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Citizens' Peace Movement in the Soviet Baltic Republics*

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A citizens' peace movement emerged in the Soviet Baltic republics in January 1980, when about 23 Lithuanians, Estonians, and Latvians signed an antiwar declaration in the wake of Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan. The concern for peace was intertwined with, but distinct from, concerns for national autonomy, civil rights, and ecology. The movement culminated with a proposal in October 1981 that the Baltic republics be enclosed in the Nordic Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. This proposal was signed by 38 Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians, in response to Brezhnev's offer to consider some NWFZ-related measures 'applicable to our own territory'. At least five of the signatories have been jailed since then, and at least in one case the NWFZ proposal figured among the most incriminating charges. Despite some remaining problems of wording, the Baltic Letter on the NWFZ represented a major advance from uncompromising declaratory dissent toward advocacy of specific and negotiable measures. The Baltic action preceded and partly inspired the formation of the now-defunct citizens' peace group in Moscow, 1982. The demand for inclusion of the Baltic republics in the Nordic NWFZ was repeated in a December 1983 letter by unnamed Estonian Peace Supporters to the Stockholm disarmament conference, in a rather declaratory style. Although the civil and religious rights movement remains strong in Lithuania, detentions seem to have broken up the Baltic citizens-initiative peace movement for the time being.

1. Introduction

In early 1982 a rather unusual declaration by 38 Soviet Baltic residents reached Western Europe. Entering the perennial discussion about the merits and feasibility of a Nordic Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, they gave the NWFZ proposal their full support — and recommended that their own republics (Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania) be included in the NWFZ. From the vantage point of 1985, the declaration represents the high point of non-governmental peace initiative in the Baltic republics and in some ways in the entire Soviet Union. Furthermore, the proposal to add some Warsaw Pact territories to the NATO and neutral territories, which are usually envisaged for the Nordic NWFZ, introduced an element of interbloc balance, the lack of which is a major reason why the NWFZ has not yet become a reality. The way the 38 Baltic citizens proposed to bal-

ance the NWFZ may present problems of its own, but some sort of balance would seem to be necessary.

The immediate catalyst for the Baltic proposal was an interview in Finland's *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* (16 June 1981) by the Soviet head of state Leonid Brezhnev. The latter not only offered 'negative security guarantees' to the Nordic members of the NWFZ (i.e., a promise not to use nuclear weapons against the NWFZ) but also added: '...this does not preclude the possibility of considering some other measures applicable to our own territory in the region adjoining the nuclear-free zone in Northern Europe'. Later (in November 1981) Brezhnev added that such measures could be 'substantial' (*New Times*, No. 27, 1981, pp. 8-9; Vaahtoranta 1983, p. 57).

Brezhnev did not specify the measures in a positive way but clearly indicated that all Soviet territories discussed would be 'adjoining' rather than part of the NWFZ. However, the 38 Baltic citizens of the USSR were willing to expand the scope beyond the one offered by the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Their decla-

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ration brought into the Nordic NWFZ debate a new constituency with a legitimate concern.

This article will discuss the content and implications of the 1981 Open Letter and of a later appeal to the Stockholm Disarmament Conference of 1984. The potential inclusion of the Baltic republics in the Nordic NWFZ has many other aspects besides the ones connected with citizens' peace movement. These aspects have been discussed in another article (Taagepera 1985). It would be desirable to integrate the description of the Baltic peace movement into the theoretical framework of social movements and of peace movements in particular; the present article supplies information for such an endeavor but does not try to carry it out.

The study of citizens-initiative actions in a closed society presents special methodological problems. Many of the routine procedures for fact verification cannot be used. The government-controlled local press makes no mention of unauthorized initiatives, and mail and telephone contact with participants or witnesses is practically unfeasible. Citizens' statements surface abroad through channels that cannot be checked without risk of exposure of middlemen to heavy retaliation by authorities. Alteration of information and even outright mystification remain a possibility. The scholar either has to depend on the long-term reputation of the channels, or he has to discard much of the information as not directly verifiable. The latter course may look more scholarly, but it inevitably distorts the broad picture to the detriment of peace activists silenced by the government. One has to strike a middle road, cross-checking as much as possible by indirect means.

