

Debunking the Falsehoods of Historical Interpretations: Arnold Spekke on George Kennan's "Soviet-American Relations, 1917–1920. The Decision to Intervene"

Maldīgu vēstures interpretāciju atspēkošana:
Arnolds Spekke par Džordža Kenana grāmatu "Padomju un Amerikas
attiecības, 1917–1920. Lēmums iejaukties"

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In the spring of 1958, Arnold Spekke, Charge d'Affaires in Washington D.C., having read George Kennan's book "Soviet-American Relations, 1917–1920. The Decision to Intervene" decided to write a comment on certain facts expressed in the book. He concentrated on the description of the execution of Czar Nicholas II and his family, as well as the fact that the book did not mention the Latvian units that fought under Allied leadership, namely, the Troitsk battalion as part of the 3rd Czechoslovak Division. Spekke also submitted a letter written in 1928 by Nikolai Sokolov's assistant, Captain Pavel Bulygin, in which it was confirmed that there were no Latvians among the shooters. Kennan in his response assured that his goal had only been to emphasize the cruelty with which the murder was committed. The preparation of comments contributed to the efforts of Latvians in exile to focus on writing down memories and studying Latvian history.

Keywords: G. F. Kennan, A. Spekke, Troitsk battalion, murder of Czar, Pavel Bulygin, exile, Latvian Legation in the USA.

1958. gada pavasarī Latvijas pagaidu lietvedis Vašingtonā Arnolds Spekke, izlasījis Džordža Kenana grāmatu "Padomju un Amerikas attiecības, 1917–1920. Lēmums iejaukties", nolēmj rakstīt komentāru par atsevišķiem grāmatā paustiem faktiem. Viņš pievērs uzmanību cara Nikolaja II un viņa ģimenes noslepkavošanas aprakstam, kā arī faktam, ka grāmatā nav minētas latviešu vienības, kas cīnījās Sabiedroto vadībā, proti, Troickas bataljons 3. Čehoslovāku divīzijas sastāvā. Spekke iesniedz arī pierādījumu, Nikolaja Sokolova palīga, kapteiņa Pavela Buligina 1928. gadā rakstītu vēstuli, kurā tas apliecina, ka šāvēju vidū latviešu nebija. Kennas savā atbildē apliecina, ka viņa mērķis ir bijis tikai uzsvērt nežēlību, ar

kādu izdarīta slepkavība. Komentāru sagatavošana veicināja trimdas latviešu centienus pievērsties atmiņu pierakstīšanai un Latvijas vēstures izpētei.

Atslēgvārdi: Dž. Kenans, A. Spekke, Troickas bataljons, cara slepkavība, Pavels Buligins, trimda, Latvijas sūtniecība ASV.

In 1958, the Princeton University Press published a detailed account written by George F. Kennan “Soviet-American Relations, 1917–1920. The Decision to Intervene”.¹ The book describes the situation in Russia in 1918, the developments in fronts, the reasons behind the Allied intervention in Russia, the situation in Archangel and Vladivostok, the Czechoslovak uprising, and many more events taking place in Russia’s territory. Kennan also provided insights into the political opinions of the American political elite at the time. The book raised the interest among Latvian historians and diplomats. Latvians knew that George F. Kennan (1904–2005) had served in the US Legation in Latvia. In 1929, he was the junior officer in the Baltic Section, later, from 1931 to 1933, he was assigned to the Russia Section of the Legation.² His expertise in Russia and Soviet Union grew during his term as the Ambassador to the Soviet Union. As such, he was the authority concerning this matter. In March 1958, Arnolds Spekke (1887–1972), then the Charge d’Affaires of Latvia in Washington D.C., reached out to Kennan via written correspondence and outlined disagreement with two points made in the book: 1) the claim that Czar Nikolai II and his family were executed by Latvians; and 2) the omission of participation of Latvian regiments in anti-Bolshevik forces.

