

The Path to Recognition from the United States, 1919–1922: The Case of Latvia

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Abstract. The purpose of this article is to examine the main stages on the way to obtaining recognition for the Republic of Latvia from the United States, paying specific attention to the period from 1921 to 1922. After recognition was obtained from other Western powers in January 1921, the issue became particularly relevant. The article reflects upon the reasons for the long period of non-recognition (first and foremost, the principle of an indivisible Russia), the actions of the Latvian Government and society to achieve recognition, as well as the process of recognition and reactions to this development.

Keywords: Baltic states; Latvia; post-war period; American-Russian policy; American-Baltic policy; Latvian diplomacy; Commission of State Department in Baltic States; recognition de jure

The situation in the Baltic region during the struggle for the independence of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania was difficult in all areas – military, political, and social. The circumstances in Latvia during the First World War were particularly difficult, and this was reflected in the post-war years. After declaring the establishment of the Republic of Latvia in November 1918, the Government faced an almost two-year long struggle with internal and external enemies for consolidation of the country's

independence. This was followed by an equally complicated struggle for international recognition. The United States of America was perceived to be one of the states from which it was important to gain recognition, and was associated with great expectations not only in the political, but also economic field. Latvian historiography (not to mention that of the US) has not analysed this issue sufficiently, although without studying it, it is impossible to fully understand the general foreign policy situation of the Latvian state.

WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE US “RUSSIAN POLICY”

American activities were particularly noticeable during the years 1919–1920. Already in the spring of 1919, the US Peace Commission Delegation (under the leadership of Warwick Greene) and the American Relief Administration’s (ARA) Baltic Mission began active work in Liepāja. The Peace Delegation, together with the other missions of the western Allies, tried until the summer to resolve conflicts in the region by creating a Latvian coalition government capable of combating the Bolsheviks and German reactionary forces, which was partially successful. The ARA provided invaluable aid to the population of the famine-stricken regions of Latvia by providing food, thus helping to strengthen the authority of the Provisional Government of Latvia. This Government unequivocally perceived the American presence as one of the factors ensuring the country’s independence, as well as an opportunity to gain international recognition as early as 1919, which was one of the main tasks of the Latvian Government and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the moment of their establishment.

In the summer and autumn of 1919, with the internal situation in Latvia stabilising, to a certain extent, the American presence intensified. Greene’s mission was replaced by a significantly higher-ranking State Department Commission, which included an observer from the War Department. Meanwhile, the ARA – the status of which was changed from governmental to non-governmental – was joined by the American Red Cross and, in 1920, the missions of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA). Humanitarian aid efforts continued until the summer of 1922.

During the War of Independence, the Greene mission and the Commission of the State Department (and to a lesser extent, also the leadership of all the previously mentioned organisations) strictly followed the policy of non-recognition of the Latvian state, despite the efforts of the Latvian authorities to the contrary. They considered Latvia and the other Baltic states to be part of Russia; a matter that would have to be reckoned with after the collapse of Bolshevism in Russia.¹ This was consistent with the long-standing guidelines of US foreign policy. According to them, the restoration of the Russian state was a priority as, partly based on the experience of the relatively recent US Civil War, the disintegration of empires or superpowers and the separation of territories from them was considered a negative phenomenon, both from a political and economic point of view.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT COMMISSION IN RIGA AND REACTION OF LATVIAN SOCIETY

From 1920 to 1922, the US Commission in Riga continued to operate in accordance with the basic directions of activity previously established: cooperating with Latvian authorities and reporting to Washington on the developments in the region as a whole. In Latvia, the US Commission received information directly from the Latvian Government and other authorities.² At the beginning of 1921, the question of the recognition of the Baltic states came up in the capitals of the western European powers. The French Government informed the US Secretary of State that the representatives of Latvia and Georgia demanded recognition, but the French believed that a joint decision should be made by Allied countries. Therefore, it was asked whether the US Government considers “changes in relation to the governments of Latvia and Georgia” possible. Acting Secretary of State, Norman Davis, replied on 15th January that the US Government always tries to act in harmony with the wartime Allied governments as far as possible, however, in this case “it does not seem” that the situation has changed so significantly as to change the

1 See: Ē. Jēkabsons. *The Latvian War of Independence 1918–1920 and the United States. – War, Revolution, and Governance: The Baltic Countries in the Twentieth Century.* Ed. by L. Fleishman, A. Weiner. Academic Studies Press, Boston, 2018, 17–29; Ē. Jēkabsons. *Latvijas un Amerikas Savienoto Valstu attiecības 1918.–1922. gadā.* Latvijas Vēstures institūta apgāds, Rīga, 2018, 831.

2 See: National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Department of State (DS), Latvia, vol. 15.

statements regarding the indivisibility of the Russian state, as expressed in US Secretary of State Colby's note of 20th August 1920.³

By the end of January 1921, an avalanche of de jure recognitions of the independence of Latvia and Estonia began, but the US was not among them. The newspaper *Latvijas Kareivis* of the Latvian Ministry of Defence noted that America does not participate in the Supreme Council, and its recognition (which actually lost much of its acute meaning after the above decision) "will hopefully come separately and in the near future".⁴ Deputy editor of the newspaper, Jēkabs Grīns, noting the rumours about the attitude of the US, expressed the hope that

very soon these uncertainties will be resolved and we will definitely find out what position America occupies against the de jure recognition of Latvia and Estonia [...] The United States has generally behaved very cautiously in the Russian issue, but as far as all Wilson's protests and notes show, America is the very first country that has forgotten the principles of self-determination of nations, which were preached by its President Wilson during the war.⁵

Another reviewer was even more frank:

We are painfully hurt by America's behaviour in the issue of recognising, all the more so because we owe her [the US] eternal gratitude for the help provided to Latvia by supplying food, clothes and medicine, which is still happening today. The current American Government is too involved in the Russia issue and it is difficult for it to suddenly change its policy. It is to be hoped, however, that the new American Government, which will come to power at the beginning of March, will be favourable to us; it is also not to be excluded that President Wilson's Government is changing its policy on Russia and the Baltic states.⁶

The reaction of Latvian society was, in general, similar.⁷

Presumably, many US politicians and representatives who had connections with the Baltic states felt some discomfort with this situation. For example, on 26th February 1921, the Prime Minister of Latvia held a reception in connection with the matter of recognition and, among the approximately 1,500 guests, were the US Representative Evan Young, Consul John Hurley Wolter, and others who probably experienced some sense of discomfort.⁸ All the more so because since the end of January, the Latvian Telegraph Agency paid quite a lot of attention to the statements

3 Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS). 1921, vol. II. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1936, 752–753.

4 Lai dzīvo pilntiesīga Latvijas valsts! – *Latvijas Kareivis*, 28th January 1921.

5 A. G. Pēc de jure atzišanas. – *Latvijas Kareivis*, 2nd February 1921.

6 L. Z. Latvijas politiskā orientācija. – *Latvijas Kareivis*, 5th February 1921.

7 Simplex. Amerika un Baltijas valstis. – *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 3rd February 1921.

8 Viesības pie ministru prezidenta. – *Valdības Vēstnesis*, 28th February 1921.

of the State Department concerning the recognition of the Baltic states, talking about the dissatisfaction of the American “government circles”, the contradiction of recognition with the US “policy of indivisibility of Russia”, etc.⁹ Significantly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also remarked upon the different attitude of Representative Young, noting in a 17th March review that the American Commissioner knows nothing of the new US announcement to the European Allies. He advises patience rather than pressure until 4th March, hoping that by then US policy will change; until then President Wilson and Colby were too involved in the Russian issue to withdraw from it suddenly.¹⁰

Some dissatisfaction with US politics towards the Baltic states was expressed in the US press, although the issue was not given significant attention.¹¹ For example, *The New York Times*, immediately after the recognition of Latvia and Estonia, published an extensive article by Walter Duranty, in which he stated that the position of Great Britain, France, and Italy came into direct conflict with the position of the US, which closely adheres to the view of the impossibility of changing the “borders of the old Russian Empire”, and did not correspond to the principle of right of peoples to self-determination.¹² Statements of a similar nature appeared in other American press publications.¹³

THE CHANGE OF PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

On 4th March 1921, President Warren Harding took office, and Charles Evans Hughes became the Secretary of State. The Latvian commercial representative in New York, Kārlis Ozols, had sent Harding and the incoming Vice President Calvin Coolidge a congratulatory telegram “on behalf of independent Latvia” immediately after the election on 2nd November 1920. Ozols expressed hope that, under the leadership of the new President, “America will delight the countries of the old world in their difficult work of reconstruction of their lives” (on 5th November,

9 Amerika njedovoljna; Amerika po povodu de jure. – Segodnia, 1st February 1920.

10 Latvijas nacionālā arhīva Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs (LVVA), 2575. f., 15. apr., 3. l., 91. lp.

