



University  
of Glasgow

Swain, G. (2009) *Latvia's democratic resistance: a forgotten episode from the Second World War*. *European History Quarterly*, 39 (2). pp. 241-263. ISSN 0265-6914

<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/6222/>

Deposited on: 23 June 2009

**Geoffrey Swain**

**“Latvia’s Democratic Resistance: a Forgotten Episode from the Second World War”, European History Quarterly, no 2, 2009.**

**Abstract**

In summer 1943 politicians representing the four main political parties of Latvia's democratic years came together to establish a movement which would both resist the German occupation and prevent the return of the Red Army. They considered the key to re-establishing Latvia as an independent democratic state was to make contact with Britain, and they hoped to do this by a combination of military and diplomatic activity. Once contact with Sweden had been established this Latvian Central Council planned to combine a diplomatic offensive abroad with an insurrection within Latvia. The diplomatic offensive was partly obstructed by the Foreign Office, but that did not prevent the Latvian Central Council working closely with the British Secret Service as it first brought out of Latvia potential members of a Government in Exile, and then began to prepare for an insurrection. Planned to coincide with the arrival of the Red Army and the withdrawal of the Germans, the military wing of the Latvian Central Council intended to seize part of the Courland coast and hold it until British or Swedish forces intervened to prevent them being crushed by the Red Army, thus forcing the Soviets to negotiate about the future status of Latvia. The plans of the Latvian Central Council relied heavily on stories circulating in Sweden that the British were indeed about to intervene in the Baltic, and it is argued here that there was more to this than mere loose talk. The dilemma of whether or not to stage an insurrection was resolved by the Germans, who arrested General Kurelis, the leader of the insurrection and the man designated the interim leader of independent Latvia. The surviving forces of the Latvian Central Council established themselves as an underground army and waited for news from Britain that the time had come to rise. When no such message had come by summer 1945, many underground groups started moves towards a national uprising; to prevent this the Latvian Central Council used its surviving organization to instruct its underground fighters not to take up arms against the Soviets but to wait on diplomacy.

**Geoffrey Swain**

**Latvia's Democratic Resistance: a Forgotten Episode from the Second World War**

European History Quarterly, no 2, 2009.

On 19 January 1945 the careful reader of *The Times* would have noticed a short article from its special correspondent in Stockholm bearing the title "Latvian Patriots Shot". The article explained that "the German military authorities in Courland (Kurzeme) have shot five Latvian patriot officers, members of the Latvian 'underground army'...whom the Germans took prisoner after a stiff battle in which it is credibly reported the Germans lost 300 killed". As the article went on to state, "the body to which the above victims belonged, nominally headed by the elderly Latvian General Kurelis, is not serving the Russians, but is simply a well-armed and organised group of Latvian patriots now living in the forests of the Windau (Ventspils)-Talsi area, which also harbours partisans working for the Russians; by an explicit understanding these organizations operate separately, keeping to roughly defined areas, but both fight and harass the Germans whenever they can". Among the five officers shot was a certain Captain Upelniēks.

This brief report is one of the few contemporary references to an attempt made by Latvian democrats towards the end of 1944 to emulate the Warsaw Uprising and fight against both the German occupiers and the returning Red Army. *The Times* story reflects almost word for word information sent by radio in mid November 1944 from Latvia by supporters of General Jānis Kurelis to an organization based in Sweden known as the Foreign Delegation of the Latvian Central Council.<sup>1</sup> It is the Latvian Central Council (*Latvijas Centrālās Padomes*, henceforth LCP) which is the subject of this study. The history of the twentieth century has left Latvians with a poor reputation. Their participation in the Nazi mass killings of Jews in 1941-42 is often remembered, while others recall how Latvians rose to the very top of the Soviet secret police.<sup>2</sup> Yet there is also another story to tell and this article focuses on those Latvians who, during the last two years of the Second World War, sought the support of Britain in re-establishing Latvia as an independent and democratic state. The LCP's story is almost unknown outside Latvia, and even within that country its activities are often misunderstood.

*Establishing Latvia's Democratic Resistance*

The LCP can trace its origins to democratic politicians who tried to resist the sovietization of their country in 1940-1941. Their efforts were concentrated among students and staff at the University of Latvia in Riga. Professor Konstantīns Čakste, the son of Latvia's first president, became the focal point for their activities and among those who took part were students such as Artūrs Arnītis, Oskars Bīleskalns, Valentīna Jaunzeme and Leonīds Siliņš; the young army officer, Captain Kristaps Upelniēks was also a member. When the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union began on 22 June 1941, Upelniēks was one of those who took to the forests around Skrīveri and Pļaviņas to establish irregular Latvian self-defence units which harried the retreating Red Army; all such independent units were quickly dissolved by the Nazis.<sup>3</sup> Members of this democratic opposition began to regroup in 1942, a process accelerated by the re-

establishment of the underground organization of the Latvian Social Democratic Party in February that year.

In June 1940 the Social Democrats had been uncertain how to respond to Soviet military occupation of Latvia. Many accepted at face value Soviet talk of a new popular front government to resist the danger of fascism; after all, Soviet intervention had led to the overthrow of the authoritarian regime of Kārlis Ulmanis, who had come to power in a coup in May 1934 and had immediately banned all political parties and suspended parliament. Bruno Kalniņš, leader of the Workers' Sports and Guards organization who had been imprisoned by Ulmanis and later went into exile in Finland, was at first willing to accept the post of Political Commissar in the Latvian "People's" Army, a post from which he was removed once the annexation of Latvia into the Soviet Union was complete. When the Social Democratic Party re-established its underground organization in February 1942 it was determined to have no more dealings with the communists and to build up an alliance only with other democratic politicians. By the end of 1942 Latvia's democrat politicians, again grouped around Čakste, had established a network of some 300 resisters with bases not only in Riga but also Liepāja, Jelgava and Ventspils. Among the movement's early and prominent adherents were Čakste's brother, Mintauts, a former member of Latvia's senate; Dr Voldemars Ģintars, an eminent archaeologist in charge of Riga's historical museum; Professor Arnolds Aizsilnieks, a distinguished economics professor at Latvia University; and Ludvigs Sēja, a former ambassador and foreign minister.<sup>4</sup> It was the Social Democrats and the democrats, more particularly Kalniņš and Čakste, who took the lead in forming the LCP, and gathered around them representatives from the Peasant Union, Ādolfs Klīve, and the Latgale Christian Party, Catholic Bishop of Riga Jāzeps Rancāns<sup>5</sup> - Bishop Rancāns had served as deputy speaker in the last three of Latvia's democratically elected parliaments.

Early in 1943 the question of contacting Latvian émigrés in neutral Sweden began to be discussed; through them contact could be made with Allied representatives in the West. In January 1943 Bīleskalns met up with his old student friend Arnītis, and another sympathetic former student Voldemārs Mežaks.<sup>6</sup> All three were living in the port of Ventspils, and in spring 1943 Siliņš travelled from Riga to Ventspils to meet them. Arnītis worked as a construction engineer in Ventspils port, and Siliņš wanted to know if there was any way to escape from Latvia to Sweden by boat. Nothing came of this first approach, but in the summer Siliņš successfully travelled to Sweden on a fishing boat organized by Arnītis.<sup>7</sup> Siliņš arrived in Sweden on 22 July 1943. He was Čakste's authorized emissary and when he reached Stockholm on 29 July he rang his designated contact Jānis Tepfers.<sup>8</sup> Another leading figure within the LCP was General Verners Tepfers, whose brother Jānis had been the Latvian ambassador to Finland and then moved to Sweden in 1942 to work as a translator in the Swedish Foreign Ministry. In Sweden Jānis Tepfers was in close contact with Voldemārs Salnais, the Latvian ambassador to Sweden, who in turn was in regular contact with Kārlis Zariņš, the Latvian ambassador to London.

