

THE BALTIC STATES MILITARY AND THEIR FOREIGN AND DEFENCE POLICIES 1933–1938

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The present article primarily examines the military relations between Estonia and the Nazi Germany, and the military cooperation between Estonia and Latvia. Furthermore, the question why the forging of a Baltic military alliance miscarried, is addressed.

It is difficult to study the defence policies of the Baltic states in the 1930s, and the relations among various military leaders at the same period. A big part of the documentation covering the 1939–1940 period was destroyed in all three Baltic countries. The activities of the special or intelligence service have always been concealed from the eyes of the general public. Materials which could enlighten the researcher and through him the public have also often been destroyed or are not for political reasons available for study. Investigation of the military intelligence services of the Baltic states is also made difficult by the fact that most of the related materials were destroyed already before the events of 1940. However, a part of these materials has been preserved, and together with the related documents in foreign archives, are throwing some light on the issue of the foreign intelligence gathering operations in Estonia. At this point the non-existence of a sufficiently extensive investigative work covering the mutual relations, military cooperation and intelligence endeavors among the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian military between the two World Wars must be acknowledged. However, some information regarding the Baltic military cooperation can be obtained from Edgar Anderson's article "Military policies and plans of the Baltic States on the eve of World War II" published in the periodical *Lituanus* in 1974. At the beginning of the 1980s the same article by Anderson appeared in a complemented version of his voluminous work: "Latvijas Vēsture 1920–1940. Ārpolitika II" (Latvian History: Latvian Foreign Policy). Because at the time Anderson was preparing and publishing his findings, the Soviet archives were still closed to the researchers, and his work depended on the information gathered from the Western sources, and on the rather meager data of the Baltic exile community. Thus, dealing with the Baltic states and their military during the period between the wars, Anderson

focused mainly on certain selected aspects of the subject, like respective military-geographical positions, the prevailing political relationships, and on the extent and quality of armaments existing in each Baltic state during the observed period. He also lightly touched on military relationships between the Baltic states and the Great Powers.

The present article primarily examine military relations between Estonia and the Nazi Germany, and the military cooperation between Estonia and Latvia. Furthermore, the question why the forging of a Baltic military alliance miscarried, is addressed. Also the views of the Great Powers – the Soviet Union, Great Britain and Germany – concerning the military cooperation of the Baltic states are considered. The Estonian-Finnish military collaboration has been treated with sufficient thoroughness by the Finnish historian Jari Leskinen, thus not requiring further consideration.¹ Similarly the subject of Estonian-Polish military cooperation has received adequate coverage in the work of the Estonian historian Raimo Pullat, and therefore does not demand further detailed study in the present article.²

MILITARY RELATIONS BETWEEN ESTONIA AND GERMANY

The Versailles Treaty brought many restrictions in the area of military preparedness to Germany. Some relief was provided by the Rapallo Treaty, which became the basis of the German-Soviet Union military cooperation, and thereby caused profound suspicion against Germany among the Estonian and Latvian military men. Consequently, Estonia and Latvia considered Poland as their foremost ally, whereas both Weimar's Germany and the Soviet Union thought of Poland as their primary enemy. For this reason the relations between the *Reichswehr* of Weimar Republic and the military circles in Estonia and Latvia were restrained, and were mainly limited to reciprocal visits. For example in 1924 the German navy cruiser "Thetis" visited Tallinn.³ After Hitler's rise to power in 1933, the growth of the German armed forces accelerated, bringing about changes in military relations among all countries under observation. The leadership of *Reichswehr* began to show interest in the small states on the shores of the Baltic Sea. In 1933 Germany was anxious to get the order from Estonia for two U-boats, which were going to be built by a Dutch boat-building company, the *Ingeneurskantoon voor Scheepsbow*, a concern financed by the German capital.⁴

¹ See Leskinen, J. *Vaiettu Suomen silta. Suomen ja Viron salainen sotilaallinen yhteistoiminta Neuvostoliiton varalta vuosina 1930–1939*. Helsinki, 1997.

² See Pullat, R. *Versailles'st Westerplatteni. Eesti ja Poola suhted kahe maailmasõja vahel*. Tallinn, 2001.

³ Wedding's report, June 3, 1924. US National Archives II, College Park, Maryland (NA II) RG-242 T-120 R-3883, K076575–K076576.

⁴ Chef der Marineleitung to the Auswärtiges Amt, August 22, 1933; Reinebeck's report, May 12, 1934. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-3883, K076705; K076740–K076742. About the Ingeneurskantoon voor Scheepsbow see Forsén, B., Forsén, A. *Saksan ja Suomen salainen sukellusveneyhteistyö*. Porvoo; Helsinki; Juva, 1999, 11.

But this firm was not acceptable to Estonian authorities, who ordered these U-boats from Great Britain instead.

On July 21, 1934 Lieutenant General Werner von Blomberg, the German Minister of War, arrived on board the German warship "Hela" in Tallinn, later also in Helsinki and Stockholm on a so-called "unofficial visit".⁵ Very little documentary information can be found about his visit to Tallinn. The visitor was received by the Commander-in-Chief Laidoner at his estate. Laidoner had got to know Blomberg at the Disarmament Conference. Blomberg also wished to meet Julius Seljamaa, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. According to Colonel Richard Maasing, the Chief of II Department (Intelligence) of General Staff, Blomberg had declared that Germany desired to retain good relations with Estonia, that Germany was against Estonia's joining the Eastern Pact or the French-Soviet Union bloc, that Germany was ready to come to Estonia's aid in case of the Soviet invasion, and that Germany was ready to sell to Estonia U-boats and other armament at reduced prices.⁶ It is possible that Blomberg's visit was to demonstrate Germany's opposition to the planned Eastern Pact: to show that Germany was not indifferent toward Finland and Estonia. This supposition is seemingly supported by another German visit to Estonia: on June 14 of the same year the German embassy in Tallinn had presented a note to Estonian Foreign Ministry, which requested permission for the German cruiser "Königsberg" to visit the Tallinn harbor, and a fleet of German travelers to visit the Narva harbor.⁷ The Estonian General Staff agreed to "Königsberg's" visit to Tallinn, but vetoed the German trawler to visit Narva harbor, primarily to avoid incensing the Soviet Union. Blomberg on board of "Hela" had barely left Tallinn, when "Königsberg" took its place in the Tallinn harbor. The Captain of this ship, Otto von Schrader also visited General Laidoner. He announced that Germany hoped, for Estonians' willingness to forget past injustices committed by the Germans, and that they are ready to follow new paths toward cooperation and mutual friendship.⁸

The year of 1935 proved to be a period of vacillations for the Estonian military leadership. The conclusion of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement was the event that brought on the reappraisal of Estonian defence policies. This circumstance is best characterized by the interview of General Laidoner published in "Journal de Geneve", in which he stated: "Warships in Kiel are balanced by the warships in Kronstadt."⁹ In his turn Colonel Maasing assessed the situation by announcing to the United States military attaché in October 1935, that Germany will become a militarily strong state within the next ten years.¹⁰

⁵ Memorandum by Seljamaa (Conversation with Reinebeck), July 20, 1934. Eesti Riigiarhiiv (Estonian State Archive), Tallinn (ERA) 957-12-380, 48; Postimees, 1934, July 24.

⁶ Shipp's report, March 8, 1935. US National Archives I, Washington DC (NA I) RG-165 M-1508 R-10, 007.

⁷ Sinka to Foreign Ministry, June 25, 1934. ERA 957-14-85, 19.

⁸ Firebrace's report, December 18, 1934. Public Record Office, Foreign Office London (PRO FO) 371/18231, N 7122/131/59.

⁹ Le Journal de Geneve, 1935, June 29.

¹⁰ Shipp's report, October 11, 1935. NA I RG-165 M-1508 R-4, 0237.

Germany itself began to show interest in the Latvian, Estonian and Finnish armies. In 1935 the German government accredited Major Horst Rössing to serve as a military attaché to Latvia, Estonia and Finland.¹¹ In 1937 Germany accredited Navy Captain Reimar von Bonin as a naval attaché to Latvia, Estonia and Finland.¹² Major Rössing started to promote the idea, that only powerful Germany, and not the helpless League of Nations, would be able to support the small Baltic states in case of a military threat from the east.¹³ Although in his report written in November 1935 Rössing stated, that his talks with the Lieutenant-General Nikolai Reek and Colonel Maasing proved that the events of 1935 had not as yet prompted the Estonian military leadership to take sides: "In the near future the Estonian military leadership does not want to get involved in the East nor in the West, Estonia wants to watch the moves of the Great Powers in the coming years and orient itself accordingly. [...] Estonia considers itself in a preferred position because of the good relations between Germany and Poland. [...] Poland presents a counterweight against the East."¹⁴ Estonian military leadership held a positive opinion of the foreign policy of German National Socialists, whereas it deemed political and military cooperation with Lithuania worthless. Starting with 1933, Hitler's policies were welcomed by Estonian military leadership."¹⁵

The changes in the sentiments of the Estonian political and military leadership are reflected in the reports of the British military attachés. The memorandums of Major R. Firebrace show that at the end of 1934 the Estonian military leadership was seriously worried about the manifestation of chauvinist tendencies in the Soviet Union, but at the same time felt also uneasy about Germany. His reports claim that Estonia still believes Great Britain and France will support Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Finland in case of a conflict with the Soviet Union.¹⁶ But in February 1935 Firebrace noted that the Estonian military leadership no longer believed that Great Britain will be in the position to help Estonia militarily: "Here a recognition has taken hold that a small state like Estonia should have a Great Power backing it, that would deliver effective support in case of a war. Estonians feel that Great Britain is not able to fill this role, and thus all eyes are turned toward Germany as a worthy opponent of the Soviet Union."¹⁷ In November 1935, discussing Estonian defence policies, Colonel Maasing admitted to Lieutenant-Colonel Godfrey, the new British military attaché, that Estonia, in case of a Soviet attack, is hoping for the support of Finland, and that it is imperative for Germany to bottle up the Soviet navy in the Finnish Bay. Maasing also stated

¹¹ See Meri's report, February 6, 1935. ERA 957-14-6, 65.

¹² Ahmann, R. *Nichtangriffspakte: Entwicklung und operative Nutzung in Europa 1922–1939. Mit einem Ausblick auf die Renaissance des Nichtangriffsvertrages nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg.* Baden-Baden, 1988, 654.

¹³ West's report, August 29, 1936. PRO FO 371/980/56, N4514/980/56.

¹⁴ Rössing's report, November 21, 1935. NA II RG- 242 T-120 R-4240, L087458–L087461.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Firebrace's report, December 18, 1934. PRO FO 371/18231, N 7122/131/59.

¹⁷ Firebrace's report, February 22, 1935. PRO FO 371/19400, N144/845/59.

that Estonia cannot expect support from Denmark, Norway and Sweden, all pacifistically disposed Scandinavian countries, as well as from Lithuania, a state friendly with the Soviet Union, while military alliance with Latvia will come into force only when the Soviet Union attacks either or both partners of the alliance. Godfrey's memorandum also points out that the Estonian military leadership was racked by doubts and fears about Poland as a fully reliable ally, while at the same time no longer viewing Germany as an arch enemy.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Estonians still hoped that Germany and Poland will eventually overcome their antagonism and reach an agreement.

However, on February 24, 1936, in his Independence Day address Commander-in-Chief Laidoner spoke of the centuries-long mistrust of the Estonians of Germany. This speech received attention in the German press. It particularly quoted and criticized Laidoner's insinuation about "both powerful neighbors by whom Estonia feels threatened."¹⁹ But barely a few weeks later, after Germany had occupied the demilitarized zone of Rhineland, the attitude of the Estonian military leadership toward Germany had changed radically. Dr. Hans Frohwein who in March 1936 had become the German ambassador in Tallinn, wrote in the middle of March to the *Auswärtiges Amt* about his talks with Laidoner. The purpose of these talks had been to find out how the Estonian military leadership viewed the events of March 7 in Rhineland. During the talks that lasted 40 minutes, quite a lot became clear. Laidoner strongly criticized the Estonian press which regardless of the authoritarian leadership still dared to express uncalled-for opinions regarding foreign policy. Laidoner declared, first in response to Frohwein's criticism about Laidoner's Independence Day Speech, that by "mistrust of Germany" he had meant only the "Balto-Germans" and not Germany, and that regardless of the Tartu Peace Treaty of 1920 and the Soviet-Estonian Non-Aggression Pact, Estonia feels endangered primarily from the east, i.e. by the Soviet Union, but is determined to defend itself against all aggressors.²⁰ As a result, Frohwein was left with the impression that in Laidoner's mind danger coming from Germany was primarily only a theoretical possibility. The views of Laidoner seemed to indicate that Estonia was ready to cooperate with Germany in military-political matters, and had made this decision apart from Latvia and Lithuania. The base for Laidoner's and Estonian military leadership's position, psychologically speaking, was the Estonian War of Independence and the attempted putsch by the Estonian Communists on December 1, 1924.

Already in September 1935 the Estonian General Staff made a decision to establish contacts with *Abwehr*²¹ and to begin cooperating in anti-Soviet intelligence activities.²² It is not clear whether this action was initiated by Germany or by

¹⁸ Godfrey's report, November 25, 1935. PRO FO 371/2036.

¹⁹ See Frohwein's report, March 14, 1936. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-3507, E632489-E632493.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ German Military Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence Service.

²² Mader, J. Hitlers Spionagengenerale Sagen aus. Ein Dokumentarbericht über Aufbau, Struktur und Operationen des OKW-Geheimdienstamtes Ausland / Abwehr mit einer Chronologie seiner Einsätze von 1933 bis 1944. Berlin, 1978, 307.

Estonia. In June 1936 Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, the Chief of *Abwehr*, arrived "privately" in Estonia.²³ The visitor met with Generals Laidoner and Reek and with Colonel Maasing. As a result of Canaris' visit an agreement was reached to exchange military intelligence concerning the Soviet Union. In June 1936 Maasing made a countervisit to Canaris in Berlin. An agreement was reached for Germany to provide the Estonian Military Intelligence with technical advice and equipment.²⁴ The Chief of *Abwehr* was particularly interested in the transport system of the Soviet Union. Consequently *Abwehr* established a center for the intelligence service in Estonia – Group 6513.²⁵ Canaris visited Estonia many times later on. For example in June 1937 he arrived in Estonia together with his wife Erika and with Colonel Hans Piekenbrock, a military intelligence specialist in the Baltic affairs.²⁶ All these visits were connected with intensification and coordination of intelligence work against the Soviet Union. Since 1936 the liaison between the Estonian intelligence service and German Königsberg *Abwehr* II was trusted to Balto-German Baron Andrei von Uexküll,²⁷ who already at the end of the 1920s had become involved with the German intelligence.²⁸

The II Department of General Staff was during the inter-war period in Estonia, also in Latvia²⁹ and in Lithuania, involved not only in the military but also in national intelligence service, which collected and analyzed necessary available information not only for the benefit of the military, but also for political leadership.

²³ See Estonian border crossing register, June 5 and 8, 1936. ERA 495-11-18, 694, 703.

²⁴ Mader J. Hitler's Spionagegenerale Sagen aus, 308; Laidoner's protocol of the cross examination, October 8, 1941. Eesti Riigiarhiivi filiaal (Estonian State Archive Branch, Tallinn (ERA(F)) 130-28797; see also Hühne, H. Canaris Hitler's Master Spy. New York, 1979, 243.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See Estonian border crossing register, June 11 and 14, 1937. ERA 495-11-22, 150, 156.

²⁷ In Russian documents Andrei Vladimirovitch Iskull, in German documents Andreas von Uexküll. As a volunteer he fought in Russian-Japan war of 1904–1905. He served as a military officer in the First World War. In 1918 he joined the Estonian Army as an officer. In 1925 he became a correspondent of DNB. Estonian top politicians, higher military officers, many members of Parliament, foreign diplomatic representatives accredited to Estonia, intelligence residents of Great Britain and France, and in Germany, Goebbels and Alfred Hugenberg (the leader of Nationalist Party) belonged to Uexküll's circle of friends. Additionally, a number of Uexküll's relatives worked in high positions in German government and were involved in analysis of foreign intelligence, particularly from the East. Furthermore, Estonian political police made use of Uexküll in the endeavor of following and investigating individual Balto-Germans as well as Balto-German National Socialist organizations. See Soviet intelligence residency to NKVD OGPU INO (Uexküll's circle of friends), March 1932. ERA(F) 138-1-17, 26; Sooman's protocol of the cross-examination, September 23, 1940. ERA(F) 130-9861, 240; Vöhma's protocol of the cross-examination, November 27, 1940. ERA(F) 130-9861, 290; Tamme's protocol of the cross-examination, October 31, 1940. ERA(F) 130-9861, 288; Friedrichsons-Skrauja's protocol of the cross-examination, September 12, 1939. ERA(F) 130-9861, 280; see also Excerpt from Edesalu's protocol of the cross-examination, August 12, 1940. ERA(F) 130-9861, 283.

²⁸ Kromel's protocol of the cross-examination, October 4, 1940. ERA(F) 130-16527/2, 98.

²⁹ In Latvia the III Department of Latvian General Staff initially handled intelligence. In 1930 this Department was renamed the II Department.

It can be said that the II Department was the only governmental organization that handled foreign intelligence. The Estonian Political Police occupied itself with internal aspects and related information in border regions, but particularly with the activities of the communists, Russian immigrants and the Estonian Balto-Germans. In truth, the functions and duties of the II Department coincided with those of the Estonian Political Police. In any case, it is certain that the information from the II Department was reaching the individuals who made decisions in the arena of foreign policy, thus substantially determining the Estonian government's orientation in the field of foreign and economic policies.

Up to the middle of the 1930s the II Department had in the area of military intelligence cooperated only with the countries favorably disposed to Estonia: Poland, Latvia, Finland and Great Britain. The collaboration of Estonia and Latvia with Poland, being particularly extensive, was directed only against the Soviet Union and Lithuania. Already at the beginning of the 1920s the Poles had established their intelligence residencies in Tallinn³⁰ and Riga.³¹ In partnership with the II Department, the Polish intelligence residency dispatched agents, recruited either from the Estonian citizenry or from the Russian émigré community, to spy in the Soviet Union. But this cooperation was not limited to the II Department only – Polish residencies also established direct contacts with intelligence sections of each divisional staff. Large sums of money from Warsaw helped to keep the intelligence work going. For example, in 1926–1927 Polish residency in Tallinn was supported with \$ 2,600 each month, but in 1936 with only \$ 200–400 per month. By the middle of the 1930s the financial support for Polish intelligence service had dried up, and in the spring of 1936 the Polish government closed their Residency in Tallinn. The Polish organization had reached its limits: essential information about the dislocations of the Red Army units had already been collected, and the Poles had been able to build up their own spy network in the Soviet Union. Warsaw decided that it did not make sense to spend money for the upkeep of the Tallinn residency with its agents recruited from Estonian and Russian émigré populations. However, mutual exchange of information with Poland continued until its collapse in September 1939. But by this time collaboration between the Polish and Estonian intelligence sectors had become quite insignificant.³² It is difficult to assert whether the decision of the Estonian military intelligence upper echelon to join up with German *Abwehr* was caused

³⁰ Polish intelligence residences in Tallinn: "Witteg" 1921–1922; "Laatika" 1924; "R-7-Balt-P-2" 1924–1936.

