

ACQUISITIONS TRIP TO THE BALTIC REPUBLICS: ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA

JUNE 3-JUNE 14, 2009

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The Baltic languages collection at Yale University Library has grown for many years. From 1960 until 1989, during the Mr. and Mrs. Rannit curatorship era at the Yale University Library, the collection grew even stronger, particularly the Estonian language materials, due to Mr. Alexis Rannit's special interest in that language and culture. At the time when I assumed the position of the Slavic and East European curator in 1989, the Soviet Union broke-up and the three Baltic countries regained their independence. In one of my first acquisitions trips in August of 1991, I visited Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and tried to make arrangements for the continuous flow of Baltic books to Yale. This was done with the direct purchase and multiple exchange programs which I established with the national and academic libraries in the area. The exchanges have continued well into the 1990s and became even stronger after the year 2000 when we initiated the first of our many Baltic Library Internships (financed by Dr. Kristaps Keggi). We have invited ten Baltic librarians for a semester long internship at the Slavic Reading Room and upon their return home we have received large shipments of scholarly Baltic books which continue to augment our holdings of Baltic materials. Recently the Library was given new funds for the purchase of Baltic titles from the European Council of the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies. They encouraged me to think that we should establish an approval plan for the purchase of these materials with book-dealers from the Baltic countries which would provide us with new scholarly publications in the fields of social sciences and humanities as soon as they are published. I proposed such a plan to the European Council and was allotted for traveling expenses 3,000.00 dollars from the Title VI Grant. The Sterling Memorial Library approved of my taking time off to accomplish this goal. What follows is a detailed report of my activities in the Baltic countries.

June 3, 2009

I arrived in Riga from Paris/Charles de Gaulle by Air Baltic flight at 6:00 p.m. Riga time. At the airport our former Baltic Library interns, Ginta Zalcmāne and Anda Simina from the Latvian National Library, were waiting for me. It was great because they helped with the suitcase and took me straight to the Library's waiting van and on to my hotel "Elizabete" on the Elizabete Street, in the center of the city. My room was very plain, but clean and basically comfortable, although the hotel is only three stars category.

I was hungry and wanted to eat. For dinner I had to go to another building of the same hotel three blocks away—it was raining and I did not feel safe in the empty streets (which was foolish, since the city is very safe). In the restaurant “Gourmand”, where I was the only patron, I felt awkward and self-conscious. I ordered halibut, which tasted good, and which was fancifully presented on a square plate. I could not resist the dessert!

June 4, 2009

At 11:00 a.m. I had a meeting with the director of the Latvian National Library. I remembered this green corner building from my visit to Riga in late August of 1991 during the first days of Latvian independence. The same large wall mirror greeted me and I looked at an older reflection of myself as I climbed the stairs to the second floor. At the meeting were present Andris Vilks, the director, Anda Simina, Ginta Zalcmāne, our former interns, and two librarians, who wanted to compete in the next round for the Baltic Library Internship at Yale. Mr. Vilks thanked me for the education of his librarians. Anda and Ginta are now part of his management team, he said. He thinks that they have developed into library leaders because of the training they received at Yale. After presenting me with the gifts (books, heavy books!!!), he hugged me to emphasize how grateful he was, I guessed. I told him about the reason for my trip and he was pleased with the increase of interest in the Baltic Program at Yale. Then he told me about the Isaiah Berlin centennial celebration going on in Riga and hoped that I would be able to attend some of these events.

The potential interns talked about why they want to apply for our internship—their English was good. One had five years of library experience and the other only three. I thought that they were not experienced enough to satisfy the requirements of our internship.

At 3:00 p.m. we were received in the U.S. Information Resource Center by its director, Valda Laucina. She and I have met somewhere before, because I recognized her face. She, of course, sent off all our Latvian interns to America, provided them with visas and followed their success after they came back. Mr. Ryan Roberts, Public Affairs Officer of the Embassy of the United States of America in Latvia, soon interrupted our talks and invited me to his office for an interesting and long conversation. He thanked me for my work with the Baltic librarians at Yale and asked a lot of pertinent questions such as the selection process, the program, other American libraries involvement with the program, source of funding etc. I gave due credit to Dr. K. Keggi, whom Mr. Ryan already has met. It seems that I am a well known person in Latvia! The Baltic Internship and my name connected with it no doubt contributed to this fame. Also, every year this office of the Embassy receives my letters: first the announcement for the competition, and later a request for visa for the winning candidate.

Our third Intern from Latvia, Edite Muzniece, joined us at the Information Resource Center (she also was acquainted with Valda Laucina through the internship and many other contacts in their library careers). With Edite I proceeded to the Latvian Academic Library. In her office the Yale certificate of completed Internship was hung on the wall above Edite’s desk—my signature along with of Alice Prochaska’s, very visible.

