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THE HOUSE BALTIC CAUCUS: A SHORT HISTORY

By Angele Nelsas

Since its founding in 1998, the Baltic Caucus has become a very important institution in all aspects of cooperation between the U.S. Congress and the Baltic nations. This relationship was enshrined in the historical U.S. Baltic Charter of Cooperation signed in January of 1998 by the President of the United States, and the Presidents of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The Baltic Caucus plays a vital and key role in implementing this agreement. Without the Congressional interest and input, the Charter might have turned out to just remain a piece of paper that the Administration could ignore. Since its' founding, The Baltic Caucus has raised visibility for US support for the Baltic countries and their integration into the free and democratic family of nations, and has established good working relationships with the Parliaments of the Baltic States.

After 20 years of its' successful existence, it may be of interest to our readers to learn how the US Congressional Baltic Caucus came into existence. As with all new ventures, it began with a new idea. The inspiration to organize the Baltic Caucus in the US Congress came to me under most unusual circumstances. Ever since becoming active in U.S. politics and the Lithuanian-American Community in 1972, I became a volunteer advocate and lobbyist for the cause of the re-establishment of Lithuania's and Baltic States Independence from the illegal occupation by the Soviet Union.

I joined the Baltic American Freedom League (BAFL) in 1987. I flew to Washington D.C. often, representing these organizations, meeting with high U.S. government officials, the sitting Presidents, their administrations, with U.S. House and Senate Members and the media. *(continued on page 5)*



Congressman John Shimkus, House Baltic Caucus C-chair, and BAFL President Angele Nelsas, and Congr. Dennis Kucinich (Photo Courtesy of Angele Nelsas)

ESTONIA, US ADVANCE CRUCIAL THREE SEAS' INITIATIVE

Courtesy of JJ Green, WTOP

Intent on stepping out of the dilapidated ruins left behind by the USSR, countries in Central and Eastern Europe have each circled the globe for nearly 30 years looking for foreign investors to help them secure their futures. Now, they've banded together and nailed down a multibillion-dollar deal that should do it. A White House meeting last week confirmed the U.S. is all in.

On the afternoon of March 3, traffic was stopped at an intersection not far from D.C.'s Dupont Circle. One of the many diplomatic motorcades that blow through the city regularly just reached the end of its trip, lights and sirens fully engaged. The convoy stopped in front of a four-story, cream-colored building at 2131 Massachusetts Ave. Northwest: the Embassy of Estonia.

The president of Estonia exited the main vehicle as U.S. Secret Service agents assumed their eagle-eyed positions, visually sweeping the triangle-shaped block for signs of trouble. *(continued on page 6)*

U.S. LAWMAKERS INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT EASTERN EUROPE ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

Courtesy of Todd Prince, RFERL

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives on October 31 introduced a bipartisan resolution to support energy independence in Central and Eastern Europe, a day after Russia moved a step closer to completing a new gas pipeline to Germany. Representatives Marcy Kaptur (Democrat-Ohio) and Adam Kinzinger (Republican-Illinois) sponsored the resolution, which expresses U.S. support for new energy projects -- including transportation and renewable energy generation -- that enhance connectivity in the 12 countries located between the Adriatic, Black, and Baltic Seas and reduce their dependence on Russia. The 12-nation partnership is known as the Three Seas Initiative.

Eastern and Central Europe have historically been heavily dependent on Russian oil and gas, with Hungary still receiving all of its gas imports from *(continued on page 4)*

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Conrad Mazeika was elected to the BAFL Board of Directors and also to the position of President at the Annual Meeting. Conrad brings in his past 10 years of experience working in the Financial, Energy and Real Estate Industries to the Board

Photo courtesy of Conrad Mazeika

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Members, Supporters and Friends,

The Coronavirus Pandemic has changed the world. As we sit down and ponder what the world is going to be like, we as an organization are flexible toward the change. We had our last meeting as a video conference call. It was a learning curve at first but a very productive meeting. Although we have postponed our Annual Banquet for September, we're already preparing for our 40th anniversary of BAFL next year.

While you read this bulletin, realize that the Baltic States are fighting this Pandemic as well. We must remain vigilant while the Baltic States are fighting the Pandemic and be weary of potential threats to the Freedom of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

Conrad Mazeika
President

EVENTS

The **Baltic Advocacy Days** in Washington DC have been postponed due to COVID-19. We will inform you as to the new date once we have that information.

The **AABS Conference** has been postponed due to COVID-19. We will inform you as to the new date once we have that information.

CELEBRATING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF LITHUANIA'S RESTORED INDEPENDENCE

Courtesy of the Ukrainian Weekly

At a reception held at the Library of Congress on March 11 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Lithuania's restored independence, Volodymyr Yelchenko (right), Ukraine's ambassador to the United States, and Michael Sawkiw Jr. (left), executive vice-president of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, are seen with Rolandas Kriščiūnas, Lithuania's ambassador to the United States. At the event, Ambassador Kriščiūnas presented a gift to Rep. John Shimkus (R-Ill.), co-chair of the House Baltic Caucus, and Anthea M. Hartig, the director of the National Museum of American History, of a nanocopy of the U.S. Capitol building, which is 600,000 times smaller than its actual size. A nanocopy of the Statue of Freedom, the crowning feature of the Dome



Baltic American Freedom League Annual Meeting : Latvian Community Center , Los Angeles on December 7, 2019. Among the attendees were: Aivars Jerumanis, Ivars Miculs, Valdis Pavlovskis, Heino Nurmberg, Angela Nelsas, Aavo Reinfeldt, Conrad Mazeika, Talivaldis Paegle. Photo: Conrad Mazeika

of the Capitol, is 10 times smaller than a human cell. The nanocopy of the U.S. Capitol was created by Femtika, a Lithuanian company that is a spin-off from the Vilnius University Laser Research Center.