2. *The 1981 Open Letter*

In response to Brezhnev's offer of June 1981 to consider some unspecified territories and measures, the 38 Soviet Baltic citizens proposed specific ones, in the following 'Open Letter to the Heads of the Governments of the USSR, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Fin-

land, and Sweden Concerning the Establishment of a Nuclear-Free Zone in North Europe,' dated 10 October 1981:

The peoples and the governments of North Europe are at present considering various aspects of the idea of establishing a nuclear-free zone in North Europe, as expressed by the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Herewith we propose to supplement the above idea by including the Baltic Sea and the Baltic countries — Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania — in the above-mentioned nuclear-free zone.

The extension of the nuclear-free zone to the Baltic Sea and to the Baltic countries would be logical because the area in question is actually part of North Europe. Moreover, this would render a possible future treaty all the more important because it would be a brilliant example of an equal and balanced disarmament. The extension of the nuclear-free zone to the Baltic Sea and to the Baltic countries would also be in the interest of the small Scandinavian and Baltic nations, more particularly by contributing to their future survival.

The Baltic nations have paid dearly for the Great Power conflicts. Their sufferings were particularly deep during the Second World War when the front passed twice over their territories. Here it must be emphasized that the governments of the independent republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania made every effort to avoid involvement in the Great Power conflicts. The Baltic nations know, too, that the leaders of the Great Powers at that time ignored completely the wishes, the fate, and the opinions of the Baltic peoples when they divided the area into their spheres of influence. A drastic example of this is the Pact of 23 August 1939 between Nazi Germany and the USSR and its secret appendix which has not been published in the USSR to this day.¹

Because of the above, we consider it extremely important to devise guarantees which would help ensure the survival of small nations in case of possible Great Power conflicts.

We consider it natural and acceptable to all nations that an agreement concerning a nuclear-free zone in North Europe would ban the production and stationing of nuclear weapons as well as stationing and movements of any means (ships, aircraft, missiles) designed to carry nuclear warheads in the appropriate territories of the High Contracting Parties and in the Baltic Sea.

We hope that the NATO and the Warsaw Pact Powers will be able to guarantee the ban on nuclear weapons in the nuclear-free zone in North Europe, including the Baltic Sea and the Baltic countries. Such a ban on nuclear weapons in one area would be an important step towards the fulfillment of the greatest expectation of mankind — A COMPLETE DISARMAMENT.²

The letter was signed by 15 Latvians, 13 Estonians, and 10 Lithuanians, whose names and some personal characteristics are listed by Taagepera (1985). They probably reflected the preferences of a large fraction of the Baltic population. Indeed, the desire to be included in a NWFZ has been voiced by so many people in Scandinavia, and symbolic proclamations of a local NWFZ have been undertaken by so many individual cities, communes, parishes, counties and districts in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, West Germany, and the United States (Kalela & Väyrynen 1983, p. 71) that it would be surprising if no people in the USSR had skeptical feelings about the safety of a nuclear umbrella compared to that of a NWFZ.

As might be expected, many of the signers of the NWFZ declaration had previously signed letters on other topics, too. As in the case of the West German 'Greens', the various social concerns tend to fuse, and this does not necessarily detract from the merit of a particular protest or proposal. The collection of signatures from three different republics obviously preassumed some existing informal network. At least five of the signers have been arrested and sentenced for peaceful dissent activities involving no stronger ideas or language than the ones in the letter above. The background of the 13 Estonian signers is known in some detail (Taagepera 1984). This background and later developments will be discussed in later sections. Let us first analyze the document itself.

What kind of views does this Letter express? Despite its shortness, several layers can be distinguished. If all reference to the Baltic republics were omitted, the Letter would become a plea for the Nordic NWFZ to include the Baltic Sea. The result would be very much in line with the shorter and simpler versions of Nordic peace appeals, regardless of whether one agrees on the technical feasibility of including the Baltic Sea. On that level the signers of the Letter are very much on the same wavelength as

the mainstream Nordic proponents of a NWFZ.

As the next step, reread the original text, leaving out only the third paragraph ('The Baltic nations have paid dearly... to this day'). This version adds the proposal to include the Baltic republics in the NWFZ in a neutral way which antagonizes the Soviet Union as little as possible. (Some antagonization is inevitable as long as the Soviet Union keeps viewing any initiative by its citizens as hostile.)

It seems that such a version would be awkward from the viewpoint of many Nordic proponents of a NWFZ ranging from Norway (or even Greenland) to the Baltic Sea. Such a statement would be too close to their own basic views to be mentally discarded without qualms. But if they didn't discard the idea, then they would have to discuss it, and such discussion could turn off even the limited dialogue they have succeeded in establishing with the Soviet Union. Rather than aiming at an objectively 'equal and balanced disarmament' on the part of NATO and Warsaw Pact (to use the wording of the Baltic Letter), which could founder against one superpower's intransigence, it makes sense for them to aim at equal *effort* in both directions, even if it should yield more concessions from one superpower than from the other. This is the way to maximize the *total* amount of concessions made by the superpowers and hence to make headway toward a Nordic NWFZ, assuming of course that this approach does not increase local security at the cost of imbalancing the wider system.

In face of such dilemma, the third paragraph of the Open Letter comes as a real godsend: the document can be branded 'revanchist' and 'secessionist' and thus can be ignored without qualms by the Nordic NWFZ proponents — and can be used by Soviet authorities as a pretext for jailing the signers. In this sense, the inclusion of the third paragraph was a mistake on the part of the authors of the Open Letter.

The factual accuracy is here not an issue.

The point is that, accurate or not, the third paragraph detracts attention from the main issue. The case for including the Baltic republics in the Nordic NWFZ does not depend on what happened or did not happen in 1939 but on considerations of geography and strategic balance. In fact, tactically it would have been wiser for the Open Letter to broaden their NWFZ proposal to the entire Soviet Baltic coastline, including the Kaliningrad oblast and coastal portions of the Leningrad oblast, so as not to appear to delineate the area on the basis of ethnic units or the Soviet borders of 1939.³ With NATO members Denmark and Norway included in the proposed NWFZ, some analogous concessions by the Warsaw Pact countries would be expected before NATO could be interested in the proposal — and the Soviet Baltic coast may well be the only Warsaw Pact area that reasonably could be included. But that would be up to the governmental negotiations to work out.

Due to lack of practice of open discussion, statements by Soviet officials and Soviet dissidents tend to have one feature in common: they lack in nuances and abound in repetitions of standardized main themes. After Brezhnev coined the expression, Andropov and lesser Soviet officials (but not Gorbachev, as yet) repeated the vague liturgical wording of 'certain measures, and substantial ones at that' in Soviet territory adjacent to the proposed Nordic NWFZ. Somewhat in the same vein, the topic of the Baltic Letter's third paragraph has been a staple theme for the Soviet Baltic civic activists. This inclusion made the Open Letter go beyond a mere disarmament appeal to become one of implied political autonomy. It was a tactical error.

However, apart from that reflexive repetition, the Open Letter actually represented a novel breaking out from the customary mold of Baltic (and Soviet Union-wide) activist thought in the direction of the worldwide peace movement mainstream. Compared to previous uncompromising declaratory dissent, the Letter was a major step

toward advocacy of specific and negotiable measures. Sergei Batovrin, a founding member of the citizens-initiative peace group formed later in Moscow, has confirmed that the Baltic Letter was the first peace action by private Soviet citizens.⁴ As such, it represents a landmark: the first Soviet statement analogous to those of various US communities in favor of a local NWFZ. It differs from the latter in being geographically realizable, in principle. These observations remain valid despite the composition flaws indicated.

3. The background of the 1981 Open Letter

What inspired the Baltic Open Letter, and why did it come at the time it did? The immediate trigger was, as mentioned earlier, Brezhnev's statement on Soviet territories adjacent to the Nordic NWFZ. There is no evidence of direct contacts with peace activists and NWFZ proponents in Scandinavia, but the Baltic activists certainly were aware of Scandinavian activities not only through the filtered reports in the Soviet media but also through Finnish television, which can be viewed in northern Estonia. Isolated from the outside world since the Soviet takeover of the Baltic states, the Baltic population slowly became aware of the worldwide issues during the 1970s. Given the rise of self-rule movements in places like Quebec and the Basque country and the precedent of Baltic independence before 1940, one could not expect the national autonomy concerns to fade, but other concerns came to be grafted on it.⁵

A civil rights emphasis clearly emerged when a Lithuanian Helsinki Watch Committee was formed in November 1976 with the purpose of monitoring compliance with the Helsinki Accords within the country. Its chairman, Viktoras Petkus, tried hard to make it a Baltic-wide committee, but his arrest stopped these efforts. Ecological concerns came to the fore with an anonymous 1977 letter by 18 Estonian naturalists. Baltic cooperation, hampered by mutually unintelligible languages and police interference,

finally took shape with an August 1979 Appeal to the Soviet and the two German governments to formally repudiate the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its secret protocol on the division of East Europe into German and Soviet spheres of influence.

An anti-war protest letter in January 1980 could be said to be the first joint Baltic peace venture. Triggered by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, this letter was signed by 19 to 44 people (depending on the sources) in Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia. Like the US protests against the Vietnam war, it was aimed only at a specific conflict which was drawing local boys to Asian lands far from home. But it probably set many of the protesters pondering over the broader war and peace issues. Within a few months several signatories were arrested, including Mart Niklus, the main Estonian promoter of Lithuanian ties. The next joint Lithuanian-Estonian letter (July 1980) had a very limited civil rights scope: release of the arrested activists. In March 1981 one of them, University of Tartu chemistry lecturer Jüri Kukk, died in prison under conditions somewhat reminiscent of Steve Biko's death in South Africa. Sentencing of people who dared to protest the first arrests continued, and the Baltic cooperation seemed shattered.

The Open Letter on the NWFZ in October 1981, therefore, represented a rather surprising rebound, the more so because the Latvians, in contrast to previous actions, now predominated numerically. In the West, one may wonder whether the shift of focus from touchy topics like Afghanistan to more neutral ones like the NWFZ (of which the Soviet government approved in principle) could have been calculated so as to continue doing something while reducing the risk of retribution. The signatories themselves most likely had no such illusions, although the Soviet authorities did not react immediately.

This overview does not discuss the various other protest activities taking place in the individual Baltic republics during the same time, such as the very active Catholic dissent

in Lithuania. The peace activists seem to have had little contact with them. The only exception seemed to be the Lithuanian Helsinki Watch Committee. However, most of its original members had meanwhile died, emigrated, or been imprisoned. Only the aged Ona Poškienė-Lukauskaitė was left to sign the NWFZ Letter two years before she died in 1983.

4. *The 1982–1983 interlude*

Thanks to the efforts of the Baltic Appeal to the United Nations (BATUN), a New York organization, the Open Letter has been made part of the official United Nations documentation on disarmament. To decide on whether the Letter has had any impact, one has to consider later developments.

The Open Letter seemed to reach the West in late January or early February 1982. By 5 February, it was broadcast back to the Baltic republics by Radio Liberty. It may be unfortunate that it was thus tied to the US media before being aired by the Scandinavian proponents of a Nordic NWFZ. However, this use by itself cannot be held against the Letter or its authors any more than a Western citizens' peace initiative can be declared a Soviet ploy just because the Soviets regard it favorably. While Western peace initiatives find their way into their own country's news media despite governmental disapproval, it's a hard fact of life that this is not the case in the USSR. Foreign broadcasts in the Baltic languages are the only media willing to discuss Baltic citizens' initiatives and able to reach the Baltic population.

