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Baltic studies newsletter

Convergences in Baltic Studies: Past, Present and Future

PRESENT AND FUTURE CONVERGENCES



Vėjas Liulevičius

Vėjas Liulevičius, AABS President Elect, 2010-2012, Associate Professor of History, University of Tennessee

Since the founding of AABS in 1968, the Baltic world has of course changed beyond all recognition, and this seems an especially apt time to take stock of the many convergences and continuities so evident today.

In these essays, presidents of the AABS look back to evaluate a great store of shared experience. They note key continuities: the succession of generations caught up in the work of the AABS; the challenges of “thinking Baltically” in terms of conceiving of Baltic Studies as a whole greater than its parts of individual histories and cultures of Baltic peoples studied in isolation from one another; the continuing challenge of engaging specialists in the Baltic countries themselves in the larger undertaking of Baltic Studies.

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AABS Archives: Twelfth Conference on Baltic Studies

HISTORICAL 1990 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS BY ANDREJS PLAKANS

Some decades ago among scholars who thought about societies on a world wide scale there existed a theory that maintained that in the course of evolution Communist and non-Communist societies would converge by becoming more like each other. I have not checked the current status of this theory in light of

the political history of the past year, but I would suspect that it has not fared so well. Indeed I would suspect that it probably ceased to be very influential long before the present, and, as an historian, I can't help but feel a certain degree of *Schadenfreude* that historical events have once again confounded the prognos-

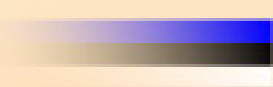
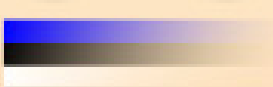
ticators among us. Nonetheless, the idea of convergence as such is still a valid hypothesis: certainly it is still one of the many patterns of historical change that can happen and have happened in the course of historical time and therefore it can be used to explore the present.

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Learn a Baltic language!

 ESTONIAN 

 LATVIAN 

 LITHUANIAN 



The Baltic Studies Summer Institute (BALSSI) offers intensive Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian language courses and a cultural enhancement program which introduces students to the rich world of Baltic history and culture.

The Center for Russia, East Europe and Central Asia (CREECA) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison will host the Baltic Studies Summer Institute (BALSSI) in the summer of 2010 (June 14-August 6). First- and **second-year*** Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian language courses will be offered, as well as lectures (in English) on Baltic history and culture and a variety of cultural events related to the Baltic lands.

BALSSI is sponsored by a consortium of twelve U.S. universities and receives additional support from the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Lithuanian Foundation.

BALSSI at the University of Wisconsin-Madison would like to acknowledge the generous assistance we have received from Madison-Vilnius Sister Cities and Žaibas Lithuanian Dancers. Read about BALSSI events hosted by these two local community organizations in the *2009 MVSC Summer Newsletter*. In addition, we would like to thank the U.S. Baltic Foundation for their collaboration with BALSSI.

For more information about BALSSI 2010, visit our website <http://www.creeca.wisc.edu/balssi/> or contact Nancy Heingartner, BALSSI program coordinator, balssi@creeca.wisc.edu, 1-608-262-3379.

**Scheduling of classes at the second-year level is contingent on sufficient enrollment, and may be canceled due to low enrollment. Please apply as early as possible to help ensure your class will be offered.*

Preparations for SASS-AABS Conference

*AABS Membership
meeting Friday, April
23, 2010,
4:45-6:00 pm
Plestcheeff Auditorium
Downtown,
Seattle Art Museum*

Preliminary Conference Schedule

Thursday, April 22

- 8:30-12:00 AABS Board Meeting
(Executive Board Room)
- 11:00-4:00 pm SASS Winery Tour
- 12:00-1:00 pm Lunch
- 1:00-2:30 pm AABS Session 1
- 2:30-2:45 pm Coffee Break
- 2:45-4:15 pm AABS Session 2
- 7:00-9:00 pm Welcome Reception

Friday, April 23

- 8:30-10:00 AABS Session 3
- 10:00-10:15 Coffee Break
- 10:15-11:45 AABS Session 4
- 11:45-1:00 pm Lunch
- 1:00-2:30 pm AABS Session 5
- 2:30-2:45 pm Coffee Break
- 2:45-4:15 pm AABS Session 6
- 4:45-6:00 pm AABS General
Members Meeting (Seattle Art
Museum)
- 7:00-10:00 pm Baltic Film Night at
the Seattle Art Museum
- 10:00 pm AABS Graduate Student
Social Event

Saturday, April 24

- 8:30-10:00 AABS Session 7
- 10:00-10:30 Coffee Break
- 10:30-12:00 AABS Session 8
- 12:00-1:15 pm Lunch
- 1:15-2:45 pm AABS Session 9
- 2:45-3:15 pm Coffee Break
- 3:15-4:45 pm AABS Session 10
- 6:00-7:00 pm No-Host Bar
- 7:00-10:00 pm Dinner/Dance

Not long after Santa Claus made his list and checked it twice, the list making tasks fell to the organizers of the upcoming joint SASS-AABS Conference. Together they sifted through more than 350 paper proposals and began the long, detailed work of creating panels. Slowly, but surely, the upcoming conference is taking shape. What can you expect?

There are panels on Ibsen and nothing but Ibsen for Scandinavianists as well as on the current work of the official, state sponsored history commissions of the Baltic States. Those who want first and foremost to attend a conference of their beloved learned society will be at home and comfortable. The conference, however, also breaks regional borders and includes many panels that examine the larger Baltic Sea region or panels that examine individual themes as they apply to Baltic and Scandinavian scholars. Equally, the preliminary conference programs complement each other seamlessly. The Scandinavian specialists that flock to a panel on Nordic church history may well follow their interests to panels that look at developments in Baltic churches. Likewise, the many Baltic scholars presenting papers broadly on issues of identity will find many similar concerns in the SASS program. The conference promises to be something familiar and something new.

For this conference, all AABS paper proposals were submitted to the same place, there was not a division by discipline as has often been the case. As a result, expect more interdisciplinary panels that place geographers, political scientists, and historians together if there is a strong, uniform theme or subject matter among them. In practice, these panels may have some drawbacks as each discipline employs its own jargon and perspective, but the cumulative effect should be an opportunity to peer over the walls surrounding our own gardens to study the work of our neighbors (to paraphrase and steal from the opening salvo of the first issue of the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* as quoted by Norman Davies in *Europe: A History*, p. 955-956). The joint conference with the Scandinavian scholars, another opportunity to see the work of our geographical neighbors, seems particularly appropriate for this interdisciplinary approach.

Also new to the conference, and borrowed from SASS, is a designated lunch event. SASS presents lunches by discipline and language, which in practice are a wonderful blending of a social event and informal networking. At the historians' lunch, you are very likely to be in the same room, eating the same food, as many of the historians in the field. A quick round of introductions that focus on ongoing work merge with table conversation and by the end of lunch, you know scholars socially, and you have a sense of what the field as a whole is working on. This is an invaluable opportunity for graduate students particularly. The Baltic lunch, which will be held on Friday, April 23rd, will include an address by Pauls Raudseps, a prominent journalist, on the state of the media in contemporary Latvia. Details about the lunch will be included in the on-line registration form.

Conference registration will be done on-line through the conference website <http://depts.washington.edu/sass2010/>, and people who register by March 31, 2010 will receive a discounted price. The conference website will continue to develop and evolve as the conference approaches. Keep returning to it regularly for the latest on hotel accommodations (there is already a link that leads to hotel bookings at the Crowne Plaza, the Conference Hotel, at conference discount rates), on information about the conference's social calendar, and for the conference program (potentially including paper abstracts to help people choose which panels to attend).

The conference will also include a Baltic Film evening at the Seattle Art Museum. Friday night at 7 pm, conveniently after the AABS members' meeting that will also take place in the Seattle Art Museum from 4:45 pm-6:00 pm – so everyone will already be there. AABS members will have the opportunity to listen to the President's Address from our incoming President, Professor Vėjas Liulevičius, wander the world class collections of the Seattle Art Museum, and eat a quick dinner at *Taste*, the museum restaurant that showcases local cuisine, before settling into their theater seats to watch a collection of short films from the Baltic States (including Edmunds Jansons' *Little Bird's Diary* [2007] and Kaspar Jancis' award-winning *Krokodil* [2009]) before the feature presentation, *The Bug Trainer* (2008). The film's director, Rasa Miškinyte, will be on hand to introduce the film and answer questions afterward. Keep checking the conference webpage for more information on the film event.

Forum, Convergences in Baltic Studies, Past, Present and Future

PRESENT, AND FUTURE CONVERGENCES *(continued from p. 1)*

Against the backdrop of such continuities, certain features of our organizational life emerge all the more clearly. First, we look back on a rich tradition of lived interdisciplinarity in our conferences, our journal (which has gone from strength to strength), and our interaction as members. This is a formidable base to build on for our future undertakings. Second, even with (or especially because of) the realization of Baltic independence, particular challenges remain with us, and are familiar because they are of a piece with those of past decades. These include the need to raise general awareness of the Baltic world and with it the profile of Baltic Studies, focusing on a crucial strategic region today. This takes on renewed urgency in the present with worrying attempts to rewrite and distort history, as evidenced in this summer's commemorations of the start of World War II, when Russian media sought to whitewash Stalin's role as a collaborator with the Nazis in initiating that conflict and ventured suggestions that Poland had been to blame or that the Baltic states were not in fact occupied. Another, and related, challenge which abides is the question of how to give more durable institutional form to Baltic Studies, to give permanence to all that it means as a field of scholarship and research.

The most fortunate convergence here is that our established traditions of scholarship in Baltic Studies and the demands of the moment coincide.

REFLECTIONS ON CONVERGENCES TWENTY YEARS LATER



Andrejs Plakans

Andrejs Plakans, *Professor Emeritus of History, Iowa State University. AABS President 1988-1990*

In June 1990 when I was privileged to give my "Convergences" presidential address to the AABS, we all understood that the unprecedented events unfolding in the USSR's Baltic republics made prediction hazardous. The parliaments (Supreme Councils) of Lithuania, Latvia,

and Estonia had all proclaimed independence in the spring of 1990, and similar changes in 1989 in all the lands East of the "iron curtain" seemed to be promising the end of the old world order. But there were probably few believers in historical inevitability at the 1990 meeting, and Balticists, being familiar with the complex history of the area, knew the difference between wishful thinking and on-the-ground reality. Enthusiasm about proclamations was one thing. But the unpredictable response of the "center" in Moscow, the hesitant collective attitudes of the Western democracies, the uncertain sustainability of non-violence among Baltic-area activists – all these and other variables made projections of the future a chancy affair.

I remember searching my mind for a general framework for my impending remarks – one that would make the address sound "presidential" but at the same time express my bred-in-the-bone historian's skepticism toward confident statements about what might happen. This conservatism explains the hesitant nature of the "Convergences" speech. On the one hand, the old Cold War period certainties were visibly eroding quickly, and, since "Baltic Studies"

itself was a Western invention, the field was likely to be affected by these changes in some way. One possible future was the disintegration of the field, as Western Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian scholars rejoined the (possibly) liberated intellectual communities of those three countries and reoriented themselves away from the "Baltic" concept. Another was the absorption of "Baltic Studies" into some larger regional studies field as yet unborn and identified (perhaps "Northern European Studies"). A third possibility was the integration of "Baltic Studies" of the Western variety with some analogous version of "Baltic Studies" anchored in the transformed intellectual life of the three Baltic countries. The premise of all these outcomes, of course, was the achievement of real freedom in the Baltic region. After some thought, it seemed to me that some form of the third alternative was most likely. This judgment was based in part on the interest and receptivity already being exhibited in the Baltic countries toward Western modes of scholarship and, specifically, toward the activities of AABS; and in part, on the experience of the AABS itself, which by 1990 was already twenty-two years old and had over time experienced various kinds of "convergences" within its own ranks. If this were possible among Western Baltic scholars, it was at least as strong a possibility that something similar might happen in the Baltic region, within the regions and with Western colleagues, once the rigid controls of the Party had weakened and – who knew – perhaps disappeared entirely.

During the post-1990 decades, however, the reality that came into being did not fit any of the alternative futures envisaged in 1990. Perhaps the most readily identifiable progress was made in what in 1990 I termed "physical convergence." By definition, this type of convergence – involving the movement back and forth of individual scholars – could never involve large numbers. The field of Baltic Studies had never been overpopulated, but the types of physical convergence in time became impressive indeed. Several past presidents of AABS – the tip of a small iceberg – became prominent in post-1991 Baltic-area politics. The AABS itself had a branch office in the Baltic region for a time and to this day continues to be known in the area. For Western Balticists, participation in the intellectual life of their former homelands eventually became almost routine, as westerners attended Baltic-area conferences and their Eastern colleagues formed a significant presence in Western meetings. Fellowship programs brought a steady stream of easterners to the West, and westerners spent longish periods of time as visiting professors in the Baltic region, in some cases helping to found new academic institutions. Unfortunately, no aggregate statistics are available about this phenomenon but the pattern has held steady for the past two decades. These seasonal academic migrations had visible consequences. If twenty years ago the characteristics of almost all research studies placed them into the two recognizable categories – "Western publications" and "Soviet publications" – this distinction disappeared relatively quickly. If two decades ago Western and Baltic scholars still viewed each other with polite suspicion, not knowing exactly what to expect, the international community of Balticists nowadays has no such internal divisions. Its members have coalesced (converged) and now comprise a single entity, with English and German frequently serving as the common languages of discourse. Westerners no longer have to feel embarrassed at having been kept at arm's length from Baltic-area sources, and Baltic-area scholars no longer have any need to feel the need for "catching up" with an allegedly "more advanced" Western scholarship.

This personal convergence was facilitated by technological change and institutional support, though in 1990 I failed to recognize the rapidly growing importance of the first of these. Easy telephone communications, e-mail, the phenomenal expansion of internet-based research, the proliferation of e-books and e-journals, the growth of large readily available data bases of primary source documents and secondary literature – all these have enabled Balticist colleagues to feel that they inhabit a single internally connected universe, virtual though it may be at times. In my own daily work, I can communicate – in Latvian – with colleagues in Rīga almost as easily and quickly as with those in the next office in my university department. The institutional infrastructure – that is, university-based programs – for all such transformations, however, developed rather unevenly, creating far fewer permanent connections between North American and Baltic institutions than between Baltic-area and other European institutions. Perhaps this was inevitable, given the relative cost of creating and maintaining such connections. Judging by the experience of my own university – Iowa State – the early 1990s began with almost unchecked enthusiasm for contact-building: delegations traveled in both directions, signed memoranda of understanding, and sought to create exchange programs that would place academics from one partner within an existing program in another for a period of one or more years. The expectation was that both partners would be gainers in arrangements. In North America, however, many of these exchange arrangements eventually lapsed, their originators having retired or died, interest having flagged, or money run out; another contributing factor in North America was the diminution among academic planners of the concept of area-studies itself. In Europe, however, the resources of international regional organizations and the European Community provided continuous investments, particularly after the three Baltic states became members of the EU in 2004. Also, countries such as Germany and Sweden, whose histories were directly linked to the Baltic region, continued to evidence considerable interest and provided healthy levels of support. One outcome of all these institutional linkages was that the forms of academic institutions in the Baltic countries became more “Western”: degree programs were renamed, course offerings were changed, programs altered their content, and Baltic institutions became full-fledged members of vast number of continental networks. Nonetheless, regardless of reform and partnership arrangements, most Baltic academic institutions retained their own character. Institutional convergence was much less readily identifiable than was the physical convergence of Balticists as individual scholars.

Of the three kinds of convergences mentioned in my 1990 talk, intellectual convergences and their characteristics are the most difficult to describe precisely. It is fairly clear, to my thinking, that Baltic Studies remain a distinctive field: the interests of its practitioners form a coherent body of scholarship, made so by its geographic focus and the continuous presence of certain themes: the problems of small-statehood, the effervescence of political nationalism, the maintenance of national consciousness, the prospects of linguistic and cultural annihilation, the preservation of national sovereignty, unfavorable demographic patterns, relations between majorities and minorities, globalization, and economic development. Many of these were prominent in Baltic-related scholarship before the events of the past two decades; others have been more relevant by the historical changes of the recent past. The critical mass of insightful scholarship, however, did change its venue. Two decades ago most politically unconstrained Baltic Studies scholarship was taking place in the West, even though it was weakened somewhat by its intellectual distance from the Baltic area; now-

days that distance no longer exists, but at the same time the relative quantity of Western scholarship about the Baltic area continues to shrink when compared to that which is being produced by scholars in the three Baltic states or by Western scholars whose work has become much more deeply embedded in the ongoing life of the three Baltic republics. Whatever their personal histories, practitioners of Baltic Studies now work within the same large intellectual frameworks, formulate their questions much in the same way, refer to the same secondary sources, and generally publish in the same journals and with the same publishing houses. Existing differences among scholars are nowadays more a matter of interpretative nuance and style and less a matter of broad ideology. One might say that the field has become internationalized more than ever before, with the nationality of the scholars writing about Baltic themes being nearly irrelevant. The concerns of the émigré generations of AABS are no longer dominant, or at least have been reformulated; the Cold War frame of reference has disappeared; and the youngest generation of Baltic scholars on the European continent are developing a European identity, which by definition excludes North America. Even so, the most recent publications in Baltic Studies, regardless of the origins of the authors, tend to share an interest in questions of personal and national identity, gender themes, environmental concerns, and media history; and a great many write more about representations of reality in the past and present than seek to establish what that reality really was or is. This is intellectual convergence of a kind but it is different from what Baltic Studies adherents might have expected twenty years ago. Balticists whose creativity proceeds from a conscious Baltic identity – as best exemplified in our field by the poetry of Ivar Ivask – nonetheless, are still few and far between.