³¹ Polish intelligence residences in Riga: "Gorin" 1922–1923; "O-5" 1923–1924; "Wiera" 1923–1924; "Nord" 1924–1928; "P-1" 1928–1929; "Rok" 1934–1936; "Karr" 1936–1938; "Lotysz" 1938.

³² Collection of original documents compiled by the Ministry of Defence of Polish Republic in 1950. This material covers anti-Soviet activity carried out by pre-Second World War Polish intelligence service. Центр хранения историко-документальных коллекций (Historical-Documental Collection Holding Center), Москва (TsHIDK) 453-1-6, 164–187; see also Pullat, R. Versailles'st Westerplatteni, 151–157.

by the falling off of Polish monetary support or not, although the sequence of economic events allows to come to this conclusion.

Later in 1946 Colonel Pikenbrock testified to the NKVD interrogators that Germany had always financially supported Estonia's intelligence, that Colonel Maasing had often visited the *Abwehr* headquarters in Berlin, and that at the conclusion of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact in August 1939 Germany had been able to establish an extensive spy network in Estonia.³³ In June 1941 Laidoner admitted to the NKVD interrogators that at this time Germany had donated two direction finder stations to the Estonian intelligence service, and that sea traffic of the Soviet navy had been observed from Estonian lighthouses. According to Laidoner, military intelligence was exchanged with the Latvian, Finnish, British, French, Polish and German military intelligence services.³⁴ The Soviet historians have used testimonies of Pikenbrock and Laidoner in their works as proof of Estonia's anti-Soviet stand in the prewar period.³⁵ The archive materials reveal sufficient concrete evidence to corroborate the accuracy of Laidoner's and Pikenbrock's testimonies given to the NKVD interrogators under duress. OKM³⁶ memorandums state that it is in Germany's interest to run an intelligence organization in Estonia, because Finland in special political and military circumstances might not be able to forward intelligence to Germany. The Estonian General Staff agreed to put an intelligence organization in place, provided that Germany would lend the needed technical equipment. Subsequently, most of the necessary gear was received from Germany as a gift or as a loan for eventual utilization in the field. An OKM memorandum of January 23, 1939 points out the details of the agreement between the German and the Estonian intelligence services: in order to follow the Soviet military activity the Germans had set up wire-tapping posts, using long-and medium wave length equipment in Narva, Tartu and Petseri, also in Narva two, in Tartu three and in Petseri two radio receivers. To listen to Soviet navy's internal exchange of information, borrowed apparatuses were placed in Tallinn, Haapsalu, Saaremaa and Hiiumaa. Information gained about the Red Navy was forwarded to Pillau and Swinemünde. Additionally one radio transmitter, one radio receiver and one radio encoder were located in the building of the Estonian General Staff. In addition *Abwehr* had given to Estonia four small radio transmitters and one radio station for special service. These were located in Narva, Petseri, Valga and on the shores of Lake Peipus and were meant to report the possible crossover of Soviet military units into Estonian territory. The purpose of all these installations was a quick delivery of gathered military information to the German army leadership. Similar observations of Soviet navy's movements on the Baltic Sea were to be passed on by means of a cable, although it was assumed that in case of a military conflict the Soviets will cut the cable. Therefore, at the beginning of 1939 *Abwehr* proposed

³³ Сергеев Ф. Тайные операции нацистской разведки 1933–1945. Москва, 1991, 171.

³⁴ President ja sõjavägede ülemjuhataja NKVD ees. Tallinn, 1993, 57–58.

³⁵ See Barkov, L. *Abwehr Eestis*. Tallinn, 1974, 37–38.

³⁶ *Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine*, High Command of the Navy.

to install additional radio transmitters on Saaremaa and Hiiumaa, and requested OKM to provide the necessary sums of money. The memorandum, however, pointed out that the organization for coordinating intelligence work in Estonia was still in the developing stage, and that Estonian seamen had been accused of being neglectful in their intelligence work against the Soviet navy. But OKM understood that it did not make sense for Estonia's small navy to operate an intelligence network on a wide scale.³⁷ In Finland the circumstances for the intelligence efforts were in depth and intensity roughly similar to those in Estonia.³⁸ But in the case of Estonia it is paradoxical that the personnel of the II Department, particularly these individuals who were best informed about the intentions of Nazi Germany concerning the Baltic states, became the servants of a Great Power which were hostile to their own country.

The service delivered by the Estonian intelligence sector to *Abwehr* did not limit itself only to the radio intelligence. *Abwehr* also received all information collected by the agents of the II Department as well as by the Estonian Political Police on the Estonian-Soviet border districts. Konstantin Kirsimägi, Deputy Director of the Estonian Police Department, confessed in November 1940 to the NKVD interrogators that using its secret agency the Estonian Political Police received vital information from the Estonian-Soviet border area: about constructions of fortifications, and of the size of the military units manning the border defences. He also admitted that the political police operating in the border areas was the main source of the anti-Soviet intelligence, and that he had passed on the data received from the agents of political police to the Chief of II Department, Colonel Maasing.³⁹ Later the intelligence concerning the Soviet Union stored in the archives of *Abwehr* fell into the hands of the American military. Americans analyzing these files concluded that the information embedded in *Abwehr* archives could have originated only from the Estonian II Department. Indeed, in the January 1940 memorandum of *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*,⁴⁰ which analyzed the operation of the Baltic intelligence services, found that the German authorities had not been able to pinpoint not even one anti-German episode or action. The Estonian intelligence was granted a positive appraisal in every respect: "Estonian-German relations have improved over the last years... The Estonian representatives have often delivered information about the Soviet military forces collected in their standard daily operations to us."⁴¹

Military contacts between Estonia and Germany were not only limited to intelligence work. On September 1, 1936 the German military attaché Rössig invited, in the name of Minister of War Blomberg, the Chief of General Staff,

³⁷ See Einrichtung einer B.-Dienst-Organisation zur Beobachtung des russischen Marine-Funkverkehrs in Estland, January 23, 1939. NA II RG-242 T-1022 R1969, 234–238.

³⁸ See Leskinen, J. Vaiettu Suomen silta, 169; Rislakki, J. Erittäin salainen. Vakoilu Suomessa. Helsinki, 1982, 150.

³⁹ Kirsimägi's protocol of the cross-examination, November 23, 1940. ERA(F) 130-9861, 321–323.

⁴⁰ Reich Main Security Office.

⁴¹ Memorandum by Department III D of *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, January 10, 1940. TsHIDK 500-4-450, 6–7.

Major General Reek, and the Chief of II Department, Colonel Maasing, to visit Germany in October-November. Whether this invitation was instigated by Germany or suggested by the Estonian officials remains unclear. It is not impossible that the Estonians started the process. It is also possible that the Germans planned the visit of Estonians as a propaganda countermeasure to the visit of the Baltic Chiefs of General Staff to Moscow. Actually this aspect of the invitation was stressed openly. At the end of October the Estonians confirmed their readiness to visit Berlin in the middle of November, and on November 14 Reek and Maasing traveled to Germany.⁴² On the day of their departure the Estonian press noted briefly that Reek was going to acquaint himself with the German army. Reek's previous visit to Moscow was given as the reason for visiting Germany – after getting to know the Red Army, it was time to get to know the German military for counterbalance.⁴³ The foreign representatives in Tallinn were told that Reek was responding to General Blomberg's visit to Tallinn in 1934. This explanation, however, was pointless as Blomberg's visit had been of unofficial nature. The initial plan was for General Laidoner to visit Berlin. In reconsideration it was decided that the Commander-in-Chief's visit to Germany would attract excessive unwanted attention.⁴⁴

The visit of Reek and Maasing lasted almost two weeks. They were received by the Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief of German Army General Blomberg, by the Chief of General Staff of German Army General Ludwig Beck, by the Commander-in-Chief of the *Luftwaffe* Hermann Göring and by the creator of *Luftwaffe* General Erhard Milch. Flying on German military planes the Estonians visited military bases in Cottbus, Rostock and Greifswald. At the same time, Karl Selter, the Estonian Minister of Finance, was in Germany on the invitation of *I.G. Farben*. He visited the *I.G. Farben* plants near Halle and negotiated with the President of German State Bank, Hjalmar Schacht.

A little before the visits of the Estonian military leaders and the Minister of Finance to Berlin, the Finnish press had published a letter of four former Heads of State Jaan Tõnisson, Jaan Teemant, Ants Piip and Juhan Kukk, who called upon the government to restore the former constitutional order, and sharply criticized the existing emergency law in Estonia, and the intervention of the Estonian military in political matters. They pointed out that the internal situation in Estonia after the March 12, 1934 *coup d'état* was turning people's attention away from the question of the country's foreign policies.⁴⁵ In answer to these accusations

⁴² Rössing to Maasing, September 1, 1936. ERA 495-12-167, 51; Jakobsen's report, October 27, 1936. ERA 495-12-167, 54.

⁴³ Päevaleht, 1936, November 14.

⁴⁴ Hynninen's report, December 1, 1936. Suomen Ulkoasiainministeriön Arkisto (Archives of the Finnish Foreign Ministry), Helsinki (UM) 5C/12.

⁴⁵ Letter of four former Heads of State to Päts, October 30, 1936. ERA 989-1-1798, 233; see also Marandi, R. Must valge lipu all. Vabadussõjalaste liikumine Eestis 1929–1937. II. Illegaalne vabadussõjalus (1934–1937). (Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia, 18.) Stockholm, 1997, 173.

the Head of State of Estonia Päts charged the four senior politicians with a clandestine subversion, while the Commander-in-Chief Laidoner declared the accusation published in Finnish press groundless. According to Laidoner the Estonian government had already in the 1920s and early 1930s committed grave errors in their defence policies, not having been able to foresee events and developmental directions.⁴⁶ Regardless of warnings put forward prior to the above described visits, a small group of Estonian politicians and military officers started independently, on the basis of their individual visions, to solve crucial problems related to the security of Estonia, and to its foreign and defence policies.

Of what was discussed in Germany during the visit of the Estonian representatives, only very little is known. So far no notes or memorandums recording the talks have been found. Therefore one has to accept Reek's and Maasing's versions of their conversations with the German militaries. Information in this matter can be found in the report written by the Finnish ambassador in Tallinn, Paavo Hynninen. This report records conversations with Colonel Maasing. Based on Maasing's remark Reek had assured the Germans of Estonia's neutrality in the international affairs and its readiness to defend itself against any adversary attempting to violate it, while also including Germany in the mix. According to Maasing, the reception in Germany had been exceptionally cordial, the Germans had voluntarily exposed their latest military technique while stressing that Estonia was not threatened by Germany.⁴⁷ It appears from Hynninen's report that the visit of the Estonians had lacked foreign and defence political significance. Maasing informed the Swedish military attaché about the proposal to conclude an Estonian-German military alliance, suggested by the German military leadership to general Reek, which had been rejected by Estonia.⁴⁸ But Reek and Maasing had passed on a different version of their talks in Germany to Béla de Léngyel, Hungarian military attaché to Poland and to the Baltic states. Léngyel wrote that the talks in Germany had been conducted in very friendly milieu, and that an agreement for cooperation in the field of intelligence had been reached: "Further, Reek was quoted as saying that the German Commander-in-Chief expressed the wish that Estonia would not allow foreign military units pass through its territory. Reek and Maasing promised to do this. But they stressed their own wish to be permitted to defend Estonia alone, accepting military help from Germany only in extreme distress," reported Léngyel to Budapest.⁴⁹

At the beginning of 1937 the German military command sent Major Hans Krebs of *Reichskriegsministerium* to Estonia to acquaint himself with the Estonian army and with its frame of mind. Regardless of Krebs' relatively low rank, he was a member of Alfred Rosenberg's *Aussenpolitisches Amt* and its

⁴⁶ Päevaleht, 1936, November 9 and 11.

⁴⁷ Hynninen's report, December 1, 1936. UM 5C/12.

⁴⁸ Lindqvist's report, February 22, 1938. Kungliga Krigsarkivet (Swedish Royal Military Archives), Stockholm (KKA) B I 1938/3.

⁴⁹ Léngyel's report, March 1, 1937. Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian State Archives), Budapest (OL) K 63-1937-3-1156.

intelligence section. He had fulfilled important assignments in Czechoslovakia and in Sudetenland.⁵⁰ The visitor stayed in Estonia for two weeks. In his final report Krebs analyzed the suitability of Estonia as a future ally of Germany. His conclusions were negative: Estonians fear the attack of Germany toward East more than the invasion of the Soviet Union, and there exists a strong antagonism between the Estonians and the Balto-Germans. Furthermore, General Laidoner lacks decisive authority in Estonian politics. As a respected military officer he is only the "right hand" of Päts, the Head of State of Estonia.⁵¹ These views, taking into account the recent visit of General Reek and Colonel Maasing to Germany, and the earlier reports of ambassador Frohwein and the military attaché Colonel Rössing, caused astonishment in the *Reichskriegsministerium*. It appears from the following correspondence that the Ministry asked the ambassador and the military attaché for a full explanation. Frohwein responded with a long report, in which he declared the viewpoints of Krebs groundless: Estonia's leading politicians do not sense any danger emanating from Germany, but only from the Soviet Union. Laidoner had weighed the danger coming from the Soviet Union in relation to that from Germany in the ratio of 12:1 and opposing views to those stated above were expressed only by the left-wingers and by some newspapers under their influence. Frohwein stressed that Estonians, in case of a military conflict, will not join the Soviet Union, but will defend their neutrality and independence on the side of Germany.⁵²

Later in exile Maasing noted only that he and General Reek had succeeded in finding friends in the highest ranks of German military, and in abolishing former misunderstandings and shadows of the past. But in one of his presentations to the Estonian exile community, a more candid Maasing stated that because of being sandwiched between two Great Powers, Estonia was forced to choose, and it was clear to the Estonian military leaders that Estonia had to belong to the Middle-European bloc.⁵³ From the foregoing, direction of Estonian military's defence policy can be determined. To Maasing Middle-Europe meant Germany. In historical works from the Soviet post-war period the November 1936 visit of Reek and Maasing to Berlin signified the beginning of the military collaboration between Estonia and Germany.⁵⁴

In the first months of 1937, details deriving from various sources and covering Reek's and Maasing's visit to Berlin, reached Moscow.⁵⁵ In February 1937

⁵⁰ See Memorandum by Krebs, November 5, 1933; Krebs to Scickendanz, December 6, 1933 and January 4, 1934. TsHIDK 519-3-33, 43-45; 21-22.

⁵¹ Memorandum by Krebs, (Undated). NA II RG-242 T-120 R-2797, E435466.

⁵² Frohwein to Rössing, February 18, 1937; Frohwein's report, February 25, 1937. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-2797, 435463-435465, 435453-435457.

⁵³ Stockholms Tidningen eestlastele, 1954, December 11.

⁵⁴ See **Pesti, M.** Rahvuslik reetmine "rahvusluse" sildi all. (Kodanliku Eesti välispoliitikast 1934-1940.) Tallinn, 1960, 140; **Barkov, L.** Abwehr Eestis, 34.

⁵⁵ See for example Brodovski's report, January 2, 1937. Архив внешней политики Российской Федерации (Foreign Policy Archives of Russian Federation), Москва (AVPR) 05-17-72-133, 6.

J. Kljavin, the Councillor of Soviet embassy in Tallinn, wrote that the purpose of their visit had been to clarify how the German-Estonian relations would be affected by a war between Germany and the Soviet Union. Rudolf Sirge, a left-leaning author and journalist who in 1940 became a supporter of the Soviet regime, had informed Kljavin. According to Sirge the Germans had assured Reek that Estonia would not be occupied, if in case of war its government agreed to provide Germany with foodstuff and with products of its oilshale industry. Subsequently Reek had agreed to military cooperation with Germany.⁵⁶ Shortly before Kljavin's talk with Sirge, the Soviet intelligence also received a communication from an agent connected with the *Auswärtiges Amt*, that touched upon the German-Estonian relations. The information originating from the German General Staff stated that in Berlin Reek and Maasing had referred to the Soviet Union as an enemy and an aggressor, but fearing the Soviet reaction they had declined forming an overt alliance with Germany, and their negotiations had mainly covered the purchases of military equipment. At the end of his report the agent remarked that Päts and Laidoner considered Germany as the best guarantor of their country's independence.⁵⁷ Of course, that was no news to the Soviet authorities. The Soviet intelligence resident in Tallinn continued to closely observe the German-Estonian relations. At the beginning of December 1936 reports from the Tallinn embassy had informed Moscow of attitudes of the Estonian leadership regarding Estonia's security and its relationship with Germany. Those reports pointed out that the Estonian government, observing the preparations for war in Europe, feared losing independence, that the rumors floating about in governmental circles predicted the breakout of a war between Germany and the Soviet Union in the next two years, that Laidoner, Selter, and also Päts, were convinced that at the outbreak of war the Germans would occupy Estonia, and because of that inevitability the government had decided to privatize the state-owned enterprises and hand them over foremost to persons related to the government one way or another. The same report also mentioned that Jaan Tõnisson, the influential leader of opposition, had expressed strong dissatisfaction with Estonia's foreign policy and regarding the visit of Estonian military leaders to Berlin. Furthermore, Tõnisson had claimed that the Germans would eventually simply buy off Päts and his closest collaborators, and that Foreign Minister Akel had no role in shaping the country's foreign policy.⁵⁸

In the fall of 1936 Colonel Ludvig Jakobsen, the Estonian military attaché in Berlin participated in the German military maneuvers as an observer. The purpose of these maneuvers was to demonstrate the German military might to the world. The Estonian military representative was impressed by the well-trained and motorized modern army.⁵⁹ Indeed, in the second half of the 1930s, the

⁵⁶ Kljavin's report, February 18, 1937. AVPR 05-17-125-137, 12.

⁵⁷ Shpigelglaz to intelligence resident in Tallinn, January 26, 1937. ERA(F) 138-1-54, 114-117.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Memorandum by Jakobsen (German military maneuvers), (Undated). ERA 495-11-1, 32-65.

