



HAL
open science

“Inventing” the Latvian democracy in the Western Europe: Anna Kēniņa and the Latvian propaganda in the Swiss and French democracies in 1917-1918“, CIGANOVS (J.), Democratic processes in the Eastern and Central Europe in 1917: political, military, social and cultural aspects”,

Julien Gueslin

► **To cite this version:**

Julien Gueslin. “Inventing” the Latvian democracy in the Western Europe: Anna Kēniņa and the Latvian propaganda in the Swiss and French democracies in 1917-1918“, CIGANOVS (J.), Democratic processes in the Eastern and Central Europe in 1917: political, military, social and cultural aspects”,. Latvijas Kara Muzeja gadagramata (= Latvian war museum yearbook),, 2017. hal-03001485

HAL Id: hal-03001485

<https://hal.science/hal-03001485>

Submitted on 12 Nov 2020

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

“Inventing” the Latvian democracy in the Western Europe:

Anna Ķēniņa and the Latvian propaganda in the Swiss and French democracies in 1917-1918

Dr. Julien Gueslin

“Partner Searcher” University of Strasbourg

and UMR SIRICE (CNRS-University Paris I)

Abstract: Until 1918, the Latvian emigrants played a fundamental role, being the one and only source of available and specific information about Latvia for the Western public opinions which knew fast nothing about Latvia.. During the place, Switzerland represents an ideal place to publish information but is the place of a big war of influence between the central powers and allied powers. Fast alone, without funds, Anna Kenin had to use any opportunity to raise awareness on the Latvian society. Despite political fights with other Latvians, she may have avoided mentioning political and social interference to give an ideal image, but they did bring to light the sense of national awakening arising and to introduce the idea of a educated and politically mature people for democracy.

Keywords: Latvians during the First World War- Latvian Propaganda in Europe- Relations between Latvia and Western democracies- Latvian Immigrants- Latvia and German occupation

1917 is certainly a crucial year for the Latvian national question: somehow, this was not obvious, at the time, as the Russian revolutions and the conflicts on the western and eastern fronts have hidden this fact or led the contemporaries to think otherwise. In the Western world, the picture of the Baltic provinces is blurred, and one may add somehow ambiguous. France and Great-Britain will not develop a Baltic policy until 2 years later. As of 1918 their interest is arising then mainly from the progress of power balance in the region and thus the need to protect their interests. However, as of 1916, a real propaganda war has begun in neutral countries about the question of small nationalities and their rights in the future

Europe. This and the weakening of the Russian Empire forced the Western powers not to stay indifferent and to begin to collect informations and to have contacts about nationalities like Baltic nation whose recent history was almost unknown to the diplomats and the majority of the public opinions.

Until 1918, the Latvian emigrants played a fundamental role, being the one and only source of available and specific information. Considering the existing constraints in the fighting countries (specifically the censorship and the control of all external information), Switzerland represents an ideal place to publish information and advertise one's ideas. The emigrants are also the first interlocutors of the western diplomats, as they try to draw the attention of public opinion. They are also a main subject to this real and secret war of influence between the central powers and allied powers¹. In the midst of an evolving conflict, each emigrant or political group has to position themselves, be it openly or secretly, and then assess the gains to be made while ensuring that they do not discredit themselves. The evolution of the case of Anna Kenin²), due to her role as a Latvian publicist and intellectual abroad, is interesting to study from 1916 to 1918. She is indeed going to play an important role in France and in Switzerland in order to make her country better known.

As Nora Ikstena's book on Anna Kenin demonstrates, at that time the young Latvian intellectual has already had a rich and varied career path. Recognised as pedagogue and high school principal, she symbolizes the rise of the Latvian urban and intellectual bourgeoisie, who wants the country to progress politically and nationally and confront the German elites and the Russian bureaucracy³.

Coming from her family heritage and her activities, she has an income that enables her to travel abroad and study. She thus becomes familiar with Western thinking and innovations that she will introduce in the Latvian territories. After two years spent in Paris at the Sorbonne (1911-1913), she goes to study at Genève's Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau, an institution that was then famous throughout Europe for its innovative educational methods⁴. This is where the war takes her by surprise. Unlike Rainis or the Lithuanian Juozas Gabrys, she has not made a name for herself abroad. She does not seem to have contributed to the activity of the circle of

Latvian and Lithuanian intellectuals and students who benefited from the sympathy and interest of liberal French intellectuals (such as the historian Seignobos or the politician Painlevé) who defend in 1912 and 1913, the cause of the nationalities (and in particular those unknown at the time of the Russian Empire) in the framework of the magazine "Annales des Nationalités"⁵. But she decides to send an anonymous contribution to the "Journal de Geneve" in reaction to the pacifist manifesto published by the writer and future Nobel prize Romain Rolland "Au-dessus de la mêlée" (*Above the Battle*). Her contribution is published on October 12, 1914, and will be published again in 1915, following the text of Rolland in the book edited with the same title as this one⁶. Kenin presents extremely well the dilemma that she and a good part of the Latvians are facing. They are trapped between the threat of Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism and divided in Germany and Russia between admiration for the culture and spirit of the two great powers and the need to oppose imperialisms the threat, in case of victory, of increased oppression. Kenin chooses the Russian side at the beginning of the War because she fears the German Empire might play the German-Baltic opponents. She has also the hope that, unlike German intellectuals, the Russian liberal elites will keep a critical distance from the Russian autocratic regime. Given their degree of development, Latvian elites can thus hope to play a role and defend their interests in a renovated and democratized Russia. On the contrary, if the fate of Belgium had already moved and alerted Latvian public opinion, the conquest of Courland, and the German policy which was being implemented there, reinforced the sense that opposing Germany is necessary. Above all it also draws attention to the ideas and theories disseminated by Pan-German circles in the German press. Finally, Anna Kenin, Francophile and Anglophile, hopes that the alliance with the Western powers will impact on the Russian regime and that the idea of a war in the service of the right of the peoples to Self-determination will have real repercussions on the fate of the peoples of the Russian Empire.

