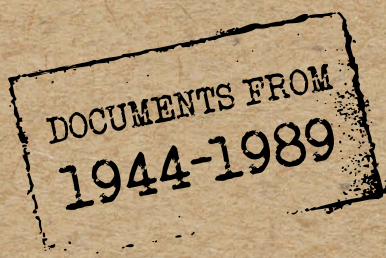


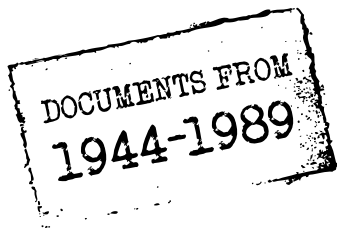
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In Defence of the  
Latvian Language  
Against Russification



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# In Defence of the Latvian Language Against Russification



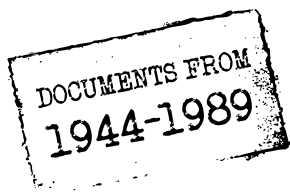




The Latvian Language Agency

» Jānis Riekstiņš

# In Defence of the Latvian Language Against Russification



Rīga  
Latviešu valodas aģentūra / The Latvian Language Agency  
2012

UDK 811.174' 272(474.3)(093)

De 167

Jānis Riekstiņš

**In Defence of the Latvian Language Against Russification**

**1944–1989**

**Documents**

***In Defence of the Latvian Language Against Russification. 1944–1989. Documents.***

Compiled and translated from the Russian by J. Riekstiņš. Introduction by Prof. Uldis Ozoliņš, foreword by J. Riekstiņš. Managing editor D. Liepa. Riga: LVA, 2012. 160 pages.

Managing editor Dr. **Dite Liepa**

Literary editor **P. Cedriņš**

Reviewer Dr. **Dzintra Hirša**

Documents utilized are from the Latvian State Archive collection of LCP CC records (*PA-101. fonds*), LCP Central Control and Auditing Committee (*PA-2160*), the LSSR Council of Ministers (*270. fonds*), LSSR Supreme Council (*290. fonds*), the Riga City Executive Committee (*1400. fonds*), as well as documents from collections of other institutions, that verify the Soviet policies in Latvian SSR. Many of these documents are published for the first time.

Cover design and layout: **Vanda Voiciša**

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ISBN 978-9984-815-77-0

# Table of Contents

Introduction: the struggle for the status of the Latvian language during the Soviet occupation 1944 to 1989 .....	6
Foreword by J. Riekstiņš .....	18
Section 1	
Decisions and materials on the acquisition of the Latvian language .....	21
Section 2	
Decisions on learning Russian. Imposing the Russian language .....	61
Section 3	
Protest Reports to Moscow about Colonialization and Russification in the Latvian SSR .....	91
Section 4	
Decisions and materials about proper Latvian orthography .....	125
Section 5	
Letters and decisions on the status of the Latvian language .....	135
List of Documents .....	155

# Introduction: the struggle for the status of the Latvian language during the Soviet occupation 1944 to 1989

Dr Uldis Ozoliņš is Associate Professor in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts at the University of Western Sydney in Australia. He has taught in the fields of Political Science, Sociology, Education, and Translating & Interpreting at a number of Australian universities, as well as having given guest lectures in these fields at several Latvian universities. He has numerous international publications on language policy, both on Australian language policy which was the subject of his doctorate work, and more recently on the politics of language in the Baltic States.

The politics of language in the Baltic States has attracted considerable interest over the past two decades, both from those concerned with the details of language policy and language planning, and from those concerned with wider issue of nationality and ethnopolitics in this post-Soviet space.

The set of documents in this volume, collected by Jānis Riekstiņš, will play a valuable role in securing our historical understanding of the preconditions to present Baltic language policy, specifically in Latvia. The collection presents a graphic chronology of the struggle to defend the use of the Latvian language while Latvia was an unwilling constituent of the USSR. The documents cover the period from 1944 – when Soviet forces re-occupied Latvia after the retreat of German forces in the closing stages of World War II – to 1989, when as a result of the resurgent national sentiments in the glasnost/perestroika period, Latvia was able – along with all other non-Russian republics in the USSR – to reassert the official status of their language.

The documents have been gathered from the now open archives of the Latvian Communist Party (henceforth CP) and its Central Committee (henceforth CC), and deposits of various journals and newspapers in the Latvian National Archives.

The documents are organised in five sections, with somewhat overlapping materials and in thematic rather than strict chronological order:

- » Section I deals with documents on decisions on the importance of learning Latvian, containing documents from the 1940s and early 1950s;
- » Section II contains documents on the importance of learning Russian and the imposition of Russian from the 1950s, detailing the Russification purge of Latvian national communists in 1959 and the growth of russification pressures in the 1970s and 1980s;

- » Section III deals with the protests expressed to Moscow over the level of immigration and Russification in Latvia in the late 1950s and 1960;
- » Section IV, the shortest section, documents concerns over Latvian orthography in the 1940s to 1950s;
- » Section V deals with the battles over reasserting the status of Latvian in the 1980s, concluding with the passage of the Language Law by the Supreme Soviet in 1989, which re-established Latvian as the official state language of the territory.

This collection of documents may present some surprises both for readers in the West as well as for readers in Latvia (or the former Soviet Union).

Two problems will immediately be apparent to any Western readers. First, the clearly ideological struggles over language being waged and so accurately reflected in these documents comes through a heavy overlay of debate over Leninist (and at times Stalinist) attitudes to language and nation – an obscure discourse to contemporary sensibilities, but absolutely essential to understand where contending forces could argue their point within the ruling ideology of the day. Many of the documents reflect conflicts within the CP and CC over language, and it was at this often secret but highly ideological level that decisions were made or revoked.

Second, while the documents expose the shifts in language policy, they cannot hope to capture all of the intense politicisation of the issue of nation and nationalism that was a constant if often suppressed and misrepresented source of discord and power struggles throughout the existence of the USSR. In particular, the huge influx of Soviet period settlers to Latvia, which dramatically altered the demography of the republic, is reflected in these documents but not systematically analysed except for a brief mention in Riekstiņš' editor's notes.

In this introduction we will place the documentation within these wider contexts of the forces – demographic as much as political – that promoted or constrained the use of Latvian throughout the period of survey.

For readers in Latvia, the documents reveal often completely suppressed instances of people fighting for the status of Latvian in overwhelmingly difficult circumstances. The fact that individuals, even at the height of Stalinism or in the face of Brezhnevian Russification policies, doggedly refused to accept the imposition of Russian and of Russian monolingualism is striking. And this opposition comes in many forms – in the CP and CC, in workplaces, from ordinary citizens writing letters to various institutions and newspapers never previously published but available from now opened archives. While some notable instances (such as the purge of national communists in 1959 and its background) are widely known, other instances of initiative or resistance come to light here for the first time.



## The reimposition of Soviet occupation from 1944: the battle over nationality and language policy

In 1944, Latvia had been heavily scarred by successive Soviet, then Nazi, then renewed Soviet occupation. The Baltic States had been initially incorporated into the Soviet Union as part of the grand alliance between Hitler and Stalin, embodied in the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of August 1939 which divided Eastern Europe, from Finland to the Black Sea, between Germany and the USSR. This paved the way for Hitler to begin his invasion of Poland. This incorporation was imposed upon the Baltic States following sham elections, and led also to a wave of deportations in June 1941, shortly before Hitler turned on Stalin and opened his second front in the East.

Two issues then confronted the USSR and its renewed occupation of Latvia from 1944. First, massive human losses – deportation losses, war losses, and a large loss of civilians who went into exile in the West – posed problems for the USSR in terms of meeting the needs of defending this now frontline state, as well as rebuilding the considerable industrial and economic infrastructure that Latvia had developed between the two World Wars.

Secondly, however, the Baltic States presented particular political issues as they had joined the Soviet Union unwillingly. From these documents the fragility and constant nervousness over re-establishing the Soviet Union in the territory of Latvia comes across remarkably strongly. Many Latvians (like many others from the Baltic or Eastern Europe more widely) fought on the German side against the Soviet Union in World War II, leaving an abiding suspicion of these populations on the part of the Soviet Union, and extreme determination to quarantine these populations from their political supporters now in the West. But there were strongly divided views of how this should be handled and how integration of these populations into the values and structures of the Soviet Union should be accomplished.

This situation in Latvia thus had both a practical and a political/ideological dimension.

Practically, there was an urgent need to have the local population understand Soviet ways and be able to operate in the Soviet system by having information in their own language, as knowledge of Russian was far from universal. Politically and ideologically, from those promoting the importance of the Latvian language there was a continual stream of warnings that if the national issue is not treated correctly, and national values supported, the enemies of the Soviet Union – particularly the “bourgeois-nationalists” in the West, who had fled there in considerable numbers – would take advantage of this in the context of the Cold War.

The need for Latvian personnel in a variety of fields to have understandable literature and instructions in their own language is clearly documented: Document 1

from December 1944, with Soviet power just re-established and the war still raging, is from the Latvian CP CC:

Recognising that among personnel in institutions, organisations and enterprises the lack of knowledge of Latvian constitutes a serious obstacle to everyday communication with the masses and appreciation of their requirements and demands, the Latvian CP CC orders institutional and enterprise managers to organise Latvian language instruction for those leading workers and service personnel who do not have a command of Latvian. (Document 1, 1944: 6)

The document details specific hours of instruction to be given, and associated budgetary expenses and use of facilities. The document goes on to iterate that the most important task for “every Party member and Soviet official” is to “learn the history of the Latvian Socialist Republic and Latvian literature and works of art” (ibid).

The practical side is illustrated in a striking document (Document 2, June 1945) from an official in charge of mine clearance in Latvia – an ongoing issue after the War, where the failure to provide instructional material in Latvian caused problems in the correct handling of this most dangerous task.

Of significant ideological importance is the CC order “On some Soviet institutions and organisations ignoring the facts of national characteristics” (Document 3, July 1945) which pointed to deficiencies in communication in both languages, Latvian and Russian: in some districts local institutions had circulated material only in Russian, not considering that local inhabitants only know Latvian or Latgalian (the variety in South-Eastern Latvia). In other cases, names of institutions or facilities had been given in Latvian only in various communications to residents, not recognising that many who received such communications had no knowledge or only scant knowledge of Latvian. This then constitutes the beginning of a double-sided approach to language issues that become increasingly common over the next few years, the need for Latvians to learn Russian but even more imperatively for non-Latvian settlers to learn Latvian. Significantly, the CC office in November 1945 (Document 4) had to remind institutions throughout Latvia to follow the July instructions, detailing several instances where Russian-only materials were circulated to those who did not know Russian, pointing out that “leading personnel who ignore national characteristics [...] in fact give sustenance to bourgeois-national enemies of the people.”

However, conflicts over approaches to the language issue become increasingly evident, and Documents 4 to 9 detail the continued efforts that needed to be made to reinforce the importance of learning both Latvian and Russian for significant nomenclature personnel, and revealing the reluctance to do so on the part of many who had come from other republics. The material here stands in ironic contrast to the materials in the early documents in Section II, (Document 20 to 22) covering the

same period from the mid-1940s to mid 1950s, showing the moves to strengthen the teaching of Russian and the imposition of Russian in Latvian institutions.

A significant contribution that reveals the difficulties of those favouring more use of Latvian is that of Baltic War Zone General-Major Voronins (Document 22). Soviet Armed Forces of course were highly mobile, with personnel and their families being shifted anywhere in the Soviet Union. As Voronins's letter to the CC argues, there is little utility in obliging children of such highly mobile service personnel to learn local republican languages when they may well move from that republic to another, and do so throughout their schooling. Paying more attention to learning higher levels of Russia, the Major-General opined, would be of greater benefit. The situation of mobile service personnel certainly raised objective difficulties for the desire to spread the Latvian language through the school system, but two points are worth making here. First, many service personnel were highly mobile, but many others in professional military ranks became very settled where they were posted (whether in the Baltic States or elsewhere in the Soviet Union) and in fact officers could elect where to live upon retirement; many chose the Baltic States and with their families – who had little exposure to local national languages – have constituted a solid core of usually monolingual Russian speakers that are still present in Latvia and elsewhere today. Secondly, while the case of the armed forces does raise genuine issues of the reach of the republican languages, this instance of the armed forces really represents only the tip of the iceberg of the huge population movement of largely monolingual Russian speakers into Latvia (and Estonia also) that was eventually to threaten the very continued existence of the nation and the status of their language. This influx and the press for Russian also began to affect the quality of Latvian written record-keeping, as documents in Section IV show, as Latvian lexis and syntax were seen to shift under the increased presence of Russian (Documents 34 and 35), and various government organisations tried to ensure adequate signage and clear use of language in public notices and communication (Documents 33 and 36).

A significant event in the nationality issue – now little remembered even in the former Soviet Union and almost totally unknown in the West, was the period following Stalin's death in March 1953 and the brief coming to power of Lavrentiy Beria, former NKVD (secret police) commander. As the extensive footnote to Document 10 illustrates, Beria was very concerned with the conflicts that could result from the press for Russification of the non-Russian republics' Communist Parties and major institutions, and he favoured building the Soviet Union on a multinational basis with strong local cadres, quite the opposite to Stalin's savage Russification. He was aware of ethnic tensions in the Soviet Union, and stopped the hitherto anti-Jewish campaign after Stalin's death. In the Baltic republics there was resentment at massive deportations in 1949 which sent to Siberia many farmers,

to establish collective farms subsequently often run by recent settlers, while anti-Soviet partisans still operated in the forests.

The documents from 1953 (Documents 10 to 16) are among the most radical in the collection, detailing the shortcomings of having significant numbers of managers and other leading personnel coming to Latvia and not knowing the local language, and laying down guidelines for intensive learning of Latvian, and replacement of such personnel if they did not in time command Latvian (Document 16). Beria's overthrow and eventual execution in December 1953 however signalled a victory for those Soviet forces that believed nationalist tendencies could be simply suppressed, and the documents from 1956 (Documents 17 and 18) are toned down, while still insisting on the learning of both Latvian and Russian. The significant shadow of Beria however still lingers: Document 19 records the very careful defence of the Agriculture Minister Ņikonovs by the Ministry's CP Secretary when Ņikonovs had been accused of nationalism and "Beriaism".

### The purge of national communists in 1959 and its linguistic aftermath

Beria's shadow is also present in one of the most important documents in the collection, the decision of the Latvian CP CC Plenary of July 1959 on "Significant shortcomings and errors in the preparation of cadres and national political practice in the republic" (Document 25). This Plenary was organised, with direct influence from Moscow and Krushchev, against then Riga City CP Secretary, Chair of Ministers and CC member Eduards Berkļavs and his associates, who had begun to put limits on the continuing flood of immigration into Latvia, replacing numerous personnel in various positions – including collective farm managers (60 % recent replacements) and regional Party Secretaries (50 % of whom had been recently replaced). The Plenary's decision was scathing in its attacks on Berkļavs and his associates for, it is alleged, insisting on nationalist criteria for employment and deployment of personnel, changing personnel without regard to their "practical and political characteristics", but paying regard only to their nationality. The Plenary charged Berkļavs and his supporters with using the excuse that personnel had to know both Latvian and Russian to replace non-Latvian personnel. Reverting to their understanding of Leninist principles, the Plenary asserted Lenin's directive that language learning should not be imposed on personnel, but had to be strictly voluntary.

While Secretary of the Riga City CP in 1956, Berkļavs had ordered all ranking personnel to become fluent in both Latvian and Russian in two years, which the 1959 plenary saw as a way of getting rid of non-Latvian personnel, for Latvian

personnel had learnt Russian well in recent years, but those coming from other republics faced what the Plenary considered a huge task in learning a new language: this had led to “nervousness and insecurity” among many cadres. The Plenary pointed out that rather than criticising the Riga decision, the Latvian CP CC had itself imposed the same requirement of personnel in all Latvia, and repeated the 2 year stipulation on learning both languages in December 1956 (Document 17). In other spheres, the Plenary also considered that closing several Russian-stream classes in various universities had been an error, and condemned administrative measures that placed restrictions on registering for Riga residence on the part of settlers.

All these moves, the Plenary concluded, had the effect of pushing out non-Latvians from various positions. Moreover, Berklavs had also stood against one of the central planks of Soviet economic policy, the deployment of more heavy industry into Latvia, being in favour of light industry producing consumer goods for the republican market, thus avoiding the bringing to Latvia of even greater numbers of settlers to work in heavy industry. These moves were seen as national isolationism, harming the Latvian nation itself by isolating it from other republics and diminishing productivity.

The Plenary noted that a number of articles with incorrect political orientation written by Party members, including by Berklavs, had been reproduced in the émigré press, leading to bourgeois–nationalist attempts to foment national divisions between Russians and Latvians. The Plenary argued that too little attention has been paid by Berklavs and his associates to the ideas of nations’ friendship, Soviet patriotism and proletarian internationalism, and they had failed to show the outstanding contribution of the Russian nation to the October Revolution and the liberation of Latvia from fascist occupation, as well as the Russian nation’s brotherly assistance in rebuilding war-torn Latvia.

The Plenary noted the spread of nationalist ideas among the intelligentsia and creative artists, and the fact that few Latvians were joining the CP. All this had happened without the CC taking the necessary steps to confront such tendencies. The Plenary announced the removal of Berklavs as well as several other personnel associated with him from all official positions. As a practical aside, the Plenary condemned the Agriculture Minister for paying too much attention to national politics and thereby contributing to the shortage of milk and meat in Riga! The Plenary’s announcement ended by revoking the December 1956 decision on enforcing both Latvian and Russian learning among Party and government personnel, in favour of the Leninist principle of voluntarism in language learning, as well as revoking the 1953 decisions on favouring the use of the Latvian language in all administration (Document 10) as having been “imposed by Beria”.

## From the 1959 purge to the Brezhnev years: Russification rampant

This 1959 Plenary represented a purge, and the origins and outcome of this purge are ironically revealed in the documents in Section III, which reproduce some truly extraordinary letters on national and language issues from various lesser known Latvian Party members. Voicehs Kārkliņš in his letter (Document 30) details how Krushchev came to Latvia in June 1959, and was immediately accosted by several members of the Russian nomenclature in Latvia all complaining of the overt nationalism in Latvia that was threatening them and their jobs. Kārkliņš, a long-time Party member and retired director of a textile factory, describes how people he was aware of had been removed from their positions because of incompetence or corruption, but they in turn immediately blamed Latvian nationalists for their dismissal, taking this straight to Krushchev. Encouraged by Krushchev's immediate anger at this, those disposed against Berkļavs in the CC moved to purge him.

These letters, sent to various newspapers as well as several sent to Soviet First Secretary Nikita Krushchev, pointed out the problems that had been caused by extensive Russian settlement (Document 29 from 1957) and then strongly criticised the purge of 1959 (Documents 30 to 32). Voicehs Kārkliņš (Document 30), gave a strong criticism of grand Russian chauvinism which incorrectly attacked Latvian attempts to follow Leninist principles of maximum respect for nationalities. The 1960 letters by Marxist lecturer and writer Jānis Dīmans to Krushchev (Documents 31 and 32) are amazingly brave in their comprehensive exposure of the destructive influence of unchecked immigration and wilful ignoring of the needs of the titular nationality, due to bone-headed misunderstandings of Leninist theory on nationality on the part of the Party hierarchy instrumental in the purge of Berkļavs. Dīmans, interestingly, was a long-time Communist, living in the Soviet Union from 1922 to 1944, surviving the Stalinist purges, and like Berkļavs a staunch Party member, but one sensitive to the corruption of nationality politics and Moscow's then growing contempt for national values in the non-Russian republics. His letters caused him to be benched before a Party commission to apologise and withdraw his comments; he apologised only for their sharp tone, but did not withdraw the substance of his writing.

The documents post 1959 (Documents 26 and 27) show the consequences of the purge and the steadily greater emphasis on promoting Russian. By the 1980s there was an unmitigated pro-Russian stance in all documentation. Document 27 is an address by Latvian CP First Secretary Augusts Voss stressing the overarching importance of Russian as the language of inter-national communication in the Soviet Union, with the widespread use of Russian an obvious outcome of the considerable geographical mobility of the Soviet population, and Voss points to

the successful spread of Russian as a result. He throws a few crumbs to the need to also learn the republican languages, but without any operative recommendations of how to do so.

The issue of Russian and the republican national languages was thus not only an issue of internal republican politics. The Soviet Union as a whole, during and in the few years after Brezhnev's period as First Secretary, increasingly showed Russification tendencies and continually gave instructions on strengthening the place of Russian in all non-Russian Republics. Document 28 from the Latvian CC and Council of Ministers in 1983 shows this tendency most starkly, articulating what was a completely new notion in Soviet nationality theory, the coming of the "Soviet nation" (expressed as a nationality, not a citizenship, and described as "a new historical collectivity") whose language was inevitably to be Russian, transcending previous national identity. The document details steps to intensify Russian language teaching in all Latvian-medium educational institutions, for example by granting extra pay and privileges to those teachers teaching Russian in Latvian stream schools or undertaking teacher training for such work, and giving greater weight to Russian in school curriculum.

### The turning point – Gorbachev and the late 1980s

The next and final turning point comes in the mid-1980s, in line with Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika policies, which were utilised very successfully in the Baltic States – much to Gorbachev's consternation – to raise again national questions and questions of the status of their national language that had been effectively repressed since the 1959 purge. The Baltic States reasserted their identity in terms of national insignia, anthems, literature, symbolism and increased demands for local autonomy, reflecting a growing national consciousness that united the population. One campaign that was of immense influence stemmed from a nationally revitalised Supreme Soviet which in 1988 formed a working group to look at constitutional reform in Latvia, a direct challenge to Moscow hegemony. One of the areas of work of this group was on the status of the state language, and on August 30 1988 an article was published in the by now national-leaning *Padomju Jaunatne* (Soviet Youth) by Aina Blinkena, head of the Latvian Language Institute at the Academy of Sciences, entitled "On the Latvian language – its present and desired status", asking readers to respond with their views. This brought a massive response, with some 9,385 letters being sent, with a total of 354,280 signatories. Documents 37, 38 and 40 are from ordinary members of the public strongly asserting the need for Latvian as the sole state language, and the central place of the Latvian language in Latvian identity. With its resolve much strengthened by this public support, the Latvian

Supreme Soviet then adopted a statement on October 6, 1988 (Document 39) announcing the status of Latvian as the state language of the republic, and directing the Council of Ministers to prepare a constitutional amendment to realise this, paying attention to the practical needs of expanding both the teaching and the use of Latvian throughout the institutions of the republic. Interestingly, this document still couched its decision in the context of being a correct reflection of Leninist principles on language, reflecting Gorbachev's own revival of Leninist principles in his *perestroika* reform attempts. The future course of Latvian language policy – Leninist or not – had been set.

There were overriding imperatives for the language issue to become so prominent by this period. With the continuation and indeed intensification of settlement in Latvia over the 1970s and 1980s, the demographic situation steadily became worse for the Latvian titular population: in the last Soviet census of 1989, the demographic picture showed that Latvians had been reduced to 52 % of the population of 2.5 million in Latvia, a reflection of the massive influx of Soviet settlers (the figure for the last pre-war census was 73 %). Moreover, on the language question, in Latvia just over 22 % of non-Latvians knew Latvian (this figure was as low as 15 % in Estonia of non-Estonians knowing Estonian, and 35 % of non-Lithuanians in Lithuania knowing Lithuanian). The demographic and linguistic situations, closely intertwined, required urgent action.

Such a course of action however did not go unchallenged, and Documents 41 to 43 show the reaction on the part of organised Russian groups to challenge the idea of Latvian as the sole state language of the republic, in this case from various workers' collectives that were mobilised at the time to protest against such separatism and challenge to Soviet authority. Significantly, Document 42 refers to the Interfront, the organisation of Soviet militarists, workers, managers and technical intelligentsia that sprang into existence, strongly supported by the CP of the Soviet Union, to directly oppose the people's fronts, citizens committees and other organisations calling for greater republican autonomy and eventually breaking away from the Soviet Union. These groups showed their opposition to the idea of Latvian as the sole state language of the republic, and called for equal status for Russian as a second state language. They were directly opposed to the position of the newly established People's Front (*Tautas fronte*). A mass movement representing those that stood for democratic principles and greater autonomy from Moscow, that eventually resulted in national independence and Latvia's leaving the Soviet Union.

The final Document 44 in this collection brings us to the end of this historical period of review but the beginning of a phase of Latvian language policy that has still to run its course. This is the Language Law, adopted by the Supreme Soviet on May 5, 1989, confirming the status of Latvian as the sole state language in Latvia,



and setting out a range of steps that needed to be taken for the realisation of this status. The Law stipulated that the official language of all Latvian administration and related institutions would be Latvian, and that all those who serve in government institutions need to command Latvian. Significantly, this document also stipulates a number of areas where Russian can be used during a transition period, signals the free choice by residents of which language they can use in communication with services, and the need for government personnel to also know Russian; to that extent, this is a compromise document, recognising the extensive use of Russian in public administration and public life, and understanding that the status and effective use of Latvian in these spheres was to be built, and could not simply be assumed.

The significance of this Law, passed after bitter debate in a still highly divided Supreme Soviet, can be seen in both a forward and backward perspective: forward, within a few years, much stronger language laws and regulations would be formulated; the mention of Russian would become far more restricted, and administrative and educational processes to realise the status of Latvian would be detailed and brought into relatively rapid operation: regulations associated with the 1989 law stipulated the time period within which people needing to know Latvian would have to demonstrate this competence, and already by 1992, just after Latvia formally regained its independence, a massive language attestation program began, resulting in several hundred thousand personnel who had not attended Latvian stream schools presenting (and mostly passing) language tests at levels appropriate to their profession. Later regulations also extended the reach of this language requirement to extend beyond public administration and cover all workers who had contact with the public. This has eventually led to the massive changes in language proficiency, with over 58 % of non-Latvians reporting knowledge of Latvian in the 2000 Census, compared with the 22 % in 1989. The requirement for all personnel in contact with the public, whether in the state or private sector, to be proficient in Latvian eventually was also to lead to considerable debate with European and other bodies that did not always agree with the reach of language policy into the private sector.

In the mid 1990s the language issue was also connected to the citizenship issue: unlike all of the other former republics of the Soviet Union, Estonia and Latvia did not grant automatic citizenship to all permanent residents in their population upon the break-up of the USSR: automatic citizenship was restricted to those who were citizens, or their descendants, in 1940 when the Communist take-over occurred. Others could apply for naturalisation, which required proficiency in Latvian at a conversational and simple literacy level. Like the language laws, these citizenship requirements have also resulted in Estonia and Latvia experiencing continuing friction with Russia. These issues are beyond the scope of the present book, but

the subsequent course of Latvian language policy is spelt out in two notable publications – in Latvian: Valsts valodas komisija *Latviešu valoda 15 neatkarības gados*. Rīga; Zinātne, 2007, and in English: Latvia, State Language Commission *Break-out of Latvian*. Rīga: Zinātne, 2008.

In a backward perspective we can also see the 1989 law as being a final conclusion to, and vindication of, a very long struggle – indeed going back in these documents to 1944 – to bring about a policy of recognition of the primacy of the Latvian language in Latvian territory, and the need for those arriving in Latvia from elsewhere to have command of this language. Through the often murky if not nightmarish past of Beriaism, of Brezhnevism, of Stalin and post-Stalin repressions, of assertions of supremacy of Russian and of the coming of a “Soviet nation”, the demand that settlers needed to know Latvian if they wished to participate in Latvian public life was finally official policy.

***Uldis Ozoliņš***

## Foreword

Data from the 1989 USSR census graphically records the results of 45 years of “Leninist – Stalinist nationality policies” in Latvia and paints in dark colours the prospects of the Latvian language and the Latvian people’s survival.

According to the census there were 1,459,000 Latvians in the USSR. Latvia was home to 1,388,000 Latvians or 95 % of the Latvians living in the USSR. At the time of the census in January 1989, there were 2,680,000 people registered as living in Latvia and 2,667,000 permanent residents in Latvia, of which 1,279,000 were non-Latvians. Of all of the peoples in the USSR, Latvians were the only people whose native population had not reached pre-World War II levels. The number of Latvians living in Latvia in 1989 was 5.4 % less than in 1935, while at the same time the number of Russians in Latvia had increased by 540 %, Belarusians by 450 %, but Ukrainians by a factor of 50. In 1989 there were 906,000 Russians in Latvia (34 %), 120,000 Belarusians (4.5 %), 92,000 Ukrainians (3.5 %), as well as small numbers of Poles, Lithuanians, Hebrews and those of other nationalities.\*

The 1989 census data gives us information about native languages and people’s comprehension of a second language. The data shows that 97.4 % of Latvians gave Latvian as their native language and 68 % were fluent in Russian. On the other hand, only 23 % of those of other nationalities understood Latvian. Therefore it is understandable that for the majority of foreigners living in Latvia, the republic was *terra incognita*, because it is not possible to understand and respect another people if one doesn’t know its language, culture, history, national characteristics, traditions and customs.

The main factor in the reduced proportion of Latvians in Latvia was the unabated immigration of foreigners. The flood of migrants divided Latvia into two parts. In one country there were two completely different groups of inhabitants – Latvians and non-Latvians, between whom there was a language barrier that hindered communication. Most immigrants did not speak Latvian and were not concerned about that. Quite the opposite, they were proud of it because at all official gatherings, many enterprises, agencies and organizations the only language heard was the one they had brought with them, the Russian language. It never occurred to the leadership or ideologues of the USSR that before sending a migrant – a skilled worker or specialist – to Latvia, he should attend Latvian language courses

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\* For more 1985 USSR census results see Latvian State Archive (LVA) – 277. f., 17. apr. 445. l., pp. 18–29, *LPSR Valsts statistikas komitejas priekšsēdētāja M. Baltiņa 1990. g. 28. februāra ziņojums*.

and only then be allowed to go. No one in Moscow was the least concerned about the Latvian language skills of those thousands of migrants who arrived from all regions of the USSR to seek their fortune in Latvia.

As is well known, language is one of the most important factors in the formation and development of an ethnos. Language forms an ethnic character of “we”, as opposed to “them”. Language is one of the most important tools that unites “us” and differentiates us from “others”. Even someone who is a complete “stranger” becomes closer and understandable if he speaks your native language.

While the Estonian language law was being discussed, Tartu University professor Jurijs Lotmans correctly stated, “Language is an indispensable element for every national culture, for every culture. Without language there is no culture. The level of language development is an indicator of language development as a whole. For this reason threats to a language are threats to a culture, but threats to a culture are threats to the survivability of a nation.”\*

With Latvia’s occupation in 1940 the Russian language has increasingly squeezed out the Latvian language from record keeping, official meetings, from all spheres of life. This process gained momentum in the post World War II years when the flood of Russians and Russian speakers increased.

The goal of this collection of documents is to show that from 1944 (when Latvia was re-occupied by the Soviet Union) until 1989, when Latvia regained its independence, a planned invasion by the Russian language was started and carried out. We also want to show what was being done to attempt to stop or at least slow down the growing threats to the Latvian language, and by extension, to the Latvian culture and the nation itself. These documents show that the Latvian CP and the Soviet republic’s leaders at that time were short on courage, will power and consistency. They were and remain the Kremlin’s diligent and obedient executors of Leninist-Stalinist nationality policies, and through the years zigged and zagged along with the “Party’s general policies”: in first post war years they adopted several important decisions on immigrants learning the Latvian language, but failed to enforce them; after Stalin’s death, as they implemented the Kremlin’s instructions, again adopting decisions regarding the use of Latvian in record keeping and promoting cadres, but after the arrest of L. Beria, the initiator of this “new nationality policy”, these were quickly “forgotten”. As fervently as the communists criticized themselves in the June 1953 LCP CC plenary for “ignoring national characteristics”, at the July 1959 LCP CC plenary they “unmasked” Eduards Berklavs and other national communists for efforts to restrict immigration, extend the use of the Latvian language and promote national cadres. In 1971 these same people were the most active propagandists and defenders of the proclaimed dogma of creating a “Soviet people.”

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\* Лотман Юрий. Закон о языке нужен. Радуга. № 4, 1989, с. 41.

Documents in the archives also describe the many courageous people who at top level CP meetings, in letters and wide-ranging reports to the Kremlin factually described the sabotage and neglect of the Latvian language and the ever increasing Russification of Latvia. They took a stand on the Latvian language and its orthography.

It is understandable that during these years no positive changes to the Kremlin's nationalities policy were made – quite the opposite. The flow of immigrants to Latvia increased together with the threat to the Latvian language and the imposition of the Russian language. In obeying the commands of the Kremlin leadership, increasingly forgotten and tossed aside were the basic principles of Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin's nationalities policy that required that immigrants – functionaries – learn the local language and observe local national customs.

The fight for the increased and secured status of the Latvian language against Russification started anew during the **Third Awakening** and culminated with the adoption of the Language law. However, the consequences of 45 years of distorted implementation of "nationalities policies" have not been completely overcome even today.

The original texts of the documents collected in this volume are in both Russian and Latvian. The English translation is based on the published Latvian text (Par latviešu valodu. Pret rusifikāciju. 1944–1989. Dokumenti. Edited and translated from Russian by J. Riekstiņš. Rīga: LVA, 2012). Surnames appear in their Latvian form (for example, the Cyrillic Калнберзин is transliterated and letticed as Kalnbērziņš; В. Лацис – V. Lācis; Курпнек – Kurpnieks). As it is not always possible to identify the ethnicity of those persons named in the text, and for the sake of consistency, the Latvian form is retained throughout the English translation except in Cases where a well-known figure's name has a traditional English spelling (e.g., Beria, Stalin, Khrushchev). In some documents, initials are used in place of names; in some cases, the full names of the individuals are unknown. In other cases, only the surname appears.

The style of most of the documents, a relic of the Soviet period, has been preserved as far as possible in the English translation. The clumsy use of language was an integral feature of such documents – awkward and frequently based on Russian, the distorted Latvian language used is a telling reflection of the period.

**Jānis Riekstiņš**



Decisions and  
materials on the  
acquisition of the  
Latvian language

## Document 1

The Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party Central Committee Bureau's 7–8 December 1944 decision “On the learning of the Latvian language by personnel in Latvian SSR institutions, organisations and enterprises, who do not have a good command of Latvian”

### **On the learning of the Latvian language by personnel in Latvian SSR institutions, organisations and enterprises, who do not have a good command of Latvian**

(..)

Heard: § 14. On the learning of the Latvian language by personnel in Latvian SSR institutions, organisations and enterprises, who do not have a good command of Latvian.

Decision: § 14. 1. Recognizing that the lack of knowledge of Latvian among personnel in institutions, organisations and enterprises constitutes a serious obstacle to everyday communication with the masses and appreciation of their requirements and demands, the Latvian Central Committee (CP) orders the leading personnel of institutions, organisations and enterprises to organise Latvian language instruction for those leading workers and service personnel, who do not have a command of Latvian.

In addition, the Latvian CP CC Bureau considers that the most important task of every Party member and Soviet official is to learn about the Latvian SSR's history as well as Latvian literature and works of art.

2. Determines the following procedure for Latvian language instruction:

- a) to organise Latvian language courses, as well as interest groups in large enterprises, people's commissariats and in district executive committees in district institutions, no later than the 1 January 1945;
- b) to hold classes 2 times per week for 2 hours in the morning and in the evening, depending on work circumstances.

3. Orders the People's Commissariat for Education to prepare and send out teaching plans and a programme for Latvian language courses and interest groups by 1 January 1945, but by 1 February, to prepare a textbook for teaching the Latvian language, and for the State Publishers to release a textbook for mass circulation by 1 March.

4. Orders the leading personnel of enterprises, institutions and organisation to provide, within cost estimates, the necessary resources to cover the

expenditure connected with Latvian language instruction for the personnel of these enterprises, organisations and institutions.

5. Orders Latvian CP district committees, district committees and the Party's leading organisations to control and provide everyday assistance to those who are learning the Latvian language.\*

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\* LVA, PA – 101. f., 3. apr., 13.l, p. 64. Original. Translated from the Russian language.  
This decision was adopted by: LCP CC Bureau Members J. Kalnbērziņš, J. Ļebedevs, V. Lācis, E. Ameriks, A. Peļše, A. Noviks, F. Titovs, K. Ozoliņš, P. Plēsums, O. Auguste, CC Bureau Member Candidate A. Eglītis, LCP CC 3rd Secretary J. Jurgens and AUCC authorized persons Butovs and Ševčuks.



## Document 2

Extracts from the speech of the Chairman of the LSSR Defence, Aviation and Chemical Manufacturing Development Association's Central Council Eduards Kusins to the LCP CC 13 June 1945 Plenary

### Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party Central Committee's VIII Plenary

*Transcript*

(..)