After a cordial chit-chat with Edite about our lives during the years we were not in touch, Daina Gulbe, Head of the Acquisitions and Collection development Departments, came to greet me. Then the three of us were expected in the director's office for official talks. Venta Kocere, the director, did not express any angst over the future of the Academic Library, as both Edite and Daina did. We talked about the general economic problems connected with the world financial crisis. After the exchange of gifts, as is the custom in this part of the world, she suggested that I buy their four volume publication: L. Depkin work "*Lettisches Worterbuch.*"

The future of the Academic Library is uncertain, particularly for its staff. The Library, connected with the Latvian Academy of Sciences for many years, holds the best Lettica collection in the world and is also strong in the hard sciences materials, useful to its university patrons. For the Latvian Government to maintain two large libraries under different governance, The Ministry of Culture and that of The Ministry of Education, is not an option in the new economic system, particularly now when the Academy of Sciences is losing its previous prominence and the National Library and Latvian University are gaining it. One possible solution is to transfer Lettica to the National Library of Latvia and the science materials to the University of Latvia. But what will happen to the staff? It is unlikely that the staff of the Academic Library will be transferred to the National Library *in toto* and there is a fear among these librarians that many will not have much of a future.

Edite related to me how it felt to come back to her work place in the Academic Library after the semester at Yale. Nobody was interested in hearing about her experience at Yale. Nobody was even trying to think about accepting her suggestions for innovations. She felt rejected and frustrated. Even depressed at certain moments!!! To fight the depression and lack of cooperation and understanding from her colleagues, she enrolled in the one year program for translators (Latvian--English and English--Latvian). This was something new for her and she experienced satisfaction in translating for the publishing industry. Maybe, I thought, this is how an institution which is on its way out behaves—a sign of slow death. What a difference when compared with Anda's and Ginta's enthusiasm for their new, more responsible work given to them at the Latvian National Library after their return from the U.S.A.

In the evening Edite and I attended one event in connection with the "Berlin in Riga" centennial conference. It was an Oxford type discussion on the theme "Nationalism is a friend of democracy?" and it was held at the Soros Center located around the corner from the "Elizabete Hotel." After a lively discussion and by vote from the audience the panel concluded that indeed, "Nationalism is a friend of Democracy!"

June 5, 2009

Early in the morning Ginta and I were in the office of Janis Roze, a publisher, book dealer and stationary whole-saler (the stationary being a profit maker according to Janis Roze) The founder of the firm, Janis Roze, the grandfather, started the book business in Riga in 1914. He died in Siberia in the gulags in 1942, after being arrested by the Soviets when they occupied the independent state of Latvia. His son, Janis Roze, fled the country in 1944 before the advancing Red Army, not wanting to live in a reoccupied Latvia. He was returned by the Allies in 1945, was sentenced to prison and after serving his time in

prison he was allowed to live in the country but with a 100 km exclusion zone around the capital Riga. His grandson, Janis Roze the 4th now runs the company. We agreed on an approval plan for the Yale University Library. I felt confident that Janis Roze would be able to deliver, since his company already had some international experience—in the U.S.A. they supply the Library of Congress and until recently the New York Public Library (Baltic and Slavic Division at NYPL was closed in 2009.) The approval plan should not exceed 4,000 dollars per year, should start with works published in January of 2009 and on, the shipments should be sent four times a year. I gave Mr. Roze the Yale/Slavic Collection profile which clearly denotes which kind of materials should be excluded and which type of publications Yale University Library wants.

On our drive back to town Ginta asked the driver to stop the car at the World War I memorial dedicated to fallen Latvian men, which is called “Mother Latvia.” The monument is impressive, built of Latvian sandstone, geometrically perfectly designed surrounded by acres of well tended park. The individual names of fallen soldiers are inscribed on small stone blocks among the flowering bushes and plants. The sun shone on “Mother Latvia,” a tall sandstone image of a sorrowful woman. I asked about the memorial for the victims of World War II. “It is by the river Daugava” Ginta answered. “It is mostly a memorial to the people sent to Siberia to the Gulags, from where they did not return and to the victims murdered by the Soviets in Latvia.” (See photo above)



In the afternoon we met in front of the National Library and were driven across the Daugava River to the site where the new National Library is being built. (See photo on the left) The location is splendid. I could imagine the large windows offering exceptional views of the Daugava, the bridges and the Old Town. But, the recent memory of the flooding of the University of Iowa, which is located on the banks of the Iowa River made me think about the possibility of something



similar happening here. My colleagues told me not to worry because the Daugava is well controlled and never floods its banks. We donned on the hard hats and went to the site. All of the sudden the cloud bursts, rain falls, and we took cover in the guards barrack. Wet and cold we caught a bus to the Old Town, where Anda, Ginta and I sat at the coffee house in the large, mall type, shopping center, looked at the rain, talked nonsense and had a good time together.