In 1940, after the Soviet Union occupied Latvia, part of Latvia’s diplomatic corps continued to reside abroad and to maintain the legal succession of the Republic of Latvia. The United States never recognized

Latvia’s forcible incorporation into the Soviet Union and the U.S. Government permitted Latvian representatives accredited by the last independent government to remain in the United States with diplomatic status. Arnold Spekke, who until 1939 was representing Latvia in Italy, was accredited as the Charge d’Affaires in Washington D.C. in 1954. The diplomatic corps in exile considered that their main task was to struggle for the restoration of the independent Latvia. Keeping up the idea of independent Latvia, exposing false narratives and debunking falsehoods or besmirching interpretations, protecting the positive image of Latvia, as well as tendency to educate international society on the issues of Baltic history was part of that struggle. Spekke’s comments on Kennan’s book constitute only one of such examples.

Why should we learn about the interaction between Spekke and Kennan? The exchange demonstrates, how important the perception of Latvians was to Spekke, and more broadly – to the Latvian diplomatic mission. In his capacity of a diplomat representing the *de jure*-recognized Republic of Latvia during its occupation by the Soviet Union, it was critical for Spekke to ensure American support for the non-recognition of the Soviet regime in Latvia. In this case, Spekke meant to refute allegations that Latvians murdered the Czar and his family, as well as emphasize that there had been Latvian units fighting against Bolshevism amongst the troops led by the Allies. Reaching out to Kennan to make this correction suggests that Spekke considered the historical reputation of Latvians – even in 1958 – as a possible risk to the country’s fight for independence.

Hence, this article examines whether the description of the events as depicted by Kennan was the only version of events available at the time. It also considers what information Spekke used to refute

the allegations enumerated by Kennan, and to whom he turned for advice and information. This article is based on primary sources found in Latvian State History Archive. The article is structured as follows: firstly, a short overview of the publications regarding the Czar's murder which, presumably, were available to Kennan, suggesting that Kennan could portray the murder of the Czar's family in several ways. Secondly, Spekke's observations from Nikolai Sokolov's book are investigated. Thirdly, the information available in the exile and Spekke's comments are analysed. Fourthly, Kennan's response to Spekke is assessed.

It is important to note, that among the critical factors in the interaction investigated in the current article, is the word "Lett". In many publications of that time, Latvians are described as "Letts" or, in Russian, "Latyshi". This was a word that stemmed from the German denomination for ethnic Latvians, which was transferred to English. However, in Russian the term was commonly used not only to refer to Latvians, but also to denote individuals that were not Russians. The interpretation of this word is important for understanding several accounts investigated in the later sections. The English term "Latvia" to describe the country and "Latvian" – the ethnicity was formally instituted by the Latvian government in 1923.³

Narratives of the last hours of the Czar's family

Over the years, various stories had been circulating about the time of the death of the Russian royal family, and who actually was murdered. Information about the death of Czar Nikolai II in the US was published already on 28 June 1918, as the United Press reported about the first official confirmation of the death

of Nicholas Romanoff.⁴ This news appeared to be wired from Foreign Minister Chicherin in Moscow to the Russian minister in Darmstadt, Germany. The rumour of the Czar's assassination at Ekaterinburg became increasingly widespread. Some considered that he was killed by Red Guards because of a personal quarrel.⁵ Others reported that the former Czar was murdered in a train on which he was leaving Ekaterinburg immediately after Czechoslovak forces captured that town. Some published alleged eyewitness's tales about the execution.⁶ In December, it was believed that the former Czar and his family escaped to a neutral country.⁷ Several detailed stories circulated about the last hours of Nicholas II. In 1919, the Washington Herald reported that the Czar was shot seven times. His body was taken to the Kremlin in a wooden box and burned there in a stove.⁸ Some other articles confirmed the fact that Czar and his family had been executed.⁹ In 1920, one could read that one of the Czar's daughters had been found.¹⁰ In the same year, Robert Wilton and George Telberg provided their account.¹¹ Nikolai Sokolov's findings about the murder of the Czar's family were published in 1925 in Berlin, in Russian language.¹² For a long period of time, this was considered the only accurate account of events. In 1926, in Sverdlovsk, the book by Pavel Bykov was published, likewise providing an account of the executions of Romanovs.¹³ In 1926, the Soviet Government apparently clarified that the Czar had been executed on 17 July 1918.¹⁴ The story of the survival of Anastasia surged with new force, when a person claiming to be Anastasia was tested by several distant relatives of the Czar.¹⁵ In 1930, the location of the remains of the royal family remained unknown. Rumours had spread that General Maurice Janin brought the ashes and other remains to France. He, of course, denied any knowledge about

