



PLEA FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF ESTHONIA, LATVIA, AND LITHUANIA

SPEECH

OF

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OF NEW YORK

IN THE

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Mr. CHANDLER of New York. Mr. Chairman, I wish to present to the House of Representatives at this time facts and arguments in favor of the recognition by the United States of America of the independence de jure of the Baltic Republics of Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

The great war brought about a new era in the history of mankind. It recast the map of the earth and created a new political world for the human race.

The group of men who composed the peace conference at Paris, in reconstructing the map of the world and in determining the rights of peoples with reference to the boundaries then created, were guided by certain well-known political principles. These principles were represented, in part, by the theories of President Wilson in his famous 14 points.

One of these points related to the so-called doctrine of self-determination, a doctrine first proclaimed on this continent by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, when he declared that all just powers of government were derived from the consent of the governed, and later beautifully described by Lincoln in his Gettysburg address as "government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

By self-determination is meant, as I understand it, that any considerable group of people having a proper physical basis of territory and population, with certain national earmarks or characteristics of race, language, and religion, can claim this right of self-determination, provided a proper educational basis of citizenship can be shown, and provided further, that many years of oppression have been exercised by the dominating power over the smaller power seeking separation and claiming rights of self-determination and independence.

It quite naturally follows, then, that the small nation that asserts independence and claims rights of self-determination, in the reconstruction of the map of the earth after the Great World War, must show the existence of four essential concurring elements:

(1) The requisite physical basis of geography, territory, and population.

(2) Certain well-defined distinctions in blood, language, and religion that differentiate its people radically from the people of the larger nation from whom separation is sought.

(3) An educational basis of citizenship that justifies the enjoyment of rights of self-determination and independence.

(4) Governmental oppression, extending over decades or centuries, exercised by a larger over a small nation, rendering self-determination by the smaller nation a supreme necessity.

Now, it is easily demonstrable that all these conditions and characteristics exist in the history of the Baltic Republics of

Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Let us consider briefly each of the above subdivisions in order.

(1) *The extent of the areas of the Baltic States with reference to rights of self-determination and independence.*

The following tables of comparative statistics furnish satisfactory proof on this point:

(A) BALTIC GROUP.

	Area.	Population.
	<i>Square miles.</i>	
Esthonia.....	16,500	1,750,000
Latvia.....	24,442	2,552,000
Lithuania.....	30,500	4,500,000

(B) GROUP OF OTHER INDEPENDENT STATES.

Holland.....	12,648	6,114,000
Belgium.....	11,373	7,633,000
Denmark.....	15,388	2,772,000
Switzerland.....	15,976	3,780,000
Greece.....	41,690	4,363,000
Montenegro.....	5,570	516,000
Norway.....	124,860	2,392,000

An examination of these tables will show that all of the Baltic States, Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, are larger in territory than Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland, and Montenegro. It will also show that both Latvia and Lithuania are greater in population than Montenegro and Norway, and that the population of Lithuania is greater, as her territory is larger, than that of Denmark and Montenegro combined.

It will thus be seen that the first essential of the right of self-determination, a proper physical basis of territory and population, is undeniably present in the case of all the Baltic States. Everything, great or small, good or bad, right or wrong, must be measured by standards of comparison and contrast. Every little patch of land and every little handful of people can not assert independence and reasonably expect recognition from larger nations having greater geographical units and more numerous populations. But unless we are prepared to deny rights of independence to Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland, Norway, Montenegro, and Greece, we must grant that Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are as well qualified by a proper standard of physical comparison to be as free and independent as they.

While a certain extent of territory is necessary as an element of the right of self-determination, it should not be forgotten that neither liberty nor civilization can be gauged by acres of land or by density of population. The greatest and freest peoples of the earth, as well as the noblest civilizations of all the centuries, have lived and thrived upon small and barren tracts of land. The most gifted of all the ancient races were, perhaps, the Hebrews and the Greeks. Around the civilizations of Palestine and of Greece have circled all the other high civilizations of the world. The Hebrews were the master builders of the great spiritual temple of the human race, whose corner stone is Hebrew prophecy and whose gorgeous domes are

the claims of Jesus and Mahomet to the Messiahship of God. The Greeks surpassed all mankind, ancient or modern, in the variety and grandeur of intellectual triumph, and to-day, among the ruins and wrecks of their genius, the modern world still wanders to contemplate, admire, and study, the pride of every master and the perfection of every model.

