The attitudes of Western powers toward the Baltic states were in 1945–1990 steadily affected by how they perceived Baltic history: whether it even existed and if so, what did its most recent phase represent – occupation or voluntary union? The Baltic refugees were initially poorly prepared for the struggle about history, because they lacked not only English language skills but also understanding of democratic societies. Their books were printed by little-known publishers, and studies in scholarly journals were almost completely absent. A breakthrough took place in the 1960s. Major figures were Vytas Stanley Vardys, who was first to publish articles in top journals and books with major publishers, and Jānis Gaigulis, who initiated and kept going the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS) and its *Journal of Baltic Studies*. Support for scholars was strong in the Latvian exile community, while hesitant in the Estonian and Lithuanian ones. By the time of the ‘Singing Revolution’ the struggle for Baltic history had been won in the Western world. It had become widely accepted that the Baltic peoples and their histories existed, and Moscow’s attempts to rewrite Baltic history could not take root in the West. Winning the struggle for the past helped in the struggle for the future of the Baltic peoples.

Keywords: AABS; Baltic post-WWII exiles; Jānis Gaigulis; Vytas Stanley Vardys; Western perception of Baltic history

Western attitudes toward the Baltic states in 1945–1990 were steadily affected by their perception of Baltic history: whether it even existed and if so, then which one? Hence the struggle carried out in the West for a Baltic future was continuously intertwined with a struggle for the past.

The obvious issue in this struggle for history was which version would prevail, the one that the Baltic exiles had experienced or its rewriting by the Soviets – was it occupation or voluntary union? It was less evident that there was also a struggle on
whether Baltic history existed. If it did not, then one could not protest against its rewriting by the Soviets.

Was this latter struggle really going on? Many in the West would have preferred a simpler history where the events in the Baltic area were a mere addendum to German and Russian histories, and maybe Polish and Swedish. Recall that as late as in 1955, *Encyclopedia Britannica* still wrote that the self-designation of Estonians was *tallopoig* (‘peasant people’). And in the 1970s it even deleted the headings ‘Estonia’ etc., replacing them by ‘Estonian SSR’ etc. In the case of Estonia, the entry itself discussed only Soviet Estonia’s economy. No history, no people. Hence even a treatise on the Lithuanian grand dukes or Latvian *dainas* represented a contribution in the struggle for the existence of Baltic nations. But they did so only if the study was published internationally, which increasingly meant in English – not just for Baltic exiles amongst themselves.

The weight of this double struggle for history lay on the Baltic exile scholars and sympathetic colleagues in the West. This overview describes the various stages of this struggle, from an Estonian and North American vantage point. Inevitably, it is a personal view; some other scholars and non-scholars may see it somewhat differently. It concludes with the mid-1980s when the struggle for Baltic history arguably had been won. Contributions to this scholarship have continued and expanded, but now as recognized study of recognized entities, without the need to prove that Baltic history exists.

**Unfavorable initial conditions in the 1950s**

The initial environment was unfavorable for struggles both for the Baltic future and for the past. For the West, the Soviet Union was a co-belligerent in a victorious war. The prewar criticism of communism had been muted during war for tactical purposes, and as years went by it even came to be forgotten. One encountered talk about Western and Eastern varieties of democracy. At the level of international politics discord among the victors soon arose, but popular sympathy toward the Russian people as an ally survived. It lasted even when anticommunism at times assumed hysterical forms, as with McCarthyism in the United States. As their hunt for communists at times broadened into general anti-intellectualism, McCarthyism actually achieved the reverse: criticism of communism and the Soviet Union became suspicious in US intellectual circles.

A most potent principle in international relations is preservation of the *status quo*. Wherever one’s own interests are not threatened, the guiding norm of all foreign policies might be ‘Above all, avoid needless trouble’. But the Baltic states had factually vanished from the map in 1940, and the idea of their restoration meant trouble that no outsider needed. Indirectly, restoration of the Baltic states could call into question all postwar border changes.

