

# Has the era of Latvian Political Ambassadors Come to an End?

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**Abstract.** With the newly regained independence in 1991 the Latvian Diplomatic Service had to be established from anew recruiting loyal to Latvia people, mainly educated population without any practical experience in diplomacy. Many of the newly recruited employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs became ambassadors. Over the years the Latvian Diplomatic Service has become a truly professional organization and does not appoint ambassadors from outside the Ministry any more, in such a way creating kind of a “closed club” or “closed system”.

The main question posed in this article is whether Latvia, as a small country with limited human resources, should base its Diplomatic Service only on career diplomats or whether in some particular cases a political appointee would be more successful.

The author argues that everyone who has proven to be qualified for a particular position on the basis of their previous experience and long years of professional work in different fields, especially if it has been tied with foreign affairs, should be enabled, and in some cases even invited, to be appointed an ambassador. Such provision would be of benefit for the professionalism, successfulness and reputation of Latvian diplomacy.

**Keywords:** Renewed Latvian Foreign Service, Transformation of Diplomacy, Career Ambassadors vs Political Ambassadors, Professional and Effective Foreign Service, Diplomatic Academy, Diplomatic Training, Evaluation of Latvian Diplomats.

Latvia is a considerably new country with twenty years of regained independence. Even though theoretically the Latvian Diplomatic Service continued to function in several countries abroad during the fifty years of Soviet Occupation and Latvian diplomats living in exile took care of Latvian state, in 1991 the Foreign Service<sup>1</sup> had to be established anew, recruiting loyal Latvian people, mainly from the educated population without any practical experience in diplomacy. As the first Latvian Ambassadors after the regain of independence had to be appointed already in 1991 and 1992, those people were not and could not be career diplomats, they represented many different other fields, e.g., cultural sector (writers, poets, and musicians), academic environment, medical sector etc. As those people had not “grown” step by step in their careers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a situation occurred that all first Ambassadors were appointed from “outside” the Foreign Service. During the twenty years of independence Latvian

Foreign Service has grown from several people/employees to more than 500 at present.

The main questions Latvian diplomats had to answer during the first years of the newly re-established Foreign Service were: “Who are you?”, “What is Latvia?” and “Where is it situated?” Our Ambassadors’ main task was to tell people in the world basic things about our existence and explain our history. Non-career Ambassadors ensured Latvia’s identification in the international environment [1]. Even though those people had a very different educational background not connected with diplomacy or international relations, most of the cases have proven to be very successful. Those people did a tremendous job and some of them have stayed in the service and continue career as diplomats. Over the years the Latvian Foreign Service has professionalized and does not appoint Ambassadors from outside the Ministry any more, in such a way creating kind of a “closed club” or “closed system”.

In this article the author has posed the following questions: whether Latvia as a small country with limited human resources should base its diplomatic service only on career diplomats? What are the main arguments for and against appointing political Ambassadors? <sup>2</sup> What is the overall evaluation of Latvian diplomats after nearly 20 years of renewed Diplomatic Service?

The first part of this article will introduce the reader with the development of Latvian diplomacy after the regain of independence and the role of political Ambassadors in creating the Foreign Service of Latvia. In the second part of the paper the author will discuss a case when a politician N was recommended to become an Ambassador, but finally his candidature was not approved and present the main arguments which appeared against this nomination. Political Ambassador’s advantage is to be familiar with a “political kitchen” and they can react more correctly and precisely to the challenges. The author considers that if a small state wants to „shine” in an international diplomacy, personalities play the major role. Therefore the possibility of appointing an Ambassador from “outside” the service should not be excluded and probably in some cases even preferable. The third and last part of the article will be dedicated to the evaluation of Latvian diplomats from the point of view of

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<sup>1</sup> Terms “foreign service” and “diplomatic service” are used as synonyms in this academic paper. However, the concept „diplomacy” itself is understood as a process of communication between the states and other international actors

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<sup>2</sup> The author uses a term “political ambassador” even though it does not mean that in all cases those people represented one or another political party. Americans have a special term for such people “citizen diplomats” or “citizen ambassadors” which mean that people can come from any field of action – business, academic sector, creative professions etc.

local and foreign Ambassadors residing in Riga, as well as politicians and foreign policy experts.

