

APERTO LIBRO ACADEMIC BOOKSTORE AND CAFE OSIRIS

Access to information is a prerequisite for the establishment of an open society. The availability or absence of instructional materials can determine the fate of the most motivated young minds. Taking this into consideration, the Soros Foundation - Latvia opened the first foreign language academic bookstore *Aperto Libro* in Latvia in the spring of 1993.

In 1994, the *Aperto Libro Academic Bookstore* underwent a major refurbishment and substantially expanded its stock to include approximately 3,000 individual titles. Most titles are in English, but there has been a considerable increase in the selection of German and Russian language books for sale. High priority in the bookstore's operations is given to the special order service which enables customers to receive practically any book published in Great Britain, the United States and Germany in a timely manner.

Over the course of the year, many educational establishments developed cooperative relations with *Aperto Libro*. Among them were the University of Latvia, the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, the Technical University of Liepāja, the Teacher Training Academy of Daugavpils, the Latvian Police Academy, the Ventspils Research Library, and many others. *Aperto Libro* attracts new clients by organizing special events such as a book signing by the prominent author Doris Lessing, or the presentation of a newly published (and Soros Foundation - Latvia supported) book on practical economics.

A western-style university academic bookstore is not complete without an adjoining cafe where the digestion of dense and learned tomes is facilitated by the intake of copious cups of cappuccino and coffee. With this in mind, the SFL supported the June 1994 opening of the *Cafe Osiris* which directly adjoins the *Aperto Libro Academic Bookstore*, and which quickly has become one of the most popular meeting places in Riga for independent journalists, artists, students and the like. Free perusal of major western and local newspapers in six languages is also available at the *Cafe Osiris*, helping to make this venue a favorite stopover for a very diverse clientele.

START-UP AND STOCK PURCHASE COSTS IN 1994: zUSD 201,600.-

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AND CAFE OSIRIS



George Soros (center) is the first guest at the **Cafe Osiris** in May 1994. SFL Executive Director Vita Matiss (far right) and **Cafe Osiris** director Andrejs Žagars (second from left) introduce Mr. Soros to this new addition to the **Aperto Libro Academic Bookstore**.

A group of Russian representatives share their ideas and lunch with George Soros at the **Cafe Osiris**.





*Soros Foundation - Latvia
Regional High School Program
1993 alumni and 1994 finalists
in a group photo.*

One of the most popular regional programs in the Soros Foundation-Latvia arsenal is the Regional High School program, which offers Latvian 10th-grade students the opportunity to spend a period from five weeks to ten months at high schools in Great Britain and the United States. In 1994, twenty-nine students from Latvia went to high schools throughout England and America. The Regional High School program is actually a grouping of eight different programs, but they all have one thing in common: they give Latvian high school students exposure to the outside world, giving them an edge in self-reliance and self-confidence, as well as in the English language. Applicants to the Regional High School program must score well on the Secondary Level English Proficiency Test (SLEP) and pass a rigorous interview session before they are selected, but the rewards at the end of the grueling procedure can be great.

"The initial adjustment to an entirely different and diverse culture was challenging," writes 1994-1995 Regional High School program student Mārtiņš Zemītis, who is studying at Fountain Valley High School in Colorado Springs, Colorado. "But the overall benefits from such a cross-cultural experience are immense. Above all, the transition from a public high school in Latvia to an independent boarding school in the USA requires absolute open-mindedness, a willingness to learn, to accept the differences, make constructive judgements, and thus achieve new summits in your own personal development."

Those summits beckon mightily. The 29 Regional High School program finalists in 1994 were selected from more than 350 applicants!

REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM

