

# FIVE STRUGGLING REPUBLICS

## Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania Azerbaidjan and Georgia and Their Needs.

**R**ECOGNITION and help for the Russian Republics of Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Azerbaidjan, and Georgia was urged recently before the House Committee on Ways and Means by Walter M. Chandler, one-time Representative from the State of New York. Mr. Chandler has just come back from a trip through the Russian territory he is now representing. He sees in them the strongest bulwark against Bolshevism.

"The Republics of Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Azerbaidjan, and Georgia are distinct nationalities and separate States from the Poles and Poland," he said, "and each and every one of them has been a mighty bulwark, an immovable barrier against Bolshevism for more than two long years.

"During the Summer of 1919, I traveled extensively in the Baltic countries, by boat, train, and automobile, and studied closely the economic, industrial, agricultural, military, and political conditions existing there. I was deeply impressed by what I saw and heard. I rode along hundreds of miles of Esthonian, Lettish, and Lithuanian battle lines. I was astonished at their system of barbed-wire defenses which seemed to me much superior to those that I had seen on the battlefields of France. They looked to me to be insurmountable barriers, impregnable bulwarks with many thousands of brave Esthonian, Lettish, and Lithuanian warriors behind them."

Mr. Chandler went on to tell why he thought these five Russian republics are entitled to full rights of self-determination.

"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 could claim this right of self-determination, provided a proper educational basis of citizenship could be shown, and provided further that many years of oppression had been exercised by the dominating power over the smaller power seeking separation and claiming rights of self-determination and independence.

"Now, it is easily demonstrable that all these conditions and characteristics exist in the history of the Baltic Republics of Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as in the history of the Caucasian Republics of Azerbaidjan and Georgia, in their claims to rights of self-determination.

"In the first place, the territory of each is large enough. Esthonia, the smallest of all these States, is larger than Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Switz-

erland, Portugal, Costa Rica or Honduras. The population of each is larger than that of many small countries of the world now recognized as independent.

### Racial and Religious Bars.

"In the second place, all the earmarks, all the characteristics of race, language, and religion are present in the cases of Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Azerbaidjan, and Georgia in their claims to rights of self-determination.

"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.

"The population of Azerbaidjan is composed of Turks and Tatars, while their religion is Mohammedan, being radically different from the Slavic blood and Orthodox Greek Catholic religion of the Russians.

"The people of Georgia are, like the Russians, Greek Catholics, but are radically different in blood, language, history, and civilization.

"Finally, the educational basis of citizenship is marked in the case of each of the Baltic and Caucasian States. The Esthonians and Letts lead with a percentage of literacy that exceeds 90 per cent., while the populations of Lithuania, Azerbaidjan, and Georgia do not fall far below this.

"On the other hand, the illiteracy of Russia is, by conservative estimate, 70 per cent., and is placed by many writers higher than that. This diversity of educational status between Russia, on the one hand, and Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Azerbaidjan, and Georgia, on the other, is radical and phenomenal. Another condition of Mr. Wilson's theory of self-determination is thus completely fulfilled.

"As to the fourth and last element of the doctrine of self-determination, the element of oppression, this is a matter of common history and requires no discussion. During a thousand years Russia has oppressed, in a most barbaric manner at times, all peoples within her borders, including her own people. She has most ferociously persecuted and oppressed any nation within her borders who asserted vigorous national life or made claims to rights of self-determination and independence.

"It will thus be seen that the terri-

tory of each of the Baltic and Caucasian republics is large enough, that the population is adequate, that the earmarks of nationality under Mr. Wilson's definition of self-determination are present, that the educational status of the people of Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Azerbaidjan, and Georgia is superior to that of Russia, and that centuries of cruel oppression have been visited by Russia upon each and all of them. These elements and considerations make a complete case for the little republics in their claims to rights of self-determination and independence.

### Their Plea for Independence.

"Much might be said in favor of the agricultural, industrial, and commercial life of all the Baltic and Caucasian States to justify the contention that there is sufficient economic basis for separate national life. Their resources, together with the possibilities of the commercial ports of Libau, Riga, Memel, Reval, Baku, and Batoum, are strongly suggestive of their ability to be self-sustaining.

"Esthonia, the smallest and poorest of the Baltic republics, paid 50,000,000 rubles into the Russian treasury in 1913. 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.

"These little States have met every possible objection to their claims to independence. They agree to pay their proportionate share of the Russian pre-war debt, to allow the Allies or the League of Nations to determine the amount, and to pledge their national resources and future revenues for the payment.

"They agree to keep Reval, Memel, Libau, Riga, Baku, and Batoum open to Russia as Danzig is kept open to the Poles and Flume to the Jugoslavs, under the control and enforcement of a league or alliance of nations.

"They agree that port duties and customs shall be uniform and equitable, with just and uniform regulations concerning railway transportation across their territories in order that Russia may be in no way crippled in her economic and commercial life by the independence of Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Azerbaidjan and Georgia."

Secretary Glass and Mr. Hoover have already made recommendations that a loan of \$150,000,000 for food relief be made to these five republics.