

Opinions Among Exiles on the Nature of Restored Independent Republic of Latvia

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The majority of the Second World War refugees from Latvia desired to return to a free Latvia and devoted much of their efforts to promote the renewal of Latvian state independence. This goal was fundamental to their common identity. Correspondingly, there was a considerable public debate about how the restoration could be effected and what the future renewed state would be like in terms of political, economic and social system. The future state was envisioned either as a sovereign nation-state or as a part of some kind of democratic union or federation. Sovereign nation-state was by far the most popular goal and the advocates of this form agreed on at least two common principles: state must be democratic and based on 1922 Constitution with minor revisions. Advocates of alternative approaches were inspired by the ideas of European integration popular at the time and saw Latvian freedom as attainable by participation in some form of federation that could encompass either Baltic states, Central Europe or even the whole of Europe.

Keywords: Latvian exiles, Latvian independence, restoration of independence, Latvian Constitution, Baltic states, European Federation.

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Introduction

The majority of war refugees from Latvia found themselves in the American, British and French Occupation Zones of Germany at the end of hostilities in Europe associated with the Second World War. In the summer of 1945, approximately 125 thousand refugees from Latvia were registered to be present in these three Occupation Zones, with a further 6 to 7 thousand refugees having reached Sweden

at that time.¹ Several members of the Latvian Diplomatic Services continued to be accredited in their posts abroad. Western officials described Baltic refugees as *displaced persons, or DPs*;² however, the Latvians who remained outside of Latvia described themselves as exiles (*trimdinieki*), thereby emphasising the compulsory and political nature of their having to remain abroad, based as this was on the illegal occupation and incorporation of the Baltic states into the USSR. Most Latvian displaced persons left refugee camps in Germany by the time these were closed in the early 1950s and took up permanent residence principally in the USA, Australia and New Zealand, Canada, Great Britain, in Brazil and other countries of South America, and elsewhere. Substantial numbers remained living permanently in Germany and Sweden.

It has been estimated that in the mid-1960s there were 156 500 Latvian exiles, comprising approximately 10% of all Latvians alive at that time.³ Attempts to estimate the number of exile Latvians have been made among themselves later, as well.⁴ It must be noted that by no means all Latvian exiles took an active part in the organised life of exile communities, or even had an intermittent contact with these communities in their countries of residence. The socially active minority that have created exile organisations retain the best documentation of their work and it is best known today. Practically no information remained about the life of those families who had abandoned all contact with local Latvian society. The numbers of the latter, as well as the number or the proportion of those active in exile community life cannot be determined with any precision. Very rough estimates (based on the results characterising the community living in Australia) indicate that in the 1960s the number of people taking part in any form of organised life (including membership of folk dance groups, choirs, etc.) would be between 12 and 20% with distinct regional variations, while up to 37% of Latvians have financially supported organisations (this being the case of the community living in Northern California).⁵ It must be also taken into account that supporting and volunteering for cultural organisations has been greater than for political organisations, the former tending to lend their support to the latter, thereby increasing the political event attendance of Latvians.⁶ Hence, the number of politically engaged Latvians living in exile communities was a small fraction of the already rather small number in any way participated in organised community life.

Nevertheless, the politically active part of exile communities devoted a great deal of their time and effort to discuss and promote the possible renewal of Latvian state independence. This article aims to examine the political views of Latvian exile community members regarding the status of future renewed Latvian state, its legal basis and possible incorporation in federative bodies.

¹ *Veigners, I.* Latvieši Rietumzemēs [Latvians in Western countries]. Rīga: SIA Drukātava, 2009, p. 81.

² This term was coined in 1943 as part of planning for resolution of war refugee issues that were expected to arise during the post-war period.

³ *Dunsdorfs, E.* Trešā Latvija [The Third Latvia]. Melburna: Latvijas skautu prezidenta ģenerāļa Kārļa Goppera fonds, 1968, p. 48.

⁴ *Štauvers, M.* Latviešu apzināšanas darbs [The work of studying Latvians]. In: *Archivs XXIII. Demografija*. Melburna: PBLA un Kārļa Zariņa fonds, 1983, pp. 193–196.