In March 1982 Zbigniew Brzezinski, former national security adviser to President Carter, urged President Reagan to take new initiatives to 'reduce the level of East-West military confrontation' in Central Europe, with a possible follow-up in the form of a nuclear-free zone to include Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia (*New York Times*, 20 March 1982; Brzezinski 1982a). He returned to the topic after Brezhnev's death (Brzezinski 1982b). Brzezinski was probably aware of

the Baltic Open Letter when he made his first proposals, but there is no evidence that this is what inspired him. He expected that some disengagement in Central Europe must take place before the Nordic NWFZ can be seriously discussed. The Baltic Letter, like most other proposals for the Nordic NWFZ, viewed it as feasible independently of Central European developments (with disengagement in either sector being helpful regarding the other). In contrast to the Baltic Letter, Brzezinski also included the Kola peninsula, which in the present military constellation has a strategic importance quite different from that of the Baltic republics (or in fact Norway or Denmark).

On 4 June 1982, a 'Group for Establishing Trust Between the USSR and the USA' was formed in Moscow, with 11 and later 15 members. It apparently was the first non-governmental peace organization in the USSR. The group proposed that Moscow be made a nuclear-free zone, that the Soviet Union and the United States exchange television programs on a regular basis, and that the children of government officials in the two countries visit each other's homes. Within a week some group members were briefly detained, and the telephones they used were disconnected. A leading member, Sergei Batovrin, was detained by police in August and spent a month of punitive treatment in a psychiatric hospital (Gillette 1982a, b).

At this point the nature of the massive government-sponsored 'peace movement' in the Soviet Union has to be addressed. What distinguishes a genuine peace movement from a government creature carrying such a name is willingness to criticize one's own government's arms programs. An organization which calls for peace through concessions by the other side but fully supports their own country's 'peace through strength' program is indistinguishable from a military booster club. All evidence indicates that the official peace movement in the Soviet Union unfortunately falls into that category, and one can only hope that President Reagan

will not respond in kind, by starting to form government-sponsored peace clubs.

To what extent was the formation of the independent peace group in Moscow influenced by the Baltic peace activists? As mentioned earlier, Batovrin not only was aware of the Baltic Open Letter but saw it as the first peace action by private Soviet citizens. The proposal to make Moscow a nuclear-free zone may have been inspired by the Baltic Letter or by similar actions in various Western cities. While the Baltic signatories were more numerous than the Moscow group members, they never formally declared themselves an 'organization'. It is likely that the Baltic example had some effect on the Moscow action, just as the Nordic discussion of the NWFZ had on the Baltic action.

In October 1982 the Estonian activists produced another Open Letter, this time addressed to the 'Citizens of the Republic of Finland', asking them not to participate in the construction of a dinosaurian harbor near Tallinn. The new harbor is questionable both from ecological and economical viewpoints, and the main motive may be to enable more Russian colonists to settle in Estonia. It is not clear whether this Letter was the last straw for Soviet authorities or whether they followed a pre-established slow plan. In March 1983 extensive home searches were carried out, and in April one Latvian (Ints Cālītis) and 3 Estonians (Heiki Ahonen, Lagle Parek, and Arvo Pesti) were arrested and subsequently sentenced to 5 or 6 years prison plus several years of banishment in most cases. Another Estonian, Enn Tarto, was arrested in September.

At least in the case of Enn Tarto, sentenced on 18 April 1984, the indictment explicitly listed the Open Letter on the NWFZ as one of the most incriminating pieces of evidence. Prosecutor Adolf Kessler considered this Letter to be among the three especially anti-Soviet items among the many that Tarto had signed. (The others were the August 1979 Appeal to abrogate the 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and the 1982

'Open Letter to Citizens of the Republic of Finland'.) Enn Tarto was convicted on the basis of the Estonian SSR Criminal Code Par. 68-2 (anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda) and sentenced to 10 years prison plus 5 year banishment.⁶

Meanwhile, in spring 1983, Yuri Andropov on several occasions repeated Brezhnev's offer which had triggered the Baltic Open Letter.⁷ Like Brezhnev, Andropov implied that no Soviet territory would be included in the NWFZ, but that some 'measures, and substantial ones at that', could be taken in Soviet areas adjacent to the NWFZ. By this time, four of the signers of the Baltic Open Letter had already been arrested.