Anna Kenin is far from being representative of the tendencies of the Latvian circles in Switzerland, especially those of the social democrats who will keep their distance with her and will always criticize her propensity to look too much on the side of the Entente as well as her very nationalist positions. However she will always manage to deal with many Latvian (in particular Austra Osolin or at times with Rainis) to defend national identity and to oppose the efforts of German propaganda to get through the situation of the occupied Courland the attitude of Latvian public opinion. Latvian emigration is scattered in the different Swiss cities, and often at this time each one acts in a rather isolated way. In addition to Rainis in Lugano /

Castagnola, we find Austra Osolin and Liepin in Basel (contributing to the *Basler Nachrichten*), Lokis Forel, the daughter-in-law of the famous Swiss psychiatrist Auguste Forel who writes in the "Lausanne Gazette" and makes her Father-in-law aware of the Latvian question, and last but not least Cielens and Fritz Reiss in Bern⁷.

In Genève, Anna Kenin, can rely on more networks of influences, which are also more diversified, in particular an environment of progressive Swiss intellectuals, teachers, connected to the Protestant community and concerned with the questions of the pacifism and the rights of the small nations. Among them, are the members of the Institute and society Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Pierre Bovet Director of the Institute and contributor to the pacifist newspaper « L'Essor », Edouard Claparède founder of the newspaper, holder of the chair of psychology of the University of Genève, Adolphe Ferrière, famous teacher, who will create in 1921 the international League "pour l'éducation nouvelle" for a new education and who, with the other two, is at the origin of the movement which is going to revolutionize in the next decades the educational ideas (in particular with Jean Piaget and Celestin Freinet)⁸. Most probably thanks to them, she meets Alexis Francois, a pastor's son, teacher of history of the French language at the University of Genève and chair of the Society Jean-Jacques Rousseau. She is also meets the former Rector of the University Bernard Bouvier, cofounder of the society; of René Claparède, brother of Edouard, who is a leading Swiss figure of the fight in favor of the right of natives of the colonial Empires (chair of the Swiss League of defense of the natives) and in favor of the nationalities (for example his action in favor of the Norwegian independence).

They all belong to well-known families of Genève's pastors and are often described by their contemporaries as passionate about social justice (often close to social Christianity) as the peoples, as well as the Ferrière. The uncle of Adolphe, Louis, a former pastor, will soon welcome Anna Kenin and Austra Osolin to give talks in his salon, and thus contribute to raise awareness of the Latvian for many members of Genève's elite, such as Auguste de Morsier, Paul Moriaud, professor of law and founder of the Association for the Protection of the Right of the People and of many professors and pastors of Genève.

This is a truly intellectual environment made of idealists, who support the vision of a France fighting for the rights of small peoples, whose main function is to open for Kenin its networks and to support her efforts. In spite of her energy and her unflinching commitment, Kenin needs very much good « translators » willing to devote time and to use their intellectual authority at her service. As her wealth and the donations sent to her to pay for hers and her children

keeping, decrease more and more as time passes, it is obvious that the financial support given to pay for scholarship fees or end difficult months is crucial⁹.

In 1915, Kenin had witnessed with consternation the invasion of her country. Along with Rainis, she considered with interest for a short time to back up a project of Latvian-Lithuanian union proposed by the Lithuanians of Switzerland. One of the main promoters was Gabrys whose precious resources and the connections he had made with intellectual environments in Swiss or France, could prove useful for the Latvian propaganda. In August 1915, she took part in a Latvian-Lithuanian conference where, in the absence of Rainis, she gave a presentation on the situation of her country. But already at that time, in spite of a consensual resolution, divergences were great between those who wanted first to denounce German policy adopted in Courland (Kenin) or those concentrating their attacks on the tsarist regime and particularly the policy of « scorched earth » that led to the evacuation in the worst conditions of hundreds of thousands of Lithuanians and Latvians. At that time, neither Rainis nor her had yet discovered the hidden agenda of Gabrys who moved from France to Switzerland because he was certain he had to play as much as possible the German card because of the total occupation of Lithuania. He thus secretly served the German propaganda in Switzerland hoping in return to influence the ideas and arise interest for the Empire to have a separated Lithuanian state in case of final victory¹⁰.

The Latvian emigration, is busy counteracting, writing many publications to the many articles and brochures of the German press, published in Switzerland. These German publications present the German occupation under the best light and state that Latvians are favorable to the idea of an annexion or at least ready to acknowledge their fate will be more favorable in the future¹¹. The pangermanist organs or brochures evoke the idea of a colonization or a progressive germanisation of the Latvian population. The declaration of the German Chancellor, on April 5th 1916 marks a turning point by making official the will of the Empire to annex Courland and therefore provoke a partition of the Latvian territory. A Latvian comity chaired by Rainis is set up at the beginning of 1916 mainly to protest against the German plans of annexion, in the Swiss and Western press. They also want to react against what they see as German propaganda maneuvers aiming to circulate the point of view of so called Latvians in favor of the German proposals¹².

