

ESTIMATION OF SECURITY THREATS AND ESTONIAN DEFENCE PLANNING IN THE 1930S

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This article aims to give an overview of the Estonian military planning in the 1930s and analyze the compatibility of the defence plans with the reality of the time. The influence of military-political relations on the defence planning is also examined. The author tries to find out how the Estonian General Staff foresaw possible military conflicts and who was considered the most plausible enemy. The article provides an overview of the principles of Estonian national defence, the main ideas of the defence plan, general structure of the Defence Forces, mobilization plan and border cover plans. The topic of military cooperation with other states, especially Latvia, Finland and Germany has also been addressed. Changes in strategic situation and military planning in 1939 have been studied separately. For the estimation of the Estonian military planning, comparisons with Latvian and Lithuanian defence and mobilization plans are made.

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

There is no academic study specifically dedicated to military planning in pre-war Estonia although the topic has been addressed in a few studies. In his doctoral dissertation examining the Estonian defence policy, Ago Pajur has given an overview of the main directions of state defence until the mid-1930s. He has also written a review about Estonian defence doctrine.¹ The Finnish military historian Jari Leskinen in his doctoral dissertation on the Finnish and Estonian secret military cooperation in 1930–1939 gives an in-depth overview about Estonian military planning and defence plans.² Leskinen also presents Estonia's principles

¹ **Pajur, A.** Eesti riigikaitsepoliitika aastail 1918–1934. (Uurimusi ja allikmaterjale Eesti sõja-ajaloost, 2.) Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, Tartu, 1999; **Pajur, A.** Eesti kaitsedoktriin. – In: Sõja ja rahu vahel, I. Eesti julgeolekupoliitika 1940. aastani. Toim E. Tarvel, T. Tannberg. S-Keskus, Tallinn, 2004, 154–157.

² **Leskinen, J.** Vaiettu Suomen silta. Suomen ja Viron salainen sotilaallinen yhteistoiminta Neuvostoliiton varalta vuosina 1930–1939. (Bibliotheca Historica, 20.) Suomen Historiallinen Seura, Helsinki, 1997.

concerning the second half of the 1930s about active defence. The Latvian researcher in exile Edgars Andersons in his article about the military situation of the Baltic countries expressed a number of erroneous views in discussing the Estonian Defence Forces and defence planning.³ Abundant interesting information related to military cooperation that had a definite impact on defence planning can also be found in other research works.⁴ What kind of impact the cooperation had on defence planning needs more in-depth research.

This article is based on the author's MA thesis written about the Estonian Defence Forces in 1939 in the History Department of the University of Tartu.⁵ Overview on the Estonian Defence Forces has been published in the first volume of the anthology *Sõja ja rahu vahel*. The same topic was dealt with in a conference presentation given in Kaunas in 2003 and a version of this article was published in the Latvian language.⁶

The study of the Estonian military planning is relatively complicated due to the fragmentary nature of sources. All the defence plans, border covering plans and other plans, secret operational correspondence (from the years 1932–1940) kept in the First (i.e. Operational) Department of the General Staff⁷ were handed over to the representatives of the Soviet Union's armed forces in the summer 1940. These documents are now probably stored in the State War Archives or in the Archives of the Defence Ministry of the Russian Federation. If the documents indeed exist, no researcher from Estonia has been permitted to see them.

Some interesting documents were destroyed before the Soviet occupation in 1940. In the Estonian State Archives (*Eesti Riigiarhiiv* – ERA), the stocks of the Armed Forces Staff have materials of the mobilization plan No 2 (from 1939), appendices of the defence plan of the Republic from 1928 and the defence plan of the 1st Division's Defence District from 1930. Earlier plans are in the stocks of the General Staff. Only border covering plans of the 3rd Division and the Harju Military District are available in the staffs of Army formations. The situation is

³ **Andersons, E.** The military situation in the Baltic States. – *Baltic Defence Review*, 2001, 6, 113–153.

⁴ See **Ilmjärv, M.** Hääletu alistumine. Eesti, Läti ja Leedu välispoliitilise orientatsiooni kujunemine ja iseseisvuse kaotus 1920. aastate keskpaigast anneksioonini. Argo, Tallinn, 2004; **Leskinen, J.** Vendade riigisaladus. Soome ja Eesti salajane sõjaline koostöö Nõukogude Liidu võimaliku rünnaku vastu aastatel 1918–1940. Sinisukk, Tallinn, 2000; **Pajur, A.** Sõjalised välissuhted ja koostöö välisriikidega. – In: *Sõja ja rahu vahel*, I. Eesti julgeolekupoliitika 1940. aastani. Toim E. Tarvel, T. Tannberg. S-Keskus, Tallinn, 2004, 188–192.

⁵ **Salo, U.** Eesti kaitseväge valmisolek sõjaks ja vastupanuvõimalused 1939. aastal. MA thesis. Manuscript in University of Tartu. Tartu, 2005.

⁶ **Salo, U.** Eesti sõjaline planeerimine, Eesti mobilisatsiooniplaan, Eesti kaitse üldised põhimõtted, kattekavad ja kaitsekava. – In: *Sõja ja rahu vahel*, I. Eesti julgeolekupoliitika 1940. aastani. Toim E. Tarvel, T. Tannberg. S-Keskus, Tallinn, 2004, 157–170, 211–217; **Salo, U.** Militārā plānošana Igaunijā 20. gadsimta trīsdesmitajos gados. (Latvijas Kara muzeja gadagrāmata, III.) Rīga, 2002, 78–107.

⁷ The General Staff of the Estonian Armed (Defence) Forces in 1929–1937 was officially named the Defence Forces Staff, 1937–1940 the Armed Forces Staff.

better as regards the Air-Defence, Navy and Naval Fortresses⁸ – the border covering plans of these services of the armed forces, mobilization plans and excerpts of the Republic's border covering plan from 1939 were preserved.⁹ Essential materials on defence planning and the organizational changes in the structure of the armed forces are in the stocks of the State Defence Council and in Johan Laidoner's personal collection.¹⁰ Useful information on defence planning can be found in the materials on military manoeuvres, staff exercises, field trips and work plans of the General Staff. Additional sources were found in the Latvian State Historical Archives (LVVA) in the stocks of the Army Staff.¹¹ Reports of the military attaches of other countries dealing with the topic (e.g. Poland and Sweden) have great value.¹²

In addition to the archival materials the memoirs of the staff officers were used. The first part of the memoirs, *Heitluste keerises*¹³, by Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Luts, last Chief of the Operations Department of General Staff, is the most comprehensive. The memoirs, written down by A. Luts' former subordinate Major Harald Roots were more critical.¹⁴ He also vividly described Estonia's military cooperation with Latvia. High-ranking Estonian officers captured by the Soviet Security Services had no chance to write memoirs; their interrogation protocols provide little useful information on defence planning¹⁵ and cannot be considered reliable. Unlike the leadership of the armies of Finland, Lithuania, and Poland, it is not possible to read memoirs of the Estonian Commander-in-Chief or Chief of the General Staff.

⁸ Estonian coastal artillery (batteries), named the Naval Fortresses.

⁹ Stocks of Eesti Riigiarhiiv (ERA): 495 Armed Forces Staff, 496 General Staff, 521 Staff of the 3rd Division, 673 Staff of the Harju Military District, 526 Staff of the Air-Defence, 527 Staff of the Navy, 642 Staff of the Naval Fortresses.

¹⁰ Stocks of ERA: 988 State Defence Council, 2553 Johan Laidoner's personal collection. Johan Laidoner (1884–1953), General, 1918–1920, 1924–1925 and 1934–1940 Commander-in-Chief of the Estonian Armed (Defence) Forces, in 1940 deported to Russia, in 1941 arrested by the Soviets, in 1953 died in the prison.

¹¹ An overview of the Estonian Armed Forces (1937). – Latvijas Valsts Vēstures Arhivs (LVVA), 1474-1-1635.

¹² Reports of Polish military attache in Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warszaw – AAN. Sztab Główny, 616; Aart Nõmm made use of reports of Swedish military attache in his BA thesis at the University of Tartu, see **Nõmm, A.** Nõukogude Liidu sõjalised ettevalmistused Eesti vallutamiseks 1939. aastal. BA thesis. Manuscript in University of Tartu. Tartu, 2007.

¹³ **Luts, A.** Heitluste keerises, I–II. Olion, Tallinn, 2004. Alfred Luts (1899–1991), Lieutenant Colonel, from 1934 officer of the Estonian General Staff, 1939–1940 Chief of the I (Operational) Department, in 1941 deserted from the Soviet Army, after WW II lived in the West.

¹⁴ **Roots, H.** Kui võitluseta murdus mõõk. Toronto, 1993. Harald Roots (1905–1986), Major, 1934–1940 officer of the I (Operational) Department of the Estonian General Staff, in 1941 arrested by the Soviets, up to 1949 in a prison camp.

¹⁵ See Interrogation protocols of Nikolai Reek. Eesti Riigiarhiivi Filiaal (ERAF), 130-9861; President ja sõjavägede ülemjuhataja NKVD ees. Tõlkinud ja kommenteerinud M. Ilmjärv. (Eesti Teaduste Akadeemia Ajaloo Instituut. Tõid ajaloo alalt, 1.) Tallinn, 1993.

ESTONIA'S PERCEPTION OF THE POSSIBLE WAR WITH THE SOVIET UNION

The estimation of the security threats on which the defence planning was based can be found in the archival materials from 1926–1933.¹⁶

In the 1930s the Estonian military command considered the Soviet Union as the most probable aggressor, although, in the middle of the decade, the threat from Germany was not excluded, either. It was taken into account that, in order to upset the Estonian mobilization, the Soviet offensive could be launched unexpectedly. The Soviet Union could gather its troops by hidden mobilization (i.e., summoning its reservists for training), as it actually happened later in 1939. It was presumed that the divisions of the Red Army could achieve readiness within 6–7 days and the gathering of all the forces for offensive could be completed by the 11th day by the Soviet Union.

Considering the speed of the Estonian mobilization, it would have been possible to outdo the enemy, if the military intelligence could give warning about its mobilization in time. Nevertheless, according to the Estonian military command's estimation, even the partial mobilization in Estonia was unlikely for political reasons. It was supposed that the Soviet Union would immediately use it as *casus belli*. Taking this into account, i.e. aiming not to provoke the Soviet Union, Estonia gave up the hidden mobilization (i.e. calling the reservists to the military exercises) after the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

The main operational directions of the Red Army's offensive on the southern front were expected to be from Pskov via Petseri (Pechory) to Võru and Valga as well as along the Pskov-Riga paved road. Thus the Soviet forces would penetrate as a wedge into the area between Estonia and Latvia. On the northern front an offensive to Tallinn via Narva was expected. The Red Army's strategic deployment plan from 1938 envisaged attacking Estonia from Pskov via Irboska (Izborsk) in the direction of Tallinn. In 1939 the offensive was planned via both, Narva and Petseri, although the majority of the troops would have been directed to the south.¹⁷

From the sea, an attack of the Soviet Baltic Fleet against Tallinn was expected, with an aim to destroy Estonia's coastal artillery and siege the city by landing troops. The Fleet could also organize landings on Estonia's northern coast, support land operations near the coast and cut off communication routes with the West. The conquest of the West-Estonian archipelago (islands of Saaremaa, Hiiumaa,

¹⁶ Situation in Estonia's defence, 1926. ERA, 496-4-228, 68–83; Short memorandum about situation in the state defence, 4.10.1929. ERA, 495-12-328, 10–17; Defence plan of the Republic, Section IV. Enemy forces and presumed activity. ERA, 495-12-308, 1–12; Defence plan of the 1st Division Defence District. Approved 10.05.1930. ERA, 495-12-56, 2–6; Minutes of State Defence Council No 1, 12.06.1933. ERA, 988-1-2, 2–9.

¹⁷ 1941 god. Dokumenty. I kn. Ed. V. Naumov. Demokratija, Moskva, 1998, 557–571; Meltjuhov, M. Upuščennyj šans Stalina. Sovetskij Sojuz i borba za Evropu 1939–1941 gg. Veče, Moskva, 2002, 147.

and others) was considered as a complicated task. The first target for air-raids was considered to be Tallinn.

It was obvious that Estonia alone could not resist the predominant enemy forces for a longer period of time. Before getting indispensable aid from abroad it was necessary to defend the borders and important centres for at least one month. It was important not to collapse under the first attacks at the beginning of the war. Considerable support from friendly states, including Latvia, was expected only after that period.

In 1926 the duration of Estonia's resistance was considered to depend on its resources and will of defence, as well as on the Soviet Union's ability to create a strategic situation to paralyze any military resistance. It was supposed that at first there would be no shortage of human resources for field forces, but the problems could arise with the ammunition supplies. For continuing resistance, more supplies were needed from abroad; it was crucial who would dominate on the Baltic Sea. The support by some of the Great Powers' naval forces was necessary for keeping up the morale and defence of the land-front rear and communication lines with Western Europe.¹⁸

The development of mechanized troops in the Soviet Union caused pessimism among the strategists of the Estonian General Staff. In 1933 they believed that in the case of the Red Army's unexpected attack, the cities Narva, Petseri, and Võru would fall within the first days of the war. Later General J. Laidoner, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, criticized the earlier leadership for overestimating the enemy.¹⁹

At the same time fast development of mechanized troops had created a feeling of superiority in the Soviet military leadership. In 1933 the main task of mechanized troops was considered to be hindering the enemy's mobilisation in cooperation with air force and cavalry. Small states like Estonia and Latvia had to be liquidated by a single strike of mechanized troops.²⁰

In the second half of the 1930s the statements of General Laidoner reveal some underestimation of the Soviet Union's military strength and the Red Army's fighting efficiency. The General did not consider the Red Army's armour and air forces too serious a threat, and in 1939 he was of an opinion that the Red Army was not suitable for offensive operations.²¹ Actually the Red Army's fighting efficiency was not high, but this shortcoming was to be overcome by mass human and technical resources. By using terror the army was made obedient.

¹⁸ Situation in Estonia's defence. ERA, 496-4-228, 80–81.

¹⁹ Minutes of State Defence Council No 1, 12.06.1933. ERA, 988-1-2, 4–7; Report of state defence activity 1934–1939. ERA, 2553-1-12, 2, 34–35.

²⁰ **Ken, O.** Mobilizacionnoe planirovanie i političeskie rešenija konec 1920–seredina 1930-h gg. Izdatelstvo Evropejskogo universiteta, Sankt-Peterburg, 2002, 266, 338–339.