From a distance, the Baltic achievement of independence around 1920 could look like a random vagary of history, because their distinct cultures were little known. If so, then 1940 seemed to restore the usual order. Any remaining pangs of conscience by the West were easily overcome. So you no longer have democracy? But what
democracy did you have under Smetona, Ulmanis or Päts? So your peoples did not want to join the Soviet Union? If so, why did they submit so meekly, without any resistance? And by the way, why did you participate in the war so extensively on the side of our enemy? It was hard to reply succinctly to such charges, in the absence of printed support materials that looked trustworthy.

Under Cold War conditions the United States might well devise the notion of ‘captive nations’ so as to needle Moscow, but when captive Hungary tried to reject the yoke in 1956, then the West looked on quietly at the suppression of the uprising. Arguably, the West could not intervene without unleashing a nuclear war, but the principle of status quo was lurking in the background. By 1956 the West had pretty much adjusted to a permanent Cold War. As an extra benefit for the USA, many states accepted US hegemony more willingly thanks to the specter of communism.

If even the liberation of Hungary disturbed the status quo, even while not altering any international borders, then how could the idea of restoration of the Baltic states play out? For those states (foremost the USA) who had not recognized their annexation, this non-recognition was also a part of the status quo which they did not wish to alter in either direction, recognition of annexation or actual de-annexation.

This may sound like an overly cynical deduction drawn from Western abandonment of Hungary, but recall the advice President George Bush Senior offered to the Baltic nations in his speech in Kyiv, 1990: it was to soft-pedal their drive toward restoration of independence. This is not to underestimate the effect of non-recognition on keeping up the spirits of Baltic exiles and dissidents at home. It resurged as a mobilizing force in the late 1980s. But up to and including the Kyiv talk, it played little active role in the politics of Western powers.

These were the conditions under which the exiles in the West had to operate to advance the interests of the Baltic peoples and states. One could distinguish social, cultural, political and scholarly levels. Socially, the exiles had to gain respect for their ethnic communities, in order to be listened to. The Baltic exiles achieved it quickly thanks to their solid working habits. Making their cultures known was easiest at the level of folk dancing, but language difficulties made themselves felt when it came to translating Baltic literary works.

The Baltic refugees were initially rather poorly prepared to function in a democratic society at political and scholarly levels. They might complain about how naive the Swedes, the Americans, etc. supposedly were about communism and the Soviet Union, without suspecting how much they themselves had to learn about democracy and world politics. Democratic experience in all Baltic countries had been interrupted by the early 1930s. Totalitarian occupations had affected the Balts more than they noticed or admitted. In their anticommunist zeal the Baltic exiles at times confused sociologists with socialists and political scientists with politruk, the political instructors of the Soviet army. It was small wonder then that the political exile community initially produced extremely few political scientists.

For these reasons, the exiles’ endeavor to explain the situation in the Baltic countries was at first less efficient than it could have been. The Estonian exiles called it välisvõitlus, ‘external struggle’, in contrast to inter-exile squabbles. This external struggle presented the exile concerns but found it difficult to gather any feedback and learn from it. As late as in 1965 I encountered recognized exile spokespersons whose
English was so limited that they asked for an Estonian translation of a political text composed in English. They wrote their own memoranda in Estonian, to be translated thereafter. They used arguments that played well in the exile community and did not suspect how odd some of these arguments might sound to Western politicians, even when supposing that translation was adequate.

Any protest was of course better than nothing, so as to prevent the Baltic issues from being forgotten. It ensured the continuation of the US policy on non-recognition of Soviet annexation. In the Estonian case, it preserved the embassy building in London. Language difficulties were inevitable at the beginning of exile. The part that may not have been inevitable was the predominance of anti-intellectual attitudes in the exile community. It weakened the Baltic message.

Where did this hostility toward inquisitive spirit come from and how did it express itself? At the time, the atmosphere was described in a series of articles by Rein Taagepera in the *aabs Newsletter*, ‘Scholarly Needs and Responsibilities of Baltic Communities in North America: What is Scholarly Work and What is Not’ (Taagepera 1986a), ‘Scholarly Needs and Allergies of Baltic Communities’ (Taagepera 1986b) and ‘Underproduction of Scholars’ (Taagepera 1987). Describing this atmosphere here would take us too far from the central topic. Conditions may have been somewhat different in the Latvian and Lithuanian exile communities. It suffices to point out some consequences, up to the early 1960s.

