

Baltic Fund News

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Quarter Million Dollar Donation to the Baltic Studies Endowment

On March 6, the [American Latvian Association](#) presented a check for \$250,000 to the University of Washington's Baltic Studies Endowed Fund. The gift will be used to support the University's Baltic Studies Program, the newest addition to the [Department of Scandinavian Studies](#). The Baltic Studies Program is the only program in North America to offer courses in the language, literature, culture, and history of all three Baltic countries - Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

The money, along with more than 12,000 books, newspapers, microfilms and other materials about the Baltic States, comes from the liquidation of the Latvian Studies Center in Association with Western Michigan University. "We are grateful to the University of Washington for expanding the Department of Scandinavian Studies by including the Baltic Studies Program, which we view as a continuation of the task begun by the LSC," said the representatives of leading Latvian-American organizations. To celebrate the gift, supporters of the Baltic Studies Program were invited to an event in Kane Hall that included speeches by faculty and donors and a performance by the UW Chamber Chorus, which presented the works of Latvian and Swedish composers.

Thomas DuBois, associate professor of Scandinavian studies and co-founder of the Baltic Studies Program, spoke about the shortage of information in the USA about the Baltic countries and the crucial importance of the Baltic Studies Program, not only in Washington State, but nationwide. "We need to have places where the right information about the Baltic countries is generated," he said. He thanked the [American Latvian Association](#) and other supporters for their trust in the UW's commitment and ability to undertake this crucial task and promised to "endeavor always to live up to that investment."

In addition to support from donors, the Baltic Studies Program is supported by several UW departments, including the [Department of Scandinavian Studies](#) and the [Jackson School of International Studies](#). This combination of support has ensured a full-time lectureship in Baltic Studies for the next five years. The Baltic Studies Endowment, presently at \$401,000, produces interest which will permanently be used to fund Baltic Studies at the University of Washington. As the Endowment grows, so also the program will continue to expand.

"Our hope is that in five years we will be able to renew the lectureship or,

best of all, that the Baltic Studies Endowment will be able to support a tenure track position," says Terje Leiren, Chair of the Department of Scandinavian Studies. "Our department is committed to doing all we can to see that this happens."

The Duties of the Citizen in an Information Age

**Speech by Professor Thomas DuBois in Kane Hall on March 6, 1998
at the celebration of the \$250,000 donation to the Baltic Studies
Endowment**

It is my unenviable task but great privilege to bring this wonderful reception to a close with some words of thanks to all of you who have been involved in the work of creating a home for Baltic studies at the University of Washington and all of you who continue striving to ensure its future growth and viability on our campus. In this context, I would like to offer a few thoughts on the duties of the citizen in an information age, and in so doing, salute you for your exemplary and important efforts. You members of the Committee for Baltic Studies at the University of Washington, you donors and friends of the Baltic Studies program, you students and contributors in its courses deserve the thanks and admiration which this occasion celebrates. Your acts are a lesson for us all.

Not very long ago at all (!), I was a graduating high school student, saying goodbye to the securities and comparative ease of high school life and about to embark on the rigors of college education. I was NOT the class valedictorian; that lofty title fell to a guy we all called "Leo," but whose full name, we knew, was Leonas Bernotas. Leo was a cut-up: intensely funny, amazingly hardworking, and very intent on becoming valedictorian. Why he wanted that so much we did not know. But we found out on the night of our graduation. There, in the graduation ceremony, with all of his classmates assembled and all their families and friends, the mayor, the local clergy, and the town newspaper journalists, Leo used his valedictory address to explain in fiery and cogent detail the injustices faced by contemporary Lithuania, his parents' homeland. Instead of offering us the simpering platitudes and fond memories which usually characterize a valedictorian's speech, Leo laid bare for us the geopolitical realities of our day and forced all of us to see how little we knew about the situation facing the Baltic countries in our day.

It is safe to say that many of Leo's listeners did not even know where the Baltic countries could be found on the globe -after all, as **Estonian Ambassador Tomas Iives** remarked in [his address](#) here at the University of Washington a few years ago- Soviet ideology and control of information had removed the Baltics from the maps and the consciousness of most of the world by then. In that era of the 1970s, Leo's defiant act constituted one of the few ways in which Baltic Americans could fight against the forced amnesia of the

postwar era, reminding people of the existence, plights, and rights of the Baltic peoples. Leo's act, as you all know so well, was repeated over and over again by Baltic Americans throughout North America, holding the torch, bearing witness, pressing the issues of the Baltics in a world which couldn't or wouldn't remember. Leo fought to spread information because he knew -just as the Soviets knew- that true information would bring about the end of Soviet oppression.