OUR ASSOCIATION

Gundar King, *Dean Emeritus of the School of Business, Pacific Lutheran University. AABS Interim President 1970*

When the First Conference on Baltic Studies took place in 1968, it was more than a gathering of Baltic scholars. The occasion was used to assess the need to establish an organization to advance the academic interests of Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians in the West.

At that time, the number of older and younger faculty members in American and Canadian colleges and universities was very high. They had acquired English as a common language for private communications and for the exchange of their professional views. More importantly, they were ready to engage themselves, directly or indirectly, in the formal study of Baltic issues.

A substantial number of the conference participants were best described as Baltic academics in exile. They were important in organizing the conference; they supported the idea of academic home of their own and other members of the exile communities.

The vision most acceptable to them was the formation of three very autonomous groups united in a confederation. An opposing view was held by faculty members firmly established in their new



Gundar King, recent PhD, 1960s

careers. They wanted an association that would facilitate conferences and seminars on Baltic subjects, to publish their work, and help raise a new generation of Baltic scholars.

The concept of a professional AABS was strongly endorsed by scholars that became the first presidents of the new association. It also was adopted by most of the conferees. Patterns of American professional societies were used. Fortunately for all, the late Dr. Jānis Gaigulis was persuaded to be the executive director of the AABS. Essentially, he was the father of the AABS. He nurtured a more inclusive idea of Baltic studies, welcomed new members, helped organize the biennial conferences, raised money and enforced fiscal discipline. He even found ways to start a modest publication that strengthened the progress of Baltic cooperation and unity.

Over the years, our association has continued to link three generations of Baltic scholars, and attracted a wider interest in their work. The conferences, with participation largely financed with university travel funds, brought us together and have added to the strength of our research and teaching. The *Journal of Baltic Studies*, now managed by Routledge, is an academic journal of internationally recognized high quality. The scholarship program, established by our generous supporters, has financed the magisterial studies of outstanding young scholars. The AABS is now a professional organization that serves the international academic interests of the three Baltic nations. More importantly, it also is a base of cooperation for the expanding community of international scholars interested in the everchanging nature of the Baltic region.

PRESENT AT THE CREATION

Jaan Puhvel, *Professor Emeritus Classics and Indo-European Studies, University of California, Los Angeles. AABS President, 1971-1972.*

My brief tenure as AABS president in 1971-1972 followed quickly upon the heels of the impressive activities of the "founding fathers," none of whom were Estonian. Someone was needed to show the flag, and activists persuaded me to help fill the slot. It was an attractive new departure, promising academic probity rather than political or ideological venality. Such prospects were amply vindicated, despite stolid (or sometimes rabid) incomprehension by the radical right, and being labeled "stooges of the imperialists" by the Soviet Latvian "academician" Steinbergs. Soon other Estonians succeeded to the role, not only that amphibious prodigy Ivar Ivask but Ilse Lehist, Rein Taagepera, and Toivo Raun. We did our best to stress the trans-Baltic (rather than parochial) scope of the enterprise. In my own instance, as a specialist in ancient Indo-European studies, I was able to meld my native immersion in Estonian culture with the comparative study of Baltic languages, linguistics, and antiquities, thus scholarship far removed from the passions of the moment. There must have been consternation in the hall when for my presidential address in 1972 at the Hart House of the University of Toronto I chose (rather than some programmatic utterance or Estonian topic) an exposé of newer findings concerning Old Prussian and Lithuanian pre-Christian religion.

On the administrative side I recall mainly the great and gentle-

manly kindness of Jānis Gaigulis, the exemplary collegiality of Vytautas Vardys and Rimvydas Šilbajoris, the pragmatic courtesy of Gundar King, and the sometimes prickly but nevertheless in retrospect good working relationship with Edgar Anderson. My main fight was to implement a two-year term for future presidents, which he for some reason fiercely opposed, but which still came to pass later.

Baltic scholarship should help unify rather than compartmentalize the three nations. English has replaced Russian as their lingua franca and joint window on the world. Much is being accomplished, more is in order! AABS will have its modest place in scholarly history for lighting this candle well before a new day dawned.

SOME THOUGHTS ON BALTIC STUDIES FROM AN ESTONIAN POINT OF VIEW



Ilse Lehist

Ilse Lehist, *Professor Emerita of Linguistics, The Ohio State University. AABS President 1974-1976*

The geographical location of Estonia places it between Finland and Latvia. History connects Estonia with its northern neighbor during some periods, and with its southern neighbor during other periods. Language connects Estonia with Finland; with respect to language, Estonia does not belong into the Baltic community, although contemporary non-Baltic consensus is that the Baltic countries all speak "Baltic."

From a linguistic point of view, there is really very little that could be called Baltic studies in Estonia, with the exception of Livonian. Livonian, however, is a Finno-Ugric language spoken on the territory of contemporary Latvia. Lithuanian and Latvian would be touched upon within the general topic of Indo-European historical linguistics.

As far as literature is concerned, Estonian writers in exile had opportunities for publication in several Estonian-language journals established by the exile communities in Sweden and Canada. The *Journal of Baltic Studies* provided a chance to write about Estonian literature in English, with the hope of reaching a wider audience.

I published several articles in *Journal of Baltic Studies* that attempted to do just that – for example, a critique of Heino Kiik's novel about collectivization in Estonia ("Where hobgoblins spend the night," published in Estonia in 1970, *Journal of Baltic Studies* article in 1973), an analysis of Ilmar Laaban's surrealist poetry published in exile in Sweden (*Journal of Baltic Studies*, 1978). But I tried to introduce a Baltic component into my research; publications in *Journal of Baltic Studies* included "The phonetic realization of the trochaic meter in Latvian and Estonian" (1984, in collaboration with Dzintra Bond), and "An acoustic analysis of the metrical structure of orally produced Lithuanian poetry" (*Journal of Baltic Studies* 1990).

I have also been interested in the more general topic of cultural contacts. As far as language is concerned, the area around the Baltic Sea constitutes a region of linguistic convergence, usually referred to by the German term *Sprachbund* – an area where historically unrelated languages introduce common innovations, resulting in closer typological similarity. An example would be the development of a phonological feature called *stød* in Danish, broken tone in Latvian – as well as in Livonian, making Livonian the only Finno-Ugric language that has developed contrastive tone. - Another such area of linguistic convergence is the Balkan peninsula – and it is amusing that the terms Baltic and Balkan frequently

are confused by speakers of English!

It is my hope that *Journal of Baltic Studies* will continue to provide an opportunity for scholars interested in Baltic studies to publish their research – and not only scholars from the three Baltic states, but members of the international scholarly community whose interests include topics dealing with the Baltic area.

RUMINATIONS ON BALTIC STUDIES AT TWICE TWENTY

Valters Nollendorfs, *Emeritus Professor of German, University Wisconsin. AABS President 1976-1978*

Indeed, not forty, but twice twenty. That is about two generations, and it is good that the generational change has gradually taken place. The next twenty years seem safe. Twice twenty years also divides the time before and after the academic Iron Curtain between Baltic scholarship in the West and in the Baltic countries was scrapped for good.

The establishment and steadfast maintenance of the AABS as an organization based on academic principles is perhaps one of the least recognized past achievements now assumed as self-understood. Yet its first twenty years were full of political pressures to change its strict academic course, to avoid or address politically touchy topics and thus cater either to the demands of exile political groups on the one hand or communist-directed academic politics in the occupied Baltic countries on the other.

Despite the political pressures, despite the lack of access to the academic resources in the countries which AABS scholars studied, despite a tenuous academic foothold in the countries in which they lived, in its first twenty years the AABS became a solid scholarly organization with a viable financial basis. Exile communities helped to raise funds; AABS conferences and its *Journal of Baltic Studies* became recognized scholarly outlets. The AABS became a respected member of the Western academic community.

Twenty years ago that was in place when the Baltic opened up. No less than the Baltic exile communities, members of the AABS rushed in to help. A Baltic Office was established. Western colleagues came as guest professors and researchers. Academic reform plans were developed and propagated. The results twenty years later only partly correspond to the heady expectations. The body academic in the Baltic had much catching up to do after more than fifty years of academic isolation and dependence. A lot of pride had to be swallowed. Not all advice was prudent, and not all was accepted. It was difficult to find an acceptable egalitarian language of communication and scholarship. Academic traditions, approaches and styles differed. The idea of "Baltic" in Baltic Studies was less understood and urgent in the Baltic than it had been abroad. As the Baltic opened up to Europe and the rest of the world, new opportunities became available, and the notion of "Baltic" itself underwent an expansion. What had looked like an easy linkage through common academic principles became a torturous process of adaptation. Yet the process continues.



Valters Nollendorfs, Conference on Exile, Culture and Identity, Riga Technical University

That bodes well for the next twenty years and many more. A new generation of scholars is now guiding the AABS. The first real post-Soviet generation of scholars is coming into its own in the Baltic. They are less encumbered, more articulated and more attuned to Western scholarly traditions than their predecessors could be. My wish is to see the twain come together and forge a new contemporary conception of Baltic Studies. I envision that it will be more open, more encompassing, and much more inventive than we could imagine twice twenty years ago. So it should be. And so be it.

AABS, PAST AND PRESENT

William R. Schmalstieg, *Professor Emeritus of Slavic and Baltic Linguistics, Pennsylvania State University. AABS President 1982-1984*

I believe that I was the first AABS officer without family ties to the Baltic region. Indeed I only became interested in Baltic studies during my first year of graduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania in 1950-51, where my first formal contact with any Baltic language was the Old Prussian course taught by Prof. Antanas Salys, and my first textbook was Jan Endzelin's *Altpreussische Grammatik* published in Riga in 1944. Under the tutelage of Prof. Salys, Prof. Alfred Senn, and the poet Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius I became fascinated by the (to me then) distant and exotic Baltic lands and cultures. At this time I also made life-long friends with fellow students Antanas Klimas and Kostas Ostrauskas, both displaced by World War II from their native Lithuania and my informal teachers of Lithuanian.

In 1964 I accepted a position at Penn State where I introduced an elementary course in Lithuanian on a regular basis, had occasion to teach a seminar in Old Prussian several times and was even once able to entice my friend Dr. Kostas Ostrauskas to come once a week for a term from Philadelphia to give a seminar on Lithuanian literature. Slightly prior to the AABS First Conference on Baltic Studies my colleague Prof. Thomas Magner and I organized a conference on Baltic linguistics which took place at Penn State University on April 5-6, 1968. Later with the help of the Lithuanian consul, Dr. Petras Anusas, I was able to organize a conference on the First Lithuanian Book, Martynas Mažvydas' *Catechism* which took place on 22nd Sept., 1997.

In the same year, however, the Penn State Dept. of Slavic Languages was combined with the Department of German and had to give up its graduate program. At the present time there are no longer any courses in any Baltic language or literature at Penn State. In like manner, as far as I know, the University of Pennsylvania no longer has courses on specifically Baltic topics. I had hoped that other academic institutions would take up the slack and compensate for this loss, but I was disappointed to read in *Draugas*, the Chicago Lithuanian newspaper (February 7th, 2009), that in spite of a grant from the Lithuanian Foundation, the University of Illinois at Chicago will no longer be offering a graduate program in Lithuanian studies.

In these days of continuing budget crises the concerns about the future of Baltic studies in academic institutions seem to be justified. On the other hand predictions about the future course of human events can easily fail. For example, Prof. Andrejs Plakans has



Prof. William Schmalstieg

pointed out that the notion of the eventual convergence of Communist and non-Communist societies 'has ceased to be very influential and that historical events have once again confounded the prognosticators among us.'

On a more optimistic note, however, one can see that much progress has been made since the founding of the AABS, initially in a large degree as a result of the work of the first administrative executive director, Dr. Jānis Gaigulis, with whom I frequently consulted during my tenure in office. I remember him as an extremely efficient, hard-working, but also good-humored and friendly man. In the course of its more than forty years of existence the AABS has become an important international scholarly organization and as Prof. Gundar J. King has noted, the *Journal of Baltic Studies* has now become 'an academic journal of internationally recognized high quality.'

AABS RECOLLECTIONS

Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, *Professor Emeritus of Psychology, University of Montréal. AABS President 1984-1986*

In 1968, when I saw a notice for the First Baltic Studies Conference, to be held in Maryland, USA, my first thought was – what an interesting event this promised to be, and my second – what a pity that I cannot see any earthly reason for participating!

At the time, I was a young Assistant professor at the Department of Psychology of the Université de Montréal, where I was to remain faithfully until my retirement thirty years later, in 1998. I had a research grant from what was then the National Research Council of Canada for experimental work on learning and memory. The courses I taught were: learning theory, history of psychology, psychopharmacology, and a laboratory on experimental methods. I was directing several master's and doctoral theses in experimental psychology. From such a spring-board, there seemed not the remotest possibility of joining an association of social scientists and scholars from the humanities working in Baltic studies, much as I might be tempted to do.

When later I read accounts of that first AABS conference, I noted the quality of the personalities who had participated, as well as the attractive mix of subject matter in the papers presented. Two years later, the Second AABS Conference was to take place in San José, California, a most attractive venue, organized by Professor Edgars

Andersons, whose tomes on Latvian history were well known to me. On scanning the list of proposed conference topics, along with the names of section organizers for the program, I was impressed to see that the session on folklore would be chaired by Marija Gimbutas, of whom I knew, of course, because of her widely read book, *The Balts*. All that remained was for me to find a topic on which I might conceivably produce a scholarly paper in Baltic studies, unlikely as the prospect seemed at first. Here were all those political scientists, historians and linguists who all could claim an interest in

Baltic studies as a legitimate field of their full-time research. How was I to find a slot to fit in, with my kind of training and areas of specialization?

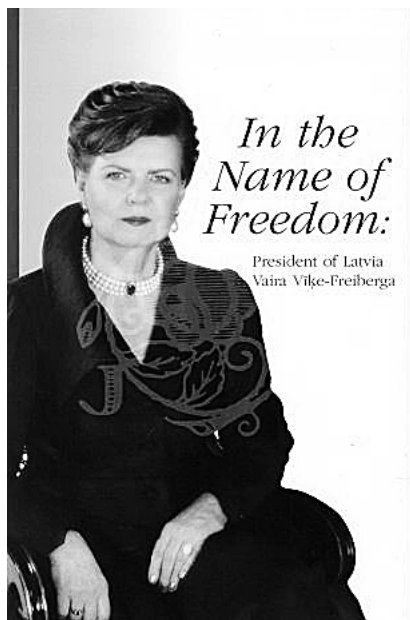
The answer came by a series of lucky coincidences. Shortly after getting my Ph.D. in psychology, I had returned to being active in Latvian exile society, being invited as a speaker to various events, both in the USA and in Canada. In particular, the activists with whom I had collaborated in organizing the First Latvian Youth Festival in Toronto, in 1959, insisted that I should continue to be involved in what was known as "Latvian youth education." I was strongly prodded "to continue doing my bit" for preserving a sense of Latvian identity among those just a few years younger than our own generation. Having heard of it as a hobby of mine, these activists simply decreed that I should start lecturing on folklore ("we need an attractive young professor as well as all the old fogies"). When I demurred that I knew too little about it, they answered: "All you need, is to be two steps ahead of your audience. Since they know nothing from nothing, that should not be too hard!"

It was true that I had embarked on a program of self-education in Latvian folklore, as a change from the rather dry stuff that was my professional fare. I bought, borrowed and read everything that I could lay my hands on, but was severely hampered by not having access to a lot of sources that I would have needed. I tried to make do with what was available to me, as did all the other young activists in Latvian exile affairs. We thought doing something was better than doing nothing at all. The older generation would occasionally make snide remarks (either in person or in the exile press) about how legendary Professor X or Y, back in the old country – now there was somebody who really knew what they were talking about, hinting broadly that my generation did not. To my surprise, I found this rather stimulating. It became a challenge to try and match old X or Y in producing work of my own.

By the time the AABS was founded, I had already embarked on a double life: one, as an ordinary Canadian citizen in my home and work environment, another as a patriotic Latvian, entrusted with carrying the torch of Latvian identity and the dream of a free and independent Latvia. It was not an easy balancing act, and it could be done only on condition that the Latvian activities be attractive enough to be worth the effort. For me in particular, it meant embarking on a broad field of study about all things Latvian and Baltic, which took up a lot of time and effort. This, necessarily, in my spare time or on my holidays, all on top of getting my career going in a very competitive environment, and having very young children at home.

