

**SOVIET RUSSIA AND  
THE BALTIC REPUBLICS**

By **PHILIP FARR**

*First Published in September, 1944  
by the Russia Today Society*



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**FOREWORD**

As this foreword is being written the Red Army is already half-way across the Baltic States, and by the time it is printed the whole of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania will probably have been liberated.'

After liberation the three states will undoubtedly remain as constituent republics within the U.S.S.R. Some writers claim that this means that three of the smaller states of Europe will have been swallowed up by Russia with the connivance of the other Allies, and that the rights of self-determination and the principles of the Atlantic Charter will thus have been flagrantly violated in order to appease the growing power of Russia. Others claim that the three Baltic states, hitherto artificially detached from the U.S.S.R., will now, for, the first time, be able to satisfy their traditional desire to be incorporated with their Russian neighbours.

This is obviously an important question, for disagreement about it can easily lead to serious misunderstandings between the three great Allies. But British and American public opinion has hardly been in a position in the past to make up its mind on the subject. There are very few available books about the Baltic States in English, and most of them throw no light on the present problem.

This booklet is intended to remedy this deficiency. The author has drawn material from a large number of hitherto unavailable foreign sources, and the result is a picture of the Baltic States which is quite different from that given in the few British and American books on the subject.

It is hoped that this new material, which incidentally places British policy towards the Baltic in quite a new light, will be useful in helping readers to make up their minds as to the rights and wrongs of this issue.

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance which he has received from the staff of the British Museum Reading Room, the Library of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the London Library, and the Marx Memorial Library.

P. F.

## CHAPTER I

### THE BALTIC PROVINCES BEFORE THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Up till the Russian Revolution of 1917 none of the three Baltic peoples—the Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians—had ever known modern State independence; since the Middle Ages they had always lived under alien rule. It would therefore be natural to expect that the fight for the achievement of such independence and for separation from Russia would have been the dominating factor in the political life of all three countries. Many writers about the Baltic have assumed that this was so, and have pictured the Baltic struggle for independence as being on the same footing as the Polish struggle against Russian rule, or the struggle of the Czechs and Croats against Austria-Hungary. Actually the situation was very different.

During the Middle Ages the Northern part of the Baltic countries—that is Estonia and most of Latvia—fell under German rule, while the Southern part—Lithuania and the Latgale province of Latvia—fell to the Poles. German and Polish nobles partitioned the Baltic lands between them and established themselves as feudal landlords ruling the native peasantry.

In the 18th century the Russian Tsars annexed all these territories, but they did not expel the German-Balt or Polish landlords. They retained them in position and used them as their agents to keep down the native peasants.

The 19th century saw an important differentiation between the position of those peasants in the North under the German-Balts, and those in the South under the Poles.

In the Northern territories the abolition of serfdom in 1861 transformed the peasants into landless agricultural labourers working on the big German-Balt estates. But in the South there was constant friction between the Russians and the Polish landlords, and as a consequence the former arranged the liberation of the peasant-serfs in such a way as to weaken the power of the Poles. Instead of simply transforming them all into landless labourers on the Polish estates, they left some of them with small landholdings of their own. This did not mean the elimination of the Polish big landlords, but it certainly left them weaker than their German-Balt counterparts in Estonia and Latvia, and it established a class of native Lithuanian small farmers which had hardly any parallel in the north.

It would be wrong, however, to picture the Baltic States during the 19th century as being exclusively agricultural. The whole area, and especially the ports, shared fully in Russia's rapid industrial and commercial development during the final decades of the century. The ports of Riga and Tallinn in particular were well situated to assist in the growing trade with England and Western Europe, and the rapid development of the continental railway system turned some of the inland towns, such as Vilna, into important trading centres.

These changes led to the steady growth of an industrial working class, but they did not lead to the simultaneous development of a class of native big industrialists and traders.

The factory owners and big merchants were practically all either German-Balts or Russians. A few natives managed to become prosperous local traders or well-to-do farmers, but they were too few to count for very much, either economically or politically.

## **National and Social Liberation**

This complex disposition of social classes in the Baltic provinces had important political consequences. The main effect was that the nationalist struggle for State independence and for separation from Russia never became a predominant factor in local politics. On the one hand, the small native middle class was too weak politically and economically to lead such a national campaign for independence. It limited itself to moderate requests for a measure of local administrative autonomy and linguistic freedom under Russian rule.

On the other hand, the native working class and peasants, though not indifferent to national problems, were mainly concerned with defending their standards of living against their German-Balt and Polish landlords, and regarded this antagonism of classes as taking precedence over the national struggle against Russia.

The working-class and peasants certainly opposed the rule of the Tsar and the Russian troops and officials, but they regarded them mainly as the backers and protectors of their German-Balt and Polish masters.

The main effect of all this was that nowhere was there to be found among the Baltic peoples that widespread antipathy to everything Russian—including Russian culture and learning—which had developed in Russian Poland as a result of quite different social and historical conditions. This peculiarity of the Baltic liberation movement was shown quite clearly during the uprising of 1905.

This is sometimes referred to as if it had been a national uprising for independence. Such an interpretation is, however, a misreading of the situation. It was almost exclusively a social struggle of the local working-class and peasants against their masters, of whatever nationality, and was carried out in the closest collaboration with the Russian labour organisations which simultaneously launched a widespread movement of revolt against the Tsar.

In all three Baltic countries the lead in the uprising was taken not by the small and weak native middle class, but by the organisations of the town workers and the agricultural labourers. In both Estonia and Latvia revolutionary Social-Democratic Parties had been founded in 1904, and by the time of the uprising a year later they had gained widespread support both in the towns and among the poorer peasants.

## **The 1905 Revolution**

In both Social-Democratic Parties the Bolshevik wing had strong support, and in fact comprised almost the whole of the Latvian Party. It is not surprising therefore that, when events in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and in the Russian Navy, precipitated a simultaneous uprising throughout Russia in the autumn of 1905, the working-class organisations of Tallinn and Riga were among the most active participants. Barricades were raised in both cities and the Bolsheviks actually held Tallinn, the Estonian capital, for several days. (It is interesting, as showing the close links between the Baltic and Russian workers at this time, that M. Kalinin, now President of the U.S.S.R., worked for some time in the Bolshevik movement in Tallinn.) Simultaneously political general strikes were declared in Libau, Mitau, and Windau, and the

revolt spread throughout the whole countryside.

The agricultural labourers showed a surprising revolutionary enthusiasm, and organised armed attacks on the manors of their German-Balt masters.

In Latvia the support for the Bolsheviks was widespread enough to enable an American historian to state that “the Lettish population sided with the Social-Democrats almost to a man.” (M. W. Graham. “*New Governments of Eastern Europe*” London, 1928, p. 320.)

One would have expected that the revolutionary movement in Lithuania would have been less developed, firstly because, as already explained, there were a substantial number of small native well-to-do farmers there in contrast to Estonia and Latvia, and secondly because the Roman Catholic clergy exercised a strong moderating influence on the peasants. But here also revolt was widespread. The Social-Democratic Party of Lithuania had been founded as early as 1894, and had already taken the lead in numerous strikes in Vilna and Kaunas.

Here again it is interesting to note the connections with the Russian revolutionary movement. One of the founders of the Lithuanian organisation was Felix Dzerzynski, later to become one of Lenin’s closest collaborators, and famous as head of the Cheka in Soviet Russia. When the 1905 uprising broke out, revolutionary activity was hardly less widespread in Lithuania than in Estonia and Latvia. General strikes were declared in Vilna and Kaunas, and the Bolsheviks even succeeded in organising a general strike of agricultural labourers.

These facts should make clear that the movement of 1905 was a working-class revolt against Tsarist, German-Balt, and Polish oppression, and in no sense a national uprising for independence from Russia.

This aspect of the uprising is brought out very strikingly in a pamphlet that was published in England in 1907 by the I.L.P. It was called *The Revolution in the Baltic Provinces of Russia, being a Brief Account of the Activities of the Lettish Social-Democratic Workers’ Party, by an Active Member*, and contains a vivid description of the Latvian uprising showing the participation of the peasants who marched to battle behind the Red Flag. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, in his introduction to the pamphlet, automatically treats the Latvian people’s fight as an integral part of the Russian workers’ fight, and even speaks of the Latvian Social-Democrats as “our Russian comrades,” thus unwittingly emphasising the non-national character of the uprising.

There is quoted in the text a statement by the Latvian Social-Democratic Party, issued in reply to a Tsarist accusation of separatism, and declaring that

“Only a person utterly ignorant of local life and conditions could assert that the aim of the Latvian people or the local revolutionary party is the separation of the Baltic Provinces from Russia.” (p. 51.)

We need have little doubt that this declaration represented the standpoint of the overwhelming majority of the Latvian population, and of the Estonians and Lithuanians as well.

The surprising scope of these Baltic uprisings can be gauged by the extent of the repression that followed them. Even as late as 1907, after the immediate echoes of the uprising had died down in Russia itself, the Tsar was still finding it necessary to maintain punitive detachments in

Estonia and Latvia.

The punishment of the workers and peasants was very severe (\*), but it did not succeed in crushing them. When the Russian working-class organisations renewed their activities again in 1912-13, the Baltic movement quickly began to revive. This was well demonstrated in 1912 when the shooting of several hundred workers at the Lena Gold- fields in far-off Siberia led to mass political strikes in all the big Baltic towns—a remarkable instance of co-ordination between the Baltic and Russian labour movements.

When taken in conjunction, all these facts seem to prove beyond question that it was a working-class movement for social liberation rather than any nationalist or separatist campaign that held the field of Baltic politics in the years immediately preceding the Russian revolution, and that this movement, which would seem undoubtedly to have represented the majority of the population in Estonia and Latvia and a large part of it in Lithuania, so far from seeing its fight as directed against Russia, regarded it as part of a common fight of all the peoples of the Russian Empire—Russians, Ukrainians, Finns, Georgians, etc.—against their masters, whether Russians, Germans, Balts, or Poles.

On the other hand, the small section of rich natives, so far from leading a struggle for independence from Russia, were so opposed to the revolutionary tendencies of their compatriots that they sided with the Russian rulers and their German-Balt and Polish supporters.

#### NOTE

(1) “I saw a place in northern Latvia (in 1919) which-reminded me of some of the villages on the Somme during the War. I mean it was smashed to pieces, utterly flattened. There was nothing left of it save brick foundations and a few charred beams, and I said to my Lettish interpreter, ‘Good Lord, I didn’t know there was any fighting as far north as this. What happened?’ ‘Oh!’ he replied, ‘that wasn’t the War, that was the ‘punitive expeditions’ in the spring of 1906.

“ ‘You see, we revolted then against the Tsar and against our Baltic landlords, the Tsar’s gendarmes, the bloody German landlords and mercenaries who killed our Lettish peasants in the name of the Tsar, to hold the land for themselves. And in any village where there had been one single revolutionary, the “punitive expeditions” came to the village and burnt it flat, like this one you see here. They didn’t shoot anyone, unless there was resistance; they just burnt the village flat and took the cattle, and horses and the farm tools and destroyed the rest. It was a lesson, they said, to teach the Letts not to revolt again’.”

