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# Nonviolent Action in the Liberation of Latvia

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Olgerts Eglitis

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Olgerts Eglitis  
November, 1992



# INTRODUCTION

On June 14, 1987, when all of East-Central Europe was still frozen by totalitarianism, news about an unsanctioned anti-Soviet demonstration in Latvia's capital, Riga, spread in the Western media. After that date the country never came to rest: the spell of fear and subjugation evaporated, and mass demonstrations, protest meetings, and acts of civil disobedience became part of daily life in Latvia, as well as in neighboring Estonia and Lithuania, strongly influencing other nations trying to free themselves from Soviet domination and Communist totalitarianism.

The Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian drive for independence became known as the "Baltic Way," the most specific traits of which were its nonviolent, peaceful nature; nonaggressive, soulful, and orderly mass demonstrations; and flowers and singing as signs of spiritual defiance, determination, and national cohesion. Consequently, it also became known as the "singing revolution" or "flower revolution."

This vast and spectacular drive for independence did not spring out of nowhere, although it was dubbed "Awakening" in the Latvian media. Opposition to Soviet rule in the Baltic states existed ever since their occupation and subsequent annexation by the USSR in 1940, after 20 years of independent existence.

The early resistance movement was not peaceful. It started in the wake of World War II (1944-52) with eight years of desperate, doomed guerilla warfare, which bled the country and caused continued Soviet repression against the civilian population. After the armed resistance was defeated, a sense of total national defeat and utter gloom ensued, aggravated by unremitting Russification policies and Soviet-steered mass settlement of Russians and other aliens in Latvia. Many Latvians

lost hope of ever regaining their independence. Still, an underground resistance movement, now using only peaceful means, and nationwide spiritual defiance continued during all the years of Soviet occupation until the relaxation of policies under Gorbachev gave another chance to challenge it openly.

Through the last years of Soviet rule the pro-independence activists in Latvia and in the other two Baltic states showed great determination in efforts to regain independence, but consistently abstained from using violent means, though there were victims from their own midst as a result of Soviet acts of terror. In a world of almost omnipresent reciprocal violence and danger of its erupting in more places all over the vast territories of the former Soviet Union and East-Central Europe, the Baltic experience of persistent nonviolent action may deserve to be studied carefully along with the classical examples of nonviolent struggle, such as those led by Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. Its closer evaluation would be of importance to the Latvians themselves, as they confront mounting economic and political hardships in their efforts to rebuild their newly recovered statehood.

This monograph focuses on the many forms of nonviolent action used by Latvian independence-seekers, mainly in the last years of Soviet domination. Only a brief account is given of the long period before these last turbulent years. The reader will find detailed reports of those earlier struggles in the many works written by Latvian and other Baltic exile scholars.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the small format of this edition, only a short survey can be given. It does not fully expound on the various forms of nonviolent activities, nor does it explain all the complexities of the Latvian political theater. Also, for the sake of more closer study, this monograph limits its scope to developments in Latvia alone, although analogous events occurred in Estonia and Lithuania.

In addition, this monograph includes documents of Latvian grassroots and State organizations that played a crucial role in organizing nonviolent civilian resistance to Soviet efforts to regain control of Latvia in 1991.



# 1

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## RESISTANCE AND OPPOSITION TO SOVIET RULE BEFORE 1987

Latvia was occupied by Soviet troops in the same year that Norway, Denmark, the Low Countries, and France were captured by the Germans. The numerical superiority of the Red army in 1940 was enormous, and the world community was already preoccupied with the turmoils of the war, so the Latvian government did not risk waging an armed struggle against the invader. In accordance with Marxist-Leninist doctrine, the Soviets staged a "revolutionary situation" and a "peaceful socialist revolution," even using their own soldiers, dressed as civilians, as "demonstrators"; organized sham elections; and installed a puppet government, which, in the presence of armed Soviet soldiers, voted for Latvia to join the USSR. A year of Sovietization, Russification, arrests, torture, executions, deportations, and elimination of all the basic structures of civil society followed, known in the Latvian people's memory as *Baigais gads* (the Horrible Year). More than thirty-five thousand people (from a population of less than two million), many of them children, women, and old people, were either killed or deported to labor camps in Siberia, where most of them perished.

Despite mass terror and confusion, resistance to the Soviet regime began immediately. People refused to comply with the new order. Students and schoolchildren were especially active in the first year of occupation. They would display the national colors, appear in festive clothes during national holidays, refuse to join *Komsomol* (the New Communist League), and refuse to sing the Soviet anthem or Russian songs. Underground groups were formed, leaflets issued, and so on.

World War II, which became a reality for Latvians in 1941, brought more tragedies to the country. Soviet occupation was replaced by German occupation, lasting from 1941 to 1944/45, when Latvia was recaptured by the Soviets. During the German occupation, up to 150,000 Latvian men were conscripted into the German army, as were many people from other occupied countries. Many of them, viewing Germans as the lesser evil, regarded this as their only chance to prevent the repetition of the horrors of 1940/41 under Soviet occupation. There were also some Latvians who not only saw the Germans as their allies against the Communists, but actively participated in their genocidal policies against the Jewish people. In 1944, an independent Latvian military force, to replace the Latvian army destroyed by the Soviets in 1940, started to form under the command of General Janis Kurelis, but was soon crushed in its incipient stages by the Germans.

After the German capitulation on May 8, 1945, thousands of armed Latvian soldiers, fighting in the nineteenth division of the German army, were still entrenched in Kurzeme (the western part of Latvia), where an enclave had formed, not yet recaptured by the Soviets. Most of them did not surrender to Soviet military authorities, but dispersed into the forests instead. Many were captured and sent to prison camps in Siberia, but the rest, together with Latvian deserters from both Soviet and German armies and remnants of Kurelis' unit, formed the nucleus of the Latvian guerilla fighters, who were active until 1952. Their numbers varied from one thousand to six thousand men in different years. When forced collectivization began in 1948, many peasants joined the guerilla groups, but after 1949, when renewed mass deportations took place and more than forty-three thousand people, mostly peasants, were moved to the eastern parts of the USSR, the partisans lost their support base, and the armed resistance subsided. In 1952, when the neighboring Lithuanians also demobilized their much larger Freedom Army, it became apparent that the Soviet regime was firmly installed in the Baltic states and that no Western power would come to the rescue.

Although some sporadic fighting occurred even after 1952, the general population discarded any idea of further armed resistance. Unarmed resistance, however, continued in various forms, which can be divided into five classes:

**1. Active nonviolent resistance:** forming underground resistance groups, discussion clubs, and cultural units; issuing leaflets and publications; displaying the national flag, tearing down Soviet flags; celebrating Latvian national holidays; holding memorial meetings at the burial places of the first Latvian president and prominent politicians of the independence period; drawing national symbols and defiant slogans on walls; singing banned national songs; etc.

However, due to the extreme Soviet repression against political opponents, only the most courageous individuals engaged in active forms of resistance.

**2. Passive opposition:** refusing to participate in mandatory Soviet social and political activities, taking a skeptical or derisive attitude towards these; refusing to join *Komsomol* and other Communist organizations at school; refusing to learn Russian—the de facto official language of the USSR; refusing to sing Russian and Soviet patriotic songs; refusing to speak Russian in public; refusing to participate in elections; etc.

Many of these forms of opposition, especially the mildest ones, were extremely widespread. So, for example, in the Latvian schools, anyone who chose to become a *Komsomol* activist had a hard time among his fellow pupils, being regarded as a hopeless climber and toady.

**3. Spiritual resistance:** maintenance of Latvian cultural traditions, folklore, and folk art; mass celebration of the principal ethnic holiday Ligo (at Summer Solstice)—a tradition dating back to pre-Christian times; etc.

Religion (Christianity) was of lesser importance in the mainly Lutheran Latvia, than in neighboring Catholic Lithuania or Poland, in the spiritual struggle to preserve the nation. Still, in an atheistic state, religion became one of the forms of spiritual independence and political defiance, a way to escape the hated official “Marxist-Leninist outlook.” Religious holidays, such as Christmas or Easter, were widely celebrated by the population in defiance of the Communists’ openly hostile attitude towards these holidays.

National achievements in culture, literature, and the arts during the independence period of 1918–40 were a major reservoir of spiritual strength. Though many of these were stigmatized by Soviet propaganda as “bourgeois” and “reactionary,” or even banned and made

unavailable in libraries and bookshops by Soviet laws and administrative decisions, the works of art, literature, and philosophy of the independence years were always highly esteemed and venerated by Latvians.

Learning foreign languages, studies in Western literature, philosophy, and the arts, were also a kind of spiritual resistance among intellectuals, which helped to make the Soviet reality seem less omnipotent and therefore less threatening, or even ridiculous. For example, George Orwell's *The Animal Farm* had a truly liberating effect on those who read it. No wonder reading, possessing, or lending Orwell's books was regarded a punishable criminal offense by the authorities.

Another form of spiritual resistance was literary and artistic creativity itself. There emerged novels, poems, pictures, songs, plays, etc., which were officially allowed or even praised by Soviet authorities, but at the same time carried some hidden meaning or message, escaping censorship, but expressing their creators' defiance and patriotism, sometimes only because these works were national in character, language, colors, or sounds. In increasingly Russified public and official life, where Latvians had to use Russian as the official language, national culture became a kind of spiritual fortress. This explains the enormous popularity of many artists, writers, poets, painters, composers, and film directors.

**4. Protecting Latvian national interests in official Soviet institutions:** This form of resistance manifested itself most patently in 1958–59, when a group of Latvian Communist functionaries, led by Eduards Berklavs (then a deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers) began to oppose resolutely the deliberate flooding of Latvia with immigrants from various parts of the USSR, as well as the Russification of all spheres of public life. They failed in these efforts, but their defiance inspired others working in Soviet institutions. In 1972 another group of seventeen Latvian Communists, also led by Berklavs, sent an anonymous letter to Western and East-European Communist leaders, protesting Latvian political suppression and Soviet Russification policies.

However, this form of Communist-insider national opposition always had dubious meaning, because from the outside it could not be easily differentiated from collaborationism. Therefore, those Latvians who joined the Communist Party often had bad consciences about it

and justified themselves saying that they had only joined the Party to advance Latvian interests.

5. *Exile resistance:* Approximately 150,000 Latvians fled their homeland in 1944–45, before the re-occupation of Latvia by the Red army. Many of those leaving would have faced severe repression had they remained—for participating in patriotic organizations, for belonging to the educated and proprietor classes before 1940, or for being involved with the Germans during World War II.

Many of the refugees first went to Germany, where they lived for a while in camps for displaced persons in the Western occupation zones. Others fled directly across the Baltic Sea to Sweden. Later many of the refugees resettled in the United States, Canada, Australia, and Britain. However, most of them viewed these states as temporary host countries, and looked forward to eventually returning to their freed homeland. Their scattered communities did not lose touch with one another or with Latvia. Political activity was high among them. Political organizations such as the World Federation of Free Latvians and the American Latvian Association were formed; cultural societies, schools, and religious communities were established; newspapers, magazines, and books were published, and so on. The exile political leaders repeatedly declared Latvia's liberation as their goal and worked for it extensively: uniting Latvian refugees, persistently reminding the world community about the continuing occupation of Latvia, taking part in international events as well as organizing their own protest actions, and morally supporting freedom fighters in the homeland. The existence of the exile community, guarding the political ideals and cultural heritage of the independence period, was itself a very strong factor influencing the defiant mood of people back in Latvia.

The combined effect of these different forms of resistance and opposition was to give Latvians a strong feeling of national identity, the living ideal of an independent nation-state, a sense of culturally belonging to Europe, well-preserved national culture and traditions, and a partly preserved Protestant work ethic.

Nevertheless, the opposition could not effectively counteract the general evils of the Soviet system: political and ideological oppression, economic stagnation, environmental degradation, cultural and intellectual backwardness of a great part of the people, widespread pessimism, alcoholism, etc.

Especially painful for Latvians was the virtual genocide waged against their nation, which began with deportations and killings, but continued in more insidious forms, such as large-scale immigration, with privileges for the new arrivals and handicaps for the indigenous population. The results were disastrous: the percentage of Latvians in the total population of the country dropped from 77% in 1935, and an estimated 83% in 1945, to 52% in 1989.<sup>2</sup> The continuation of this process opened for Latvians the horrifying prospect of becoming a minority in their own homeland. As a small nation, Latvians strongly identify themselves with their language, culture, traditions, and history, and therefore perceived such a prospect as nothing less than a personal tragedy.

In 1985–86, when the new Gorbachev era began in the USSR, the changes echoed very slowly in Latvia at first, due to the very conservative Party leadership in the country. Then, encouraged by developments in Russia, various political, economic, historical, and social problems started to be discussed more freely in public and in the media. A strong environmental movement emerged in 1986, which simultaneously facilitated and disguised its participants' preoccupation with the principal political causes of the ecological catastrophe. Some people got the feeling that they could now express their national aspirations openly, without being immediately threatened by severe punishment. Others, who were previously subdued and debilitated by the daily Soviet terror and propaganda, became gradually conscious of their national identity. A nationwide drive for political liberation began to gather strength. Nonviolent challenges to the totalitarian Communist regime, conducted by daring individuals, had a triggering effect on later developments.

## 2

### DEFIANT DEMONSTRATIONS

Most of the resistance groups that existed up to 1986 tried to disguise their participants' identities and conducted underground activities out of fear of being severely punished if discovered. Seldom did people venture to defy the system openly. Those who did were usually hardened dissidents who had been punished before. In 1979, a group of forty-five Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian dissidents, most of them Soviet labor camp veterans, signed a joint declaration to the international community, demanding the right of self-determination for their nations. Most of them were charged with "anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation," were tried and sent to labor camps again.

In 1986, a new kind of resistance group was formed, which was to play a major role in future developments. Three workers from Latvia's port city Liepaja—Linards Grantins, Raimonds Biteniēks, and Martins Bariss—founded a human rights watch group called "Helsinki-86." They acted openly from the very beginning. The group's purpose, as stated in their first public announcement, was "to monitor how the economic, cultural, and individual rights of our people are respected."<sup>3</sup> They started their activities by writing a series of open, signed protest letters to Soviet authorities and to various international bodies and figures, calling for their attention, requesting help for the Latvian people, and protesting against the continued Russification of Latvia, the economic, cultural, and linguistic discrimination against Latvians, and political oppression. In an appeal to Mikhail Gorbachev they wrote:

"Your people hold territories beyond imagination, from the Baltic Sea to Japan. You are at both the North and South Poles. You are on all the oceans of the world and even the cosmos is yours. That is almost as much as God has. Isn't that enough for the Russian people?