Looking back, I can see numerous occasions when I might have disembarked from this tread-mill and returned to a quiet life as a "normal" citizen, working in a single field of endeavor. But - as the behaviorist psychologists would put it: actions that get positive reinforcement increase in habit strength, while actions getting negative reinforcement weaken and may ultimately be extinguished. It so happened that my public lectures in Latvian society were extremely well received by an enthusiastic public, who showered me with compliments, offered me flowers, and kept sending me ever more invitations. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, my 1968 students in my francophone university, all fired up by the student uprisings in France, seemed sullen and resentful about all the hard work I was expecting from them. The Université de Montréal student paper of that revolutionary year was full of Marxist slogans and fiery articles where professors were presented as nasty, elitist oppressors of the working class. I personally was ranked among those tyrants who actually expected students to learn something before giving them a good mark in my courses (admittedly abstract stuff, rather than "touchy-feely").

To make a long story short: I did find a topic, I did get to San José



Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, cover of biography by Ausma Cimdina, 2003

and my paper was well-received. Plenty of positive reinforcement there. Marija Gimbutas, among others, loved my approach to the Latvian dainas and encouraged me to continue. Valdis Zeps, the linguist, asked me to publish my paper in one of the first issues of the *Bulletin of Baltic Studies*, which was meant to become the official scholarly *Journal* for the AABS. This was extremely important, not just for me, but for attracting AABS members in general, for universities and granting agencies alike look to refereed publications as well as presented conference papers in their evaluations of professors.

Another bonus was that the AABS conferences were great fun, with a wonderful *joie de vivre* among the interdisciplinary and international participants. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the field of Baltic studies was the main field of operations for only some of the presenters in the conference. Many other scholars, just like myself, had had to go through intellectual contortions in order to fit into the program and be able to participate. They might be full-time professors of English, or German or Slavic languages or literatures, but they used their training and breadth of experience as an asset to the study of Baltic topics. As Vilis Samsons, the long-time Secretary-General of the Soviet Latvian Academy of Sciences, had disparagingly remarked: Baltic Studies in the West was carried out largely by amateurs, while the academicians in the home countries were at it full time. That position too was a challenge: we in the West had to show what could be achieved under far from ideal conditions, but with complete academic freedom. I think we rose to the challenge and really put Baltic Studies on the international map.

Undoubtedly, there was also a political undertone to supporting the AABS, even if the association kept itself totally free from any kind of political interference or pressure, from whatever source. The biannual conferences and the *Journal of Baltic Studies* were serious academic platforms from which to remind the world of the existence of the Baltic States, of the injustice of their condition under Soviet occupation, and of their right to the freedom ardently hoped for by their peoples. The *Journal of Baltic Studies*, as well as books by AABS authors, found their place on public and university library shelves where only USSR propaganda and a few pre-WWII publications had been available before. I think it was an important achievement and a very necessary one.

The seventies were a time of great growth and popularity for Baltic Studies, with hundreds of local Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians joining the regulars at any AABS conference held in their town. By the time I joined the governance of the Association and became its President in the mid-eighties, we had reached a time of professional consolidation and of creating the Baltic Studies Fund as an insurance for continuation into the future. I saw then how much the AABS owed to the unique vision and unflagging efforts of one single man – the late Jānis Gaigulis, the long-term Director of the Association. One problem we could not solve – and we see the results of it today – was the difficulty in establishing a changing of the guard and of the generations in Western universities. After Professor Andersons' tragic death, only a few places like Stockholm or Indiana remained with departments where a student might get a doctorate in a field that was a direct part of Baltic Studies. I among others could never have students in the interdisciplinary field that I developed for my own research, for they had to be trained along the lines laid down and accepted in the disciplinary study programs of my department and university. I am proud of all the graduate students I have guided over the years, but they are all psychologists, not Baltic scholars.

Then came 1991, and the rest is history. In my case, history brought the immense privilege of returning to my native country and having

a hand in writing the history of a free and independent Latvia for a full two terms as President of the Republic. President Toomas Ilves is another AABS veteran who still holds the same privileged position in Estonia. I think we are both grateful to the AABS for what it contributed to our being ready to accept such responsibilities.

The new generations of scholars now face different conditions and different challenges. I hope they will be just as stubborn and just as committed as we were in our youth in overcoming all the difficulties and rising to the opportunities that history will present them.



Tallinn, 2002: Three Presidents meet for lunch: Lennart Meri, Bill Clinton, Rein Taagepera. Photo by Mare Taagepera.

THOUGHTS ON BALTIC STUDIES SINCE THE FALL OF THE IRON CURTAIN

Rein Taagepera, *Professor Emeritus of Political Science, University Tartu, and Research Professor of Political Science, University of California, Irvine. AABS President 1986-1988*

The fall of the Iron Curtain and restoration of Baltic independence meant that I largely shifted away from Baltic studies, which in my case straddled political science and history. Many local people are now able to study the Baltic scene, and I am free to do other things.

Instead of looking at the Baltic countries from the outside, I now live here for six months per year and teach logical models in social sciences rather than Baltic history. Description and analysis of Baltic current events, which I laboriously used to piece together from indirect sources, is now done better even by some daily newspapers. And instead of describing the political scene, I

(Continued on p. 12)



Tartu, 1992: Rein Taagepera with his presidential campaign poster, in morning attire. Photo by T. Palm.

I would like to borrow it for a while as the main theme of my ruminations this afternoon.

To most of us in this room it has been particularly hard to view the recent changes in Eastern Europe, particularly in the Baltic area, with dispassion. Our personal histories or those of close friends and colleagues are too directly involved in these changes for us to view them in a laboratory context, as it were, in which all of the various possible outcomes would be equally acceptable. Yet we must also recognize that these changes have been the result of the interplay of forces that we did not create and that the outcomes are not necessarily amenable to any kind of shaping. They may, in other words, have their own internal dynamic. It is also true that one attribute of that dynamic could be a convergence of sorts, or convergences, in the plural, across a wide variety of activities. There is a considerable amount of empirical evidence before us that convergences of various kinds are already taking place at the level at which their discussion is relevant to the participants of AABS. We have, to begin with, a physical convergence of people interested in Baltic affairs. Witness the fact that at the present AABS convention there are present many more scholars from the Baltic republics than has ever before been the case, as well as the fact that immediately after the AABS meeting a large portion of the people present here will be flying to Rīga to attend the 1990 song festival in Latvia. And these groups are only small examples of the larger process of physical convergence that has been enlarging over the past few years the numbers of Balts visiting the republics themselves and the numbers of visitors from the republics to the west. In this process of physical convergence, stereotypes have been shattered, misunderstandings have been reduced, and a greater realism has entered these admittedly difficult long-distance relationships.

A second type of convergence which is also fairly easy to document is institutional convergence, and it can be seen as a byproduct of the first physical types. We have, for example, the institutional ties that have been created by American-Lithuanian scholars participating in the direction of the newly founded Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, by the increasing number of exchange programs that are linking institutions of higher learning in North America and the Baltic, and the complex linkages that are developing between various kinds of scholarly, professional, and business organizations of the two areas. Some of these institutional convergences will not, of course, result in very much in the long run for lack of resources or energy to sustain them. Yet some of them will last to become

commonplace in ways that would have been inconceivable a few short years ago. In the domain of academic organization, as we heard in our pre-conference workshop from representatives of Baltic institutions of higher learning, much thought is being given to reorganization, and some of the new models being contemplated are those with which North American academics are indeed very familiar.

The physical and institutional convergences of which I speak have been made possible to a great extent by the availability of modern transportation and communications media, both of which render the implementation of decided-upon steps relatively easy. The decision to visit, the decision to borrow institutional models — both of these, once made, can be implemented on the practical level without much further ado. But there is a third kind of convergence that needs to be discussed and on which I would like to spend the remainder of my time, and that is intellectual convergence. This type of convergence is the most problematic of all because it has to do not with the proximity of bodies but of minds. The fact that we can sit in the same rooms around one table for any length of time and converse at length about a wide variety of subjects, perhaps even in a common language, is in itself no guarantee whatsoever that we have had a meeting of minds. And this fact can hardly be otherwise. Intellectual convergence — or the meeting of minds — is a rare thing even among members of the same culture when they have complete freedom to speak their piece. Why should we expect, therefore, that it would be any easier to achieve among people who have grown up in very different cultures, different political systems, and have received very different academic training. Cross-cultural understanding has never been easy — anthropologists have an entire discipline designed to achieve it.

By posing the question about intellectual convergence in this manner I am not seeking to be unduly pessimistic nor to be unappreciative of the vast difficulties that have had to be overcome in achieving the other kinds of convergences. Nor am I saying that we try to think in the same manner. But what I do wish to underline is that we, as scholars and researchers, hoping to move approximately in the current direction in the future, should not confuse physical and institutional convergence with mutual understanding. Required is more than an or-

ganizational framework such as AABS and more than the good will exhibited in our willingness to entertain each other's point of view. What is required ultimately for intellectual convergence is a deep appreciation of each other's thought processes and then a decision to minimize the importance of those aspects of them that can never be merged. The first step is an inventory and I shall try to develop one by means of looking carefully at the experiences of my own discipline — history — and one of my specialties within history — the history of the Latvian people — to see how the process of intellectual convergence can work out there and what some of the difficulties might be.

Let me begin this exploration by looking at the domain of historical investigation where convergence would seem to be the easiest, namely, in the realm of research topics. The question is whether historians working in Latvia and those working elsewhere are likely to develop some degree of unanimity on what the important unexplored subjects of Latvian history might be. This question seems simple, but an answer to it is difficult, if we remember that the choice of research topic may be conditioned by different factors among the two groups. On the one side, in the Latvian republic, there has developed in the recent half year or so an intense interest — one might say a justifiable interest — in a range of subjects which heretofore were for one reason or another closed to research. Many of these have to do with the history of Latvians in the twentieth century and for the most part



AABS delegation, June 1991, at a seminar in Jūrmala, Latvia: Jānis Gaigulis, Valters Nollendorfs, Andrejs Plakans

with the political history of the Latvian people. Current circumstances themselves have dictated this emphasis, but it has to be noted that for historians in the West who may also be interested in Latvian history no similar incentive is present. They, on their side, may be taking their cues not so much from the burning issues of the day as from the intellectual problems defined as important by the organized disciplines

which they inhabit. These may have little to do with twentieth century political history and may be scattered across the centuries that are normally studied by their specialties. And that motivation too is perfectly understandable.

We come therefore to what seems to be a kind of an impasse, which may diminish the chances of convergence on this point. On the one hand, there is a perfectly reasonable emphasis on historical events that are directly relevant to current political questions; on the other hand, there is an equally reasonable emphasis on those questions, sometime wholly irrelevant to the present, that are defined primarily by the interests of the organized discipline which provides the immediate intellectual setting in which historical work is carried out. Can convergence on important historical topics, take place when working historians define them from such radically different intellectual settings? The problem is a very real one for future interactions among historians of the Latvian people but the outcome is at this point unpredictable.

We proceed to the next step, or next level, which for historians is the domain of concepts with which the past is organized. I refer here primarily to the difficult questions of periodization and units, of analysis, that is, the questions of how the seamless web of the past should be broken up for purposes of mutual understanding into chronological periods and into the geographical entities that should be focused on. These problems have been part of Latvian historiography for a long time, and debates about them certainly precede the present. But they are also very much part of the question of convergence, because in a very real sense mutual agreement about them must precede agreement on the answers that historical sources provide. In recent times, historians in the Latvian republic have begun to question the periodization scheme that has been part of Marxist-Leninist historiography for a long time — the scheme which sees the past in terms of a feudal period followed by a period of victory of the bourgeoisie followed in turn by the victory of the proletarian state. Transferred into the realm of real chronology, this scheme tended to cut across Western categories of periodization, which by and large has used historical time — centuries — or cultural events — such as the Renaissance or the Enlightenment — as markers.

With respect to units of analysis, there has perhaps been greater convergence among Latvian historians than one might have expected, because the historians of the independence period and many of those living in the west subsequently, as those working within the Marxist-Leninist frame of reference, wrote primarily about Latvians as having had a separate and to a great degree

unique history among the peoples living in the Baltic area. Yet the most recent generation of Latvian historians who received their professional training in the West are more likely to see the history of Latvians comparatively and to be more comfortable in viewing them in the comparative context of the Baltic area as a whole. The unit of analysis for them, in other words is not so much the Latvian people themselves — a unique population undergoing unique historical experiences — but rather the Latvians as a component part of a regional population, with an historical experience whose dimension can best be understood when seen to be similar with and comparable to those of other peoples.

These differences in the way basic historical conceptualization takes place are of course not the result of perversity or stubbornness, but rather of intellectual training and conditioning, and they are very real with respect to the process of intellectual convergence. There will be severe problems of communication — of historians talking past each other — if some degree of unanimity on these questions is not reached. One might note here, of course, that precisely

the same kind of impasse has been reached with respect to basic concepts in the Western historical professions, and the degree to which historians do not share fundamental assumptions can be seen by looking at the book review pages of such publications as the *American Historical Review*. Nonetheless, we are discussing here intellectual convergence between two relatively small groupings of historians and therefore their failure to come to an understanding in this domain may have even more serious consequences for the future.

An even more difficult problem for intellectual convergence is raised within the realm of philosophy of history by the radically different basic understandings of the past the two groups of Latvian historians have become used to. I do not think that it would unfair to characterize the general atmosphere that prevails among historians in the Latvian republic as one in which the past is seen to be patterned and meaningful. Several generations of research within a philosophical tradition which emphasized that the past had meaning and that the trajectory of the past could be known will have left a permanent residue even when the less

Dancing Shoes and Common Approaches

By Aldis Purs

AABS members planning on attending the 22nd AABS Conference in Seattle* from April 22-24, 2010 need to dust off their dancing shoes and prepare themselves for a joint banquet with the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study (SASS). I witnessed a SASS banquet in Madison, Wisconsin this past May and saw firsthand the collected leading lights of Scandinavian studies anxiously await the rock cover band as they tuned their instruments. Hardly a chord had been struck before a crazed mob of academics rushed the dance floor and proved that ABBA was indeed from a Scandinavian country.

Apparently, however, AABS banquets were similar "back in the day." If so, it would not be the only similarity between SASS and AABS. At the same Madison conference, I repeatedly noticed a family resemblance between AABS and SASS conferences. The methodological approaches and driving points of inquiry in papers, panels, and round tables was familiar. With few exceptions, I could easily imagine a paper on an aspect of Estonian history, Lithuanian political science, or Latvian folklore as an integral part of the panels assembled. Likewise, the collegial atmosphere of a gathering of specialists reminded me of AABS. Scandinavian specialists eagerly reveled in the chance to talk about their specialization with like-minded and equally informed colleagues. Many described their relative isolation at their home institutions and looked forward to SASS particularly for the ability to talk about Scandinavia with other specialists. No doubt, this description rings equally true to many Baltic specialists and their relationship with AABS. This common experience and relationship between specialist and learned society will contribute to a successful joint conference of SASS and AABS, not least because we also know each other. Scandinavian specialists have a strong, basic background on the Baltic States (often personal travel experiences as well), just as we know about Scandinavia. In other words, we will converse with each other without beginning at the beginning (no clarifications that Baltic and Balkan are different will be needed).

For AABS members, the conference in Seattle promises to be a welcome reunion of old friends and colleagues and simultaneously an introduction to kindred neighbors. Just don't forget the dance shoes. You may also want to practice "Happy Birthday" as SASS will celebrate its 100th Conference, a truly remarkable, formidable, and praise-worthy accomplishment. Maybe in 2168, SASS will return similar greetings to AABS.

* Visit <http://depts.washington.edu/sass2010/> regularly for updates

significant aspects of this philosophical tradition are finally laid to rest. The habit of thinking about the past in terms of historical laws of development and of the historian's obligation to uncover those laws is not likely to disappear quickly and, of course, there is no reason why it has to disappear at all. But contrast this with the habits of mind of Western historians among whom belief in "historical laws" in the same sense has disappeared almost entirely. The reasons for this disappearance are complicated and they have to do with the general erosion of the belief in absolutes of any kind, and the replacement of them by a high degree of relativism in making statements about the past. If historians in the Latvian republic continue to talk in terms of an "historical science," meaning by that term an organized undertaking which is in some ways analogous to the natural sciences, historians of the West tend to emphasize relativism and generally exclude the humanistic disciplines from those which can pretend to the discovery of any kind of permanent regularities in human affairs.

As far as intellectual convergence is concerned, therefore, in the realm of philosophy of history a meeting of minds is likely to be the most difficult of all. On the one hand, there are historians who expect a great deal of certainty to flow from historical evidence; on the other, there are historians for whom the permanence of any historical statement is very questionable indeed and who will see in the historian's work less the uncovering of historical laws and more the continuous, unending testing of hypotheses, with each tested hypothesis giving rise to new ones. These differences of approach may turn out to be too great to bridge, in which case intellectual convergence will have to operate at the lower levels already described.