Kusins [the association led by him was at the time also involved in mine clearing in the territory of Latvia – J. R.]:

(..) "I must point out that in our case a major cause of the incidence of accidental explosions during mine clearing is the lack of instructional material in Latvian. So, for example, an important brochure like the instructions on mine clearing was issued in Moscow in the Russian language, and we are completely unable to achieve its translation. Since November, our attempts, to date, to achieve its translation have been unsuccessful. The majority of our assets, the mine clearing Soviet youth, do not have a good command of Russian, and therefore it is difficult to explain the mine clearing equipment to them. The lecturers – Russian officers, who provide the instruction, demonstrating it in practice or by mimicry, cannot explain it in the Latvian language. The main instructions and brochures are also in the Russian language, and the young people on entering the field, are unable to learn all of the features of the mine clearing equipment. By not knowing many of the details of the mine clearing discipline, they are unaware of the dangers to which they are exposed through their inadvertent actions. For example, let's take a look at our institutions. Not all of our institutions issue directives in the Latvian language where they are vitally necessary. They are sent to rural districts which are predominantly Latvian in the Russian language. (..) When, during the realm of Tsar Alexander III, it was decided to russify the Latvians by stealth through promising them land, a large number of Latvians moved from Lutheranism to the Orthodox religion, but the Latvian language still wasn't annulled, and even the Orthodox Church's services took place in the Latvian language, as they didn't understand the Russian language. (..)"\*

\* LVA, PA – 101. f, 7. apr., 51., pp. 59–60. Original. Translated from the Russian language. In this speech E. Kusins also examined many other, in his opinion, incorrectly addressed national political issues, for which he received criticism and condemnation from many participants at the Plenary, while J. Kalnbērziņš even pointed out that E. Kusins was appearing as a "Latvian bourgeois nationalist agent" and was a "mouthpiece of bourgeois nationalists" (ibid, p. 71.).

Eduards Kusins was born in 1889 in the Bebrene Rural Territory of the Ilūkste Region. In 1910 he was called up for the army and served in the Guard Cavalry. He took part in the First World War and in the Russian Civil war. After this he worked in the USSR National Economic Supreme Council, Soviet CP CC Heavy Manufacturing sector. In autumn 1940, E. Kusins was sent to Latvia, where he initially worked as J. Kalnbērziņš's assistant, but subsequently – as the Head of the LCP CC War Section. He participated in the formation of the 201st Latvian Rifleman's Division, and in the final stage of the war he led Latvia's mine clearing operations. Alexander III – Emperor of Russia (1845–1894). Reigned from 13 March 1881 to 1 November 1894. During his reign the periphery of the Russian Empire (including what is now Latvia) was subjected to Russification.

## Document 3

The Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party Central Committee's Bureau's 31 July 1945 decision "On some Soviet institutions and organisations ignoring the facts of national characteristics in their work"

**SECRET**

Latvian CP CC Bureau's decision

Protocol No. 122, § 5

### **On some Soviet institutions and organisations ignoring the facts of national characteristics in their work**

The Latvian CP CC has information at its disposal, which shows that some district executive committees and other district organisations and institutions communicate with rural territory and village councils, where Latvian and Latgalian inhabitants live, requesting them to submit reports, news, information etc. only in the Russian language, without taking into account that most of the local inhabitants and personnel have no knowledge or scant knowledge of the Russian language.

On the other hand, facts exist about some republic, city, district and rural territory institutions responding only in the Latvian language to letters and complaints from the working people, as well as various types of communications, notices, which denote the names of organisations, institutions etc., without taking into account that a significant number of inhabitants have no knowledge or scant knowledge of the Latvian language.

The Latvian CP CC Bureau determines to:

1. Condemn such a practice, which has permitted the previously mentioned and similar facts about the ignorance of national characteristics in clerical work, in official communications with inhabitants of local Soviet institutions and other sectors, as politically incorrect.
2. Advise Party district committees, city committees and district committees, city, region and district executive committees to verify the existence of such facts and to immediately eliminate them.
3. Orders, that:
  - a) clerical work in Soviet organs and institutions in rural territory and village councils with Latvian and Latgalian\* inhabitants must be performed in the Latvian and Latgalian language;

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\* Written Latgalian is a variant of the Latvian language. (In contemporary Latvia, the Language Law (III. 4.) stipulates that the state ensures the protection and development of written Latgalian as a historic form of the national language.

- b) written responses to submissions and complaints from the working people to republican people's commissariats and institutions, all city, regional, district and village Soviet institutions and organisations must be submitted in the language, in which the working people have addressed them, with their submissions and complaints;
  - c) various types of communications; signs on houses, which denote the street; the names of enterprises, institutions, and on the inside – part, shop, sector names; the surnames of leading personnel must be written in the Latvian or the Latgalian language and in the Russian language in accordance with the national composition of the rural territory, village council, region.
4. Advise Party regional committees, city committees and district committees to notify all Party organisation secretaries, Party organizers, and leading personnel of institutions, organisation and enterprises of this decision.

*Latvian CP CC Secretary*

***J. Kalnbērziņš\****

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\* LVA, PA – 101.f., 7. apr., 26.l., pp. 239–240. Original. Translated from the Russian language.

## Document 4

The Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party Central Committee Bureau's 2-3 November 1945 decision "On the implementation by Party regional committees, city committees and district committees, of the Latvian CP CC Bureau's 31 July 1945 decision "On some Soviet institutions and organisations ignoring the facts of national characteristics in their work"

Latvian CP Central Committee Bureau Meeting  
Protocol No. 135

2-3 November 1945

P[oint] 4.

**"On the implementation by Party regional committees, city committees and district committees, of the Latvian CP CC Bureau's 31 July 1945 decision "On Soviet institutions and organisations ignoring the facts of national characteristics in their work""**

The Latvian CP CC Bureau points out that many regional committees, city committees, district committees and people's commissariats and ruling council leaders have not given sufficient political significance to the Latvian CP CC Bureau's decision "On Soviet institutions and organisations ignoring the facts of national characteristics in their work" and have confined themselves to familiarizing a narrow circle of leading personnel about this, and have not adopted the necessary measures to uncover and eliminate the facts of the ignorance of national characteristics in the work of Soviet institutions, economic and public organisations. In addition, leaders of individual regional committees and district committees, people's commissariats and ruling councils don't even consider it necessary to familiarize the personnel responsible within their apparatus and the secretaries of Party leading organizations with the decision mentioned.

At the same time, the fact was established, during the inspection carried out by the Latvian CP CC, that a rude ignorance of the national characteristics of the local inhabitants continues to exist within Soviet institutions and enterprises. So, for example, the Gaigalava Rural Territory Executive Committee sends out all of its decisions in the Russian language only because the worker who drafts the protocols, has a poor understanding of the Latvian language, at a time when the village's Soviet executive committee leaders have no knowledge or only scant knowledge of the

Russian language; The LSSR People's Commissariat on Preventative Health Care's instructions and decrees to institutions under their jurisdiction are sent out only in the Russian language, despite numerous verbal and written complaints about this extraordinary situation. In Riga city enterprises (Railway Carriage Construction, Super-phosphate Factory etc.), where more than 90 % of the personnel and workers are Latvians and a large number don't have a command of the Russian language, orders, notices and wall newspapers etc. are being written only in the Russian language.

The Latvian CP CC Bureau determines:

1. To explain to all Party regional committees, city committees and district committees, people's commissariats, and the leading personnel of republic ruling councils and organisations, that the ignorance of national characteristics in the work of Soviet and other institutions is a serious deficiency, which has huge political significance, and that leaders of Party committees and institutions, who ignore national characteristics and don't fight against this ignorance in their work, in effect, give sustenance to bourgeois-national enemies of the people.
2. To request Party regional committees, city committees and district committees, people's commissariats and the leading personnel of republic ruling councils and organisations, to take strong measures to eliminate the ignorance of national characteristics in the work of institutions and enterprises, and to submit reports about the compliance with the Latvian CP CC's 31 July 1945 decision, to the Latvian CP CC by 15 December 1945.
3. In accordance with the Latvian CP CC's 31 July 1945 decision, to instruct the Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars (V. Lācis) to issue a Council of People's Commissars' decision about the carrying out of clerical work in institutions and enterprises, taking into account national characteristics, and to issue it to all institutions and organisations and to publish it in the press.
4. To advise the Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars' Culture and Educational Institutions Committee (V. Āboltiņš) to organize three month interpreter courses no later than by 15 December 1945.
5. To order people's commissariats and departmental leaders to select and send suitable candidates to interpreter courses, who, on completion of the courses, will be sent back to the institutions which sent them.
6. To request Party regional committees, city committees and district committees, and the leading personnel of institutions and enterprises to strongly comply with the Latvian CP CC Bureau's 8 December 1944 decision about the teaching of the Latvian and Russian languages to leading personnel and workers, who do not have a command of the Latvian language, and the teaching of the Russian language to Party assets and intelligentsia, who do not have a command of the Russian language.

To instruct Party regional committees, city committees and district committees, the People's Commissariat for Education and the Latvian SSR Central Council of Trade Unions to inform the Latvian CP CC each month about the instruction process of Latvian and Russian language.

7. To note the announcement by the Latvian CP CC Propaganda and Agitation Department, that the second part of the Latvian language text book, and a reader and Latvian language self-instruction book will be issued in November this year.\*

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\* LVA, PA – 101. f., 7. apr., 18.l., pp. 5–6. Original. Translated from the Russian language.

## Document 5

Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars' 4 November 1945 decision on the conduct of daily business in Latvian SSR institutions, enterprises and organisations

**SECRET**

Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars  
Decision

The Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars notes that despite numerous instructions, many people's commissariats, central institutions and organisations, regional, city and rural territory executive committees rudely ignore the national characteristics of local inhabitants in their work. So, for example, in many Riga enterprises (Railway Carriage Construction, Super-phosphate factory), where more than 90 % of all personnel and workers are Latvian and where a significant proportion don't have a command of the Russian language, orders, notices, wall newspapers etc. are written only in the Russian language. The authorized agent of the People's Commissariat for Procurement and "Grain Procurement" sends personnel, who only have a command of the Russian language (Cēsis Region) to state procurement points in such places where there are only Latvian inhabitants. On many signboards in Riga the Russian words "НКПС СССР", "ЛАТЧАБСБЫТ", "РЫБОПЕРЕРАБОТЫВАЮЩАЯ ФАБРИКА" are written in Latvian letters.

Many regional and rural territory executive committees hold meetings, send out decisions and responses to village executive committee requests in the Russian language, even though many village executive committee chairmen have a poor command of the Russian language.

There are also cases where street and institution names are written only in the Latvian language in places where there are a significant proportion of inhabitants of Russian nationality.

The Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars determines:

1. To place an obligation on Latvian SSR People's Commissars, ruling council chairmen, leading personnel of economic and public organisations, regional, city, rural territory and village executive committee chairmen to check and clarify all facts about when the rude ignorance of national characteristics has been permitted in institutions and organisations supervised by them, and to take measures to rectify and prevent the breaches outlined.
2. To place an obligation on Latvian SSR People's Commissars, ruling council chairmen, leading personnel of central institutions and organisations to undertake their daily business and communications with organisations and local executive committees supervised by them in the Latvian and Russian languages.

The daily business of Soviet organs and institutions in rural territories and village councils, where there are Latvians or Latgalians, must be undertaken in the Latvian or Latgalian language respectively.

Various types of advertisements, signs on buildings, which denote the street, the names of enterprises and institutions and signs on the inside (departments, shops, sectors, surnames of leading personnel etc.) must be written in the Latvian or Latgalian language and in the Russian language, depending on the national composition of the rural territory, village council and region.

3. To place an obligation on all leaders of institutions and organisations, and chairmen of regional, city and rural council executive committees to receive visitors and respond to citizen's complaints and applications in the native language (Latvian, Russian) of the visitor and person lodging the complaint.
4. When recruiting personnel for the institutional and organisational apparatus, especially on the periphery, to place an obligation on leading personnel of institutions and organisations, and chairmen of executive committees, to take into account the need to provide services to visitors in their native language, especially in commercial, medical, cultural and household and other institutions providing a wide range of services to inhabitants.
5. To place an obligation on the leading personnel of all institutions, and chairmen of regional executive committees to intensify and systematically check the work of workers in the state apparatus, and require them to learn the Latvian and Russian languages.
6. To place an obligation on all state commissars and leading personnel of central institutions and organisations to implement the Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars 25 May 1945 decision No. 511 about the decision to submit the project in the Latvian and Russian languages to the Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars (Latvian SSR decisions 1945 Issue No. 15, p. 247) without objection.
7. To place an obligation on regional and city executive committees, to denote the names of streets, institutions and organisations in the Latvian and Russian language in places where there are a significant number of inhabitants of Russian nationality.
8. The Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars warns the leading personnel of all republican institutions and organisations and chairmen of local executive committees, that it will view the ignorance of national characteristics as political deviations, which give sustenance to the enemies of the people – bourgeois nationalists, and asks leaders of republican institutions and organisations and chairmen of local executive committees to take certain measures to eliminate the rude ignorance of national characteristics of the local inhabitants of the Latvian SSR.



9. To place an obligation on the Main Literature Board (V. Jaunzems), to strictly comply with the provisions, that when issuing permits to print forms, posters, placards and other documents in publishing houses, that they are to be published in the Latvian and Russian languages.
10. The Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars places an obligation on people's commissariats, heads of ruling councils and chairmen of executive committees to discuss this decision in meetings of the collegiate of people's commissariats, ruling councils and executive committee and to implement it.

*Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars Chairman*

**V. Lācis**

*Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars Chief Clerk*

**O. Stanke**

4 November 1945

Riga

No. 1040\*

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\* LVA, 270. f., 1s. apr., 115.l., pp. 153–154. Original.

## » Document 6

Riga City Workers Council of Deputies Executive Committee's 4 July 1946 decision "On writing on signboards and advertisements in Riga City"

**SECRET**

Riga City Workers Council of Deputies  
Executive Committee  
Decision No. 559-s

### **On writing on signboards and advertisements in Riga City**

4 July 1946

The Riga City Executive Committee points out that many state institutions, enterprises and organisations deform the Latvian language on signboards and signs or designate only abbreviations of the institutions' names on signboards in public places.

In many places the writing is only in the Russian language. The abbreviations of names for institutions and enterprises which are accepted in the Russian language are written in the Latvian language, which makes it difficult for those persons who don't have a command of the Russian language, to understand the names of institutions causing many mistakes and misunderstandings.

To prevent this type of occurrence and in accordance with the Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars' 4 November 1945 decision No. 1040, the Riga City Executive Committee determines:

1. To establish that all signs in public places within Riga's administrative boundaries must be in the Latvian language.
2. That signs must also be written in the Russian language, together with the writing in Latvian, everywhere where the need exists, but it is obligatory in the following places:
  - a) on all signboards on state institutions and enterprises;
  - b) on the city's communication facilities, stops, passenger and goods railway station signboards.
3. That all signs in the Latvian and Russian languages must be: 1) sufficiently complete and understandable, 2) grammatically correct, 3) translated accurately in accordance with the Latvian SSR CPC 19 December 1945 decision No. 1167

- and the Latvian SSR CPC 5 June 1946 decision No. 480 "On Latvian language terminology and orthography".
4. That the use of abbreviations of institutions' names, which are accepted in the Russian language, is strictly forbidden in the Latvian language. Those abbreviations, which are accepted for general use in the Union's republics in the Russian language, are permitted.
  5. All signs in public places must be:
    - a) easily understandable;
    - b) artistically set out or printed (with printed letters);
    - c) have the same textual content in the Latvian and Russian languages and with similar sized letters, which are located together or next to each other on the signboard;
    - d) the Latvian and Russian text on the same signboard is to be laid out in the following manner:

the Latvian text must always be first, and then – the Russian.

If both texts are placed side by side – the Latvian text must be on the left side.
  6. That no later than by 25 July 1946, all state institutions, enterprises, organisations, associations and owners of private workshops and shops, which are located within the city's administrative boundaries, are ordered to remove signboards and signs, which are in public places and don't comply with Points 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of this decision, and to replace these with appropriate new signboards.
  7. That responsibility for the implementation of this decision is given to the Riga Architects Board (Comrade Tilmanis) and Riga City Main Police Board (Comrade Kisels) and Landscape Ruling Council (Comrade Žarkovs).
  8. To ask the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers – to adopt the decision and publish it in the press.

Riga City Executive Committee Chairman

**[A.] Deglavs**

Riga City Executive Committee Secretary

**Kurpnieks\***

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\* LVA, 1400. f., 1.a. apr., 11.l., pp. 118–119. Original. Translated from the Russian language.

## » Document 7

Extract from Latvian CP Central Committee Secretary J. Kalnbērziņš' 29 January 1947 "Report on the Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party Central Committee's work in 1946"

**TOP SECRET**

### **Report on the Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party Central Committee's work in 1946**

(..)

Recently a crude breach in administration and socialist legitimacy, and an ignorance of national characteristics in the work of Soviet organisations has been spreading, which has created a negative mood in the mass of inhabitants, deforming an understanding of the essence of the Soviet system's national policy and helping the bourgeois nationalists in their hostile activities.

The Latvian CP CC adopted a special decision "On measures in the fight against breaches in socialist legitimacy in the Republic". A secret letter was sent to Party regional committees; locally a number of measures were taken on the position of the Party organization, executive committee, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of State Security and the Prosecutor's Office organs on this question. The Party's CC twice adopted decisions, which were directed at the most rapid elimination of the ignorance of national characteristics in the work of councils and the Party, and other organisations.

In this way, the situation was significantly improved. But on occasion, and even now, the Latvian CP CC has come across instances where socialist legitimacy and national characteristics have been ignored, and has taken specific measures regarding these.

Latvian CP CC Secretary  
**J. Kalnbērziņš**

29 January 1947\*

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\* LVA, PA – 101. f., 10. apr., 52.l., pp. 2, 13. Original. Translated from the Russian language.

## Document 8

Extract from the Latvian CP Central Committee's 29–30 May 1947  
XVII Plenary Transcript on the Ignoring of the Latvian language\*

**SECRET**

### Latvian CP Central Committee's XVII Plenary Transcript

29–30 May 1947

(..)

Chairman of the meeting: I give the floor to E. Kusins, a member of the Latvian CP CC.

Kusins: It can be seen from Comrade Titovs' report, that the situation with national cadres on the periphery is still not favourable. (..)

Taking into account the small number of Latvian Party organisation comrades who emerged from underground activity (..) the Soviet CP [All Union Communist (Bolshevik) Party – J. R.] CC sent a large number of communists with a lot of practical Party and Soviet work experience, to work on a permanent basis in Latvia. It could be said that the best of the best were selected from the nations of the Soviet Union and the greater majority were Russian cadres. It seemed that the country should have gone ahead in leaps and bounds in adopting the Soviet system, with this kind of assistance for communist re-education, but this matter is moving ahead more slowly than required. All of the accumulated Soviet work and Party experience of the despatched comrades has not been fully vested in the Latvian working people. Despite the Soviet CP CC's directives and many decisions by the Latvian CP CC, they still don't learn the Latvian language, and, if they don't learn it, then they can't provide real help in mass re-education, and can't involve the workers in the spirit of re-education in socialist awareness. But one won't get far nor will one understand bourgeois nationalism without this instrument. Karl Marx, who never thought of visiting Russia, still wanted to understand the Russian community and feudalism. To find out about primary sources, he decided to learn the Russian language – and learnt it, and his Russian conspectuses have reached us as well.

Comrade Stalin, a Georgian by nationality, forced himself to learn the Russian language in his youth at the time he published the "Brdzola" newspaper and learnt

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\* Two issues were considered in the Plenary mentioned:

1. On the results of the spring crop in our Republic and preparation for harvesting the crop. Speaker A. Nikonovs.
2. On work with cadres in our Republic. Speaker J. Titovs. Some of the debate materials on the second issues are published here.

it brilliantly. (...) Our comrades too, who have been sent to Latvia for a long time, possibly for life, must learn the Latvian language. Do they really think that they can just sit there quietly, while the national cadres mature, which will take no less 5–6 years? The Latvian language can even be learnt in just a year. During the retreat from Latvia, a huge mass of Latvians didn't know the Russian language at all, but, during the evacuation, they learnt not only Russian, but also the Bashkir language. Why? Daily living forced this on them. But people aren't trying here, even prominent leading personnel, who should learn the language, irrespective of the CC decision, aren't learning the language. They have even got Russian secretaries for themselves, so that they can be isolated in their environment and Latvian sounds don't enter. On seeing this, Latvian comrades also don't learn the Russian language, even those who should be learning it in accordance with the CC decision. (...) Comrades Vanags [J. Vanags – Minister for Agriculture – J. R.] and Tabaks [A. Tabaks – Minister for Finance – J. R.] at one time spoke Russian quite poorly, but weren't shy in taking the floor and have now mastered the Russian language. (...)

The Latvian language is easy and cultural, with a wealth of literature, and it is easier than the English language, but at the same time comrades aren't learning the Latvian language, but are learning the English language instead.

Interjection: To travel to England.

Kusins: This is in conflict with the directive to learn the English language, as they won't have to work in England in the near future, but they must work in Latvia.

Let's speak openly. After the CC decision on this issue, there were statements like this made by prominent personnel – why the devil am I in Latvia, why do I have to learn the Latvian language, I was sent by the Soviet CP CC etc. After this they looked around, liked what they saw, got to know it better and are now learning it, as they've been sent here. They then rented a summer house for 5 years. In other words, it could already be learnt in a year (laughing). But then further action can be taken as well. The comrade no longer considers himself as temporary, but as permanent (personnel) and thinks about seriously working here for a long time.

After a long absence I arrived from Moscow. I looked into the course activities. I came, had a look and truly thought that through compliance with the CC directive, there would be a majority of Latvians here. Nothing like it. Those same Russian comrades, just vegetating, regurgitating what they'd learnt in Moscow. Everyone accumulating in a way that there's no yield.

See, comrades, in 1918, when Soviet power was just beginning to consolidate itself, there was a huge Latvian, Latvian worker, Bolshevik mass in Russia, who didn't understand the Russian language. (...) But the comrades worked, complied with Party directives and learnt the Russian language. Now following the same example, here in Latvia, Russian comrades have been sent deep into Latvian regions, and despite Party instructions, it's doubtful that they know more than the words for

“bread” and “good”, nothing else. In other words they work with the assistance of other people or with the help of a translator. One must know the country, the customs, and learn the language. (..)

Chairman of the meeting: I give the floor to the Chairman of the Workers ReserveRepublican Ruling Council E. Paškevičs.

Paškevičs: Before I commence my address, I'd like to mention, that I don't agree with the defamation and slander of the Latvian people expressed by E. Kusins. He hasn't noticed the Latvian people and their wealth of achievements. Just like the other peoples in the Soviet Union, the Latvian people, with some success, are moving towards the victory of communism in our country. I really couldn't understand for whose benefit Kusins stated his words.

Kalnbērziņš: Kusins is offended by the fact that he was given a position which doesn't have a summer house as an entitlement.

Paškevičs: I am offended about the fact that he is defaming all of the Latvian people. (..)

Kalnbērziņš: From his address it transpires that workers who don't know the Latvian language arrive, isolate themselves from the people, and in his words, just vegetate, but such honest people as Kusins, who know both the Russian and Latvian language, aren't being given a chance. (..) I don't know how much one can go on about this. In my view, in the situation in which we live, where local nationalists are still influencing many of our people, the recidivist strata among the intelligentsia, workers and peasants, E. Kusins' speech is very destructive. It should be strongly condemned and in the decision it should be stated that the Plenary condemns the speech of this CC member candidate. (..)\*

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\* LVA, PA – 101. f., 10. apr., 7.l., pp. 163–166, 181. Original. Translated from the Russian language. E. Kusins appearance was also condemned by the LKP CC Second Secretary I. Ļebedevs, LKP CC Ideological Secretary A. Peļše, LSSR State Planning Commission Chairman F. Deglavs, as well as many other speakers. Recognizing his speech as an “anti-Party, bourgeois nationalistic appearance”, he was unanimously expelled from this Plenary. LCP functionaries had already “forgotten” their quite recently adopted decisions about the learning of the Latvian language for new arrivals, about the observation of national characteristics. This had quite destructive consequences.

## Document 9

Latvian CP Central Committee Bureau's 30 October 1951 decision  
"On the presentation of the Latvian and Russian language in schools  
in the Republic"

**SECRET**

Latvian CP Central Committee Bureau Meeting  
Protocol No. 237

30 October 1951

### **7.p. On the teaching of the Latvian and Russian language in schools in the Republic**

(Comrades [V.] Samsons, [A.] Kalnbērziņa, [J.] Kalnbērziņš, [F.] Titovs, [A.] Pelše,  
[J.] Davidovs)

The Latvian CP CC Bureau notes that, guided by Comrade Stalin's teachings on linguistic questions, many school teachers in the Republic have been able to reorganize the teaching of the Latvian and Russian languages on real scholastic foundations and have gained certain achievements in raising the oral and written language culture among their students. However, there are still quite serious shortcomings in the teaching of the Russian and Latvian languages. Progress by students in languages at many schools is noticeably lower than progress in other subjects. In the Upmale School in Alūksne District, from 60 to 70 % of pupils in individual language classes are unsuccessful. Many language teachers in the Kandava and Auce districts and Riga city schools teach language at a low standard, apolitically, ignore language teaching programmes in their work, and liberally evaluate the knowledge of their students. Language teacher methodical commissions in many schools have not commenced their work in the new teaching year.

The Latvian CP CC Bureau's view is that such an unsatisfactory situation in the teaching of the Latvian and Russian languages in schools is a result of the fact that the Latvian SSR Ministry of Education and local people's education divisions, in places, don't adequately evaluate the important political significance of this work and don't do everything possible, to correct serious shortcomings. The review shows that many schools don't have qualified Latvian and Russian language teaching cadres, and that the Ministry has poorly organised the raising of language teachers' qualifications. Language methodology laboratories, institutions for improving the qualifications of education cadres and the Ministry's press organs – "Skolotāju Avīze" [Teachers' Newspaper] and the "Padomju Latvijas Skola" [Soviet Latvia's School] magazine – provide insufficient methodical assistance. Schools have insufficient supplies of



Russian and Latvian language textbooks. From the fifth – tenth years there is one textbook issued for every 5–8 students. Up till now the incongruity between the Russian and Latvian language teaching programmes has not been eliminated. Latvian school students do some Russian language programme sections before they've done them in the Latvian language, which quite naturally, makes learning the Russian language more difficult.

Schools have almost no printed visual aids provided for languages, tables, schemes etc. School directors, as well as district people's education divisions and the Ministry of Education don't adequately control the teaching quality of language, especially the Russian language. In the last school year, there hasn't been a single review by an inspector in many Kandava, Auce and other district schools. Party district and city committees don't control the teaching quality any more either. Party district and city committee secretaries and section leaders very rarely visit classes being taught at schools and don't take the required measures to eliminate shortcomings in teaching.

The Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences' Language and Literature Institute doesn't provide practical assistance to language teachers. The Institute has only planned the solution of the contemporary Latvian language grammatical construction problem for 1952, and for the work only to be completed – in 1955, even though there still isn't currently a unified orthography for the Latvian language, and its development is a task which cannot be delayed.

The Latvian CP CC Bureau determines:

1. To place an obligation on the Latvian SSR Ministry of Education (Comrade Samsons) to eliminate the serious shortcomings mentioned in this decision in the teaching of the Russian and Latvian languages in the schools in the Republic and ensure that they are taught in complete harmony with Comrade Stalin's teachings on linguistic questions. To this purpose:
  - a) to improve the cadre of teachers of the Russian and Latvian languages. To organize regular one month qualification raising courses for 50 language teachers, starting from 1 January 1952. The course programme is to be developed and submitted to the Latvian CP CC on 10 December this year;
  - b) by 1 January 1952, to refine the Russian language programme for Latvian schools, taking into account the characteristics of the Latvian language, and ensure that it conforms completely with the Latvian language programme; to refine the Latvian language teaching programmes for Russian schools and Latvian schools Years 1–7, ensuring that they conform to Comrade Stalin's teachings on linguistic questions; to develop a new Latvian literature programme for grades 8–11. To organize a broad discussion among language teachers, language methodology laboratories and in subject sections on the planned language teaching programme;
  - c) by 15 November this year, to approve the author collectives for writing the textbooks in the Ministry's collegiate: in the Latvian language for grades 1–4, in the

- Latvian language for Russian schools, in the Russian language for grades 2–4, in Latvian language grammar for grades 5–7 and for grades 8–11, in Russian language grammar for Latvian schools for grades 5–7, Latvian language readers for grades 5–7, in the history of Latvian literature, in presentation methods for Latvian literature, a collection of dictations in the Latvian and Russian language and to ensure that the author collectives submit the textbook manuscripts no later than 15 May 1952;
- d) to radically improve control over the teaching of the Latvian and Russian languages in schools, and to request that school directors, leading personnel of teaching units, leading personnel of people's education divisions, as well as inspectors systematically visit Russian and Latvian language classes, and to later analyze and discuss these; to inspect the teaching conditions for the Latvian and Russian languages in all schools in the Republic and to discuss the results in the Ministry of Education's collegiate;
- e) to research, summarize and widely share the experience of the work of the best language teachers; to organize articles for the sharing of their experience in the *Skolotāju Avīze* [*The Teachers' Newspaper*], *Padomju Latvijas Skola* magazine [*The Soviet Latvian School*], methodological commissions and inter-district methodological meetings;
- f) to place an obligation on teachers in all specializations to closely follow the oral and written language culture of their students, paying particular attention to promoting the activities of language interest groups in schools.
2. To place an obligation on the Latvian SSR Cabinet of Ministers' Polygraphic Manufacturing, Publications and Book Retailing Ruling Council (Comrade Putniņš) to publish all of the textbooks and visual aids provided to schools by the Ministry of Education by 20 August 1952.
  3. To place an obligation on the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences' Language and Literature Institute to organize more practical support to language teachers in solving grammatical structure problems in the contemporary Latvian language and to actively participate in the writing of Latvian and Russian literature textbooks.
  4. To place an obligation on the Party's city and district committees to improve the control of the quality of work in teaching and socialization in schools, to systematically discuss these issues at office meetings and to provide timely practical support to schools in overcoming obvious shortcomings.
  5. To place an obligation on the Minister of Education, Comrade Samsons, to submit reports about the implementation of these decisions to the Latvian CP CC on 1 March and 1 May 1952.\*

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\* LVA, PA – 101. f., 14. apr., 52.l., pp. 133, 147–149. Original.

## Document 10

Extract from the Latvian Communist Party Central Committee Secretary J. Kalnbērziņš' Report "On Considerable Shortcomings in the Leadership of Political Work and the Building of the Economy and Culture in our Republic" at the LCP CC 22-23 June 1953 Plenary

The Latvian Communist Party Central Committee's current, Sixth Plenary has been convened in relation to the Soviet Union Communist Party Presidium's decision on considerable shortcomings and errors in the leadership of political work and the building of the economy and culture in our Republic.

On 12 June this year, the Soviet Union Communist Party Central Committee's Presidium reviewed issues in the Latvian SSR and adopted the following decision. Allow me to read it.

- "1. Orders the Latvian Communist Party CC and the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers to radically improve the situation in the Republic, to terminate the distortion of Soviet national policy, to eliminate the nationalistic underground, to fight energetically against violations of Soviet legitimacy, and administration and arbitrariness in relation to inhabitants.
2. To recognize the main task of the Latvian Party organization in the near future to be the wide scale preparation, development and nomination of Latvian cadres in leading the Party, councils and economic work. To abolish the practice of selecting personnel as Party District Committee Second Secretaries and also as Workers Council of Deputies Executive Committee Deputy Chairmen, if they are not from the ranks of Latvian cadres. To appoint Latvian personnel as the leading personnel at collective farms, MTS [Machinery and Tractor Station – J. R.] and manufacturing enterprises where possible. Accordingly, to recall surplus nomenclature personnel, who do not have a command of the Latvian language, to be at the disposal of the Soviet Union Communist Party CC.
3. To suspend the conduct of clerical work, which is not in the Latvian language, in all Latvian SSR Party, state and public organisations. To hold all Latvian SSR Council of Ministers, Latvian Communist Party CC Bureau and Plenary meetings and also all of the Party's city and district committee and the Workers Council of Deputies Executive Committee and Workers Council of Deputies Executive Committee meetings in the Latvian language.

4. Order the Latvian Communist Party CC and the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers to eliminate shortcomings and errors in the construction of kolkhozes, to achieve the organizational and economic consolidation of kolkhozes and an improvement in the economic conditions of farms.
5. Order the Latvian Communist Party CC to enthusiastically intensify political and explanatory work among the mass of inhabitants, especially among the young and the intelligentsia, and to do this work in their native language. To ensure the active participation of the broad mass of inhabitants in the implementation of Soviet power, the aims of which are – to improve the building of the economy and culture.
6. Order the Latvian Communist Party CC and the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers to discuss this decision at the Central Committee's Plenary; to develop and submit specific measures, on how to rectify the situation in the Republic and to improve the work of the Latvian Party and Soviet organs, for approval to the Soviet Union Communist Party CC and the USSR Council of Ministers, within a month."

(..)

Even though the Party's CC has reproached us more than once, in practice we've still permitted distortions in Soviet national policy, not paying sufficient attention to the preparation, development and nomination of national cadres, neglected political work among the masses, permitted violations of Soviet legitimacy and shameful administration and arbitrariness in relation to inhabitants. (..)

The Latvian Communist Party CC and the Council of Ministers has seriously breached Soviet national policy principles in the development and nomination of cadres and has nominated very few Latvians for work in leading the Party's, council and economic organs.

Many Party, council and economic leaders, hiding behind a false vigilance, often conducted themselves inappropriately before all local cadres without exception, excusing themselves on the basis that these cadres lacked experience, and nominated cadres who weren't local inhabitants to leading positions. (..)

The majority of cadres who work in the many Party, council, economic and other organs don't have a command of the Latvian language and don't know the local conditions, or the traditions, way of life and culture of the local inhabitants. (..)

The Latvian Communist Party CC and the Council of Ministers made an error in introducing the Russian language in the clerical work of the Party, council and public organs. It's also wrong that a great majority of meetings and gatherings, directives and other discussions in our Republic take place not in the Latvian, but rather the Russian language, which also impairs contact with the masses.

Our obligation is to ensure the implementation of the Party CC's decisions and to suspend the clerical work of all Latvian SSR Party, state and public organisations which is not in the Latvian language. The Council of Ministers, the Party CC Bureau

and Plenary sessions, as well as Party city and district committees and Workers Council of Deputies Executive Committee meetings must be held in the Latvian language. The implementation of this Clause will require that our leading cadres and council, economic and public organisation workers master the Latvian language. (..)\*

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\* LVA, PA – 101. f., 16. apr., 8.l., pp. 45–46, 51, 57, 67. Original.

In the circumstances of the crisis of power created by the death of J. Stalin in March 1953, the USSR C of M's Deputy Chairman and Minister of the Interior L. Beria tried to move the focus of cadre policy priorities in the national republics (where the national issue was particularly acute) in favour of the indigenous inhabitants. In this respect he turned against the comprehensive Russification of the Republic's Communist Party and state apparatus. He understood very well that in the situation of the crisis of power which had developed after the death of J. Stalin, the retention of the current Stalinist national policy in the USSR's western republics could provoke wide scale destabilization processes, but this obviously wasn't planned as part of his goal – to become the USSR leader. After L. Beria proposal, the USSR CC decided to focus the attention of the leadership of the Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuanian and Latvian Communist Party on such "Leninist Stalinist national policy distortions" as the practice of poor preparation and nomination of national cadres, when workers mainly from other republics were appointed to leading positions, as well as the suppression and ignoring of the national language. But at this very time, a ruthless battle for power was taking place in the highest echelons of USSR power. L. Beria was arrested, declared an "enemy of the people" and was shot soon afterwards (23.12.1953).

## Document 11

Excerpt from the address by LSSR Minister Council Chairman V. Lācis at the LCP CC plenary on 22-23 June 1953

(..)

The mistake wasn't that in the first post-war years we utilized the vast experience of Russian and other nationality comrades in renewing and developing our republic's life. That was correct, and we needed to do that. Our mistake is that we didn't know how to properly use this great assistance, that we didn't know how, after receiving the help and experience of comrades of other nationalities, to prepare local national cadres in a timely fashion, that we did not duly promote enough Latvian cadres to leading and responsible CP, Soviet and economic positions. Our mistake is that we did not resist enough the incorrect tendency of some leading Party, Soviet and economic workers to continue along the policy path of least resistance for placing cadres. We were not consistent enough in this question and we did not put a timely end to these tendencies which unavoidably brought us to those great distortions of national policies, which we are discussing today at this plenary.

Let me give some examples. In the former republic ministry of state farms, with the knowledge of former minister Comrade Vācietis and the assistance of his deputy responsible for cadre issues, Comrade Lodziņš, there developed a situation that of 31 state farm directors only 5 were Latvian, but of the 31 director deputies for political work only 6 were Latvian.

