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NOTES AND COMMENTS:

POSTSCRIPT ON U.S. RECOGNITION OF THE BALTIC STATES IN 1922

The noted scholar Melbone W. Graham, Who has written studies in international law concerning the recognition of states (*Diplomatic Recognition of the Border States*: I, Finland, 1936; II, Estonia, 1939; III, Latvia, 1941), recently has commented on the factors in the American political environment which led to the recognition of the Baltic States in 1922. Since access to his commentary is limited, the following excerpt is reprinted from Graham's article "The Recognition of the Baltic States in the Configuration of American Diplomacy", which appeared in a collective volume *Pro Baltica* (Stockholm, 1965), in honor of the Estonian diplomat Kaarel R. Pusta.

"The beginnings of the vast misunderstanding of the Baltic States by the United States stem from the last days of Robert Lansing's Secretaryship of State. Woodrow Wilson by that time was not on any terms of intimacy with this Cabinet Officer and most of the policy-making with regard to Russia emanated from the office of Colonel House. House knew all the pro-Czarist points of view of which the Quai d'Orsay was master. When the breach extended itself to Colonel House it involved many more things than were at first apparent or which in the course of the ensuing years have met the eye. Not only was Lansing no longer in favor but the Colonel, the kingpin of Wilson's diplomatic strategy, was in disgrace. In these circumstances political power vested in Mrs. Wilson — and Admiral Grayson. At a certain point in Wilson's illness the thought of a vacancy of power in the White House began to be envisaged with cupidity by the Republicans. This would have required the attestation of the fact of Wilson's incapacity whereupon Marshall would resign and Lansing automatically succeed to the presidency. No one knows to this day who discovered what was in fact a plot which would have turned the government of the United States over to Wilson's adversaries. It is probably true that Mrs. Wilson discovered it and with Dr. Grayson's aid helped frustrate the politics that would have put the Republicans instantly in power. That this in fact would have been a constitutional conspiracy of the deepest dye need not bother us. What is of enormous significance is that the prompt ousting of Lansing led to his being replaced by the sinister figure of Bainbridge Colby, a ci-devant liberal, who turned out to be one of the most unfortunately reactionary secretaries of state in America's history. When Colby, who was no expert in foreign affairs, sought guidance as to how he would meet the problem of relations with Russia he checked into the record and came out with the most extreme legitimist doctrines regarding new states. To follow the polemics unleashed from Washington released at this time serves no useful purpose. Colby was a Progressive who had gone sour in the process.

What he did not know at the time and may not have learned then or later was that Henry Cabot Lodge, kingpin of the new Administration, utilized the case of the Baltic States to his own advantage by making America's retreat from Colby's untenable position, politically useful to himself and some thousands of Lithuanian - American voters in Massachusetts. If the Lithuanian-American voters could guarantee the reelection of Senator Lodge in 1922 by a few thousand votes it would buy more in influence in Washington than half-a-dozen ordinary senators. It was settled and sealed in the bond in a Boston hotel and the intermediary, a Lithuanian living in Texas, delivered the vote and lived to tell me the story personally. In a state where the name of Woodrow Wilson still evoked among Poles lyrical reactions, Lithuanians were at a discount. Only a clever votecounting Republican worker was able to see that in the situation Lithuanian votes had their price. The Lithuanian-Americans of Massachusetts paid it and Lodge delivered, being able to procure recognition of all three countries in consequence.

In London, in 1957, at the one-time legation of Lithuania I was told the whole story by a good American newspaperman, who had long been the Lithuanian Minister. One small angle of the burial of the Colby Doctrine was gleefully recounted. On a day in the early summer of 1923, President Harding called Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes on the phone. He had discovered apparently for the first time that Lithuania was not recognized by the United States.

"Don't we recognize Lithuania?" the President asked the Secretary of State.

"No", said Hughes.

"Well, why in the Hell don't we?" the President queried.

Hughes was stumped for an adequate reply. To cut short the conversation Harding said, "We'll go ahead and recognize them then." And so at 11 o'clock on the morning of July 22, 1923, the United States recognized Lithuania and Estonia and

Latvia. No erudite defense of non-recognition was even attempted. Verily, the days of influence of the *Conference Politique Russe* were over."