11 See: Latvijas de jure atzīšana. – Amerikas Atbalss, 2nd February 1921.

12 W. Duranty. New States on the Baltic. – New York Times, 28th January 1921.

13 See: New Baltic Nations. – New York Tribune, 28th January 1921.

Coolidge, who was still the Governor of Massachusetts, thanked him for the telegram).¹⁴

Alberts Zalts, columnist of the *Latvijas Kareivis* newspaper, wrote that changes in the current policy are expected and President Wilson has “definitely spoken out against new countries, that is, against the division of Russia,” thus the change of administration “can’t bring us anything worse, but only better.”¹⁵ The press once again emphasised its European policy as the reason for the unpopularity of the Wilson administration and expressed the hope that “the change of government in America will be of great benefit to us, if only we ourselves are more active than before and know how to use the relatively favourable position.”¹⁶

Ludvigs Sēja wrote on 17th March 1921 that “it is not known what the policy of the new American government will be on the issue of Russia and the Baltic states, in any case, it will be more favourable to us than the policy of Wilson, who was too far involved in the issue of Russia and the new states.”¹⁷ In the spring of 1921, in an interview with Michael Farbman, a journalist for *New York World* (he had visited Riga for the first time already in March–April 1920, returning from a trip to Soviet Russia), Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs Zigfrīds Meierovics also noted the need for the recognition of the US, whose support for Latvia was extremely necessary, especially in the economic field.¹⁸

Due to the international changes, voices for recognition began to sound more clearly in the US itself. Soon after the de jure recognition of Latvia and Estonia by western European states, the former secretary of the US Liquidation Commission in Europe in 1919, Edward Noble, justified the need to recognise the Baltic states with personal considerations in the press (April 1921), blaming the “inertia” of President Wilson’s administration for the current policy on this issue.¹⁹ US Senate member Joseph France, upon return from Soviet Russia, met with Foreign Minister Meierovics on 1st August 1921 in Riga, admitting that a change of power in Russia is not possible, but only its “evolution” is

14 LVVA, 2574. f., 4. apr., 133. l., 134., 135. lp. (Report of K. Ozols to Z. Meierovics, 3rd December 1920); *Latvijas tirdzniecības priekšstāvis Ziemeļamerikas Sabiedrotās Valstīs* inž. K. Ozols. – *Latvijas Kareivis*, 9th January 1921.

15 A. Zalts. Prezidenta vēlēšanas Amerikā un Krievijas jautājums. – *Latvijas kareivis*, 14th November 1920.

16 Sav. Valstu Eiropas politika. – *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 7th March 1921.

17 LVVA, 2575. f., 15. apr., 3. l., 29. lp.

18 M. Farbman. Recognition by U.S. is urged by Latvia. Such Action is Indispensable for Growth of Border State. – *Amerikas Atbalss*, 21st April 1921. See: NARA, DP, Latvia, vol. 10 (M. Farbman to J. Gade, Riga, 9th April 1920); National Archives of the United Kingdom, Foreign Office, 371/3633/20 (S. Tallents to Foreign Office, 31st March 1920).

19 E. Noble. The International Practical Value of the Baltic Republics. – *Amerikas Atbalss*, 28th April 1921.

expected. Due to this, he “looked favourably on the final recognition of Latvia”. Latvians also tried to influence the State Department through Japanese and British diplomats in Washington and through Young in Riga, even threatening to recall Sēja from Washington, but there were no results.²⁰ It should be noted that Japan’s position, as Sēja had also noted, played a significant role in the US’s policy of non-recognition of the Baltic states, which was connected to the activity of the dummy Far Eastern Republic, and other governments existing in the territory of Russia. The Americans feared that Japan might recognise one of them if the US would recognise the Baltic states.²¹

Sēja wrote on 27th July that many expected a “rapid” change in the policy also in relation to Russia and the Baltic states. However, the new administration

sticks to the previous administration’s policy on almost all major issues, at least for now. With regard to Russia and the Baltic states, the policy of President Harding and his administration has not yet been clarified, but due to inertia it is going in the old direction, already started previously. The attitude of the United States towards Latvia and other Baltic countries is completely dependent on the American policy towards Russia. The government of the United States, political circles and the press have so far never discussed the question of the Baltic states as an independent problem.

He stated that among the major nations, the Americans are the “biggest Russophiles” and one of the reasons for this is the complicated relationship with Japan. Sooner or later a war with Japan was expected, so it was important for the US to ensure the support of a strong Russia, a natural ally:

Countless times I have heard from the Americans and from the press here the following thoughts expressed: we must do all we can to cultivate Russia’s friendship and encourage her cooperation in the future; the Russian people will soon shake off the yoke of the Bolsheviks and will never forgive the wrongs that are being done to them at the present time; Russia will never forgive the attempt of the European powers to tear away important components from her, such as the Baltic states, the Caucasus, Ukraine and Siberia; therefore, the United States must refrain from every step which might be displeasing to the future government of Great Russia; through this, America will have shown Russia that it is its most reliable friend and benefactor. Such behaviour, in the

20 LVVA, 2575. f., II. apr., 9. l., 62., 67. lp.; 2574. f., 4. apr., 134. l., 114. lp. (Reports of L. Sēja to Z. Meierovics, 6th August 1921; 17th, and 19th August 1921). See: France Goes to Riga; Soviet to Admit Him: Senator, With Permission to Visit Russia, Leaves Berlin With His Secretary. – New York Times, 28th June 1921; France Leaves Riga on Trip to Moscow: Special Courtesies lacking, He Travels in a Crowded Second Class car. – New York Times, 2nd July 1921.

21 See: LVVA, 2574. f., 4. apr., 135. l., 17. lp. (Report of L. Sēja, 5th October 1921).

opinion of many Americans, is capable of securing for America the friendship and benefit of the future Great Russia in her eventual conflict with Japan.

On the other hand, the Russian Ambassador Boris Bakhmetyev, of course, did everything to strengthen such a belief. However,

voices are increasingly being heard that Russia is facing a long era of anarchy and chaos after the collapse of Bolshevism. Due to this, quite a lot of hope is placed on the new countries: they are beginning to be considered as oases from which the gradual recovery of the large and sick body of Russia could proceed. Russian nationalists, of course, fight such insights very fiercely. However, only the most extreme Russophiles think that the Baltic states will be able to be ignored for long. The slightly more far-sighted Russian friends are therefore speaking in favour of actual or provisional recognition of the Baltic states, with their statutes reviewed anew after the establishment of a legal system in Russia, when, as Russian nationalists and their friends say, the Russian people will once again be able to freely decide on their land and their destiny.²²

At the same time, signs appeared in the US that the question of the recognition of the Baltic states was becoming more relevant. On 2nd June 1921, *The Washington Post*, quoting the Chicago banker Josef Elias, stated that the recognition of the Baltic states would be the “biggest step” to stop the threat of the spread of Bolshevism. Elias observed that the three nations had been able to preserve their language and traditions for centuries, despite the pressure of autocratic Russia, and this is a guarantee of their ability to stop aggression, especially if the Great Powers (particularly the US) support them politically and economically. A few days later, the editors of this newspaper published an anonymous article in response that tried to prove recognising the independence of the newly created countries, with the exception of Poland and Finland (whose right to independence is “recognized by the Russians themselves”), was not safe. It was argued that a literal adherence to the principle of “self-determination of nations” would lead to anarchy and a complete collapse of the international order, which could threaten any country. It also praised the policy of the State Department, because it would be foolish to settle the “Russian question without consulting the Russians themselves” and advised to wait until such consultations become possible.²³

²² LVVA, 2574. f., 4. apr., 34. l., 64.–67. lp.