⁵ *Dunsdorfs, E.* Trešā Latvija ..., pp. 185–186.

⁶ *Elferts, P.* Diaspora Political Actions to Achieve Baltic Independence – Including Civil Disobedience. Tracing the Baltic Road to Independence in Diaspora Archives. In: Transcript and materials of the international conference on 30 June – 2 July 2015, Rīga. Rīga: Latvian Academy of Sciences Baltic Centre for Strategic Studies, 2015, p. 19.

Debates about the restoration of Latvian independence

The citizens of Latvia who found themselves in involuntary exile fervently desired to return to a free Latvia, and the goal of a restored independent state was a constant thread that united Latvian exiles over the nearly 50 years long history of waiting for the state liberation. It was also fundamental to their common identity, the one that contributed to the persistence of the exile community and also slowed down assimilation.⁷ There was a considerable public debate – in discussion sessions, at workshops and published articles – about how restoration could come to pass, as well as to possible forms of the economic and political system of the future restored state. Many different views were presented, partially resulting from the wide spectrum of political philosophy and convictions that were a feature of the exile community. A number of former Deputies of the Latvian Parliament (*Saeima*) as well as Alfrēds Valdmanis⁸ and Alfrēds Bērziņš,⁹ the only surviving former ministers of the last government of independent Latvia (headed by K. Ulmanis), were active in these discussions. A number of senior members of widely differing political parties operating in independent Latvia were active in the exile community, in particular, the Foreign Committee of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party led by Bruno Kalniņš.¹⁰

The position on what manner of governance would be appropriate for a restored Latvian state was closely linked to the ideas prevalent among exiles about the manner in which this restoration could come about. During the initial post-war period, when refugees lived in special camps in Germany, the predominant view was that the occupation of Latvia was going to be short-lived and that “justice would prevail” and that with the active assistance of Western countries the injustice done to the Baltic states would soon be put right.¹¹ The position widely held by refugees that “they would return to continue to build their independent state” in understandable, given the hopes that the question of liberating Latvia was almost resolved and that liberation itself would take place in a few months time.

After migration in the early 1950s to several countries around the world, the optimism that liberation of Latvia would take place with the help of Western powers gradually faded, with a sharp decline setting in after the events in Hungary in 1956, wherein Western countries clearly demonstrated that they were unwilling

⁷ *Upeslācis, V.* Latviešu tautas kopas 10 gadi [10 years of Latvian people assemblage]. In: Latviešu trimdas desmit gadi. Rakstu krājums [Ten years of Latvian exile. Collection of articles]. Ed. H. Tichovskis. [B.v.]: Astras apgāds, 1954, p. 272.

⁸ An account of the political career of A. Valdmanis is given in: *Bassler, G. R.* Alfred Valdmanis and the Politics of Survival. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000, 472 p.

⁹ Alfrēds Bērziņš, the last Minister for Social Affairs in the government led by K. Ulmanis, ultimately emigrated to live in the USA.

¹⁰ Bruno Kalniņš lived in exile in Sweden, in addition to leading the Foreign Committee of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party he was active throughout his long life in the political work of Western European Socialist (Social-Democratic) parties. His archive is held in Sweden in Stockholm at the *Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek*.

¹¹ *Auziņš, A.* Informācijas darba metodes un prioritātes [Methods and priorities of information work]. In: Ko latvieši svešumā var darīt savas tautas politiskās nākotnes labā? Austrālijas Latviešu Informācijas centra 1. semināra īsreferāti un debātes [What can Latvians in a foreign country do for their nation's political future? Australian Latvian Information Centre's 1st seminar: brief reports and debates]. ALIC, 1972, p. 19.