Latvian emigrants have found attention with the Swiss press, though their publications have little echo with diplomats or allied press until spring 1916, when German propaganda's intention of countering the image of the Entente defending nationalities becomes evident,

communicating on her weak point: the alliance with a Tsarist Russia whose goal would also be « to exterminate nationalities ». A telegram sent in May 1916 to President Wilson by an alleged “league” of the “oppressed” nations of the Russian Empire requesting his help is published in two Swedish newspapers. This provokes the wrath of the Russian opinion and attracts the attention of the foreign press. The adhesion of an alleged group of the Latvians of Switzerland to this manifesto gives rise to a firm denial of the Latvian committee, advocating of his wide representation face to what would be the action of a few « Baltic-Germans » in the service of Germany (e.g. Silvio Broedrich, author of « Das neue Ostland » or the baron von Ropp, pretending to be a Lithuanian citizen but in fact German agent who came to Switzerland). These statements are echoed by French press, which react sharply to this attack¹³.

The Congress of Nationalities organized by Gabrys and Von Ropp in Lausanne at the end of the month of June 1916 with German funds will create even more echoes. The congress is presented as an impartial manifestation dedicated to the problem of nationalities and thus attracts many Swiss intellectuals (e.g. Edouard Claparède or Auguste Forel). The organizers, as does Gabrys, while claiming their sympathy for the Allies, highlight in a clever way the communications hostile to the Russian Empire, or to the English and French colonial powers. These informations are widely communicated by German and Austro-Hungarian journalists that are present. Gabrys will prevent all speakers who wanted to condemn German policy, pretending agents provocateurs and Russian agents from Okhrana are present. If, according to Gabrys « own words », a Latvian agitator sent by the Russian embassy is thus silenced, he has to accept the speech of Anna Kenin¹⁴. In spite of the attempts to interrupt her, she protests again against the idea of a « liberation of Latvians by Germans », highlighting the heroic commitment of the Latvian people and its degree of culture, reaffirming the famous slogan of a free « Latvia in a free Russia ». She calls upon the allies to grant all their attention to the Baltic question: not having any illusion for the tsarist regime, she uses the ideas announced by the allies as a base for the democratization of the Russian Empire, in which Latvia would enjoy a wide autonomy¹⁵. Focusing on the education level, the role of schools or agrarian cooperatives in the national Latvian movement she suggests without naming it the model of the third French Republic and the triumph of its republican bourgeoisie in the so-called Republic « of the teachers ».

The Latvian press in Russia criticizes the excess of passivity of Latvians and advocates for the necessity to have a more active propaganda. This is certainly the origin of the multiple contacts Anna Kenin and Austra Osolin start, in Genève, with the Swiss intellectuals. Some of

them, as René Claparède, Auguste Forel or Louis Ferrière, pay even more attention as they had the feeling to have been instrumentalised by the conference on nationalities¹⁶.

In Genève, she meets by chance, professor Emile Doumergue, rector of the faculty of protestant theology of Montauban, international specialist of Calvin. He is the brother of Minister Gaston Doumergue, a politician future President of the French Republic. He had developed a strong interest for the cause of small nations (he had just published a brochure about Armenia severely criticizing Turkish policy) and he was firmly decided to build an idealized image of France being a long standing defender of the Right of small nations (and thus denounce German methods based on the use of Force).

Kenin made him aware with her alarming descriptions. He seems to have discovered with her a new publication by Rohrbach, one of the theoreticians of pan-Germanism, in the review « Deutsche Politik » of Weimar. This brings about the inevitable disappearance of the Latvian nation and thus the interest of its connection to Germanism in the frame of a colonization policy.

He then decides to spend a month studying the Latvian question and write for Kenin an appeal meant to be published in the « Journal de Genève » in order to call attention on the « projects aiming to destroy » and fragment the Latvian nation¹⁷.

The text of the appeal is ready in November, and if it gets the support of most of the Swiss intellectuals, previously mentioned, yet many others are reluctant to support it, considering it is too engaged on a topic they know too little about. After also trying to get the support of German speaking Swiss citizens, a Swiss study committee is finally set up in Genève. At last, on February 13th 1917, the « Journal de Genève » publishes the appeal « An entire people exposed to a threat » under the signature of Alexis François¹⁸. Doumergue, then decides to write for French readers, an historical summary on the Latvian question with the help of Kenin.

From autumn 1916, the attention of French diplomacy is drawn to the actions of Anna Kenin. Since summer a great counterattack against German actions seems to be launched by Tsarist diplomacy. During December 1916, the deputy Zalitis travels to Scandinavia and England in order to condemn German policy and to highlight the resistance of Latvians and their loyalty to Russia. The journey of Tchakste to Scandinavia, Great-Britain and Russia is helped, but the 1917 revolution will stop him in Sweden¹⁹. At the end of 1916, the Swiss trader Bibikov will also try to convince Kenin to accept the direction of a Latvian news agency in Switzerland, funded by grants of the Russian Embassy. According to Kenin, she

declined the proposal because she did not want to depend on the Tsarist government as long as the Russian diplomacy stays shy to reveal “the actions of the Baltic barons”. Had Alexandre Liepin not such restraints? In fact, the reports of the German Embassy in Bern accounts the growing activity of a Latvian news agency, a proof of the actions of Liepin and Osolin in Basle and Bern at the beginning of 1917. Numerous press releases and the publication of a bulletin (named “Pro Lettonia” in 1917) have widely circulated in the German speaking Swiss press. Kenin is also introduced to Emile Haguenin, head of the French propaganda in Switzerland, who will echo her activities in Paris²⁰.