(Walter Duranty: *I Write as I Please*. London, 1935, pp. 64-5.)

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\* See note at end of Chapter.

## CHAPTER II

### **FROM THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION TO THE PEACE TREATIES OF 1920**

In view of the active participation of the three Baltic peoples in the unsuccessful uprising of 1905, it is probable that they would have given at least equal support to the successful Bolshevik revolution of October, 1917. Certainly the Bolshevik movement had made great strides in Estonia and Latvia by 1917. This is shown by a report given to a Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (i.e., the Bolsheviks) in July, 1917.

. This report stated that there were 14,000 organised Bolsheviks among the Baltic peoples (presumably only Estonia and Latvia are included, for Lithuania was then under German occupation)—more than the number in the whole of the Volga Region, and nearly as many as the number in the key industrial area of the Donbas. The same report stated that in the celebrated Latvian Rifle Regiments of the old Tsarist Army there were 2,000 organised Bolsheviks.

Unfortunately it is only in the case of Estonia that it is possible to know the actual popular reaction to the Bolshevik revolution, for by the time it broke out the Germans had occupied almost the whole of Latvia in addition to Lithuania. Consequently the populations in these two countries had no chance of making their views known.

#### **Estonian Labour Commune**

In the case of Estonia the evidence as to their views is fairly plain. During the summer of 1917 Bolshevik majorities gained control of the Soviet Committees that had sprung up in the two principal towns of Tallinn and Tartu, and these majorities—in line with the simultaneous developments in Russia—proceeded on November 28th to establish a Soviet Government.

It is most important to notice that this Government did not regard itself as the Government of a separate Estonian Soviet Republic, but merely as the local Estonian section of the supreme Soviet Government that was rapidly extending all over the Russian Empire. It called itself the “Estonian Labour Commune,” just as the revolutionary organ of government in Petrograd was called the “Petrograd Labour Commune.” In this way the Estonians sharply emphasised their determination to become an integral part of the new Socialist Russia.

This Estonian Soviet Government set about consolidating its position in Tallinn, and, in particular, it called a big Congress of Peasants in order to expropriate the German-Balt estates and to distribute the land among the landless peasants.

There seems to have been very little opposition to this programme. An attempt to check the Government’s radical measures was made by a group of Right-Wing Estonian politicians, but when they tried to appeal to the Tallinn workers they were nearly lynched by an angry crowd. They might certainly have been killed had it not been for the intervention of Kingisepp, the Estonian Bolshevik leader, who managed to calm down the angry demonstrators. It is significant that among those whom he saved were a number of politicians who, five years later, ordered his execution without trial.

Apart from one or two incidents of this sort, the transfer of power to the local Bolshevik Government seems to have taken place smoothly, and it seems to be quite certain that, had it not

been for subsequent German intervention, Estonia would have developed along Bolshevik lines in exactly the same way as Russia proper, and would have become a constituent Soviet Republic of the U.S.S.R. as did the Ukraine and White Russia.

### **The German Occupation**

But this development was suddenly cut short after four months in February, 1918, as a result of the northward advance of the German armies which followed the repudiation by the German delegation at the Conference of Brest-Litovsk of the peace proposals put forward by the Soviet Russian leaders.

As a result of this advance the Germans quickly occupied the whole of Estonia, and thus all three Baltic peoples found themselves temporarily under German military rule.

It is not easy to obtain detailed information about events under the German occupation, but in Estonia the Germans naturally crushed the newly established Bolshevik Government with considerable ruthlessness and drove large numbers of its supporters over the frontier into Russia. They also quickly reversed all the social and economic legislation which the Bolshevik Government had had time to enact, and in particular they saw to it that all the German-Balt estates that had already been divided up by the peasants were immediately returned to their former owners.

On the other hand, there is ample evidence from German sources to show that in all three countries the local populations, led by their working-class parties and organisations, put up a steady resistance to the German rule and prepared their forces for the day when Germany would be defeated.

But when defeat came in November, 1918, the Baltic peoples did not obtain the liberation for which they had been fighting, for the Allies ordered the German armies to remain in occupation.

### **The Armistice Terms**

Whereas Clause II of the Armistice stipulated that the Germans should evacuate Belgium and France immediately, and Clause XII, Part 1, similarly provided that they should evacuate Turkey, Austria-Hungary, and Rumania immediately, Clause XII, Part 2, laid down that the Germans were to evacuate the Baltic territories only "as soon as the Allies shall think the moment suitable, having regard to the internal situation of these territories."

It must be admitted that this was an extraordinary decision; particularly since Allied spokesmen during the war had often referred to the horrors of the German occupation of the Baltic region and had spoken of the unfortunate victims as the "Belgians of the East."

The reason for this decision is explained in the Hale Report, made by a visiting U.S. Senate Commission:

"The Germans were present in the Baltic Provinces with the full consent of the Allies, and, indeed, by their implied command. The framers of the Armistice agreement recognised that the red tide could not be held by any bulwarks which any of these native races could maintain. Estonia and Latvia were themselves permeated with the Bolshevistic poison." (*Report of U.S. Mission to Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. 66th Congress, 1st*

*Session, Senate Document 105, 1919, p. 8.)*

In view of the Bolshevik tendencies of all three Baltic peoples it was evident to the Allies that liberation from the German occupation would be followed by the establishment of three Soviet Baltic Republics, and in their horror of the “Bolshevistic poison,” the Allies ordered the Germans to remain in occupation so as to prevent this.

During the next two years they made very considerable use of German troops to crush Baltic Bolshevism, and only after a prolonged and confused struggle did they succeed in achieving this object and in establishing three anti-Bolshevik independent governments in power. During the course of this struggle the Allies were forced to use the most surprising and questionable expedients, and, even so, the evidence shows that they would certainly have failed had it not been that the Russian Red Army was too busy fighting on other fronts to be able to give much military assistance to the Baltic Bolsheviks.

The author is aware that this estimate of the events of 1917-1920 is at variance with the picture given in almost all British and American books about the Baltic States: the detailed course of events is, therefore, set out in the following pages, supported by a good deal of documentation.

It will be seen that almost all the evidence is drawn from original Baltic, German, White Russian and French sources. The absence of Soviet Russian sources is due to the writer's ignorance of Russian.

The absence of British and American sources can best be explained by quoting from the introduction to Sir Stephen Tallents' autobiography (*Man and Boy, 1943*) in which he writes that:

“The confused and perplexing Baltic events of 1919 and 1920 have been described in detail by German, French, and Russian pens. England did more than any other outside country to set their ultimate course; yet they have never been recorded as English eyes saw them at the time, or with a just view of the part which British sea-power played in their determination.” For the sake of clarity the events are traced country by country, though there was naturally a good deal of overlapping, and events in each country had important repercussions on the others.

### **Estonia**

In Estonia, the very first day after the Armistice, the German military command at Tallinn found it necessary to appeal for British warships, to be sent to suppress local “Bolshevistic outbreaks.”<sup>(1)</sup>

Under normal circumstances the substantial German forces of occupation would certainly have been adequate to crush any local revolutionary uprising, and the Allies had obviously relied on this when they instructed the Germans to remain at their posts. But the German troops were in no position to carry out such instructions. They themselves were completely demoralised, and there was every likelihood that they might go Bolshevik. Many units had deposed their officers and set up Soldiers' Councils, and all of them had put forward demands that they should be transported back home without delay.

Immediately the German appeal arrived a British naval expedition was detailed for the Baltic under the command of Admiral Sinclair, but owing to the minefields laid during the Great War it did not reach Tallinn till December 12th. By that time the German armies had completely disintegrated and had already evacuated practically the whole of Estonia.

As soon as they had withdrawn, the Estonians had re-established their Soviet Government, whose rule had been previously cut short by the German occupation in February, 1918, so that by the time Admiral Sinclair arrived, seven-eighths of the country was already under Bolshevik rule. Only in the capital of Tallinn had the anti-Bolshevik forces managed to maintain a precarious foothold.

Though occupying the capital, these forces were not strictly Estonian at all. They consisted of a German-trained regiment of German-Balts, and a unit formed of local "White" Russians. The only Estonians among them were the same group of Right-Wing politicians who had been so sharply repudiated by the population of Tallinn at the end of 1917. Under the protection of the German-Balt and "White Russian" units, they had established themselves as an anti-Bolshevik Estonian Government, under the leadership of Constantin Päts. Though not actually established by the Germans themselves, this Päts Government was a direct successor to the German occupation administration.

Before evacuating the capital, the German, civil administrator, Winnig, signed an agreement at Riga on November 19th subsidising the Päts Government to the extent of one million roubles, and handing over to them considerable quantities of arms which the Germans had captured from the Russians.

Though supported in this way by the Germans, the Päts Government cannot have had very much support among the Estonian population; it claimed no authority at all outside the capital, and its position inside the capital can be judged by the fact that 60-70 per cent of the local population supported the Bolsheviks, according to Baron Wrangel, the official historian of the Estonian German-Balt unit.<sup>(2)</sup>

### **Appeal to Mannerheim**

Before the arrival of Admiral Sinclair's expedition, the Päts Government had made several attempts to gain more military support, to replace that of the demoralised German forces. Being unable to obtain any Estonian recruits, it appealed to General Mannerheim of Finland (November 28th). Mannerheim was able to spare a considerable number of Finns and some field guns, and these were hastily shipped across the Gulf of Finland to beleaguered Tallinn.

A week later (December 6th) Päts was able to supplement the Finnish support by arranging a pact of mutual aid against Bolshevism with General Rodzianko (later placed by General Yudenich), who commanded the "North Russian Corps," a body of Tsarist Russian troops which had been assembled some months earlier under German patronage.

These were the forces that Admiral Sinclair found when he arrived at Tallinn on December 12th. Practically none of them were Estonians, and the greater part of them (the German-Balts and the North Russian Corps) always had been and still were openly hostile to the whole idea of Estonian independence.

### **Admiral Sinclair's Role**

Sinclair immediately took command of the situation, and set to work with great energy to strengthen the military position of the anti-Bolshevik forces.

### **British Intervention**

His first step was to hand over to the Pääts Government two Soviet Russian warships which he had seized in the Gulf of Finland. Next he organised a surprise British naval raid on Kronstadt harbour and succeeded in sinking two Russian battleships, thus ensuring that the Red fleet would be unable to come to the assistance of the Estonian Bolsheviks.

He then consolidated the earlier agreement for the assistance of the Finnish troops. Five thousand men and twenty guns were promised, but they would only come for money. Sinclair therefore arranged that the German-Balt banks in Tallinn should make the necessary payments. These were then backed up by substantial Allied loans (France alone contributing as much as 13 million francs.)<sup>(3)</sup>

At the same time Sinclair and the Pääts Government tried to recruit some Estonian troops. They had little success. Very few volunteers came forward, and when a few companies had been formed, several of them immediately mutinied and went over to their Bolshevik compatriots.<sup>(4)</sup>

Despite these setbacks, Sinclair felt strong enough to attack in January, 1919, and within a very short time his forces had broken out of Tallinn and succeeded in occupying the whole of Estonia. The speedy success of the campaign showed up the military weakness of the Estonian Bolsheviks. Their hastily formed workers' guards and peasant units were no match for the trained Finnish and North Russian regiments, and they were totally without any naval forces with which to oppose the British warships. Moreover they obtained very little assistance from Soviet Russia.