the location of the remains.¹⁶ Later, in 1934, Richard Halliburton visited Russia and interviewed one of the partakers in the execution of the Czar family – Ermakov, and this in 1935 was published in his book “Seven League Boots”.¹⁷ He arrived at the conclusion that Anastasia could not have escaped.¹⁸ Halliburton’s account of the events provided by Ermakov* has been since considered to be inaccurate, and Ermakov’s deathbed confession – a fabrication.¹⁹ In 1935, the take on the events in Ekaterinburg was presented by the long-time Moscow correspondent of “The Christian Monitor” William H. Chamberlin.²⁰ In 1935, the account of Captain Pavel Bulygin and Alexander Kerensky “The Murder of the Romanovs: The Authentic Account” was published in London.²¹ It was well-publicized in the USA.²² American society became interested in the topic also on other occasions, for example, the anniversary of the regime changes in Russia, etc. The narratives were also revived by Hollywood, for example, in 1956 the movie “Anastasia” with Ingrid Bergman in the leading role, which received several awards.

One of the storylines, which could be observed within the materials was a quite dominating narrative about “Letts” being the executioners of the royal family. For example, Captain William Waite, who was a member of the special French commission investigating the Czar’s disappearance, apparently believed that the Czar and his family were shot by a lone Lettish trooper, when it was feared the imperial prisoners would be rescued by advancing

* Ermakov proclaimed, for example, that the bodies of the executed were burnt to ashes and scattered in the wind, that there were only three executioners (Ermakov, Yurovsky, Vaganov); that the Cheka guards were Hungarians (at some point, he uses “Letts”), etc. (HALLIBURTON 1935, 100–143).

Czechoslovakian troops.²³ Waite shared the information that witnesses had testified – the Czar and his family were placed in a castle in Ekaterinburg, where they remained under the constant military guard of Lettish troops until their death.²⁴ The story of events in the Ipatiev House in Ekaterinburg was rekindled after the Kolchak administration assigned a commission to investigate the destiny of the Romanov family. The commission was led by Nikolai Sokolov. During interrogations, it had been suggested that the actual shooters were “Letts”.²⁵ Sokolov was convinced that in all likelihood the family had been murdered. He could not find the burial ground.

One of the first books on the topic was “The Last Days of the Romanovs” published in London in 1920 by Robert Wilton, correspondent of “Times”, and Minister of Justice in Omsk Government George G. Telberg. The book contained transcripts of the depositions of the crime eyewitnesses, taken from the archives by George G. Telberg, and the essay of Robert Wilton, which was based upon the original dossier of the investigating magistrate Nikolai Sokolov. Several of the interrogated individuals mentioned “Letts” and their activities in the Ipatiev House. Wilton himself believed that several narratives arose due to the fact that the Soviet authorities only informed about the Czar’s execution, which led to the belief that the family was removed to a safe place or they (or at least some) miraculously escaped. The other thought, which prevailed for a long time, was that no Russian, however hostile to the ex-Sovereigns, could find the slightest excuse or pretext for executing a whole family with five children.²⁶ Wilton also presented arguments for other narratives, which could be summarized, as follows: no Russian could have killed the Czar, the “Russian” revolution was financed with

German money, and the Germans approved of the murder, thus, the Germans slew the Czar.²⁷ Concerning those who actually killed the Czar and the family, he informed that ten Magyar-German “Letts” were sent to Ekaterinburg as executioners.²⁸ One should be reminded that the Russian Whites believed that Germany aided Bolsheviks, and the civil war was therefore a continuation of the war against Germany.²⁹

The myth about Letts has been explained also by the fact that in Siberia and in other parts of Russia during the Civil War “Letts” became a term describing anyone who was not of Russian origin. Former Austro-Hungarians, as well as German prisoners of war were commonly referred to as “Letts”, even though they were nothing of the sort. Thus arose the confusion with Latvian Riflemen. Several testimonies proved that the term “Letts” was used as a denomination for all non-Russians, but all non-Russians as Bolsheviks.

