



Good Riddance?

by Juris Kaza

Paplaka, Latvia

The name of this little village in western Latvia, the site of a Russian helicopter base, is suggestive of the Latvian word for collapse by deflation: *saplaksana*. "Paplaka" suggests partial deflation or sagging, like that of a mushroom past its prime.

My freelance television crew and I arrived in Paplaka and drove directly to the gray and dismal multi-story military housing that dominates this village of single-family dwellings. Most of the military apartments appeared empty, their windows broken or the panes covered with Russian newspapers. The Russians had simply gone—no one had announced their departure, and no one mourned their passing. Once the target of demonstrations by local residents and independence activists, Paplaka was now strangely quiet. The gates to the base were open, and a plaque proclaiming the glory of Soviet aviators decorated an empty plinth.

We walked unhindered into a facility from which attack helicopters had once thundered over the landscape, frightening cattle, chickens, and children at all hours. Near the gates, a hatless man in a leather jacket and camouflage pants came up and introduced himself as "the unit commander." For the next hour, as we filmed, the Commander rambled amiably on and on about how "Latvians, Russians, Uzbeks, Gypsies, and everybody else are people who want to be happy, if only we all understood how we are all just people and part of the human race." The Russian officer was, as my Latvian girlfriend whispered, "s---faced."

So were many of the others in a rag-tag crew loading hampers, bookcases, and office desks onto two attack heli-

copters. An officer with a mustache like that of a czarist dragoon climbed aboard one of them, waving a fencing sword. Even as the choppers revved up, two men ran toward them, carrying heavy loads. Was it the last of the base's secret documents? To my eyes, the bags dramatically shoved aboard through the cockpit windows were bulging with—potatoes. Or maybe onions. It was hard to see in the stinging rotor wash that kicked up leaves, twigs, and spatters of mud.

A skeleton crew remained at the base, standing in the mud among fallen-down fences and vandalized shacks that once housed the mighty airmobile unit. Nearby, two trucks were



loaded with pipes, radiators, and cement panels ripped from structures on the base. Perhaps they were headed for the huge scrap-metal foundry in nearby Liepaja, where we had just seen workers cannibalizing several armored personnel carriers.

A hundred yards away, in a steel-matted helicopter parking area now littered with smashed vehicles and the remains of a radar station, a Latvian farmer and his son calmly picked through the wreckage. They had driven in with a tractor and a small crane. "I let them in for a bottle of vodka. Let 'em take what they

want, what the hell," our ever-hospitable Commander remarked, back with us after disappearing for a few additional belts from the cognac bottle.

Another white-haired officer shrugged and said, "Both our people and your people [local Latvians] are looting. We punish those we catch. Everyone is carrying off whatever they can get their hands on."

It's getting harder and harder to decide whether to laugh or worry about the Russian military *Gotterdammerung* in the Baltic States. In places like Paplaka, once-haughty military units appear to have collapsed into barely disciplined bands of uniformed scavengers, vandals, and drunks. But that is only half the picture.

In many places, there is a spiteful violence to the Russian departure. I visited a barracks in Riga that was vandalized with an intensity that Russians almost never put into constructive work. Giant kettles in the mess hall appeared to have been pounded loose from their moorings in the concrete floor with some huge, blunt object. A short distance away, the ceramic tiles had been meticulously peeled from the wall for sale, but a stained-glass window depicting the Riga Old Town skyline was smashed. The entire library of the barracks—a training center for construction troops—was tossed in a heap on the floor, the bookshelves smashed to splinters.

Sometimes the vandalism is passive—in Liepaja, a port and naval base in western Latvia, the Russians appear to be abandoning a huge munitions dump containing tens of thousands of tons of obsolescent arms. How the local authorities will prevent thieves and scavengers from entering the dump, and how the potentially unstable ordnance will be dis-

Juris Kaza is an American journalist based in Stockholm.

armed, isn't Russia's problem anymore.

Tales of wholesale vandalism also come from Estonia. Journalists recently visiting the large submarine base at Paldiski reported scuttled warships and bizarre attempts to burn buoys and docks. It will cost Estonia huge sums simply to clean up the Paldiski harbor and to ascertain that no radioactive, toxic, or explosive materials have been dumped there. The demolition apparently started just weeks after Russia indicated to Estonia that it wanted to keep Paldiski as a strategic base even after other forces were withdrawn.

It is no surprise, then, that at some Russian bases the reception extended to unannounced visitors is less than cordial. In July, a squad of Russian marines in bulletproof vests surrounded the car I was riding in near the Mangalusala naval base outside Riga. The Russians locked and loaded their Kalashnikov assault rifles. Their commander, Captain Third Rank Aleksandr Zhebrik, demanded to know where our video camera and cassette were. We were intruders on Russian soil, he declared, and after a check of ID papers, the Russian officer announced that my Latvian cameraman and assistant could be summarily shot, while I, a "foreigner," could be thrown into the *kartser*, the solitary detention cell used in Gulag camps.

