shown themselves to be supporters of the anti-Nazi "Weltanschauung" have not only fallen into disfavor but are even persecuted. They are refused a chair in the university, and their works are entered in the list of prohibited books.

(d) In connection with the mass mobilization for the front and for the labor service, there are actually hardly enough students to make it

worthwhile commencing studies, not only in the university, but even in the last classes of high school. In May 1943 the Rector of the University in Riga Primanis announced that of approximately 5,000 students during the time of the independent Republic the number had fallen to barely 1,300.

(e) Scientific research may be undertaken only with the assent of the "Council of Science." This "Council" was established by the occupation authorities, and it gives instructions regarding the conduct of research work and supervises how it is done. Scientific books are permitted to be published only in the German language.

(f) All newspapers and books can be published only with the previous permission of the occupation authorities, and all printed matter is subject to previous German censorship.

(g) The candidates for the higher official ecclesiastical posts must be approved by the Commissar General.

(h) The entire movie industry and radio broadcasting administration are in the hands of either the Reich Commissar and Commissar General, or under the control of their subordinates and officials, both legally and practically, not to mention from a financial standpoint.

Actually no cultural autonomy exists in Latvia under the German occupation. Just as the Bolsheviks persecuted and destroyed everything that did not conform with dialectic materialism, now in a similar manner everything is being destroyed by fire and sword if it does not correspond, even in the slightest degree, with national socialistic concepts and with the totalitarian aspects of life.

PERSECUTIONS

For several months now the "liberators" have been running down not so much communists as nationalists, Latvian patriots. Many former collaborators of the Bolshevik occupation are going around freely in Riga, whereas people who are known to be supporters of the national independence of Latvia begin to disappear more and more frequently without leaving any traces. Thus the former president of the Council of the Latvian Bank, A. Klive, and the president of the Latvian Press Society and President of the Board of the Chamber of Arts and Literature, J. Druva, have disappeared. Both were arrested already in December 1942. The former Director General of Justice, A. Valdmanis, who presented a memorandum demanding more rights, was placed under house arrest for a few weeks, but was then sent to Germany, where he must remain as "pensioner." Also Price Inspector, Captain Kikuts, has disappeared. Captain Kikuts in the beginning

of 1942 presented the following demands to the occupation authorities: (a) the rations for Latvians must be the same as those provided for Germans; (b) rations in general must be increased; and (c) the food supply system must be changed, as the German system does not differ from that of the Bolsheviks. The Germans immediately removed Captain Kikuts from his post and then arrested him. No one knows where he is now.

Very many have been arrested for various violations of the mobilization and labor regulations, decrees regarding delivery of food supplies, for not having turned over weapons, etc., etc. A considerable number of arrests have been made among the young people university and senior high school students. The latter are usually charged with "ultra-nationalism," illegal activities, insulting the Germans, etc. A 16 year old student of the III High School in Riga was sentenced to death and shot for singing a satirical song.

The number of arrested Latvian patriots is unknown. However, it must be considerable, as the large Central Prison in Riga for the time being has been reserved only for political culprits, and the number of male prisoners alone runs up to 2,500. This figure only includes the "nationalists;" arrested communists and criminals are placed in the Termin Prison.

In Ventpils (Windau) some 5,000 Russian prisoners of war are being employed in the construction of a new prison -a four-story brick building. This prison will furnish space for as many prisoners as are now located in the Central Prison in Riga.

Also in Liepaja (Libau) a large prison building is under construction. The people living in that vicinity are wondering for whom the Germans are constructing these "cultural buildings."

In addition to prisons the arrested Latvian patriots are kept in concentration camps. The largest camp is in Salaspils, another is in Kalnciems. In both these places the prisoners are made to break stones. Other camps are located near Olaine and between Kemeris and Sloka, where the prisoners are employed in peat digging.

As elsewhere in German occupied Europe, also in Latvia Himmler's Gestapo sees that "internal peace and order" are maintained. The headquarters of the German so-called "Sicherheitsdienst" (Security Service) is in Riga, on the corner of Reimers iela and Rainis bulvaris, and characteristically in the same rooms of the same building where formerly the special Bolshevik GPU imprisoned those Russian officers and officials who had been so careless as to complain somewhere and at some time that the supply situation was much better in Latvia than in the Soviet paradise. The German Gestapo has taken over these premises of the GPU with all the

equipment, "medical" alcoves, and other implements of inquisition, such as lighting effects, hot and cold temperature, etc. These are now being used to torture Latvian patriots.