Likewise, the storyline about “Letts” was used by George Kennan. He based his knowledge on Chamberlin’s book published in 1935 “The Russian Revolution, 1917–1921” (the book was reprinted in 1957). Kennan was sure that the events developed, as follows:

Yurovsky shot him down with his revolver. This was the signal for the general massacre. The other executioners, seven Letts and two agents from the Cheka emptied their revolvers into the bodies of victims.

(KENNAN, 1958, 448)

Spekke’s observations about N. Sokolov’s publication

To comment on Kennan’s narrative, Arnold Spekke first studied the book of Nikolai Sokolov “Ubiistvo tsarskoi semi”

(Murder of Czar’s Family) published in 1925. There, he noticed discrepancies regarding the use of the term “Letts” and in the description of events.³⁰ Examining the book, Spekke noted the professionalism of Sokolov – a lawyer stating all the facts as they were presented to him, and providing the description of all types of evidence, not solely testimonies of detained individuals. Spekke noted that Sokolov did not express opinions about nationalities or ethnic groups as such. Evaluating the evidence provided in the book, Spekke had a couple of observations: 1) The accounts differed – one account stated that there were ten Letts, while others stated seven (what happened to the other three?). 2) The presence of Letts was mentioned only in the testimonies of the interrogated Red Guards or Chekists, no other evidence was presented. 3) The writings on the walls in the Ipatiev House were in languages other than Latvian (German, Magyar). 4) The main source of the information about Letts participating in the execution was P. Medvedev, others reported second-hand information. There were several arguments used as a proof of the Letts’ participation: 1) that a Latvian Red Unit was stationed in Ekaterinburg; 2) that only Medvedev and Letts were present at the execution, which at once was refuted in another testimony, that “chambermaid Demidova had not died from the bullets at once and was twitching; she was stabbed to death with bayonets by one or two Russians from Cheka”; or Yakimov’s recollection that, when he entered the Command room (after the execution), there were Nikulin and two “non-Russian Letts”. 3) Medvedev stated that “At the bottom-level rooms of the Ipatiev House there were several Letts from the “Latvian commune” who lived there after Yurovskiy took the command. According to Yurovskiy, the individuals taking part in the process

of dealing with the bodies of the executed Czar's family members were dressed in Magyar uniforms. Spekke emphasized the fact that Medvedev who was captured by the Whites at the attempt to blow up a bridge, at the time of interrogation had become ill with typhoid. Spekke was aware of the White terror in the territories taken over from the Bolsheviks. He stressed that the overuse of terror was one of the reasons why the Whites lost. Spekke wondered how reliable such a testimony could be. At the interrogation, Medvedev could have told the story which was suggested to him, or just told lies. Medvedev tried to exonerate himself by explaining that he himself did not fire the shots, – he just gave orders. Even his wife, referring to his previous stories, was sure that he was one of the shooters. Spekke found that the fact that Medvedev was the shooter had been testified by Bykov in 1926 (referred to also by Chamberlin).

Spekke was convinced – the Chekists knew that Kolchak's army and the Czechoslovaks were closing in; that there was a fear of Latvian Red "praetorians". Later, they were deployed by Trotsky at the Perekop** against Wrangel, where some two thirds lost their lives. The remaining "Grīziņkalns homeboys"*** returned to Latvia after dramatic clashes with the Russians. No wonder that the workers of the Ural factories, having heard stories about the heroic Latvian Riflemen, called all the foreigners "Letts". Spekke also analysed the statement of Yakimov: "Yurovsky learned that the sentry duty within the house would be performed by the "privileged" from Avdiev's party. He was told that, at first, they

** The siege of Perekop, the three-mile approach to Crimea, was the final battle of the Southern Front in the Russian Civil War from 7 to 17 November 1920.

*** Grīziņkalns is a suburb in Riga.

would be sentries and later Avdiev would demand the guards from Cheka. Some days later, ten men appeared in the house and their belongings were brought by the carriage." Spekke noted Sokolov's finding that Medvedev, Yakimov, and Proskriakov, when using the term "Letts", meant something else. The main army forces of the Bolsheviks in the front in Siberia were made up of Latvian units and Austrian-German prisoners of war. They kept themselves separate from other units, thus, others resented them, and called all non-Russian Bolsheviks "Letts".