Kenin’s position in Switzerland is difficult because of the attacks launched by other Latvian circles about her policy felt as too personal and also because of her strong temper. She did not spare others sensibility. She has also a great difference of point of view with the Social Democrats who condemn her policy as too personal and find her too well-inclined towards the Entente²¹. They support Latvian independence as a component of the international and revolutionary fight against imperialism. Among Latvian Socialists stays the hope of a rapprochement with the German folk and Social Democrats. The hope would be a common fight against Russian or German imperialism and the building of similar democracies. That idea seems reasonable because of the good understanding and the similarities of Latvian and German culture, intellectual activities and policies. Austra Osolin (who qualifies herself as close to socio-revolutionary thinking people and will always keep in touch with Kenin) asks Professor Auguste Forel to include references to the German nation and her lack of animosity towards Germans in the introduction she asked him to write for her. The title of her booklet written at the end of 1916 and published in 1917 reveals her state of mind: “Befreiung oder Vergewaltigung? Des lettischen Volkes Frage an das deutsche Volk”. At the time when the call of the Swiss Comity is published in the Journal de Genève, the Latvian news agency and the editorial board of “Latvji Arzemes” (Cielens?) published a letter addressed to Wilson²². There is no head-on opposition, but there are different orientations. Kenin has the will to separate distinctly imperial policy and German nation (a position she already defended in 1914). But there is also the judgement that solidarity with the German nation is not possible, at least on the basis of the political approach of Latvians. The reason why there is the need to play the game of the Entente.

It is 1917 that Kenin left Switzerland for France and England in order to convince the circles of the Entente to give their full support to the Latvian cause and help its propaganda. Was it also connected with the journey of Tchakste and the organization of conferences? Or

influenced by demands from the Russian Latvians to direct her action towards Anglo-Saxon countries? Was there the need for her to regain contact with specific Latvian groups? Or simply the need to find a job (as she has written it in a letter dated April 1917) or financial support, her incomings from Russia shrinking considerably?

Her status stays difficult, because even with the advice of Ferrière to be opportunistic, her lack of support from the Russian Minister holds her back. The support of intellectuals as Seignobos allows her, after long months of efforts, to publish, at the beginning of 1917 summer, the study of Doumergue “Un petit peuple en souffrance. Les Lettons . Les provinces baltiques et le pangermanisme prussien en Russie” in a special issue of a Protestant magazine «Foi et Vie». This magazine has a large audience on war problematics through its publications and through the conferences organized. It seems she went often to Montauban and Paris for proofreading of the book of Doumergue. Many details, references or statistics are her work. The many references of Doumergue to statements and letters of “a Latvian” are possibly related to Kenin. It also seems that she took of contact with the small Latvian community of Paris, notably with Aija Bertrand, the wife of Raymond Duncan and sister-in-law of the well-known artist Isadora Duncan, who is working on a “Latvian library” and accommodates Kenin.

The prospects seemed better in London (where Kenin could expose her arguments and goals more freely, so Ferrière was thinking), but as the sources are very incomplete, there is no way to tell if her actions were successful. Her poor English prevented her to settle down in London for longer time²³.

As many Latvians, Kenin has probably hoped that the revolution of February would bring the democratization of the Empire as well as its complete autonomy. As we know, it was a great disappointment which induced growing exasperation. It is of interest to acknowledge that the new Russian government tried to reinforce its support to Latvian publishing, in order to counter German propaganda. Austra Osolin mentions in her letters to Forel in 1917 her sympathy with Kerensky’ political actions and her binds to his Minister for agriculture, Tchernoff, a SR who was her teacher at university. She feels able to accept financial support which will allow her to publish a new and improved issue of her booklet “Selbstbefreiung...” in 1917²⁴. Before that, Forel and she had been introduced to Vladimir Victoroff-Toporoff, the new Director of the Russian news agency, and had accepted to collaborate at the writing of a special issue of the “Basler Nachrichten” (an issue dated May 26th 1917, which was translated in French later on). That issue was financed by the Russian government and dedicated to the

new Russian regime. Those articles written by Osolin and Forel will, afterwards, be published in a special booklet in both French and German: “Une Lettonie libre dans une Russie libre”²⁵. Such financial support is not to be found towards Kenin, but thanks to Osolin and herself, the Swiss Committee still takes efficient actions. As when, April 1917, on behalf of Latvian information, Louis Ferrière, Alexis François and Auguste Forel write two letters addressed to the Swiss politician Robert Grimm. At that moment he was on his way to Russia to enquire about war end terms, they wanted to advise him against peace agreements that would be to the cost of small nations. May 1917, the Swiss Committee protests against an article published in a newspaper from Zürich in which a fake Latvian writes his support to the German policy. The committee reveals that this article is in conflict with all other expressed points of view of different Latvian groups and especially that the last paragraph is the true replica of an article published in a German newspaper, so to say that the Swiss issue seems to be a hoax²⁶.