Do you really need 1.5 million Latvians and a tiny corner of land by the Baltic Sea? Come to us as friends and you will receive friendship in return. Respect other peoples, and you will be respected. If you do not respect other peoples, you will do irreparable harm to your own people."

The group also tentatively raised the question of national independence, refraining though from mentioning the fact that Latvia was forcefully occupied by the Soviets in the first place and therefore had indisputable rights to freedom—an argument which a little later became the cornerstone of Latvian pro-independence activists. In an appeal to the United Nations they wrote:

"Let the Soviet Union explain how to put into effect paragraph 69 of the constitution of the Latvian SSR,<sup>4</sup> which states that the Latvian SSR retains the right to freely secede from the USSR . . ."

Soon the group was joined by more men and women, mainly from the lowest strata of society—political outcasts, many of whom had previously been repressed by the authorities and consequently had little to lose in their social position.

On June 14, 1987, "Helsinki-86" organized the first large unofficial gathering of the postwar era at the Freedom Monument in Riga, commemorating the anniversary of a mass deportation by the Soviets of more than fourteen thousand of Latvia's citizens in 1941. About a thousand people took part in the march to the Freedom Monument, ready to face imminent violence from the police, who stood nearby, intimidating the demonstrators. Some two to three thousand more gathered near the place, drawn by interest and solidarity, but were too scared yet to join.

That first demonstration was followed by a series of similar activities at the Freedom Monument, initiated by "Helsinki-86" on meaningful dates in Latvia's history: on August 23, Black Ribbon Day, when in 1939 Hitler and Stalin signed a non-aggression pact that led to the annexation of the Baltic states by the USSR; on November 18, the national holiday celebrating the founding of the Republic of Latvia in 1918; and on March 25, 1988, commemorating the victims of another mass deportation of more than forty-three thousand people in 1949. The demonstrators always behaved peacefully: they laid flowers at the Freedom Monument, sang patriotic songs, and made public speeches. Though the first demonstration on June 14 passed peacefully, the others were marked by police brutalities, humiliations, beat-



ings, and arrests.

These demonstrations acted as a detonator for Latvian political activity. Although most people remained cautious and did not take part in the demonstrations, they sympathized with them and started to discuss more openly political questions with friends or family members, which was thought dangerous before because of the great number of secret KGB informers. Other small political groups, discussion clubs, cultural, religious, and environmental units emerged. A religious group *Atdzimsana un atjaunosanas* (Rebirth and Renewal), which later played a key role in the revitalization of the whole Lutheran Church in Latvia, was founded on June 14, 1987—the very date that the first demonstration took place. The first independent and uncensored magazine, *Auseklis*, appeared in September 1987. Although it was published only later for the Latvian exile community in the West, it circulated among friends in carbon copies and handwriting, and was widely read and discussed in private circles.

More politically charged articles appeared in the official, censored press too, expressing sometimes, between the lines, solidarity with the dissidents. Feelings of solidarity were also expressed more openly and defiantly in poems and songs.

At the time, acute political problems were usually discussed more indirectly. For example, a public discussion concerning planned construction of a Riga subway started in 1987 and continued into 1988. Opponents of the subway project based their arguments mainly on ecological and economic grounds, while the real issue at stake was the prospective influx of more aliens from Russia and elsewhere threatening national identity.

A first laboratory for real democracy started to take shape in 1987: representatives from various social, environmental, religious, and political groups began to meet weekly. These meetings were called *Sabiedrisko klubu padome* (The Council of Societal Clubs). It gradually developed into a kind of proto-parliament, discussing issues from various points of view and passing common decisions and declarations. The Council acted without any direct Communist influence, though it was always conscious of being scrutinized by the omnipresent KGB. In late 1988, part of the Council—the pro-independence activists—developed into a radical political organization—*Neformala tautas fronte* (The Informal Popular Front), which later merged with the Popular Front of Latvia.

The attitude of the Soviet authorities towards the new political activists differed from case to case. Loyal opposition, aimed at making only minor changes in the system, pursuant to the official *perestroika* and *glasnost* doctrines, was allowed and even encouraged. More radical activists were severely criticized and persecuted. Members and supporters of "Helsinki-86," the most articulate and boldest group taking part in unsanctioned demonstrations, were constantly vilified and slandered in the official media, which portrayed them as dimwits and criminals. The group's members, their relatives, and even small children were harassed and beaten.<sup>5</sup> In 1987 and 1988 many of their activists were forced to emigrate. But this did not help: more people joined the group.

In 1988, "Helsinki-86" produced more political documents: announcements, appeals, protests, etc. Some of these were broadcast on the Latvian programs of Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America and published in the magazine *Auseklis*.<sup>6</sup> The most influential of these was "The Memorandum to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Latvia,"<sup>7</sup> which was in fact the first detailed political program for democratization in Latvia. Its ten points, ranging from equal legal status for the Latvian language to economic autonomy, stirred society and greatly influenced subsequent developments. The Memorandum got the usual slandering and "refutation" in the official media. A secret directive for local Communist functionaries, twice as long as the Memorandum itself, giving instructions on how to argue against its ideas, was produced by a Communist ideologue Janis Vasermanis.<sup>8</sup> Despite all this, the Memorandum received much support within groups of intellectuals. Intellectuals still hesitated to speak out in public for fear of reprisals, but fermentation among them grew.

# 3

## THE AWAKENING

### The Breakthrough

Encouraged by the “Helsinki-86” activities and by the very fact that the group could continue its precarious existence, people gradually shed their fear. Prompted by the official, however hypocritical policy of *glasnost*, journalists and editors of newspapers and magazines went from one previously banned subject to another. More daring political activities took place after the first memorial demonstration was officially sanctioned and took place on March 25, 1988.<sup>9</sup> On April 19, 1988, thousands of people took part in a funeral procession for a leading Latvian dissident who had spent many years in Soviet labor camps, Gunars Astra. On that day the Latvian national flag was flown and the national anthem sung publicly for the first time since World War II. And on April 27, ten thousand demonstrators—mainly students and schoolchildren—marched against the subway project.

Most people, however, especially among the more prominent and educated, were still hesitant to speak openly about the most acute problems of society and their nation. The real breakthrough in people’s minds occurred after a joint conference of Latvian “creative unions” (writers, artists, painters, poets, journalists, scholars, etc.) took place in Riga on June 1–2, 1988. It was the first time that people from officially acknowledged and until then docile intellectual circles spoke their minds freely, although some caution and halfheartedness still remained. They spoke openly about the deplorable economic, social, and political circumstances in Latvia, the continuing mass migration, Russification, cultural deprivation, discrimination against the Latvian language, distortions in Latvian history, and miserable living conditions. A political commentator and Communist ideologue, pre-

viously notorious for his orthodoxy and subservience to the regime, Mavriks Vulfsons, radically changed his position, venturing to say that in 1940 Latvia did not join the USSR voluntarily and legally as Communist doctrine had it, but was occupied by the Soviets.

Though there was some delay and hesitation, the papers of the conference were eventually published and broadcast on television. This triggered a tremendous political upheaval in society, soon to be named the "Awakening" by journalists.

The conference and the activities that followed, leading to the foundation of the Popular Front of Latvia (see below), surely had an imprimatur from pro-*perestroika* authorities both in Riga and in Moscow, who hoped to use a partial, officially steered or at least officially influenced liberalization to further reforms. But as soon as the green light was given, grassroots activities and individual political initiatives took over and led the course of events faster, farther, and in another direction than the official reformers may have planned.

Encouraged by the daring of intellectuals, at least one hundred thousand people (as compared with one thousand the year before) participated in a march on June 14, 1988, commemorating the victims of Soviet deportations. The demonstration was officially sanctioned, but its scope and character apparently deviated from what the authorities seemed to think appropriate. The speakers and posters were bolder than expected, and the national flag carried by a "Helsinki-86" member virtually electrified the participants.

From that date on, large-scale peaceful demonstrations of up to five hundred thousand participants became one of the principal traits of the Latvian national liberation movement.

Acts of spiritual defiance, so characteristic for the postwar period, continued now in a much freer and undisguised manner. A large folk-festival "Baltica-88," with Lithuanian, Estonian, and exile Latvian guests taking part, soon followed the June demonstration. The previously banned national flags were now flown freely and defiantly, carried by many participants of the festival. Though consisting of dancing and singing, the festival had a clear political meaning, signaling the national resurrection of the Baltic nations.

Other forms of nonviolent activity gradually emerged, such as writing collective declarations, protest letters, and demands, and passing resolutions at workplaces, meetings, and various social clubs and organizations. These widespread activities initially began in reac-

tion to actions of the Communist Party of Latvia (KPL). On June 18, 1988, only four days after the triumphant demonstration, the KPL convened a plenary meeting of its Central Committee, in which Communists strongly reacted to the conference of intellectuals and the demonstration, and in fact threatened the new national movement. This stirred up not only apprehension in society, as would have been usual in the previous period, but it also aroused strong defiant feelings, which was something new for the Communist authorities. On June 24 the weekly newspaper *Literatura un Maksla* (Literature and the Arts) published an editorial in which it condemned "attempts by some senior Party and Soviet apparatus officials to disguise their economic and ideological errors by an attack on the policy of democratization . . ." To attack the "infallible" Party authorities in this way would have been regarded as an unthinkable political effrontery by usual Soviet standards, but could pass now in the atmosphere of growing self-respect of the people and under the cover of *glasnost*. Other organizations and institutions followed suit and also protested the KPL attempt to stop the liberalization.

This incident opened another floodgate: more and more daring public declarations were made, calling for an end to discrimination against the Latvian language and culture, an end to massive immigration into Latvia, and the official annulment of the Hitler-Stalin pact (which in effect would mean the restoration of Latvia's independence). Other, more specific demands were also made: opening "special files" (libraries for banned literature), canceling decrees passed by Communist authorities, making this or that amendment to the constitution, changing laws, stopping some environmentally or socially damaging construction project, and so on. Storms of public protest arose every time some authority or official tried to curtail the newly gained freedoms.

Thousands of signatures were collected for specific protests, demands, or initiatives. In some campaigns more than one million signatures were collected—for example, protesting discriminatory amendments to the USSR's constitution in December 1988, and expressing the popular will of Latvians not to join the Union Treaty offered by Gorbachev in late 1990.

Acts of lawlessness and human rights abuses by the KGB and police, which were so common in previous years, were no longer effective in quelling unrest (though casual police or army violence

continued to occur from time to time against political activists). The determination to stand against Moscow-directed repression was vividly demonstrated in the case of Modris Lujans—a young political activist who during the demonstration in June 1988 carried a poster calling some of Soviet Latvia's leading officials "kangars" (a metaphor for "traitor"). The poster was considered "slandering," "anti-Soviet," and "hooligan" by the authorities. Modris Lujans was arrested. A vast political campaign for his release began at once, because political activists saw it as a precedent-setting case that could affect future conflicts with the authorities. Not to react strongly then could have encouraged the authorities to regain their lost totalitarian control. At first, signatures were collected, resolutions passed, and protest letters written. Then a new form of protest developed, which in Latvia came to be named "picketing": people standing with posters, flags, etc., expressing their demands or protests. This type of protest, first used while protecting Modris Lujans, later became one of the most widely used political actions.

The Communist authorities did not want to back down: picketers were sometimes detained and beaten by the police. The same happened to those collecting signatures in his support. Lujans was charged with "hooliganism" and "slandering the Soviet state and social order" and put on trial.

On the day of the trial the entire courthouse was "decorated" with posters, which was possible because a scaffold had been erected to paint the building. A large crowd of people gathered outside (only a limited number of people were let into the courtroom) with posters, demanding that the accused be acquitted and released. Some of their posters were exact copies of the one carried by Modris Lujans on June 14—a blatant challenge to arrest them too. Three "public advocates" were appointed by various groups and organizations to defend Lujans. Finally he was wholly acquitted. It was one of the first real gains in the struggle against the established order.

### **The Grassroots Organizations**

As a result of the turbulent public activity, various political organizations were founded, the National Independence Movement of Latvia and the Popular Front of Latvia being the strongest and most influential among them.

*Latvijas Nacionālais neatkarības kustība* (The National Independence Movement of Latvia or NIML) was founded in the summer of 1988 by a group of determined activists—open adversaries to the Communist regime. From the very beginning it advocated full national independence for Latvia. To do so was a sure way to prison in earlier years and still was regarded risky. Therefore, though enormously popular among the people, the organization's numbers rose disproportionately slowly, reaching eleven thousand in the spring of 1989. Many supporters and sympathizers simply were afraid to join. Others regarded the NIML as a bunch of too radical, unrealistic dreamers. Nevertheless the influence of its bold stance was great.

After its first congress in February 1989, the NIML was fiercely attacked by the orthodox, mainly Russian, Communists as "unconstitutional," and they demanded that its activities cease. This led to a public debate broadcast on the radio between the highest Soviet authorities in Latvia and the Movement's leadership about the aims of the NIML. The latter in fact won the debate after skillfully defending its positions. That victory was reinforced during the organization's second congress, which took place in May 1989 and received vast public support, prompting the much larger Popular Front also to adopt independence as its aim.

*Latvijas Tautas fronte* (The Popular Front of Latvia or PFL) was founded in October 1988 by representatives of support groups from all over the country. Many prominent members of society—professors, writers, journalists, etc.—together with some dissidents and others who had suffered repression, were elected to the organization's leading bodies, the Council and the Board. Soon more than two hundred thousand people were counted among its active members, and most Latvians as well as a considerable number of Russians in Latvia supported it as the strongest political force, a kind of "loyal opposition" to the Communists (at least in the first stage of its existence). The program of the PFL did not at first have independence as its goal. Rather it advocated the realization of national interests within the framework of the Soviet Union, applying Gorbachev's doctrine of *perestroika*. Only later—in May 1989—under the pressure of the Independence Movement's more radical stance, did the PFL also express its readiness to work for independent statehood.

The PFL initiated many grassroots activities—collecting signatures on petitions and organizing demonstrations and other actions. One of the largest and perhaps most spectacular of these was the

"Baltic Way," organized jointly by the Popular Fronts of Latvia and Estonia and the Lithuanian *Sąjūdis* movement: more than two million people joined hands, forming a human chain connecting the capitals of all three Baltic states—Tallinn, Riga, and Vilnius—on August 23, 1989. The action was intended to remind the world community of the Hitler-Stalin pact and its extant consequences. It achieved its goal and thereby so infuriated Moscow, that the Central Committee of the CPSU<sup>10</sup> issued an announcement "About the Situation in the Baltic Soviet Republics," on August 26, which threatened the Baltic peoples, saying: "if they [the Baltic leaders] succeeded in achieving their goals, the consequences could be catastrophic for the peoples. Their viability itself could be questioned."<sup>11</sup> The sentence was interpreted by the Baltic patriotic movements as tantamount to threatening them with genocide. Consequently the announcement was met by numerous protest actions—protest telegrams, letters, resolutions, demonstrations, etc.—in Latvia and in the other two countries.