The incident was a sobering example of what some of the Russian military thought of Latvian sovereignty nearly a year after the nation regained its independence in the wake of the August coup. Russian forces in the Baltic continue to operate under vague but sinister orders authorizing the use of arms against any threats or "insults" to Russian soldiers, their families, or the "honor" of the Russian military. For every tipsy, merry Russian, there are others who are ready, willing, and able to shoot to kill to protect what they see as the legacy of their Russian Empire.

Such officers and their subordinates bring to mind the fall of another imperial ruling class in the Baltics—the Germans. In the wake of the German Empire's defeat in World War I, the Baltic German gentry, like today's Russian colonists, were threatened by the aspirations of the indigenous Baltic peoples for independence and democracy. Within weeks of the Armistice, and using the Bolshevik Revolution as a (possibly legitimate)

excuse, German officers and the local aristocracy ignored the end of hostilities in Europe to start a *Freikorps*—a military force no longer under the control of the German state.

Although the *Freikorps* cooperated with Latvian forces in running out the Bolsheviks, it was clear that they intended to return German rule to the Baltics—if not with Berlin's support, then in the form of an autonomous German-ruled Baltic state. Besides strictly military activities, the *Freikorps* also raised funds to support itself and purported to offer the reward of colonial homesteads on Baltic soil to its recruits.

With a government in Moscow claiming to respect democracy and the sovereignty of the Baltics, the Russian colonists are in a position like that of the Baltic Germans in late 1918, and they harbor strikingly similar attitudes. For instance, Russian demands for "human rights" in the form of automatic Baltic citizenship and Russian as a second official language echo demands made in 1919 that the German language be given official status in Latvia, that the privileges of the landed aristocracy be pre-

served, and that ethnic German units be formed in the Latvian military.

If the Russian soldiers were looting simply for cash to buy homes when they returned to Russia, most Latvians would say, "Good riddance." But their spite and chauvinism lend credence to suspicions that many of them are building up "war chests" to underwrite renewed Russian domination of the Baltic nations. "All this talk that military property would be sold or leased to create a fund for returning soldiers is just talk," says Auseklis Plavins, a spokesman for Latvia's Defense Ministry. "We're talking about deals amounting to billions that are totally out of control."

One of the most spectacular arms deals conducted in violation of Latvian sovereignty—though apparently in accordance with Russian law—was the September 19 delivery of a Kilo-class submarine to Iran. The sub sailed from the Bolderaja naval base at the mouth of Riga harbor with a crew consisting largely of Russians, paid up to \$40 a day for their services in delivering the vessel to the Gulf. It is probably not the last such

Perfect for Holiday Gift-Giving!

A HISTORY OF THE WESTERN WORLD 1100-1980

This new program is a terrific gift for anyone who likes music and would like to know more about it. Hundreds of musical examples are combined with explanatory comments by 15 outstanding authorities.

The program is on 12 full-length audio cassettes. Featured commentators include Dr. Christopher Page of Oxford University, Anthony Rooley, founder of the Early Music Centre in London, Christopher Hogwood, director of the Handel and Haydn Society, and many others. For the first time you can hear insightful discussion of the roots of our rich musical heritage and then moments later hear the actual pieces being played. As enthusiastic reviewer James K. Bowman, declared, "it's wonderful — no more flipping from book chapter to record 3, band 5. It's all right here."

Full information on lecturers, composers, and performing artists is included with each cassette. This attractively packaged program is only \$89.50 postpaid and is available from Audio-Forum. To place your order call us toll-free at 1-800-243-1234, or Fax us at 203-453-9774, or write to:

AUDIO-FORUM® Room 2722, 96 Broad Street, Guilford, CT 06437

All orders received by Dec. 14 will be delivered before the holidays!



Contents

1. Medieval Music 1100-1480
2. Music of the Renaissance 1480-1600
3. Baroque Period 1600-1750
4. Classical Period 1750-1830
5. Romantic Period 1830-1900
6. Modern Period 1900-1945
7. Contemporary Music 1945-Present
8. Approaches to Popular Music
9. History of Percussion Instruments
10. Story of Reggae and Calypso
11. Introduction to English Folk Music
12. Instruments around the World

SARKES TARZIAN INC



WRCB, CHANNEL 3, CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

KTVN, CHANNEL 2, RENO, NEVADA

WTTS, 92.3 FM, BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

WGCL, 1370 AM, BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

WAJI, 95.1 FM, FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

CENTRAL OFFICE, BOX 62, BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA 47402
TELEPHONE: 812 332 7251

Providing the Best Radio and Television Service

deal, since a number of Iranians remained on the Russian base in Latvia, waiting for a second, and, possibly, a rumored third submarine.

Latvian Deputy Defense Minister Valdis Pavlovskis says Russian officers and retired military personnel in Latvia are also engaged in a wide range of activities aimed at subverting Latvia's independence. Pamphlets urging a return of "Soviet power" in Latvia have been printed at Russian army printing facilities. There are regular meetings of Russian veterans and paramilitary organizations and clubs that suggest a whole infrastructure of "civilian" support for the neo-Freikorps is being organized among the Russian population. One such manifestation was the loud, bizarre demonstration in front of Latvia's parliament by aging Russian hags and bemedalled geezers on behalf of Igor Parfyanov, a leader of the dread OMON paramilitary police, who was put on trial in September. The shrill senior citizens bellowed that Latvia was "Russian soil" and that Latvians were "fascists" who should be shot or deported. Igor Lopatin, a retired Soviet officer and a former leader of the banned hard-line Interfront, has founded a new Communist organization in Latvia, skirting the ban on the former Soviet Communist party imposed in the wake of the August coup.