Soon after, US President Ronald Reagan used a reception for Baltic Americans to comment on Soviet occupation of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania, stressing that the United States does not legally recognize the Soviet annexation of these states. He then proceeded to what could be the first mention of the Nordic NWFZ by a US president:

It seems ironic that those responsible for the repression I've been describing are now proposing what they call 'an atom-free Baltic', 'a Nordic nuclear-free zone', especially since unidentified submarines have repeatedly violated the territorial waters of Norway and neutral Sweden. This kind of conduct doesn't lend itself to a spirit of trust. As a matter of fact, the curious thing is, if you really stop to think about it, their description of a nuclear-free zone is that there won't be nuclear weapons in that zone. The kind of nuclear-free zones we want in the world are the zones where nuclear weapons will not be landing and exploding (Reagan 1983).

Reagan's last sentence quoted is comparable in quality to Andropov's 'and substantial ones at that'. The attempt at ridicule flew in the face of not only Andropov but also of Nordic NWFZ proponents in Scandinavia and Baltic dissidents wasting away at that time in Soviet prisons. The odd thing is that the general context of the event at which Reagan spoke did not oblige him to take a stand on the Nordic NWFZ. The insult to the Baltic dissidents looked gratuitous.

A chat with a member of Reagan's staff indicated that they were not aware of the Baltic Open Letter and that the bit on the NWFZ was inserted into Reagan's remarks at the request of an American Baltic group with ties to the Republican Party. This Baltic exile group either was uninformed to the point of lacking awareness of a major and well-publicized joint document of the dissidents of the three Baltic republics or they were bafflingly contemptuous of those courageous people and their ideas.

5. Estonian December 1983 Letter to the Stockholm Conference

Half a year later another letter touching on the Nordic NWFZ was received from Estonia, with the lengthy title 'To the Participants of the Conference on Disarmament and Confidence-Building Measures in Europe, Starting in January 1984 in Stockholm, and to the Peace Supporters Organizations in the Countries Around the Baltic.' Dated on Christmas Eve 1983, the letter was signed by the 'Estonian Peace Supporters Rally "Neutral and Nuclear-Free Baltic Countries"'. In view of the arrest of four of the Estonian signers of the 1981 Open Letter the anonymity of the 1983 letter was understandable. The Latvian and Lithuanian ties seemed to be interrupted.

The lengthy text mainly reviewed Estonian-Soviet relations from 1918 to the Soviet annexation of Estonia in 1940. It further described the Soviet military installations in the Baltic republics. 'In addition, nearly 15% of the Estonian territory has been declared a border zone which one can enter only with special permits and where the rights of the civilian population in the coastal zone are severely restricted.' The letter noted that the Soviet nuclear submarine base in Paldiski (northern Estonia) is certain to be hit by nuclear missiles in case of a war, with the fallout killing also a large fraction of population in southern Finland. However, it fully put the blame for such potential calamity on the Soviet armed presence, failing even to mention by name the country whose

missiles are targeted against Estonia. (The US nuclear targeting of the Baltic republics is especially striking when one recalls that the United States does not legally recognize the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states.)

The Estonian Peace Supporters said that Soviet youth is one of the most militarized in the world, an assessment for which they may lack adequate comparison opportunities outside the USSR. However, there is no reason to doubt their direct knowledge of the Soviet internal scene, such as in the following detail: 'In high schools even girls must be able to disassemble a gun and to fire it, and acquire basic skills in combat tactics'. The letter contrasted the freedom of protest by Western peace movements with the measures taken by Soviet authorities against the independent domestic peace movement:

The only self-expression allowed to Soviet citizens in connection with international peace and security is the opportunity to pay one's rubles to the 'peace fund' (upon command, with no refusal tolerated) or to warm a chair at some of the official peace events inserted in the gaps between the increasingly frequent military refresher courses, air defense drills, first aid training, and propaganda sessions hitting out at Reagan the 'warmonger'. Even privately initiated quest for peace is crushed literally in the embryonic stage. (When a few years ago a working man joined the October parade with a hand-made sign 'NATO – NO, UNO – YES', this was considered so threatening to the state that the sign was trampled to pieces and the man was sentenced to several days in jail for 'hooliganism').⁸