On the grassroots level, the branches of the Popular Front in cities, towns, and villages initiated a variety of local actions, often jointly with the National Independence Movement and other patriotic organizations. However, as a rule the more radical and decisive actions were initiated by the NIML and smaller groups.

The Council and the Board of the PFL, basing themselves on grassroots strength, conducted a pressure policy towards the legislature—the Supreme Soviet of Latvia. Many laws (e.g., about the status of the Latvian language and the curtailment of immigration to Latvia) were passed on the Popular Front's initiative.<sup>12</sup>

The Popular Front also initiated or took active part in a great number of political and cultural changes, leading to the restoration of normal civil society. Opening churches and synagogues that had been closed long ago by the Communists, issuing the first mass-circulation religious newspaper *Svētdienas Rīts* (Sunday Morning) under its auspices, organizing cultural societies and schools for ethnic minorities—these were but a few of the PFL initiatives.

The emergence of the Popular Front had a complicated effect on political life. It was later acknowledged by some of the Front's leaders, that the establishment of the PFL was not only officially sanctioned but also to some degree steered by pro-*perestroika* Communist functionaries, with the aim of creating a docile organ that would help with reform projects and mobilize the grassroots in a desirable direction. In



fact, the only other alternative left for them was to face the spontaneous emergence of an openly hostile opposition. As soon as the PFL was founded, however, it became apparent that it would not subversively follow the official guidelines and that it would become something more than a loyal opposition. It developed more radical ideas and urged people to take more decisive action than the authorities would approve of.

The Popular Front also gave a kind of protection to those acting in its name: the Front was respected by the Communist authorities as a legitimate organization, while the members of other, smaller and more radical organizations, the NIML included, were often more out on a limb, risking police repression and other reprisals.

However, the emergence of the PFL also had a negative aspect: psychologically, it diminished people's sense of personal responsibility—people delegated their decision-making faculties to the Front's leadership. The number of small group or individual political initiatives diminished or passed unnoticed by the general public, whose attention was constantly focused on the PFL. The considerable influence of the Communist Party's nomenklatura on the Front's leadership, either through its members' direct participation or through negotiation and compromise, led to the suppression of more decisive initiatives and politicians and the bolstering of the popularity of corrupt Communist functionaries pretending to be patriotic and progressive reformers.

### **The Citizens' Movement**

A new civic campaign known as the Citizens' Movement started early in 1989. Taking an idea from Estonia, the Citizens' Movement in Latvia planned to register all the legal citizens of the state, that is, everyone who held the citizenship of Latvia before the occupation, and their descendents. Those who could not claim citizenship, due to their later arrival in the occupied territory, were invited to register as candidates for citizenship, thus expressing their loyalty and support for Latvia's independence. Registration was viewed as necessary in order to recover national identity, to counteract the disintegrating effects of deportations, emigration, and the large-scale, Soviet-steered influx of immigrants from Russia and elsewhere. One of the aims of

registration was to elect a representative body of Latvia's citizens, called the "Citizens' Congress," as well as to form local citizens' committees, to protect the interests of the citizens and to coordinate their actions.

The registration process itself was carried out by thousands of volunteers, mostly from the National Independence Movement of Latvia, but also from the Popular Front. In their spare time they went from home to home, or registered people at improvised offices—usually in churches, public buildings, schools, private houses, or apartments—all over the country. The process was declared illegal by the Supreme Soviet of Latvia<sup>13</sup> and "counterproductive" by some more cautious leaders of the Popular Front.<sup>14</sup> The registration volunteers were sometimes harassed by local authorities or police, especially in the Russian-dominated eastern regions of Latvia. Nevertheless, the plan went ahead and more than eight hundred thousand citizens were registered (from an estimated 1.6 million) by April 1990, when the election of delegates to the Citizens' Congress took place.

The elections were organized on the basis of the registered body of citizens, according to election rules set forth by a special conference of Citizens' Movement activists. The territory of Latvia was divided into election districts; seats in each district were allotted in proportion to the number of registered citizens there. Delegates were chosen on a competitive basis, with anywhere from one to ten candidates running for every seat. A total of 678,862 voters took part in these unofficial, publicly organized elections. In addition, 28,910 registered candidates for citizenship also took part, choosing their own delegates with deliberative rights.<sup>15</sup>

The registration and the elections went on under constant fear that Soviet authorities or the army might use violence against the activists. Nevertheless they strictly followed the election rules, trying to provide the Citizens' Congress with a proven legitimacy, especially as an alternative if the newly elected official Supreme Soviet—elected by the entire population of Latvia, including Soviet troops—deviated from the course toward independence.

The elected Congress held its first session April 31–May 1, 1990, declared itself to be representing the legal citizens of the occupied country, and passed a series of political statements and resolutions, blueprinting its version of the further way to independence. For a

while the Congress was regarded by many to be on a par with the newly elected Supreme Soviet as an alternative supreme authority with legal rights to speak in the name of the Republic of Latvia. However, the Citizens' Congress lost its political weight and influence later, when the Supreme Soviet (renamed to Supreme Council) supplanted its leadership role in the struggle for independence.

### **Confronting the Army**

Another broad public campaign was directed against compulsory military service. Latvian youths, along with other minorities in the Soviet army, suffered a great deal from beatings, rapes, mutilations, hazings, and humiliations—the constant lot of the daily lives of new recruits and even older soldiers. The independence movements in the Baltics, often depicted as viciously separatist or even “fascist” in the chauvinistic press of the Soviet Union, sparked still more violence against the Baltic young men in the army. Every month one or more Latvian servicemen (often also Russians from Latvia) returned to their homeland in coffins, killed not in battle or by accident, but by their fellow soldiers. Many others were crippled, physically or mentally, for life.

The campaign against military service was carried out by the Women's League, the youth association *Tevzemei un Brīvībai* (For Fatherland and Freedom), the committee “Geneva-49” and other organizations.

Among the Women's League's activists were many mothers and sisters of Latvian young men who had been killed or had suffered in the Soviet army. They helped to raise public awareness about the facts of brutality and lawlessness in the army; they provided shelter, food, and other help to deserters; and they helped to change the assignments of those who were on the brink of mental breakdown or suicide. The Women's League also helped to find servicemen whose relatives had lost contact with them; it offered legal assistance to those tried by Soviet war tribunals for deserting; and it demanded investigations in cases of servicemen's death in uncertain circumstances. Under the pressure of the Women's League's activities, a law on alternative service was passed by the Supreme Soviet of Latvia, on March 1, 1990.<sup>16</sup> The law made it possible for young men to choose between

military service and civil work while living at home.

The Soviet military authorities never accepted this law and corresponding regulations. They even tried, sometimes successfully, by force or by some ruse, to capture those in the alternative service and send them to military service. Still, the law provided at least partial protection to the young men, since the civil authorities and courts in Latvia could no longer be forced—by Soviet central authorities and the military—to persecute those evading the army.

The youth association *Tevzemei un Brīvībai* pursued a more radical line than the Women's League, encouraging young men to boycott the military orders.<sup>17</sup> Like the committee "Geneva-49," they did not recognize the alternative service either, regarding it as humiliating.

The committee "Geneva-49" was founded by young men, who were due to be conscripted into the army, but were refusing to comply with the conscription orders. They based their position on international law, especially the Geneva Convention, signed in 1949, which calls for the protection of civilians in time of war, and prohibits an invading army from conscripting the people of an occupied country. "Geneva-49," jointly with the association *Tevzemei un Brīvībai*, organized mass campaigns, during which young and also older men, even officers, publicly denounced their military obligations. The young activists collected military documents (draft cards and military I.D. cards) from these men and, together with their written refusals to serve in the invaders' army, sent them to the military authorities. Latvian courts, which before the law on alternative service was passed had to try youths refusing to enlist, usually gave them very mild sentences (probation for one or two years), thereby encouraging the anti-conscription movement.

The confrontation with the army was not limited to the struggle against mandatory conscription. The Soviet army—at first only by radicals, but then by the general Latvian population and all the patriotic organizations—was declared to be an army of occupation and as such was met with increasing demands to leave the country. These demands were expressed by individual protesters, pickets, and small group demonstrations, as well as by larger actions, such as protest camps near army bases.<sup>18</sup>

## Other Activities

Along with mainstream political activities, a wide range of lesser but often effective nonviolent actions took place. Students were especially ingenious when it came to these activities. One of their actions took place in December 1988, when a festival of snow sculptures "Kangars-88" was organized. The name of the festival was a reference to the Modris Lujans' case earlier that year, and the snow image of the procurator-general Janis Dzenitis, who played the major role in the efforts to punish Lujans, dominated the scene of other "kangars" (traitors) made out of snow.

Another student action was much more serious: students occupied a newly built but still empty apartment house in February of 1989. The students did not want the apartments for themselves, but instead moved in families who were living in desperate conditions and had no hope of improving them. The "occupation" lasted until May, when the illegal occupants were turned out. The students, who tried to stop the police, were arrested. The action drew public attention to corrupt local authorities responsible for public housing. Flats were even allotted officially to most of the families the students had tried to help.

In November of 1989 students organized a mock funeral procession for "scientific communism"—a subject that was still mandatory at the time in institutions of higher education. The coffin, which contained a makeshift corpse and textbooks in "scientific communism" and was covered with the then still official flag of Soviet Latvia, was carried through Riga and buried near some student hostels. Some of the student leaders were harassed afterwards by the KGB.

A similar action shocked the still orthodox Communists in April of 1990, when members of the "Helsinki-86" group laid down a coffin at Lenin's monument in Riga, with the inscription "*Vecais, taisies!*" (Old chap, get ready!) on its sideboard. A suit was brought against them by the Communists, but the activists were acquitted by the court, which regarded the coffin as a kind of poster used in a picket (demonstration). The public mood already was unanimous: indeed, it was time for Lenin to go.

## The Dynamics and the Results of the Awakening

The nonviolent protests against oppression and calls for the nation's rights to be respected, initiated by one political group in 1987, grew into a nationwide liberation movement in 1989. At the end of the period, even the previously docile rubber-stamp sham parliament—the Supreme Soviet of the “Latvian SSR”—turned into a cautiously pro-independence institution, confronting Moscow on certain issues: immigration, official language, alternative service, greater autonomy, the interpretation of the historical events in 1940, etc. Mounting contradictions and rising tensions appeared even at the center of the system—in the Communist Party of Latvia—between the Party's implicitly pro-independence, predominantly Latvian wing and its conservative, Moscow-oriented, predominantly Russian wing. In early 1990 these tensions resulted in the Party splitting in two. The pro-independence faction soon changed its name and discarded the communist ideology altogether.

Due to the nonviolent character of the pro-independence movement in Latvia, the hostile reaction to it by a segment of the Russian-speaking population also proceeded mainly in restrained, nonviolent forms (with the exception of sporadic police and army violence and the terrorist behavior of the “black beret” troops in late 1990 and 1991). After the Popular Front of Latvia was founded, a conservative counterforce—the Interfront<sup>19</sup>—emerged, which tried to consolidate and coordinate the mainly Russian-speaking opponents to independence. Like the PFL, it organized mass meetings and demonstrations, but it failed to gain much political weight due to its communist ideology.

The political progress made by the pro-independence movement did not come easy, however. It was accompanied by feelings of uncertainty and apprehension. A usual joke among the activists was: “See you later in the carriage,” by which they meant a railway car heading to Siberia.

It was only step by step that the attitudes of the common people were changed, their self-esteem redeemed, their fear shed, and political victories gained. It was an arduous way from the cautious and timid demands for a “just Union of sovereign states,” for “socialistic pluralism” and “people's socialism” in 1987–88 to the clear-cut program, shared by most patriotic organizations, envisaging national

independence, normal civil society, political pluralism, and capitalism, in 1990.

The major political achievement and the closing point of the Awakening period was the election victory of the Popular Front, jointly with the National Independence Movement and other patriotic organizations, on March 18, 1990, when the first democratic elections to the Supreme Soviet in the postwar period were held.<sup>20</sup> More than two-thirds of the seats were won by pro-independence candidates. This was a turning point, radically accelerating the process of restoring independent statehood.





# 4

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## FROM OPPOSITION TO DEFENSE

On May 4, 1990, the newly elected Supreme Soviet declared its intention to restore the independent statehood of Latvia and announced the illegality of the annexation of Latvia by the USSR in 1940. The historic name of the state—"The Republic of Latvia"—was promptly restored.

Although only the beginning of a transition period to full independence (not immediate restoration of independence as in Lithuania) was declared, the new Supreme Council<sup>21</sup> and the new Council of Ministers formed by it were perceived by the majority of Latvia's population as their own legitimate government, and no longer as an alien imposition, as the previous Supreme Soviets were perceived. Only a relatively small faction of more radical Latvian politicians viewed the newly elected Supreme Council as a puppet parliament and illegitimate authority due to the fact that non-citizens participated in the election and, as a result, almost a third of the members were Moscow-loyalists. However, the Popular Front and the majority of other patriotic organizations from then on strongly backed the parliament with its pro-independence part in joint opposition to the central Soviet government in Moscow and its loyalists in Latvia (including the pro-Moscow faction of the Supreme Council itself) and in coordinated efforts to achieve real independence.

The new governing bodies were fragile and unprotected at first: though the majority of the population, including Russians, respected the newly passed laws, decisions, and decrees, the government had no real mechanisms of coercion or defense—no armed forces and not even a reliable police force. The enormous number of Soviet troops in the Republic gave the opponents of independence confidence and encouraged them to disregard the government and its decisions. Thus the new authorities were in vulnerable, insecure positions, apprehen-

sive about a possible military assault or a kind of coup.

The first serious conflict came only days after the Declaration of Independence. On May 14, 1990, Soviet President Gorbachev declared Latvia's Declaration of Independence null and void. This encouraged Interfront to call Russian Moscow-loyalists to a general strike and a protest rally on May 15. Although only a few factories stopped work, a crowd of Interfront supporters, mainly army officers (though without arms) and army cadets dressed as civilians did come to the building of the Supreme Council. They demanded that the Declaration of Independence be suspended and that full army rights and privileges be restored. The aggressive posture of the crowd aroused concern that it could resort to physical violence and rampage. Soon an even larger number of Latvians, having heard on the radio and seen on television the dramatic situation, gathered before the building to defend it. Some hours passed in high tension, while the military tried to push their way to the parliament building, though unsuccessfully. Apart from smaller scuffles and sporadic fist fights, no major violence took place. The peaceful outcome was due to the resolute composure of the defenders and to the efforts of police separating the two opposing groups.