In the period of autumn 1917, the fall of Riga clearly triggers a deep sense of dismay among Latvian circles in Switzerland. In a vibrant article published on September 15th 1917 in the journal “La Semaine Littéraire”, Alexis François pays tribute to Anna Kenin, “a hero of Latvia, a mother and a woman, but mostly an outstanding patriot”, far away from her husband and children and on the verge of collapse. He also praised the tremendous courage and loyalty of the Latvian nationals “terribly disappointed” by the Russian “treason”²⁷. As convincing the Alliance to further investigate the issue of Baltic provinces proves a daunting task, the sense of dismay keeps rising. As mentioned in an article inspired by the Swiss Committee and published in “le Journal de Genève” of November 6th 1917, the question is to find out whether Latvia would become another Alsace-Lorraine or if Alsace-Lorraine is set to disappear altogether on both sides of Germany²⁸.

This increasing focus, in particular from France, paradoxically stemmed from the October Revolution. The number of articles and stories on the key role of Latvian skirmishers during the military coup tarnished Latvia’s image in Western countries, for a long time, and raised questions about a people that would have turned to bolshevism. On the other hand, the potential defection of the Russian ally, hence a potential concentration of German forces on the Western front, caused a serious crisis within French diplomacy. France then decided to call on all its possible networks within Russian empire and nationalist circles, seeking support and groups willing to maintain resistance to the German influence. In December 1917, an

official unit is commissioned by the government to reshape the French policy towards Russia and to send as many missions and French nationals in Russia, in a bid to influence the Russian public opinion. The higher aim was to find alternative ways to slow down the German drive and counteract the prevailing sense of resignation. At the time, the main targets were Poland and Ukraine, considering that the Baltic States were either powerless to act or treated with caution²⁹. In this context, however, the following preventions from France started fading away. In a note dated November 26th 1917, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs urges to start allowing all paper transfers from Switzerland's Latvian groups that are resisting the German influence. Detailed records must be drafted about the Baltic States that are "gaining importance while remaining completely ignored"³⁰.

Another note from December 1917 mentions the fact that Anna Kenin "has joined the Russian office of La Maison de la Presse", the French propaganda services operating abroad³¹. Without any of the department's archives left, however, we lack detailed information on Kenin's activities and on her final motivations. Kenin might have been then introduced in the house of Madame Menard-Dorian, where a number of intellectuals and liberal politicians supporting nationalities used to meet. This is where she may have met Philippe Berthelot, the powerful director of La Maison de la Presse and soon-to-be Secretary General of the Ministry, who will shape the entire French foreign policy as of 1918³².

Kenin's first mission, along with Lithuanian national Milosz, is to monitor the entire international press, with particular focus on German and Russian media, before having articles translated and summarized for the French diplomatic community as well as for the press release given to French media. These records, that have been kept, are a huge source of information enabling the diplomatic community and the French public to better understand the situation in Latvia and, most importantly, the policy led by Germany in this country³³. Settled in Paris, Anna Kenin has privileged access to information and press bodies. As such, she becomes one of the most informed persons on foreign events, while many French people can only access uncensored authorised information.

She is able to expand her networks and meet new people. She meets for instance Albert Thomas, a former minister and a socialist politician with a keen interest in Russia and nationality issues, who traveled to Russia on several occasions in 1917. She helps him plan a third trip that will eventually not take place, but at this time, the man grows very attached to Latvia and supports many Latvian actions in France, in particular in 1918 and 1919. He promotes the funding of a mission to send Kenin to Switzerland and organize in Genève an event against the integration of Baltic States into the German empire. This mission would

hinder the German policy on neutral States and compromise negotiations with the Bolshevik power. Kenin also aims at rebuilding ties with Lithuanian nationals, among which Gabrys, and bring him back closer to the Allies³⁴.

Back to Switzerland in January 1918, Kenin meets the Swiss Committee and coordinates a large people's assembly in the "Salle de la Réformation" in Geneve, gathering several hundreds of persons and drawing the attention of countless journalists from the country and abroad. The meeting comes under the spotlight as Germany's grip over Latvian territories is endorsed in the Brest-Litovsk Treaty at this time. For Latvian people, it comes as the first large event solely dedicated to their country organized outside of Russia. For the occasion, a booklet "Latvia against the German threat" is printed and handed out. It features articles of Pierre Bovet and Alexis François, the Swiss Committee's manifesto, Kenin's report on the nationalities conference, as well as several texts from Osolin. All the event's speeches are also published in a booklet in June 1918.

This successful event is followed very closely by the German services which acknowledge the event's success but promptly start suspecting the French embassy of having funded the event planning and the various publications. Swiss people, however, will keep mentioning this "unforgettable event" of 1918 during all the 1920's League of Nations' meetings and events organized to honor Latvia and the Latvian delegations³⁵.

Back to Paris, Kenin remains active and organises events focused on Latvia (such as a "Latvian day" at the Académie Raymond Duncaun on March 15th 1918). Alongside Milosz and another Latvian national, Toupine, she creates "La Revue Baltique", a journal supported by all the French intellectuals with an interest in Baltic States. At the end of the war, the journal aims at informing the French public on the situation of these countries.

In the summer of 1918, Kenin is sent to Stockholm for a French propaganda mission and gets back to Paris the following year as a member of a French propaganda delegation³⁶. Thanks to her French network, she contributes to improving the two countries' relations in the intellectual and political fields. France supports Latvian democracy and decides the *de jure* recognition of the country in 1920. Kenin's actions are not, however, the main focus of this paper³⁷.