THE HEART WE LEFT BEHIND: CHILDREN OF THE 1944 ESTONIAN DIASPORA

Courtesy of ERR News

Based on the memories of children who fled Estonia in 1944, Estonian-American photographer Maria Spann's photo exhibition "The Heart We Left Behind" was opened at the Mehari Se-

quar Gallery in Washington [this week] January 15th.

Spann, a first-generation Estonian-American, said that the subject started interesting her a couple of years ago, when her grandparents died. Following their death, her mother and uncle were the only ones in the family who remembered anything about fleeing occupied Estonia, but their stories differed from those of their parents.

"My mom and uncle, who are in the exhibit — they escaped Estonia when they were 5 and 7," Spann told ETV news broadcast "Aktuaalne kaamera." "And I always heard the story from my mom about the escape, and what happened, but it was always like it was her mother's story — like an adult's point of view. So then I realized I want to find out what the children remember — as a child — of that experience. So I asked her, and it was different; it was a lot more physical. She remembered the white bread that she got when she got to Sweden. Spann took portraits of each person, siblings together, if possible, as well as an object — "something they brought with them from Estonia or something that they have kept from that time," the photographer writes on her homepage.

"To this day, my mother can't stand the smell of engine oil as she was hiding in a tool box," she describes. "My uncle has no memories of the boat journey itself, but remembers the soft white bread and hot milk they were served as they arrived in Sweden.

(continued on page 3)

US HOUSE AND SENATE CAUCUSES AND CURRENT LEGISLATION

By Ausra Tallat-Kelpsa Di Raimondo

The 116th Congress has been in session since January and several bills and resolutions have already been proposed and passed in the House and Senate that are important for US- Baltic relations, specifically with respect to commitment to defense.

Although House Caucus co-chairs Representative John Shimkus (R-IL) and Representative Adam Schiff (D-CA), and Senate co-chairs Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) remain supportive and have initiated or supported several bills and resolutions, additional support through increased membership on both caucuses is necessary. Please review the current membership list on our website and if your Representative or Senator is not on it, consider making a call to ask that s/he join.

BAFL follows all new legislation and its status as it is proposed, and strongly advocate for all legislation relevant to the Baltic region and its neighbors, keeping our constituents informed through the Baltic Bulletin, The Baltic Caucus Update Newsletter, our website, www.bafl.com, our new Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/BAFLorg/>, new Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BalticFreedom>, and our new Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/balticamericanfreedomleague>.

With respect to US legislative bodies, we also keep you updated on the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations Committees (HFAC and SFRC) activities and changes. The HFAC and SFRC websites, (foreignaffairs.house.gov), and (www.foreign.senate.gov) provide detailed information. One significant change to the SFRC, is its new leader Senator James Risch (R-ID). We will also provide new development information for the Senate NATO Observer Group (SNOG) co-chaired by Senators Thom Tillis (R-NC) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH).

We will also keep you updated on any developments at NATO, the EU, the Council of Europe, the UN, the Baltic Assembly, and all organizations directly involved with or influencing the Baltic region and its neighbors (links on our website).



H. Res. 672: THREE SEAS INITIATIVE: STATUS

H.Res. 672 - Expressing support of the Three Seas Initiative in its efforts to increase energy independence and infrastructure connectivity thereby strengthening the United States and European national security.

Sponsor: Marcy Kaptur (D-OH)

Co-sponsors: Adam Kinzinger (R-IL), William Keating (D-MA), Albio Sires (D-NJ), Greg Pence (R-IN), Lance Gooden (R-TX), Jim Costa (D-CA), Francis Rooney (R-FL), Duncan Hunter (R-CA), Andy Harris (R-MD), Randy K. Weber, Sr. (R-TX), Denney Heck (D-WA), Michael Turner (R-OH), Mie Quigley (D-IL), David Price (D-NC), Daniel Lipinski (D-IL), David Trone (D-MD), Bill Johnson (R-OH), Vincente Gonzales (D-TX), Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), Michael Guest (R-MS), David Schweikert (R-AZ), Vicky Hartzler (R-MO), Paul Cook (R-CA), Steve Cohen (D-TN), Ann M. Kuster (D-NH), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Donald Beyer (D-VA), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Tim Ryan (D-OH), James Himes (D-CT), Josh Harder (D-CA), Eric Swalwell (D-CA), Steve Chabot (R-OH), Yvette Clarke (D-NY), Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), Tom Malinowski (D-NJ), and Filemon Vela (D-TX).

ACTION: Introduced October 31, 2019 and referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

SENATOR JEANNE SHAHEEN (D-NH) HAS JOINED THE BALTIC FREEDOM CAUCUS

New Hampshire Senator Jeanne Shaheen joined the Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus on March 27 as its 14th member!

Senator Shaheen was elected to the Senate in 2008. She serves on the Foreign Relations, Appropriations, and Armed Services, and committees, and is the Ranking Member on the Subcommittee on Europe and Regional Security Cooperation. Additionally, she is the Democratic co-chair of the Senate NATO Observer Group.

On April 3 the GMF hosted NATO Engages: The Alliance at 70, which commemorated NATO's 70th anniversary. This event preceded the NATO foreign ministers' meeting on April 4. In conjunction with the Atlantic Council and Munich Security Conference, GMF hosted Senators Chris Murphy (D-CT) and Jean Shaheen (D-NH) and Representatives Mike Turner (R-OH) and Gerry Conolly (D-VA) as featured speakers.