In the 1990s, things have changed for the Baltics, and happily, for the better. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are again recognized members of the world's community of nations and in the last several years we have watched their gradual reintegration into the institutions, economy, and consciousness of the world. Comparatively speaking, in fact, the Baltics are much in the news today. In a recent "Ernie" cartoon in the Seattle P-I (February 24, 1998), for instance, author Bud Grace depicts himself signing book autographs in a Tallinn bookstore. As he signs a copy of his book for an enthusiastic Estonian customer, he is showing asking: "Is that with two E's or three?" This is a joke which requires a certain cognizance of its audience: you have to know what written Estonian looks and sounds like to really enjoy the humor. That's expecting a lot of an American public that two decades ago wouldn't have known where Estonia is. And the notion of an American author signing book copies in the Estonian capital- who would have imagined such developments two decades ago?

But recent press about the Baltics has not always been so positive; consider, for instance, Thomas L. Friedman's polemic against Baltic membership in NATO, printed in the same newspaper on February 16 of this year and part of a nationally syndicated column. Without the worrisome bothers of evidence or thought, the dimwitted columnist asserts that nearly everything wrong with the world internationally must in fact all derive, somehow, from Madeleine Albright's willingness to extend NATO membership to what Friedman continues to describe as the "Baltic States." Preaching the same gospel of appeasement which willed Americans to forget the existence of the Baltics in the past, Friedman depicts respect for the rights and prerogatives of the Baltic countries as a threat to world peace. Painting a fantastic scenario of world conflagration, Friedman sneeringly quips: "But don't worry, sleep well, Latvia will be in NATO."

Anyone who knows about the Baltics today would be outraged by Friedman's remarks, and I'm sure that by now thousands of angry letter-writers have set him straight. But once I got over my own anger at seeing such drivel in print, I tried to remember that this back and forth of ideas, this open debate of policy, is what our own country was founded on. This was the dream of the American revolutionaries: that out of the chaos of differing views freely expressed and information freely exchanged, the right decisions would emerge and democracy would prevail. In this light, even Friedman's column can be seen as a positive development, at least if it is matched by sound and cogent arguments to the contrary. This is what our founding fathers hoped would

happen, placing their faith in the exchange of ideas to counter both the narrow self-interests of a ruling elite and the equally unjust demands which they termed the "tyranny of the majority." But crucially, of course, this saving and central exchange of ideas presupposes the generation of ideas in the first place and that task the founding fathers left largely unaddressed.

It may seem strange in the aftermath of fifty years' of Soviet propaganda and "information management" to imagine a time when people took the notion of information simply for granted. It was as if we could all agree on the facts without effort and turn at once to the serious business of figuring out what to do about them. The idea that the facts might be lacking, or erroneous, or intentionally untrue simply didn't enter into the founding fathers' idealistic understandings. This failure on their part was ironic, of course, because privately they complained of the misperceptions and misunderstandings of the American situation in the distant British court which had helped precipitate the American conflict and revolution in the first place. It would take the better part of a century for Americans to fully understand the importance of discovering the facts and to establish the land-grant system of universities and colleges which today constitutes the world's most powerful and effective research engine. This American research university system generates the ideas and trains the investigators whose work and insights will illuminate the entire nation's understandings of the world. They do so for the benefit of students who pay relatively little for the chance to study and learn and who, we hope, will contribute in great ways to the future of our country. We know that these universities, researchers, and students play a central role in our achievement of democracy today.

But while the research university remains vital in the generation of information today, the modes of distributing information in our world have undergone rapid and largely unexplored change. In complex processes of information exchange which my colleagues in the School of Communication can explain, but which most of us hardly notice, a few large, international news information systems -Reuters, AP, CNN- increasingly determine what and if we learn about the world. These organizations not only report developments, they shape them, as American congressmen and world leaders increasingly tune the world over into C-span or news broadcasts to figure out what they're voting on and what it all means. Information must move fast: I have a friend who works at the Tokyo office of Reuters International. She was once called on the carpet because her report on a slight fluctuation on the dollar-to-yen exchange rate came out "significantly later" than the same report from the AP. "Significantly later" in this case meant one quarter of one second. In the Information Age, speed is everything.