Considering the huge political issues and the importance of events in Russia and Latvia at this time, the role played by Anna Kenin can seem somewhat limited: what could be the impact of a limited number of articles and events, even if marked with a deep sensitivity

for the political situation of the Latvian nation? This true informal diplomacy and hidden work to influence western public opinion can nonetheless be acknowledged. The point is to fully understand where the Latvian nation started: completely ignored by the West, even the country's most limited claims were far from obvious, unlike that of other eastern and central European countries. With eyes turned on the German and Russian empires, where stereotypes prevailed, nobody (except a few intellectuals) would see the Latvian democracy as a possible or even desired option. Kenin and other Latvian nationals have rightfully proved deeply pragmatic and determined to use any opportunity to raise awareness on the Latvian society during the power struggles among leading countries. They may have avoided mentioning political and social interference to give an ideal image, but they did bring to light the sense of national awakening arising since the 19th Century. The issue of how democracy could have been implemented even as a mere self-governance system, has never been addressed extensively in the texts dedicated to democracy as a political regime. A few implicit references can be found when reading about support to the Swiss democracy or the will to turn Latvia into "the Switzerland of Russia". Anna Kenin brought awareness in the West on the presence of educated circles and a literate people engaging in cooperatives and associations, as well as on the growth of print media in the country. She wanted, as a result, to introduce the idea of a politically mature people, matching all the official conditions deemed necessary to implement a solid democracy. More importantly, she showed how farmers and educated circles shared the common will to get rid of the terrible feudal system that prevented society and the country to develop freely. This consideration presented to the French public will also be one of the cornerstones of the Baltic propaganda, at the beginning of the independence period. Her attempt to prove that this feudal system is linked to a destructive German imperialism where power outweighs the law is a clear hint at the French revolution story, the basis of the Republican ideology at the time. The idea of a fight for the law is a clear link to the French thesis spread in 1917.

This surely reflected the ideals of certain intellectual circles in Latvia but not the whole Latvian people, offering to foreign countries a streamlined version of events and motivations of other groups, in particular German-Baltic circles. The efforts also show how a generation of Latvian nationals acquired a strong European feeling through their studies and journeys in Western countries at the start of the century. This generation naturally got closer to Western educated middle-class circles with common ideals. The Latvian people proved skillful using ideas and standards to raise interest for their country, thus making it a part of democratic Europe in the Western minds.

July 2017

¹ See the recent book: Alexandre Elsig (2017), *Les shrapnels du mensonge: la Suisse face à la propagande allemande de la Grande guerre*, Antipodes, Lausanne ; Klaus-Jürgen Bremm (2013), *Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Theiss, Stuttgart ; Troy R.E. Paddock (ed.), (2014), *World War I and propaganda*, Brill, Boston

² In Latvian: Anna Rūmane-Ķeniņa: She uses herself the form “Anna Ķenin” or just “Kenin” for french or western opinion (the form “Kenin” is also used, seldom Keninch).

³ Nora Ikstena (1993). Anna Rūmane-Keniņa. Dzīves skices. In: Nora Ikstena (ed.), *Pārņākšana. Grāmata par Annu Rūmani-Ķeniņu*, Rīga, Garā Pupa, pp. 9-36; Tālvāldis Ķeniņš (1993), *Atskats uz mātes dzīvi*, *ibid.*, pp.42-57. Ēriks Jēkabsons, Valters Ščerbinskis (2003), *Latvijas ārlietu dienesta darbinieki 1918-1991 : biogrāfiskā vārdnīca*, Zinātne, Rīga

⁴ Biographical Note by A.Kenin [in French], ? (1915?), **Archives of the Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau (University of Genève)=AIJJR**, “Livre d’Or” (Guestbook). Letter of Emile Doumergue [in French], 31.01.1920, **French National Archives (=AN)**, 470 AP 64 (Millerand Papers). Note about the organization of a baltic meeting against the German policy [in French], 12.1917, AN, 94 AP 180 (Albert Thomas Papers), File “Third Trip in Russia”

⁵ *Annales des Nationalités. Bulletin de l’Union des Nationalités*, 5-6, May-June 1913 (Special Issue on Latvia and Lithuania with articles of Seignobos, Meillet, H.Simson, K. Baron, T.Zeifert, F. Trasun...). Henry Simson (1912), *La Lettonie*, (Report for the Conference of The Nationalities, Paris, 22-23 juin 1912), Paris-Choisy

⁶ Romain Rolland (1915), *Au-Dessus de la Mêlée*, Paris, pp. 46-56 (V. De Deux Maux, le moindre : Pangermanisme, Panslavisme, Lettre à Romain Rolland du 30.09.1914), the same text in *Journal de Genève*, 12.10.1914 (p.1)

⁷ On the perceptions of the Latvians in Switzerland, see the files of the German Embassy in Bern: **Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (Berlin=AAA)**, Bern (Gesandtschaft), 474-6 (Letten), passim; F. Zeelen (1917), *Der Krieg und die Baltische Frage*, Bern; Fr.Weiss (1917), *Die Baltische Frage im Weltkrieg* und in der russischen Revolution, Bern ; Question lettonne (Lettres et Divers), **Bibliothèque communale et universitaire de Lausanne (BCUL)**, Manuscripts, IS 1925 (Auguste Forel Papers), III E 3 (Osolin), IV A 58 (Forel-Upeneck), IV A 89 (Kenin), IV A 137 (Rainis)

⁸ Archives of the Institut Jean-Jacques Rousseau (University of Genève)=AIJJR, FG.QL Question Lettonne, 1 (Letters), 2 (Swiss Committee to study the Latvian Question), 3 (Articles of Newspapers, release, bulletin, etc.) **Genève Public Library (=GPL)**, Manuscripts, Alexis Francois Papers, Ms 4047, 3 (Latvian Affairs), Edouard Claparede Papers, Ms 4003 (Anna Ruman-Kenin), Rene Claparede Papers, Ms 3978 (Letters to Bernad Bouvier, Louis Ferrière, Alexis François)