²³ Would Recognize Baltic Nations. – *The Washington Post*, 2nd June 1921; The Powers and Russia. – *Washington Post*, 13th June 1921.

THE DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVE OF LATVIA IN THE US

On 17th March 1921, Sēja, the Director of the Department of Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was officially appointed as a delegate to the US and entrusted with the task of achieving de jure recognition.²⁴ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially notified Young of Sēja's appointment as the head of a "delegation with unofficial status," and on 15th March, Young replied that he had received permission to issue "ordinary visas."²⁵ The day before departure, on 8th April, Sēja acknowledged that his main political task will be to inform the US about Latvia's situation and to achieve "legal" recognition, moreover, taking into account that "America's behaviour towards us has been highly favourable, we can hope that in the future she will not deny us political and moral support either". Sēja expressed the hope that the US "will not refuse to realise part of our planned external borrowing and will provide assistance for the reconstruction of the areas devastated by the war in Latvia." The editorial staff of the *Latvijas Kareivis* commented that during the time of President Wilson the policy towards the new countries was "openly unfavourable", expressing the hope that "the current government of the great overseas republic will not follow in Wilson's footsteps and it will be possible for Latvia to establish closer relations with it."²⁶

The Latvian Government, similarly to the governments of the other two Baltic states, continued the active cooperation with US Congressman Walter Chandler. The cooperation had already started during the Paris Peace Conference in the spring of 1919, for which Chandler received financial compensation (Chandler cooperated in a similar way with other 'young states'). In addition, the American politician was active as a Legal Representative of Latvia in America, publishing, among other things, articles in the American press. For example, in March 1920 an article was published in *The New York Times* about the "five fighting republics" (the Baltic states, Finland, and Poland) that protect Europe from Bolshevism, and are culturally completely different from Russia.²⁷ Chandler also strengthened the belief about the different position of the new US administration on the question of the independence of the Baltic states. In the US press, he tried to convince the public of the error

24 Hoover Institution Archives, Latvia, Sutnieciba Sweden, box 1 (Telegram to Envoy in Sweden, 16th March 1921).

25 NARA, DS, Latvia, vol. 15.

26 Latvija un Amerika. Saruna ar Latvijas sūtņi Amerikā. – *Latvijas Kareivis*, 10th April 1921.

27 See: *Piecas „kaujas republikas”*. – *Latvijas Kareivis*, 23rd March 1920.

of Wilson's position against the so-called new countries on the territory of the former Russia and expressed confidence that with the victory of the Republicans in the presidential elections "better days will come" for them. In his contacts with senators and members of Congress, he also reflected on his activities in the promotion of these countries. Chandler stressed that "only President Wilson stands in the way of the recognition of the Baltic republics."²⁸

On 30th April, Sēja entered New York, continuing on to Washington on 1st May. Already on 2nd May, Chandler took Sēja to Congress, the Senate, and the Supreme Court, where he was introduced to several colleagues (in his report Sēja sarcastically noted that "the introductions most often happened in the elevator"), and on 3rd May, at Chandler's recommendation, Sēja was invited to a reception organised by the speaker of the parliament. On 5th May, Sēja (together with Chandler) visited Herbert Hoover whose attitude was sympathetic to Latvia, receiving a promise to support efforts to achieve de jure recognition. On 10th May, Sēja reported that the State Secretary did not "officially" accept him, so he was going to submit a "motivated" request for him to recognise Latvia. At the same time, he and Chandler were preparing to lobby the issue among senior officials. During this time, Sēja had already established that Chandler

has put our affairs and prospects in too rosy a light, as if the Secretary of State Mr. Hughes, like the President, were only waiting directly for me. Regrettably, these gentlemen are much less interested in me. I asked Chandler to inquire discreetly at the State Department whether Mr. Hughes would officially accept me if I requested an audience. It was explained to him that there is a rule in the State Department according to which the Secretary cannot accept any representative of an unrecognised country. Chandler asked the Secretary to talk to Hughes himself, drawing his attention to the fact that I, although a representative with an unofficial status, consider it my duty to stand before the Secretary of State before I visit anyone else or start my activity at all. Mr. Hughes confirmed the existence of the above-mentioned rule, asked me not to consider it as discourtesy towards me and told me that he "appreciates very much" my correctness and tact in this case; I am free to visit who I want. So officially I cannot see the Secretary of State. Presumably, this will be possible unofficially in the near future. I will also be able to see the President as a foreign citizen [...] The general prospects for American recognition are not bad; I am confident that we will achieve it in a few months, maybe faster.²⁹

28 Amerikānietis par jaunajām valstīm. – Latvijas Kareivis, 9th December 1920.

29 LVVA, 2574. f., 4. apr., 134. l., 3., 6. lp.; 293. f., 1. apr., 1., 2. lp. (Telegrams of L. Sēja to the Ministry, 30th April 1921 and 3rd May 1921); Latvijas priekšstāvis Amerikā. – Valdības Vēstnesis, 4th May 1921; Latvijas sūtis Amerikā. *Latvijas Kareivis*. 10th May 1921; Latvijas sūtis Amerikā. – Jaunākās Ziņas, 9th June 1921.

On the same day, Sēja wrote: “I am not at all a pessimist, but it is quite clear that we will not get through here without a fight. I am acquainted with many political workers and I can reach everywhere, so there is an opportunity to work.” On 20th May, Sēja managed to get an unofficial, 20-minute meeting with the Assistant Secretary of State, Fred Morris Dearing, who “was quite reserved and very wary of getting involved in any way”, but on 13th July he was unofficially accepted by Hughes, who expressed “sympathy for the Latvian people and their efforts”.³⁰ Sēja considered the audience a “remarkable success and a certain concession” because “in the beginning the Secretary of State had motivated his refusal to accept me with certain arguments, which are still valid now, at least formally.”³¹ Hoover’s support was essential. For example, on 30th April, he reminded the Secretary of State of “the recent discussion in the cabinet on the issue of the recognition of the three Baltic states” and asked him to explain his “current position”.³²

On 4th June, Sēja believed that in the US “government circles are gradually changing their views in our favour”. He thought that the process was hindered by contradictions between the Senate and the Government. On 4th August, however, Sēja reported that the Assistant Secretary of State hinted in a conversation with Chandler that the State Department could only recognise the Baltic states in November: “We are not satisfied with the principled favour and promises of the American Government, because what else could these gentlemen say in the current circumstances? I have had the opportunity to speak with some other employees of the State Department, and they all say that the *de jure* recognition of Latvia is a matter of time.”³³ US delays in recognition caused disappointment and resentment in the Baltic states, especially after Estonia and Latvia were admitted to the League of Nations in September 1921. Also in connection with achieving US recognition, on 19th August, Sēja wrote to Meierovics: “I completely agree with you that Latvia’s admission to the League of Nations will give us a new and very strong trump card against the Americans as well”.³⁴

On 27th September, Sēja could still only report that “in the last couple of weeks,” an evolution can be detected in American policy

30 LVVA, 2574. f., 4. apr., 134. l., 37. lp. (Report of L. Sēja, 20th May 1921). LVVA, 293. f., 1. apr., 453. l., 1–6., 14., 16., 39. lp.; 2570. f., 14. apr., 1353. l.; 1131. l., 178. lp.; 2574. f., 4. apr., 133. l., 199.–201., 268., 269. lp.