As soon as Arnītis received confirmation that Siliņš had arrived safely, he travelled to Riga to inform Čakste of the news. Then Latvia's democratic politicians held a meeting formally to establish the LCP. On 12 August Čakste, Kalniņš, Bishop Rancāns and Klīve met at Klīve's flat and chose Čakste as president and Kalniņš vice president of the new organization.<sup>9</sup> At this historic meeting, Kalniņš read out a programme which had been agreed earlier and contained fourteen points summarizing the need for a single resistance movement against the German occupation which would bring together

Latvia's four big parliamentary parties into a common front to work for the renewal of a democratic Latvia. The programme made clear that Latvia's new democracy should avoid some of the failings of the inter-war years; the powers of the president would be strengthened and the terms of parliaments lengthened. The LCP, while working according to the strictest principles of conspiracy, would oppose all German actions contrary to the Hague Convention, such as forced mobilization to the Latvian Legion; disassociate itself from all activities by the communist resistance; and develop its work through diplomatic links with Great Britain and the USA. At the end of this historic meeting, the LCP resolved to meet again in two weeks time in the flat of Bishop Rancāns.

The arrival of Siliņš in Stockholm and his reports on the activities of Latvia's democratic resistance caused an immediate stir, both among the Stockholm emigration and Latvians further afield. At this stage, the main channel of communication between the Latvian Legations in Sweden and London was via Polish embassy couriers, and on 3 August Salnais used these contacts to report to Zariņš the arrival of Siliņš; he stressed that although Siliņš was not known to the émigré group in Stockholm, it was clear that the group he represented were part of the Latvian intelligentsia and were active and skilled in conspiratorial work; Salnais and Siliņš were soon discussing the possibility of launching an underground newspaper in Latvia, as a letter sent by Salnais to Zariņš a fortnight later reveals.<sup>10</sup> Siliņš's arrival must also have been reported to Alexander "Sandy" McKibbin, an MI6 representative in Stockholm. Salnais, Zariņš and McKibbin had been in discussion for some time about the fate of Latvian sailors in Sweden and the possibility of their transfer to Britain for service in the Royal Navy; this was a matter fraught with diplomatic sensitivities, but McKibbin had been, and would continue to remain unswervingly optimistic. Indeed on 15 November 1943 Salnais informed Zariņš that "Sandy" had made Baltic affairs his own, supporting the Baltic emigration in its difficulties and rejoicing in its successes.<sup>11</sup> The MI6 station chief in Stockholm, Harry Carr, shared this interest. He had set in motion a programme of interviewing all those who escaped from the Baltic States to Sweden, and it is inconceivable that Siliņš was not one of those so interviewed.<sup>12</sup>

Salnais was quick to identify with the work of the LCP. On 3 September he wrote a long report for transmission to Riga, promising to give all the support he could and urging the LCP to establish itself as a solid underground organization, capable of initiating both legal and illegal activities. Ten days later Salnais wrote to Zariņš describing his "heart to heart" talks with Siliņš, the respect and trust he had for him; Salnais considered Siliņš his *de facto* secretary.<sup>13</sup> Towards the end of October Salnais and Siliņš began work on establishing a Swedish-Latvian Aid Committee (*Svensk-lettiska hjälpkommittén*), to provide aid for the growing number of Latvian refugees. Salnais reported to Zariņš on 22 December 1943 that it had finally been established with a former Latvian consul Johan Sande as President and Siliņš as Secretary. Funds for the Committee's work were soon provided from the Americans: on 22 January 1944 President Roosevelt freed money from the War Refugee Board to be used to bring over those fleeing from conscription to the German Army, the Latvian intelligentsia and western oriented politicians, escaping Jews and deserters from the German armed forces. With a grant of 70,000 kronor (approximately 17,000 dollars), Siliņš was immediately given the task of contacting Latvia and starting the process of evacuation.<sup>14</sup>

### *Diplomacy Abroad*

In order to establish closer relations with the western allies, the LCP decided to establish a Foreign Delegation. Čakste wrote about this to Siliņš on 10 January 1944 and soon the membership had been agreed: Pauls Kalniņš, the father of Bruno and the former parliamentary speaker, was appointed president in absentia; Salnais became vice-president and Siliņš secretary; Jānis Tepfers was an ordinary member, as was Fēlikss Cielēns (in absentia), a Social Democrat parliamentary deputy who had served as Latvia's Foreign Minister and ambassador to France. On 26 February Čakste wrote to Siliņš again, confirming Siliņš as both Secretary of the Foreign Delegation and LCP representative in Stockholm.<sup>15</sup> The establishment of the Foreign Delegation prompted the LCP to make a determined effort to send a delegation to London. Čakste wrote to Salnais on 26 February 1944 asking him to request from Zariņš diplomatic passports for Siliņš and other members of the Foreign Delegation: that such a delegation would request military assistance is clear from the discussion in the letter of the need to establish military missions. Čakste made clear that foreign intervention in Latvia on the part of democratic states would be welcome: "here there would be no objection if US or British military forces came to Latvia, that would even be desired very much – or even the armed forces of a neutral power like Sweden, for example; the local population would support such an occupation actively". He added that, while arms available to the Latvians at the moment were modest, once German troops surrendered substantial arms would be obtained; even before the German surrender, the LCP expected that sufficient arms for 180,000 men could be obtained from Finland.<sup>16</sup>

A month later, on 31 March 1944, Salnais explained to Čakste how unreal these expectations were. The Lend-lease scheme for supporting allies of the western democracies was simply not available to a group like the LCP; even basic financial support was not available, for Zariņš had tried to persuade the British Treasury to "unblock" some of pre-war Latvia's funds held in the Bank of England, but had been turned down.<sup>17</sup> As to the diplomatic passports, this had already led to problems in London. On 18 September 1943 Siliņš had written to Zariņš requesting help in obtaining a diplomatic passport so that he could visit London. When Zariņš replied on 4 October his tone was one of offence at Siliņš's failure to understand the diplomatic realities of life in London. He copied his reply to Salnais and from this it is clear that, although Zariņš stressed he was not insulted by such a direct approach from someone he did not even know, nevertheless the request had put him in a difficult and even ridiculous situation; it had been hard enough to make progress on the fate of the Latvian sailors, the British would certainly not grant Siliņš a passport. Siliņš needed to remember that Zariņš had no diplomatic immunity.<sup>18</sup>

Zariņš ended his letter by adding that in forwarding this request Salnais had potentially compromised his position as a non-party ambassador. This criticism seems to have reflected worries Zariņš had about the constitutional plans of the LCP. Prior to the Soviet occupation of June 1940 Ulmanis had given Zariņš extraordinary powers to act in the interests of Latvia's statehood if its sovereignty were impaired. Although Salnais had tried to reassure Zariņš that the issue of the constitution was not so acute at home as it seemed to be abroad, Zariņš was not yet ready to back the LCP. On 1 February 1944 he sent Foreign Minister Eden a statement which called for the establishment of an International Committee to administer Latvia after the war, with "any trials of war criminals which may affect Latvian citizens being postponed until the end of the war."<sup>19</sup> This statement made no mention of the LCP. Zariņš was perturbed by the question of

authority: did the LCP have sufficient representative authority to demand the obedience of the diplomatic corps and were its plans for Latvia's future acceptable to all? On 23 March 1944 he had written to Salnais suggesting that the first task was to free the Latvian people and then consult them on their future form of government, rather than to decide questions of state administration in advance.