Once again, the authors' knowledge of the Soviet scene is direct, while comparison material with the West is indirect and leads to some idealization of the other side. The letter tacitly accepted the deployment of Pershing 2 and cruise missiles on the NATO side, and it even added some criticism of Western peace activists opposing such moves. One senses some symmetry between the authors and those Western peace activists who concentrate on opposing their own side's intermediate-range missiles to the point of forgetting about the ones on the other side.

In this mixed context, the Nordic NWFZ belittled by Reagan was given support:

When the Nordic countries brought forth the idea of turning Northern Europe into a nuclear-free zone, this idea met a sympathetic reaction among the natives of the Baltic countries: yes, the Scandinavian countries are nuclear-free but the Baltic provinces are not. ...For us it is disgusting and appalling to think that a situation similar to that of 1939–40 could repeat itself, and the territory of the Baltic countries could be used as a basis for air attacks and landing operations aimed at the Scandinavian states. Yet even now the bases in Estonia are among the starting points for Soviet submarines which undertake ominous raids into the coastal waters of Sweden and Norway.⁹

The Letter wondered why the Western peace supporters are not more concerned about the Soviet military build-up in the Kola Peninsula and the Baltic countries. It described various civil rights issues, and listed the prison sentences meted out to four Estonian signers of the 1981 Open Letter on the NWFZ. It concluded with an appeal that the Stockholm conference do the following:

- declare adherence to human rights a prerequisite for trust and security among nations;
- demand release of Baltic human rights activists from prison;
- 'undertake specific measures to create a nuclear-free zone in northern Europe, to include the three Baltic states'; and
- accept a January 1983 recommendation by the European Parliament that the Helsinki follow-up conferences raise the issue of decolonization in the Baltic states.¹⁰

In sum, the demand for Baltic inclusion in the NWFZ was made in a context of much deeper changes in the status quo, which rendered the memo pretty much untouchable and undiscussable by most Scandinavian supporters of the NWFZ idea. Compared to the 1981 Open Letter on the NWFZ, the 1983 letter represented a regression from sober single-issue effort to a more emotional broad range of grievances. This is not to

deny the courage and sincerity of the authors nor the legitimacy of their concerns. But the tactics had become less sophisticated. Just at the moment when some of the Estonian civil rights workers were almost learning to focus on one semi-realizable idea at a time, they were arrested, throwing the movement back to diffuse cover-all declarations common to Soviet official and samizdat styles.

6. Beyond 1984

As of late 1985, no further Baltic declarations have been received which would involve an element of citizens-initiative peace movement.¹¹ The related civil rights movement seems to be completely crushed in Latvia and Estonia by the arrests and long prison sentences meted out from 1981 to 1984. In Lithuania the civil rights movement continues strong, especially regarding issues of freedom of religion, as witnessed by the continuing publication of such underground periodicals as *The Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*. However, the small Lithuanian movement for international peace still seems not to be part of the mainstream of the Lithuanian civil rights movement. The *Chronicle* has not mentioned the Open Letter on the NWFZ, and none of the signers of this letter could be found in the *Chronicle* index. The only civil rights group with whom the peace activists seemed to have any contacts was the Lithuanian Helsinki Watch Committee. Given the relatively recent date of the Open Letter and the slow and difficult exchange of ideas in the USSR, new ties still may emerge between peace groups and the religion-oriented ones.

The civil rights movement in Latvia and Estonia can also reappear, as it did after several lulls of many years in the 1970s. If so, the concern for international peace and, in particular, for the Nordic NWFZ, is likely to be a component, because the entire Eastern Europe is being increasingly sensitized in this respect. The Moscow 1982 peace group, which possibly was inspired by the Baltic action, has faded. But new citizens' peace init-

iatives in the Warsaw Pact region keep arising. In May 1985, 40 East German peace activists signed an 'Initiative for nonalignment in Europe' delivered to the US embassy in East Berlin. They urged Washington to work for withdrawal of all Soviet, US, British, and French troops from the two German states (*Los Angeles Times*, 7 May 1985, p. 2). Adjusting for the geographical location, the quest of the 38 Baltic peace activists for a widened Nordic NWFZ was very much in the same spirit.