# I. LATVIAN DIPLOMACY BETWEEN THE WARS AND REVIVAL OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE

The end of the current year – 2009, has been marked with the commemoration of a few very important events which have shaped the history of Europe and determined future directions of Europe's further existence.

20 years ago the fall of Berlin Wall symbolized the end of Cold War [2]. At the same time Round Table Talks between the Polish government and the Polish Trade union federation *Solidarność* which was in opposition at that moment, led to semi-free elections in Poland and this unprecedented event broke the hard-line stance of the communist regime and created a chain reaction in the countries of the Soviet communist regime in the Eastern Bloc of the USSR [3]. Solidarity's influence led to the intensification and spread of anti-communist ideals and movements throughout the countries of the Eastern Bloc, weakening their communist governments [4].

The Baltic countries also experienced a turning point in their history. The national awakening came about in large measure as a result of Gorbachev's loosening the reins of repression with his public stress on truth and freedom of expression. The first large anti-Soviet and anti-occupation demonstrations in Riga took place already in 1987. The reviving of the Latvian identity had started. Several political organizations were created, biggest of which was the Popular Front of Latvia. In 1989 approximately two million people joined their hands to form a human chain spanning over 600 kilometers across the three Baltic States. The purpose of this peaceful demonstration was to attract the world's attention to historical facts from which Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia had suffered. It marked the 50th anniversary of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany

that led to the occupation of the Baltics and now stands as a landmark in the struggle for self-determination [5]. The Baltic Way protests against Soviet domination inspired many people not only in Latvia and Eastern Europe but also around the world. Three Baltic countries regained their independence.

Fifty years of foreign control created a unique period in the history of the Latvian Diplomatic Service. An independent Latvian government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not exist. The Latvian Foreign Service abroad after 1949 was the only one *de iure* Latvian institution which existed, situated outside the occupied Latvian territory [6]. It continued its work without interruption during the full period of Soviet occupation till 1991. The Latvian Foreign Service, even though in a very limited amount, fulfilled the functions of the Latvian state authority. Latvian diplomats in Western countries from 1940 till 1991 continued to express the official opinion in the name of the Republic of Latvia [7]. They protected the interests of Latvia and continuously reminded Western governments about the situation in Latvia. They spoke on behalf of the Latvian people who did not have the possibility to express their free will in a democratic way in their homeland [8].

Elected in democratic elections in March 1990, the Latvian Parliament on May 4 1990 adopted the "Declaration on the Renewal of Independence of the Republic of Latvia" [9]. The Parliament established a new Cabinet of Ministers and in May 1990 the first Minister of Foreign Affairs of a newly re-established Republic of Latvia was appointed. A new basis for the establishment of the independent state's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was made. It acted in accordance with the Declaration of Independence. An important task was establishing or renewal of diplomatic relations. As an example in the chart below we see that the diplomatic relations with other countries were established or re-established one by one in a very short period of time [10]. This work was done by several inexperienced employees of the Ministry.

TABLE I  
ESTABLISHING OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Germany	28.08.1991.
France	30.08.1991.
Canada	03.09.1991.
UK, USA	05.09.1991.
Estonia	06.09.1991.
Russia	04.10.1991.
Lithuania	05.10.1991.

Other tasks were accreditation of the first foreign diplomats, Latvian foreign policy service personnel disposition, establishing embassies, issuing visas for foreign citizens and receiving of foreign high officials. Parallel practical foreign policy work formed national legal basis and regulation [11].

After the adoption of the Declaration the main task of the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was to provide a foreign policy course for the Latvian government in order to achieve

the actual renewal of the independence of Latvia in the period of transition. Resuming the foreign policy of Latvia after an interruption of fifty years, qualified foreign policy experts actually started from point zero. The work of the Ministry was influenced by the Latvian international legal status, as well as complex conditions of inner state politics. USSR did not recognize the Declaration of May 4, 1990 and still considered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia as the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic (LSSR) as well as a component of the USSR foreign policy department [6].