A similar state of affairs developed in the republic Machinery and Tractor Stations (MTS), where of 107 MTS political section chairmen, only 23 were Latvian. Now think about it, comrades, how can one work and what is the value of a political chairman's work, if he can't talk with MTS personnel and state farm workers, if because of a lack of language comprehension he is isolated from those masses with whom he is to be in daily contact and among whom he is to perform political education work. (..)

We see a similar state in our republic's justice organs. The Ministry Council in a recent session reviewed the Justice Ministry's work with cadres. I give you only one example. The Moscow district of Riga has five people's courts. Thanks to the political short-sightedness of the Ministry of Justice and Moscow district's CP committee, it happened that in the last judicial election none of the five people's judges know Latvian and are thus incapable of holding a trial and judging a case in Latvian. There have also been many instances where investigators and prosecutors have performed their duties in Latvian but cannot present their findings to the Moscow district judges and are forced to turn to the republic's

Supreme Court with a request that a case be given to another district court that is capable of reviewing the case and holding the trial in Latvian. This is absurd and this situation is without a doubt the reason for the complaints and dissatisfaction we have earned from the people.

However, the crowning moment took place under similar circumstances, with none other than the infamous Riga educational division director Comrade Rons. Upon starting work, this go-getter put a halt to all record keeping in Latvian in the Riga educational division and replaced it with the Russian language for all service correspondence and documentation. A little later Comrade Rons openly declared that the time has come to completely convert to Russian. Thus this overzealous overachiever and untiring Leninist Stalinist national policy distorter inevitably brings to mind the hero of the "famous" Saltikov-Scedrin book who gives the order to close America. Just as the hero of Saltikov-Scedrin's book achieved nothing with the closure of America, so nothing came of Comrade Rons's selfless efforts, because Riga, as everyone knows, is and remains the capital city of Soviet Latvia and the waywardness of a politically blind person will never achieve the banning of the Latvian language in this city. However, the harm that people like Comrade Rons can do with their actions, and have done politically, is great. „If similar tendencies arise again, we will have to devote greater attention and intervene in a more aggressive manner. (..)“\*

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\* LVA, PA – 101. f., 16. apr., 8.l., pages 95–98. Original.

## » Document 12

Excerpt from the address by LSSR Supreme Council Presidium Chairman K. Ozoliņš at the plenary on 22–23 June 1953

(..)

In carrying out correct national policy, we have to be especially clear about the national forms with which we work. We all too often use the expression: “Socialistic in content, national in form.” What socialistic content means, we all, I believe, understand well. But what does ‘national in form’ mean – we have not thought about this enough and not infrequently we have been incapable of explaining, with concrete real life examples, what ‘socialistic in content, national in form’ means. And it is precisely with the ignoring of national form that our mistakes and the essence of our shortcomings can be found.

As everyone knows, the main national form is a people’s language. In order for us to carry out the political and ideological work of the masses, to adopt decisions in a language understood by the people, then that has to be done in the people’s language and in addition, a language that everyone can understand. We can’t say that everything up to now has been in Russian. No, it has also been in Latvian. But the Latvian language frequently appears to be just a poor translation from the Russian. Some people’s court decisions are written in Latvian so poorly that no one can understand what a person was convicted of. Similar incomprehensible language is used in executive committee decisions. (..) \*

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\* LVA, PA - 101. f., 16. apr., 8.l., pages 227–228. Original.



## Document 13

Excerpt from the address by LCP Riga Regional Committee Secretary J. Avotiņš at the LCP CC plenary on 22–23 June 1953

(..)

In selecting cadres according to political and practical characteristics, we often ignore the national or language issue as if with the elimination of classes, national characteristics have also been eliminated. That is why, in practical work, we have one wage whether the institution leadership is composed of people who understand the local language or not. If we take into account that we feared being labelled nationalists, if we had placed Latvians in all leadership positions, then it will be clear why we have placed so many who don't know Latvian, Latvian traditions and our way of life. That also explains why in almost all of our institutions paperwork is done not in Latvian but in Russian.

In this same hall it has been pointed out (by, among others, Comrade Kalnbērziņš) that it is time to cease discussion regarding mass political work among Latvian workers being conducted in Latvian, and that in many Riga enterprises and collective farms it is not being done. Comrade Kalnbērziņš without a doubt feared, that if he supported such talk, some immature communist would call him a nationalist. But propagandists have come to the conclusion that from now on the language question would no longer be talked about in propaganda, that we should be satisfied with the current status as it is. Now we see that such a stance has been incorrect.

I don't know how far we would have gone in ignoring the mother tongue if the Soviet Union CP CC hadn't corrected us. Inattention to Latvian has been so great that at the last Riga city Workers' Deputy Council session Latvians who know Latvian, for example Comrades Večers, Aleksandrs Kukainis, Riņķis and Krievs, gave talks in Russian. Even the decisions of the session were read by Comrade Straujums, not in Latvian, which he knows well, but in Russian.

Recently ceremonial meetings have also not been in Latvian, even though talks have been given by our esteemed Comrades Jānis Ostrovs, Kārlis Ozoliņš and Arvids Pelše.

Understandably, all of that distances us from the Latvian masses and is used as a weapon by the national bourgeoisie. We gave them reason to talk about the Russification of Latvia. (..) \*

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\* LVA, PA - 101. f., 16. apr., 8.l., pp. 167–168. Original.

## Document 14

Excerpt from the address by LSSR Interior Minister I. Zujāns at the LCP CC plenum on 22–23 June 1953

(..)

As a result of the improper selection and promotion of local national cadres in the former National State Security Ministry, only 17 % of the investigative workers were Latvian. Of the 58 city and district chairmen, only 4 were Latvian and in some districts there was no one who spoke Latvian. Keep in mind that from 1948 to 1952 a large number of workers were released from the State Security Ministry, of which 25 % was due to a reduction in staffing. With regard to the police, Latvians make up 31 % of the labour force, when including high ranking officials – 17 %.

The leadership of the republic's police board and cadre department have not given enough attention to improving local national cadres. As a consequence from 1950 to 1953 the police have hired 558 Latvians while at the same time letting go 603 Latvians.

It is even worse in the Interior Ministry itself and the Police Board's cadre department. There are only 2 Latvians in the Police Board's cadre department and it should not be surprising that the department intends to hire a translator. (..) \*

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\* LVA, PA - 101. f., 16. apr., 8.l., p. 258. Original.

In March 1953 the Ministry of State Security was incorporated into the Interior Ministry and in 1954 the VDK (KGB) was formed.

## Document 15

Excerpt from the closing remarks of J. Kalnbērziņš\* at the LCP CC plenary on 22–23 June 1953

(..) First of all I will address some questions. How do we have meetings and plenary sessions if all of the leading personnel do not have a command of the Latvian language? There is one solution – replace all of the personnel who don't speak Latvian. All meetings, all office work has to be in Latvian. But comrades who continue to work and don't speak Latvian, have to learn Latvian. No matter how difficult that may be, it has to be overcome and Latvian has to be learned.

Another question – what of those workers who on paper are not Latvian but know Latvian? They will continue to work because they will not have any difficulty performing political duties. In the USSR CC decree not one word is mentioned about non-Latvians who have a command of the Latvian language and those comrades who are learning Latvian, that they would not have the right to remain in Latvia and work, further helping to develop our country's economy, that they would have to be released from their duties. We should not emphasize and look for that which has not been written, for that is wrong. And there is no basis to say that now the time has come when no one will speak Russian to those comrades who work in our enterprises and collective farms. No. We have to work in the language that is understood by all workers in our republic's enterprises. It can be that in some plants we have to work with half of the workers in Russian and the other half in Latvian, so that they understand our Party's policies, our goals, etc.

In the beginning we can talk in Latvian, translating it into Russian, or two comrades can work or we can promote two propagandists. We have to decide which is the best practical way. (..)

The next question reads: why doesn't Kalnbērziņš take a goodly portion of the blame upon himself? This implication is completely correct, it should be underscored even more, that I am one of the guiltiest persons, who did not properly implement our republic's soviet national policies and with that, without a doubt, have done our Soviet system, our Party, a great injustice. I am now trying to correct my work. I have been thinking about this question for 3–4 weeks, from all angles, as to why on this issue I have not done my best. I have promised the USSR CC presidium that I will correct my errors and I promise you the same.

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\* Kalnbērziņš's speech closes with responses to questions submitted by participants in the plenary session.

(..) This plenary shows that almost everyone speaks Latvian at a high level, except for Comrade Sieks (A. Sieks – LSSR Interior Ministry deputy – J. R), who has difficulty speaking Latvian, but who is learning Latvian. There are no complaints about the others, not even if Latvian philologists were present. That proves that it is in our power. If we continue to work, to prepare secretaries, stenographers and clerks in Latvian, it is quite possible to have all written work in our native language and translate it only when necessary for higher standing organizations. (..) \*

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\* LVA, PA - 101. f., 16. apr., 8.l., pp. 199–201, 203. Original.

## » Document 16

Excerpt from the LCP CC VI plenary draft  
decision on 22-23 June 1953

**SECRET**

DRAFT

### **LSCP Central Committee VI Plenary Decision**

22 June 1953

#### **On the leadership's shortcomings in political work, economic, and cultural construction in the republic**

(..)

Latvia's CP CC, the Council of Ministers and the CP city and district committees are seriously overstepping Soviet national policy principles with regard to the education and promotion of cadres into leading positions; as a consequence, few Latvians are being promoted in central, district and council organs. The result of this harmful practice is that the majority of leading positions in the republic are held by workers who do not have a command of Latvian and know little about local conditions. For example, of all LCP city and district committee leading personnel, only 47.2 % are Latvians; of Party city and district committee instructors, 34 %; Party cell top leaders, 31 %; city and district council executive committee chairmen and deputies, Latvians are 56 %. Of the LCP CC only 42 % are Latvian; the Council of Ministers, workers 43.9 %; and Komsomol CC, 38.9 %.

The level of promotion of Latvian cadres to leading positions in factories, MTS, collective farms as well as republic finance and procurement, prosecutors and in the Interior Ministry is unsatisfactory. Of the directors of the largest 66 factories, only 8 are Latvians; out of 107 MTS directors, Latvians are only 48; there are only 24 Latvian political district chairmen; and of the 42 council economic directors, only 5 are Latvian. Among the state bank department directors, Latvians make up only 20 % of the total, 40 % of the district financial department managers and 37 % of the district and city council councillors and procurement authorities. Latvians make up only 15 % of all workers within the Interior Ministry. (..)

Behind a supposed careful attitude toward bourgeois nationalistic elements a distrust has been cultivated against national cadres, which further hinders their

education and promotion to leadership positions, as well as to central organs and other posts.

We have serious shortcomings in ideological work in our republic. The majority of lectures and talks in cities and even rural areas given to workers are in Russian. In many work places and kolkhozes all agitation and mass work – the preparation of wall newspapers, meetings – is in Russian. Latvians make up 60 % of the LCP CC lecturer group but only 10 % of the Riga city lecturer group, and many of them read lectures in a language that is not their native language. (..)

It is completely wrong that in republic institutions of higher education many disciplines are taught not in Latvian, but in Russian. At the State University of Latvia, for the 75 Latvian student class groups, 89 different lectures are read in Russian. Not enough attention is being devoted to preparing educational cadres from local national inhabitants. (..)

The LCP CC plenary decides:

(..)

4.To reorganize LSSR record keeping in all Party, state and social organizations so it is in Latvian. Council of Minister meetings, Latvian CC bureau meetings and plenary sessions, as well as Party city, district committee and workers' deputy council executive meetings are to take place in Latvian.

(..)

8.To instruct LCP CC bureaus to halt their negligent attitude to such a politically important question as completing academic work in the republic's institutions of higher education in Latvian; to significantly improve the preparation and qualifications of national scientific cadres, especially to utilize cadres from the Latvian intelligentsia; and to improve their education and ideological work, and to promote without fear the best representatives into leading positions in educational, scientific, cultural and other institutions.

(..) \*

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\* LVA, PA – 101. f., 16. apr. 8.1., pp. 216–218, 220–223. Original. The LCP CC plenum approved this proposal, but in practice, none of these points were ever enforced.

## » Document 17

LCP CC bureau meeting on 6 December 1956 discussing the question  
“About Party, council and collective farm workers learning the  
Latvian and Russian languages”

LCP CC bureau  
6 December 1956

### **About Party, council and collective farm workers learning the Latvian and Russian languages (Comrade Veselovs)**

I. Veselovs – A committee\* was formed to examine this issue in detail and this is the proposal it has submitted to this bureau.

J. Kalnbērziņš\*\* – Do the bureau members have the proposal notes?

F. Kašņikovs – Some editorial changes need to be made.

J. Kalnbērziņš – The main thing now is to establish a firm foundation, so that we can work, prepare books, dictionaries, etc., so that no one can say that there aren't any.

V. Lācis – And we have to think about the theatre. Can't we do something about earphones as they do at the drama theatre?

J. Kalnbērziņš – Correct. Maybe we can do that at the opera so that everyone can go to all of the performances. At the university hall, too. I think that we can do that now, the technology is there and that wouldn't cost too much.

A. Pelše – Comrade A. Voss would need to see which district committees can do this.

J. Kalnbērziņš – Especially in the new buildings. The district committees have good facilities and this needs to be done.

A. Drozdovs – The proposal has this phrase – ‘to consider one of the basic requirements of workers to know the language.’ I don't know how correct that is.

Ā. Migliniks – Not one of the basic requirements but an important quality.

J. Kalnbērziņš – Correct. It's adopted. \*\*\*

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\* The committee members were: I. Veselovs, V. Krūmiņš, K. Ozoliņš, V. Lācis, J. Jurgens, K. Voltmanis, A. Pelše, and J. Kalnbērziņš.

\*\* I. Veselovs – LCP CC Agitation and Propaganda Department Chief

F. Kašņikovs – LCP CC Second Secretary

A. Drozdovs – LCP CC Administrative Organ Department Head

Ā. Migliniks – LCP CC Secretary

A. Voss – LCP CC Party Organ Department Head

\*\*\* LVA, PA – 101. f. 19. apr., 59.l., p. 11. Original. Translated from the Russian language.

Бюро ЦК КП Латвии - 6 декабря 1956 г.

Об изучении латвийскими, советскими и хозяйственными работниками латвийского и русского языков. /т.Беселов/

БЕЗЛОВ -  
Была создана комиссия, которая детально рассмотрела этот вопрос и сейчас представлен на бюро этот проект решения.

КАЛИБЕРЗИН -  
По проекту есть замечания у членов бюро?

КАШНИКОВ -  
Редакционной надо поправить.

КАЛИБЕРЗИН -  
Сейчас главное это создать базу, чтобы могли заниматься дать книги, словари и т.д., чтобы никто не мог сказать, что нет ничего для этого.

ЛАПИС -  
И насчет театров надо подумать, нельзя ли еще где-нибудь так сделать с научниками, как в драматическом.

КАЛИБЕРЗИН -  
Правильно, может быть и в Споре можно это сделать, чтобы все могли ходить на все спектакли. Университетский зал тоже. Я думаю, что мы можем сейчас это сделать, техника для этого есть и не так дорого это обходится.

ПЕЛЬМЕ -  
Надо и т.Воссу посмотреть, по каким районам это можно сделать.

КАЛИБЕРЗИН -  
Особенно в новых зданиях, в районах хорошие залы и это надо сделать.

БЕЗЛОВ -  
В проекте есть такая фраза -- считать одним из основных качеств работника знание языка. Не знаю насколько это правильно.

МИЛЛИНИК -  
Не одним из основных, а одним из важных качеств.

КАЛИБЕРЗИН -  
Правильно. Принимается.

2-лх.

*1 из 2 экземпляров Работе*



## Document 18

LCP CC bureau decision of 6 December 1956

### About Party, council and collective farm workers learning Latvian and Russian

6 December 1956

The LCP CC bureau acknowledges that the CP 20<sup>th</sup> congress directives and the numerous instructions from the CPSU CC regarding the necessity to strictly abide by Leninist national policy principles – for example, to take into account national features in our work with the masses – have been poorly carried out by many republic Party, council and collective farm organs.

In many factories in Rīga, Liepāja, Jelgava, Ventspils, Daugavpils and Rēzekne as well as in collective farms, council enterprises, MTS, in a number of villages, especially in the eastern districts, almost all mass political and cultural education work is in Russian. Taking into consideration the national makeup of the working people, all orders and notices written by enterprise and agency directors are being written in Russian.

In almost all cities of the republic, especially in Rēzekne and Daugavpils, one can see in fact that some street names, individual agency, company, store, and cultural and educational entity signage is written only in Russian.

Several state ministries, for example, the Interior Ministry, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Trade, some Party, council and union organs, who interact on a daily basis with a wide range of the working masses, ignore the Latvian language in their work.

At the Ministry of Light Industry, the Ministries of Heating and Local Industries, Construction and Construction Material Ministries, and Textile Industry Ministry, literature about the experiences of the best workers as well as technical instructions and technical literature are published only in Russian.

The Republic of Latvia's Science and Technical Propaganda Agency has not published one informative technical information brochure in Latvian.

The All-Union subsidiaries of Local Industries and Heating Ministries as well as a few All-Union subsidiary companies, who sell some of their production in Latvia, print their and other product operation and maintenance instructions only in Russian.

All of these and similar negligent attitudes toward the Latvian language summon from the Latvian working masses well founded dissatisfaction and presents a basis for bourgeois nationalists to heat up nationalistic quarrels between Latvian and Russian inhabitants.

Of course, city and district Party committees and city and district Soviet Executive Committee deputies have not taken appropriate measures to deal with the aforementioned shortcomings. They are satisfied that many Party, council and union workers, organization, enterprise, council company, MTS and agency leading workers, who have worked in the republic for many years, do not know Latvian and are not learning the language.

At the same time the Latvian CP CC acknowledges that Party, union, council and communist youth organizations have not been ensuring that local national cadres and republic workers learn Russian.

The Latvian CP CC bureau as well as the Party's city and district committees have forgotten previously adopted decisions regarding this question and have not taken proper enforcement measures.

The Latvian CC CP bureau resolves:

1. To condemn the serious violations of the Leninist national policy principles as being politically harmful, which permit hostile elements to use them to create tension between Latvians and Russians.

To ask of the Latvian CP city committees, district committees, Soviet workers' city and district executive committees, ministries and enterprises, organizations, institutions, council agency and MTS leaders to adopt measures to resolve the aforementioned shortcomings.

2. To assign to Party city and district committees, institutions, organizations, enterprise, collective farm and MTS leaders to organize Latvian and Russian language courses for Party, council and collective farm workers who do not have a command of either of these languages.

No later than 1 January 1957 are ministries and large enterprises, according to need, to organize Latvian and Russian language courses and to organize language groups in institutions, organizations, enterprises, MTS and collective farms.

To assign to the Ministry of Education (Comrade V. Samsons) to prepare and distribute by 1 January 1957 course work and language group plans and programs for acquiring the Latvian and Russian languages.

To request of party, union, soviet, Komsomol and collective farm workers who don't speak Latvian and Russian, to be conversational in 2 years time.

To assign to the Latvian SSR Ministry of Culture (Comrade J. Ostrovs) to organize Latvian language radio programs.

To assign to the Latvian SSR Ministry of Education (Comrade Samsons) and the Latvian SSR Ministry of Culture (Comrade Ostrovs) to prepare and publish as soon as possible Latvian and Russian language text books for adults, conversational dictionaries, Latvian-Russian and Russian-Latvian dictionaries.

To direct the attention of Party, union, council and collective farm organizations, when selecting and promoting cadres, that one of the most important political and practical characteristics to be considered be the knowledge of the Latvian and Russian languages.

3. To strengthen USSR national friendships and unity and to better give Party, council, Komsomol, union and collective farm workers a deeper understanding of Russian and Latvian national literature, art, traditions and social life, it is considered a very important duty to acquaint them with the best of Russian and Latvian literature and art and national history.
4. To assign Party city and district committees and Party cells to put a halt to ignoring the Latvian language in the performance of political, cultural and educational work for the Latvian masses; to improve lecturer and agitation groups by supplementing them with people who are capable of performing political work among the people and who have a command of Latvian, and in Latgale, a command of the Latgalian dialect; to organize the work of amateur artists so that, when necessary, they can perform in Latvian and Russian.

When organizing visual agitation, to make sure that slogans, posters, honorary plaques and socialist competition tables be in Latvian and Russian, where there are Latvian and Russian workers and collective farm workers.

Also, leaflets, flyers and wall newspapers should be published in two languages.

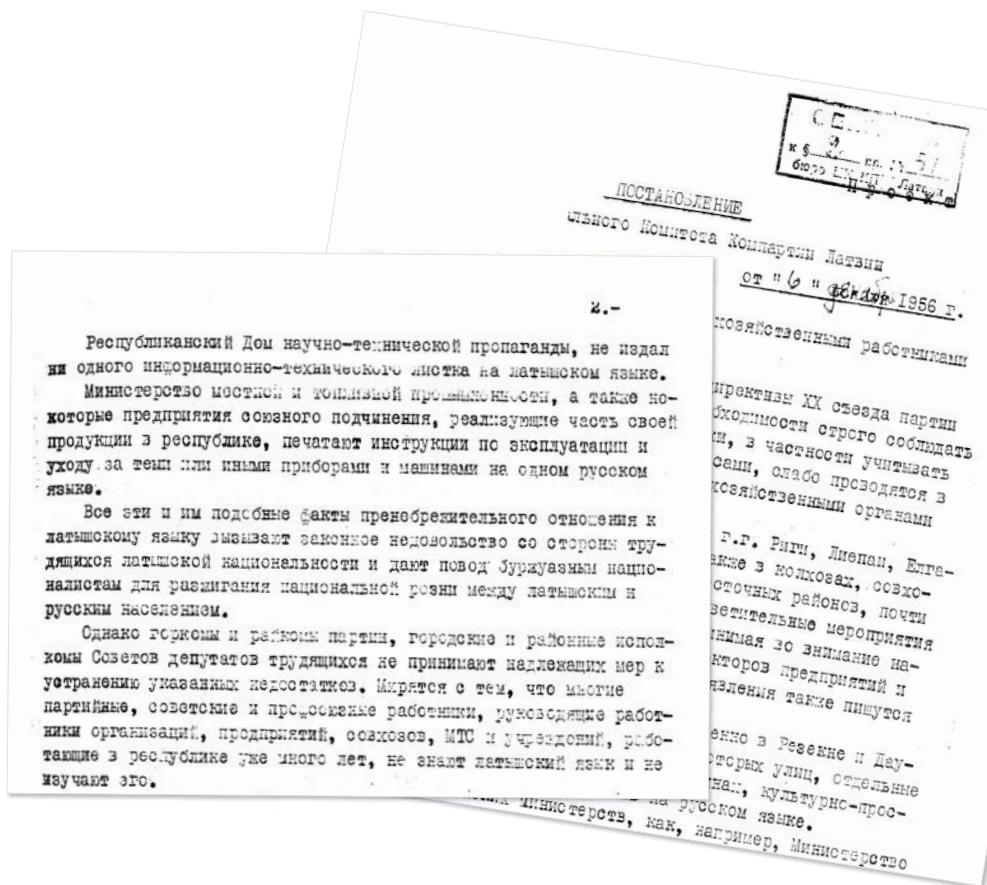
5. To ensure that in Party, union, council, Komsomol, and collective farm organizational meetings, gatherings and discussion groups reports, lectures, presentations, decrees and resolutions are absolutely in both languages – Latvian and Russian.
6. To assign republic industrial ministries and the Science and Technology Propaganda Section to publish literature about the experience of industrial top producers, about technical information and manuals in Latvian and Russian.
7. To assign to Party city and district committees and city and district executive committees to adopt measures so that transport, police, trade organization, communal and household enterprise, cultural and educational institution workers, and medical workers, who have daily contact with the working masses, definitely have command of two languages – Latvian and Russian.

To request from the above mentioned organization, enterprise and agency leaders that they give workers the opportunity to learn Latvian and Russian.

8. To recommend to the Latvian SSR Ministry of Culture (Comrade Ostrovs):
  - a) to find the necessary funds so that the Malta, Dagda, Zilupe and Krāslava districts publish district newspapers in two languages – Latvian and Russian; and to submit as soon as possible proposals for accomplishing this to the Latvian CP CC.

- b) to ask of the USSR Ministry of Culture to changeover one Riga radio station to broadcast in Latvian. In order to improve Latvian music and song broadcasts, to ask that the Radio Information Department Choir, which was disbanded in 1953, be reinstated.
- c) to adopt measures so that travelling concerts and theatrical productions from Riga and other cities have Latvian and Russian musical numbers.

9. Taking into consideration that the Daugavpils and Daugavpils district city and regional newspaper is published only in Russian but a large percentage of inhabitants are Latvian and within the city is the Pedagogical Institute, to ask that the USSR CC permit the publishing in Daugavpils and the Daugavpils district another district and city newspaper in Latvian. \*



\* LVA, PA – 101. f., 19. apr., 59l. pp. 1, 6–10. Original. Translated from the Russian language.

## Document 19

Latvian SSR Ministry of Agriculture CP organization Secretary  
N. Morozovs' reply to the LCP CC Agricultural Department regarding  
the accusation of Agricultural Minister A. Ņikonovs of nationalism

### To Latvia's CP CC Agricultural Department Chairman Comrade A. A. Lūriņš:

This is in reply to the complaint received by the LCP CC in which the LSSR Minister of Agriculture, Comrade A. Ņikonovs is accused of acting in a nationalistic manner toward individual apparatus workers.

I can explain that Comrade A. Ņikonovs frequently gives reports to ministry Party meetings and production meetings. However, I have never observed Comrade A. Ņikonovs express any nationalistic views in his talks.

True, there was a ministry worker production meeting in which Comrade Ņikonovs criticized senior state farm animal husbandry technician Comrade Červaņš for acting improperly. There is a Ministry of Agriculture rule which states that when a complaint, proposal or request is received, the reply must be given in the language the documents are written. Comrade Červaņš did not think this was correct.

There was an instance where state farm workers addressed Comrade Červaņš in Latvian but he answered them, "Why are you speaking Latvian? I don't speak Latvian." Further, when he was asked to observe the language rule, Comrade Červaņš told the state farm chief inspector, Comrade T. Godmanis, that "Beriaism" is appearing in the ministry.

Comrade Ņikonovs criticized senior animal husbandry technician Comrade Červaņš's behaviour and warned all ministry workers that actions like Comrade Červaņš's will not be tolerated.

I view the criticism expressed by Comrade A. Ņikonovs at the meeting as proper.

LSSR Ministry of Agriculture  
Party Organization Secretary

**N. Morozovs**

3 September 1958\*

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\* LVA, PA – 101. f., 21. apr., 28.l., p. 130. Original. Translated from the Russian language.



# Decisions on learning Russian. Imposing the Russian language

## » Document 20

The Latvian CP CC Bureau decision “Russian language acquisition by Latvian SSR Party, council, Soviet youth, union activists and intelligentsia”, dated 7 December 1944

Latvia CP CC bureau decision

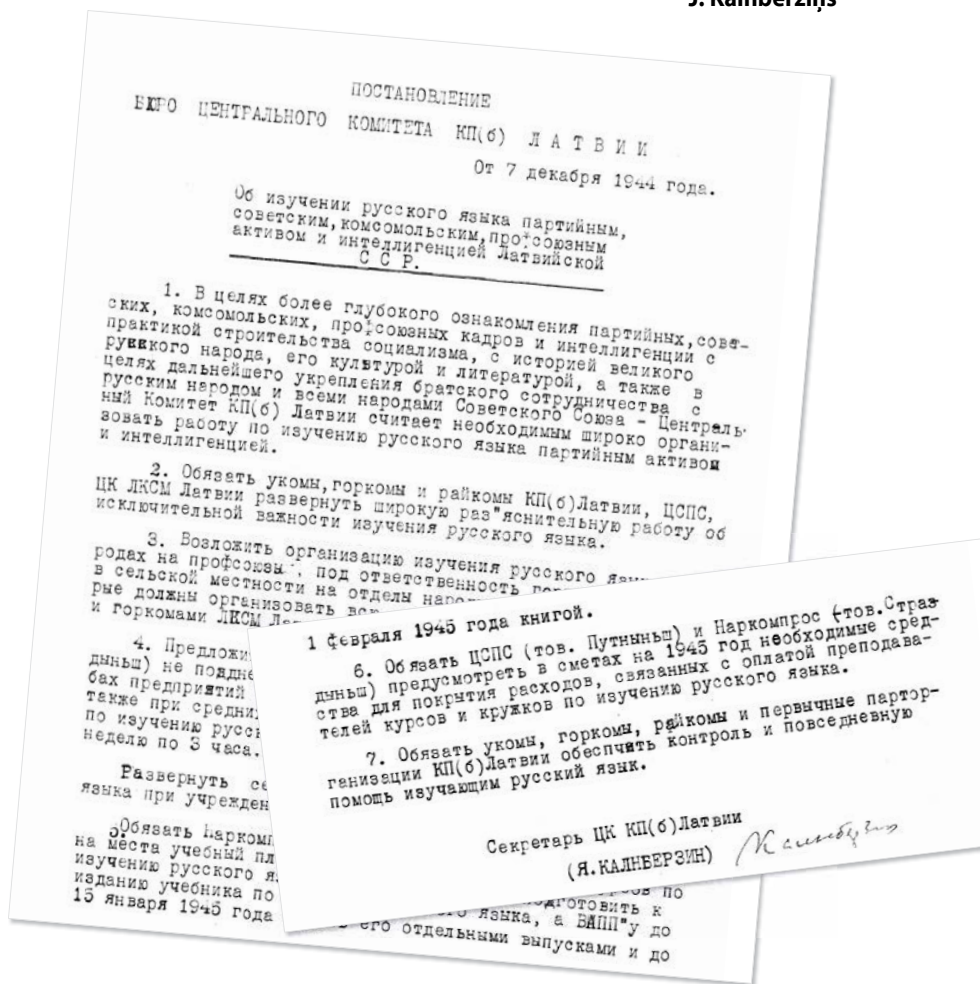
7 December 1944

### **Russian language acquisition by Latvian SSR Party, council, Soviet youth, union activists and intelligentsia**

1. In order to better educate Party, council, Soviet youth, union cadres and the intelligentsia about building socialism, about the great history of the Russian people, their culture and literature, as well as to strengthen brotherly collaboration with the Russian people and all Soviet Union peoples, Latvia's CP CC considers it necessary to organize activities so that Party activists and intelligentsia learn Russian.
2. Assign LCP county, city and district committees, the Central Committee of the Association of Unions and the Latvian Komsomol CC to launch a wide-ranging campaign about the great importance of learning Russian.
3. Assign to the unions, under the auspices of city union councils, to organize the teaching of Russian, and in rural areas, the People's Education Departments to organize this work together with Latvia's Komsomol county and city committees.
4. Recommend to the Central Council of the Association of Unions (Comrade Putniņš) and to the People's Education Commissariat (Comrade Stradiņš) that by no later than 1 January 1945 Russian language courses be organized in company clubs, county and district People's Halls and in secondary schools, without the interruption of production. Lessons should be organized 2–3 times a week 3 hours at a time.  
Within agencies and enterprises, introduce a network of Russian language evening groups.
5. Assign to the People's Education Commissariat to prepare and distribute by January 1 teaching plans and programs for Russian language groups and course study and in a month's time to prepare for publishing a Russian language text book. By 15 January 1945 the State Publishing and Printing House board to publish portions of the material, but by February 1, the complete book.

6. Assign to the Central Council Association of Unions (Comrade Putniņš) and to the People's Education Commissariat (Comrade Stradiņš) to earmark for 1945 the required funding to cover educator expenses for Russian language courses and language groups.
7. Assign to LCP district, city, county committees and CP cell organizations to ensure that members learning Russian are guaranteed supervision and daily assistance.

Latvian CP CC Secretary  
J. Kalnbērziņš\*



\* LVA, PA, 101. f., 3. apr., 15. l., pp. 122-123. Original. Translation from the Russian language.



## » Document 21

Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars 16 May 1945 decision  
"On learning Russian by those citizens who obtain military training  
but do not know the Russian language"

Latvia SSR Council of People's Commissars  
Decision Number 466

16 May 1945

### **On learning Russian by those citizens who obtain military training but do not know the Russian language**

The Latvia SSR Council of People's Commissars decrees:

1. In order to improve the preparedness of Red Army reserves, citizens who obtain military training but do not know Russian are required to participate in a 90 hour Russian language learning program. Russian language teaching will commence everywhere starting from 1 June 1945.
2. To appoint the War Commissariat to keep records of those citizens participating in required Russian language learning as well as their involvement in learning Russian during general military training.
3. To assign to the LSSR People's Education Commissariats and district and city executive committees to:
  - a) organise a network of schools within the War Commissariat's General Military Training areas for those who need to learn Russian;
  - b) organise within the People's Education Commissariat's network of schools Russian language courses for rural area citizens who have completed their military training, without interrupting their work schedule; to task the LSSR district War Commissariat to provide complete support to educational organs;
  - c) provide the aforementioned schools with the best qualified and experienced teachers and to furnish them with program and methodology instruction.
4. To assign to the LSSR People's Commissar Council's State Publishing and Printing enterprise's executive council to publish in 15 days' time 15,000 copies of the short course book on learning Russian for General Military Training soldiers who do not understand Russian and to provide the aforementioned schools with paper and pens, to be sent to locations designated by the LSSR People's Education Commissar.

5. To assign to the LSSR People's Finance Commissariat to provide in their 1945 local budgets funding for expenses related to teaching Russian to our citizens who are receiving military training in the amount of 554,000 rubles.

LSSR People's Commissar Council Chairman

**V. Lācis**

LSSR People's Commissar Council Chief Clerk

**O. Stanke\***

- 2 -

4. Обязать Управление Государственными Издательствами и Полиграфическими Предприятиями при Союзном Латвийской ССР в 15-ти дневный срок перепечатать краткий учебник русского языка для бойцов Всесоюзной, на владеющих русским языком, тиражом в 15.000 экземпляров и обеспечить школы письменными принадлежностями, разослав их на места по указаниям Наркомпроса Латвийской ССР.

5. Обязать Госплан при Союзном Латвийской ССР выделить соответствующее количество бумаги.

6. Обязать Наркомфин Латвийской ССР предусмотреть по местным бюджетам на 1945 год расходы по обучению русскому языку граждан, проходящих военное обучение - 554,0 тысяч рублей, согласно приложению.

Председатель Совета Народных  
Комиссаров Латвийской ССР

Управляющий Делами Совнаркома  
Латвийской ССР

*В. Лācis*  
/В. ЛАЦИС/

*О. Станке*  
/О. СТАНКЕ/

COMISĀRU PADOME  
ЛАТВИЙСКОЙ ССР

1945 г. № 15, стр. 839.

6 мая 1945 года.

Вла-

Р поста -

резервов для  
еиное соу-  
е изучение

новостями с 1 июня

учению изучению русского языка, а также привлечение их к изучению русского языка производится военными комиссариатами бойцов Всесоюзной.

3. Обязать Наркомпрос Латвийской ССР, уездные и городские исполкомы:

а/ организовать при учебных пунктах Всесоюзной военнопленных для лиц, подлежащих обучению русскому языку;

б/ изучение русского языка в сельской местности граждан, уже прошедших военное обучение, организовать через школы Наркомпроса без отрыва от производства.

Военным комиссарам уездов Латвийской ССР обязать органы народного образования всемерное содействие;

в/ укомплектовать учебные школы наиболее квалифицированными и опытными учителями и снабдить программно-методическими изданиями.

\* LVA, 270, f., 2. apr., 50. l., pp. 219 and 219a. Original. Translation from the Russian language.

## Document 22

Letter from the Baltic Military District (BMD) Political Executive Council Chairman Major General J. Voronins to the Latvian CP CC regarding exempting the children of military officers from learning Latvian and Lithuanian

20 September 1947

### To the Latvian SSR CP CC

I ask that the Latvian CP CC and the Republic's Council of Ministers adopt a decree instructing the People's educational organs to exempt the school age children of military officers from the obligatory learning of the Latvian and Lithuanian languages.

There are several reasons for this.

First, as is well known, BMD military units are deployed in the Latvian SSR, Lithuanian SSR and Kaliningrad RSFSR territories. Military service requires officers and their families to frequently move. Thus the children of officers cannot systematically and proficiently learn a local language. That in turn leads to lower grades for their children because every move means having to start at the beginning to learn the local language.

Secondly, military officers are systematically rotated not only within the borders of the BMD but also to other USSR military districts where the knowledge of Latvian and Lithuanian has no practical use.