Subsequent summer months of 1990 were relatively calm and there were no major confrontations. Tensions began to accumulate again in autumn, however, when terrorist acts were perpetrated by the Soviet special Interior Ministry's OMON<sup>22</sup> troops, commonly called the "black berets," against civilians and municipal authorities, and a series of bombings occurred. Some of these bombs damaged or destroyed newly erected memorials to Latvian soldiers killed in World War II. Other bombs exploded near army facilities, near Communist Party headquarters, at the KGB building in Riga, at Russian schools, and near apartment buildings, and were most probably provocations, intended to be one of the pretexts for introducing presidential (military) rule in Latvia. Senior army officers and Moscow-loyalists repeatedly called upon the central Soviet government to restore "law and order." When, in addition, some leading Soviet democratic reform politicians resigned from the Gorbachev team or were replaced with hard-liners like Gromov and Pugo, and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze resigned warning of an imminent dictatorship, it became obvious that Latvia had to brace itself for a major ordeal.<sup>23</sup>

In this atmosphere of tense apprehension the Popular Front issued a document called "Announcement of the Board of the Popular Front of Latvia to All the Supporters of Latvia's Independence." (See Appendix I) The Announcement became known as "The Appeal for the Hour X," since it set up a program about how to act at the moment when a coup d'état or imposition of presidential rule began. The Popular Front called upon the people to resort to nonviolent means in such a case. This Appeal was in fact the first plan for national defense by nonviolent, civilian actions. It advised people, for example, to comply only with the laws of the Supreme Council, to ignore the orders of the military and any imposed governors, to not participate in any elections or referenda, to document all the crimes perpetrated by the occupiers, etc.

Plans were also made by the Commission of Defense and Home Affairs of the Supreme Council and by independent activists about how to protect important government and public buildings in a crisis situation by nonviolent means. No armed units were organized by the government, though a small network of defense groups was unofficially formed by Latvian activists.<sup>24</sup> However, they were never involved in any shooting incidents.



# 5

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## THE JANUARY CRISIS

On January 2, 1991, the Soviet "black berets" captured the Press Building in Riga, where until then the principal newspapers and magazines of the Republic were edited and printed. The "black beret" troops threatened, humiliated, and physically beat people working there, some of them severely. The immediate reaction of the public was a mass protest rally of about ten thousand at the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which was responsible for the building's capture. At another protest meeting the Press Building's employees decided to abandon their workplace to evade Communist dictate. The government promptly promised to provide them with new printing facilities and wages for the interim period.

It was clear to the population, having lived for months in tense apprehension, that the takeover was only the first step in a wider scheme of military actions.

On January 7, Soviet authorities announced that additional paratrooper divisions were to be moved into the Baltic republics to ensure that young men complied with the draft. That was apparently only a pretext: the arriving paratroopers were expected to help the "black berets" capture other key locations in the capital and repress Latvia's government and population.

At this time the National Independence Movement of Latvia, like the Popular Front, also issued an Appeal to its supporters for actions in a crisis, envisaging concrete measures to be employed against the usurpers. (See Appendix II)

Moscow's plan for the removal of Latvia's government was most probably based on the Marxist-Leninist scheme of staging a "revolutionary situation": fomenting popular discontent among the "working people" and having a "revolutionary provisional government" ask

the Soviet central authorities for military help. This classical scheme in its different variants was used by Moscow many times (e.g., in Finland in 1939, in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and in Afghanistan in 1979). Popular discontent seemed easy to arouse among the mainly Russian-speaking populations of Riga and the other large cities, due to recent price increases. The role of revolutionary government was assigned to the "Public Salvation Committee of All-Latvia," established in 1990 by the Communist Party and the Interfront.

On January 10, a mass anti-independence rally was held by the Interfront to protest the price increases and to demand the restoration of Soviet rule. An ultimatum was presented to the government, threatening a general strike beginning on January 15 and other measures if their demands were not met.

However, the first blow was directed against Lithuania. On January 11, paratroopers opened fire on unarmed civilians in Vilnius, who were trying to protect key public buildings. In the early morning hours of January 13, a major tank and infantry attack took place against Lithuanian civilians guarding the Television Center in Vilnius. In the massacre fourteen civilians died and more than two hundred were wounded.

Riga became like a front-line city at once. Dainis Ivans, the first deputy chairman of the Supreme Council and a popular leader in the Popular Front of Latvia, began broadcasts on the radio at four o'clock in the morning, appealing to people to come immediately to the parliament building, television tower, International Telephone and Telegraph Center, and other key locations. His appeals were repeated every half-hour throughout the morning. On their television screens people saw the massacre in Vilnius, videotaped by a team of Latvian cameramen and foreign journalists, and were almost sure that similar events would take place in Riga soon. But no panic arose: people braced themselves for what seemed inevitable and had been in fact anticipated since the Awakening began in 1988.

A member of the Defense Commission, Supreme Council Deputy Odisejs Kostanda, together with a group of activists and advisors—some former military officers among them—made a detailed plan to protect the inner city, called Vecriga (Old Riga) with barricades. Such key buildings as that of the Supreme Council and Radio Latvia are located there. An emergency Defense Headquarters was established at the Supreme Council, coordinating, advising, and directing people who offered their help.

At 2 P.M. more than five hundred thousand people came to a mass rally in the Old Riga to protest Moscow's assault and to express solidarity with their Lithuanian neighbors. After the demonstration a considerable number of participants remained and formed human barricades around the parliament building and other locations inside and outside of the Old Riga. All the streets leading into the inner city were blocked with buses and other vehicles. These makeshift barricades were later reinforced with heavy trucks and tractors loaded with rocks, concrete blocks, sand, timber, etc. Bulldozers and other heavy machinery were also put into service. Defenders completed these structures with metal bars, barbed wire, fishing nets, sandbags, etc. Some of the barricades were made easily flammable—to turn them into walls of fire if attacked. The usual antitank "hedge-hogs" were also made.

The defenders kept round-the-clock vigils at the barricades. Every barricade had a commander. Two or three adjacent barricades formed a "sector," which also had a commander. People were provided with meals, firewood, rooms for rest and sleep, medicines, and gas masks.

All this work was being done voluntarily and on societal initiative, coordinated by the Defense Headquarters of the Supreme Council, Popular Front Headquarters, and other bodies.<sup>25</sup>

The barricades were formed in order to keep off or hinder for a while the most probable kind of attack—that of tanks or armored cars with infantry, which was a "classical" method for attacking civilians in the USSR, "tested" before in Tbilisi, Baku, and Vilnius. A written "Instruction for the Defense of the Old Riga" was distributed among people at barricades in the inner city. (See Appendix III) It specified how to behave in case of an attack.

To be sure, most people understood quite well that their barricades would be no real obstacle to a determined army attack. Still, they hoped that the Soviets would refrain from an attack if many civilians were blocking their way and the expected casualty rate could be very high. If the worst came, however, many of them were psychologically ready to die, hoping that their self-sacrifice would eventually help their homeland to gain independence.

The expected major army assault did not come on January 13 or later. The plans of the hard-line Communists were most probably stopped by the resoluteness of the defenders, combined with international protests and efforts to preclude another massacre. A major role in these efforts was played by the Russian Supreme Soviet's Chairman

Boris Yeltsin who signed a joint statement on January 13, in Tallinn, with the leaders of all three Baltic states, pledging mutual help and assistance and protesting any intrusion by force into their affairs. Also of great importance was Yeltsin's personal "Appeal to Russian Soldiers," in which he entreated the Russian troops not to act "against legally constituted state bodies" in the Baltic states.<sup>26</sup> After this Appeal was broadcast, soldiers of a special Vitebsk paratrooper division, due to move to Riga, refused to obey. Some of the division's officers turned in their CPSU Party cards as a sign of protest.<sup>27</sup> Similar protest actions of military servicemen were reported in army units stationed in Latvia.<sup>28</sup> Signals also came from some army units located in Latvia, Estonia, and the USSR that in the event of an armed conflict they would remain neutral or even would back the Balts.<sup>29</sup>

Close cooperation between the Baltic states and especially between Latvia and Lithuania, which were the main targets at the time, also played a role in averting further assault. For example, when radio and television broadcasting from Vilnius was made impossible, Latvian Television rebroadcast news from the Kaunas television station and Radio Latvia gave regular news summaries in Lithuanian.

The possible staging of a major "popular uprising" and of a conflict between Latvians and Russians also failed. On January 15, when it was most probably planned, and when the Salvation Committee announced the dissolution of the Republic's government, only about eight to ten thousand came to an anti-independence, anti-government rally. That was small compared with the hundreds of thousands keeping guard at the barricades. The demonstrators soon dispersed, realizing they did not have the strength to provoke further hostilities. The threatened general strike failed too. Most Russians either remained neutral or were sympathetic towards the defenders of the government.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, some were even at the barricades, or providing food, etc.

Uncertainty continued and so the vigilance at the barricades continued as well for almost two weeks. Although no regular army assault came, the "black berets" went on terrorizing the people. In some places, they attacked those keeping guard at the barricades, beat and humiliated them, burned down vehicles used for blocking roads and shot over people's heads or directly at them. As a result of the shooting, one person, a car driver named Roberts Murnieks, died on January 16 from a bullet wound in his head. The "black berets" also



captured five unarmed members of a public order squad and detained them for days, severely beating and torturing them. The aim of these criminal activities was apparently to scare the defenders and to provoke Latvia's still loyal police units to engage in reciprocal armed fighting which could then be used as an excuse for army intervention.<sup>31</sup> At a news conference on January 18, the notorious Soviet Colonel Viktors Alksnis in fact acknowledged this, saying that if the "black berets" were attacked, the army would step in to defend them.<sup>32</sup>

A major provocation of this kind came on January 20, when the "black berets" attacked the Interior Ministry, killing two police officers and two civilians, and wounding ten other people, one of whom later died. After this attack the barricades were gradually replaced with walls made of large concrete blocks, defended by civilians and armed police loyal to Latvia's government. The situation remained tense for months, but the threat of an imminent assault subsided.



# 6

## TOWARDS CIVILIAN-BASED DEFENSE

The barricades in January of 1991 were a form of improvised nonviolent defense, or defense by civilian means. After the crisis the Commission of Defense of the Supreme Council tried to form an organized, pre-meditated civilian-based defense system in anticipation of future conflicts with Latvia's powerful and unpredictable eastern neighbor.

The concept of civilian-based defense in this report is used in the same sense that Dr. Gene Sharp uses it in his book *Civilian-Based Defense* as "defense by civilians (as distinct from military personnel) using civilian means of struggle (as distinct from military and paramilitary means). This is a policy intended to deter and defeat foreign military invasions, occupations, and internal usurpations. . . . Civilian-based defense is meant to be waged by the population and its institutions on the basis of advance preparation, planning, and training."<sup>33</sup>

The usage of this concept here is particularly justified, as the aforementioned book was one of the few available at the time in Latvia about how to defend against an armed attack by civilian means. It was therefore carefully studied by both government officials working for defense and their voluntary assistants. Afterwards, the concepts of the book were directly applied when preparing the unarmed defense system.<sup>34</sup>

The task of preparing for a new conflict was urgent, because security threats continued to mount, but Latvia's government was not in a position to mount an armed defense.

At first, contacts were established with Lithuania's Defense Department, which was further along in creating a civilian-based defense system. In fact the Lithuanians were the first to use desperate, but

determined civilian direct action to defend their public and governmental buildings against armed assault, thus setting an example for Latvians to follow. On February 28, the government of Lithuania declared that nonviolent action by civilians would be the nation's main means of defense in case of a further assault by the Soviets.<sup>35</sup>

Later in 1991, a non-governmental Nonviolent Action Center was created in Vilnius, to do research and education on civilian-based defense. The need for a similar center was clearly felt in Latvia too, especially when tensions with the USSR and its loyalists in Latvia again began to rise. In May 1991, severe renewed attacks on Latvia's and Lithuania's customs posts were made by the "black berets." Customs officers were humiliated and beaten, but on July 31 six Lithuanians were killed and one badly wounded in a customs post in Medininki.

Information and rumors began to accumulate about a new possible army assault against the Baltic states or a coup. A proposal for a Nonviolent Defense Center was then made by the Commission of Defense in Riga, and a resolution on its founding was passed by the Supreme Council on June 20, 1991.

A conception of civilian-based defense was developed by the newly created Center, based on analysis of the January crisis and past resistance experience in Latvia, as well as forms of nonviolent sanctions in other countries. The conception contained a plan for what to do if a coup was taking place in the USSR, with its implications for Latvia. The conception envisaged the following goals of civilian-based defense:

- to make control of the situation impossible for the adversary;
- in close cooperation with Lithuania and Estonia, as well as with democratic groups in Russia and other Soviet republics, to destabilize the adversary's political regime;
- to gain support in East-Central Europe on the basis of that region's security interests;
- to make a political, psychological, and moral impact on the democratic nations of the West, making it hard for them to accept the destruction of democracy in Latvia;
- to combine inner and outer factors so as to achieve the restoration of democracy.

A plan was also made for concrete defense actions, called "The Basic Principles of Nonviolent Defense of the Republic of Latvia." (See

Appendix IV) It consisted of three coordinated sets of recommendations, to guide patriotic activities in an emergency situation—in the state and private sectors, and on an individual level. Every set of recommendations envisaged a complex of actions (or non-actions) for three different stages of the adversary's assault:

- for the first hours and days of an attack;
- for more advanced stages of it;
- for continuing long-term occupation by the enemy.

These recommendations were just ready for distribution in the days of the August 19–21, 1991 coup attempt in the whole of the USSR. Printed booklets with them were secretly sent to Latvia's cities and villages.

The defense tactics actually applied during the coup differed, however, from some of those planned in the Basic Principles, which were based on the experience of the January crisis. The attackers anticipated having to confront barricades and crowds of people trying to stop them: to pre-empt this, in the early hours of August 19, Soviet troops quickly came in and blocked and controlled all the major roads leading to the capital and major streets in Riga. Therefore people were not called to gather in the capital, as in January. They were to protect their local communities instead. The task was to make every village, town, and home a center of resistance.