Spekke's comments

Spekke also reached out to his colleagues and prominent Latvians in exile, such as R. Liepiņš, A. Klīve, A. Švābe, O. Grosvalds, P. Dardzāns, V. Dambergs, K. Lobe with a request to provide any information available regarding the events of those days. Several of them examined the early publications regarding the events in Ekaterinburg and compared those with their own experiences at that time. For example, Pēteris Dardzāns (1889–1985) had been the Commander of the Troitsk Latvian Riflemen Battalion since its establishment on 14 October 1918. From November 1919, this detachment was part of the Third Czechoslovakian Division; Oļģerts Grosvalds (1884–1962) had worked as the Secretary of the Latvian Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference from February to July 1919, then he became the Representative of the Latvian Government. O. Grosvalds recalled that in 1919–1920, before Latvia was recognized *de jure*, White Russian emigrants did everything to slander Latvians.³¹ The narrative about the Latvians brutally killing Czar and his family fit well into this tactic. Since some Latvian Bolsheviks had been observed committing

brutal acts (the Red Terror), for many it might have seemed plausible. When another story was published in Paris, namely, a detailed description of the horror night, in which the German and Hungarian prisoners of war figured as the perpetrators, the accusations cast upon Latvians ceased. Historian Arveds Švābe (1888–1959) in 1918–1919 was in Vladivostok, where he carried out the duties as the Secretary of the National Council of Latvians in Siberia and the Urals. He played a role in facilitating the return of Latvian units from Siberia to Latvia. Švābe considered that, although this case had a legal statute of limitations, it was unpleasant and difficult to refute, although the term “Lett” was often used in the press at the time as a synonym for non-Russian Bolsheviks. Švābe felt that it could not be denied that Latvian compatriots worked in Moscow and in the provinces. For example, M. Lācis glorified the work of Chekists. In 1928, in Moscow, the Red Riflemen published “The History of the Latvian Riflemen”, where they boasted that they were entrusted not only with gold but also with guarding the Czar in Ekaterinburg.³² Arnolds Skrēbers (1897–1979), the Latvian representative in Switzerland, was familiar with the Pierre Gilliard’s “Le tragique destin de Nicolas II et de sa famille” published in Paris in 1921. After the death of the former Latvian Consul in Switzerland J. Kļaviņš-Elanskis in 1957, Skrēbers found in his documents an official copy of a response to the inquiry from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia by P. Bulygin – N. Sokolov’s assistant during the investigation in Ekaterinburg.³³ The response was published in the newspaper “Latvijas Kareivis” in 1928.³⁴

On 3 April 1958, Spekke reached out with his comments to George Kennan.³⁵ He summarized that Kennan had paid due attention to the Czechoslovak Legion, and the part it was destined to play in

the Russian Civil War, as well as to the subsequent deterioration of the relations between the revolutionary Soviet regime and the former allies of Russia. He then stressed that it has escaped Kennan’s attention that “a Latvian regiment****, formed in September 1918 in Troitsk, the capital city of the Orenburg district, having placed itself under French supreme command, took part in the anabasis of the Czech corps throughout the length of Siberia from Urals to Vladivostok”. Spekke argued that limiting the references to “The Lettish regiment which was used by the Soviet leaders as personal bodyguards”, might prevent an uninformed American reader to form an objective opinion regarding the eight Latvian regiments which, having been established within the framework of the Russian army in 1915, were chiefly instrumental in the defense of the Baltic Section of the eastern front until the very eve of the Bolshevik revolt in 1917. Spekke was of the opinion that, since Kennan mentioned the Czech Druzhina and its part in battles of the Carpathian section of the front, the Latvian regiments, just as was the case with the Czechs, could not possibly have avoided being drawn into the political controversies of the Russian revolution in one way or another. He clarified that a great many of the former officers and soldiers of the Latvian regiments, including also many of those who fought at the beginning of the Russian Civil War on the side of the Bolsheviks, returned in the end to their homeland where they subsequently formed the nucleus of the Latvian national army of liberation.