²¹ Report of state defence activity 1934–1939. ERA, 2553-1-12, 35, 38–39; Minutes of State Defence Council 22.10.1936. ERA, 988-1-3, 45; Note on the Estonian ambassadors in England Schmidt's memorandum. ERA, 495-12-264, 91–92.

SOVIET MILITARY PLANS AGAINST THE BALTIC STATES

By the time of Hitler's rise to power the Soviet Union had abandoned (at least publicly) the idea of 'exporting the revolution' via international communist movement (*Comintern*). Stalin concentrated his efforts on reinforcement of the Red Army having in mind the possibility of using it in the case of a favourable international situation (war between capitalist states) for gaining supremacy in the world by force. The Soviet Union was interested in the outbreak of the world war in Europe and intervention in it at the final stage. The Red Army was prepared only for an offensive (and called it counter-offensive) to destroy the enemies on their own territory. The idea of offensive strategy was supported by fast technical development of the Red Army. Already in 1935–1936 its command had a feeling of superiority compared to neighbouring countries.²² At first Stalin wanted to restore the borders of the Tsarist Empire.²³

In 1936 Marshal M. Tukhachevsky foresaw that the war could break out on the Western border of the Soviet Union already in 1937. On the General Staff exercise in April 1936 Tukhachevsky found that in the war with Germany and Poland the Soviet Union should first take the Baltic states over by force in case those countries would not let the Red Army cross their borders. His aim and purpose was to create danger from the wing to the German Army. The other leaders of the Red Army did not agree with Tukhachevsky's operative-strategic ideas; the decision was nevertheless made in the *Politburo* to invite heads of the Baltic General Staffs to Moscow. The Chief of the Soviet General Staff Marshal A. Yegorow hosted them in late April and at the beginning of May 1936. The purpose of the Soviets was to demonstrate their own military power and sway their Baltic neighbours to sign military agreements so that the Soviets could send the Red Army units to their territories. At the time of the visit, the prepositions presented with this aim in view but without any apparent pressure received no positive answer from the Baltic generals. Afterwards, the attention was concentrated on the Spanish Civil War.²⁴

²² **Tannberg, T.** Nõukogude Liidu ettevalmistused sõjaks. – In: Sõja ja rahu vahel, I. Eesti julgeolekupoliitika 1940. aastani. Toim E. Tarvel, T. Tannberg. S-Keskus, Tallinn, 2004, 295–297, 301–304; **Nevežin, V.** “Jesli zavtra v pohod...”. Podgotovka vojne i ideologičeskaja propaganda v 30-h–40-h godah. Jauza, EKSMO, Moskva, 2007, 89–92, 106–114, 135, 158–159; **Ken, O.** Mobilizacionnoe planirovanie, 338–340; **Musial, B.** Wir werden den ganzen Kapitalismus am Kragen packen. – Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft, 2006, 1, 45, 52–53, 57, 60–61; **Sokolov, B.** Krasnyj koloss. Počemu pobedila Krasnaja Armija? (Velikaja Otečestvennaja: Neizvestnaja vojna.) Jauza, EKSMO, Moskva, 2007, 21–31.

²³ **Šubin, A. V.** Mir na kraju bezdnõ. Ot global'nogo krizisa k mirovoj vojne. 1929–1941 godõ. Veče, Moskva, 2004, 390; **Rodin, V.** Černo-belaja istorija. – Vesti nedeli, November 5, 2004, 17.

²⁴ Latvian ambassadors Liepiņš report to Munters. LVVA, 2574-3-3103, 14, 20–21; **Minakov, S.** Voennaja elita 20–30-h godov XX veka. Russkoe slovo, Moskva, 2004, 426–432, 436–437; **Maasing, R.** Eesti ja N. Liidu sõjaväeliste delegatsioonide läbirääkimisi 1939. a. oktoobris. – In: Eesti riik ja rahvas II maailmasõjas, II. Toim R. Maasing, E. Blumfeldt, H. Kauri. Kirjastus EMP, Stockholm, 1955, 44; international background of visits see **Ilmjärv, M.** Hääletu alistumine, 412–416.

Tukhachevsky repeated his idea of conquering the Baltic States in a draft on the future war (Plan of defeat) written in the NKVD jail in 1937. He found that the Soviet Union had to get into the Baltic states before Germany. He considered the naval bases in Estonia and Latvia especially important. The Marshal believed the Baltic states' neutrality to be very unfavourable for the Soviet Union.²⁵

Although numerous researchers would not admit aggressive world expansion plans of the Soviet leadership, their existence could be proved by Stalin's plan of building a great ocean-going fleet that was approved already in 1936.²⁶ According to Marshal Voroshilov (1937) a strong Soviet Fleet could help to influence political orientation and military conduct of the border states as well as the Scandinavian states.²⁷ In the future this fleet would also have required the harbours of the Baltic states.

In military planning since 1934 the Soviet Union considered its main enemies to be Germany, Poland, and Japan. Their possible allies (maybe remaining neutral for some time before joining the campaign) were considered to be Finland, Estonia and also Latvia. As countermeasures implemented by the Red Baltic Fleet, the Soviet Union foresaw the destroying of Finnish, Estonian and Latvian fleets; seizure of islands in the Gulf of Finland; obstruction of the German Navy from using ports of Finland, Estonia and Latvia; and hamper disembarkation of German troops. In 1938 the Soviet Union wanted to close the Gulf of Finland with minefields and submarines on the line Porkkala–Tallinn. The exercise of the Baltic Fleet was carried out directly following those tasks.²⁸

The Soviet military command was aware of Estonian-Finnish naval cooperation in the 1930s and understood the danger of closing the Baltic Fleet into the Gulf of Finland through the crossfire of Estonian and Finnish coastal defence cannons and minefields. The Estonian and Finnish possible cooperation with Germany was also seen as a threat.²⁹ On the other hand, Estonian-Finnish naval cooperation did not mean a military alliance because since 1935, Finland in its foreign-political orientation identified itself with the Scandinavian countries.

²⁵ **Kantor, J.** *Vojna i mir Mihaila Tuhatševskogo*. Ogonek, Vremja, Moskva, 2005, 517, 521–524, 551.

²⁶ **Åselius, G.** *The rise and fall of the Soviet Navy in the Baltic, 1921–1941*. (Cass Series: Naval policy and history, 29.) Frank Cass, London, 2005, 157–158, 175–176, 194; **Širokorad, A. B.** *Flot, kotoryj uničožil Hruštšev*. VZOI, Moskva, 2004, 52–55; **Drogovoz, I.** *Bol'šoj flot Strany Sovetov*. (Voenno-istoričeskaja biblioteka.) Harvest, Minsk, 2003, 36–42, 45–48. All in all, the ship-building programme contained at first 676 ships, among them 24 battleships and 20 cruisers, about 1/3 of them for the Baltic Fleet. Subsequently, the unrealistic programme was curtailed and was never completed when the war broke out.

²⁷ **Åselius, G.** *The rise and fall of the Soviet Navy in the Baltic*, 158.

²⁸ **Tannberg, T.** *Nõukogude Liidu ettevalmistused sõjaks*, 311–314, 318–322, 490–500; 1941 god, I, 557–571; **Petrov, P.** *Baltijskij flot. Finski gambit*. Jauza, EKSMO, Moskva, 2005, 78–88, 101–104, 327–330.

²⁹ **Leskinen, J.** *Vendade riigisaladus*, 272–279, 284–286.

Events in the spring 1939 showed a growing threat to Estonian security by the Soviet Union. Soviet authorities wanted to have a permission of the Western powers for stationing the Red Army troops in its neighbouring countries. The Red Army and Baltic Fleet needed the Baltic states as operational bases for the war against Germany. Although Tukhachevsky was killed in struggle for power, his ideas were followed by Soviet leadership in 1939.

GERMANY – THREAT OR POTENTIAL SUPPORTER?

Danger of the German expansion into the Baltic states after Hitler's rise to power was perceived in Estonia. In October 1934 a field trip was organized to Saaremaa on Lieutenant General Johan Laidoner's initiative. According to Harald Roots the trip was organized due to the rise of German aggressiveness. During the field trip a great attention was paid to experiences related to the German landing operation on the island in 1917.³⁰ In February 1935, Chief of the General Staff Major General Nikolai Reek³¹ pointed out the need of preparations in two general strategic directions – the eastern and southern – in the new international political situation. It was considered necessary to prepare for an independent defence of the islands of West Estonia.³²

In the first half of the 1930s, besides Latvia, the Estonian military command hoped to get military support also from Poland in the case of war with the Soviet Union. The relations with the Polish General Staff were very close although no formal alliance between the two countries had been signed.³³

Improvement of the German-Polish relations in 1934–1935 also had an impact on the Estonian military command. After the conclusion of the British-German Naval Treaty, in June 1935, Estonia was forced to approach Germany in its foreign policy and foreign trade. After Germany's success in its ship building programme the Baltic Sea was dominated by the German Navy (*Kriegsmarine*) and the Baltic states could not count on the British or French help delivered by naval transport. On the other hand, Germany was pointing out that the increase of the *Kriegsmarine* is in the interest of the Baltic states and in the case of Soviet aggression the fleet is going to be sent to help the Baltic states.³⁴

³⁰ Report of state defence activity 1934–1939. ERA, 2553-1-12, 37; **Roots, H.** Kui võitluseta murdus mõök, 60–73.

³¹ Nikolai Reek (1890–1942), Lieutenant General, 1925–1926 and 1934–1939 Chief of the Estonian General Staff, 1927–1928 and 1939–1940 Minister of War, in 1941 arrested by the Soviets, in 1942 executed in the prison camp.

³² Minutes of State Defence Council No 15, 16.02.1935. ERA, 988-1-3, 8–9.

³³ Memorandum of the British military attaché Firebrace, 18.12.1934. PRO FO 371/18231, 436.

³⁴ **IImjärv, M.** Hääletu alistumine, 308–314; **Stoker, D. J.** Britain, France and the Naval Arms Trade in the Baltic 1919–1939: Grand Strategy and Failure. (Cass Series. Naval Policy and History, 18.) Frank Cass, London, 2003, 183–186.

In the mid-1930 the independence of the Baltic states was based on the unwillingness of two Great Powers – the Soviet Union and Germany – to see the other dominating in the Baltics.

Nevertheless, since the beginning of 1936, Estonia's relations with Germany had considerably improved. A two-week visit in November made by Chief of General Staff General Reek and head of military intelligence Colonel Maasing to Germany was initiated by the German General Staff. A secret cooperation was developing between the Estonian military intelligence and the *Abwehr*. Strong Germany was seen as power that could prevent Soviet aggression and provide military support in the case of the Soviet attack (particularly in the form of military supplies).³⁵ Therefore, in the defence plans the German assault was not taken into consideration. Estonian military leadership acted pragmatically and made its choices according to information available at the time. In case of war real support could be expected primarily from the German Navy. At least at the beginning of 1939 the German help to Estonia and Finland was promised by German Naval Command.³⁶

Estonian and Finnish islands were strategically important for a possible German naval blockade against the Soviet Baltic Fleet's access to the Baltic Sea. The *Kriegsmarine* had previously planned to block the Red Fleet's access to the small channel between Finland and Estonia. In April 1938 Commander of the *Kriegsmarine* Raeder recommended to maintain Estonia's and Finland's neutrality for the present and give a counterblow only when the enemy (the Soviet Union) would violate the neutrality. But in 1937–1938 the Headquarters of the *Kriegsmarine* recommended to occupy Latvia and in 1938 they planned also to occupy West-Estonian islands. In the case of war in the West, German military planners found it possible to confine to defensive measures only in Eastern Europe.³⁷

According to Estonian analysis in the case of the German-Soviet war the main battleground (or transport routes) would be the territories of Latvia and Lithuania,

³⁵ A information survey of the Ministry of foreign affairs (MFA) to Estonian foreign representations from November, 27.11.1936. ERA, 957-14-325, 24; Latvian ambassador Krievinš's report to Munters, 14.12.1936. LVVA, 2574-3-3116, 63–64; **Maasing, R.** Eesti ja N. Liidu sõjaväeliste delegatsioonide läbirääkimisi, 44–45; **Ilmjärv, M.** Hääletu alistumine, 369–378; **Arumäe, H.** President Päts Saksa saadiku hinnanguis 1939–1940. – Akadeemia, 2000, 12, 2543–2544; **Noormets, T.** Eesti sõjaväeluure tegevusest, meetoditest ja vahenditest aastail 1920–1940. – In: Luuramisi. Salateenistuste tegevusest Eestis XX sajandil. Koost T. Noormets. Kistler-Ritso Sihtasutus, Tallinn, 1999, 58–60.

³⁶ German ambassador Frohwein's report to MFA, 19.11.1938. – In: Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik 1918–1945. Serie D. Bd. V (Juni 1937–März 1939). Baden-Baden, 1953, 383–384; **Ilmjärv, M.** Hääletu alistumine, 468–469, 504–505; **Myllyniemi, S.** Die baltische Krise 1938–1941. (Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, 38.) Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, 1979, 33–36.

³⁷ **Ahmann, R.** Nazi Germany policy towards the Baltic States on the eve of the Second World War. – In: The Baltic and the Outbreak of the Second World War. Eds J. Hiden, T. Lane. Cambridge University Press, 1992, 52–53, 65–66; **Ilmjärv, M.** Hääletu alistumine, 388–389, 476.

not Estonia.³⁸ The main motivation for securing the southern border was a probable Soviet attack through Latvia.³⁹

No documents on Estonian-German joint military action plans are found in Estonian archives, since there were no binding agreements. In some of the Estonian General Staff's documents on defence planning, Germany is named "Western enemy" or "attack from the West" is mentioned. Also, from time to time, diplomats briefed on Germany as enemy number two (possibly it was done in order to disguise relations).⁴⁰

Diplomatic reports show that the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and military leadership did not consider Germany as a threat in the late 1930s, on the contrary, Germany was seen as an eventual ally in the case of a possible Soviet attack. Germany's sympathies were not shown publicly and official neutrality was to be kept.⁴¹ Estonian-German public military contacts (visits of high-ranking officers and military organizations, education and practice of the officers, visits of military ships and aircraft) were limited in comparison to the military cooperation with Poland and Finland. In the framework of the Finnish-Estonian naval defence cooperation, joint exercises of coastal defence artillery and the fleet were undertaken in 1936–1939. In 1933–1939 a more large-scale cooperation was established between the Estonian Defence Forces and Polish Armed Forces. Only in 1939 the Polish representatives became anxious because of intense activity of Estonian-German military contacts.⁴²

In the first half of 1939, increase of German political and economic influence is evident. It was related to the growing Soviet threat. It was feared that in the case of war between Germany and the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France would agree with the Red Army's entrance to Estonia and Latvia.⁴³ Why Germany was preferred to the Soviet Union? It has been clearly pointed out by the Foreign

³⁸ Short military-geographic overview of territories of the Latvian and Lithuanian Republics (1937). ERA, 495-12-284, 22–70; see also **Ilmjärv, M.** Hääletu alistumine, 442.