There is also a Latvian division of the Security Service in Riga, whose headquarters are located on Juris Alunans iela, in the former building of the YMCA. The principal duty of this Latvian Gestapo consists of tracking down communists.

MORALE

All refugees who have recently arrived from Latvia are of the unanimous opinion that the attitude of the population toward the Germans and the authorities of occupation is one of opposition, and even inimical and one of hate. This is the way a young seaman expressed it:

"The general attitude now is quite different to that existing in the summer of 1941. Most of us then believed that the Germans actually did want to help us free ourselves from the Russian barbarians. We also believed that the Germans would restore our liberty and independence. We received the Germans with flowers in honest trust and without hypocrisy. Today the life of every Latvian is a continual round of hypocrisy. Deep in our souls we hate the Germans, but at the same time we must deal with them with a smile, for we understand that we dare not yet revolt against them, no matter how deep our hatred may be. They still help us to keep the Bolsheviks from crossing our borders."

This double role must also be played by most of the higher Latvian officials, and many of them, particularly recently, are trying to resign from their posts and to find employment elsewhere. Whoever is able to do so leaves the towns for the country to do farm and other similar work. Those who own farms and formerly rented them now cultivate them themselves, which is the best solution to the present delicate problem.

Some have been able to obtain employment in the "National Relief." This is the only comparatively strong Latvian organization which is able to lead a more or less independent existence and is not subject to the direct control of the German occupation authorities.

Resignation from an official position is by no means an easy matter, however, as not everyone is able to obtain employment elsewhere. Moreover, also the Germans oppose this strenuously and simply refuse to accept such resignations.

In view of the present attitude of the Latvian people a new factor has become very conspicuous, i.e., the population has lost all fear of the Germans.

The Latvians now act with great self-consciousness and dignity. They offer no apologies when Germans challenge them or feel insulted. Consequently conflicts and brawls between Latvians and Germans have become common occurrences. Individual skirmishes take place not only between civilians, but also between the German soldiers and the so-called Latvian “volunteers,” both behind and at the front lines.

This spirit of opposition of the Latvian population is already commencing to assume an organized form: here and there one observes signs of illegal activity, and it is rumored that the entire underground movement is being conducted by an underground organization. Illegal newspapers are being published, and in cases when the Germans use too harsh measures, illegal pamphlets appear. For example, a pamphlet appeared against the mobilization. It was typewritten, and the authorities discovered that it was the work of employees of the VEF (State Electrotechnical Factory). Some 200 employees were arrested there, of whom a number were interned in a concentration camp in Latvia, but others disappeared completely—evidently they had been deported to Germany.

Obviously the occupation authorities cannot be unaware of this inimical feeling of the population for the Germans. Their reaction to this, on one hand, expresses itself in various repressions, and on the other—unmistakable and unessential forbearance toward the demands of the population, and primarily “sweet speeches.” For example, the supplying of the Latvian Legion with all types of mechanized weapons must be considered as yielding to the demands of the Latvians. Originally the “volunteers” had been furnished only rifles. Also the permission to organize and support Latvian festivals must be considered in this light.

The “sweet speeches” recently are being made in larger numbers by the “bearers of supreme authority,” with Commissar General Drechsler at the head. Their purpose is to “talk away” the inequality which exists everywhere today in life in Latvia. The leading motive of all these speeches is one and the same, viz., “We Germans and you Latvians are equal nations; we have had the same history, and the same fate awaits us; we must therefore hold together and fight together.”

The tone of these speeches as well as that used in the “Deutsche Zeitung im Ostland” has lost much of the former haughtiness of the Prussian “bearers of culture.” Now the editorials in the DZO in a light vein try to emphasize that the Latvians have no cause to feel affronted if the Germans refer to them as “natives” (die Einheimischen). One should not confuse this expression with the name “colored natives” (die Eingeborenen), which has an entirely

different meaning. One should understand that in the German language there is no word other than “die Einheimischen” to designate the *entire* population of the Baltic. One surely cannot demand that all three peoples—the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians—always be individually enumerated, naively explains the DZO.