Table 1 shows that books on the Baltic countries were published, off and on. This, however, was mostly done using marginal publishing outlets. Table 2 shows that no studies on the contemporary Baltic countries were published in recognized English-language scholarly journals prior to 1963, with a single exception by Erich Senn, a non-Balt. By ‘contemporary’, I mean the works on the period from the 1930s on. The tables do not include works on earlier history, such as the studies of the 1800s by Edgars Andersons in the *Journal of Central European Affairs*. The dearth of basic information on the Baltic countries was alleviated by availability of pre-WWII works, such as a survey by the Royal Institute of International Affairs (1938), but the drastically changed circumstances required new evaluation even of the pre-1938 period, on top of the need to describe and analyze latter events.

Sustained publication on Baltic topics began first in German, when *Acta Baltica* was founded in 1960. It was preceded by *Baltische Hefte* (from 1954 on), which included scholarly pieces, and *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* (since about 1952), where Baltic issues were occasionally discussed. The international reach of publications in German, however, had become limited. The English-language cultural magazine *Lituanus*, published from 1954 on, began by 1960 to offer serious scholarly studies on Lithuania, but it reached few non-Lithuanian scholars. Around 1952–1964, *Baltic Review* was published in New York, financed by the US government. When preparing to write an overview of contemporary Baltic history I scanned it with great expectations. Yet the bibliography of Misiunas and Taagepera (1983) documents the sad fact that little was to be gleaned from *Baltic Review*. It was vociferous against communism and the Soviet Union in a superficial way that may have alleviated the authors’ feelings, but it could not supply convincing facts to a neutral observer. The few exceptions included the matter-of-fact economic analyses by Aleksander Kütt.
**TABLE 1** Books of scholarly interest in English, German (G), French (F) or Spanish (S) on contemporary Baltic history, 1945–1979

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Baltic</th>
<th>Estonia</th>
<th>Latvia</th>
<th>Lithuania</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945–1949</td>
<td>Chambon '46</td>
<td>Survel '47</td>
<td>Bilmanis '45</td>
<td>Chase '46</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oras '48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1950–1954</td>
<td>Swettenham '52</td>
<td>Uustalu '52</td>
<td>Bilmanis '51</td>
<td>Harrison '52</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>1955–1959</td>
<td>Meissner '56G</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carson '56</td>
<td>Mačiuka '55</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tarulis '59</td>
<td>L. Raun '55</td>
<td>Spekke '57</td>
<td>Senn '59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rei '61</td>
<td>Kaelas '58S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Taurus '62</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960–1964</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Zunde '62S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965–1969</td>
<td>Sprudz &amp; Rusis '68</td>
<td>Mägi '68</td>
<td>King '65</td>
<td>Vardys '65</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970–1974</td>
<td>Ivask '73</td>
<td>Purre '70G</td>
<td>Rukis '67</td>
<td>Savasis '66</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rauch '74</td>
<td></td>
<td>Boje '71</td>
<td>Dovydenas '71</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Myllyniemi '73G</td>
<td>Namsons '60G</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sabaliunas '72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ziedonis et al. '73</td>
<td></td>
<td>Žymantas '60</td>
<td>Kaslas '73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975–1979</td>
<td>Allworth '77</td>
<td>Parding &amp;</td>
<td>Ekmanis '78</td>
<td>Kazlas '76</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vardys &amp; Misiunas '78</td>
<td>Järvesoo '78</td>
<td></td>
<td>Vardys '78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Myllyniemi '78G</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bordeaux '79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on bibliography in Misiunas & Taagepera (1983), where full references are given, with Chase (1946) and Jurgela (1948) added. Indicated in bold are the works I subjectively deem the most important.