I. Berezutsky, the commander of Naval Unit 69422 in Mangalusala, where I was held at gunpoint last July, is said by Defense Ministry officials to have been an ardent supporter of the August 1991 putsch. Three amphibious BTR60BP armored personnel carriers used by the OMON are still reportedly hidden somewhere at his facility. Captain Zhebrik's marines, who chatted with my crew when the initial tension passed, freely admitted they had been smuggled in from Kaliningrad in violation of Moscow's promises not to reinforce its troops in the Baltic states.

These days, when the Western powers inform the Baltic countries that they have no alternative but to learn to live with their former colonizers, incredulous locals can only wonder: On whose terms? □

As we closed this issue, Russia announced that it was suspending withdrawal of the 130,000 troops still in the Baltics. —Ed.



Set for Life

by Benjamin J. Stein

Sunday

New Orleans. I'm sitting up here on the stage of a huge meeting room at a hotel next to the Saint Dome or the SuperDome or something like that. There's a football game going on inside and we can occasionally hear the sound of thunderous cheers. On the other hand, this is Louisiana, not Los Angeles. Maybe it's real thunder.

The reason I'm on this stage is that I'm at a meeting of the wonderful North American Society of Securities Administrators. The panel is about ethics on Wall Street. There are lawyers for securities dealers, brokers, and underwriters on the panel, and there are consumer advocates on the panel, too. The discussion is getting fairly heated, and it's taken an interesting turn.

The lawyers who represent real-life defendants or potential defendants are basically saying that if they had extremely good reason to think that their clients had been doing insider trading, they would not notify the law. Nor would the lawyers notify the stockholders of the companies whose executives had broken the law. Basically, the lawyers would try to protect the managers who had broken the law, and not the stockholders and investors who pay their bills.

Every time yours truly asks (in a friendly, helpful tone) why the lawyers think they have no duty to obey the law, the lawyers tell me I'm naive, foolish, crazy, or being absurd.

It's getting to be real easy to see why people hate lawyers. I'm getting to hate them myself, and I am one.

This is part of my basic schema of reality, a little bit of which goes like this:

Benjamin J. Stein is a writer, lawyer, economist, and actor living in Malibu, California.

No one is less supportive of law than lawyers.

No one knows less about money than economists.

No one cares less about stockholders than their management.

No one hates war as much as soldiers.

No one dresses worse than clothing designers.

No one has worse hair than hair stylists.

No one knows less about human nature than psychologists.

No one is more serious and less funny than comedians.

From this I exempt my old Dad, who is an economist who knows quite a lot about money.

Sunday

Oh, this is really great, great stuff. Great stuff. I'm in Chicago, Illinois, to do a small part in the movie version of *Dennis the Menace*. The writer/producer is my pal and savior, John Hughes. It's a small part, but I am prostrate with gratitude to have it.

It's raining. Plus, it's cold. Plus, I'm tired. But it's still great because I get to have my face on the camera.

My old comrade in arms, John Coyne, lives here. So does my niece, Emily, a solid braino at the University of Chicago. So does her boyfriend, whom I will call Tom. I met them all for dinner at a miserable Italian place downtown. The meal was unremarkable except for the boyfriend, who had a truly electrifying perspective on society.

Tom, as I call him, had grown up in Singapore, where his father worked for a commodities firm. Then he had come to Chicago for school. Now he was out, and he was working at a "home" for homeless children. John Coyne had a good question about whether kids with guns

who are 18 years old should be called "children," especially after they have just killed someone in a robbery.

Tom's views were fascinating. "I work with kids who have never known anything but violence and abuse," he said. "That's their lives. Getting hit, being mistreated, being abandoned. It really doesn't scare them to go to prison. They're used to very tough surroundings. What's amazing is that any of them, any of them at all, actually go to work in the morning, save money, and eventually get an apartment and have a life. Where that comes from is incredibly mysterious."

"Is there any hope for most of them?" I asked.

"If there is, I don't see what it is," he said. "It would have to come from a society entirely different from what ours is now."

I asked Tom what Singapore would do with lazy, rebellious, sullen, violent kids.

"They wouldn't be allowed to be sullen and lazy," he said. "The whole society makes young people work and be disciplined. The parents can be severely punished if the kids aren't doing their work. The kids are ostracized and no one will talk to them if they don't work. I've been thinking about this, and the whole time I was in Singapore, I don't remember any kids who were bad kids. The goal of social organization there is to make people learn and work and save, not to allow people to hurt themselves. That means a lot of repressed people. But it also means a society that's amazingly safe and productive, and where young people rarely hurt anyone. If they do, they get hit really, really hard."

It was all food for thought, until I phoned the A.D. on *Dennis* and found I had a 5:45 a.m. (yes, a.m.) call. Good-bye to philosophical musings. Time to sleep. →