³⁹ Chief of the General Staff of the Letter to the 2nd and 3rd Division commanders, 18.05.1937. ERA, 521-1-400, 2; **Leskinen, J.** Vaiettu Suomen silta, 70.

⁴⁰ Work plan of the I Department of General Staff for 1938. ERA, 495-12-464, 38–39; **Seene, A.** Kas illusioonidiplomaatia? Eesti Vabariigi neutriteedipoliitika ja selle rahvusvaheline taust 1918–1940. MA thesis. Manuscript in University of Tartu. Tartu, 2001, 160; **Roots, H.** Kui võitluseta murdus mõök, 76, 79–82.

⁴¹ Report of Polish military attache in Tallinn Szczekowski from IV quarter of 1937, 5.01.1938. AAN, Sztab Główny, 616-271, 364–365; Szczekowski's report from II and III quarter of 1938, 20.10.1938. AAN, 616-326, 283; **Seene, A.** Kas illusioonidiplomaatia?, 158–162; **Ilmjärv, M.** Hääletu alistumine, 369, 376–378, 387, 430–431, 442–446; **Arumäe, H.** President Päts Saksa saadiku hinnanguis 1939–1940, 2544–2545.

⁴² Szczekowski's report from III quarter of 1937, 10.10.1937. AAN, 616-271, 280–283; Szczekowski's report from I quarter of 1938, 25.04.1938 and report from II and III quarter of 1938, 20.10.1938. AAN, 616-326, 191–192, 282–286; **Leczyk, M.** Polska i sąsiedzi. Stosunki wojskowe 1921–1939. Comandor, Warszawa, 2004, 409–415; see also **Pajur, A.** Sõjalised välissuhted ja koostöö välisriikidega, 188–192; **Leskinen, J.** Vendade riigisaladus, 235–270; **Pullat, R.** Versailles'st Westerpatteni. Eesti ja Poola suhted kahe maailmasõja vahel. Estopol, Tallinn, 2001, 118–173.

⁴³ Szczekowski's report from period 1.I–1.V 1939, 10.05.1939. AAN, 616-326, 325–326.

Minister Selter who said in May 1939 to the Polish Ambassador, “A month of Soviet occupation is worse than four years of German occupation.”⁴⁴

In April 1939, the majority of Estonian people considered Germany as a greater threat than the Soviet Union. Tensions had created the rise in self-confidence and activity of the Baltic Germans.⁴⁵ Not all Estonian political and military leaders were ready for unlimited cooperation with Germany.

Germany was an important partner of foreign trade; Estonia could also buy modern weapons and military equipment from Germany on relatively good terms (clearing). In 1938 it was also profitable to sell Estonian goods to Germany thanks to relatively high prices there so that the balance was in Estonia’s favour. Germany was often preferred especially due to the use of clearing balance. Aviation and Navy equipment was ordered from England as usual.⁴⁶ Apart from England and France, Germany continued supplying ordered arms also after the beginning of WWII. On the other hand, it is interesting that in 1936–1939 Estonia sold old arms to the Spanish republicans who were supported by the Soviet Union.

Evaluating the military cooperation between Estonia and Germany, it has to be kept in mind that the Estonian officers’ counterparts in the leadership of the German Army Headquarters and *Abwehr*⁴⁷ were in concealed opposition with Hitler. They did not want military conflict with Western countries and a new world war but Hitler managed to block the appeasement policy. Therefore some German military leaders could have given false hopes to Estonians.

Intelligence contacts with Germany should not be overestimated. Estonian military intelligence service was also exchanging information on Soviet Union with the British, Latvian, Polish, Finnish and since 1938, also with Japanese counterparts.⁴⁸

Germany was an unreliable and dangerous partner but also the other Great Powers did not do anything to protect the Baltic states from the Soviet Union.

⁴⁴ Polish ambassador’s report to the minister of foreign affairs, 25.05.1939. AAN, 616-356, 223. Selter expressed similar views also to the Latvian ambassador, see **Ilmjärv, M.** Hääletu alustamine, 531.

⁴⁵ **Ant, J.** Eesti 1939–1941: rahvast, valitsemisest, saatusest. Tallinn, 1999, 34–36. Only the inhabitants of Tallinn and Tartu considered Russia and Germany equally dangerous.

⁴⁶ Minutes of the Joint Economic Board of the State Council and the Committee for External and State Defence of the State Council 11.11.1938. ERA, 84-1-1539, 3–5, 8–9; Protocol of agreement (25.05.1938) and German ambassador Frohwein’s and Estonian minister of foreign affairs Selter’s notes for approving the protocol, 22.06.1938. ERA, 957-14-497, 37–39, 45–46, 48–50; **Salo, U.** Riigikaitse Nõukogu roll Eesti riigikaitse uuendamisel 1933–1939. – Tuna, 2007, 3, 40–41. According to an agreement concluded with German Reichsgruppe Industrie A.G.K. (approved 22.06.1938) it was planned to order military supplies from Germany up to 9 mil. RM. 50% of the purchase sum calculated by Estonian-German clearing, 15% in English pounds and 35% in Estonian oil-shale export.

⁴⁷ Admiral Wilhelm Canaris had an important role in formation of Estonian-German cooperation, see: Estonian military attaché Jakobsen’s letter to Chief of II Department of the General Staff (GS), 6.05.1939. ERA, 495-12-229, 233.

⁴⁸ **Noormets, T.** Eesti sõjaväeluure tegevusest, 61–64.

ESTONIA'S DEFENCE PRINCIPLES AND GOALS IN 1930–1939

General principles of the national defence, approved by the Estonian government in 1931, emphasized that the Estonian national defence was self-defence against aggression. In the 1930 defence plan Estonia's strategic aim in the case of war with the Soviet Union was active defence outside the borders or in the border areas where defence positions against the overwhelming enemy were more favourable than elsewhere. The possibility of Estonian territory becoming a war zone had to be prevented since it would exhaust the country's limited resources. Protection of land and sea communications with friendly states for receiving support was considered one of the priorities.⁴⁹

In the years of the Great Depression the Estonian General Staff doubted if the predominant enemy could be stopped on Estonia's borders. After the *coup d'état* in March 1934, Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces Lieutenant General Laidoner restored active defence principles for border covering and operational activities. Since Estonia's territory is small, efficient resistance had to be organized already on the borders. The enemy's forces had to be stopped from crossing the River Narva and the line of the heights of Petseri. Defence had to be active: were it possible, military action had to be transferred to the enemy territory. It was stressed that Estonia could get foreign help only if it was able to defend itself during the first period of war. The army had to be trained in the assault battle spirit. Laidoner ordered to abandon retreat tactics on manoeuvres.⁵⁰

In September 1938 the Commander-in-Chief issued a directive which provided the transfer of warfare to the enemy's territory along with the defence of the native territory. In the late 1920s and in the middle of the 1930s an assault of armoured trains over the border on the Narva front was planned in order to disorganize the concentration of enemy troops. Later the idea of this active strike was abandoned in accordance with Laidoner's order.⁵¹

Estonia's War of Independence (1918–1920) was undoubtedly the model for such a planning where the frontline was transferred to the adversary's territory to prevent the Red Army from intruding. Already in the defence plan of 1925 the principles of active defence were the same – counter-attack on the Narva front had to reach the Gdov–Jamburg (Kingisepp) line, and on the Pskov front the Ostrov–Pskov line. A particular attention was devoted to the destruction of the bridges on the River Luga and the River Velikaya.⁵²

⁴⁹ Defence plan of the 1st Division Defence District. Approved 10.05.1930. ERA, 495-12-56, 1; Lahingueeskiri. Tallinn, 1932, 1–2.

⁵⁰ Report of state defence activity 1934–1939. ERA, 2553-1-12, 36–37; Diary of Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces 1934–1938, 13.04.1935, 18.11.1936. ERA, 2553-1-2, 45, 137; Minutes of State Defence Council 22.10.1936. ERA, 988-1-3, 42; Modernization plan of the state defence, 14.12.1937. ERA, 495-12-85, 4.

⁵¹ Diary of Commander-in-Chief 1934–1938, 14.10.1938. ERA, 2553-1-2, 204; **Roots, H.** Kui võitluseta murdus mõõk, 36–37.

⁵² Defence plan of the Estonian Republic against Russia (January 1925). ERA, 496-4-151, 12–13.

According to Lieutenant Colonel Luts, the operational concept of the defence plan at the end of the 1930s was as follows: "...to defend persistently and actively the positions situated on the general line of the River Narva and Lake Velje along our eastern border by the military forces created by timely and fast mobilization. It is necessary to have strong mobile reserves behind the frontline in order to eliminate the enemy's breakthroughs and landings from the air, sea and lakes." The Commander-in-Chief's headquarters was supposed to be in Tallinn and the troops retreating from the front were to be sent there for the final fight. After the arrival of supporting forces, a general counter-attack was to be launched with an aim to push the enemy behind the Estonian borders.⁵³

In Estonian defence plans expansive guerrilla-warfare was not planned, nevertheless, in the border cover plan of 1930, the Defence League actions were planned on the territory occupied by the enemy next to the border.

Principle of active defence could not be related to cooperation with Germany because this principle of defence was implemented already in 1934–1935 and based on earlier planning and experiences obtained in the War of Independence. The plans were by no means regarded as full adventure since they were possible in the case of coalition war.

Estonia, left alone against the overwhelming enemy forces in 1939–1940, apparently had no real chance to make counter-attacks or transfer the defence line to the Soviet territory. Besides, by 1939 the defence positions, notably on the south-eastern border, were not fortified. The defence principles introduced by Laidoner had primarily a moral meaning.

For defending seaways, the confidential cooperation evolving between Estonian and Finnish navies in the 1930s, was very important. Thus, since 1935, as a result of the activity of the neighbours' coastal artillery and fleet, it was possible to close down the Gulf of Finland at its narrowest point to obstruct the penetration of the Soviets.

In the General Staff's operational preparations beginning in 1937 more attention was paid to the Estonian–Latvian border area. In the case of need it was planned to transfer the line of defence to North-Western Latvia. Primary task was to prevent the Soviet assault through the Latvian territory. In May–June 1938 a military field-trip of the command officers was organized to the southern border area in order to study operational directions if the enemy attacked from the south.⁵⁴

LATVIAN AND LITHUANIAN DEFENCE PLANS AND PROBLEMS OF THE BALTIC MILITARY COOPERATION

At the end of the 1930s the **Baltic military cooperation** was interfered with foreign-political differences, particularly with the tensions between Lithuania and

⁵³ Luts, A. Heitluste keerises, 25, 29; Roots, H. Kui võitlusetä murdus mõök, 36–37.

⁵⁴ Report of state defence activity 1934–1939. ERA, 2553-1-12, 37; Letter of the Chief of the General Staff to the 2nd and 3rd Division commanders, 18.05.1937. ERA, 521-1-400, 2; Roots, H. Kui võitlusetä murdus mõök, 76, 79–82; Leskinen, J. Vaiettu Suomen silta, 68–70.

Poland. Therefore, the Lithuanian proposals for a military alliance were not accepted. The Treaty of the Military Alliance between Estonia and Latvia (1923) regrettably yielded no real results. In the second half of the 1930s the cooperation weakened due to personal controversies and prejudices of the military commands. A common defence plan was not prepared and in national defence plans the partners did not have much regard for each other. In the second half of the 1930s there were no joint manoeuvres carried out – there were only visits. In December 1934, the last Estonian-Latvian strategy game in Valga took place in an atmosphere of distrust. Therefore the Great Powers in planning their activities did not take the Baltic states' military potential seriously. Probably even an active defence cooperation in 1939 would not have saved the countries although it would have provided better positions for negotiations and won more time. The Latvians anticipated the danger also from Germany and did not count on Estonia's help in that case. Importance of the cooperation was understood only in the autumn 1939, when Soviet military bases were already on the territory of the Baltic states.⁵⁵

Compared to Estonia, **Latvian borders** were naturally much less suitable for defence. Latvian defence plans anticipated the Soviet Union as a potential aggressor up to the mid-1930s, against whose assault the defensive plan variant A (Austrumi – East) had been drawn up. Covering troops on the border accompanied by the border guards' battalions and the Defence League (*aizsargi*) had to cover deployment of main forces for 72 hours on the 250 km-long front. Mobilized forces had to concentrate along the Pededze River – Lake Lubāna – the Aiviekste River line and deploy further from it. This naturally suitable defence line was regarded as a main line of defence. On the left flank it was planned that the II group of divisions with 2 divisions and on the right flank I group of divisions with 3 divisions would be engaged in the combat. War minister General J. Balodis did not wish to give up Latgale, however, the staff planners failed to see how to defend the eastern border. Border covering troops were relatively weak and the defence zone was not fortified. It was planned to defend Latvia according to moving defensive principle, because a permanent line of defence was not possible either for geographical or economic reasons. When necessary, Latvian troops were to withdraw to the River Daugava. In the second half of the 1930s Latvian defence designers anticipated a mounting danger to state neutrality from Germany and by the summer of 1938 the defensive plan variant D (*Dienvīdi* – South) had been worked out. In the case of German invasion of Lithuania it was feared that acts of warfare would be carried to Latvia's territory. Mobilization plan No 4, prepared already in the autumn 1937, was the most opportune for concentrating troops on the southern front. During the Klaipeda crisis in March 1939 Balodis wanted to declare