to support rebellions against the Soviet Union.¹² However, the issue of the form of governance of a future independent Latvia did not lose its currency, and it is important to note that different views appeared in this regard. A proof of the continued viability of this issue lies in the several public discussions that were organised addressing the issue. Two of these discussions took place already in 1957: one organised by the American Latvian Youth Organisation (ALJA) at a meeting held in Milwaukee, the outcome of which was creation of an initiative group to clarify these issues,¹³ whereas the Latvian Youth Organisation in Sweden who on the occasion of their planned meeting in 1957 *Jaunatnes dienas* organised a round-table discussion on the theme of “How we see a future.”¹⁴ A decade later, the journal *Jaunā Gaita* (New Course), which was relatively progressive in the context of other exile community journals, published a series of articles on the topic, “Thoughts about a Latvian State”. The editors of the journal invited a number of prominent members of the exile community to express their views on this topic:¹⁵ Bruno Kalniņš, Jāni Peniķis, Laimonis Streips, Jāzeps Grodnis and Ilgyars Spilners. Their responses were published in several issues of this journal during 1966 and 1967. At the end of the 1980s with the advent of events associated with the Awakening, the discussion of the governance of a restored, independent Latvia gained a new impetus.

There are two principally disjoint schools of thought about the nature of a restored Latvian state, an unsurprising result given the diversity of views that were expressed at one time or another. The future state could either be a sovereign nation-state, or Latvia might join a union or a federation.

A sovereign Latvian nation-state

Most Western European countries recognised the continued *de jure* existence of the Republic of Latvia throughout the entire period of Soviet occupation. The exile community shared this view, and some insisted on using passports issued by the Republic of Latvia over many decades. A restoration of the Latvian state in the form of the Republic that it had been previously was a political dream and goal of most exiles. Restoration of a sovereign nation-state was closely linked to the concept of being in exile and formed the cornerstone of the internal identity of the Latvian exile community.

In their thinking about eventual future restoration of their state, the exiles did not question the idea that the restored Latvian state had to be a democratic one, but there was a disagreement about governance details. The democratic system could either be a parliamentary one, which was the option favoured by the older politicians living as exiles; alternatively, greater powers would have to be granted to a directly elected state president in a presidential form of government. The latter

¹² *Āboliņš, K. J.* Latviešu trimdas situācija un prognozes [Situation of Latvian exiles and prognosis]. In: *Tāltālu tālumā. Referātu krājums* [Far away in the distance. Collection of papers]. Studiju grupa. Lincoln, 1964, p. 22.

¹³ ALJA ziņas, 1957. gads.

¹⁴ A. V., G. I. Starp dzirnakmeņiem maltie – atspoguļo nākotnes cerību. Zviedrijas latviešu jaunatnes dienas [Ground between millstones – to show future hope. Youth days of Latvians in Sweden]. *Jaunā Gaita*, 1957. No. 9.

¹⁵ *Kalniņš, B.* Domas par Latvijas valsti [Thoughts on Latvian state]. *Jaunā Gaita*, 1966. No. 60.

option was favoured by politicians who had grown up in exile, though they also conceded that presidential rule could strengthen autocratic tendencies.¹⁶

The Latvian Constitution as adopted in 1922 (*Satversme*) had been recognised from the very first years of exile, i.e., even during time spent in refugee camps in Germany prior to onward migration, as the legal basis for the Latvian state, and would remain unaltered as the basis for the future restored state. The Latvian National Council (LNP) founded in 1948 was one of the first exile organisations to have explicitly defined as one of its goals the liberation of Latvia, to save the Latvian people, and their statutes stated that “only organisations could be part of the council that recognised the continued validity of the 1922 Constitution”.¹⁷ Furthermore, it was stated that the activities of the LNP “in no way prejudice the rights granted under the 1922 Constitution to the highest offices of the state, or to the extraordinary powers granted by the Government of Latvia to certain individuals”.¹⁸ These fundamental provisions testify to the fact that the Latvian Central Council, the principal organisation that inspired creation of the LNP, was of the opinion that the 1922 Constitution was still in force. During the process of founding the LNP, there was extensive discussion about the nature of the governance of a restored state, to such an extent that it delayed the formal establishment of the LNP.¹⁹