Finally, I would like to mention one more area where convergence might be expected to take place and where there are great difficulties to overcome, and this is in the realm of expectations produced by the or-

ganization of historical disciplines. Let me highlight this aspect of things by juxtaposing the two different intellectual contexts within which historians in the Latvian republic and historians in North America are likely to be working. I mentioned some of these differences in a conference in Riga in March in which the memory and work of Edgar Anderson was celebrated, and pointed to the fact that the differences in question are likely to carry historians interested in Latvian history in two different directions. I mean by this that in Latvia, historians have a ready, dedicated, and broad audience for the intellectual products of their work, whereas in the West historians working on Latvian themes are likely to be writing, when they write in English, for other specialists. In the one case, historians are contributing to the self-understanding of an entire nation; on the other, they are contributing to the specialized information about another part of the world and therefore their ways of shaping their research will naturally be guided by the interests of their fellow specialists. There is likely to be an emphasis on the comparative dimensions of the subject, as I mentioned earlier, and a tendency to portray Latvian history not in and for itself but as part of the larger story of the larger political units of which Latvians for most of their history have been a part. By being professionally socialized within a very different professional milieu, Western historians with an interest in Latvia are not likely to have as fervent a commitment to Latvian history per se and may seem to their counterparts in Latvia to be partaking somewhat of dilettantism. Whether one designates these differences as arising from the different organization of the historical disciplines, or from different styles of doing history, the result in either case will be different degrees of attachment to the subject matter at hand and different modes of presentation of findings.

Whether what I have observed in my own field will hold true for other disciplines as well is something that remains to be seen



AABS delegation to the Baltic, 1991: V. Stanley Vardys celebrating the impending convergence of Baltic Studies scholars

and I certainly do not view the future with despair. Perhaps in those fields of Baltic studies whose subject matter transcends the burning questions of the day intellectual convergence will prove easier to achieve, as indeed in some fields is already the case. What I have sought to suggest here is that the kind of commonality it would be desirable to have, and which would without any doubt enormously benefit the further study of the Baltic, will require more than good will and more than the physical and institutional convergences our common enterprise has exhibited so far. It will require a great deal of patience on both sides, as we seek to identify the sources of each other's point of view and try to understand why choice of subject matter, organizing concepts, and indeed the very philosophies in which our intellectual statements are embedded are likely to be very different. I, for one, do not expect that this enterprise will fail, but I do expect that it will take many more meetings such as the present one for true intellectual convergence to finally bear its fruit. When that moment arrives, we shall finally be able to deal with each other not only as personal acquaintances but as colleagues engaged in a common academic enterprise, namely the continuing search for the special contributions that our connection to the Baltic area allows us to make to the general body of knowledge about human affairs.

THOUGHTS ON BALTIC STUDIES SINCE THE FALL OF THE IRON CURTAIN (continued from p. 9)

have sometimes participated.

I still read the *Journal of Baltic Studies* with great interest and sometimes am drawn into publishing in it. Mostly this involves comparisons of the Baltic countries with each other and the outside world. This is what Baltic studies are about, as distinct from Lithuanian, Latvian or Estonian studies. The latter have value, but they become building blocks for Baltic studies only when someone uses them for something broader.

Some Baltic scholars justify their concentrating on a single country by an inability to gather materials outside their language area – until some brash American graduate student pieces something interesting together without knowing any of the geographically Bal-

tic languages. The tendency remains, as Andrejs Plakans noted 20 years ago, to consider painstaking fixation on a narrow topic scholarly, while generalizations "may seem ... to be partaking somewhat of dilettantism." Generalizations are felt to be unscholarly because they inevitably draw one outside one's range of deepest expertise. The reverse is true.

If a scholar insists that "a cobbler should stick to his last," my response is that he who narrowly sticks to his last is a cobbler.

Making our specific findings meaningful requires that we try to connect them to the broader vistas about which we know less. So we are liable to make mistakes. If so, others will correct us. Remaining too narrowly in our area of highest expertise guarantees us against mistakes – and against relevance. So I am waiting for more Baltic studies in the *Journal of Baltic Studies*.

IN THE TIMES OF GREAT CHANGE



Tomas Venclova

Tomas A. Venclova, *Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Yale University. AABS President 1990-1992*

Most AABS members relate to the emigration of the WWII era: themselves or their parents, they had fled their countries in 1944-45, running away from the Soviet occupation and Stalin's terror. I am a rare exception since I grew up in Lithuania, in the Soviet environment, and left my country only in 1977. Perhaps, my case was a herald of the new era, when immediate contact was established between the Baltic intellectuals living in the West and those who remained home. Even before I left Lithuania, I thought – and still think – of myself as a poet, essayist and translator rather than a scholar; although since the second half of the sixties, it so happened that I have from time to time published philological articles. I was interested in structuralism and semiotics, often visited Tartu, where Yuri Lotman was building up the famous semiotic school, and, in a sense, I became his disciple. I considered Lotmanism to be especially engaging because it gave one a chance to move away from the official and generally fruitless Soviet scholarship. It was not far, incidentally, from Lotmanism to overt political protest. Eventually, I was driven out of my country to the West and stripped of Soviet citizenship for being a member of the dissident movement. It was a rather mild measure, which the Soviet authorities back then resorted to, even if infrequently: more often than not, dissidents would end up in prisons.

My generation in Lithuania felt that the Baltic States, with their shared problems and unenviable fate, were, so to speak, a single whole. We were interested in what was going on in Latvia and Estonia and often visited those countries, where we had lots of friends; Latvians and Estonians, in their turn, visited us and shared the events of our life. The cultures of all the three states evolved in a somewhat parallel direction and represented a kind of a “Western enclave” within the Soviet empire. We were familiar with the daily life, art and scholarship of our Baltic neighbors, and of course the freethinking activists in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, regardless of whether they were officially recognized or underground figures, acted as one or at least took each other's experience into account. We all knew that there were active Baltic diasporas in the West, and we shared as much information about them as we could, depending on how much of it managed to get through the bars of censorship. The existence of AABS and the *Journal of Baltic Studies* was not a secret to me even at home. For a Lithuanian, such names as Marija Gimbutas, Rimvydas Šilbajoris and Algirdas Julius Greimas (with whom Lotman collaborated) were legendary; names of the Latvian and Estonian émigré scholars were not something alien either.

When I came to the West, I became more involved with scholarship (here my Tartu experience turned out to be very useful). My direct interests lie in the field of Slavic studies, more precisely – Russian and Polish poetics. But I also taught Lithuanian (I am proud that some of my students later published their work on Baltic studies) and even all three Baltic literatures as part of the survey course “Non-Russian Literatures of the USSR,” which I read at Yale and Columbia universities. I have published several articles on the topics related to the Baltic region – on the Russian-Lithuanian poet Jurgis Baltrušaitis (whom I studied with Lotman earlier, back in Tartu), on the history of the Vilnius University, on the theater of absurd in Lithuania, as well as many essays about Lithuanian writers, which were included

in my book *Texts about Texts* (1985). One article (“Vjačeslav Ivanov – Translator of Kristijonas Donelaitis”) came out in the *Journal of Baltic Studies*. I became friends not only with Gimbutas, Šilbajoris and Greimas but also with numerous other Lithuanian scholars in the West, and besides them – with Valdis Zeps, Juris Dreifelds, Ivar Ivask, Mardi Valgemäe. In 1984-89, a group of Baltic scholars I was part of issued the journal *Baltic Forum*, which was published in Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian and English (we also thought about Spanish and even Russian editions which nevertheless did not materialize). The journal, even if somewhat forgotten nowadays, had played a certain role in making the Western reader familiar with the state of affairs in the Baltic States during the crucial moment of their history. The postulated Baltic unity at that time was as obvious as during the years of my youth in Lithuania.

The status of the founding fathers and the most active group of AABS has belonged to the Latvians. First of all, I would like to mention the memorable name of Jānis Gaigulis, whom we all owe much and whose colleague I used to be, which I consider a real gift of fate. However, elections of the president have been traditionally carried out by rotation – a Lithuanian, a Latvian, or an Estonian president would be elected turn by turn. In the years 1990-1992, it was my honor to play this role. Alas, I am a very poor administrator (though with such people around me as Gaigulis, Valters Nollendorfs, Gundar King and others this was not so hopeless). And yet, I was lucky, because these were the years of the final liberation of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. I flatter myself with the thought that at that time the choice of a recent immigrant from the occupied Baltic country and a member of the dissident movement as AABS president has acquired a certain symbolic value. We followed the events in our native lands with hope but, naturally, not without apprehension. Fortunately, the Soviet system turned out to be weaker than most of us had assumed. In the second half of June, 1991, a group of AABS leaders, including myself, visited Rīga, Tartu, Tallinn and Vilnius, establishing direct contacts with the Baltic universities and academies. It was also at that time that the Baltic Academic Center in Rīga, branch office of AABS, was founded. We experienced virtually no problems in communicating with the local colleagues, though they did not quite believe yet that the long-awaited freedom had come. This was already my third visit to Lithuania: in the spring of 1990, I was not yet issued a visa on the grounds of being a dissident, but in the fall I already managed to visit my motherland from the side of Poland; in May 1991, there was again a complication with obtaining the visa, but it was nevertheless settled, and there was no longer a problem crossing the Lithuanian border for the third time in June. Freedom was visibly gaining ground. In Tartu, I was lucky to meet again with Yuri Lotman, who only had two more years to live. He, as we all did, passionately awaited complete independence of the three Baltic countries. The independence came soon, along with the collapse of the Soviet Union. It so happened that at that moment I delegated my presidency to Toivo Raun, the newly elected Estonian.

Remembering these turbulent years now, I am thinking of how AABS could contribute, and what it actually contributed, to the preservation and the development of the Baltic culture and scholarship. We are not a political organization, but the right of the Baltic States to be free and to reunite with the family of other European countries has always been of paramount importance to each one of us. Our nations have reached this goal. Generally speaking, AABS managed to ensure that the Baltic region during the Soviet era would not be disregarded by the world community of scholars, and that those aspects of its life which were hard or impossible to study at home were still studied. We have been trying to find

common language with the scholars from our native countries, to give them the opportunity to publish in the West, to provide them with institutional connections and guarantee an exchange of people engaged in the same field, to help reshape academic life in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia according to world models and standards. This activity has had its ups and downs, but it has been and will be carried out in the future. One wishes to think that Baltic scholars in the West will continue to influence their countries on their way to greater openness and tolerance, in their struggle against xenophobia and stereotypes. This task remains vital, and in some cases – rather difficult. The very idea of the Baltic solidarity, which has always inspired AABS and seemed self-evident during the years of my youth, causes the most problems. Each of the three countries is now inclined towards self-insulation, which leads inevitably to provincialism – at times, nearly as grave as during the Soviet era. Here we could, and should, help. Finally, an essential goal is to study the Baltic nations in their relation to the geographical, historical and ethnic surroundings, whether German, Scandinavian, Polish, Russian, Jewish or any other. Incidentally, my own interests have recently become focused precisely on this issue: I am working on the cultural history of Vilnius, and in part on that of Klaipėda and Königsberg-Kaliningrad – all cities where the narratives and discourses of several cultures and nations intersect.

THE AABS IN ITS FIFTH DECADE

Toivo U. Raun, *Professor of History, Indiana University. AABS President 1992-1994*

At the beginning of its fifth decade, the AABS can rightly be proud of its accomplishments. The organization was launched (not surprisingly on Latvian initiative, because this community had the largest critical mass among postwar Baltic immigrants to North America) in the heyday of the founding of area studies organizations in the US in the 1960s, e.g., Latin American Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, and Jewish Studies. In its early years Baltic Studies in North America clearly benefitted from this increased recognition of ethnic and cultural diversity. Following roughly a human generation of proving itself, the AABS was accepted into the prestigious American Council of Learned Societies in 1991. In my view the AABS's most lasting achievement is the establishment and almost continually improved existence of the *Journal of Baltic Studies*, now in its fortieth year, counting the preceding *Bulletin of Baltic Studies*. The journal has refreshingly evolved toward a substantially broader scope in subject matter as well as in the range of authors and disciplines represented, not to speak of a more professional appearance. It is the premier outlet for English-language

scholarship on the eastern Baltic world and will remain a monument to the far-reaching and bold vision of the organization's founders.

It is also important to recall the AABS's pioneering role in stimulating Baltic Studies on a world scale. I don't think it was a coincidence that the Baltic Studies conferences in Scandinavia began in the early 1970s or that much deeper cooperation between North American Baltic specialists and those based in Europe really took off in that same decade. Although they were initially small in numbers, it is striking that the first Soviet Baltic scholars at AABS conferences appeared as early as 1982.

In many ways the years 1989-1991 were a turning point for the AABS. In North America we had come of age and were accepted as a bonafide scholarly organization. At the same time, as the Baltic states were regaining their independence, a true opening to our colleagues there finally became possible. One of my most vivid memories of those years is an official trip by the AABS leadership, co-sponsored by IREX, to the Baltic region (still officially under Soviet rule) in June 1991. There were virtually no restrictions on our activity, and we had very cordial meetings with leaders of Baltic universities and academies. It was an emotional experience for all of us. On one particularly memorable day, traveling by bus, we literally had breakfast in Tallinn, lunch in Riga, and dinner in Vilnius, and the evening was topped off by several hours of wandering the streets of the Lithuanian capital with Rimvydas Šilbajoris as a wonderful guide. On the other hand the academic payoff, or the possibility of "intellectual convergence" that Andrejs Plakans alludes to, from these and ensuing contacts never fully transpired. To this day Baltic Studies in the Baltic states remain relatively stunted. The rewards for Baltic scholars are still mainly for work in Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian (not Baltic) Studies, and the comparative dimension, so pervasive in West scholarship, continues to be downplayed. There are, however, some signs of change, especially as younger Baltic scholars receive training abroad and then return home.

A final aspect of the turning point I see at the start of the 1990s was the mushrooming of interest in Baltic affairs, to a large extent the result of the collapse of the USSR and the restoration of Baltic independence. One of the most significant results here was the expansion of the range of scholars doing Baltic Studies in North America, including a considerable number of individuals with a non-Baltic background. Maintaining and indeed further expanding this base of interest will be a crucial factor in the well-being of Baltic Studies in the coming years.

WHAT AABS HAS MEANT TO ME

Violeta Kelertas, *Associate Professor, Chair of Lithuanian Studies, University of Illinois, Chicago. AABS President 1996-1998*

As a young graduate student in Comparative Literature in the early 1970s, I was more than happy to have been able to do Lithuanian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania and continue to use Lithuanian literature as one of my minors at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Fortunately, my professors were delighted to have an exotic language in the departmental mix. While there I became aware of AABS and joined the Association, and have been a member ever since, and have missed maybe one or two conferences.

It was the early AABS conferences back when they were small and one could go to almost all the lectures (history, linguistics, politics) that helped broaden my Baltic outlook and give me more perspective on the region. The literature sections were the most exciting for me; there are so many big names that I was fortunate to get to hear and know. The center of the Baltic literary circle was



AABS delegation to the Baltic, 1991: Toivo Raun at Āraiši Village Museum, Latvia

the inspiring polyglot Ivar Ivask. As editor of *Books Abroad*, later known as *World Literature Today*, Ivask knew the literary world as no one else, being personally acquainted with Nobel prize winners and other literati. But Ivar didn't just rest on his laurels, he was endlessly promoting Baltic writers, organizing literary evenings at AABS (please revive this old tradition!), asking for reviews on, in my case, Lithuanian books for his journal, and setting a wonderful example of what can be achieved globally to put Baltic literature on the world map. Another personal inspiration was Rimvydas Šilbajoris, who wrote mostly on Lithuanian literature, though he was a Slavist. Valters Nollendorfs did the same for Latvian literature, though he was in Germanics. These were heady examples for us graduate students to follow and to know that we could have careers and do Baltic Studies at the same time.

We would see writers and critics at the conferences and follow their work in the Journal and other venues. Thus I was privileged to meet Gunars Saliņš, Astrīde Ivaska, Juris Silenieks, Valdis Zeps, Mardi Valgemäe, Maire Jaanus, Karl Jirgens, Karlis Racevskis and many others, just to mention the literary types, some of whom no longer appear at the conferences, but whose work and example have left an indelible imprint on my mind and work. I know I am not alone in venerating them, as younger people than myself appeared and keep appearing on the scene to take our place and feel the same sense of coming home, the same sense of belonging somewhere with our intellectual interests and passions understood and welcomed, regardless of generation or outlook. Because we all want to do Baltic studies and the American academic world only rarely has an umbrella for us to fit under. Small states, small literatures, small relevance is the attitude. Especially now when our countries have joined the European Union and are seen correctly as a vital part of Europe, it has become increasingly difficult for North American scholars to fit into any other structure than AABS. Thus I foresee an increasing role for AABS to fill. The Association is more necessary and needed than ever. The international vibe it provides draws

scholars from all over the world and rightly so.

This brings me to a sore spot that AABS has not been able to do so well on; namely, in attracting scholars from the Baltic region. Though attempts and initiatives were made in the early 1990s, the results have not been encouraging. AABS still needs

to increase its visibility in the Baltic states—this is a vital project for the present and one that should not be neglected. How to communicate the excitement and vigor that we find at AABS conferences to our Baltic colleagues? How to attract them to Seattle, Chicago or wherever the scholarly venue may be? We have to look to the shores of the Baltic Sea to grow our membership and I wish the present Board and future boards luck in finding new solutions to this problem.



Rimvydas Šilbajoris in Lithuania, date unknown.



Herbert Ellison, Violeta Kelertas, Vytautas Landsbergis, Stephen Hanson: Roundtable on Lithuania and the End of the Soviet Union, University of Washington, 2000

A LIGHT-HEARTED LOOK AT THE TRANSITION.