I took a tramway back to the hotel and looked through the windows at this pretty city. The houses, built during the prosperous times of the pre WW I era and during the Independence, achieved on 11/18/1918 and lost in 1940, which gave an incredible boost to the Latvian economy, are now repainted in lovely pastel colors, with intricate decorations and profound architectural charm. I was astonished at the beauty of Riga. Art nouveau (or Moderna or Jugendstil) buildings, parks well tended, clean sidewalks, no potholes on the roads, people driving new, German made cars and very well dressed. It must have been very expensive to achieve all that in such a short time. I remember how Riga looked not so long ago—in August of 1991!

At 6:30 Edite picked me up for a concert, part of the celebration “Berlin in Riga” with the tickets provided by the National Library. The piano concert, given by Evgenii Samoilov, a Russian pianist, who had studied in Riga, and now lives in London and thus repeats the life path of Isaiah Berlin, took place at the Small Guild Hall in the Old Town. The Guild Hall is spectacular, the best representation so far of the Hanse town taste and wealth. Looking at the painted ceiling, the portraits of the imposing merchants of Riga, the décor, lights and listening to the excellent performance of Mozart, Beethoven, Scriabin and Tchaikovsky was a treat.

June 6, 2009

I woke up early to visit Alberta Street 2a, the house where Isaiah Berlin was born in 1909 on that very day and where he lived until 1915. The house was the work of Michaels Eisenstein, the famous architect father of the even more famous cinematographer Sergei Eisenstein. This relatively short and quiet street has several Michaels Eisenstein’s four stories buildings, one lovelier than the other and recently restored (with Swedish money I was told). The many tours with the guides speaking in several foreign languages were already in the street in spite of the early hour. I took several photos which are attached at the back of the report. (Peter Simms told me recently that the Yale University Press is publishing a book on Riga’s art nouveau buildings.)

Later in the day I was invited for the unveiling of the Isaiah Berlin bust sculpted by Anthony Stone, a British sculptor. This was the grand finale of the “Berlin in Riga” centennial celebration. It took place at the Latvian National Library. (*See photo below*) Former Madame President of Latvia, Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga gave a speech in Latvian and then in perfect English. A nice simple speech in which she talked about Riga’s right to claim Isaiah Berlin for Latvia due to the fact that he was born in Riga and it marked him for life. The cameras flashed, television crew was pushing forward and at the moment of unveiling it was just flashes all over. I took also a few good pictures of the Berlin’s bust.

During the reception Mr. Vilks presented me to Mrs. Vike-Freiberga. He told her about Yale's Baltic Library Internship Program and my contribution towards the development opportunities for the Latvian librarians. She thanked me and I told her about Dr. Keggi's financial role which makes it possible. I liked her smile--she makes a person feel welcome. Later I was introduced to the first United States ambassador in post Soviet Latvia, now retired, Mr. Ints M. Silins. He was delighted to talk about Yale, because his son is a Yale graduate and his wife spent several years at Yale with her first husband. But the ambassador himself said –“I am a Princeton man.”



In the afternoon Edite took me to a permanent open air exhibit of Latvian peasant life where there was an art and crafts show. This is my third visit to the ethnological park with the reproductions of different types of Latvian peasant houses situated at the outskirts of Riga on the shores of Juglas Lake. First visit was in the summer of 1983 when I traveled to the Soviet Union with a group of American Librarians led by Fred Ryan and Miranda Remnek, second time in August of 1991 and now again accompanied by my former intern, Edite. The venue did not change much—still the woodwork, embroideries on linen and Latvian peasant houses of yore.

We both got tired after an exciting day and after a long walk in the fresh air. I invited Edite for dinner (*see photo on the left*).



We had a long conversation in the quiet of the restaurant. I asked Edite how the time spent with us at Sterling Memorial Library influenced her work and life. “It opened up a whole new world for me” was the answer. “I learned everyday from so many friendly librarians! In the Babylonian Collection I held in my own hands the clay tablets that were thousands years old! With each meeting something new was presented to me. Then the visit to the Library of

Congress and Washington DC, Harvard and Boston, New York City and the Baltic Division at the New York Public Library—these were all profound experiences which I cherish and will always remember.” This made me happy! Back in 1993 when I started the program I hoped that I could offer an exceptional and memorable work experience to the colleagues in the Eastern Bloc countries, the hard working and usually neglected promoters of culture and knowledge in their communities. It seems that I succeeded!