The future role to be played by Constitution of 1922 was never questioned in later discussions, but suggestions were made for its revision. Although differing in some details, most of these suggestions foresaw substantial changes. A majority of Latvian exiles did not wish to see a repetition of the highly divided convocations of *Saeima* as had been the case prior to 1934, hence, most changes were designed to reduce the number of miniscule political parties in the *Saeima*, as well as to defining more strictly the procedure for forming a new government,²⁰ with all of these revisions to be made legally following procedures laid down in the Constitution.²¹

The position that the Constitution is not to be changed and is, self-evidently, the constitutional basis for a restored Latvian state was convincingly enunciated later, for example, at the first workshop devoted to the topic “What can Latvians living abroad do for the benefit of a political future of their people”, held in September 1971 at the Latvian Centre in Adelaide. In his presentation, J. Andrupis concludes that “The goal of the Latvian people is to regain their right to self-determination in an independent democratic Latvian state, one based on the fundamental principles as expressed in the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia.”²² However, during the late 1980s, when more than 60 years had elapsed from adoption of the Latvian Constitution, ideas were advanced that simple revision might not suffice and that one had to consider adopting a new modern constitution.²³

¹⁶ *Raidonis, A.* Kādu demokrātiju nākotnes Latvijai [What kind of democracy for the future Latvia]? *Daugavas Vanagu Mēnešraksts*, 1989. No. 1, pp. 10–14.

¹⁷ Latviešu Nacionālās padomes statūti [Statutes of Latvian National Council]. Point 2. In: Latviešu trimdas kopības noteikumi [Latvian exile community rules]. Vācija, Latviešu Centrālā komiteja, 1949, p. 98.

¹⁸ Latviešu Nacionālās padomes statūti [Statutes of Latvian National Council]. Point 3. In: Latviešu trimdas kopības noteikumi [Latvian exile community rules]. Vācija, Latviešu Centrālā komiteja, 1949, p. 98.

¹⁹ *Ozoliņš, K.* “Mazā Latvija” un latviešu dzīve Vācijā [“Small Latvia” and the life of Latvians in Germany]. In: Latviešu trimdas desmit gadi ..., p. 310.

²⁰ *A. V., G. I.* Starp dzirnakmeņiem maltie ...; *Peniķis, J.* Domas par Latvijas valsti [Thoughts on the Latvian state]. *Jaunā Gaita*, 1967. No. 65.

²¹ *Spilners, I.* Domas par Latvijas valsti [Thoughts on the Latvian state]. *Jaunā Gaita*, 1967. No. 61.

²² *Andrupis, J.* Par ko mēs cīnāmies [What are we fighting for]? In: *Ko latvieši svešumā var darīt ...*

²³ *Raidonis, A.* Kādu demokrātiju nākotnes Latvijai ..., pp. 10–14.

One of the most frequently advanced revisions concerned limiting the number of political parties represented at one time in *Saeima*. The issue of political parties was present practically in the entire discussion, and the exile community unanimously adhered to the view that the excessive number of small political parties and the resultant fractious *Saeima* must be avoided, to circumvent a repetition of the situation that prevailed before the Ulmanis' coup of 1934. One remedy to eschew small political parties was to promote the creation of political parties that are not representative of class interests, but which are distinct in their ideological programme, thus attracting broad public support,²⁴ with both those exiles who are liberal in their political outlook and conservatives convinced that their supported party would gain mass public support and political stability.

Latvian exiles in addition to discussing the legal basis and governance of a restored state also were concerned, albeit to a lesser degree, by other aspects of daily life such as the economy, social policy, etc. As regards these issues, a wide variety of opinions were expressed depending on individual political convictions and personal experience. The necessity of raising the overall standard of living was seen as the principal economic challenge. Pride of place in the future of Latvia was assigned to agriculture, although it was accepted that the era of small farm holdings had irreversibly disappeared and that the first priority for deciding the form of agriculture best suited for Latvia would have to be a scientific assessment of various options.²⁵ Additionally, the issues such as social legislation, education, organisation of industry, taxation and others were part of these discussions.

