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DAUGAVPILS UNIVERSITY**

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AVOTI UN CILVĒKI**

XXVII

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Marika Selga

The Robert F. Kelley Papers in the Georgetown University Special Collection

Key words: USA-Latvia relations, Robert F. Kelley, Baltic States, Baltic Union, State Department

Summary

The author's main study interest is the relations between Latvia and the USA from 1922 till the 1930s. The Division of Eastern European Affairs in the US State Department had the direct responsibility for coordinating relations with Latvia, other Baltic States, Finland, Poland, and the Soviet Union. The Division from 1925 was led by Robert F. Kelley, first as an Assistant Chief, later – as the Chief. He is known as a hardliner towards the Soviet Union and his opinions regarding the Soviet Union have been studied in detail. Less researched are his views on Latvia and other Baltic States. The author assumed that some information might be found in the Georgetown University collection "Robert F. Kelley Papers".¹ This article will 1) provide a short biography of Robert F. Kelley, 2) describe Georgetown University's special collection "Robert F. Kelley Papers" and 3) findings relating to the Baltics. The collection of papers prove that Kelley's main interest always had been Russia. A significant finding is the lecture "Baltic States".

Introduction

The research topic of the present paper are the relations between Latvia and the USA from 1922 to early 1930s. One of the individuals, who served in Latvia and later coordinated the US policy towards the Baltic states, was Robert Francis Kelley (1894–1976). He is known as a hardliner towards the Soviet Union and his opinions regarding the Soviet Union have been studied in detail, for example, by Frederic L. Propas (Propas 1984, 209–26). Less researched are his views on Latvia and the other Baltic states. The author of the paper assumed that some information might be found in the Georgetown University collection "Robert F. Kelley Papers" (GMT – 770901). This article provides a short biography of Robert F. Kelley, a description of the Georgetown University's special collection "Robert F. Kelley Papers", and main findings regarding the Baltics.

If not stated otherwise, all information in this article is based on facts acquired in the "Robert F. Kelley papers".

¹ <https://findingaids.library.georgetown.edu/repositories/15/resources/10520>

Robert Frances Kelley



Fig. 1. Robert Frances Kelley, photo from his diplomatic passport
(GMT-770901, Box 1, Folder 5)

Robert F. Kelley lived in Boston, graduated from Harvard University in 1915 and continued graduate studies until 1917, his subject being Russian history. He joined the Army in October 1917 and was assigned to the Fifth Provisional Officer's Training Battalion at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Upon completion of his training at that post, he was assigned to the 22nd Infantry. He served with that regiment in New York, Washington, and Philadelphia. In the latter part of 1918, he was transferred to the 5th Infantry which shortly afterwards went overseas. Subsequently the 5th Infantry was included in the Silesian Brigade which was being organized to supervise the plebiscite which was to be held in Upper Silesia. However, its mission was soon changed, and the 5th Infantry was assigned to the American Army of Occupation in Germany. Mr. Kelley spent a year in Andernach in Germany, serving for most of the time as a liaison officer between the Army of Occupation and the local German civil authorities (GMT-770901, Box 1, Folder 9, *Autobiographical sketch*).

In March 1920, he was assigned as the Assistant Military Attaché to Denmark and Finland, but in July he was deployed to the US Commission at Riga as a Military Observer in the Baltic provinces. His main task was to monitor developments in Soviet Russia and to liaise with local military authorities. His expertise on Russia grew. In November 1922, he married Vera Julie Wettler, born in Riga in 1902 (LNA-LVVA, 1427. f., 3. apr., 190. l.). After discharge from the Army, he joined the Consular Service and, despite request by the US envoy in Latvia to assign him to work in Riga, in 1923 he briefly worked in Calcutta, India (NARA, RG 59 Box 1473). His knowledge about Russia was considered useful in the State Department and he was soon called to Washington, D.C. From 1923 till 1937, he worked in the Division of Eastern European Affairs at first as a drafting officer, later in 1925/1926 becoming the Chief. This division coordinated the policy towards the Soviet Union, Finland, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In January 1924, he was asked to provide information about Soviet Russia at the hearings before a subcommittee of the Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations, pursuant to S. Res. 50 declaring that the Senate of the USA favors the recognition of the present Soviet government in Russia. According to his testimony, the decision to recognize the Soviet Union was not taken. In 1937, he was sent to Turkey, where he worked until the end of war in 1945. When Kelley returned to the US, he retired from the service. A letter from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) suggests that in 1949 he was employed by the CIA. He represented the American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism in Munich from 1953 onward. He took part in the creation of Radio Liberty. Until his final years, Kelley's activities continued to be directed towards studying and countering communist activities.