On December 24th, 1918, the Moscow Government had recognised the Estonian Soviet Government, and certain units of the Red Army were sent from Petrograd to help them against Sinclair. But, from the evidence of anti-Bolshevik witnesses, it appears that almost all these Red Army units consisted of Estonian refugees who had fled to Russia when their country had originally been occupied by the Germans, and that there were not a great number of Russians among them.<sup>(5)</sup>

Even after the Bolshevik forces had been decisively defeated in the field, the internal political position of the Pääts Government continued to be uncertain, and Bolshevik and near-Bolshevik revolts continued to break out.

In the autumn of 1919 some of the remaining loyal Estonian units mutinied<sup>(6)</sup> and, more or less simultaneously, a peasant revolt against the German-Balt landlords broke out in/the island of Saaremaa.<sup>(7)</sup> Both these were fairly easily suppressed by armed force.

Having finally gained the upper hand, the Pääts Government was naturally anxious to regularise its international status as quickly as possible, and to secure diplomatic recognition of Estonia as a properly established independent State.

For this purpose one of the first necessities was a peace treaty and frontier settlement with

Soviet Russia. On their side the Russian leaders were anxious to negotiate such a treaty. They were too weak militarily to be able to reverse the results of the Sinclair campaign, and they saw that the local working-class and peasant organisations were too cowed to be able to re-establish their Estonian Soviet Republic. They therefore welcomed the overtures of the Pääts Government.

However, the Allies appear to have been strongly opposed to any recognition of Estonian independence by Moscow. When the first overtures were made in April, 1919, the Allies had reacted very sharply, and additional armed assistance had been sent in order to keep the Pääts government in the anti-Bolshevik front.<sup>(8)</sup>

When more definite steps were taken by the Pääts Government in the autumn of 1919, the Allies actually threatened a food blockade unless negotiations were suspended.

This attitude seems to indicate that the Allied Governments regarded the fight against Bolshevism as their main aim, with the fight for Baltic independence as a purely incidental consideration.<sup>(9)</sup>

### **The “North Russian Corps”**

This is confirmed by the Allied attitude to General Yudenich’s “North Russian Corps.”

While the Allies were threatening the Pääts Government, they were building up and equipping this “North Russian Corps” for the grand assault on Petrograd.

Though this force was stationed on Estonian soil, and, in its earlier stages, received supplies and assistance from Pääts,<sup>(10)</sup> Yudenich and his Tsarist officers made no secret of the fact that after occupying Petrograd they would immediately suppress the Estonians’ “potato republic,” and incorporate all the Baltic territory in a restored Tsarist Imperial Russia “One and Indivisible.”

The precise extent to which this Great Russian attitude was shared by the Allied Governments must remain a matter of conjecture, and it is certainly true that the British Government was never quite so favourably to it as was the French. But there is no doubt that all the Allies gave full military support to General Yudenich, in the full knowledge that his victory would have meant the end of any independent Baltic States.

‘Moreover, there is evidence that some British leaders (for example, General Radcliffe, Director of Military Operations) readily accepted Yudenich’s standpoint as being in line with British Government policy, and regarded Baltic independence as a fiction.’<sup>(11)</sup>

However, Yudenich’s plans came to nothing, for he was defeated by the Red Army in November, 1919, and his forces were thrown back into Estonia in disorder. This emboldened the Pääts Government to defy the Allies and to institute formal peace negotiations with Moscow.

With Yudenich defeated, the Allies were no longer able to bring military forces to bear against Pääts, but they continued to oppose and obstruct the negotiations.<sup>(12)</sup> Nevertheless, these were completed surprisingly quickly, and in February, 1920, Soviet Russia signed a Treaty recognising the Pääts Government.

Russia was the first country to grant de jure recognition. The Allies did not follow suit till considerably later. Throughout 1920 there was still hope that Soviet Russia would be defeated and the Tsarist Empire restored, and, it seems probable that recognition was delayed so long as

this hope remained.

Mr. Walter Lippmann has recently reminded us that, even when finally decided on, recognition was given “reluctantly and with the belief that it was provisional,” and he quotes the U.S. High Commissioner for the Baltic Provinces, Evan Young, as saying at that time that it was “entirely possible, even probable,” that the three States might be reabsorbed into Russia. (*U.S. Foreign Policy*” p. 87 n.)

It seems clear from this that the Allies were only interested in Baltic independence if this meant independence from a Bolshevik Russia.

No objection would have been raised to reabsorption into a restored Tsarist Russia.

### **Latvia**

When the Russian revolution broke out, almost the whole of Latvia was already occupied by the Germans, and they completed the occupation of the remainder of the country in February, 1918.

There is not much direct evidence as to events under the German occupation, but it is fairly clear, even from German sources, that there was widespread underground opposition, led by the working-class organisations. An indication of their strength is that even in Latgale—the least revolutionary province—the landowners appear to have anticipated the withdrawal of the German army of occupation with the greatest apprehension.

A measure of this apprehension was the fact that, in 1918, the Polish landlords, who predominated in Latgale, joined with their German-Balt counterparts in the rest of Latvia in sending an appeal to the Kaiser to annex the whole of Latvia to the Prussian Crown.

As a British commentator remarked at the time, among these Polish nobles,

“the desire to retain their lands was a far stronger motive than their antipathy to Germany.” (*The Round Table*,” Dec., 1918, p. 52.)

The collapse of the German Empire in November, 1918, put a sudden end to all these hopes, and faced the German-Balt and Polish landowners, as well as the few small Latvian capitalists in Riga, with the certainty of a thorough-going Red Revolution backed by practically the whole population.<sup>(13)</sup> As in Estonia they were saved from this by the Allies.

Whereas in Estonia the fighting was mainly carried out by the British Navy together with Finnish and “White” Russian land forces, in Latvia it was possible to make much greater use of the German Army.

It is true that here, too, many of the German soldiers were completely demoralised and whole units were defying the Armistice instructions by withdrawing home to Germany. But at the same time, other German soldiers—and in particular the junior officers—were tempted to remain in the Baltic as a result of prospects of land-settlement held out to them.

During the occupation, the German Government had worked out plans for large-scale land-settlement of German soldiers in Latvia, and when the collapse came in November, 1918, they made hasty last-minute attempts to put these plans into effect.

### **Dr. Ulmanis and the Germans**

For this purpose they made use of a small group of Latvian politicians headed by Dr. Ulmanis. All English and American books on the origins of the Baltic States refer to Ulmanis and his group as if they were the recognised leaders of the Latvian people, and the main representatives of a movement for national liberation. Such an estimate bears very little relation to the facts.

The U.S. Senate Mission, already quoted, reported that this group “had no real mandate from the people, could not possibly have been upheld by a popular election, and entirely lacked the support of large elements of the community.

At the time of the Armistice it seems, in fact, to have been little more than a cloak for the continuance of the aims of German imperialism in Latvia, for within a few days of the Armistice it signed a pact<sup>(14)</sup> with the German High Command, providing that all German soldiers who wished to remain in the Baltic should be granted the right to acquire Latvian citizenship, and should be granted a plot of land to colonise.

In addition the German Army was to act as a local police force to hold down the Bolshevik workers and peasants. In return for this pact the Ulmanis group was recognised by the Germans as the “Independent Government of Latvia.”

How far this Pact differed from the desires of the Latvian people can be seen from a further quotation from the U.S. Senate Mission, which reported that

“The dominant passion politically of the Lett is hatred of the Baltic-German landholder whom he regards as the personification of feudal reaction and heartless tyranny. Next to the Balt, his aversion runs to the Reichsdeutsch or German-born German, whom he believes, not without reason, to be in league with the Balts for the purpose of exploiting Latvia and maintaining in the country indefinitely the regime of the Baltic landholder, even fortifying it perhaps with a widespread system of colonisation, which will prolong the servitude of the Letts under harder terms than ever.”

### **A Remarkable Conference**

It was precisely this colonisation that the Ulmanis Pact was preparing.

During the negotiations for the Pact a British Naval Mission arrived at Riga, on December 18th. As soon as the Mission arrived, it set about the task of organising the German Army as an effective army of occupation.

Plans for this were worked out at a remarkable conference that took place on December 23rd on a British warship lying in Riga Harbour.<sup>(15)</sup> (It is interesting that the chief German civilian representative was August Winnig, later to become a leading “theoretician” of the Nazi Party.)

At this conference the British representatives ordered the German troops to retain their positions, refused to allow them to evacuate certain railways in the area round Riga, and arranged for them to be used as a police force under the supervision of British officers.

What this meant for the Latvian population can be judged from the statement of a strongly anti-Bolshevik American writer who says that:

“The Baltic Army of Von der Goltz (the German commander), deliberately retained in the western part of Courland under the terms of the armistice as a bulwark against

Bolshevism, harried the native population by acts of brigandage, relentless requisitions, persistent searches and confiscations, and indiscriminate assassinations of the Letts on mere suspicion.... By an inexplicable idiosyncrasy of the Allied Powers, troops which were the equals of the occupying forces in Belgium in destructive power were left as the guardians of the Letts in the Baltic region.” (*M. W. Graham, “New Governments in Eastern Europe,”* p. 331.)

At the same time as organising the German troops, the British Mission tried to recruit some Latvian forces to support the Ulmanis Government. But these efforts proved even more disastrous than in Estonia.

As the German official version states, “These Latvians were not chosen with sufficient care,” and on December 30th,

“two companies rebelled and had to be suppressed by the Germans with the help of the English warships outside Riga.”<sup>(16)</sup>

These warships bombarded the barracks where the mutinous troops were housed, and also shelled the working-class districts of the port.

Though this Anglo-German military co-operation was temporarily successful in Riga itself, it could not prevent revolt breaking out throughout the rest of the country. Rebellion flared up throughout Latvia, and at the same time Riga was attacked from the north by two Latvian brigades of the Red Army recruited partly from soldiers of the old Latvian Rifle Regiments and partly from among refugees who had been driven from Latvia by the Germans in 1917.

In face of this attack, the German troops in Riga wavered and had to be withdrawn. By January 3rd Riga was completely in the hands of the Bolsheviks, who immediately proclaimed a Latvian Soviet Republic.

This occupation of Riga by the Red Army is often described as if it were a Russian occupation. This is not so. General von der Goltz, the German commander, admits that almost all the Red troops who drove him out of Riga were Latvians and not Russians.<sup>(17)</sup>

Moreover it is significant that many anti-Bolshevik writers at that time accused the Moscow leaders of making special use of regular Latvian troops to form crack troops of the Red Army, and there were certainly many occasions on which Latvian regiments of the Red Army, taken over from the Tsarist army, are mentioned as fighting on the other intervention fronts.

