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IMPORTANCE OF THE UNIVERSAL REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO
SELF-DETERMINATION AND OF THE SPEEDY GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO
COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES FOR THE EFFECTIVE GUARANTEE AND
OBSERVANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Letter dated 27 July 1983 from the Permanent Representative of
the United States of America to the United Nations addressed
to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose the text of a statement issued by President Regan on the occasion of the anniversary of the recognition, by the United States of America of the three independent Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

I would like to request that it be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 86 of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Jeane J. KIRKPATRICK

* A/38/150.

ANNEX

Statement issued by the President of the United States on the occasion of the anniversary of the recognition, by the United States of America, of the three independent Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

On July 26, 1983, we mark the sixty-first anniversary of the de jure recognition of the three Baltic Republics of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia by the United States. Each of these states was a full member of the League of Nations and had signed non-aggression treaties with the Soviet Union. Yet all three countries were forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union more than forty years ago as a result of the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact which divided Eastern Europe into Nazi and Soviet spheres of influence.

By continuing the illegal occupation of the Baltic States under the provisions of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet Union violates international law, particularly the right to self-determination as set forth in the United Nations Charter and in subsequent resolutions of the General Assembly. Resolution 1541 of the General Assembly, dealing with self-determination, stipulates that the decision to incorporate into another state "should be the result of the freely expressed wishes of the territories' peoples acting with full knowledge of the change in status, their wishes having been expressed through informed and democratic processes, impartially conducted and based on universal adult suffrage." Far from respecting such democratic processes, the Soviet Union used brutal force in absorbing the three Baltic States into its empire.

In 1940, the Soviet Union invaded, occupied, and annexed the Baltic States, after which it embarked upon a policy of ruthless Sovietization. Then, on a single night of terror, June 14, 1941, the Soviets deported huge numbers of Baltic peoples to the Gulags where many of them perished.

Following the Nazi occupation of the Baltic States, the Soviets again invaded the Baltic States and reconsolidated their control through killings, repression, and new mass deportations. Between 1944 and 1949, some 600,000 Baltic people, out of a population of just a little over 4,000,000, were deported to Siberia. The resistance to Soviet occupation continued until 1952, eight years after the re-entry of the Red Army.

Since then, the Soviets have pursued a conscious policy of forced Russification aimed at the denationalization of the Baltic States. The religious, cultural, and historical heritage of the Baltic peoples has been denigrated and suppressed. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union has been unable to force the acceptance of an alien life of totalitarian domination.

Today, the Baltic peoples continue to struggle to attain their freedom and their right to self-determination. Broadly based dissent movements have emerged demanding national, political, and religious rights. In Lithuania, for example, where 15 unofficial journals are circulated regularly, some 148,000 people recently submitted a protest petition to Moscow, a figure unprecedented in any place under Soviet control. Typically, the Soviet response to these efforts to restore Baltic freedom has been to deny Baltic national rights and to subject these brave Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians to imprisonment, exile, or confinement in psychiatric institutions.

Americans share the just aspirations of the people of the Baltic nations for national independence. We cannot remain silent in the face of the continued refusal of the government of the USSR to allow these people to be free. We uphold their right to determine their own national destiny, a right contained in the Helsinki Declaration which affirms that "all people always have the right, in full freedom, to determine, when and as they wish, their internal and external political status, without external interference, and to pursue as they wish their political, economic, social, and cultural development."

For this reason, the government of the United States has never recognized the forced incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union and will not do so in the future.

On this occasion, we wish to reaffirm this policy as we note the anniversary of the 1922 recognition by the United States of the three Baltic Republics. In so doing, we demonstrate our continuing commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and to the cause of peace and liberty in the world.