The LCP's statements were confused on the question of the constitution. The Programme adopted in August 1943 mentioned addressing the weakness of the previous parliamentary system, but the Declaration issued to the diplomats abroad talked of restoring "the organs of government envisaged by the constitution".<sup>20</sup> By spring 1944 LCP documents talked of the demand for "a new parliament and a new constitution" which would limit the impact of the previous system of proportional representation.<sup>21</sup> These rather different statements reflected the fact that while there was broad agreement among the four parties in the LCP about the need to address the failings of the pre-Ulmanis constitution, a dispute had arisen on the LCP's judicial commission between the Peasant's Union and the Social Democrats over whether or not to expand the powers of the president.<sup>22</sup> It was perhaps because these issues were finally being cleared up that, on 28 March 1944, Zariņš informed the Foreign Office officially of the establishment of the LCP; a public declaration was made at the Latvian Legation in London on 14 April 1944.<sup>23</sup> Yet a few days later, Zariņš could still complain to Salnais about the way the LCP operated without consultation, issuing what amounted to orders to its diplomats, implying that the LCP were state leaders when in fact their mandate was unclear.<sup>24</sup>

Understandably given the tension between Zariņš and Salnais, Čakste was keen to strengthen the Foreign Delegation. He informed Siliņš on 25 April that Cielēns should arrive in the middle of May<sup>25</sup>, and amongst the material he brought to Stockholm was a letter from Pauls Kalniņš to be sent to the governments of Great Britain and the United States. Zariņš duly passed it to the Foreign Office on 7 June 1944. In the letter Kalniņš asserted that, as "speaker of the last democratically and lawfully elected parliament of Latvia" he was assuming the position of President of the Republic, in accordance with the constitution. The letter made clear that "under the German occupation the functions of the Government in Latvia are assumed, and national resistance directed, by the Central Council of Latvia in which all the main political currents are represented". No doubt aware of the diplomatic problems the distribution of this letter might cause him, Zariņš stated in covering letter that in the present circumstances Kalniņš had "no effective power".<sup>26</sup> Cielēns followed up the Kalniņš letter with a detailed report on the LCP and its activities<sup>27</sup>, while a further report, sent from Stockholm on 5 July, finally cleared up the confusion about the LCP's constitutional plans. This stated: "The new constitution of the new Latvian state is, however, not intended to be a mechanical copy of the old constitution of 1922; the idea is to maintain only the general democratic principles of the old constitution and to create something new and better as regards the authority of government organs." All political circles, the statement went on, were agreed on the necessity to end proportional representation and encourage the emergence of three main parties; to strengthen the powers of the president and the government; and to introduce longer parliaments.<sup>28</sup>

The Kalniņš letter made clear that the LCP was on the point of announcing the formation of a new democratic government. Correspondence between Zariņš and the Foreign Office also shows that at the end of July there was discussion about the circumstances in which a new Latvian government might be recognized. As Zariņš

explained to the Foreign Office, it had been agreed on the eve of the Soviet occupation of June 1940 that only the Latvian ambassador to the United States, Alfrēds Bīlmanis, had the authority to recognize the formation of a newly independent Latvian Government.<sup>29</sup> However, Bīlmanis showed no enthusiasm for the LCP. On 8 July he informed Washington that he did not know the identities of LCP members and did not accept the letter from Kalniņš as "having an official character" since it was not signed. This attitude of Bīlmanis seems to have prevented any announcement about the formation of a new government at this stage<sup>30</sup>, although there was a clear logic to the idea of declaring the formation of a new democratic government as the Red Army crossed on to Latvian territory on 19 July 1944.

### *Resistance at home*

The LCP was not only active abroad, but also very active within Latvia itself. Members of the organization engaged in such acts of sabotage as burning flour mills, and in January 1944 they destroyed the main grain elevator for Riga harbour. At the same time groups of nationalist partisans were beginning to be formed in the forests.<sup>31</sup> In February 1944 the LCP claimed that it headed a single underground organization of partisans which embraced the whole land.<sup>32</sup> Little trace of the activities of these groups has been left to historians, but evidence to support the claim can be found. One of the leading figures among Latvia's pro-Soviet partisans Vilis Samsons recalled that in late 1943 talks took place with 'liberally minded armed nationalist groups' in Alūksne, Kārsava, Ludza and Cibla, while another Soviet partisan commander Vilhelms Laiviņš held talks with nationalist partisans in Valka; a third Soviet partisan commander Otomārs Oškals met nationalist partisans near Birzgale in November 1943 and spring 1944. Reports from Soviet partisans to Moscow in January and February 1944 expressed concern at the growing number of nationalist partisan groups operating in Latgale. Partisans loyal to the LCP were a genuine force, but to the frustration of the Soviet partisans they were under strict orders not to engage in any political deals, although they did engage in joint action from time to time.<sup>33</sup>

Clandestine activity was not the only sphere of LCP work. To challenge the right of the German puppet Self-Administration (*Landeseigene Verwaltung*) to impose conscription to the Latvian Legion the LCP organized in March 1944 a campaign among the pillars of pre-war Latvian society to collect signatures for a petition demanding the restoration of a democratic, independent republic and asserting that only an independent Latvian Government, properly constituted, could mobilize the nation. This petition, which collected 189 signatures and was later sent to the west, was largely the work of Cielēns, who was disappointed not to have obtained the signature of Alberts Kveisis, Latvia's surviving democratically elected president.<sup>34</sup> The petition campaign was reinforced by a letter Zariņš had sent the LCP via Salnais which made clear that, according to the briefing he had been given by the Ulmanis Government on the eve of the Soviet Union's military intervention of June 1940, war – and by extension mobilization – could only be declared by the legal government of Latvia, which the German-appointed administration could not claim to be.<sup>35</sup>

The problems the LCP faced in its London work were not matched in the resistance work organized from Stockholm. There, from early in 1944 the LCP was in close contact with the British Secret Service; at that time the LCP was given permission to communicate with London through the diplomatic bag, thus ending the link with the

Polish Government in Exile. Of course, the Secret Service wanted something in return, and the LCP was expected to provide intelligence information about the military situation in German-occupied Latvia.<sup>36</sup> To obtain that information the LCP would need to send regular agents to Latvia and this coincided with its plans to evacuate to Sweden leading democratic politicians. In February 1944 Siliņš was issued with "an English radio".<sup>37</sup> When he set off for the Kurzeme coast that month, in a boat helmed by a new recruit to the LCP Eduards Andersons, he took this radio with him. Siliņš was also in touch with Swedish military intelligence, also anxious to monitor the situation on the Baltic coast.<sup>38</sup> Siliņš went straight to Čakste in Riga and asked for "the English radio" to be passed to Captain Upelnieks; back in Ventspils he made contact once again with Arnītis. His message to both Čakste and Arnītis was the same: it was now the duty of the LCP to organize active resistance to the Germans in order to convince public opinion abroad that the Latvians were actively fighting for their independence.<sup>39</sup>

LCP boat crews then began to maintain regular contact between Swedish Gotland and Kurzeme. Andersons made the journey in March, April and May, contacting not only Arnītis but another LCP activist Alfonss Priedītis; despite these regular sailings, Čakste expressed concern on 1 April 1944 that Siliņš was not responding to his questions, even though regular sailings continued into May.<sup>40</sup> However, by then the work of the LCP had been interrupted by the Gestapo. On 27 April 1944 an LCP courier was arrested, leading to the arrest of Čakste on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Ludvigs Sēja, the LCP Secretary, was arrested a month later on 25 May, leaving Bruno Kalniņš to head the organization.<sup>41</sup> Nor were arrests the only problems the LCP faced in its work; their radios turned out to be extremely unreliable. Siliņš returned to Kurzeme later in May, and spent two weeks working underground, accompanied by Arnītis. When he returned to Sweden he left Andersons in Kurzeme with Arnītis, but radio communication was never properly established.<sup>42</sup> Arnītis and Andersons were hardly back in Sweden when, early in June Siliņš again asked them to travel back with new radios and new codes. They made successful contact with Priedītis and transferred the new equipment, but there was no immediate improvement – since the radios only had a range of 150 miles they were constantly operating at the margins of reliability.<sup>43</sup>