And yet both Hebrews and Greeks inhabited comparatively barren stretches of land, not as large nor as fertile as Lithuania; for it must be remembered that Palestine has only 13,724 square miles, a territory smaller than that of either Esthonia or Latvia.

(2) Let us now consider the second element above mentioned of the right of self-determination; that is—

Certain well-defined distinctions in blood, language, and religion that differentiate its people radically from the people of the larger nation from whom separation is sought.

This element is also very clear and well defined in the claims of all the Baltic States to rights of self-determination.

The racial and religious differences between Esthonians, Letts, and Lithuanians, on the one hand, and Russians on the other, are as radical as those between Germans and Russians, or between Englishmen and Frenchmen.

The Esthonians are Finns in blood; the Russians are Slavs. The Esthonians are Finnish in language; the Russians are Slavic. The Esthonians are Lutheran in religion; the Russians are Orthodox Greek Catholics.

The Letts and Lithuanians are Indo-Europeans in blood and language; the Russians are Slavs. The Letts are overwhelmingly Lutheran, and the Lithuanians are overwhelmingly Roman Catholics, while the Russians are overwhelmingly Orthodox Greek Catholics.

In each of the Baltic States the language both of the Government and the people is the mother tongue, which is spoken and written by a vast majority of the population.

In short, a pure strain of Finnish blood flows through the veins of Esthonians, as an almost pure Finnish language is spoken by them, while a pure strain of Indo-European blood flows through the veins of Letts and Lithuanians, at the same time that an almost pure Indo-European language is spoken by them, proving a radical difference in blood and language between the peoples of all the Baltic States and those of Slavic Russia.

The logic and philosophy at the foundation of this second element of the right of self-determination as a reason and requirement for separate national life are to be found in the experiences and observations of mankind, that race and religious differences breed strife among nations, resulting in bloodshed and in warfare. The reason of the principle and the cause of the trouble are found deeply embedded in human nature and in the bias and prejudices of men. We like our "kith and kin" and are naturally disposed to regard strangers with distrust, if not with positive dislike. Deadly feuds are born of the loves and hatreds of the clans, and race prejudice and tribal impulse are the most powerful of the motives of men.

(3) I come now to discuss the third element, namely:

An educational and cultural status that justifies the privilege and the enjoyment of the right of self-determination.

This element is absolutely necessary in appealing to the nations of the earth for recognition. However extensive the territory and however numerous the people, illiterate barbarians can not reasonably expect recognition of their independence from literate and civilized races. The ability to be self-governing must be shown in order to claim self-government, and the ability to be self-governing is impossible without a certain degree of educational and cultural development and achievement.

This third element of the right of self-government is conspicuously present in the history, life, and civilization of the peoples of all the Baltic States. There is practically no illiteracy among them. The man or woman of adult years in Esthonia, Latvia, or Lithuania who can not read or write is usually a mental delinquent, a lunatic, or an idiot.

The extraordinarily high rate of literacy in the Baltic countries is really astonishing when we consider that just across the border in Russia the population is 70 per cent illiterate, by conservative estimate, and is placed by many writers as high as 80 per cent.

In university as well as in common-school education the populations of Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are remarkably advanced. The following comparative statistics in university education are illustrative. The university students of Latvia in 1913, the year before the war, were by comparison as follows:

University students.

Latvia	1,950
Denmark	1,460
Norway	1,400
Sweden	1,200
Portugal	1,150

It will thus be seen that although her population is smaller than that of either Denmark, Sweden, or Portugal, the number of university students of Latvia is numerically greater, and what is true of Latvia in university education is equally true of Esthonia and Lithuania.

I beg you to pardon me for personal reference to myself and to what I have recently done and seen and heard in this connection. In the summer of 1919 and again in January, February, and March of this year I visited all the Baltic countries and traveled extensively through them by train and automobile. I was astonished at the high-grade civilization of the masses of the people and at the fine accomplishments and brilliant educations of the public men with whom I met. At Reval, at Kovno, and at Riga, the capitals, respectively, of Esthonia, Lithuania, and Latvia, I was honored by being the invited guest at public dinners given by ministers of state. I was surprised and pleased to learn that all of these statesmen were university graduates and that most of them spoke several languages, including English, fluently.

