

April 15, 1996

**Cable, Secretary of State to US Embassy Tallinn,
'The Deputy Secretary's Meeting with Estonian
Foreign Minister Kallas, March 25'**

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Summary:

This document details a March 25, 1996, meeting between US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and Estonian Foreign Minister Siim Kallas. Discussions focused on NATO enlargement, Baltic security, Russia's aggressive rhetoric ahead of elections, and Estonia's commitment to reform and sovereignty. Talbott reaffirmed US support for Baltic sovereignty and NATO eligibility, encouraged Nordic-Baltic cooperation, and recommended addressing human rights concerns through the OSCE.

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SUBJECT: THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH ESTONIAN
FOREIGN MINISTER KALLAS, MARCH 25

1. ~~Confidential~~--entire text. Classified by the Acting Secretary; reasons: 1.5 (b), (d).

2. Summary: March 25 Estonian FonMin Kallas emphasized GOE interest in the broad security structure set out in the Secretary's Prague speech and voiced concern about Russia's aggressive rhetoric. The Deputy Secretary noted the stakes in upcoming Russian elections and USG's careful stance in favor of reform; reiterated that the door remains open for the Baltics as NATO moves forward on enlargement and our firm commitment to Baltic sovereignty; and reaffirmed our position that Russia should take its complaints on human rights in Estonia to the OSCE. End Summary.

3. The Secretary dropped by at the beginning of Estonian Fonmin Kallas' March 25 meeting with the Deputy Secretary, Kallas praised the broad security concept in his Prague speech. The Secretary emphasized the need for pragmatism without premature compromises in order to expand NATO

within an undivided Europe: the Russians will continue to have their view, he said, but are well aware of the U.S. view after his recent visit to Moscow. In conclusion, the Secretary said much of the Russian rhetoric about

reintegrating" the countries of the former Soviet Union is election-related: Yeltsin conceives of reintegration in economic terms; Zyuganov wants a military union as well. However, the situation is fluid, and all eyes are on the June elections.

4. Kallas emphasized to Talbott that Estonia's main goal is to create a peaceful environment for small states in Europe, a goal made ever more more urgent by Russia's increasingly aggressive rhetoric. Estonia is the bellwether in the eyes of some NIS states, e.g., Ukraine, which is watching to see whether Estonia turns back from its reform course under Russian pressure. Estonia has taken all possible steps towards reform: there is no tension among ethnic communities; the OSCE resident mission has positively assessed Estonia's human rights record; Estonia has made all possible concessions on recognition of the current border with Russia. But Estonia will not concede continuity of its statehood. The U.S. and other western states have always recognized this

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principle as well in proclaiming the 1940 Soviet annexation as forced and in considering the Baltic states as sovereign countries, even during the Soviet era. This is all the more important given Russia's assertion that the 1940 annexation was "voluntary" and that forces in Russia are again calling for the "voluntary reintegration" of the Soviet Union.

5. Talbott replied that we must be candid about Russia: we could face a dramatic fork in the road in June. It is too early to predict the outcome of the Presidential election. Polls indicate a close race and much can happen in the eleven weeks before the vote. Yeltsin appears to have benefitted from the Duma's rash actions in recent weeks. We must not overestimate the consequences of a Zyuganov victory, but must accept that his presidency would be significantly different from Yeltsin's. While we do not endorse any candidate, all the presidential candidates, including Zyuganov, must understand exactly what the U.S. stands for. We are using every opportunity now, including at the highest levels, to get our message across that Russian policy may change but U.S. policy won't.

6. Regarding the Baltics, Talbott continued, we've never

accepted their unwilling incorporation by the Soviet Union; we consider them Central European, not NIS. What we want to do first is work out NATO enlargement so it is unambiguously clear that the Baltics are truly eligible for membership. Although the Secretary and Primakov agreed in Moscow to disagree on NATO enlargement, there nevertheless may be the makings of an understanding between Russia and NATO. However, we don't yet have a glimmer of understanding with Russia regarding the Baltics. Until we can better answer the question of Baltic and Ukrainian security, the rationale for NATO enlargement will not be complete.

7. Second, Talbott said, we want to do everything possible to bolster the Baltics' security and independence. We need to urge the Nordics to help reintegrate the Baltics into the West. We must refute the idea that the Baltics are forever excluded and must work to ensure closer Nordic-Baltic ties, for instance between Finland and Estonia. We are working on ways to strengthen western support for the Baltics.

8. Regarding human rights, Talbott observed, we have a consistent answer for both Estonia and Russia: take the issues to the OSCE. Although Russian interlocutors complain that the OSCE is not sufficiently critical of the human rights situation in the Baltics, we continue to hold

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to this line. On a related issue, Russian orthodox Metropolitan Kiril was vociferous against alleged persecution of orthodox believers in Estoniawhen he met Talbott; Patriarch Aleksey, however, seemed much calmer in a more recent discussion. Kallas replied that the GOE has not intervened. The Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church (EAO) has reregistered in Tallinn as the continuation of the EAO which was the church of all Estonian orthodox before the Soviet occupation. The Russian orthodox church, established after the Soviets reoccupied Estonia, claims the same name (legally not possible) and asserts the right to absolute leadership. The EAO has responded by assuring parishes which wish to remain subordinate to Moscow that they may continue to worship unimpeded in their current churches.

9. Attending on the Estonian side: Ambassador Ilves, MFA political director Kionka, MFA Americas desk Lepik; on U.S. side: EUR DAS Adair, EUR/NB Kunstadter (notetaker), D staffer Withers.

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