Thomas Palm, *Professor Emeritus of Economics, Portland State University. AABS President 1998-2000*

The replacement of central dictate with markets and dictatorship with democracy has led to rapid economic growth and a general improvement of living standards in the Baltics.

Market-clearing prices were well established by the autumn of 1993, and the stores were well stocked. Baltic shopping centers today are as “classy” as others in the world.

However, as is evident in the current recession, the transition has also subjected the region to the business cycle. Indeed, economics as a profession has earned the pejorative: “The dismal science.” It has not, however, been without its humorous side.

Soviet restaurants, when they were open at all, were known for their slovenly appearance, bad food, and sullen service. As often as not, they were closed! Why? Because, in the absence of rational prices, the allotted food had been sold off through the “back door” —to generate private income. The scribbled cardboard sign in the window of the empty restaurant would say: “No vacant tables.” Or, “accident, inventory, worker missing.”

My particular favorite was: “Closed for lunch.”

Very early after the transition, I was astounded by a waitress in the Volga restaurant in Tartu, who, having fed us a good, fairly-priced meal, said “Thank you for your visit, come again!” She was smiling—all this had been unheard of!

There is now a large variety of good restaurants in Tallinn, and other bigger Baltic towns, with sophisticated international cuisine competing for business. Not to be outdone, the restaurant, “Eesti Maja” (The Estonian House), in the heart of Tallinn, specializes in Estonian food— marinated eel, blood sausage, jellied pork, Baltic sprats, tongue in horseradish sauce, etc.. It is owned and operated by a repatriated Estonian émigré,

The first evening on a bike-and-barge trip in France, I was chatting with a young anthropology professor. He told me about his interesting experiences as a visiting professor in an “exotic country in northeastern Europe.” It turned out that he had been at Tartu University in the Social Sciences Division. His six-year old daughter had become just old enough to start school. Only the Estonian school was available. The daughter's new language skills proved invaluable to her parents at the grocery store: what is in the containers labeled “kama” or “kilu”? I hesitated to tell him that I had been one of the founders of the Division a year earlier, and, as such, a reviewer of his job application.

In the Soviet era, people had to wait for years to get a phone line. In the fall of 1991, I was in Estonia consulting with the government at an economic policy conference at the Suurupi center, some 10 kilometers out of Tallinn. There was one phone in the building; it did not work. Had someone from town wanted to contact the prime minister, they would have had to send a car. Only a year later, I had been asked to head a commission to evaluate the program in business and economics at Tartu University. I had a question for the rector, which I e-mailed him just before midnight, from my home on the American West Coast. Next morning, about 7 am, I had a



Summer 1991, shortly before Estonia's independence was restored: Thomas Palm lectures about market economics, at the Estonian Management Institute (the former School of the Communist Party)

response, which began with:

"Dear Toomas, Excuse the delay.....

More recently, it was Estonians who wrote the basic code for Skype. On a per capita basis, there are more cell phones in Estonia than there are in the United States. One advantage of "coming late" to technology is that you can "leapfrog!"

The inability to travel abroad was one of the major complaints of "Homo Sovieticus." It was only marginally easier for Westerners to peer behind the iron curtain. After the transition, travel in both directions has become "old hat." The city of Portland, Oregon, my current home town, has a formal "Friendship City" arrangement with the government of Tallinn, the city of my birth. Portland has been visited by three of Tallinn's mayors, multiple other politicians, composers and conductors, choirs, dance troupes, theater personalities, academicians, relatives and friends. Most recently, I met a dozen Estonian college kids in Oregon for the summer. They are selling children's books door to door. Their hope is to pay for their trip (with, hopefully, some dollars left over), to polish their English language skills, and to have an adventure. Not only have the emigrés visited the "old country," but it has become increasingly common to encounter friends, neighbors and colleagues who "just loved" Tallinn, even if the beer at the "Raekoja Plats" is overpriced. (On my last visit, I saw five large cruise ships in dock at the same time).

Portland now has the largest "Estonian" folk dance troupe in North America only because about half of the dancers are "Americans." For example, two Mormon missionaries who spent two years in Estonia have learned the language, and have just returned from performing at the Dance Festival. The dance group also included a young Estonian fellow from Washington D.C. who did not think it "odd" to fly to Portland to rehearse before joining the dancers in Tallinn. The choir of a Portland community college has participated in several of the Estonian Song Festivals, and has taken concert tours of the country. Several of the singers have married Estonians. Others, long since graduated, continue to sing Estonian music, almost exclusively, in the alumni choir.

Travel is a sign of a globalizing economy. Recently, when traveling around Antarctica, my wife and I quite unexpectedly came upon a large barrel on one of the islands. The barrel dates from the heyday of Antarctic whaling in the 19th century. Mail addressed to whalers on ships anywhere in the region would be dumped in the barrel on the expectation that the addressee would eventually get there to sift through the mail. When a sailor saw an "outgoing" item addressed to someone in a part of the world that he would be going to, he was "morally obliged" to not only take the letter with him, but also to deliver it in person. The postal system is still operating to this day. How effective could it possibly be?

We decided to write a postcard to friends in Tallinn and dropped it in the barrel. The card was delivered (by an Estonian tourist?) in person, within a month!

As discouraging as the current economic downturn and the rumblings from Russia are, research by, and advice from, AABS can be one element in giving hope for the resurgence of Baltic economic, political and social institutions. AABS, "Just Do it!"

THE CONTINUED RELEVANCE OF AABS EXPERIENCE

Juris Dreifelds, Associate Professor of Political Science, Brock University. AABS President 2000-2002

The founders of the AABS had several reasons for initiating this organization two generations ago. For many, however, there was also a serious fundamental purpose beyond detached academic inquiry that guided participation. Many people saw this venture as a strategic

means for preventing the reality of the Baltic States from falling into a black memory hole. The permanence of Soviet occupation, which had endured for a quarter century, seemed to permeate "realistic" analyses in media and many government circles. In the words of *Readers Digest*, these were "Dream States" which still received perfunctory and evidently "futile" declarations regarding the non-recognition of the incorporation of these states into the USSR. In July 1974, the government of Australia decided that the time had come to dispense with this non-recognition "charade." But for the determined opposition of the local Baltic communities, this Australian move, which was reversed after 17 months, could have become the beginning of a long parade of new "realist" states.

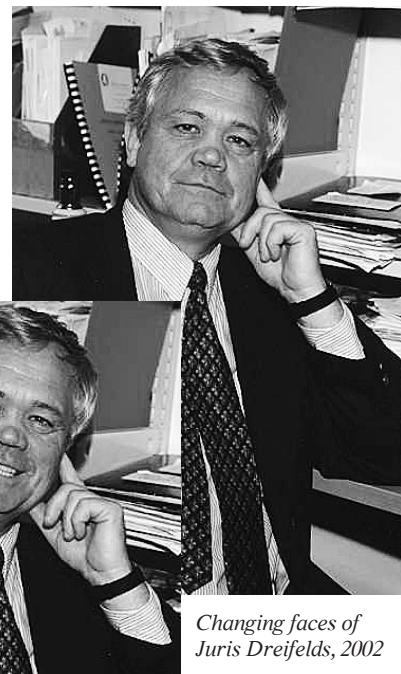
Concern about this increasing acceptance of injustice became the driving force for Baltic community involvement with the AABS. Widespread participation in various activities of AABS, including voluntary work, funding, publicity, journal editing and leadership, welled because of a rarely articulated but always present goal for many—Baltic State independence. This vitality and dynamism was undoubtedly best reflected in the role of Jānis Gaigulis, the executive director of the AABS. He, like many others in this organization, was not an academic but a dedicated volunteer. As well, there were very few academics for whom Baltic studies became a major part of their university responsibilities.

This underlying common purpose created strong friendship ties. Indeed, the high degree of communion, camaraderie and solidarity, paralleled the bonds felt by many soldiers sharing trenches in wartime.

With the advent of Baltic State independence, the underlying grid of dynamic popular energy slowly but inexorably retrenched. A major goal had been achieved. Nonetheless, the scholarly side of the AABS failed to excite or capture the imagination of many local Baltic researchers. The AABS office, based at the University of Latvia, was never taken seriously by the school administration or incorporated as a potential vehicle for international contacts and expansion. At times it seemed that the greatest interest in the AABS was focused on the use or takeover of the million dollar AABS fund. The *Journal of Baltic Studies* became a useful vehicle for international publication of local scholarly articles, but very few locals became its subscribers.

The idea of Baltic solidarity, embraced by many AABS members, for the most part has not found deep roots or resonance in the three separate "mother countries." Regional studies have mostly devolved to local country studies. Baltic solidarity evidenced in the "Baltic Way" of August 23, 1989, when two million people joined hands to

demonstrate their desire for freedom, has only reappeared sporadically. The moribund state of the "Baltic Assembly" highlights this new reality. The three states are more often in direct competition with each other than



Changing faces of
Juris Dreifelds, 2002

joined in a common purpose. Indeed, the current President of Estonia and many other Estonians have expended time and effort to promote Estonia as a new member of Scandinavia, and very definitely not part of Baltica.

Could it be that the three states are focusing on self-discovery after half a century of arrested development? Perhaps they suffer from something that could be best described as a collective inferiority complex (We are so-o good!). Certainly the real conflicts over resources (oil, fish), over boundaries, over investments and over access to various EU and other funds have fed a certain prejudicial strain in their respective populations. There seems to be an almost total neglect of news coverage by each about its Baltic neighbours. Very few students are provided more than a perfunctory overview of the history of their neighbours (even of Russia).

In this new maelstrom of competing interests, there is another sombre reality. There is a surprisingly small number of active Baltic scholars in all three republics. Most of these, moreover, are underfunded, overworked and often simply struggling for their daily existence. Multiple jobs and few sources of financing have placed a pall on their scholarly energies.

Paradoxically, in spite of the attainment of EU and NATO membership, there has never been a greater need for spirited and dynamic Baltic scholarship to understand some very perplexing psychological, sociological and political realities afflicting the three republics. The ideological cement that commonly holds countries together has become seriously frayed in the Baltics. Surprisingly, over half of young people queried in a Latvia poll indicated that they wanted to live permanently elsewhere. Trust in public institutions is in the single digit range. The perception of politicians as incorrigible crooks intent on corruption permeates the thinking of a majority. Many have already left for other countries. Various blogs and interactive media highlight the widespread contempt felt for the infrastructure of their local homelands. The recent Russian attempt to force feed world media with their version of history with respect to the Baltic States demands a solid phalanx of knowledgeable scholars to offer soundly based sustainable evidence and facts.

The economic crash suffered by all three Baltic States (even by the much-lauded Baltic Tiger, Estonia) begs for deeper understanding of Baltic economic processes. The impact of almost total foreign ownership of local media is also an uncharted field of study. These and other issues need a solid cadre of intellectuals and scholars to provide more depth to the limited understanding of social forces storming over the three “sister republics.”

Ironically, the AABS, in view of its past experience, is positioned better than most other organizations in meeting what appears to be a new “existential threat.”

HISTORY, POLITICS AND NEW CHALLENGES: THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

Saulius Sužiedėlis, *Professor Emeritus of History, Millersville University. AABS President 2002-2004*

In perusing the list of past presidents of the AABS we can distinguish generations. There were the scholars who came of age during the war, mainly Baltic exiles who arrived in their adopted homelands ready to enter secondary schools and universities: I recall here my dear friend and mentor, Prof. V. Stanley Vardys. These men and women were true refugees: their bond with the lands of their ancestors was visceral, firmly fixed in memories of Europe. Most needed to learn a second language as young adult immigrants. My generation, who emigrated as infants or toddlers from DP camps, received degrees at the height of the Cold War. Our connection to the Baltic lands was strong but largely vicarious and we soon achieved native fluency in our new language. Yet the majority of us remain embed-

ded in our cultural communities and thus we own, to an extent, the “exile experience.” The latter included a good deal of cultural and political baggage: an often uncritical conservatism and knee-jerk anti-Communism and, among the older generation in particular, a certain degree of isolation from the culture, world-view and values of American and Canadian societies and academia. Our bifurcated experience distinguished us from our non-Baltic colleagues.

The young scholars who will now dominate the Association thrive in a wonderful universe, previously unimaginable to those mentioned above: democratic elections, a free market, visa-free travel to the lands of their research interests, unrestricted communication with Baltic colleagues via cell phone or Skype, and all the rest. Our generation imagined these possibilities only within the realm of fantasy, a kind of science fiction world. Alexander Shtromas and Andrei Amalrik were among the few who suggested a collapse of the ossified Communist world by the 1980s: they were exposed to (mostly gentle) ridicule. It is instructive that both were exiles themselves. I am ashamed to say that I was one of the skeptics, but at least I had the opportunity to apologize to Dr. Shtromas during a particularly beer-soaked evening in 1990.

This is not to say that the new world is a Baltic Disneyland: the problems are obvious and immense, especially today. The demands of the EU have turned



Saulius Sužiedėlis with his grandson at the Lithuanian Festival in Baltimore in May, 2009

out to be a curse to many, especially on the lower socio-economic scale, whose current tribulations lead to amnesia about the horrendous aspects of postwar life on the wrong side of divided Europe. But I would pay special attention to what Andrejs Plakans has identified as the problem of intellectual convergence: We are as physically close as ever to our Baltic colleagues and the Baltic societies in which they work, and yet there is the painful experience that, with notable exceptions, the people “over there” have long inhabited a radically different cultural, political and mental world. It is not “our” world and we need to think clearly whether it is our mission to make them more like us. Let’s leave it to the young ones to tackle this one.

It is inevitable that given my profession I will conclude with a historical theme. It has been one of the great achievements of our Association that on its founding in 1968 it resisted pressures to become yet another politicized exile lobby. Jānis Gaigulis deserves much credit for this. And yet, as has been pointed out, we are not dispassionate observers of the Baltic past and present. Nor should we be: academic standards do not require us to adopt a value-free outlook in our research and teaching. The banal clichés may or may not be true: that the more things change, the more they remain the



Andrejs Plakans, Toivo Raun, and Saulius Sužiedėlis at the 2006 Conference on Baltic Studies, Washington DC.

same, or that there is nothing new under the sun. And yet...

The Cold War may have ended but the recent geopolitical moves of the Putin/Medvedev regime leave no doubt that, at the very least, the “new Russia” seeks to restore what it views as a rightful sphere of influence in the “near abroad.” The recent brouhaha over the relative evils of Nazism and Communism, the egregious allegations that Poland was a Nazi ally, or the contradictory charge that the nation’s courageous stand against Hitler in 1939 triggered World War II, the establishment of the Medvedev “historical commission” dominated by the security services, the rehabilitation of Stalin and all the other elements of full-blown revisionism accompanied by the denial of Soviet crimes are troubling developments. The fact that all of this is orchestrated at the highest levels makes it clear that this is part of an overall political strategy. This will doubtless impact Russian historical memory, especially impressionable young minds. Too many uncritical minds in the West remain grateful captives of the Soviet Great Patriotic War narrative, a theme cynically manipulated by those encouraging amnesia about Soviet wartime culpability. The clueless speculation of some of the Baltic intelligentsia concerning the Holocaust and their own denial of difficult themes of the past are gleefully exploited by Russian deniers and their enablers. This is an intellectual and ethical challenge which I hope young scholars of the AABS will now confront.

BEYOND BALTIC BORDERS

Thomas Salumets,
*Professor of German,
University of British
Columbia. AABS
President 2004-2006*

I first became more actively involved with the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies in 1998 when I accepted the editorship of the *Journal of Baltic Studies* for a three-year term. After my tenure as editor I served for another six years on the Board of Directors - as has been customary, two years each as President-Elect (2002-04), President (2004-2006) and then Director at Large (2006-2008). Before my membership on the Board I had attended some AABS conferences and published an article in *Journal of Baltic Studies* but on the whole my participation remained largely occasional. I devoted most of my time to teaching and research in German Studies, my home discipline at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

What attracted me to AABS? Influenced mostly perhaps by postmodern literary theory, which had left its mark on much of the humanities in North America in the 1980s, I came to understand my own work increasingly in “relational” terms. In particular, the question of human interdependencies, how we co-determine one another in co-operation and in conflict yet remain in league with

independence, captured my imagination. By the 1990s, the wish to soften the borders between disciplines and better comprehend the narratives of other cultures and cultural forms informed the broader intellectual landscape as I understood it. Cross-fertilization between disciplines and working between cultures had become mainstream in many academic departments.

Convinced that this transformation ranks among the most important developments in the humanities, I focused my scholarly efforts in the same direction and searched for opportunities to reach beyond my own scholarly community. I explored neighbouring disciplines, chaired the Program of Comparative Literature, developed some expertise in other areas and also taught courses outside my primary field of study, mainly in the Department of Sociology.

Extending my set patterns in teaching and research to include things Baltic seemed natural and I was happy to see AABS develop greater interest in the Baltic Sea Region as a whole and continue to make strides towards active engagement with a wider range of people, areas, topics and disciplines. The upcoming joint conference with the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study in 2010 is one important and tangible sign pointing to a more inclusive and, in my opinion, ever more promising future for AABS.

I am curious to see how AABS will continue to re-imagine itself, increase its visibility, engage with cultural diversity, encourage even “deeper” intercultural understanding - also in the *Journal of Baltic Studies* - and promote initiatives anchored in the Baltic states but also deliberately turn its lens outward and reach beyond its borders. Of course, this is only one possible way forward for AABS. But in my opinion, this path promises to make the significance of Baltic Studies more obvious and lead to stronger and broader recognition of our association.