But knowledge doesn't always come fast. In fact, new knowledge is always built on foundations which may take years or even decades to build. It takes time to learn Estonian, Latvian, or Lithuanian. It takes time to learn about a country's history and culture and society. It takes time to learn how to investigate an issue and present findings for the world to consider. That quiet,

diligent, but crucial work related to the Baltics now goes on right here at the University of Washington, thanks to you. Thanks to you, informed viewpoints regarding the Baltic countries can emerge in our public debates and hopefully on our news networks. Thanks to you, a new generation of researchers, entrepreneurs, and citizens can turn their thoughts to the Baltics. Thanks to you, American amnesia and misinformation regarding the Baltics can be dispelled. Through your efforts and generosity, the Baltics have a new presence in the Information Age and we at the University of Washington are proud to play a part in the work of conveying information regarding the Baltic countries.

You have seen and accepted the duties of the citizen in the Information Age: not simply to take in and express ideas, as the founding fathers imagined it, but to work to ensure the generation of accurate information in the first place and the creation of institutions to impart that information to other Americans. You have recognized the hard work behind producing the rapid news and views of the Information Age and you have ensured that there will be well-informed and cogent experts on the Baltic countries in the future. We at the University of Washington owe you a debt of gratitude and accept with enthusiasm the commitment which now exists between this institution and all of you. On behalf the Department of Scandinavian Studies, the Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies program, and the many administrators, staffmembers, faculty, and students involved in Baltic studies on this campus, I thank you for your efforts and your foresight.

"A Lasting Partnership"

**Speech by Irena Blekys in Kane Hall on March 6, 1998
at the celebration of the \$250,000 donation to the Baltic Studies
Endowment**

I am honored to speak on behalf of the Committee for The Baltic Program, representing the local Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian communities.

This program is truly a partnership between our communities and the University of Washington. Without the University's interest and commitment of funds from its budget, we would not have had the rich variety of courses, lectures, and visitors brought to this campus. Without a home in the Scandinavian Studies department under the guidance of [Terje Leiren](#), we would not have this ground breaking program which places the Baltics for the first time into a broader North European international context.

Without the far-sightedness of professors [Dan Waugh](#) and [Tom DuBois](#) and now James West, this program would not have had the smooth continuity from year to year as we were fundraising. Without [Guntis Smidchens'](#) skills in our three languages and cultures and his commitment to this program, we would

not have attracted and kept the fine students we have. Please let us show our appreciation for our University friends. When the Baltic Summer Institute started here at the University in 1994, we were all pleased and inspired by its success. It started with an initiative from the University, some funding from our community Foundations, and with your donations. But to succeed we needed an endowment. State budget cuts included university programs, and we would not survive long unless we started to build an endowment, to collect at a minimum \$775,000.

For all of us this seemed like an impossible figure. How could we raise such a sum at this time when our homelands had become independent and were seeking our help in rebuilding their societies? How could we raise this amount when none of us were professional fundraisers? It started with a small but highly symbolic donation. One of our first donations was a 5 Lats silver coin brought in by Mrs. Vija Ozols. This coin, she told us, was minted in Latvia in 1929 and had been buried by a friend of hers before the war. This friend then dug it up after independence and brought it to the USA when she came to visit Mrs. Ozols. Hearing about the collection that was underway for the new Baltic studies program, this lady donated the coin, saying there was no place for it---more fitting than the University of Washington.

The program caught the imagination of Mrs. Ozols' friend from Latvia and she responded. You dear friends here tonight also responded generously. Each of you have made a difference however small or large. And when we came together as a Baltic community and put our efforts into our first Baltic auction last year we raised over thirty thousand dollars, twice as much as we had expected. We found out we can raise the money.

Now with this wonderful donation of \$250,000, the program once again has caught the imagination of our American communities to see the potential of what we are building here. Thank you, again, Mr. Kukainis and the [American Latvian Association](#) for your leadership in bringing the program so much closer to its goal.

This fantastic gift on top of generous giving from you, from our communities, and from our friends launches us to a new level of investment in this program. Roughly \$400,000 remains to be raised to reach our goal. You who have supported us in the past are going to be asked again - in the next few weeks and months - to help, to stretch just a little more, to make a pledge of what you can give over the next year, or the next five years so that we are fully funded by 2003.

The word is out. More of our friends are including this program in their giving. In the past month, the department has received \$5,000, of this \$2,000 came in a variety of small and larger donations during the past week. Five people are also soon coming forward and pledging \$10,000 each lifting the total amount raised in the last month to \$55,000.