Whatever the precise composition of the troops which drove the Germans out of Riga, there can be no doubt at all from reading the German sources that they were welcomed as liberators.

As already stated, the majority of the population of Riga were Red already,<sup>(18)</sup> and even those sections which were not were strongly anti-German.

### **Reliance on German Troops**

After withdrawing from Riga, the German forces, together with the British Mission and the Ulmanis Government, established themselves at the port of Libau, some fifty miles down the coast to the south. Despite the difficulties of the situation after the loss of the capital, the British Mission continued to organise the anti-Bolshevik forces for its recapture.

The most obvious difficulty was the lack of reliable troops. To remedy this deficiency, Rear-

Admiral Cowan—who led the British Mission—wired home asking for British, or French, or American troops; but Sir Henry Wilson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, replied that troops were needed so badly in Ireland, Egypt and India that he could not possibly spare any.<sup>(19)</sup>

The Admiral, therefore, had to rely almost exclusively on German troops. These were not too reliable, and shortly after the fall of Riga the German Command in Libau had to appeal to the Admiral to use the British Fleet to suppress a revolt that had broken out in the German garrison.<sup>(20)</sup>

Any hope of using Latvian troops seems to have been completely out of the question. The Ulmanis Government had practically no troops behind it, and its incapacity to recruit any can be judged from the fact that, while at Libau, it was unable to establish itself on land, and had to set up its headquarters in a cabin on an old ship in the harbour.<sup>(21)</sup> Moreover, shortly after the evacuation of Riga, a series of revolts broke out among the local Latvian population in Libau. They had to be suppressed by the German troops.<sup>(22)</sup>

All these symptoms made it clear that the reoccupation of Riga and the suppression of Latvian Bolshevism would be impossible without the importation of large numbers of additional troops. It was, therefore, arranged that unreliable German troops should be sent back to Germany, and that they should be replaced by more suitable types.

, Throughout the spring of 1919 appeals for volunteers were made in Germany, and the old promises of land-settlement were revived once more. The men who answered this appeal in thousands were the very worst elements in German society, just those sections which later proved to be the breeding-grounds of Nazism. Unemployed Junker officers, demoralised ultra-nationalist Prussian students, and a whole band of mercenaries, adventurers, and professional strong-arm-men of all sorts flocked to the Baltic. (Among them were Schlageter, the Nazi Rhineland dynamiter; Volck, convicted in 1930 of the Nazi Holstein bomb outrages; and Wagener, sometime Nazi Minister of Economics.)

Most of these men arrived in little groups under their own self-appointed leaders, and these, together with those who arrived singly, were formed into a so-called “Iron Division” under a German, Major Rischoff.

In addition, whole units of the regular German Army arrived, such as the 1st Guards Reserve Division, and various formations from Holstein and Lower Saxony, until finally something like 35,000 German troops had assembled.<sup>(23)</sup>

It must be noted that all these troops arrived with the full knowledge of the Allies,<sup>(24)</sup> and that a good proportion of them landed at Libau in German troopships, while British warships were lying in the harbour.

As General Denikin has said:

“A whole Army Corps was formed with the approval of the Entente.”<sup>(25)</sup>

When at one stage the Social-Democratic Government in Berlin wanted to recall these troops, the Allies refused to allow this and ordered them to remain.<sup>(26)</sup>

What the arrival of these forces in Latvia meant to the local population can be learnt by reading the numerous volumes of semi-literate but self-satisfied memoirs written up later by

some of the more picturesque ruffians among the leaders of these troops.<sup>(27)</sup> All of them contain nauseating recitals of “adventures” with local peasant-girls, beating up of recalcitrant villagers, shooting of Red prisoners, etc., interspersed with tales of sordid political and mercenary intrigue.

### **Riga Reoccupied**

By the beginning of May, 1919, enough German troops had been assembled to launch an attack on Red Riga. The German contingents were assisted by a small contingent of White Russians, by the so-called “Baltic Militia” of 2,000 German-Balts under German officers, and a few hundred Latvians under a Colonel Kolpak.

The attack on Riga from Libau was carried out simultaneously with a double invasion of the rest of Red Latvia by the “Estonian Army” (we have already explained its Finnish-German-Balt-White Russian composition) from the north, and by a Polish Army under General Rvdz-Snigly which had pushed into Latgale from the south after having seized Vilna from the Lithuanians.

Advanced elements of these two armies met at Jakobstadt in the east of Latvia. At about the same time the Libau forces marched on and occupied Riga on May 22nd. 1919.

The occupation was followed by a massacre of local Bolsheviks in which something like 3,000 people were killed. The German brutalities were so bad that Ulmanis, who entered the city with the Germans, appealed to the French to curb the German troops, and even the German commander, von der Goltz, admits looting and outrages.<sup>(28)</sup>

Thus Latvia was recaptured from the Bolsheviks by a force consisting of Germans, Balts, Finns, White Russians, and Poles, with the inclusion of only a few hundred Latvians.

Once Riga had been occupied, the Allies did everything they could to establish Ulmanis and his group in power. Col. Tallents, on behalf of the British Mission, insisted on various changes in the composition of the Ulmanis Cabinet to suit Allied requirements,<sup>(29)</sup> while the American Relief Organisation rushed food supplies to Riga, thus ending the close blockade that had been maintained by the Allied navies while the Bolsheviks held the city.<sup>(30)</sup>

Despite this assistance, the Ulmanis group was apparently not yet strong enough to stand on its own feet, for Col. Tallents arranged, after the capture of Riga, that part of the City should be policed not by Latvians but by the German-Balts under Major Fletcher, their German leader. This is all the more extraordinary in that Col. Tallents was fully aware that it was the German-Balts who had led the terror against the civilian population immediately after the occupation of Riga.<sup>(31)</sup>

Though the Allies continued to make use of the German-Balts in this way, they had no further use for the German troops proper, though certain small sections among the Allied leaders—particularly in America—seem to have hoped that they could be used to crush not only Baltic Bolshevism but Russian Bolshevism as well.

Orders were given that the Germans should withdraw, and the relative ease with which this evacuation was accomplished indicates the extent to which the earlier German operations in the Baltic had been dependent on Allied goodwill.<sup>(32)</sup>

The first steps were taken by Col. Tallents, who threatened that if the Germans did not withdraw he would blockade Riga. Secondly, the Berlin Government was now ordered by the

Allied Supreme Command to start transporting troops homeward at once.

### **Avalov-Bermondts Adventure**

Though the majority of the regular German units were evacuated fairly rapidly, some difficulty was caused when considerable numbers of von der Goltz's officers, instead of going back to Germany, threw in their lot with the so-called "West Russian Force." This was a varied collection of mercenary troops under the leadership of a bogus Russian "White" adventurer who called himself Colonel Prince Avalov-Bermondts. His force occupied an area on the Latvian-Lithuanian border, and actually launched an attack towards Riga in October, 1919; but most of its time was spent in undertaking punitive expeditions against the local population.

Bermondts himself made strenuous efforts to obtain Allied backing for a large-scale offensive against Soviet Russia, but though he got many expressions of sympathy, the only tangible success he could claim was that J. P. Morgan, the American banker, negotiated a treaty with him by which he was to be financed in return for lucrative monopoly concessions to be made available when Russia had been reconquered.<sup>(33)</sup>

Finally, however, his military actions became so irresponsible that the Allies had to send a special commissioner to check his depredations and to arrange for the transfer of his troops back to Germany. The French General Niessel was entrusted with this mission, and finally arranged for complete evacuation by December, 1919.

Another difficulty facing the Allies was the disposal of the "Baltic Militia," the force of German-Balts that had helped to capture Riga. Though these men had all been trained by the Germans, were serving under German officers, and were openly German in their sympathies, they naturally did not wish to evacuate with the Germans, as this would have meant giving up their Baltic landed estates.

The British Mission solved the problem by simply transferring command of the Militia from the German Major Fletcher to the British Lieut.-Colonel Alexander, who continued to command the corps with its full complement of German-trained Balt officers.

The Militia continued with its task of suppressing local Bolshevik outbreaks in Eastern Latvia, and finally completed its work by the end of 1919.<sup>(34)</sup> Alexander was finally withdrawn in March, 1920.

As a result of these various diversions, it was not till the summer of 1920 that the Ulmanis Government could settle down to rule the country that had been conquered for it.

Almost its first step was to accept Soviet Russia's suggestion for a peace treaty. This was finally signed in August, 1920, and, as in the case of Estonia, it included the first de jure recognition of Latvian independence by a Great Power. For reasons which we have already explained in the case of Estonia, Allied recognition did not follow till January, 1921, and American recognition was delayed till 1922.

### **Lithuania**

The Germans occupied Lithuania as early as 1915. Their subsequent policy towards the country passed through two distinct phases. At first they patronised the Polish landowners, and

offered to include Lithuania in a Polish vassal State. They even brought in Polish troops from Western Poland to help in the administration. During this period of German rule, the Lithuanian peasants were jointly ruled by Germans and Poles, and no expression of Lithuanian nationalism was tolerated.

After the fall of Russian Tsardom in March, 1917, there was a change. The new Russian regime reversed the Tsarist attitude towards the Poles. It proclaimed support for Polish independence, and permitted the formation of Polish units in the Russian armies.

This naturally influenced the attitude of some of the Polish leaders, and made them noticeably less anti-Russian and less pro-German. This in its turn affected German policy, which quickly became less and less friendly to the Poles, and less hostile to the Lithuanians.

The previous repression of Lithuanian nationalism ceased, and the Germans even succeeded in recruiting a group of middle-class Lithuanian nationalist politicians to form a "National Council."

From the autumn of 1917 until the end of German rule in Lithuania there was close collaboration between the German authorities and this "National Council" headed by Antanas Smetona.

In opposition to the Smetona group and the Germans stood the Bolshevik Lithuanian Social-Democratic Party, whose surprisingly strong support among both the town workers and the peasants had already been shown in the 1905 uprising.

The exiled leader of this Party, Kapsukas, returned from America to Russia in 1917, and from there travelled illegally to Lithuania in 1918 in order to stir up the population against the Smetona Government and the German forces of occupation.

The main centre of the Bolsheviks was in the capital of Vilna, where they had support not only among the Lithuanians, but also among the Poles and Jews who formed the bulk of the city's working-class population.

### **First Lithuanian Republic**

As soon as the Armistice was signed the demoralised German troops started to withdraw, and the Smetona "National Council" withdrew with them. At the same time Kapsukas, the Bolshevik leader, proclaimed a Soviet Lithuanian Republic, and set up a Government in Vilna with the assistance of units of the Red Army which occupied the city on January 5th, 1919.

As in the case of Estonia and Latvia, the establishment of the Red Vilna Government is often described as if it had been the result of an invasion by Red Russian troops. Actually, as also in the other two countries, there were few Russians in these units.