**TABLE 2** Studies on contemporary Baltic history published in 1945–1979 in scholarly journals or edited volumes in English, German (G) or Spanish (S)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Baltic</th>
<th>Estonia</th>
<th>Latvia</th>
<th>Lithuania</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>1945–1949</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950–1954</td>
<td>Ney '62G</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7+10G</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955–1959</td>
<td>Ney '62G</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960–1964</td>
<td>Valters '64G</td>
<td>2+4G</td>
<td>1+5G</td>
<td>2+3G</td>
<td>9+12G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965–1969</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2+4G</td>
<td>1+5G</td>
<td>2+2G</td>
<td>15+4G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970–1974</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6+1G</td>
<td>2+1G</td>
<td>5+2G</td>
<td>34+8G+1S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975–1979</td>
<td>11+3G+1S</td>
<td>11+2G</td>
<td>7+1G</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on bibliography in Misiunas & Taagepera (1983), where full references are given. Chapters in books listed in Table 1 are not double-counted here. Up to 1964 authors are shown; for later periods only the number is indicated. In German, one should add the more academic part of *Baltische Hefte* (starting from 1954), and further studies were published in *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* (from about 1952 on).
The most prominent English-language books during the early period in exile were *Baltic Eclipse* by Ants Oras (1948), *A History of Latvia* by Alfred Bilmanis (1951), *The History of the Estonian People* by Evald Uustalu (1952), and a most thorough *History of Latvia* by Arnolds Spekke (1957). These works enabled interested Westerners to obtain an idea of the history and recent occupation of these countries. Regarding Soviet Estonia Aleksander Kaelas (1958) did a worthwhile job, but unfortunately it did not result in a book in English.

*Die Sowjetunion, die Baltischen Staaten und das Völkerrecht* by Boris Meissner (1956) also failed to be republished in English. *Soviet Policy toward the Baltic States, 1918–1940* by Albert Tarulis (1959) ended with an overview of the end of effective independence. The first work to present the history of all three Baltic countries jointly was *The Drama of the Baltic Peoples* by August Rei (1961). While deserving praise as a pioneer in this respect, Rei was a practicing politician with limited scholarly preparation. The scholarly reader must have deemed his book valuable raw material rather than final synthesis. This book, too, concluded with the events of 1940. A new edition (1970) added a postscript on later developments, by Uustalu. The other books listed in Table 1 were even more journalistic in style, or else they focused on earlier history – which of course was valuable in stressing the very existence of Baltic history.

History itself, which had ended with WWII when the exile period started, gradually expanded. The postwar period under Soviet rule began to divide into distinct sub-periods. The years of genocide were followed by years of restoration of national culture. This development brought frictions between scholars and the general exile public. The predominant attitude among the exiles was that nothing in the Soviet Union could change for the better. And if some aspects of life should seem to improve, one should pass over it in silence because admitting it would hurt the ‘external struggle’ of the Baltic exiles. Scholarly standards, however, demanded respect for facts. As a matter of fact, the credibility of Baltic exile claims also depended on it.

It still happened around 1960 that a US newspaper would publish what sounded like a sympathetic requiem, telling how the brave little Baltic nations had been destroyed by Soviet terror and Russian immigration. The illusion that it was too late to help the Baltic nations was actually reinforced by such exile versions that denied the rebirth of Baltic cultures in the 1960s. Despite continuing oppression, these nations still existed and showed remarkable resilience. It was counterproductive to present them as vanishing.

The breakthrough of the 1960s

In hindsight, the mid-1960s were a watershed. Earlier, exile scholarly action was in the hands of people educated in their home countries, unfamiliar with social and political science, and mostly ill at ease with English. They managed to publish books, almost always with marginal publishers, but they could satisfy the requirements of scholarly journals only in German. The higher education of the next generation was delayed because of war and then was completed abroad. The early results of some of their work were published in *Lituanus*, but the full breakthrough into scholarly circles only came with articles by Vytas Stanley Vardys (1963) and with the volume he edited,
Lithuania under the Soviets (1965). In addition to accounts of the past, it also gave an extensive overview of postwar developments. Gundar King’s Economic Policies in Occupied Latvia (1965) covered a more specific aspect of Latvia during the same period.

Vytas Stanley Vardys was indeed a major figure in the struggle for Baltic history. In science in general and in political science in particular, doing good work does not suffice – it must also be published in a good place. No astrophysicist can leaf through every relevant study published in India. Few political scientists will pay attention to a study that has not passed the hurdles involved in getting published in a prominent journal or with a prominent publisher. Failing to recognize this hard fact still seems common among present-day scholars in the Baltic states. One may settle for publishing decent work in third-rate outlets rather than make an extra effort and reach the top. One may believe that reaching the top journals or publishers is hopeless when one deals with a Baltic topic and lacks connections.