The approach of the Red Army caused underground activity within Latvia to intensify. With the LCP's diplomatic offensive stalled, it was time to put the LCP's underground operations on a firmer military footing. As a prerequisite, radio contact had to be secured. Siliņš was determined to return to Latvia himself, taking with him the best radio operator he could find. He recruited Richards Zande, who before leaving for Kurzeme was trained by Swedish Intelligence on the use of Swedish radios, and then privately by Siliņš on the importance of "the English radio". Siliņš and Zande, accompanied by another LCP activist Pēteris Klibiķis, with whom Zande had escaped to Sweden earlier in the year, set off on 12 July and arrived in Kurzeme on the 13<sup>th</sup>. They were joined on the 14<sup>th</sup> by Priedītis and on the 15<sup>th</sup> by Arnītis and Andersons, who explained the continuing difficulties with the radios. Two days later Upelnieks arrived and the LCP held a council of war. Upelnieks brought bad news; Bruno Kalniņš had been arrested by the Gestapo, and replaced as LCP leader by General Verners Tepfers. Nevertheless Upelnieks and Siliņš agreed that Zande and Klibiķis should travel to Riga to make contact with Valentīna Jaunzeme, who would take them to Upelnieks's house to work first on the radio transmitter hidden there. Zande succeeded in restoring "the English radio" and then returned to Ventspils to work on restoring the other LCP radios.<sup>44</sup> For a while after this, radio communications between Sweden and Kurzeme

went smoothly, with transmissions being received in Sweden from such places as far afield as Skrīveri, Mazsalaca and Dundaga.<sup>45</sup>

### *Uprising*

During this July visit Siliņš travelled to Jelgava and from there on to Riga for talks with Tepfers. It was here that he tried to advance the LCP's military plans. At this second council of war Siliņš stressed the importance of the nationalist underground becoming more active. Under Soviet interrogation, Arnītis would later describe Siliņš's address to the council of war using the following words: "England and the US had to be shown that the Latvian people were not oriented towards Germany, and did not want a Soviet Latvia; that it was necessary to stage an uprising and hold out, even if it was only for a week. During that time it was possible to hope for help from England and in this way bring reality to the final aim the organisation had always set itself, the creation of an independent Latvia." To realize this plan, armed forces were needed. Another of those present at the meeting later told Soviet interrogators: it was "early in July" that Siliņš began to talk of the need for an uprising; the appointment of Upelnieks as chief of staff to General Kurelis provided the perfect way forward.<sup>46</sup>

Contact between the LCP and General Kurelis was indeed the key to the organization's military ambitions. It was on this visit that Upelnieks and Siliņš, accompanied by Zande and Priedītis, first established contact with General Kurelis. Kurelis had served with the Fifth Zemgale Regiment of Latvian Riflemen of the Russian Imperial Army during World War One, and then in the Latvian Army, being appointed a general in 1925. He retired in 1940, but at the end of 1943, when the German occupation authorities permitted the re-formation of the inter-war paramilitary nationalist militia the *aizsargi*, Kurelis joined the Fifth Riga *Aizsargi* Regiment.<sup>47</sup> By 28 July Kurelis had 1,800 men under his command, based initially at Skrīveri, and his group's official tasks were: 1) to defend the Daugava Pļaviņas Kegums region; 2) to deliver 200 armed men to send to Riga. The daybook of the Kurelis Group shows that in mid August it was in action near Jēkabpils, Koknese, Aizkraukle and Pļaviņas. However, his biggest operation came after Tukums fell to the Red Army on 30 July; Kurelis played a key role in the recapture of the town on 20 August. Kurelis was also in radio contact with his supporters in Vidzeme and Latgale; on 9 September he received a radio message from Rēzekne, from national partisans operating behind the lines.<sup>48</sup> As the Soviet partisan commander Oškals testified, these national partisans believed in the imminent arrival of British military intervention and read the underground newspaper *Jaunā Latvija* (New Latvia) edited by Cielēns.<sup>49</sup>

Boasting from Stockholm of the key role played by Latvian forces at the battle for Tukums, Cielēns stressed that "Latvian officers believe that if the Latvians had sufficient modern weapons (tanks, anti-aircraft guns, artillery and airplanes) and ammunition at their disposal, a Latvian Army of 150,000 men could be set up immediately; this army would be in a position to defend Latvia against the Russians for some time". He went on:

Patriotic Latvians have seized the idea of partisan combat...Psychologically the Latvians cling to their last hope – that the Americans and English will soon defeat in a couple of months Hitler Germany and will then defend the lofty principles of the Atlantic Charter against the Russians. The people must fight and suffer for a

few months. Soon deliverance will come from the great Western democracies which saved Europe and the Baltic peoples in 1918.<sup>50</sup>

Although by the end of July 1944 General Kurelis was fully integrated into the LCP's Military Department, with his units ready to act as soon as the struggle began, not all the LCP leaders were as convinced of the need for immediate military action as Siliņš or Cielēns. The situation at that time was very fluid. Not only was the German Army retreating, but the attempt on Hitler's life of 20 July prompted a wave of uncertainty and indecision among the Latvian occupation authorities. Kurelis and the LCP had sympathizers within the Self-Administration and the Latvian Legion - attempts had been made to contact them before embarking on the March 1944 petition<sup>51</sup> - and on 17 August Čakste, Bruno Kalniņš, and Sēja wrote to Tepfers from prison urging him to take one last political initiative. He should head a delegation including Pauls Kalniņš and Bishop Rancāns which would request a formal meeting with the General Inspector of the Latvian Legion *SS-Gruppenführer* Rūdolfis Banģerskis; private approaches suggested the Legion's leadership might be ready to break with the Germans.<sup>52</sup>

When nothing came of this approach, Kurelis and Upelnieks began to explore the military possibilities before them. It is clear that the expectation of foreign support remained strong, although the idea of obtaining weapons from Finland had to be abandoned after Finland called for a cease-fire on 4 September and signed an armistice with the Soviet Union on the 19<sup>th</sup>, news that was immediately communicated to Kurelis.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, as Zande's radio informed Sweden on behalf of Upelnieks, the Kurelis group saw itself as "tasked, with the help of the English and Swedish, to drive the Germans from Latvia and not allowing in the Bolsheviks, to re-establish an independent Latvia". As Zande later told Soviet interrogators, "the nationalists were counting on an English and Swedish landing" and therefore sent information about coastal defences.<sup>54</sup> The LCP believed that the German Army would not cling on to the Kurzeme peninsula. Thus, while for the immediate future it made sense to continue to oppose the Red Army alongside the German Army, at the first sign that the Germans were leaving Kurzeme, Kurelis would act. This plan was agreed in September 1944 when Arnītis made another sea crossing, bringing with him once again a new radio. He went straight to Riga for talks with General Tepfers in which it was agreed that Tepfers should leave for Sweden along with Mintauts Čakste and Pauls Kalniņš. Before leaving Tepfers appointed Voldemārs Ģinters his successor and carefully briefed him on the state of LCP planning. He instructed Ģinters to maintain contact with Kurelis and help the general stage an insurrection with both his own units and those sympathetic to him within the Latvian Legion. The plan remained essentially this, as Arnītis later told Soviet interrogators, to seize territory on the Baltic coast and proclaim the re-birth of an independent Latvia in anticipation of support from Britain.<sup>55</sup>

As these plans were being finalized, on 9 September the LCP bit the bullet and announced the renewal of the Latvian state. According to Cielēns, it had planned to do this on 1 August<sup>56</sup>, but constitutional niceties got in the way. However, the last constitutionally elected President of Latvia, Alberts Kveisis, died on 9 August 1944 and this meant that when the last meeting of the LCP was held on Latvian soil in the flat of Bishop Rancāns, there were no impediments to Pauls Kalniņš making use of his powers as parliamentary speaker to issue the requisite formal announcement. This meeting was attended by Upelnieks, who represented Kurelis, and by Mintauts Čakste. The Germans responded on 22 September by arresting Bishop Rancāns.<sup>57</sup>

