

Baltic Fund News

Summer 2000

Latvian President Visits UW



Photo courtesy of: Mary Levin, UW

On February 14, 2000, Dr. Guntis Ulmanis, President of Latvia from 1993 to 1999, addressed faculty, students and Seattle-area community members in the Walker Ames Room of Kane Hall, with a speech titled "Latvia in the New Millennium."

The speech was the highlight of an intensive day during which President Ulmanis toured the Baltic book collection at the UW Library, lunched with administrators and faculty, and met with Latvian language students. President Ulmanis noted that his visit to the University of Washington was an "expression of gratitude for the work you have done."

Impressions gained during a twenty-day tour of American businesses and government agencies set the tone of the President's speech. Ulmanis looked ahead to the new millennium with optimism: "In Europe, the time of large countries has ended. In Europe, collective will and the power of small countries prevail. Europe is irreversibly going the path of democracy and freedom, and Latvia has been, and will continue to be a bright example on this path." [\[Full text of speech in English\]](#)

Perhaps the most moving moment of the day came when the University of Washington Chamber Singers sang the Latvian song, "[Put vejini](#)" at the introduction of Ulmanis's speech. "The song you heard a few moments ago was also sung in 1994 at the Liberty Monument in Riga, in honor of the American President, Bill Clinton. Mr. Clinton was moved to tears by this song, and almost the same thing is happening to me today. This song is not only a melody, this song is not only folklore; this song is like a bridge which unites our hearts, our minds and our feelings of responsibility."

UW Chamber Singers Baltic Tour 2000

It all began three years ago, when the University of Washington's premier student choir first encountered the magical world of Baltic songs. It

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culminated on the Song Festival stage in Tallinn, when they joined a choir of ten thousand singers at this year's Estonian-Finnish Song Festival.

This Baltic odyssey took place during the short break between the Spring and Summer Quarters, on June 8-19, 2000. The ten-day whirlwind tour included concerts in six cities: Vilnius and Klaipeda in Lithuania, Liepaja and Riga in Latvia, and Tartu and Tallinn in Estonia. Baltic host choirs in each city helped make arrangements for lodging, food, and concert halls.

Between concerts and tours of the host cities, the Singers also enjoyed a rich program of musical culture and history: In Vilnius they experienced traditional singing and dancing with the Vilnius University folklore ensemble. A rock opera in Liepaja was followed by a performance of Verdi's Requiem in Riga. And finally, the massive Song Festival in Tallinn recalled more than a century of choral traditions in all three countries.



Arriving in Vilnius.

Ancient history appeared at every step. The 14th century Gediminas Fortress in Vilnius reflected the fame of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. During a tour of the Vilnius University Library, a student remarked that the university was founded in 1579, eighty seven years after Columbus sailed to America!

Liberty Monument, Riga



The Baltic countries are inspiring for choir singers worldwide. In Riga, the singers stopped for a photograph at the Latvian Freedom Monument, which honors the choir singers who sang for independence.





Flowers for conductor Geoffrey Boers, Tartu University

In their six concerts, the UW Chamber Singers presented a program of recent American music- all of it composed after 1990. Host choirs and other newly found friends in the Baltic were treated to a gift CD of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian songs, "Music of the Baltic Lands," which the Singers recorded in spring of 1999.

WTO Conference, Nordic-Baltic Roundtable

On December 2, 1999, Professor Christine Ingebritsen's class, "Europe Today," received a real treat fitting the course title: Six European delegates at the World Trade Organization conference in Seattle took time out of their busy schedule to convene a round table discussion of northern Europe and its perspectives on world trade. The event was open to the public, and attracted a full hall of UW faculty, students and community members.

Newspapers around the world reported massive anti-WTO demonstrations in the streets of Seattle, but the roundtable participants gave a more sober view of the complex discussions taking place inside the conference meeting rooms. The audience was intrigued by cross-regional connections which break down traditional ideas that split the Baltic Sea region neatly into East and West. Lithuania is quite similar to Norway, for example, in its desire to protect native traditions of food production, in stark contrast to Estonians and Danes who strive to open their borders to free trade.

Roundtable participants were Priit Pallum, Ambassador of Estonia to the UN headquarters and other international organizations in Geneva; Ulrik Vestergaard Knudsen, Second Secretary, Royal Danish Embassy, Washington DC; Dr. Nijole Zambaite, Minister-Counselor, Embassy of Lithuania, Washington DC; Kristian Ødegaard, Minister-Counselor, Economic Section, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Washington DC; Peter Kleen, Director General, National Board of Trade, Sweden; and Normunds Popens, Deputy Director, Foreign Economic Policy Dept., Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia.

"Quiet, Diligent, Crucial Work" at the

University of Washington...