Spekke also noted that in Kennan’s book the only other reference to the “Letts” concerned the massacre of the Czar and family, in which “seven Letts” allegedly had taken a very active part. Spekke

**** Actually, a battalion.

underlined, that Kennan used a formerly widely publicized though unsubstantiated and repeatedly contested allegation, presenting “seven Letts” as proven murderers of the Czar, thus “I consider it my duty to draw your attention to the fact that there is also evidence to the effect that actually no member of the Latvian nation had been involved in this particular criminal action”. Spekke in detail presented the evidence collected by N. Sokolov, where it was stated, that all non-Russian Bolsheviks were habitually labelled by the Russian Red Army as “Letts”.

In addition, Spekke provided a letter, dated 16 August 1928, by Captain Paul Bulygin to Dr. Alfreds Bilmanis, who at that time was the Chief of the Press Section of the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. P. Bulygin (1896–1936) had been in command of the personal guard of Nicholas II’s mother the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna. In 1919, he assisted Nikolai Sokolov in his investigation of the royal family’s execution in Ekaterinburg. Bulygin referred to the article “The Last Road of the Family of the Czar”, published by the newspaper “Slovo” on 15 July 1928, and emphasized that the phrase “Entered [...] Medvedev of the Ochrana with ten Latvians, whom Yurovsky had asked the Cheka to send him” is not true. He stated: “I, having been an officially appointed assistant of N. A. Sokolov, the investigator in matters of extraordinary importance, who conducted the preliminary investigation in the case of the assassination of His Imperial Majesty Czar Nicolas II Alexandrovich, the Imperial family, and other members of the Imperial household, and having worked with the investigator from 1919 to the day of his death, consider it my duty to correct this statement for the sake of historical truth. The word “Letts” was always placed in quotation marks by the investigation. The interrogated murderers

(Pavel Medvedev) and witnesses called all foreign communists “Letts”. The investigator cautions that the word “Letts” does not signify nationality in this case. Of the ten “Letts” who entered with Pavel Medvedev, one was Russian by the name of Kabanov, and five were Hungarian prisoners of war – special executioners of the Cheka, but the nationality of the remaining four have not been established by the investigation.”

Kennan’s response

On 26 April 1958, Kennan responded to Spekke, clarifying that the Baltic countries were not mentioned in the book, as in the period under discussion – March to September 1918 – they played no role in Soviet-American relations. “It was not my purpose here to write a history of civil war. I am most grateful to you for the interesting data about the executioners of the Czar, and sorry that my quoting from Mr. Chamberlin may well have served to have revived an inaccurate impression. My purpose here, again, was only to remind the reader of the date of the murder of the Czar’s family, of its extraordinary brutality, and of its effect on the feelings of the Allied community. I could not pretend to have made a careful study of the event itself.” Kennan noted that it might have been customary for Russian Red Army soldiers to refer to non-Russian communists sweepingly as “Letts”, and Latvians may well have been the victims of this carelessness in the 1918 period.³⁶ Kennan assured that “my own citing of this passage from Mr. Chamberlin’s book reflected no unfriendly feelings toward your country. I was stationed in Latvia for three years and have only pleasant memories of that experience. There could be no one who was more shocked and sickened than myself by what occurred in 1939–40.”

Conclusion

This article examined whether the description of the execution of the Czar and his family as depicted by Kennan (quoting Chamberlin) was the only version of events available. There were, indeed, a variety of publications suggesting many different scenarios of the events that could be drawn from by Kennan.

The questions regarding the murder of the Czar and his family emerge continuously. There are those who are interested in proving that Romanovs are martyrs; others deny the fact that the remains found in Ekaterinburg are those of the royal family; some are interested in other aspects of this event. Thus, the events leading to the execution and its aftermath have been and continue to be researched in detail, and new sources are published. For example, in 1995 Mark D. Steinberg and Vladimir Khrustalev released most of the available documents in English.³⁷ In 2001, even more documents were published by them in Russian language.³⁸ Steinberg noted that some of the stories may be exaggerations and even fabrications.³⁹ From these documents, Steinberg concluded that Nicholas and the local worker-guards referred to the new men [internal guards] as “Letts” – a term often used to describe non-Russian Communists active in Soviet Russia but also, perhaps, to refer to the important role that ethnic Latvians played in the Cheka. In fact, the new men seem to have been a mixture of Magyars, Austrians, Germans, and Russians.⁴⁰ In 2009, Helen Rappaport concluded that the killers were brought into the house as a late replacement for the Letts who refused to kill the girls. A narrative was born that night and persisted thereafter that “Letts and Jews” were the key figures in the executions, when in fact it was not so; all but one of the killers were Russians.⁴¹ In Russia, there have been