⁵⁵ **Andersons, E.** Latvijas brunotie spēki un to priekšvēsture. Daugavas Vanagu Apgāds, Toronto, 1983, 651–657; **Luts, A.** Heitluse keerises, 19–21; **Roots, H.** Kui võitluseta murdus mõök, 42–43, 118–119; **Raštikis, S.** Kovose dēl Lietuvos. Kario atsiminimai. I dalis. Lituanus, Vilnius, 1990, 455–456; **Pajur, A.** Sõjalised välissuhted ja koostöö välisriikidega, 188–189; **Arumäe, H.** Ühist ja erinevat Eesti ja Läti välispoliitikas esimesel iseseisvusperioodil. – In: Eestlased Lätis, I. Peatoimetaja L. Utno. Välis-Eesti, Tallinn, 2007, 230–238.

mobilization. In case of assault by Germany, Latvian troops were to move forward to Lithuania to the depth of 60–70 km with units of two divisions to occupy a favourable defensive position in North Lithuania. 4 divisions in all were concentrated on the southern border, one division was planned to the eastern border. Defence of the extensive Latvian sea coast caused anxiety. Since September 1939 the Soviet Union became the primary adversary.⁵⁶

According to the memoirs of the officers of the Operational Department of the General Staff, the weakest point of the Estonian defence plan was its juncture with the Latvian Army. It was the place of expected enemy attack with an aim to separate the allies. The Estonians estimated the Latvian front's left flank much weaker than the right flank of the Estonian front. It was pointed out at the negotiations; however, the Latvians did not change their plans. The centre for their defence was located more to the south. In addition to this, while retreating due to the offence of a superior enemy, the two armies would have left a cleavage between them. The Estonian army would have retreated in the direction of Tallinn and the Latvian army – in the direction of Riga and to the River Daugava. This contributed to the aim of the enemy's offensive on the southern front: to separate the allies and beat them one-by-one.⁵⁷

Since 1937 the Estonian General Staff had not much trust in Latvia's readiness to fight against a possible Soviet invasion, therefore the defence plans were redesigned. There was no conviction as to Latvia's fulfilment of the alliance pact in case of the Soviet attack or whether it could hamper the Red Army's march through Latvia. More forces were foreseen for the southern front and also active defence in North Latvia was planned. At the end of the 1930s Germany and other countries regarded Latvia both in foreign and military politics as more orientated to the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ Yet it seems unfounded that the Latvian military leadership were Russophile, although there could have been exceptions. They were probably just anti-German and underestimated the Soviet threat, therefore they did not fortify their eastern border. The 1940 events showed anti-Soviet attitudes in the military command of the Latvian army. After Munich and in 1939 in particular, the Latvian politicians rather supported Germany.

⁵⁶ **Kuzmins, V.** Latvijas brunoto spēku aizsardzības plāni. 1939. g. rudens – 1940. g. vasara. MA thesis. Manuscript in University of Latvia. Rīga, 2002, 27, 44–45, 48, 50–51, 104, 113–116; **Andersons, E.** Latvijas brunotie spēki un to priekšvēsture, 605–610, 651; **Pētersons, A.** Krustugunīs. Latviešu karotmāka 1940–1945. 60 gadus no tautas slēptais. Rīga, 2007, 84–87; **Nõmm, A.** Nõukogude Liidu sõjalised ettevalmistused, 50–51. According to Kuzmins, Latvia regarded Germany as its only real enemy from the summer 1938 up to the autumn 1939.

⁵⁷ **Luts, A.** Heitluste keerises, 24, 28–29; **Roots, H.** Kui võitluseta murdus mõök, 39–41, 48; **Nõmm, A.** Nõukogude Liidu sõjalised ettevalmistused, 52–53.

⁵⁸ **Kirotar, E.** Eesti välisministeeriumis. – In: Eesti riik ja rahvas II maailmasõjas, II. Toim R. Maasing, E. Blumfeldt, H. Kauri. Kirjastus EMP, Stockholm, 1955, 81; **Ahmann, R.** Nazi Germany policy towards the Baltic states, 52, 54–55, 65; **Ilmjärv, M.** Hääletu alistumine, 504, 506, 509; **Arumäe, H.** Ühist ja erinevat Eesti ja Läti välispoliitikas, 236–238; **Myllyniemi, S.** Die baltische Krise 1938–1941, 35–36, 39.

Lithuania did not anticipate danger from the Soviet Union. The defensive plan had three variants in the second half of the 1930s: “L” (*Lenkija*) – in case of Poland’s attack, “V” (*Vokietija*) – if Germany attacked and “VL” – in case of the attack of Germany and Poland. The border length with Germany stretched to 275 km, with Poland to 525 km. No defence zones were prepared, natural obstacles were planned to be used. According to the variant “V” Lithuania had to deploy its army inside the country on the line of the rivers Venta – Dubysa – Nemunas.⁵⁹

The German attack was expected via the Klaipeda area in the direction of Shiauliai or Kėdainiai and from Eydtkuhnen in the direction of Kaunas. After occupying the Klaipeda area in 1939, the attack was expected in two main directions: via Tauragė in the direction of Shiauliai or Kėdainiai and across Kybartai in the direction of Kaunas, Vilnius or Ukmergė. A Polish attack was expected from the south-east across Jewie, Zhiezhmariai in the direction of Kaunas and from Suwalki in the south across Kalvarija in the direction of Marijampolė. Therefore it was planned to form five obstacle belts in the east and south. Demolition of roads and bridges was planned to jam the enemy’s advances.⁶⁰

The enemy’s advance had to be first hampered by covering units and fast mobilizing border covering battalions (essentially consisting of local members of Shaulių Sąjunga⁶¹) and groups of Shaulių Sąjunga. Later, border covering battalions were planned to remain in the enemy’s rear to fight a guerrilla war.⁶²

Estonian active defence plan was nothing special because both Finland and Poland planned primary active resistance against their neighbour’s aggression. The Finnish active defence plan VK-1, approved in 1934 presumed that the Soviets had to fight along the whole extent of the western border. After grouping the field army a counterstrike was planned against the Red Army from the Eastern and Central Kannas to the south. In the autumn 1939 a more passive defence plan VK-2 was chosen as the basis for action.⁶³ At the beginning of the war against Germany Poland intended to take its intervention corps to Danzig.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ **Vaičėnionis, J.** Lietuvos kariuomenės modernizacija. – Darbai ir Dienos, 2000, **21**, 162, 165; **Vaičėnionis, J.** Defence problems in the Lithuanian Republic in 1934–1939. (Latvijas Kara Muzeja Gadagrāmata, VII.) Rīga, 2006, 157–158.

⁶⁰ Directives for border covering to II Division and units in Suvalkija, 1935–1939. Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybes Archyvas (LCVA), 929-3-931, 5–6, 10–11, 14–15, 19, 31, 40, 75.

⁶¹ Shaulių Sąjunga – Shooter’s Union, Lithuanian voluntary defence organization.

⁶² **Vaičėnionis, J.** Lietuvos Šaulių sąjunga Valstybės gynyboje 1935–1940 metais. – In: Lietuvos Šaulių sąjungos istorijos fragmentai. Konferencijos pranešimų medžiaga. Detali, Kaunas, 2002, 113.

⁶³ **Juutilainen, A.** 1930. aastate kaitseplaanid. – In: Talvesõda 1939–1940. 105 päeva Soome rahva kangelaslikku võitlust. Koost J. Leskinen, A. Juutilainen. Varrak, Tallinn, 2002, 63–66; Talvisodan historia, 1. Suomi joutuu Talvisotaan. WSOY, Porvoo, 1977, 79–85. VK – Venäjän keskitys.

⁶⁴ **Tuliszka, J.** Westerplatte 1926–1939. Dzieje Wojskowej Składnicy Tranzytowej w Wolnym Mieście Gdańsku. Adam Marszałek, Toruń, 2002, 94–97; **Kirchmayer, J.** 1939 i 1944. Kilka zagadnień polskich. Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa, 1959, 57–70.

ESTONIAN MOBILIZATION PLAN

The principles of the mobilization plan and its development until 1939

The general plan of mobilization No 2 was in force in Estonia since 1928. A mixed system for manning the military units was used, in accordance with which the transportation of reservists from a distance was partially needed. From 1930 already an attempt was made to implement the territorial principle of manning, in which case respective manning areas for some military units and arms of service of the armed forces (e.g. for artillery) were assigned. This accelerated the mobilization and linking together the mobilized men in the units, at the same time reducing the need for transport.

In February 1935 the National Defence Council approved of a new reduced war-time organization of military forces along with the fundamentals of the new mobilization plan. The territorial manning principle was planned as the basis of carrying out mobilization.

It was planned to mobilize 16–18 year-calls of reservists to the regular army from the eastern counties and 8 from western counties and the islands. Other reservists were to be sent to the Defence League for formation of territorial units.⁶⁵ The implementation of both plans was delayed due to the unaccomplished reinforcement of the armament of the Defence Forces. The implementation of the new plan required re-dislocation of some units and it was expensive.

In accordance with the new Law of Military Service that came into force on 1 April 1937, the complicated division of military service into the service in regular Defence Forces, call-up (high-readiness) reserve, reserve and 3-category territorial force was abandoned in order to simplify the registration. From now on the military service was divided into a pre-service national defence education at schools, active service and service in reserve. The annulment of the institution of call-up reservists was motivated by its complicated procedure of registration, complications in transportation, disturbances in the mobilization and similarities of their enlistment with the mobilization proper. In a crucial political situation it could irritate possible adversaries.⁶⁶ Call-up reservists⁶⁷ were the conscripts up to four years after their active service (12–18 months) had ended.

Along with the call-up reservists the concept of partial mobilization was also abandoned, instead, the right to organize continuing training for reservists on the basis of territorial manning principle was expanded. Chiefs of Military Districts could call up the reservists for training for five days, Division Commanders for seven days, the Commander-in-Chief could call up officers for two months and

⁶⁵ Report of state defence activity 1934–1939. ERA, 2553-1-12, 94–95; Minutes of State Defence Council 16.02.1935 and 22.10.1936. ERA, 988-1-3, 15, 51–52.

⁶⁶ Minutes of State Defence Council 22.10.1936. ERA, 988-1-3, 52–54; Riigi Teataja (RT) 1937, No 15, 237, 247, 251–252.

⁶⁷ In 1932 there were c. 32,000 call-up reservists registered in Estonia, 25,000 of them were planned to be called into service. The War Minister could call them up in case of the risk of war for manning the covering units.

other reservists for 14 days, and the President could call up reserves for unlimited period of time. This way it was possible to organize refreshment training for reserves for the border covering during the periods of international tension. In May 1939 the General Staff worked out instructions for accelerated call-up of reservists for refreshment training.⁶⁸

The Defence League (*Kaitseliit*)⁶⁹ was also engaged in mobilization. In case of mobilization part of the Army units and sub-units (e.g. cavalry squadrons and commandos as well as some artillery batteries) were to be manned by the Defence League. In 1932 riflemen companies and cavalry platoons were formed in *Kaitseliit*, which had to serve as core for infantry regiments and detached cavalry squadrons in case of mobilization. The members of the Defence League had to man the Peipsi Coastal Defence Battalion near Lake Peipsi and the 11th Infantry Regiment in Tallinn. The Defence League was given an important task to train horses for the cavalry. By the beginning of 1939 required cavalry units were formed. Since 1936 the *Kaitseliit* was used for manning and reinforcing Coastal Artillery batteries after mobilization. In 1937 a reorganization process of the Defence League artillery units started. Its aim was to provide additional units to covering forces and forming artillery groups during the period of mobilization.⁷⁰

Estonian mobilization plan in 1939

The decision to mobilize was to be taken by the President of the Republic according to the Constitution. In accordance with the general mobilization plan No 2, besides the peace-time cadre, ca 3,600 officers and 84,270 NCOs and soldiers were to be mobilized in 1939. There were 6,060 up to 60-year-old officers, military officials and physicians in reserve, including 4,532 officers. There were 155,045 NCOs and soldiers in reserve up to 45 years of age. 15% of them were subtracted for failure to appear, sickness, ineligibility etc., thus after subtractions 131,780 persons remained as fit for service.⁷¹ Therefore, even after the mobilization some of the eligible men remained in reserve in order to compensate for battle losses.

⁶⁸ Minutes of the State Defence Council 22.10.1936. ERA, 988-1-3, 55; 642-1-319, 64–67; RT 1937, No 15, 248.

⁶⁹ The Defence League (*Kaitseliit*), Estonia's voluntary defence organization 1918–1940 and from 1990, approximately 42,600 members in 1939.

⁷⁰ Report of state defence activity 1934–1939. ERA, 2553-1-12, 95; Chief of V Department of the General Staff to Chief of I Department of the GS, 31.03.1932; Report of Head of the Tartu County Unit, 15.06.1932; Orders of the Chief of the Defence League, 22.06.1932. ERA, 495-12-380, II, 24, 53–61; Correspondence between the Main Staff of the Defence League and General Staff, 1936; Plan of formation and armament of artillery units of the Defence League, 15.01.1937. ERA, 495-12-433, 10–15, 28–37; **Punga, O.** Suurtükiväeüksused Kaitseliidus. – Kaitse Kodu, 1998, II, 42–44.

⁷¹ Mobilization plan No 2. ERA, 495-12-479, 5; Appendix of the Mobilization plan No 2. ERA, 495-12-417, 103, 112, 114–115.

Reserve officers, also some technical NCOs and soldiers-reservists were assigned to certain military units in peace-time. Other reservists, 14–15 year-calls had to gather to 22 determined assembly points all over the country. Most of the military units had to be manned with reservists from a short distance, i.e., according to the territorial principle. At the beginning of the 1930s 21,000 reservists were to be transported from their assembly point to the units of some distance, whereas in 1939 only 12,200 were to be transported. In Narva there were not enough reservists in order to man covering forces, on the other hand, in Petseri (Pecory) County (south-eastern Estonia) there were too many of them. In the case of an unexpected outbreak of war some of the men to be mobilized in the border area military districts (all in all 17,680 men) could possibly remain not-mobilized. There were also the problems of loyalty. In 1932 the Chief of the Petseri Defence District estimated that one-third of the men to be mobilized could flee to the Soviet Union (in 1934 63% of inhabitants of Petseri County were ethnic Russians).⁷²

The enemy's air force could disturb the mobilization, especially in the 1st Division defence district where the transportation was to be performed mainly along the Tallinn-Narva railway line and road. Most of the transportation of forces for deployment had to take place in the evening of the second day of the mobilization and on the third day. The last echelons of the 1st Division had to reach their gathering zones by morning of the fourth day of mobilization and last echelons of the 2nd Division accordingly by the morning, day five.⁷³

Peace-time and war-time organization and establishment of the Estonian Armed Forces in effect in 1939 were mainly determined by the 1928 reform. The peace-time organization of the armed forces parallel to the training was to guarantee fast mobilization and covering the border during the mobilization.⁷⁴ In infantry, artillery, cavalry and armoured forces, covering units and cadre units were envisaged.