## *Disintegration*

As the time for action approached, Kurelis was keen to clarify just what support he would get. LCP radio communications with Sweden on 12 and 13 September show that Kurelis was worried about the extent of military support he would get from abroad and whether the International Red Cross would recognize him.<sup>58</sup> Between 16-22 September the situation at the front forced Kurelis to relocate his forces to the Talsi region.<sup>59</sup> However, once at his new base he became concerned at the attitude of the British. After a meeting organized by Upelnieks on 10 October, Kurelis clashed with the LCP Foreign Delegation in Sweden over the question of providing military intelligence to the British, intelligence which he feared would be shared with the Red Army.<sup>60</sup> The message Upelnieks sent after that meeting read: "we will give no information of a military character if that information is used by the British or answers their interests; if the English can stop the Russians coming, then the information can be given – we are not going to allow our throats to be cut".<sup>61</sup>

This episode did not delay preparations for long. Kurelis communicated his assent to the LCP leadership on 14 October<sup>62</sup> and on 29 October he moved his headquarters from Talsi to Ventspils.<sup>63</sup> At precisely this time, one of Kurelis's chief liaison officers, Indulis Dišlers, was contacted by Valentina Jaunzeme, whom Ģinters had put in charge of military matters. Her message was that things were now falling into place and the insurrection should begin soon: all the key members of Latvia's planned future democratic government were now abroad -Mintauts Cakste had left on 15 October and Tepfers arrived in Sweden on 1 November<sup>64</sup> - and at the same time the English Secret Service were offering help; the time had therefore come for Kurelis to declare himself Provisional President and Minister of War and begin the insurrection. However, the message she brought about the English Secret Service was rather confusing. She reported that on 25 October 1944 "Lonis", the code name for Siliņš, had held a meeting with "the leader of the English Secret Service in Stockholm" and had been informed that "England would offer help to the LCP in April-May 1945 in the event that the English fleet found itself in the Baltic Sea and the Germans were still in the Kurzeme peninsula."<sup>65</sup> This was a long way from a clear promise of support for an immediate insurrection. When Upelnieks reported this back to Kurelis on 1 November, he was both optimistic and pessimistic, referring darkly to "being caught on this fish-hook many times".<sup>66</sup>

The LCP strategy was premised on the Germans commencing a withdrawal from the Kurzeme peninsula in the near future; the British message seemed to suggest aid would only come if the Germans stayed on in Kurzeme until spring 1945. It is therefore not surprising that at this time Kurelis vented some frustration on another of his LCP liaison officers, Pēteris Klibiķis. According to what Klibiķis later told Soviet interrogators, Kurelis was worried that the Germans had already found out about his plans and that talk of delay until spring 1945 was unrealistic: "we have to act in the near future, either to take the path of an armed action for the declaration and creation of an independent Latvia, or its armed forces must go over to an illegal stance and hide in the forests in small groups". Kurelis wanted to receive a clear answer from the LCP leadership in Sweden as to which of these policies to follow, and in the event of armed action he again raised the issue of establishing contact with the International Red Cross.<sup>67</sup>

Jaunzeme described the reply she received from Sweden on these points as "hopelessly vague", and made preparations herself to leave for Sweden, presumably to

clarify the situation.<sup>68</sup> The last radio message from Sweden to Latvia in November 1944 was indeed rather unhelpful. It stated: "The English representative gave instructions to hold Kurzeme only at the moment when the British and American fleet arrived in the Baltic Sea. The arrival time in the Baltic Sea has not been determined. Depending on circumstances and the forces at your disposal, do what you can. If local conditions allow, you should declare the re-establishment of the sovereignty of the Latvian state. If the LCP with you does not establish a Provisional Government which will issue the declaration, then Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces General K should issue it, and temporarily, until the formation of a provisional government, assume all military and civilian powers. In this case the composition of the Provisional Government will be declared later".<sup>69</sup>

Such imprecise information about British policy was very frustrating, but reflected the genuine uncertainty about how British policy in the Baltic might evolve. In his recollections, Siliņš commented that talk of British support which emerged from his conversations with McKibbin was "war-time psychological propaganda", and there was more than an element of psychological propaganda in the question of British policy in the Baltic in 1944-5.<sup>70</sup> From early 1944 onwards it was essential for the British to disguise the fact that preparations had begun for the Normandy landings. Under what was code named Operation Bodyguard, a whole series of moves were begun designed to confuse German intelligence, and the memoirs of Cielēns suggest that one of these moves was widely discussed among the Foreign Delegation in Sweden. Cielēns recalled that in 1943 the "English General Staff drew up a strategic plan which envisaged an Anglo-American military advance through Finland to the Baltic States".<sup>71</sup> Two decades after the event this appears to be a garbled memory of one element of Operation Bodyguard, Operation Graffam, a supposed plan for an Allied invasion of Norway, that would be quickly followed up by a march through neutral Sweden and an assault on Denmark. As far as the Swedish press was concerned, Operation Graffam was a success: Stockholm newspapers were agreed in summer 1944 that Allied action was imminent.

Even after the D-Day landings had begun, German intelligence accepted that Scandinavia "was considered to be an area of extreme importance in the forthcoming operations" and that action against Denmark was "a certainty".<sup>72</sup> Just before the Normandy landings, the British ambassador had been instructed on 5 June 1944 that he should give the impression "that this invasion is only one of several assaults upon the continent",<sup>73</sup> and Operation Graffam made clear that "after D Day, and for as long as possible, the enemy should be led to believe that the operations in Norway and Sweden will be carried out as soon as sufficient shipping is available, the assault on Denmark being postponed until spring 1945". This was not just the fantasy of psychological warfare, however. Operation Graffam envisaged that "if there is any weakening of the German forces in Norway, these operations will be launched on a reduced scale to take immediate advantage of the situation"; and in August 1944 Churchill asked Stalin if six British submarines could be sent to the Baltic via the White Sea Canal.<sup>74</sup> In such circumstances McKibbin and his fellow intelligence officers were almost bound to give confusing information, presumably assuming by October 1944 that there was little sign of a German withdrawal from Norway, meaning no action in Denmark until the spring. Yet in mid November, precisely when the LCP craved greater clarity, both British and German diplomats in Stockholm believed that Sweden was preparing to break off diplomatic relations with Germany and enter the war on the Allied side. On 15 November

"the desirability of an advance naval base in Sweden" was being discussed within the Admiralty.<sup>75</sup>

The last advice Kurelis received from Sweden amounted to "do what you can". He already saw his choice as one between immediate insurrection and partisan warfare, one of Jaunzeme's last proposals before leaving for Sweden was to suggest to a colonel sympathetic to the LCP that he try to persuade Kurelis's men to go underground.<sup>76</sup> It was at this time that Ģinters asked Pēteris Samsons to make contact with Kurelis; Samsons had been instructed to organize a partisan movement that would lie low and then prepare for an armed struggle against Soviet power at the first opportunity, with the help of Sweden, England and America.<sup>77</sup> Early in November 1944 the Kurelis group informed Sweden that Upelnieks had had a meeting to discuss the work of partisans and a subsequent report noted that "our partisan work in the Bolshevik rear continues".<sup>78</sup>

In the end, it was the Germans who resolved Kurelis's dilemma. On 14 November Kurelis was arrested and 1,360 of his men disarmed.<sup>79</sup> Yet as *The Times* report of 19 January 1945 made clear, the Kurelis troops put up a stiff resistance and inflicted serious casualties on those sent against them. The remnants of the Kurelis organization reported to Sweden shortly after the arrest of Kurelis, "our partisan work in the Bolshevik rear is continuing"; earlier it had been reported that "Lt. Sture is based in the Zlēķas forest". Indeed, messages from Kurzeme in the immediate aftermath of the Kurelis debacle stressed that "the Kurelis group is continuing its struggle further, with losses on both sides: please send further instructions". On 28 November 1944 Bīleskalns sent a report to Siliņš on the situation in Kurzeme: the struggle was continuing; the Kurelis men were still engaged in heavy fighting with the German police and needed ammunition and moral support, while those in the forest needed arms and logistical support to ensure their further work from secure bunkers.<sup>80</sup>