Thirdly, military officers and their families arrive from various Soviet military districts. The children of these officers have often completed 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades somewhere in the Volga District, Siberia, etc. Naturally, they have not studied Latvian and Lithuanian, but when continuing their education in schools in Soviet Latvia and Soviet Lithuania they are forced to take tests in the local languages. As a result, their progress suffers and their further education is seriously hindered.

These circumstances require that the children of military officers no longer be required to learn Latvian and Lithuanian in school.

In its place it would be more expedient for the children of military officers to be able to attend well taught Russian language classes.

Baltic Military District Political Executive Committee Chairman  
**Major General Voronins\***

\* LVA, PA – 101. f. 10. apr., 62.l., pp. 32–33. Original. Translation from the Russian language.

Notes in the document: To Legzdinš. Call a meeting and have the issue reviewed by the CC School Department. 22 September 1947. Kalnbērziņš.

## Document 23

A list prepared by the Latvian SSR Ministry of Agriculture's Cadre Ruling Council of collective farm directors and key specialists who do not have a command of the Latvian language

### List of directors and key specialists who do not have a command of the Latvian language

Collective Farm	Surname, Name, Patronymic	Position	Understands Latvian
Bēne	Melnīks G. I.	Director	does not
	Novaks D. A.	Head Veterinarian	-"-
	Gorohovs Mihails J.	Chief Engineer	-"-
	Šestakovs V. J.	Chief Bookkeeper	-"-
Īslīce	-	Director (vacant)	-
	Vladimirskis V. N.	Head Animal Husbandry tech	does not
	Novikovs V. N.	Head Agronomist	-"-
	Novikova A. D.	Head Veterinarian	-"-
	Glazdins B. M.	Chief Engineer	-"-
Mežotne	Stabņikovs P. S.	Director	does not
	Švarbeins J. B.	Chief Bookkeeper	-"-
Rundāle	Starikovs J. K.	Director	does not
	Periškina M. N.	Head Animal Husbandry tech	-"-
	Zjabrevs S. A.	Head Agronomist	-"-
	Aņisimova A. G.	Head Veterinarian	-"-
	Laboda S. A.	Chief Engineer	-"-
Uzvara	Kuzņecovs M. R.	Director	does not
	Kuzņecovs V. D.	Head Veterinarian	-"-
	Tolstenko J. P.	Chief Engineer	-"-
	Mihailovs I. S.	Chief Bookkeeper	-"-
Glūda	Stulova Ņina Gr.	Head Animal Husbandry tech	does not
	Kozlovskis S. N.	Head Agronomist	-"-
	Antohins N. F.	Head Veterinarian	-"-
	Ivanovs D. A.	Chief Bookkeeper	-"-
Dobele	Provotorovs J. F.	Director	does not
	Fomenko G. V.	Head Animal Husbandry tech	-"-
	Molčanovs I. A.	Head Agronomist	-"-
	Beļajevs F. P.	Chief Engineer	-"-
	Gračevs I. I.	Chief Bookkeeper	-"-
Ābeļi	Javovļeva G. A.	Head Animal Husbandry tech	does not
	Kočanovs J. V.	Head Agronomist	-"-

Collective Farm	Surname, Name, Patronymic	Position	Understands Latvian
	Cvetkova V. N.	Head Veterinarian	-"-
	Kuravins I. K.	Chief Bookkeeper	-"-
Istra	Petrovskis I. N.	Director	does not
	Lukjanovs A. N.	Head Agronomist	-"-
	Mihailovs P. N.	Head Animal Husbandry tech	-"-
	Lazarevs V. A.	Chief Engineer	-"-
	Rukša N. I.	Chief Bookkeeper	-"-
Komunārs	Petrovs V. F.	Director	does not
	Muratovs A. V.	Head Animal Husbandry tech	-"-
	Neščadins A. V.	Head Agronomist	-"-
	Siņicins L. M.	Head Veterinarian	-"-
	Sovbo T. S.	Chief Engineer	-"-
Kaunata	Jakovļevs N. I.	Director	does not
	Kravčenko I. I.	Head Veterinarian	-"-
	Gedercevs V. A.	Chief Engineer	-"-
	Aksenovs N. D.	Chief Bookkeeper	-"-
Saliena	Čabans G. S.	Director	does not
	Davidovs J. A.	Head Agronomist	-"-
Jugla	Žukovs M. N.	Director	does not
	Sverčkova I. I.	Head Animal Husbandry tech	-"-
	Šemonajeva J. J.	Head Veterinarian	-"-
Austrumi	Bondurs G. F.	Head Animal Husbandry tech	does not
	Aļeksejevs N. A.	Chief Engineer	-"-
	Bogdanovs Z. N.	Chief Bookkeeper	-"-
	–	vacant	–
Gauja	Makarovs I. M.	Director	does not
	Udaļcovs V. A.	Head Animal Husbandry tech	-"-
	Polovovs P. F.	Chief Engineer	-"-
	Vavilovs P. I.	Chief Bookkeeper	-"-
Daugava	Nešedovs N. M.	Director	does not
	Čaiko G. A.	Head Animal Husbandry tech	-"-
	Jakovļevs V. M.	Head Agronomist	-"-
	Bogdanovs V. D.	Chief Engineer	-"-
	Kuzņecovs P. J.	Chief Bookkeeper	-"-

Cadre Ruling Council Vice-Chairman  
**J. Kisis**

23 August 1958\*

\* LVA, PA – 101. f., 21. apr., 28.l., pp. 127–128. Original. Translated from the Russian language.

## Document 24

Excerpt from the 6 May 1959 Decision of the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers "On the state of cadres in the Ministry of Communication and efforts to improve work"

Latvian SSR Council of Ministers  
Decision No. 261

6 May 1959

### **On the state of cadres in the Ministry of Communications and efforts to improve work**

(..)

Considering that within the system of the Latvian SSR Ministry of Communication 90 per cent of the workers are Latvian and their duties require that they serve the masses, a significant part of the leaders and technical engineers do not have a command of the Latvian language, nor do they show an inclination and perseverance to learn it, which creates difficulties working with their colleagues and serving the people.

A significant portion of the leaders and technical engineers within the staff of the Latvian SSR Ministry of Communication do not have a command of the Latvian language. Of the 226 workers at Riga Telegraph, 144 do not understand Latvian, including Telegraph chairman Comrade Samarins, chief engineer Comrade Mikutejs, cadre instructor Comrade Gobanovska and 95 telegraphists.

A similar situation exists in many other communication enterprises in Riga.

Many district and communication bureau chairmen do not have a command of Latvian (among them Comrade Kalugins – Valmiera, Comrade Sorokins – Balva, Comrade Šatajevs – Jelgava, Comrade Starčikovs – Riga, and others), while of eight technical chairmen only three understand Latvian.

Of the 261 workers at the Valmiera technical junction 241 are Latvian but technical chairman Comrade Gurjanovs and engineer Comrade Pakuļs, as well as several other top managers do not have a command of Latvian. A similar situation is at the Valmiera communication bureau.

There are formal Latvian language courses, language groups have been established but lessons do not take place on a regular basis and attendance is low. In addition a significant number of workers don't even participate in the language program (Telegraph – 39 persons, Riga Telephone – 25, Riga Post Office – 15). Such a situation has a negative impact on production work and the education of the collective.

(..)

In order to resolve the aforementioned cadre shortcomings within the Latvian SSR Ministry of Communication, the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers has decided that:

1. The priority of the leadership of the Latvian SSR Ministry of Communication is to ensure that highly qualified specialists with higher education as well as leading staff members and those workers serving the general public understand the Latvian and Russian languages.

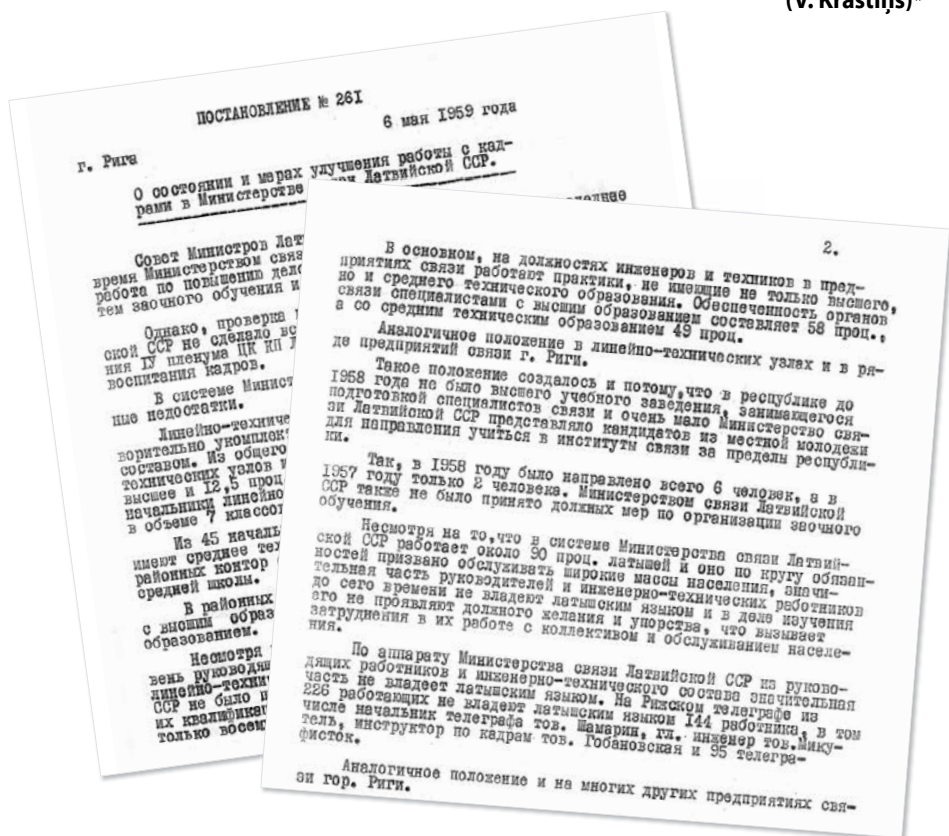
(..)

Latvian SSR Council of Ministers Chairman

(V. Lācis)

Latvian SSR Council of Ministers Chief Clerk

(V. Krastiņš)\*



\* LVA, 270. f., 3. apr., 20. l., pp. 27–29. Copy. Translated from the Russian language.

## Document 25

Excerpt from the decision of the 7th Closed Plenary of the Latvian CP CC on 7–8 July 1959 “On the significant shortcomings and errors in the preparation of cadres and national political practice in the republic”

### **The Latvian CP CC 7th Closed Plenary on 7–8 July 1959**

Decision  
**TOP SECRET**

#### **On the significant shortcomings and errors in the preparation of cadres and national political practice in the republic**

The Latvian CP CC Plenary acknowledges that in the post-war period the republic's Party organization has accomplished a great deal in the preparation of Party, council, collective farm and ideological cadres. More than 20,000 engineers and technicians, about 16,000 agricultural specialists, more than 17,000 educators and 2,400 doctors have been educated in specialized institutions of middle and higher learning. At the same time 1,600 people have graduated from the Republican and Highest Party School. This allowed the promotion of many well prepared workers to Party, council, union, collective farm and Komsomol positions ready to effectively implement Communist Party policies.

The efforts of Latvian Party organizations in preparing, promoting and educating cadres has had a positive impact on economic and cultural development, and the further elevating of worker political and production activities. Compared to pre-war 1940, Latvia's industrial production has increased 8.5 fold. There have been notable achievements in agriculture: in the past five years milk production has increased 35 %, meat production – 41 %. Culture and science in our republic has further developed. Latvian cultural and artistic achievements are recognized beyond our borders. The number of upper class high schoolers, compared to 1940, has increased by a factor of 4, while the number of college students has doubled. The number of clubs and libraries, compared to the pre-war period, has increased 14 times and the number of cinemas – 5 times. Newspaper circulation in 1958, compared to 1940, is 3.5 times greater.

Despite this the Latvian CP CC plenary believes that the republic could have achieved even greater success in economic and cultural development if the CC bureau, and Party city and district committees would not have tolerated serious shortcomings and errors in the selection, promotion and education of cadres. Various



Party organizations have done a poor job in preparing cadres for their practical work, selecting and promoting workers while not paying enough attention to their skills and political characteristics, frequently moving from one managerial post to another, workers who have not been able to perform their assigned duties. That has resulted in frequent cadre turnover and is detrimental to work. In just the past three years, more than half of the first secretaries of Party city and district committees, the chairmen of district executive committees and about 60 % of collective farm chairmen have been replaced. One third of enterprise directors and head engineers have been replaced within the Latvian People's collective farm council system in the past two years. However, in many districts, collective farms and enterprises, things have not improved, which is evidence of a lack of attention and haste to replace cadres.

The most serious violation of Leninist principles for selecting cadres is evident in the recent development where some Party, council and economic organ leaders, in promoting and appointing workers, do not take into consideration their practical and political characteristics, but primarily their nationality. Individual city and district Party committees, ministries and institutions justified the promotion of such cadres, who understand both Latvian and Russian, enforcing the policy to replace those cadres who are not by nationality Latvian. In addition the multi-national composition of the Latvian SSR habitants was frequently ignored.

Lenin's instructions that language acquisition cannot be imposed upon workers, that strict volunteerism must be observed here, was seriously violated in our republic. Thus in November 1956 the CP committee of Riga, following the persistent efforts of its First Secretary Comrade E. Berkļavs, adopted a decision that everyone must in two years time learn Latvian and Russian. Because of this decision, directors of enterprises, organizations and institutions had to consider the issue of utilizing persons in their operations who do not comprehend Latvian. That created an unequal situation among workers of various nationalities because most Latvians living in Riga have long known Russian but workers who had moved to Latvia from other republics had to learn a new language from scratch. The purpose of the Riga CP committee decision was to squeeze out cadres of other nationalities, under the pretext that they did not know Latvian. That created nervousness and insecurity in a significant number of workers.

The Latvian CP CC bureau did not reproach the Riga CP committee for these mistakes. Even more, in December 1956 the Latvian CP CC adopted an incorrect decision that leading cadres have to learn Latvian and Russian in two years' time.

The aforementioned Riga CP committee bureau and Latvian CP CC bureau decisions were viewed by some local republic Party organizations as a directive to replace cadres who are not Latvians. As a consequence, in recent years very experienced workers have been removed from positions in Party, council and collective farm organs without real reason, resulting in disruption of work.

The rights of persons who are not Latvian by nationality have been limited also by the closure and reduction of education programs in Russian in several republic colleges. As a result, graduates of Russian high schools in Latvia and other republics had the right to continue their education in Latvia's colleges taken away.

The efforts of some leading republic workers to achieve national separation have been displayed in the decision making regarding school organizations.

Our republic adopted a law to provide educational materials for all primary school pupils, which would place them in a privileged status, compared to pupils in other republics. Despite an all union law that all high schools would be based on an 11 grade program, a few leading personnel in our republic have persistently requested a 12 grade program.

The CP Leninist national policies were further distorted when the Latvian SSR Council of Ministries and the Riga executive committee, with the knowledge of the Latvian CP CC, under the guise of strictly enforcing residency permit laws, made it difficult for people, mainly non-Latvians, to obtain residency.

The outcome of this has been that individual workers in the republic have implemented anti-Party principles in order to select cadres on the basis of nationality, to request that people who do not know Latvian be dismissed from work, to close down Russian language courses in several institutions of higher education, and to severely restrict the registration in Riga of workers and their families who have come from other republics, all of this in order to prohibit persons from other republics from entering our republic and to banish from Latvia those people who are not Latvian.

The Latvian CP CC plenary notes that the CC bureau and Party organizations have not devoted the required attention to the education of leading cadres, intelligentsia and all workers in the ideals of international friendship, soviet patriotism and the spirit of proletarian internationalism and have not decisively struggled against individual expressions of bourgeois nationalism.

There have been instances in the republic when individual leading personnel have tried to lead Party organizations astray from the true Leninist path, diverting it instead to national seclusion and isolation. For example, Latvian CP CC bureau member, LSSR Minister Council vice-chairman Comrade Berkļavs, in discussing the seven-year-plan proposal, openly opposed the Party's general principle regarding the development of heavy industry, repeatedly requesting that Soviet Latvia decline from expanding the train wagon and diesel factory and instead increase capital investment in light industry and food production, whose products are mainly used in the republic. As one of the main reasons against the development of heavy industry in the republic, Comrade Berkļavs argued that construction of new enterprises and the expansion of existing industries will require the importation of workers from other republics and that would result in an increase in the number

of non-Latvians in the country. Similar views have been expressed by LSSR Academy of Science Economic Institute director Comrade P. Dzērve. These rightist opportunistic proposals are in essence nothing more than a longing for autarchy, isolation of nationalities and seclusion, and their adoption would harm not only common national interests but also the interests of the Latvian people because it would damage Latvia's economic relations with our country's other republics and harm the development of the Latvian SSR industrial might.

The Latvian CP CC bureau and some city and district Party committees have devoted too little attention to the selection and education of cadres in the press, radio, the creative unions and other ideological institutions. Some newspaper and journal editorial staffs as well as individual creative unions are contaminated with questionable persons who do not comprehend proletarian ideology. Therefore, because of weak leadership and controls in Party organs, such as the newspapers and journals "Cīņa" (The Struggle), "Rīgas Balss" (The Voice of Riga), "Padomju Jaunatne" (Soviet Youth), "Zvaigzne" (The Star) and "Liesma" (The Flame), materials were published with the incorrect formulation and there were instances when Latvians were promoted instead of other nationalities. Materials that are ideologically reprehensible (articles by Grigulis, Laganovskis, Berklavs, Kalpiņš and stories by Skujiņš) were printed in our republic's publications and then republished in the foreign bourgeois and émigré Latvian bourgeois press.

The Latvian CP CC bureau and Party city and district committees have not taken into consideration in their practical approach to the Leninist Stalinist education of cadres, in the raising awareness of communism among workers, that the Latvian people, under the ruling Ulmanis\* clique and during the fascist occupation, were corrupted by bourgeois nationalistic propaganda. Few also observe that currently imperialists and their servants, the Latvian émigré bourgeois, in many anti-Soviet radio broadcasts, in letters and in nationalistic literature that they send to our republic's inhabitants, attempt with their bitter lies about the Soviet system to sow hate and distrust among the Soviet nationalities, especially between the Latvian and Russian people. In newspapers and magazines, in lectures and talks, the proper amount of attention is not being devoted to the idea of friendship among the nationalities, soviet patriotism and the propaganda of proletarian internationalism; under emphasized is the prominent role of the Russian people in the struggle for victory in the October Revolution, in the liberating of Latvia from under the yoke of fascism during the Great Patriotic War; few emphasize that the success of the Latvian SSR workers in the development of our republic's economy and culture was achieved with the help of all of the nationalities of the Soviet Union and foremost with the brotherly help of the Russian people.

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\* Kārlis Ulmanis was independent Latvia's last president [1934–1940].

Our weak political ideological work with the intelligentsia is the reason why nationalistic views and expressions are being spread among our creative artists. Unhealthy sentiments and displays of nationalism have been observed also among students and young people in some schools and institutions of higher education.

In many enterprises, collective farms and state farms, political work has not been satisfactorily performed. That can be explained foremost by the unusual situation that for a long time a large portion of Party cell membership has not been replenished by the best workers, collective farm workers and representatives from the intelligentsia, especially from among Latvians. Little has been done to ensure that the best Latvian youth join Lenin's Komsomol.

The Latvian CP CC bureau and Party city and district committees have done an unsatisfactory job in creating within cadres a deep feeling of responsibility toward entrusted work, unquestioning observance of Party and state discipline, frequently tolerating leading personnel who are unable to fulfil their plan quotas and socialist obligations, express local tendencies, self-satisfying and careless sentiments.

Negligence and mistakes in our work with cadres, in the leadership of ideological work, and distortion of Leninist national policies in practice hinders the republic's Party organization from fully utilizing the great industrial and agricultural reserves and from significantly increasing production. Even though certain strides have been made in the republic's agricultural sphere, there remain significant shortcomings. Cattle and sheep numbers have not reached pre-war levels. We have an unusual situation in the republic in that the proportion of collective farm live stock production is barely growing and currently comprises 39 % of meat production and 44 % of milk production. The Latvian SSR has more than 200 economically weak collective farms. Many of them owe the state more than they can produce in a year. The majority of state owned farms continue to operate at a loss.

All of these serious shortcomings and political mistakes have occurred because the Latvian CP CC bureau has not been principled enough in deciding important issues, it hasn't reacted to displays of bourgeois-nationalism, and has not decisively countered those who are specifically responsible. For example, with the knowledge that for quite some time Comrade Berklavs has been utilizing overt nationalistic policies in the selection and promoting of cadres as well as employing the forced learning of Latvian and Russian in issues related to the republic's economic development, the Latvian CP CC bureau did not fully politically appraise his anti-Party conduct and did not put an end to these harmful activities.

The Latvian CP bureau was tolerant toward the failures and mistakes of CC secretary Comrade Bisenieks. He was unprincipled during the decision making of many important issues, often supporting Berklavs incorrect actions, and, in evaluating achievements in agriculture, did not implement the correct measures

to liquidate the serious shortcomings in the work of state and collective farms. Comrade Bisenieks is also to blame for the disruption of milk and meat distribution in Riga.

The Latvian CP CC bureau did not dismiss, in a timely manner, CC bureau member candidates Comrades Pinksis and Pizāns, who were inconsistent on many issues, especially in implementing the Party's national policies, and often took the wrong position.

The LCP CC plenary decides:

1. To recognize as correct the Latvian CP CC bureau decision of 21 June 1959 which properly uncovers significant shortcomings and errors in the work of the LCP CC bureau, individual bureau members and bureau candidate members, in the promotion and education of cadres, the violation of Party principles in the promotion of cadres, and the corruption of Leninist nationality policies.
2. To make it a priority of LCP CC bureau, city and district Party committee, ministry, institution and organization leaders to eliminate the shortcomings and mistakes noted in this decision and to steadfastly observe Leninist principles in the promotion and education of cadres, to persistently and consistently implement the Party's Leninist national policy, always remembering that the restricting of any nationality, regardless of the restrictions, can seriously hinder the consolidation and mobilization of the working people to build communism in our country. Party organizations have to energetically struggle against any and all attempts to distort Leninist principles in the promoting and educating of cadres, against all forms of nationalistic-bourgeois and Russian chauvinism expression, as well as energetically eradicating all lenient attitudes toward them.
3. To make it a priority of LCP CC bureaus, city and district committees to categorically halt anti-Party conduct, where individual Party, state and collective farm chairmen select workers not on the basis of their work and political characteristics but on nationality, personal sympathies and servitude. To ensure the careful evaluation of cadres in their practical work, to confidently promote into leading positions younger workers who have shown their organizational skills and loyalty to the CP, taking into consideration the Party's guidelines regarding the proper treatment and proportion of younger and older cadres.

All of the practical work of Party organs with cadres must be governed by the historical decisions of the USSR XXI congress and the USSR CC June plenary, and by the successful fulfilling of the 1959 people's economic plan in the republic, as well as in every district, enterprise, collective and state farm.

4. To revoke the 6 December 1956 LCP CC bureau decision "About leading cadres learning Latvian and Russian", acknowledging it as incorrect. To explain to city and district Party committees as well as Party cells, that the learning of Latvian

and Russian has to be organized according to Lenin's instructions on strict volunteerism and under no circumstances by administration and coercion.

5. To rescind the LCP CC IV plenary (October 1958) decision 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph part 2 as incorrect.

(..)

11. To decide that insofar as Comrade Berklavs has for a long time in his practical work permitted serious political mistakes, for which he has been repeatedly admonished, and in view of the fact that he has not come to the correct conclusions, and within the LCP CC plenary he exhibited un-Soviet behaviour and was not honest, Comrade Berklavs is removed from the LCP CC bureau and CC membership and it is decided that it is not possible to allow him to remain as vice-chairman of the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers. To warn Comrade Berklavs that should he not change his anti-Party views, his membership in the Party will be reviewed.

12. With inconsistency on many important issues, particularly those related to the implementation of the Party's Leninist national policy, for his politically incorrect public address at the LCP CC bureau, Comrade J. Pinskis is removed from the ranks of the LCP CC bureau candidate members.

13. For inconsistency on many acute political issues, for the publication of numerous ideologically harmful articles in the publication "Cīņa", LCP CC bureau member candidate, "Cīņa" editor Comrade P. Pizāns is hereby given a warning.

14. To bring to the attention of the LCP CC secretary, bureau member Comrade N. Bisenieks, his admitted serious errors and shortcomings in his work.

15. To assign to the LCP CC bureau:

a) to clarify and evaluate issues regarding the work of the Latvian SSR Academy of Science Institute of Economics;

b) to strengthen the editorial staffs of the newspapers "Rīgas Balss" and "Soviet Youth" as well as the journal "Zvaigzne" with cadres.

16. To nullify the LCP CC 23 June 1953 plenary decision "On shortcomings in political work and the constructing of the economy and cultural creativeness in the republic" on the grounds of being politically incorrect and forced upon by Party and Soviet Union enemy L. Beria.\* (..)

Latvian CP CC secretary  
**J. Kalnbērziņš\*\***

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\* Regarding the activities of Eduards Berklavs and other Latvian national communists see Riekstiņš, J. (2008), *Nevardarbigā pretošanās: Latvijas neatkarības atgūšanas ceļš. 1945–1991*. Latvijas Zinātņu akadēmija pp. 162–224, "Latviešu nacionālkomunistu cīņa pret Latvijas kolonizāciju un rusifikāciju".

\*\* LVA, PA, 101. f., 22. apr., 15. l., pp. 16–27, 30. Original.

## Document 26

Minutes of the 11 January 1974 meeting with LSSR Council of Ministers' Deputy Chairman V. Krūmiņš on the transfer of teaching at the USSR Armed Forces Specialist Training Group to the Russian Language

**SECRET**

Minutes of the meeting

**with the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers' Deputy Chairman V. Krūmiņš on the transfer of teaching at the USSR Armed Forces Specialist Training Group to the Russian Language**

Minutes

11 January 1974

In Attendance: Comrades V. M. Krūmiņš, I. J. Čaša, A. K. Veiss,  
J. J. Brodelis, J. J. Ruško, M. P. Kuhmalainens

### **Agenda**

1. On the transfer of teaching at the USSR Armed Forces Specialist Training Group to the Russian Language.

Heard: Information from Latvian SSR War Commissar Major-General I. J. Čaša about tasks for training specialists for the USSR Armed Forces, in accordance with Directive No. D-035 from the USSR Defence Minister dated 30 July 1973, and the proposal from the Latvian SSR DOSAAF CC (Comrade A. K. Veiss), the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers Professional Technical Education State Committee (Comrade J. J. Brodelis), Latvian SSR Council of Ministers (Comrade M. P. Kuhmalainens) and the Latvian SSR Ministry of Agriculture (Comrade J. J. Ruško).

### Decision:

1. To replace teaching in the Latvian language with teaching in the Russian language, beginning with the second stream of the Specialist Training Plan in the 1973/1974 teaching year at: the Latvian SSR DOSAAF CC (Comrade A. K. Veiss) Liepāja Automobile and Motorcycle Club 2 groups (60 people), Latvian SSR Council of Ministers Professional Technical Education State Committee – 32, and the City Professional Technical School at Ogre – 1 group (30 people).
2. To transfer teaching in the USSR Armed Forces Specialist Training to the Russian language in the 1974/1975 teaching year at:
  - a) DOSAAF teaching organisations:
    - Liepāja Automobile and Motorcycle Club – 6 study groups (180 people),
    - Talsi Automobile and Motorcycle Club – 5 study groups (150 people),

- Jēkabpils Automobile and Motorcycle Club – 2 study groups (60 people),
  - Valmiera Automobile and Motorcycle Club – 6 study groups (180 people).
  - b) Professional Technical Education Schools:
    - Rural Professional Technical High School No. 8 – 2 study groups (60 people),
    - City Professional Technical School No. 32 – 1 study groups (30 people).
  - c) Latvian SSR Ministry of Agriculture technical colleges:
    - Višķi Sovhoz Technical College – 2 study groups (60 people),
    - Malnava Sovhoz Technical College – 1 study groups (30 people).
3. To transfer USSR Armed Forces Specialist Training studies in the Russian language in 1975/1976 at:
- a) DOSAAF teaching organisations:
    - Valmiera Automobile and Motorcycle Club – 5 study groups (150 people),
    - Talsi Automobile and Motorcycle Club – 5 study groups (150 people).
  - b) Professional technical education schools:
    - Rural Professional Technical High School No. 1 – 2 study groups (60 people),
    - Rural Professional Technical High School No. 4 – 2 study groups (60 people),
    - Rural Professional Technical High School No. 7 – 2 study groups (60 people),
    - Rural Professional Technical High School No. 11 – 2 study groups (60 people).
  - c) Latvian SSR Ministry of Agriculture's technical colleges:
    - Višķi Sovhoz Technical College – 4 study groups (120 people),
    - Malnava Sovhoz Technical College – 2 study groups (60 people).
4. The issue of transferring further USSR Armed Forces Specialist Training studies to the Russian language should be reviewed in January and February 1976.

Latvian SSR Council of Ministers Deputy Chairman  
**V. Krūmiņš\***

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\* SAL, 270. f., 1. s. apr., 2223. l., p. 13–14. Original. Translated from the Russian language.



## Document 27

Excerpt from USSR CP CC Member, Latvian Communist Party CC First Secretary A. Voss' lecture "Current issues on the further intensification of the working people's patriotic and international education" on 28 and 29 June 1982 in Riga at the All Union Scientific Practical Conference "The achievement of maturity in the development of national relations in socialist conditions. Experiences and problems in patriotic and international education"

### **Current issues on the further intensification of the working people's patriotic and international education. USSR CC Member, Latvian Communist Party CC First Secretary A. Voss' lecture**

(..) We always try to observe the two language principle in organising political mass events. In other words we try to hold all events in the Latvian and Russian languages, simultaneously, or one after the other, as the people of these nationalities who know these languages, form the absolute majority in work collectives. The working people are informed of the language in which the respective event will be held through appropriate notices. Wherever technically possible, earphones or other synchronous translating measures are used.

The work of mass information tools, the press, television and radio is organised according to these principles. District, city and enterprise newspapers are issued in two languages in districts and cities, as well as in large industrial concerns, where, alongside Latvians, a certain percentage is composed of representatives of other nationalities.

Nearly one third of the Republic's television and radio broadcasts, not including the transmission of the All Union programmes, are organised in the Russian language. The names of streets, state and public organisations, commercial enterprises, and cultural and municipal institutions and similar, are usually in both languages.

It may seem that these are everyday trifles, but overall, such details significantly affect the development of the mutual relationship between the cultures of the nationalities.

This should be noted in everyday practices, as our goal is to create a real internationalist morale and psychological climate in each collective. We want all of the members of our society to be real internationalists.

At the same time we believe that a very important pre-condition for the successful functioning of a multinational collective is the overcoming of existing language barriers between people of different nationalities, and the creation of conditions, so that the Russian language can be learnt everywhere as the language of mutual communication between nations.

As previously stated, the majority of work collectives in our Republic are multinational collectives, and the student composition of comprehensive schools, professional technical high schools and universities is usually multinational. Millions of people change their place of residence each year, crossing the borders of Soviet and autonomous republics. And everyone experiences the same problem everywhere – the problem of human contact. But in the conditions of our multinational state, knowledge of the Russian language undoubtedly helps to considerably widen these contacts. (..)

Soviet people understand this very well. The striving to master the Russian language is great everywhere, and is being expressed ever more widely. That's why Party organisations and soviet organs must constantly ensure that all the conditions are created, to satisfy this desire, which the objective logic of the construction of communism creates in this country.

(..) In Latvia, probably like in the other republics, the learning of the mutual language begins in children's pre-school institutions, which in many cases are set up as multinational institutions.

This policy, quite naturally, continues in the coming years, when the children attend school.

The Latvian Communist Party Central Committee places great significance on schools where there are parallel classes with teaching in the Russian and Latvian languages. We have accumulated certain experience in this work. Currently, there are 130 schools of this type in the Republic. (..)

To us it seems that a challenge has arisen from the needs of inhabitants in our Republic, and obviously in a number of other republics, to extend this specific two language school network. At the same time it's also important that Russians and representatives of other nationalities who gain an education in the republics, know the respective language of the native population. (..)

In the 1970's, the Latvian Communist Party Central Committee twice reviewed the issue of measures required to further improve the presentation and learning of the Russian language in the Republic's schools. In step with the decisions made, school programmes, textbooks and instructional guides in the Russian language were improved, and also achieved recognition in All Union organisations. A range of measures have been developed and are being implemented to improve the qualifications of Russian language teachers. At many schools language laboratories have been installed for teaching the Russian language, and library stocks have been supplemented with Russian literature. A deeper understanding of the connections between Russian and Latvian literature is taking place.

It's quite clear that all of these measures have played a significant part in the situation where the majority of the Republic's inhabitants have now mastered the Russian language. (..)\*

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\* *Cīņa* [a newspaper], 29 June 1982.

## » Document 28

The Latvian Communist Party Central Committee's and the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers' 19 July 1983 decision "On additional measures for improving the acquisition of the Russian language at Latvian SSR comprehensive schools and other learning institutions"

Not for publication in the press

Latvian Communist Party Central Committee's  
and the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers  
Decision No. 421

19 July 1983

### **On additional measures for improving the acquisition of the Russian language at Latvian SSR comprehensive schools and other learning institutions**

In the Soviet CP Central Committee's and the USSR Council of Ministers' 26 May 1983 decision No. 473 "On additional measures for improving the acquisition of the Russian language in the Soviet republics' comprehensive schools and other learning institutions" it's pointed out that as a result of the unwearying implementation of the Leninist national policy, great economic and social progress had been achieved in all of our nation's Soviet and autonomous republics, autonomous regions and provinces. The internationalization of all facets of public life and the mutual enrichment and flourishing of national cultures is taking place. The development of all of the native languages and literature of the USSR nation and peoples, including those which previously didn't have their own orthography, have gained a wide field of endeavour for broad all-round and equal development. The right to study in one's own native language, as well as in the languages of the other peoples of the USSR, has been effectively ensured for all citizens.

In today's circumstances, when the national economy has become a unified economic complex, a new historic community has been created – the Soviet nation. The significance of the Russian language is growing, as the Soviet people have voluntarily adopted it as the international means of communication.

A free command of the Russian language alongside one's own native language is becoming an objective necessity and need for each citizen, serving to bring all nations and nationalities closer together, strengthening the friendship of the

peoples of the USSR, bringing them closer to the cultural spiritual values of their own country and the world, to the achievements of scientific and technical progress and the consolidation of the nation's defensive capacity.

However, the graduates of secondary learning institutions, especially in rural areas, in many cases have a poor command of the Russian language, and therefore experience difficulties in inter-national personal communication in political activities in manufacturing and in the community, as well as in military service.

One of the reasons for this situation is comprehensive schools and other learning institutions where learning doesn't take place in the Russian language, and the unsatisfactory supply of Russian language teachers. A certain number of teachers, especially in the preparatory classes, are insufficiently prepared in the Russian language and its teaching methods. The improvement of existing pedagogic cadre qualification norms to the required level will not solve this problem. In this subject, there is a deficiency at learning institutions of good quality textbooks, methodology handbooks, dictionaries and fiction in the Russian language. Mass information tools are poorly utilized for mastering the Russian language. None of the nation's educational organs provide the required attention to the improvement of the teaching quality of the Russian language.

The abovementioned deficiencies in the teaching of the Russian language at comprehensive schools and other learning institutions can also be encountered in the Latvian SSR.

In accordance with the Soviet CP Central Committee's and the USSR Council of Ministers' 26 May 1983 decision No. 473, the Latvian Communist Party Central Committee and the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers determine:

1. The Latvian Communist Party district and city committees, district and city (cities under the jurisdiction of the republic) People's Council executive committees, Latvian SSR Ministry of Education, Latvian SSR Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education and the Latvian SSR Professional Technical Education State Committee, other Latvian SSR ministries and institutions, which are in charge of higher and secondary special learning institutions, to take additional measures to improve the effectiveness of teaching of the Russian language at institutions with Latvian as the teaching language, bearing in mind that alongside a native language, knowledge of the Russian language is important in improving a Soviet person's work and public political activities, and a condition for successfully accomplishing a constitutional duty of honour – serving in the ranks of the USSR Armed Forces. To achieve a situation where a mastery of the Russian language becomes the norm and obligation of each young person finishing secondary learning institutions.
2. The Latvian SSR State Planning Committee, Latvian SSR Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education, Latvian SSR Ministry of Education and the Latvian

SSR Ministry of Finance to prepare and take specific measures, so that the quality of the preparation of Russian language and literature teachers be expanded and improved at the Latvian SSR's pedagogical learning institutions and at the Pēteris Stučka Latvian State University. To provide draft plans by the end of 1990 for the preparation of Russian language and literature teachers, to fully satisfy the demand for them at all learning institutions in the Republic.