several attempts to investigate the case of the deaths of the members of the Russian Imperial Family Romanov and their retainers.⁴² Conclusions of each of those investigations have been published.⁴³ The Russian State Archive has made available online all relevant documents, enabling everybody to do their own research.⁴⁴ The Investigative Committee noted that there were no trustworthy sources to identify any other shooter but those whose last names are known.⁴⁵

Most of the information about the event as such was already available at the time George Kennan wrote his book. His belief that the story as portrayed by Chamberlin was accurate, might have been influenced by the information to which he was exposed in the Soviet Union. His comments indicated that his objective, by providing a detailed illustration of the execution, was to remind everybody about the methods used by the Communist regime.

Latvians strongly believed in the statement of Paul Bulygin, who opposed the allegation brought about by the narrative about Latvians as executioners. The narrative itself continued to reappear, especially based on the Soviet-period memoirs of the participants or their contemporaries. Mostly, in reference to Jānis Svikke (1885–1976), Latvian Bolshevik who in July 1918 took a post of a Commissar of the Printing House of the Headquarters of the Ural Military District in Ekaterinburg.⁴⁶ After the World War II he relocated to Latvia. Svikke claimed to have met Lenin several times, and at later stages of his life came up with the statements which suggested Latvian guards had some role in destiny of the Czar Edvard Radzinsky suggested that Svikke is the nasty Radionov.⁴⁷ The same narrative has been propagated by Svetlana Ilicheva.⁴⁸ Ivan Plotnikov analysed the provided information and considered that there could be only one Latvian who had

possibly participated.⁴⁹ Their claims, including Svikke's, have been challenged and proved wrong, for example, by Yuri Zhuk.⁵⁰ A continuous stream of various studies and publications tends to represent the views of certain groups. In a publication in "Sputnik News" in 2018, Mihail Gubin concluded that the traces of Latvians will continue to appear in the murder case of the Czar's family – this is the current geopolitical situation.

Spekke's desire to comment on Kennan's book facilitated the research of Latvian history among the Latvians in exile. This impetus gave him and others the incentive to publish more information about Latvia in English. For example, in commemoration of the proclamation of Latvia's independence, Latvian Legation in Washington D.C. published a booklet "Latvia, 1918–1958".⁵¹ Dardzāns tasked historian Dr. Edgars Andersons with collecting the information needed for his memoirs. They were published much later in two volumes. The detailed stories about Troitsk Battalion were published in 1987 in the second volume.⁵²

In 1967, Edgars Andersons released "History of Latvia: 1914–1920", in which he in detail described the Latvian "old" Riflemen, Latvian Red and White Riflemen.⁵³ Historian Uldis Ģērmanis especially researched the history of Latvian Riflemen.⁵⁴ In 1965, Ģērmanis, reacting to the hype created by Michael Goleniewski, a former officer of the Polish Ministry of Public Security who defected to the USA in 1961 and later claimed that he himself was Czarevitch Alexei, also commented on Kennan's opinion about the execution of Czar.⁵⁵ Ģērmanis considered that Kennan could not be seen as discriminating against Latvians, however, he could be blamed for using incomplete and one-sided sources.⁵⁶

Spekke's decision to comment on Kennan's book provides insight into the formation of the collective memory in exile regarding the events that took place from 1915 to 1920, including World War I, the Bolshevik revolt in 1917, Russia's Civil War, as well as the War of Independence of Latvia. Spekke's comments must also be perceived as a diplomatic activity.