⁹ Letter from Kenine to E. Claparede, 5 juin 1916, GPL, Ms 4003

¹⁰ Eberhard Demm, Christina Nikolajew (Eds.), (2013), *Auf die Wache für die Nation. Erinnerungen. Der Weltkriegsagent Juozas Gabrys berichtet (1911-1918)*, Academic Research, Peter Lang, Francfort, pp.102-104

¹¹ Silvio Broedrich-Kurmahlen (1915), *Das neue Ostland*, Charlottenburg; “Livonicus”(1916), *Sind die Letten deutschfeindlich? : Eine Aufklärungsschrift über die wirtschaftlichen und politischen Fragen in Liv-, Est- und Kurland : mit einem Rückblick auf die Unruhen von 1905*, Freiburg

Fritz Fischer (1970), *Les buts de guerre de l’Allemagne impériale 1914-1918*, Paris

¹² Uldis Germanis (1971), Die Autonomie und Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen der Letten, In: Jürgen von Hehn et alii, *Von den baltischen Provinzen zu den baltischen Staaten, 1917-1918*, Herder Institut, Marburg, p.9

Note about..., AN, 94 AP 180 (Albert Thomas Papers), File “Third Trip in Russia”, p.2

Report of the 06.06.1918 (about the latvian propaganda in Switzerland), AAA, Bern (Gesandtschaft), 475

¹³ « Un comité letton contre une manœuvre allemande », 18 juin 1916, *Le Temps* (Paris), Nouvelles de l’Etranger. Suisse., p.2. Austra Osolin (1917), *Befreiung oder Vergewaltigung ? Russland oder Deutschland*, p. III sq. and p.41 (Anhang 1)

¹⁴ Demm(2013), *Auf die Wache*, pp. 161-163,

¹⁵ Anna Kenin (1918), *Le Peuple letton et la guerre* (Report to the Third Congress of the Nationalities of 1916), IN : *La Lettonie contre la menace allemande* (published by the latvian Press Office « Pro Lettonia »), Olten (Switzerland), p.29 et p.32 (note 1). Emile Doumergue (1917), *Une petite nationalité en souffrance. Les Lettons. Les Provinces baltiques et le pangermanisme prussien en Russie*, Foi et Vie, Paris p.138

¹⁶ Letter from R. Claparède to Louis Ferrière, 6 juillet 1916, GPL, Ms 3978 (Louis Ferrière)

Report presented by the Swiss committee to the Peace Conference, 1919, **LVVA**, 2575/7/27, p.35. Report from Louis Ferrière for the Swiss Committee to the Latvian Committee, 1918, AIJJR, FG.QL, 2/3, pp.1-13

¹⁷ Report from the French Embassy in Switzerland (Bern), 11 avril 1918, **Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (=AMAEF)**, Série Guerre 14-18, 701 (Latvia) and Report of the French Consul in Genève, 6 mars 1917, *ibid.* Letter from Kenine to Auguste de Morcier, 4.11.1916, GPL, Ms. 8313, f.100. Letter from Kenine to Forel, 8.12.1916, BCUL, IV A 89. Arthur Toupine (1920?), “Nos Amis à l’étranger, le Professeur Emile Doumergue”, **LVVA**, 2575/7/29, 39 lp.

¹⁸ Handwritten memo from Alexis François on the Formation of the committee, Appeal of the Committee (01.12.1916), Article “Riga ou le Calvaire des Lettons” in the “Semaine Litteraire” (15.09.1917), GPL, Ms 4047/3, I-III (A.François seems just to have revised the first text of Doumerge written in November 1916) Appeal (01.12.1916), BCUL, IS 1925, III E 1 (Pierre Bovet), p. 1. “Un peuple menacé”, Journal de Genève, 13.02.1917, p. 1

¹⁹ U.Germanis (1971), Von den baltischen...op.cit., pp. 11-12, 19

²⁰ Note about the organization of a baltic meeting..., AN, 94 AP 180 (Albert Thomas Papers), File “ Third Trip in Russia”. Letter from Ferriere to Kenine, 10.01. 1917, AIJRR, FG.QL.1/1. Report of the 07.10.1918 (Militärattaché in Bern, about the Swiss Committee), AAA, Bern, 476

²¹ Nora Ikstena (1993), op.cit., pp. 28 ; Letter from Lokis Forel-Upeneck to A. Forel, 08.01.1917, BCUL, IS 1925 , IV A-58, Letter from Bovet, 21.02.1916, IV A 19/1, Letters from Rainis to Forel, 1916-1917, IS 1925, IV A 137/1-7

²² Austra Osolin (1917), *Befreiung...*, p.45. Letters from Osolin to Forel, 1917 (no date,Letter 13) , IS 1925, III E-3

²³ See note 4 and Letter from Kenine to Ferriere, Letter from Alexis François to the French Consul in Genève, Letter from the Consul to the French Foreign Office, 5-15 april 1917 , AMAEF, Guerre, 701 and Note of the “Maison de la Presse”, 23 april 1917, AMAEF, Guerre, 700. Letter from Kenine to Ferriere, 13 juin 1917, AIJRR, FG.QL.1/1

Emile Doumergue (1917), *Les Lettons...*,p.5: are the notes of the book written by Kenine ?