31 LVVA, 2574. f., 4. apr., 134. l., 88., 89. lp. (Report of L. Sēja, 15th July 1921).

32 NARA, DS, Latvia (H. Hoover to Ch. Hughes, 30th April 1921).

33 LVVA, 293. f., 1. apr., 453. l., 28., 57., 58. lp. (Reports of L. Sēja, 4th June 1921; 4th August 1921).

34 LVVA, 293. f., 1. apr., 453. l., 71. lp.

towards Latvia under the influence of two circumstances: the reception of Latvia in the League of Nations; and the fear of Germany's economic expansion in both the world and in the Baltic market. He had just met with US Assistant Secretary of State Dearing, and several other employees of the department, who all reassured him, "so as not to doubt the favourable final outcome. At the moment, before the peace conference, they still think that our recognition cannot be realised; their big politics is hindering it. They have spoken about this matter with the Secretary of State himself, and he adheres to this insight." Sēja noted that he had recently encountered "the greatest hospitality and kindness" in state institutions.³⁵

Riga received (with some nervousness) the constantly incoming signals that the American public still considers Latvia a part of Russia. For example, in June 1921, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs even informed Sēja that the Minister of Finance had drawn Young's attention to the phrase "Russia, including Latvia" was once again mentioned in an article about the New York company Baltic & Russian Import. Co. Sēja replied on 23rd September that in the US, where the understanding of events in Europe is generally quite unclear, this is a "normal thing". As an example, he mentioned that the press often writes about the Baltic countries as "Balkan" countries. Sēja noted: "We are doing our best to inform the American public correctly, but it will take a long time before the broad American people and even the press begin to fully orientate themselves on the affairs of eastern Europe. In my opinion, this will not happen until several years later, when the new structure of eastern Europe becomes available to Americans in geography textbooks and on maps."³⁶ Later, he recalled that an American expressed his understanding of the problems with the Turks that Latvia has to experience, while another had to be enlightened that Latvia is not a new automobile company, etc.³⁷ However, there were also signs that the Baltic states were increasingly being "noticed".³⁸

On 3rd December 1921, during the Washington Disarmament Conference – which US representatives previously mentioned as the main reason for not resolving the recognition issue – Sēja reported that "nothing new has arrived in the last weeks, because in the State Department, as they have informed both for me and our benefactors,

35 LVVA, 293. f., 1. apr., 453. l., 74. lp.

36 LVVA, 2574. f., 4. apr., 133. l., 322., 323. lp.

37 Amerika un Latvija. – Latvijas Vēstnesis, 14th June 1923; NARA, DS, box 6666.

38 See: T.R. Ybarra. Orientation in Baltic High Politics. – New York Times, 2nd October 1921; The Truth about the Baltic States. – Washington Post, 18th December 1921.

who have been there, it is not possible for the Department to start discussing such issues during the conference, [people] who are not directly connected with the conference. It would not be advisable to bother the gentlemen of the State Department too often. We are taking steps to make our case as active and determined as possible when the conference is over. My personal thoughts are that our prospects are satisfactory.” On the other hand, the 15th December report showed the real state of affairs. Sēja wrote:

The personal treatment of me, as I have already emphasised earlier, is satisfactory; but the official behaviour is simply terrible. So, quite recently, I tried to get an entrance card to the meetings of the big conference through the State Department. The State Department has a diplomat’s balcony, and the gentlemen had a terrible fear that if I received the card in question, I would *eo ipso* be included in the official diplomatic corps; therefore, despite the promises, I still haven’t received such a card. [...] Of course, I can get to the meetings unofficially by getting a card from a member of Congress. Such a lack of welcome is simply shameless if you consider the great attention and subservience that our people show daily to the American representatives in Riga; I personally have shown them the greatest kindness in my time. Therefore, I think it is quite right that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also the Prime Minister in one case or another will make them feel that even millionaires are not allowed to do everything.³⁹

During this time, the Department of Foreign Affairs of Latvia devoted significant efforts to achieving US recognition. In an interview, Prime Minister Meierovics particularly emphasised that the main foreign policy task of 1922 will be the achievement of recognition by the US. Among the encouraging factors, he counted Latvia’s admission to the League of Nations and that the European powers and the US will begin to solve the ‘Russian problem’.⁴⁰ On 26th January 1922, on the first anniversary of *de jure* recognition of the state by the Allied Supreme Council, Sēja reported that, in Riga, Young “was speaking very energetically for the recognition of the Baltic states”.⁴¹ Sēja once again expressed the hope that with the end of the disarmament conference, it would finally be possible to discuss the Baltic states issue: “Our stocks are doing quite well. A few weeks ago, the Secretary of State stated in a conversation with senior officials of the State Department that the case of the Baltic states could not be postponed any longer.” Sēja had noticed that the French representatives at the conference were definitely showing support for

39 LVVA, 2574. f., 4. apr., 135. l., 57., 67. lp.

40 Ministr-prezident Meijerovic. – Segodnia, 4th January 1922.

41 LVVA, 253. f., 1. apr., 453. l., 95. lp.

the Americans in everything that affected the “integrity of Russia”. As France had recognised the Baltic states and supported their admission to the League of Nations, it could be concluded that it “does not consider the independent establishment of the Baltic states to be a violation of Russia’s integrity”. The representative of Latvia undertook to use this argument in future communications with the State Department.⁴²

On 1st March 1922, Sēja reported that he had just been to the State Department, where he was promised again that a report “composed in a favourable spirit” for the Secretary of State on the issue of the recognition of the Baltic states had been prepared, though no tangible evidence was provided. The representative of Latvia, however, believed that “the next 2–3 weeks will perhaps be decisive for the issue of recognition.” On 9th March, Sēja submitted another request to recognise Latvia’s independence (with appendices about the country’s economic situation, relations with Russia and other Baltic states, the request made up a total of 45 pages). From then on, Sēja met frequently (two to three times a week) with various employees of the State Department, but the only answer they gave was: “The Secretary of State is not yet ready to take our case forward.” Moreover, the forthcoming Genoa Conference was now cited as a pretext for delay. On 13th April, Sēja concluded that “the State Department simply does not keep its promise to us, because in the past it definitely promised to discuss the affairs of the Baltic states after the Washington [arms limitation] Conference. During the time of the Washington Conference there was a sort of truce between us and the State Department, and I made no move to have the matter raised in the House of Representatives, the Senate, or their Foreign Affairs Committees. Now the question revolves around whether to start a more active tactic or wait a little longer.” Sēja believed that the issue of the Baltic states could be raised easily in the Senate, however, there would be a risk of “making the State Department gentlemen angry with us and making the situation possibly even worse.” In this situation, with the demands of trade and financiers to recognise Soviet Russia, Sēja considered it wiser to wait a little longer.⁴³

On 16th April, *The New York Times* published an article by a representative of Latvia on the relations between the Baltic states and Russia, in which he looked at the collapse of the empires and justified the demand for independence. This should be acknowledged as Sēja’s

42 LVVA, 2574. f., 1. apr., 76. l., 2.–6. lp. (Report of L. Sēja, 26th January 1922).

43 LVVA, 2574. f., 1. apr., 76. l., 21., 31.–35. lp. (Report of L. Sēja, 1st March 1922, 13th April 1922).

success. He wrote that “the only practical objection to the declaration of independent Baltic states has been Russia’s inability to exist without the great ports of those states,” but “the Baltic states understand this, and are not going to deny Russia access to them,” and “the Americans have been of great help to us in very critical moments of our existence. We hope that in the future this great nation will not look down upon the nations which have built up strong democracies from ruins and destruction, which have contributed more to the victory of the Allies than their duty required, and which are a factor in the maintenance of peace, order and stability.”⁴⁴

PROCESS OF RECOGNITION

In the spring of 1922, Young suggested recognising the Baltic states. On 6th April, he concluded that the Baltic states have demonstrated their ability to exist, although each still had certain shortcomings. He also wrote:

It is idle at this time to discuss the question as to whether the Letts, the Estonians and the Lithuanians were morally justified in proclaiming their independence in the hour of Russia’s weakness. The simple fact is that these nationalities, though unquestionably animated by nationalistic aspirations, preferred the creation and establishment of what may be termed modern civilized governments to their existence either as a part of Soviet Russia under a communistic regime or with a status of autonomous soviet republics. Whatever their future may be, it is certain that their action in proclaiming their independence has resulted in the maintenance of at least this part of the former Russian Empire free from the ravages and destruction of communism and bolshevism. [...] It is entirely possible, or even probable, that some time in the indefinite future these so-called States may once again become an integral part of Russia. It seems most probable, however, that until that time comes they will be able to maintain their political stability, and with that their independence. [...] from our point of view, a strong Russia is greatly to be desired, it is still difficult for an observer here to suggest any course of action other than the immediate recognition of these States. [...]”⁴⁵

On the other hand, in the circles of the American intelligentsia, the policy implemented by the US Government in 1922 began to cause growing dissatisfaction, of which the representations of the Baltic states in the US were aware. At the beginning of 1922, their representatives decided to create the Society of Friends of America and the Baltic States, the

⁴⁴ Ch. Seya. Baltic States and Russia. – New York Times, 16th April 1922.