Last June, the Baltic Program gratefully said farewell to one of its founders, Professor Thomas DuBois, who has accepted a position at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. As Professor of Finnish here in Seattle, DuBois taught popular courses in folklore and mythology, among them the annual "Finno-Ugric Epic" course, which studied the Estonian national epic, Kalevipoeg. In 1994, he was a key member of the faculty team that explored uncharted academic territory, establishing the first American university program to teach all three national languages of the Baltic countries.



Marlena Otlans, representing the Baltic students, thanks Tom DuBois for his work in founding the first Baltic Studies program in the United States. Photo courtesy of Vija Rauda.

In 1997, Tom DuBois spoke about the goals of the Baltic Program, the duties of an American citizen, and the mission of the university as a whole: As news today travels around the world in microseconds, it appears that learning comes with the click of a mouse. It seems that instantaneous transmission of knowledge is progress, and that "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 our University of Washington," said Tom DuBois. Tom's words aptly describe his own passionate work over the past seven years, creating and ensuring the future of the Baltic Studies Program.

Looking forward to the new millennium, we congratulate Professor Stephen Hanson as the new Chair of the UW's Russian, East European and Central Eurasian Studies Center. Since the Baltic Program's founding in 1994, the REECAS Center has worked with the Department of Scandinavian Studies to ensure that American students are able to study the languages, culture and history of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

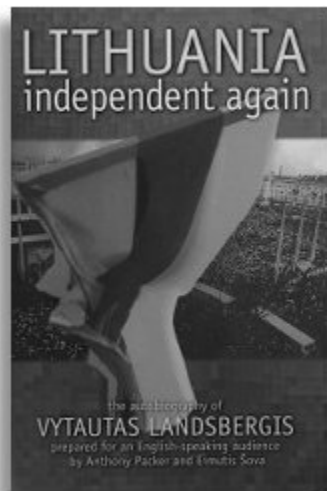


Three REECAS Directors have passed the baton since the Baltic Program's founding in 1994: Professors Stephen Hanson, James West and Dan Waugh. Photo courtesy of Andris Rogainis.



The Department of Scandinavian Studies, like REECAS, has had three Chairs presiding over the Baltic Program's development since 1994: Professors Patricia Conroy, Jan Sjøvik and Terje Leiren. The Scandinavian Department, which this year celebrated its ninetieth birthday, is proud to view the Baltic Program as a core element in its curriculum.

The crucial work produces results: Since 1994, more than 120 students have studied Estonian, Latvian or Lithuanian language at the University of Washington.



Landsbergis book published by UW Press

Among the recent publications by the University of Washington Press is Lithuania: Independent Again, an English translation of the political autobiography by Vytautas Landsbergis (Luzis prie Baltijos, Vilnius: Vaga, 1997). For information, contact the UW Press Order Department at 1 (800) 441-4115 or uwpord@u.washington.edu

Sixth Year of Baltic Studies at the UW

The Academic Year 1999-2000 saw a colorful group of students entering the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian language classes. Among them were Professor **Thomas DuBois**, who studied Lithuanian, and Professors **Gary Handwerk** and **Particia Conroy**, who enrolled in the Basic Latvian language class. **George Rueckert** studied Estonian in preparation for his Fulbright Exchange to Tartu University.

Among this year's graduates were **Joshua Leggett**, who completed the BA in Scandinavian Studies specializing in Latvian history; his undergraduate thesis studied the emergence of the independent Republic of Latvia in 1918 as compared to Norwegian independence in 1904 and Iceland in 1945.

Graduate student **Jim Kleinschmit** earned the M.A. in Russian and East European Studies, defending a thesis about the Kaliningrad District of Russia and its role in the integration of the Baltic Sea region. A substantial portion of the work was devoted to Kaliningrad-Lithuanian relations. Thanks to Lithuanian courses he took at the UW, Kleinschmit was able to use valuable sources published in that language.

A growing community of UW students is again in the Baltic this year: Undergraduates **Janis Elksnitis** and **Marita Graube** will study at the University of Latvia during autumn semester 2000. Three graduate students are abroad on Fulbright Fellowships: **Jura Avizienis** is in Lithuania studying the memoirs of Siberian deportees. **Janis Elksnitis** is in Latvia studying the culture of that country's eastern district, Latgale. **George Rueckert** is in Estonia, studying the works of Vasily Zhukovsky, a Russian poet who lived in Tartu during the early 19th century.

In Spring Quarter 2000, the Advanced Latvian class tackled an ambitious translation project. Having learned that the UW Chamber Singers were traveling to the Baltic and planned to attend a performance of the Latvian rock opera, "Kaupens, My Dear," six students translated the libretto from Latvian into English. **Janis Elksnitis, Marita Graube, Imanta Holmquist, Marisa Hougardy, Max Olson** and **Jake Sparling** met weekly to discuss, debate, critique and interpret a team translation of this major work in Latvian literature.

When the forty members of the UW Chamber Singers arrived in Latvia, this translation opened yet another page in their fascinating encounter with modern Baltic cultures.

