

## America's Baltic Time Bomb

By: *Ted Galen Carpenter*

Ted Galen Carpenter, vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, is the author of seven books and the editor of ten books on international affairs, including *NATO Enters the 21st Century* (Frank Cass Publishers).

The ongoing diplomatic food fight between Russia and Estonia over the latter's removal of a Soviet war memorial should be one of those things Americans can safely ignore. But because Washington successfully pressed its NATO allies into admitting Estonia and the other two Baltic republics into the alliance, the U.S. now has a treaty obligation to defend those tiny countries on Russia's border if Moscow ever resorts to force. It is an unwise, extremely dangerous commitment. As American trade with Asia increases by leaps and bounds, and China and India grow to great power, the Baltics are the last place the U.S. needs to assert itself.

Most American proponents of NATO's eastward enlargement act as though the alliance is now little more than a political honor society. Their logic is that, because the nations of Eastern Europe have become capitalist democracies, they deserve to be members of the West's most prominent club. And because NATO is now primarily a political body, so the argument goes, Russia has no reason to fear or oppose its expansion -- even to Russia's own border.

But as the Estonia episode should remind us, NATO is still a military alliance with serious obligations for the United States. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty proclaims that an attack on one member is an attack on all. That means the United States is obligated to defend every member -- no matter how small, how militarily and economically insignificant, or how strategically exposed that member might be.

And even worse, those obligations go on forever. Therein lies the danger. True, in the near term, there's little risk of a clash with Russia. Its military is in no condition to challenge the United States -- even in its own backyard. And although tensions between Washington and Moscow have risen in the past few years, Russian President Vladimir Putin appears to be more of a calculating opportunist than a reckless gambler.

But who knows what Putin's successor might be like? And who would dare predict the political environment in Russia a generation from now? All it would take to trigger a crisis is a Russian president who tires of the Baltic republics' continuing treatment of their Russian inhabitants as second class citizens and decides to rectify that situation by force if necessary.

For example, Moscow's anger might reach the boiling point if Estonia continues to insist on proficiency in the Estonian language for citizenship -- a requirement that disenfranchises hundreds of thousands of Russian speakers. Or the Kremlin could tire of the pervasive discrimination against Estonian citizens of Russian descent in employment -- especially in government ministries. Although the Russian government would probably first use economic pressure to force a change in

policy, nationalist emotions inside Russia could lead to an adoption of military measures.

Indeed, a crisis could result if a future Russian president concludes that NATO's mere presence in the Baltic region is an intolerable intrusion into Moscow's rightful sphere of influence. Russian concerns on that score have already been exacerbated by the efforts of the Baltic States to have NATO combat aircraft deployed in their territory. As Russia's economic and military recovery progresses, its determination to stand up to the United States and western allies is also likely to grow.

That is why permanent U.S. security obligations are so unwise. The commitments may make sense -- or at least seem innocuous -- under one set of conditions, but they can become disastrous liabilities when conditions change.

When permanent commitments are made to strategically and economically irrelevant clients, the folly is compounded. The security pledges to Estonia and the other Baltic republics are a prime example. If the U.S. commitment were ever challenged, Washington would face a choice between a bad outcome and a worse one. It could renege on its obligations, devastating American credibility and casting doubts on U.S. security commitments and statements elsewhere in the world. Or even worse, the U.S. could endeavor to carry out its pledge, which could easily lead to a clash with a nuclear power. America should never incur that degree of risk except in the defense of its most vital security interests. The security of three tiny nations on Russia's border doesn't even come close to meeting that test.

Washington should seriously consider the elimination of Article 5. If NATO is now meant to be primarily a political organization, as its supporters contend, there should be little objection to that reform. Conversely, if NATO supporters demand that Article 5 be maintained, then their assurances that the alliance is not directed against Russia are disingenuous, and we can expect serious tensions with that country in the future.

In any case, the U.S. should never have undertaken military commitments to the Baltic republics. These obligations are a dangerous liability, and the U.S. must extricate itself from them.

This article appeared in the South China Morning Post on May 24, 2007. □

## Israeli teenagers are a nuisance in Poland

By: *Anna Szulc*

Przekrój weekly of May 10, 2007

English translation: SPOŁEM group for MoPoPressReview

Roberto Lucchesini, originally from Tuscany, for several years now a resident of Krakow, hasn't been sleeping well recently. Before he will be able to move his arms normally again, he will have to go through long rehab. All this because of how he was treated, in broad daylight in front of passers-by and several teenagers who were hermetically closed in their coach-buses. Israeli bodyguards, equipped with firearms, bound his arms behind his back over his head with handcuffs. In Krakow, in the middle of the street. A moment before, the Italian was trying to make coach drivers parking in front of his house turn their engines off. - 'Israelis handcuffed me, threw me on the ground, my face landed in dog excrement, and then they were kicking me'. After that the perpetrators were gone. Italian had to be freed by the Polish police.

Lucchesini moved to Kazimierz, a district of Kraków, that used to be a Jewish commune of which the only things left now are synagogues and memories, often painful. He found an apartment with a view on the synagogue. - 'Back then I had thought this was the most beautiful place on Earth' - he says - 'after some time I understood that the place is indeed beautiful, but not for its today's residents'.