Any doubt as to the educational qualifications of all the Baltic Republics for self-determination and independence will be removed by a short visit to these countries. The visitor will find peasant populations with books, periodicals, magazines, and musical instruments in the home, and, to his amazement, he will find that a considerable percentage of the people of Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania speak three languages—German, Russian,

and their mother tongue—and that they are somewhat familiar with the history and literature of the countries of these languages.

Of all the elements that form a just basis of claims to rights of self-government and independence among the Baltic peoples, the test of literacy is the greatest, for the thirst of Estonians, Letts, and Lithuanians for knowledge and education is as unquenchable as their thirst for freedom is unconquerable.

(4) Permit me, if you please, at this time to discuss the fourth element of the right of self-determination above mentioned, namely:

Governmental oppression, extending over decades or centuries, exercised by a larger over a smaller nation, rendering self-determination by the smaller nation a supreme necessity.

It seems quite unnecessary to discuss this element or phase of the subject at any length. All men are thoroughly familiar with the history of Russian cruelty and oppression. Scholars of every nation know well the details of Russian tyranny and persecution. Siberian dungeons have been the horror and the nightmare of Russian freedom in every age. Not only nihilists and anarchists, who deserved incarceration, but patriots and freemen who thirsted and fought for liberty spent wretched lives and met horrible deaths within them.

Russian history is replete with instances of governmental cruelty and oppression. Russian imperial administrative affairs were simply records of revolting and horrible stifling of man's natural cravings and struggles for freedom. Other nations—Greece, Rome, Spain, France, and England—have had periods of despotic sway. Russia has been uniformly the land of barbarism and illiteracy, of tyranny and oppression. This tyranny and oppression have been dealt out not only to Letts, Estonians, and Lithuanians but to the Russians themselves. Slavs as well as Finns and Indo-Europeans have been the barbarized and persecuted victims of the Russian imperial system of government. The fixed and unalterable policy of that Government was to hold in ignorance and abject slavery the masses of the Russian population, trusting to this method of government to destroy the aspirations for freedom that are natural to men.

When we turn from the régime of the Czar to the rule of the soviet, we find neither hope nor consolation. We have simply passed from one gloomy prison dungeon to another. Both are monumental, pyramidal tyrannies, and of the two the reign of Nicholas would be preferable to the rule of Lenin and Trotski, for the absolutism of an aristocracy is better than the despotism of the proletariat.

In other words and in short, Estonians, Letts, and Lithuanians can not and will not consent to enter into political union with Russians under any known form of Russian government that history presents.

Russian tyranny and oppression was born of the design and determination of the Russian clergy and Government to reduce to one homogeneous whole the heterogeneous masses and nationalities of the various peoples and races of the Russian Empire. One Czar, one Orthodox Catholic faith, one Russian language was the slogan of all the Russian priests and statesmen,

and from this policy of amalgamation proceeded centuries of discrimination, persecution, and mean oppression. The idea of one Czar caused the attempt to suppress tribal impulse and the aspirations of distinct races for self-government and independence. The idea of one Orthodox Catholic faith caused religious persecution out of which came the most bitter of all revolt. The idea of one Russian language caused the attempt to suppress the mother tongues of the Esthonians, Letts, Lithuanians, and other non-Russian nationalities, and this in every age has been a mean form of persecution, for the love of the mother tongue is second only to the love of the mother herself or to that of God and country.

A peculiar form of Russian malignity and persecution, in the matter of attempted suppression of language, took place in the year 1864, when Muravjev prohibited the publication of anything in the Lithuanian language and in Latin characters. The compulsory use of Russian lettering in the publication of books and papers in Lithuania was intended to destroy gradually all knowledge of the mother tongue of Lithuanians.

When the Letts demanded judges with a knowledge of their own language the Russians replied by forbidding such judges to use the Lettish language.

When Esthonians and Letts demanded a voice in the solution of the agrarian problem in accordance with modern notions of right and justice, the Russians replied by extending sympathy and aid to the German Baltic barons, and, to aggravate the matter, brought Russian colonists from the interior of Russia to colonize Esthonia and Latvia.

Innumerable forms of Russian tyranny and oppression might be mentioned, but it is considered that sufficient has been said as a matter of illustration.

Up to this moment I have discussed the subject of the recognition of the independence of the Baltic peoples from the viewpoint of certain cardinal elements of the right of self-government; that is, extent of territory and population, race and religious differences, educational status, and long-continued oppression.