To reach our goal, we need more of your support to move to a new level of giving. Will you join us, will you think about what more you can do. No donation is too small because it builds with all our efforts. I know you are here tonight because you care about this program and want to see it funded.

I don't know if we will be so lucky again to attract the kind of gift that Mr. Kukainis and the [American Latvian Association](#) brought today, but I do know that if you and I continue to give and work towards reaching our goal, we will do it. Our dream of seeing a permanent Baltic Studies Program at the University of Washington will be a reality in the next millenium.

Thank you very much.

Baltic Program Events Winter and Spring Quarters 1998

Professor **Violeta Kelertas** (University of Illinois-Chicago) visited the UW on February 12-13. "Ricardas Gavelis and Baltic Postcolonialism" and "Recent Lithuanian Fiction" were the titles of her guest lectures in two courses, SCAND 345 "Baltic Cultures" and SCAND 427 "Scandinavian Women Writers."

"Eco-Nationalism in the Former USSR: Global Implications" was the title of a lecture on February 13 by Professor **Jane Dawson** (University of Oregon), author of *Eco-Nationalism: Anti-Nuclear Activism and National Identity in Russia, Lithuania and Ukraine* (Duke University Press 1996). The book was winner of the 1997 Shulman Book Prize for most outstanding book in Soviet/post-Soviet Studies.

The Cutting Edge of Nordic and Baltic Studies

Professor **David G. Kirby** (School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London) visited the University of Washington on May 28 and 29, for an intensive series of lectures to UW faculty, students and guests. Kirby is author of numerous publications about Baltic and Scandinavian History, including two recent books which present the Baltic in a new light: *The Baltic Sea*, which for fifty years of Soviet occupation was an impenetrable barrier between East and West, is today returning to its centuries-old traditions of serving as a highway which integrated the countries of northern Europe. His visit was sponsored by the Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies Center, the Department of Scandinavian Studies, the Baltic Program Fund, the History Department and the Center for West European Studies.

Kirby gave a guest lecture in a Scandinavian History class which explored the reasons for the expansion of the Swedish Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries. "Finlandization" was the topic of another guest lecture, surveying the policies of Finnish President Kekkonen during the Cold War.

On Thursday evening, May 28, Kirby gave a public lecture in the UW's new Boeing Auditorium, titled "European Integration and the Baltic Region: A Historical Perspective." He addressed the difficulty that some non-Europeans have in viewing the Baltic Sea basin as a distinct geographical region. A rich diversity of architectural styles in Baltic port cities, for example testifies to vibrant trade relations among the diverse peoples and cultures living around the sea. "The sea can give a focus to regional identity, and provide a solid, durable foundation to larger European integration."

On Friday afternoon, May 29, a panel of four graduate students presented their current research related to North Europe:

Andy Nestingen (MA program in Scandinavian Studies) in "Culture and the Movement Toward Revolutionary Violence: Finland 1905-1918", discussed Finland's general strike of 1905. The paper suggested that considering the nature of the strike helped illuminate the conflicts in Finland that culminated in her Civil War in 1918.

Anne Tuominen (Ph.D. program, Sociology), in "Expressing 'Estonia' Through Tourism" presented the main images of Estonia created by the Estonian tourism industry for foreign tourists. In contrast to the images created during Estonia's First Independence and Soviet periods, the touristic images today depict Estonia as a natural society with some European and few Russian influences.

Brian Hodges (M.A. program, Scandinavian Studies) analyzed cultural expressions of a unified region which are being created together with the planned bridge from Denmark to Sweden, in "Re-conceptualizing Regions: Rhetoric and Restructuring in Öresundsregionen."

Steve Grosse (M.A. program, Russian and East European Studies), spoke on "The Baltic States: Realistic Expectations from Swedish and Finnish Security Policies," reviewed trends of military aid given by these two non-aligned Baltic Sea states to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Differences in military aid can be seen as indicators according to which these three countries should pursue their own security agendas.

"These papers are at the cutting edge of scholarship in general," commented David Kirby. Issues of region and identity are of great interest in Europe as well as the USA. "Being young at this time of reevaluation, these researchers are not encumbered by the scholarship of the Cold War." Discussions continued at a reception after the panel, then stretched late into the evening at the Big Time Brewery.

Traveling to the Baltic...

As Spring Quarter 1998 nears its end, a number of UW faculty and students are preparing for trips to the Baltic countries.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Open Society Fund in Lithuania, a group of University of Washington School of Law faculty and students will be travelling to Kaunas, Lithuania, to teach a series of courses on law at Vytautas Magnus University.