The units which occupied Vilna consisted almost entirely of Lithuanians and Poles, who had fled to Russia when the Germans had originally occupied this area. The importance of the Polish element in these units is indicated by the fact that on December 30th, 1918, the Polish Foreign Minister sent a protest to Moscow complaining that Red Polish troops were marching on Vilna.

Furthermore, the Red Government set up by Kapsukas in Vilna contained no Russians, but consisted of Lithuanians, Poles, and Jews. Indeed, on March 4th the leader of the anti-Bolshevik Polish Socialist Party protested that the Vilna Red Government contained so many Poles that it

must be intended as a propaganda move to impress the Polish working-class.

This Red Government was not able to extend its rule over very much of the country, for the whole of the western areas remained in the hands of the German occupying forces and the “National Council” of Smetona. Nor were they able to retain power even in Vilna for very long, for they were soon attacked by Polish troops sent from Warsaw under the command of Pilsudski.

These Polish troops advanced rapidly and captured Vilna on April 19th, 1919. They immediately arrested over 2,000 Vilna Reds and suppressed the Red Lithuanian Government. During the Polish attack the Reds obtained no assistance from Smetona’s “National Council,” for the latter was well content to see its internal enemies suppressed, even though this might mean the annexation of the historic Lithuanian capital by the Poles.

Once the Red centre had been occupied, and all the Bolshevik leaders were either in prison or exile, the Smetona Government was able to strengthen its position in what was left of Lithuania, especially as they continued to be backed up by the German troops which, at Allied behest, remained in the Western part of the country till the end of 1919.

Despite the presence of German troops, the Smetona Government was not entirely secure, and as late as October, 1919, it had to appeal to the Germans for war material to suppress the Bolsheviks, who were still active.

After the Germans finally withdrew, the Smetona Government continued to rule in Kaunas, but Smetona had made himself so universally unpopular by his pro-German policy that he had to be dropped from the Government shortly afterwards.

It will be seen that events in Lithuania followed a rather different course from those in Estonia and Latvia. Whereas in the latter it was British and German intervention that played the decisive role in crushing the Bolsheviks, in Lithuania this role was performed by the Poles. There was a further difference. Whereas in Estonia and Latvia the facts prove without a shadow of doubt that the great majority of the population supported the local Bolsheviks right through the period of civil war and intervention, the same cannot be said with certainty about Lithuania.

### **Bolsheviks and Peasants**

In Vilna the Bolsheviks were undoubtedly in a majority, and probably also in Kaunas, but it is difficult to estimate the attitude of the peasants in the country districts, for these were mainly under the rule of the German army of occupation and the Smetona “National Council” throughout almost the whole of this period.

It seems probable that in the period immediately after the Armistice these peasants were strongly pro-Bolshevik. One would be led to expect this by the experience of the revolt of 1905, which showed that large sections of the peasants favoured the Bolshevik programme, and there is the further evidence that, when the Germans started withdrawing in 1918, Smetona did not even bother to try and rally support, but hastily withdrew with them.

On the other hand, there is overwhelming evidence that the Red Vilna Government, whatever the degree of its original support, quickly alienated many of its peasant supporters by some of its first legislative acts. In the first place, the large number of posts in the Red Cabinet which were occupied by Poles and Jews, though faithfully reflecting the national composition of the Vilna

city population, antagonised the national aspirations of the Lithuanian peasants who formed the overwhelming majority of the population of the countryside. In the second place the Vilna Bolsheviks lost much of the sympathy of the peasants by attempting to set up large-scale State farms, instead of dividing up and distributing the land as Lenin did in Russia in 1917.

As a result, village opinion began to swing against the Bolsheviks, and this swing was, of course, greatly accentuated when the latter were defeated and crushed by the Polish armies. This naturally involved a simultaneous swing towards Smetona—the only practicable alternative—and this was reflected in the fact that, unlike Pāts and Ulmanis, Smetona had some success in recruiting a number of anti-Bolshevik regiments.

Even despite these successes it must, however, be admitted that Smetona's final establishment as the recognised Government of rump-Lithuania, was due not to this support from certain peasant quarters, but rather to the fact that he received the consistent military backing of the German army of occupation, and that his internal political rivals—the Bolsheviks—were crushed by the Polish Army.

### **The Poles and Vilna**

There is one other special feature of the Lithuanian situation which differentiates it from the position in Estonia and Latvia; that is the widespread sympathy for Soviet Russia that was aroused by the subsequent developments of the Vilna dispute.

When the Red Army started pushing back the Polish armies in the Russo-Polish war of 1920, the Smetona Government in Lithuania thought it advisable to reinsure its position against possible difficulties by signing an agreement with Soviet Russia. The result was a Treaty signed in July, 1920, by which Russia was the first power to give de jure recognition to Lithuanian independence.

In the Treaty Russia recognised Lithuania's right to Vilna, even though it was at that time still occupied by the Poles. Very shortly after the signature of the Treaty the Red Army pushed the Poles westwards and, in the process, occupied Vilna. To everyone's surprise they immediately handed it over to the Lithuanians.

This unexpected action had, as it was no doubt intended to have, a profound effect on all Lithuanians, including those who had previously been most hostile to Soviet Russia, and earned for Russia a gratitude that was not weakened when, as a result of a surprise coup in October, 1920, Poland once more occupied the city by armed force and annexed it to the Polish State.

Before concluding the story of Lithuania, we should mention that in this case also the Allies were in no hurry to recognise independence. Recognition was delayed as long as it appeared possible that the whole country might be absorbed by Poland, and was only finally given in 1922, two years after it had been granted by Soviet Russia.

\* \* \* \*

From the study of these confused events it is possible to draw several conclusions.

Firstly, in Estonia and Latvia it is certain, and in Lithuania it is probable, that the overwhelming majority of the native population supported the Bolshevik programme in 1917-18,

and wished their countries to form Soviet Republic linked with Soviet Russia, Soviet Ukraine, etc.

In all three countries the local population established Soviet regimes as soon as the occupation forces withdrew. Had it not been for foreign intervention, all three States would have become Soviet Republics and constituent parts of the U.S.S.R.

Secondly, these regimes were established with practically no military assistance or intervention from Soviet Russian forces. Russian forces were too busy fighting in other parts of the old Russian Empire to be able to give much help to the Baltic Communists. Organised Red Army units fought in all three Baltic States, but these were composed almost exclusively of nationals of the countries concerned and not of Russians.

Thirdly, the small native “bourgeois” and merchant elements in the three Baltic countries, who finally established the independent governments in 1920, and who controlled the subsequent histories of the three States, played no independent part in the actual formation of these States, and were only able to gain control of them as a result of the military defeat of their opponents by British, German, Polish, Finnish, “White” Russian and German-Balt armed forces.

The Pääts Government relied throughout on foreign military support. The Ulmanis Government started as a German puppet creation and was later reconstructed by the Allies and taken over by them. Neither was able to gain local support, nor dared recruit many local troops until their countries had first been made safe for them by foreign arms.

In Lithuania, as we have just seen, the Smetona Government started as a pure Quisling Government of the type now found in Nazi-occupied countries. It was established by the Germans, it withdrew with the Germans, and it only managed to retain its position in rump-Lithuania because the capital of its country and the main centre of its political opponents was occupied by the Poles.

Fourthly, sympathy for the cause of Baltic independence cannot possibly have been sincere in the case of the majority of those whose military efforts alone established this independence. The Germans, German-Balts, and Russian “Whites”—in fact, all those who played the decisive military role—had always been avowed opponents of Baltic independence. Had they been successful in suppressing not only Baltic Communism but Russian Communism as well, they would have incorporated the Baltic States in a restored Russian Empire.

The Allied Governments, though not basically hostile to Baltic independence like the Germans or Russian “Whites,” gave active support to those who were quite indifferent to the question of independence so long as Bolshevism was destroyed.

If independence meant independence from a Soviet Russia they favoured it; if it meant independence (particularly a Soviet independence) from a Tsarist Russia they were against it.

This indifference—to use no stronger word—was indicated by the Secret Treaty signed between France and Britain on December 23rd, 1917 (six weeks after the Bolshevik Revolution), and which divided the Russian Empire into spheres of political and economic interest. Under this treaty France took South Russia including the Ukraine; Britain took West Russia including the Baltic States.<sup>(35)</sup> (Though this treaty is not referred to in any British source, there seems no reason to doubt the accuracy of the references to it in Russian “White” sources.)

Fifthly, even the Päts, Ulmanis, and Smetona groups themselves cannot claim to have been consistent supporters of Baltic independence. Even if we excuse their active collaboration with the worst enemies of Baltic independence and regard it as being the result of temporary military necessity, it must still be remembered that they had never waged an active struggle for independence from Russian rule in the days before the Revolution. A good indication of this is the fact that in all three cases the military leaders of these “bourgeois” groups (Laidoner in Estonia, Ballodis in Latvia, and Zukauskas in Lithuania) had been loyal servants of the Tsar and high-ranking officers in the Imperial Russian Army up till 1917. Like their foreign backers, they were chiefly interested in independence because this meant independence from Bolshevism.

One other conclusion is worth mentioning.

These Baltic events had a considerable influence on the growth of the Nazi movement, and on the survival of German militarism.

We have already referred to the number of Baltic adventurers who later became well-known Nazi terrorists. More important was the fact that the German Army managed to recover in the Baltic some of the prestige that it had lost in France.

It could and did boast that the Allies had not been able in their hour of need to do without the aid of German arms, and had been compelled to grant them the leading role in the battle of Europe against Bolshevism. In the long run this was perhaps the most serious consequence of all.<sup>(36)</sup>





*How the people of Moscow received the news of the acceptance of the Baltic States as Republics of the U.S.S.R. Pictures of Soviet and Baltic leaders are carried, and the slogan on the banner reads, "Warm brotherly greetings to the people and Government of Soviet Latvia."*



*Women of Tallinn, capital of Estonia, in their national dress, celebrate their new status as Soviet citizens.*



*Women from the textile-mills of Riga, capital of Latvia, carry red flags and sing Soviet songs on May Day. Their banner is inscribed "Hurrah for our victorious Motherland — the U.S.S.R."*



*Voting Day in Kaunas—at that time the capital of Lithuania. Citizens are deciding the future course of their country — as a Union Republic of the U.S.S.R.*



*A demonstration of Latvian workers acclaims the election results. They look forward to the new Soviet way of life.*

## CHAPTER III

### BETWEEN THE WARS, 1920—1940

We do not propose to describe the history of the Baltic territories between the two wars. During these twenty years the average British and American newspaper reader probably gained an impression of three small and inoffensive democratic republics, with fairly progressive social services and a prosperous peasantry on the Danish model. All we wish to do is to give enough evidence to show that such a picture of the three independent States is inaccurate.

To deal first with the question of economic prosperity. All three States were in a depressed condition throughout most of this period. We have already mentioned the extent to which the prosperity of their main ports, communications, and industries depended on the industrial and commercial- development of the Russian hinterland.