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KOPSAVILKUMS

1958. gada pavasarī Latvijas pārstāvniecības ASV vadītājs Arnolds Spekke, iepazīnies ar Džordža F. Kenana grāmatas “Padomju–Amerikas attiecības, 1917–1920. Lēmums par iejaukšanos” saturu, nolēma nosūtīt autoram savus komentārus par grāmatā izklāstītiem faktiem. Kenans spilgti aprakstīja cara ģimenes nogalināšanu, ko veica septiņi “letiņi”. Spekke pievērsās divām problēmām: aprakstam par Nikolaja II un viņa ģimenes nogalināšanu un tam, ka grāmatā nav atspoguļota latviešu vienību darbība Sabiedroto vadībā, proti, Troickas bataljona cīņas 3. Čehoslovāku divīzijas sastāvā.

Raksta autore vēlējas uzzināt, vai Kenana sniegtais notikumu apraksts ir vienīgā notikumu versija, kādus materiālus Spekke izmantojis, lai atspēkotu Kenana apgalvojumu, un pie kā viņš vērsās pēc padoma un informācijas. Šis raksts ir balstīts uz pirmavotiem, kas atrodami Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvā. Raksts sniedz 1) pārskatu par publikācijām par cara slepkavību, kuras bija pieejamas, Kenanam rakstot savu grāmatu, 2) ieskatu Spekkes novērojumos par N. Sokolova grāmatu, 3) ieskatu par trimdā pieejamo informāciju, kā arī 4) Spekkes komentārus un Kenana atbildi.

Autore konstatē, ka Kenana izvēlētā notikumu versija bija tikai viena no vairākām Nikolaja II un viņa ģimenes nogalināšanas versijām. Kenans bija izvēlēties atstāstīt Čemberlena publicēto aprakstu, kurā caru un viņa ģimeni nogalināja “letiņi”. Spekke, lai izpētītu šīs versijas izcelsmi, iepazīnās ar N. Sokolova publikāciju par notikumiem Jekaterinburgā. Viņš pamanīja neatbilstības attiecībā uz termina “letiņi” lietošanu un to darbības aprakstu dažādās liecībās. Daži minēja desmit “letiņus”, citi – septiņus, vēl citi

norādīja uz konkrētām personām, kurām nebija nekādas saistības ar etniskajiem latviešiem. Izmantotais materiāls pierādīja, ka ar terminu "letiņi" tika apzīmēti ne tikai latvieši, bet jebkuri nekrievu boļševiki. Lai veiktu izpēti par patieso notikumu gaitu, Spekke vērsās pēc padoma, informācijas un komentāriem gan pie saviem kolēģiem – trimdas latviešu diplomātiem, gan pie bijušajiem strēlniekiem un vēsturniekiem, piemēram, P. Dardžāna, A. Švābes, O. Grosvalda, K. Lobes u. c. Bijušā Latvijas konsula Šveicē J. Kļaviņa-Elanska dokumentos tika atrasts Nikolaja II bojāejas izmeklētāja N. Sokolova palīga, kapteiņa P. Buligina 1928. gada 16. augusta vēstules oficiāls noraksts, kas bija adresēts Latvijas Ārlietu ministrijai. Buligins apliecināja, ka cara šāvēju vidū nebija latviešu un ka N. Sokolova vadītā izmeklēšanas komisija terminu "letiņi" lietoja pēdējās, jo pratinātās personas ar šo terminu apzīmēja jebkuru cittautu komunistu, nevis konkrētu tautību. 1958. gada 3. aprīlī Spekke par saviem novērojumiem informēja Kenanu un iesniedza tam arī Buligina vēstules norakstu. Kenans, iepazīties ar komentāriem, atbildēja, ka viņa mērķis ir bijis tikai uzsvērt nežēlību, ar kādu tika izdarīta slepkavība, un ka viņš pats nav iedziļinājies konkrētā notikuma izpētē.

Spekkes sarakste ar Kenanu ir tikai viens no piemēriem, kā trimdā esošie diplomāti, kuru mērķis bija Latvijas neatkarības atjaunošana, iesaistījās nepatiesu faktu noliegšanā. Spekkes aktivitātes veicināja trimdas latviešu centienus pievērsties atmiņu pierakstīšanai un Latvijas vēstures izpētei.