

at last appointing a new ambassador. In December, Meri was able to set out Estonian NATO hopes personally to Mr Major, and we are now planning for Ilves's visit in February.

OBJECTIVES AND RESOURCES

14. We made good progress on our (shortened) objectives, working for improved Estonian relations with Russia, promoting trade, managing military assistance, providing pre-EU accession help, running KHF and other aid projects, and coping with a rising visa workload. We get a great deal done, considering we are the smallest Embassy in Tallinn. The arrival of our Executive Assistant in mid-year made a welcome difference, but with only 3 UK-based staff we are under constant pressure on all fronts. With a one-year local EU Presidency in prospect, this is not going to change. Organising 'British days' a la Warsaw or Budapest, when my public diplomacy resources consist of 10% of me and 25% of a LEII, is impossible. I think we have not fully appreciated the need to strengthen embassies in prospective EU member-states. If we are to get our message across, this issue must be faced. My Embassy is just too small to achieve everything asked of it.

PROSPECTS FOR 1997

15. The new government or any conceivable successor will develop the open market economy, though at a less frenetic pace. The fractiousness of Estonian politics will probably also continue, with every political party now split. But Estonia has considerable basic strengths, and as Ilves said in his first speech, "Economic success and the image of a successful country are the best possible defence and security guarantees for us." If the Russians decide or can be persuaded to sign the border agreement soon, and agitate less over their brethren here, there is no reason why Estonia should not approach the 1997 EU enlargement decisions with confidence, though German attitudes may still be an obstacle. The economy should continue to grow, provided farmers can somehow be brought along too. Vähi predicts that 1997 will be the year "when it will be clear whether we will soon join the EU", and Meri's continued presence makes that more likely. The then Ambassador wrote in his Review for 1930: "The three Baltic States may be said to be surrounded by uncertainties: the element of doubt in their situation is perhaps greater than in the case of most countries, even small ones. Russia, its present intentions and future possibilities, presents the chief problem." Despite the extraordinary pace of change, that at least has not altered.

16. I am copying this despatch to HM Ambassadors in Riga, Vilnius, Helsinki, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Moscow, Kiev, Washington, Bonn, UKRep Brussels, UKDel NATO, UKDel Vienna and UKDel Strasbourg.

I am, Sir,
Yours faithfully,



CRL de Chassiron