²⁴ See the note 22 and the others letters from Osolin (7 may to 10 october 1917), BCUL, IS 1925, III E-3 and Letters from Victoroff-Toporoff to Forel (4 april, 8 May 1917), IS 1925, III E-4

Austra Osolin (1917), *Selbstbefreiung oder Selbstvergewaltigung ? Des lettischen Volkes Frage an das deutsche Volk*, Latvija-Verlages, Troesch, Olten (Vorwort von Professor Dr. A. Forel)

²⁵ Austra Osolin, Auguste Forel (1917), *Für ein freies Lettland im freien Russland*, (Reprinted from « Basler NACHrichten »), Latvija-Verlag, Olten, 1917, *Pour La Lettonie Libre et unie réunie à la Russie Libre* (French Version, Reprinted from « Tribune de Lausanne »), Editions Latvija, Olten

²⁶ Letter from the Swiss Committee to the “Zürcher Post”, 16 May 1917, BCUL, IS 1925, III-E-5

(Correspondance lettonne pour l'étranger (Bureau letton d'Information), 3, 30 May 1917),

Letter from the Swiss Committee to Robert Grimm, 27 April 1917, AIJRR, FG.QL. 3.1/1 (Correspondance lettonne pour l'étranger (Bureau letton d'Information), 2, 7 May 1917),

Letter from Louis Ferrière (28.04.1917), BCUL, IS 1925, III-E-2 and the letter from Osolin (07.05.1917), IS 1925, III-E-3 . GPL, Alexis François Papers, Ms. 4047/3 (IV-Our Letter to Grimm)

²⁷ See note 18

²⁸ « La Lettonie » (Journal de Genève, 06.11. 1917) Reprinted in : *La Lettonie contre la menace allemande...*, p. 23 and p.9 (Pierre Bovet, Le sort de la Courlande et de la Livonie). Letters from Osolin to Forel (10.10.1917, BCUL, IS 1925, III-E_3) and to Ferrière (17.10.1917, AIJRR, FG.QL.1/1

²⁹ Decision of Stephen Pichon to create a special Commission , 07.12.1917, AMAEF, Russie, 683 (and note written the 15.12.1917 in the same file) and 683 Bis. “1917 Commission about Russia”, AN, 62 AJ (Boyer Papers), 66.

Julien Gueslin (2015), « Public Opinion, the French Military and the Baltic Front: From Ignorance to the Discovery of a Geopolitical and National Issue (1914-1919)”, *Yearbook of Latvian War Museum*, Riga, 15, 2015, p.127

³⁰ Telegram de Beau, 26.11. 1917 AMAEF, Guerre, 701

³¹ Quoted in the Note about the organization of a baltic meeting..., AN, 94 AP 180 (Albert Thomas Papers), File “ Third Trip in Russia”

³² See Kenine about Mrs Menard Dorian : Nora Ikstena (1993), op. cit., pp. 193-5 and about Berthelot and Kenine: Letter from Albert Thomas to Berthelot (15.04.1921) and to Comert (08.01.1924), **Archives of the International Labour Office (=ILO)**, CAT 5-45-1 (Albert Thomas Papers), Dossier 4 (Relations of the Director), Kenine

³³ Bureau d'Etudes de la Presse Etrangère(=BEPE), File « Courlande. Lettons », **International Library for contemporary documentation (Nanterre=BDIC)**, F DELTA 819/31 (File 1: Generalities with handwritten notes from Kenine) and 30 (Baltic Provinces)).

³⁴ See notes 31 and 32, ans the letters of the French Foreign Office to the Embassy in Bern (26 and 28.12.1917), AMAEF, Guerre, Russie, 683

Letter from Kenine to Albert Thomas, 02.01.1918, AN, AP94/407 (Kenine)

³⁵ *La Dernière victime du germanisme : le peuple letton* (1918), Speeches of the Meeting at « Salle de la Reformation » (Genève, 4 mars 1918, with the speech of Kenine,Pro Lettonia, Lausanne (Reprinted from « La Russie libre », may-june 1918). The speech of Kenine is reprinted and translated in latvian in: Nora Ikstena (1993), Op.cit., pp. 213-217

La Lettonie contre la menace allemande (published by the Latvian Press Office « Pro Lettonia »), Olten (Switzerland).

Alexis François (1923), Une heure en Lettonie, *Journal de Genève*, 26.09.1923, p. 1

Report from the German Consul (05.03.1918, with press review) and from German Militärattaché (09.03.1918), AAA, Bern Gesandtschaft, 476 and the Report of the French Embassy... (11.04.1918), AMAEF, Guerre, 701

³⁶ Gabriel Millet (1918), Le sacrifice des Lettons (Speech during the Latvian Morning organized by Raymond Duncan at the “Goupil” Gallery, 15.03.1918), Action Nationale (BEPE, BDIC, F DELTA 819/31, File 1 (Généralités))

Letters between Kenine and Thomas and (27.03, 30.05, 17.07 and 23.07, 07 and 24.08, 1918, 01.12.1919) and fro, AN, AP 94/407 (Kenine)

³⁷ Letter from Kenine (31.05.1920), AN, AP 394/390 (Kenine), Letter from Doumergue to Millerand (31.01.1920), AN, 470 AP 64 (Presidence du Conseil. Estonie, Lettonie, Lituanie)

LVVA, 2570/14/742 (Administrative File, Kenine, 1919-1920), 2570/7/78 (Latvian Information Office in Paris), 49,7