3. To note that with the Soviet CP Central Committee's and the USSR Council of Ministers' 26 May 1983 decision No. 473, for improving the quality of the preparation of all specialized Russian language teaching cadres at pedagogical higher and secondary special learning institutions, in which teaching does not take place in the Russian language, the USSR Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education, the USSR Ministry of Education and Soviet republics' councils of ministers are instructed:

- 3.1. to submit changes in teaching plans at the respective learning institutions, increasing the time spent teaching the Russian language, and for this goal, permitting the use of time planned for mastering learning disciplines (as options) and methodical preparation, and where required – part of the time which is meant for learning a foreign language;
- 3.2. at pedagogical institutes, to organize the preparation of an additional specialization, "Russian language and literature at a national school" for early primary teachers, native language, as well as foreign language teachers, for schools where teaching does not take place in the Russian language;
- 3.3. after the development of these conditions, to establish final exams in the Russian language at pedagogical schools and institutes, as well as at university specializations in pedagogy;
- 3.4. to give rural comprehensive school graduates, who have expressed a desire to acquire the Russian language teacher specialization, the right to enrol in preparation courses for pedagogical institutes and universities without having the professional standing;
- 3.5. to determine a procedure for posting and preferential intake at pedagogical learning institutions for eight-year and high school graduates, with the recommendations of Pedagogic Councils and state education organs;
- 3.6. to institute the practice of sending teachers to RFSSR, Ukraine SSR and Belarus SSR teacher qualification improvement institutes and institutes of higher learning to improve their qualifications, as well as approving the conditions for the mentioned teachers' travel, after confirming this with the USSR Ministry of Finance.

4. The Latvian SSR Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education and the Latvian SSR Ministry of Education is to:

- 4.1. organise one year evening courses for persons, who have expressed a desire to improve their Russian language knowledge, at the Pēteris Stučka Latvian State University and the Vilis Lācis Liepāja State Pedagogical Institute.  
To note that with the Soviet CP Central Committee's and the USSR Council of Ministers' 26 May 1983 decision No. 473, the USSR Ministry of Education is instructed to develop the regulations for these courses and to determine the sources of their finance after confirming this with the USSR Ministry of Finance;
- 4.2. organise two month qualification improvement courses for early primary teachers and Russian language teachers at the Republic's learning institutions, with Latvian as the teaching language, at the Latvian SSR Ministry of Education's Republican Teacher Qualification Improvement Institute from 1983, at the Pēteris Stučka Latvian State University from 1984 and at the Daugavpils Pedagogical Institute from 1985. To establish a repeated teaching course sequence for the specialists mentioned – once every three years. The Latvian SSR Ministry of Finance to provide the necessary allocation of funding for this goal.
5. The Latvian SSR Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education to ensure the preparation of Russian language and literature teachers from the ranks of the inhabitants of the Latvian SSR at RFSSR pedagogical institutes and universities, sending 10 people each year to be accepted without having to compete for positions and 20 people for a 1 year traineeship from 1984–1990.
6. The Latvian SSR Ministry of Education:
  - 6.1. to open a Russian language and literature department at the Republican Teacher Qualification Improvement Institute in 1984, applying the rates of pay provided by the USSR Council of Ministers' 5 June 1957, decision No. 660 to the employees of this department;
  - 6.2. to provide children with a mastery of the Russian language in older groups at preschool institutions and comprehensive school preparatory classes from 1984–1988.
7. The Latvian SSR Ministry of Education commissioned the Latvian SSR State Committee for Construction to provide for the preparation of technical documentation for the construction of a teaching block of 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> and halls of residence of 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> for those attending the Republican Teacher Qualification Improvement Institute in 1983–1984.
8. The Latvian SSR Ministry of Education, the Latvian SSR Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education, the Latvian SSR Professional Technical Education State Committee, and other Latvian SSR ministries and institutions which are in charge of higher and secondary special learning institutions:

- 8.1. to provide measures, so that effective methods for the teaching of the Russian language are implemented at all types of learning institutions, and in addition, to focus special attention on work so that students are inculcated with the skill to have a free command of the Russian spoken language; to evaluate the need to increase the time devoted to learning the Russian language;
- 8.2. to allow the splitting into sub-groups of all classes and groups where the number of students are – over 25 people, in learning the Russian language and literature at comprehensive schools and other secondary learning institutions with Latvian as the teaching language;
- 8.3. to utilize the experience of many Soviet republics in the development of comprehensive schools and classes with more intensified learning of the Russian language, the formation of secondary learning institutions with teaching in the native language and the Russian language, more broadly; to introduce the learning of the Russian language in technical school groups with Latvian as the teaching language;
- 8.4. to widen the acquisition of the Russian language as an inter-national means of communication in scientific research work, its research connections with the Latvian language and the preparation of Russian language scientific research cadres from among the native population of the Latvian SSR's people. (..)

**SECRET**

9. (..) Latvian Communist Party district and city committees, Latvian SSR War Commissariat, Latvian SSR Ministry of Education, Latvian Komsomol Central Committee, Latvian SSR DOSAAF Central Committee:

- intensify the military patriotic upbringing of young people and the preparation of young people for work duties in the ranks of the USSR Armed Forces;
- implement measures for the professional education of young people and to involve young people of Latvian nationality more widely in study at military learning institutions.

To note that the Soviet CP Central Committee and the USSR Council of Ministers by their 26 May 1983 decision No. 473 "On supplementary measures to improve the learning of the Russian language at comprehensive schools and other learning institutions in the Soviet republics":

- have, where required, allowed for preparatory courses for recruits which are organized in accordance with the USSR Council of Ministers' 15 December 1978 decision No. 2684, to be increased to 6 months;

- asks the USSR Ministry of Defence to review the question about the acceptance in military learning institutions of young people from the local nationalities of Soviet republics without having to compete for positions;
- supports the experience of the Azerbaijan SSR and the Georgian SSR in the preparation of young people of the local nationality in special boarding schools with intensified teaching of the Russian language and more intensive military and physical fitness for young people, so that they can join military learning institutions.

Allowed the Soviet republics' councils of ministers to organize such boarding schools. Determined that all costs for supporting this would be covered by the state.

Instructs the USSR Ministry of Education and USSR Ministry of Defence, after coordination with the USSR Ministry of Finance, to prepare and adopt a regulation on the mentioned boarding schools and on the staff for these types of boarding schools, taking into account, as well, that the number of students in the group in classes must not exceed 30 people; expenditure for the purchase of catering, clothing and soft furnishings will be undertaken, guided by the defined norms in Suvorov schools; the rates of pay for directors and their deputies for this teaching and education work (including leading military personnel) is defined at 10 percent, but teachers' and educators' rates of pay – at 15 percent higher than the applicable rates, which are defined for the workers mentioned at general types of boarding schools.

After the USSR Ministry of Education and USSR Ministry of Defence have adopted the regulation about special boarding schools with intensified teaching of the Russian language and more intensive military and physical fitness for young people, to order the Latvian SSR Ministry of Education and Latvian SSR War Commissariat to submit proposals to the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers about organizing such schools in the Republic within three months.

10. The Latvian SSR Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education, the Latvian SSR Ministry of Education, the Latvian SSR Professional Technical Education State Committee, other ministries and institutions which are in charge of higher and secondary special learning institutions, and the Latvian SSR State Committee for Publishing Houses, Printing Plants and the Book Trade to approve a complete set of teaching aids, illustrated teaching aids, methodical literature, dictionaries and conversational dictionaries for teaching institutions with Latvian as the teaching language for students and teachers, as well as a plan for the preparation and distribution of Russian fiction, to fully satisfy the needs of the mentioned learning institutions for 1984–1990.

To note that with the Soviet CP Central Committee's and the USSR Council of Ministers' 26 May 1983 decision No. 473, the "Русский язык в национальной школе" ["Russian Language in the National School" – J. R.] Magazine is



transformed into the "Русский язык и литература в средних учебных заведениях с нерусским языком обучения" ["Russian Language and Literature for Secondary Learning Institutions in Which Teaching does not Take Place in the Russian Language" – J. R.] magazine (with audio recording included). Its category has been promoted from IV to II and the frequency of its release is increased from 6 to 12 issues per year, and the experience of many Soviet republics in releasing the Pioneer Newspaper in the native language as well as the Russian language is supported.

11. The Latvian SSR State Television and Radio Broadcast Committee is to organize a series of instructional and community political transmissions for pupils and students about the Russian language, as well as special transmissions for those who are learning the Russian language.
12. The Latvian SSR State Television and Radio Broadcast Committee is to organize a series of instructional and community political transmissions for pupils and students about the Russian language, as well as special transmissions for those who are learning the Russian language.

The Latvian SSR Ministry of Education, Latvian SSR Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education, Latvian SSR Professional Technical Education State Committee, and other Latvian SSR ministries and institutions which are in charge of higher and secondary special learning institutions, to provide the setting up of a Russian language and literature laboratory, supplied with linguaphone equipment and other technical equipment in 1983–1985 at all learning institutions where teaching takes place in the Latvian language; to take measures for this equipment to be used effectively in the educational process.

The Latvian SSR State Planning Committee and the Latvian SSR Ministry of Finance to provide the allocation of the required funding for these goals in the Latvian SSR's plan and budget projects.

To note that with the Soviet CP Central Committee's and USSR Council of Ministers' 26 May 1983 decision, after coordination with the USSR Ministry of Education, the USSR State Committee for Construction is to provide pre-schools, eight-year and secondary comprehensive schools and professional technical learning institutions with Russian language and literature laboratories with the division of classes into sub-groups.

13. To note that the Soviet CP Central Committee and the USSR Council of Ministers, with their 26 May 1983 decision No. 473:
  - 13.1. provided students who are gaining specialization in "Russian Language and Literature at a National School" at pedagogical institutes and at universities, with the allocation of stipends which are determined by the Soviet CP Central Committee's and USSR Council of Ministers' 18 October 1971 decision No. 755 for students at jurisprudence institutes (Latvian

Communist Party Central Committee's and Latvian SSR Council of Ministers' 30 November 1971 decision No. 598);

- 13.2. from 1984, increased rates of pay by 15 percent for Preparatory and Year 1–3 teachers who conduct activities in the Russian language, for Year 4–11 comprehensive and boarding school Russian language and literature teachers, at all types and denominated professional and secondary special learning institutions in which teaching is not in the Russian language, which are located in the country or towns, for Russian language and literature teachers. (..)

Latvian Communist Party  
Central Committee  
Secretary  
**A. Voss**  
Latvian SSR  
Council of Ministers  
Chairman  
**J. Rubenis\***

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\* LVA, 270. f., 1. s. apr., 2432. l., pp. 72–82. Original. Translated from the Russian language.

К п.7 пр.66

Не для печати

ПОСТАНОВЛЕНИЕ № 421  
Центрального Комитета Компартии Латвии и Совета Министров  
Латвийской ССР

19 июля 1983 года

О дополнительных мерах по улучшению изучения русского языка в общеобразовательных школах и других учебных заведениях Латвийской ССР

В постановлении Центрального Комитета КПСС и Совета Министров СССР от 26 мая 1983 года № 473 "О дополнительных мерах по улучшению изучения русского языка в общеобразовательных школах и других учебных заведениях союзных республик" отмечается, что в результате неуклонного осуществления ленинской национальной политики достигнут большой экономический и социальный прогресс всех союзных и автономных республик, автономных областей и округов нашей страны. Пролетариат интернационализация всех сторон общественной жизни, взаимобогащение и расцвет национальных культур. Получили широкий простор для всестороннего и равноправного развития родной язык и литература всех наций и народностей СССР, в том числе и тех, которые не имели ранее письменности. Всем гражданам СССР, проживающим в республике, гарантируется право обучаться на родном и русском языках.

Центральный Комитет Компартии Латвии и Совет Министров Латвийской ССР выражают твердую уверенность в том, что партийные, советские, комсомольские органы и органы народного образования, учительство будут постоянно проявлять неустанную заботу и внимание к удовлетворению потребностей учащейся молодежи в овладении русским языком — языком межнационального общения, дружбы и братства народов, могучим средством дальнейшего развития и укрепления материального и духовного потенциала советского народа.

Секретарь  
Центрального Комитета  
Компартии Латвии

*А. Зосе*  
А. Зосе

Председатель  
Совета Министров Латвийской ССР

*Ю. Рубан*  
Ю. Рубан

SECTION III

Protest Reports  
to Moscow about  
Colonialization and  
Russification in the  
Latvian SSR

## Document 29

“Soviet Youth” Newspaper correspondent Kārlis Reimanis’ report  
“Some observations about the national question in Latvia” for the  
Soviet CP Central Committee

Letter to the editor of “Pravda” Newspaper

(16 March 1957)

Dear “Pravda” Newspaper Editor!

Since the Soviet CP XX Congress, the development of socialistic democracy in our nation has entered a period when the mass initiative of the people is being expressed more and more and – the main thing is – that the conviction is gradually gaining strength among the people, that more attention is being given to a person’s ideas and suggestions, than at the time when all areas of our lives were determined by the cult of personality.\*

At every step, I – a Latvian Komsomol newspaper correspondent, am also coming to this realization. Many questions can be initiated and solved on the spot – with the help of a republic’s newspapers and institutions, however, life also brings up the sorts of questions, which can’t be solved using local means, and the solution of these is becoming more pressing.

I, in fulfilling my duty as a journalist, would like to turn to “Pravda” or – through using the good offices of the “Pravda” editorial board – to leading comrades with some of these questions. I didn’t do this earlier as I could clearly see that the capabilities of the central press – including “Pravda” too – were very restricted. I believe that the situation now has improved a lot in this respect too. What I’d like to write about this time relates to a question, which, to my mind, has become the most serious and burning one in Soviet Latvia – the national question. My request to the editorial board is: to send my article to the comrades on the Soviet CP CC who are involved in researching this question.

**K. Reimanis**

Rīga, Dzirnavu Street 37, apt. 4.

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\* Personality cult – the extreme exaggeration of a person’s role, ascribing a determinative influence in the direction of historical processes to that person. USSR dictator J. Stalin’s personality cult is meant here.

### **Some observations about the national question in Latvia**

I'd like to start with the main and most painful question, and it's the national question for us here in Latvia, more accurately – it's the question about relations between Latvians and Russians in the territory of Latvia. As we know, there isn't any quarrelling taking place between Latvians and Russians, with the working people of both nationalities living and working together. The Latvian worker and the intellectual respect the simplicity, sincerity and diligence of the Russian person. The majority of Latvians, in my opinion, quite correctly value the Russian people's outstanding contribution to liberating Latvia from the German Fascists, the renewal of Latvia's state economy and Latvia's transformation into an industrial agrarian republic. During the years of Soviet power, the Latvians, better than ever before, came to know the richness of the Russian people's spiritual culture. In brief, favourable conditions arose for the development of the friendship between the Latvian and Russian peoples.

But over time other facts also appeared which not only interfered with the development of this friendship, but even created direct threats to the good relations between Latvians and Russians. I don't intend to list all of the injustices, wrongs and mistakes which were permitted during the period of Stalin's dictatorship in relation to the national republics and non-Russian nations. Anyone who wants to, can see and sees that the USSR government and the Soviet CP CC are now putting in serious efforts to correct these mistakes and injustices (amnesty for political prisoners and deportees, the transfer of many enterprises from the jurisdiction of the All Union to the republics, a reduction in the centralization of planning, in the financial sphere, jurisdiction etc., and a gradual, though also very slow, extension of socialistic democracy etc.). But some very serious facts can be observed alongside this in the area of national policy, which to a great degree, can be similarly included among the consequences of the distortions of the cult of personality, but these are not addressed, and attempts are made to conceal, ignore or not see them, or at times there are even attempts to show them as something positive. Firstly, here I mean the fact, that in the last decades the relationship in Latvia between the number of Latvians and Russians has changed very drastically – in favour of the latter.

Currently, the situation is such that one hears the Russian language more frequently than Latvian on the streets and in institutions (often in those which serve the cultural sphere as well), and it has become the leading language in Riga, the capital city of the Latvian Republic. Although relevant statistical data is lacking (and quite strangely, why should they be kept secret?), it seems that in Riga and the other larger cities – Daugavpils and Ventspils – the number of Russian inhabitants (without even including soldiers and their families) is greater than the number of Latvians. The intrusion of Russians can also be observed in many rural areas, especially in Latgale (in the south-east of Latvia). This fact causes great concern

in the hearts of the Latvian working people, as threats to the nation's future are hidden within this. Real assimilation and the dangers of Russification appear under the mask of friendship between nations.

Our propaganda in no small measures criticized the USA's imperialist policies and the so-called open door or equal opportunity policy. It's quite correctly pointed out that: if, for example, the USA and the Republic of the Philippines were to sign an agreement, then the little Philippines wouldn't in any way be able to dominate the huge USA internal market, whereas the United States could quite easily take over the Philippines economy. However sad it may seem, many of our people believe that with the existence of the equal opportunity of nations, the same thing is happening here. Our homeland is large – the entire Soviet Union. Latvians have the same right to settle and live in any district or city of Russia as Russians do in Latvia. But it is clear to anyone that just over a million Latvians will never be able to create a majority of inhabitants in Moscow, whereas the hundred million Russian people could quite easily flood Latvia, Estonia, Moldova etc. To better understand how Latvians feel, one could try to imagine how a Russian person would feel if the Chinese language could be heard more often than Russian in Moscow, Leningrad and Gorky?

In these cases, any nation, including the Latvian nation, looks at it like this: no matter how good a neighbour may be, if he moves into your apartment and wants to take it over, then – whichever way you look at it – the good relationship gets destroyed.

Nobody who admits that two times two is four, but not nine, can deny that Russification here in Latvia, is a fact of life. Latvians get discriminated against at almost every step. I will provide just a few examples.

A Latvian who doesn't know the Russian language is no longer a master to the full degree in his own country – Latvia. He may require emergency care – the nurse on duty replies to him in Russian, he needs help from the police – there are people sitting there who don't know the Latvian language, he goes into a shop – the shop assistant can't understand him, she only speaks Russian. In Gorky Street (among other things, this street was earlier named after a Latvian involved in the "Awakening" of the nation) a café called "Sigulda" was recently opened. The name – quite Latvian, the interior decoration was also national, but, if you address the barmaid, she doesn't know a word of Latvian. This may sound trifling, but it's a very characteristic trifle.

If a Latvian, who doesn't know a word of Russian, travelled to Voronezh or Tula and wanted to work there in the Soviet or Party apparatus, he wouldn't be accepted because he didn't know the language, whereas, for Russians who arrive in Latvia in a similar situation, knowledge of the Latvian language is not demanded.

Even though this may seem quite paradoxical, among Soviet, Komsomol and Party workers in Latvia, there are a lot of Russians who don't know the Latvian

language. Furthermore, they are in positions where they have to meet with inhabitants on a daily basis.

As is well known, Latvia was earlier, in essence, a petty bourgeois nation with quite good connections with the Western capitalist nations. Therefore, it's hard to find a Latvian family, which doesn't have a relative with private property, and a lot of them had relatives who lived in foreign countries. During Stalin's time, people from such families were considered insufficiently politically trustworthy and they weren't allowed to hold positions of any real responsibility.

Trustworthy people with completely "clean" cadre forms were brought in from Russia – together with workbenches and tractors. So, under the pretext of political vigilance, Latvians were discriminated against in their own home. It should be stated that this situation still hasn't been rectified. Strange as it may seem, but the, quite small in number, Latvian bourgeoisie was able to successfully administer all areas in its class-ridden nation. Whereas, the Latvian working class, farmers and work intelligentsia, which form the great majority of the people, now, as it turns out, are unable to get to grips with the either the railways (Head – Comrade Krasnobajevs), the republic's finances (Minister of Finance – Comrade Manoilo), with agriculture (Council of Ministers' Deputy Chairman on Agricultural Issues – Comrade Skobkins), or the Police and the Prosecutor's Office. I flicked through the Riga governmental telephone listings (as we know, the governmental telephone is only for high ranking personnel). Of the 572 surnames, 269 were Russian. I could recite an endless number of these and similar examples. There really was a great shortage of qualified cadres in our republic in the first post-war years and the Russian people's assistance was very valuable. But the circumstances now have changed drastically: Russian comrades, who take up responsible positions obstruct the nomination of national cadres. Very often they are able to work only just satisfactorily or quite poorly due to having an insufficient knowledge of local conditions and the character of the Latvian people.

A lot of people here are afraid that the current Soviet CP CC and the Soviet government will be unable to solve this problem. The following facts are mentioned regarding this.

The majority of Party and government leaders are Russians, but a representative of a large nation finds it difficult to understand the thoughts and feelings of a small nation, even when that person is a Marxist.

The current leaders are, to a greater or lesser degree, products of the Stalin's era, but it is considered that one can apply Lenin's words, that "those of other nationalities who are Russified always overcompensate by being more Russian than Russians" to Stalin, more than to any other. During the Stalin's era, Russian great nation-like chauvinism was not only greatly exaggerated, but a "scientific Marxist" foundation was created for it. It seems that there is no shortage of people among the leaders of



the USSR, who view the Russification of national republics as a Marxist nation policy victory, as a confirmation of the friendship between the peoples of the USSR.

Workers of Latvian nationality in almost any area mention examples which show the All Union's government institutions' inconsiderate attitude to the needs of the national republics.

One example of this, which causes outrage among all the Latvian people, is the ruthless destruction of Latvia's forests. Due to the USSR State Plan's "concern" and the USSR Ministry of Forestry Industry's activities, the norms for cutting down forests in Latvia from year to year greatly exceed their natural re-growth. This is happening because the USSR Ministry of Forestry Industry, right up till now, has not implemented the Soviet CP XIX Congress's decision on the transfer of the wood materials preparation base to Siberia and the nation's east. But in Latvia the forest grows next to a first class road – in which case the last pine tree in Latvia can be cut down, so that the comrades in Moscow can provide news about the fulfilment of the wood material export plan. (..) The weak, timid objections of a few parliamentarians – envoys of the Latvian nation – were not taken into account in the USSR Supreme Soviet (and that too is quite typical!). The plan for cutting down forests in our Republic in the sixth Five-year plan actually means the death sentence for the remaining Latvian forests.

A second example comes from a completely different area of life. Latvians, just like other people, have their cultural monuments, including farm homesteads and houses, where famous writers, artists and people working in the cultural sphere were born, lived, and created. Certain funds are required from the state budget to restore these monuments and to keep them maintained. For many years now the USSR Ministry of Finance, in coordinating its budget, has deleted this point. That means: the government, which after the war, allocated 10 million roubles alone for the restoration of Mikhailovskoe village and its surroundings, where the great Russian poet A. S. Pushkin lived and wrote, refused to provide some hundreds of thousands of roubles, to save monuments which are dear to the hearts of all Latvians. We were able to receive very limited sums for this purpose for the first time, only this year (i.e. 1957).

Some features of Latvia's industrialization are also perplexing. A whole string of large enterprises are being developed here, and just about everything they require is brought in from Russia: equipment, engineers, workers and raw materials. The production is also sent back there. The question arises – what is the point of creating such factories in a national republic? There is perhaps one: to increase the number of Russian inhabitants and to attain a situation where they form a majority, and then one fine day, based on this majority, to declare that the national Soviet republic is abolished and to ask the RFSSR Supreme Soviet to accept a new autonomous

republic into Russia... Many Latvians see a sad future and their own destiny in the example of the Karelo–Finnish Republic.\*

As we well know, the Latvian CP CC Plenary took place in 1953 (the same as in Lithuania), where flagrant facts about a divergence from Marxist Leninist policy in the national question were revealed. But the decisions adopted remained purely on paper. One can't but notice that the interests of non-Russian nations have in this way been sacrificed in favour of a great-nation sentiment. Isn't the non-implementation of these decisions (which, as far as I know haven't been repealed) a capitulation to Great Russian chauvinism?

If we evaluate how the national rights of the Latvian people are being observed, then the government of our Republic and our Republic's Party organization leadership appear in a very sad light. They should be expressing the will of the people, fighting for the implementation of the people's demands, but they do this in a very feeble way. This is also understandable – all of our leaders have been through the dreadful Stalinist school of blind obedience and unconditional implementation. Most of all they were afraid that they could be accused of bourgeois nationalism, and they therefore competed in the exemplary implementation of the next instruction "from above". To protest or fight for the people's interests and for the respect of Latvia's particular circumstances – that's something completely new to them. Many of them aren't capable of this too because they have become Russified themselves, distancing themselves from their people and are ready to find the "remains of bourgeois nationalism" in any expression of national self-respect. In addition, many of our leaders are people with very mediocre ability, having become prominent specifically because of their obedience, not due to their talent. They now, quite justifiably fear for their positions, and it would be simply naïve to expect energetic activity from them.

Russification has brought us to a situation where the people call the establishment of Soviet power in Latvia as the "arrival of the Russians" and the existence of Soviet power itself as "life with the Russians". The Communist Party and the Latvian Komsomol are treated as Russian organizations, and service in the Soviet army as service in the "Russian army". This means that through the process of Russification all of these institutions are becoming more and more estranged from the people and are losing authority.

Recently an acquaintance of mine asked the chairman of a kolkhoz: "Why have so many young people at the kolkhoz (including those in the Komsomol as well) become confirmed in the church?" The reply was: "Because, the Lutheran Church has now become the only truly national organization, into which, the Russians

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\* The Karelian ASSR was established in 1923. In March 1940 it was transformed into the Karelo–Finnish SSR, but in June 1956, into an autonomous republic again, in the RFSSR.

haven't forced their way. It is the only organization which speaks to the people in a language they understand."

And, if I was asked, how young Latvian people would act, if a war were to break out with the English-American capitalist group of nations, I would be forced to admit: it's doubtful whether the majority would spill their blood, to defend Latvia's possible further Russification.

But one Latvian, a communist (among other things, an officer in the recently abolished Latvian national army unit) expressed concerns that the time could arrive, when the main force which would keep the Union of Socialist Republics together, could be the Soviet army with Russian generals and marshals at the forefront.

Then the question remains: why did I write all of this?

Here's the answer.

1. Because I, as a son of the Latvian nation, am vitally interested in ensuring my people a bright national future.
2. That's because I have a deep trust in the Communist Party, its bright intellect, and its belief in the ideas of Lenin. I am convinced that the Soviet CP CC will be able to eliminate all of the negative effects of the past and will do this resolutely. Otherwise I wouldn't have wasted my energy and time in writing.
3. Because I can see that the thing to which I've given the best years of my life and to which I knowingly wish to dedicate all of my remaining years is under threat. As a rank and file Komsomol member, as a school Komsomol organizer, as a Komsomol CC lecturer and, finally as a journalist, I have through my words and writing attempted to convince my people that the guarantee of a bright future for the Latvian people can be found only through socialism, only in the USSR community of nations. But now I see that what's been created in the ideological sphere – including my insignificant contribution is teetering. That its foundations are being washed away by a powerful current which continues to get stronger and stronger. These are the people's feelings of national honour and the nation's self-preservation instinct which have been affronted.

But these feelings are stronger than anything else. They can't be extinguished by anything – not with any kind of material benefits and not with any kind of propaganda phrases. Agriculture may have been neglected – this can be improved after some five-year plans. But if you neglect the national question – you'll still come to reap what you've sown after a number of generations.

The Russification of national republics which is taking place under the pretext of the friendly coexistence of various peoples must be stopped as it is leading to the destruction of our multinational state's main strength – the friendship between peoples. The Latvian people are patient and – allow me to say – fairly cultural people, for whom the reasoning of the mind usually dominates over feelings.

They truly feel deep sympathy for the Russian people and knowingly wish to live in friendship with them. But the Latvian people also wish to remain in the role of masters in their own home. The current situation creates threats to their national existence, and they are beginning to understand this more and more clearly. They can see that their affability and hospitality is beginning to be used against their vital interests. The corresponding conclusions inescapably flow on from this. See, what a young electrician told me: "When you think about how many Russians have come to Riga and what that means to us, then quite involuntarily one starts looking at one's best workmate, a Russian, with suspicion."

A teacher told me: "I am undoubtedly in favour of a socialist lifestyle, I am very satisfied that I can live in a society in which I am not forced to sell myself nor others. But, if I, as a Latvian, have to decide about my people's existence in capitalism or its assimilation, its dissolution within Russian mass socialism, then I'd be forced to choose the former option."

I asked my schoolmate, a very capable person, who could take on a much more responsible position and could provide greater benefit to socialist society, why he hadn't joined the Party. He replied: "I would gladly do that, if I was convinced that in the end, my people wouldn't have to take a stand against this unreasonable Russification. At that time I'd want to be on the side of the people."

This wasn't said by a person, who had come from the bourgeois or who had listened to "Amerikas Balss" [Voice of America]. This was said by a young person, a formerly active Komsomol member, who had grown up in poverty and had received a higher education under Soviet power.

Similar sentiments have taken hold more and more widely in the minds of young Latvian people, especially among the young intelligentsia.

If some of our Republic's leading personnel could get to know the contents of my letter, they might possibly say that there are many exaggerations and biases in it. They could possibly say that, because firstly, some of them are detached to a certain degree from the masses, are insufficiently aware of the mood of the people and, secondly, because the facts that I have mentioned could induce the conclusion, that ideological education, in the spirit of friendship between the peoples in our Republic, is taking place poorly. As is well known, some leaders have a weakness – they attempt to show the situation in a rosy light, so that they can, in this way, highlight their own personal achievements.

I think that we really have many serious shortcomings in mass ideological education. But the main cause of the weakness (I'd say it directly: failure) of our propaganda is not that our lectures, discussions and articles are of a low level or that there are an insufficient number of them. The main cause of the failure is that in the eyes of the Latvian working people, our words, when we speak of the national

question, are totally out of kilter with the actual situation. And this makes even the best propagandist's and agitator's efforts useless.

Comrades in Moscow could conclude that bourgeois nationalism is developing at a great intensity in Latvia and that this letter has also been written under the influence of this ideology, as the author is using terms like "Russification", "assimilation" and "discrimination" etc., which, as is well known, are used in imperialist propaganda in relation to the Soviet system.

I would like to say that I use these words, not because I agree with this terminology. But I am forced to use them, as they have real content in the eyes of many Latvian working people and they reflect occurrences in real life. But it's doubtful whether this fact could be considered as an achievement of imperialist propaganda. The deciding factor is that the people see phenomena in their lives, the names having to be borrowed from bourgeois nationalist propaganda. Therefore – if we don't make an effort to energetically and consistently eliminate these occurrences, we will become the very best and the most valuable allies to the enemies of Soviet power.

I am not suggesting any specific measures, as I believe that our leaders, with their much deeper knowledge, can develop them. The goal of my letter – is to add another signal to the signals which, no doubt, are already at the disposal of central institutions.

One thing is clear: as long as national differences exist in the Soviet Union (and that will be for a very long time), the Latvian people have to be guaranteed an unthreatened majority in their homeland, in all of Latvia's cities and districts, and the greatest freedom in their national development.

No half-measures and window dressing (for example, now Russian comrades in some newspapers have begun to sign their articles with Latvian pseudonyms) will help, they will only make the situation worse.

**Kārlis Reimanis\***

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\* SAL, PA – 101. f., 20. apr., 96. l., pp. 26.–41. This author of this document's own prepared text is published here, and was included in journalist Andris Sproģis' publication "Lasītāja vēstule avīzei kā slepens dokuments" [Reader's letter to a newspaper as a secret document] (*Latvijas Vēstnesis*, 11, 12 May 2005).

The "Pravda" Newspaper editors sent this document to the Soviet CP CC Soviet Republic Party Organ Department on 28 May 1957, and its Deputy Leader P. Piļajevs sent it on to LCP CC Secretary J. Kalnbērziņš on 2 July 1957.

## » Document 30

Voicehs Kārklīš' 3 September 1959 Report to Soviet CP CC Secretary  
A. Kiričenko on expressions of Great Russian chauvinism in Latvia

To Soviet CP CC Secretary  
Comrade A. I. Kiričenko

Copy to: LCP CC Secretary  
Comrade J. E. Kalnbērziņš

Party Comrade, Comrade Card No. 07380285,  
Voicehs, son of Staņislavs, Kārklīš, lives in Riga,  
Lāčplēša street 27, apt. 4, Telephone No. 20404

Report

In June this year, when Soviet CP CC First Secretary, USSR Chairman of the Council of Ministers Nikita Sergejevich Khrushchev arrived in Riga, a large group of "people unhappy with their lot", and mainly of Russian nationality, tried to complain to Nikita Sergejevich starting from the airport and continuing to the site of the meeting at the Culture and Recreation Park.

At that time I wasn't clear what these people were complaining about and what they were trying to achieve, but at the City Party's activist meeting on 12 July, I understood, in which direction this matter was being pushed from the speeches of individual comrades. In place of healthy Party criticism we started hearing semi-chauvinistic attitudes and anger against the Latvian people. I experienced a heartfelt disappointment and began to shake, as I'd never heard anything like this before.

To confirm what I've said, I'll mention some distressing facts, which I heard in the meeting of Party activists, how individual Party members, in discussing the Latvian national question, began to speak out after the July meeting of City Party activists.

In the City Party's meeting, some loudmouths got carried away to the extent that they reprimanded the LCP CC Secretary Peļše about the fact that in mentioning the achievements of the Latvian people in his report, he used the words "Latvian people", since, look, what is this "Latvian people", because one shouldn't say the "Latvian people", but the "Soviet people" instead.

At the time when I worked as Director of the Riga City Textile, Sewing Material and Shoe Trading Trust, I undertook a document audit for the *Baltijas modes ateljē*

Baltic Fashion Atelier sewing factory which was under the Trust in 1958. Its Director at the time was Nora Ivanovna Šjahtova. The Trading Trust's auditor, N. N. Bogolepovs discovered many damaged orders in the factory warehouse, which had been rejected by those ordering them. Šjahtova, without any feelings of remorse about these rejects, drafted up acts, approved them, and piled up the rejects in the warehouse, which meant that the workers went without their wages. She attached a note to each month's balance sheet to the effect that there were no rejects at the factory warehouse, and in this way, by deceiving the trust and the state, received a progressive premium each month. The State Controller intervened in this matter, an estimate of Šjahtova's falsification was made, and she was dismissed from her job. But people turned up at the City Party's meeting who claimed that Šjahtova had been dismissed from her work due to national traits. In front of Party activists, she was declared to be a "martyr of the torture chamber of Latvian domination".

After the City Party meeting in July this year, the Riga City Party organizations discussed the national question brought up at the Party's gathering. A meeting of the Party also took place at the Riga City Kirov District Household Services Combine, where, in her chauvinistic speech, Anna Jevdokimovna Krasovska, disregarding the Soviet CP CC's opinion and directions, requested that the Latvian CP CC secretaries be dismissed and expelled from the Party.

Krasovska, formerly the Director of the "Merino" Factory and later *Rīgas Modes nams* [Riga Fashion House], was dismissed from both her jobs, with great fanfare, for malevolently misusing her official position and misappropriation of state funds, which was written about a number of times in Latvian SSR newspapers.

Perhaps you might think that she's admitted her errors? No! She cackles on to everyone about not being given any leading positions due to national traits.

I'd like you to request the Household Services Combine Party meeting minutes for July and to draw the relevant conclusions.

If you take a careful look, I think that among those who surrounded Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev to complain, there was no shortage of people like Šjahtova, Krasovska and their ilk, who, stating their resentments, forgot their own personal issues. But they know from history that the most important thing is the national question and emphasise this in the highest degree, creating a basis for offending the national feelings of the Latvian people, slander the Latvian CP CC leaders, and dream of rising to commanding positions in the Republic by using the commotion raised.

If we've decided to talk about the Latvian SSR's national question, then we should make some comparisons with other brotherly republics – Estonia, Lithuania, Armenia and Georgia – and to ask these complainers the question: what percentage of commanding positions in these republics are taken by persons

of Russian nationality? I may err slightly if I say 0.01 %, but comrades of Russian nationality are at the same time in 65 % of commanding positions in Latvia. Besides the Russians, there are also Armenians, Georgians, Jews, Tatars and representatives from all peoples of the Soviet Union. Where then has this nationalities policy been expressed? (..)

(..) the Latvian SSR is also the same Latvian SSR that the great Lenin knew well, for the trustworthiness of the Red Riflemen and due to the people's revolutionary tradition. That's why there has to be at least a modicum of respect towards this small country which was faithful to Lenin's ideals, since nowhere else in the other republics can comrades of Russian nationality live, and do live as freely as they do in the Latvian SSR, which also explains their great gravitation towards the Latvian SSR.

Analyze how many Latvians can be found in commanding positions. You can count them on your fingers.

The majority of Latvians, good or bad, do speak the Russian language and give a full reply to any question, which you won't see in Tallinn, Yerevan or Tbilisi.