Such self-defeating expectations prevailed in the Baltic exile community, too, until Vardys disproved them. His book in 1965 was published by a well-known US publisher – the first on a Baltic topic since Bilmanis (1951). Its cover looked professional, and the contents were of corresponding quality. The book was preceded by articles by Vardys in Journal of Central European Affairs (1963) and Slavic Review (1963). The truly amazing part, however, was that Vardys soon succeeded in getting an article on ‘How the Baltic Republics Fare in the Soviet Union’ (1966) published in Foreign Affairs. This top journal mostly publishes commissioned items and is extremely selective regarding contributions sent in on the author’s own initiative.

A new wave of younger exile scholars were emerging anyway. They knew the political and social science style used in English. For them, the success of Vardys confirmed that top publishers and journals were receptive to studies on Baltic topics, provided that one hit the right angle and was willing to spend time on polishing the presentation. The same skills helped to make the struggle for the Baltic future more efficient. In this respect, the breakthrough came with the establishment of BATUN (Baltic Appeal to the United Nations) in 1966. Its activists began to visit systematically the UN delegations of all countries (including the communist ones!), thus gaining valuable face-to-face feedback on what works and what does not.

In the struggle for Baltic history the final breakthrough came with the First Conference on Baltic Studies in 1968 at the University of Maryland. The end of this conference saw the foundation of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS). Its first presidents were King, Vardys and Jaan Puhvel. The Baltic Studies Conferences continued thereafter every two years, at various US and Canadian universities.

These developments in North America were paralleled and in some aspects preceded by scholarly activity in Western Europe, notably at the Centre for Baltic Studies in Stockholm, founded by Aleksander Loit, the Baltische Historische Kommission in West Germany, and the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in the UK. The Baltic Studies Conferences in North America were soon complemented, during the intervening years, by Baltic Studies Conferences in Europe, initiated by the Baltic Institute in Stockholm.

The modest Bulletin published by the AABS soon (1972) became the Journal of Baltic Studies (JBS). It has remained the central specialty journal for these area studies.
and soon achieved recognition in scholarly circles worldwide. It is indicative in this respect that AABS was admitted as a separate member of the American Council of Learned Societies, while the associations for Hungarian and Greek studies were forced to join as mere subsections of the Association for Slavic Studies, as if all of Eastern Europe were Slavic.

The *Journal of Baltic Studies* differed appreciably from *Lituanus*, senior by 20 years. *Lituanus* was a broad cultural magazine, read largely by those descendants of Lithuanian immigrants of the late 1800s who were interested in their roots. In contrast, *JBS* addressed expressly the scholarly readership worldwide and imposed the corresponding criteria of quality. It took some effort. I recall an older-generation theologian who felt insulted when his manuscript was sent out to a reviewer and the latter asked for revisions, as if his original manuscript were not sufficiently clear. He withdrew it.

Jānis Gaigulis was the second major figure in the struggle for Baltic history, which was rather odd, given that he never published any scholarly studies apart from accounts of the development of AABS. He worked as an accountant. Yet he came to be called Mr AABS, because he was the one who perceived the need for a scholarly association, initiated its founding and was for decades its organizational leader. He remained central to AABS even after he moved on to the Baltic Studies Fund (another initiative of his), to secure funds for AABS activities.

For the initial financial and moral boost to found AABS, Gaigulis depended very much on the union of Latvian student corporations. More broadly, too, the Latvian exile community and scholars carried the main load in advancing Baltic studies. The Lithuanians tended to imagine that they were strong enough by themselves and could do even without Baltic cooperation. Yet, despite being in English, *Lituanus* gradually lost out to *JBS* in terms of impact outside the exile community. Professional advancement was most successful for those Lithuanian scholars who also participated in AABS. The Estonian scholars joined the Latvian initiative eagerly, knowing that they were too few to go it alone. The Estonian exile leadership and newspapers, however, espoused a hesitant attitude toward the AABS, veering at times toward hostility. Some newspapers covered the early conferences on Baltic studies with only a few dozens of reluctant lines. They did not realize that, apart from BATUN, these were the first Baltic activities that truly carried the Baltic issues beyond the narrow circles of the exiles.