During the mobilization the single infantry battalions were to be replenished with reinforcements to form infantry regiments. New artillery groups were formed on the basis of batteries, detached from B-type and C-type groups. During peace-time, one officer and 1–2 re-enlisted NCOs in the cadre units were responsible for the formation of every company and battery.⁷⁵

⁷² The Chief of the Petseri Defence District to the Chief of the V Department of the GS, 6.05.1932. ERA, 495-12-366, II, 174; Rahvastikuprobleeme Eestis. II rahvaloenduse tulemusi. Vihik IV. Tallinn, 1937, 24.

⁷³ Appendix No 8 of the Defence plan of the Republic. Railway transportation of forces for deployment, 20.12.1928. ERA, 495-12-308, 24–31.

⁷⁴ A letter of construction to the enactment of organization and establishments of the Defence Forces. ERA, 496-4-420, 28; Guidelines of cadre units organization and establishment (1928). ERA, 496-4-424, 103–105; Plan for modification of the Armed Forces peace-time organization, 1938. ERA, 495-12-468, 2; Development of organization of the Defence Forces after War of Independence (1933). ERA, 1131-1-22, 16.

⁷⁵ War-time establishments of the units of the Armed Forces. ERA, 495-12-332, 84–91; Short memorandum about today's situation in the state defence, 1929. ERA, 495-12-328, 9.

By 1 September 1939 there were to be 15,717 persons in the Estonian Armed Forces according to peace-time establishments, in muster-roll there were 12,572 men but actually only 11,170 men (71% of the nominal) were there on the spot.⁷⁶ In autumn 1939 5,087 officers, 15,005 NCOs and 84,272 soldiers, totally 104,364 persons for the war-time strength of the armed forces and the War Ministry were envisaged.⁷⁷ In the case of mobilization the number of officers increased almost three times, the number of NCOs and soldiers 9–10 times.

The war-time organization of armed forces was largely based on the War of Independence organization. In 1939, all in all 3 division headquarters and 6 or 8 brigade headquarters, 16 infantry regiments, one single infantry battalion, 12 light and 6 heavy artillery groups, cavalry regiment and other battle and auxiliary units were to be formed in the Ground Forces (see Appendix 2). On the eastern border the division and brigade commands, cover units, some battalions and seven artillery batteries had to be in battle-readiness within 24 hours since the beginning of mobilization. Mobilization had to be practically completed within 72 hours after its beginning, i.e., by the end of the third mobilization day. The gathering of the troops to the areas determined by the operational plans was to be completed by the evening of the fifth mobilization day. However, recently mobilized units could not be considered fully ready for battle. Usually it takes approximately one month of additional training – time which would definitely not be given by the enemy.

Comparing Estonian Armed Forces to those in Latvia and Lithuania one must admit that Estonia's military efforts were relatively the greatest. In the case of war Estonia intended to call up c. 9% of the population while Latvia had planned 7% and Lithuania only c. 5% (see Appendix 1).

LATVIAN AND LITHUANIAN MOBILIZATION PLANS

The Latvian mobilization system of the armed forces remained exterritorial until 1939, i.e. reservists had to be conveyed from one end of the State to another to form troops there. Its aim was to avoid using reservists from ethnically or politically disloyal areas (Latgale primarily) to reinforce border covering units and other combat units.

In November 1937 the 4th mobilization plan (division) was completed for concentrating troops on the southern border. Formation of all combat units and part of support units of the 1st, 3rd and 4th divisions was to be completed in Courland, Latgale and Daugavpils on the mobilization day II (i.e. up to 48 hours), formation of all combat units and the majority of support units of the 2nd and 5th divisions on the mobilization day III. All the units of the 6th and 7th divisions had to be completed on the mobilization days IV–V.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Personnel strength of the Armed Forces 1.09.1939. ERA, 495-12-482, 62–63.

⁷⁷ War-time strength of the Armed Forces, 1939. ERA, 498-13-710, 147.

⁷⁸ Mobilization division No 4, 1937. LVVA, 1474-1-3190, 6–9.

Servicemen on leave until further notice⁷⁹ (3 year-calls of reservists, ca 36,000 men) could be called up by the minister of war to reinforce covering units or all peace-time units in the case of the threat of war before issuing the mobilization order. Substantially it meant a concealed mobilization. Covering units of the eastern border were the 7th, 9th and 10th infantry regiments, subunits of Latgale and Zemgale artillery and cavalry regiments, 2–4 armoured trains. The concealed mobilization time (of readiness) of the units was 3–6 hours. Units of Kurzeme Division on the southern border were to cover against Germany.⁸⁰

To cover the eastern border ca 3,500–5,500 men could be concentrated. The plan envisaged that on calling mobilization, inland reservists from their assembly points would be transported to border-area military districts and the other way round. The units of four peace-time regular or active divisions were to be reinforced to war-time strengths and by dividing regular units new reserve units and formations (incl. 3 divisions) formed.⁸¹

The Latvian exterritorial mobilization system was complicated and demanded excessive railway transportation. The majority of reinforcement commandoes were to be conveyed to their units by railway and combat strength of about two divisions were to be conveyed by railway from Riga to their concentration area. The course of mobilization could slow down or be frustrated owing to obstacles caused by the enemy's air-raids upon the railway. A second drawback was the weakness of the Latvian covering forces. Thus in case of the enemy's overwhelming attack the divisions being mobilized inland could be engaged in the combat before their mobilization was completed and thus upset the appointed organization. A third drawback was the irregular location of the formation sites of units. E.g., the 4th Division was fully formed in Daugavpils, in the vicinity of the border that could fall an objective for the enemy's air-raids immediately at the beginning of war.⁸²

In Lithuania up to 1934, 72 hours were planned for mobilizing all the armed forces. In the course of reforming the army and decentralizing mobilization in 1934–1935, the period was decreased and the dislocation of the army was reorganized. Since 1935, the General Staff envisaged carrying out mobilization following two schedules. Following the 11th mobilization schedule the mobilization was to take place on the whole territory of the state, military units and institutions were to be formed in accordance with war-time strength. Infantry, cavalry and artillery had to be ready for march within 24 hours, the rest of the units within 30 hours. The 12th mobilization schedule envisaged manning the military units and

⁷⁹ In time of 3 years after conscription service reservists were in class of high readiness reserve and named servicemen on leave until further order.

⁸⁰ LVVA, 1474-1-3190, 6–9; **Vakkur, E.** War-time organization and combat doctrine of the Latvian Armed Forces. ERA, 495-12-824, 19–25; **Kuzmins, V.** Latvijas bruņoto spēku aizsardzības plāni, 47–48.

⁸¹ **Vakkur, E.** War-time organization and combat doctrine. ERA, 495-12-824, 19–25.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 25; **Kuzmins, V.** Latvijas bruņoto spēku aizsardzības plāni, 49.

institutions in specified areas or on the whole territory of the state. The schedule envisaged combat units' readiness within 30 hours, the rest of units, services and institutions within 48 hours. Covering units (3 infantry and 3 cavalry regiments and 3 artillery groups) were to be ready for march within 6 hours. Mobilization of border covering units was planned by a separate schedule No 4. Mobilization had to be carried out by the territorial principle, the state being set up into 4 divisional mobilization districts. During the 1938 Polish–Lithuanian March crisis, on 18–19 March the mobilization was carried out in the largest Lithuanian garrisons within 30 hours.⁸³ Likewise, on 17–18 September 1939, a large-scale mobilization took successfully place according to the 11th and 12th schedules, mostly within 30 hours.⁸⁴

At the time of mobilization covering units of army, 12 border defence battalions and subunits of Shauliu Sajunga would defend borders. The main covering groups were in the areas Taurage, Marijampolė and Ukmergė.⁸⁵

THE ESTONIAN BORDER COVERING PLAN OF 1939

The border-covering plan, in force in the Republic of Estonia up to September 1939, was approved on 14 April of the same year.⁸⁶ Active defence was set as a fundamental principle for the border covering forces. The troops were to keep the area needed for an advance in order to transfer the military activities to the enemy's territory on the first opportunity. Compared to earlier plans, the 1939 plan added the southern variant and the reinforcement of covering forces up to the war-time strength by calling up the reservists for training.

The eastern variant of the border covering activities was the basic one, i.e. the military aggression was mainly anticipated from the Soviet Union. The southern variant was envisaged for the occasion when Estonian southern land border and the western sea border were endangered by military activities broken out in the south. Obviously that means the Soviet attack against Latvia or through Latvia, but also a possibility of the German attack could be taken into account.⁸⁷

⁸³ LCVA, 929-3-848, 5–23, 108–116; **Raštikis, S.** Kovose dėl Lietuvos, I, 325–327, 530; **Vaičėnionis, J.** Lietuvos kariuomenės modernizacija, 161; **Rezmer, W.** Litewskie lotnictwo wojskowe 1919–1940. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Toruń, 1999, 41–42, 45.

⁸⁴ Overview of mobilization in September 1939. LCVA, 929-5-547, 1–2, 4, 6, 20–21.

⁸⁵ Directives for border covering to II Division and units in Suvalkija, 1935–39. LCVA, 929-3-931, 10–11, 14–15, 19, 31, 40, 75; **Rezmer, W.** Litewskie lotnictwo wojskowe, 42; **Vaičėnionis, J.** Lietuvos Šaulių sąjunga Valstybės gynyboje 1935–1940 metais, 113–115.

⁸⁶ Excerpts: for Harju Military District ERA, 521-2-82a; for Air Defence ERA, 526-1-38, 38–62; for Navy ERA, 527-1-1618, 58–81.

⁸⁷ H. Roots has related the southern variant to the danger from Germany. See **Roots, H.** Kūi vōitlūseta mūdus mōōk, 37.

In normal conditions the covering forces were to be reinforced to their war-time strength for action by calling up the reservists for training. In emergency, e.g., in case of the enemy's unexpected attack, the covering forces were to act in their peace-time strength. Covering troops had to be ready for action within 30 minutes up to six hours after receiving an order or mobilization notice (most of the covering units of ground troops within three hours).⁸⁸

By 1939 the activities for demolition roads, bridges etc. in the first demolition stripe and partially in the second stripe were fully prepared in the defence districts of the 1st and 2nd Division. The landscape and roads near the eastern border were made hard to penetrate or move along.

Erecting **border fortifications** on the eastern border area was at the initial stage in 1939, single defensive installations were ready on the Narva front, at the same time only preparatory work had been completed on the southern front in Petseri County. Although in the 1930s a number of border fortification plans had been drawn up, major construction work began only in 1939. In accordance with the plan, 748 various concrete weapon bunkers, command and observation posts, shelters, incl. 222 caponiers (for machine-guns, single for artillery) had to be erected. 245 permanent fortifications were planned on the Narva River line and 503 on the south-eastern border. These had to be ready within three years.⁸⁹

In 1938 the work on border fortifications in the Narva front-line was considerably hindered by the treacherous activity of Captain Nikolai Trankmann, Commander of the 1st Pioneer Company who had conducted the fortification work in this sector – the designs had to be redrawn.⁹⁰ A great fire in Petseri postponed the beginning of the fortification work on the south-eastern border until the summer of 1939. Because of that all free labour force was engaged in building dwelling-houses in town until autumn.

The core of the **border covering forces** was to be made up by the covering units of ground troops, Air-Defence Artillery Group, Air Force, Navy and Naval Fortresses.

⁸⁸ Appendix to the Mobilization plan No 2. Time-table of readiness of the military units, 13.05.1936. ERA, 495-12-417, 59–64.

⁸⁹ A letter of the Inspector of Engineers to Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, 11.07.1939, Summary of reconnaissance 29.07.1939, An amendment of the Chief of the 1st Department of the General Staff about the supplementary reconnaissance results of the 2nd Division's border fortification work, A report of the Inspector of Engineers to Commander-in-Chief, 11.08.1939. ERA, 512-1-333, 468–470, 498, 659–660, 693–708; **Nõmm, T.** Eesti piirikindlustused. – Tehnika ja Tootmine, 1992, 9, 43–46.

⁹⁰ In 1937 Trankmann sold the materials on border fortifications to Soviet intelligence. See **Kuuli, O.** Luurajad – poliitvangid? – In: Luuramisi. Salateenistuste tegevusest Eestis XX sajandil. Koost T. Noormets. Kistler-Ritso Sihtasutus, Tallinn, 1999, 98–99; **Roots, H.** Kui võitluseta murdus mõök, 56–58.

In 1939 the covering units of ground troops in the 1st Division next to the eastern border involved the 1st Infantry Regiment, 2 platoons of the 4th Infantry Battalion, the 1st Anti-Tank Company and the 1st Artillery Group. The Armoured Train Regiment was to forward one armoured train to support the 1st Division and one more armoured train to support the 2nd Division. In the 2nd Division the covering forces were the 7th Infantry Regiment, the 2nd and the 3rd Anti-Tank Companies, the 3rd Artillery Group and the Cavalry Regiment. The 1st and the 2nd Companies of the Auto-Tank Regiment and the 1st and the 2nd Air Force Squadrons⁹¹ of the Air-Defence were to support the 1st and the 2nd Divisions, respectively. Basic covering units were poorly manned. By 1 September 1939 the authorized strength of the peace-time covering units of ground troops totally included 6,274 men, but 5,015 were in muster-roll and 4,416 on the spot. The armament of covering units consisted of 268 machine-guns, 42 guns, 28 anti-tank cannons, 6 light tanks and 10 armoured cars.⁹²

The Border Guard was to cover the border until the arrival of the military units and after that they were to act together. In December 1939 the Border Guard had 22 officers and 428 NCOs and soldiers on the eastern border. The Defence League was to provide 8 companies, infantry and cavalry squads and 3 batteries and one half-battery for the border covering.⁹³ Later other battle units of the Defence League could also be used.

Border covering units of the 3rd Division were cadre units that needed reinforcement with reservists, sub-units of the Auto-Tank Regiment and the units of the Defence League and the Border Guard.