Great and small people, Latvians and Russians and other peoples do make individual mistakes, but one shouldn't prejudicially rouse the national question from this, as the Latvian people are attentively listening in to this matter.

No one has thought about or asked who these people are who keep moving from one place to another in the Soviet Union, all the fifteen post-war years, unable to find themselves a place to stay, flitting from republic to republic, poisoning the atmosphere around them, looking for weaknesses, so that they can cause national offence and make themselves into heroes.

Every honourable Soviet person has long ago found their place and is working in the interests of their homeland, but drones continue flitting, chasing the big ruble.

To me it seems that, in the actual implementation of the Party's XXI Congress's decisions about the pre-term fulfilment of the seven year plan, we should think about the people who can't in any way find a suitable place for themselves in the Soviet Union.

**V. Kārklīņš**

3 September 1959\*

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\* SAL, PA – 101. f., 20. apr., 112. l., p. 169–172. Original. Translated from the Russian language.



## Document 31

Excerpts from Jānis Dīmanis' 20 April 1960 report to Soviet CP CC Secretary N. Khrushchev "On the reasons for the exacerbation of national relations in Latvia"

To Soviet Union Communist Party Central Committee

Comrade N. Khrushchev

Jānis, son of Jānis, Dīmanis, Soviet CP member from 1919, Party Ticket

No. 0673988, pensioner, living in Riga, Gorkija Street No. 123, apt. 7, tel. 7-04-31

Report

### on the reasons for the exacerbation of national relations in Latvia

It would have been better if such a letter had been written to you by a communist of Russian nationality. But the fact that I worked outside of Latvia (..) for 27 years in Party, literature and teaching work (..), seems to give me certain rights to speak about the national question in all of its aspects, more so because, as a stranger, an arrival, it's very difficult and almost impossible to understand the issues of other nationalities. Therefore, the untangling of a national question, if one arises, rests firstly (and I don't say "only") on the shoulders of national communists, i.e. – on the communists of the particular nationality. (..)

National disagreements and national friction are completely foreign to the nature of socialism. Socialist multinational nations – are friendly families of different peoples. But, only in cases where contradictions arising on the path of objective development, are solved correctly and in a timely manner. But socialism unfortunately is not free of bad, narrow-minded leaders, who, by their irresponsible actions or inaction, can ruin a great deal in national questions in socialism too. [Here and henceforth, the underlining is that of the author of the respective document – J. R.]

Until the revolution [meaning the events of 1917 – J. R.], three nationalities (I'm not speaking here of other much smaller national groups), Latvians, Germans and Russians lived shoulder to shoulder in Latvia, especially in Riga. Russians were not only tsarist officials, but also workers and even farmers in Latgale. Great changes took place in the national composition of Latvia's inhabitants due to World War I and the ensuing revolution. Due to the occupation of Latvia in the First World War and the evacuation of its factories, a large proportion of the Russian inhabitants left Latvia (excluding Latgale) and, obviously, never returned. Before the Second World War, nearly all of the inhabitants of German nationality were repatriated from bourgeois Latvia to Germany, being 3.7 % of Latvia's inhabitants and 11.7 %

of Riga's inhabitants. In terms of national composition, Latvia's inhabitants became much more homogenous, although there were about 30,000 Russians in Riga, and 150,000 in Latgalia, but these were Russians who knew the Latvian language.

Latvia lost about 600,000 of its inhabitants in the Second World War; they fled were either killed or deported. A kind of "vacuum" developed here. It had suffered less materially in the war than neighbouring Russian districts. It was quite natural, that Russian inhabitants from devastated districts headed to this "vacuum", as well as those, who were in the army, and travelled through Latvia, marking this land as their future place of residence due to its comparatively high, almost "European" standard of living.

(..) Obviously, the daily needs of this mass of arriving inhabitants had to be organized and accommodation had to be found for them first of all. In Riga, which had lost about 20 % of its residential dwelling space, there were empty apartments belonging to those who had been killed, deported or fled. But it was just a drop in the ocean compared to the flow of arriving inhabitants. Some of Riga's inhabitants, mainly the bourgeoisie, lived rather spaciouly in terms of their apartments, and a reduction in space was necessary from many aspects. But even this couldn't solve the accommodation issue in Riga. Then it came down to the adoption of "Russian apartment norms" for all of Riga's inhabitants – workers, public servants, the intelligentsia and the petty bourgeoisie. It wasn't possible to fully implement this, but Riga's Latvian inhabitants, who had been used to acceptable living conditions, were seriously restricted. In this way, 2–3 families were squeezed into an apartment, but even more in the large apartments of the bourgeoisie, of which there were many in Riga – families of many nationalities, with varying ways of living and cultural levels.

Even angels would end up fighting in such conditions, let alone mere mortals! (..)

The shifting of a large mass of people, even more so of diverse ethnic composition, aggravates and complicates not only the apartment issue, but also the language issue. These issues can be solved with a rational approach, but with an irrational approach they can become a source of national disharmony. (..)

Lenin had – among other things – a pronounced, but very accurate observation: the less we can satisfy a national in a material sense, the more carefully we have to behave in relation to his language interests (which, obviously, doesn't mean that if a national is completely satisfied in a material sense, then we don't have to take his language interests into account, that he'll "sell" his language for material benefit). What is happening here in Latvia, then, with regard to language questions? (..) What is the situation now with the Latvian language in enterprises in Riga and other cities?

There are no purely Latvian enterprises anywhere. A significant proportion of workers (half and more) in our enterprises are Russians. The workers of two nationalities in one enterprise, without doubt, complicate the Party's political work

as well as that of the trade unions etc. But, if there is the desire, then this can be solved in way that the interests of neither nationality need to suffer. That is, if there is the desire and understanding. But is there always this desire and understanding? Unfortunately not in many cases! Not from the "bottom", nor the "top". (...) Just the opposite, both the periphery as well as the centres are well inclined not to mess around with two languages, but to get by with one. With which one? The Russian of course! This is unbelievable, something unheard of – but it's a fact!

I'll illustrate this with a number of examples, to which I myself have been a witness and participant. I have to present lectures and presentations quite often. With very few exceptions I lecture only in the Russian language, as in enterprises everywhere, the "triangle" [representatives of the enterprise's leadership, the Communist Party and trade unions – J. R.], who are also mostly Russian, announces: "But our Latvians all know the Russian language." I obviously object and say that it's one thing to talk about production issues in the Russian language, but it's a completely different thing for a Latvian to listen to a lecture or presentation in the Russian language. Of course, my objections are not taken into account.

I understand that the situation with workers on site, in enterprises, isn't one of the easiest: to develop language equality in mass political work, one needs a well thought out system of measures at a district and city scale. An individual enterprise is powerless in attempting to start something.

Obviously, Latvian workers don't do a song and dance about this type of ignorance of their language, but they have a deep resentment in their souls, and how could they not have, if they understand little of what is said by the lecturer or presenter. In addition, this also affects a person's self-respect: in what way am I inferior to a Russian, why don't I have the right to listen to a lecture in my language in my republic. Very often Latvians don't even go to these "Russian" lectures. Situations also arise where there are open conflicts in relation to the question of the language in which a lecture should be read. This happens when a lecturer who can read a lecture out in Latvian is forced to read it in the Russian language. I can remember such an occasion in a Riga shoe factory during an election campaign. I was only able to calm the inflamed passions on the question of the language in which a lecture should be read by immediately commencing to read in both languages, translating one phrase after the other. I came to use such a "method" more than once after that. (...)

But then, is the Latvian worker who is intelligent in the language sense, affected only in the political work of the masses? On meeting a policeman on the street who doesn't know the Latvian language, or a similar shop assistant in a store, he remembers: "But during the Tsarist period, may the Devil himself take them, even the lowest ranking police officers knew the Latvian language, but shop assistants and waiters in Riga had to know three languages – Latvian, Russian and German. And what's happening here with the language in Soviet Latvia. It's the work of the Devil!"

I'll mention another incident from my life which reveals what difficulties a Latvian person has with his language in his own capital city. I was standing in a queue for cinema tickets. Two young Latvian girls were standing in front of me. At the box office, one asked the other to buy her a ticket and gave her the money, as she'd find it hard to explain herself to the cashier in the Russian language.

How should the language issue be resolved in Latvia's specific situation so that people act correctly towards it?

You can't force one to learn a language. It has neither economic nor political utility. For Russians living in Latvia, working in manufacturing, there is absolutely no need for them to learn the Latvian language. There is absolutely no need for those Russians who work in those institutions under the jurisdiction of the All Union in Latvia to learn the Latvian language. And, obviously, there is absolutely no point in pensioners and other similar categories of Russian inhabitants learning the Latvian language.

But then what category of Russians should know the Latvian language? A relatively small category of workers within our institutions. In Latvia currently, two nationalities – Latvians and Russians – live closely together. The administrative, economic, trade, health protection (...) apparatus which serves them operates without interpreters. Therefore, people who work in these apparatuses, independently of what nationality they are, should know both languages. A person who doesn't know both languages – Latvian and Russian – whether that person is a Latvian or Russian, no matter what his practical qualification, is not suited to work in these institutions, and no allowance should be made in this respect for either a Latvian or a Russian, as the discussion in the end is not about the convenience of a small group of people who work in our institutions, but about the convenience of the mass of inhabitants – both Latvian, as well as Russian. In relation to political work with the masses, this then has to be done separately for each nationality in its native language.

Some will say: but these are such elementary things. What arguments or discussion could there be against this? But arguments and discussion take place because the workers in our institutions, the Latvians, have learnt the Russian language over these 15 years and speak it sufficiently well, but the same kinds of Russian workers have not advanced a step in mastering the Latvian language over these 15 years.

As public servants, Latvians have mastered the Russian language, but the half a million Russians who moved to Latvia don't experience any discomfort in terms of language when coming into contact with our apparatus. Obviously, there's nothing bad about this, it's even positive. The bad thing is that half a million of the Republic's native population, on coming in contact with a policeman, doctor, shop assistant, waiter, bookkeeper or lecturer who doesn't know the Latvian language, have to struggle and experience great discomfort. It turns out that it's not a small handful of workers of Russian nationality in our apparatus who have to adapt to the

interests of the resident native population and learn their language, but the native population which has to adapt to the convenience of this handful in the apparatus that doesn't wish to learn the native population's language. And how can this not create outrage! And where would you find the kind of people who would tolerate this type of arrangement and allow themselves to be bamboozled with talk of friendship between peoples and proletarian internationalism – but if they disagree with this, it's bourgeois nationalism? (..)

But it's not the people themselves, Comrade Khrushchev, who are to blame, but their leading personnel, who have never raised the serious issue of the workers of Russian nationality in our apparatus needing to learn the Latvian language. In the end, their prevarication on this issue gave the impression to people (who initially had begun learning the language) that obviously something had changed on this issue in the Party instructions and it was no longer necessary to learn the language. (..)

And this wasn't the only misdeed from our leading personnel towards the Russians who moved to Latvia. Ask the question, Comrade Khrushchev, whether any kind of work on clarification of the national issue was ever done with these half a million Russians over these 15 years (..)? No work was done at all! Absolutely none! That's a strange thing, to bring and leave half a million people in complete ignorance about its policy, its principles and tasks, which in one way or another affects each one. Is it any wonder that the most incorrect preconceptions about our national policy began to develop in this, politically uninformed mass of people, including communists (and firstly among communists), as we'll see later.

That's our other national "knot" of contradictions – the language knot. If our leading personnel hadn't thought of making their "corrections" to well-known Party instructions on language, then such a "knot" would never have been possible. But now it exists and operates along with the apartments "knots", poisoning our national relations.

The Latvian person – who is an intelligent proletarian – knows, as all the world knows, that Leninist national policy demands respect for each nationality's language, but here in our Republic he doesn't see this kind of respect for his language. But he doesn't know who is to blame. As he, a simple person, finds it hard to accept (it seems completely unnatural to him) that Latvians can exist with such twisted thinking. That they gladly ignore their own people's language (from where would he know Lenin's observation about the fact that a Russified national has the characteristic "of being more Russian than Russians" (..) and that by just giving such a person the opportunity, he'll cook up the kind of "wonders", of which not even a Russian chauvinist is capable). Then he, the average Latvian person, thinks only one thing. Namely, that the Russians who arrived here have oppressed the Latvians and don't want to take them into account. He becomes angry at the Russian, who he thinks has taken his living space away from him and doesn't want to respect

his language. But our leading personnel put all the blame for the deterioration in mutual national relations on the bourgeois nationalists. Obviously, the bourgeois nationalists have “a song and dance” about these contradictions, but it should still be understood that they are playing with trumps, which we, through our own stupidity, have dealt them.

There was a large group of people who arrived here to “lead” among that group of Russian residents who headed to Latvia after the war and were provided with work in industry and agriculture.

Our rule for Soviet development is assistance with leading cadres for a new Soviet republic. All of our republics have gone through this stage in their development. But, if a process is natural and objectively unavoidable, then that doesn’t mean that it has to happen spontaneously. Everything has its measure, and this measure is determined by a rationally thinking person.

But what’s happening with us here in Latvia? A number of these leading personnel carefully selected the more important organizations and arrived in the Republic with travelling vouchers – business trip warrants from these important organizations to give the Republic political and organizational assistance.

But the great majority of these applicants for leading positions arrived in the Republic without being selected by anyone, privately, taking a risk themselves, or they were dragged here by their mates and acquaintances. Until their arrival in Latvia, they had travelled around a great many other regions and republics, looking for a leading position for themselves.

But what provided jobs to all of these “privates” in our apparatuses? A complete lack of resistance!

One has to imagine the situation involving workers in the Cadre Section in those years! Positions in the apparatuses had to be filled, but there just about weren’t any cadres of the local nationality: one had to search until a more or less suitable person was found. If it transpired, later on, that this person was badly selected – who would you seek? Well, the Cadre Section worker, obviously! But, there in the waiting room are ready-made leading personnel with shining formal references. There are no problems or risks with these Cadre Section workers!

The thought would emerge somewhere, every so often, from the depths of this Cadre worker’s subconscious: “But the republic is national, I better not overdo it...” But he tried to ignore these sorts of thoughts and to quell his awakening conscience: “But do I have any directives at all regarding this matter? No! And therefore, why should I care; do I have to be cleverer than those who are sitting in Riga? If those people there don’t have any pangs of conscience about this issue, why should I?!”

But at the top, those “who were sitting in Riga”, considered it in the same way: “Really we should have focussed the Cadre workers on the “national moment” during

the selection of cadres, but the issue really is very delicate – suspicions may eventually be aroused about nationalism. Therefore – let it take its own course!”

But at least a little should have been done on this “delicate” issue – just honestly and openly warning these applicants for leading positions (best of all sealed with a signature and kept in a personal file) that all of them will have to learn the Latvian language (only them, workers in apparatuses; the other Russians – no!), and for those who find this difficult, let them return or choose a job in manufacturing, so that afterwards no objections arise. Just that – and this would have been completely clear!

It is entirely possible that many of those who came into contact with these elementary but imperative demands for our national policy would have planned their lives differently and returned home, considering the learning of the Latvian language to be too great a burden for them, without agreeing to pay such a price for the pleasure of living and working in Latvia.

The learning of a foreign language, especially for an adult, is not an easy matter. There's little joy in it. Therefore, the situation arises at times in life where a person starts learning a language, but he lacks the necessary desire to do the job properly. But he's already put roots deep down in the new place and really doesn't have the desire to abandon a place which he is now used to (or to move from a job in the apparatus to manufacturing). Usually, when an individual starts to lose the desire and begins to give up, those who are mentally stronger and more conscientious come to his assistance. But what if such a lack of desire for something (in this case the mastering of the language) isn't just an individual, but a mass phenomenon?

There are these “weak-willed” people spread throughout whole collectives for whom no end of worries and problems are provided by the demands of our national policy, and ruin their peaceful lives. What then?

Then there's the endless conflict between the interests of individual groups and class interests! There isn't a worker in the world in the workers' movement, who hasn't had to come into contact with this type of conflict, as it's very widespread. The earlier dominating nation's working class's basic interests demand the consistent observation, in practice, of the letter and spirit of the tested and completely correct national policy. But this narrow group of workers from the earlier dominating nation, who have arrived to “lead”, are not happy with the national policy of this class, as it demands that these workers learn the language of the local inhabitants and in some cases they would be ready to give up their position for a national. (..)

What's the situation in Latvia in this respect? What's the Republic's Party organization like?

Its structure is completely abnormal, even warped, in the national as well as the social sense. (..) In the large cities, and they for the most part influence (and they have to influence) the policy of leading personnel, Party organizations are Russian

in their national composition, but they are mainly made up of public servants in terms of their social status.

It's not difficult to understand that such a republican Party's national and social composition is unable to make things easier, but only harder, which includes the correct implementation of Leninist policy in the Republic at the highest level too. The breeding ground for individual group interests "to rebel" against class [interests] in the national question is most fertile here: the "rebellion" had to happen, and it happened and ended with individual group interests being raised to the class [interests – J. R.] level: the LCP CC's July (1959) plenary resolution, as we'll see later, is a document, which repeals all of the main Leninist instructions on the national question in favour, finally, of a small handful of people, who due to error, inattentiveness or neglect are rather broadly represented in the republican Party organization.\* (..)

(..) as we indicated previously, over these 15 years the Russian apparatus workers have not moved even a step ahead in learning the Latvian language: institutions, especially in the large cities, work mainly in the Russian language, and their clerical work takes place in the Russian language. Political work with the masses – is done in the Russian language in enterprises and institutions. That's why on the eve of Soviet Latvia's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the common people call the Soviet authority, the "Russian authority", but refer to bourgeois rule as the "Latvian era" – that's exactly how the common people speak, but not the politically refined intelligent person, who, fearing that he'll be suspected of having sympathies for the bourgeois order, usually refrains from using the term – the "Latvian era". It would be hard to imagine more scathing criticism of our national policy from a common person, from the point of view of an everyday Latvian person.

Each Soviet republic went through a period of "Russian power", but this period didn't continue for 15 years in any of them. That's because errors of such magnitude in the national question weren't permitted in any other republic, like they were in Latvia. (..)

Let's take the "question of all questions" – the question of language, which affects the widest interest of the mass of residents and creates the most offence. Party regulations require that a Russian official who has moved to Latvia (..) learns the Latvian language, but a Latvian official – the Russian language. For a long time the Russian official didn't object in principle (what objections – it's the regulations!) to learning the Latvian language, but in practice did nothing. The other official, a Latvian, would achieve certain progress in mastering the Russian language.

The native inhabitants tolerate this situation – tolerate it, but after that begin to lose patience and increasingly begin firmly demanding that this absurdity with the

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\* See Document 25 in the collection.



language be stopped. After pressure from the growing discontent, the LCP CC in the autumn of 1958 [actually – already in 1956 – J. R.] was forced to adopt a carefully made decision about the learning by officials of the Latvian language. This decision is completely correct – its only shortcoming is that it wasn't done at least 10 years previously.

As there are certain terms and sanctions provided in this decision, dragging one's heels with the learning of the Latvian language is no longer possible: one is now finally left with the option of either honestly seizing on the language [learning it – J. R.], or initiating an open "revolt" against this decision. Those "interested" chose the latter. District committee instructors openly "revolted" at their republican seminar and a gnashing of teeth took place at the regular Riga City Party conference etc. And such discontent was inevitable, as the decision, through its strict terms, made the tactic of the convenient "basic" learning which satisfied everybody, while practically doing nothing impossible. Public opinion is being strongly manipulated intimating that the CC's decision is a result of pressure from bourgeois nationalists. Official organs, which are involved in moulding public opinion, must quash these rumours, because the Republic's Russian press is as quiet as if the cat had its tongue – the implementation of the CC's decision doesn't concern them you see. The Republic's leading personnel of Russian nationality are remaining silent – they are obviously very interested in nothing coming of the CC's decision. It is the Latvians who are in favour of the Russians learning the Latvian language.

In other words, the LCP CC's decision on language is being thrown out. You, Comrade Khrushchev, might say that it's like some sort of mix-up at the Tower of Babel: how can people revolt against the CC and not implement its decisions – and what sort of CC is this, which can't insist on its decisions being implemented? Yes, if the CC has a firm foundation under its feet, then it also has a firm hand. But, if the foundation on which it is based and on which it is dependent, isn't satisfied with what the CC is doing, then this foundation takes its CC firmly and tells it – learn to respect me, your base, you fool, or find yourself a another base. But the different base, which is really very interested in bringing our national policy principles into practice, is very weak, very weak, crumbling and crumbling.

In 1959, having justifiably won the battle against the LCP CC's most foolish policy – to undertake a nationalization\* of the apparatus under the guise of being based on a factional agreement, the "winners" have also decided to avenge themselves on the language question as well, as the victory achieved through sabotage and through non-compliance with the directive on the language front was still not a complete victory. A complete victory principally also requires the termination of the language

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\* Here the concept "nationalization" means the recruiting of national cadres as personnel for institutions.

question for all time, so that people are no longer made nervous by it. The “winners” ask for the language question to be buried with all due “theoretical honours”. The “losers” will have to concede and perform a “theoretical act of heroism”.

But how can the “question of all questions” – the question of language – be removed from the agenda of a national republic? How can one prove that there’s no longer any point in demanding knowledge of the local language from an official? This can be proven quite simply! If the local inhabitants know the language of the official who has arrived, then he can see no point in burdening himself with learning the language of the local inhabitants. Clear as day!

You may say that this can’t be so. But, why not? Can’t a miracle take place, a real linguistic miracle? Then, see, it turns out that a linguistic miracle has taken place in Latvia, and the fact of this miracle has been confirmed by the LCP CC’s (1959) July Plenary resolution, where it’s written in black and white that Latvians know the Russian language and that by forcing a Russian official to learn the Latvian language, he is being placed in an unequal position with Latvians.

I have to reveal that this thesis has been kept in great secret: in the consideration of the plenary resolution, it wasn’t read out and commented on – obviously the authors of this thesis are afraid of the “enthusiasm” which will overcome the Latvian people when they find out about the linguistic act of heroism the authors have achieved.

Look at the Party regulation that is compulsory for you and for everyone, Comrade Khrushchev – both the “winners” as well as the “losers”. The “winners” raised the threat of bourgeois nationalism, and immediately “witnesses” were found who provided evidence about the fact of the miracle – that a whole nation had mastered a foreign language to the extent that, they could, without difficulty explain anything to a newly arrived official in the official’s own language.

In his latest article in “В помощь политическому самообразованию” Magazine [“Assistant in Political Self-Education” – J. R.], Comrade Pelše also touches on the question of language, but looks at it incorrectly, devising a completely absurd approach to the question and then going into battle with it. As asserted by Comrade Pelše, the discussion is not about forcing half a million Russians who have moved to Latvia to learn the Latvian language against their will using a stick – nobody has suggested such nonsense, and, as far as I know, such nonsense also isn’t in the LCP CC’s decision about language, for which, as it seems, Comrade Pelše also voted.

The discussion is about this and only this: that workers in our apparatus, regardless of their nationality, be they Latvians or Russians, know two languages – Latvian and Russian, as while working in these apparatuses they have to serve people of two nationalities, Latvians and Russians. The discussion is about getting rid of the absurdity, the inequality, the invidious situation, that a Latvian worker in the apparatus has learnt the Russian language in 15 years, but a similar Russian

worker in the apparatus has been able to get out of learning the Latvian language. When the LCP CC tried to put a bit of “pressure” on this issue in 1958, the Russian workers in the apparatus caused a “revolt”, categorically and on principle refusing to learn the Latvian language. The justification was that if Latvians didn’t want to look like bourgeois nationalists, then they must know the Russian language; that they shouldn’t harass Russian public servants to learn the Latvian language, leaving this question completely up to the conscience of the individual public servant.

Why didn’t Comrade Pelše talk about the real essence of this language problem in Latvia in his article? Why didn’t he satisfy his readers’ perfectly natural interest in this question: if Latvia is such a paradise to the newly arrived “apparatchik”, and knowledge of the Latvian language is only desirable but not compulsory for him, then in what language does this “apparatchik” explain himself to the local residents – in the Marr\* language or the deaf-and-dumb language?

Comrade Pelše didn’t do this because he’d then have to reveal the secret “Leninist” national policy in Latvia to the whole world, which is, in essence, that the majority of institutions operate in the Russian language and that clerical work within them is undertaken in the Russian language, especially in the cities, for example, in Riga. And then he’d have to satisfy his readers’ natural interest: but how do Latvians behave towards such a “Leninist” national policy? Comrade Pelše couldn’t tell the truth, i.e., the fact that the LCP CC is implementing an incorrect, un-Leninist national policy, (...) But what else could he do? Only one thing – to avoid the “uncomfortable” questions, and to say nothing about them at all. But then why did I even have to write this article?

The LCP CC’s July (1959) Plenary resolution removed the language problem which had harassed everyone for so many years, in such an original way, with the help of the “linguistic miracle”, removing the “national moment” problem, in selecting cadres in a no less original way as well. It turns out, that the preservation of this “moment” is nothing other than a breach of the Leninist requirement on the selection of cadres on the basis of their practical and political characteristics. And this was written, not in some backward rural Party regional committee’s resolution, but in a plenary resolution of the national communist Party’s CC!

(..) If we lived in a society where national differences weren’t recognized, then it would be foolish, simply mad, to take the national moment into account in selecting cadres. But the requirement not to take this national moment into account in a national republic, which has to undertake the nationalization of its apparatus and develop its national cadres, is the same type of foolishness!

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\* Marr “Marxist” theory foresaw the blending of languages and linked it with the building of communism.

In choosing a cadre in a national republic, it is not a breach to take into account his knowledge of the local language and his national belonging. It is rather, the observation of Leninist requirements on the selection of cadres, which is based on their practical and political characteristics. If an official doesn't know the local language in a national republic, this is evidence of his lack of practical qualifications. To place a local person in a particular position in a national republic is a political requirement, and a person who doesn't conform to this requirement, i.e., is not a local person, is not suited to this position based on political considerations. (...)

By taking this position of abandoning Leninist principles in our national policy, the LCP CC inescapably had to entangle itself, and it truly did entangle itself. The kind of quagmire in which the LCP CC ended up can be seen from this almost unbelievable fact.

In an attempt to reveal the "theoretical roots" of Berklaivs' mistake, economic science candidate [A.] Sumins, in discussing the LCP CC's Plenary resolution, appeared in one of the Riga district Party activist meetings, and argued the thesis that Berklaivs' "fall from grace" had occurred because he hadn't understood the assimilationist character of our national policy. To substantiate his "thesis", Sumins referred to Lenin. The news about this presentation by Sumins spread throughout Riga at a lightning pace, and was commented on everywhere. Questions about this presentation were raised at meetings. Questions were also asked of Comrade Pelše. When I was informed of Comrade Pelše's reaction to this question, I simply didn't believe it. But afterwards, I heard Pelše's response with my own ears at the Republic's Propagandist Seminar. (...) Pelše didn't defend Lenin and also didn't show that in the latter's well known treatise, the term "assimilation" was forced on him by an enemy, and that Lenin used this term with inverted commas. Pelše confirmed, that Sumins, in explaining Lenin in this way, was correct, and that our national policy really is assimilatory. (...)

It may seem that all of these are attestations from the past; that now, with the consistent implementation of the resolution from the July Plenary, the Republic has quieted down, that "passions" have cooled. But why should they cool? Have their causes been eliminated? Of course not! Can "passions" be done away with by repressive measures or organizational conclusions? They'll just be driven deeper underground – that, indeed! (...)

The Party organization formally supported the July Plenary decisions. It's true, there was also a "revolt". So, the Party's History Institute Party organization, for example, "revolted" and adopted a resolution "for noting and for implementation", but refused to support it. The "rebellion" was calmed. "Not in the spirit" stated the Academy of Science's Party organization secretary, a Party member of long standing. This person was then pensioned off. This is how "support for it" was organized. As

people couldn't openly object, due to the possibility of being repressed, they find safer forms of demonstrating their dissent instead. (..)

But what do Latvian communists think about the LCP CC's policy on the national question? They obviously think that all of our old national policy principles have now been discarded, that nothing from this policy which was carved in stone has remained and that this has taken place without Moscow's knowledge.

A small incident from my life. I ran into a young communist who had completed studies at the LVU\* Faculty of Biology and worked in the anti-religion propaganda field. I asked him: "Well, how is it with God?" – He answered: "I've discarded God completely. I work with the national question; I've read Stalin and studied Party congress decisions." – "And what are the results?" I asked him. – "You understand how it is: now if someone went and read out a resolution from the Party's XII Congress without citing the source, he'd immediately be expelled from the Party for being a nationalist."

But people do have heads on their shoulders. In their eyes the old Marxist-Leninist documents on the national question have incomparably greater authority than the LCP CC's July Plenary resolution, a document, to which they were forced to swear allegiance with threats of Party sanctions. People also know that life and practice test the correctness of political lines as well as all sorts of theoretical expositions and concepts. As there's no possibility of bringing the leaders to their senses due to the use of terror, one is left to wait for the leaders not to reach a dead end, or to get too many large economic and political bumps on the head with their inefficient, incorrect course. Therefore, "the worse, the better" – for then a solution will arrive quicker, and then Moscow will really be forced to find out what's really happening here on the national question. (..)\*

**J. Dīmanis\*\***

Riga

20 April 1960

\* LVA, PA – 2160. f., 21. apr., 487.l., pp. 107–110, 112–116, 132–133, 135–136, 138–139, 143–144, 150–152, 158. Originals. Tulkojums no krievu valodas.

\*\* J. Dīmanis was born in 1885 in Valmiera Region, in the Rencēni Rural Territory. He completed studies at Shanavsky University in Moscow. He worked as the director of a school in Rūjiena Rural Territory, and a teacher at a children's colony in Bashkiria. He took part in the Russian Civil War – and was the editor of an army newspaper. From 1922 to 1944 he lived and worked in the USSR. From 1944 to 1949 – as the Head of the LSSR Publishing Ruling Council, from 1950 to 1952 as a lecturer in Marxism-Leninism in Riga, from 1953 to 1956 – as Director of the LSSR Ministry of Culture's Central Lecture Bureau, from 1957 – a retired pensioner.

## Document 32

Excerpt from theses sent by J. Dimanis on 20 April 1960 to N. Khrushchev "On a 'new course' in national policy and its results in Latvia"

To the Soviet CP CC  
Comrade N. S. Khrushchev  
On a 'new course' in national policy  
and its results in Latvia  
(theses)

(20 April 1960)

Initially, the author of these theses had intended to confine himself to a "Statement about the reasons for an exacerbation of national relations in Latvia." But, in preparing this notification, he became convinced that the LCP CC has overstepped not only a number of our significant national policy theses, but that these breaches have been sanctioned by the Soviet CP CC apparatus, or in any case – by its workers, individually.

This situation forced the author to write these theses, in truth, their first part. In the second part the content of the "Statement" will be outlined, as it became necessary to follow how the national question developed here step by step, and how individual "knots" of national contradictions came about!

### I

1. For a certain time now in our Party's press, mainly in its magazines, articles can quite often be found about the national question in a number of our republics. From these articles it can be seen that something is wrong with the mutual national relations in these republics – local nationalism has raised its head and begun to "cause trouble". As to the causes, the main view is that this is the "result of intrigues" by foreign class enemies, but in places where the revival of local nationalism can't be linked in any way with foreign influences, the view is that it's political atavism – due to their longevity, nationalistic prejudices suddenly "flare up" for varying reasons.

Of course, in no way can we not take the capitalist world's pressure on us into account – the influence of its ideological attacks and its "games" with some of our people's prejudices. But in all of these cases one should also take into account the circumstances; that the results of this "pressure" and "influence" aren't directly

proportional to their strength, but quite often are dependent on the type of political nation in which they are being implemented: if this policy appeals to the masses, then foreign "intrigues" don't achieve anything and they "don't get accepted", but, if a policy is unsatisfying within a nation, then people begin to "listen in", "pricking up their ears", and are "caught on a hook". Then pure explanatory work here will make no difference, as the masses, as Lenin many times has emphasized, "learn from life and not from books."

In all cases of local expressions of nationalism on the national question, one has to take into account our Party's position regarding the fact that local nationalism is mainly a phenomenon deriving from a defensive position. It is a "national" reaction to the insults which they have suffered from chauvinism, but Great Russian chauvinism is nothing other than a diminution of national characteristics, and a disinclination to even take them into account in the work of the Party and of councils. A nationalist, as pointed out by Lenin, is extremely easy to insult, sensitive to the slightest injustice or expression of inequality; a person who belongs to a nation which has never experienced a national yoke, said Lenin, simply cannot understand this sensitivity, this wounded feeling.

2. There are people here who consider that there can't be any talk of national insult in our Soviet circumstances. What sorts of insults can there be if the national question here has been solved, solved in all of its aspects – political, cultural, economic and that objective development in socialist conditions doesn't create any national contradictions; but, as to what applies to the "subjective moment," they say, then those Great Russian chauvinistic reactionaries, who from their class position and previous political "upbringing" were capable of oppressing and offending small nations, disappeared long ago – they have simply died out, and a new – Soviet person – generation has emerged here, which finds it completely foreign, which finds an arrogant, inconsiderate attitude to people of another nationality disgusting in its very essence. (..) And still, we have to deal with the national question again and again at each major turning point in our objective development, which in one way or the other, impacts on a people's fundamental interests, their way of life and language etc. As national differences will remain, though life and development can't be stopped, development will, in this way, create continuing new changes in the mutual relationships between nations, and in some cases will cause "insults" and contradictions. (..)
3. Recently the USSR Council of Ministers Central Statistics Board's report from the interim information from the 1959 National Census on the national composition of USSR inhabitants was published. This news provides evidence of the large-scale mixing of inhabitants which had taken place in the country during the war and afterwards. Due to the large arriving inhabitant mass of various ethnic composition, which was settled permanently in many of our Soviet republics, the

percentage of native population numbers decreased significantly: in Kirghizia from 52 to 41 per cent, in Kazakhstan – from 38 to 30 per cent, in Tadzhikistan – from 60 to 53 per cent, and in Uzbekistan – from 65 to 62 per cent.

In the Baltic Soviet republics (excluding Lithuania) changes to the national composition are even more surprising. In Latvia the balance of the republic's native population (compared to 1930) decreased from 73.4 to 60 per cent, but the percentage of Russian inhabitants increased from 10.6 to 26 (bearing in mind the return of a number of rural territories with mainly Russian inhabitants to the RFSSR. After the war, almost half a million people moved to Latvia. Extremely rapid national changes have taken place in Riga: the percentage of Russian inhabitants has increased from 8 to 50, and about half of Riga's inhabitants are Russians, the majority of whom don't know the Latvian language (Russians who were part of Latvia's native population know the Latvian language).

In Estonia in 1922, the Russians made up 3.8 per cent but now – 27.7 per cent. The balance of Estonian inhabitants has gone down from 92.4 per cent to 72.9 per cent. In Lithuania in 1931, Russian inhabitants constituted 2.4, but are now 8.5 per cent. The balance of Lithuanian inhabitants hasn't decreased by much – from 80.6 to 79 per cent.

4. Obviously, such a large transfer of inhabitants, which took place during the war and afterwards, couldn't but produce the occurrence of a completely inescapable and natural interim conflict (mutual "affront") between the arrivals and residents of our Republic. This was about a whole range of purely day to day, practical questions, which are completely solvable with the right policy, such as on issues of accommodation, language, the placement of cadres et al. Only a completely hopeless doctrine would ward off these conflicts in practical, daily issues, as in socialism, in a land where the national question has long been solved, there can't be any national discrepancy in any circumstances. It's not practical political work that's needed here to eliminate discrepancies and resentment, but the beating and beating of the enemy and the enemy's direct and indirect supporters so that they don't weave intrigues, and don't "play" on the nationalistic prejudices of ignorant people.
5. One of the reasons for the bankruptcy the Latvian CP CC experienced on the national question, is that it didn't understand a simple thing. Namely, that in a republic which stepped onto the path of Soviet development only 15 years ago and which was additionally forced to accept and establish half a million arriving inhabitants – the national question cannot be reduced to just the fight against bourgeois nationalism, loud as it may be. Many different kinds of solutions to purely practical household questions are required which are connected with the placement of the arriving inhabitants and the settlement of mutual relations with the local inhabitants; the fight against bourgeois nationalism without the



resolution of this practical question becomes empty words, which are not worth a groat, and the masses won't be free of the influence of bourgeois nationalists if the practical questions aren't solved. (..)

6. Our Party always fought on two fronts on the national question – against Great Russian nationalism (chauvinism) and against local nationalism, viewing the latter as mainly a protective phenomenon: a “nationalist” usually resorted to “his” nationalism when he'd suffered injustice from Great Russian nationalism (chauvinism).

