DOKUMENTI PAR LATVIJAS VALSTS STARPTAUTISKO ATZĪŠANU, NEATKARĪBAS ATJAUNOŠANU UN DIPLOMĀTISKAJIEM SAKARIEM

1918 – 1993
Summary

There comes a point in time, when one is almost inevitably led to subscribe to a Socratic world view, wherein it is held that there are two concurrent and simultaneously existing realities — on the one hand, the events and emotions one experiences on a daily basis via empirical evidence, and, on the other, a series of invisible ‘shores’, which exist on a purely metaphysical level, and reflect or predict these empirical events. At times, these two simultaneous realities collide, and events from the past fuse with those of the present — and, occasionally, with those yet to come.

Such is the history of the Baltic State of Latvia, and subsequently, such is the nature of this book.

Latvian history has always been subject to its geographical location, and has been the battleground of conflicting political interests for neighbour nations. WWII came upon Latvia in the spring of 1941, when German forces seized the Kurzeme region, and thus, changed Latvia forever. Latvia experienced a massive flow of war refugees, and suffered considerable material loss. However, it was this very experience that provided the necessary spark for the initial flame of a sense of national identity, which, in turn, was the creative force behind the founding of the ideological and political movements in Latvia.

From the onset of Latvia’s journey towards becoming an independent and democratic state, the Latvians considered themselves a part of both the European and the world communities. Latvian foreign policy both in the very early years of its existence, as well as during the following 22 years of independent statehood was geared towards establishing close cooperation with the nations of the west, among these relations can be mentioned Latvia’s membership in the League of Nations. By the time Latvia joined the League of Nations, most of the nations of the world had granted it official recognition as an independent state and thus Latvia continued to develop as a civilized European state which promoted and cherished education, culture, agriculture, machinery, and, above all, its hard-won independence, which came at a very high price in terms of human sacrifice. Also, this great sacrifice was not to be the last, as Latvia enjoyed national independence for only 22 years before it again became an object of desire in the eyes of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

The collection of documents included in this book illustrates, without a doubt, that history has a way of repeating itself; the wise will utilize these repetitions as a means of changing the future — the indifferent will reject them as visions of a fading past. This work opens with an introduction in
Latvia's history beginning with the 16th century and ending with Latvia's tragic loss of national independence in the summer of 1940 it offers thought-out and concise picture of the beginnings of Latvian national identity, of the events which led to the birth of the independent Republic of Latvia on the 18th of November, 1918, of the work of the fledgling Latvian diplomatic corps abroad, of Latvia's efforts for security guarantees and a place for itself on the stage of international politics, of its unsuccessful policy of absolute political neutrality (completely unfeasible at the time, due to geographic location), and of the tragic of Latvian sovereignty and independent statehood. The years 1939-1940 signaled the tragedy of an era in Latvian history, diplomacy and foreign policy. Although Latvia had signed agreements with both Germany and the Soviet Union that, from the Latvian point of view, served as the cornerstone of Latvia's continued independence and existence, but upon the political marriage of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union via the signing of the Molotov-Ribentrop Pact, these cherished agreements became null and void in the eyes of the aggressor, and, unfortunately, in the face of the multiplying horrors of WWII, virtually insignificant to Latvia's one-time allies and/or friends in the west. This fact, combined with the League of Nations inability to guarantee peace were the moving forces that changed the face of not only Latvia, but of all of Europe both during the war, and, most visibly, after it.

The second part of the book examines the legal and political nuances of Latvia's new post-war status within the context of international law during the 30 years of Soviet occupation. Even though Latvia no longer existed as an independent state de facto, the majority of the free world continued to recognize its existence as a legally valid entity de jure. Mention should be made of the fact that both from a legal and a political point of view, this continued recognition was a precedent. The fact of the occupation and subsequent annexation of Latvia by the Soviet Union, as well as the internationally advertised mock elections via which Latvia was said to voluntarily have joined the U.S.S.R. was met with mixed emotions by the international community, which was still reeling from the war. There were variations in the degrees of support each nation was willing to offer the occupied Baltic States.

Though the 30 years of occupation have had long-lasting effects on Latvia, the third part of the book brings us to a Latvia survived 5 decades of Soviet occupation without losing hope, and without sacrificing its mother tongue or its culture. It survived the implementation of the massive Soviet policy of Russification, and the deportations of its native population. In 1991, Latvia once more raised the red-white and red flag and declared itself a free state and, once again, the nations of the free world
supported this gallant effort via repeatedly (and, in some cases, initially) granting it their de facto recognition.

"A Document Collection On the International Recognition of Latvia, Renewed Independence, and Diplomatic Relations: 1918-1998" is a work that is an absolute original — it includes a large selection of authentic documents, both from the initial period of Latvian statehood (1918-1940) and from the second period of renewed Latvian independence (1991-1998), wherein one can examine documents relating to recognition of Latvia as a State, but also having to do with the establishment of diplomatic relations. Hence, this work is an absolute "must-read" for anyone in any way connected with the fields of diplomatic service history and international law, and can also be utilized as a text for political studies students at the middle and higher education levels.

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