### *The LCP and the Struggle of the National Partisans*

The arrest of Kurelis was a bitter blow to the LCP. Partisan warfare against the Red Army was now clearly the only option, but not all future partisans had been forced into the forests. By February 1945 what remained of the LCP military organization in Kurzeme could report that there was still a lot of support for the idea of proclaiming the restoration of Latvian sovereignty. They had 2,000 nationalist partisans operating in units dispersed in Kurzeme, and there were some partisans still operating in Latgale and nearby areas, although they were short of munitions and did not always have the support of the local population in Russian speaking areas.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, even at the lowest point in their activities, December 1944, thirteen national partisan groups were active in Soviet Latvia, and by February 1945 they were undertaking offensive operations in groups 70 plus strong.<sup>82</sup> By end of March 1945 one of the best organized national partisan groups comprised over 350 men scattered in over twenty separate bunkers in the Stampaki Marshes; this group was strong enough to engage the Red Army on 2-3 March 1945 in two days of heavy fighting.<sup>83</sup>

The problem was whether the national partisan fighting in Kurzeme and elsewhere had any international significance or not. After all, the message from "the English Secret Service" had been that British military operations in the Baltic could be expected in April-May. The disappointing reply, which came in February by radio from Stockholm, was that the struggle in Kurzeme was only of significance to the Germans. As the Second World War neared its end, there was no likelihood of the landings taking

place in Denmark which had been envisaged as part of Operation Graffam. The radio message stated: "Latvian units should be preserved at all cost. However long the Russian occupation drags on, the partisans should not actively take the stage, but should develop and broaden the organization of their future work and preserve their strength. Urgently dispatch this information to the others".<sup>84</sup>

This same message was brought on 5 March 1945 when Arnītis again arrived in Kurzeme. Before leaving Sweden, Arnītis had a long briefing meeting with General Tepfers, who assessed the situation and how further underground work could be carried out in Latvia. As Arnītis told his Soviet interrogators: the reality was that the Germans had lost the war and the Russians would occupy the whole of Latvia. "The international situation was such that it was unsuitable for staging an immediate armed uprising and to start a struggle against Soviet power and for a democratic republic; therefore we should develop in the rear of the Red Army, underground nationalist activity, or as Tepfers expressed it, 'a struggle of ideas', in order to preserve the forces of Latvian nationalists and increase recruitment for the organization of new members. Tepfers added that before the Russians arrived in Kurzeme the basis had to be laid for that work and establish contacts with the LCP centre in Sweden so that "the centre could lead the illegal anti-Soviet activity in Latvia from abroad".<sup>85</sup> In the middle of March Dišlers picked up the same message: groups should continue to be formed behind Soviet lines, but when the Red Army arrived in Kurzeme, there should be no armed action without an order.<sup>86</sup>

On 8 May, as the Second World War came to an end and those German forces still in Kurzeme prepared to surrender, the last boat for Sweden took Ģinters to safety. Arnītis, at the helm of that last boat, was interned by the Swedish authorities on his return. From internment he wrote to his contact in Swedish intelligence urging him to send a final radio message to Kurzeme reminding LCP partisans not to undertake any armed opposition to the Red Army until instructed to do so. He sent this message "to remind them one more time of this, in accordance with Tepfers's instructions."<sup>87</sup> As the summer developed, the majority of national partisans in Latvia became increasingly impatient with the idea of awaiting instructions from abroad. With rumours flying around that the British were about to land, or had even landed on the Kurzeme shore, the activities of the national partisans intensified. By the end of May 30% of village soviets in Abrene district had ceased to operate because of national partisan activity; in Ilūkste district in June 1945 and the first ten days of July, 32 soviet representatives were killed; throughout Daugavpils district telephone lines were down and large tracts of forest under national partisan control.<sup>88</sup> The national partisans in Latgale and neighbouring Ilūkste were busy trying to weld their units together into a grouping they called the Second Division; the First Division was the designation given to the forces in Kurzeme, while there were plans for a Third Division in Vidzeme. When rumours began again at the end of September that the British had landed, preparations began for a nationwide insurrection: not only were members of future national and district administrations identified, but political pronouncements were hastily translated into English.<sup>89</sup>

Such developments were of great concern to the LCP leadership abroad, but what influence could it bring to bear? At the end of the war, McKibbin returned briefly to London, but early in July he was back in Stockholm with instructions to see if exploiting the LCP network in Latvia might produce information of interests to SIS about developments in the Soviet Union.<sup>90</sup> McKibbin worked with Tepfers, Ģinters, and Cielēns to get suitable members of the LCP network released from Swedish internment. By mid

July Ģinters had persuaded the Swedish authorities to release Arnītis and he at once made contact with Tepfers and Cielēns about returning to Latvia to do what he could to reconstruct the LCP network. When Arnītis visited Cielēns, the latter said, according to Arnītis's statement to Soviet interrogators:

In the near future, disagreements are hardly likely to arise between the Allies . . . we must prepare for the future. Armed struggle by the Latvian people against Soviet power at the present time would, in Cielēns's opinion, only be harmful and would lead to nothing, as every armed incident Soviet power would crush immediately. We must, Cielēns said, organise a 'struggle of ideas' against Soviet power, broaden the ranks of the nationalists and gather together their forces; going deep underground, this illegal-anti-Soviet work should be led by the centre abroad.

In August Arnītis met Tepfers who repeated the same message, as did Ģinters.<sup>91</sup>

It was not until early October that a four-man team was ready to sail. Arnītis would be accompanied by Jānis Šmits, a close friend from school and university days, and Eduards Andersons, with whom he had worked regularly during the war; the fourth member of the group Laimons Pētersons was an expert with motors. They were supposed to set sail on the night of 9-10 October, but there were no less than three false starts, and in the end they were forced to turn back because of engine trouble. Until this point Swedish intelligence had been willing to provide a radio, but the chaotic start to the operation convinced them that it was doomed, so the radio was confiscated and the team told to recover one of the radios left behind before the German capitulation. The team finally set off on the night of the 12<sup>th</sup> and arrived on the 14<sup>th</sup> at 6 a.m. after their engine had definitively died a little way off shore. This necessitated an immediate change of plan. Andersons and Pētersons were supposed to drop Arnītis and Šmits, return to Sweden, and then cross back to pick them up, making their first attempt on 27 October and returning on 10 November if that *rendez-vous* was missed. Now they had no choice but to bury the boat and all go ashore.<sup>92</sup>

The four men headed for a secret "drop" where details of how to make further contact were supposed to be hidden. They neared the drop on 16 October and Andersons and Pētersons hid in a barn while Arnītis and Šmits made their approach. At the drop they found nothing, so decided to make their way to the farm of a friend. On the way they were stopped by a local Soviet militiaman. Swedish intelligence had provided them with papers, but Arnītis had decided that they were such poor forgeries that it was better not to carry them and left the papers, with their guns, at the drop; they thus had no papers to present to the militia and were arrested.<sup>93</sup> Once Andersons and Pētersons realized that something was wrong, they made their own attempt to establish contact, which this time was successful.<sup>94</sup> Mežaks and Priedītis had survived from the wartime operations and Mežaks organized the transfer of Andersons and Pētersons to Riga and then joined them there on 28 October. The next day they met up with Priedītis and held a meeting to reconstruct the LCP leadership.<sup>95</sup> It was agreed: 1) to establish a LCP cell in Riga; 2) to make contact with the national partisans; 3) to develop an underground press; and 4) to collect information about the numbers of Latvian being exiled to Siberia. Andersons reported on the situation in Sweden and Mežaks reported on the situation in Latvia.<sup>96</sup>