German military leadership repeatedly continued to make oral promises that Finland and Estonia could depend on the help and support from Germany in case of an attack from the Soviet Union. For example in December 1937, Göring told Aarne Wuorimaa, the Finnish ambassador in Berlin, that Finland can depend on Germany's aid and all around support in case of the Soviet attack, nor will Germany permit assaults against other border states.⁶⁰

Prior to the German Nazis coming to power in January 1933, it was impossible to purchase modern armament from Germany. By February 1937 the Estonian Ministry of War, Department of Military Equipment and Procurement had prepared lists of armaments and war material to be ordered in the budget years 1936–1937 and 1937–1938 from foreign countries.⁶¹ The plan was to place orders with the German firms, although the possibility of ordering from other states was not discounted in case prices proved more favorable.⁶² At the same time Germany understood that the economic dependence of the small states on the Reich made it possible for the Reich to dictate its will on these states. This idea prompted Germany to agree providing Estonia with the requested weaponry. Germans were willing to pay a percentage of every transaction to the decision-makers concerning the armament and munitions purchases thus encouraging them to accept the offered deals. But as a reciprocator to their goodwill, Germans expected concessions to their wishes from Estonia. Germany assigned the *Otto-Wolff-Konzern*⁶³ (later OW) Eastern Department to deal with Estonia. In the 1920s and 1930s it was customary for export companies like OW to be involved also in the intelligence work. For this purpose the so-called Eastern or Russian Departments were established at most German firms, also at the OW concern. The workers and officials of Eastern Departments were not only engineers, but also trained spies.⁶⁴ All employees were closely connected with the *SS Sicherheitsdienst, Dienststelle Ribbentrop, Forschungsamt*⁶⁵ led by Göring, *Reichswirtschaftsministerium* and other institutions involved in foreign intelligence, collecting political and economic information for institutions mentioned, and carrying out special assignments. At this point, it must be asked who stood behind the whole

⁶⁰ Wuorimaa to Holsti, December 20, 1937. Suomen Kansallisarkisto (Finnish National Archive), Helsinki (KA) Holsti, 59; see also Wuorimaa's report, October 16, 1937 UM 5C/5.

⁶¹ Reek to Laidoner, November 2, 1936. ERA 2553-1-11.

⁶² Ministry of War to Ministry of Finance, February 19, 1937. ERA 969-1-297, 90–95.

⁶³ OW owned numerous iron production plants across Germany, and was also involved in the armament trade. The headquarters of the concern were located in Köln with representations in many European states. About the OW see Eicholtz, D. *Geschichte der deutschen Kriegswirtschaft 1939–1945*. Bd. I 1939–1941. Berlin, 1969, 117, 202; Krestinski to Litvinov, February 19, 1926. Дух Рапалло. Советско-Германские отношения 1925–1933. Документы. Екатеринбург; Москва, 1997, 22–23.

⁶⁴ See for example Mader, J. *Hitlers Spionagegenerale* Sagen aus, 56–58.

⁶⁵ On April 10, 1933 Göring created the *Forschungsamt*, the Reich intelligence agency charged with signals intelligence, wire tapping, and cryptanalysts.

enterprise? The presence of barrister Hermann Kromel⁶⁶ in the circle of armament merchants allows to point at the *Aussenpolitisches Amt* as the initiator of the operation. In the second half of the 1930s Alfred Rosenberg, a Nazi bigwig and party theorist, tried to establish a political-economical zone, dominated by Germany, along the western border of the Soviet Union from the Scandinavian countries, Finland, the Baltic states to Poland, Romania, and through Turkey and Iran to Afghanistan. Germany planned to make Afghanistan into one of the footholds of its foreign policy in the East.⁶⁷ The Finnish historian Seppo Kuusisto has stressed that most of these grandiose plans remained unfulfilled or only modestly executed.⁶⁸ It can be guessed that additional institutions and individuals stood behind these efforts: the Commander-in-Chief of the German Air Force and the Leader of German War economy Göring, his relative Herbert Göring and Colonel Joseph Veltjens were involved in enterprises dealing with the armaments and with their export.⁶⁹

In early May 1937 the OW Director of Eastern Department, Bogislav Swicykovski⁷⁰ entered Estonia through the border station in Valga.⁷¹ According to the Soviet political intelligence sources Swicykovski was supposed to travel to

⁶⁶ Until now historians have paid very little attention to Kromel, who played an important role as a backstage wirepuller on Estonia's political arena in the period between the two world wars. Kromel was arrested by NKVD in June, 1940, and was immediately transferred to Leningrad. His almost a thousand-page NKVD file is an extremely interesting source of information. As a man with a colorful past, he had been born in 1892 in Russia to a German aristocratic family. Kromel was known to the Estonian Political Police, to the intelligence branches of Great Britain and Poland. Documents in the archives of Polish intelligence record show his relations with the German intelligence. But the archive materials of *Reichskommissar für Überwachung der Öffentlichen Ordnung* show that during the period of Weimar republic Kromel, although simultaneously working for the intelligence of other foreign states, was primarily an agent of the Weimar Germany. His particularly wide circle of acquaintances in Estonia included many important politicians, members of Parliament, and the upper crust of Russian emigrants and that of Balto-German nobility. See Kromels' protocols of the cross-examinations. ERA(F) 138-1-53; Hermann Kromel. ERA Register of Estonian Political Police; Hermann Kromel Register of II Department of the Polish General Staff. TsHIDK 308-19-113, 15; Memorandum by the passport department of the British consulate in Tallinn, March 29, 1927. ERA(F) 138-1-53, 51-52; Memorandum by Nuntia, January 3, 1927. TsHIDK 772-1-109, 32.

⁶⁷ See Memorandum by Malletke, March 4 and December 13, 1937. TsHIDK 519-3-38, 20, 52-54; Memorandum by Harder, February 20, March 17 and 22, April 5, 1937. TsHIDK 519-3-38, 176-189, 105-108.

⁶⁸ Kuusisto, S. Alfred Rosenberg in der nationalsozialistischen Aussenpolitik 1933-1939. Tammi-saari, 1984, 244-286.

⁶⁹ For detailed analysis of these issues, see Peltovuori, R. O. Saksa ja Suomen talvisota. Helsinki, 1975, 65.

⁷⁰ Although he has a Polish name, Swicykovski was a German citizen born in Eastern Prussia, and while employed as German agricultural attaché in Moscow he became in 1938 the special representative of *Reichwirtschaftsministerium* in the area of export and foreign trade. See Personnel of Reichs- und Preußische wirtschaftsministerium, March 14, 1938. TsHIDK 500-1-907, 62.

⁷¹ See Border crossing register, May 4, 1937. ERA 495-11-22, 1252.

Tallinn already at the end of April, but allegedly his trip was cancelled because of the illness of the Estonian Foreign Minister Friedrich Akel.⁷² When he finally arrived in Tallinn, he immediately contacted solicitor Kromel.⁷³ It is possible that Kromel had been chosen by the *Aussenpolitisches Amt*, because he knew personally President Päts and other influential persons in the Estonian political hierarchy. Kromel was also aware of relations between Päts and Renning and therefore of their connection with the embassy of the Soviet Union. Previously Kromel had acted as an intermediary between Päts and the Germans. Later Kromel testified to the NKVD: "Actually by then Päts was already embedded in the sphere of German influence and, having accepted bribes from the Germans he had become dependent on Germany."⁷⁴ Furthermore, it might be of interest what Kromel had to say about the previously described visit of Swicykovski to Tallinn: "Already at the first meeting our attention was focused on President Konstantin Päts. The subjects under discussion were: how and by which means can Päts be brought into the orbit of German interests, through whom this could be accomplished, how much should be paid in bribes, and how could these payments be passed on."⁷⁵

Moscow quickly found out about the plan to draw Päts into the sphere of German influence. Soviet political intelligence assumed that the plan was instigated by the *Aussenpolitisches Amt* and Kromel had been chosen as a middleman, because in the past he had secretly passed on a fee of 60,000 Ekr to Päts, supposedly to make up to Päts for convincing other members of the Parliament to go along with his policy of compensating Balto-Germans for the expropriated land in Estonia.⁷⁶ To explain what it was all about, one has to begin with the land reform of 1919, which had left Estonia's German landowner class members without land and who then returned after their land had been expropriated to "fatherland". From this circumstance arose the so-called "question of the new Germans", which strained the relations between Estonia and the Weimar Republic, later also between Nazi Germany and Estonia, until the middle of the 1930s. The German governmental circles constantly exerted pressure on the Estonian government in the matter. The situation was further complicated by the fact that among the compensation seekers also citizens of other countries started to show up. The law accepted in March 1926 promised payment for expropriated land to persons who had not actively fought against Estonia in the War of Independence.⁷⁷ Some of the new Germans considered the sum of 12,800,000 Ekr

⁷² Memorandum by Slutski, June 2, 1937. ERA(F) 138-1-54, 94.

⁷³ About Kromel and Swicykovski see also Bondarenko's protocol of the cross-examination, May 20, 1941; Jefremov's protocol of the cross-examination, August 27, 1940. ERA(F) 130-7493/2, 176, 187.

⁷⁴ Kromel's protocol of the cross-examination, September 20–October 4, 1940. ERA(F) 130-16527/2, 150.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 147.

⁷⁶ Memorandum by Slutski, June 2, 1937. ERA(F) 138-1-54, 95.

⁷⁷ See Riigi Teataja, 1926, March 23.

initially offered insufficient and demanded it to be increased. The case was threatened of being taken to the international court. In 1928 barrister Kromel became the representative of the German compensation claimants, thus being brought into contact with the *Auswärtiges Amt* and with the members of *Reichstag*, and with Konstantin Päts⁷⁸ in Estonia. But it has to be admitted that also Jaan Tõnisson and some socialist leaders supported the demands of the new Germans. Whereas on the basis of Parliamentary protocols it appears that some Estonian politicians like Piip, Uluots, Palvadre and others proposed going to the international court.⁷⁹ At the end of 1931, when Päts was Head of State, an agreement was reached: Estonia added a supplementary 7,000,000 Ekr to the compensatory total. These additional sums were going to be paid out in installments.⁸⁰ In 1933 the relations between Kromel and the *Auswärtiges Amt* became strained. As a result, ambassador Reinebeck recommended Estonians to drop Kromel as the intermediary, and solve the question of compensations directly between the respective governments. Not waiting for Estonia's response in the matter, Reinbeck informed the Estonian government that German authorities were no longer using Kromel's services.⁸¹ Final payments were stretched out, because of the worldwide economic crises. This soured Estonia's relations with Germany as late as 1933–1934.⁸² In 1934 1,800,000 million Ekr remained to be paid out during the next seven years. In the same summer talks began to accelerate the compensation schedule. For this purpose referent Ernst Woermann of the *Auswärtiges Amt* arrived in Tallinn. Subsequently, in spite of being opposed by socialists, Päts satisfied the demands of the new Germans. This decision was influenced by the constant German anti-Estonian propaganda as well as by the hope that a favorable trade agreement with Germany would consequently be forthcoming. In November, the Foreign Minister Julius Seljamaa informed ambassador Reinebeck, that the Estonian Government had decided to pay the remaining amount in a lump sum.⁸³ According to Kromel, the question of compensation had been solved already in 1931 thanks to the convincing elucidation provided by Päts in Parliament and among the members of government: "...I received strong support from Päts in my efforts. He was the main factor in solving the problem in favor of Germans."⁸⁴ But who in Germany came up with the payment of 60,000 Ekr to Päts, obviously a recompense for the services rendered? Kromel tells that this money was delivered

⁷⁸ In 1926 Kromel had represented Päts in one of his court cases, and now Päts supported Kromel's clients – the former Balto-German landowners.

⁷⁹ Minutes of the meeting of the Foreign Commission of the Parliament, May 19, 1931. Baltiska arkivet (Baltic Archives), Stockholm (BA).

⁸⁰ Minutes of the meeting of the Foreign Commission of the Parliament, December 2, 1931. BA.

⁸¹ Memorandum by Seljamaa, October 27 and November 30, 1933. ERA 957-13-643, 211, 235–236.

⁸² Memorandum by Seljamaa (Conversation with Reinebeck), October 27, 1933. ERA 957-13-643, 211–212; Menning's report, November 16, 1933. ERA 957-12-380, 41.

⁸³ Memorandum by Seljamaa, June 8, 14 and 20, November 10, 1934. ERA 957-8-1324, 76, 88, 94–95; Memorandum by Seljamaa, January 15, 1935. ERA 957-19-764, 61–64.

⁸⁴ Kromel's protocol of the cross-examination, September 20–October 4, 1940. ERA(F) 130-802/2, 84.

to Päts through the Tallinn attorney Peeter Reisik: "This fee was very large and part of it went into the hands of Päts."⁸⁵ This money could hardly have come from Germany through the good offices of the *Auswärtiges Amt*. More likely these funds were collected from German emigrant organizations and from individuals.⁸⁶ But in any case there were officials in the *Auswärtiges Amt* who were in favor of secret payments to the Estonian politicians. Thus Kromel alleged: "Contrary to Martius⁸⁷, who was against paying bribes, Woermann was convinced that some individual members of the Estonian government had to be bought in order to successfully solve the issue of new German landholdings in Estonia."⁸⁸

In May-June 1937 Kromel visited Berlin.⁸⁹ Later he confessed to the NKVD interrogators that Swicykowski had proposed the following plan in the name of OW to him: to inform Päts through attorney Reisik that the German government wishes to invite him to a private visit to Germany under the pretext of health cure, and that in Germany the conclusion of the supplementary trade agreement, specifically the sale of armaments to Estonia will be negotiated with him. To advance this plan the Estonian Minister of Finance Selter was brought to Germany together with the representatives of OW in June 1937. According to Kromel Päts had, through the good offices of Reisik, agreed to the German proposal. The Chief of General Staff, Reek, was in favor of Päts' visit to Germany, but the Commander-in-Chief Laidoner was against it, declaring that only he will decide from where new armament is purchased. According to Kromel this was the reason why Päts did not go along with arms-deals offered by Germans.⁹⁰ However, this claim was not true. It is possible that in the second half of 1937 the Estonian government decided that Kromel, who through his German contacts had initiated negotiations for buying German weaponry, should be removed from his position as an unnecessary and expensive intermediary.

During years 1934–1939 the biggest part of the money spent on armaments went to Great Britain, altogether 8,200,000 Ekr. But this only on account of two U-boats, the largest purchase of the period, with payments extending till fall of 1938. Similarly, the purchases for the Estonian air force were primarily made in Great Britain, the biggest purchases having been made already in the 1929–1932 period. All military attack planes with relevant supplies and motors for airplanes built in Estonia, were ordered from Great Britain. Consequently, U-boats and Spitfire fighters tied the Estonian navy and air force to the British armament

⁸⁵ Ibid., 150.

⁸⁶ There were several similar organizations established in Germany. In 1924 the League of Estonian Hereditary Nobility (*Verband des estländisches Stammadles*) was founded. Livonian, Ösel and Kurland nobility established its own league: League of Hereditary Nobility of Balticum (*Stammverband des baltischen Adel*).

⁸⁷ Georg Feodor Albert Martius: acted at the time as a Referent of the Department dealing with the Baltic questions of the *Auswärtiges Amt*.

⁸⁸ Kromel's protocol of cross-examination, September 20–October 4, 1940. ERA(F) 130-802/2, 100.

⁸⁹ See Estonian border crossing register, June 9, 1937. ERA 495-11-22, 146.

⁹⁰ Kromel's protocol of the cross-examination, October 4, 1940. ERA(F) 130-16527/2, 154–155. Boarder crossing register, June 22, 1937. ERA 495-11-22, 176.

industry. But if all military purchases for the army and for the Home Guard in the 1934–1939 period, including the engineer-technical equipment and the total amount of diverse war materials, were counted, then most money for military purchases went to Germany. Obviously, the process initiated by Kromel was notably successful. Between November 1938 and August 1939 most of the Estonian military orders were placed with the German firms: Estonia requisitioned 14,3 million Ekr worth of armament from Germany, whereas it bought only 6 million Ekr worth from Great Britain. It must be pointed out that within nine months Estonia purchased more armaments than during the past decade. Most of the German weaponry was bought for the land forces, primarily anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns, field guns and cross-country vehicles.⁹¹ The Estonian historian Toe Nõmm claims that the choice of German armaments, particularly howitzers, was entirely justified, because of their excellence compared to the products of other countries. But this was not the only reason that decided the issue in favor of Germany. In December 1937, Horst Rössing, German military attaché in Tallinn, told his British colleague that Estonia had signed an agreement for purchasing 88 mm anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns, and that buying various types of armament from Germany depended on the bribes paid to various officials, that in addition to the technical superiority and related trademarks, successful deals hinged on the rake-offs offered to high-level potentates, among others also to Head of State Päts.⁹² On July 26 1937, Frohwein, German ambassador in Tallinn, sent a long memorandum about the Estonian foreign and defence policies to Berlin. He stressed that the Estonian government had again informed him about the country's unconditional neutrality in its relations with all Great Powers, and that the Estonian government had consistently been trying to avoid any public actions, which might have indicated its nearing either to Germany or to the Soviet Union. Although speaking about the military relations, Frohwein had to admit to the secret cooperation (*unter der Hand*) between the Reich and the Estonian government as well as the General Staff.⁹³

In the military collaboration between Finland and Estonia, naval operations had an important role to play. This issue has been thoroughly examined and enlightened by Finnish historian Jari Leskinen. Both Finland and Estonia agreed that in case of war the Finnish Bay could be effectively mined, and that thus the Soviet navy could be closed in a strategical as well as in a tactical pocket.⁹⁴

⁹¹ See Nõmm, T. Eesti Vabariigi kaitseväest 1939–1940. – Akadeemia, 1989, 3, 591; Nõmm, T. Eesti relvaimport aastail 1934–1939. In authors' possession.

⁹² Vale's report (Conversation with Rössing), December 14, 1937. PRO FO 371/2226, N154/154/59.

⁹³ Frohwein's report, July 26, 1939. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (Archive of the German Foreign Ministry), Berlin (PA AA) Reval 29 C 1. Bd; 6. Welczeck, German ambassador in Paris had to admit in his report written on August 12 that his confidant, who had spent two hours talking with General Laidoner, had misunderstood Laidoner's statements. See Welczeck's report, August 12, 1937. PA AA Reval 29 C 1. Bd. 6.