⁴⁵ FRUS, 1922, vol. II, Washington, 1938, 869–872.

purpose of which would be “the promotion of mutual acquaintance and information, also in an economic field, and the moral benefit of the Baltic States”, and (according to Sēja’s report of 7th February 1922) “to bring the Baltic countries closer culturally and economically to America, to provide correct information about the Baltic countries in America and about America in the Baltic countries, as well as to provide moral support to the Baltic countries that have not yet achieved recognition of their independence here” in the US.⁴⁶ According to the original plan, each of the Baltic states would invite three Americans and two of their compatriots living in the US as founders of the association.⁴⁷

On 31st March, seven supporters of the foundation of the association gathered in New York, in the presence of nine heads of nationalities delegations from the Baltic states (including the President of the Central European Association, prominent industrialist, and economist Robert Caldwell). The Baltic-American Society was formed, in which prominent Americans were active alongside Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians. The goal declared was to maintain friendship between the peoples of the Baltic states and the US, based on the “recognition of common democratic ideals, recognition of mutual national achievements and efforts, as well as on cooperation for the purpose of developing international trade.”⁴⁸ Lithuanian representative Voldemaras Čarneckis believed that the association should become a means to remind the US Government of the political and economic issues of interest to Baltic people.⁴⁹

Hamilton Holt, the publisher of *The Independent*; Edward Filene, a Boston merchant; a former President of the State University of New York and the editor of *The New York Times*, John Finley; Senator William King; Congressman Chandler; Director of the Institute of International Education, Professor Steven Duggan, and others joined the association. On 1st July 1922, the organisation asked State Secretary Hughes to recognise the Baltic states “in the name of national justice, international peace and stability, [and] the growth of world democratic ideals”. The memorandum was submitted by the director of the society’s board, Harold Bender, a professor of Indo-Germanic philology at Princeton University. It was signed by another 29 university professors, and the cover letter stated that it is an “urgent duty is to recognize these

46 LVVA, 2574. f., 4. apr., 109. l., 328. lp.

47 LVVA, 293. f., 1. apr., 1156. l., 10. lp. (L. Sēja to K. Roos, 1st February 1922).

48 LVVA, 293. f., 1. apr., 1156. l., 1.-45. lp. (Correspondence of L. Sēja with Latvian organisations in USA, 1922–1923).

49 J. Skirius. Lietuvos užatlantės diplomatija 1918–1929 metais. S. n., Vilnius, 1995, 61.

republics”, all the more so since Lithuania has just been recognised de jure by other Great Powers, thus “practically all the great powers of the world have recognized de jure all three Baltic States, except the United States”. Bender stressed that the right of the Baltic states to independence is equally as strong as that of Poland because of “vigorous national consciousness, [and] a rapidly improving economic situation”. On 12th July, Bender gave a three-hour interview in Princeton about the need for recognition of the Baltic states (especially highlighting Lithuania, with whose representation he maintained close relations) to the head of the press syndicate, Edward Marshall. The interview was published on 23rd July, reaching 15–20 million readers.⁵⁰ Among other things, Bender stressed the differences of Latvians and Lithuanians from Germans and Russians, their historical role in Europe, etc.⁵¹

The Lithuanian historian Jozas Skirius rightly believes that the main motive of the Americans in the association was that, by supporting “new and small countries”, they tried to gain from it not only possible material benefits from cooperation with them in the future, but also “honour”.⁵² In any case, in 1922 such activity was very beneficial for the Baltic states. The real situation in the summer of 1922 forced the US Government to finally decide on the recognition of the independence of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania (it was also significant that on 30th June the Conference of Ambassadors made a decision to recognise de jure Lithuania).⁵³ In addition, as noted by the Estonian historian Eero Medijainen, the economic factor (i.e. the debts of the Baltic states to the US) was also important – after the losses in Russia, the US could not afford to also lose money from the Baltic states (albeit incomparably smaller amounts), and this could be caused by further prolonging non-recognition.⁵⁴

On 5th July, Sēja reported that he had visited the State Department several times and many sources there said that “Latvia’s recognition is in principle safe, our people and government enjoy America’s favour and trust, but due to certain circumstances, the American Government is still waiting.” The head of the Russian Department, Dewit Poole, emphasised that the US had already recognised Latvia and maintained relations. He advised “to calmly wait for a while, because in the near future the

50 LVVA, 293. f., 1. apr., 989. l., 15., 16. lp.; U.S. Urged to Recognize 3 Baltic States. – New York Tribune, 12th July 1922.

51 Amerikas profesors par mums. – Jaunākās Ziņas, 12th September 1922.

52 J. Skirius. Lietuvos užatlatntės diplomatija 1918–1929 metais, 61.

53 FRUS. 1922, vol. II, 873.

54 E. Medijainen. The US de jure Recognition of the Baltic States. – Trames, 2012, 16(4), 305–322.

matter will be resolved in our favour anyway.” An official who spoke with the President recently echoed Harding’s remarks. Sēja believed that the position of the US Government was positively influenced by the recent *de jure* recognition of Lithuania, as well as developments in relation to the Russian issue – on 30th June, Bakhmetyev’s ambassador’s mandate was terminated, and he had left for Europe at the beginning of July.⁵⁵ Sēja wrote that Bakhmetyev “defended his position here, so to speak, until his death” and “used all his influence and all his connections to stay here at least for a while longer.” The favour of the US Government ended when the question of the use of the 182-million dollar loan issued to Bakhmetyev was raised in the Senate, and the issue of economic relations with Soviet Russia became increasingly prominent on the agenda.⁵⁶

It is significant that still on 20th July, *The Washington Post*, which had previously also stood out with an unfavourable position against the recognition of the Baltic states, explaining that the situation with them is different from Finland and Poland, and that the principle of Russia’s indivisibility must be taken into account (it must not be denied access to sea). Therefore, the US still occupied the position of “observer”, assuming that Russia could become a union of “semi-autonomous countries” in which Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia would also “take their place”.⁵⁷

However, opinion in the government had changed, and on 24th July, Secretary of State Hughes told the President that the time had come to recognise “the so-called Baltic States”. He based this on the stability of the governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and their ability to ensure stable economic and political conditions in their territory. Hughes emphasised that the US Government has maintained unofficial relations with the governments of these Baltic countries for more than two years, the Commission and consular representatives work in them, but the representatives of the Baltic countries are informally admitted to the US. The Baltic countries have been recognised by all the “important” countries of the world, except the US. He remarked that the recognition had been delayed by considerations related to the Russian problem in general, by “some European governments” promoting the collapse of Russia, as well as external evidence that suggested the future interests of the US required a strong, united, and democratic Russia. However, the situation required (and gave the opportunity) “to give recognition to the three Baltic governments and carry out this action in accordance with our

55 See: FRUS. 1922, vol. II, 875–884.

56 LVVA, 2574. f., 1. apr., 76. l., 80.–85. lp. (L. Sēja to Z. Meierovics, 5th July 1922).

57 Russian Succession States. – Washington Post, 20th July 1922.

[US] general Russian policy”. The Secretary of State also added Albania to the recognition text for the approval of the President.⁵⁸ The President immediately agreed, and on 25th July an encrypted telegram was sent to the representative office in Riga with an order to inform the governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on the morning of 28th July, possibly simultaneously, that the US grants them “full recognition”.⁵⁹

On 28th July, the US Government made an official statement, justifying the decision because the Baltic governments had been able to ensure political and economic stability in their countries. A significant remark followed – the US Government had always believed that unrest in Russia cannot be the reason for the separation of its territories, but in the case of recognising the governments of the Baltic states, the principle has not been violated. On the same day, the temporary head of the US representation (Consul in Charge) Harli Quarton, in Riga at 11:00, submitted a note about the recognition without restrictions to the Latvian Government.⁶⁰ In the accompanying letter, he remarked that the recognition also affects Estonia and Lithuania, and Young will be given the rank of envoy and minister plenipotentiary, and would continue to represent the US in Latvia.⁶¹