Obviously (one is forced to make such an assumption, as there currently aren't direct, open statements on this question), making the excuse that due to the victory of socialism in our country, deep class transformations have taken place and that the exploiter class, which had been the social basis of both of these deviations in the nation's interior has been liquidated – that some sort of silent agreement has been reached here about the fact that one can no longer talk about a fight on two fronts in the national question, (..) that without a social basis, the remaining [remnants] Great Russian nationalism (chauvinism) has disappeared. (..)

A document about the national question in Latvia – an LCP CC VII Plenary resolution, in which there wasn't a hint of a fight on two fronts, was put forward to the All-Republic Party organization for discussion last year, in 1959. When LCP CC Secretary Comrade Pelše was asked, at the relevant meeting about where chauvinism and the fight against it had gone, the answer came that “there isn't an object to strike” in the battle at the front against chauvinism

(..)

11. For quite a while now the absence of a fight on two fronts on the national question in relation to the “disappearance” of chauvinism couldn't but affect places, to the national policy implemented in the Republic. The deviation from Leninism on the national question in some republics (for example, in Latvia) is so great, that we can even talk of some kind of “new course” on the national question.

This “new course” has the following features:

- a) most frequently the factual, but in some cases, the formal abdication from the fight on two fronts on the national question too. The justification for this is that due to the “disappearance” of chauvinism, the fight has become one without a target and is therefore also futile;
- b) local nationalism, which was earlier considered to be a reaction to the mischief of chauvinism, its “roguery”, the shifting of its base to foreign countries, and calling it the “intrigues” of the class enemy (emigration) hiding there, but in situations where this is impossible, it is called a remnant of capitalism, existing due to a completely natural lag in awareness of reality;

- c) the abandonment of the nationalization of the apparatus in those republics in which this nationalization wasn't even implemented; the abandonment of observing the "national moment" in the placement of cadres in any national republic because it seems inconsistent with the Leninist cadre selection principle according to its characteristics of politics and efficiency. In actual fact such a comparison is pure sophism: in a society where there aren't national differences, taking the "national moment" into account is an absurdity and folly; whereas in a society in which national differences have been maintained, the observation of the "national moment" in the placement of cadres emerges directly from the Leninist principle – to select cadres according to their efficiency and political characteristics. An example: an official belonging to whatever nationality not knowing two languages, the local and Russian in a national republic, means that this official has an inadequate practical qualification; in a national republic the placement of a person of the local nationality in a particular position is, at every step, a political demand, and a person who is not a local, a "nationalist" often doesn't conform to the position according to political considerations. At this stage of our development, we cannot avoid this and we won't be able to for a long time yet, if, of course, we intend to live as taught by Lenin and don't get involved in leaps in the wrong direction and hyperbole;
  - d) abandonment of the requirement for an official who has arrived in a national republic to learn the local language; forcing the local inhabitants to come to terms with this and to speak with the official in the Russian language, politically irresponsible declarations and decisions (in Latvia), that whole nationalities already know the Russian language and therefore neither the nationalization of the apparatus is necessary, nor political mass work among the local inhabitants in their native language. (..) to treat anyone who doesn't agree with such a policy, like a bourgeois nationalist;
  - e) the lack of understanding of the task of development of a national working class in a national republic (in Latvia), and behaving towards it like it was a simple workforce, the national composition of which is completely unimportant; (..)
  - f) the regulation of the Party organization's (in Latvia) national and social composition, which is completely unacceptable to a Marxist; (..)
  - g) the growth of local nationalism which is leftist in form, but in its nature the result of chauvinist policy.
12. As the "new course" is still being quite steadily implemented in life even without being advertised and without theoretical "rehashing", a quite ticklish situation has arisen, the essence of which is that we, can no longer use Party documents, in which some of our national policy's foundations are formulated

in our propaganda work, without getting involved in “arguments” with this “new course”. (..)

13. (..) The forcing of the Republic’s native inhabitants to reconcile themselves with the work of institutions in the Russian language is chauvinism, even though they may be formed with some “real communist”, “real internationalist” battery of arguments and even though communist-nationals who implement such a policy pacify themselves that in this way they hasten the historic process and bring peoples together.

The task selected by our objective development path, and which wasn’t as acute before, is a completely different one, and requires that workers in our institutions (..) who have to attend to both native inhabitants as well as arrivals, know two languages – the language of the local inhabitants and the Russian language as the language of the arriving inhabitants, even if not all of the people who have arrived are of Russian nationality, as no apparatus is capable of speaking with every person in his native language and it would be absurd to require it. There’s no doubt that in connection with the strengthening of our economic and cultural connections with the capitalist world, one of the Western European languages will also have to be learnt. (..)

Capitalism, as we know, also brings peoples together and solves language problems. Obviously it solves these spontaneously, but not at all badly (some of our leftists should learn from them in this respect!). A doctor will definitely be left without patients, a lawyer – without customers, a shopkeeper – without buyers, hotels, or a restaurant owner – without visitors (..), if one doesn’t know the language of one’s patients, customers, buyers and visitors. If you have dealings with people of 2–3 nationalities, you have to know 2–3 languages! And people know them. In Riga before the revolution, professional people, shop, restaurant and hotel workers etc. had to know, and they did know three languages – Latvian, Russian and German. But, see, an official arriving in Riga now stages a real revolt, if it’s recommended that he know two languages and to accordingly learn the language of the native inhabitants for this purpose!

14. In national republics, staffing of the apparatus, predominantly by local inhabitants, must be maintained as sacred in the future too. (..)

The nationalization of the apparatus in a national republic is, as we know, dictated by:

- a) the need to strictly observe the implementation of the equality of peoples policy, but there can’t be such equality in a place where a people isn’t actually allowed to participate in self-government and is governed by people of a different nationality;
- b) the need to develop our national cadres, who only develop through hands-on work in administration;

- c) the need for a an authoritative, good quality apparatus which is closely connected with the masses, and this is specifically why it's necessary for this apparatus to work in the same language as spoken by the inhabitants and that "one's own" people, who understand the mode of life and customs of the local inhabitants work there. (..)

**J. Dimanis\***

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\* LVA, PA – 2160. f., 21. apr., 487. l., pp. 87–91., 95–101. Original. Translated from the Russian language. Explanation.

On the initiative of V. Lenin, the following resolutions were taken on the national question at Russia's Communist (Bolshevik) Party XII Congress which took place from 17 to 25 April 1923: "The Congress recommends a practical example for Party members on how:

- a) in creating the Union's central organs, the equality of rights and equality of individual republics is safeguarded both in relation to their mutual relations as well as in relation to the central authority;
- b) all national republic and regional representative organs in the Union's highest organ system should, without exception, be created on the basis of equality (..);
- e) national republic and regional organs should be created mainly from local people, who know the language, mode of life, customs and traditions of the particular people;
- f) special laws would be issued which would ensure the use of the native language in all state organs and institutions, which serve the local inhabitants of different nationalities and national minorities, – laws, which persecute and punish, with complete revolutionary severity, all breaches of national rights and especially the rights of national minorities. (КПСС в резолюциях и решениях съездов, конференций и пленумов ЦК. Т. 2: 1917–1924. Москва, 1970, с. 441)

However, these demands weren't observed in the creation of national policy in the Soviet empire, which is also justifiably pointed out by J. Dimanis.

On 20 May 1960, the Soviet CP CC Soviet Republics Party Organ Bureau leader V. Čurajevs sent both of the materials submitted by J. Dimanis to LCP CC Secretary A. Pelše for a "review of the J. Dimanis matter". This "review" took place in the LCP CC Party Commission on 8 August 1960. The LCP CC in its 21 September 1960 report to the Soviet CP CC Soviet Republics Party Organ Bureau pointed out: "(..) At the meeting of the Party Commission J. J. Dimanis admitted fault only for the sharp tone of his statement, but maintained his position on all other questions. (..)" (LVA. PA – 2160. f., 21. apr., 487.l., p. 1)

В ЦК КПСС  
товарищу Н.С.Хрущеву

О некоем "новом курсе" в национальной политике  
и его результатах в Латвии

(тезисы)

Автор настоящих тезисов вначале предполагал ограничиться лишь "Заявлением о причинах обострения национальных взаимоотношений в Латвии". Однако, работая над этим заявлением, ему пришлось убедиться:

себе нарушить  
ной политики,  
тон ЛК КПСС;

Это обост  
тезисы, собствен  
содержание "З  
довольно боль  
развился у  
дельные "узлы

то состава процент коренного населения во многих наших  
союзных республиках значительно снизился: в Азербайджане - с 52 до  
41 процента, в Казахстане - с 38 до 30, в Узбекистане - с 30 до 20,  
- с 60 до 53 процентов, в Узбекистане - с 60 до 53, в Таджикистане  
с 60 до 62 процентов.

В Прибалтийских  
наименее в

5...

миллиций, языковой, расстановки кадров и др. Надо быть совершенно  
безнадежны доктринами, чтобы отмахнуться от этих противоречий  
по практическим, житейским вопросам под тем предлогом, что при  
социализме, в стране, где национальный вопрос давно решен,  
никаких национальных противоречий ни при каких обстоятельствах  
не должно и не может быть; что тут не положительная практическая  
работа нужна по устранению противоречий, обща, а битье и еще раз  
битье врага и его волиных и чуждых пособников, чтоб не устраи-  
вали "козлы"; но "итрали" на националистических предрассудках  
теплых ладонь.

5. Одной из причин банкротства, которое потерпел ЦК КП Латвии  
в национальной политике, явилось непонимание им той простой вещи,  
что в республике, только 15 лет назад ставшей на путь советского  
развития и к тому же вынужденной принять и устроить миллионы  
пришлого населения, национальный вопрос не может быть сведен  
только к борьбе с буржуазным национализмом, как бы громко она ни  
была, а требует разрешения большого количества разнообразнейших,  
сугубо практических, житейских вопросов, связанных с устройством  
этого пришлового населения и налаживанием его взаимоотношений с  
местным населением, что без решения этих практических задач, и  
отторгания от них борьба с буржуазным национализмом вырождается  
в пустопорожнюю словесность, которой цена грош, который миллион  
если не будут решены эти практические вопросы, из-под влияния  
буржуазных националистов не высвободится.

Конечно, о национальной политике, проводимой в других наших  
республиках, нельзя судить только по статьям в нашей прессе, но  
некоторое отражение этой политики они, эти статьи, все же дают.  
Так почему же в этих статьях говорится главным образом о  
достижениях нашей национальной политики и так обидно мало о  
сегодняшних ее задачах? Неужто, кроме борьбы с буржуазным  
национализмом, никаких задач по национальной линии здесь больше  
нет и все они уже решены?

действительно дело обстоит так и причина та, что  
как "революция", партийные организации пере-



Decisions and  
materials about  
proper Latvian  
orthography

## Document 33

The Latvian SSR Council of Ministers decision of 4 June 1947 "On the proper Latvian and Russian orthography for the names of Latvian SSR institutions, organizations and enterprises"

Latvian SSR Minister Council

Decision No. 449

### **On the proper Latvian and Russian orthography for the names of Latvian SSR institutions, organizations and enterprises**

4 June 1947

The Latvian SSR Council of Ministers decides:

1. To approve the orthography of Latvian SSR institution, organization and enterprise names in Latvian and Russian in accordance with the attachment.\*
2. To forbid all Latvian SSR ministries, central institutions, organizations and enterprises from using stamps, seals, forms and signs with abbreviated names of ministries and central institutions in Russian and Latvian.  
To order that changes to stamps, seals and forms be completed in accordance to this decision by no later than 1 January 1948.
3. To forbid the usage in advertising, signage, etc., the writing with Latvian letters abbreviated Russian names, such as "Gosstrach", "Gortop", and so on, because these are not in the least understandable to the inhabitants and in many causes they form words that mangle the meaning of the name.
4. To forbid the usage in Latvian and Russian incoherent abbreviations of names, such as "GUK", "Latžilkomunstroj", "Piščemestprom", etc.
5. To order that abbreviations (for example "VEF" and others) be permitted only when statutes and by-laws have been drawn up, approved and registered in a timely fashion for where this abbreviation will be used.
6. To order that all signage in public areas can be placed with the permission of the local city (district) or region executive committee.

To make it the responsibility of city and district executive committees to verify that institution, organization and enterprise signage are in accordance with provisions of this decision. The aforementioned executive committees have the right remove all signage not conforming to these provisions.

Latvian SSR Minister Council Chairman

**V. Lācis**

Latvian SSR Minister Council Head Clerk

**I. Bastins\*\***

\* The attachment was never published.

\*\* LVA, 270. f., 2. apr., 391. l., pp. 77–78. Original.

## Document 34

Mr. A. Reiznieks' article "On proper surname orthography"

Mailed to the editor of "Rīgas Balss"  
(1959)

In mailing the attached article I hope that it will be published in your newspaper, perhaps in the Letters section.

I would not object if the editor finds it necessary to somewhat edit this article.

### Proper surname orthography.

A while back, while riding the tram, my attention was drawn to a conversation between, it appears, two friends. One in a nervous voice said:

– "Do you know what has happened to me? My surname is no longer Briedis!"\*

– "How did that happen?"

– "I am a 'murgs' (= nightmare)" – the first one answered!

– "How so?"

– "Here. Look, if you don't believe me." – He took out his personal identification and showed his friend. – "You see, its written as „Бред“, which in Latvian is 'murgs.'"

– "That's right," his friend replied astonished. "How did that happen?"

– "I had to renew my identification documents and in the police department they 'shortened' my surname in Russian. I objected to that but they wouldn't listen. Today, and possibly longer, I won't be able to work normally because I have gone from being a noble animal to being a 'nightmare'.

Listening to this conversation I thought about my own problems in getting my identification documents. When I started to stubbornly protest to the police the liquidation of the letter 's' from my surname, the police showed me a Council of Ministers decision (it could have been No. 940?) and its attachment with examples of abbreviated surnames. Among them, if I remember correctly, was "Apinis", which will have to be shortened to "Apin." This surname does not go through a metamorphosis as radical as „Бред“, but still, my surname is altered.

Is there really a need, and if there is, then what kind, to shorten Latvian surnames when writing them in Russian? Is this justifiable from a scientific (morphological) point of view? Is the decision proper if it embitters those whose surnames are changed?

And therefore, shouldn't this issue be revisited with the view that people's surnames would be kept as they are in their entirety?

**A. Reiznieks\*\***

P.S. Attached is a Russian translation of this letter.

\* Briedis is a male deer, a buck.

\*\* LVA, 290. f., 1. apr., 5267. l., pp. 67–68. Original.



## » Document 35

Report to the Latvian SSR Supreme Council presidium by A. Leiškalne, senior lecturer in the Documentation Section, on “The careless preparation of documents in the Latvian language”

Information

### **The negligent preparation of documents in Latvian (1959)**

In reviewing how official documents are prepared by the police, the registry office, courts, district executive committees, factories and institutions, it is clear that some documents are prepared carelessly, containing mistakes and with sloppy penmanship.

On the whole police departments do a good job preparing documents that are clearly readable. None the less some citizens have been issued identification documents that contain mistakes and inaccuracies. For example, police Precinct 1 in Riga issued identification documents to citizen A. Stepānovs in which the Latvian text was different from the Russian (in Latvian it stated that the document will be good for 5 years, in Russian – indefinitely. The Russian text is correct.) In addition it states that citizen Stepānovs is registered at Pēteris Stučka Street 23/25, apt. 4, but his family, with which he lives together in an apartment, is registered as living at Blaumaņa Street 5a, apt. 4. (Stepānovs' apartment is located on the corner of Pēteris Stučka and Blaumaņa streets and the housing council has issued information with differing addresses.)

On 22 March 1954 Riga's 3<sup>rd</sup> Precinct issued identification documents to citizen Kalnietis in which it is unclear on what basis they were granted: “Apl. izd. 2. III 54 g. No. 36 MD SD PKA IM LPSR.”

In citizen Boriss Plotke's documents the Latvian text states that he is the daughter of Ilja.

Police departments occasionally stamp the residency part of identification documents with seals that are not readable and write street names illegibly. Such a case occurred in the police department in the Jūrmala district of Riga.

Children are usually listed in their parents' documents in only one language – Latvian or Russian, although they are supposed to be in both languages.

Police precincts run into trouble with the correct surname orthography, which is why we have misunderstandings and people are dissatisfied. In order to resolve this issue, the Council of Ministers will shortly publish new rules regarding name and surname orthography.

It is noted that in residency registries the Riga police sometimes translate Latvian street names into Russian, for example Dzirnavu, Strēlnieku streets, etc.

The Riga civilian registration bureau issues correctly completed birth and marriage certificates. However, it should be noted that a majority of birth certificates are written sloppily and illegibly; in some certificates the father's name is noted, in others not. The birth certificate form has a space for the nationality of the parents, but not for the child's. In the former Red Army district registry office Latvian birth certificates are issued in Russian.

Court decisions and judgments written in Latvian contain several grammatical errors, incorrect endings on words, and careless mistakes that have led to misunderstandings. For example, the Smiltene district people's court on 31 August 1956 wrote in the verdict regarding Burkēvics (Criminal case no. 1-67) that, "guilt was proven with experimental protocols." In the Kirovs district's 5<sup>th</sup> precinct people's court judgment in the trial (20–23 April 1954) of Berkulis, Vitkoskis and Vojedovs (Criminal case no. 1-23) it states, "Berkulis Verners son of Pēteris is sentenced in the Riga linesman transportation court...", followed further by the incoherent phrase, "On 23 January 1954 Vojedovs became kl. 19-20 with the convicted Vittkovskis (*sic*)..." There were many sloppy mistakes: "pulled from my hands (*sic*)", "general stoore (*sic*)", "individaul (*sic*)", "putt down (*sic*)".

The judgment in the trial was very sloppily written: "sentenced 1) Vojevods Ādolfs son of Antons, born 10 July 1936 on the basis of the USSR Supreme Council Presidium Decree of 4 June 1947, 'Regarding strengthening the protection of citizens' personal property'. On the basis of Paragraph 2 Section 2, applying Criminal Code 51, he was sentenced to..." and: "punished with imprisonment work – in a correction colony" (instead of correctional work in a colony), further – "... the sentence to be suspended with an experimental time of 2 years" (probation time).

The judgment incorrectly states the name of the 4 June 1947 Decree: "Regarding strengthening the protection of a citizen's personal property", omitting the word "personal".

In the case of Vecmanis, No. I-249, the Kirovs district people's court wrote in the judgment, "but when the police wanted to judge him, to arrest him..., ... when he was arrested by a policeman on January 24 stolen from and trying to carry from the factory territory..." (*sic*).

The judgment written by the Alūksne district people's court in case of Hmelinska (No. 1-56) of 4 April 1957 is incomprehensible. For example: "slaughtered for Morele the stolen lamb meat" and "the accused in stealing the good case lamb for Alma Bārda..." (*sic*). Further, "With all of the frames, because that was attested to previously by the accused's son Egons, and Alma Bārda, in looking for clues to the theft, when told of the lamb's theft, about 300 meters from the accused's home were found a few frozen bees by the trees."

The whole judgment is written in a similar fashion.

Similar types of mistakes are found in many sentencing documents. Surnames are written grammatically incorrect, women's surnames are written using male endings, copies are often written on tissue paper with narrow spacing, illegible and with numerous unauthorized corrections. The many grammatical errors and illogical expressions lower the standards of the courts. When judgment copies, which contain many pages, are distributed, rarely are these pages stapled together and stamped. Often copies of judgments are stamped with the seal of the court's clerk even though the state seal is required.

Some shortcomings are also found in the work of the district executive committees in drawing up documents. In decisions, just as in court rulings, one comes across many grammatical mistakes, improper usage of male/female endings, for example, the Kuldīga district executive committee decision No. 164 of 15 October 1958 states unclearly: "4. To assign to all institution, enterprise and organization leaders to provide auto transportation to instructors for night time traffic safety patrols, according to their schedule."

In the same document in decision No. 165 it states, "Serious complaint and submittal decision deadlines allowed in the district hospital" and, "...strictly observe the instructions regarding.... paragraph 15."

In decision No. 169 of 15 October 1958, this same district executive committee writes: "Soil preparation a)... b) in plowing the soil in the autumn to loosen the culture for cultivation, also to plow fallow to make the plough layer deeper" and in decision No. 172, "1. To assign administrative responsibility for violations of social order because (if) it was not foreseen as criminal liability." One small error changes the whole meaning of the sentence.

Such mistakes occur in the decisions of other district executive committees.

District executive committee decisions in Krustpils and Kuldīga regarding the registration of underage marriages omit the ages of the people.

The Kuldīga district executive committee, in approving the decision of the people's general meeting regarding the banishment of social parasites, writes that these persons will be exiled to an "exile place", to wit decision No. 134 of 6 August 1958 regarding the to be exiled Stucis states, "...about citizen STCA ..... banished from the city of Kuldīga."

Similar sloppiness can be seen in decisions adopted in sessions of district Soviets. In the Pļaviņas district Soviet decision of 28 August 1958 it is written, "...patient sanitary processing" and in the 30 January 1958 decision, "In the deployment, organizing and improving the villages' shortage of council work, almost no help has been forthcoming from the district executive committee branches."

District and village executive committees distribute various documents, sometimes preparing them on tissue paper, unclearly, and not affirmed with an official stamp and the official title of the signatory.

Educational institutions distribute well prepared documents. Nonetheless these also contain mistakes and inaccuracies, such as the State University of Latvia diploma completion form distributed to linguists in which the rubric "Qualification" is crossed out and moved to another part of the document and where somebody has entered by hand: "Granted the qualification of linguist and the title of high school Latvian language and literature teacher." Such unauthorized changes can cause confusion – notaries do not have the right, in such cases, to issue certified copies, therefore state printers should publish correct forms.

The Latvian Agricultural Academy uses the qualification description "educated agronomist", something that is completely confusing.

The Riga Second Medical School writes the surnames of women using the masculine form, for example, "issued citizen Ģermanis [ed. Ģērmāne] Dzintrai Augusta daughter". Her qualification was listed as "feldšērs-laborants" [ed. feldšēre-laborante]\*.

There are numerous inaccuracies in documents issued by medical institutions. Information regarding treatment in hospitals is poorly written, illegible, the diagnosis is often undecipherable, the record is filled out by various persons, signed by a physician and personally stamped, although the signature of the head doctor, or at least of the department doctor, is required along with the state stamp. Sometimes these documents are not even signed. The Physician Advisory Committee (AKK) also writes opinions incorrectly. Quite often in the right hand corner are two poorly written, and unclear to everyone, letters "KK", a signature and the physician's stamp, even though all three committee members are required to sign it and attach the state stamp. The information forms issued by the tuberculosis medical centre are written in Latvian but the headings are usually in Russian.

Personal employment books are poorly designed. For women who change their surnames, usually the former name is crossed out and the new one written in or just added on, and the new name is not witnessed with a signature and stamp. Sometimes the corrections are so illegible that they cannot be read and are written with different coloured ink. For example, the Jēkabpils supply office issued an employment book to citizen Kļaviņa in which her maiden name is illegible, her married name is entered in a different handwriting and colour ink, her profession is again in another person's writing, in Russian it states she is an inventory manager, but in Latvian, an economist. The entry noting her hiring

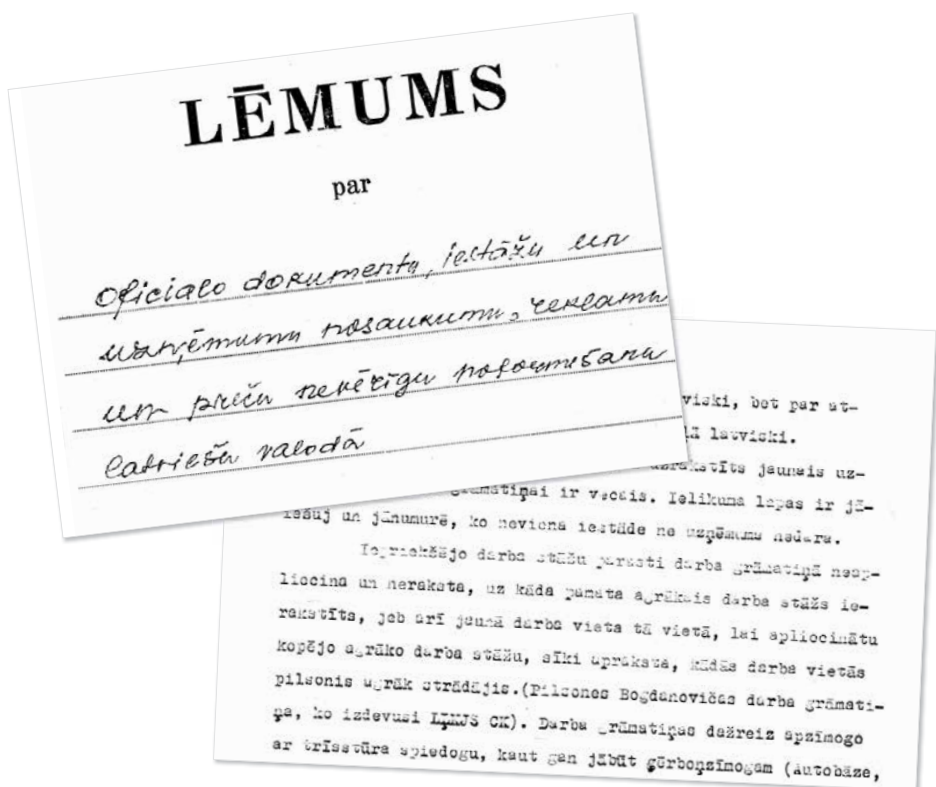
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\* The endings of the names are incorrect in Latvian due to the gender of the nouns.

is in Russian in the Russian section but her release from work is in Latvian in the Latvian section. (...) The vast majority of employment books are written in Russian.

Documentation Section Senior Lecturer

**A. Leiškalne\***



\* LVA, 290. f., 1. apr., 5267. l., pp. 18–25. Original.

## Document 36

An excerpt from the Latvian SSR Supreme Council Presidium notice regarding the careless registration of the names of official documents, institutions and enterprises as well advertising and products in Latvian

Notice  
(June 1959)

The Latvian SSR Supreme Council Presidium has reviewed the issue regarding the names of official documents, institutions and enterprises as well as advertising and products in Latvian and concludes that government institutions and enterprises often irresponsibly and carelessly prepare decisions and other documents in Latvian, which results in confusion regarding their intent and implementation.

(..)

The largest number of grammatical errors is encountered in state enterprise documents. For example, in the Latvenergo employee time sheet, which is called a "tabula" (table), we find the following linguistic gems: "Free time for feeding mothers", "Overtime work hours", "Total shift idle time", "Partial idle time", "Loafing" (nporyn), "Tardiness and leaving early", and so on. These and similar inaccuracies can be found in all factory or enterprise documents. At the same time complete illiteracy abounds on restaurant and eatery menus, such as "pork atbivnoja" (ed.: pork chopped, *sic*) and others. And this happens where the cultural standards, including the standards of language culture of visitors and inhabitants, should be best observed.

Factories and commercial enterprises at times continue the old practice of writing their names and advertising grammatically wrong in Latvian. One encounters signage written "Gastronomija", "Gastronoms" or "Gastronom". Currently it is popular to use the difficult to pronounce word in Latvian "ateljē" (atelier), to the detriment of the now almost completely eradicated word "darbnīca". The term "sabiedriskā ēdināšana" (public catering, ed.) is a direct translation (from Russian) that in Latvian makes no sense. At times well known names are "Latvianized", creating nonsensical Latvian forms, as when "Nivea" was transliterated to "Niveja". Enterprise names are comprised of a long sentence or even several sentences, and when abbreviated create incomprehensible and unpronounceable names, such as "PPRM PSRS Glavtorsirjo-Supply Storage", "Latcentroautotek", and so on. At the same time the naming of new factories with easy to pronounce and easy to remember names, as was the case earlier with "Imanta", "Blāzma" (Glow), "Sarkanā Zvaigzne" (Red Star), "Sarkanais Metalurģis" (Red Metallurgist), and others, is being done away with. Some other enterprises, such as "Vairogs" (Shield) and others, have, for some unfathomable reason, liquidated

their names. A few enterprise abbreviations are translations from two languages, resulting in two brand names, such as “RVR” and “RVZ”, “RER” and “REZ”, and so on. But if enterprises and institutions look for an appropriate name, then infrequently the search is one-sided. We now have a hotel “Rīga”, a cinema “Rīga”, “Rīga” pianos, a radio brand “Rīga”, a wash machine “Rīga”, a moped “Rīga”, a perfume “Rīga”, a cigarette “Rīga”, and so on, as if another name couldn’t be found. Some enterprises are referred to incorrectly – for example “VEF” stands for “Valsts elektrotehniskā fabrika” (State Electro-technical Factory), but in documents its name appears as “Factory VEF”, as if VEF isn’t an abbreviation but a proper name. In the same way beer breweries are incorrectly referred to as factories.

Every consumer appreciates that on every candy box, on the vodka bottle “Kristāldzidrais”, on perfume packaging, etc, the name of the product is highlighted and easy to find and read. But on numerous other goods, for example beer bottles, canned foods, etc., there are unnecessarily long texts that make it difficult to find the name that immediately describes the product.

All of this has happened because the directors of institutes and enterprises don’t devote the necessary attention to document preparation and proper language usage in signage; they don’t understand that the contents can be best described by proper language usage, that in naming an enterprise and products, one has to observe a people’s cultural demands, as well as traditions and language peculiarities, and importantly, that the name connects the visitor to the institution and consumers to the product.

In view of the above, the Latvian SSR Supreme Council Presidium assigns:

1. To all existing republic institutions, enterprises and organizations to prepare all documents, descriptions and advertising, enterprise and product names using proper Latvian, thusly satisfying the people’s cultural demands.
2. To have police institutions phase out incorrect and negligently prepared identification papers and other issued documents, and replace them with documents that are grammatically correct and properly filled out.
3. To the Latvian SSR Academy of Sciences Language and Literature Institutions to work closely with existing republic state social and economic organizations and to energetically influence the practical use of language in the manner noted in this decision.\*

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\* LVA, 290. f., l. apr., 5267. l., pp. 56–60. Original.

Note on the document: “was not sent”.

On 4 June 1959 the Latvian SSR Supreme Council Presidium adopted a decision, “Regarding the careless preparation of official documents, institution and enterprise names, signage and product registration in the Latvian language.” LVA, 290. f., l. apr., 5267. l., pp. 1–8.



Letters and decisions  
on the status of the  
Latvian language



## Introduction

In this section we have collected letters and decisions regarding the status of the Latvian language beginning with the “Third Awakening”. The last document in this section is the 5 May 1989 Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet Presidium decision “The Latvian SSR Languages Law.”

Acknowledging the threats to the continued existence of the Latvian language, the Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet established a work group on 1 July 1988 to “review proposals for improving Latvian SSR Constitutional and other legislative bills in issues related to the democratization of society and bettering the work of the People’s Council of Deputies.” One of the work group’s assignments was to review questions regarding determining the status of the state language. In order to ascertain the views of Latvia’s inhabitants, the newspaper “Padomju Jaunatne” (Soviet Youth) on 30 August 1988 published Latvian Academy of Sciences academician Prof. Aina Blinkena’s article, “The Current and Desired Status of the Latvian Language.” This article drew a huge response from a large number of inhabitants. A total of 9,385 letters were received with 354,280 signatures. People wrote not only to the newspaper “Padomju Jaunatne”, but also to the Latvian SSR Supreme Council Presidium Judicial Department, expressing, on the one hand, their views to the government, and, on the other, engaging a large part of society in not only thinking about this issue, but about other Latvian national and cultural heritage values. The newspaper “Padomju Jaunatne” published a large number of these letters on its op-ed pages and people felt strong support from the mass media. Insofar as the “Awakening” had already begun, the government respected the wishes and support expressed by the people: on 29 September 1988 the Latvian SSR SC Presidium adopted “Decision on the status of the Latvian language”, in which it is acknowledged that the Latvian language should be granted state language status in the territory of the Latvian SSR. This decision was confirmed by the Latvian SSR SC on 6 October 1988.

Of the many thousands of letters received, only three are published in this section (Documents 37, 38 and 40). Many of the “Awakening” year letters that express support for the Latvian language are published in the book “Vēstules. Ceļš uz valodu” (Letters. The Road to [Our] Language”, 1994, State Language Center, publishing house “Garā pupa”, publisher Uldis Auseklis, 168 pages facsimile). Other letters appear in “Savā zemē – savu valodu” (In Your Country – Your Language), a compilation by Aina Blinkena (Riga: Publisher “Vieda”, 1999, 163 pages).

## Document 37

Engineer Pēteris Brunčuks' letter in support of the Latvian language

### Language Status

One cannot ignore the language that through history has developed and served the Latvian people in communication, in expressing ourselves, in (our) folk songs, but now, in just one generation's time – for shame, the time has arrived to decide for our language to be or not to be, and who will decide this – those same ones who have driven us so far down, that this issue has to be decided – to have the Latvian language on the same legal level as Russian, to which we are not related, or should it be a territorial language or a republic's state language or an official language.

It has to be clear to everyone that if we have a Latvian SSR, then there can be no other decision or thought than to recognize the Latvian language as the official state language of Latvia SSR. If that is not so, then there is no independent Latvia in the USSR, but just a territory where everyone does whatever and however they want, migrate or speak – that is territorial anarchy.

As pathways and sidewalks in a park or the dunes in Jūrmala discipline pedestrians, in the same manner language disciplines people. In the Latvian SSR it can only be the Latvian language.

I remember very well that in Daugavpils before World War II when then, as now, the city had more foreigners than Latvians, but everyone made an effort to speak Latvian, signs in stores were in Latvian. Now a sign in two languages is a rarity and sales persons are offended if they are addressed in Latvian.

Now when someone arrives in Latvia by train from Moscow they can't tell where they are because there are no signs in Latvian, just Russian.

In Daugavpils Latvians meet and hear the Latvian language only in Latvian gatherings, Latvian theatre performances or concerts. How could it be any different since for every Latvian in the city there are eight foreigners. How is it possible to establish young Latvian families?

Even if historians someday "prove" that Latvia was not occupied in 1940, by not adopting the Latvian language as the official state language, the occupation will be affirmed. Officially two languages are not permissible. One can learn and speak either language at school or at home. Migration into Latvia has reached occupation levels. In view of this, recognizing Latvian as the official state language will improve the situation.

My proposal – recognize Latvian as the official state language of the Latvian SSR.

**Pēteris Brenčuks**, Engineer

9 September 1988

Gaismas Street 20/78, 228400 Daugavpils

Employer: Daugava River Hydro-electrical Station\*

\* LVA, 290. f., 11. a. apr., 29. l., pp. 42–43. Original.

## Document 38

A letter from Daugavpils Pedagogic Institute student Ināra Kacare in support of the Latvian language

**Dear “Padomju Jaunatne” (Soviet Youth) editor!**

Daugavpils

Having read in the August 30 issue A. Blinkena’s article “On the Latvian Language – Its Present and Desired Status”, it was clear that I could no longer remain silent. I have to write so that my voice and my opinion also join together with that of all of the Latvian people into one great voice. If I keep my silence, perhaps it would be exactly my proposal, my letter that is missing. That is why I summoned the strength to write you for the first time.

This article awoke that which has been living in me a very, very long time, an aching that wouldn’t leave me in peace. I was born and raised in Latvia and that is why I want my native language to ring out free and wide. I want people to look at me as a full pledged citizen of Latvia, not as a “foreigner” in my native country.

I live in Daugavpils where Latvian is rarely spoken. Recently our local newspaper noted that out of 130,000 people in our city, only 15,000 are Latvian. That is unbelievably small! By us medical, business, public service workers and others do not speak or understand (don’t even want to understand!) Latvian – we have become accustomed to that, although with difficulty, but that our city is still viewed as an orphan, because we are probably the city that Latvian theatrical groups, musical ensembles, actors visit the least – we do not want to be satisfied with that. We place great hope on the newly established Daugavpils theatre, but until it gets up to speed, we need to enjoy some type of Latvian culture, even if we are only a small handful of Latvians left here in Daugavpils. I have always tried with all of the inner strength I have to have my Russian friends and acquaintances understand my native language, because I, of course, not only understand their – Russian – language, but have an excellent command of it.

Therefore, esteemed A. Blinkena, I wholeheartedly support your view that “all must be done to ensure that all inhabitants in our republic have a command of basic Latvian, at the very least, understand it” (in the beginning – I.K.). In addition I agree with you that people working in professions such as medicine, law, trade and service providers as well as in government agencies, where they work with the public, basic Latvian language proficiency should be mandatory.

With regard to my position on this issue, I am for, and only for, Latvian as our republic’s language.

Sincerely, Daugavpils “native” **Ināra Kacare** J. Kalnbērziņš DPI Biology and Chemistry Student 5 September 1988\*

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\* LVA, 290. f., 1 l. a.apr., 29.1., pp. 22–23. Original.