⁹⁴ Leskinen, J. Vaiettu Suomen silta, 287; Turtola, M. Eräitä näkökohtia suomalais-virolaisiin sotilassuhteisiin 1920- ja 1930-luvulla. – Sotahistoriallinen aikakauskirja, 1987, 6, 95–109; see also Memorandum by Rosenberg, March 22, 1930. Suomen Sota-arkisto (Finnish Military Archives), Helsinki (SArk) 1403/16.

The interest in Hitler-Germany in Estonia and Finland was bound to the iron ore production of Sweden. The German military and foreign policy planners were afraid that at the outbreak of war the Soviet navy, utilizing the Baltic harbors as their bases, will blockade Germany's communications with Sweden. For this reason the German military leaders considered the closing off of the Gulf of Finland for the Soviet navy, and constructing necessary strongholds on the islands of the Baltic Sea imperative. OKM began developing the necessary plans already in the 1935–1936 period. A memorandum prepared soon after Reek's visit to Berlin viewed possible anti-German actions of the Soviet navy. This document found that if the war broke out, the Soviet Union might occupy the Paldiski harbor, Saaremaa and Hiiumaa islands, and use these occupied strongholds to threaten the defenceless Åland islands and Gothland.⁹⁵ In 1937 at *Wehrmacht's* Academy a review was completed, which looked at different possible stratagems the Soviet navy could employ while in war with Germany. In these calculations also Estonia and Finland occupied important roles. The author of the memorandum concluded, that theoretically no ship could pass through the Gulf of Finland without being detected either by Finland or by Estonia. "In case of offensive actions by the Soviet U-boats and warships, it seemed to be clear that the Soviets will attempt to occupy at least one coast of the Gulf of Finland. More suitable than Finnish coast is that of Estonia with an almost year long ice-free harbor of Paldiski. Conquering Estonia would provide a base for attacking Åland islands and Gothland, which figure as key positions for Germany to import Swedish iron ore through the Bay of Botnia."⁹⁶ In April 1938 at the navy maneuvers in Kiel organized by OKM, Admiral Conrad Albrecht, the Chief of German Baltic navy, proposed a plan for the conquering strongholds in the Baltic Sea. This plan was to secure peaceful importation of the Swedish iron ore to Germany. According to Albrecht, whoever held Åland islands and Estonia's western islands, would rule the Baltic Sea. But the necessary military operations would succeed only if at the same time Germany would be able to occupy also Latvia and Lithuania. It was assumed that Finland and Estonia would fight on the side of Germany.⁹⁷

MILITARY COOPERATION BETWEEN ESTONIA AND LATVIA

On November 1, 1923 the Estonian-Latvian Military Alliance was formed. This document foresaw mutual military assistance, if one of the parties were attacked without provocation. It did not matter who the attacker was.⁹⁸ But regardless of

⁹⁵ Unsigned memorandum, December 15, 1936. NA II RG-242 T-1022 R-4083, PG48810.

⁹⁶ See Review Concerning Soviet Navy, January 29, 1937. NA II RG-242 T-1022 R-4083, PG48810.

⁹⁷ Gemzell, C.-A. Raeder, Hitler und Skandinavien. Der Kampf für einen maritimen Operationsplan. Lund, 1965, 64–69.

⁹⁸ See Estonian-Latvian Defence Alliance, March 1, 1923. Eesti ja Läti suhted 1920–1925. Dokumentide kogumik. Comp. H. Arumäe, T. Arumäe. Tallinn, 1999, 222–224.

the details cited, the alliance existed on paper only. The reasons why this alliance did not become a reality were historical, political, military and economic.

The historical reasons – the partners' differing visions of future – were probably the least essential. But the Estonian military leadership claimed that throughout the previous seven centuries Latvians had never been loyal to Estonians, that Latvians had betrayed Estonians in their common fight against the Teutonic Order, that in 1919–1920 the Estonians actually formed the Latvian army, that the Estonian army had destroyed the German *Landeswehr* at Valmiera and thus made it possible for Latvian government to return to Riga, that Latvians did not sufficiently support Estonian army at Valmiera, that only thanks to Estonians the Latvian state became a reality, that Latvians still deny the assistance they had received from Estonians in their fight for independence and that they express false views in their textbooks of history. The Latvians in their turn proclaim that although Estonia had helped to establish an independent Latvian state, in 1919 the Estonian army had plundered material assets on Latvian territories, that the compensation paid to the Estonian war invalids and to the families of soldiers fallen in action in Latvia, was excessive, and that the polemics about who had brought the independence to Latvians only undermined the Baltic cooperation.⁹⁹

The military reasons were: the concluded military alliance prescribed that the Commander-in-Chief of the united army was going to be a Latvian, but the Chief of General Staff was going to be an Estonian officer. Not until 1933 the Chiefs of General Staffs of both countries, Major General Juhan Tõrvand and General Aleksandrs Kalēys, signed agreements about the crossing of the borders, about the commanding of military forces, about the standardizing of armament and munitions, and about the use of language when operating a united army. It was agreed that the united army could be led either in Estonian or in Latvian. Using Russian language was considered impractical, because after gaining independence, the use of Russian had declined notably. It was assumed that this trend would continue even more precipitously in the future, and that understanding each other was going to be accomplished through the staff translators.¹⁰⁰ An agreement for the standardization of armament was not reached. As mentioned before, most of the Estonian armament prior to the Second World War derived from British and from German arsenals. The Latvian military leadership repeatedly pointed out that Estonia should avoid purchasing its military equipment from Germany, because this course of action would make the Baltic states totally dependent on Germany.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ See A Review by Estonian General Staff (Estonian-Latvian Defence Alliance), January 1, 1927. ERA 495-12-245, 101; Kruus' report, October 30, 1934. ERA 957-14-11, 8–9; Saarsen's report, March 15, 1936. ERA 495-12-197, 10–11.

¹⁰⁰ The Agreement Concerning Crossing Borders, activated on June 14, 1933, regulates command, supply and evacuation of joint defensive forces; Explanatory letter is attached to this proposal of Estonian Minister of War, concerning endorsement of Estonian-Latvian governmental agreement (Undated). ERA 31-2-275, 2–21.

¹⁰¹ See Orde's report (Conversation with Hartmanis), June 8, 1937. PRO FO 371/22233, N2992/29992/59; Memorandum by Collier, May 11, 1937. PRO FO 371/21057, N2548/124/59; Orde's report, June 10, 1938. PRO FO 419/32.

But regardless of promises to the contrary, Estonia continued buying armaments from Germany. Because of receiving British weaponry in 1919–1920 period, Latvia became dependent on the British armament, since in Latvia almost all small arms, most field guns, airplanes and middle range anti-aircraft guns were of British origin. In 1935 the Latvian Military leadership considered purchasing British tanks.¹⁰² And just before the beginning of the Second World War, Latvia received 20 Gloster Gladiator fighter planes from Great Britain. Palin, the Finnish ambassador in Riga, analyzing Estonian-Latvian military alliance and military readiness of Latvia, concluded that the government of Ulmanis, while spending huge sums of money on cultural affairs, on building luxurious government complexes, and on holding grandiose parades and festivities, neglected fulfilling Latvia's military requirements and thus the defence of the country against an invader.¹⁰³ But Rössing, the German military attaché, claimed in 1936 that of the three Baltic states, the Latvian army was best equipped.¹⁰⁴ At the same time damaging appraisals can also be found in the diplomatic correspondence about the Estonian army and its armament.¹⁰⁵ However, claims that in the late 1930s Latvian military expenditures were considerably smaller than those of Estonia are totally ungrounded. In comparing the military outlays of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1938, the following is revealed: the fractional parts of the military budget in the state's overall yearly outlay were for Estonia 20,4%, for Latvia 27,5% and for Lithuania 23,2%. Military expenses for each citizen were in Estonia 19,8, in Latvia 18,9 and in Lithuania 22,1 Ekr.¹⁰⁶

During the existence of the Estonian-Latvian Military Alliance, a united army and navy manouvers were held only once – in the summer of 1931.¹⁰⁷ Already at the end of the 1920s the Estonian military leadership determined that the alliance between Estonia and Latvia should be annulled. This decision derived from the following considerations: that Estonia in cooperation with the Finnish forces will be able to close the Gulf of Finland and defend the Estonian coastal region from Paldiski to Narva, that the Latvian navy defending its own coastal area will not be able to help Estonia, that Estonia can defend the border zone between the Gulf of Finland and Lake Peipus, and a stretch of land between Lake Pskov and the Latvian border, altogether 165 km, and in case the enemy would attack Estonia through Latvia, the only perilous sector would be the Estonian-Latvian border, because

¹⁰² Torr's report, February 14, 1935. PRO FO 371/19398, N862/495/59; Memorandum by Collier, May 11, 1937. PRO FO 371/21057, N2548/124/59; Unsigned memorandum (Armament to Latvian Government), May 29, 1937. PRO FO 371/21061, N2883/1192/59.

¹⁰³ Palin's report, January 5, 1939. UM 5C/16.

¹⁰⁴ Rössing's report, July 1, 1936. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-2797, E435476–435484.

¹⁰⁵ See Monson's report (Conversation with French military attaché), April 5, 1937. PRO FO 371/21060, N2042/798/58.

¹⁰⁶ See Nõmm, T. Eesti Vabariigi kaitseväest 1939–1940, 590; Scarlett to Eden, January 11, 1938. PRO FO 371/22229, N329/329/59. From the last report it becomes evident that in the budget year 1937–1938 Latvian military expenditures made up 23 per cent of the state's total budget.

¹⁰⁷ See Schroetter's report, September 8, 1931. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-3883, K076698; Anderson, E. Military policies and plans of the Baltic States on the eve of World War II, 30.

the border of 296 km between Latvia and the Soviet Union, being devoid of natural obstructions, was open to the invading military forces. Consequently the Estonian military authorities drew the following conclusions: the Estonian-Latvian Military Alliance was beneficial primarily to Latvia, and not to Estonia, that by leaving its eastern border undefended, Latvia appeared to have decided to surrender to the Soviets in case of a military conflict, while Estonia, considering its 1,157 km coastline, had to develop cooperation with Finland, and not with Latvia.¹⁰⁸ However, at the end of the 1920s and in the early 1930s Poland played an important role in advising Estonia not to nullify the alliance. The Polish military leadership believed that withdrawal of Estonia from the alliance would force the Latvian military seek cooperation with Lithuania, a circumstance that was unacceptable to Poland, which consequently requested Estonia to continue the military collaboration with Latvia. Leaving the Latvian eastern border undefended put Estonia, of course, into a strategically difficult position: the Red Army could easily by-pass the Estonian fortifications and attack from behind through Latvia. But accusations that Latvia did not plan to defend itself against a possible Soviet attack were unfounded. The Latvian-Soviet border of 296 km compared to Estonia's 165 km long eastern border was indeed difficult to defend. Therefore the Latvian military planning foresaw the initial retreat to Central Latvia, where the Vidzeme highlands, large forests and the River Daugava with all its tributaries provided bastions against the invading forces. The Latvian General Staff had also prepared a war plan directed against a German attack, and another one which foresaw military operations against both Germany and the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁹

The political and economic reasons: the Estonian leadership claimed that when Latvia concluded the trade agreement with the Soviet Union in 1927, it thwarted political as well as military cooperation with Estonia, and that the foreign policy orientation of Latvia wavered among the Soviet Union, Lithuania and Germany.¹¹⁰ In the 1920s and 1930s Estonia's exports to Latvia exceeded the imports from Latvia. The share of Latvia in Estonia's total trade volume was higher than the share of Estonia in Latvia's total trade volume. In the second half of the 1930s the Estonian-Latvian relations tensed because of Estonia's renouncing the so-called Baltic clause.¹¹¹ Estonia did not look kindly on attempts of Latvian authorities to

¹⁰⁸ A Review by Estonian General Staff (Estonian-Latvian Defence Alliance), January 1, 1927. ERA 495-12-245, 7; Kara's report, December 29, 1929. TsHIDK 308-12-162, 43-46; Memorandum by Finnish General Staff: Military Political situation in Europe 1938. SARK YE:n arkisto 1400/16; Gallienne's report, July 23, 1937. PRO FO 371/21059, N3993/346/59; Hynninen's report, September 27, 1937; December 23, 1938. UM 5C/12; Ülavere, J. Balti liidust sõja puhul. – Akadeemia, 1937, 4, 214-216.

¹⁰⁹ A Review by Estonian General Staff (Estonian-Latvian Defence Alliance), January 1, 1927. ERA 495-12-245, 1-7; Military-geographical summary about Lithuania and Latvia, (Undated). ERA 495-12-284; Anderson, E. Military policies and plans of the Baltic States on the eve of World War II, 31-32.

¹¹⁰ Piip, A. Eesti ja Läti. – Akadeemia, 1937, 4, 213.

¹¹¹ About the Estonian-Latvian economic cooperation see Pihlamägi, M. Eesti ja Läti majanduslik koostöö aastail 1920-1940. – Acta Historica Tallinnensia, 2002, 6, 84-107.

latvianize native Livonians. In 1937 the Latvian government expelled the well-known Estonian folklorist Oskar Loorits, who had spoken out for Livonians' human rights within the Latvian state. This had unleashed a serious exchange of polemics, shaded by nationalistic feelings, between the two countries.¹¹²

Until the mid-1930s the Estonian and Latvian political and military leaderships considered the Soviet Union as their primary regional enemy. But the coming to power of Nazis in Germany brought on a change in Latvia's defence policies. Now Germany stood at the head of their enemy list, whereas the Soviet Union occupied the second place. At the same time Estonia was ready to offer military resistance only to the Soviet Union. Estonians considered a war in alliance with the Soviet Union against Germany equal to suicide.¹¹³

The Estonian-German military contacts did not go unnoticed in Riga. The visit of Reek and Maasing to Germany further strained Estonian-Latvian relations: Riga was hurt by the visit and the Latvian foreign policy and military leaders were unhappy, because the preparations for the visit had been made secretly.¹¹⁴ It can be assumed that Germany with inviting Reek indeed wished to antagonize the relations between the Estonian and Latvian military. Karl Menning, the Estonian ambassador to Latvia, reported that rumors were floating in Riga about Germany's plan to establish an airbase on Saaremaa.¹¹⁵ At the same time the Foreign Minister Munters and the Chief of II Department of the General Staff Grigorijs Kikkuls found that an invitation to visit Berlin should also have been forwarded to the Latvian Chief of General Staff. The report of Colonel Rössing, the German military attaché, declares that according to Munters, who previously had been somewhat fearful of Germany, now told about Latvia's wish for improving the relations between Latvia and the Reich.¹¹⁶ The military information concerning Estonia often reached Riga via Berlin, as Germans were cleverly breeding mistrust between Estonia and Latvia by selectively exposing dealings between the German and Estonian military.¹¹⁷ Thus Colonel Rössing announced in Riga that because of his good relations with the Estonians he had access to everything worth knowing.¹¹⁸ On January 9, 1939 the Latvian ambassador in Berlin in his report describes talks with a military attaché of an unknown name and origin, who informed him about the German, Finnish and Estonian General Staffs having an agreement for the unified action in case of war, and that the Estonian military collaboration with Germany was more extensive than that with Finland.¹¹⁹

Tom Bower, scrutinizing the British intelligence (Secret Intelligence Service, or MI6), notes that already in the 1920s the British embassy in Riga had

¹¹² See Hynninen's report, September 27, 1937. UM 5C/12.

¹¹³ See Laidoner to Päts, January 12, 1937. ERA 2553-1-11, 2-6.

¹¹⁴ Menning's report, November 25, 1936. ERA 957-14-319, 36.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Rössing's report, November 23, 1936. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-2797, E435469-E435473.

¹¹⁷ See Orde's report, June 10, 1938. PRO FO 419/32.

¹¹⁸ Mollin's report, July 14, 1939. ERA 495-11-42, 84.

¹¹⁹ Krieviņš' report, January 9, 1939. Latvijas Valsts Vēstures Arhīvs (Latvian State Historical Archives), Riga (LVVA) 2574-3-3249, 100-101.

“effectively suborned” the II Department of Latvian General Staff and the Political Police, which regularly delivered useful information to the embassy.¹²⁰ A number of Latvian officers had studied in the military colleges in France, thus retaining special relationships with France, as mentioned by the German military attaché Rössing in his reports to Berlin.¹²¹ It is not impossible that the Latvian military intelligence also cooperated with the French intelligence. Thus, based on the information gleaned from a German newspaper, Pravda stated in November 1930, that the intelligence department of Latvian General Staff only constitutes a branch of the French General Staff.¹²²

The Latvian military leaders did not conceal their decision to accept help from the Soviet Union in case of a German military attack. Indeed, in the second half of the 1930s the Latvian military were disposed favorably toward the Soviet Union. Already in the spring 1935 many Latvian officers expressed a view that the Latvian army will fight with the Red Army against Germany in any case.¹²³ In May 1937 General Balodis, the Latvian Minister of War, when visiting Military Academy announced that regardless of its social order, the Soviet Union will in time become Latvia's ally.¹²⁴ Similar statements were made in Latvia time and again. After the Munich Pact in October 1938 Balodis declared to the Soviet ambassador in Riga, Ivan Zotov, that all patriotic Latvians, particularly those in the military service, have cordial feelings toward the Russians, and therefore will never join Polish or German camps.¹²⁵ In Estonia Latvia's Eastern orientation was not unknown. For this reason, in the second half of the 1930s the issue of renouncing military alliance with Latvia became topical again. On December 5, 1937, when addressing the congress of the Fatherland League (*Isamaaliit*), General Laidoner stated that although Estonia regards alliance with Latvia necessary, it would not shed tears if this alliance broke up.¹²⁶ Laidoner's statement alluded to Estonia's willingness to free itself from an unstable ally. Gallienne, the British representative in Tallinn, referring to Laidoner's above discussed speech, asked Nikolai Kaasik, Head of Political Department in Foreign Ministry, whether Estonia intended to withdraw from the Estonian-Latvian military alliance. He received an answer stating that in the opinion of the Estonian military leadership Estonia will be able to fight without the support of Latvia in the coming war.¹²⁷ On December 31, 1938 *Rahvaleht* published opinions of Laidoner in the matter. The General stated that Estonia did not have any misunderstandings with its close nor with its distant neighbors, but that relations with Latvia in terms of military

¹²⁰ Bower, T. The Red Web. MI6 and the KGB Master Coup. Aurum Press, 1989, 21.

¹²¹ See for example Rössing's report, July 1, 1936. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-2797, E435476-435481.

¹²² Pravda, 1930, November 12.

¹²³ Unsigned report to Finnish Political Police, May 15, 1935. KA EK VALPO I, 689.

¹²⁴ Brodovski's report, June 2, 1937. AVPR 05-17-72-133, 87; Сиполс В. Тайная дипломатия. Буржуазная Латвия в антисоветских планах империалистических держав 1919-1940 гг. Рига, 1968, 256.