Edite gave me during the meal a short course in Latvian history. The country was under Russian rule from 1721-1918. Peter the Great wanted a widow to the west and Latvia fell under the Russian Imperial rule. Latvia gained its independence on 11/18/1918 and stayed prosperous and independent until the Ribbentrop / Molotov Pact in 1940. The year 1940-1941, the year of Soviet Occupation, is remembered by Latvians as the time of the worst terror in their entire history. The Germans occupied Latvia in June, 1941 after the attack on the Soviet Union. The second Soviet Occupation took place from 1944-1991.

June 7, 2009

In the morning I left Riga by bus for Vilnius. Edite and Ginta took me to the Bus Station and waved a sad good-by. Are we going to see each other again?

Trip to Vilnius was reasonably comfortable, the roads good, but it rained and the countryside looked rather gloomy. I did not see many cattle, but a lot of land was under cultivation. In Vilnius I took a taxi to the hotel Artis, and was paying way too much in Euros, since I did not have the local currency—the LIT. My accommodations were excellent!!! The suite, booked by Vilma's friend, at a much reduced price, consisted of a sitting room, bedroom and a spacious bathroom, all elegantly furnished and spotless. Besides, as I later found out, the hotel was located at the back of the Lithuanian's President's palace. The weather was miserable—raining cats and dogs.

Around 7:00 p.m. Eglė Stalnionienė, another former Yale Library Intern, arrived and took me for a walk to the Vilnius Old Town. The rain stopped, the air was fresh and cold. The Vilnius's Old Town is famous for its charm. We walked uphill, looked at inner courts, galleries and historically significant buildings while Egle informed me about their importance. One, for instance, had an inscription which said that from this house poet Adam Mickiewicz was taken and sent to exile in Siberia, never to return back to Vilnius. After some time Egle called a taxi and took me out of town to Belmontas, the entertainment and leisure center on a site of an old French mill, lovingly restored. Black swans were swimming in artificial ponds, the buildings abounded with Lithuanian ethnographical motifs and there was also a waterfall which turned the giant mill's wheel. We talked, she reminisced about her stay at Yale and with a pint of beer each we got quite sentimental and chummy. The *blini* (eastern variation of a pancake) filled with cheese were delicious.

June 8, 2009

On Monday morning I walked in the old town again. I found a bank and changed dollars into LITs. At 11 a.m. I was received at the Vilnius University Library. Mrs. Irena Krivienė, recently appointed Director of the Library who worked within the institution for many years at various positions, waited for me in her cabinet. Her predecessor, much loved and respected, died recently and Irena Krivienė had very large shoes to fill. She and the Library's Deputy Director, Dr. Marija Prokopčik received me warmly. In unison they thanked me for the two previous Lithuanian librarians, who were selected for the Dr. Keggi Internship. The former interns, unfortunately, were not in Vilnius. Jurgita Budziute is now Mrs. Campbell and resides in Washington, D.C., while Vilma Karvelyte was attending her friend's wedding in Sweden. I talked about Yale University's new interest

in Baltic studies following donations by alumni who were Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian Americans. From these donations the Library had received funds towards the development of the Baltic collection to support such studies. I stressed the importance of this new development at Yale in a situation where another large Baltic research collection at the New York Public Library had closed down this spring. I also explained why I was in Vilnius—to set up an approval plan for Lithuanian scholarly publications—and asked them for advice in that endeavor. In their opinion the “Humanitas” academic book dealership would be the best choice, but they also suggested that I visit the “Eureka” book store. Both firms were in the vicinity of the Vilnius University and I planned to do this in the afternoon. At the very beginning of our meeting I asked if they could help me find a book, published by the Vilnius University Press, for Yale’s Judaica Collection. Neither the Judaica curator nor I could find this title through our regular channels. At the end of our talks the secretary brought the book and gave it to me as a gift along with some other publications about Vilnius and its University. They insisted on sending the books themselves, which made me very happy. A grand tour of the University followed. Vilnius University was established in the sixteenth century. It was influential in the advancement of sciences and humanities throughout its existence and was the major educational center for this part of Europe. It was carefully restored to its previous glory. What a difference since I last saw it in the turbulent first days of Lithuanian independence in August of 1991. I was led through the courts, halls, a University church and a special astronomical exhibition in the Library. This year, 2009, was proclaimed by UNESCO to be an international year of astronomy—the books exhibited were rare and each represented a step forward in astronomical discoveries. Also above the Library there were steps to an old observatory where Vilnius astronomers looked at the stars—the wooden steps were steep and I was advised against this climb.