I come now to discuss the economic, industrial, and agricultural life of these countries as a secondary, but nevertheless very essential, element of the claim to recognition of independence by the nations of the world. Indeed, this element is given primary consideration by many writers upon the subject of the justice and advisability of recognizing the independent national existence of the newly created non-Russian republics of the former Russian Empire. It is contended by some of these writers that Latvia, Esthonia, and Lithuania are too weak and undeveloped economically, industrially, and agriculturally to maintain separate and independent stations among the nations of the earth. It is further asserted by them that to recognize the independence of these little States would be to create permanently dependent communities whose helplessness would make them perpetual wards of the larger nations. This is the chief contention of the advocates of a reunited and federated Russia.

Facts and figures, however, and especially comparative statistics, negative completely the idea that these countries are not fitted economically for separate and independent life. It can be

easily shown that other nations less strong and well developed economically, commercially, and agriculturally have maintained centuries of separate national existence. Unfortunately, however, the time allotted to me does not permit an elaboration of argument from statistics. I have time to suggest only one illustration of the economic strength of the Baltic countries.

I respectfully submit on this point that the revenue-producing powers of a country, under normal conditions of equitable taxation, give a most satisfactory idea of the economic strength of that country.

In 1913, the year before the outbreak of the war, when conditions were normal, Esthonia, the smallest and poorest of the Baltic Republics, paid 50,000,000 rubles into the Russian treasury. This money paid all the expenses of her local government and left a balance, a net deposit of 5,000,000 rubles for the benefit of some other Provinces of the Russian Empire that showed a deficit. Esthonia being the smallest and poorest, this fact alone is proof of the economic abilities of all the non-Russian Republics to be self-sustaining under an independent régime.

Nevertheless, it may be mentioned as additional proof that Latvia, in 1913, produced 88,054,576 rubles revenue; that the grand total of her local provincial expenses in that year were 54,324,205 rubles, leaving a net revenue amounting to 33,730,371 rubles to be sent to the Imperial Russian treasury.

As still further illustration and proof, permit me to say that in the same year, 1913, Lithuania raised a national or, rather, provincial revenue of 55,000,000 rubles, and spent some 20,000,000 rubles in her local government, according to a statement furnished me by Mr. J. Vileisis, former minister of finance of the Republic of Lithuania. It will thus be seen that Lithuania sent, in the year preceding the war, 35,000,000 rubles as a contribution to the Imperial Russian treasury to help pay the expenses of less-favored portions of the Empire.

I respectfully submit that these facts and figures furnish indubitable proof that these little countries could each maintain the government of an independent republic at home and sustain all necessary diplomatic offices abroad.

The contentions heretofore made in behalf of the independence of the little republics have been affirmative. Certain negative considerations or objections should be noted at this time.

In the first place, it is contended that the peoples of these non-Russian republics are not fitted for self-government because they have had no experience; because it would be like sending out little children into the world without training and guidance. This is worse than foolish, for it flies completely in the face of the history and the essential conditions of the lives of nations and of men. No great nation of this earth ever began national existence with finished experience. The history of mankind shows no graduate or postgraduate nations from birth. Each and all have been compelled to tread the bitter pathway of suffering, self-development, self-denial, and individual experiment. Every great man of eminence of the earth of any calling or profession has had to have his beginning and his individual experience.

At the time of the American Revolution it was contended by the enemies of America in England that the colonists were not

fitted for self-government. William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, defended them most brilliantly in Parliament against this charge. With superb eloquence he declared that he had studied the political masterpieces of antiquity and of modern times and that he had never read finer productions of statesmanship than had been sent overseas from America to England by the inexperienced colonial statesmen—Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton. And yet to-day we have what Americans believe to be the greatest and mightiest of all Republics of the earth, and when we Americans make speeches in Congress we support our arguments by citations from the words and deeds of these inexperienced colonial master builders of the early Republic.

As a matter of fact, however, it can not be truthfully contended that the statesmen of these little countries have not had considerable experience and have not demonstrated the finest qualities of statesmanship under the most trying circumstances. About three years have elapsed since they separately declared their independence. During that time they have adopted constitutions, organized stable governments, with cabinets of ministers, and with national assemblies. They have organized and outfitted splendid young armies that have already given a fine account of themselves upon the battle field. The deliberations and official conduct of their ministers have been marked in all things by ability and conservatism. Their national assemblies have acted with wisdom in most cases and have as yet enacted no foolish or extremely radical legislation. Civil and religious liberty and the sacred rights of private property are everywhere to be found in the provisions of their constitutions and in the enactments of their national parliaments.