Though shocked by the sudden news about the coup in Moscow, both the people and the government of Latvia were ready to resist. Thus the Supreme Council promptly issued an Appeal to the local governments, calling on them not to collaborate with the usurpers and to comply consistently only with the laws and decisions of Latvia's government. (See Appendix V) In an Announcement to the World Community the Council stated Latvia's readiness to wage nonviolent resistance against the putschists.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile the Popular Front issued another Announcement to its supporters, which was an altered version of the well-known Appeal for the Hour X. (See Appendix VI) The rapid victory over the putschist leaders in Moscow, however, made further resistance unnecessary.

After the unsuccessful coup attempt the situation in Latvia changed quickly. In two weeks time Latvia was recognized as an independent state by the international community and the USSR. A Ministry of Defense was established later in 1991, to direct the development of the military defense forces.

A Draft Defense Concept of Latvia was drawn up jointly by military specialists, State officials, and politicians early in 1992, envisaging the functioning of a Nonmilitary Resistance Center as part of the overall defense structure, its task being to prepare (in peacetime) and direct (in wartime) "nonmilitary resistance," as the Draft puts it.

According to the Draft: "The main task of nonmilitary resistance is to ensure the nation's survival during a time of national emergency and the preservation of the nation's independence, employing tactics of mass disobedience, acts of sabotage, and other measures directed against the occupation regime and usurpers of State power."<sup>37</sup>

It is yet to be seen, however, what concrete forms of preparation for nonmilitary, civilian resistance will take shape under the new circumstances of emerging full-fledged independence.

# 7

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## CAUSES AND PROSPECTS OF NONVIOLENT POLITICS IN LATVIA

The nonviolent character of the liberation movement in Latvia was both an inevitability and an achievement. Any violent means would have been doomed to fail in the hopelessly unequal conflict with the USSR. Furthermore, violence would have had disastrous consequences, considering the ethnic composition of the population: 52% overwhelmingly pro-independence Latvians and 48% Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, etc., mostly Russian-speaking people, ranging from supporters of independence to its bitter opponents.

The frustration among disappointed factions of people could have sparked violence, as it has elsewhere in similar situations. In January 1991, for example, the “black berets” actively sought to provoke feelings of anger and revenge. That did not work, however, due to the restraint of political leaders, the nonviolent discipline of the people, and Latvian political culture.

Democratic traditions have a long history in Latvia, dating back, as elsewhere in Europe, to city life in the Middle Ages. By the end of the nineteenth century, elected representative bodies—though still divided along class lines—existed everywhere, both in cities and the countryside. The years from 1920 to 1934 were a period of full-blown Western-style multi-party parliamentary democracy. The democratic model of conflict resolution—by the rule of law, by voting, by minority rights, and by other checks and balances—remained alive in the people’s consciousness and—despite the enormous violence of World War II and the Soviet period—helped to shape the politics of the most recent years.

Although Latvians have had experiences of armed warfare and resistance—successful in 1919–20, when independent statehood was established, and futile in the tragic years of 1944–52—the ideas of violent struggle seemed out of place to practically everyone in Latvia in the new historic setting. So, from the very beginning of the Awakening, the ideas of active nonviolence spread widely, and the names and principles of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. became constant references in the publications and speeches of activists.

Another source of inspiration for nonviolent political development was the high prestige of the existing Western political models. The historical, cultural, and geographical proximity with Northern and Western Europe, reinforced by strong political and emotional ties with the very active Latvian exile community there, cemented the Westward oriented democratic politics in Latvia.

These factors account for the great difference with Russia, which lacks any significant democratic experience in its past, as well as with regions in the Southern parts of the former Soviet Union where political influences from the volatile Middle Eastern countries, combined with bellicose indigenous traditions, have played a role in choosing violent and dictatorial means of deciding conflicts. In contrast to that, the experience of nonviolent action and democratic traditions in Latvia give hope that, even with its difficult demographic situation and the deepening economic hardships of the transition to a market economy, *internal* conflicts could be resolved in a democratic, peaceful way.

It does not mean, however, that there are no grounds for concern about possible dangerous conflicts in the future. Whether Latvia will be able to avoid *external* conflicts depends on whether the successor state of the USSR—Russia—will be able to abolish its centuries-old ambitions for territorial expansion and enslavement of other nations and become a truly democratic and peaceful modern state.

Latvians are extremely worried about the recent activities of Russian nationalist organizations such as *Pamyat*, which openly promote ideas of expansionism, militarism, and Russian supremacy over all the peoples living within the borders of what was the Russian Empire before 1917.<sup>38</sup> These worries are only compounded by the apparent unwillingness and hesitation of the Russian government to negotiate the withdrawal of ex-Soviet—now Russian—troops from the territory of Latvia. There are fears in Latvia that if the economic crisis in Russia



is aggravated further, a dictatorial, openly aggressive, Nazi-like regime could come to power there. That would be an extremely dangerous development for the Baltic nations, and especially for Latvia, since its enormous Russian minority (34%) could easily be used as a pretext for a Russian attack.

In the event of a massive armed attack, civilian-based defense would probably be Latvia's most reasonable response. Its experience of nonviolent action and resistance gained during its recent fight for national liberation would contribute much to the effectiveness of that kind of defense.



## Appendix I

### Latvijas Tautas Frontes Valdes paziņojums visiem Latvijas neatkarības atbalstītājiem

#### Announcement of the Board of the Popular Front of Latvia to All the Supporters of Latvia's Independence<sup>39</sup>

December 11, 1990

Alarming news comes from various parts of Latvia, signaling the activation of imperial forces. In Moscow the group of deputies "SOYUZ" is openly planning the restoration of a dictatorial regime, with or without M. Gorbachev.

We do not need an atmosphere of fear and hysteria, but already at this moment everyone must consider his or her actions on the eventual Hour X, when the USSR's presidential rule or other kind of emergency rule will be introduced to suppress peoples' strivings for freedom. The opportunities for our future organized activities will depend on the degree of the presidential rule, which could be introduced:

— in a relatively mild form, when "only" the functions of the State institutions of the Republic of Latvia will be stopped on all levels and our access to mass media will be precluded, without banning the activities of sociopolitical organizations;

— in a brutal form, when the stoppage of the functioning of State power institutions will be combined with banning the activities of sociopolitical organizations, with the exception of the All-Union organizations—CPSU, DOSAAF,<sup>40</sup> and the like.

In the first case our plans for further activities will depend on the situation at hand and we will be able to make them known to our supporters via our organizational structures. However, already now we must have a clear understanding about our future actions in the worst possible case—if brutal presidential rule is introduced.

#### **The main tasks until the Hour X:**

1. To be ready for a demonstration of Latvia's population in Riga.
2. To call extraordinary sessions of the Councils<sup>41</sup> on all levels, expressing their support for the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia, their readiness to comply with the laws of the Republic of Latvia, and their attitude towards the Union Treaty.<sup>42</sup>
3. To prevent the squandering of the property of the Republic of Latvia and the establishment of USSR stock-companies on the basis of so-called All-

Union enterprises.

4. To join the Special Units of the Voluntary Security Guards<sup>43</sup> of the Republic of Latvia.

5. To facilitate the propagation of ideas supporting Latvia's independence among non-Latvians. While addressing the officers of the army units and their family members, to make clear the common line in the ideas of Russian democrats and those of the Popular Front of Latvia.

6. To inform immediately the coordinators of the PFL about all changes in the distribution of the occupation troops.

7. To publish in the press norms set forth by international law regulating the activities of an occupation army in occupied territories.

8. To raise support funds in the industrial enterprises.

9. During the critical period, to establish a 24-hour-long workday for Radio Latvia.

10. To prepare the activists of PFL branches for eventual underground activities. To establish a communications system. To appoint reserves for the leaders. To facilitate the activities of territorial groups in local communities. To decentralize funds of the branches. To prepare letterheads with symbols of the PFL for announcements. To decentralize copying equipment and stores of paper.

11. To inform the world democratic community about all happenings. To prepare lists of activists of sociopolitical organizations and to hand them on to international organizations, in order to get a chance to check on their future lot.

After the introduction of presidential rule, to deploy a wide-ranging campaign of civil disobedience, which in fact has already started now, in the protecting of Latvian youths from being forcefully drafted into the USSR Army. This is to be achieved in these ways:

1. Disregarding the presidential "ukases,"<sup>44</sup> to comply consistently only with the laws of the Republic of Latvia and with the decisions of local governments.

2. Not to appear for the call-ups issued by the USSR War Commissariats,<sup>45</sup> and to send military identity cards, together with an application announcing one's refusal to serve in the USSR Armed Forces, to the War Commissioner of the LSSR.

3. Not to collaborate with and not to give any information to the occupation authorities.

4. To turn down with contempt and to boycott the puppets of the presidential rule and their supporters.

5. To resort to various forms of strikes to disrupt the economic system of the USSR. To make special use of labor, strictly regulated by absurd instructions, which will paralyze production.<sup>46</sup>

6. To ensure that democratic organizations and their leaders can work under illegal conditions.

7. To document and record all crimes perpetrated by the occupation authorities under presidential rule.

8. In order to prevent legitimization of dictatorial rule, not to participate, in any case, in elections or referenda organized by these authorities.

9. To employ people tested in the election campaign—canvassers—for the purposes of informing the population, and to employ also local citizens' committees.

10. To employ deputies of the USSR,<sup>47</sup> loyal to the Republic of Latvia, for organizational purposes, if in the introduction of presidential rule their personal immunity status is preserved.

11. To make maximum use of participation in public organizations not banned by occupation authorities—religious and cultural organizations, trade unions—to popularize the ideas of the PFL.

**Supporters of the independence of the Republic of Latvia! While Communist crimes against our homeland continue, let us be conscious of the fact that the first condition for our survival is to live for the people, to be united for Latvia!**

December 11, 1990  
The Board of the PFL

## Appendix II

### LNNK Valdes aicinajums LNNK un citu organizaciju dalibniekiem, visiem Latvijas iedzīvotājiem Pienemts LNNK Padomes Valdes sēdē 09.01.91.

### Appeal of the National Independence Movement of Latvia Board to the Members of the NIML and Other Organizations, to All the Population of Latvia<sup>48</sup> Adopted at the Board meeting of the Council of the NIML on January 9, 1991.

In view of the fact that special units of the USSR Armed Forces have been illegally brought into the Republic of Latvia and that armed conflicts have been provoked, the Board of the Council of the NIML appeals to all of you—at this very crucial moment for Latvia—to nonviolently resist the actions of the USSR military authorities and their supporters.

Drafting of citizens of the Republic of Latvia into the USSR occupation troops contradicts the Geneva Convention of August 12, 1949, the UN Declarations, and International law.

1. Young men, try not to sleep at home, but spend the nights at your relatives', or good acquaintances', or friends' instead.

2. To organizations and the population: those detained must be regarded as war prisoners.

3. Inhabitants of the Republic of Latvia, we appeal to you: do not refuse to help youths who are threatened with being drafted by force.

4. Simulate *not knowing the language*: you do not understand Russian, demand an interpreter for you.

5. Simulate *not knowing anything*: you know nothing about the families of your friends, acquaintances, relatives, neighbors, colleagues at work, etc.

6. You *do not orient yourselves in the surroundings*: you do not know where the place, street, house, etc., is that is asked for.

7. In the countryside and suburbs: take down the signs with the numbers and names of houses, if possible—also signposts, tablets of place names, etc.

8. The documents of institutions, organizations, and individuals, containing information about individuals or about political activities, must be hidden.

9. For organizations: a mutual communications network must be established. For the population: in the event of danger, mutual informing must be organized. In settlements where it is possible, churchbells can be used to warn and summon the people.

For institutions, organizations, and individuals:

10. Do not distribute publications of the CPSU.

11. Transport (including railway) organizations, industrial, and communications organizations must not collaborate with representatives of the army.

12. Do not provide food, communications, electricity, etc. for [CPSU] Party committees, war commissariats, DOSAAF, and other collaborationist institutions.

For everybody:

13. Keep record of those organizations and individuals who collaborate with the CPSU and the USSR military.

14. For information: resistance and disobedience to the demands of the *black berets* and other representatives of the USSR Armed Forces are legal activities, according to the existing laws of the Republic of Latvia.

## Appendix III

### Vecrigas aizsardzibas instrukcija

#### The Instruction for the Defense of Vecriga (Old Riga)<sup>49</sup>

1. **In the case of a chemical attack —**
  - a) A command "Gas!" must be given.
  - b) All [persons] are to use personal means of protection immediately, observation and defense positions are to be occupied.
  - c) Persons without any means of chemical protection are to evacuate themselves to places provided for such a case, previously allotted by the commandants of sectors.
  
2. **In the case of an attack by infantry and tanks —**
  - a) A command "Battle stations!" must be given.
  - b) All [persons] are to occupy positions on the inside of the barricades, including the drivers of the blocking vehicles after vehicles are in place.
  - c) All the women, children, adolescents, and older men are to hide themselves in buildings, courtyards, yards, the Dome Cathedral, and other shelters, but the rest are to form chains. Reserves are to occupy places allotted to them.
  - d) Refrain from insulting comments or various provocative actions.
  - e) In the case of direct contact with attackers, employ methods of self-defense without arms, striving to keep the rear chains intact.
  - f) Arms and ammunition taken away from the attackers are to be passed over to the rear immediately.
  - g) **In the case of a tank attack in which the attackers open fire —** hide quickly and without panic beyond the shelters prepared before. If possible, cover with a rag the tank driver's window and sights, which are located by the side of the cannon. If a tank releases white smoke, it is not gas, but a harmless smoke dispensing device. Do not be afraid of intensified loud roaring of a tank, which is meant to arouse fear. They try to achieve a similar effect also with superpower loudspeakers, mounted on special cars.
  
3. **In the case of inner disorders, created by persons dressed as civilians —**
  - a) He who notices the disorder first calls out: "Help!"
  - b) All those standing close by immediately start to break up the conflict, taking its participants to the commandant of the sector (barricade).
  - c) If conflicts erupt at various places at the same time, then he who notices it first, calls out: "Alarm!", which is repeated by those standing farther off and on the loudspeaker.



- d) While evaluating the situation, every effort should be made to suppress the points of mass disorders.
4. **Giving first aid —**
- a) There must be persons in every defense sector (barricade) able to give basic medical help to the wounded, burned, or those suffering from gas attack.
  - b) After receiving first aid, the victims must be brought to the nearest shelter and transported, as soon as possible, to the hospital unit of the sector which, together with an operating room, is located in the Dome Cathedral.
5. **Fire prevention —**
- a) At each change of the watch, all the commandants of sectors and government buildings have to check the places where fire-fighting tools (extinguishers, sand, blankets, buckets of water, accesses to urban water supply) are kept, informing people about specific details of fire fighting in that area.
  - b) Make bonfires only on places allotted by the commandant, and do not leave them without supervision.
  - c) If a fire starts, report it without delay to the nearest fire engine on duty and by telephone, by calling number "01," and start fighting the fire on your own, without relaxing the defense of the area.
  - d) Responsibility for observing fire protection regulations in a sector (barricade) rests with the commandant of that area, who is to organize extinguishing the fire.