At three o’clock I met Mrs. Eureka Stogevičienė in her bookstore “Eureka”, who explained to me the depth of the current economic crisis in Lithuania. Nothing sells!!! Nobody comes to the book store!!! It was obvious that they did not have experience with the international trade. They were not equipped to take over the approval plan for the Yale University Library. As we talked I saw some good reference books on the shelves. I pulled out several dictionaries and a Lithuanian language grammar and the employee checked them against the Yale on-line catalog. I bought the books and tried to pay with the Yale University purchase card. The bank rejected the transaction. Then I pulled my personal visa card which was promptly rejected by the bank too. Very embarrassed I said, well, please send the package on by mail to my address and Yale will pay you by check—the calling card, which I pulled out of my purse, restored my stature in their eyes, and they agreed to do that. Fortunately the bank has called back to tell that both cards were valid but that the amount was too high. Scared that I might be in serious financial trouble, I rushed to the hotel and called the Master Card and Visa offices in the States. The purchase card story was that the amount was above 500 dollars and I was not allowed to cross that limit in any single transaction. In the case of my personal Visa card the officials told me that they were afraid that this purchase could be a fraudulent one, since the day earlier I was paying for a hotel in another country. (If they knew geography they could have realized the proximity of that other country to Vilnius!) So they blocked my visa card, my main source of financial security on the trip! It was unblocked only

after I recited my mother's maiden name, my social security number and the rest of the data required. Both telephone conversations cost over one hundred dollars, but without them I would have been in a serious trouble.

Then I met with Jonas Ramanavičius in the "Humanitas Ltd" Academic bookstore. Since the book store already worked with several American libraries our conversation was business like and to the point. Jonas Ramanavičius studied our profile which I sent him earlier by e-mail. To make sure that the profile was understood we went together through the list of newly published books issued by the National Library of Lithuania and selected the desired titles. He will:

- Send a package of Lithuanian scholarly books which meet the requirements of our profile four times a year.
- The mark up from the publication price will not go over 30%.
- Yale reserves the right to return the publications for any reason we might have.
- Yale will pay by check.
- Yale will pay the shipping costs.
- Our contract starts with publications issued after January 1st, 2009.
- We can request on firm order any earlier dated title.
- The languages covered will be Lithuanian, Russian for scholarly or valuable artistic publication issued in Lithuania, as well as English and German for titles which fit the profile and are published in Lithuania.

In this case I did not impose the budget limitations, as I did with the Janis Roze firm. I do not believe that in the current economic crisis Lithuania will be able to publish many new Lithuanica titles.

Eglė came to pick me up at the hotel and we went out and walked for hours over squares and boulevards enjoying the long summer evening. Vilnius has open broad avenues in the new, modern parts of town. It is full of light, has a river flowing through the center—which is not as majestic as Daugava, but has the cozy feeling of a smaller, less menacing body of water. We walked all the way to the Parliament square and the National Library, which is now being restored with its staff moved to different temporary locations. But mementos of the August 1991 fights were displayed behind the large ground floor windows: the concrete blocks meant to stop the OMON tanks, the barbed wire; the freedom slogans and above all the photos of the slain young people--they brought back the memories of my earlier visit in August of 1991, during the first violent days of Lithuanian independence.

I invited Eglė for a well deserved dinner. During the dinner conversation I mentioned Solly Ganor, the Lithuanian Jewish friend of my family in California, who wrote a book, "Light one candle: a survivor's tale from Lithuania to Jerusalem." The book is about his days during the Holocaust in Kaunas. Eglė was not pleased. She was aware of the book, since the American Embassy made a presentation of it in Vilnius when it was published in 1995, and she as a librarian was invited. She was surprised that I knew the author and said rather defensively: "The Holocaust is how Lithuania is presented to the World! All other historical acts, such as saving some Jewish families by Lithuanian citizens, the extended fights against the Soviets, the partisan movement and so on are forgotten. Lithuania stays equated with the Holocaust." I was embarrassed thinking that I might

have offended her. On the other hand I could relate to Eglè's reaction because I was several times in the same situation when I had to defend the honor of Croatia, my former country, when accused of its collaboration with the Nazis during WW II. Fortunately I had had Marshal Tito, a Croat, and the whole partisan movement on my side. This topic was soon forgotten and we enjoyed our food, red wine and a friendly conversation until late into the night.

June 9, 2009

I slept till nine. After breakfast and a short walk to the Cathedral Square I met Eglè (*see photo on the left*) for a walk to the Old town where we looked for a gift for Clare, my daughter in law. After lunch we walked through a maze of streets in the Old Town towards her library. I saw her new office within the specialized Music & Art Library and finally we had to part. We hoped that somehow in the future we will see each other again. I paid my hotel bill, wrote post cards to my grandchildren, Adrian and Emma (this being a continuous geography lesson by which I hope they will learn about the world) and took



the cards to the very modern main post office, and then sat to write some of these notes. After a shower and a dinner I left at 8:30 p.m. for the bus station. Mentally I was readying myself for a whole-night trip to Tallinn where I was to arrive at 6:30 a.m. the next morning.