¹²⁵ Zotov's report, October 30, 1938. AVPR 0150-35-6-7, 147.

¹²⁶ See Uus Eesti, 1937, December 6.

¹²⁷ Gallienne's report, December 20, 1937. PRO FO 419/31.

alliance require further clarification and adjustment. Soon after the Latvian ambassador in Tallinn announced that General Balodis, the Latvian Minister of War, and General Hartmanis, the Latvian Chief of General Staff, are ready to meet Laidoner at once to discuss questions related to the military alliance. The Estonian authorities answered that the meeting of military leaders was not necessary, because the Estonian-Latvian alliance was a hopeless undertaking in military terms.¹²⁸ But the Estonian military leadership did not view the pro-Soviet stand of the Latvian military as the decisive factor in Estonian-Latvian relations. Instead, the Estonian military leaders felt that in the future war between the two Great Powers, Latvia and Lithuania, unlike Estonia, will become the territory on which the armed forces of these powers will operate. The Estonian military leadership assumed that the final German-Polish agreement will be concluded at the expense of Lithuania and Latvia.¹²⁹

Surely the military planners of Germany were aware of problems emerging with the war, probably to be fought simultaneously on two fronts, in which case Germany would be limited only to conducting a defensive campaign in the Eastern Europe.¹³⁰ Berlin determined that in case the Soviet Union provided military assistance to Czechoslovakia, the Baltic states should defend Poland and Germany along their eastern borders. At the beginning of September 1938 Reimar von Bonin, the German navy attaché, reported that Laidoner and other Estonian military leaders and also Frohwein, the German ambassador in Tallinn, had during the summer of 1938 repeatedly discussed matters of Article 16, and the German military aid to Estonia. According to Bonin Laidoner had time and again assured the German ambassador about Estonia's decision of militarily opposing any attempt made by the Soviet Union to pass its troops through Estonia, but had expressed hope that Estonia, considering its small size and restricted resources, in case of war with the Soviet Union, would receive assistance – primarily material aid – from Germany, as long as overland connections with Germany were secured. Obviously Laidoner considered the possibility that both Latvia and Lithuania would be occupied by Germany. Until this goal had not been reached, the necessary transport of goods and war material had to be accomplished by sea routes. Therefore Laidoner promised to support Germany with the development of Estonian naval forces. To the question of the ambassador, whether in case of a conflict Estonia would approve of German navy controlling traffic routes in the Baltic Sea, Laidoner answered affirmatively. He assured that just for this reason Estonia viewed the security, and thus the refurbishing of important military and naval fortifications on coastal area essential.¹³¹ Furthermore, Bonin's memorandum indicated that the German embassy in Tallinn, particularly the German naval attaché, had hitherto been cautious in making concrete promises concerning the

¹²⁸ Palin's report, January 27, 1937. UM 5C/16; see also Šūmans' report, January 12, 1939. LVVA 2574-3-3250, 39.

¹²⁹ See Vale's report, September 23, 1938. PRO FO 371/22233, N4916/2992/59.

¹³⁰ See for example Öpik's report, July 26, 1937. ERA 957-14-439, 13.

¹³¹ Bonin to OKM, September 2, 1939. NA II PG-48787 T-1022 R-295, 48787NID 5912/38.

details of the future military assistance to Estonia. But German authorities had pledged at least orally their military aid to Estonia and to Finland, preventing the passage of the Soviet troops through their respective territories. In order to answer Laidoner's inquiries, Bonin asked OKM about how the Reich intends to help Estonia in case of war, what kind of method of granting aid would be chosen by the Reich, and what kind of means Estonia should employ to succeed in its efforts of self-help. Bonin proposed that Estonia should begin constructing necessary locations for unloading ships, furnished with anti-aircraft and long-distance guns.¹³²

UNREALIZED DREAM – MILITARY ALLIANCE OF BALTIC STATES

On September 12, 1934 the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was concluded in Geneva. This treaty concerned itself only with the diplomatic and political collaboration, despite the fact that the crucial issue linked to the Baltic League was the desired military hook-up among the three countries. On August 31, 1934, on the day when the concluded Baltic agreement was initialed in Riga, *Rīts*, one of the official organs of the Latvian government declared that as long as one of the allies was not able to solve its border questions, the military alliance of all three Baltic states was not feasible, and that if Lithuania were attacked, Estonia and Latvia would only be able to provide diplomatic and political assistance.

On July 12, 1920 a peace treaty between Soviet Russia and Lithuania had been signed in Moscow. This treaty contained also a secret supplemental protocol, which to Soviet Russia guaranteed a free passage of the Red Army through the region of Vilnius. Thus Russia had ensured the neutrality of Lithuania and at the same time a free transit of the Red Army units through Lithuania. For Soviet Russia the Treaty of Moscow presented one of its diplomatic and military offensives against Poland. On September 5, 1920 Eustachy Sapicha, the Polish Foreign Minister, accused the Lithuanians in a letter sent to the League of Nations: "Without doubt the Lithuanian military has made itself an ally of the Red Army, and thus the Lithuanian government has become an instrument of the Soviet government."¹³³

After the Sleževičius government had concluded a Non-Aggression Pact with the Soviet Union in September 1926, the Lithuanian military leaders increasingly insisted on a military alliance with the Soviet Union. The Soviet diplomats as well as the military representatives often answered these proposals in a contradictory manner: the diplomats approved of the continuing mutual accessibility in the wake of the non-aggression pact, thus supporting the idea of a military alliance,

¹³² Bonin to OKM, September 2, 1939.

¹³³ Op cit. Senn, A. E. The Great Powers Lithuania and the Vilna Question 1920–1928. Leiden, 1966, 37.

while the military attaché refused to commit himself on the issue. Because of the Lithuanian military leadership repeatedly raising the question of military alliance, the Soviet military leaders were forced to take a stand. On October 9, 1926 Voroshilov, the Commissar of War, wrote to Chicherin, the Commissar of Foreign Affairs, stating that the military alliance with Lithuania might only cause difficulties for the Soviet Union: "To continue converging with Lithuania will create an impression among the Lithuanians that the Soviet Union will not allow its destruction, a circumstance that would lay the foundation for an anti-Soviet bloc from sea to sea. Our international as well as internal situation requires us to keep our hands free, and not to bind ourselves to weighty responsibilities in respect to Lithuania. Therefore we cannot offer an impression of concluding a military alliance with Lithuania, although at the same time we will have to continue close relations with its military leadership, and ensure our influence on its actions."¹³⁴ The same letter also offers information regarding the collaboration between the Soviet and Lithuanian intelligence services. Voroshilov proposed that the ongoing exchange of intelligence in regard to Poland should be continued, and that additionally the Soviet Union should also commence intelligence work against Latvia.¹³⁵ Whether and how this proposal was carried into practice requires further investigation. But it can be assumed that Lithuania accepted this plan, as Latvia and Poland already collaborated in the intelligence work against Lithuania.

Lithuania was the only one of the three Baltic states that carried out intelligence work against Poland as well as against Germany. The reasons for this were the territorial problems of Lithuania: Vilnius and Memel. Besides Lithuania another Eastern European state – Czechoslovakia – had agreed to cooperate with the Soviet Union in intelligence matters.¹³⁶ However, the Soviet-Lithuanian intelligence collaboration started already at the beginning of the 1920s, while the Soviet-Czechoslovakian intelligence cooperation started in 1935. But after the annexation of Memel by Germany in March 23, 1939, the entire Lithuanian intelligence network in Germany collapsed. Germans had initially recruited Wilhelm Frank (Villus Frankas), an official of the II Department of the Lithuanian General Staff, who promptly betrayed the whole Lithuanian intelligence organization in Germany. Between October 1938 and December 1939 the German authorities uncovered 45 instances of Lithuanian espionage: 23 agents received 6 months in prison, 25 were sent to concentration camps, and one agent was condemned to death. In January 1940 the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* in its report analyzed the activities of Lithuanian intelligence, a question was raised how such a small nation, with the population barely half of Berlin, had been able to conduct an active and effective intelligence campaign. The author of the memorandum assumed that in secrecy behind the Lithuanian espionage stood a more powerful and affluent

¹³⁴ AVPR 028-/-2-48, 2-3.

¹³⁵ Firebrace's report, December 18, 1934. PRO FO 371/ 18231, N 7122/131/59.

¹³⁶ About the Soviet-Czechoslovakian intelligence cooperation see Кен О. Чехословакия в политике Москвы (1932–1936 гг.). – Россия XXI. Общество–политический и научный журнал, 1997, 1–2, 70.

entity.¹³⁷ But this assumption remained basically just an assumption. The author, however, referred to the fact that the Soviet military attaché in Kaunas was practically a daily visitor of the II Department of Lithuanian General Staff. To elucidate the issue further, the extent of the cooperation between the Soviet Union and Lithuania, the archives of Soviet army, particularly those of the Command of Military Intelligence, the NKVD Political Intelligence and the Soviet State Committee of Security should be thoroughly investigated.

If the Red Army tried to keep a certain distance from the Lithuanians and their aspirations, then the Lithuanian government was intensely interested in the further development and strengthening of the relations between the armies of both countries. For example, in December 1933 Jurgis Baltrušaitis, the Lithuanian ambassador in Moscow, when visiting the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, encouraged closer relations between the two armies so that the Red Army would not lose its interest in Lithuania, and would retain its awareness of the Lithuanian defensive capacities.¹³⁸ The majority of Lithuanian armament was of French origin.¹³⁹ But Lithuania also tried repeatedly to purchase Soviet weaponry. This may have been the reason for rumors floating around in the second half of the 1930s that Lithuania had purchased the Soviet armament.¹⁴⁰ But also in the area of weapons' procurement, Moscow stood firm in its neutral stance toward Lithuania, and declined all armament deals with it.¹⁴¹

Until the middle of the 1930s contacts between the Lithuanian military and those of Estonia and Latvia had been rare and insignificant. The reasons for the relative lack of cooperation between the Baltic states being: first, Lithuania's military collaboration with the Soviet Union, and second, the collaboration of both Estonia and Latvian with Poland. The leadership of Estonian and Latvian armies assumed that in case of a military conflict involving Estonia, Latvia and Poland, Lithuania will fight on the side of the Soviet Union.¹⁴² Trewor R. Swett, the United States military attaché to the Baltic states and Finland, wrote in 1928 that unlike the Finnish, Estonian and Latvian General Staffs, it was almost impossible to extract information from the General Staff of Lithuania. However, the American officer did not hold the Soviet influence responsible for this fact, but primarily the hostility of the Lithuanians vis-à-vis the Polish officials, also the

¹³⁷ Memorandum by Department III D of *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, January 10, 1940. TsHIDK 500-4-450, 1-2.

¹³⁸ Stomonjakov's report (Conversation with Baltrušaitis), December 19, 1933. AVPR 0151-23-46-5, 145-146.

¹³⁹ Monson's report (Conversation with French military attaché), April 5, 1937. PRO FO 371/21060, N2042/798/58.

¹⁴⁰ See Torr's report, January 24, 1935. PRO FO 371/19398, N555/398/59; Reuterswärd's report (Soviet-Lithuanian military cooperation), March 11, 1935. Sveriges Riksbibliotek (Swedish State Archives), Stockholm (UD) HP 20C.

¹⁴¹ Memorandum by Rozengolts (Conversation with Baltrušaitis), January 25, 1937. AVPR 0151-28-54-16, 6-7; About Lithuania's desire to purchase Soviet weaponry see also Brodovskii's report (Conversation with Vileišis), December 27, 1934. AVPR 0150-30-62-7, 123-124; Karski and Fehner to Litvinov, April 14, 1937. AVPR 05-17-73-133, 107.

¹⁴² Kara's report (Conversation with Kalėjs), February 28, 1930. TsHIDK 308-12-165, 24-26.

character, the low educational level and the ineptness of the Lithuanian military. At the same time Swett mentioned that the Lithuanian military leadership was excessively friendly toward the foreign military officers, decorated them with undeserved medals, held endless sumptuous dinners and evening banquets in their honor where they saluted them and danced like maniacs.¹⁴³ The contacts between the Estonian and Lithuanian military were few and far between, although in 1930 a delegation of Estonian officers visited Lithuanian military maneuvers.¹⁴⁴

With the coming to power of the Nazis in Germany, also this country became one of the enemies of Lithuania. After the creation of the Baltic League some circles in Lithuania wished to complement the political cooperation with the military aspect. General Raštikis, the Lithuanian Commander-in-Chief, shortly after the war claimed in his memoirs that on becoming the military leader of Lithuania in 1934, he attempted to push through the establishment of Baltic military alliance, with Sweden and Finland joining in.¹⁴⁵ On December 14, 1934 General Raštikis and Konstantinas Dulksnys, the Chief of II Department of the Lithuanian General Staff, visited Riga. To avoid a possible negative reaction from Moscow, the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry informed the Soviet ambassador in Kaunas of the upcoming visit.¹⁴⁶ In Riga General Raštikis met President Alberts Kviesis and Balodis, the Latvian Minister of War, and decorated high-ranking Latvian officers with Lithuanian military orders. However, Ulmanis, the Prime Minister and the real power in Latvia, declined receiving Raštikis. *Latvijas Kareivis*, the organ of the Latvian army, limited its coverage of Raštikis' visit to the printing of his biography in most laconic terms. The official governmental organ *Brīvā Zeme* attempted to display Raštikis' visit as a victory for Ulmanis' foreign policy efforts: political convergence of the Baltic states had established a foundation for the friendship between the armies involved, which shows that with the unified military forces the Baltic region is determined to defend its independence.¹⁴⁷ In February 1935 Raštikis himself told the British military attaché in Kaunas that he had proposed creating a Baltic military alliance.¹⁴⁸ To the contrary, the Latvian military leadership denied the rumors that during the visit of Raštikis the establishment of the Baltic military alliance had been discussed.¹⁴⁹

From his Riga visit, Raštikis wished to continue to Tallinn. The letter, dispatched from the Lithuanian General Staff to the Estonian military leadership, justified Raštikis' planned visit to Estonia with his desire to improve cooperation between the armies of the two countries.¹⁵⁰ Estonian military leaders declined to receive

¹⁴³ Swett's report, July 11, 1928. NA I RG-165 M-1508 R-10, 6728-6729.

¹⁴⁴ See Memorandum by Čečeta, December 16, 1934. Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas (Lithuanian Central State Archive), Vilnius (LCVA) 383-7-1531, 6.

¹⁴⁵ Raštikis, S. Iyčiai ir žmonės is manu užrašų III. Cikaga, 1972, 307.

¹⁴⁶ Memorandum by Urbšys, November 23, 1934. LCVA 383-7- 1509, 4.

¹⁴⁷ Latvijas Kareivis, 1934, December 13; Brīvā Zeme, 1934, December 13.

¹⁴⁸ Firebrace's report, February 22, 1935. PRO FO 371/19400, N144/185/59.

¹⁴⁹ Firebrace's report, January 2, 1935. PRO FO 371/19382, N38/19/59.

¹⁵⁰ Jakutis to Estonian General Staff, December 6, 1934. ERA 495-12-188, 154; Jakutis to Čečeta, December 11, 1934. LCVA 383-7-1531, 4.

Raštikis on the pretext that in case of visits by Finnish, Latvian and Polish military leaders, Estonia had been notified respectively 2 months, 6 months and 2 years ahead of the actual events. Thus Raštikis' visit was declined because of a 5-day notice not being acceptable to Estonia.¹⁵¹ It was thought in Kaunas that the true reason for not accepting the visit of Raštikis was the friendly relationship the Estonian military held with the Polish and German military. Warsaw found out about the planned visit of Raštikis to Tallinn through the Lithuanian press. The reaction from both Germany and Poland was not slow to come. Germany quickly presented a demarche about the Baltic military alliance: the Reich has nothing against the economic and political cooperation of the Baltic states, but does not under any circumstances agree to the military collaboration of the three Baltic states.¹⁵² In the plans of Germany there was no place for the military alliances in Eastern Europe. Obviously Germany feared military cooperation among the small states, that even when directed against the Soviet Union could in time cause unpleasant surprises for Germany. Also the Polish military attaché in Riga delivered an austere warning to the Latvian military leadership: because of the long-lasting collaboration between the Polish and Latvian armies, the Latvian military leaders must refrain from the cooperation with Lithuania and its army. As demonstrated by the report of the Polish military attaché in Latvia, Warsaw was gravely incensed by Raštikis' visit to Riga.¹⁵³ It is possible that with the visit Kaunas indeed demonstrated its anti-Polish stance.

In his explanation offered to the Estonian Foreign Ministry, Colonel Maasing, the Chief of II Department of General Staff, justified his declining of Raštikis' visit with the existing Lithuanian policies: the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry and military leaders had for sixteen years ignored the cooperation with Estonia, and the former Lithuanian Foreign Minister Dovas Zaunius had spoken repeatedly about the dangers of the Estonian-Lithuanian military collaboration. Maasing stated that the Estonian military leadership would not be able to change its attitudes toward Lithuania overnight, first a basis for the economic cooperation had to be established, and only then the military and political collaboration could follow.¹⁵⁴ As pointed out before, in 1935 the Estonian military leaders supposed that Poland and Germany, regardless of mutual antagonisms, might pursue a common goal which could cause the division of Lithuania. At the same time the Lithuanians' hope of receiving assistance from the Soviet Union, France and Czechoslovakia in case of a German attack, was considered unrealistic by the Estonian military.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, fear and mistrust of closer cooperation was probably justified. Once in a while rumors floated about Lithuania's intention to let the Soviet Union establish air

¹⁵¹ Memorandum by Čečeta, December 16, 1934; Dailide's report, December 19, 1934. LCVA 383-7-1531, 6, 3.

¹⁵² Torr's report, December 10, 1934. PRO FO 371/18231, N6992/131/59.

¹⁵³ Liebach's report, December 15 and 28, 1934. TsHIDK 308-12-167, 123-124.

¹⁵⁴ Maasing to Foreign Ministry, November 11, 1935. ERA 957-14-6, 281.