Scandinavian and Baltic Fiddlers Meet



Laima Gaigalas

On October 14, 1999, students in the course "Immigrant and Ethnic Folklore" encountered living musical traditions of Baltic and Scandinavian-Americans. Three fiddlers told about their own musical education, compared national styles of music, and described the dancing communities in which their music is popular, both in the United States and in the European homelands.

Laima Gaigalas described Lithuanian folk music



performances in college pubs and at the Seattle Folklife Festival, Ingrida Erdmanis discussed connections between folk musicians in Latvia and the United States, and Peter Michaelsen told of the Scandinavian music and dance revival in Seattle. Videotapes of the lecture were added to a growing archive of events at the University of Washington, to be used in future lectures and research on Baltic topics.



Ingrida Erdmanis



Peter Michaelsen and
Sue Thompson

On the following weekend, the fiddlers continued the living traditions that they had described in class: Michaelsen played at the annual Skandia ball. Gaigalas and Erdmanis performed for about three hundred people at the Baltic community dance organized at the Latvian Center by the Amber Road Committee.

News from the UW Library

Development of UW's Baltic library collections has continued at an especially brisk pace throughout 2000. In February all materials in the Latvian Studies Center gift that had not yet been fully cataloged (approximately 8,000 items out of the total gift of 12,000 items) were moved to a new and spacious processing facility near UW's main Suzzallo Library, where they were unpacked and arranged on shelves alongside other East European materials for easy sorting, prioritization, and processing. Since that move, the Library's Slavic and East European Section has redoubled efforts to provide full cataloging for books, periodicals and microfilms in the LSC collection, beginning with materials in subject areas of greatest interest to UW's students and faculty--including Latvian literature, folklore, history, art, architecture, theater and music. From February to August, more than 1,000 additional books, periodicals, and microfilm sets were fully processed, entered into the UW Library's online catalog, and made available for check-out in Suzzallo Library's open bookstacks.

This summer UW paid on-site visits to our major suppliers of Baltic area materials in Riga, Tallinn, and Vilnius. Since 1996 the Library's Slavic and East European Section has made a concerted effort to build intensive book and

periodical exchange relationships with the national libraries of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Over four years these interinstitutional arrangements have yielded burgeoning collections of new Baltic materials at UW, in exchange for books and journals purchased and sent by the UW Library to each of the Baltic national libraries. However, staff turnover at all three national libraries over the past two years recently made it advisable for UW to solidify good working relationships with our new Baltic library colleagues in person. These visits, which Professor Guntis Šmidchens made on behalf of the Library during his June-July trip to the Baltics, have reinforced UW's position with the national libraries as a strategic partner.

Meanwhile, the most important books and journals from all three countries continue to arrive at the Library in large numbers. Capable library staff with good knowledge of Latvian and Lithuanian (and, in one instance, native ability) make it possible for UW to do a first-rate job of acquiring, cataloging, and providing assistance using Baltic materials. Just a handful of notable titles from among the many hundreds of outstanding books and periodicals received in the past year include:

- **Anthology of Latvian choral music**, 1873-2000 in 12 volumes (with accompanying audio disks)
- **The Electronic atlas of Latvia** (CD-ROM)
- Lithuanian literary periodicals: **Akiracai; Baltos Lankos; Literatura ir Menas**
- Estonian literary periodicals: **Eesti Kirjandusmuseumi Aastaraamat; Keel ja Kirjandus; Looming**
- **Lithuanian mythological tales** (Vilnius, 1998)
- **The manor houses of Viljandi county, Estonia** (Viljandi, 1999)
- **Estonian theater**, by Jaak Rahesoo (Tallinn, 1999)
- **Never-built Riga** (an album of unrealized architectural plans through history)

In addition to the usual books, albums, atlases, periodicals, and microfilm archives of major newspapers, in coming months we in the Library plan to increase efforts to acquire audio disks of new and traditional music from the Baltics, video recordings of the most important Baltic feature and documentary films, and quality multimedia CD-ROMs.

Individuals with Web access can browse through UW's growing Baltic collections by pointing a Web browser at <http://www.lib.washington.edu> On that page under "Find It," click on "UW Libraries Catalog." Keyword searches for "Latvia," "Lithuania," or "Estonia" (for example) are good ways to gain a very general view of the range and extent of the Library's most recent Baltic acquisitions and overall holdings. Searches by author and specific subject headings are, of course, also possible. Questions about specific holdings are welcome anytime and can be sent by e-mail to mbiggins@u.washington.edu

Thanks to the many generous gifts in kind, large and small, that have reached

us from individuals and organizations throughout the United States, and to a dynamic current acquisitions program, the UW Library continues its rapid evolution into a major comprehensive research resource for Baltic studies.

Dr. Michael Biggins
Slavic & East European Section
University of Washington Libraries

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