BORDER COVERING AND DEFENCE PLANS OF THE MILITARY FORMATIONS

In case of war with the Soviet Union, Lake Peipsi (Peipus) separated the Estonian Defence Forces between two fronts: the Northern or Narva Front and the Southern or Petseri Front (see Fig. 1). Lake Peipsi between them was a passive zone of defence. The eastern border was to be defended by the 1st and the 2nd Divisions. The 3rd Division was to support them and also safeguard the right flank of the 2nd Division. When using the southern variant, the intensity of the activity was transferred to the 2nd and the 3rd Divisions.

⁹¹ The Estonian Air Force squadrons were named divisions.

⁹² Personnel strength of the Armed Forces 1.09.1939. ERA, 495-12-482, 59p-60o; Plan of reorganization of the Defence Forces in transition to one-year service, 1.07.1927. ERA, 496-4-408, 20; Development of organization of the Defence Forces after War of Independence (1933). ERA, 1131-1-22, 23.

⁹³ Strength of the Border Guard, 15.12.1939. ERA, 510-1-125, 5-11; Appendix of the Mobilization plan No 2. Formation of the military units, 20.06.1936. ERA, 495-12-417, 143.

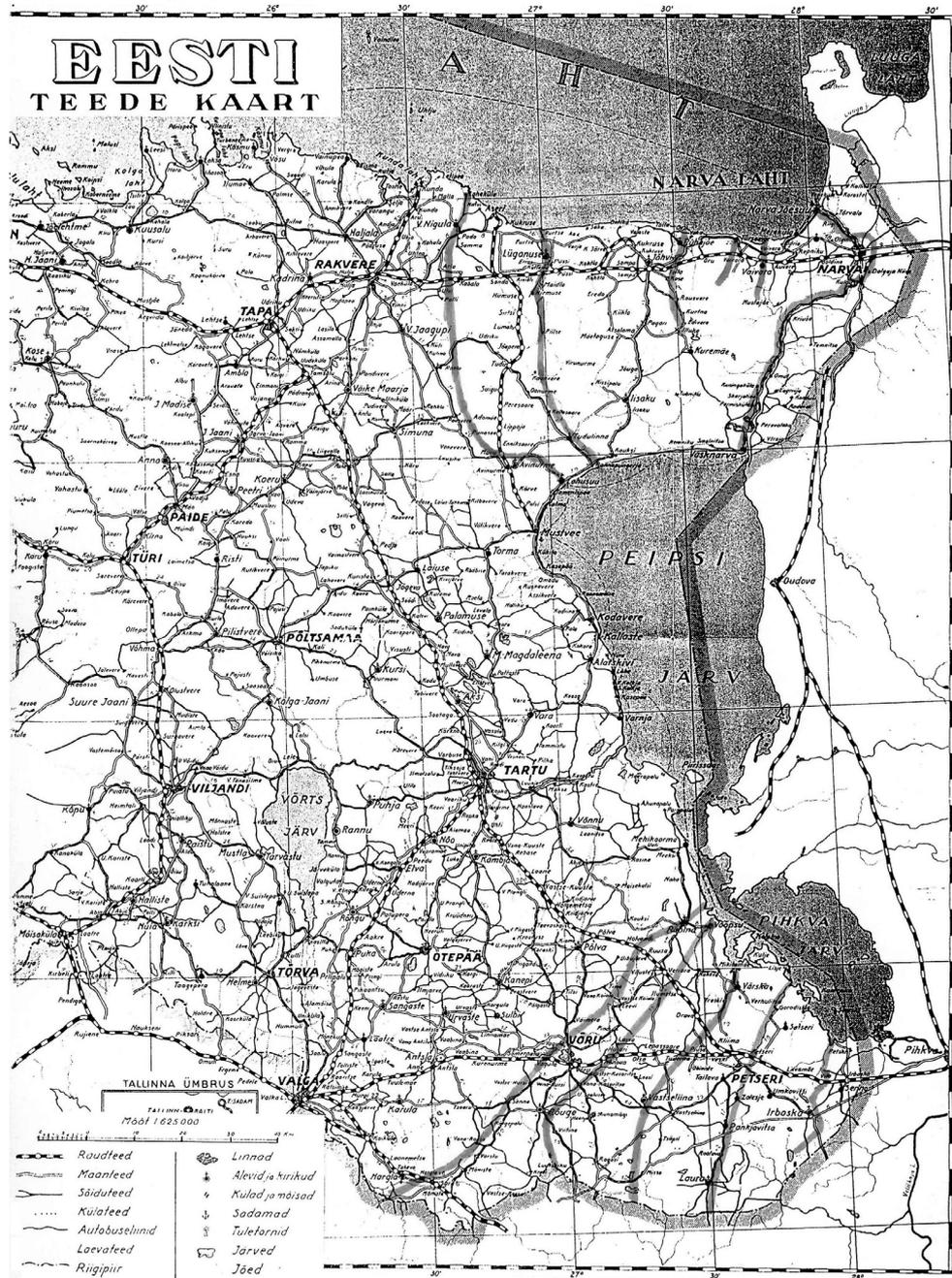


Fig. 1. Planned Estonian defence positions in Narva and Petseri Front in 1939.

The Defence District of the 1st Division stretched from the Gulf of Finland to Mustvee along the coast of Lake Peipsi. The first defence position was planned to be created on the left bank of the River Narva (length 75 km), leaving a 5 km wide and 3–4 km deep bridgehead on the right bank. It was designed to begin with building fortifications on the bridgehead in the spring 1940. In 1939 there were only trenches for one company next to the bridges and one concrete machine-gun bunker (*blokhaus*). On the left bank of the River Narva one *blokhaus* and one machine-gun caponier had been built, also four machine-gun caponiers in the Agusalu swamp for covering the Vasknarva–Kuremäe–Jõhvi road. In 1938 positions for five stationary heavy artillery batteries were built in Narva and to the north of the town. In September 1939 ten more machine-gun caponiers on the riverbank between Narva-Jõesuu and Narva were completed.⁹⁴

It was planned to defend the area between the railway and the sea with main forces of the division and leave the weaker covering forces to the south. In mid-1930 it was planned that in case of abandoning the town Narva, the next defence lines were to be set up along the Mereküla–Laagna line and in the Vaivara Heights (Sinimäed – the Blue Hills). Next positions were on the line of rivers Sõtke, Pühajõgi, Purtse, and Rannapungerja and also on Kunda–Avijõe line. Preparations were made to liquidate enemy landings in Narva-Jõesuu and Mereküla area.⁹⁵

In 1939 the Estonian military leaders considered it unjustifiable to withdraw from the River Narva line. The defence had to be active. If possible (after the assembling of troops was over), the frontline had to be transferred to the enemy territory to the line of Rivers Plyussa and Luga (from Kingissep to the sea). This way it was planned to establish an effective defence line and save troops.⁹⁶

The Defence District of the 2nd Division extended from the north-western coast of Lake Peipsi to the Latvian border (its ground border with Russia being 39 km) and was divided into four defence sectors. The defence sector No 2 (the Lake Velje–Irboska position) was more important as it covered the Pskov–Riga paved road and also the direction of the Irboska–Petseri road. In the Irboska area the directions of the enemy's attack deployed. Defence sector No 3 (Vilo–Optjok position) had to cover Pskov-Petseri railway. Next to the Latvian border and Lake Peipsi (defence sectors 1 and 4) the Defence League and Border Guard units had

⁹⁴ A report of the Inspector of Engineers to Commander-in-Chief, 11.07.1939. ERA, 512-1-333, 469–470; 1st Division Commander's letter to Chief of the General Staff, 28.07.1939. ERA, 512-1-333, 542–544, 551; **Nõmm, T.** Eesti piirikindlustused, 43–46.

⁹⁵ An overview of the Estonian Armed Forces, 1.07.1937. LVVA, 1474-1-1635, 106–109; Protocol on the discussion of the war game in the Narva Defence District 7.–9.05.1934. ERA, 515-1-761, 39–41.

⁹⁶ Operational and tactical evaluation of terrain of the 1st Division (Narva) Front (material of field trip, 1939). ERA, 515-1-825, 175–176; Report of state defence activity 1934–1939. ERA, 2553-1-12, 36–37.

to cover the border, in sector 4 also Peipsi Naval Squadron. Border cover forces had to reach their main positions from Petseri (ca 500 men), and mostly from Võru and Tartu, armour units from Tallinn and Tapa.⁹⁷

The forward edge of the first defence position was envisaged on the line Lake Velje–Badagova–Kurkova–Turok–Davõdova–Lopatova–Mäe–Krupska–Lake Drebi–Külmorg (Cold Valley)–Brook Kolomna–River Optyok with the length 30 km. The building of fortifications on the defence position was in September 1939 still in the stage of preparation. The second defence position was allocated on the Laura–Panikowich–River Piusa line and the subsequent ones up to the River Mustjõe–River Võhandu line. If the defence line were pushed back to the Estonian inland it would be longer and require more troops.⁹⁸

The 3rd Division's main task in the border covering was to fight against the enemy landings on the coast and also against air-borne landings. If there was no direct threat, the division's covering forces could be used as the reserve of the Commander-in-Chief. The Division's district was divided into the northern, western and southern defence sectors. The Division had to defend Tallinn, West Estonian islands, ca 450 km of coastline of the mainland and land border from Ikla to Valga (ca 120 km). In the Northern defence sector the Division had to protect Tallinn from sea and be ready for confronting enemy landings in Paldiski and Loksa areas. In the Western defence sector the Island of Saaremaa as well as Haapsalu and Virtsu areas had to be protected.⁹⁹

Landscape on Estonian southern border was favourable for defence. It was taken into account that the enemy could operate in two naturally separated directions – Pärnu and Viljandi. Therefore it was considered to be possible to strike the enemy's forces separately and start a counterattack. Defence of the Valga junction was considered to be the strategic task of the 3rd Division. In case of counterattack the activities had to be transferred from the Estonian soil and strategic junctions (e.g. Rujiena railway junction) had to be taken. The defence positions had to be on the Limbaži–Valmiera–River Gauja line. It would provide a possibility to straighten the frontline. Should there be a need for long-term defence along the southern line, the River Seda–Lake Burtnieki–River Salaca–River Gauja–Valmiera–Limbaži had to be reached.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Plan of communication of 2nd Division for border covering (1939). ERA, 495-12-880, 68–72.

⁹⁸ An overview of the Estonian Armed Forces, 1.07.1937. LVVA, 1474-1-1635, 109–111; Act of fixation of defence positions of the 2nd Division border fortifications, 9.05.1939. ERA, 512-1-333, 655; Report of the Inspector of Engineers to Commander-in-Chief, 11.08.1939. ERA, 512-1-333, 693.

⁹⁹ Evaluation of 3rd Division border covering situation 24.05.1939, Chief of 3rd Division to Commander-in-Chief 2.06.1939. ERA, 521-1-453, 93–94, 110–111; Excerpt of the 3rd Division's border covering plan for the Harju Military District (1.09.1939). ERA, 521-2-82a, 4–5, 8; Border covering plan of the 3rd Division, 1939. ERA, 521-2-90, 1–22.

¹⁰⁰ Operational evaluation of terrain near Estonian-Latvian border in 3rd Division Defence District. ERA, 521-1-400, 147–149.

In accordance with the covering plan from 1939¹⁰¹, the **Air-Defence's** 1st and 2nd Air Force Squadrons were to accomplish reconnaissance-cooperation and bombing tasks with the combat aircraft and communication tasks with training planes. The 3rd Air Force Squadron was to perform air-defence for Tallinn, attack landings and also fulfil communication tasks. By the order of the Air Defence Chief the units had to relocate to reserve airfields. In reality the out-dated aircraft¹⁰² of the Air Force allowed accomplishing only reconnaissance and communication tasks.

The Air-Defence Artillery Group's task was to defend military objects in Tallinn and the city centre against bombing-raids. Elsewhere in Estonia only machine-guns were used for air-defence.

The Navy's tasks, in accordance with both (the eastern and southern) variants of the border covering plan¹⁰³ in 1939, were: to defend the capital of the republic against the artillery shooting of the enemy's navy, while the fire of the coastal artillery of the Naval Fortifications and minefields set by the fleet created a continuous defence system at sea; to perform reconnaissance and observations at sea; to interfere with activities of the enemy's navy; to defend Estonia's communications at sea and safeguard the movement of merchant ships. In case of the southern variant, the Navy additionally had to prevent the enemy's ships from the intrusion to the Straits of Muhu and their activities in the area of the West-Estonian archipelago.

For reinforcement Naval Fortresses and Navy Fleet Squadron to accomplish the task of the border covering, naval units of the Defence League, and ships and boats of Naval Communications, Border Guard, and Water Connections Service were used.

The task of the Naval Fortresses (Coastal Artilleries) according to covering plan¹⁰⁴ was not to let the enemy's fleet into the Bay of Tallinn from the Aegna Island–Naissaar Island–Suurupi line¹⁰⁵ to shell Tallinn from the sea. In the shooting range of batteries, landings were to be hindered; the Estonian fleet was to be supported; the movement at sea and the minefields were to be defended. For covering activities the group of the Aegna Island, Naissaar and Suurupi were to be created. If cover activities had to be performed in peace-time composition there would be 15 coastal cannons, and 2 anti-aircraft cannons had to be in combat-

¹⁰¹ Covering plan of the Air Defence units (1.09.1939). ERA, 526-1-38, 20–37; Letter of the Chief of the Air Defence to Commander-in-Chief, 1.06.1939. ERA, 526-1-37, 69–70.

¹⁰² In 1939 the Estonian Air Force had 4 fighters, 12 reconnaissance and ground support, 22 training and signal aircraft, mainly old models.

¹⁰³ Border covering plan of the Navy (3.06.1939). ERA, 527-1-1618, 17–38. In 1939 the Estonian Navy had 2 submarines, one torpedo boat, 4 gunboats, 2 minelayers and 2 minesweepers.

¹⁰⁴ ERA, 527-1-1618, 21–25, 29; Mobilization covering plan of the Naval Fortresses 25.04.1939. ERA, 642-1-309, 2–10.

¹⁰⁵ The Island of Aegna – Wulf; the Island of Naissaar – Nargen, the Suurupi Peninsula.

readiness. After calling up the reserves and reaching war-time composition there would be 32 coastal cannons, 3 anti-aircraft cannons, and 11 anti-landing cannons, also searchlights, anti-aircraft and anti-landing teams.