What caused such attitudes? The exiles were used to blasting off against communism, the Soviet Union and the supposed naivety of the West amongst themselves. The more vociferous one was, the more one carried respect. They would write exuberant memoranda and Western politicians would respond politely. One could read more into these thank you notes than there actually was. In contrast, gaining respect in scholarly circles depended on dispassionate analysis of data and restraint in drawing conclusions. This restraint could be interpreted as ‘being soft on communism’ by some exile leaders and newspaper editors. In their view, fact-oriented scholars were leftist.

It happened that exile extremists would come to the AABS conferences and demand to be heard. Or they would try to dilute discussion of papers on specific issues into broad and superficial condemnation of communism. They carried to the extreme the unfocussed style that rendered *Baltic Review* of little use for Misiunas and
me when writing contemporary history. When such activists were called to order, this confirmed in their minds that AABS was pro-communist. Viewed against such a background, it is especially noteworthy that the union of Latvian student corporations, definitely on the political Right, understood that ‘external struggle’ also included a scholarly front where norms differed from those at political demonstrations. BATUN knew it too, of course. It unhesitatingly made use of the documentation supplied by scholars on the Baltic past and present. It is likely that the memberships of AABS and BATUN overlapped heavily, but I can assert it only regarding my own acquaintances.

The productive 1970s

It can be seen in Table 2 that the number of English-language studies on Baltic topics multiplied in the 1970s. The number of studies in German, in contrast, remained stable at best. Once more, this sample is limited to works found to be essential for writing the Misiunas–Taagepera (1983) overview of Baltic history 1940–1980, the historical period at the center of the struggle for Baltic history. Growth was comparable in studies of earlier history, literature and culture. Such studies had an indirect yet indispensable role in showing the Baltic peoples as modern nations with a long cultural past – and very much alive despite Soviet pressures.

As seen in Table 1, the number of books showed no marked boost in the 1970s. Here the change came more in terms of quality of contents and prestige of publishers, meaning enhanced impact. In particular, a volume edited by Tõnu Parming and Elmar Järvesoo (1978), *A Case Study of a Soviet Republic: The Estonian SSR*, brought the description of conditions in Estonia to the same level as the volume edited by Vardys (1965) did for Lithuania and as King (1965) did for Latvia’s economy.

The effect of the duration of the Soviet regime can be sensed in the titles of these works. It had become hard to characterize this rule as a temporary ‘eclipse’, as Oras (1948) had done. The Soviet hold on the Baltic countries had proved more durable than that. While King (1965) used the term ‘occupied’ in his title and Vardys had the softer ‘under the Soviets’, in the title by Parming and Järvesoo we encounter the Estonian SSR as simply ‘a Soviet republic’. Such recognition of the realities of the day undoubtedly raised the credibility of the book among US scholars. Recall that this was the time when *Encyclopedia Britannica* replaced the entry ‘Estonia’ with ‘Estonian SSR’.

The exile scholar had to perform a continuous balancing act. The more one presented hard truths about the Soviet Union, the more one was viewed as a nationalist who exaggerated. In order to be taken seriously and hence have some impact, one had to soften one’s message. Yet one had to watch out continuously so that softening would not degenerate into falsification.

Among the books published since 1965, Seppo Myllyniemi’s *Die Neuordnung der baltischen Länder, 1941–1944* (1973) was especially useful for a broader overview, given that few treatments of the German occupation had been based on such a wealth of official documents. Unfortunately, it is still available only in German. Myllyniemi’s later book on the preceding crisis, *Die baltische Krise, 1938–1941* (1979), also came only in Finnish and German.

In the category of broad overviews, the next milestone after Rei (1961) was George von Rauch, *The Baltic States: The Years of Independence, 1917–1940* (1974), first published in German (1970). Like Rei’s book, it included all three Baltic states, covering their independence period and preceding history. In contrast to Rei, it was co-published under the University of California Press trade mark, which ensured entry to the libraries of all research universities. For a non-German, the treatment of Baltic German issues may look overly extensive, but this is a minor matter. The success of von Rauch’s book motivated the publishers to ask him for a follow-up on the Soviet period. He desisted, and the baton was passed first to Romuald Misiunas and then to me.