Several fundamental principles, with subtle nuances, were common to the extensive range of opinions held by those who were in favour of restoring a sovereign Latvian nation-state: the state must be democratic, it would be based on the 1922 Constitution, the latter subject to revisions to avoid the most glaring undesirable features and errors of the inter-war Latvian state. An important feature of these discussions among Latvian exiles was that the future independent Latvian state would not be a new entity, but an "improved" version of the former Republic of Latvia. Despite the positive view of Kārlis Ulmanis that was held by most Latvian exiles, it is noteworthy that practically none of the plans for a restored independent Latvian state based on the principle of continuity called for emulation of the pre-war example set by K. Ulmanis. The new state was to be based on the 1922 Constitution with due correction of some of its shortcomings that became all too evident in the life of the country prior to the Ulmanis' coup.

Latvia as the member of a federation

Once it became evident to the exile community, through the passage of time, that realistic possibilities were not present for restoration of a Latvian nation-state, a number of efforts were made to examine alternatives, i.e., how to regain independence through aiming for the Latvian people to exercise their right to self-determination through political existence as members of a federation or union. Recognising that a free sovereign state was the ideal, a number of acceptable alternatives were discussed, were the ideal outcome prove not to be achievable.²⁶ In the same way as the proponents of a nation-state, the advocates of alternatives

²⁴ A. V., G. I. Starp dzirnakmeņiem maltie ...

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See the debates of the 1st session of the workshop: Ko latvieši svešumā var darīt ..., p. 59.

insisted that a future Latvia could only be part of a federation based on democratic principles as opposed to the totalitarian Soviet Union. The exile community differentiated between, for example, a European Federation as opposed to the Soviet Union: “[...] communist rule is based on Party dictatorship with all of the attendant consequences, whereas the idea of Europe is based on pluralistic democracy and individual freedom.”²⁷

The idea that an essential first step in fulfilling their aspirations was to achieve close cooperation between the Baltic states was all pervasive among Latvian exiles. The three Baltic peoples had never before found themselves in such close contact as in exile. Cooperation began as soon as individuals were settled in refugee camps and continued afterwards in their countries of residence. The concept of “the Balts” gained a permanent place in the self-awareness of Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian exiles as a unifying element; Latvians in exile to a far greater extent than previously began to identify themselves as Balts.²⁸ Cooperation between the three Baltic peoples was active and particularly significant in political activities. A similar fate that had befallen all three Baltic states during the Second World War led to very similar political demands and a single goal – restoration of Baltic states’ independence. Furthermore, Western politicians and society readily saw these three small peoples as part of a united entity – the Balts. Therefore, joint Baltic exile organisations were formed to be more effective in working towards their goals.

As part of discussions among the exile community on the future of the Baltic states, a considerable importance was attributed to a closer future cooperation. There was a considerable reflection on the unsuccessful attempts during the inter-war period to establish cooperative links between the Baltic states, and the exiles for their part issued warnings about not repeating the mistakes of the past and therefore to consolidate cooperation whilst in exile and in anticipation of eventual independence – of cooperation between the Baltic peoples and to promote formation of a common identity that could later find expression at a different level, including political and economic cooperation.²⁹ Although the need for cooperation between the Baltic states was generally accepted, there was no general agreement upon the manner and possible extent of this future cooperation. Opinions ranged from a need to gain greater appreciation of one another’s culture to the necessity for close economic cooperation, retaining individual political sovereignty, but not excluding formation of a union or even federation of the Baltic states.³⁰ Latvian lawyer and politician Felikss Cielēns even drafted and published a set of principles for successful functioning of a Baltic federation in 1947. He proposed the federation to ensure full equality for all three states within the federation by equal participation in the government. Federation would be governed by Baltic Federal council composed of 10 members from each state’s parliament, which would elect a president and two presidential assistants, and create a federal government of 9 ministers. To ensure equality, three ministers would be chosen from each country, and the post of the president would in each new term change to the next country.³¹

²⁷ *Āboliņš, K. J.* Latviešu trimdas situācija ..., p. 26.