Diplomatic activities in Eastern and Western directions started already in 1989. Latvian foreign policy during the Soviet Occupation was implemented by Diplomatic Service abroad<sup>3</sup> [12]. Even though after the regain of independence its meaning diminished, exile organizations and social movements still had a very important task. They used the contacts formed during fifty years to open up a new generation of Latvian diplomats who were closed from the outside world for many years [6].

One of the peculiarities of the Latvian Foreign Service in 1990 – 1991 was the fact that two parallel processes took place simultaneously – renewal and enlargement of the Latvian Diplomatic Service. A process started which was directed towards the Latvian state re-integration into the international community. After that the Latvian transition government was gradually recognized. The *de facto* process came about – official meetings with diplomatic representatives of other countries<sup>4</sup>, support of aspirations to achieve participation in international organizations and conferences. Also information centers were opened and cooperation agreements were signed as well as protocols with other countries' governments and their foreign affairs offices [11].

Latvian Diplomatic and Consular Service fulfills the following tasks [13]:

- 1) ensures protection of interests of Latvia and its citizens abroad;
- 2) informs foreign official institutions and society about Latvia;
- 3) coordinates international contacts of state institutions of the Republic of Latvia;
- 4) provides state institutions and society of Latvia with information obtained abroad in any legal way;
- 5) carries out consular functions according to the Consular Rules of Procedure [14].

In order to fulfill Latvian foreign policy tasks constant presence of Latvian representatives was necessary abroad. While Latvia did not have enough diplomatic centers abroad, "travelling diplomacy" dominated, which gave the first indications in the gradual renewal of state's independence [11]. Equally with praxis in 1918-1920, the government of the transition period started with the forming of the Latvian information offices<sup>5</sup> the first being in Brussels<sup>6</sup>, Copenhagen<sup>7</sup> and Stockholm. These offices were engaged not only with the work of information, but focused on creating the political contacts and defending Latvian interests. The offices were

doing what in normal circumstances the diplomatic representations did. These offices were actually the beginning of embassies. In the capital cities of foreign countries regular contacts with other states' diplomatic representations were implemented. The Stockholm office had the main role in liaising between Riga and the Western countries. The offices also served as a base from which Latvian employees could obtain foreign policy and diplomatic experience. Latvians living in exile who had completed significant work in order to facilitate the first steps of Latvian foreign policy, were also involved [11].

External and internal political situation and the transition period allowed implementing cardinal changes in the activity of Foreign Service, that it could fully function as a foreign affairs' department of an independent state. As before in the history of the Latvian state, the changes in the Latvian national status widely influenced further development of the foreign affairs' department. On the August 21, 1991 parliament voted for an end to the transition period, thus restoring Latvia's pre-war independence. After that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia started to function in full force. On September 6, 1991 Latvian independence was recognized by the USSR.

## II.

### 1. SUCCESS OF LATVIAN POLITICAL AMBASSADORS

The main resource of Latvian Foreign policy in the period of Soviet Occupation and after the regain of independence was the "citizen diplomacy", support of exile organizations and social movements. Even though the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1990 transferred the centre of gravity of diplomacy back to the motherland, the above-mentioned resources still had a crucial meaning.

In 1991 when the Republic of Latvia regained its independence it started its foreign policy after fifty years interruption. The first employees in the Diplomatic Service were not career diplomats who had "grown" and developed their careers in the Foreign Service, but representatives of intelligence and several former exiled public figures that had the experience in leadership of different Latvian international organizations [11]. "Citizen Ambassadors" have had a tremendous meaning in reestablishing the renewed Foreign Service of Latvia. They were the ones who ensured the identification of Latvia in the international arena.