Presenting the letter of recognition to Meierovics, Quarton highlighted what was said in the statement of his government about the many reliable US citizens of Latvian nationality, and the local attitude towards Americans: “every American who has lived in Latvia until now knows how to respect the kindness and hospitality which he received from the government and people of Latvia, both in times of war and peace”. Quarton also spoke of the activities of US organisations: “representatives of these organizations returned to America with the best impressions from Latvia and thereby strengthened the friendly relations between the two countries”, etc. Meierovics returned the visit at 11:30, then at 12:30 several other guests met with Meierovics, such as the US military representative Worthington Hollyday, trade attaché Laurence Groves, and Layton Roger, who had come to Riga at the beginning of the year with the aim of making contacts with Soviet Russia in order to establish economic ties. At 13:00, lunch was held at the home of Mrs. Evan Young with Meierovics, Voldemārs Salnais, Vilis Šumanis, Quarton, Hollyday, and others. During the lunch, Quarton said that Americans have recognised Latvia in their hearts for a long time, but they felt happy

58 NARA, Latvia UD 38, Record Group 84 (C. Hughes to W. Harding, 24th July 1922).

59 NARA, DS, Latvia (C. Hughes to Mission in Riga, 25th July 1922).

60 LVVA, 2570. f., 3. apr., 1148. l., 155.–157. lp.

61 NARA, DS, Latvia (H. Quarton to Z. Meierovics, Riga, 28th July 1922).

that they could now openly express their feelings. Quarton remarked to the press that recognition should be followed by closer economic relations and the possibility of receiving a loan from the US opened up.⁶² On the same day, Meierovics telegraphically thanked Hughes, noting that the recognition “will strengthen the deep friendship felt by the people of Latvia towards the people of the United States and our deep admiration for your great republic.”⁶³

REACTIONS IN LATVIA AND THE US

At the initiative of youth organisations in Riga, on 28th July, at 13:30 on the Esplanade, a demonstration with flags started, accompanied by orchestras. About 800–1,000 demonstrators from the Latvian Youth Union, the Latvian National Youth Union, etc., with US flags went to the representative office at Jura Street 1, where Quarton was greeted by the head of the Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilhelms Munters, and Professor Jānis Ozoliņš. After that, the demonstrators visited the houses in turn, where the apartments of Quarton and Young (who was on vacation in Carlsbad) were located. Mrs. Young came out to the demonstrators and shouted “Long live Latvia!” in Latvian. The anthems of the US and Latvia were played, and at the end the demonstration visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where it was greeted by Meierovics.⁶⁴

In terms of size, smaller demonstrations or events were also held in other cities. For example, in Liepāja the news about the recognition caused houses, institutions, and ships to be decorated with flags, there was “observable excitement” in the population and “lively movement” in the streets. Representatives of organisations, associations, and schools convened in the city council meeting, in which it was decided to hold a residents’ demonstration on the evening of 31st July. This plan was executed and the press reported that “a demonstration so successful had not been seen for a long time”. After a service held in St. Anna’s Church by the American Baptist pastor in Liepāja, William Aberneth, there was a

62 Atzišanas raksta iesniegšana; Pēc Savienoto Valstu de jure atzišanas. – Latvijas Kareivis, 29th July 1922; Amerika priznala Latviju, Estoniju i Litvu de jure. – Segodnia, 29th July 1922; M. Rns [Rācens]. Vēl par Latvijas atzišanu no Ziemeļ-Amer. Savienot. Valstīm. – Darba Balss, 29th July 1922.

63 NARA, DP, Latvia, vol. 17 (Z. Meierovics to Ch. Hughes, Washington, 28th July 1922). Latvia Cables “Grateful Thanks”. – New York Times, 30th July 1922.

64 De jure svinības Rīgā. – Jaunākās Ziņas, 29th July 1922; Manjifestacija. – Segodnia, 29th July 1922.

parade of garrison troops and a procession of soldiers, and representatives of schools and organisations with flags through the city, and the streets “were full of people long after the demonstration ended”.⁶⁵ In Sloka the fire brigade siren was activated to gather residents, they were then greeted by the management of the town board, and subsequently marched through the streets accompanied by an orchestra.⁶⁶

Officials also spoke highly of the American recognition. For example, Salnais, a fellow of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who had lived in the US for a long time, said that the recognition “definitely secured our [Latvia’s] international position”. He, like Deputy Minister of Finance Voldemārs Āboltiņš, also observed the economic importance of recognition for Latvia. Āboltiņš said that the members of the American delegation who visited him on 28th July also emphasised the future prospects of Latvia as a trading partner of the US. He himself also noted the increase in the importance of Russian transit with the recognition, etc.⁶⁷

On 28th and 29th July, the press reported on the long-awaited recognition from the US. The newspaper *Jaunākās Ziņas* noted in its editorial that Latvia’s international position after being recognised by the European powers was stable enough to consider each subsequent recognition as logical. However, the hesitation of the US had given reason to clarify its position towards Russia and, therefore, the Baltic states, as well as giving detractors a reason to question the existence of the new states and to wait for the “restoration of indivisible Russia”. With the recognition, it also became clear that “in the big overseas country, Latvia is considered a full member of the global family of countries”.⁶⁸ In the same newspaper, Professor Ozoliņš wrote that recognition from the world’s most economically powerful country, the US, was the “last great victory” that had to be won on the way to independence. He expressed his hope for changes in the economic situation as well (i.e. receiving a loan in the US, etc.). He also thanked Sēja, Ozols, and Chandler for their work in achieving recognition. He noted the greatest US support to Latvia among other countries, writing that America delayed its recognition but “we don’t hold it against her” because “we know the character of the Anglo-Saxon people: reticent to show friendship, but constant and faithful, once friendship is assured. We have no reason to fear that we

65 Latvijas de jure no Amerikas. – Kurzemes Vārds, 29th July 1922.

66 Sloka. De jure svinības. – Jaunākās Ziņas, 1st August 1922.

67 Jaunā atzišana nodrošina Latvijas nākotni. – Latvijas Vēstnesis, 29th July 1922.

68 A. Gersons. Amerika atzinuse Latviju. – Jaunākās Ziņas, 28th July 1922.

may soon lose America's favour again."⁶⁹ Another reviewer of *Jaunākās Ziņas* noted with satisfaction that the US also recognised Lithuania, thus giving an additional stimulus to the unity of the Baltic states and even the creation of a union, while also improving Lithuania's suspicious attitude towards Latvia.⁷⁰

The introductory text of the newspaper of the Ministry of War (*Latvijas Kareivis*) was decorated with the slogan: "Long live the great Transatlantic Republic, fighter for people's rights and democratic ideas!" Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Meierovics, making a peculiar summary of the US relations with the unrecognised Republic of Latvia, demonstrating his personal attitude, announced: "The note of recognition of the great overseas democracy has put the final crown on our independence." US recognition has come slowly, moreover, "the darkest was the era of President Wilson", the US has been waiting for the results of the Washington, Geneva, and Hague conferences, moreover, some German and Soviet Russian statesmen have warned that "the United States does not yet consider us worthy of recognition" and it was rumoured in diplomatic circles that the possibility of a union between the US, Germany, and Soviet Russia is not excluded, with the US "keeping its hands free to watch indifferently the inevitable crushing of the new states". He continued: "Now this gossip has been put to an end forever. Our borders have been finally recognised and the speeches of detractors, which, regrettably, are still heard in our homeland and abroad, must be finally silenced." The act of recognition also expanded economic perspectives, because until then Latvia was considered a "credit-deprived country" in "a certain part of the world", and therefore it was difficult to cooperate economically with the US, because the possible creditors were forced to orient themselves to the position taken by the government. However, "now this dam of mistrust and suspicion has been broken and much wider horizons are opening up for our trade and industry, all the more so because American capital plays a decisive role in the economic life of the world." Meierovics emphasised that the government and the representative in the US, Sēja, did everything to achieve the "de jure recognition of the Transatlantic superpower", and also noted the merits of the representative of the US, Young, who had constantly indicated in his reports that "there is no visible obstacles on the political and economic horizons that would hinder our [US] full recognition".⁷¹

69 J. Ozoliņš. Amerika un mēs. – *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 28th July 1922.

70 Elvis. Jauns ieguvums Baltijas valstu apvienībai. – *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 29th July 1922.