¹⁵⁵ Shipp's report, October 11, 1935. NA I RG-165 M-1508 R-4, 0237.

and navy bases in its territory, and start using the Soviet instructors as trainers of the Lithuanian military forces.¹⁵⁶

Raštikis wrote in his memoirs that he had presented the plan for establishing the Baltic military alliance to the Lithuanian Defence Council, and had justified it with a claim that Lithuania cannot be defended only by its army and by its unstable foreign policy. According to Raštikis, in the last days of 1935 President Smetona had announced at the meeting of the Lithuanian Defence Council that a planned military alliance is useful for Estonia and Latvia, but not for Lithuania, that the military alliance with other Baltic states is not acceptable as long as the Estonian Commander-in-Chief Laidoner criticizes Lithuanian policies concerning Vilnius and Memel and is hostile toward the Soviet Union, and that the Latvian military leaders are oriented toward Poland.¹⁵⁷ But the claims of Raštikis, presented above, are at variance with the facts. Some members of the Lithuanian government continued to desire the creation of the Baltic military alliance. When in February 1935 Berķis, the Latvian Commander-in-Chief visited Lithuania, Petras Šniukšta, the Lithuanian Minister of Defence, brought up the idea of the Baltic military alliance. Berķis was very careful in his response: the question belongs to the competence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Subsequently, attitudes of the Latvian military leaders changed due to the increasing tensions in the international arena. Hitherto the Latvians had been positively attuned toward the French-Polish military collaboration. But notable improvement in the relations between Germany and Poland awoke certain doubts and mistrust against Poland among the Latvian military. The rumors about the pending exchange of “assets” – Poland delivering its Corridor with the city of Danzig to Germany and receiving the Latvian seaport Liepāja in return – brought the Latvian military to the recognition that cooperation with Lithuania is of utmost importance.

At the end of April 1935, Berķis informed the Lithuanian ambassador that he was ready to travel to Kaunas together with Balodis, the Minister of War, for discussion of common defence issues. In May 1935, at the II Conference of the Baltic League, Lozoraitis, the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, proposed to Latvia and Estonia an immediate establishment of the Baltic military alliance. But Munters and Seljamaa did not accept the offer. They declared that as long as tensions exist between Germany and Lithuania concerning Memel, this question cannot be discussed.¹⁵⁸ It seems that in May 1935 the issue of the Baltic military cooperation had gained President Smetona’s approval. It was he, who during the conference of the Baltic foreign ministers informed the British representative in Kaunas, that in case of a German attack the three Baltic states would be able to deploy at least eleven

¹⁵⁶ Günther’s report, December 2, 1936. NA I RG-165 M-1508 R-10, 9638.

¹⁵⁷ Raštikis, S. Ivykiai ir žmonės is manu užrašų III, 307.

¹⁵⁸ Preston’s telegram, May 9, 1935. PRO FO 371/19399, N 2381/575/59. See also Anderson, E. The Baltic Entente 1914–1940. – In: Its Strength and Weakness. – The Baltic in International Relations between the Two World Wars. Symposium organized by the Centre for Baltic Studies. November 11–13, 1986. (Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia, 3.) Eds. J. Hiden and A. Loit. University of Stockholm, Uppsala, 1988, 83.

divisions.¹⁵⁹ In an attempt to convince Latvia of the need of military cooperation, Lithuania repeatedly referred to the danger from Germany. In February 1936 Lithuania dispatched Stasys Dirmantas, the Minister of War, to Riga, and Juozas Čaplikas, the Minister of Interior, to Tallinn, both with the purpose to propose the establishment of a joint Baltic armament industry.¹⁶⁰

In August 1936 while staying in Latvia, in his talks with Munters Lozoraitis again raised the question of forming the Baltic military alliance. He proposed to conclude a mutual assistance pact between the three Baltic states in the framework of the League of Nations' statutes, and in addition to close the military contract between Latvia and Lithuania. Munters considered the acceptance of the proposal dependent on the solving of the Polish-Lithuanian conflicts, and on the attitudes of the Estonian government.¹⁶¹ In the fall of 1936 Lozoraitis also made a similar proposal to the Estonian government through the Estonian ambassador in Kaunas: by promising to establish diplomatic relations with Poland, and expecting the creation of the Baltic military alliance as a compensation for Lithuania's progressive foreign policy move suggested.¹⁶² At the end of 1936, during the V Conference of the Baltic Foreign Ministers, the issue of the Baltic military alliance became again the subject of discussions, but only between the Latvian and Lithuanian representatives. But the attitude of Munters in this matter remained negative.¹⁶³

The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Baltic states did not change Lithuania's orientation toward the Soviet Union. In this respect the declarations of Smetona, Tūbelis and Lozoraitis made to the Soviet ambassador in Kaunas after signing the treaty should be remembered. The continuation of the Soviet orientation in Lithuanian foreign policy was caused by the strained Lithuanian-German relations, and by the sharp conflict with Poland.¹⁶⁴ Because of the new circumstances the Lithuanian military leadership concluded: since there is a common border between the Soviet Union and Poland, then in case of a Lithuanian-Polish conflict the Soviet Union would be able to aid Lithuania, but in case of a German-Lithuanian friction, assistance from the Soviet Union can only come through Estonia and Latvia. This was one of the reasons why the Lithuanian military leadership became interested in the creation of the Baltic military alliance. How did the Lithuanian military planners view their country's defence policies in the middle of the 1930s, and what they strove for with establishing the Baltic military alliance, is vividly presented in the May 1937 memorandum prepared for the Lithuanian Ministry of War: "Even if the anti-German military alliance with Latvia cannot be concluded, it would be crucial to preserve the best possible relations with Latvia, to secure its benevolent neutrality in case of a war with our neighbors. Our present operational plans foresee Lithuanian army's retreat to

¹⁵⁹ Preston's report, May 6, 1935. PRO FO 371/19396, N2537/143/59.

¹⁶⁰ Sėja's report, January 23, 1936. LVVA 1313-1-103, 458-459.

¹⁶¹ Memorandum by Lozoraitis, September 7, 1936. LCVA 383-7-1894, 86-88.

¹⁶² Preston's report, February 2, 1937. PRO FO 371/21056, N 914/122/59.

¹⁶³ Memorandum by Lozoraitis, December 22, 1936. LCVA 383-7-1862, 53-55.

¹⁶⁴ See example Yrjö-Koskinen's report, April 2, 1935. UM 5C/18.

Latvia. A war between the Soviet Union and Germany is inconceivable without Poland being drawn into it. It does not seem realistic that the Lithuanian territory would remain untouched by the onslaught of the warring armies. Lithuania must decide before the commencement of the war on whose side it will fight. To fight against the first intruder would mean trusting itself into the hands of fate. Lithuania has to join the side that is most likely to win the war. Lithuania would have the least chance to remain independent, in case of Germany's triumph. Lithuania must join the states which oppose Germany's expansion..."¹⁶⁵ Similar thoughts appeared in the reports of the Lithuanian ambassador in Moscow. Baltrušaitis stressed repeatedly that Lithuania can be attacked only by Poles or by Germans, and the only supporter of Lithuania in this case would be the Soviet Union with its Red Army, dependent on the agreement made with Latvia in this matter.¹⁶⁶ But it is also true that the Lithuanian military leaders were afraid that the Red Army after entering the country would refuse to leave, but stay on as an occupation force.¹⁶⁷ All-in-all, in the mid-1930s the Lithuanians considered Germany and Poland their primary enemies, and were ready to fight against them together with the Soviet Union. According to the Lithuanian military planners, the Baltic military alliance would, as an ally of the Soviet Union, fight against Germany. But these thoughts and plans were most likely unrealistic and unachievable. The leadership of the Red Army was not in the least interested in the cooperation with the Baltic states. On the other hand, politicians and military officers of all three Baltic states never came to an agreement as to which one of the neighboring states should be considered as enemy number one.

In 1938, a couple of months after the *Anschluss*, the Latvian military leadership determined that the Baltic states should put aside their antagonistic feelings and begin an extensive military collaboration. For this the Latvians turned to Great Britain for assistance. On May 28 1938, General Hartmanis, the Latvian Chief of General Staff, proposed to Colonel Croxton S. Vale, British military attaché, that the British government dispatch a military delegation to the Baltic states, which would help to coordinate the defence policies of the Baltic states, primarily standardize the armaments of these states.¹⁶⁸ That idea of Hartmanis was brought on by the mission of British General Walter Kirke to Finland. Namely in 1924 the Finnish government had invited a delegation led by General Kirke to Finland to help in redesigning and reconstructing the Finnish coastal and anti-aircraft defences.¹⁶⁹ The proposal of Hartmanis did not surprise London. In November 1936 General Balodis, the Latvian Minister of War, had come up with a similar proposal.¹⁷⁰ London supported the proposal, as the Foreign Office felt that

¹⁶⁵ LCVA 929-3-1136.

¹⁶⁶ Baltrušaitis' report, December 15, 1934. LCVA 383-7-1557, 68.

¹⁶⁷ Firebrace's report, January 2, 1935. PRO FO 371/19382, N38/19/59.

¹⁶⁸ Orde's report (Vale's conversation with Hartmanis), June 8, 1937. PRO FO 371/22233, N2992/29992/59.

¹⁶⁹ See Turtola, M. Eräitä näkökohtia suomalais-virolaisiin sotilassuhteisiin 1920- ja 1930-luvulla, 98.

¹⁷⁰ Collier to Hayes, July 4, 1938. PRO FO 371/22233, N2992/29992/59; see also Memorandum by Collier, May 11, 1937. PRO FO 371/21057, N2548/124/59.

close cooperation between the Baltic military was of utmost importance, because it would help to reject, hopefully, the pressure of Latvia's more powerful neighbors. It was feared that the refusal of Great Britain might lead Latvia to proposing a similar scheme to another Great Power. At the request of the Foreign Office, the War Office agreed to send a delegation to Latvia. Regardless of all those official moves, neither the Foreign nor War Office were sympathetic toward the Baltic states, nor were they interested in assuming military obligations in relation to those small countries. Both institutions only viewed the Baltic states as markets for the British war industry. Consequently they stipulated that before dispatching a mission, the Baltic states had to come to a mutual agreement concerning the British mission, and then develop a joint program for purchasing British war equipment and armament.¹⁷¹ At that point London began to make preparations for the planned visit – by selecting suitable military officers for the intended mission. On September 17 1938, Vale, the British military attaché, told the Estonian military leadership that because the cooperation between the three Baltic states was practically non-existent, the War Office was ready to send a military mission to Balticum in order to coordinate the attempt of putting the idea into practice. Colonel Maasing, the Chief of II Department of Estonian General Staff, reacted by stating that thanks to its geographical location Estonia, in case of the German-Soviet Union war, had a much better chance to retain its independence than Latvia and Lithuania, whose territories would become the battlefield of the German-Soviet military conflict.¹⁷² With that answer of Maasing, the Hartmanis plan collapsed. Consequently Vale and the Foreign Office concluded that taking into account the Estonian-German relations the idea of sending a military mission to Balticum had to be abandoned – regardless of Maasing's optimistic declaration, "Estonia will be able to avoid involvement in the coming war," which was deemed by the British authorities to be ridiculous.¹⁷³ But such declarations could hardly surprise the British. On December 3 1937 Maasing had told F. M. F. West, the British air attaché, that Germany had informed the Estonians about its readiness to provide Estonia with a guarantee for its continuing independence, but not for Latvia and Lithuania. London considered that promise of Germany as its plan to separate Estonia from the other Baltic states.¹⁷⁴ In March 1938 Maasing was even more candid, when telling the British diplomatic representative Gallienne, that Germans thought highly of Estonians as a race, which is ready to defend itself. According to Maasing, Estonia's relations with Germany positively sparkled, compared to those of Latvia and Lithuania with Germany.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Hayes to Collier, August 26, 1938. PRO FO 371/22233, N4267/2992/59.

¹⁷² Vale's report, September 23, 1938. PRO FO 371/22233, N4916/2992/59.

¹⁷³ See Vale's report, September 23, 1938; Remark by Collier and Gage, October 12, 1938; Orde to Collier, September 30, 1938. PRO FO 371/22233, N4916/2992/59.

¹⁷⁴ Scarlett's report, December 3, 1937; Gallienne's report, December 14, 1937. PRO FO 419/31; see also Schmidt's report, December 23, 1937. ERA 957-14-440, 56–57; Estonian Foreign Ministry to Schmidt, January 15, 1938. ERA 957-14-440, 59.

¹⁷⁵ Gallienne's report, March 17, 1938. PRO FO 419/33.

SOVIET UNION AND THE BALTIC MILITARY ALLIANCE

The plans of establishing an Eastern Pact, and the continuous convergence of France and the Soviet Union, became reasons for the Lithuanian political leadership to start talking about the Baltic military alliance. On December 5, 1934 at a Conference between the Soviet Union and France, Litvinov and Laval signed a so-called Soviet-French Protocol, which restrained both partners from concluding other agreements that would prevent the establishment of the named Eastern Pact. On December 11 the Soviet ambassadors in Tallinn, Riga and Kaunas informed their respective governments about the concluded protocol between the Soviet Union and France. This announcement was accompanied by a confidential explanation. In the December 8 and 11 telegrams the British ambassador in Riga declared that after the conference Litvinov and Laval had told the Estonian government that they both were in favor of the Baltic military alliance. According to R. Firebrace, the British military attaché, Lithuania had accepted the Soviet-France proposal at once, Latvia had agreed to consider the matter, whereas Estonia had rejected the proposal. Comments scribbled on the telegram proved that this bit of information took the Foreign Office by surprise and was simply taken as a successive new political maneuver.¹⁷⁶ Firebrace, who on December 18 analyzed the proposal, which was presented in the memorandum sent to War Office, concluded that the primary purpose for the move made by Paris was its desire to create a bloc of states friendly to the Soviet Union and France, willing to allow the Red Army, in case of German-French war, freely march through their territories.¹⁷⁷ It was believed in Paris that taking into account its relations with Germany and Poland, Lithuania fittingly belonged to the Soviet-French camp. Paris hoped that Lithuania could enlist Estonia and Latvia to the planned political community.¹⁷⁸ Thus Paris continued to encourage Lithuania to actively work for the establishment of the Baltic military alliance. Subsequently Firebrace, analyzing the existing Baltic defence policies, concluded that if France and the Soviet Union truly wanted to form a Baltic military alliance under their patronage, a positive outcome of their efforts would be highly unlikely.¹⁷⁹

Meanwhile Moscow continued its recommendations for establishing the Baltic military alliance, and appeals for this alliance to be closely related to the military might of the Soviet Union. In the winter of 1935 Lieutenant General Anatoli Gekker, Chief of the Red Army's Intelligence Headquarters, Department for Foreign Relations informed the Estonian military attaché Colonel Arnold Sinka, that the leadership of the Red Army wished for the Estonian military leaders to draw closer to the Soviet Union as the Lithuanians had done. Many Soviet army officers told Colonel Sinka of their wish that the Baltic states would create a

¹⁷⁶ Torr's telegram, December 8 and 11, 1934; Dodds' remark, December 20; Collier's remark, December 20; Walker's remark, December 21, 1934. PRO FO 371/18231, N6948/131/59.

¹⁷⁷ Firebrace's report, December 18, 1934. PRO FO 371/ 18231, N7122/131/59.

¹⁷⁸ See Memorandum by Lozoraitis, February 18, 1936. LCVA 383-7-1894, 283.

¹⁷⁹ Firebrace's report, December 18, 1934. PRO FO 371/ 18231, N7122/131/59.

military alliance under the Soviet and French protection.¹⁸⁰ On February 2, 1936 Litvinov informed Baltrušaitis, the Lithuanian ambassador in Moscow, that the Soviet Union would welcome the conclusion of the mutual assistance agreement, at least between Latvia and Lithuania, because such an agreement would help the Baltic states to secure an international guarantee for their security.¹⁸¹

It must be asked, whether the Soviet government truly desired the formation of the Baltic military alliance? And whether visits made to Moscow in May 1936 by the Baltic Chiefs of General Staffs were related to the Soviets' wish to commence coordinating the Baltic military cooperation? Attempting to answer these questions, one has to retreat into the past.

The idea of inviting some higher Baltic military officers to visit the Soviet Union had germinated in the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs already at the end of 1933. Recalling that on January 20, 1934 the Politbureau had decided to invite Petras Kubiliūnas, Lithuanian Chief of General Staff, and Mārtiņš Hartmanis, the Latvian Deputy Chief of General Staff, and a former military attaché in Warsaw and also a relative of Kārlis Ulmanis, for a visit to Moscow. The Soviets viewed Hartmanis as an unwavering Polnophile. Indeed, in his reports even the Polish military attaché in Riga called Hartmanis "a firm supporter of Poland."¹⁸² Therefore it has to be assumed that the only reason for Moscow's invitation to both military officers was not to discuss the issue of creating the Eastern Pact, but also to make an anti-Polish statement to the regional policy makers. In March 1934 the Latvian ambassador in Moscow informed the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of Hartmanis' readiness to visit the Soviet Union. Fearing that Hartmanis' visit might cause undesirable problems, the ambassador recommended extending an invitation simultaneously to another high Baltic military officer, Nikolai Reek, the Estonian Chief of General Staff.¹⁸³ But the Soviets had no intention to do this. After the May 15 Latvian *coup d'état* by Ulmanis, the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs found that the planned visit could be considered as a diplomatic backing of Ulmanis' rise to power. At the same time Voldemaras, the former Prime Minister of Lithuania, tried to overthrow Smetonas' regime. For all these reasons the visits of the Baltic military officers to Moscow were postponed. At this time Moscow did not even consider extending an invitation to Major General Juhan Tõrvand, the Estonian Chief of General Staff, as in the reports of the Soviet embassy in Tallinn he was depicted as an anti-Soviet individual.¹⁸⁴ It was also true that Tõrvand had been accused of corruption. But in March 1934 Tõrvand was released by the Estonian Head of State Konstantin Päts from his position, possibly a step taken to please Moscow. In November 1934 the planned visit of

¹⁸⁰ Shipp's report, April 5, 1935. NA I RG-165 M-1508 R-10, 699.

¹⁸¹ Baltrušaitis to Lozoraitis, February 14, 1936. LCVA 383-7-1814, 8-9.

¹⁸² See for example Kara's report, February 28, 1930. TsHIDK 308-12-165, 26.

¹⁸³ Кен О. Н., Рупасов А. И. Политбюро ЦК ВКП (б) и отношения СССР с западными соседними государствами (конец 1920–1930-х гг.). 420.