NOTES

1. On 23 August 1939 Soviet and German foreign affairs ministers Molotov and Ribbentrop signed a public non-aggression pact and a secret 'additional protocol' (see text in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, ser. D, vol. VIII, U.S. Department of State, 1954, p. 166, based on captured Nazi archives) which divided East Europe into German and Soviet spheres of influence. This enabled the USSR to annex the independent Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania which thus became the only members of the prewar League of Nations not seated in the United Nations. For an overview of contemporary Baltic history, see Misiunas & Taagepera (1983).
2. Translated from Estonian by the Relief Centre for Estonian Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR, Box 34018, 10026 Stockholm. This Centre, directed by Mr. Ants Kippar, is a major clearing house for civil rights documents from Estonia.
3. The legal status of the Baltic republics is still subject to international dispute because of the way the USSR annexed the independent Baltic states in 1940. Many nations, including the United States, do not recognize the annexation. For this very reason the USSR would be especially reluctant to agree to anything (such as inclusion in the Nordic NWFZ) that would set the Baltic republics apart from the rest of the USSR. Including Kaliningrad and Leningrad areas would help to blur the distinction, from the Soviet viewpoint.
4. As reported in 'Rahu eest võitlejad,' *Side* No. 4 (December 1983), p. 2 (Stockholm: Estonian Social Democratic Party Section Abroad).
5. For details and sources regarding this section, see Misiunas & Taagepera (1983) and Taagepera (1984).
6. *Teataja* (Estonian-language bimonthly, Stockholm), 12 May 1984, based on press releases by the Relief Centre for the Estonian POCs (see Note 2).
7. As reported in Soviet Estonia's main daily *Rahva Hääl*, 11 May and 7 June 1983.

8. Translated from the full Estonian version in *Teataja*, 4 February 1984, 3–5.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. A 24 December 1984 Open Letter was received in Stockholm a year later (*Vaba Eestlane*, 24 December 1985, p. 3). Addressed to the Secretary General of the United Nations and to the governments of the states possessing nuclear weapons, it was signed by six Estonians who also had signed the 1981 NWFZ letter (Ülle Einasto, Karin and Urmas Inno, Eve Pärnaste, Endel Ratas, and Erik Udam), by the wife of a Latvian signer of 1981 who had meanwhile received a 6-year prison sentence (Inara Serdane, wife of Ints Cālītis), and by an Estonian dissenter freshly returning from 4 years of prison and internal exile (Viktor Niiitsoo). The letter proposed the following: complete nuclear disarmament under international control; withdrawal of all military units in foreign territories (except UN troops); abolition of slurs regarding other countries in state-controlled press worldwide; amnesty for political prisoners and legalization of non-violent opposition press in all ex-nuclear countries; abolition of radio jamming and emigration restrictions; and limitations on arms sales to less developed countries. 'In our view, no major state's political and social order is in such a weak condition that they should worry about their survival in case of a free competition of ideas.' Also in late 1985, a new Lithuanian non-state-approved newsletter (*Juventus Academica*, No. 2, published later than 14 February 1985) was reported to urge young conscripts to refuse to take the military oath of allegiance, as a gesture of conscientious objection to the Soviet war in Afghanistan (Lithuanian Information Center, Brooklyn, NY, press release of 24 September 1985): 'For five years, our colleagues have been dying in Afghanistan for nothing, ostensibly doing their so-called 'international duty'..., killing innocent citizens of a sovereign nation, burning their villages and towns...'. The newsletter gave specifics of atrocities (four Afghan women flung out of a helicopter above Kabul in fall 1984),

and denounced not only the regime but also the direct perpetrators who forfeit 'their conscience and honor... and unthinkingly do what they are told by their superior officers.'

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