When this hinterland was cut off by the new frontiers, and hermetically sealed by the anti-Soviet policy of the three Governments, previously flourishing commercial centres such as Riga and Vilna withered and decayed. Vilna—isolated in a cul-de-sac after its seizure by Poland—disappeared as a commercial and railway centre, and instead became the most poverty-stricken and miserable city in all Poland. Over the border in rump-Lithuania the capital of Kaunas was not in much better position, and by 1940 30,000 of its 150,000 inhabitants were unemployed. Tallinn and Riga were unable to regain their former importance.

. A recent writer has summed up the position thus: “Here were great urban settlements whose reason for existence had largely disappeared; behind them trailed a network of rail communications to the east, so cut by frontiers as to assume an absurd and meaningless appearance.... The case of Riga was desperate. Her activities were reduced to a fraction of their former scope.” (*H. Wanklyn, “The Eastern Marchlands of Europe,”* pp. 87 and 104.)

The general industrial decay is best shown by the fact that employment in the Estonian iron and steel and textile industries declined from 36,000 in 1913 to less than half (17,000) in 1940, while in Latvia the total industrial output in 1940 was only 82 per cent of the 1913 level.

#### The Land Reforms

All this might have been easier to bear if it had been compensated by a flourishing agricultural development; but this possibility was excluded by the inadequacy of the land-reforms that followed the upheavals of 1917-20. The revolutionary ferment among the peasants and the example of Russia across the border made it essential for the three Governments to introduce some sort of agrarian reforms, but in all cases the measures that were carried through fell short of what was necessary either to satisfy the peasant or to ensure economic stability.

The most tangible result of the reforms was that the old German-Balt landlords were forced to share some of their land and privileges with a new class of native large farmers, though they still retained a substantial stake in the country till Soviet pressure compelled Hitler to remove them all to Germany in 1940.

The inadequacy of the reforms in Latvia can be seen from the fact that after 20 years of reform there were still 170,000 peasants with no land at all, 30,000 farmers were so poor that

they had no horse, and 20,000 had no cow. Latgale was particularly depressed, and in the five years prior to 1940 no less than 26,000 small Latgalian farms were sold up by their impoverished owners. Though the Lithuanian reforms were the most radical of the three, the result in the long run was not much better. By 1930 35 per cent of the plots distributed during the reforms had already been sold up for lack of credit, so that by 1940 one-quarter of all the peasants were landless once more.

Apart from the serious economic effects, this inadequacy of the Baltic land-reforms led to a continuance of the old social discords and inequalities that had plagued the three countries prior to their independence. Thus, a writer normally inclined to accept the official Government view had to admit, when describing the relations between the new class of rich native farmers and the agricultural labourers in Estonia, that “as employers of labour they were not anxious to pay high wages, and among the landless labourers they were becoming known as the Grey Barons, second in iniquity to the Black Barons or Balts.” (J. Hampden Jackson, “Estonia,” p. 123.) The same observation would have been equally true in Latvia or Lithuania.

Another serious effect of these economic conditions was the extent to which all three States were vulnerable to economic pressure from foreign trading interests. The effect of some of this trade on living standards inside the countries can be guessed from the fact that in Latvia in the 1930’s the local population had to pay three times as much for its butter as was charged to the exporting interests.

It is hardly open to question that these particular economic difficulties would not have arisen had the Baltic States remained attached to the U.S.S.R. The economic and agricultural development of the Soviets has been remarkably spread over the different territories that make up the Union, and has embraced both the old-established centres such as the Moscow Region and Donbas, and new areas such as the Urals and Siberia.

There is no reason to suppose that if the Baltic States had formed part of the Union, they alone would not have shared in its phenomenal industrial and agricultural development. Certainly, such incorporation would have eliminated that economic vulnerability of the Baltic States to which we have just referred. This was well brought out in an article in the London *Economist* at the time of the incorporation into the U.S.S.R. in 1940, which stated that “the foreign trade... will now be controlled by the central Soviet authorities... a much more difficult client... than the small Baltic States which had to trade under threats of political pressure.” (June 27th, 1940.)

The foregoing facts are not intended to give a complete—or even a balanced—picture of the economic condition of the Baltic States during the years of independence, but merely to show that, as concerned both industry and agriculture, they were faced with severe economic depression, and that this depression would hardly have occurred had they not been separated from their natural Russian economic hinterland.

### **Social Unrest**

Inevitably these economic difficulties gave rise to political and social difficulties. Throughout the greater part of the twenty years’ independence all three States were subject to a

succession of political upheavals which belie the usual picture of three stable and balanced social systems. These upheavals were particularly significant when it is remembered that the establishment of the Päts, Ulmanis, and Smetona regimes had originally entailed the physical extermination of practically all the opposition leaders of 1917-20, and the decimation and illegalisation of all the Left-Wing political parties and trade unions.

Though all three Governments established parliamentary systems in 1920, each contained certain decisive limitations of democratic rights, so that the authors of the Royal Institute of International Affairs booklet on the Baltic States felt obliged to write in 1938 that “it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that democratic institutions, as operated during a period of parliamentary government lasting from 1922 to 1926 in Lithuania, and from 1920 to 1934 in Latvia and Estonia, never functioned properly, from the time of their inception until their abrogation.”

Despite these limitations on democracy, and despite the loss of almost all their experienced leaders, the working-class organisations made a quick recovery after 1920 in all three States. In Estonia the Government felt obliged to take drastic measures against them as early as 1922. In that year the Communist leader Kingisepp, who had returned from exile in Russia, was arrested and immediately shot without trial.

### **The 1924 Uprising**

Two years later, in November, 1924, 149 leading Communists were arrested and put on trial for treason, and during the trial one of the accused, who was an M.P. and President of the Trade Union Congress, was court-martialled and shot for “contempt of court.” This act provoked an uprising among the workers of Tallinn, most of whom were still under Bolshevik influence. This uprising in its turn was put down with great severity. Both the army and the police were used to crush the revolt, and-as a result of it about 500 workers were arrested and sentenced, after a mass trial, to very long terms of imprisonment; in fact, a number of them were still in prison when the Russian troops marched in 16 years later. (Both the prejudiced character of the trial and the bad conditions in the prisons were described at the time in a letter to the British Press by Miss Susan Lawrence, who was present as an eyewitness.)

In addition to the hundreds of insurgents who were imprisoned, an additional 300 were shot out of hand. A note on this execution is given by a British traveller, a Roman Catholic, who visited Estonia in 1939. He writes: “Humour up in those Baltic States near the frontier struck me as being a scrap on the crude side. There is a bit of a mound in one of their towns about which they will tell you a tale. How there was an attempt at a Bolshevist rising, and how they caught the rioters and their suspect friends, and just drove them at the point of the revolver across the length of a wall carefully spraying that wall with machine-gun fire. Hence the heap, which was earth thrown on the result. But the official way of putting it was that the rising was promptly and firmly repressed.” (J. Gibbons, *“Keepers of the Baltic Gates,”* pp. 164-5.)

After repression on this scale, the Päts regime met with little further public opposition, but, even so, it felt it advisable to strengthen its position by the abolition of democratic forms and the establishment of a Fascist constitution in 1934. It is clear, therefore, that there can be very little

talk of democracy so far as independent Estonia was concerned.

The position in Latvia was not dissimilar. Here, also, severe repressive measures were taken whenever there was the least sign of a revival of the Communist agitation of 1917-20. For example, in 1928 it was reported that one-third of the Latvian Communist Party were in prison, and in 1933 seven M.P.s belonging to a so-called “Workers’ Group” were imprisoned on the grounds that they were crypto-Communists.

Finally, as in Estonia, parliamentary government was completely abolished in 1934 and replaced by a Fascist regime. As in Estonia, the change to Fascism was not the work of a small group of extremists, but the deliberate policy of the group of politicians which had been in power ever since 1920. In Latvia the full Fascist regime was partially modified in 1939, but dictatorial powers were still retained by the Minister of the Interior under a special “Law for the Defence of the State.”

### **Upheavals in Lithuania**

In Lithuania politics were even more unstable than in Estonia and Latvia. Despite the repression of all the Left-Wing parties and organisations in 1917-20, a revolutionary “Workers’ Group” headed the polls in all the main towns during elections in 1922, but within a few months all its deputies had been arrested and imprisoned. Similarly in 1926, when a Left-Wing Government came to power, it was soon overthrown by an Army coup which arrested the members of the Cabinet and forced the President to accept a Government led by Smetona, whose unpopularity had kept him out of public life since 1920.

Immediately after this *coup d’état* Smetona’s police arrested and executed four Communist leaders, and within less than a year 800 workers had been imprisoned for “Communist activities.” Two years later Smetona amended the Constitution so as to give the President almost dictatorial powers. The cumulative effect of these measures justified a British observer in writing in 1940 that “the country had existed only 20 years, but it had already the air of the Ancien Regime.” (*H. Foster Anderson, “Borderline Russia”* p. 154.)

By these various repressive measures Smetona succeeded in keeping the opposition within bounds, but during the five years immediately preceding the Soviet incorporation there were many signs that the revolutionary temper of the town workers and the agricultural labourers was rising once more. In 1935 and again in 1936 peasant revolts against the Government broke out in the Suwalki district, and in June, 1936, a general strike was declared by the labour movement of Kaunas, the capital.

Before the strike could be mastered, the Government had to declare a state of siege and use troops. (It is perhaps significant that the Chief of Staff at this time was General Kubiliunas, now the Germans’ main quisling in Lithuania.) When the Red Army entered Lithuania in 1940 there were said to be over 1,000 political prisoners in the prisons—a very large number for such a small country.

In view of the evidence in the preceding pages, it must be admitted that none of the three Baltic States were genuine democracies at any time during their 20 years’ independence. During the first decade of independence they were only able to retain democratic forms by providing

special clauses in their Constitutions involving serious infringements on full democratic liberty, while during the second decade Lithuania moved more and more towards totalitarian forms, while both Estonia and Latvia introduced open Fascist regimes.

Throughout the whole period in all three States the Communist movement was subject to extreme repressive measures; anybody attempting to spread Communist views, or taking up working-class issues in an aggressive spirit was in danger of immediate suppression, and its leaders were almost certain to be imprisoned and possibly shot. In view of the strength of the Communist movement in 1917-1920, this repression was equivalent to the permanent disenfranchisement of a substantial part of the population. It can be said that only by such repression and disenfranchisement was it possible for the three governing regimes to maintain their rule throughout the 20 years of independence.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOVIET INCORPORATION

The attitude of the three Baltic populations to the Soviet incorporation in 1940 has been the subject of much controversy.

The attitude of the Communist sections of the populations was not, of course, in doubt. The active members of the small illegal Communist Parties had been campaigning for such an objective for 20 years. They, and the not inconsiderable numbers of their less active sympathisers, regarded union with Socialist Russia as a great victory for their cause.

As to the rest of the population, they had for 20 years been under the influence of intensive and almost unopposed official propaganda against both Russia and Communism (in Lithuania, though always anti-Communist, this official propaganda was not always so outspokenly anti-Russian). This propaganda cannot have been without effect, particularly among the peasants.