Many Popular Front of Latvia<sup>8</sup> workers became political ambassadors. Some were high ranking professionals in different and most often creative, fields: poets, translators, musicologists, writers with good foreign language knowledge. These political Ambassadors from the intelligence were in an unenviable situation because they did not have diplomatic

<sup>3</sup> The methods, means and fields of action specifically differed from country to country

<sup>4</sup> Sometimes Latvian representatives abroad were received even in highest level with full protocol

<sup>5</sup> Such information offices were separately or together with other Baltic States

<sup>6</sup> Real work started in the November in the composition of Baltic States information office, formally opened in the end of September in 1990

<sup>7</sup> Since December 20, 1990, also in the composition of Baltic States information office

<sup>8</sup> The Popular Front of Latvia (*Latvijas Tautas Fronte* in Latvian) was a political organization in Latvia in late 1980s and early 1990s which led Latvia to its independence from the Soviet Union. It was similar to the Popular Front of Estonia and the Sąjūdis movement in Lithuania. Its newspaper was *Atmoda* ("Awakening", cf. Latvian National Awakening), printed in the Latvian and Russian languages during 1989-1992

experience and Latvia had a very weak material base [1]. These people had to deal with the same work volume as professional career diplomats in other countries.

The above mentioned people gained knowledgeable success in diplomacy – we have soon been admitted to the UN [1], embassies one by one were established, Sunday schools opened, etc. They created a positive Latvian image and contributed to Latvia's involvement in international arena.

Till the end of 90-s also Latvian career diplomatic service had started to develop and a growing number of career diplomats appeared [15]. During those 20 years Latvia were accessed to the main international organizations.

The choice of Latvian ambassadors already since the 90s has regularly reached the agenda of the political process. In recent years the practice of appointing political or citizen ambassadors has disappeared [16], however, the author considers that Latvia should not exclude the possibility of appointing political ambassadors to the countries where personal contacts and identification plays a big role. The author would encourage continuous "headhunting", meaning to look for valuable Latvian Foreign Service people from outside the Ministry, not only in political parties or Parliament of Latvia but also within the academic, business and other sectors. May be such people are not many, but it is possible to find them and educate them. In the process of development of the educational system of diplomats, such people should be integrated more.

## 2. CASE STUDY – ATTEMPT TO APPOINT A POLITICAL AMBASSADOR

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia nominated a member of the Latvian Parliament N to the post of Ambassador of Latvia in one of the international organizations (*further in text – IO*) but the President of the State rejected his candidature considering that this position should be awarded to a professional career diplomat [16]. Such situation testifies the topicality of choice of Latvian Ambassadors. The author has crystallized the key arguments, used in media discourse about this case which attracted much attention of the Latvian society, media and politicians.

The main argument against the political ambassador nomination was the following – although several former politicians successfully continue their career in diplomacy, before the appointment they had abandoned their political career and some „certain preparation period” was done.

Minister admitted that he had brought forward the candidature of N as ambassador to IO, because he in his professional qualification fully complies with the fulfilling the obligations of ambassador. As Minister emphasized, N in no case could be viewed as a political person without experience in foreign policy, due to many years of work connected with foreign affairs in the Parliament of Latvia. That's why Minister thought he was a suitable candidate for this high level position.

There are interesting debates on choice of a political or career Ambassador from the viewpoint of the Ombudsman. According to it, political membership cannot be reason to

prohibit the person to become an Ambassador. In a democratic country a person's certain political conviction or membership to the political organization per se is not valued negatively. In fact the opposite is true. Civil participation and activity is encouraged, and one of its manifestations is membership in political organizations. The Ombudsman admitted that „praxis that persons in positions are appointed grounding on political membership should not be supported, but at the same time political conviction or membership could not be an obstacle for a person to forbid the access to public service or work, except in law stated cases.” However, at the same time it was emphasized that „the approval of Ambassadors is one of the functions of the President of the State and he has a wide freedom of action in the decision making at the same time obeying applicable principles and norms deriving from the Constitution.”

Risk which is connected with the appointment of political Ambassadors arises from the fact that in such cases political parties could manipulate with those people as well as a risk that such people could possibly defend one party's position rather than interests of the country. No doubt that Latvia has to send an experienced person to IO. Latvian Ambassador in IO should have a good knowledge of international as well as European affairs since Latvia is represented as a member state of the European Union in IO, he should also know foreign languages and preferably have an experience in diplomacy.