Neither should the Latvians misunderstand the expression “we” so often used by the Germans, the DZO further attempts to whitewash itself. This “we,” of course, does not mean “we Germans” but “we all,” i.e. “we – Germans, Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians and White Ruthenians,” in brief, “all who live here.”

Evidently this was also the purpose of a big exhibition which was held in the summer of 1943 in the City Museum of Riga. This exhibition was divided into several sections, of which some markedly tried to promote the idea of the “equality” and “affinity” of the Latvians and the Germans.

Both the honeyed speeches and the photographs in the exhibition, however, are properly assessed by the Latvian population. Everyone knows, state the refugees, that those are only empty words, and that the deeds of the Germans have nothing in common with what they say.

In order to obtain a clear picture of the attitude existing among the Latvian population, a remark should be made here. It is true that hatred against the Germans has attained such proportions that it is to be found even among those elements who formerly placed all their hopes upon the Germans. However, despite all this it must definitely be emphasized that no serious sympathies for the communists have appeared in Latvia. Even among the workmen and the small artisans, who suffer most under the German system of economic gangsterism, one will not find a single person wishing for the return of the Bolshevik period. Many of them do say that under the Bolsheviks it was easier to obtain goods, as the Bolsheviks were not as efficient in organizing the plundering of the population as the Germans. However, such statements are never followed by the inference that the Bolsheviks should be supported against the Germans. Even the sympathies of the most radical workers lie far from such thoughts, for during the single year of their rule the Bolsheviks had soured the life of the Latvian workers.

In answer to the question, upon what the Latvian people place their hopes in the long run and wherein the Latvian population sees an exit from the present delicate situation, the refugees all have the same reply: We hope that the United States and Great Britain will realize what they have promised the world by the Atlantic Charter.

This firm conviction is also expressed in the Statement issued by the Latvian Underground Central Council in February 1944, in Riga.

The L.C.C. in its statement demands full and unrestricted independence for Latvia.

S T A T E M E N T
by the
LATVIAN UNDERGROUND CENTRAL COUNCIL

In June 1940 Latvia was occupied by the armed forces of the U.S.S.R. This act implied a violation of the treaties which the U.S.S.R. had concluded with the Latvian Republic in 1920, 1932, 1933 and 1939. In these treaties the U.S.S.R. had renounced voluntarily and for ever all rights of sovereignty over the Latvian people and territory, pledged itself not to resort to aggression against the Latvian Republic and not to interfere in its internal affairs, and solemnly promised to submit all eventual disputes to arbitration. Completely disregarding these promises, in June 1940, the government of the U.S.S.R. brutally interfered in Latvia's internal affairs by officially demanding a reorganization of the Latvian government and by occupying the entire territory of the Latvian Republic.

A new Latvian government, headed by Mr. Kirchensteins, was set up, in violation of the Latvian Constitution, by Mr. Vishinsky, the representative of the government of the U.S.S.R. The new Cabinet included persons who were not Latvian citizens, Deputy Ministers Valeskains and Blaus. The President of the Republic was replaced by Mr. Kirchensteins, the President of the Cabinet, who had been appointed to his position by the occupying power. The Latvian Constitution provides that the Deputy of the President of the Republic is the President of the Saeima, Parliament, and not the President of the Cabinet. Consequently, the aforesaid substitution was an illegal act. Both the President of the Republic and the Cabinet of Ministers were appointed by the occupying power; consequently they were created illegally, and hence had no right whatever to act as the supreme organs of the Latvian Republic.