June 10, 2009

Autobus arrived early, at 5:45 a.m.—forty five minutes before the scheduled time. I was too tired to wait for Mr. Etverk, our supplier from Estonia, who promised to pick me up at the bus station. With a taxi I went straight to hotel Olympia. My room was not ready, although it was clearly stated in the reservation that it would be available early in the morning. They put me in a smaller room to take a shower and rest, while my “ladies executive room” was being made ready for me. At noon Marje Tamre, a librarian from the University Academic Library, waited for me in the lobby of Olympia. She was accompanied by Ingrid Šelemba and Kristel Engel from the KE Subscriptions LTD, company. We then drove to the KE office where they explained to me their operation and Marje Tamre suggested that this company could provide an approval plan for the Yale University Library. I was not convinced, since Yale University would be their first such client. Their main business was the import of periodical literature to Estonia. I did not commit to anything but I continued the conversation about the book business and the current financial crisis. Kristel Engel's husband, Aivar Engel, who turned out to be an adviser for the Secretariat at the Estonian Parliament, drove me to my next meeting. He also promised to show me the Parliament building and possibly arrange for a meeting with Ivi Eenma, now a Parliament member, but who was the director of the Estonian National Library until 1997 and after that the mayor of Tallinn. Kalju Tammaru, a colleague and a friend, whom I met in 1991 and who is now a librarian in the Repository Library of Estonia—a similar institution to our Center for Research Libraries in Chicago-- waited for me to take me to his Repository where Vaiko Sepper, another

colleague, is the director. They showed me their operation and offered me some treats and cognac along with the shop talk and the memories of never forgotten exciting days of August 1991. Aivar Engel called to tell that he is ready to take us to the Parliament. The Parliament building is impressive in its simple elegance—nice woodwork, open spaced rooms with large windows overlooking Tallinn. When all doors are open from one room to another, one gets the impression of a long hall which leads to the imposing yet tastefully decorated President's room. The parliament session over, Ivi Eenmma met us in the hall—I told her about the Baltic Library Internship and about my efforts to build a serious Estonian collection at Yale. She was pleased and was sorry that in the evening she was leaving for another town and could not spend more time with me. I invited Kalju for dinner, where we talked about book business, politics, family and then we walked from the Old Town to my hotel. I was very tired and was looking forward to a good night's sleep after another exciting day.

June 11, 2009

Marje Tamre came early and we walked to the Tallinn University Academic Library. As is the custom I was introduced to the director, Dr. Andres Kollist. He is a doctor of chemistry and he conducts research on seaweed and is also interested in water purity. Now he heads one of the three major libraries in Estonia. He thanked me for the Baltic internship, he told me that he always receives my letters of invitations for applications and he expressed his hope that one of his staff might be a winner this year. Soon we turned to politics. Dr. Kollist was for many years directing the Citizenship and Migration Department of Estonian Government and had a lot to say about the relationship between the Estonians and the Russians. He wished that the Estonians could look on Russians like the Finns do, who in spite of their close historical ties look at Russia as just another foreign country. He is afraid that Estonians cannot do that yet. The memory of looking at the Russians as bosses and foreign rulers is still there. The problem of course is that roughly thirty percent of the population in Estonia is Russian--with their Russian schools, language and a certain superior attitude still very much evident. Estonians requested that the Estonian language should be taught in Russian schools too—but such efforts are closely watched by the European Union on account of minority rights. The Russians, however, do not behave like a minority group!!! In Narva, for instance, the librarians check out Russian books to the Russian speaking public—an Estonian library serving Russians, speaking Russian to them and looking across the Narva River to mighty Russia herself.

At the lengthy meeting with the acquisition librarians we reviewed our exchange program, with Yale's ORBIS present on the screen, and we came to a conclusion to strengthen it. We went title by title through their publications list and decided on the spot which ones to send and which ones to eliminate from the exchanges. This was a very good exercise which gave them a taste of what type of materials interests Yale. In conclusion, we agreed that the Tallinn University Academic Library will send their publications in the area of humanities and social sciences and we will send Yale University Press titles, which they will order from the on-line catalogs.

Mr. Etverk picked me up for lunch. His company, Teek LTD, occasionally supplies Yale with Estonian titles and is reliable. He habitually sends an e-mail with a list of titles with elaborate annotations, from which we select the desired items. I wanted to expand his

services into an approval plan by which he would supply the Yale University Library with current materials published in Tallinn and Parnu, with the exclusion of all Tallinn University publications. I also wanted him to skip the Tartu publications because I was planning a trip to Tartu the next day and I knew that the librarians there would like to play a role in our Estonian collection development. After prolonged deliberation we came to following conclusions:

- Mr. Etverk is acquainted with Yale profile of desired scholarly materials in social sciences and humanities.
- We agreed that the beginning date for our approval plan should be January 1st, 2009
- The languages covered would be Estonian, Russian and English.
- The books published by the Tartu University will be excluded from Teek, LTD shipments.
- Also books published by the Tartu commercial publishers will be excluded from Teek, LTD shipments.
- Another category for exclusion is Tallinn University publications which will be sent to Yale directly by the Tallinn University Library.