As the number of Latvian diplomats is limited it would be even more advisable to attract people from other sectors in particular cases to use their professional qualifications for the benefit of the state of Latvia. For example, today when the world copes with economic challenges the author considers that a strong economist or person from a finance sector would be very suitable for a post of Ambassador. It would be advisable in some particular cases to appoint ambassadors “interdisciplinary”, meaning to attract a high level professional from any other sector (business, academics, other ministry etc.) and involve them in diplomacy for some time. There are good possibilities to enrich the diplomatic establishment with talented outsiders from the world of business or finance or education; and this process would become even easier if the movement went in both directions - if there was a system of rotation whereby career diplomats could go out periodically into that world to do practical work at a high level of responsibility and thus to enrich their own experience and the diplomatic service – with a better knowledge of the problems of the non-governmental world. In this manner there would be a greater likelihood of coming up with the desired type: not "specialist or generalist" rather a specialist and generalist at the same time. Therefore the author would advise that everyone who has proven to be qualified for a particular position on the basis of their previous experience and long years of work in different fields, especially if it has been tied with foreign affairs, should be enabled and in some cases even invited, to become Ambassadors. Such provision would be of benefit for the professionalism, successfulness and reputation of Latvian diplomacy.

### III. EVALUATION OF LATVIAN DIPLOMATS

The author considers that an Ambassador has to direct further that spectrum of issues which create the countries' tomorrow. A Latvian Ambassador has to find spheres, which are important for wellbeing and development of Latvia. An Ambassador should be able to act in all continents and feel stable and brave and not to fear asking questions.

To state how qualified and efficient current Latvian ambassadors are, the author has asked for an opinion and evaluation from foreign ambassadors residing in Riga. The overall evaluation is very good. The interviewed persons qualify Latvian ambassadors as knowledgeable and professional. Former Ambassador of USA to Latvia Bailey, Catherine Todd says: "The ambassadors that you have out there now are very good. You've got good representation. I have not met them all, but I have met probably ten and I am impressed with every single one of them. They are very knowledgeable and very impressive. And they are very dedicated. I think that Latvia can be very proud of the people who are representing it." [17].

H.E. Mr. *Jaak Jõeriüt*, Ambassador of Estonia to Latvia has similar observations: "Yes, I think, of course, they are very professional. It is quite the same in Estonia. As we have accessed the NATO and EU, it means that both Latvian and Estonian Foreign Services are good, otherwise it would not have been possible. Of course, we have some weaknesses and in Estonia we know them and we work with them. Some people are more professional, some less, but my overall experience is that Latvian diplomats are competent and perform quite well." [18].

H.E. Mrs. *Claire Poulin* also has a very good impression about our acting ambassadors. Mrs. Poulin says: "Those people whom I have met are very professional and very good. I even did not know that you did not have a diplomatic school. However, the training center for Foreign Service officers is always necessary. People are different and when you are a diplomat, your personality is very important. You have to be a person who can communicate, manage things and be a leader. And sometimes there are not really courses, but if you have some basic materials about different things, also policy and administrative matters, then afterwards when you are abroad and represent the country this is just a plus for your personality. So, if you do not have such an institute, your people are doing a tremendously good job, but if you add some basic training it will be even better" [19].

To prove the good impression foreign diplomats have about Latvian diplomats, the author will cite another former foreign Ambassador – H.E. Mr. *Robert Schuddeboom* who had already spent 3 years in Riga and therefore has an objective point of view: "I have noticed that the higher rank diplomats are very competent and professional. It is a real pleasure to work here with high-level diplomats, because they are accessible, hardworking and easygoing." [20].

For comparison – local diplomats and experts are more critical. One of the traits of character which our ambassadors

are probably missing is the ability to speak to the public – public diplomacy: „Today our diplomats have to speak more and more not only with representatives of other countries but also to our local media and society. Our people should have more training in public relations, talking style and etiquette. They have to develop their communication skills. I am sure that our ambassadors are very professional in particular issues they have to deal with and very competent in administrating their embassies, however, more attention should be turned to image and public relations, at least some of them,” [21] admits one of the first appointed Latvian Ambassadors after the regain of independence.

Another former and very successful Ambassador of Latvia admits that: „Knowledge is never enough” and that she sometimes has an impression that we have to „educate” each ambassador much more about the particular country where he or she is going to be posted. Even, if this is a neighboring country. „It is of utmost importance that this person gets to know the culture, history, politics and economics of this particular country.”