The Parliamentary elections on July 14th and 15th, 1940, were illegal because they were carried out according to the election law which the Kirchensteins government passed, thereby violating the Constitution of the Latvian Republic. In addition, only one single list of candidates, selected by the occupying power, was admitted, all other lists being arbitrarily rejected; and thus the voters were deprived of the opportunity of voting according to their opinions. Moreover, the Kirchensteins Cabinet had declared that it would defend the independence of Latvia. The voters were never told that

the new Saeima was going to adopt a decision in the question of adhesion to the Soviet Union. They have in no way given a mandate to vote for the extinction of the independence of the Latvian Republic. The voters were compelled to march from their respective places of employment in serried ranks to the ballot boxes. It was said that reprisals would be taken against persons who should not have in their passports the stamp attesting that they had participated in the poll. The vote was, in fact, open, a circumstance which had a terrorizing effect on the voters. The results of balloting were falsified in many constituencies by giving figures which were several times higher than the number of votes, actually cast in the ballot boxes. Finally, the elections were carried out under pressure brought to bear upon the voters by a foreign military occupation, thus depriving there of any liberty of action. On the poll-day all major points were occupied by Soviet troops. Everywhere the voters met with the sight of Soviet tanks and machine-guns.

The Saeima which was elected on July 14th and 15th, 1940 is unconstitutional and illegal. It had no right or mandate to make decisions in the name of the sovereign Latvian people. Moreover, the decision which this body of usurpers took on July 20th, 1940 with regard to Latvia's adhesion to the Soviet Union is legally ineffective also on the ground that the Latvian Constitution provides that a decision concerning any change in the status of Latvia as an independent sovereign republic must be decided by a referendum to the people. Such a decision made by the Saeima and referred to the plebiscite must have the approving vote of at least 50 per cent of Latvian citizens having the right of suffrage. The unconstitutional Saeima of 1940 did not refer its aforesaid decision to the vote of the people. The decision concerning Latvia's adhesion to the Soviet Union has, therefore, *not* become valid.

Latvia's incorporation in the U.S.S.R. is a flagrant breach of the provisions of international law. Latvia's independence is acknowledged *de jure* by all countries of the world and Latvia is a member of the League of Nations. The action taken by the U.S.S.R. against the Latvian Republic involves a brutal violation of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Kellogg Pact. In the Atlantic Charter the leading powers have said that all nations, great and small, shall have the right to decide for themselves how they want to live and that territorial changes shall not take place without their freely expressed consent.

According to international law the Latvian Republic has not lost its sovereignty nor the U.S.S.R. acquired this sovereignty by the fact of the occupation of Latvia by the U.S.S.R. No country has recognized *de jure*

Latvia's incorporation in the U.S.S.R., except Germany. Latvia was occupied by armed forces and the occupying power could not have other rights than those stipulated in the Hague Convention of 1907.

In June, 1941 the U.S.S.R. occupation was ousted by a German invasion of Latvia, as a consequence of which German occupation authorities were established in Latvia. According to international law the military occupation of Latvia has not given Germany any rights, of sovereignty over the Latvian people and territory.

The so-called "Local Self-Administration" set up by the German occupying power and headed by General Dankers and Professor Primanis, is an organ of the German occupying power. It has no right to speak in the name of the Latvian people. It is as unconstitutional and illegal a body as the Kirchensteins government which was set up by the Russian occupying power.

During the German occupation Latvian citizens have been compulsorily mobilized for service in the German Army or the German Labour Service and for work in German war industries, or deported beyond the Latvian frontiers. These measures were decreed by the German occupying power and they all constitute a brutal violation of the provisions of international law, and particularly of the Hague Convention of 1907. They have been taken against the will of the Latvian people and they are merely acts of German arbitrariness.