In June, under the leadership of Professor **John Haley**, the group was intensively planning the eight-week summer schedule. The professors will lecture in their areas of specialization: **John Haley** (Comparative Law), **Stewart Jay** (Constitutional Law), **Linda Hume** (International Business Law), **Pat Kuzler** (Law and Medicine), and **Debby Maranville** (Administrative Law). Law school students **Scott Davis** and **Lauren Rayment** will teach courses on United States Institutions and on Legal Writing.

1997-98 Fulbright exchangee **Robert Smurr** was able to extend his stay in Tartu, Estonia to November 1998, thanks to a grant from the International Research and Exchanges Board. Smurr is writing a dissertation on the historical roots of the Estonian environmental movement.

A 1998-99 Fulbright Fellowship was awarded this year to **Dan Ryan**, to travel to Tartu, Estonia, in order to continue his research on 19th century Estonian and Russian witchcraft. "Who were the witches, those shadowy and mysterious figures behind illnesses, crop failures, and other peasant misfortunes? I will examine this question as it pertains to nineteenth-century Estonia. Estonia presents an interesting case for scholars because historically, in contrast to other parts of Europe, the majority of suspected witches were male. Using folkloric and ethnographic sources, I hope to determine how peasants' social roles may have left them vulnerable to suspicions of witchcraft within their communities." In December of 1997, Ryan received the M.A. degree in Russian and East European Studies. After returning from Estonia, he will continue his graduate studies at the University of Washington.

Vizma Schulmeisters, a graduate student in Social Work, received a Fritz Grant to conduct quantitative and qualitative research about the retired population of Latvia. She will work at the Human Rights Bureau to assess the economic living conditions of retirees, and will conduct an independent qualitative survey, visiting small, medium and large cities in all four regions, Kurzeme, Zemgale, Vidzeme un Latgale collecting the retired populations perspective of the economic situation.

During her upcoming trip to Latvia, **Kathrine Young**, Graduate student in

Museology, plans to explore possibilities for future cooperation with museums in Latvia.

Bryn Purcell, who is studying toward the Bachelor's degree in Scandinavian Area Studies, will spend the fall semester at the University of Latvia, studying in an exchange program sponsored by the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire.

The Baltic Studies Program: A Look Ahead

An expanded curriculum of Baltic studies courses will be offered in academic year 1998-1999. All three languages will be taught at the first-year level (ESTO 101, 102, 103; LATV 101, 102, 103; LITH 101, 102, 103). Teaching Assistant Jura Avizienis has been reappointed to teach Elementary Lithuanian, and the department plans to appoint a second graduate Teaching Assistant to teach Estonian language. Advanced instruction in the three languages will be offered in ESTO 490, LATV 490 and LITH 490.

In Autumn Quarter, Guntis Šmidchens will teach a new course, SCAND 334, "Immigrant and Ethnic Folklore," exploring the traditions of Baltic-Americans and Scandinavian-Americans.

In Winter Quarter, Christine Ingebritsen will teach SCAND 326 "Scandinavia in World Affairs," including a section about Nordic and Baltic politics; Terje Leiren will teach SCAND 380 "History of Scandinavia to 1720", including discussion of the Swedish empire and its territories in Estonia and Latvia.

SCAND 345 "Baltic Cultures" will be taught in Spring Quarter by Guntis Šmidchens, introducing students to masterpieces of Baltic art, music and literature in English translation. Plans are underway for a series of guest lecturers and cultural events to enhance the upcoming year's program.

Fundraising News

Coming on October 17: 1998 Baltic Auction

Over 350 people attended the "Follow the Amber Road" auction in April 1997, raising \$30,000 for the University of Washington's Baltic Studies Program Endowment Fund. Lucky bidders went home with Caribbean cruise tickets, a basketball autographed by the Portland Trailblazers, amber jewelry, computer games, a hand-carved Baltic nativity scene, and use of a condominium at Whistler.

The auction committee would like to thank everyone who contributed to last year's auction and let you know that it is already procuring items for the 1998 auction. If you wish to donate an item, please call a community

coordinator for a procurement form and instructions.

The 1998 goal is to raise \$50,000 for the Baltic Studies Program Endowment Fund, to support the University of Washington's growing program in Baltic languages, history and culture. We hope that you will join us for an evening of fun in support of Baltic Studies at the University of Washington.

Amanda Floan, Auction Chair

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Send comments or questions to: uwscand@u.washington.edu