## Document 39

The Latvian SSR Supreme Council 6 October 1988 decision “The Latvian Language”

Latvian SSR Supreme Council decision

### The Latvian language

Many social organizations, worker collectives, citizens as well as the Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet mandated (11 July 1988) working group tasked to review proposals for improving the Latvian SSR Constitution and other republican legislation regarding social democratization and to better improve the work of the People's Deputy Councils, have come forth with a proposal for recognizing Latvian as the republic's state language.

It is the Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet's view that such an opinion complies with Leninist nationality policy principals and the resolutions of the USSR XIX All Union Conference that foresees the free and all-around functioning and development of all national languages.

Up until now not enough proper attention was devoted to protecting the people's spiritual values, including the Latvian language. Even though the Latvian language is the mother tongue of the majority of the inhabitants of the Latvian SSR and which is spoken by many of the republic's other peoples, in the past decades the use of the Latvian language has decreased and its functions have been reduced.

In order to foster the development and functionality of the Latvian language, it should be granted state language status in the republic and accorded concrete guarantees of use, while at the same time recognizing the constitutional rights of other nationality inhabitants to use their mother tongues.

The Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet decides:

1. To recognize the Latvian language as the state language within the Latvian SSR.  
To secure the overall improving and teaching of the Latvian language, to guarantee its use in state organs, enterprises, institutions and organizations, in educational, scientific, technical, cultural, medical, social service and other fields, and in written records. To guarantee citizens, in dealings with state organs, institutions and organizations, per their choice, the use of Latvian or Russian in communication and document language. Russian will be used in dealings on the federal level.
2. To assign the Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet Presidium to prepare by 1 January 1989 a legislative packet of proposals for amending the Latvian SSR Constitution as well as proposals regarding the use of Latvian and other languages, and to submit those for public comment, guaranteeing a complete proposal for submitting for review by the LSSR Supreme Soviet.

### 3. To the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers:

To undertake activities to create a material base and other prerequisites for the teaching and learning of Latvian in pre-schools, schools, technical schools and colleges, institutions of learning, work collectives, as well as its active functioning in the life of the state, society and culture and other spheres.

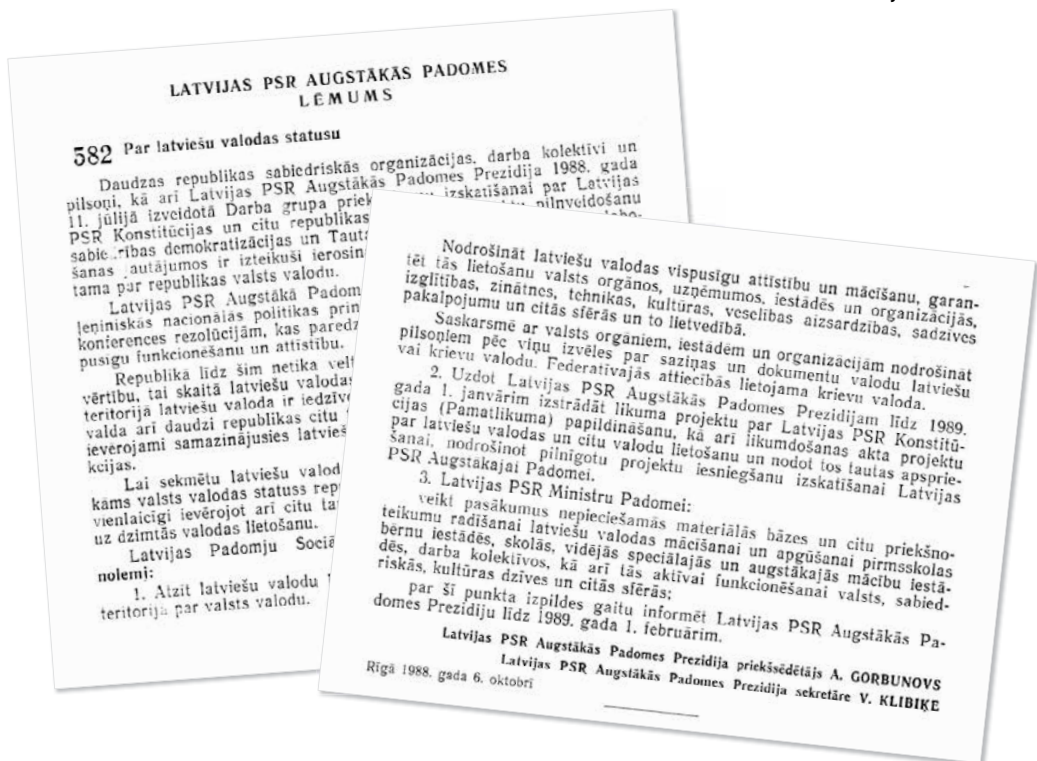
To inform the Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet Presidium of the progress in achieving these goals by 1 February 1989.\*

Latvian SSR Supreme Council Presidium Chairman

**A. Gorbunovs**

Latvian SSR SC Presidium Secretary

**V. Klibiķe\*\***



\* *Latvijas Padomju Sociālistiskās Republikas Augstākās Padomes un Valdības Ziņotājs*, No. 41, 13 October 1988, pp. 1337–1338.

\*\* For more on this question, see: Blinkena, A., Hirša, Dz., Veisbergs, A., “Valodas situācija 60.–80. gados un Latvijas Padomju Sociālistiskās Republikas Valodu likums. From: *Latviešu valoda 15 neatkarības gados*. Rīga: Zinātne, pp. 37–52.

## Document 40

A letter from Aldis, Jānis and Silvija Sproģis in support of the status of the Latvian language

### Good Day!

Our father and mother, as well as all of our earlier generations have been Latvian. Even in our passports, in the box marked "nationality", it states Latvian.

While in primary school we, along with our classmates, attended native language classes where we were taught grammar rules. Later, in trade school, we were taught how to correctly fill out various forms. Now that our school years are behind us and we have entered the adult world, the question arises – why did we have to learn all of that?

Now, for example, I go to a store. I politely ask a saleslady for assistance. She looks at me in astonishment and asks, "что" (= "what" in Russian). When I point out that its time she understood Latvian, I am hissed at, rudely served and on occasion "complimented" with the word "Nazi". That has absolutely no connection to nationalism.

The same scene is repeated in doctors' offices, post offices and public service agencies.

And it is no secret that we have been required to meet with the police numerous times. On occasion we have been so frightened that we even forget our mother tongue, but a polite old man asks us to sit down and write a submittal, in Russian, of course, because otherwise he wouldn't understand anything.

But we attended a Latvian school, we live in Latvia and we speak (often only at home) Latvian. We have a small son. We truly hope that in his lifetime he won't have to encounter incidents regarding the Latvian language. The Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet has adopted the decision regarding the status of the Latvian language. We ask and hope that the Latvian language will be used in all documents!

Sincerely,

**Aldis, Jānis and Silvija Sproģis**

Ilūkste

2 October 1988\*

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\* LVA, 290. f., 11. a. apr., 29. l., pp. 82–83. Original.

## » Document 41

An open letter from the workers of the Riga Machinery Factory on splitting two language stream schools

To: Comrade A. E. Voss, Chairman of the USSR  
Supreme Soviet Nationality Council  
Comrade A. V. Gorbunovs, Chairman of the Latvian SSR  
Supreme Soviet Presidium  
Comrade J. J. Vagris, First Secretary of the Latvian CP CC  
Editor of the newspaper "Sovetskaja Latvija"

### **An open letter from the workers of the Riga Machinery Factory**

(December 1988)

Currently there is a campaign underway in Riga to split the Russian and Latvian separate language stream schools\*. This is being discussed in newspapers, the radio and television. Concerns about this are being talked among our workers, especially those who have children and grand children attending such schools.

Judging from all that is happening in the republic, trends in some radio and television programming, and articles in newspapers, this campaign is well planned, even being presented as a grassroots initiative from Latvian parents and school children.

The rising passions around the issue of splitting schools are fuelled by the mass media, where all school and educational system problems are presented only as a Latvian problem.

In our opinion the Latvian People's Ministry of Education has adopted an unusual position, letting local councils and Party organs resolve such a principled issue. As we have seen in the past, their decisions are not always objective and well thought out. It is unclear to us on what grounds our leaders adopted the decision to split Latvian school No. 93 which was built in order to alleviate the nearby overcrowded Russian schools. Currently this school, built for 1,604 pupils, has 1,387 pupils from all corners of Riga.

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\* Linguistically mixed or "two-track" schools were introduced in Latvia in the 1960s and were an instrument of Russification. These schools were developed along ethnic and linguistic lines. Children from the two largest ethnic groups, Latvian and Russian, studied in such schools; the lessons for the separate groups were given in the native language (Latvian or Russian).

Vice-minister B. A. Kubuliņa explained the lack of pupils at the school as due to the expectation that the apartment complex "Pļavnieki" will be inhabited by a growing number of Latvians and the school will be filled to capacity. However, such an expectation is small consolation for the pupils of the overcrowded Russian schools. So, for example, school No. 88, built for 1,604 pupils, has 1,807 pupils, school No. 86 – 2,181 pupils and school 92 – 2,500 pupils.

Truly, in building schools, as is with other things, one must plan ahead and it is wrong to anticipate classes in Latvian schools having 35–40 pupils, as is the case in Russian schools. The half filled Latvian school No. 93, in comparison to the overflowing Russian schools, brings to mind the "Special Hospitals", "Special (Social) Services" and "Special Stores" which can serve as an example, but in the current unfavourable situation serve as the embodiment of social injustice.

The varied crowding of Latvian and Russian schools, these are not just empty words about native nationality discrimination, it is actually the direct restriction of the rights of Russian school children and is the granting of special material privileges to Latvian school children. It is, in fact, inequality and the segregation of people by nationality.

This is also supported by the fact that of 45 mandates issued by our republic to the All Union Teachers Congress, only one was given to a representative of a Russian language institution – the PTS (Professional Technical School). At the congress there will not be a single representative from 198 Russian schools! The newspaper "Sovetskaja Molodjož" described how the selection process took place.

Currently under consideration is the splitting up of school No. 72, located in the Maskavas (Moscow) district of Riga. It is attended by 516 Latvian children and 1,084 Russian. At the Latvian parents' meeting, which took place on October 27, a proposal was discussed to transform the school into Latvian school No. 72 and have the Russian children transferred to neighbouring schools located 5 miles away.

A similar situation has developed in the two language stream school No. 82 located in the Leningrad district, where 800 children are in the Russian program and 500 in the Latvian program. After a request from the Latvian parents, as reported in the Leningrad People's Education Section, the school is planned to be converted to a Latvian school. Such a decision is perplexing.

Russian parent meetings have expressed the common position that children must learn together and that there is no real reason to expose children to the hazards of attending schools miles away and that it is not expedient to disrupt the learning process, transforming schools, and that it is criminal to plant in the hearts of children the seeds of national quarrels.

The workers at our plant, the parents of children, the grandmothers and grandfathers, are not indifferent to the situation developing in our two language



stream schools, nor are they indifferent to the state of the international education of the younger generation.

In expressing our concerns regarding the future of our children, we believe that:

1. The dividing up of schools is not normal, it is artificial and is causing division among the inhabitants and strains in nationality relations.
2. The raising of the quality of education, the need to improve the school environment, the supplying of schools with necessary technology, these are our common concerns and all enterprises have to help improve the infrastructure of educational institutions and take an active role in various spheres of school life.
3. The People's Ministry of Education should publish statistical data which objectively describes educational conditions in Latvian language, Russian language and dual language schools (school and class sizes, quality of teachers, for example, Latvian language teachers). This information will allow everyone to evaluate the true status of education, to participate in discussions regarding these questions and their solution, and to remove tensions between school children, parents and various language school educators.
4. The working peoples' deputies in local councils, the city council, the Supreme Soviet, and the republic's government should use all of their resources to immediately suspend this campaign of splitting schools which, due to a lack of financial support, has turned this into a nationality quarrel, a campaign to sow distrust, a campaign to plant nationalism in the souls of children.

We turn to all of the republic's enterprises, to all nationality parents, to school teachers to ask that they support our initiative to hold meetings and express our opinions against the splitting up of two language stream schools, to present concrete proposals about raising the level of international upbringing in educational institution, and to increase the material support for pre-schools, schools and professional technical schools. These proposals to local councils, the Latvian Supreme Soviet and the republic's Council of Ministers will help to resolve these problems collectively and constructively.

The Workers of the Riga Machinery Factory\*

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\* LVA, 290. f., 8. apr., I., pp. 107–110. Original. Translated from the Russian language.

## Document 42

An excerpt from a letter to USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium Chairman M. Gorbachev from G. Borodins, N. Fiļipova, V. Zaharčuks, V. Matvijenko, J. Kuharenko and N. Pospelova about the draft “Law on Languages”

(February 1989)

To M. Gorbachev of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium  
Copy to the Latvian SSR Supreme Council Presidium

We categorically protest the adoption by the Latvian SSR of the law “Regarding Languages” in the form that it has been presented to the people for discussion.

Shame on those who prepared the proposal. Its deliberate, elementary legal ignorance, which weaves through the whole proposed “law” like a red thread, causes indignation and serious perplexity. Obviously no one will be surprised if it is said (we think so and are convinced of it) that the authors are members of the Council of the Popular Front of Latvia.

Even to ignorant persons it is clear that this proposal was prepared by either the most reactionary members of the Council of the Popular Front of Latvia or directly influenced by them. It can't be otherwise.

Therefore we announce – such a proposal will not be adopted. The overwhelming majority of Latvia's Russian speaking inhabitants will not accept it. We completely and totally support the International Front\* which has stated that Latvia, where not less than 50 % of the inhabitants are non-Latvians, has to have two state languages – Latvian and Russian.

(..) We decided to turn to Moscow, not Riga, with this protest, because we believe it would make more sense. (..)

**G. V. Borodins, N. K. Fiļipova, V. Zaharčuks,  
V. Matvijenko, J. P. Kuharenko, N. Pospelova\*\***

\* The International Front [or Interfront] (complete name is The International Front of the Working People of the Latvian SSR) was officially formed on 7/8 January 1989 as a social working people's organization to support *perestroika* (reconstruction) but in reality operated as a satellite organization of the conservative wing of the Latvian CP that fought to preserve the privileges of the Russian speaking inhabitants and against the renewal of an independent Latvia outside of the USSR. Promoted to the leadership of the Interfront were Soviet military officers, retired military personnel and representatives of Russian technical intelligentsia. The Interfront took a confrontational stand against the Popular Front of Latvia.

\*\* LVA, 290. f., 8. apr., 209. l., pp. 101–102. Original. Translated from the Russian language.

## Document 43

A protest letter to USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium Chairman M. Gorbachev from N. Kravčenko and many other Russian speaking inhabitants of Riga regarding the draft law on languages

25 February 1989

To USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium Chairman M. Gorbachev

Under discussion in Latvia until 1 April 1989 is a draft "law on languages".

We are greatly concerned that the views of Russian inhabitants will be ignored and that the mass media will not properly report that because the press, television and radio are for the most part a Latvian monopoly. Russians make up 50 % of Latvia's inhabitants.

The republic's eastern part is inhabited by Latgilians who do not speak Latvian. In Riga, with its concentration of factories, live 30 % Latvians. In many enterprises the majority of workers are Russians. As these are the proportions of inhabitants, it is not possible to have one national language. The Latvian SSR Constitution must have an article about the status of two national languages – Latvian and Russian. That would be fair, that would be in accordance with the ideas of internationalism. In this age no nation can survive wound up in its own self-isolated language cocoon. It cannot decide the issue of a national language at the expense of another language. Today Latvians often quote from the works of V. Lenin. But Lenin never said anything about forcing the acquisition of a language. On this issue we must adhere to complete democracy. Honestly, in which USSR Constitutional article does it state that someone who resides in one of the republics has to know (underlined by authors – J.R.) its language. But if circumstances force someone to move to from one republic to another, how many languages should this person have to know? And, if he hasn't learned the language, where can he work? That is a direct violation of human rights but we are forming a just state. The draft "Law on languages" states in paragraph 21, "The Latvian SSR guarantees lessons in Latvian in all mid-level, professional and higher education institutions, in all specializations that can be obtained in the Latvian SSR, independent of the department to which the institution is subordinated. If absolutely necessary, education in these specialties shall be provided in Russian." But what if it is not absolutely necessary?

Article 23 states, "The raising of qualifications in the Latvian SSR will be in Latvian. If needed Russian and other languages groups will be organized!" But what if there is no need?! "The draft law" guarantees only the development of the Latvian

culture, while others will be supported but not guaranteed. Preferences are granted for books and other publications published in Latvian.

It is known that if a person doesn't speak his native language for a long time, he loses it and his culture, too. And if the only language heard in Latvia is Latvian, then Russians will be only able to use their native language in social gatherings and at home. No, we do not want to lose our Russian language culture, we don't want to lose both our practical Russian language and our culture. Without a doubt that also pertains to the Latvian language and culture. See, that is why Latvia must have two languages. Russian cannot have a limited language status because it is spoken by half of the inhabitants.

The world has experience with two and more languages having official status – Canada, Finland, Sweden, in our country, for example, Abkhazia has three state languages: Abkhazian, Georgian and Russian.

To insult, humiliate – these are poor aids in the acquisition of a foreign culture and language, administrative methods – even worse for they have been condemned long ago. And the set of epithets – migrants, occupiers, colonizers, foreigners (the time has come for them to leave) not only doesn't encourage the learning of the native people's language but creates psychological tension, distrust and so on. The Russian people stood at the work table, built houses, factories, mills, hospitals, schools, sewed clothes and shoes. Why are they faulted? Why should a typist who has been typing Russian for 15 years now have to obtain new qualifications? Are her concerns only minor? After work she goes to stores, stands in long lines for food, but at home she has so many chores she doesn't even know where to begin. When does she have time to learn a language? But if she doesn't want to learn a language, will she therefore become unemployed? Is that just? How can a person be forced to learn a language? The proposed "Law on languages" orders it and by a set date, 1 January 1990. It is obvious that human rights are being violated. The Latvian and Russian languages have to develop parallel. There is no other way to avoid nationality quarrels.

Of course we have to respect another people's language and culture. We, Russians, have and continue to do that, however that does not mean that we have an obligation to know another people's language. That is a delicate and voluntary issue. First of all we want to know our language and culture. (..) We would like to draw the Presidium's attention to anti-soviet work in Latvia. In the centre of Riga there is a stand displaying some organization's information. There it is written, "Latvia is a colony that is ruled over by an administrative apparatus and monopolies." It has a variety of appeals to the UN, European Parliament and others. It contains insulting information about Soviet rule and Russian inhabitants. The Latvian government (..) hasn't reacted to it. It is necessary to find a way to normalize the situation in Latvia. (..) Latvians don't need a language. That is only a cover. They have a different goal.

They, along with Lithuania and Estonia, want to leave the Soviet Union. But if that is not possible, they will behave badly toward Russians.

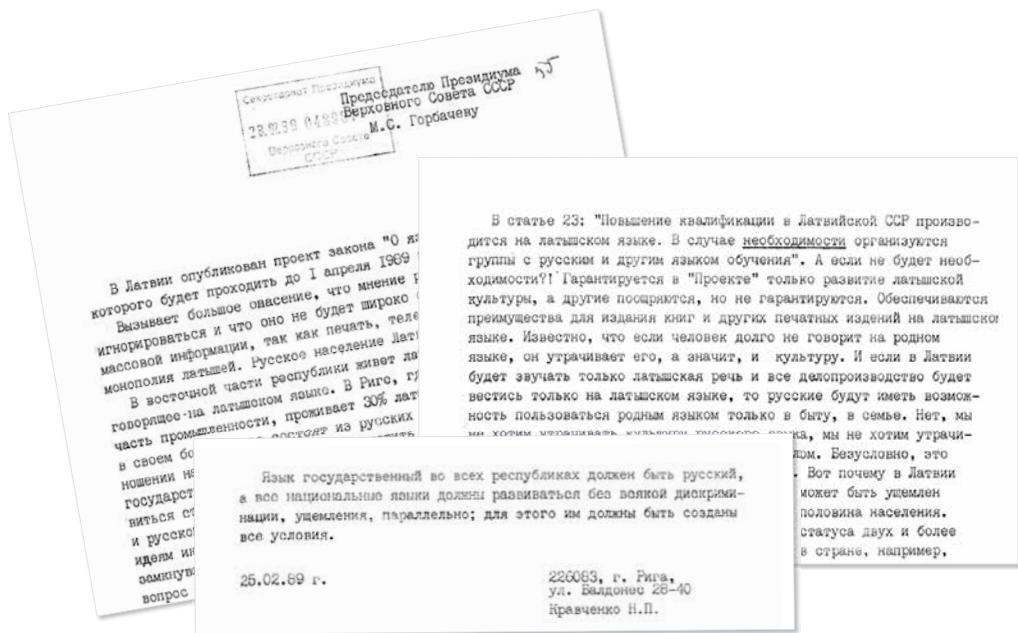
Currently the draft "Law on languages" foresees a future that will not have specialized education in Russian. But where will those specialists who obtained an education in Russian work? Will the centre (Moscow) really allow Russians to be sold out? (..) How will the centre coordinate and review the activities of republics if other republics follow the Baltic example?!

But they are already doing it, as in Moldova, and not only there. Couldn't it happen that the republics become uncontrollable?

The state language in all republics has to be Russian, but all of nationality languages have to develop without any discrimination or restrictions whatsoever, and parallel: the proper environment must be created to achieve this goal.

25 February 1989

**N. Kravčenko (and numerous signatures)\***



\* LVA, 290. f., 8. apr., 231. l. pp. 55–58. Original. Translated from the Russian language.

## » Document 44

“The Latvian SSR Language Law” adopted by the Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet Presidium on 5 May 1989

### **The Language Law of the Latvian SSR**

Latvia is the only ethnic territory in the world inhabited by the Latvian people. One of the main conditions for the existence of the Latvian people and its culture is the development of the Latvian language. Over the past decades the use of the Latvian language in state and social spheres has considerably narrowed. The Latvian language must be legally protected. This protection can only be guaranteed by granting it state language status. With that the state secures the all around and complete usage of Latvian in all state and social spheres, as well as its teaching.

The Latvian SSR also supports the teaching and researching of the language outside of the republic.

At the same time the state cares for the respectful treatment of all languages and dialects used in the Latvian SSR.

The status of the Latvian language as the state language does not violate the right of citizens of other nationalities to use their native language or other languages.

The law foresees that the Russian language is the second most widely used language in the Latvian SSR and one of the international languages of communication.

### **Chapter 1**

#### **General Provisions**

1. In conformity with the Latvian SSR Constitution, the state language of the Latvian SSR is Latvian.

2. The state guarantees all Latvian SSR inhabitants the right to learn the Latvian language by financing a Latvian language education program.

3. The Latvian SSR Law on Languages declares the use of Latvian and other languages in state, commercial and social spheres, the right of citizens to choose a language and the protection of languages.

## **Chapter 2**

### **A citizen's right to choose a language**

4. When contact with state authorities and state administrative organs, as well as institutions, enterprises and organizations, communication, information and document language, whether Latvian or Russian, is chosen by the citizen.

In order to implement these rights, all state authorities and state administrative organs as well as agency, enterprise and organization workers whose duties include communicating with citizens, have to know and use the Latvian language, as well as the Russian language, at a level that is necessary to fulfil his professional duties. The level of language required of these workers will be established by the Latvian SSR Minister Council's regulation.

5. At Latvian SSR organized congresses, conferences, meetings, gatherings and conventions speakers can choose which language to speak.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Language in state authority and state administrative organs, agencies, enterprises and organizations**

6. The state language shall be used by the Latvian SSR state authorities and state administrative organs in documentation, meetings and all other work related gatherings. Those who do not have a command of the language in meetings and gatherings can use Russian or, upon agreement, some other language. When necessary the organizer provides a translation.

Latvian SSR state authorities and state administrative organs adopt and publish documents in Latvian. In specific cases, legislation will be precisely translated into Russian.

7. In existing agencies, enterprises and organizations in the Latvian SSR, the language used for documentation shall be the state language.

In written communications between Latvian SSR state authorities and state administrative organs, republic agencies, enterprises and organizations shall use the Latvian language.

The use of Russian and other languages for documentation purposes in agencies, enterprises and organizations shall be determined by the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers, observing the principles of this law and proposals from work collective councils.

The first parts of this section do not pertain to agencies and organizations formed in accordance with the language principle (educational agencies, theatres, etc) as well as national cultural associations.

8. Documents issued to citizens by state authorities and state administrative organs as well as agencies, enterprises and organizations shall be, as requested by the citizen, in Latvian, Russian or Latvian and Russian.

State authorities and state administrative organs as well as agencies, enterprises and organizations shall accept and review documents submitted to them in Latvian or Russian. Documents submitted in other languages must be accompanied by a notarized translation in Latvian or Russian.

9. Latvian SSR state authorities and state administrative organs, as well as agencies, enterprises, organizations and their officers shall, until the language of communication is clarified, approach a citizen in the state language. Further communication will take place by both in a mutually agreed upon language.

Latvian SSR state authorities and state administrative organs, as well as agencies, enterprises, organizations and their officers shall respond to citizen submittals and complaints in the language used by the submitter or another mutually agreed upon language.

10. In cases of judicial proceedings and documenting misdemeanours, the language used shall conform to LSSR Constitution and LSSR laws.

#### **Chapter 4**

#### **Language in education, science and culture**

11. The Latvian SSR guarantees the right to a general secondary education in the Latvian or Russian languages.

Citizens of other nationalities residing in the republic have the right to education in their native language. The state shall do everything in its power to realise this right.

Directors of pre-school and educational institutions, educational and guidance personnel have to have a command of the institution's language(s) of education.

12. The Latvian SSR shall provide education in Latvian and Russian in secondary specialized schools, vocational schools and institutions of higher education in specializations required for the LSSR regardless of the department the educational institution is subordinated to. The register of specializations shall be determined by the LSSR Council of Ministers.

13. All Latvian SSR educational institutions that employ another language shall teach Latvian independent of the institution's subordination. Graduates of Latvian SSR secondary schools, secondary specialty schools and higher education institutions shall take examinations in the state language. The Latvian SSR Ministry of Education together with other related ministries and state committees shall determine the required level of language proficiency and shall provide language teaching.



14. In the Latvian SSR the language of research will not be restricted. Theses submitted for scholarly degrees and their public defence shall take place in Latvian or any other language agreed upon by the author and Defence Committee members.

15. The use of the Latvian language and its dialects, and the Latgalian written language is guaranteed in all cultural spheres within the Latvian SSR.

The state also guarantees the preservation of the Livonian culture and its development in the Livonian language.

The development of other cultures in their native languages shall be secure within the Latvian SSR.

### **Chapter 5**

#### **Language usage in titles and information**

16. Latvian SSR place names are formed and given in the Latvian language. Their transliteration required into other languages shall be determined by local Councils of People's Deputies.

17. The names of agencies, enterprises and organizations shall be formed and given in the Latvian language and where required shall be transliterated or translated into another language.

On signs these names shall be written in Latvian but where required, on the right hand side (or underneath) translated into Russian or some other language.

18. Latvian names and surnames shall be used in conformity with Latvian traditions and language rules. The names and surnames of other nationalities shall be written and used in Latvian, observing the transliteration rules for foreign language proper names.

19. The text of official stamps of state authorities and state administrative organs, as well as agencies, organizations and enterprises shall be in Latvian and replicated in Russian.

The texts of official stamps of national cultural associations must be, in addition to their chosen language, in the state language.

20. The labels, standards and documents of products produced in the Latvian SSR shall be in Latvian while products produced for export or delivery to other republics shall also be in Russian or another language.

Instructions on the proper use of a product shall be in Latvian and Russian.

Brand names and labels from other languages are not to be translated.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Protection of Languages**

21. Compliance with the law on languages within the republic is overseen by the LSSR Supreme Council Presidium's Language Commission, but in districts (cities), by respective Councils of People's Deputies.

22. Agencies or service organizations, whose personnel or workers are required to interact with citizens, shall compensate citizens for damages that occur because said personnel or workers do not have a command of Latvian or Russian. In instances detailed in this legislation, the agency or organization has the right to make a claim against the guilty person (worker).

23. Violations of a citizen's right to choose a language, the public disparaging of a language or its wilful distortion in official documents and texts shall result in the violators being held accountable as foreseen by the law.\*

Latvian SSR Supreme Council  
Presidium Chairman  
**A. Gorbunovs**

Latvian SSR Supreme Council  
Presidium Secretary  
**V. Klibiķe**

Riga, 5 May 1989\*\*

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\* *Latvijas Padomju Sociālistiskās Republikas Augstākās Padomes un Valdības Ziņotājs*, No. 20, 18 May 1989, pp. 480–483.

\*\* Aina Blinkena, Dzintra Hirša and Andrejs Veisbergs view the 5 May 1989 LSSR adopted language law as follows: "Even within the context of the period's standards, the law did not adequately frame the priority of the Latvian language and, in fact, the status of the Russian language was equated to that of a state language, but under the circumstances this law can be viewed as an indisputable achievement for it initiated a lasting process for deciding language hierarchy. Please remember that at this time Latvia was still a part of the USSR." (See *Latviešu valoda 15 neatkarības gados* (The Latvian Language During 15 Years of Independence), Riga: Zinātne, 2007, p. 51).



# List of Documents

## Section I

**Decisions and materials regarding the learning of Latvian**

1. The Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party Central Committee Bureau's 7–8 December 1944 decision "On the learning of the Latvian language by personnel in Latvian SSR institutions, organisations and enterprises, who do not have a good command of Latvian".
2. Extracts from the speech of the Chairman of the LSSR Defence, Aviation and Chemical Manufacturing Development Association's Central Council Eduards Kusins to the LCP CC 13 June 1945 Plenary.
3. The Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party Central Committee's Bureau's 31 July 1945 decision "On some Soviet institutions and organisations ignoring the facts of national characteristics in their work".
4. The Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party Central Committee Bureau's 2–3 November 1945 decision "On the implementation by Party regional committees, city committees and district committees of the Latvian CP CC Bureau's 31 July 1945 decision "On some Soviet institutions and organisations ignoring the facts of national characteristics in their work".
5. Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars' 4 November 1945 decision on the conduct of daily business in Latvian SSR institutions, enterprises and organisations.
6. Riga City Workers Council of Deputies Executive Committee's 4 July 1946 decision "On writing on signboards and advertisements in Riga City".
7. Extract from Latvian CP Central Committee Secretary J. Kalnbērziņš' 29 January 1947 "Report on the Latvian Communist (Bolshevik) Party Central Committee's work in 1946".
8. Extract from the Latvian CP Central Committee's 29–30 May 1947 XVII Plenary Transcript on the Ignoring of the Latvian language.
9. Latvian CP Central Committee Bureau's 30 October 1951 decision "On the presentation of the Latvian and Russian language in schools in the Republic".
10. Extract from the Latvian Communist Party Central Committee Secretary J. Kalnbērziņš' Report "On Considerable Shortcomings in the Leadership of Political Work and the Building of the Economy and Culture in our Republic" at the LCP CC 22–23 June 1953 Plenary.
11. Excerpt from the address by LSSR Minister Council Chairman V. Lācis at the LCP CC plenary on 22–23 June 1953.
12. Excerpt from the address by LSSR Supreme Council Presidium Chairman K. Ozoliņš at the plenary on 22–23 June 1953.
13. Excerpt from the address by LCP Riga Regional Committee Secretary J. Avotiņš at the LCP CC plenary on 22–23 June 1953.
14. Excerpt from the address by LSSR Interior Minister I. Zujāns at the LCP CC plenum on 22–23 June 1953.
15. Excerpt from the closing remarks of J. Kalnbērziņš at the LCP CC plenary on 22–23 June 1953.
16. Excerpt from the LCP CC VI plenary draft decision on 22–23 June 1953.
17. LCP CC bureau meeting on 6 December 1956 discussing the question "About Party, council and collective farm workers learning the Latvian and Russian languages".

18. LCP CC bureau decision of 6 December 1956 "About Party, council and collective farm workers learning Latvian and Russian".
19. Latvian SSR Ministry of Agriculture CP organization Secretary N. Morozovs' reply to the LCP CC Agricultural Department regarding the accusation of Agricultural Minister A. Nīkonovs of nationalism.

## Section II

### **Decisions on learning the Russian language.**

#### **The imposition of the Russian language.**

20. The Latvian CP CC Bureau decision "Russian language acquisition by Latvian SSR Party, council, Soviet youth, union activists and intelligentsia", dated 7 December 1944.
21. Latvian SSR Council of People's Commissars 16 May 1945 decision "On learning Russian by those citizens who obtain military training but do not know the Russian language".
22. Letter from the Baltic Military District (BMD) Political Executive Council Chairman Major General J. Voronins to the Latvian CP CC regarding exempting the children of military officers from learning Latvian and Lithuanian.
23. A list prepared by the Latvian SSR Ministry of Agriculture's Cadre Ruling Council of collective farm directors and key specialists who do not have a command of the Latvian language.
24. Excerpt from the 6 May 1959 Decision of the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers "On the state of cadres in the Ministry of Communication and efforts to improve work".
25. Excerpt from the decision of the 7th Closed Plenary of the Latvian CP CC on 7–8 July 1959 "On the significant shortcomings and errors in the preparation of cadres and national political practice in the republic".
26. Minutes of the 11 January 1974 meeting with LSSR Council of Ministers' Deputy Chairman V. Krūmiņš' on the transfer of teaching at the USSR Armed Forces Specialist Training Group to the Russian Language.
27. Excerpt from USSR CP CC Member, Latvian Communist Party CC First Secretary A. Voss' lecture, "Current issues on the further intensification of the working people's patriotic and international education" on 28 and 29 June 1982 in Riga at the All Union Scientific Practical Conference, "The achievement of maturity in the development of national relations in socialist conditions. Experiences and problems in patriotic and international education".
28. The Latvian Communist Party Central Committee's and the Latvian SSR Council of Ministers' 19 July 1983 decision "On additional measures for improving the acquisition of the Russian language at Latvian SSR comprehensive schools and other learning institutions".

## Section III

### **Protest Reports to Moscow about Colonialization and Russification in the Latvian SSR**

29. "Soviet Youth" Newspaper correspondent Kārlis Reimanis' report "Some observations about the national question in Latvia" for the Soviet CP Central Committee.

30. Voicehs Kārklīņš' 3 September 1959 Report to Soviet CP CC Secretary A. Kiričenko on expressions of Great Russian chauvinism in Latvia.
31. Excerpts from Jānis Dīmanis' 20 April 1960 report to Soviet CP CC Secretary N. Khrushchev "On the reasons for the exacerbation of national relations in Latvia".
32. Excerpt from theses sent by J. Dīmanis on 20 April 1960 to N. Khrushchev "On a 'new course' in national policy and its results in Latvia".

#### Section IV

##### **Decisions and materials about proper Latvian orthography**

33. The Latvian SSR Council of Ministers decision of 4 June 1947 "On the proper Latvian and Russian orthography for the names of Latvian SSR institutions, organizations and enterprises".
34. Mr. A. Reiznieks' article "On proper surname orthography".
35. Report to the Latvian SSR Supreme Council presidium by A. Leiškalne, senior lecturer in the Documentation Section, on "The careless preparation of documents in the Latvian language".
36. An excerpt from the Latvian SSR Supreme Council Presidium notice regarding the careless registration of the names of official documents, institutions and enterprises as well advertising and products in Latvian.

#### Section V

##### **Letters and Decisions Regarding the Status of the Latvian Language**

37. Engineer Pēteris Brenčuks letter in support of the Latvian language.
38. A letter from Daugavpils Pedagogic Institute student Ināra Kacare in support of the Latvian language.
39. The Latvian SSR Supreme Council 6 October 1988 decision "The Latvian Language".
40. A letter from Aldis, Jānis and Silvija Sproģis in support of the status of the Latvian language.
41. An open letter from the workers of the Riga Machinery Factory on splitting two language stream schools.
42. An excerpt from a letter to USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium Chairman M. Gorbachev from G. Borodins, N. Filipova, V. Zaharčuks, V. Matvijenko, J. Kuharenko and N. Pospelova regarding the draft "Law on Languages".
43. A protest letter to USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium M. Gorbachev from N. Kravčenko and many other Russian speaking inhabitants of Riga regarding the draft law on languages.
44. "The Latvian SSR Language Law" adopted by the Latvian SSR Supreme Soviet Presidium on 5 May 1989.





**In Defence of the Latvian Language. Against Russification.  
1944–1989. Documents.**  
Edited by J. Riekstiņš

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Lāčplēša iela 35-5, Rīga, LV-1011  
[www.valoda.lv](http://www.valoda.lv)

Printed by SIA „Jelgavas tipogrāfija”

DOCUMENTS FROM  
1944-1989

ISBN: 978-9984-815-77-0



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