THE HOUSE BALTIC AND THE SENATE BALTIC FREEDOM CAUCUSES

The history of and the constituent list for both caucuses can be found on the insert included in this Baltic Bulletin.

ESTONIA, US ADVANCE...*(continued from page 1)*

Once inside, President Kersti Kaljulaid, the first female leader of Estonia and only the fourth since it became an independent nation, and her staff set up a temporary command post in a large dining room that doubled as a conference room. Ambassador Jonathan Vsevirov, one of Estonia's rising political stars, made sure all was flowing smoothly. They were preparing for her next stop: a critical meeting at the White House.

On the agenda was the Three Seas Initiative (3SI). The project, launched in 2015, is designed to facilitate interconnectivity through digitalization, energy and infrastructure projects in Central and Eastern Europe.

"The Three Seas initiative is a practical approach to fill the void in the countries that were formerly behind the Iron Curtain and are now a part of the European Union," said Kaljulaid in an exclusive interview with WTOP. Kaljulaid, 50, Estonia's youngest-ever head of state, spoke with a smooth, assured cadence and demonstrated a commanding ability to verbally paint vivid pictures of critical issues. "If for 50 years," Kaljulaid said, "nothing gets invested, then it doesn't look like it should. Three Seas is trying to build smart connectivity between these countries."

The 'geopolitical' importance to the US. The project is named after the three seas that border a dozen countries' region: the Baltic, Black, and Adriatic seas. The countries involved include Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Thousands of miles away, the U.S. is playing a critical role. "I believe at the Munich Security Conference, it was broadcast the loudest possible how the U.S. is involved in the Three Seas Initiative. Secretary (Mike) Pompeo promised that the U.S. would invest up to \$1 billion, provided that the Three Seas countries themselves also invested into the fund," Kaljulaid said. She met with national security adviser Robert O'Brien to discuss the matter. WTOP asked the National Security Council to characterize the meeting.

A senior administration official said, "Our commitment of \$1 billion to the Three Seas Initiative was a powerful demonstration of the United States' investment in strengthening Central Europe's energy security and economic growth."

Kaljulaid made it clear that the added stability 3SI delivers is not just important to the region. "It is of geopolitical interest to the United States to make sure that these (Three Seas) countries are really feeling that they do belong to Europe," she said.

The senior U.S. administration official — pointing to a slate of meetings and appearances that Kaljulaid participated in that were designed to emphasize the importance of the Three Seas Initiative — said, "This past week's meetings with President Kaljulaid served to further reinforce the U.S. support for this important effort ahead of the Summit in Tallinn this summer." By time the summit opens in June, it's hoped that \$3 billion to \$5 billion will have been raised. The money for the project is not only coming from foreign investors.

"We want all Three Seas countries, as many as possible, either committed or invested," Kaljulaid said. That element of the project is critical, because as Kaljulaid pointed out, many of the 3SI countries are connected to the West, "but not among ourselves."

Mutual assistance. During her White House visit, she also met separately with senior advisers Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump about other matters. Estonian officials don't just visit the U.S. to seek assistance. The small country, the 132nd-largest country on the planet, is the world's most technologically advanced nation. It's also America's most critical ally in Eastern Europe, and the U.S. state of Maryland's "state partner."

The U.S. and Estonia share a rich, cultural connection. From long-standing historical links to modern strategic military and geopolitical bonds, the two countries' futures are intertwined. Estonia was the victim of a vicious Russian cyberattack in 2007. Since then, Estonia has strategically worked its way from a Baltic pawn recovering from the Cold War to a global, digital powerhouse. It has plotted a bright economic future, insulated itself from Russia's aggression and pioneered security measures that many nations, including the U.S., have benefited from.

Recognizing that strength often comes in numbers, Kaljulaid championed NATO for recognizing Russia's revival of its aggressive tactics in the region and preparing for an "unpredictable Russia." Aware of the turmoil in U.S. politics, Kaljulaid said that Russia "paradoxically is also very predictable," especially as the U.S. prepares for the 2020 election.

"To try to disrupt democratic processes is one of the approaches that Russia has been taking.

The U.S. has said it. France has said it. We have absolutely no reason to not suspect that it will happen in upcoming elections," Kaljulaid said.

LITHUANIAN NAVY PLANS TO ACQUIRE 3RD EX-ROYALNAVY HUNT CLASS MCM VESSEL

Courtesy of Navy Recognition

The Lithuanian Navy is looking to expand its fleet of Skalvis-class Mine Counter Measures (MCM) vessels with the procurement of a third hull to be overhauled and upgraded. It will probably be the HMS Quorn, which patrolled the seas as part of the Royal Navy fleet of Hunt Class Mine Countermeasures Vessels (MCMVs) until 2017.

HMS Quorn, which was decommissioned in December 2017, is being transferred under a sales package that will include the regeneration and upgrade of the vessel. The United Kingdom's Defence Equipment Sales Authority (DESA), part of the MoD's Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) organisation, will contract for the regeneration and upgrade on behalf of the Lithuanian Defence Materiel Agency. The package is estimated to be worth between GBP40-50 million (USD50.4-63.3 million). HMS Quorn is the third MCMV DESA has sold to Lithuania, following in the wake of HMS Dulverton and HMS Cottesmore in 2008. They became operational as the 'Skalvis' class in 2011.

The sale will bring in £1m and there will be income from a levy following the sale of the sonar system on HMS Quorn. The £750,000 cost of disposing of the ship has been avoided.

Lithuania wants the vessel to deliver the same capability as the Skalvis class, which it will operate alongside, meaning a significant upgrade programme will be required.

There will be a competition launched for the contract, which could lead to two years of work for a company which has prior experience of the Hunt Class; most likely a British firm. It is hoped the vessel will be operational for Lithuania in 2023.