Collection

The collection was established in 1977. A variety of documents and materials are stored in five boxes, each containing several folders. Boxes No. 1, 2, and 3 contain materials dated to the year of 1937. Boxes No. 4, and 5 contain informative materials dated after the Second World War. Mostly, reports about the situation in the Soviet Union, displaced persons, communist activities in Asia, a report about operation "Trust", materials regarding the American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism, Russian emigrant organizations, etc. Boxes No. 3, 4, 5 contain a great number of clippings and articles by other people. Most materials regarding his carrier developments, interests, articles, and lectures were found in the first two boxes. There were only a few documents written by hand, for example, his theses from the study years. There were no documents describing his private views or experiences. Most of the materials could be categorized as informative

used by him or written by him. A unique category of documents were lectures presented by Kelley at the Foreign Service School or the Naval Academy. Most of the lectures provided detailed explanations about the Soviet system, government, economy, policies. There are materials depicting his career in the Army and as a Foreign Service officer. The documents in the collection provide insights into the internal rating of the Division within the State Department, which are reflected by the lower ranking of the Chief of the EEA Division and lower salary than Chiefs of other geographic divisions.

Findings regarding the Baltics

Little black book

For those who are interested what books were used by Kelley as a reference material regarding Russia, very useful might be his little “black book”, which contains a list of titles of books and articles regarding Russia and the Soviet Union. The titles are arranged by topics, such as history, economy, political studies, memoirs by statesmen, military leaders, etc. This booklet includes titles of works published till 1932. There are only some titles related to the Baltic states, such as “Les Etats Baltes et la Russie Soviétique” by E. Sobolevitch published in Paris in 1930; “Die Politik der Sowjet-Union gegenüber den Baltischen Staaten” by Hans von Rimscha in “Europäische Gespräche” No. 4, April 1930; “Survey of International Affairs 1927” by Arnold Toynbee, 1929; and “La Latvia et la Russie” by Arved Berg published in Paris.

Several Business Cards

Folder 4 of Box No. 1 contains some business cards, which suggest that Kelley visited the Baltic states. There are cards of Kārlis Ulmanis as the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ludvigs Ēķis as the Minister of Finance, Jānis Tepfers as the Director of the Administrative – Legal Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There are cards of Lithuanian officials (Stasys Lazoraitis, Juozas Tūbelis) and Estonian officials (Heinrich Laretei, Jaan Mölder and R.A. Möllerson, Edward Wirgo and Julius Seljamaa). Some other documents suggest that the visit might have taken place in October 1935.

Diplomatic Passport

Folder 5 of Box No. 1 contains Robert F. Kelley’s diplomatic passport No. 962D issued on 25 August 1924. The passport contains visas to France, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia. According to the border crossing stamps, he had crossed Lithuania and Latvia border at Joniškis/Meitene stations on 27 August 1928. He left Latvia on 2 September 1928 via Zemgale station (to Poland). The passport holds stamps of crossing the border at Meitene arriving in Latvia on 30

August 1931 and leaving on 1 September 1931. In both cases, visas to Latvia were issued in Europe (in 1928 in France, in 1931 – in Germany).

Awards

Folder 13 of Box No. 1 contains information about the awards presented to him by the governments of Poland and Latvia. In 1928, he received a Medal Commemorating 10th Anniversary of Latvian Independence War. In 1930, he was awarded the Officer's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta. In 1933, he was conferred by Latvian government the Commander's Degree of the Order of the Three Stars. The diplomats of the USA were not allowed to accept any decorations from foreign nations. These decorations were stored at the State Department and each year a Congress' decision was taken, permitting certain retired officers to accept them. Kelley received them in 1958. The Polish Grand Cross and Latvian Commemoration Medal are stored in the collection.

The lecture "Baltic States"

The only document in the collection reflecting the attitude towards the Baltic States is the forty-one-page long lecture which was delivered before the Foreign Service School on 17 December 1925. It is stored in Folder 10 of Box No. 2. In this lecture Kelley analyzed the Baltic states according to the following factors: 1) development and intensity of their national consciousness (political development), 2) adequacy of the material basis of their national existence (economic development), 3) significance and importance in the realm of international politics, 4) relations to the USA (debt, trade). It is important to notice that in 1925 Kelley under the term "Baltic states" understands Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Finland. The creation of the Baltic states is analyzed in correlation to the USA policy towards the undivided Russia, clarifying why Finland and Poland were recognized by the USA in 1919, but Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania only in 1922, namely, that the recognition was granted only after the establishment of independent political entities and success in maintaining political and economic stability within their borders. It was considered that the national sentiment of these countries was of recent growth, but its vitality and intensity had been such that the new nationalities were able to overcome all obstacles. The lecture addressed the topics of Memel and Vilna. The lecture also addressed the idea of the Baltic Union. Kelley explained that the concept of the Union was to cooperate with regards to common interests. The first attempt to establish such a union was attributed to the years 1920 to 1922. The main obstacle to it was the general suspicion of Poland (in the context of Poland-Lithuania relations). Kelley found that closest relations existed between Estonia and Latvia. Evaluating the foreign policy of Estonia and Latvia, he considered that both had done their utmost