One of the current Ambassadors of Latvia reminds us that we have to take into consideration the fact that our ambassadors are very much involved in all kinds of administrative work, book-keeping, etc. As such issues take much of the Ambassador's time, then sometimes it is quite impossible to find a time to „up-grade” oneself. „Besides, ambassadors have to go out in public a lot”, adds Ambassador. And all those time consuming things create barriers for an ambassador to educate himself further”. Therefore the author would say that an Ambassador is a manager, he or she has to learn to manage his time.

Another very important aspect which the author believes is of great importance is that an Ambassador does not lose ties with Latvia when he or she is abroad. It sometimes happens that an Ambassador after his posting in one country is posted further to another country and it means that he or she spends about eight years abroad, which means that the ties and communication with the home country and the Ministry plays a big role. In the opposite case the Ambassadors can become “ill with *localite*”<sup>9</sup>.

Evaluation of knowledge and efficiency of young diplomats of Latvia differ from very good references to quite low. The author thinks that it is because different people have different experiences with our young diplomats and for one this experience might be good and not so good. Therefore the author has decided to mention 4 points of view, expressed in personal interviews with the author – those of one politician, one current high ranking diplomat in the Ministry and two senior diplomats’ – expert's opinions. They are both very experienced in diplomacy and one of them is also involved in

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<sup>9</sup> *Localite* – situation when an Ambassador is posted abroad for such a long (more than two terms – 8 years) time period that he or she does not feel the ties with his home country any more, loses the understanding that he has to represent the interests of his country and starts to think or act as people in his residence state

the Council of Evaluation commission of the young diplomats willing to obtain their first diplomatic rank.

"Latvia does not have its Diplomatic Academy and Latvian educational system does not prepare professional diplomats therefore we are working with "the product" which our education system prepares and we receive specialists of very different fields. That means that we have to find ways how we educate those young people in diplomacy. The courses, offered by the Ministry's Personnel department and Training center<sup>10</sup> are good, but not ideal. It is something, but not enough. Actually, to my mind, not only the academic education is of crucial importance for a young diplomat, because very many things are being acquired exactly by everyday job in a working process. Meaning of "learning by doing" is very high. The development of a diplomat is a never ending process. Academic background is a good material but each diplomat has to search ways and possibilities how to educate further, for example, by learning another foreign language, because, as we know the weapon of a diplomat is a word and language," admits the politician.

Our other expert – the high ranking diplomat believes that the young diplomats are not very well prepared. In order to get the first diplomatic rank, he considers, a young diplomat should not only pass the preparation courses offered by the Ministry, but also should work in several Departments of the Minister and have a experience in one of the Embassies and only then apply for the first rank. "I think that a desk officer starting to work in the Ministry should have not only some theoretical knowledge, but also the understanding what other structures of the Ministry and Embassies are dealing with. I would support at least 3 months long praxis," the diplomat admits. "Besides it would be good that he or she works also in the Consular department for a while to get acquainted also with this branch of the Foreign affairs. At the moment there is not such a regular practice," the diplomat continues.

One of our experts, a senior diplomat says that there is some particular stage of preparation, but the main thing former Ambassador considers is the matter of personality – whether one has it or not. "A person should be seriously interested in foreign relations and should have graduated from a faculty which is more or less connected with foreign relations – law, business, history or politics. As to my mind, the Ministry's Training Center has now developed an optimal preparation course and exam for young diplomats. I am not telling that the

best one, but the optimal one. It should be advisable to create a diplomatic faculty in one of the Latvian Universities with attaching professors not only from Latvia, but also from abroad. However, if a person wants to work in the Ministry, pass the exam of a preparatory course, continues to educate himself afterwards, besides ministry offers quite wide spectrum of further studies in the field of diplomacy, then it is possible to become a good diplomat. If a person wants it then this is achievable. We have very many examples of such people who have started from zero point and become excellent diplomats. Those people have been trustful to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 17 years, educated themselves and achieved a level of Ambassador today."

