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LATVIAN AMERICANS PROTEST PROPOSED REAGAN-GORBACHEV MEETING
 IN SOVIET MISSION BUILDING BELONGING TO
 INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

Rockville, MD - The Latvian American Association is urging President Reagan not to meet with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in a Soviet mission building in Geneva which legally belongs to the independent Republic of Latvia.

In a telegram sent to President Reagan on Nov. 1, 1985, Aristids Lamberg, President of the ALA, stated: "We emphatically urge you not to compromise the longstanding U.S. non-recognition policy toward the illegal Soviet annexation of Latvia, by meeting at 5 Rue de la Paix, which is registered as lot No. 2104 in the Geneva Record of Deeds as Latvian property."

Lamberg added, "Your presence in this building at any time would be a gross violation of the non-recognition policy and would be viewed as a serious affront by the Latvian-American people."

The building in question served as a Latvian mission during Latvia's independence (1918-1940) prior to the Soviet invasion, occupation and illegal annexation of the country. Both the Swiss and the United States governments have never recognized this illegal annexation.

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According to a statement released by the Swiss government on October 14, 1985, the building still legally belongs to the independent Republic of Latvia and is recorded as such in Geneva's Record of Deeds. They cited a Nov. 15, 1946 declaration by the Swiss Bundesrat which states that "until the proprietors were able to resume their international legal capacities, or until there was a case of succession of states, this property will be administered by the Swiss government."

The building was turned over to the USSR for its use on Feb. 18, 1947 by the Swiss government with the stipulation that this act of courtesy should in no way be construed as a legal change of ownership, or recognition of the Soviet annexation of Latvia.

The Swiss statement goes on to say that "The present Record of Deeds, which states that the building is Latvian property, remains in force. The Swiss position on this issue to this day has not changed." It also mentions that a request made last year by the Soviets to change the ownership of the building was refused. While the Soviets are allowed to use the building, they are responsible for upkeep and maintenance. No rent is being paid.

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"Department of State policy toward Latvia clearly states that the U.S. Ambassador in Moscow and Cabinet-level officers of the U.S. Government are not allowed to visit occupied Latvia," said Valdis Pavlovskis, VP for Public Information of the AIA. "The building at 5 Rue de la Paix in Geneva is occupied Latvian territory and therefore should be off limits to the President as well."

The White House has also received protests on this subject from Dr. Olgerts Pavlovskis, President of the World Federation of Free Latvians and Ojars Kalnins, Acting Chairman of the Joint Baltic American National Committee.

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