71 E. Mednis. Ministru prezidents par Savienoto valstu atzīšanas nozīmi. – *Latvijas Kareivis*, 29th July 1922.

The entire Latvian press wrote about the event similarly on 29th–30th July, not excluding the Russian-Jewish daily newspaper *Segodnja*.⁷² The left-wing social democrat newspaper *Sociāldemokrāts* in Riga stood out by writing about the need to hope and wait for the US recognition of Soviet Russia, which is very important for Latvia, also including the general phrases about the importance of recognition for Latvia. However, the social democratic press also wrote that with the recognition “the international situation of the Baltic states can be considered as finally stabilised”, noting with reason that this does not mean that “it will bring economic benefits in itself”.⁷³

On 1st August, Quarton reported to the Secretary of State that after receiving a telegram from Washington, the representative office in Riga agreed with the consulates in Kaunas and Tallinn that notifications to the governments would be submitted simultaneously – on 28th July at 11:00, and the announcement was received with great joy in Riga. In state institutions, after lunchtime, employees were released from work duties, flags were hung, demonstrations took place in the streets, moreover, none of this was organised in advance, because the recognition was delayed for so long. Quarton also noted the impression that the reasons for the long non-recognition were understood and no criticism had been directed against the US Government. He wrote: “I found it necessary to avoid explanations and comments on American-Russian policy in all the speeches and interviews I gave.” On the other hand, on 9th August, Quarton sent translations from the Latvian press writing about the recognition. Finally, on 19th August, Meierovics also thanked Young, asking him to convey his gratitude to his government and expressing the hope that it would strengthen the friendship of the Latvian people towards the people of the US and “their great republic”.⁷⁴

The recognition of the Baltic states and Albania de jure was also observed by the American press. *The New York Times* symptomatically wrote on 29th July about “a struggling group of little republics on the edge of Soviet Russia”, the combined population of which is “hardly greater than that of the three larger boroughs of the City of New York” but they have the “spirit of an early American commonwealth before our federation.” Still, the Baltic people were characterised positively because

72 See: Sakarā ar Latvijas atzišanu no ASV. – Kurzemes Vārds, 29th July 1922; Amerikanskoje priznanije. – Segodnia, 29th July 1922.

73 See: Amerikas de jure atbalsis. – Latvijas Kareivis, 30th July 1922; Ziemeļ-Amerikas Savienotās Valstis atzinušas Latviju de jure. – Sociāldemokrāts, 29th July 1922.

74 NARA, DP, Latvia, vol. 17.

these little republics are now cooperating and even confederating to promote and protect their common interests. That recognition by the United States has waited so long gives it greater value now that it has come, for it is like a diploma of accomplishment and not merely a birth certificate. It does not imply a change of policy, but rather a ripening of it [...]. They [Baltic states] are an indigenous growth, as Secretary Hughes has said, and their vigor has compelled their recognition not only by all the Western Powers, but also by Soviet Russia. Once a corridor through which the Slav and Teuton armies passed to and from, their territory has now become a republican threshold of the East, and at the same time a station of Western commerce. The final reward of their courage has come last from America.⁷⁵

Several other major newspapers also published articles supportive of recognition, for example, *The New York Tribune* remembered the “Colby note” of August 1920, noting that Hughes did not immediately abandon the “absurd policy” of his predecessor, but this delay was connected with the desire to maintain the continuity of foreign policy. Finally, he concluded that the situation is ripe for full recognition of the Baltic states’ right to independence (indeed, in the previous issue, in the title of the article on the recognition of the Baltic states, they were once again named the “Balkan states”).⁷⁶ *The Washington Post*, which was not so favourable to the recognition of the Baltic states, covered what happened a little more briefly, stressing that an additional argument was the desire to achieve the creation of a “chain” of countries separating Europe from Soviet Russia.⁷⁷

The 28th July was a holiday at the Latvian representation in Washington, Sēja was congratulated by acquaintances and officials from both the US and Latvia. On 3rd August, in New York, the Baltic-American Society celebrated the event at the Metropolitan Club.⁷⁸ On 3rd August, Sēja and the Lithuanian representative, Čarneckis, were finally officially accepted by Hughes. He emphasised Latvia’s achievements in political and economic life and continued: “The American people know how to evaluate the success of the Baltic states in the fight for democracy, order and economic renewal, which is why Latvia and its

75 The Baltic States. – *New York Times*, 29th July 1922; Latvia Acclaims Our Recognition. Riga Makes Holiday in Celebration – Capt. E. E. Young Named American Minister. – *New York Times*, 29th July 1922.

76 Four New Republics. – *New York Tribune*, 29th July 1922; Four Balkan States Win American Recognition. – *New York Tribune*, 28th July 1922.

77 4 War Born-Nations Recognized by U.S. – *Washington Post*, 28th July 1922; Latvia is Grateful for U.S. Recognition. – *Washington Post*, 30th July 1922.

78 LVVA, 2574. f., 1. apr., 76. l., 99. lp. (Report of L. Sēja, 19th August 1922); Celebrate U. S. Recognition. – *New York Times*, 4th August 1922; Baltic Envoys Thank U.S. For Recognizing Republics. – *New York Tribune*, 4th August 1922.

neighbours will not lack the support of the American government and people in the future.”⁷⁹

Sēja reported on 19th August that the State Department received many telegrams of thanks, and the press in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, etc., pays increased attention to the recognition. The economic importance of the Baltic states was highlighted. For example, the *New York Tribune* wrote on 13th August that recognition is more important than it seems, because former Russian ports were located in the recognised countries, emphasising the importance of Russian trade, and the need to create free ports in Tallinn, Ventspils, Liepāja, and Riga. The press expressed confidence in the stable nature of the independence of the Baltic states, while the newspapers to some extent sympathetic to Soviet Russia tried to connect the recognition of the Baltic states with this country, even expressing hope for a “step” towards its recognition. At the same time, Sēja admitted that there are still some Russian, Jewish, and German-controlled press publications that “express doubts whether the Baltic states will be able to stop Russia’s aspiration to reach the sea (for example, the newspaper *Texas News*). Sēja also noted the reaction in diplomatic circles in Washington: “Many consider this event as a mark of the USA’s Russian policy amendment. Poles and Finns, with whom we have very friendly relations here, show their warmest satisfaction in this case.”⁸⁰

On 5th August, upon Young’s return to Riga from the Carlsbad resort in Czechoslovakia (where Meierovics had sent him a telegram of thanks), he was solemnly welcomed at the station with an orchestra by Meierovics, the Minister of Internal Affairs Alfrēds Birznieks, the city commandant, prefect, representatives of the Latvian Red Cross, etc.⁸¹ On 7th August, Meierovics organised a dinner for representatives of the government and institutions, as well as for 18 representatives of the “local American community”. During the dinner Meierovics noted in a “felt speech” that “recognition from the USA has been there for a long time, just not on paper”, emphasising the support of aid organisations. The head of the government thanked both their leaders and Young for achieving the recognition. Young expressed his belief that “the old American Republic and the new Republic of Latvia are destined to play a big role on the shores of the Baltic Sea and their paths will cross more

79 LVVA, 293. f., 1. apr., 453. lp., 104. lp.

80 LVVA, 2574. f., 1. apr., 76. l., 92.–100. lp. (Report of L. Sēja, 19th August 1922).

81 Amerikas sūtnis ieradies Rīgā. – Jaunākās Ziņas, 5th August 1922. Ministru prezidenta apsveikšanas telegramma Savienoto Valstu sūtnim Latvijā. – Latvijas Kareivis, 30th July 1922.

than once.” America recognised Latvia after comprehensively making sure that the Latvian people and their government are able “to write their course on the white pages of history.”⁸²

Young remarked to the press that the recognition of the Baltic states does not necessarily mean a change in US policy: “She will continue to adhere to the opinion that the territory of Russia is indivisible.” However, this should not be interpreted in the sense that the Baltic states should be included in the territory of Russia. As separate entities with a specific culture and a well-organised state system, they have proven during their existence that they have the same right to independence as Russia: the Baltic states are ripe for their independence, and this can be considered the main incentive for North America to recognise them. Russia, according to North America, should limit itself and get only its own territory, regardless of which government would come to be in control. This territory, of course, should not include other countries that are already recognised, for example Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Latvia need not fear that the US could change their position someday. “The Baltic states” – the envoy emphasises this especially – “are de jure recognised forever. The opinion is not bound by any rules and is not given in any connection with the settlement of the Russian question. Also, I must stress that the recognition of the Baltic states was not caused by the prolonged anarchy in Russia, but was achieved by the recognised states themselves.”⁸³ Young spoke similarly in other interviews, but in a conversation with the correspondent of the *Latvijas Vēstnesis*, he also remembered his first arrival in Latvia even before the Great War, when it was still a part of Russia, and he got to know “Latvians as an energetic and enlightened people.” He expressed his belief that Latvia has made “extreme progress” in all areas and his hope for the mutual rapprochement of the Baltic states.⁸⁴

In 1920–1921, relations between Latvia and the US were still largely characterised, on the one hand, by Latvia’s efforts to achieve the recognition and favour of the great power, and on the other – by its attempts to maintain the previous policy of not recognising the partition of Russia. The recognition of Latvia and Estonia by the other great powers in the beginning of 1921 brought a certain problem to this US

82 Latvija–Amerika. – Jaunākās Ziņas, 7th August 1922; Sakarā ar Amerikas de jure. – Valdības Vēstnesis, 9th August 1922; Uzšīn u ministr-prezidenta. – Segodnia, 9th August 1922.