**Victory on the Western Front**

Misiunas and Taagepera’s *The Baltic States: The Years of Dependence, 1940–1980* (1983) visibly ties in with von Rauch, starting with the very title – years of independence versus years of dependence. The wording ‘years of dependence’ characterizes the situation less sharply than King’s ‘occupied’, about as strongly as ‘under the Soviets’ by Vardys, and less submissively than Parming and Jårvesoo’s ‘a Soviet Republic’.

Incidentally, I also proposed a tie-in with von Rauch’s cover design, which featured the coats of arms of the three independent republics. Ours was to show the coats of arms of the three Baltic SSRs, with those of the independent states sticking out from underneath. It harked back to the temporary eclipse motive of Oras (1948). This design was accepted by Misiunas and the leading publisher, Christopher Hurst. At the last moment, Hurst met a Lithuanian exile leader who declared that if the Soviet coats of arms enter the cover design in whatever connection no exile Lithuanian would purchase the book. Hurst scrapped the cover. It was too late to look for another design, and the book was published with an utterly nondescript cover. Once again, a silly friend proved more of a hassle than an adversary.

The Misiunas–Taagepera book was a success anyway, as confirmed by a later updated edition (1993) and translations into Lithuanian, Hungarian and Estonian. Along with rather favorable reviews, a brief book note in *Foreign Affairs* was sobering: the book supposedly was so narrow-minded as to make use of émigré sources only. The anonymous critique evidently mistook all sources in Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian to be émigré, in a firm belief that everything published in the Soviet Union would be in Russian. Actually, our bibliography listed more than 80 Soviet sources.
Somewhat earlier, Andres Küng had published *A Dream of Freedom: Four Decades of National Survival Versus Russian Imperialism in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania* (1980). While journalistic in style, it was thorough and perceptive. It was a pity that its publisher in Cardiff, Wales, had limited marketing ability. Nonetheless, it seems that the top Soviet lieutenants in the Estonian SSR saw Küng at the time as public enemy number one, while I came in second.

Roughly at the same time (1978), Hoover Institution Press at Stanford initiated an ambitious series on the history of peoples within the Soviet Union. One of the first to reach print was Toivo Raun’s *Estonia and the Estonians* (1987). It met great success, the more so since the Singing Revolution began to raise Western interest. A second print followed (1991), and an updated edition (2001). A Finnish translation was published as early as in 1989 (*Viron historia*), and a Hungarian one followed in 2001 (*Esztország története*). The corresponding work on Latvia, by Andrejs Plakans, was delayed until 1995. The death of Vardys delayed the overview of Lithuanian history even more, and by then it was produced by a different publisher (*Vardys & Sedaitis* 1997). The other books of the 1980s, on more specific topics, will not be reviewed here, because the Baltic scene was already undergoing major change.

By the time of the Singing Revolution the struggle for Baltic history had been won in the Western world. It had become widely accepted that the Baltic peoples and their histories did exist. The books and articles listed or counted here contributed to such effect, but so did in equal measure publications on topics ranging from early history to contemporary culture as well as the ongoing cultural activities of the Baltic exiles. Moscow’s rewriting of history was unable to strike roots in the West.

How did Moscow’s propaganda machinery react to the strengthening of Baltic history in the West? Its reaction was more muted than is the case currently, where the debate at times reaches all the way up to heads of state. In those earlier times, the Baltic SSRs tried to pass over exile activities in silence or engage them in local languages, apart from campaigns to paint émigré leaders as Nazi collaborators. Moscow did not risk a debate in English that could attract the attention of the Western scholarly community. Only once or twice did *Pravda* or *Izvestiia* take a jibe at AABS. A more detailed attack came in a book on *Critique of Falsifications of National Relations in The USSR* (Institute for Marxism–Leninism, 1984):

In 1968, a coordinating center for ‘Sovietologists’ appeared in the USA, called ‘Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies’. This center attracted, for purpose of anticommunist activity, mainly those émigrés who had received their scholarly degrees in capitalist countries. This ‘Association’, whose activities were based on anticommunism, anti-Sovietism, and nationalism, began to play a leading role in relations to other ideological organizations of the bourgeois émigrés.