Unfortunately, as Andersons and Pētersons tried to get their boat repaired for the return journey, they were arrested and the whole LCP cell crumbled. Both Mežaks and Priedītis were arrested, but before his arrest, Priedītis had succeeded in making

contact with someone in touch with the Vidzeme partisans<sup>97</sup>, and on 7 December a group of Vidzeme partisans listened to instructions received "from the British Secret Service" which told them "until the moment when foreign states intervene to restore the independence of the Baltic States by force of arms, be passive in your attitude to the Soviet authorities, preserve your lives and organisation and wait for instructions from abroad to begin active operations".<sup>98</sup> Without the prospect of British support, the LCP felt it had no choice but to put the activity of its national partisans on hold.<sup>99</sup>

### *Unjustly Forgotten?*

The LCP, like Operation Graffam on which the LCP uprising depended for success, quickly sank into post-war obscurity; after all, for all the LCP's grandiose ambitions, it failed to influence the fate of Latvia. Its story would never be told by Soviet commentators – they always insisted that the LCP, unlike Latvia's Soviet partisans, had never taken up arms against the Germans, but had simply prevaricated and issued meaningless bits of paper. Within Latvia's émigré community a similar view quickly emerged, but from the opposite end of the political spectrum. Over the summer of 1945 the relatively small Latvian emigration associated with the LCP boat transports to Sweden was overtaken in terms of numbers by survivors from the Latvian Legion interned in Germany. As a result, even at the time of Arnītis's last mission, the LCP could no longer speak for the whole Latvian emigration. Justifying their own decision to fight Soviet communism by forming a pragmatic alliance with Hitler, former legionaries were able to convince most émigrés that their amoral pragmatism had nearly succeeded, while the idealists of the LCP had never stood a chance. Once the Cold War was firmly established, the "third way" offered by the LCP held little of interest.

Since the restoration of Latvia's independence, echoes of this émigré controversy have been reflected in Latvian historiography. The basic outlines of the LCP story are now well-known, and Konstantīns Čakste is revered by many; but even reputable historians like Uldis Neiburgs continue to suggest that the LCP activists were deluded in their fanciful belief that Britain would come to Latvia's aid; in his view their escapades should not be taken seriously. The picture is truly alarming when it comes to popular history. Glossy picture books extol the virtues of the Latvian Legion, and websites peddle pseudo-documentary films which state clearly that the Latvian Legion was fighting for Latvian independence, ignoring the fact that Hitler never agreed even to Latvian autonomy and only gave Bangerskis permission to form a government in March 1945. Soldiers in the Latvian Legion wanted independence, no doubt, but they were fighting for Hitler.<sup>100</sup>

There have been two weak points in the LCP's story which Latvian historians sympathetic to its cause have failed to challenge. First, the LCP was not just a liberal talking shop as Soviet commentators tried to suggest, and Latvian public opinion still seems to accept. As the evidence presented here shows, although its leading activists were the "wishy washy pinko" elite of Latvia's parliamentary establishment from the 1920s and early 1930s, they succeeded in establishing a formidable underground organization linked to fighting units operating throughout the country; the national partisans who fought side by side with Soviet partisans in spring 1944 were reading *Jaunā Latvija* edited by Cielēns.<sup>101</sup>

Second, the LCP's strategy of linking up with the British in order to prepare an insurrection co-ordinated with a British landing was rooted in fact, not fiction. Critics of

the LCP have always been able to laugh off these efforts on the grounds that the British never had any intention of landing in the Baltic, and the few Britons who talked in this way were SIS officers like Harry Carr who were working to an intelligence agenda and were prepared to promise anything and con anyone in the hope of acquiring a network which would enable them to place British agents inside the Soviet Union. Again, the evidence produced above shows quite clearly that the option of a Baltic operation by the British was always on the cards, but depended on the speed of Germany's collapse. If the Warsaw Uprising had succeeded, intervention in the Baltic in November 1944 was likely. If the Germans had not staged their Ardennes counter-offensive in December 1944, German collapse might have begun in the early spring, making British operations in the Baltic in April-May quite feasible. The LCP was not conned, its strategy made absolute sense, but the vicissitudes of war meant their moment passed.

With Latvia re-established as a democratic state within the European Union, it is surely important to recover this episode in the history of that country's democratic movement, so that students both in Latvia and beyond its borders know that in the struggle between the two totalitarian systems of the twentieth century, defending the country from one by siding with the other was not the only option. The Latvian Legion survived to tell its story. The national partisans loyal to the LCP did not.

---

<sup>1</sup> E Andersons & L Siliņš, *Latvija un Rietumi: Latviešu nacionālā pretestības kustība, 1943-5* (Riga 2002), 288

<sup>2</sup> In the early to mid-1960s the Soviet press gave great prominence to the trial of Latvians involved in the holocaust, see Lukasz Hirszowicz, 'The Holocaust in the Soviet Mirror' in L. Dobroszycki and J. Gurock (eds), *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Armonk, NY 1993). At about the same time as the Dobroszycki and Gurock published their account, Bernhard Press wrote a devastating memoir account, translated into English as *The Murder of the Jews of Latvia, 1941-45* (Evanston, IL 2000). A more recent popular history in English has also given chapter and verse of the role of the Latvian Arajs commando in the murder of thousands of Jews, see M. Eksteins, *Walking since Daybreak* (Basingstoke 1999). Jakovs Pēters was deputy director of the Cheka.

<sup>3</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit., 100, 192-3, 249; L Siliņš, *Nacistiskās vācijas okupanti: mūsu tautas lielās cerības un rūgtā vilšanās*, (Riga, 2001), 8. For Upelnieks in 1941, see also Elmārs Pelkaus, *Ciņa un cerība: Partizāni Latvijā 1941 g. vasarā* (Riga, 2004), 106.

<sup>4</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit., 28; Siliņš op. cit., 39; F Cielēns, *Laikmetu Maiņā: Atmiņas un atziņas III sējums*, (Lidingo, 1964), 251-2. For Aizsilnieks, see N. Balabkins, *Tautsaimnieka piezīmes: Raksti, Runas, Recenzijas*, (Author's publication, 1996), 187-202.

<sup>5</sup> Cielēns, op. cit. 249-50, 252

<sup>6</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit., 192-3

<sup>7</sup> Latvian State Archives (LVA) fond 1986, opis' 1, delo 99, vol. I, 141-5

<sup>8</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit. 46

<sup>9</sup> U Neiburgs, "Latvijas Republikas diplomāti Rietumos un Latvijas Centrālā padome (1943-44): politiskā nostāja, pretrunas un risinājumi" in *Latvijas Vēstnieku Komisijas Raksti: 16 sējums Okupētā Latvija 2 gadsimta 40. gados* (Riga 2005), 376; Cielēns, op. cit., 253.

<sup>10</sup> Siliņš, op. cit., 131, 136-7; 134 for one of the many references to the Poles

<sup>11</sup> Siliņš, *ibid.*, 127-8, 177; it is clear from this correspondence that "Sandy" had loaned Siliņš money, which it was hoped Zariņš could repay.

<sup>12</sup> British National Archives, FO 898/254 no page number; FO 898/253, 45-66

<sup>13</sup> Siliņš op. cit., 154

<sup>14</sup> Siliņš, *ibid.*, 172, 188; Andersons and Siliņš op. cit., 149

<sup>15</sup> Siliņš, op. cit., 190; Andersons and Siliņš op. cit., 85, 474

<sup>16</sup> Siliņš, op. cit., 192-3; Andersons and Siliņš op. cit., 253

<sup>17</sup> Siliņš, op. cit., 206, 216

---

<sup>18</sup> Siliņš, *ibid.*, 140, 160-1. Zariņš was a good friend of Francis Balodis, an eminent Latvian historian who fell out with Ulmanis and went to live in Swedish emigration, where he lived throughout both the Soviet and Nazi occupations. Before Siliņš arrived he was the pre-eminent figure in the Stockholm emigration and after an initial attempt to get to know each other the two men fell out. A particular issue that caused resentment was the way Siliņš described himself as “Master of Arts”. Balodis questioned whether he really had this qualification, and to Siliņš fury started contacting old associates in Latvia University to see if the qualification was genuine; as Siliņš pointed out with some justification, this correspondence, if discovered, would disclose his identity. These personal issues accentuated generational differences and the fact that Balodis’s politics were more conservative.