¹⁸⁴ Characterizations of leading figures employed by Estonian General Staff. Unsigned report to Prokofjev, Bērziņš and Artuzov, (September) 1931. ERA(F) 138-1-37, 152.

the Latvian and Lithuanian military leaders to Moscow became actual again. But at this time inviting all three Chiefs of General Staff was considered. The November 11 memorandum completed in the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs proposed that the Soviet ambassador in Tallinn should find out from the Head of State Pāts, whether General Reek would be willing to visit Moscow together with the Latvian Chief of General Staff.¹⁸⁵ At the same time the Soviets planned a separate visit for the Lithuanian Chief of General Staff, apart from the other two. In November the Lithuanian government accepted the invitation and the Foreign Minister Lozoraitis informed Moscow accordingly.¹⁸⁶

At the March 1935 talks with the representatives of the Soviet embassy, General Hartmanis and General Balodis, Latvian Minister of War, expressed a wish to visit Moscow. The Soviet ambassador Brodovski, who informed the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs about the talks, expressed an opinion that a visit by Hartmanis alone would not provide a wished-for anti-Polish effect. He found that for a greater effect all three Chiefs of General Staffs should be invited together.¹⁸⁷ At the end of 1935 the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs ordered Brodovski to strengthen contacts with Latvian military. To accomplish this, he was told to organize showings of Soviet propaganda films for the Latvian military, and entertain them at lavish embassy receptions. In a letter written in the first days of 1936 to Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, Brodovski discussed measures to be taken for awakening anti-German feelings in Latvians as well as in the Latvian military. He found that propaganda films and sumptuous receptions at the embassy had not helped. Instead, he recommended activating the old plan of inviting Hartmanis to Moscow.¹⁸⁸ In his talks with Glinski, the Soviet military attaché in Riga, in January 1936, Hartmanis himself explored various aspects of the proposed visit. However, he did not react to the invitation to participate in the military maneuvers held near Kiev.¹⁸⁹ It is possible that in his deliberations he took into account the predictable negative reaction from Warsaw to his presence at the maneuvers held near the border of Poland. In a letter to the Foreign Commissariat, written in January 1936, Brodovski expressed the opinion that Hartmanis would have no reason to turn down the invitation to attend the May 1 festivities.¹⁹⁰ But barely a couple of weeks before the intended visit the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs seemed to discard the whole idea.¹⁹¹ Even Brodovski appeared to believe that the Latvians would decline the honor. He based his opinion on the internal policies of Latvia, and on its relations with Poland and Germany: "One way or

¹⁸⁵ Memorandum by Fehner, November 10, 1934. AVPR 0154-27-38-2, 83; Stomonjakov to Ustinov, November 10, 1934. AVPR 0154-27-38-2, 85-84.

¹⁸⁶ Memorandum by Urbšys, November 23, 1934; Lozoraitis to Lithuanian embassy in Moscow, December 13, 1934. LCVA 383-7-1970, 4-3.

¹⁸⁷ Brodovski to Stomonjakov, March 11, 1935. AVPR 05-15-108-59, 22-23.

¹⁸⁸ Brodovski to Stomonjakov, January 3, 1936. AVPR 0150-33-3-65, 3.

¹⁸⁹ Brodovski to Stomonjakov, January 18, 1936. AVPR 05-16-120-81, 6.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Stomonjakov to Karski, April 11, 1936. AVPR 05-16-121-84, 6-7.

the other, the visit of the Chief of General Staff to Moscow, even to the May 1 celebrations, would appear as a step taken to create a certain impression in Latvia, as in other countries of the world. Doubtlessly Germany and Poland would interpret this visit as Latvia approaching our camp.”¹⁹²

Brodovski's predictions turned out to be correct. The announcement of the visits to Moscow of the Baltic Chiefs of General Staffs, as well as those of the French military attachés accredited to the Balticum, immediately raised in Berlin, Warsaw and also in Helsinki the question about Soviet intentions, and about the future orientation of the Baltic states' foreign and defence policies. This reaction also comes across in a memorandum addressed to the *Reichskriegsministerium*¹⁹³ by Grundherr, Head of Scandinavian and Baltic Department of the *Auswärtiges Amt*, and also in recorded talks between the Finnish ambassador in Warsaw and Tadeusz Kobylański, Head of Eastern Department, Polish Foreign Ministry.¹⁹⁴ It should be added that the Finnish authorities felt relieved for not receiving an invitation for the Finnish Chief of General Staff to travel to Moscow. The Finns felt that such a visit would have created many difficulties in the Finnish internal as well as in foreign policies.¹⁹⁵

The German and the Polish ambassadors in the Baltic capitals reacted immediately to the news about the visit of the Baltic military leaders to Moscow, and questioned the reasons for such visits. In this respect the action of the Soviet Union was successful. In Tallinn, the Foreign Minister Seljamaa and Colonel Maasing assured Hans Frohwein, the German ambassador in Estonia, that the visit under consideration was not going to change the Estonian foreign policy in any manner, and that it only had military-technical significance. To pre-empt the propaganda campaign of Soviet and French press, ambassador Frohwein advised Seljamaa to inform the press that the only goal of the visit would be gaining knowledge about the military technique.¹⁹⁶ In Riga similar information was passed on to Schack, the German ambassador in Riga, with assurance that the visit did not pursue any political goals. But the *Auswärtiges Amt* was quite upset about the visit of the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, occurring simultaneously with those discussed, to Czechoslovakia: Erich Zechlini, the German ambassador in Kaunas, was convinced that Lozaraitis' goal was to draw also the Baltic states into the French-Soviet Union-Czechoslovakia combination.¹⁹⁷

It might be of interest how the invitations to visit Moscow were delivered. The first one to receive the invitation was the Estonian Chief of General Staff, Nikolai

¹⁹² Brodovski to Stomonjakov, April 18, 1936. AVPR 0150-33-3-65, 25.

¹⁹³ German Ministry of War.

¹⁹⁴ Memorandum by Grundherr (Undated). NA II RG-242 T-129 R-3506, E631713-631714; Idman's report, April 29, 1936. UM 5C/13.

¹⁹⁵ Šūmans' report, May 8, 1936. LVVA 2574-3-3103, 26-27.

¹⁹⁶ Frohwein's telegram April 26 and 28, 1936. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-3507, E632087 ja RG-242 T-120 R-3506, E-631721-E631722; Schack's telegram, April 27, 1936. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-3506, E631715.

¹⁹⁷ Zechlin's report, April 30, 1936. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-3507, E632687-E632692.

Reek. The Estonians informed the Latvian authorities about the invitation only after they had accepted it. Quite likely Reek's declining the invitation would have led Moscow to recognize that a visit of the Latvian Chief of Staff alone would not achieve the expected effect. Therefore only after the Estonians agreed to go along with the planned undertaking, did the Soviets forward the invitation also to Latvian Chief of General Staff. Subsequently the Estonian military leadership reacted in an unexpectedly ludicrous manner. Having found out about the invitation to the Latvian Chief of Staff, General Laidoner approached the Soviet ambassador Ustinov requesting the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs to call off Hartmans' visit.¹⁹⁸ The Latvians, finding out about Laidoner's intervention were surprised and, of course, indignant. It is possible that at first only the Estonians grasped Moscow's goal of making the planned visit into a propaganda gesture against Germany and Poland. Therefore the Estonians began their anti-Latvian counteractions behind the Latvians' backs. Initially Moscow left the Lithuanian Chief of General Staff out of this game. The Soviet authorities recommended Karski, their ambassador in Kaunas, to delicately inform Jonas Černius, the Lithuanian Chief of General Staff, that in his case Moscow has in mind more than a simple courtesy visit for the participation of May 1 celebrations. The ambassador was to intimate to the Lithuanian Chief of Staff that an invitation to the Soviet military maneuvers will be forthcoming.¹⁹⁹ The invitation to Reek was explained to the Lithuanians as a courtesy response to the Estonians', particularly to General Laidoner's, long-standing request for such an invitation.²⁰⁰ However, when Kaunas found out about the invitation to the Estonian and Latvian military leaders, the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry immediately asked for an invitation also for their own Chief of General Staff.²⁰¹

Seeing the vacillation among Estonian and Latvian military leaders, one has to ask why the invitation was accepted in the first place, and why the invitees rushed to Moscow to participate in a staged spectacle? The more so that the described visits had been declared undesirable even before receiving the invitation. It was presumed that Moscow was trying to demonstrate the change of orientation in the Baltic states to the rest of the world.²⁰² Frohwein, the German ambassador in Tallinn, guessed that by accepting the invitation the Estonian military leadership attempted to avoid the accusations of the Soviet press that Estonia is pro-German and a hireling of Germany.²⁰³ Of course, the curiosity about the military-technical matters cannot be denied. A visit to the Soviet Union would let the Baltic military leaders observe and evaluate the Soviet war technique. The quick acceptance of the invitation by the Estonians and their coordinating the action with the Latvian

¹⁹⁸ Frohwein's telegram, April 28, 1936. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-3506, E631721-E631722; Brodovski to Stomonjakov, May 18, 1936. AVPR 0150-33-3-65, 36-37.

¹⁹⁹ Stomonjakov to Karski, April 11, 1936. AVPR 05-16-121-84, 6-7.

²⁰⁰ Dailide's report, May 13, 1936. LCVA 383-7-1860, 26.

²⁰¹ Palin's report, April 30, 1936. UM 5C/16.

²⁰² See Schack's telegram, April 27, 1936. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-3506, E631715.

²⁰³ Frohwein's telegram, April 26, 1936. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-3507, E632087.

military could also be taken as an act of revenge. Munters, at this time the General Secretary of the Latvian Foreign Ministry, had visited Warsaw at the end of March. The Estonian military leadership accused him of acting there as a representative of the whole Baltic League, thus also in the name of Estonia – a circumstance not agreeable to the Estonians.²⁰⁴ It should also be mentioned that as in the case of Hartmanis, according to Palin, the Finnish ambassador in Riga, the Latvian military leaders had been spurred to accept the invitation for Munters' visit to Warsaw. Indeed, many foreign diplomats wondered what lay behind Munters' visit to Warsaw. According to Palin, the Latvians accepted Moscow's invitation to convince the Soviet Union about Latvia's intention not to join any kind of anti-Soviet alliance.²⁰⁵ At the time of Munters' visit, Liepiņš, the ambassador in Moscow, reported about Moscow's suspicion of Poland's desire to join the Baltic League.²⁰⁶ Although a secretary of the Finnish embassy in Warsaw thought that on the contrary, it was Munters who wanted to determine whether Poland would be interested in joining the Baltic League. A similar interpretation of events was published in the German-language newspaper *Baltische Korrespondenz* in Riga. The diplomatic corps considered this newspaper the unofficial organ of the Latvian Foreign Ministry, particularly in the area of the Latvian trade relations. Actually, at the time Munters started his voyage to Warsaw, the same newspaper published an article, which announced that Munters' talks with the Polish authorities will also include the question of expanding the Baltic League; that Munters does not represent only Latvia, and that Estonia and Lithuania are aware of his goals and intentions.²⁰⁷

Of course, the expansion of the Baltic League was the pipedream of the Latvian leadership of foreign affairs, which, however, could not be realized before the normalization of the Lithuanian-Polish relations. The above described article in *Baltische Korrespondenz* did not remain unnoticed in Moscow, and truly revived the fear that the purpose of Munters' visit to Warsaw was to create a Polish-Baltic military bloc, and to eliminate the situation the Baltic states had found themselves in, because of the conclusion of the Soviet-French Mutual Assistance Pact.²⁰⁸ On the other hand, the reports of Brodovski, the Soviet ambassador in Riga, explain the purpose of inviting General Hartmanis to Moscow: "We hope that his visit will mitigate his pro-Polish feelings. We proceed from the following: it is necessary that Latvia recognize our military power and the enormity of our economical growth potential. The military leaders tend to converge with the more powerful and for this reason we hope that also in Hartmanis' case the sentiment prevalent among the membership of the Latvian military sector will strengthen."²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ Valters' report, April 26, 1936. LVVA 2757-15-95, 289–290.

²⁰⁵ See Palin's report, April 6 and 30, 1936. UM 5C/16.

²⁰⁶ Liepiņš' report, March 30, 1936. LVVA 2574-3-3104, 82.

²⁰⁷ See Lettland und Polen. Zur Warschau-Reise des lettischen Generalsekretärs des Aussern W. Munters. – Baltijas Korespondenc (Baltische Korrespondenz). Ende Maerz 1936.

²⁰⁸ See Brodovski Stomonjakov, April 3, 1936. AVPR 0150-33-3-65, 20.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

Subsequently on the invitation of Marshal Voroshilov the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian Chiefs of General Staffs, Reek, Hartmanis and Černius, traveled to Moscow to participate in the May 1 celebrations and in the demonstrations of the Soviet military technology. In exile, Colonel Maasing wrote that in his private talks with Semjon Uritski, the Chief of Intelligence Department of the Soviet General Staff, Uritski had informed him of Germany's plan to attack its Eastern neighbors, to conquer the Baltic countries and Poland, and that consequently the Estonian military will be forced to conclude a military alliance with the Soviet Union.²¹⁰ Maasing did not comment on the authenticity of Uritski's explanation and proposal. The declarations of the Soviet military leaders to Generals Hartmanis and Černius were similar in spirit. According to Liepiņš, the Latvian ambassador in Moscow, the Soviets had informed Hartmanis that the Soviet Union is not going to accept a German invasion of the Baltic states quietly, that anti-German military agreements have to be reached, and that a Baltic-Soviet military alliance is not in any way going to affect the independence and the prevailing governmental regimes of the Baltic states.²¹¹ At a banquet held in honor of the Baltic military leaders, Marshal Alexander Yegorov, the Chief of Soviet General Staff, repeated the offer for a military alliance against a possible aggressor. He offered a toast in honor of the military cooperation between the Baltic states and the Soviet Union.²¹² With this act Yegorov demonstratively called upon the Baltic states to cease their resistance to the passing of the Red Army units through their territories.

All in all, Moscow wished to demonstrate to the world that the Baltic states were looking for support from the Soviet Union against an aggressive and expanding Germany. But in spite of the Baltic cooperation treaty established in 1934, the Baltic foreign ministers were unable to harmonize the actions of the Baltic military officers in Moscow, nor reach a united position in relation to the Soviet Union. This was proven by the fact that Reek, when attending the aforementioned banquet, had in his response to Yegorov's speech admitted that he was not speaking in the name of all three Baltic states. However, this stance of Reek might have been caused by the ongoing Soviet propaganda. According to Liepiņš, the Latvian ambassador in Moscow, the Soviet authorities had immediately started speaking loudly to the foreign diplomats about the change in the foreign policy orientation of the Baltic states, thus forcing him and the Estonian ambassador to declare repeatedly that the visit of the Baltic military leaders lacked any military as well as political goals.²¹³ Both ambassadors presented identical views of the visit to Moscow. Both Tofer and Liepiņš drew similar conclusions: that the demonstration of the Soviet military prowess had been planned to influence the Baltic states in re-evaluating their foreign policy orientation, and to show to the world that a critical change in the relations between the Soviet Union and the Baltic states has

²¹⁰ Maasing, R. Eesti ja N. Liidu sõjaväeliste delegatsioonide läbirääkimisi 1939. a. oktoobris. – In: Eesti riik ja rahvas II maailmasõjas II. Stockholm, 1956, 44.

²¹¹ Liepiņš' report, May 5 and 18, 1936. LVVA 2574-3-3103, 20–21, 14.

²¹² Liepiņš' report, May 5, 1936. LVVA 2574-3-3103, 21.

²¹³ Ibid., 20–21.

occurred – a circumstance that would make it possible to animate the conclusion of regional treaties.²¹⁴

It appears that the planned actions of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, as outlined above, succeeded in general terms. On May 2 the French newspaper *Petit Parisien* wrote that the visit emphasizes the friendship between the Baltic states and the Soviet Union, and the Baltic states, worried about the continuous arming of Germany, have started moving closer to the Soviet Union. But the influential *Le Temps* found that, because of their dependence on Germany, the Baltic states in quest for a more balanced position were approaching the Soviet Union. The *Auswärtiges Amt* and the German press felt especially irritated by the visit of the Baltic military leaders to Moscow. Friedrich W. von Schulenburg, the German ambassador in Moscow, devoted a full report to the subject. He had talked in Moscow with Reek and Maasing. Although both had assured him that Estonia is not going to allow a foreign soldier onto its territory, and had scorned the Soviet Union's doubts about the situation in the region, the doubts of the German authorities did not vanish.²¹⁵ *Völkischer Beobachter* qualified the visit as a beginning of bolshevization of the Baltic states.²¹⁶ In Warsaw the visit was called the Baltic-Soviet expression of mutual friendship, at the same time a serious loss to the Polish foreign policy. General Władisław Sikorski commented harshly on the visit in the May 24 issue of *Kurjer Warszawski*, the organ of the National Democratic Party: "A rapprochement between the Baltic bloc and the Soviet Union would radically change our military situation in the east. The Polish border with Russia, fixed by the Treaty of Riga, has granted us a continuous front from the Baltic sea to the Black sea. This situation requires that we maintain an understanding with Latvia and Estonia and an alliance with Romania. Today the northern sector of that front is breaking town..." All this was, of course, an exaggeration. The purpose of this unexpected burst of emotions was probably to warn Estonia and Latvia against any further political and military escapades with the Soviets. Sikorski's article, indeed, startled the Estonian military leadership.²¹⁷

At a May 3 celebration of the Polish national holiday Laidoner gave a pro-Polish and sharply anti-Lithuanian speech, thus attempting to nullify the furor brought on by the visit of the Baltic Chiefs of General Staffs to Moscow. He stated that as long as the Polish-Lithuanian relations are not normalized, there is no reason to speak

²¹⁴ Tofer's report, May 15, 1936. ERA 957-14-29, 14-16; Liepiņš' report, May 18, 1936. LVVA 2574-3-3103, 14; see also Gyllenstierna's report, May 11, 1936. UD HP 512 Ryssland.

²¹⁵ Schulenburg's report, May 9, 1936. NA II RG242 T120 R3506, E631727-631729.

²¹⁶ *Völkischer Beobachter*, 1936, May 6; Berliner Tagblatt wrote on May 7 that, although the idea of the Eastern Pact has lost its glitter, the visits of the Baltic military leaders still illuminate the orientation of the Baltic states. The newspaper expressed fear that Latvia might enter into negotiations with the Soviet Union, and that the pro-Soviet Lithuania might influence Estonia and Latvia to move in the same direction. See also Berliner Börsen-Zeitung, 1936, May 6.