TIES THAT BIND

Inta Gāle Carpenter, *Research Scholar, Folklore and Ethnomusicology, Indiana University. AABS President 2006-2008*

Andrejs Plakans, along with many others, rightly points to the central place “personal convergences” have played in sustaining AABS and promoting Baltic Studies over the last four decades. Indeed, as a folklorist, I might venture that personal interconnections constitute the vital foundation for the other two convergences Andrejs contemplates: institutional and intellectual.

My own first experience with folklorists in Latvia took place in 1983, during a personal pilgrimage to the country of my birth. I had no professional duties or ties, but since I worked in Special Projects at the Folklore Institute of Indiana University and had been part of the editorial team for *The Handbook of American Folklore* (published by IU Press in 1983), I wanted to present a copy to fellow folklorists at the Latvian Academy of Sciences. At the time, I was fully



Thomas Salumets at a conference in Tartu in honour of Uku Masing's 100th birthday (23. Sept. 2009). Photo by Alar Madisson.



Inta Carpenter, Presidential Address, 2006 AABS conference

immersed in that illusion of exile – the “wishful thinking” Andrejs alludes to – which expects a seamless merger with the homeland I had heard so much about from family and community. Arranging a meeting for a private individual – moreover an unknown from a university unlikely to be recognized as the mecca for folklore study in the U.S. – was a feat accomplished by a highly placed distant relative in Rīga, over whose office desk hung one of the ubiquitous portraits of Lenin. When I presented the *Handbook* to the assembled four or five folklorists, they huddled together over its table of contents. With a mixture of confusion and envy, they excitedly whispered and translated among themselves, pointing to the range of topics covered: the folklore of crime, occupation, family, students, urban and suburban places, churches, social conflict, and the many methods and theories delineated. Eventually one of them put their collective surprise into words, “Oh, that we could pursue such topics freely.” Nothing more followed from this first encounter.

My second trip to Latvia came seven years later, in 1990, to do research on the song festival as a moment of reconciliation between natives and exiles. My fieldwork confirmed what was becoming increasingly clear in many circles, namely, that merging as “one” wouldn’t be imminent or smooth. I recall the rise and proliferation of (sometimes hilarious) anecdotal gossip about returning exiles who were perceived as a touch too arrogant and too dismissive of what was known by those who had lived in place during their absence. AABS was not entirely exempt from such chatter, and thus, scholarly convergences initially got off on a rocky footing. Dare I say, it took time for personal ties to overcome first impressions in order to grow into the powerful nurturing force they often are today.

But that same rumor mill had its positive side as well. In 1990, it was mighty sensitive to the arrival of each visitor from abroad, and, despite no effort on my part to establish academic ties, I was quickly invited into a conversation about the budding life-story collecting venture envisioned by Māra Zirnīte, a practicing journalist. British anthropologist Vieda Skultans, as I remember, was also at this meeting. The subsequent development of *Dzīvesstāsts* (Life Story) as an oral history archive is a tale of unstinting personal agency and a convergence of patriotic fervor and scholarly input. I was a minor partner, helping as I could during a Fulbright semester in 1994, at 3 x 3 sessions in Daugavpils, and in many late night brainstormings over food and drink. In the 1990s, Western scholarly ideas were shifting in useful directions for nascent academic initiatives in the Baltic countries. For example, history was increasingly being perceived as narrative, even as a form of cultural mythology; folklore was fast moving away from a concern with classifications by type and motif to a fascination with just how are stories told, to whom, with what intent. Intellectual convergence was tremendously facilitated by electronic communication. I was gratified to watch *Dzīvesstāsts* adapt the work of folklorists by paying particular attention to the aesthetics of narration. They recorded superbly talented life-story tellers for the task of reconstructing historical experience, with the result that many of the 3000 interviews archived today in Rīga are gripping, richly detailed, contextualized resources.

Over the next decade-plus, with great satisfaction I watched the circle of collaborators in *Dzīvesstāsts* grow (in the Baltic and beyond) as individuals worked together on the “life story boom.” Local shining lights were brought into contact with top European and American scholars at conferences and on grant projects. Young graduate students joined the effort as interns and paid staff, and they in turn were inspired by the scholarly world opening up before

them. Exile and native scholars planned international conferences, served on thesis committees, edited and translated publications, wrote grants, and found shared interests. I personally benefited greatly from archived interviews by scholars in Latvia of Latvians in Brazil. Most especially, individuals, often strangers to one another, teamed up during numerous “field expeditions” to collect life stories throughout Latvia. Interviewers volunteered in exchange for room and board (in the quirky environs of museums and schools as well as welcoming personal homes). Disparate researchers and lay persons befriended one another as they walked from house to house to talk to old-timers, as they solved problems, shared meals, impressions, and a growing understanding of what it had meant to live in Soviet times, as well as had opportunities to talk about their own lives abroad.

Something similar happened with regard to post-doctoral training at IU. A number of IREX, Fulbright, and AABS-Saltups scholars and their families from Rīga found Bloomington to be a home-away-from-home. Personal ties led to plotting about other endeavors. In my own case, friendships with visiting scholars led to the convening of a folklore symposium in Rīga in 1995 (supported by IREX), joint grant proposals, team fieldwork in a Siberian Latvian village, reunions at the two AABS conferences recently held in Bloomington, and even the production of a cookbook in Latvian of American recipes (which demonstrates that scholarly lives are obviously richly diverse).

What I’m saying reiterates what Andrejs concludes and others in their essays have demonstrated: the variety and intensity of physical convergences are “impressive indeed.” In my experience, converging energies, interests, and potentially endless initiatives have abundantly spilled over among individuals who have come to know and like one another. Going forward from the first generation will necessarily take new paths. Young AABS members do not carry the same baggage nor dream the same dreams nor unstintingly dedicate themselves to cause as did their predecessors. But the vital center of productive energy, I maintain, will continue to be fueled by those whose ties to one another are broadly and warmly human. AABS has the opportunity to continue to play a role in doing all it can to enable members to get to know one another as they work together on shared interests.

CONVERGENCES: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

Guntis Šmidchens, *Assistant Professor of Baltic Studies, University of Washington. AABS President 2008-2010*

I have one blurry photograph that I took at the 1990 Conference on Baltic Studies, during the “Convergences” address by Andrejs Plakans. The picture, and many pages of scribbled notes in my files, help me reconstruct the electricity of that now very distant conference. The Berlin Wall had come down only a few months earlier. Baltic borders, too, were opening up. The imminent convergence of Baltic and American scholarship was in the air. In this essay, I’ll recall transformations in my field of folkloristics after 1990, when so-called “Baltic” and “Western” folklore research converged exactly as prophesied by Plakans—physically, institutionally and intellectually. I won’t examine the role of the AABS, which has always been in the background, catalyzing and energizing.

A week after the 1990 AABS conference, I was in Rīga at an exhibit in the Latvian Folklore Archive, and I accidentally bumped into somebody. I excused myself. “My name is Guntis, and I’m a folklorist,” he said to me*. “Ditto,” I replied, accepting his invitation to lunch. And the convergence had begun.

B a c k home in the USA, I found many of my American colleagues gazing at the Baltic: “Write me something about recent trends in Baltic proverb research,”



Andrejs Plakans keynote address, 1990 AABS conference, blurry photo by Guntis Šmidchens

was the repeated request whenever I met Wolfgang Mieder, the world’s premier paremiologist and editor of the journal, *De Proverbium* (Arvo Krikmann’s six-volume collection of Estonian proverbs was legendary, and Kazys Grigas and Elza Kokare were household names in the field, but Americans couldn’t read what they wrote in their native languages). Graduate student that I was, full of good intentions, I promised but later reneged, having come face to face with the hellish enormity of the task. Then Regina Bendix asked me to write an overview of current Baltic folkloristics for the *American Folklore Society’s Newsletter*, and this time I promised and kept my word; my much-too-short-and-superficial essay was promptly translated and republished in *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde*.

Demand for knowledge about Baltic folklore and folkloristics was great, too great for the few of us Americans who could read Estonian, Latvian or Lithuanian. Luckily, folklorists in the Baltic quickly rose to the challenge. Thanks to generous support from IREX, the American Folklore Society’s Baltic Section was able to bring panels of scholars to North America, to present papers about Baltic urban legends, folksongs, and epics at the conferences of the AFS and AAASS. At one such conference, another leading American folklorist, Jan H. Brunvand, remarked that Balts bring a welcome spark of international inspiration to the AFS.

In the 21st century, activity shifted from North America to the Baltic. American folklorists met Balts at international folklore seminars in Finland, and soon went on to visit Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. A milestone was the 2005 Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR), organized by the Estonian folklorists in Tartu. Soon afterwards, the main resource for international urban legend research, FOAFtale News, moved to

Tartu, where it is published today.

Americans have much to learn from Baltic folklorists, particularly in the realm of academic publishing. While one of our leading journals, *Southern Folklore*, recently passed into oblivion, for example, Estonian folklorists have established three excellent new periodical publications: *Folklore*, *Sator*, and *Mäetagused*. Though they do also exist in paper versions, their main form exists online, with open access to full text. Moreover, all of the classic works in Estonian folkloristics, including the abovementioned six-volume proverb collection by Arvo Krikmann, have been converted to e-format, freely available on the website, www.folklore.ee. In Latvia, Šmits’ twelve-volume collection of folktales and legends is now online, and the dainas are in a web-based, searchable database, free of charge. Excellent Lithuanian publications such as the *Anthology of Lithuanian Ethnoculture* and the journal *Liaudies kultūra* parallel the Estonian publications as online scholarly resources. We Americans (and, I might add, the Fellows in Finland also, and others, too) struggle to keep print-and-paper formats alive by raising prices and restricting research publications to affluent libraries and narrow, members-only circles of professional associations, but Baltic folklorists have adopted the democratic ideal that scholarly knowledge should be disseminated freely to all who desire it.

At the 2004 Conference of the American Folklore Society, the prominent folklorist, Alan Dundes, concluded his Invited Presidential Address on a positive note, marveling at the “tremendous folkloristic energy” he had encountered during his recent trip to the Baltic: “I believe,” he wrote, “Estonia is well on the way to rivaling its neighbor Finland as the prime mover of folklore scholarship in the world today. And Latvia and Lithuania are also major players in contemporary international folkloristics of the twenty-first century.” I humbly agree with the late Alan Dundes. In my own research, I grapple with the tremendous challenge of keeping up to date on Baltic folkloristics. For every problem I engage, I encounter a stack of publications that precede me: I’m trying to write a book about singing traditions, for example, but Kristin Kuutma, Dace Bula, Stasys Skrodenis and many others are always two steps ahead of me: They are well versed in international theory and trends, they possess formidable knowledge of their native materials, and they leave a trail of books and articles that I must follow and absorb before I can contribute anything new to the field.

The 2013 ISFNR Congress is scheduled to take place in Vilnius, Lithuania. I’m going. Are you?

*Today, I note the eerie resemblance between his surname, Pakalns, and that of the abovementioned keynote speaker, Plakans.

Upcoming Conferences and Events

	When?	Event	Where?
2010	April 22-24	22nd AABS Conference on Baltic Studies	University of Washington, Seattle
	September	AABS Australian Chapter Conference	Melbourne, Australia
	Nov. 18 – 21	Annual Conference 42 nd National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies	Los Angeles, CA. Westin Bonaventure Hotel and Suites
2011	June 11	Conference on Baltic Studies in Europe	Stockholm, Sweden
2012	Spring	AABS Conference, University of Illinois-Chicago 2012	Chicago

RESOURCES

Baltic Studies Collections in North American Research Libraries, 1989-2009

Michael Biggins, *Slavic, Baltic and East European Studies Librarian, Affiliate Professor of Slavic Languages, University of Washington*

If 1989 was a watershed year for Baltic studies in general, it also marks a divide, in several respects, for university libraries supporting Baltic studies.

For one, the unofficial roster of North American universities actively engaged in developing research-level collections for Baltic studies changed significantly across this divide. If, before 1989, the leaders were Wisconsin (for Latvian and Lithuanian), Pennsylvania (for Lithuanian), Indiana (for Estonian), and Harvard (for all three), in the twenty years since, most of these libraries have downgraded their collecting activity, and a new constellation of rapidly growing Baltic collections has emerged—one that is led by Yale, Harvard, Stanford and Washington. This shift is nothing alarming in itself, but rather a consequence of the natural ebb and flow of research library strengths over time, as libraries try to coordinate their priorities with the birth, growth and (sometimes) decline of campus programs, the latter most often signaled by faculty retirements.

A second major post-1989 change with consequences for libraries has been the liberalization of the publishing industry in all three Baltic countries. Throughout the 1980s the output of the Baltic book markets remained stable and mostly undistinguished—underwritten, planned and filtered as they were by the local Soviet governments and censorship boards. Some innovation in terms of content slipped past the increasingly negligent censors' eyes in the very late 1980s, at the same time as economic and political crisis caused a drop in output. This period of retrenchment in publishing continued into the first few years of independence, generally through 1993. But as new markets formed, there followed a boom in book production that has taken the total number of titles published per year to twice that of late Soviet and early independence years (in Estonia and

Lithuania) and to more moderate gains of around 50% in Latvia. This growth over twenty years has been far more dramatic than the growth of publishing output in mature European economies, such as Germany or France, where the 20-year increase has been just 20% and 30%, respectively. Some part of the increase can be ascribed to the return home of publishing activity that for 45 years could only take place in emigration. As for *Baltica* published outside of the region, after 1989 North America witnessed a threefold boom in publishing on Baltic topics and Germany saw a 50% increase. Altogether, for North American libraries with Baltic interests there has been far more material that needs to be captured out of the post-1989 publishing landscape than ever had to be acquired before, and with academic book and periodical inflation far outstripping the consumer price index, the result has been that these proliferating titles are now owned by fewer and fewer libraries.

Third, in some respects the ways our libraries acquire Baltic materials have also changed fundamentally—while in others they have not. Until 1990 many U.S. libraries depended on the Soviet book export monopoly, *Mezhdunarodnaia kniga* (International Book), to supply them with publications from throughout the Soviet Union, including the Baltics, automatically and in accordance with a collecting profile established by the library. That monopoly came apart with the Soviet Union, and North American libraries had to become more proactive about their Baltic collections, if they intended to grow them. Most often, the earliest post-1989 Baltic book dealers were based either in Germany or North America, a fact which introduced a whole new layer of overhead costs and challenged our ability to support extensive research collections. With time and the emergence of Internet-based commerce, it has become both convenient and affordable to acquire mainstream material through Amazon-type bookstores

based in Tallinn, Rīga or Vilnius. However, for academic and more specialized publications not available through Web vendors, some libraries still rely—as we did 20 years ago—on productive book and periodical exchanges with the major Baltic libraries.

Lastly, second only to independence, the biggest factor distinguishing the Baltic collections of today from those of 1989—not to mention, in all likelihood, 2029—is the Internet. With millions of books in all languages available soon through Google Books, and the national libraries in Vilnius, Rīga and Tallinn already making huge strides in their own EU-supported projects to digitize the national printed heritage, much of the older, copyright-free material now held in our Baltic print collections will soon also be available through a few mouse clicks. Since the late 1990s, many Baltic newspapers have gone online, some of them using a costly, pay-per-use commercial model that few North American libraries are likely to sustain. On the other hand, the national libraries have done admirable work creating detailed and chronologically deep online article indexes made, for the most part, freely available as a public good.

In short, in 2009 our Baltic library collections exist in an environment of complexity and flux—both of information formats (printed books and journals, films on DVD, licensed full-text databases, e-books and the free-access Web) and of acquisition methods—that goes far beyond what we've ever dealt with before. For now, North American libraries' holdings of current Baltic studies materials remain collectively strong, and even if each item is held by fewer libraries across the continent than in the past, most of these can still be readily borrowed via our established interlibrary lending networks. But without some form of external support, the economic and organizational pressures bearing down on our research libraries and universities will make it ever more challenging to maintain this level of coverage.

US-Baltic Fulbright Scholars Exchanges, 1993-2009

Compiled by **Guntis Smidchens**

The Fulbright Scholar program sends U.S. scholars to approximately 125 countries around the world and brings visiting scholars to the U.S. for post-doctoral research and/or to lecture at host universities. The following data on one category of international exchanges, the Fulbright Scholars program administered by CIES, is an example of the geographic and discipline diversity represented in the Fulbright programs.

Baltic Scholars to US:

Top Disciplines
Political Science (20);
Chemistry (13);
Economy (11);
Physics & Astronomy (9);
Sociology (9);
American Literature (8);
Education (8);
Engineering (8);
Language & Literature, non-US (8);
Linguistics (8);
Anthropology (7);
Business Administration (7).

US Scholars to Baltics

Top Disciplines:
Political Science (19);
Law (17);
Business Administration (16);
Communications (14);
American Literature (13)
Education (13);
Sociology (12);
Creative Writing (11);
Music (10).