Chief of the Operative Staff  
of the Defense Headquarters  
of the Supreme Council of  
the Republic of Latvia

/ Signature / O. Kostanda

## Appendix IV

### Latvijas Republikas nevardarbigas aizsardzības pamatprincipi Latvijas Republikas Nevardarbigas aizsardzības centrs

### The Basic Principles of Nonviolent Defense of the Republic of Latvia<sup>50</sup> Nonviolent Defense Center of the Republic of Latvia

#### 1991 Office of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia

#### The Basic Principles of Nonviolent Defense of the Republic of Latvia

The restoration process of the independence of the Republic of Latvia proceeds under complicated inner and outer circumstances. Most of all, it is endangered by the military aggression of the USSR (by the Communist-military-KGB coup d'état in the whole of the Union).

Nonviolent defense is intended as a means to defend the Latvian State, by mobilizing for nonviolent struggle all those inhabitants of Latvia who support independence in order to attain the disintegration of the dictatorial regime by many factors in a period of time from some few months to 2–3 years. It requires therefore immediate vigorous action and utmost use of strength in all the possible directions of nonviolent struggle. Its basis: absolute noncooperation and noncompliance with the aspirations of the adversary.

Relations with the adversary staff and supporters are to be formed, as far as possible, nonconfrontationally, trying to convince them that the cause of Latvia's independence is just and well-founded, and disorganizing and demoralizing the reactionary forces. It is necessary to refrain from using violence against the adversary. Nonviolent defense will be effective, if the national armed forces (militia, police, etc.) will also, when possible, abstain from engaging in bloodshed.

The goals of the nonviolent defense are:

1. To make it impossible for the adversary to control the situation in Latvia.
2. In close cooperation with Lithuania and Estonia, as well as democrats in

Russia and other republics of the USSR, to destabilize the dictatorial Communist regime in the USSR.

3. To gain support in eastern and central Europe, on the basis of the region's security interests.

4. To make a political, psychological, and moral impact on the public opinion of the democratic countries of Western Europe, the USA, etc., making it hard for them to accept the destruction of democracy in Latvia, in the Baltics, and elsewhere as a *fait accompli*.

5. By combining internal and external factors, to achieve the defeat or retreat of the adversary and the restoration of democracy in Latvia.

The specific nonviolent defense tasks for institutions and the population are expounded in detail in the following documents:

1. Recommendations to state institutions, organizations, and enterprises of the Republic of Latvia in case of a coup d'état—"What to Do in the Event of a Coup d'état."

2. Advice to public organizations, independent institutions, and enterprises in case of a coup d'état—"What to Do in the Event of a Coup d'état."

3. Advice to all the patriots of Latvia in case of a coup d'état—"Guard Your State!"

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *to State Institutions, Organizations, and Enterprises of the Republic of Latvia in Case of a Coup d'État*

#### Introduction

The restoration of the independence of the Republic of Latvia proceeds under complicated circumstances. Forces hostile to the Republic of Latvia are trying to stop and reverse this process by violent means. The Nonviolent Defense Center of the Republic of Latvia has worked out basic principles of national defense, which make it possible to defend against an armed coup d'état with nonviolent means.

The foundations [for these principles] are: noncooperation with the adversaries (usurpers of power); loyalty to the parliament, government, laws, and traditions of one's country (the Republic of Latvia); making no concessions to the demands of the adversary under the impact of military and political pressures; nonrecognition of and noncompliance with the authorities and laws of the adversary; applying to the international community for support, understanding, and help.

The methods of nonviolent defense are: open civil disobedience to the orders, decrees, and laws of the adversary; sabotage of these orders and decrees; hidden disobedience; interfering with the actions of the adversary or precluding them with means that do not threaten anyone's life (barricades, human chains, etc.); various kinds of nonviolent protests, demonstrations, strikes, boycotts; distribution of information (also destroying of or interfering with

information important to the adversary); convincing the adversary; individual protests: protest letters, telegrams, demonstrative transgression of laws and decrees, leaving the workplace demonstratively, etc.

The Nonviolent Defense Center coordinates concerted national defense on 3 major levels: on that of State institutions, organizations, and enterprises; on that of public organizations, independent institutions, and enterprises; and finally, on the level of individual initiative. The given Recommendations advise how the directors and employees of State institutions, organizations, and enterprises loyal to the independent Republic of Latvia should act in an emergency situation.

### **Chapter I: How to act at the beginning of a coup d'état.**

The main tasks of nonviolent defense in the first days and hours of a coup d'état are:

1. To preclude (hinder) the overthrowing of the legal government or intrusion upon its work.
2. To preclude (hinder) the capture of major State and economic buildings (parliament and government buildings, mass media, post offices, telephone, telegraph, enterprises, warehouses, etc.).
3. To inform the international community about the course of events.
4. To prepare for lasting struggle against the adversary, in case of a successful coup d'état.

It is necessary therefore:

1. For the directors and employees of all the State institutions, organizations, and enterprises:
  - 1.1 To try to coordinate further actions with the Nonviolent Defense Center or, if that is impossible, to act independently.
  - 1.2. Not to comply with any orders or decrees of the usurpers of power; to continue, as far as possible, daily work as usual.
  - 1.3. To prepare for hiding (or if that is not feasible, for destroying) all kinds of important information. To hide or destroy information, if the institution is captured by the adversary forces.
  - 1.4. To help to organize general protest strikes in the first days after the beginning of the coup d'état.
  - 1.5. To make no hindrances for those employees who, on the initiative of public organizations or their own, take part in defense activities; pay them the average salary for the time they spend there.
2. For all the managers and employees of State enterprises:
  - 2.1. In as short a time as possible, to supply all that is necessary to [block all roads, railways, and airports with] vehicles, piles of materials, ditches, dams, etc.
  - 2.2. To stop all relations of any kind with enterprises which are under the All-Union command (those supporting the coup d'état).
  3. For all the managers of agricultural enterprises: not to supply [food to] the adversary; to prepare for possible hiding of food and materials; and to

prepare for supplying the population with food, after a coup d'état or invasion, with the help of legal State institutions (or institutions of the PFL and NIML).

4. For all the chiefs and employees of mass media, being under State command:

4.1. In cooperation with the Nonviolent Defense Center, to appeal to the population to wage a resolute nonviolent struggle, and to direct and coordinate the defense work.

4.2. To pay special attention to information in Russian: to enhance the editions in Russian; to issue special publications; to allot, if possible, a channel of radio and television broadcasts exclusively for programs in Russian (if necessary, also for broadcasts in English, German, and other languages).

4.3. To appeal to the population to take part in the general protest strike.

4.4. To document all the happenings. To prepare documentary and propaganda publications, as well as radio and video recordings for various audiences: for the defenders of Latvia, the adversary staff and supporters, foreign countries.

5. For State publishing houses and printing houses: in as short a time as possible, to prepare and publish the highest possible amount of information and propaganda materials for various audiences.

6. For armed units (militia, police, etc.): to be on the alert in defense of the most important buildings. The major task of these units is to keep public order, to guard against bandit groups. Arms should be used only in extreme necessity: if security of the most important objects is threatened or human lives are endangered. Armed units are not to engage adversary units which surpass them in strength. Armed units should use special caution and abstain from using arms, if those same buildings are also guarded by civilians. In case of violent capture of the buildings, armed units are to retreat; in case of a successful coup they have to go over to the service of underground government/resistance leadership. The capture of arms by the adversary troops is not to be permitted in any case.

7. For all the directors and employees of educational institutions: to give objective accounts to the pupils/students of the course of events and their meaning, to care for the security of minors, to coordinate proper pupil/student protest actions with their parents, public organizations, and pupil/student initiative groups.

## **Chapter II: How to act after a coup d'état has taken place.**

If a coup d'état is not averted—if the most important buildings or the major part of them are captured, if the adversary has partially taken over and put under his control the State apparatus, then the major tasks of the nonviolent defense are:

1. To prevent, by all possible means, the enlargement of the sphere of control and influence of the adversary, and to paralyze any attempts to establish a new order in the country.

2. To preclude, by all means, the formation of a "coalition" leadership<sup>51</sup>

(mixed parliamentary and extraparliamentary institutions, "coalition" government) and the transfer of powers from the legal parliament and government to these or any other institutions.

3. To preclude or hinder the formation of any new State authorities obedient to the perpetrators of the coup d'état or invaders. To paralyze their activities if they are formed.

It is necessary therefore:

1. For the directors and employees of all the State institutions, organizations, and enterprises:

1.1 To comply consistently only with the (pre-coup d'état) laws of the Republic of Latvia, and with the orders, decrees, instructions, etc. of the legal government, and to disobey and disregard the newly appointed officials.

1.2. To destroy or hide all kinds of important information, in case the institution is put under the supervision of usurpers or invaders.

1.3. If an institution is put under the supervision of usurpers, then the directors and employees of the institution are to continue their work, precluding, with all their power, the functioning of the institution against the interests of the Latvian State and people. If such behavior (independent course, sabotage) is impossible, then work in these institutions is to be abandoned (posts are to be left).

2. If new State authorities are formed, the legal parliament and government have to find ways to function, whether in Latvia or abroad—as a whole or with only some members present, according to legally endorsed powers.

3. For all the managers and employees of State enterprises: to perform only such industrial, commercial, and other tasks, which are vitally important to the Latvian population. To preclude the reintegration of enterprises into the all-Union structures, being under the control of the usurpers.

4. For health service employees: not to participate in the medical commissions at the military registration and enlistment offices; to care for the health of those defending the country.

5. For all the directors and employees of mass media, being under State's command:

5.1. Not to permit, in any case, getting under supervision or influence of the adversary. To go underground, if independent open work is stopped: to continue publishing newspapers and magazines, to broadcast, if possible, radio and television programs, also using transmitters stationed abroad.

5.2. To appeal to the population not to lose courage and determination, while continuing nonviolent struggle in its various forms. To condemn collaboration, to publish the names of traitors—collaborationists, to document the events.

6. For armed units: to guard the parliament and government (also when underground) or institutions authorized by them. If these do not exist, then give protection to other coordination and leadership centers of resistance. To spare arms and fighters loyal to the Republic of Latvia for the time when a reinforced struggle against the unlawful regime and for the restoration of the Republic of

Latvia will have to start.

7. For all the chiefs and employees of educational institutions: to preclude any changes in curriculum and guard against ideas that cast doubts on the way of restoring Latvian independence and freedom, and slander the past of the free Latvian nation. If this is impossible because of brutal pressure, then stop work at school (leave jobs in school) and, if possible, organize an underground educational system, improvised classes in private apartments, etc.

### **Chapter III: How to act in a situation of prolonged usurpation of power (under an unlawful regime, hostile to the Latvian State and people).**

Nonviolent defense is also intended for a situation, when despite the efforts of defenders, the adversary still manages to entrench himself by putting under his control or supervision all or the major part of the State institutions, organizations, and enterprises, and to establish his own State authorities or authorities obedient to him. In such a situation, nonviolent struggle has to be continued in forms possible under given conditions, striving to achieve the following tasks:

1. To hinder and paralyze, by all means, the functioning of the anti-national and unlawful regime, to make it impossible for the adversary to control the situation in the country.

2. Not to let people sink into apathy and hopelessness, to create the conviction, both in Latvia and abroad, that the struggle goes on, and to sustain hope that victory will be achieved.

3. To prepare all the preconditions to restart the process of restoring the independence of the Republic of Latvia.

Therefore:

1. To ensure, that in a certain form, in Latvia or abroad, the institutions of the legal State government continue to exist and function (influencing the processes in Latvia). Officials of the State institutions have to comply with the decrees of these institutions. If there are no such (governmental) institutions, then the directions of the resistance movement's leadership are to be followed. In other cases, whenever and wherever it is possible, the laws of the Republic of Latvia are to be followed.

2. In cases when adversary supervision and brutal control is introduced: to perform unremitting clandestine sabotage and obstruction; to make the appearance of doing the tasks one is given; to distort, impede, or block orders, decrees, and various kinds of information; to commit deliberate "errors," "forgetfulness"; to use also other (contradictory) instructions, decrees, orders, etc. as a justification for one's clumsiness and errors.

3. To continue leaving posts in those institutions, which function against the interests of the Latvian State and people and where it is impossible to preclude or disrupt such functioning.

4. For the fighters of armed units: to ensure the personal security of the underground government/resistance leadership, not to engage in any kind of revenge or terrorist acts.

**ADVICE**  
**to Public Organizations, Independent Institutions, and Enterprises**  
**of the Republic of Latvia in Case of a Coup d'état**

**Introduction**

The following Advice is intended for all public organizations, independent institutions, enterprises, as well as other independent political, social, and economic institutions of Latvia.

**Chapter I: How to act at the beginning of a coup d'état.**

The main tasks of nonviolent defense in the first days and hours of a coup d'état are:

1. To preclude (hinder) the overthrow of the legal government or intrusion upon its work.
2. To preclude (hinder) the capture of major State and economic buildings (parliament and government buildings, mass media, post offices, telephone, telegraph, enterprises, warehouses, etc.).
3. To inform the international community about the course of events.
4. To prepare for lasting struggle against the adversary in case of a successful coup d'état.

It is necessary therefore:

1. For all the public organizations, etc., loyal to the Republic of Latvia:
  - 1.1. To establish and keep regular contacts with the Nonviolent Defense Center and follow its instructions.
  - 1.2. Not to comply with any orders or decrees of the usurpers of power; to continue, as far as possible, daily work as usual.
  - 1.3. To prepare for hiding (if that is not feasible, for destroying) all kinds of important information. To hide or destroy information, if the institution is captured by adversary forces.
  - 1.4. To help to organize general protest strikes in the first days after the beginning of the coup d'état.
  - 1.5. To make no hindrances for those employees of institutions, who on the initiative of public organizations or their own, take part in defense activities; pay them the average salary for the time they spend there.
2. For all the independent enterprises (firms, cooperatives, individual producers):
  - 2.1. To participate in the efforts to block mechanically all the roads, railways, airports, with vehicles, piles of materials, ditches, dams, etc.
  - 2.2. To provide the defenders of the buildings and others, who participate in defense activities, with material help (including food).
3. For agricultural enterprises (farmers, cooperatives, etc.): not to provide food for the usurpers of power, to prepare for hiding food reserves, to help those participating in the State defense with food.
4. For public and sociopolitical organizations:
  - 4.1. To engage effectively their members in defense work: guarding impor-



tant buildings, keeping public order, participating in organizational work, caring for supplies, etc.