Thanks to its weapons and sensor systems, the Hunt-class can combine both mine warfare and maritime patrol missions.

FIGHTING INFECTION AND MALIGN INFLUENCE: THE BALTIC RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

By Réka Szemerényi, CEPA

Past week's CEPA webinar with the Baltic ambassadors to the United States highlighted the wider impact of the coronavirus pandemic on regional cooperation, the EU, and transatlantic security. The participants were Jonatan Vsevirov (Estonia), Māris Selga (Latvia) and Rolandas Kriščiūnas (Lithuania). The following are the highlights of that conversation, condensed and paraphrased for clarity.

The crisis is common. The virus does not discriminate between countries or recognize national borders. Hence the more coordinated our response, the more effective it will be.

But effectiveness is not the only criteria. Fundamental values matter too — and more. The challenge is all but unimaginable. However, that does not mean sacrificing our lifestyle, values, freedoms, and constitutional order. Indeed, we should value these more — and strengthen them. Democracies do work more slowly than dictatorships; our national and international decision-making has been slower than our citizens might like. But we come out of crises stronger than we go into them. We should see the crisis like an exercise: it tests our institutions, procedures, and decision-making, reveals shortcomings, and helps us learn to do better. The gains we make in cohesion, connectivity, and resilience through our responses will be of lasting benefit. This pandemic may be the first global crisis of its kind, but it will not be the last. Nor should we shift our national security priorities—the pressure of new problems does not mean that old ones vanished.

We must acknowledge that the immediate impact has in some cases been negative. The temporary closure of the Polish border reminded the Baltic states of the importance of connectivity and mobility. There are important lessons to learn from the mistakes committed, but it is also important to remember that the established regional communication channels remained functional and were used effectively. Ties between the Lithuanian and Polish authorities, for example, were never broken. Ministers of Foreign Affairs worked together to find an efficient solution to the problem of Baltic citizens stranded in Germany. The unfortunate initial reactions also highlighted how special and valuable is the relationship between the three Baltic

states. This realization will serve us well in future crises. Efforts such as the Three Seas Initiative (TSI) to enhance infrastructure and other links in the smaller and larger neighborhood have gained added importance.

The European Union and NATO should be more effective in communicating what they do to support our countries. But criticism overlooks the essential positive steps that the EU, for example, has taken. The External Action Service has proven particularly active and helpful in the repatriation of EU citizens, especially for the smaller EU countries, from remote parts of the world. This was very well received in the Baltic countries.

The crisis has highlighted the dangers of dis- and misinformation — something that the Baltic states are no strangers to. We saw this before this crisis, we are seeing it during this crisis, and we will certainly see it after the crisis. Exaggerated descriptions of Russian and Chinese help, and overly critical characterizations of national, EU, and NATO responses, are ammunition in this information war. We have seen attempts to portray NATO soldiers as carriers of the virus, and to claim that NATO military exercises have a higher priority than public health. Confident responses from the authorities and a strong civil society are key in responding to attempts to distract the public and distort its vision.

We should remember that we face efforts to undermine the West's unity and the cohesion of our institutions, and to sow the seeds of mistrust between our countries, using all possible means, including propaganda. And we have a message to those spreading the misinformation. Do not underestimate our societies, the cohesion of our people, of our alliance, of our institutions in the EU, and most importantly, the ability of our public to understand and recognize propaganda. Our countries know who our friends are, and this cannot be changed by spreading misinformation. Those who underestimate the power of our values and the strength of our societies are making a huge mistake.

THE HEART WE LEFT BEHIND...

(continued from page 2)

This is what I am most interested in when pursuing this project — what memories do these 'children' have of the escape?"

Thus far, Spann has photographed 35 people, but she is hoping to find at least 100 Estonian refugees worldwide. The hope is for these memo-

ries and photos to be turned into a book, and for the photos and stories to be exhibited in Estonia as well.



THE 16th LITHUANIAN WORLD FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL POSTPONED

The 16th Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival scheduled in Philadelphia, PA during the July 4, 2020 weekend has been postponed until 2021. Featuring over 2,000 dancers from all over the world, visited by 10,000+, the three day festival, complete with exhibits, associated cultural and social events, takes place every four years: <https://www.sokiusvente2020.org/welcome>



U.S. LAWMAKERS INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN RESOLUTION ...

(Continued from page 1)
 Kremlin-controlled Gazprom. The region lacks energy infrastructure running along north-south routes that could help it diversify its energy sources, including imports from the United States.

“Russia has long used energy as a weapon to coerce and manipulate our European allies,” Kinzinger said in a statement introducing the resolution. “As American energy production continues to rise, we have an opportunity to support our allies in Central and Eastern Europe with an alternative.”

U.S. oil and gas production has surged over the past decade amid the shale revolution, enabling the country to end a ban on exports. Central and Eastern Europe require additional terminals and pipelines in order to increase imports of U.S. liquefied natural gas. The resolution reaffirms U.S. financial support for projects that advance U.S. economic or foreign policy interests.

The resolution comes a day after Denmark gave approval to Russia to lay a gas export pipeline through its waters, the last regulatory hurdle to the project's completion. The Nord Stream 2 pipeline will carry 55 billion cubic meters of gas annually to Germany, doubling the country's imports of Russia gas. Gazprom expects to complete the project -- which is already more than 80 percent built -- in the next few months.

Washington has criticized the Nord Stream 2 project, saying it will increase Europe's dependency on Russian energy. The House and Senate are considering bills that would sanction the companies helping to build the pipeline.

“Now that Danish authorities have approved the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, we must now act swiftly to boost the energy security of our European allies by passing this critical legislation as well as sanctioning the pipeline,” Kaptur said in the statement.