²⁸ *Bračs, J.* Baltijas tautu vienības ideja un vienības darbs trimdā [The idea of unity of Baltic states and work of unification in exile]. In: *Latviešu trimdas desmit gadi ...*, p. 283.

²⁹ *Balodis, A.* Baltiešu vienības centieni pagātnē un nākotnē [Efforts for Baltic unification in past and future]. *Jaunā Gaita*, 1958. No. 14.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Cielēns, F.* Baltijas Federācija [Baltic Federation]. *Jurista Vārds*, 31 July 2012. No. 31(370).

A different approach that was discussed by the exiles as to how the Latvian people might realise their right to self-determination consisted of it happening in the context of a Federation of Europe, even as member of a United States of Europe. The extent to which Latvia might be a part of such entities ranged from a restored Latvian state with “some limitations on sovereignty in favour of a united Europe”³² to being an integral member of a federation with a single government. For example, one of the models discussed by Latvian exiles called for guarantees for the freedom of the Latvian people by means of “a social and cultural independent Latvian people acting in an independent Central European Union in which sovereign power is held by the peoples that make up this union and a central government”.³³ The popularity of idea envisaging Latvia as a member of a Federation of Europe was greatly boosted by ideas current in Europe at that time about an ever greater European integration. As a result, the latter process was actively discussed in the exile community. The topic of “The Baltic states in the light of European unification policies” was chosen for the Baltic Student Days held in 1959 in Germany; the principal speakers that discussed this topic were Dr. D. Loeber, Prof. N. Valters and Prof. A. Aizsilnieks.³⁴

There were a number of reasons why the advocates of this form of Latvian statehood considered it to be the most appropriate one. One view held that nationalism and, accordingly, the nation-state were no longer valid concepts and that exiles were clinging to the idea of a nation-state since all other forms of past governance in Latvia were associated with political, cultural and economic oppression of the Latvian people.³⁵ A very similar opinion held that the states in Central Europe which had been created on the basis of nationalism that admitted no compromises would not be able to guarantee freedom or independence of small peoples such as the Latvians.³⁶ A number of practical considerations underpinned the attractiveness of the federation concept, such as economic challenges that could beset the existence of small states, these being more readily met through integration into a broad federation.³⁷

The advocates defending the federation idea emphasised the fact that any of the concepts of European unity or federation might be easier to achieve, simultaneously guaranteeing Latvian freedom in the form of a state, and they would be an adequate ideological alternative to the Soviet Union. A federation of the democratic states of Europe might also be an idea that would appeal to all of the oppressed peoples of Central Europe, in this way helping to free them from the influence of the Soviet Union.³⁸

Overall, the ideas that freedom of the Latvian people could be guaranteed by membership in a larger democratic federation or union were less popular in the Latvian exile community than the idea of restoring a nation-state; however, the former took greater account of practical issues. The ideas were considerably closer to

³² Kalniņš, B. Domas par Latvijas valsti ...

³³ Peniķis, J. Latvija pasaules fonā: 1945. gada un 1975. gada modeļi [Latvia against the background of the world. Models of 1945 and 1975]. In: Tāltālu tūlumā ..., p. 9.

³⁴ Neieputinātie cilvēki. Baltiešu studentu dienas Vācijā no 7. līdz 11. augustam [People who did not become snowbound. Baltic students days in Germany from August 7 to 11]. *Jaunā Gaita*, 1959. No. 23.

³⁵ Balodis, A. Latvija – Baltija – Eiropa [Latvia – Baltics – Europe]. *Jaunā Gaita*, 1958. No. 13.

³⁶ Peniķis, J. Latvija pasaules fonā ..., p. 9.

³⁷ Streips, L. Domas par Latvijas valsti [Thoughts on Latvian state]. III. Latvijas uzbūve [Structure of Latvia]. *Jaunā Gaita*, 1967. No. 62.

³⁸ Āboliņš, K. J. Latviešu trimdas situācija ..., p. 26.

the real situation in Europe, were inspired by the ideas about European unification and in accepting the demise of the idea of a nation-state they took a greater account of the situation in Latvia under Soviet occupation, and the consequences brought by the occupation, in particular, the economic ramifications.