Nevertheless, it is important not to overrate its influence. Experience in Italy shows how astonishingly superficial and deceptive is the long-term influence of a great deal of such exclusive State-controlled propaganda, and how persistent can be the allegiance, in particular of organised industrial workers, to Socialist doctrines denied expression for nearly a generation. During times of relative stability the older suppressed beliefs seem to be—and perhaps actually are—discarded and forgotten; but with the return of national and social crisis the old slogans reappear and begin once more to evoke the original reactions and enthusiasms. For this reason alone we should be justified in assuming that the prospect of union with a Socialist Russia in 1940 must have awakened a favourable response among large sections of the working-class population and the agricultural labourers who remembered the great efforts they had made to achieve such union twenty years earlier.

It is doubtful if these revived enthusiasms and allegiances counted for very much outside the ranks of the organised working-class and the poorest peasants. The large class of small officials, the shopkeepers, and the professional classes under the influence of continuous anti-Soviet propaganda had undoubtedly become very suspicious of Russia. Their political standpoint was, however, sharply affected by the pressing considerations of military expediency.

**By 1940 it must have been evident to everyone in the Baltic that the only alternative to incorporation in the U.S.S.R. was occupation by Germany. No middle way was any longer possible.**

We have already referred to the century-old fear and hatred of German oppression, particularly among the Latvians, which was much stronger than any hatred of Russia. All these old fears and hatreds were naturally revived and intensified as a result of the rise of Hitler-Germany, with its Baltic experts such as Alfred Rosenberg, and its talk about the Baltic States forming part of the “historic German living-space.” Faced with this threat large sections who had no sympathy for the Soviet system as such, accepted union with Russia as very much the lesser of two evils.

By the time the actual incorporation took place this factor of military necessity had been reinforced by the impression made by the initial entry of Russian troops in 1939.

It is nowhere disputed that the extremely correct behaviour of the original Red Army garrison contingents did a great deal to swing middle-class Baltic opinion over to a position where they were reconciled to the idea of Soviet incorporation. In 1939 British and American opinion was naturally somewhat sceptical of reports about the excellent impression made by the Russian troops, but now that more is known about the extremely strict discipline in the Red Army and of the high quality of the officers' corps and technical equipment, it is evident that the Baltic middle-class must have been astonished and relieved to note the contrast between the Red Army and, on the one hand their recollections of Tsarist troops, and on the other hand the horrifying pictures of the Soviet barbarians that had been presented to them by successive Governments. Such a contrast must have reconciled large numbers of Baltic citizens to the advantages of union with Russia.

### **Twelve Months of Soviet Rule**

Under the influence of these factors, Baltic middle-class opinion became steadily more favourable to Russia during the period between the initial entry of Red Army units in 1939 and the first incorporation in 1940. Similar factors continued to operate during the twelve months of Soviet rule between the incorporation in the summer of 1940 and the German invasion and occupation in the summer of 1941, during this period the Moscow Government seems to have made considerable efforts to win the greatest possible support from all sections of Baltic opinion. Special efforts were made to promote economic and cultural collaboration. In industry large contracts were arranged with the Baltic timber, textile, sugar, cement, and engineering works, leading to a drastic reduction in Baltic unemployment.

In agriculture the large estates of the withdrawn German-Balts were distributed among the local peasants, tax-remittances were authorised, and fertilisers and tractors were sent in from Russia. No attempt was made to collectivise the farms. On the cultural side, a steady stream of lectures, concerts, delegations, exhibitions, conferences, etc., all emphasising the mutual advantages of intellectual cooperation, were arranged between Russian and Baltic savants, and exceptional budget allocations were made for general educational purposes.

The re-distribution of the land has given rise to the circulation of wildly exaggerated stories by anti-Soviet elements!

They are perhaps best answered by the following extract from an article in the *Times* (18.8.44) by their Moscow correspondent: Headed "Popular Support." it continues:—

"The number of persons adversely affected by land reform in Latvia amounted to about 2 per cent of the total population, and less than a fifth of the total landowners; in Estonia the figures were about 2.5 per cent and a fifth respectively. In each country the landowners whose individual holdings were increased by land reform far outnumbered those whose estates were reduced. In Lithuania only about 5,000 landowners had reason to complain, while the great majority of peasants had their holdings increased."

The evidence for these measures comes mainly from Soviet sources, but there is not much reason to doubt its validity. Russia's capacity to give such industrial, technical, and financial assistance is unquestioned, while the advisability of giving it was dictated by every political and,

in particular, by every military consideration; for the Kremlin knew that German invasion was imminent, and that the fate of Leningrad would probably depend on the amount of assistance or obstruction that the Red Army could expect from the Baltic populations.

In view of Russia's huge economic resources and her skill and experience in cultural propaganda, it is certain that these measures during the twelve months of Soviet rule had some substantial effect in converting to a pro-Soviet attitude many Baltic intellectuals and middle-class persons whose attitude had previously been neutral or hostile.

On the other hand, during these twelve months, the Soviet Baltic Governments took some sharp repressive measures against members of the old Governments, and deported a certain number of the deposed Cabinet Ministers and high Government officials and their families. Obviously such measures must have made these sections and their political sympathisers even more anti-Soviet than before.

Thus we can assume that the net result of the twelve months' Soviet rule was probably to make the wavering and uncertain sections (particularly the intellectuals) more favourable to the Soviets, but to make the small nucleus of anti-Soviet sections more anti-Soviet than ever. This conclusion is partially confirmed by evidence as to the reception given to the German troops during the invasion. In most towns they were able to find a small number of local people prepared to act as minor Quislings (all the major Quislings were chosen from the ranks of the old Government circles), but the great majority of the populations was actively hostile, and it was not long before the Germans were faced in the Baltic States with exactly the same sabotage and guerrilla activity as everywhere else in occupied Eastern Europe.

### **Hatred of the Germans**

The effect on the Baltic peoples of the three years of German occupation is not difficult to estimate. Overwhelming all else has been hatred of the Germans engendered by their brutalities and atrocities. Public opinion in Britain and America, as a result of effective publicity by the exiled Governments, is fully aware of the crimes perpetrated by the Germans in Poland, Norway, Belgium, France, etc.

Equal crimes have been committed in all three Baltic countries, but little has been heard of them, because in Great Britain no special Baltic publicity agencies exist, while in America those that do are run by diplomats appointed by the former Governments, who are naturally hostile to Soviet incorporation, and whose publicity is therefore more concerned with anti-Russian than with anti-German information.

As a result of these atrocities, the Germans will, as in every occupied country, be hated for the next decade by the Baltic peoples with an intensity that will far surpass their earlier historic hatred of the Germans and German-Balts. A like hatred will be directed against those Baltic nationals who have assisted the Germans.

Every English and American observer in France has been astonished at the deep-felt intensity of hatred and contempt that is felt by the French against the collaborationists—almost stronger than their hatred of the Germans themselves; and the same phenomenon will doubtless be observed all over Europe as liberation progresses.

In the Baltic States this is politically important, because almost all those who came forward to assist the Germans as quislings belonged to those circles which ruled the independent States from 1920 to 1940 and whose outlook was dominated by hatred of Russia. Their collaboration with the Germans must have completely discredited in the eyes of the general public the political standing of these circles and their traditional anti-Soviet propaganda. At the same time, the fact that the local Communists have been the leaders of the sabotage and guerrilla activities against the Germans, and have borne the main brunt of the German repression will greatly have increased their reputation.

### **The Attitude to Russia**

The obverse of this hatred for the Germans and their collaborators will inevitably be gratitude to the Red Army troops which finally save the Baltic peoples from German oppression\* particularly since some of these troops will undoubtedly consist of Baltic units.

A substantial number of units of all three countries have been formed in the Red Army. Latvian units were mentioned in the defence of Moscow and one division was made a "Guards" Division for its good work. It has been reported that there are twelve Latvian Generals in the Red Army. Estonian units were named during the capture of Velikye Luki, and the *Times* Moscow correspondent has reported (August 17, 1944) that the Soviet-Estonian forces are more powerful than any forces raised from 1920 to 1940. Lithuanian units fought during the battles for Kursk and Orel. The Soviet Press has reported that 500 Latvians, 1,000 Estonians and 900 Lithuanians have been awarded military decorations. The entry of such troops into their own towns on the heels of the retreating and destroying Germans will hardly have appeared like a foreign invasion and will be very different from the original entry of unknown Red Army units in 1940.

It seems certain that this gratitude to the Red Army will be accompanied by astonishment at the industrial and organisational efficiency that must lie behind its achievements. Faced with the overwhelming military evidence of the resources and efficiency of the U.S.S.R., such sections in the Baltic States as the technicians, scientists, professional men, shopkeepers, etc., can hardly avoid comparing the possibilities for large-scale industrial and technical development which exist in a unit of the size and economic power of the U.S.S.R. with the somewhat bleak economic future that would face the Baltic States in the post-war world if left to fend for themselves.

There will be disagreement as to the precise effect of each of the several considerations just set down, but there can be hardly any doubt that, when taken together, their cumulative effect will have been to produce in the Baltic States a steadily increasing support for union with the U.S.S.R. ever since 1940, both in the sense of more enthusiastic support from those already in its favour, and also in the sense of support from those hitherto neutral or antagonistic.

One other influence must be mentioned; that is the influence of the signature of the 20-years

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\* Compare the testimony of the Stockholm Correspondent of the *Daily Express*, who writes (January 3, 1944) that: "A great number of Estonians who were taken or went voluntarily to Russia, are already in Kingisepp ready to enter their country with the Russians. They are by no means all Communist or Leftist émigrés. Amongst them are many Liberals and even some Conservatives who were forcibly taken to Russia during the first Soviet occupation. These men have become reconciled to Russia, especially because of the regime of oppression and terror which the Germans established in their country."

Pact between Britain and Russia and the Teheran agreements. British influence, particularly among the commercial and governing classes, was the strongest outside influence in the Baltic States, particularly in Estonia and Latvia. In many cases just those sections who were most anti-Soviet were the most strongly under British influence. The British and American acceptance of and friendship with Russia, as codified at Teheran, must therefore have affected just these sections and helped to persuade them that their previous horror of Russia is now superfluous and obsolete. In every occupied country in Europe sympathy for Soviet Russia has enormously increased since 1940. It seems improbable that the Baltic States should be exceptions.

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If the considerations set out in this and the preceding chapter are valid, then there is no reason to fear that the continuance of the Baltic States as autonomous Soviet Republics within the U.S.S.R. runs counter to the desire of the Baltic peoples.

Firstly, union with a Socialist Russia was the aim desired by the great majority of all three Baltic populations in the decisive years of 1917-20, but frustrated by the intervention of foreign arms.

Secondly, economic depression throughout the twenty years of independence stood in marked contrast to the extraordinary economic and industrial development of the U.S.S.R.—a development which would presumably have embraced the Baltic States had they been successful in their efforts for union in 1917.