No date has been set for a House vote on the resolution. House resolutions are not binding law but rather express the collective sentiment of the House on a particular issue, person, or event. The countries have since pledged to boost their military spending, counting on NATO allies to provide military assistance should Russia take any action.

UNTIL SOMETHING MOVES: Reinforcing the Baltic Region in Crisis and War

Courtesy CEPA

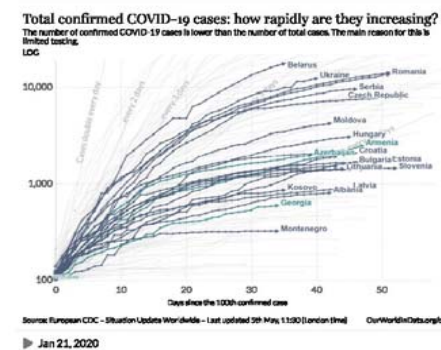
The Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) and the International Center for Defence and Security (ICDS) have partnered in a groundbreaking new report, “Until Something Moves: Reinforcing the Baltic Region in Crisis and War.” Authors LTG (Ret.) Ben Hodges, Tony Lawrence, and COL (Ret.) Ray Wojcik contend that in order to establish effective deterrence, Western allies need to rethink the existing post-Cold War models for military and civilian logistics and infrastructure, and eliminate the legal and procedural obstacles to military mobility in Europe. The report is available here: <https://www.cepa.org/untill-something-moves>

WHO'S TESTING WHO? BALTIC STATES LEAD THE WAY

Courtesy of Emerging Europe

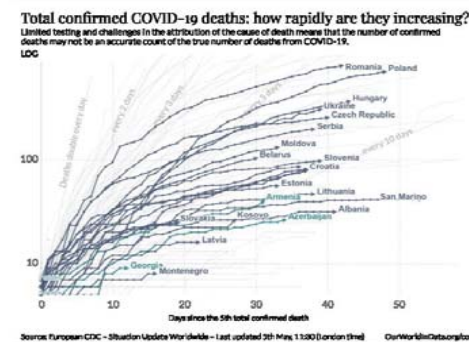
With some notable exceptions, curves are beginning to flatten across emerging Europe, both in terms of the number of people infected with Covid-19 and the number of deaths. Not one country however can yet claim to be on a descendant trend. The worst, in some places, is yet to come.

Romania has the highest number of deaths in the region, at 628, and Poland the highest number of confirmed cases, at 11,761. However, the number of infections in Belarus - whose authorities have to all intents and purposes ignored the threat of coronavirus - is on a relatively steep trend and the country is likely to have the region's highest number of confirmed cases by April 28 or 29.



Looking at these charts, however, it is clear that for those countries in the region which have been worst affected by Covid-19 (notably Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Ukraine) the peak number of either deaths or infections has almost certainly not yet been reached.

Why then, have Czechia and Poland begun to ease confinement restrictions? (Serbia, on May 4, and Romania, on May 15 will also ease restrictions). The World Health Organisation (WHO) has for some weeks urged countries not to lift measures put in place to slow the spread of the coronavirus too early. Neil Ferguson, an epidemiologist with Imperial College London and adviser to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, has said on a number of occasions that rules should only be relaxed when mass testing has been put in place. In emerging Europe, the number of tests being carried out is almost universally low (the exceptions are Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, where the rate of tests per one million people is higher than Germany). As such, the three Baltic States (as



well as Slovenia and Czechia) probably have the most accurate coronavirus data in the region, which makes Latvia's performance (fewer than 1,000 cases and just 13 deaths) remarkable. What's more, Latvia has kept many shops and other businesses open as part of a balance struck between keeping people healthy and doing the least amount of damage possible to the economy.

In Latvia, shopping centres are only closed at weekends, and businesses such as garden centres, construction shops and opticians have remained open. The guiding principles of Latvia's approach have been “testing, identifying, isolating”, says its prime minister Krisjanis Karins. Latvia has now tested more than two per cent of the population, with each positive case starting a domino effect of contact tracing in order to ensure that those who may be infected self-isolate for 14 days.

Other countries in emerging Europe will need to ramp up testing to Baltic levels if they are to avoid new spikes in cases once lockdown restrictions are lifted.

THE HOUSE BALTIC CAUCUS...

(continued from page 1)

In 1997 during one of these many trips, I was in the Congress lounge before departing for Los Angeles and was approached by three African American women, who asked me what I was doing in Washington since I didn't look like a typical lobbyist. I told them that I was visiting Congressmen and asking them to sign a resolution in support of my homeland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. They offered to help me by writing down the resolution number so that they could take it to the Black Caucus since that is where they were going. They also told me that many of the members of Congress and the Black Caucus would gladly sign it. At this recommendation, the idea struck me that if there was a Black Caucus, and there were many other caucuses, why couldn't there be a Lithuanian Caucus?

Flying home that night I couldn't sleep; I was continually thinking about implementing this idea. I went down to my Representative's Congressman Ed Royce's office, and informed him that I wanted to start a Lithuanian Caucus in the House of Representatives, and asked him to be the Chairman. I was taken aback when he initially laughed at my idea, but then he became serious - he thought it a great idea, but a bad name. The name had to be the Baltic Caucus, and would represent the entire Baltic region and not just one country, since the issues affecting all three countries were similar. Having three different caucuses would make it harder to find enough members for each. He advised me how to organize it: that the first step would be to get House Approval for the Baltic Caucus, and to ensure that the Caucus would be bi-partisan. It was imperative to have the support of a non-profit organization to support my effort and then, get the approval of the House Majority Leader, the Representative from Texas, Dick Armey. Congressman Ed Royce (who later became Chairman of House Foreign Relations Committee), also suggested that I find a Congressman of Baltic descent to be one of the two Co-Chairmen (one from each party). Ed promised to be the first to join as a member and to help me in every way he could, especially by inviting more of his colleagues in the House to join this new Caucus.