To sum up the above-mentioned, the author considers that five main aspects should be taken into consideration when evaluating a potential employee of the Ministry – his or her personality, psychological balance, professional knowledge, loyalty as well as discipline. According to their academic background, young diplomats should be offered a position in the Ministry in a particular department or division.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

During twenty years of regained independence Latvian Foreign Service has gone through very important transformations, grown from several employees to more than 500 at present and deals with challenges of today. After the regaining of independence political Ambassadors ensured Latvia's identification in the international environment.

Presently the Latvian Foreign Service is mainly appointing the career Ambassadors. A career ambassador is the most stable instrument in the hands of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, the advantage of a political ambassador is that when dealing with the state government and political environment he or she orientates better in those processes and can react more correctly and precisely to them. The author considers that if a small state wants to „shine” in international diplomacy, then personalities play the major role. Personality does make a difference for all countries, but especially in Latvia's case. Charisma of a politician, orator and communication skills are the traits of character which can give additional advantage to a politician in comparison with state functionaries and career diplomats. Political ambassadors also orientate better in decision-making of external issues which influence the domestic policy. Politicians are more self-confident and integrated. Ambassadors from outside of Diplomatic Service bring to their ambassadorial assignments important knowledge and experience accumulated from successful careers in academic, business, law, arts, military, political and public life. The author concludes that in cases where difficult issues have to be solved (e.g., case of Russia), countries which are very important in international arena (e.g., USA), or where there is a very large number of embassies and missions (e.g., UN in New York) political appointees would have more privileges. As the number of Latvian diplomats is limited it would be even more advisable to attract people from other sectors and in particular cases use their professional qualifications for the benefit of the state of Latvia. Therefore

<sup>10</sup> The main spheres of training of the diplomatic corps are as follows: partly reimbursed cost for education in the higher education institutions in Latvia and abroad if the education is connected to the diplomat's work according to the Civil Service Law of Latvia. Diplomats and employees of the Ministry have a chance to educate themselves in courses and training abroad, as well as to do in-service training in ministries of Foreign Affairs abroad or secretariats of international organizations, acquire foreign languages, etc. There are also specialized courses organized in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia for the new diplomats who want to get their first diplomatic rank and pre-posting courses for the people being selected to go to work in and Embassy and for their spouses. Besides, there are also thematic courses about different topical subjects – EU, economy, consular affairs, bookkeeping etc. There exist also compulsory exams to acquire the first diplomatic rank as well as before the Counselor diplomatic rank

the author would advise that everyone who has proven to be qualified for a particular position on the basis of their previous experience and long years of work in different fields, especially if it has been tied with foreign affairs, should be enabled and in some cases even invited, to become Ambassadors. Such provision would be of benefit for the professionalism, successfulness and reputation of Latvian diplomacy. Therefore in future it would be advisable to appoint also political ambassadors if a particular figure is found for a particular country.

Today when the world copes with economic challenges the author considers that a strong economist or person from a finance sector would be very suitable for a post of Ambassador.

Another suggestion from the author's side would be in some particular cases appoint ambassadors "interdisciplinary", meaning attract a high level professional from any other sector (business, academics, other ministry etc.) and involve them in diplomacy for some time. There are good possibilities to enrich the diplomatic establishment with talented outsiders from the world of business or finance or education; and this process would become even easier if the movement went in both directions - if there was a system of rotation whereby career diplomats could go out periodically into that world to do practical work at a high level of responsibility and thus to enrich their own experience and the Diplomatic Service – with a better knowledge of the problems of the non-governmental world. In this manner there would be a greater likelihood of coming up with the desired type: not "specialist or generalist" rather a specialist and generalist at the same time.

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#### Maija Bisofa. Vai Latvijas politisko vēstnieku ēra ir beigusies?

Līdz ar Latvijas neatkarības atjaunošanu 1991.gadā Latvijas ārpolitika un Ārlietu dienests pēc 50 gadu pārtraukuma bija faktiski jāveido no jauna. Latvijai nebija ne kvalificētu ārpolitikas speciālistu, ne akadēmiski apmācītu diplomātu.

Ārlietu ministrijai bija jārisina plaša spektra jautājumi ar tiem cilvēkresursiem, kas tai bija pieejami. Galvenokārt tie bija Latvijai lojāli cilvēki, inteliģences pārstāvji. Viņu galvenais uzdevums bija Latvijas valdības ārpolitiskā kursa nodrošināšana, lai panāktu Latvijas neatkarības faktisku atjaunošanu pārejas periodā.