Conclusions

Latvian exile communities were imbued with the idea of restoring a free and independent Latvia. Apart from practical political campaigns that were intended to help bring this about the exile, community devoted considerable effort to discussing both how this goal might be achieved and also what should be the system of governance in a restored free Latvian state. Without any doubt, the future state would be a democracy. The governance concepts that were expressed in public debate and in the exile community media were of two kinds. The most widely held and most popular view, the one shared by the majority of Latvian exiles, including all principal exile organisations, was that the restored Latvian state would have to be a sovereign nation-state, a continuation of the Republic of Latvia which was illegally suppressed and would be based on the 1922 Latvian constitution. It was also the majority's view that the deficiencies in the Constitution would need to be corrected to avoid the failings evident in Latvian political life before the Ulmanis' coup, for example, the plethora of tiny political parties.

The views that were held about the governance of an independent and free Latvia that would be restored in an unknown future time were closely linked to opinions current in exile society about the likelihood of such a renewal taking place. Initially, the predominant sentiment was naive optimism. However, after a number of decades spent in exile, a part of the émigré community accepts that the hoped-for renewal of the Republic of Latvia as a nation-state is impossible in the circumstances of the times and considers alternative forms of statehood. The latter might be realistically achievable and would ensure political self-determination by the Latvian people, and would secure their national interests. The discussed formations included a Federation of Baltic States, or Latvia as part of a future European Federation or the United States of Europe.

There were no realistic practical steps that could have been taken by the exile communities to attain their goal of restored Baltic independence faced with the political environment of the period from the 1950s to the 1980s. The most important action that could be undertaken in pursuit of their goal was to ensure the continued recognition of a *de jure* existence of the Republic of Latvia. Continuity of an arguably tenuous and theoretical legal existence of the Baltic states as international persons was highly important as this was the principal basis for the demands that Baltic states' independence be renewed. A wide-ranging discussion of the governance of a future restored Latvian state on their part led to an evolution of the political thinking among the members of the exile community. Through definition of their goals, the community activists could realistically and critically assess the likelihood of success based on activities that they were able to mount, and search for effective methods to gain an opportunity for the Latvian people to exercise their right to political self-determination in practice.

Summary

1. The citizens of Latvia who found themselves in involuntary exile fervently desired to return to a free Latvia, and the goal of a restored independent state was a constant thread that united Latvian exiles over nearly 50 years. There was a considerable public debate about how restoration could come to pass, as well as regarding the possible forms of economic and political system of the future restored state.
2. The position regarding the appropriate mode of governance for a restored Latvian state was closely linked to the ideas prevalent among exiles about the manner in which this restoration could come about. During the initial post-war period, the predominant view was that the occupation of Latvia was going to be short-lived and that with the active assistance of Western countries the injustice done to the Baltic states would soon be shortly put right. After migration in the early 1950s to several countries around the world, the optimism that liberation of Latvia would take place with the help of Western powers gradually faded, with a sharp decline setting in after the events in Hungary in 1956.
3. Two principally disjoint schools of thought formed about the nature of a restored Latvian state, an unsurprising result given the diversity of views that were expressed at one time or another. The future state could either be a sovereign nation-state, or Latvia might join a union or a federation.
4. Several fundamental principles were common to the extensive range of opinions held by those who were in favour of restoring a sovereign Latvian nation-state: the state must be democratic and based on the Constitution of 1922, the latter subject to revisions to avoid the most glaring undesirable features and errors of the inter-war Latvian state.
5. The idea that freedom of the Latvian people could be guaranteed by membership in a larger democratic federation or union was less popular in the Latvian exile community than that of restoration restoring a nation-state. However, the second approach was considerably closer to the real situation in Europe and inspired by the ideas about European unification and accepting the demise of the idea of a nation-state. Thereby, it took a greater account of the situation in Latvia under Soviet occupation, including the consequences brought about by the occupation, in particular, the economic ramifications.

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