I asked about the costs and how he decided on prices for individual titles. He answered that he takes the publisher's list price and marks it up one hundred percent. Surprised at such a high markup I told him that I could not agree to such increase in prices. He then lowered it to a fifty percent increase along with the postage that we will have to pay. That seemed more acceptable considering that he creates English language annotations for each title.

I arrived to the National Library of Estonia later in the afternoon. A librarian waited for me at the door of this massive building which looked like a medieval castle. She took me by some equally solid and dark staircase to the meeting with Janne Andesoo, the Deputy Director of the Estonian National Library. To my delight Signe Kant, our former intern, was at the meeting too along with the Exchange Librarian and the Library Secretary.

I explained again, afraid that I might sound like a broken record after repeating the same story so many times, but managing to put into my voice the fresh excitement of a newly invented plan of action, the reason for my trip. I spoke about the newly found donor funds towards the purchase of the Baltic materials and our desire to establish the approval plan for the Estonian materials. I also wanted to talk about the Baltic Library Internship at Yale and possibly meet some candidates in person. Everybody was appreciative of my little speech, but our conversation, unfortunately, continued in an official tone. They thanked me for my good work and they hoped that the exchanges would continue between our two institutions although the shipping costs were getting forbiddingly high. They also had high hopes for their candidate to be selected for the internship. After the meeting I was shown the building, its very spacious halls, work spaces, exhibits and some friendly staff. I remembered the building from my 1991 visit. At that time the Library, a gift from the Soviet Government, was not completely finished. Kalju Tammaru, then employed by the National Library, walked me through the building all the way to the unprotected roof. In 1991 he had showed me the black shelving, the blue carpeting and white walls inside the building—a replica of the colors of the Estonian flag. Now I did

not see this arrangement. Another change in the minds of the library brass--their nationalism is more subdued. The National Library is efficient, professional, and *sans enthousiasme*.

Signe Kant walked with me—she wanted to talk. As we went past lovely flowers glowing in the afternoon sunlight she told me that the flowers marked the spot where a monument to the Soviet fallen soldiers had until recently stood. When the government decided to remove it to the cemetery, there was a huge uproar from the Russian population of Estonia as well as from the Russian Federation. Signe came to see me from Parnu, a town where she now lives. She has two little girls and is on maternity leave, two years for each child. The Library is keeping her position with pay until September of 2010, and at that time she will have to make a decision about continuing as a librarian or staying at home with the children. She was anxious, and seeking my advice, which I was hesitant to give. I then told her that she has the best possible position for a professional librarian in Estonia. The Library invested in her training by sending her to Yale and in a way she owes them a return to work. I did not think that she would be happy if she would let her career go—but on the other hand I understood that she had to think about her family. Only she can resolve this dilemma. We walked from the Old Town to my hotel with Signe constantly coming back to her predicament.

June 12, 2009

Two-hour long bus drive through the unspoiled countryside brought me to Tartu. Signe Bachman and Tiina Tolli waited for me at the bus station. Tartu is a university town, where the old and well known Tartu University is located. Germans used to call this town—Dorpat, the Imperial Russians--Yuryev. Now it is back to its Estonian name of Tartu. Tiina and Signe, both having a successful career at the Tartu University Library, looked satisfied with their situation. Signe talked about her teenage son, Tiina about her aged mother who is living alone in Parnu, where she visited every weekend. They took me for a tour of the town, which was lovely in its simple architecture, then to lunch--always talking about Yale, their memories, asking about colleagues they remembered while I tried to explain the purpose of my trip. They already knew about it and took care of everything I might need. I was to meet Brita Melts, representative of the Tartu University Bookshop and set up an approval plan with her. They guaranteed that she would do well, since they had only the best experience with her. In the afternoon they proposed a tea with Tiina Kuusik of Lehepunkt of Sanoma group organization and a series of meetings with the Deputy Director, the exchange librarian, Mrs. Eber, and one possible candidate for our internship. Indeed everything went well. I setup an approval plan with Brita Melts for Tartu publications (according to our profile for scholarly publications in the field of humanities and social sciences) with the exception for the Tartu University publications, which will be provided by Mrs. Eber. Mrs. Eber, whom I met in August of 1991, is very conscientious in sending her university's publications to Yale. She and I went through the list of titles, updated it and I am sure that this exchange program will continue to function without problems.