<sup>19</sup> FO371/43052/24-5

<sup>20</sup> Siliņš, *op. cit.*, 239.

<sup>21</sup> Neiburgs, *op. cit.*, 378.

<sup>22</sup> Cielēns, *op. cit.*, 254.

<sup>23</sup> FO 371/43050/33,37,39,45

<sup>24</sup> Neiburgs, *op. cit.*, 378.

<sup>25</sup> 1986/1/99/I/150.

<sup>26</sup> FO 371 43052, p. 90; 43050, p. 60

<sup>27</sup> A. Ezergailis (ed.), *Stockholm Documents: the German Occupation of Latvia, 1941-45: What did the Americans Know?* (Riga, 2002), 424-6.

<sup>28</sup> Ezergailis, *op. cit.*, 430-2.

<sup>29</sup> FO 371/43050, p. 94

<sup>30</sup> Ezergailis, *op. cit.*, 462-3. Bilmanis is keen to stress in this letter that Zariņš was equally ignorant of the composition of the LCP leadership. This seems hard to credit, since he was in regular correspondence with Salnais using the intimate form for “you” and had received letters from Mintauts Čakste and General Kurelis. All correspondence reaching Washington came via London, leaving Bilmanis at the end of the communication line.

<sup>31</sup> Ezergailis, *op. cit.*, 458-9.

<sup>32</sup> Siliņš, *op. cit.*, 199.

<sup>33</sup> G Swain, *Between Stalin and Hitler: Class War and Race War on the Dvina, 1940-46* (London 2004), 133-4, 139

<sup>34</sup> Ezergailis, *op. cit.*, 424-6; Cielēns, *op. cit.*, 272.

<sup>35</sup> FO 371.43050 p. 94

<sup>36</sup> FO 371/ 43050 p. 116

<sup>37</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, *op. cit.*, 288; in 1986/1/28636/78 the date given is January.

<sup>38</sup> 1986/1/28636/ 229-30

<sup>39</sup> 1986/1/99/I/145-9, 243-4

<sup>40</sup> 1986/1/99/I/150

<sup>41</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, *op. cit.*, 81, 83, 85.

<sup>42</sup> 1986/1/28635/I/ 132.

<sup>43</sup> 1986/1/99/I/154-5; 1986/1/99/II/249

<sup>44</sup> 1986/1/28635/I/19, 125-32, 145; Andersons and Siliņš, *op. cit.*, 151-2.

<sup>45</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, *op. cit.*, 284.

<sup>46</sup> 1986/1/[28635/I/21-22, 134-5; 1986/1/99/I/157; 1986/1/99/II/246-8; 1986/1/28636/74. For the difficulties of using NKVD interrogations as sources, see G. Swain, ‘Divided We Fall: Divisions within the National Partisans of Vidzeme and Latgale, Fall 1945’, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2, p. 198.

<sup>47</sup> Dz Ērglis, *Latvijas Centrālās Padomes Vēstures Nezināmās Lappuses* (Riga, 2004), 61-2.

<sup>48</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, *op. cit.*, 250, 256, 308.

<sup>49</sup> 301/1/29/47

<sup>50</sup> Ezergailis, *op. cit.*, 435-8.

<sup>51</sup> Cielēns, *op. cit.*, 264.

<sup>52</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, *op. cit.*, 250; for the approach to Bangerskis, see Siliņš, *op. cit.*, 296-7.

<sup>53</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, *op. cit.*, 253.

<sup>54</sup> 1986/1/28635/I/ 137

<sup>55</sup> 1986/1/99/I/,243.

<sup>56</sup> Ezergailis, *op. cit.*, 437.

- 
- <sup>57</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit, 86,88, 102, 104.
- <sup>58</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit., 287.
- <sup>59</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit., 258; Ērglis op. cit. dates this 23-29 September, see 63.
- <sup>60</sup> Ērglis, op. cit., 64.
- <sup>61</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit., 287.
- <sup>62</sup> 1986/1/29669/II/16
- <sup>63</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit., 258.
- <sup>64</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit., 200, 202.
- <sup>65</sup> 1986/1/29669/II/16-18
- <sup>66</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit., 331.
- <sup>67</sup> 1986/1/99/II/249
- <sup>68</sup> 1986/1/99/II/249-50
- <sup>69</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit., 292.
- <sup>70</sup> Siliņš, op. cit., 138.
- <sup>71</sup> Cielēns, op. cit., 291.
- <sup>72</sup> M Howard, *British Intelligence in the Second World War Volume 5: Strategic Deception*, (London 1990) 117-9.
- <sup>73</sup> FO 188/446/144
- <sup>74</sup> HS2/1/no page numbers; for Churchill's request to Stalin, see K.Pirmāe, 'Britain and the Baltic Question in the 1940s', British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies 2008 Conference, unpublished paper, citing Eden's letters in FO954.
- <sup>75</sup> HS2/269 AD/E to AD/X 15.11.44 (no page number)
- <sup>76</sup> 1986/1/99/I/50
- <sup>77</sup> 1986/1/99/59-60
- <sup>78</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit., 292.
- <sup>79</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit., 259, 261, 332.
- <sup>80</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit, 190, 261-2, 289.
- <sup>81</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit., 290.
- <sup>82</sup> Swain, op. cit., 165.
- <sup>83</sup> Z. Turčinskis, 'Latvijas nacionālo partizanu apvienības izveidošanās un darbība Stampaku periodā (1944 gada oktobris – 1945 gada marts)' in *Latvijas Vēstnieku Komisijas Raksti: 10 sējums Okupācijas Režimi Latvijā: 1940-59 gadā* (Rīga 2004) 441-5, 447-9, 461.
- <sup>84</sup> Andersons and Siliņš, op. cit., 290, 293.
- <sup>85</sup> 1986/1/99/I/60, 165-6
- <sup>86</sup> 1986/1/29669/II/18
- <sup>87</sup> 1986/1/99/27,31,55,60,105,163,166,168
- <sup>88</sup> Swain, op. cit., 171-2.
- <sup>89</sup> G. Swain, 'Divided We Fall', 199-201.
- <sup>90</sup> T Bower, *The Red Web: MI6 and the KGB Master Coup* (London, 1989), 54.
- <sup>91</sup> 1986/1/99/I/169-71
- <sup>92</sup> 1986/1/99/I/ 175-7; Bower's description (59) "on the night of 15 October the four men neared the Courland coast in an expensively equipped speedboat" reflects the James Bond world of sensational writing on intelligence matters.
- <sup>93</sup> 1986/1/99/I/175-7; 1986/1/28636/157
- <sup>94</sup> 1986/1/99/II/152-3; for the date of the meeting, see 1986/1/28636/51
- <sup>95</sup> 1986/1/99/II/153; 1986/1/28636/ 23
- <sup>96</sup> This meeting is referred to in 1986/28636/54-64; 1986/1/99/III/ 91, 174-5, and is described slightly differently on all three occasions; the accounts agree on the date of the meeting and the approach to the national partisans.
- <sup>97</sup> 1986/1/99/III/95
- <sup>98</sup> 1986/1/30641/III/76-7
- <sup>99</sup> The arrest of Arnītis and his team marked the start of one of the great spying episodes of the Cold War. Through these arrests the NKVD came into possession of the LCP's radios and quickly realized that this might be the way not only to disrupt the work of the Latvian anti-Soviet emigration in Sweden but to place an agent in Sweden who could infiltrate the British Secret Service. Thus the operation began which would

---

end with “the KGB first compromising and then controlling MI6’s entire intelligence network in the Baltic States of the USSR”, as the dust jacket of Tom Bower’s colourful but inaccurate account puts it.

<sup>100</sup> This is the tenor of Neiburgs, ‘Latvijas Republikas diplomāti’. One such website is:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1H8TEVO1dxQ&feature=related>

<sup>101</sup> See note 33.