It is now and will always be a matter of pride and pleasure that I have met and known the leading statesmen of the Baltic Republics. Many of them I met at Paris in the summer of 1919 during the sessions of the peace conference. Others I met in the capitals of their countries. All of them are, without exception, brainy and accomplished men, and I never talked to one of them that I did not think of the remark of one of the European diplomats, referring to Venezelos, of Greece, that the small nations of Europe had furnished to the conference at Paris its greatest statesmen.

At Paris I met Antoine Piip, present minister of foreign affairs of Esthonia, a young, brave, serious, and accomplished man, who was formerly professor of international law at the University of Petrograd.

Afterwards, at Reval, I met Konstantin Pätz, who is now president of the constituent assembly and virtual head of the Republic of Esthonia. Pätz is a writer and lawyer of distinction, who has translated the Constitution of the United States into the Esthonian language for the benefit of his countrymen. His life's history has a deep touch and coloring of the high heroic and of martyrdom, for he spent many months in prison and was once condemned to death for his supreme devotion to the cause of the liberty and independence of his country. While at Reval I met other able ministers of state of Esthonia, among them Otto Strandman, prime minister, and Gen. Laidoner, minister of war.

At Kovno, the temporary capital of Lithuania, I had the pleasure of meeting Stulginskis, president of the constituent assembly and the recognized head of the Republic of Lithuania. One of my most pleasant and interesting experiences in Europe was to listen to Stulginskis address the national assembly on the occasion of the celebration of the third anniversary of Lithuanian independence. At Kovno I also met Grinius, prime minister, and Purickis, minister of foreign affairs, of Lithuania. Purickis is a Roman Catholic priest of great learning and piety and intensely devoted to his country.

At Riga it was my great pleasure and privilege to meet the leading Latvian statesmen. I met Tschakste, president of the constituent assembly and titular chief of the Latvian State, a venerable and accomplished man, whose great good nature and merry twinkle of the eye endear him to all who know him. I also met Meierovics, minister of foreign affairs of Latvia, a youth in years but a veteran in statesmanship and diplomacy, a man of fine accomplishments and wonderfully pleasing personality. It was my good fortune, also, to meet Ulmanis, prime minister of Latvia, a big, brave, brainy man, a rugged patriot who loves Latvia as Macaulay says Pitt loved England, as an Athenian loved Athens, as a Roman loved the city of Seven Hills.

All these men are university graduates and have had wide political experience under the Imperial Government of Russia and later as founders and builders of their own Republics. And I want to assure you that I have little patience with the views of those who contend that such men are inexperienced and incompetent, and that the destinies of the Baltic Republics are not safe in their hands. I wish, further, to say that it would be decidedly ungenerous to judge these statesmen of Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, or their early Governments, by the records of a few short years immediately following a great and paralyzing war, and without any recognition of their independence whatever from the nations of the earth. It would be just as generous to chain a man hand and foot and then command him to run and condemn him because he could not.

In this connection it may be well to observe that the strange and absurd proposition is advanced that the non-Russian Republics are not capable of governing themselves but that Russia is capable of governing them. A moment's reflection will demonstrate the fallacy and the absurdity of this contention. Russia is worse than a broken reed. The poor old Russian ship of state is a mass of wreckage swept by every storm and tossed ruthlessly by every wave. On the other hand, the little Republics have stable Governments, organized along constitutional lines of right and freedom, and sustained by well-disciplined armies that have beaten back bolshevism from their territories and that stand to-day as breakwaters against a great tide of anarchy and ignorance. Can it be seriously contended that these little well-ordered States can not govern themselves, but that Russia can govern them?

Of course, it is nothing but fair to state that the advocates of a greater Russia contend that a stable government can be established out of the ruins of the present Russia, and that

it might be well to leave Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as political units or national members of this greater Russia. Such a proposition is neither fair, feasible, nor just. Neither the wisdom of the philosopher nor the vision of the prophet can tell what will be the result of government in Russia in the next generation or century. The return of the Czar and of absolutism is unthinkable, and is seriously contemplated by nobody except the interested Russian aristocracy. But whether a constitutional monarchy, a federative republic, or several independent republics, for the territory of the ancient Russian Empire, is a question for debate. Each has its advocates, and one of them must be a solution of the Russian problem.