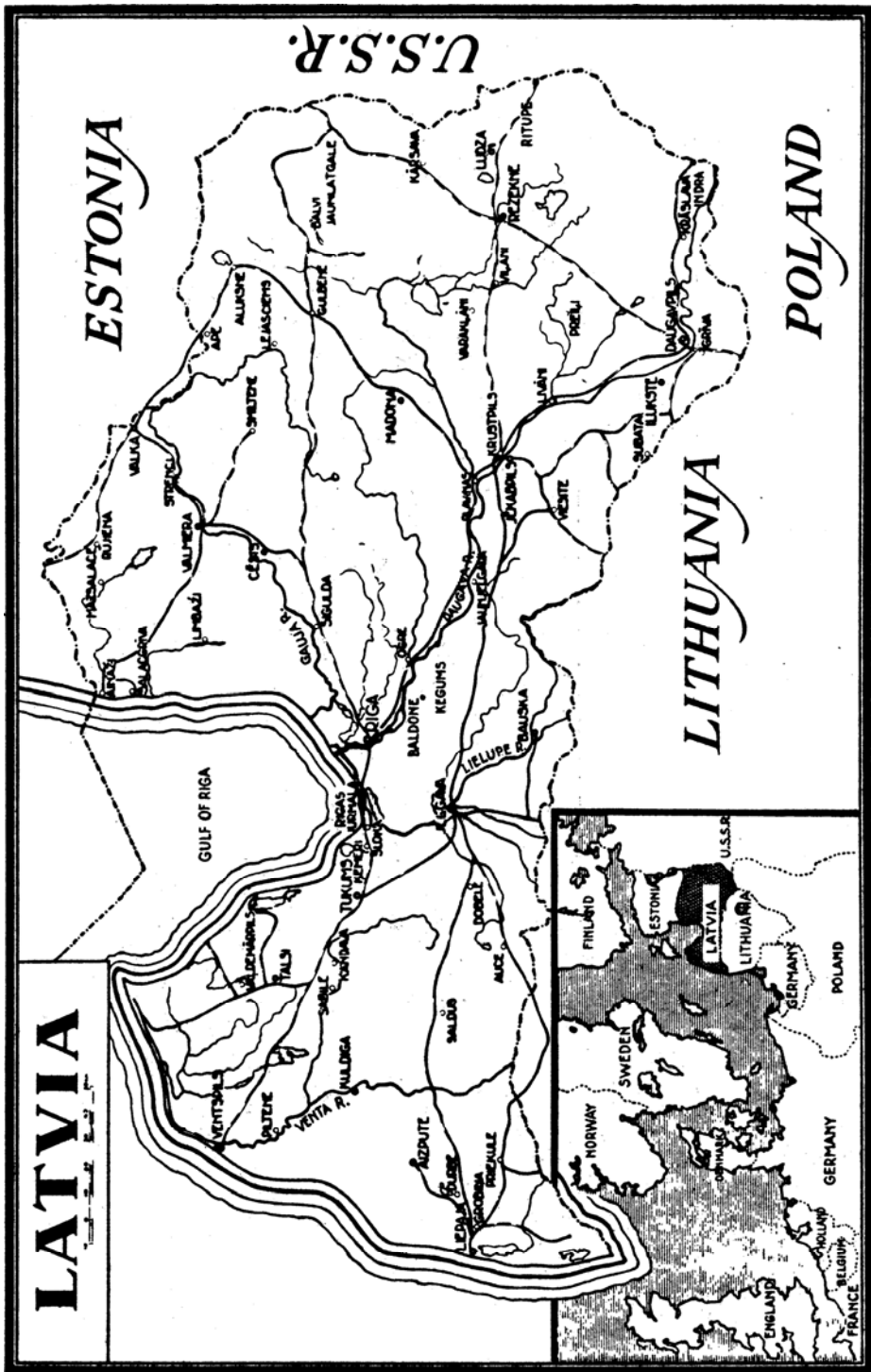
In burning indignation the Latvian people denounce the reprisals which the German occupying power is taking in Latvia. 5,000 Latvian citizens are languishing in concentration camps and prisons to which they have been sent without court or trial. German police officials apply torture as a method of examination. About 10,000 Latvians have been shot during the two dire years of German occupation and there is no end yet to the executions. Wholesale murders of Latvian citizens of Jewish race have also taken place. In September 1943 the German occupation authorities evicted more than 10,000 farmers in the Dundaga region in Northern Kurzeme. The persons concerned were robbed of all they had: land, houses and movable property. In the same month the Germans deported to Germany several thousands of people from Latgale, as politically unreliable. The Germans did not pay any attention to family ties—children were separated from their parents and wives from their husbands.

The Latvian people unanimously reject German intentions to incorporate Latvia in Germany and fight against the German oppressors. Our people firmly and steadfastly stand for the independent and democratic Latvian

Republic which existed for 22 years, and legally has not ceased to exist either under the Russian or German occupation.

The Latvian people are firmly convinced that this war will be won by the United Nations under the leadership of the U. S. A. and Great Britain. It is their hope that the U. S. A. and Great Britain will apply also to Latvia the high principles of the Atlantic Charter which the Latvian people unreservedly support.

Riga, February 1944.





Latvia's Monument of Liberty