4.2. If possible, to summon their members to plenary meetings, extraordinary conferences, congresses, and other activities, to express their attitude towards the events and to put it down in public announcements, protest telegrams, letters, etc. To organize or to induce their members to other individual or collective protest actions: pickets, meetings, demonstrations, etc. One of the possible protest forms is sending letters and telegrams, on a mass scale, to a certain particular addressee (a leader of an international organization, a head of a foreign country, a foreign ambassador, an editor of an influential newspaper, etc.).

4.3. To call general protest strikes after the beginning of the coup.

4.4. To distribute widely various kinds of information and propaganda materials (newspapers, magazines, audio and video recordings, appeals on leaflets, posters, etc.) to many audiences: defenders of the State, the adversary staff and supporters, foreigners. Posters, slogans and signs on walls, on motor vehicles, on streets and sidewalks, in the sky (if airplanes are available), on open places (fields, meadows, forests, etc.), where they can be easily seen from the air, could also have a positive effect. National flags are to be hung outside the guarded buildings.

4.5. To interfere with the movements of the adversary, by taking down, replacing, or changing signs with names of cities, villages, homesteads, etc.—signposts, traffic signs, and other kinds of directory information.

4.6. To be ready to hide lists of their members' names, addressees, and other significant documents, to set up a communications network and organizational structure for eventual work in underground circumstances. To keep guard, if possible, at the organizations' headquarters.

4.7. To restrain their members from any acts of violence.

4.8. To document all of what is going on. To copy the documentary materials and distribute them to various places.

4.9. To prepare publishing facilities and portable broadcasting stations for working underground.

5. For independent publishers of newspapers, magazines, etc.:

5.1. In cooperation with the Nonviolent Defense Center, to call the population to decisive nonviolent struggle, to help in directing and coordinating the defense work.

5.2. To pay special attention to publications in Russian: to enhance the volumes and circulation of Russian publications, to publish special issues, etc. to preclude publications, which could exacerbate ethnic relations.

5.3. To record all the happenings.

5.4. To be ready for underground work.

## **Chapter II: How to act after a coup d'état has taken place.**

If a coup d'état is not averted—if the most important buildings or the major part of them are captured, if the adversary has partially taken over and put

under his control the State apparatus, then the major tasks of the nonviolent defense are:

1. To prevent, by all possible means, the enlargement of the sphere of control and influence of the adversary, and to paralyze any attempts to establish a new order in the country.

2. To preclude, by all means, the formation of a "coalition" leadership (mixed parliamentary and extraparliamentary institutions, "coalition" government) and the transfer of powers from the legal parliament and government to these or any other institutions.

3. To preclude or hinder the formation of any new State authorities obedient to the perpetrators of the coup d'état or invaders. To paralyze their activities if they are formed.

It is necessary therefore:

1. For all the public organizations, etc., loyal to the Republic of Latvia:

- 1.1. To coordinate their work with the Nonviolent Defense Center or, if its functioning is stopped, with another institution directing the defense work.

- 1.2. To call wide and various protest actions: meetings, demonstrations, street marches, etc.

- 1.3. To comply consistently only with the (pre-coup d'état) laws of the Republic of Latvia, and with the orders, decrees, instructions, etc. of the legal government, and to disobey and disregard the newly appointed officials.

- 1.4. To preclude any important information getting into the hands of usurpers or invaders.

- 1.5. To hide persons, whose freedom and lives are endangered: political activists, statesmen, young men due to be drafted into the army, persons who have deserted the Soviet army, etc.

2. For public and sociopolitical organizations:

- 2.1. To continue their work despite bans and repressions; to go underground if open forms of activities are impossible.

- 2.2. To continue distributing information and propaganda materials. Emerging patriotic slogans and symbols of various kinds in highly visible places have great importance at this stage of struggle, urging people to go on with their struggle and resistance.

- 2.3. To continue recording and documenting all the crimes of the usurpers/invaders; to be on alert for the fate of every one of their members; to sum up information about the killed, wounded, arrested, or otherwise repressed, to send it to the human rights' protection organizations and to publish it widely; to give moral and material help to them and to their families.

- 2.4. To put into use all the means available to preclude the formation of a "coalition"-type parliament or a government of collaborationists, or transfer of the legal powers from the parliament and government to another ruling institution; to preclude elections, referenda, and other ways of legitimizing the regime of the usurpers of power.

- 2.5. To preclude (hinder) the adversaries' attempts to establish their own order in the country.

2.6. To turn against collaborationists, to publish their names, expose them in public and in the press, but preclude physical violence against them. To make clear for them, that correcting their mistakes and taking the people's side is still possible.

3. For independent enterprises and institutions:

3.1. To preclude (hinder) the adversaries' attempts to establish their own economic order.

3.2. To provide, as far as possible, material help for the legal State authorities and local governments, for patriotic organizations, and for victims and their families.

### **Chapter III: How to act in a situation of prolonged usurpation of power (under an unlawful regime, hostile to the Latvian State and people).**

1. For all the public organizations, etc., loyal to the Latvian State:

1.1. To continue to obey only the legal State institutions (parliament, government, local governments) or temporary institutions, which have received legal powers to work in an emergency situation. If there are no such institutions, then the directions of the resistance movement's leadership are to be followed. In other cases, whenever and wherever it is possible, the laws of the Republic of Latvia are to be followed.

2. For public and sociopolitical organizations:

2.1. If uncompromised (without collaboration) open activity is impossible, then to go underground, but continue active resistance in forms, seen and felt by the rest of the people every day: to publish newspapers and magazines, to broadcast radio programs (if possible, also television programs) from secret transmitters, to distribute leaflets and posters, to put up symbols and slogans on the walls and elsewhere, to fly national flags on national holidays in highly visible places.

2.2. If political activities are banned, then cultural and sporting events should be used to rally people together and keep the resistance spirit alive.

2.3. To continue watching closely for crimes against the population and resistance activists. To call protests in cases of arrests, pickets at the court houses during political trials, and to keep close contacts with international human rights' protection organizations, to help victims and their families.

2.5. To pay special attention to work conducted with schoolchildren and youth. To organize, in cooperation with patriotic teachers and professors, underground schools, universities, classes, circles, etc.

2.6. If political activities are banned, to take active part in the allowed public, religious, and cultural organizations, trade unions, etc.

**Guard Your State!<sup>52</sup>**  
**What Should Latvia's Patriots Do in Case of a Coup D'État?**  
**(Advice of the Nonviolent Defense Center**  
**of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia)**

Latvians and all patriots of Latvia! The process of restoring Latvia's independence is imperiled. It is endangered by the coup d'état, perpetrated by the USSR's military and Communists. The realization of their plans can be precluded by active resistance of all willing people. It therefore depends on all of us now, on every one, whether we will be able to defend the part of freedom, already won, the new sprouts of democracy, and continue our way to full independence of Latvia.

There are no reasons for hopelessness or despair in the face of the adversary's military superiority! Remember that life has proven: communism and totalitarianism have no future. Today's putschists also have no future. The unlawful regime is doomed to failure sooner or later.

The Nonviolent Defense Center of the Republic of Latvia has worked out Basic Principles for State Defense, which provide a possibility to guard against an armed coup d'état with nonviolent means.

The fundamentals for such defense are: noncooperation with the adversary (usurpers of power), loyalty to the parliament, government, laws, and traditions of one's State (the Republic of Latvia), noncompliance with the demands of the adversary, made under military and political pressure; nonrecognition of and disregard for the authorities and laws of the adversary; applying to the international community for support, understanding, and help.

The methods of nonviolent defense are: open civil disobedience to the adversary's orders, decrees, and laws, sabotage of these orders and decrees; clandestine disobedience; interference with (or halting of) the actions of the adversary with means not endangering anyone's life (barricades, human chains, etc.); various kinds of nonviolent protests: demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, distribution of information (also destroying of or interfering with information important to the adversary); convincing the adversary; individual protests: protest letters, telegrams, demonstrative transgression of laws and decrees, leaving the workplace demonstratively, etc.

The Nonviolent Defense Center coordinates concerted national defense on three major levels: on that of State institutions, organizations, and enterprises; on that of public organizations, independent institutions, and enterprises; and finally, on the level of individual initiative. The Advice "Guard Your State!" is intended for every patriot of Latvia in this decisive struggle.

**Chapter I: How to act at the beginning of a coup d'état.**

1. Follow all the directions given by the Supreme Council and the Nonviolent Defense Center. In the absence of these, follow the recommendations of the Popular Front of Latvia and other resistance organizations and the Basic Principles of the Nonviolent Defense of the Republic of Latvia.

2. Do not comply with any orders, decrees, or demands of the occupiers.
  3. Be careful that no important official or personal information gets into the hands of the occupiers.
  4. Take active part in defense activities, as well as in protest strikes, meetings, and all other actions initiated by the Supreme Council and the Nonviolent Defense Center, as well as the Popular Front of Latvia, the National Independence Movement of Latvia, and other resistance organizations.
  5. Preclude provocations, do not provoke the adversaries to armed clashes, but strive to convince them that the demand for Latvian independence is just. Do not treat Soviet soldiers with hatred and contempt. Remember that many of them are representatives of oppressed peoples, and also that in Russia there is no lack of democrats and advocates of freedom. Appeal to soldiers to take the side of the people or leave their units.
  6. Write letters to friends and acquaintances in the USSR republics and abroad, explaining what is going on.
  7. Photograph, film, and note down the happenings, preserve the leaflets found and other kinds of information.
  8. Help to distribute various kinds of patriotic information and propaganda materials (newspapers, appeals, leaflets, etc.) to defenders of the State, to the adversary staff and supporters, and to foreigners. Help to make posters, slogans, and symbols on the walls, sidewalks, and streets. Do everything to enhance your people's will to struggle and make it apparent to the adversaries.
  9. Try to interfere with the movements of the adversaries everywhere, their efforts to find certain places, institutions, and persons. Do not help them! Do not show the right way! Take down or change signposts, tablets with the names of streets, places, and institutions, and other kinds of information.
  10. Care for the safety of your and other people's children. Tell them the truth about what is going on.
  11. Examine your notes and documents as well as letters for incriminating information, in case you are searched. Hide or destroy addresses, letters, and documents which could be used by the adversaries to organize repression against other Latvian patriots.
  12. If you are arrested, remember: do not give *any* truthful information, not even that pertaining to everyday trifles. As soon as you start being honest, the adversary will be able to discern when you are telling the truth and when you are not, and it will be easier for him to make you confess.
- Do not answer questions. Do know: plotters have no legal rights to interrogate you or demand anything from you.

## **Chapter II: How to act after a coup d'état has taken place.**

1. Take active part in all the resistance activities initiated by the Supreme Council, Nonviolent Defense Center, PFL, NIML, and other resistance organizations. Initiate activities together with your friends or on your own.
2. Comply consistently only with the (pre-coup d'état) laws of the Republic of Latvia and with the orders, decrees, instructions, etc. of the legal government;

disregard the newly appointed authorities and officials.

3. If the invaders have put your institution under supervision, then continue your work, hindering functions that would be contrary to the interests of the State and people of Latvia (if there are no calls to strikes). If such actions are impossible, and if there are no options for disrupting work or for sabotage, then leave your job in such an institution.

4. Hide and otherwise help people whose freedom and life are endangered—political activists, statesmen, young men due to be drafted into the army, etc.

5. Continue to distribute information and propaganda materials. If possible, make patriotic slogans and symbols in highly visible places.

6. Help each other; forget trivial bickering and antipathies; remember that all of us have a common goal—the freedom of Latvia. Watch carefully that nobody disappears in times of repression. Help the families of those who have suffered, were killed or arrested. Collect information about people who have been repressed and give it to public organizations.

7. Do not agree, in any case, to work for the enemy. Decline advantageous work proposals from the criminal regime's institutions, even if the job is not directly connected with State control or ideology. Better to find work in industry or agriculture.

8. Turn away from and stop personal contacts with people who collaborate with the occupiers. Treat them with pity, but without hostility. Let them understand that it is still possible for them to take the side of the people.

9. Do not lose determination and courage, cheer up others too, be tolerant, selfless, and supportive with each other. Only in this way can victory be achieved.

Do not lose self-respect in the event of repression. Remember that no sacrifice is too large for the freedom of the Homeland.

10. Do not forget the safety of your children. Guard them also against lies. If you children's school comes under the influence of the occupiers, send them to another place. If that is impossible, keep them at home.

11. Do not, in any case, take part in any political or ideological undertakings organized by the enemy, especially in any kind of elections or referendums.

12. Do not support officials from the occupiers' ruling bodies and various kinds of "coalition" governments, even if previously popular people are included in them.

### **Chapter III: How to act in a situation of prolonged usurpation of power (under an unlawful regime, hostile to the Latvian State and people).**

1. Continue to obey only the legal State institutions (parliament, government, local governments) or temporary institutions, which have been given legal powers to work in an emergency situation. If there are no such institutions, then follow the directions of the resistance movement's leadership and the Basic Principles of Nonviolent Defense. Comply only with the laws of the

Republic of Latvia.

2. Do not allow people to sink into apathy and hopelessness; create conviction that the fight against the oppressors continues.

3. If an open struggle is impossible, then go underground and continue active resistance in forms seen and felt by the rest of the people every day: publish newspapers and magazines, broadcast radio programs (if possible, also television programs) from secret transmitters, distribute leaflets, put up posters, write slogans and appeals on the walls, draw patriotic symbols, hang out national flags, etc.

4. Hinder and disrupt production and all kinds of economic activity in ways that do not threaten human lives or health.

5. Do not join, in any case, and keep others from joining the enemy's political, public, cultural, and other organizations. Do not accept their ideology and do not participate in mendacious agitation, propaganda campaigns, or social activities.

6. There are still many more forms of symbolic protests: demonstrative refusal of rewards and honorary titles conferred by the Communists, giving up USSR passports, leaving various all-Union organizations (creative unions, etc.), throwing out books by writers collaborating with the criminal regime, wearing patriotic badges, using colors of the national flag as parts of one's dress, refusing to shake hands and speak with those collaborating with the enemy, boycotting cultural activities, changing names of streets and changing signs with names [of places], placing flowers at monuments (even when the monument is removed), singing patriotic and folk songs, refusing to stand up when the occupiers' anthem is performed, and many others.