A constitutional monarchy is not practicable or advisable for Russia. The history of England shows that years and generations were required to determine whether a given race of people, endowed with certain national and individual attributes, are capable of self-government under a liberal monarchy. The first Englishmen of more than a thousand years ago were probably more intelligent and conservative and adapted to self-government than are the Russians of to-day, and yet it took all these years of painful development, with all the strange vicissitudes of British history, such as the contest of the Barons with King John over Magna Charta, the beheading of King Charles, and the establishment of the Commonwealth of Cromwell, to bring England to her present proud station as the leading monarchical democratic Commonwealth of the world.

A federative republic is out of the question, as a conference of Russians at Petrograd, under the Kerensky régime, admitted. A republic of any kind, to be worthy of the name, must of necessity rest upon the will of the people and be controlled by the action of the majority. Russia proper has 130,000,000 of the 180,000,000 people of the former Russian Empire. This vast majority is densely illiterate and can not justly rule the intelligent, literate non-Russian minority. If England, France, the United States, or some other masterful and intelligent nation could be placed where great Russia is, a federative republic might be possible, since the dominating race would then form the intelligent head of a confederacy of peoples of different races and religions. The United States, Great Britain, and France illustrate this truth in their governments to-day. But it is inconceivable to think that great Russia could govern a federative republic where the non-Russian members of the confederation would form the only intelligent and educated elements. The Russians ruled the empire of the Czar on principles of freedom and democracy, and not upon the principles of freedom and democracy, such as the existence of a republic necessarily implies.

Besides, our American experiment throws serious doubt upon the advisability of a federative republic for Russia. In America, after seven years and eight months of bitter struggle, we gained our independence; but from the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown to the adoption of our Constitution at Philadelphia in 1787 was a period of six years, and then it required more than half a century, until the close of our Civil War in 1865, to determine whether free government under a federative republic in America were possible. And I respectfully submit that Americans in every age, besides being homogeneous in race,

language, and religion, and contiguous in territory, have been more intelligent, conservative, and literate than are the Russians of to-day.

To suppose that Russia can develop in a generation a stable form of government is to fly in the face of the facts and teachings of history. The illiteracy and the emotional and idealistic tendencies of the Russian mind will make Russians for many years to come a buffet and a prey of every fanatic like Lenin and every demagogue like Trotski that may come along.

Should the rights of the intelligent, well-organized, non-Russian Republics to self-determination and independence be made contingent upon the speculative proposition of the establishment of a stable government in Russia any time within the next few years? I think not. Justice requires that these little countries be immediately recognized and admitted to the League of Nations or otherwise protected by an alliance of nations, with the understanding that they are to perform all their obligations under the league or alliance, including the maintenance of friendly relations with all mankind, and especially with their immediate surrounding neighbors, and that they shall then have the protection of the league or alliance of nations against the aggressors of all mankind, particularly against Germany and Russia.

The Baltic baron land question is acute, and in the minds of many forms a serious objection in connection with the consideration of the question of the recognition of the independence of Esthonia and Latvia. Some 700 years ago Germans invaded Esthonia and Latvia, conquered the land by force of arms, and made serfs of the people, as William the Conqueror invaded England in 1066 and made serfs and churls of the Saxons. The Esthonians and Letts have never ceased to hope that they would some day regain their freedom and their lands. The defeat of Germany and the destruction of the Empire of the Czar removed from Europe and from history the two great oppressors of Esthonians and Letts. Since the establishment of the Esthonian and Lettish Republics, several Esthonian and Lettish statesmen, as well as certain statesmen in other European countries, have contended that these lands that were virtually stolen from their countrymen by highway robbery 700 years ago should now be taken back by confiscation, since no legal title was ever vested in the usurpers upon these lands. But it seems that a different course is now being pursued by the Esthonian and Lettish national assemblies, out of respect to the opinions and wishes of America and of the Allies, and that some form of compensation will be given to the Baltic barons for their lands, leaving to them a portion of the lands also, regardless of the methods by which they were acquired in the beginning. I have just been informed by Mr. Louis Seya, representative of Latvia, who has just arrived in America, that this is the attitude of his Government at the present time.