Pēc neatkarības atgūšanas pirmie Latvijas vēstnieki ārvalstīs bija dažādu nozaru profesionāļi ar labām valodu zināšanām. Tā kā šie vēstnieki nebija kāpuši pa diplomātiskā dienesta karjeras kāpnēm, mēs viņus nevaram uzskatīt par karjeras diplomātiem. Tiesa, daļa no šiem cilvēkiem ar laiku pa tādiem kļuva, paliekot strādāt diplomātiskajā dienestā un veiksmīgi pildot savus pienākumus.

Pēc gandrīz divdesmit neatkarības gadiem tendence nozīmēt vēstnieku vienā vai otrā valstī no „ārpuses” ir mazinājusies vai pat zudusi pavisam. Līdz ar to Latvijas diplomātiskais dienests ir kļuvis par tādu kā „slēgtu klubu”, kurā cilvēkiem no malas ir grūti iekļūt.

Protams, karjeras diplomāts ir vislabākais instruments Ārlietu ministrijas rokās, viņš ir zinošs, profesionāls, ieturēts un ar labām manierēm, kurš noteikti labi darīs savu darbu, nozīmēts vēstnieka postenī ārvalstīs. Tomēr autors uzskata, ka mazām valstīm, kā Latvija, ir ļoti svarīgi tikt pamanītai starptautiski un šādos gadījumos spilgtā vēstnieka personība nereti spēlē izšķirošo lomu. Politiski mēdz būt drošāki, ar labākiem kontaktiem, viņi nebaidās par savu nākamo nozīmējumu un līdz ar to bieži vien pieņem lēmumus un veic uzdevumus drošāk operatīvāk.

Pirms vairākiem gadiem viens no Latvijas politiķiem tika nominēts Latvijas vēstnieka amatam, bet valsts prezidents noraidīja šī cilvēka kandidatūru, argumentējot savu lēmumu ar to, ka vēstniekiem jānāk no ārlietu resora vides. Autors uzskata, ka gadījumos, kad cilvēkam piemīt nepieciešamās īpašības un kvalifikācijas vēstnieka amatam, kā arī valodu zināšanas, politiskā piederība nedrīkst būt kā šķērslis, kas liegtu personai ieņemt vēstnieka posteni.

Gandrīz divdesmit gadi, kopš Latvija ir atguvusi savu neatkarību ir labs atskaites punkts, lai novērtētu Latvijas diplomātu kvalitāti un profesionalitāti. Tādēļ autors ir apkopojis ekspertu viedokļus par Latvijas diplomātiem un šo vērtējumu pievienojis rakstam.

#### **Майя Бишофа. Действительно ли эре политических послов Латвии пришел конец?**

С недавним восстановлением независимости в 1991 году, Латвийская Дипломатическая Служба должна была быть организована лояльными латвийскому народу образованными людьми без какого либо практического опыта в политике. Дипломаты в свою очередь должны были рассказывать их коллегам, работающим за границей, основные факты существования Латвии, объяснять нашу историю и обеспечить узнавание Латвии в международном общественном сознании. Многие из недавно принятых на работу служащих Министерства иностранных дел в дальнейшем стали послами. Имея ввиду даже то, что у этих людей было совершенно другое образование, не связанное с дипломатией или международными отношениями, они сделали огромную работу и некоторые из них остались работать в дипломатии в качестве профессиональных дипломатов. За последние годы латвийская дипломатическая служба действительно стала профессиональной организацией и больше не назначает послов за пределами министерства, таким образом создавая "закрытый клуб" или "закрытую систему".

Главный вопрос, изложенный в этой статье - должна ли Латвия как маленькая страна с ограниченными человеческими ресурсами основывать дипломатическую работу только на основе деятельности профессиональных дипломатов, и не могли ли некоторые конкретные ситуации решены более успешно.

Автор утверждает, что все опытные и профессиональные в различных областях люди должны были быть приглашены и назначены на должность посла. Такое условие принесло бы большую пользу профессионализму, успешности и репутации латвийской дипломатии.