INCREASE OF WAR THREAT IN 1939

In March 1939 the international situation in Europe worsened considerably. Germany occupied Czechoslovakia and, exerting pressure took Klaipeda away from Lithuania on 22 March. German–Polish relations grew more critical. The guarantee given to Poland by Great Britain on 31 March increased the danger of German–Polish war. In the forming situation made Moscow act. On 28 March Estonian and Latvian governments were forwarded notes that warned them not to remise their political, economic and other command to a third state. It was intimated that in that case the Soviet Union would not remain a bystander.¹⁰⁶

Besides the note, the Soviet Union organized a force demonstration against Estonia. In April during the Easter holidays the Red Army carried out field exercise in the region between Pskov and the south-eastern border of Estonia. On 10 April, near the border a simulated infantry and cavalry attack was demonstrated with 3000 infantrymen and cavalrymen participating.¹⁰⁷

Similarly, in 1939 the Soviet Baltic Fleet prepared for the war against Estonia. The Naval Forces Headquarters issued a combat training plan according to which “an expansion of operational basis of the fleet” was trained. On 26–28 March in Kronstadt an operative military game took place in the course of which the capture of islands in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland as well as organizing fire support for the offensive (to Viborg and Rakvere) of the Red Army on the land were trained. The description of the military game situation also included Soviet provocations that materialized later, in the autumn 1939: “a border incident” in the area of Mainila and sinking a ship by a submarine. In August, as part of the general manoeuvres of the fleet, was the training of the fire support to land forces against the Estonian army and German subsidiary forces in the Narva–Rakvere direction and against German combat ships.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Note to Estonian government by the Soviet government 28.03.1939. – In: Molotovi-Ribbentropi paktist baaside lepinguni. Dokumente ja materjale. Toim H. Arumäe. Perioodika, Tallinn, 1989, 16–17; **Arumäe, H.** Poliitilised sündmused Euroopas 1939. – In: Sõja ja rahu vahel, I. Eesti julgeolekupoliitika 1940. aastani. Toim E. Tarvel, T. Tannberg. S-Keskus, Tallinn, 2004, 96–98; **Medijainen, E.** 1939: võimalused ja valikud, I. – Ajalooline Ajakiri, 2000, 1, 29–44; **Medijainen, E.** 1939: võimalused ja valikud, II. – Ajalooline Ajakiri, 2000, 2, 51–54.

¹⁰⁷ Szczekowski’s report to Chief of II Department of Polish GS, 12.04.1939. AAN. Sztab Główny, 616-356, 204–205; Päevaleht, April 13, 1939; **Luts, A.** Heitluste keerises, 64.

¹⁰⁸ **Petrov, P.** Baltijskij flot. Finski gambit, 121–134; **Solonin, M.** 25 ijunja. Glupost’ ili agressija? (Velikaja Otečestvennaja: Neizvestnaja vojna.) Jauza, EKSMO, Moskva, 2008, 74; **Leskinen, J.** Vendade riigisaladus, 279–282.

On 2 August the people's commissar N. Kuznetsov issued a directive for working out an operation plan. Although in the war against Germany and Poland the neutrality of Finland, Estonia and Latvia was regarded as possible, following the government's respective order the naval forces were not to consider it and "expand their operational basis". Military operations were to start without a formal declaration of war. The fleet was to destroy the combatant forces of Border States ("limitrophs"), occupy and hold the islands in the eastern area of the Gulf of Finland, prevent the dislocation of the German fleet on the Aland Islands, Helsinki and Tallinn, support the Red Army from the sea and arrest the adversary's naval transport.¹⁰⁹

This planning could not be related to the Soviet defence objectives but it was clearly a seizure of springboard for attacks, expanding the operational range of the strengthening Baltic Sea Fleet. Having military bases in the Baltic countries enabled to prevent transportation of iron ore from Sweden to Germany and launch bombing raids to Germany.¹¹⁰

In the given situation Estonia's military service was extended in April (actually up to 18 months since October) and it was decided to station some of the south-eastern covering units closer to the border. Fortification works on the north- and south-eastern borders were started.¹¹¹

Soviet military preparations showed no intentions to take the Baltic states' neutrality into consideration and indicated readiness to occupy the Baltic states at any possible German activity in the Baltic direction or against West. During the talks with England and France in the spring-summer 1939 the Soviet Union sought approval of the Western Powers for intrusion into the Baltic states (calling it guaranteeing the Baltic security). In May the Soviet administration was convinced that not the Soviet Union but the Western Powers would be the subsequent object of German attack.¹¹² It is obvious that in the case of the German invasion of Lithuania or Poland, the Red Army and the Baltic Fleet would have preventively attacked both Estonia and Latvia, not depending on the behaviour of these states.¹¹³ In case of emergency the Soviet Union would have instigated a provocation to justify its aggression. Thus Estonia could not have remained neutral but would have required help from Germany. The Baltic states between the Soviet Union

¹⁰⁹ **Petrov, P.** Baltijskij flot. Finski gambit, 332–334.

¹¹⁰ Counsellor Pallo to MFA, 21.07.1939. ERA, 957-14-701, 58–59; Velikaja Otečestvennaja vojna 1941–1945, 1. Surovye ispytaniya. Nauka, Moskva, 1998, 35.

¹¹¹ **Salo, U.** Eesti kaitseväe valmisolek sõjaks ja vastupanuvõimalused 1939. aastal, 80–82, 195–197.

¹¹² **Arumäe, H.** Poliitilised sündmused Euroopas 1939, 102–106; **Medijainen, E.** 1939: võimalused ja valikud, II, 49–58, 61–62, 66–68, 99; **Åselius, G.** The rise and fall of the Soviet Navy in the Baltic, 163–164.

¹¹³ **Ahmann, R.** Nazi Germany policy towards the Baltic states, 58–59; see also **Laretei, H.** Kirde-Euroopa sõja puhkemisel. – In: Eesti riik ja rahvas II maailmasõjas, II. Toim R. Maasing, E. Blumfeldt, H. Kauri. Kirjastus EMP, Stockholm, 1955, 36–37.

and Germany had no good options, it would have been impossible to fight against two superpowers simultaneously.

Similarly, the Finnish military command also expected that in the German-Soviet military conflict the Soviet Union would first attack neutrality-claiming Finland and Estonia.¹¹⁴

In Germany interest towards the Baltic states increased when German-Polish relations deteriorated. Planning anti-Poland military offensives on 11 April 1939 Hitler foresaw possible action against Lithuania and Latvia. Along with some developments it would have become necessary to occupy Lithuania and Latvia until the old border of Courland (i.e. in Latvia Courland together with the ports of Liepāja and Ventspils) and annex these territories to the *Reich*. Two days later since issuing the directive Hitler gave up the plan. To prevent the interference action by the Baltic Fleet it was important to make reconnaissance and guard raids with submarines.¹¹⁵ In May Hitler made the final decision to wage war against Poland, the decision for a subsequent military campaign against the Western Powers had been made already earlier, in 1938.¹¹⁶

The German leadership considered it more useful to support the maintenance and strengthening neutrality of the border states. *The Kriegsmarine* command stated in June 1939 that Germany lacks strength to prevent the occupation when at war with the West or on two fronts simultaneously. At the Baltic Sea the *Kriegsmarine* could confine itself to defensive measures only. The pass for the Soviet fleet to the Baltic Sea could be blocked only in cooperation with Estonia and Finland. Germany needed continuous shipping at the Baltic Sea. Since from the military point of view Germany could not support the Baltic countries and Finland in their conflict with the Soviet Union, it was interested in avoiding engaging these states in acts of war as long as possible. The Baltic states were economically important for Germany as sources of food and raw materials, particularly in the case of a possible war in the west. Thus the Baltic states' foreign and defence policies leaned in favour of Germany, from where besides Estonia also Latvia bought military supplies. On 7 June Germany signed non-aggression pacts with Estonia and Latvia.¹¹⁷

Numerous visits that the German military paid to Estonia and other Baltic countries in spring-summer 1939 were not planned to extend military cooperation but to demonstrate political interests. The Chief of General Staff of the German

¹¹⁴ See materials for Finnish-Estonian staff exercise 26.02.193: **Leskinen, J.** Vendade riigisaladus, 241–242.

¹¹⁵ Hitler's directive for preparing armed forces for war 11.04.1939; German Navy Commander's directive 16.05.1939. – In: **Dašitšev, V. I.** Strategija Gitlera. Put' k katastrofe 1933–1945. Istoričeskie očerki, dokumenty I materialy, 2. Nauka, Moskva, 34–39, 53, 58–60; **Ahmann, R.** Nazi Germany policy towards the Baltic states, 59.

¹¹⁶ **Kershaw, I.** Hitler, 2. 1936–1945: karistus. Varrak, Tallinn, 2008, 172–174, 198–201.

¹¹⁷ See **Ahmann, R.** Nazi Germany policy towards the Baltic states, 51–52, 59–64, 66–69; **Ilmjärv, M.** Hääletu alistumine, 534–535, 550–560.

Army, General Franz Halder's visit to Estonia and Finland at the end of June has been variously interpreted. The aim of the visit was supposed to be assessment of possibilities of Estonian and Finnish military resistance. Halder had also wished the continuation of the hitherto Germany-oriented neutrality policy.¹¹⁸

ISSUE OF DEFENCE OF WESTERN-ESTONIAN ISLANDS IN 1939

The events of March 1939 in Europe placed Estonia in a security-politically difficult situation. It was not believed that Estonia could maintain neutrality in the case of a major military conflict in Europe. At the beginning of 1939 the General Staff considered the probability that sooner or later the Estonian territory would become the site of German-Soviet collision. It was supposed that the Gulf of Finland had a great significance as a possible route for both Germany and the Soviet Union. Therefore both parties had recently made attempts to establish their control over Estonian and Finnish islands. The Headquarters foresaw that when the war broke out in Europe, the Soviet Union was fast to seize all the passages from the Gulf of Finland, i.e. occupy Saaremaa and Hiiumaa as well as fortified Naissaar and Aegna.¹¹⁹

In March the question of fortification of the Baltic Sea islands was raised. Diplomatic circles discussed the German interest in air force bases in Saaremaa and Hiiumaa as well as in Finnish islands. The information from Colonel Saarsen disclosed that German representatives had tried to convince Estonians and Finns for half a year in the need of full fortification of the islands, with the help of Germany. The deputy minister of foreign affairs, O. Öpik, confirmed repeated interest by the Soviet Union, Germany and England but not any concrete request as to the consolidation of the islands.¹²⁰

As was known, in March 1938 the Soviet Union already held secret talks with Finland about a defence and mutual assistance pact and renting some of the islands in the Gulf of Finland. The information about it was published in the Finnish press at the end of March 1939.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ **Ahmann, R.** Nazi Germany policy towards the Baltic states, 69–70; **Rauch, G. v.** Halders Besuch in Estland Juni 1939. – In: *Reval und die Baltischen Länder*. Hrsg. von J. v. Hehn, C. J. Kenéz. J. G. Herder-Institut, Marburg, 1980, 181–193; **Ilmjärv, M.** Hääletu alistumine, 504, 542, 550–551; **Myllyniemi, S.** Die baltische Krise 1938–1941, 48–49.

¹¹⁹ Szczekowski report from period I.I–I.V 1939, 10.05.1939. AAN, Sztab Główny, 616-326, 324–325.

¹²⁰ Szczekowski report to Chief of II Department of Polish GS 02.04.1939. AAN, Sztab Główny, 616-356, 191–193; Report of the Polish ambassador in Tallinn Przesmycki 20.05.1939. AAN, 616-356, 217.

¹²¹ See **Arumäe, H.** Baasidelepingu eelmäng. – *Tuna*, 2001, 4, 23–31; 2002, 1, 37–49; **Tannberg, T.** Nõukogude Liidu ettevalmistused sõjaks, 321–322.

Already in 1934 the General Staff had investigated the 1917 experience of the German amphibious assault landing in Saaremaa. Owing to the more critical international situation, on 21–23 March 1939 the war game of the 3rd Division was organized to study defence possibilities of Saaremaa against superior enemy forces. The defence of the island against the Red Army landing division, transport of troops from the mainland and counteroffensive were tested. As a result of the war game it was found that Saaremaa needed some kind of organization for its independent defence or prevention of the enemy until the arrival of reinforcements. It appeared that supporting Saaremaa from the mainland with manpower and supplies was a complicated task.¹²²

The General Staff decided to have a garrison for the defence of Saaremaa. It was to consist of a single infantry battalion and a single artillery group. The question about stationing the 6th Single Infantry battalions from Pärnu to Saaremaa was raised.¹²³ Factually, in the spring and summer 1939 no permanent military garrison was stationed to Saaremaa. In May the first step to consolidate the defence was taken – the Command of Defence of Saaremaa was established so that in the case of war a regiment could be formed. Only at the beginning of September a machine-gunner platoon and riflemen platoon were stationed in Kuressaare.

On 19–21 July 1939 Saaremaa was visited by Laidoner, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, to get acquainted with the preparations for the formation of the Saaremaa Regiment and options of defence of Saaremaa. Laidoner did not think Saaremaa was a suitable base for either naval or air force and believed that it was highly probable that in a would-be war no amphibious landings were going to take place in Saaremaa.¹²⁴ The steps taken could be assessed as demonstrative to show Estonia's aspirations for the protection its neutrality. Actually, very little could be done for defence.

The policy of the German leadership as regards the Baltic states was very changeable in 1939. At the end of July they agreed to divide the Baltic states and other border states with the Soviet Union to consolidate war campaigns against Poland and the West. Although at first Germany wished, in addition to Lithuania, to exert control also over half of Latvia, later both Latvia and finally also Lithuania were given up to the Soviet sphere of influence. Stalin wanted to gain control over the Baltic states without exercising military force and in August the deal with Germany (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) was made.

¹²² Overview about 3rd Division's war game on 1939, 15.07.1939. ERA, 673-1-702, 178–196; ERA, 531-1-19, 11–15.

¹²³ Szczekowski report from period I.I–I.V 1939, 10.05.1939. AAN, Sztab Główny, 616-326, 335; Report of Latvian military attache Veckalninš to Chief of Information Department of the Latvian GS, 13.07.1939. LVVA, 1469-1-2689, 10; **Nõmm, A.** Nõukogude Liidu sõjalised ettevalmistused, 33–34.

¹²⁴ Summary about Commander-in-Chief's visit to Saaremaa 19.–21.07.1939. ERA, 531-1-19, 11–15.