I introduced my idea to the Directors of BAFL. They were at first skeptical, but then agreed to support the effort and left it more or less to do the initial undertaking and the organizing associat-

ed with it. Later, all of my colleagues joined in the effort and became very committed to achieve our objective and we worked hard to this day by reaching out to Congressmen on issues of importance to the Baltic States and our Baltic communities to sign their Representatives as members of the Baltic Caucus. It is an ongoing process every time new members are elected! To have a strong Baltic Caucus, we need more constituents to call their Representatives and urge them to join by calling one of the Co-Chairmen.

Scheduling a meeting with the Majority Leader proved difficult. With the help of my good friend, Congressman Chris Cox, I was able to meet with the Majority Leader and receive his approval to move forward with the organization. I reassured the leader that BAFL was a non-partisan and non-profit organization. Finding two Congressmen willing to undertake the Chairmanship was the next challenge. Luckily, I remembered meeting a young Congressman from Illinois, John Shimkus, whose grandfather was an immigrant from Lithuania. It took some time and effort to convince him to take on this extra task, but he finally agreed, making me promise that I would be the coordinator between this new caucus, BAFL, and the Baltic communities. I was, by then, the Executive Director of BAFL, and, as such, I also agreed to engage the Balts in reaching out to their Representatives to join the Caucus. Congressman Shimkus (Rep, IL) selected Dennis Kucinich (D- OH) as the Co-Chairman of the Caucus. After much hard work and many trips to Washington to coordinate its' development in late 1998, with Congr. Shimkus and his Chief of Staff, Craig Roberts, we had 75 U.S. Congressmen as members of the Baltic Caucus.

Our continuing efforts bore fruit. The Baltic Caucus, since its' founding more than 20 years ago with a chance meeting, a new idea, and a good recommendation, took tremendous effort to form. This institution became the most important body in the U.S. government to foster better understanding and cooperation in the Baltic cause for independence from the Soviet Union, and with championing the Baltic countries in becoming a strong economic and democratic force rejoining Europe and becoming members of NATO. In a strong and united voice, it demonstrated to Russia, that the United States would not tolerate any interference in the Baltic countries' independence.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Directors of BAFL, the Baltic

communities, my family, everyone who helped make my dream a reality, especially my friend, Congressman John Shimkus for his 20 years of outstanding leadership and commitment. I had a part in finding his dad's roots in Lithuania, to open the door to the culture and rich history. It is with sadness that I received his decision not to run for Congress in 2020. Together with BAFL and the Baltic community we will have to undertake the effort to strengthen the Baltic Caucus with a newly chosen Republican Co-Chairman and contact the new Congressmen after the election to join the Baltic Caucus. We count on our communities to become active and HELP!!! In closing, I wish to thank my friend Congr. John Shimkus for accepting my invitation to be Co-Chairman of the Baltic Caucus and wish him good luck in all future endeavors, and good health and happiness with his beloved wife Karen, their sons and his parents Kathy and Gene Shimkus.

May God continue to bless America, the Baltic States, the directors of BAFL, who supported me, and the good people who contributed to the success of my dream, the US Congressional Baltic Caucus. !!!

Angele (Angela) Nelsas
 Founder of the Baltic Caucus
 Past BAFL President
 Executive Vice President
 Vice President

CONGRESSIONAL RESOLUTIONS INTRODUCED ON THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BALTIC COUNTRIES' INDEPENDENCE

The US house and Senate introduced bipartisan resolutions S.Res.536 and H.Res.889 recognizing the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on the 30th anniversary of the restoration of their independence.

In his statement Senator Durbin emphasized their courage, and the US commitment to continued strong ties: “But Lithuanians were armed with stronger weapons--faith, courage, and a burning desire to reclaim their independence. ... So let us use this historic anniversary to recommit to our continued support for our Baltic allies through economic and security cooperation and to reaffirm America's commitment to NATO and the enduring transatlantic alliance. “

House Baltic Caucus

Members (76):

Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE) - joined November 2017
 Rep. Andy Barr (R-KY) - joined April 2016
 Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA) - joined April 2018
 Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) - joined May 2017
 Rep. Brendan F. Boyle (D-PA) - joined June 2019
 Rep. Anthony Brown (D-MD) - joined April 2018
 Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA) - joined July 2016
 Rep. Ken Calvert (R-CA)
 Rep. Saulud Carbajal (D-CA) - joined July 2017
 Rep. Tony Cardenas (D-CA)
 Rep. Buddy Carter (R-GA) - joined April 2017
 Rep. Steve Chabot (R-OH) - joined May 2018
 Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA) - joined December 2017
 Rep. David Cicilline (D-RI)
 Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN)
 Rep. Gerry E. Connolly (D-VA)
 Rep. Paul Cook (R-CA) - joined September 2017
 Rep. Lou Correa (D-CA) - joined September 2017
 Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) - joined September 2015
 Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-TX)
 Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) - joined January 2019
 Rep. Bill Flores (R-TX) - joined August 2016
 Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ) - joined June 2017
 Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) - joined September 2019
 Rep. Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon (NPP-Puerto Rico) - joined August 2017
 Rep. Kay Granger (R-TX)
 Rep. Denny Heck (D-WA) - joined August 2018
 Rep. Jim Himes (D-CT) - joined May 2018
 Rep. Bill Huizenga (R-MI) - joined February 2018
 Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX) - joined July 2014
 Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH)
 Rep. William Keating (D-MA) - joined March 2017
 Rep. Peter King (R-NY)
 Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) - joined June 2019
 Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-IL) - joined February 2016
 Rep. Doug Lamborn (R-CO) - joined September 2015
 Rep. Rick Larsen (D-WA) - joined March 2017
 Rep. John Larson (D-CT)
 Rep. Bob Latta (R-OH) - joined January 2016