(Institute for Marxism–Leninism 1984)

As Taagepera (1986c) observed, the Moscow institute gave AABS too much credit. Its relations with exile organizations were more complex. But the AABS activities had achieved some visibility. Yet Soviet Baltic scholars began to be allowed to attend and give papers at the Stockholm and AABS conferences. The empire was no longer monolithic.
History itself, which had ended with World War II at the start of exile, had become longer by 40 years. Despite some blunders by Encyclopedia Britannica and Foreign Affairs, visits to the Baltic countries by Western journalists confirmed the documentation presented by exile scholars to the effect that Baltic history existed and so did the peoples concerned. Compared to the late 1940s, the change was huge. Even if a Western person might feel sympathetic, there was little literature available around 1950 on Baltic cultures and histories. Vastly more was available by the mid-1980s, and this availability had an impact on Western attitudes.

Scholarly activities also affected textbooks — and most people acquire their lifelong understanding of history while in school. Gaigulis among other people pushed in 1986 for a scholarly review of the way history textbooks used in New Jersey treated Eastern Europe. The review found quite a few items where communism and large-nation imperialism more generally were shown in a favorable light. The most widespread misrepresentation lay in intimating that Lenin was the one who toppled the tsar, rather than showing him destroying a fledgling democratic government. To the extent that this review reduced the spread of the very worst textbooks or induced them to revise their new editions, it exerted some pressure on the US textbook market far beyond New Jersey.

This overview focuses on the struggle for Baltic history. The parallel struggle for Baltic future is beyond my scope. That other struggle also intensified in the 1970s, as the new exile generation had not only a better mastery of English but also more self-confidence and interaction skills. It would be pointless to try to evaluate the relative contributions of various types of activities in various geographic locations to the liberation of Baltic states — and to their later capacity to make use of this freedom. This liberation was a great symphony where many instruments participated and resonances mattered as much as solos. The outcome depended on cooperation of many groups and individuals at home and abroad. It depended on the synergy of people active in politics, culture and scholarship. Given the emphasis on the struggle for history in this study, one may pose the following question.

When history started to move, in 1987, Western decision-makers began to look at the Baltic countries with increased interest, the more so when needled by exile activists. Suddenly, those decision-makers need more information on these countries. When they rushed their aides to the libraries (these were pre-internet times!) what sources would the latter tend to dig up?

These may arguably have been the most general and relatively recent works published by reputed academic publishers, such as Raun (1987) and Misiunas and Tągepera (1983). How much difference might the availability of such works have made in the attitudes of decision-makers? For instance, did it matter that the Stanford series could already offer a book on Estonia but not yet on Latvia or Lithuania? Did it matter that one could at least consult Spekke (1957) and Vardys (1965)?

No answer can be offered. It cannot be done, for one, because those decision-makers, their aides and the opinion-leaders who influenced them were not tabula rasa. They reacted to events, information sources and visits by Baltic exile activists in the light of their earlier perceptions. How much difference did it make that some of them had received slightly better information on the Baltic states during their secondary or college studies than was the case a few decades earlier? Once again, nothing can
be proved. In the same way, causal ties cannot be proved between culture, science and education on the one hand and economic wellbeing and happiness on the other. But the nation who deems the first three superfluous frills will pay with the latter two.

Whom or what have I influenced, for instance? If this is so at all, has it been the Misiunas–Taagepera book with its couple of thousand copies or rather my half a dozen journalistic pieces on timely topics in The Los Angeles Times, printed in a hundred thousand copies? But whatever the answer might be, one thing is certain. Neither my books nor my scholarly articles in JBS etc. nor my pieces in opinion pages would exist if it had not been for the support and encouragement of many other people: in particular, if it had not been for two major figures in the struggle for Baltic history: Vytas Vardys, who wrote much contemporary history, and Jānis Gaigulis, who inspired others to write.

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