By the end of September 1939 the Soviet Union concentrated overwhelming forces on the borders of Estonia and other Baltic states to solve by force if necessary the issue of spheres of influence granted to it by the secret protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Although Estonia's Defence Forces had for two decades prepared to repel Soviet aggression, the Estonian leadership gave up resistance and on 28 September signed a mutual assistance pact or agreement of bases with the Soviet Union.¹²⁵ Estonia's strategic situation after the conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and fast collapse of Poland was hopeless – there was no real support against an overwhelming adversary to be found anywhere.

CONCLUSION

In general, Estonian military command estimated security threats adequately. In the 1930s it was justified to consider the Soviet Union as a more potential aggressor. The USSR Stalinist administration intended to disseminate communist regime by force, beginning with recapturing the territories including the Baltic countries, lost in the course of the collapse of Tsarist Russia. The threat gradually increased in the second half of the 1930s in connection with the militarization in the Soviet Union and growing tensions in international relationships. In the mid-decade Estonia did not exclude the threat by Nazi Germany either. However, after 1936 their mutual relationships improved and Germany was regarded more as a possible supporter than aggressor. It was Germany's support that Estonia could count on in resisting the overwhelming Soviet pressure since the western powers offered no hope. Estonia's neutrality was of little use because both the Soviet Union and Germany would have violated it if necessary.

Greater cooperation among the Baltic states, Finland and Poland would have improved the situation but the Great Powers' support would have been indispensable, at the same time neither the Soviets nor Germany were interested in any such alliance. Owing to political differences and disparate estimation of threat, attempts at military cooperation failed. Although Germany could be a threat to Estonia, it did not make anti-Estonian military plans in the second half of the 1930s. Germany intended when in need to attack Lithuania, and also Latvia up to the spring 1939.

Thus defence planning of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania generally corresponded to the threat in the second half of the 1930s. Estonia did not need to fear an immediate attack by Germany but in the case of German invasion of Latvia and

¹²⁵ According to the agreement of bases the Soviet Union obtained the right for 10 years to set up naval bases and airports on West-Estonian islands and Paldiski. To protect the basis up to 25,000 servicemen of land forces and air forces could be stationed for the time of war in Estonia. Temporarily (until 2 years) the Soviet Baltic Sea Fleet could use the port of Tallinn.

Lithuania, Estonia was threatened by an immediate attack of the Red Army from the east. Latvia should have paid more attention to the threat from the east and fortify its eastern border because in the former case its invasion by the Red Army was expected.

Estonia in comparison to the other Baltic states was drawing up defence plans in the second half of the 1930s more actively, relying on the experiences of the War of Independence. Although the primary strategic task was to defend the positions along the border, it was planned to take the defence line over the eastern border to the Soviet border area and over the southern border to North Latvia. Latvian and Lithuanian planners intended to fight the enemy in the depth of their territories as natural obstacles close their borders failed. Latvians planned to take warfare also to North Lithuania in the case of invasion by Germany. To realize active defence against overwhelming adversary it would have been indispensable to get the allies' support and maintain land and sea communications with friendly states. In general, all the Baltic states hoped not to fight single-handed against the Soviet Union or Germany.

Estonian mobilization plan no longer measured up to the demands of 1939. It was important to speed up mobilization but it demanded redeployment of troops and stores. Latvian exterritorial system of mobilization was still more out of place because the enemy could derange it with air-raids. Lithuanian system of mobilization was the fastest and most effective thanks to most extensive implementation of the principle of territorial manning. High mobilization readiness was proved also by partial mobilizations in 1939.

Border covering forces were weak in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to check the advance of a strong adversary pushing forward. It was necessary to man border covering units before warfare started (calling up reservists to training).

Since the spring of 1939 the threat of Soviet aggression against Estonia and Latvia grew considerably. After concluding the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the subsequent border agreement with Germany, the Soviet Union was at liberty after having ruined Poland to decide the fate of the Baltic countries. In September 1939, the Estonian leadership gave up resistance and signed an agreement of bases considering that the defence of Estonia without the allies' support was hopeless.

The Soviet leadership did not make any difference between the Baltic states according to their relations with the Soviet Union or Germany – all of them were occupied and brutally sovietized. In order to calm down its victims and foreign countries, the Soviet Union used clever tactics in 1939–1940. Nevertheless, its final aim was annexation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX 1

GROUND FORCES OF THE BALTIC STATES IN SEPTEMBER 1939

| Military units | Estonia | Latvia | Lithuania |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| Territory, km ² | 47 549 | 65 791 | 55 670 |
| Population, m | 1.134 | 2.0 | 2.575 |
| Endanged ground border*, km ² | 113 | 456 | 525/272 |
| In peace-time | | | |
| Authorized personnel | 15 717 | 22 127 | 22 508** |
| Divisions | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Infantry regiments | 2 | 12 | 9 |
| Cavalry regiments | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Single battalions | 12 | | |
| Artillery regiments | – | 5 | 4 |
| Artillery groups | 5 | 1 | – |
| Tank (armour) company's | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| Armoured trains | 2 | 4 | – |
| Air-defence batteries | 3 | 10 | 8 |
| Anti-tank company's | 3 | – | – |
| Members of Defence League | 42 600 | 45 000 | 42 000 |
| In war-time | | | |
| Potential forces | 150 000 | 200 000 | 250 000 |
| Authorized personnel | 104 364 | 143 418 | 125 433 |
| Division HQ | 3 | 7 | 4 |
| Brigade HQ | 6 | – | – |
| Infantry regiments | 16 | 21 | 19 |
| Cavalry regiments | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Single battalions | 1 | 3 | 12 |
| Cavalry squadrons | 6 | | |
| Artillery regiments | – | 7 | 5 |
| Artillery groups | 18 | 5 | |
| Tank (armour) company's | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| Armoured trains | 10 | 5 | – |
| Air-defence batteries | 4 | | |
| Anti-tank company's | 5 | – | – |

* Estonian border with USSR, Latvian border with USSR and Poland; Lithuanian border Poland/Germany.

** In list.

Sources: **Salo, U.** Eesti kaitseväe valmisolek sõjaks ja vastupanuvõimalused 1939. aastal. MA thesis. Manuscript in University of Tartu. Tartu, 2005; **Andersons, E.** Latvijas brunotie spēki un to priekšvēsture. Daugavas Vanagu Apgāds, Toronto, 1983.

**ESTONIAN ARMED FORCES PEACE-TIME AND WAR-TIME
ORGANIZATION IN SEPTEMBER 1939**

| Peace-time | War-time |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Command | |
| Commander in Chief of AF | Commander in Chief of AF |
| Armed Forces Staff | Armed Forces Staff |
| 3 division headquarters | 3 division headquarters |
| 8 military district headquarters | 6 brigade headquarters |
| Infantry | |
| 2 infantry regiments* | 16 infantry regiments |
| 12 single infantry battalions | 4 reserve infantry regiments |
| 3 anti-tank companies* | Single infantry battalion |
| | 5 anti-tank companies |
| Artillery | |
| 2 artillery groups type A* | 12 light artillery groups |
| 2 artillery groups type B | 6 heavy artillery groups |
| Artillery group type C | Reserve artillery group |
| | Narva artillery group |
| | 2 art. measure commandos |
| Cavalry | |
| Cavalry regiment* | Cavalry regiment |
| | 6 single squadrons |
| | Reserve cavalry battalion (division) |
| Armour | |
| Armoured train regiment* | Armoured train regiment |
| Auto-tank regiment* | Auto-tank regiment |
| Engineers | |
| Signal battalions | 2 signal battalions |
| Single signal company | AF Staff signal company |
| Pioneer battalion | Reserve signal battalion |
| | 2 pioneer battalions |
| | Reserve pioneer battalion |

APPENDIX 2. *Continued*

Air defence

Air-defence Headquarters
3 Air Force squadrons (divisions)*
Flying School
Air Force Base
Air-defence artillery group*

Air-defence Headquarters
3 Air Force squadrons (divisions)
Flying School
Air Force Base
Air-defence artillery group

Peace-time

Navy and Naval Fortresses

Navy Headquarters
Navy fleet squadron (division)*
Peipsi fleet squadron (division)*
Navy equipage
Naval base
Naval Fortresses Staff
3 Naval Fortr. commandants staffs

War-time

Navy

Navy Headquarters
Navy fleet squadron (division)
Peipsi fleet squadron (division)
Navy equipage
Naval base
Naval Fortresses Staff
3 Naval Fortresses commandants staffs

Military Institutions of Education

High Military School
Military School
Combat School

High Military School
Military Technical School

Rear services and defence

Guard battalion

Guard battalion
8 military districts headquarters

* In peace-time covering units.

Sources: ERA, 495-12-479, 7, 21–23; 495-12-482; 495-12-489, 1–3, 13–20.

**OHUHINNANG JA EESTI KAITSEPLAANID
1930. AASTATEL**

Urmas SALO

Artikli eesmärk on anda ülevaade Eesti sõjalisest planeerimisest 1930. aastatel ja hinnata kaitseplaanide sobivust tolle aja reaalsuses. On püütud analüüsida sõjalis-poliitiliste suhete mõju kaitseplaneerimisele ja vaadeldud, kellega Eestis sõjaks valmistuti ning millisena nähti tulevast konfliktist. On antud ülevaade Eesti riigikaitse põhiprintsiipidest ja kaitseplaanide põhiideedest, kaitseväge üldisest organi-

satsioonist, mobilisatsiooniplaanist ning piirikatteplaanidest. Samuti on juttu sõjalisest koostööst teiste riikidega, eelkõige Läti ja Soomega, aga ka Saksamaaga. Eraldi on vaadeldud Eesti strateegilises olukorras ja planeerimises toimunud muudatusi 1939. aastal. Eesti sõjalise planeerimise paremaks hindamiseks on ülevaatlikult käsitletud ka Läti ja Leedu kaitse- ning mobilisatsiooniplaane. Artikkel põhineb autori Tartu Ülikooli ajaloo osakonnas valminud magistritööl Eesti kaitseväge valmisolekust sõjaks 1939. aastal.

Kokkuvõttes hinnati Eesti sõjaväe juhtkonnas sõjalist ohtu üldiselt adekvaatselt. 1930. aastatel peeti õigustatult potentsiaalseimaks kallaletungijaks Nõukogude Liitu. Nõukogude Liidu stalinlik juhtkond kavatses kommunistlikku korda relva jõul kehtestada, esmajärjekorras tagasi haarata Tsaari-Venemaa kaotatud alad, sh Balti riigid. Oht kasvas järk-järgult 1930. aastate teisel poolel seoses militariseerimisega Nõukogude Liidus ja rahvusvahelise olukorra pingestumisega. Aastakümne keskel ei välistatud Eestis ohtu ka natsliku Saksamaa poolt, kuid 1936. aastast paranenud suhete tõttu nähti Saksamaas siiski rohkem võimalikku abistajat. Just Saksamaa toetusel loodeti Nõukogude Liidu survele vastu seista, sest lääneriikidelt polnud enam abi loota. Ka neutraliteedist oli vähe kasu, sest nii Nõukogude Liit kui Saksamaa oleksid seda vajadusel rikkunud.

Balti riikide, Soome ja Poola tugev koostöö oleks küll olukorda parandanud, kuid vajalik oli ka suurriikide toetus, samas polnud ei Nõukogude Liit ega Saksamaa sellisest liidust huvitatud. Poliitiliste erimeelsuste ja erineva ohuhinnangu tõttu ei õnnestunud sõjalist koostööd luua. Ehkki Saksamaa võis perspektiivis Eesti iseseisvust ohustada, ei kavandanud Saksa väejuhatuse 1930. aastate teisel poolel Eesti-vastaseid sõjaplaane. Saksamaa kavatses küll vajadusel rünnata Leedut ja kuni 1939. aasta kevadeni ka Lätit.

Eesti, Läti ja Leedu kaitseplaneerimine vastas seega üldiselt ohule 1930. aastate teisel poolel. Eestil polnud Saksamaa vahetat kallaletungi vaja karta ja Saksamaa sissetungi korral Lätisse ja Leedusse ähvardas Eestit kohene Punaarmee rünnak. Läti oleks pidanud ohule idast ja idapiiri kindlustamisele siiski rohkem tähelepanu pöörama, sest ka teda ootas sel juhul Punaarmee sissetung.

Eesti kavandas oma kaitseplaanides 1930. aastate teisel poolel Balti riikidest kõige aktiivsemat tegevust, tuginedes seejuures Vabadussõja kogemustele. Ehkki esmane strateegiline ülesanne oli kaitsta piiriäärseid kaitsepositsioone, kavatseti kaitsejoon esimesel võimalusel viia nii üle idapiiri Nõukogude Liidu piirialale kui ka üle lõunapiiri Põhja-Lätisse. Läti ja Leedu planeerijad kavatsesid kaitseks sobivate looduslike takistuste puudumisel võidelda vaenlasega oma territooriumi sügavuses, lätlased Saksamaa vastu ka Põhja-Leedus. Aktiivse kaitse teostamiseks ülekaaluka vaenlase vastu oli aga hädavajalik liitlaste toetus ja maismaa- ning mereühenduste alalhoidmine sõbralike riikidega.

Eesti mobilisatsiooniplaan ei vastanud 1939. aastal enam aja nõuetele. Mobilisatsiooni oli vaja kiirendada, kuid see nõudis väeosade ja ladude ümberpaigutamist. Läti eksterritoriaalne mobilisatsioonisüsteem oli aga veel ebakohasem, sest

vaenlane võis seda õhurünnakutega segada. Leedu mobilisatsioonisüsteem oli kõige kiirem ja efektiivsem tänu territoriaalse komplekteerimise põhimõtte kõige laiemale rakendamisele. Suurt mobilisatsioonivalmidust tõestasid ka 1939. aastal läbi viidud osalised mobilisatsioonid.

Piirikattejõud olid nii Eestil, Lätil kui ka Leedul tugeva vastase edasitungi pidurdamiseks nõrgad. Enne sõjategevuse algust oli hädavajalik piirikatteüksusi varjatud mobilisatsiooniga täiendada, st reservlaste õppustele kutsumisega.

1939. aasta kevadest kasvas Eestile ja Lätile sõjaoht Nõukogude Liidu poolt märgatavalt. Kuna Saksamaa andis Molotovi-Ribbentropi pakti ja järgneva piirilepinguga Nõukogude Liidule vabad käed, oli pärast Poola hävingut Balti riikide saatus ette määratud. Eesti juhtkond loobus vastupanust ja sõlmis baasidelepingu, kuna ilma liitlasteta peeti Eesti kaitsmist 1939. aasta septembris lootusetuks.