Rep. Ted Lieu (D-CA) - joined April 2016
 Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-IL)
 Rep. Alan Lowenthal (D-CA)
 Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY)
 Rep. James McGovern (D-MA)
 Rep. Mark Meadows (R-NC) - joined August 2019
 Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-NY) - joined January 2016
 Rep. Grace F. Napolitano (D-CA)
 Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-Washington, DC) - joined September 2017
 Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA) - joined August 2014
 Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ)
 Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-CA) - joined July 2019
 Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-NJ)
 Rep. Dean Phillips (D-MN) - joined December 2019
 Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)
 Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME) - joined February 2019
 Rep. David Price (D-NC)
 Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD) - joined October 2017
 Rep. Guy Reschenthaler (R-PA) - joined May 2019
 Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA)
 Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL)
Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) - House Baltic Caucus co-chair
 Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA)
Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL) - House Baltic Caucus co-chair* Rep. Shimkus is retiring this year
 Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ)
 Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-PA) - joined August 2014
 Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY) - joined April 2017
 Rep. Lori Trahan (D-MA) - joined September 2019
 Rep. David Trone (D-MD) - joined March 2019
 Rep. Michael R. Turner (R-OH) - joined February 2014
 Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI)
 Rep. Filemon Vela (D-TX) - joined November 2019
 Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-NY) - joined April 2017
 Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI)
 Rep. Randy Weber (R-TX) - joined April 2017
 Rep. Brad Wenstrup (R-OH) - joined September 2018
 Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA) - joined April 2017

Monthly message from BAFL President

Conrad Mazeika

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the BAFL I would like extend our warmest of greetings to all our Baltic friends, associates, and partners. We continue to appreciate everyone's contributions to the goals and mission of the Baltic American Freedom League and encourage everyone to maintain their support both personally and with your financial support to our ongoing mission. If I or anyone of our board of directors could be of service to you, please reach out to any of us. We are here to serve you. The world is still a very dangerous place. Despite the effects of the COVID19 pandemic, our Ukrainian neighbors continue to be attacked through unprovoked, aggressive tactics by Russian forces. Russia has increased its missiles in the Kaliningrad region, and its disinformation campaigns continue.

I encourage all of our BAFL friends to continue to contact your congressional members to support any and all resolutions and legislation: 1) condemning Russian aggression against, and annexation of, lands of sovereign countries, and 2) supporting the Baltic nations. 2020 is proving to be a difficult year for the Baltic nations with respect to COVID19, yet all three countries are on the forefront of innovative emerging technology developed to fight this pandemic and others to come. We applaud the Baltic nations progress on these fronts and look forward to working hand in hand in support with each of our Baltic countries for their continued growth and expanded prosperity. Stay safe and healthy during this time.

Current Legislation of Importance to the Baltic States

H.R. 672 - H.R 889 - S.Res. 536

H.Res. 672: Expressing support of the Three Seas Initiative in its efforts to increase energy independence and infrastructure connectivity thereby strengthening the United States and European national security: expresses U.S. support for new energy projects, including transportation and renewable energy generation, that enhance connectivity in the 12 countries located between the Adriatic, Black, and Baltic Seas and reduce their dependence on Russia. The 12-nation partnership is known as the Three Seas Initiative. Last action: Referred to the Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, Energy and the Environment.

H.Res. 889: Recognizing the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on the 30th anniversary of the restoration of their independence: commits continued support for the Baltic allies of the United States through economic and security cooperation, further strengthening transatlantic ties and regional presence; reaffirms the commitment of the United States to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the enduring transatlantic alliance. Last action: Referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

S.Res. 536: A resolution recognizing the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on the 30th anniversary of the restoration of their independence: see H.Res. 672. Last action: Introduced to Senate

news.err.ee

Three Seas Initiative summit postponed to October due to coronavirus

The Three Seas Initiative summit and business forum which was to take place in Estonia in June has been rescheduled due to the spread of coronavirus and will be held on October 19-20, spokesperson for the event said on Wednesday. The Three Seas Initiative (3SI) is a cooperation format that brings together 12 European Union member states between the Adriatic Sea, the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea. It is designed to accelerate the development of energy, transport and digital infrastructure in order to increase the region's economic growth, reinforce its economic resilience and further the vision of an integrated, cohesive and undivided Europe...The 12 countries that have joined the Three Seas format are Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary. The partner countries of the 3SI are the United States and Germany. <https://news.err.ee/1068651/three-seas-initiative-summit-postponed-to-october-due-to-coronavirus>

nationalinterest.org

How NATO Hopes to Protect the Baltics From a Sudden Russian Invasion

NATO has stood up a new command whose job it is to speed alliance troops and tanks around Europe in order to defend against a Russian invasion... "The new command in Ulm will help our forces become more mobile and enable rapid reinforcement within the alliance, ensuring we have the right forces in the right place at the right time," Lungescu said. "Setting up new commands to manage the flow of forces in a crisis is one of the ways the alliance has tried to adapt," Stars and Stripes noted. "NATO and the European Union also have discussed the need to streamline diplomatic clearances for