Thirdly, many factors operating since 1940 have all conspired to increase rather than decrease sympathy and friendship with Russia, and to spread an appreciation of the tremendous economic and cultural possibilities that lie before the various constituent republics of the U.S.S.R. in the post-war years.

One last point must be made. We have seen how in 1917-20 the Allied Governments, in their attempts to separate the Baltic States from Bolshevik Russia, were compelled to seek the co-operation of, and almost to become the prisoners of all the most sinister and reactionary forces in Europe, centred round German Imperialism. It seems quite certain that a renewed attempt at this time to obtain a similar separation would again lead to precisely the same effect and would play straight into the hands of all those who are anxious to destroy the possibility of a united Anglo-American and Russian policy in Europe.

Already the Germans themselves are making propaganda about the independent Baltic States being threatened by Soviet destruction, and anti-Soviet propagandists in Finland, Sweden, Spain, etc. have been harping on the need for a defence of Baltic independence. In these circumstances, any Anglo-American intervention in favour of the separation of the Baltic peoples from the U.S.S.R. would immediately bring comfort to these Fascist and Quisling forces, would split the unity of the Allied Nations, and would threaten to repeat the discreditable story of 1917-20 over again.

Everything possible must be done to avoid this. One of the first prerequisites is a proper understanding of the historical background of the Baltic problem. If this study helps towards such an understanding, then its objects will have been achieved.

## NOTES

- (1) *Darstellungen aus den Nachkriegskämpfen deutscher Truppen und Freikorps*. Reichskriegsministerium. Vol. I. "Die Rückführung des Ostheeres," 1936, p. 22. This is the first volume of the German official military history of the Baltic events, issued in three volumes.
- (2) *Geschichte des Baltenregiments. Das Deutschtum Estlands im Kampf gegen den Bolschewismus*, 1918-20. By Baron Wilhelm Wrangel. Reval. 1928, p. 37. This is the official history of the Estonian German-Balt unit. It should be compared with a strange article, *On the Shores of the Baltic*, "Atlantic Monthly," October, 1919, in which Colonel J. A. Gade, one of the official American representatives in Estonia, lavishes praise on the German-Balts for their political, social, and martial virtues.
- (3) "The Baltic banks of Reval (Tallinn) provided funds for hiring Finnish volunteers for this fight. The distinguished Esthonian military leader, Laidoner, had but few genuinely Esthonian volunteers to rely upon, but with a degree of courage that verged on rashness, the Baltic section under Colonel Weiss, together with the Finnish mercenaries, under the protection of the British fleet, saved the situation." *Self-Determination on the Baltic*, by Baron Meyendorff, in "The Historians' History of the World."
- (4) Wrangel, *op. cit.* pp. 4, 15, 17, 24, 32.
- (5) Wrangel, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-52.
- (6) "There is a strong Red element in the Esthonian army and the Esthonian populace. On several occasions detachments of Esthonian troops have assumed the Red cockade, and at least one lively mutiny in the Bolsheviki interest had to be suppressed last autumn. The people themselves are demoralised by the corruption known to exist in the Government, and disgusted at not being allowed to confiscate outright the property of former owners." *The Baltic States and the Bolsheviki*, by Sir John Pollock, in "The Nineteenth Century." March, 1920.
- (7) "The agrarian law was politically necessary. The Bolsheviki revolution had so stimulated the passion for land reform that the Esthonian Government had had to face a revolt of the peasants of Saaremaa." *Esthonia*, by J. Hampden Jackson, pp. 157-8.
- (8) "Incidentally such assistance would keep the Esthonian forces (of whose disinclination to continue the struggle there are persistent reports) in the field. The despatch of missions to the Baltic States is therefore highly desirable." Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, quoted in *The White Armies of Russia*, by George Stewart, 1933, p. 173.
- (9) This is clearly indicated by the terms of reference of the Niessel Commission that was sent to the Baltic by the Allies. "The task of the Commission will be to preserve the Baltic Provinces from Bolsheviki tyranny and anarchy." The full text of the official document setting out the terms of reference is given in *L'Evacuation des Pays Baltes par les Allemands*, by General A. Niessel, 1935, p. 31-2. Niessel also states that it was agreed that the Allies should take no steps in the Baltic without first consulting Admiral Kolchak, the White Russian leader, who

was an intransigent opponent of Baltic independence.

- (10) “The North Russian Corps” were “equipped and supported in every way by the Estonians.” Admiral Cowan, in his official report on his Baltic Mission. (*London Gazette*, 6th April, 1920. Fifth Supplement.)
- (11) Cf. Bolovin’s memorandum to Sazonov, giving an account of conversations in London, in which General Radcliffe agreed with him that Esthonian independence was “quite out of the question.” This document was published in 1920 by the “Hands Off Russia” Committee. Though it is not mentioned by any of the standard authorities, its authenticity has never been questioned Cf. also “The Times” (November 5th, 1919), supporting the Great-Russian views of Kolchak “They (the Baltic States) cannot stand by themselves absolutely independent and sovereign states.”
- (12) “In spite of warnings, even threats, addressed to them (the Estonians) by the French, they began negotiations with Soviet Russia on Oct. 5th, 1919.” “Encyclopaedia Britannica,” 13th Ed., Vol. XXXI., p. 419. Cf. also, “There is little doubt that Allied pressure has been exerted upon the Baltic States generally, and upon Estonia in particular, to induce them to continue the war against the Bolsheviks.” General Gough (who had previously led one of the Allied Missions in Estonia) in a letter to the London Press, January. 1920.
- (13) “The mass of the population (of Latvia) put their hope in the Bolshevik Party.” *L’Allemagne et le Baltikum*, by G. Gaillard, p. 69.
- (14) There were actually two separate agreements, one of Nov. 27th, the other of Dec. 29th. The full texts of both are printed in full in *L’Aventure Allemande en Lettonie*, by Lt.-Col. du Parquet (Head of the French Military Mission, 1926, pp. 55-58.
- (15) For a description of this Conference see *Darstellungen...*, Vol. I., p. 149. Cf. also *L’Allemagne et la Baltique Orientate*, 1915-19, by A. Tibal. Riga, 1932, p. 37.
- (16) *Darstellungen...* Vol. I., p. 151. The bombing British naval bombardment is mentioned in *Life and Letters of Lord Wester Wemyss*, by His Wife, 1935, p. 412.
- (17) *Meine Sendung in Finland und Baltikum*, by Gen. Graf Rudiger von der Goltz, 1920, pp. 153-4. Cf. also Meyendorff, op. cit. p. 214, and *The Outlaws*, by Ernst von Salomon (one of the German mercenaries in Latvia and later implicated in the murder of Rathenau), p. 61.
- (18) Freiherr Eugen von Engelhardt (*Des Ritt nach Riga*, 1938, p. 15) estimates that 80 per cent, of the population of Riga was Bolshevik.
- (19) See *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson. His Life and Diaries*, 1927, Vol. II., p. 183.
- (20) *Darstellungen....* Vol. II. *Der Feldzug im Baltikum bis zur zweiten Einnahme von Riga*, 1937, p. 3.
- (21) “The presence of British ships in Libau alone made it... possible for Ulmanis and his skeleton Government to shelter themselves in the ‘Saratov’ under the protection of British guns.” Tallents. *Op. cit.*, p. 406.
- (22) *Darstellungen...* Vol. I., p. 154.’

- (23) This is the estimate given by Col. du Parquet. *Op. cit.*, p. 116.
- (24) “The ultimate reason for our fighting in Courland was the terror of Bolshevism which possessed the West. We made no movement which was not sanctioned by the men whom Germany had acknowledged as her leaders. The Government did not issue a single order which was not seen and approved by the Allied Cabinets.” Von Salomon, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
- (25) *The White Army*, by Gen. Denikin, p. 320.
- (26) *Die Deutschen Freikorps, 1918-23*, by F. W. von Oertzen, 1936. p. 80.
- (27) Cf. *Von der Heimat Geachtet*, by O. Wagener, 1920; *Die Letzte Front—Geschichte der Eisernen Division im Baltikum*, by Major J. Bischoff, 1935; *Mit der Eisernen Division im Baltenland*, by F. J. H. R. Steinaecker, 1920; *Als Freikorpsführer im Baltikum*, by D. C. von Brandis, 1920.
- (28) The text of Ulmanis’ appeal, dated May 26th, 1919, is given in full in du Parquet, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-5. For von der Goltz’ admission see *Als Politischer General im Osten, 1918-19*, 1936, p. 124.
- (29) See Tallents, *op. cit.*, p. 342. Du Parquet (*op. cit.*, p. 119) speaks of the Ulmanis Cabinet being “imposed” by the Allies.
- (30) As soon as Riga had been captured, “The American Relief Administration came to the rescue with a train-load of flour and in a few days the U.S.S. ‘Lake Mary,’ with a cargo of food, escorted by the H.M.S. Vancouver, made her way through dangerous minefields into Riga harbour.” George Stewart, *op. cit.*, p. 216.
- (31) “There were bloody reprisals when the Landeswehr (i.e., the Militia) entered Riga, and a young Baltic baron of the Landeswehr, who reached Libau on June 2nd, told the French Mission that many women were being killed.... Some fifty or sixty people were being executed in the prison yard each morning.” Tallents, *op. cit.*, p. 309. On page 334, Tallents describes how he insisted that Major Fletcher, the German head of this Landeswehr, should be allowed to use his troops to police part of the city.
- (32) When Winnig, the German Commissioner, complained to Gen. Niessel that the Allies were fickle in their attitude towards the German troops, the latter replied; “The Allies demanded the retention of the German troops in the Baltic when they judged this to be suitable. Now they demand that they should withdraw; this is within their rights.” Niessel, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
- (33) Details about the Morgan loan are given in du Parquet, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
- (34) Even then, Bolshevism in Latvia continued to have numerous adherents. Cf. Duranty (*op. cit.*, p. 44), describing an interview with Col Ballodis, the military leader of Ulmanis’ troops; “He was no less outspoken about the remnants of Bolshevism in Latvia, which he said were being rapidly liquidated... in the Lettish army, but still existed amongst the civil population, especially the workers.” This was at the end of 1919.
- (35) This agreement is referred to by both the Tsarist Generals Denikin and Lukomsky in their memoirs.

<sup>(36)</sup> In addition to the books already referred to in preceding notes, the following sources were consulted concerning the facts related in this chapter:

P. M. Avaloff, *Im Kampf gegen die Bolscheviken*.

John Buchan (Ed.), *The Baltic and Caucasian States*. Chapters by W. F. Reddaway and S. Tallents.

W. H. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution*.

E. Gugelmeier, *Das Schwarze Jahr, 1917-18*.

E. J. Harrison, *Lithuania, 1918-28*.

J. Hertmanowicz, *Historical Outlines on Lithuania*.

H. Kruus, *Histoire de VEstonie*.

L. Léontin, *Les Armies des Pays Baltes*.

I. Meyer, *Das Jager Bataillon*.

A. Rahl, *New Masters of the Baltic*.

C. Rutter, *The New Baltic States*.

E. Sobolevich, *Les Etats Baltes et la Russie Soviétique*.

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