The settlement of this problem, however, should not be final or decisive in the matter of the determination of the rights of Esthonia and Latvia. The disposition of this question is really an internal affair, and if our Government can not intervene in Russia to protect the land of the Russian nobility against confiscation by Trotski and Lenin, if it is not regarded as worth

while to object to the confiscation of the lands and properties of the Austrian nobility by the Czecho-Slovaks, and having as an example the practical confiscation of church properties in France not many years ago, against which no civilized nation protested at the time, I respectfully submit that the little Republics of Esthonia and Latvia should not be made a special example in this regard.

These little States have met every possible objection to their claims to independence. They agree to pay their proportionate share of the Russian prewar debt, to allow neutral countries, or the League of Nations, in conference with their own representatives, to determine the amount, and to pledge their natural resources and future revenues for the payment.

The advocates of a reunited Russia insist that the independence of Latvia, Esthonia, and Lithuania would practically shut out Great Russia from the Baltic Sea and from free commerce with the western world. These gentlemen contend that the absolute independence of these States, considering their small territory and geographical location, would be a constant menace to the peace of the world, because of the supreme necessities of Russian industrial and commercial life, and that their reconquest by some Charles XII or Peter the Great would be only a matter of time and provocation and circumstance in history.

The answer to this objection is that the Baltic States have all repeatedly proposed to the peace conference at Paris, and at other times to the representatives of different nations, to keep their ports on the Baltic open to the Russians under fair and equitable conditions of port duties and customs charges; also to guarantee to the Russians equitable railway transit across their territories, thus furnishing fair and unobstructed passage from Russia to the open sea. In the various treaties they have made with soviet Russia they have already acted and are now acting in good faith in the proposals they have made in this regard.

Again, certain objectors to the independence of the Baltic States have urged that legally, under international law, the allied nations can not recognize them as independent governments. It is contended that the doctrine of self-determination was and is intended to apply only to the enemy countries, namely, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey, and that the application of the principle to former Russian Provinces would be a virtual dismemberment of the territory of a friendly country.

The first reply to this contention is that Russia has never been in any proper sense a friendly country since the last days of the Kerensky régime.

In the second place, reply should be made that the principle of self-determination, if just and righteous in any case, should be applied in all cases where the elements forming the necessary basis of self-determination are present. Certainly a just and righteous principle of government should not be employed as an instrument of punishment or revenge by being applied alone to enemy countries. It is ironically cruel to deny to friends the benefits that enemies enjoy.

In the third place, it may be replied that Russia has already been dismembered by both Russians and the Allies. In the

Brest-Litovsk treaty the bolshevik rulers of Russia practically ceded all the Baltic Provinces to Germany, and subsequently by complementary agreements at Berlin in the summer of 1918 completed the cession by waiving all rights of sovereignty of any kind over these western Russian States. The fact that the treaty of Brest-Litovsk has since been repudiated by the Allies and has been canceled by Germany does not alter the fact that Russia was dismembered by Russians themselves.

Again, in the acknowledgement of the independence of Finland, the Allies themselves have particularly dismembered Russia. This dismemberment was further carried out by the acknowledgement of the independence of Russian Poland, Russian Armenia, and by the separation and cession of Bessarabia. The contention has been made that these were exceptions and were not intended as precedents, but the fact of dismemberment remains nevertheless, and the precedents are there regardless of the intention.

The various recent treaties between the soviet government and the Governments of the Baltic Republics by which the bolsheviks have formally and solemnly acknowledged the independence of the little countries is the best possible proof of the willingness of the bolsheviks to dismember Russia. And not only the Russians under Lenin and Trotski but Russians who are not bolsheviks have also consented. I personally saw Gen. Yudenitch, commander of the Russian Army on the north-western front, sign an agreement to acknowledge the independence of Esthonia. Conditions were attached, however, to the agreement which rendered it impossible for the Esthonians to accept. Nevertheless, the fact of the willingness of the leader of one of the nonbolshevik Russian armies to acknowledge the independence of Esthonia and thereby dismember the Russian Empire, remains.