Top US Sending Institutions:

Arizona State University (3)
Columbia University (3)
Indiana University (3)
Louisiana State (3)
University-Baton Rouge (3)
Northern Illinois University (3)
Portland State University (3)
Rutgers (3)
University of Kansas (3)
University of Wisconsin-Madison (3)

Top US Hosts

Columbia University (10)
University of Wisconsin-Madison (8)
Indiana University (6)
Georgetown University (5)
University of California-Irvine (5)
Stanford University (4)
University of California-Berkeley (4)

	Scholars to Baltic	Baltic Scholars to US
Estonia	57	61
Latvia	75	66
Lithuania	63	64
Total	195	191

US Academic Exchanges with Lithuania

Rasa Baukuvienė, *Embassy of the United States in Vilnius, Lithuania*

According to available statistics, the first exchanges between American and Lithuanian scholars started in 1977. During the Soviet times academic exchanges between the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic and the United States existed through the central government in Moscow. They were limited and under strict control. Students were not included in exchanges, and scholars could not conduct research. American scholars were allowed to come to only two institutions of higher education: Vilnius State University and Vilnius Engineering and Construction Institute (now Vilnius Gediminas Technical University). From 1977 to 1987, ten American Fulbright scholars lectured in Vilnius. The first scholar from Lithuania went to the U.S. in 1977. The second scholar received a grant only ten years later, in 1987. Two more Lithuanian scholars were invited to lecture at American universities through 1990.

With independence from the Soviet Union, various academic exchange programs were established with Lithuania—IREX, Edmund Muskie, Fulbright, Ron Brown, and Humphrey were all established in 1992. Lithuanian-U.S. academic exchanges are administered by the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of U.S. Embassy in Vilnius, widely known as the American Center. With Lithuania's membership in NATO and EU, some academic exchange programs were closed (IREX, Muskie, Ron Brown), while other exchange programs continue. New exchange initiatives such as ASSIST, Youth for Understanding, Benjamin Franklin, and Lithuanian Youth Leaders were initiated by private sponsors.

Since 1992, PAS has established a network of Lithuanian institutions of higher education that regularly receive American lecturers, scientific researchers and students, thereby improving the chances for curricular reform and broadening cultural/educational contacts between

Lithuania and the United States. In turn, Lithuanian grantees go to the United States. Today Lithuania counts more than 400 participants in various educational exchange programs to the United States (Lithuanian Fulbright – 155, U.S. Fulbright – 157, Senior Specialists – 16, Hubert H. Humphrey – 6, Edmund Muskie – 56, Summer Institutes – 18, Ron Brown – 2, IREX – 2, and others).

Fulbright grantees come from a variety of academic fields of research and study including natural sciences, social sciences, linguistics, and media. Graduate students normally study for a full academic year, while scholars may travel for a semester or an academic year. Through the initiative of fellows, the Lithuanian Fulbright Alumni Association was established in 2000. It includes government members, prominent academics and scientists, diplomats, and one EU parliamentarian.

In 2001, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Government of the United States of America

and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on the Fulbright Program was signed. The MOU was renewed in 2008. Based on the memorandum, the Lithuanian Government became involved in the applicants' selection process, and allotted funding to support the Fulbright alumni activities in the country. In 2009, the United States signed a Sci-

ence and Technology Agreement with Lithuania. The agreement allows the U.S. and Lithuania to share information, perform joint research, exchange scientists and researchers, organize joint scientific events and enhance collaboration between the scientific and educational institutions of both countries. Academic and scientific cooperation

strengthens the already close relationship between the U.S. and Lithuania

The PAS works in close cooperation with two "EducationUSA" Centers, in Vilnius and Kaunas, which disseminate information on U.S. universities and administer academic tests, such as the TOEFL, GRE, TOEIC, SAT, and help to prepare for GRE and USMLE.

Four Decades of US-Estonian Exchanges

Jane Susi, *Educational/Cultural Assistant*, and **Tiiu Vitsut**, *Cultural/Outreach Assistant*, Embassy of the United States in Tallinn, Estonia

The history of academic exchanges between Estonia and the United States dates back to the 1970's. At that time, Estonia was one of the 15 republics of the former Soviet Union, and rare academic exchanges were authorized through the central academic institutions in Moscow. After Estonia reinstated its independence and re-established diplomatic relations with the United States in October 1991, the administration of the Fulbright program, along with other academic exchange programs in Estonia, moved to the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Tallinn.

PAS works in close cooperation with two Educational Advising Centers in Tallinn and Tartu, which disseminate information on U.S. universities, advise Estonian students on the application and admission process therein, and administer academic tests, such as the TOEFL and GRE.

In 2007, a Memorandum of Understanding between the embassy and the Estonian Ministry of Education was signed. Based on the memorandum, the Estonian Government became involved in the selection process for the Fulbright program, and in allocating funding for Estonian program participants' travel to the United States. Former Fulbright-

ers and recognized academics, as well as representatives of the Ministry of Education also contribute to the selection process of new candidates, particularly for high-level programs requiring technical expertise.

In 2001, a group of local Fulbrighters, IREX Alumni and Muskie Fellows established an NGO for Estonians who had previously participated in U.S. Government programs in the United States. The NGO cooperates closely with PAS. The association has approximately 100 alumni, two-thirds of whom participated in U.S. Government-sponsored academic or exchange programs and one third of whom studied in the U.S. independently.

Fulbright grantees come from a diverse academic background. More than fourteen students and scholars per year travel to and from Estonia under the Fulbright auspices, which grant up to a full academic year of study or research. The majority of American Fulbright grantees work with one of six Estonian public universities, while efforts are made to accommodate the Estonian grantees at the U.S. school of their choice.

Altogether, more than 400 academic exchange grantees over three distinct program bodies (Fulbright, IREX, Muskie) have taken the opportunity to study in American and Estonian Universities. Since 1992, 13 Estonian high school teachers have taught for an academic

year in the U.S., and 3 Estonian school administrators have attended a six-week exchange program at U.S. schools. Although the one-year Fulbright Classroom Teacher Exchange program has not been offered in Estonia since 2009, the six-week Teaching Excellence and Achievement program currently provides professional development opportunities in the U.S. for Estonian teachers.

Following the discontinuation of the two-year Muskie Fellowship for Estonian applicants in 1999, the inception of the one-year Hubert Humphrey Fellowship provided opportunities for Estonian mid-career professionals. The Humphrey Fellowship Program brings outstanding candidates from countries in states of development and transition to the U.S. for one-year, non-degree programs that combine graduate level academic work with substantive professional affiliations. Humphrey Fellows are selected based in part on their demonstrated potential for leadership as well as their commitment to public service in either the public or private sector. Since the first program year, 2000-2001, 12 Estonian Humphrey Fellows have participated in this highly competitive and unique program across 9 different fields.

More information about the exchange programs is available from James Land, PAO, U.S. Embassy Tallinn, Kentmanni 20, 15099 Tallinn, Estonia, LandJG@state.gov.

Academic Exchanges between Latvia and the United States

Ingrida Bodniece, *Embassy of the United States in Riga, Latvia*

The Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Riga began administering academic and professional development exchanges in 1991, when Latvia regained independence and the Embassy reopened

for business. The Embassy also works closely with Education USA, a non-profit educational advising center under the aegis of the Riga Business School, to promote study at U.S. colleges and universities among Latvian students.

The Embassy's flagship exchange

program is the J. William Fulbright Program, designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. The Fulbright Program in Latvia dates back to a bilateral agreement between the U.S. and the USSR, which

was signed in 1973. However, Latvia's Fulbright contacts were initially rare. For years, the Fulbright Program operated strictly as an exchange of lecturers, as specified in the bilateral exchanges agreement. Few Latvian scholars participated, and only a handful of Americans lectured in Latvia.

Following independence from the Soviet Union, a separate Latvian country program was created during the 1991-92 academic year. Rather than being a part of a system that allowed only sporadic Latvian participation, Latvian scholars could now apply for and receive awards annually. Open competitions were established for selection, faculty were able to apply for either research or lecture opportunities, and student awards became available.

Since 1992, six to ten American Fulbrighters have journeyed to Latvia annually to lecture on topics ranging from journalism to child psychology. Enriching opportunities outside of the classroom also await many grantees to Latvia. Former U.S. grantees have had the chance to guest lecture at government agencies, television networks, and academic conferences.

Each year approximately a similar number of Latvians receive Fulbright

grants. Since the Fulbright program was established in Latvia in 1992, almost 200 Latvian citizens or legal residents have received Fulbright fellowships to study, teach or conduct research at U.S. institutions of higher education. The most popular fields for Latvian Fulbright recipients include political science, economics, social work, the sciences and education. Also within the Fulbright Program, the Embassy administers the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program under which, to date, four Latvian mid-career professionals have engaged in a year of non-degree graduate study and professional development at U.S. universities.

Several Latvians who are prominent in the fields of politics, diplomacy and the arts, are Fulbright alumni. These include Artis Pabriks, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and current parliamentarian, who studied political science at the New School for Social Research in 1997-1998; Aivis Ronis, a former Latvian Ambassador to NATO, who studied political science at Columbia University in 1999-2000; Ina Druvieta, a former Minister of Education and Science and current parliamentarian, who studied linguistics at the University of Pittsburgh from 1996-1997; Gatis Smits, a well-known stage and film director, who

studied at New York University, Tisch School of Arts from 1999-2001; Laura Prikule, a visual artist who studied at the San Francisco Art Institute in 2001-2002; and Inese Voika, a board member of Transparency International Delna, who studied at Harvard University, JFK School of Government in 2004-2005.

In addition to the Fulbright Program, the Embassy also administers several other U.S. Government exchange programs. Thirty-nine Latvians received Muskie Fellowships to study in the United States, before the program's discontinuation. In addition to long-term exchanges, the Embassy also facilitates short training programs in the United States. These include seminars for Latvian educators who teach about the Holocaust, which are organized by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Association of Holocaust Organizations in cooperation with the U.S. Department of State. This year, for the first time, the Embassy is also recruiting Latvian teachers to participate in the Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program, a U.S. State Department program that allows foreign teachers to engage in professional training and internships in the United States, and that will bring U.S. teachers on short-term exchange visits to Latvian classrooms.

US-Baltic Fulbright Exchanges

Amanda Swain, AABS Student Representative

In September 1993, I arrived at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania to conduct research for my master's thesis. In addition to my own academic work, I, along with two other students in Lithuania, two students in Latvia and two students in Estonia, launched the Fulbright student exchange program in the Baltic countries. Even at the time, I knew that I was vicariously experiencing history being made. I was on the ground as Lithuania went through the political, social and economy changes that characterized its transition from a post-Soviet country to a European Union member.

It was a particularly exciting time for a historian as documents and materials previously suppressed by the Soviet authorities were being made public. Once a month, one of my friends would take me to a bookstore and point out all the books – memoirs and histories and collections of documents from the Soviet years – that I had to buy and take back to America. “This one, and this one, and this one,” she would say. “They are all important. Can you believe we can now know about these things?” I would dutifully purchase everything she selected for me. When it came time to return to the United States, I had so many books that I couldn't carry them home with me. The

Lithuanian postal service has a flat rate for books within a certain weight, so each day for two weeks I took 5-7 books to the post office where they were wrapped in brown paper, tied with twine and sealed with wax. As I sent them off, I was sure that I would never see them again. Amazingly all of the packages arrived safely in Seattle several weeks later. Now those volumes of history reside in the University of Washington Library.

Fifteen years later, there are over 600 American students and scholars who also have stories to share about their experiences from US federally-funded Fulbright exchange programs in the Baltic countries. Fulbright programs provide opportunities for students, scholars, teachers and professionals from the U.S. and the Baltic countries to study abroad, conduct research, lecture and engage in professional development. The student exchange programs are administered by Institute of International Education (IIE) and the scholar exchange programs are administered by Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES). The Humphrey Fellowship program for mid-level professionals and the Teacher Exchange program are coordinated separately. All of these programs provide rich experiences for the participants.

Continued on p. 31.

AABS Annual Report, 2008-2009

President's Report

Happy birthday to all of us! Our dear Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies celebrated its fortieth anniversary this year. The recipe for our longevity and continued strength lies in the contributions of every member. A quick tally: There are 582 of us, located on four continents. For four decades, we have continued the tradition of meeting face-to-face once every two years here in North America, at the Conference on Baltic Studies. Nowadays, we “meet” more often in our Association’s publications: The Journal of Baltic Studies, this Newsletter, and, increasingly, the pages of the AABS website.

Money for these and other AABS activities comes from two sources: Membership dues, and charitable donations by both members and nonmembers. The Association – that is, its members and supporters – is grateful to all of our members and supporters for this money and voluntary work which makes our conferences and publications possible. Thank you! Thank us! Without us, our association wouldn’t exist.

The upcoming year is an exciting one. We will meet in Seattle on April 22-24, 2010, at the AABS conference held jointly with the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study. By then, we will have elected our new AABS Board of Directors, who will, with their energy and work, ensure another two productive years for the Association. Please be on the lookout for ballots and conference registration materials that will arrive in your mailboxes in February 2010.

Our Journal of Baltic Studies is also celebrating: Many of us have just finished reading the newest issue: Number 4 of Volume 40, another page-turner which arrived in the mail in December. Our Journal has seen particular growth these past five years; its new, sleek, blue cover signals cutting edge contents written by leaders in multiple disciplines. Thanks to our partnership with Routledge, its electronic distribution has expanded to reach more libraries than ever before. We are grateful to the outgoing Editor, David J. Smith and his staff, for five years of leadership and five volumes of riveting reading.

During the period of transition at the JBS, Inta Carpenter took a leave of absence from the AABS Board to hold the fort as Interim Editor, and is producing two excellent issues for our reading pleasure. Thank you, Inta! As this Newsletter goes to print in January 2010, the AABS Board has just appointed the Journal’s new Editor, Terry Clark. Terry, welcome to the team! We look forward to three great years of working with you at the helm of our proud flagship, the Journal of Baltic Studies.

The past year-and-a-half has also seen a transition in the administration of the AABS. In January of 2010, Anita Juberts will take a well-deserved rest after seven years of service to the AABS as Administrative Executive Officer. Anita announced her upcoming retirement in fall of 2008, and in April 2009 the AABS Board appointed Irena Blekys as her successor. Since then, Anita and Irena have been working overtime to ensure that the Association’s day-to-day operations continue to run smoothly. Thank you, Anita! And welcome, Irena!

With the change in administrator comes a change of our business address: Our new mailbox is hosted by the Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Washington in Seattle. Please mark the new AABS address in your records.

The past year has also been an occasion to assess our Association’s history. We are partnering with the University of Washington as the home for the AABS Archive. The archive’s core comes from the office of the late Jānis Gaigulis; we have finished an inventory of forty boxes of files, and deposited these materials at the University of Washington Libraries. In the coming year, we will work with the UW to catalog and process the collection for permanent storage. We invite all AABS members and board members, past and present, to donate AABS-related correspondence, photographs and other documents from their personal archives to our new AABS archive.

Guntis Šmidchens, AABS President

AABS Welcomes Irena Blekys as Administrative Executive Director

Amanda Swain

In July 2009, AABS welcomed a new Administrative Executive Director. Irena Blekys of Seattle replaced Anita Juberts, who has served AABS since 2002. Irena brings a wide variety of skills and experience to this position. Most importantly, she brings a strong commitment to AABS’s mission.

Although Irena was aware of AABS before 1990, her first involvement with the association came during the annual conference in Seattle that year. Irena recalls that the “Seattle conference was especially memorable for me because it was the first time that delegations of scholars and publishers from the Baltic states joined their counterparts from North America and Europe. These were the years of historic change. I volunteered as part of the Seattle community to welcome our visitors from Lithuania: picking them up at the airport, chauffeuring, housing, even proofreading someone’s English-language paper. Our local Lithuanians hosted an evening to meet the visitors. For many of us, it left a sense of the importance of supporting Baltic scholarship.”

A few years later, Irena became actively involved in efforts to establish a Baltic Studies Program at the University of Washington. She credits the Baltic communities’ experience with the AABS conference as a factor in their enthusiasm and success



Irena Blekys

in supporting the new program. As she explains, “the ground was fertile when the local Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian communities were invited in 1993/1994 to build a Baltic Studies endowment at the University of Washington.” In addition to working as a volunteer on fundraising events, Irena is currently secretary of the Scandinavian Studies Department Advisory Board (the home department of the Baltic Studies Program).

Irena has continued to be involved with AABS. She says, “As an independent scholar, I’ve always felt grateful that AABS has welcomed the general public to its association and its conferences. My interest in history and literature has been enriched by these conferences and by the friendships that developed out of them, even if we only met every two years at AABS. Finally, in 2006, I had an opportunity to introduce the wartime diary of a Lithuanian partisan, Lionginas Baliukevičius, which I was translating at the time. I received a lot of valuable encouragement and comments as I was finishing that work, which is now in print.” She is looking forward to being part of the AABS conference when it returns to Seattle in 2010.

As Administrative Executive Director, Irena will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the association, a challenge that she is looking forward to taking on. At her first board meeting in July, Irena expressed her enthusiasm for her new position. “I am very excited to learn about AABS from the operations side of the association. I’m impressed with the dedication and hard work of the current board in running the business of AABS. I’m grateful both to Anita Juberts, the outgoing administrative director as we change the office from the East coast to the West coast, and especially to the current President, Guntis Šmidchens, who has put in extra time to make sure that the transition goes smoothly.”