Continue resistance in all possible forms. Remember: any kind of struggle is better than passive compliance and cowardly obedience to the enemy.

## Appendix V

### Latvijas Republikas Augstakās Padomes AICINAJUMS

Latvijas rajonu, pilsetu un pagastu pasvaldībām, to  
amatpersonām, vietējo padomju deputātiem

#### APPEAL

of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia to the  
Local Governments of Latvia's Districts, Cities, and  
Parishes, to Their Officials, and to the Deputies  
of Local Councils<sup>53</sup>

A coup d'état is taking place in the Soviet Union. The power in the State is taken over by unconstitutional formations which, in Latvia too, organize illegal authorities based on military force.

We appeal to local self-governments, to their officials, and to the deputies of local Councils:

1. Not to contact in any way and not to collaborate with USSR military officials, with representatives of the KGB and Internal Troops, with the CPSU, or with other formations acting on the instructions of the so-called Emergency State Committee of the USSR.

2. To dissociate yourselves publicly from any kinds of illegal governing bodies and their actions.

3. To regard any decisions and decrees of the Emergency State Committee of the USSR and its officials, as well as decisions and decrees of those authorities collaborating with the Emergency State Committee of the USSR and institutions formed by it, as illegal and as having no juridical consequences in the territory of the Republic of Latvia.

4. In any case, to comply only with the laws and decisions passed by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Latvia, and with the decisions and decrees of the Council of Ministers.

Chairman of the Supreme Council  
of the Republic of Latvia

A. Gorbunovs

Secretary of the Supreme Council  
of the Republic of Latvia

I. Daudiss

Riga, August 19, 1991



## Appendix VI

### LTF Valdes pazinojums visiem Latvijas neatkarības atbalstītājiem

#### Announcement of the Board of the Popular Front of Latvia to All the Supporters of Latvia's Independence<sup>54</sup>

In the morning of August 19, news about a coup d'état in the USSR came from Moscow. There is no need for an atmosphere of fear and hysteria, but already at this moment everyone must know for sure what to do now, when an emergency rule is being introduced to suppress peoples' strivings for freedom. Already on December 11, 1990, the Popular Front of Latvia adopted a plan of actions for the Hour X. This Hour has struck. Therefore the duty of every democratically minded person who is loyal to Latvia is to defend his or her State.

We regard as necessary:

1. To prepare the PFL branches' activists for eventual underground activities. To establish a mutual communications system. To appoint reserves for the leaders. To facilitate the activities of territorial groups in local communities. To decentralize funds of the branches. To prepare letterheads with symbols of the PFL for announcements. To decentralize copying equipment and stores of paper.

2. Disregarding the ukases of the emergency authorities, to comply consistently only with the laws of the Republic of Latvia and with the decisions of local self-governments.

3. To resort to various kinds of strikes. To be ready to join the All-Russia strike announced by Russian President Yeltsin. To make special use of strict and absurd labor instructions to paralyze production.

4. Not to appear for the call-ups issued by the USSR War Commissariats, and to send military identity cards, together with an application announcing one's refusal to serve in the USSR Armed Forces, to the War Commissioner of the LSSR.

5. Not to collaborate with and not to provide any information to the occupation authorities.

6. To turn down with contempt and to boycott the puppets of the coup d'état regime and their supporters.

7. To ensure that democratic organizations and their leaders can work under illegal conditions.

8. To document and record all crimes perpetrated by the occupation authorities under emergency rule.

9. In order to prevent the legitimization of this regime, to refuse flatly to participate in elections or referenda organized by this regime.

10. To employ people tested in the election campaign—canvassers—for the purposes of informing the population, to employ members of all the democratic organizations.

11. To make maximum use of participation in public organizations not banned by the occupation authorities—religious and cultural organizations, trade unions—to popularize the ideas of the PFL.

Supporters of the independence of the Republic of Latvia! While Communist crimes against our Homeland continue, let us be conscious of the fact that the first precondition of our survival is to live for the people, to be united for Latvia!

The Board of the Popular Front of Latvia

## NOTES

1. See e.g., Adolfs Silde, *Resistance Movement in Latvia*, Stockholm: Latvian National Foundation, 1972, (2d ed.: Stockholm: Latvian National Foundation, 1985, is supplemented with *Latvia Before the Helsinki Agreement (1962–1975)*, by Gunars Rode); Romuald J. Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence 1940–1980*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983; Andres Küng, *A Dream of Freedom: Four Decades of National Survival Versus Russian Imperialism in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, 1940–1980*, Cardiff, Wales: Boreas, 1980; August Rei, *The Drama of the Baltic Peoples*, Stockholm: Kirjastus Vaba Eesti, 1970, (2d ed.: Stockholm: Kirjastus Vaba Eesti, 1972); Egil Levits, "Der politische Konflikt zwischen den selbstbestimmungsbestrebungen und dem sowjetischen Herrschaftsanspruch in Lettland," *Dokumentation Ostmitteleuropa*, Marburg an der Lahn: Johann-Gotfried-Herder-Institut, No. 5/6, December 1988.

2. The figure 77% in 1935 excludes the District of Abrene, which now belongs to Russia. *Latvija sodien* (Latvia Today), Riga: Latvijas PSR Valsts statistikas komiteja (The State Statistics Committee of the Latvian SSR), 1990, p. 13. The estimated 83% in 1945 comes from Misiunas and Taagepera, p. 272.

3. This and following citations from the group's first public announcements are from their English translations in *Brīvība* (Freedom; periodical of the Latvian Social Democratic Party), Stockholm, No. 1/2, 1987, p. 8–12.

4. *Latvijas Padomju Socialistiska Republika* (Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic or Latvian SSR or LSSR)—The official Soviet name of the annexed Latvia.

5. See an eyewitness' testimony in Maris Vecvagars, "Kur atradas prokurora sankcija?" (Where was the Public Prosecutor's Warrant?), *LATNIA Informativais Zinotajs* (LATNIA News Bulletin; a weekly publication), July 19, 1989, p. 8.

6. Most of the documents produced by the "Helsinki-86" group were later published in a booklet, *Latvijas Cilvektiesību aizstāves grupas Helsinki '86. Dokumentu krājums* (The Human Rights Protection Group of Latvia, Helsinki '86. Collection of Documents), July 1986–April 1988, Neatkarīga informācijas centra izdevums (Published by the Independent Information Center), Riga, 1989.

7. The Memorandum's English translation is available in the *Baltic News Focus*, No. 2, Kitchener, Ontario and Stockholm: Memento Publishing and Information Services, 1988.

8. Published in *Auseklis*, No. 6, 1988.

9. This demonstration was allowed because it was organized under the cover of hypocritical *perestroika* and *glasnost* rhetoric. However, on the same day, "Helsinki-86" organized another, openly anti-Soviet demonstration, which was harassed by police.

10. Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

11. *Pravda*, August 28, 1989.

12. The resolution "About the Status of the Latvian Language," declaring

Latvian to be the official language in Latvia, was passed on October 6, 1988 (*Padomju Jaunatne* [Soviet Youth; a daily newspaper], October 11, 1988). The regulation "On Initiatives to End the Unfounded Mechanical Growth in the Number of Inhabitants and to Regulate Migration Processes in the Latvian SSR," restricting immigration, was adopted on February 14, 1989 (*Cina* [Struggle; a daily newspaper], February 18, 1989). Actually they did not change anything in real terms: Russian officials continued haughtily to ignore the Latvian language, and immigrants continued to flow in uncontrollably—a situation which testified once more to the impotence of Soviet Latvia's "government" and spurred activists to take a more radical stance.

13. *Cina*, July 15, 1989.

14. See e.g., the interview "Dainis Ivans: tik ar pratu uzvaresim tumsu" (Dainis Ivans: Only with Wisdom Shall We Prevail Over Darkness), *Skolotaju Avize* (Teachers' Gazette; a weekly newspaper), September 20, 1989.

15. *LR Pilsonis* (Citizen of the Republic of Latvia; a periodical of the Citizens' Movement's activists), No. 3, 1990.

16. *Cina*, March 15, 1990.

17. See *LATNIA Informativais Zinotajs*, October 26, 1989.

18. See Eglons Bruns, "Pikets pie Skrundas 'monstra'" (Picket at the Skrunda "Monster"), *LATNIA Informativais Zinotajs*, August 24, 1989.

19. The International Front of the Working People of the Latvian SSR.

20. The elections could be described as "democratic" only in comparison with the sham elections of previous years, in which there were no alternative candidates and abstention from voting or voting "no" was regarded as a political crime. The elections of 1990 still were not up to the standards of full-fledged democracy. Although voters could now choose from a field of candidates freely and without any intimidation, there were injustices in the election rules and campaigning, favoring in fact the Communist candidates (some of whom—mainly the Latvians—were pro-independence) or their allies. The major mass media were all in the hands of Communists or ex-Communists still closely linked with the nomenklatura establishment. This explains the very high proportion of ex-Communists (mainly Latvians) and Communists (mainly Russians) in the newly elected governing body.

21. Although its neutral sounding Latvian name (*Augstaka Padome*) was not changed, the word "Soviet" was replaced with "Council" in the English translation, to demonstrate its pro-independence majority's unwillingness to be associated any longer with the Soviet Communist system.

22. In Russian: *Otryad militsii osobovo naznacheniya*—the Militia (police) Unit for Special Assignments. It acted under direct commands from Moscow.

23. As Radio Liberty/Russian Service reported on January 14, 1991, plans for a military takeover in Latvia and the other two Baltic states were in the making by the KGB since December 1990.

24. See "Kas jādara, kad neviens neko nedara?" (What to Do When Nobody Does Anything?), *Atmoda* (Awakening; the weekly newspaper of the Popular Front of Latvia), September 17, 1991.

25. For more details about the barricade defense see *Atmoda/Awakening* (the English language newspaper of the Popular Front of Latvia), January 31, 1991; "Baiga stunda vel tikai sitis" (The Horrible Hour Is Yet to Strike), *Atmoda*, February 12, 1991; "Valsts aizsardziba sieviesu bruncošos" (State Defense in Women's Skirts), *Atmoda*, September 10, 1991; A. Anteniskis, "Kas organizēja pasaizsardzību" (Who Organized Self-Defense?), *Diena* (The Day; a daily newspaper), October 11, 1991; "Barricad Odiseya Kostandi" (The Odisejs Kostanda's Barricade; in Russian), *SM—Sevodnya* (SM—Today), January 14, 1992.

26. Both documents are available in English, in *Orbis*, Summer, 1991.

27. Russian Colonel Vladimir Soldatov spoke about the incident on Radio Latvia on January 14, 1991. See also *Diena*, January 16, 1991.

28. See *Diena*, January 17, 1991.

29. See *Diena*, January 16 and February 6, 1991.

30. Russian attitudes were gauged by a sociological survey conducted by the Sociological Service of the Supreme Council just before the January crisis—on December 1–9, 1990. 47% of Russians were in favor of independent statehood, 41% supported the idea of Latvia's greater autonomy within the USSR, and only 3% favored the introduction of presidential direct (military) rule. *Latvijas Jaunatne* (The Youth of Latvia; a daily newspaper), December 29, 1990. Also, as the official State opinion poll showed on March 3, 1991, many Russians supported Latvians in voting for independence. So, for example, in Riga, with its 36.5% Latvian population, 60.68% voted for independence. *Diena*, March 8, 1991.

31. See interview with the Minister of Interior Affairs A. Vaznis in *Diena*, January 16, 1991.

32. See *Moscow News*, No. 4, 1991.

33. Gene Sharp, *Civilian-Based Defense*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990, p. 6–7.

34. See also the Minister of Defence Talavs Jundzis speaking about this. *Diena*, November 29, 1991.

35. For more details about the Lithuanian efforts to establish a civilian-based defense system, see Christopher Kruegler, "A Bold Initiative in Lithuanian Defense," *Nonviolent Sanctions: News from the Albert Einstein Institution*, Spring, 1991.

36. See *Neatkarīga Cina* (Independent Struggle; a daily newspaper), August 21, 1991.

37. See *AP & MP* (Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers; an official publication), April 3, 1992.

38. These ideas have now become a common platform for a larger political conglomeration called the "Russian People's Assembly," the founding congress of which took place in Moscow and was greeted by the Russian Vice-President A. Rutskoy on February 9, 1992. Twenty-five representatives from Latvia's Russian nationalist organizations were among the delegates. See *Diena*, February 11, 1992.

39. The English translation is made from the text of the Announcement, published in the newspaper *Latvijas Jaunatne*, December 13, 1990.

40. In Russian: *Dobrovolnoye obshchestvo sodeystviya armii, aviatsii i flotu* (Voluntary Society for Assisting Army, Air Force, and Navy).

41. Local governments.

42. The Union Treaty—a cherished idea of M. Gorbachev—was regarded in Latvia as a pseudodemocratic device to secure the continuation of a Russian-dominated and centrally governed Soviet Union.

43. Unarmed voluntary public order squads, loyal to the government of Latvia and under its direct control.

44. Authoritative orders or decrees; originally, proclamations of the czar having the force of law in imperial Russia.

45. Military registration and enlistment offices.

46. Industrial safety rules and other regulations, formally binding, were as a rule ignored in actual working practices in the USSR (due to their impracticability).

47. Members of the Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from election districts in Latvia.

48. The English translation is made from the text of the Appeal, published in the newspaper *Pilsonis* (The Citizen; weekly newspaper of the Citizens' Congress), January 15, 1991. Misprints clearly identifiable are corrected.

49. The document originated some time between the sixteenth and eighteenth of January 1991. About one thousand photocopies were distributed among the defenders of Old Riga.

50. "The Basic Principles . . ." were prepared by activists working for the Nonviolent Defense Center in July-August 1991, but they were not photocopied for distribution until August 19, when the coup actually broke out. More than two thousand copies were distributed.

51. One of the aims of the Communist Party and the Interfront in January of 1991, was to establish a sham "coalition," virtually a puppet government, consisting of both elected deputies of the Supreme Council and representatives of the anti-independence organizations and the military.

52. The Advice "Guard Your State!" was prepared for publication just in the days and nights of the August 1991 coup attempt and consequently there are no alternative variants for invasion/coup in it, as in the previous two documents.

53. The translation is made from the text published in the newspaper *Neatkarīga Cina*, August 21, 1991.

54. The "Announcement . . ." was first read on Radio Latvia by the Popular Front leader Romualdas Razukas on August 20, 1991. The translation is made from the text published in the newspaper *Neatkarīga Cina*, August 21, 1991.