Permit me to say, in conclusion, if you please, that all discussion of the dismemberment of Russia in the future will be worse than idle talk. The Russian Empire has been recently definitely and irrevocably dismembered by the allied powers at Paris when they acknowledged the independence de jure of Esthonia and Latvia, and intimated that they would acknowledge the independence de jure of Lithuania as soon as the Polish frontier question had been settled. The brave little Republics of the Baltic Sea are now free and independent States and members in good standing of the great family of nations. Their sovereignty has been established and decreed by all the great Governments of the world excepting our own. The recognition of their independence was de jure, not de facto—absolute, not conditional—and they will remain forever free until they waive and surrender their sovereignty by treaty stipulations or until they are overrun by some conqueror who robs them of their freedom. Neither one of these contingencies is to be thought of at this time.

I am well aware that the Government of the United States is not necessarily bound by the action of other Governments in this regard. But I respectfully suggest that a decent respect for the opinions of mankind, a proper spirit of international comity, and a due appreciation of the action of other Governments, should impel us to follow immediately the example of other na-

tions and to recognize at once the independence absolute of Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

When Aristide Briand sent official notification of the recognition of Latvia to the president of the Latvian delegation at Paris he used this language:

The supreme council of the allied powers, taking into consideration the repeated requests presented by your Government, has decided at its session of to-day to recognize Latvia as a de jure State.

The powers desire to mark by this the sympathy which they feel toward the Latvian people and to render homage to what it has accomplished in the establishment of order and peace in its national life.

The suggestion of the "establishment of order and peace" as the reason of the recognition of the independence of Latvia is full of meaning and is a direct and powerful appeal to us for our official recognition. With the fall of the Russian Empire and the establishment of the soviet government a supreme crisis confronted Latvia and the other Baltic States. The alternative of following Russia into bolshevism and anarchy or of standing with the civilized nations of the world for the maintenance of law and order presented itself. There was no hesitation in deciding.

The brave little Republics at once scornfully and defiantly repudiated Lenin and Trotski and all their teachings and practices, and allied themselves with the antibolshevik peoples of the earth. And from the very first there has been no change of resolution, no wavering, no retreat. Bravely, steadfastly, and with sublime purpose and resolve they have borne the brunt of battle against the hordes of anarchy in Russia. While university professors throughout the world were learnedly discussing bolshevik theories in the quiet and seclusion of academic shades, and while statesmen of Rome, Paris, London, and Washington have been loudly denouncing Lenin and Trotski from afar, the brave soldiers of Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have been engaged in a death struggle at close quarters with the Red armies of Russia.

Do these sufferings and sacrifices deserve no recognition, no reward? Is it without meaning that men and women and children should starve and wear rags and die for others? Men and women and children have starved and worn rags and died rather than accept bolshevik favors or submit to bolshevik rule.

In the summer of 1919 I visited Esthonia. Through Gen. Toennison, their commander, as interpreter I addressed the various units of the Esthonian Army. While I was speaking the soldiers were standing at rigid salute. Many of them were boys not more than 15 years of age. Though young in years, their sufferings and sacrifices had given them faces and features that looked bronzed and granite like. From each eye a glint of desperation and defiance gleamed fiercely when they looked across their barbed-wire entanglements toward the bolshevik battle line a few miles away. Most of these brave fellows were poorly clad and barefooted. I assured them that the greatest Republic in the world, my own country, had been founded by barefooted soldiers who left blood prints upon the snows at Valley Forge. I told them that I saw in them the resurrected, the reincarnated soldiers of Valley Forge, and that I would never cease pleading their cause until their country was as free and independent as mine. And I am here to-day to fulfill that pledge, not only to Esthonians but to others as well, to

Letts and Lithuanians who are equally brave and self-sacrificing as Esthonians.

I respectfully submit that a sacred and solemn duty rests upon the United States to recognize at once the independence de jure of Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. They merit our recognition and our good will, our sympathy, and our support. They merit the recognition and good will and sympathy and support of all civilized mankind.

Their people are literate, their statesmen are able and accomplished, and their soldiers are brave and unconquerable. These are the real attributes of sovereignty and the right to be free and independent, for, after all, the permanency and prosperity of nations depend upon the wisdom of the statesmen who conceive the constitution and create the laws, upon the patriotism and intelligence of the people who make and support the government, and upon the courage of soldiers who defend the national frontiers. All these things are preeminently present in the life, character, history, and civilization of the Baltic Republics of Esthonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the recognition of whose independence as free and independent States I advocate to-day. [Applause.]

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