Dear AABS friends and colleagues,

After eight years as AABS’s administrative executive director, I have passed along my responsibilities to Irena Blekys. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank my all of my former colleagues, AABS presidents, directors and board members, for their great support and cooperation over the years. I also want to send my best wishes to the members of AABS, with many of whom I have had the privilege of becoming personally acquainted over the course of my tenure. As members of AABS, you have played a vital role in supporting Baltic Studies and assuring its future.

I wish AABS, its members and its new Administrative Executive Director Irena Blekys every success in the years to come.

*With best regards,
Anita Juberts*



AABS Welcomes Dr. Terry Clark as Editor of the *Journal of Baltic Studies*

Dr. Terry Clark is Professor of political science and the director of the graduate program in international relations (INR). A specialist in comparative politics, he received his B.S. from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1973, the M.A. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1988, and the Ph.D. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1992. member of Phi Beta Kappa, he manages Creighton University’s long-standing exchange with Vilnius University, which has brought more than three dozen scholars to the United States to study and conduct research in comparative politics and international relations.



Terry D. Clark

Dr. Clark has published four books and numerous articles in journals such as *Comparative Political Studies*, *Public Choice*, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, *Problems of Post-Communism*, *Slavic Review*, *EEPS: Eastern European Poli-*

tics and Societies, and *Journal of Baltic Studies*. He has received grants to support his research and travel from the American Political Science Association (APSA), the Fulbright Committee, the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), the MacArthur Foundation, and the Kennan Institute. He is currently engaged in the fuzzy math spatial modeling project. The project’s long-term goals are to improve the capacity of spatial models to predict stable outcomes and the empirical validity of those predictions, and to provide a touchstone for further applications of fuzzy mathematics in the social sciences.

Dr. Clark teaches undergraduate courses and graduate seminars in comparative politics, research design, the new institutionalism, international relations, international regimes, and the government and politics of Eastern Europe. He has been recognized for outstanding teaching by both Creighton University and the Creighton College of Arts and Sciences. His students have won national awards for research, and several have been accepted into Ph.D. programs in political science in major universities, including Harvard University, The Johns Hopkins University, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the University of Iowa, the University of Minnesota, and Washington University in St. Louis. He and his wife, Marnie, have a daughter, Jessica.

Elections for the 2010-2012 AABS Board

The 2010 AABS conference will take place in Seattle, Washington from April 22-24, 2010. This is a break from the more frequent June dates for AABS conferences (good news for those of us who want to celebrate Midsummer’s Eve). As a result, elections for the 2010-2012 AABS board will also take place at an earlier date. Ballots will be sent to members on February 1, 2009. Completed ballots must be received before March 10, 2009.

As William Hale Thompson likely said, “vote early – and often!” On second thought, only follow the first part of that advice and vote early for the 2010 AABS Board.

Report of the Editor, *Journal of Baltic Studies*

David J. Smith

After five very busy but enjoyable years, I am stepping down as Editor of the *Journal of Baltic Studies*, due to other commitments.

It only remains for me to thank all of the members of the outgoing editorial term for their contribution to what has been an exciting new phase in the *Journal's* development. Eva-Clarita Onken has been responsible for a number of new features, such as the books received and new dissertations sections and the periodic reviews of scholarship in countries that have hitherto not featured especially prominently on the Baltic Studies map. Sarah Lennon and, more recently, our Journal Assistant Hazel MacKenzie have helped to ensure the efficient operation of the editorial and copy preparation process at a time when the number of contributions to the *Journal* has been steadily increasing. I will miss our discussions of all things Baltic! I would also like to thank all of the members of the JBS Advisory Board, Richard Delahunty, Gerald Dorey, Adam Leary and Keri Barrow at Routledge publishers, and everyone who has set aside valuable time to act as a peer reviewer for the *Journal* over the past five years.

In 2007 *Journal of Baltic Studies* gained a new appearance and acquired

an online presence following the start of the current publishing agreement between AABS and Routledge. As a result of this, the number of libraries worldwide in which the *Journal* is available has increased almost fivefold, and is set to grow further in the future. More people than ever are reading and citing the *Journal of Baltic Studies*, as can be seen from the growth in our impact factor, from 0.143 in 2007 to 0.419 in 2008. This has taken us from 32nd to 20th out of the 38 world leading Area Studies journals. Consequently, we are attracting more and better contributions from across a wider spread of countries. Particularly welcome during my editorship has been the number of special issues that have appeared. The Baltic sociolinguistic review appeared in summer 2005, and the special issue on Foreign Rule and Collaboration (including Karsten Brüggemann's Votols Prize-winning article) in spring 2006. We then waited two years before four came along at once – on musicology, politics of history, post-communist transition revisited and contemporary environmentalism. All have either appeared or are set to ap-

pear in parallel book format. Proposals for several more special issues are in the pipeline. My thanks also to all of our recent guest editors, who have brought to light valuable new perspectives on some of the most salient issues facing the three Baltic states and their wider region.

The *Journal* has also retained and developed its focus on the wider region, understood not simply as 'Baltoscandinavia', but as encompassing all of the societies of the Baltic littoral. This area remains prominent within debates on the overall future political shape of Europe, as can be seen in the new EU Baltic strategy and the continued discussions on the Northern and Eastern Dimensions. In short, it remains an exciting time to study the Baltic. I hope that my successor finds the role of Editor as rewarding as I have.



Journal of Baltic Studies Editorial team: from left to right, Sarah Lennon, Hazel MacKenzie and David J. Smith

Baltic Studies Summer Institute 2009

Nancy Heingartner, *BALSSI Program Coordinator*, and **Jennifer Tishler**, *CREECA Associate Director*, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*

The sixteenth annual Baltic Studies Summer Institute took place at the University of Wisconsin-Madison between June 15 and August 7, 2009. BALSSI was co-sponsored on campus by the department of Scandinavian studies and the Center for Russia, East Europe, and Central Asia (CREECA). In all, fourteen students were enrolled in the three language courses. The faculty director for BALSSI 2009 was Tom DuBois, the Birgit Baldwin Professor of Scandinavian Studies.

BALSSI 2009 offered three intensive language courses: elementary Latvian, elementary Lithuanian, and elementary Estonian (Scandinavian 404: Languages of Northern Europe). Two undergraduates, ten graduate students, and two non-students participated in BALSSI 2009. Four students completed the Estonian course, which

was taught by Piibi-Kai Kivik of Indiana University; three students completed the Latvian course, which was taught by Dr. Dzidra Rodins of DePaul University; and seven students completed the Lithuanian course, which was taught by Daiva Litvinskaite of the University of Illinois-Chicago.

Among the topics the graduate participants are researching are: Lithuanian conceptual art from the 1960's until 2000; heritage identity, foreign language literacy, and discourse communities; Latvian subject formation and Baltic identity; masculine Relationships in Russian and East European Literature; accent type and language change in German and Estonian; the Arajs Kommando, a Latvian execution squad in the Holocaust; and the Development of a clean energy industry in the Baltics.

BALSSI 2009 was enhanced significantly by the rich program of lectures and cultural offerings that accompanied it. All of these events were

BALSSI 2009 Cultural Events

June 16,
Film *The Singing Revolution* (2006, 94 minutes, Estonia)

June 23,
Lecture by Robert J. Kaiser, UW-Madison, Professor of Geography: *Post-Soviet Borderlands as Diaspora Spaces: The Case of Setomaa*

June 30, 7:00 p.m.
Film *The Waterfowl People* (1970, 50 minutes, Estonia)

June 30, 8:00 p.m.
Film *The Winds of the Milky Way* (1977, 55 minutes, Estonia)

July 7
Lecture by Alfred E. Senn, UW-Madison, Professor Emeritus of History: *What is Lithuania?*

July 8
Film *Kurpe* (1998, 83 minutes, Latvia)

July 14
Film *Balkonas* (2008, 48 minutes, Lithuania)

July 21
Lecture by Rudra Vilius Dundzila, Harry S. Truman College, City Colleges of Chicago, Professor of Humanities and Comparative Religion: "*A Poplar Stood by the Roadside: A Sojourn With Baltic Myths, Songs, and Spirituality*"

July 28
Dance Demonstration by Žaibas Lithuanian Dancers

July 28
Lecture by Paulis Lazda, UW-Eau Claire, Professor of History: *The Museum of the Occupation of Latvia*

July 29
Film *Kevade* (1969, 84 minutes, Estonia)

August 3
Film Shorts *The Best Waterpieces Ever* (2002-2007, Latvia)

free and open to the public. Attendance ranged from six to thirty-one people. In addition to the public events, there was a welcome picnic on June 15th hosted by the Madison-Vilnius Sister Cities organization, a field trip to Eesti Maja (Estonian House) in Riverwoods, IL on June 20th, a July 25th field trip to the Balzekas Museum in Chicago and to Grand Duke's Lithuanian Restaurant in Summit, IL, and a farewell picnic on August 6th.

In 2009, BALSSI received generous financial support from fifteen Title VI Area Studies Centers at twelve universities:

UCLA (Center for European & Eurasian Studies);
University of Chicago (Center for East European and Russian/Eurasian Studies);
Columbia University (East Central European Center);
Harvard University (Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies);
University of Illinois (European Union Center, and Russian, East European and Eurasian Center);

Indiana University (Inner Asian & Uralic National Resource Center, and Russian & East European Institute);
University of Michigan (Center for Russian and East European Studies);

University of Pittsburgh (Center for Russian and East European Studies, and European Studies Center /European Union Center of Excellence);

Stanford University (Center for Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies);

University of Texas (Center for Russian, East European & Eurasian Studies);

University of Washington (Ellison Center for Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies);

University of Wisconsin (Center for Russia, East Europe, and Central Asia).

BALSSI also received generous financial support from the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies, the American Latvian Youth Association, as well as two external grants from ACLS and the Lithuanian Foundation.



BALSSI 2009 students and faculty

ACLS Meeting in Portland, Oregon

Olavi Arens

Each fall the American Council of Learned Societies schedules a meeting of the executive officers of its member associations. The meetings are held in different cities and the costs are covered by the host city's convention center. One of the purposes of the meetings is to provide an opportunity for representatives of the member societies to tour the host city's convention facilities and discuss with hotel representatives the possibility of holding their conferences in the host city. The meetings are also used by the member associations to discuss issues of common concern.

This fall's meeting was held in Portland, Oregon on 5-8 November 2009. The Executive Committee of the association of officers met at the beginning of the meeting to begin planning for the annual spring meeting of the ACLS in Philadelphia. Olavi Arens, a member of the committee, was selected to chair the nominating committee for the spring elections of new committee members.

Representatives of approximately 50 of the 70 member associations attended. Reports were heard on ACLS activities during the past year: the ACLS sponsored Leadership Seminars held in the fall, the ACLS' E-book project, etc. As usual, a representative of the National Humanities Alliance gave a report. Then a representative of the Teagle Foundation discussed the relationship of learned societies and undergraduate education.

Discussion followed on various uses of new technologies to build virtual communities for scholarly research, to construct online photo archives, and to develop new ways of communicating among members. A closing session discussed what is changing in the societies (use of new technologies, graduate students on boards, etc.) and the impact of the economic downturn on association activities.

AABS 2008-2009 Book Prize

Nomination Deadline: February 18, 2010

The Association awards the AABS Book Prize for an outstanding English-language scholarly book in Baltic Studies (humanities and social sciences) published in 2008 or 2009. Books with a broadly historical, literary, social, or cultural significance are of particular interest. Narrowly specialized or overly technical books will not be considered. To nominate, please send a letter of nomination to Dr. Bradley Woodworth at bwoodworth@newhaven.edu or by mail to:

Dr. Bradley Woodworth
Div. of Global Studies, History and Political Science
University of New Haven
300 Boston Post Road
West Haven, CT 06516 USA

Anyone may submit a nomination. The winner will be announced at the 2010 AABS/SASS conference. The author(s) of the book selected will receive an award of up to \$500.

US-Baltic Fulbright Exchanges *(continued from p. 24)*

Margaret Rung, Associate Professor, School of Liberal Studies at Roosevelt University in Chicago, Illinois, shares her experience as a Fulbright scholar in Latvia in 2000-2001 on the CIES web site:

Rung's award was for lectures (in the University of Latvia's History Department and North American Studies Center), not research. But what she discovered in Riga about Latvian "narratives" of World War II aroused her professional curiosity about the relationship between "accidents of geography and the way a country writes its own history." In the U.S., the war has been seen as a "good" one with a clear-cut enemy, she explains; yet to Latvians it was a "senseless bloodbath" in which soldiers from other places "stomped through, deporting or conscripting people, and then either left or occupied the country." She is now working to connect the University of Latvia to a broader international community of scholars, through exchange programs with institutions in Mississippi and Wisconsin, and expects her Latvian experience to enrich her teaching about ethnicity at Roosevelt.

The exchange programs are not unidirectional, however. An equivalent number of students and scholars from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have their own stories to share from exchanges to the United States. The Humphrey Fellowship brings mid-professionals from the entire globe to the United States for non-degree graduate study and work related experience, including six weeks of professional affiliation. Silver Pramman, Estonia, was a Humphrey Fellow at the University

of Washington in 2007-2008. He describes his experience through the exchange program.

This was my first time visiting Washington state and Seattle and very soon I felt at home. Probably one reason for that was warm connections with Baltic community and all the open and friendly people I met. I value also Seattle's environmental awareness.

The Fellowship was about more than gaining knowledge of individual professions; personal growth is just as valuable. I was able to use my time in Seattle to see how I can adjust to the U.S. melting pot and to see what kind of person I am. Coming to the United States was an opportunity to learn also about other cultures. Professional learning can be done through the Internet and books but the interaction in the exchange program with co-fellows and students is a unique opportunity to reflect and learn about yourself, your culture and your way of observing world, while living with people of various nations. People's lifestyles are different everywhere. It's interesting to find out if it's cultural things or human things making differences between people.

In establishing the US Fulbright international exchange program, Senator J. William Fulbright, said "Fostering leadership, learning and empathy between cultures was and remains the purpose of the international scholarship program." The stories of my fellow exchange participants over the years, of which these are just a taste, demonstrate that the programs are fulfilling these goals.

Baltic Studies Conference at Vytautas Magnus University

Olavi Arens

The 8th Conference on Baltic Studies in Europe (*The Baltics as an Intersection of Civilizational Identities*) was held on 11-14 June 2009 in Kaunas, Lithuania. The Chair of the conference, Ineta Dabašinskienė, greeted the participants in behalf of the host university, Vytautas Magnus University, a university reestablished in 1989 in the city of Kaunas that had been the capital city of interwar Lithuania. The President of Lithuania, Valdas Adamkus, warmly greeted the participating scholars in Lithuanian and in English. The keynote speech by Leonidas Donskis centered on the theme of traditions of political liberalism in the Baltic area. Co-sponsors of the conference were the Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation and the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

While not everyone listed in the program was able to attend, approximately 180 presenters or co-presenters of papers were listed. Scholars from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia provided one-half of the papers. The rest came from elsewhere in Europe, North America or Aus-

tralia. While the traditionally strong areas of Baltic Studies (history, linguistics, and political science) still dominated the conference, one could see diversity, as non-traditional areas also received coverage -- sessions and papers were devoted to gender studies, media studies and art and theater. A selection of the papers will be published by the conference organizers.

During the banquet it was announced that the next Baltic Studies Conference in Europe will be hosted by Södertörn University in Stockholm, Sweden in June 2011.

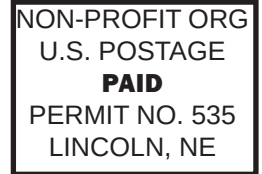
The tradition of holding Baltic Studies con-

ferences in alternating years in North America and Europe thus continues.

Participants who arrived early took part in a walking tour of Kaunas. Those able to stay an extra day were treated to a tour of Vilnius that included what remains of Jewish Vilnius.



President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus attending the conference



AABS, University of Washington,
Box 353420, Seattle WA 98195-3420

POSTMASTER: Address Correction Requested

The AABS is an international educational and scholarly non-profit organization. The purpose of the Association is the promotion of research and education in Baltic Studies. Its activities include sponsoring meetings and conferences for the exchange of scholarly views, the evaluation of research in Baltic Studies and supporting the publication of research and other information about Baltic Studies. Membership is open to anyone wishing to support these endeavors. All AABS memberships include complimentary subscriptions to the quarterly *Journal of Baltic Studies* and the *Baltic Studies Newsletter*. Membership dues are not tax deductible as charitable contributions but may be deductible, depending on individual circumstances, as miscellaneous professional expenses. All donations to the Baltic Studies Fund are deductible in the United States as provided by law.

To communicate with us, detach the entire sheet including your address and send it to the return address printed above.

☐ Please note my address correction above.

☐ Please send me additional information about the AABS including a membership application.

☐ Please send me information about the Baltic Studies Fund.

☐ Please send me additional information about the AABS, including a membership application (Membership forms may also be downloaded at the AABS website, <http://depts.washington.edu/aabs/>)

Check the type of membership desired (annual dues in parentheses):

☐ student (\$25.00)

☐ Baltic resident (\$25.00)

☐ retired (\$35.00)

☐ regular (\$60.00)

☐ sponsor (\$100.00)

☐ patron (\$500.00)

☐ life membership (\$2000.00)

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