### Kicking instead of answers

Other resident of Kazimierz, Beata W., office worker is of similar opinion. Israeli security searched her handbag on one of the streets, without telling her why. - 'When I asked what was this all about, they told me to shut up. I listened, I stopped talking, I was afraid they'd tell me to get undressed next' - she says annoyed.

A young Polish Jew, who as usual in Sabbath, went to pray in his synagogue couple months ago, also didn't get his answer. He only asked, why can't he enter the temple. Instead of an answer, he got kicked.

- 'I saw this with my own eyes' - says Mike Urbaniak, the editor of Forum Of Polish Jews and correspondent of European Jewish Press in Poland. - 'I saw how my friend is being brutally attacked by security agents from Israel, without any reason.'

All this apparently in sake of Israeli children's safety. - 'For Poles it may be difficult to understand, but security agents accompany Israelis at all times, both in Israel and abroad' - explains Michał Sobelman, a spokesman for Israeli embassy in Poland. - 'This is a parents' demand, otherwise they wouldn't agree for any kind of trip. Poland is no exception.'

But it was in Poland, as Mike Urbaniak reports, where Jews from Israel brutally kicked a Polish Jew in front of a synagogue, and then threatened him with prison, in plain view of the Israeli teenagers.

- 'We are very sorry when we hear about such incidents' - Sobelman admits - 'Detailed analysis is carried out in each case. We will do everything we can, to prevent such situations in the future. Maybe we will have to change training methods of our security agents, so that they would know Poland is not like Israel, that the scale of threats here is insignificant'

Professor Moshe Zimmermann, head of German History Institute at Hebrew University in Jerusalem thinks however, that the problem is not only in the security agents' behaviour. He thinks Israelis basically think that Poles aren't equal partners for them. And it's not only that they think Poles can't ensure their children's safety.

- 'They are not equal partners to any kind of discussion. It applies also to our common history, contemporary history and politics. In result Israeli youth see Poles as second category people, as potential enemies' - he explains bluntly. An instruction on conduct with the local inhabitants given away to Israeli teenagers coming to Poland couple years ago may confirm professor's opinion. It contained such a paragraph: 'Everywhere

*Israeli teenagers to page 11*

## PolAm Federal Credit Union Holds 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

By: *Betsy Cepielik*

On May 12 the PolAm Credit Union in Los Angeles held its 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting for shareholders/members. The meeting was held at the PolAm office in Los Angeles.

CEO Chris Hiller welcomed those present. Father Robert Wojsław of Our Lady of the Bright Mount Church gave a blessing.

After the ascertainment of a quorum, Board Chairman Mariusz Kiciński took the podium. Plaques were given in recognition to: former Board members Basia Jankowski (ten years), Richard Kobzi (over fifteen years), Tony Krawczyk (ten years), and Tony Nowak (eight years.) All are successful in their full-time fields of endeavor. Tony Nowak is now managing fifteen branches of the WestCon Credit Union. Basia Jankowska is a successful attorney. Rick Kobzi is planning to relocate. Tony Krawczyk is in Human Resources. The PolAm staff members were then introduced.

Director and Secretary Donna Żuchowski described the Directors' duties. Chairman Mariusz Kiciński presented the Directors' report, followed by CEO Chris Hiller with the Management report. Since its founding in 1969 PolAm has granted \$160,000,000 in loans. They have always been active in promoting Polish art and culture. Another benefit to members is that of being able to select the Directors. CEO Hiller expressed a need to attract more low cost accounts. In May, PolAm will be sending e statements. They will also be accepting deposits at 7-11 Stores' kiosks. Soon there will be a paperless operation. The current total of assets is \$50,748,353 (compared to \$49,489,232 a year ago.) Members were urged to spread the word.

The Supervisors and committee reports followed.

PolAm has been a major supporter of the Polish Film Festival in Los Angeles and the Relief Committee to Help Poles in the Former USSR, headed by Frank Kosowicz of the Polish American Congress, as well as many other worthwhile Polish causes (Does your bank do this?)

Original founding members Józef Ładowicz and Laura Matthews were introduced and thanked for their continued support.

In the Q and A session, it was announced that the current PolAm membership is 2,453.

The election of new Directors followed. There were four vacancies. Nominations were made in advance and the members were elected by acclamation. Continuing members are Wladek Juszkiwicz, Piotr Bunikiewicz, and Andrew Dobrzyński. Newly elected was Stan Sowa, who had served one previous term on the Board. Wladek Juszkiwicz is the organizer of the Polish Film Festival. Stan Sowa is the Director of Land Acquisition for Real Estate Development. Piotr Bunikiewicz is an estate administrator. Andrew Dobrzyński is President and CEO of Practice Administrative Consultants.

There was a raffle of Polish DVDs. Frank Kosowicz reported on the money his organization has sent to Litva.

The event concluded with a sumptuous Polish Buffet.

If you are not a member of PolAm, you should consider becoming one, and helping your Polish Community. The address is 569 North Larchmont Blvd., Los Angeles 90004. (Additional information may be found in the PolAm ad on page --.) Sto lat to PolAm!... □

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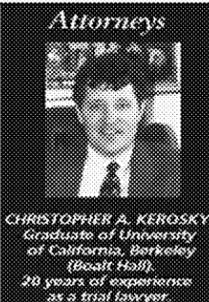
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