

In Memoriam. Ojārs Ēriks Kalniņš

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An outstanding diplomat, public and political figure, and Member of the Saeima, Ojārs Ēriks Kalniņš, passed away in Riga on 14 October 2021.

Ojārs Ēriks Kalniņš was born on 22 October 1949 in a Latvian refugee camp in Munich, Germany. In 1951, the family moved to Chicago, U.S. In 1972, Ojārs Ēriks Kalniņš graduated from the Philosophy Department of Roosevelt University. Worked as a publicist and creative manager at public relations agencies.

From 1985 to 1990, Ojārs Ēriks Kalniņš was active at the Information Office of the American Latvian Association, and in 1986 helped to organize and headed a delegation of American Latvians to the Chautauqua Conference in Jūrmala, Latvia. From 1988 to 1990, he was an advisor to the Latvian Popular Front and the Latvian National Independence Movement, and wrote for *Dienā* newspaper from 1990 to 1991.

In May 1990, Ojārs Ēriks Kalniņš became advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia and in July 1990, organised a visit to Washington DC by the Latvian Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis and Foreign Minister Jānis Jurkāns, as well as taking part in the first meeting of the Latvian statesmen with U.S. President George H. W. Bush. As from January 1991, Ojārs Ēriks Kalniņš was Press Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as serving as a public relations officer and later as counsellor at the Latvian embassy in Washington DC. From September 1991 to January 1993, he was the Ambassador's authorised officer and the authorised officer of Latvia's representative to the United Nations.

In January 1993, Ojārs Ēriks Kalniņš was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Latvia to the U.S. and Mexico, residing in Washington DC, and held that post until 1999. The Ambassador was actively engaged in talks with the U.S., achieving support from the U.S. for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Latvia, and the closure and dismantling of the Skrunda Radar Station.

Ojārs Ēriks Kalniņš' ambassadorial posting saw the strengthening of the relations between Latvia and the U.S. as strategic allies: in 1994, the U.S. President Bill Clinton visited Latvia and in 1998, the U.S.-Baltic Charter was signed. The Ambassador also led the process of Latvia's application for accession to NATO being accepted and considered.

Having completed his career in the Foreign Service, Ojārs Ēriks Kalniņš became head of the Latvian Institute and held that post for more than a decade (1999-2010).

In 2010, Ojārs Ēriks Kalniņš was elected to the 10th Saeima, where he headed the Foreign Affairs Committee. He was also re-elected to the 11th and 12th Saeima, and since the autumn of 2018, served as a member of the 13th Saeima.

To pay tribute to the memory of Ēriks Ojārs Kalniņš, and in deep gratitude for his contribution to the restoration of the Latvian state, strengthening its Foreign Service and enhancing the relations between Latvia and the U.S., the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Saeima are opening a book of condolences.

To pay tribute to the memory of Ēriks Ojārs Kalniņš, and in deep gratitude for his contribution to the restoration of the Latvian state, strengthening its Foreign Service and enhancing the relations between Latvia and the U.S., the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Saeima are opening a book of condolences. The book of condolences will be open at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 14.00 to 16.00 on Monday, 18 October and from 10.00 to 12.00 on Tuesday, 19 October. Please apply in advance by calling 67016492.

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