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Shared values that unite

troop movements as well as ensure that infrastructure on the continent — such as tunnels and bridges — are strong enough to handle tanks and other heavy military vehicles.” <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/how-nato-hopes-protect-baltics-sudden-russian-invasion-136872>

usnews.com

US Delivers 128 Anti-Tank Javelin Missiles to Estonia

The United States says it has delivered 128 anti-tank Javelin missiles to Estonia as part of a larger contract with the Baltic NATO member and the U.S. Department of Defense. Washington has provided Estonia, a staunch military ally, with over \$100 million in joint defense cooperation over the past few years, the U.S. Embassy said...The FGM-148 Javelin is an infrared-guided anti-tank missile that can be carried and launched by a single person. It is manufactured by a joint venture between Raytheon Company and Lockheed Martin Corp. <https://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2020-04-02/us-delivers-128-anti-tank-javelin-missiles-to-estonia>

jamestown.org

Moscow Enhances Artillery Firepower in Kaliningrad

Since Moscow’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, it has gradually reinforced its military presence in Kaliningrad, frequently portraying these measures as a response to increased North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) activity close to Russia’s borders...Notably, the artillery brigade based in Kaliningrad has now received the long-range Tornado-S multiple-launch rocket system (MRLS), which is replacing the older BM-21 Grad (Izvestia). In the case of introducing the Tornado-S, this provides more accurate firepower in the exploitation of artillery systems; while at the political level, the presence of such assets close to neighboring NATO members offers the Kremlin potential ways to coerce or threaten Alliance militaries. <https://jamestown.org/program/moscow-enhances-artillery-firepower-in-kaliningrad/>

civil.ge

NATO to Deepen Partnership with Georgia, Ukraine

On April 2, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said at a virtual press conference following the Foreign Ministerial that the Alliance has decided to deepen its partnerships with Georgia and Ukraine “even further”. According to Stoltenberg, the package for Georgia and Ukraine includes exercises in the strategic Black Sea region, as well as joint “work to counter hybrid warfare, and efforts to share more air traffic radar data, making the skies safer for all.” <https://civil.ge/archives/345371>

jamestown.org

Baltic Intelligence Agencies Increasingly Worry About Threats From China in Addition to Russia

Though the Russian threat remains most pressing, all three Baltic countries are increasingly concerned about Chinese intelligence activities in the region. The now-familiar threats of hybrid warfare, espionage, terrorism, extremism, cyber warfare, disinformation, fake news and populism will of course continue to dominate the Baltic States’ security environment as in past years. But newly emerging concerns about China, in addition to the developing global health pandemic, will require greater attention from the Baltics’ intelligence services this year. <https://jamestown.org/program/baltic-intelligence-agencies-increasingly-worry-about-threats-from-china-in-addition-to-russia/>

euvsdisinfo.eu

Disinformation Can Kill

On the one hand, pro-Kremlin disinformation outlets claim that the outbreak is a hoax. On the other, they indulge apocalyptic scenarios, suggesting that due to the pandemic the Schengen system has collapsed, NATO will dissolve, the EU is paralysed, the Baltic states are doomed, there are no doctors in Lithuania, and Ukraine is in free fall. The entire project of “globalisation” is over! The coronavirus is the EU’s Chernobyl. But then the whiplash comes again: The virus is not dangerous at all. It can be cured with saline in four days, what’s the problem? <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/disinformation-can-kill/>

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The House Baltic and the Senate Baltic Freedom Caucuses

The House Baltic Caucus and the Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus were both founded in 1997 by two prominent American members of Congress of Lithuanian heritage, Illinois Senator Richard Durbin and Illinois Congressman John Shimkus. A brief history of the House Baltic Caucus, by BAFL Board Member Angele Nelsas, who was the founding force behind the Caucus, is included in this Baltic Bulletin. The members of the House Baltic Caucus have a strong interest in promoting opportunities to strengthen the economic, political, and cultural relationships of the United States of America with Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Both Caucuses have been very effective over the years in achieving much in these areas, and will continue to have success as they increase in members, and as the connections between the US and the Baltic nations grow stronger.

Senators Durbin and Grassley recently sent a “Dear Colleague” letter to engage other members of Congress in the Caucuses. The letter makes extremely important observations: “The Baltics have never been more relevant to U.S. foreign policy. As NATO frontline states, Baltic security in the face of an aggressive Russia is critical to the integrity of the alliance...the knowledge and experience of our Baltic allies will continue to be invaluable on many of the timely issues of the day.” These include not only matters of defense, diplomacy and economic cooperation, but also technology, medicine, and science, as we have seen with some of the Baltic nations COVID19-related cutting-edge developments.

We encourage all of our BAFL friends to continue to contact your congressional members to support any and all resolutions and legislation: 1) condemning Russian aggression against, and annexation of, lands of sovereign countries, and 2) supporting the Baltic nations.

Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus

- Sen. John Boozman (R-AR) - joined March 2019
- Sen. Mike Braun (R-IN) - joined December 2019
- Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR) - joined March 2019
- Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) - joined March 2019
- Sen. Richard J. Durbin (D-IL), co-chairman
- Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA), co-chairman
- Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)
- Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR) - joined 2018
- Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ)
- Sen. Christopher S. Murphy (D-CT)
- Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI)
- Sen. Mike Rounds (R-SD) - joined November 2019
- Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) - joined March 2020
- Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)



SUBSCRIPTION & MEMBERSHIP FORM

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have regained their independence; however, there is much that must be done to protect the security of the Baltic nations from Russian military threats, disinformation and economic boycotts, and to promote their entrance into Western institutions. Your help is needed.

Here is my contribution for:

- \$30 A year’s subscription to the Baltic Bulletin
- \$50 Contribution, plus a subscription to the Baltic Bulletin
- \$100 A voting membership, plus a Baltic Bulletin subscription
- \$250 \$500 \$1000 I feel so strongly about the Baltic cause, here is an increased contribution to help keep America informed.

Please indicate ethnic background (optional)

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Congressional District and Name of Representative _____

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