The prospective intern spoke very good English, she was enrolled in the Ph D library program—her thesis being a relationship between the communications and knowledge -- but she has two little children whom she wanted to bring to New Haven along with her husband. I explained that she would not be able to profit from an internship straddled with so many family responsibilities. She reluctantly agreed. With my official work finished, Signe and Tiina (*see photos below*) took me for another walk through town and showed me the oldest church —a beautiful brick structure with a lot of terra cotta statuettes which were discovered after the plaster fell off the church’s walls during the heavy fighting between Germans and the Soviet army in 1944. The statuettes were always there, but they have been white washed after the Protestantism prevailed. Another interesting spot was Struve’s Observatory on the hill, which in the 1700s was rather well known throughout the world.

Job well done and my mission accomplished, full of impressions and good feeling towards Tiina and Signe, I boarded my express bus for a return trip to Tallinn.

June 13, 2009

Eric Johnson called at 10:00 a.m. He asked if I would have time for him today. Yes, Eric, all day long! Eric is a colleague and a fellow Slavic librarian. In the nineties we organized seminars, funded by IREX money, for librarians in different regions of Russia. We had had lots of fun and also difficult times together and our friendship continued after Eric left the library profession and became a diplomat. These days he is the American Consul for Culture and Press in Saint Petersburg. Eric was preparing a big party for twenty five people on Sunday and had hoped that I would still be in Tallinn. Alas, I was leaving on Sunday early in the morning. “Never travel on your time! Weekends are yours! Fly on the work days in the future!” advised Eric. I will remember his words!



Eric waited in the lobby. We took off straight to an open market. After buying three kilos of tomatoes, a big chunk of meat for the grill (kebabs) and many other necessary spices and produce for gazpacho, Eric needed eggs. There were plenty of eggs in sight, but he did not want them. “They were from the European Union” he explained “imported and presumably ‘zapped’ for some weird health reason.” He was looking for real Estonian farm eggs, which were no where to be seen. In the busy market, elbowing his way through the crowd, he approached a woman seller and said something in Estonian. She shook her head in clearly understood sign of “No!” and conspiratorially replied to Eric, who then headed towards the flower shop with me in tow. There, hidden by roses, petunias and

greenery, inside the shop and out of sight of people, Eric bought two dozen eggs and left with them well hidden in his sack. I was amazed to learn that the sellers of Estonian farm eggs would be heavily fined for such illegal activity. Yet everybody wants Estonian farm eggs, which in turn inflates their price—Eric paid 36 EER for a dozen, while the European Market ones are only 24 EEK. We carried the heavy bags onto the tram and to Eric’s apartment. There I learned that he plans to retire in Estonia. In preparation he already bought an apartment, furnished it with pieces of furniture made by his father, who was also in the diplomatic service and had retired in Madrid. After a tour of his nice place we left of for the Ukrainian Uniate Monastery, at Laboratootiumi Street 22, another big surprise for me!!!

Within the city walls, the Ukrainian monks, who are orthodox by religion but who accept the papal authority and some of the Roman rites, had built for their believers a little church devoted to “The Virgin with Tree Hands,” the Protector of Estonia who embraces all people, animals and plants with open arms. Along with the church, they had created space for a printing shop, paper-making, an icon painting art shop and a calligraphy school. All that, along with a little yard, was located in a rather meager amount of space of the medieval stone walls, with a nearby Lutheran church spire looking down on this heresy with suspicion and disapproval. These monks had found their place in Estonia, the western boundary of the former Imperial Russian and Soviet Empires. Eric told me that he is involved in their papermaking enterprise. Everything there I looked at was so reminiscent of long-forgotten past. All objects were hand made from recycled items. For instance, the heavy wooden beams were taken from the old wharf—the one that Peter the Great had built when he took Reval (Tallinn) as his port –part of his window to the West project. (Earlier I also had seen several small wooden Russian orthodox churches with onion shaped roofs which Peter the Great ordered built for his sailors and soldiers, who found themselves in this Lutheran country.) At the end I was delighted that I could buy two books of “Poetics of endangered species Estonia” in the Estonian and Ukrainian languages. They were printed in the monastery on the monk’s own rag paper, illustrated by their artists, with accompanying poems which Eric Johnson had translated into English.

Eric treated me to a Russian lunch of delicious borsch and Siberian *pilmeni* at the hotel Telegraph, and later on I invited him for truffles at the Chocolate Shoppe within the city walls. We visited the souvenir shops where everything was hand made of natural materials—wood, linen, wool. Finally he showed me the building of the former American Legation where George Kennan worked as a Consul in free Estonia between the two World Wars. We parted after another shopping spree at Stockmans where we bought the remaining products needed for his party, which I would unfortunately miss.

June 14, 2009

Finnair’s early hour flight to Helsinki was uneventful. After a seven hour long wait at the Helsinki Airport, I boarded the United Airlines flight to New York City.