to foster the important trade between the Baltic ports and their hinterland in Russia. He characterized this as a wise commercial policy which was at the same time the best possible insurance against the revival of Russia's political ambitions at their expense (page 38). Kelley concluded that the Baltic States had shown considerable skill and foresight in their conduct of foreign relations. Polish-Baltic cooperation has been an important factor in East European politics and served to safeguard the independence of the Baltic States against the aggression from Bolshevik imperialism.

Notes for the speech of Secretary of State at the Republican National Committee in 1928

Folder 4 of Box No. 3 contains a two-page document which describes the status of the relations between the USA and the new East European republics. The group – Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are not addressed as the Baltic states. The document provided account of treaties and agreements already signed or under negotiations with these states. Kelley stressed that the USA had established a firm basis for the development of the intercourse with the new East European republics.

Conclusion

The “Robert F. Kelley papers” at Georgetown University provide detailed insights into his career and work interests. Most of the materials are related to studies of the Soviet Union or *Comintern*. His experience in the Baltic States is not reflected. The documents suggest that Kelley might have visited Latvia in 1928, 1931, and 1935. The US view on the region is described in the lecture “The Baltic States”. The use of the term “Baltic states” was broader in 1925, including in the group also Finland and Poland. Estonia and Latvia are perceived as very similar and having close relations. The lecture is a significant source to study the development of the position of the USA towards the Baltics.

References

- Georgetown University collection “Robert F. Kelley Papers” (GMT – 770901).
National Archives of Latvia, Latvian State Historical Archive (LNA-LVVA), 1427. f.
(German Congregation of St. Petri Church in Riga, The registry of engagement, betrothment and marriage from 1915 to 1933. <https://raduraksti.arhivi.lv/objects/1:4:11:2055:2474:23899#&gid=1&pid=208>.
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Department Soviet Experts, 1927–1937. *Diplomatic History* 8, no. 3: 209–26, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.1984.tb00409.x>.

Džordžtaunas Universitātes speciālā kolekcija “Roberta F. Kellijs dokumenti”

Atslēgas vārdi: ASV – Latvijas attiecības, Baltijas valstis, Roberts F. Kellijs, Baltijas Savienība, Valsts departaments

Kopsavilkums

Autores izpētes tēma ir Latvijas un ASV attiecības no 1922. līdz 1931. gadam. ASV Valsts departamentā attiecības ar Latviju, citām Baltijas valstīm un Padomju Savienību koordinēja Austrumeiropas lietu nodaļa. Šo nodaļu no 1925. gada vadīja Roberts F. Kellijs (*Robert F. Kelley*, 1894–1976), vispirms kā nodaļas vadītāja pienākumu izpildītājs, vēlāk vadītājs. Viņa uzskati par Padomju Savienību ir zināmi, tiek vērtēti kā stingrās līnijas piekritējs. Mazāk pētīts ir viedoklis par Latviju un citām Baltijas valstīm. Lai uzzinātu Roberta F. Kellijsa nostāju par Latviju, tika pētīts Džordžtaunas Universitātes Vašingtonā speciālās kolekcijas krājums “Roberta F. Kellijsa dokumenti”. Autore sniedz ieskatu par Roberta F. Kellijsa biogrāfiju, krājumu “Roberta F. Kellijsa dokumenti”, precīzē izpētes procesā iegūto informāciju par Baltijas valstīm. Krājumā ir divi dokumenti, kas liecina par ASV vērtējumu attiecībā uz Baltijas valstīm: 1925. gada Diplomātiskā dienesta skolā nolasītā lekcija “Baltijas valstis” uz 41 lapas; 1928. gadā Valsts sekretāra runai iesniegtā informācija “Austrumeiropa” uz 2 lapām. Autore konstatē, ka 1925. gadā ASV kā Baltijas valstis raksturo Somiju, Igauniju, Latviju, Lietuvu un Igauniju, bet 1928. gadā šāds apzīmējums vairs netiek lietots. Materiālu krājums apliecina, ka Roberta F. Kellijsa galvenā interese vienmēr bijusi Krievija.