83 Saruna ar Ziemeļamerikas sūtņi. – Jaunākās Ziņas, 8th August 1922.

84 M. J. Pie Amerikas sūtņa. – Latvijas Vēstnesis, 8th August 1922.

policy towards the Baltic states, which made the Latvian Government and society again expect a similar reaction from the US. There was some disappointment that there was none. In addition, the policy was largely dissonant with the views of the head of the US Commission in Riga, Young, as he increasingly (and more consistently) defended the need for recognition. Hopes in Latvia were also associated with the change of presidential administration in Washington in the spring of 1921, but it did not cause rapid changes in the US Baltic policy. In May 1921, the Latvian Government's delegate or unaccredited (unofficial) diplomatic representative – the experienced Sēja – finally started work in Washington, but he too was forced from time to time to admit that he failed to fulfil the main task: the achievement of recognition. The Latvian Government had tied its hopes to economic support and the State Department only promised a policy change, but did not follow through. All this was happening despite the still consistent welcoming of the Latvian authorities to the US State Department Commission in Riga, whose main task was to follow the events in Russia, and despite the activities of Sēja in Washington and New York, the consular representative Arturs Lūļe and the American lawyer Chandler, hired for this purpose.

After the admission of Latvia and Estonia to the League of Nations in the fall of 1921, the disappointment and even resentment in the Baltic states about the US's delay in recognition continued. In addition, a certain increase in misunderstandings about the policy of their government was also increasingly noticeable in US public opinion, and for this reason too, the Latvian representation managed to get favourable articles published in major newspapers. Officially, the US authorities continued to give various pretexts for the delay and to promise recognition in the near future, but the result did not follow. At the same time, the economic, cultural, scientific, and postal relations between the two countries developed relatively intensively, and regular passenger traffic between Liepāja and New York was established. True, for example, economic relations manifested themselves as the initiation of many small and even petty transactions, which soon subsided, but in all cases where it could have been a matter of greater cooperation, it either turned out to be unsuccessful or failed for other reasons (this was also determined by a number of reasons, and non-recognition constituted only one of the hindering causes). However, as a result of the development of the international situation, and also the aforementioned connections, calls to recognise the Baltic states were increasingly heard in the US, thus creating economic opportunities in the region for the Americans themselves,

and even a special support movement was formed in which influential politicians, businessmen, scientists, and newspapers were involved. Moreover, taking into account the possible gains in the relatively small territory that the Baltic states in Europe formed from the point of view of the US, it should even be recognised as relatively influential. Finally, in the summer of 1922, with the US's position on the Russian issue changing to some extent, the US Government drafted a note of recognition of the Baltic states with a very cautious text, which was submitted to the governments of the Baltic states. The recognition caused them joy and even a certain euphoria, which can only be explained by the long wait and hopes for the economic and political advantages that recognition would bring. In general, the main consequences of recognition were more of a legal and formal nature. Hopes for the development of economic transactions were only partially fulfilled due to both the US isolationist policy and other circumstances.

From the year 1918, when the US Government for the first time considered the possibility of the existence of an independent Republic of Latvia, until the summer of 1922, of the US government can be characterised as that of uncertainty and unwillingness to allow intervention in the affairs of an imagined anti-bolshevist Russia by other countries. At the same time, government officials of the US were greatly concerned about growing political influence of Soviet Russia, and tried to preclude it. At the same time, they tried maintain contacts with other superpowers of the Entente who were interested in a change of the system of government in Soviet Russia. Accordingly, the US showed great interest in the Baltic states, Latvia included, because these countries had borders with Soviet Russia. The US leaders believed that it was possible to stop further expansion of Bolshevism in war-destroyed and weakened Europe by helping to prevent famine, poverty, and disease among the inhabitants of the countries which had suffered the heaviest losses. It was the reason why the US engaged in supporting those countries (especially eastern Europe and Soviet Russia, as well as formally independent Soviet Ukraine, Soviet Belorussia, and Transcaucasia) by sending them food and daily commodities. The humanitarian aid of the US non-governmental organisations was also of great importance. The extent and character of this support is well exemplified in the case of Latvia. It was appropriate and inherent in the US foreign policy in eastern Europe.

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TEEKOND LÄTI RIIGI
TUNNUSTAMISENI AMEERIKA
ÜHENDRIIKIDE POOLT 1919–1922

Ēriks Jēkabsons

Juba 1919. aastast alates oli Läti välispoliitika üks peamisi ülesandeid saavutada lääneriikide, sh Ameerika Ühendriikide tunnustus. Läti ja USA suhteid iseloomustas aastatel 1920–1921 Läti püüdlus saavutada riikliku iseseisvuse tunnustamine, ent seda pidurdas USA varasem mitte-tunnustamise poliitika, mis põhines visioonil jagamatust Venemaast. 1921. aasta kevadel vahetus Ameerikas presidendi administratsioon, mis tõi juurde tunnustamise lootust. USA ja Balti riikide vahelises poliitikas muutusi siiski ei järgnenud. 1921. aasta maikuus alustas Washingtonis tööd Läti valitsuse delegaat Ludvigs Sēja. Vaatamata sellele, et Riias asuv USA Riigidepartemangu komisjon, mille ülesanne oli jälgida Venemaal toimuvat, oli Läti ametnike suhtes soosiv, ei suutnud Sēja noore riigi tunnustamist saavutada. Ameerika viivitas ametliku tunnustamisega ning pettuda tuli ka pärast Läti ja Eesti vastuvõttu Rahvasteliitu 1921. aasta sügisel. Asjaolusid raskendas seegi, et USA avalikkus ei mõistnud hästi Läti tunnustamise aluseks olevat poliitikat. USA ametnikud jätkasid viivitusele ettekäänete toomist ja lubasid tunnustamist lähitulevikus. Siiski tõi rahvusvaheliste suhete areng Balti riikide tähtsust Ameerikas ühe enam esile ning nende toetusteks loodi isegi liikumisi.

Suvel 1922, kui USA suhtumine Venemaasse oli muutumas, koostas valitsus ettevaatlikult kirja Balti riikide tunnustamiseks. Tunnustamise tagajärg oli aga formaalse ja õigusliku loomuga, majandusliku koostööga seotud lootusi kattis see vaid osaliselt. Alates 1918. aastast, kui USA valitsus kaalus esimest korda iseseisva Läti riigi tunnustamist, kuni 1922. aasta suveni, mil suurriik otsustas Läti riiki *de jure* tunnustada, iseloomustab USA suhtumist ebakindel hoiak ja soovimatus Venemaa siseasjadesse sekkuda, sest USA kujutluses oli Venemaa, kus enamlasti võimul ei ole. Samal ajal muretsesid USA valitsuse ametnikud Nõukogude Venemaa mõjuvõimu pärast Baltikumis ja seda püüti ennetada.

USA huvitus Balti riikidest, sest viimastel oli piir Venemaaga. Usuti, et vähendades enim kannatanud aladel nälga ja vaesust, on võimalik sõjast laastatud Euroopas enamlaste võimu levikut takistada. See oli põhjus, miks Ameerika neid riike toiduabi ja tarbekaupadega toetas ning seda tegevust näitlikustab hästi ka Läti juhtum.