²¹⁷ Later, Johan Markus, the Estonian ambassador in Warsaw, told his Latvian counterpart Valters that the Estonian military leaders had blamed him for his inability to properly convince the Polish Foreign Ministry of the absence of any political goals with respect to the visit just concluded. See Valters' report, May 19, 1936. LVVA 2757-15-95, 27.

of the Baltic triple alliance, but only of some type of collaborative agreement. He stressed that Estonia is not allowing the passage of foreign military units through its territory, and declared that Estonia's great friendship with Poland without a binding treaty is a great and influential peace factor on the shores of the Baltic Sea. This speech particularly annoyed Kaunas, but also Riga. The Latvians and Lithuanians wondered about the Estonian Commander-in-Chief openly involving himself in questions of foreign policy.²¹⁸ The Estonian diplomats quickly condemned Laidoner's actions. Thus Johan Markus, the Estonian ambassador in Warsaw, informed his Latvian colleague Valters that from Laidoner's speech no inferences in relation to the Estonian foreign policy should be drawn.²¹⁹ But Laidoner's views pleased Warsaw as well as Berlin. *Polska Zbrojna*, the official organ of the Polish Ministry of War, and *Deutsche diplomatische-politische Korrespondenz*, the organ of *Auswärtiges Amt*, commented favorably on his speech.²²⁰

Finally, there is reason to ask whether the Soviet government had changed its previous policies, and now attempted with the visit of the Baltic Chief of Staffs to establish a military alliance. From Sikorski's remarks and from the comments of the German press it appears that the Soviet-planned anti-German and anti-Polish action had succeeded. Not before or after the visit, not one word can be found in the reports to the Commissariat of Foreign affairs and in instructions from the Commissariat to the embassies about Soviet intentions to form a military alliance with the Baltic states. Obviously this was not a matter on which the Soviets had built high expectations, and consequently the issue was not discussed any further. It is proper to end the episode with a highly illuminating quotation from the report of ambassador Brodovski to the Deputy Foreign Commissar Krestinski: "The fact is that the foreign policies of the Baltic states, particularly of Latvia, are based on the fear of the Soviet Union. Now the fear of the German aggression, although somewhat less intense, has joined the former. As a result of recent developments, a belief has taken root that in case of the Soviet-German war, Latvia and other Baltic states will lose their independence. Therefore the question is raised, whether a Soviet Latvia would be better than a German Latvia? The number of individuals, who think that the Soviet regime will be the lesser evil, is steadily increasing. Therefore our policy toward Latvia should be founded on the principle of sweetening the perspective further. This should facilitate our defensive position in the region, and help us realize our political plans altogether. [...] In case the Latvian fascists should suppose that their supporting Germany and Poland will help them destroy the Soviet Union, and thereby maintain the independence of Latvia, then a close observation of our military and economic might will noticeably mitigate this illusion and will prove the fallaciousness of their position."²²¹

²¹⁸ Jaunākās Ziņas, 1936, May 6; Schack's report, May 13, 1936. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-910, 384489; Dailide's report, May 13, 1936. LCVA 383-7-1860, 26; Kruus's report, May 7, 1936. ERA 957-14-322, 211.

²¹⁹ See for example Valters' report, May 19, 1936. LVVA 2757-15-95, 289.

²²⁰ Polska Zbrojna, 1936, May 19; Deutsche diplomatische-politische Korrespondenz, 1936, May 20.

²²¹ Brodovski to Krestinski, June 2, 1936. AVPR 0150-33-65-3, 40-43.

By January 1937 the Soviet embassy in Riga and the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs in Moscow had received reports, that the German authorities had invited General Hartmanis to visit Berlin. Consequently the Soviet ambassador recommended his government to forestall the Germans. He stressed that Soviet relations with Latvia should not be slackened, not even for one day, and only a country able to offer realistic cooperation can influence the Latvian military.²²² But the visit of General Reek to Berlin and the announcement of General Hartmanis' plans to travel to Berlin were not the reasons why Marshal Aleksandr Yegorov, the Red Army's Chief of General Staff, visited the Baltic capitals in February 1937. Instead a sequence of various events brought about this venture: first, at the end of 1936 or beginning of 1937 the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs had heard about secret contacts for normalization of mutual relations, made between Lithuania and Poland. Also by August 1936 Germany and Lithuania had concluded a trade agreement, which made Germany after Great Britain Lithuania's second most important trade partner. According to the Soviets, Germany had offered a unilateral guarantee for Lithuania's independence and its territorial integrity. Based on this information Moscow assumed that certain Lithuanian governmental circles were prepared to redefine the relations with Germany and Poland. Consequently, the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs decided that to defeat the new policies of the Lithuanian government, the Lithuanian military, friendly to the Soviet Union, should be utilized. This scheme was vividly demonstrated by Krestinski's instructions to Brodovski: "We cannot forget that the influence of the Soviet Union on Lithuania is a very important political factor. Although we do not intend to influence the Lithuanians to purchase our modern armament and war technique, and in spite of our not having assumed military-political responsibilities in aiding Lithuania, increasingly the Lithuanian military will sense that our Red Army is the only friendly army to associate itself with."²²³ Subsequently, the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs remembered that Černius, the Lithuanian Chief of General Staff, while in Moscow had invited Marshal Yegorov to visit Kaunas. Thus the Soviet ambassador in Kaunas announced to the Lithuanian government that Yegorov is ready to reciprocate an earlier visit by Černius. Černius, having heard about Yegorov's wish to come to Kaunas, supported the idea. But the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry feared that the planned visit might strain relations with Germany, create mistrust in Riga and Tallinn against Lithuania, and thus cause a split between Lithuania and other Baltic states. Therefore, Kaunas recommended that for a "greater effect" Moscow should also consider Yegorov's visiting Riga and Tallinn, and that before coming to Kaunas.²²⁴ This request was a surprise to Moscow, who nevertheless understood that Kaunas feared straining relations with

²²² Brodovski's report, January 16, 1937 and Brodovski to Litvinov, January 16, 1937. AVPR 05-17-72-133, 10, 13.

²²³ Krestinski to Podolski, February 11, 1937. AVPR 05-17-71-132, 7-8.

²²⁴ Brodovski to Krestinski, February 1, 1937. AVPR 05-17-73-133, 13; Skučas' telegram, February 9, 1937; Memorandum by Lozoraitis, February 9 and 13, 1937; Baltrušaitis' telegram, February 9, 1937. LCVA 383-7-1971, 74, 73, 31-33, 69, 67.

Germany.²²⁵ All the same, since Moscow did not want to damage its relations with Kaunas, the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs informed Lithuania about Moscow's longlasting recognition of Lithuania's delicate situation and of Moscow's not having wanted to cause difficulties for Lithuania, and that from the very beginning it had been planned for Yegorov to visit all three Baltic capitals.²²⁶ Not until the second half of February did the Soviet embassy inquire the Estonian government of the possibility of Yegorov's visit to Tallinn. The Foreign Minister Friedrich Akel stated that the Estonian political and military leadership warmly welcomed the visit. In reality, the Estonian military leadership was not too delighted by the proposed visit, as shown in the words of General Reek to the Soviet military attaché: Yegorov is not a distinguished military personality.²²⁷

But it is not impossible that when planning Marshal Yegorov's visit to Kaunas, also the Soviet-German relations were taken into account. In December 1936, Adolf Kandelaki, the Soviet trade representative in Berlin and Stalin's special emissary, met with Hjalmar Schacht, the Reich's Minister of Finance. Schacht searched for possibilities of starting talks for "direct negotiations between the two countries".²²⁸ Moscow welcomed Germany's reaching out toward the Soviet Union. In early January 1937 Stalin, together with five members of Politbureau, approved of the continuing the political negotiations with the German government for improving the "mutual relations and the establishment of general peace".²²⁹ A far-reaching regulation of the German-Soviet relations was considered. But Hitler, assessing the Soviet proposal as a political maneuver, assumed that by proposing closer relations with Germany Moscow intended to make France aware of the necessity of a veritable military alliance, and at the same time draw nearer to Great Britain. Therefore Berlin decided that the friendly gesture of the Soviet Union made through Kandelaki had to be rejected. This decision was made at the time when Moscow was, together with the governments of the Baltic states, coordinating the suitable time for Yegorov's visit to the Baltic capitals.²³⁰ Nevertheless, the consultations for "normalizing the relations" continued until the spring of 1937.²³¹ Was it a coincidence? Or did the Soviet government through Yegorov's visit hope to apply pressure on Berlin: by showing that Germany's resistance to improve relations with the Soviet Union might lead the Baltic states to an anti-

²²⁵ See Podolski to Litvinov, March 5, 1937. AVPR 05-17-73-133, 46; Skučas' telegram, February 9, 1937; Baltrušaitis' telegram, February 9 and 12, 1937. LCVA 383-7-1971, 69, 68, 65.

²²⁶ Karski to Podolski, February 11, 1937. AVPR 05-17-71-132, 2.

²²⁷ Kljavin to Krestinski, February 15, 1937. AVPR 05-17-125-137, 8-9.

²²⁸ Schacht to Neurath, February 6, 1937. Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945. Series C (1933-1937). Vol. VI. The Third Reich: First Phase. November 1, 1936-November 14, 1937. London, 1983 (DGFP), 379-380.

²²⁹ Абрамов Н. А., Безыменский Л. А. Особая миссия Давида Канделаки. — Вопросы истории, 1991, 4-5, 150; Кривитский В. Я был агентом Сталина. Записки советского разведчика. Москва, 1996, 27, 33.

²³⁰ See Neurath to Schacht, February 11, 1937. DGFP, 403-404.

²³¹ See Абрамов Н. А., Безыменский Л. А. Особая миссия Давида Канделаки, 150; Кривитский В. Я был агентом Сталина, 27, 33.

German military alliance under the protection of the Soviet Union. The notion of a political maneuver on a grand scale was supported by the swiftness of reaching an agreement with the Baltic states concerning the details of Yegorov's visit. He was scheduled to visit Lithuania in early February, and Estonia and Latvia in the second half of February. Subsequently, on February 16 Yegorov participated in the celebrations of Lithuanian Independence Day, on February 20 he visited Riga, and on February 23 he arrived in Tallinn, where on the next day he attended the celebrations of Estonia's independence anniversary.

Retrospectively the Soviet historian Sipols has connected the visits of the Baltic Chiefs of Staff to Moscow with the negotiations for concluding the Eastern Pact: since the perceptions of the Baltic states and the Soviet Union concurred in the security matters of Eastern Europe, the Soviet government decided to establish contacts with the Baltic military leadership. Sipols considered Yegorov's visits as courtesy return visits to the Baltic military leaders.²³² Although Sipols has searched the archives of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, in his writings he ignored the fact that Yegorov's visits had been early political demonstrations.²³³ The instructions of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs First Western Department to the ambassador in Kaunas stressed that Yegorov must show and prove that the Red Army did not only defend the borders of the Soviet Union, but is an important factor in keeping peace in the Baltic area and also in Europe, that the traditional friendship between the Soviet Union and Lithuania is a consequence of both countries' peace policy, that Yegorov's visit ought to strengthen the pro-Soviet feelings among the Lithuanian military leadership, thus fortifying the influence of the military personnel in favor of Soviet orientation.²³⁴ These were the limits set for Soviet propaganda efforts. Regarding the military relations between the two countries, as well as the Soviet foreign policy, the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs requested that the embassy should avoid actions and statements which might be interpreted as the Soviet Union's promise of military aid to Lithuania in case of an attack by any of its neighbors.²³⁵

Yegorov clearly followed the aforementioned instructions in Tallinn, Riga and Kaunas. Cooperation in the military matters was never discussed. In his talks with the Baltic military leaders Yegorov assured that the Soviet government approved of the Baltic military sectors becoming stronger, and that a political and military rapprochement between the Soviet Union and Germany was unfeasible. In his talks with the Latvian Minister of War, Yegorov raised the question of the purpose of Reek's visit to Berlin.²³⁶ Yegorov was received by President Smetona, and by the Head of State Pāts. His joining the celebration of the Lithuanian independence

²³² Социалистические революции 1940 г. в Литве, Латвии и Эстонии. Востановление Советской власти. Главный редактор И. И. Минц. Москва, 1978, 141.

²³³ Сиполс В. Тайная дипломатия, 255.

²³⁴ Karski to Podolski, February 11, 1937. AVPR 05-17-71-132, 2.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Memorandum by Černius, February 18, 1937. LCVA 383-7-1971, 50-54; Vileišis' report (Conversation with Balodis), March 7, 1937. LCVA 383-7-1971, 15-17.

day turned the event into a demonstration of Soviet-Lithuanian friendship. Lithuanian newspapers published articles extolling Yegorov and the Red Army, and while alluding to Vilnius, underlined the utmost importance of the friendship between the two countries.²³⁷ Contrary to the reception of Yegorov in Kaunas, both Riga and Tallinn demonstrated Yegorov's visit only as reciprocated visits of the Estonian and Latvian Chiefs of Staff to Moscow.²³⁸ But Yegorov did receive a friendly greeting from Balodis and the pro-Soviet senior officers of the Latvian army.²³⁹

On the occasion of Yegorov's visit the Communist Party organ *Pravda* dedicated its editorial to the Baltic states, although it did not mention military collaboration or alliance. It stressed, however, that the Baltic harbors, the railway network and the Estonian islands occupied an important place in fascist Germany's anti-Soviet strategical plans, that German fascism was daily preparing itself for an attack against the Baltic people, and that in their fight against the evil fascist ideas the Baltic peoples would be supported by the Soviet people.²⁴⁰

During Yegorov's stay in Kaunas the French and Polish press announced that Lithuania and the Soviet Union had initialed a treaty of military cooperation, and that Soviet instructors will start training Lithuanian recruits, and collaborate in building military airfields and army camps.²⁴¹ But after Yegorov's visit rumors reported that the alliance between Lithuania and the Soviet Union had existed already before the visit, and the visit only confirmed its existence.²⁴² On February 22 the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry ordered its embassies to deny those rumors.²⁴³

The German press rendered special attention on Yegorov's visits. The main press organ of the Nazi party simply called Yegorov a *commis voyageur*, but at the same time told *commis voyageur* Baltic people not to forget that the Soviet Union was an aggressive state.²⁴⁴ At the *Auswärtiges Amt* and in *Reichskriegsministerium* questions regarding the visits were raised. The German authorities speculated about the purpose of those visits to the Baltic capitals, and about the future direction of the Baltic foreign and defence policies. It was presumed in Berlin that the goal of the visits had been to establish a Baltic military alliance

²³⁷ See Lindqvist's report, March 2, 1937. KKA B I 1937/3; Palin's report, February 24, 1937. UM 5C/26; Öpik's report, February 19, 1937. ERA 957-14-322, 77.

²³⁸ See Palin's report, February 27, 1937. UM 5C/16; Krieviņš' report, March 1, 1937. LVVA 2574-3-3148, 257; Lindqvist's report, March 2, 1937. KKA B I 1937/3.

²³⁹ **Stranga, A.** Latvia and the Baltic Policies of the USSR, Poland and Germany in late 1930s. Part I: Competition among the USSR, Poland and Germany 1934 to 1938. – *Latvijas Zinātņu Akadēmijas Vēstis*, 1993, 11, 12.

²⁴⁰ *Pravda*, 1937, February 18.

²⁴¹ See Klimas' report, February 19 and 26, 1937. LCVA 383-7-1971, 49, 29; About the rumors spreading in Riga see Vileišis' report, February 23, 1937. LCVA 383-7-1971, 35.

²⁴² See Palin's report, March 19, 1937. UM 5C/26.

²⁴³ Lozoraitis to Lithuanian embassy in London, February 22, 1937. LCVA 383-7-1971, 45.

²⁴⁴ See *Völkischer Beobachter*, 1937, February 14; *Berliner Tageblatt Morgen-Ausgabe*, 1937, February 13; *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, 1937, February 13, 15, 16, 20 and 23; *Königsberger Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1937, February 18.

under the Soviet protection. Therefore German diplomatic representatives in Moscow, Kaunas, Riga and Tallinn focused their attention on these visits. They informed Berlin of specific politicians and military leaders Yegorov had met, and what subjects had been touched upon in the public speeches. They speculated about the goals of the visits, and prognosticated about the future direction of the Baltic foreign and defence policies.²⁴⁵ To gather additional information, ambassador Frohwein approached General Laidoner and Foreign Minister Akel directly. He asked Laidoner whether the Soviet expansion to the shores of the Baltic Sea was not posing the greatest danger that Estonia should be especially afraid of. Frohwein, as instructed by Berlin, stated that Germany was interested in a truly neutral Balticum, and that the foreign and internal policy of the Latvian government was suspect in this respect.²⁴⁶

Some Lithuanian circles saw Yegorov's visit as a sincere attempt to reach out. That caused fear in Moscow that the Lithuanian foreign policy, encouraged by Yegorov's visit, might confront Germany as well as Poland, and consequently turn to the Soviet Union for help, a circumstance not in Moscow's interest. Therefore instructions dispatched from Moscow to Kaunas requested that the ambassador and his personnel avoid anti-German and anti-Polish declarations as well as promises of the Soviet military assistance in case of trouble. Moscow stressed again that the Soviet government did not wish to create a conception that would foresee the Red Army aiding Lithuania in case of a conflict.²⁴⁷ In fact, there were individuals in Lithuania, who seemed to believe just that. On March 10 *Lietuvos aidas* wrote that in case of war, cooperation of the Baltic and Soviet military forces was of critical importance, and that Yegorov's visit proved the Soviets' interest in retaining the independence of the Baltic states. Contrary to the Lithuanians and some Latvian politicians and military personalities, Yegorov's visit did not cause approval of the Soviet Union among the Estonian political and military authorities. During Yegorov's visit, the repressions unleashed in the Soviet Union had spread into the leadership of the Red Army, and all that was reflected on the pages of Estonian newspapers. After Yegorov's visit, Ustinov, the Soviet ambassador in Tallinn, advised the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs to have no illusions. He emphasized that Germany had found true disciples in General Reek and in Colonel Maasing, and that also in the future Estonian policies would remain anti-Soviet.²⁴⁸

In the 1930s both the Soviet Union and Germany viewed the Baltic states as the objects in their struggle to solve their common European problems. It is

²⁴⁵ Zechlin to Reichskriegsministerium, February 18, 1937; Frohwein's report, February 26 and 27, 1937; Schack' report, February 26, 1937; Tippelskirch's report, March, 8, 1937; Memorandum by Bismarck, March 11, 1937. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-785, 379804, 379815-379816, 37981, 379817-379820, 379834-379837, 379838; See also Öpik's report, February 19, 1937. ERA 957-14-322, 17-18.

²⁴⁶ Frohwein's report, March 5, 1937. NA II RG-242 T-120 R-785, 379827.

²⁴⁷ Karski to Podolski, March 11, 1937. AVPR 05-17-71-132, 13-15.

²⁴⁸ Ustinov to Litvinov, March 18, 1937. AVPR 05-17-125-137, 28.

true that during this period the diplomatic representatives of the Soviet Union occasionally came up with oral proposals that the Soviet government was interested in concluding mutual assistance pacts or military alliances with the Baltic states. Until signing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, such declarations had to be viewed as political maneuvers to inform Berlin of an alternative to the Treaty of Rapallo. But when some Lithuanian and Latvian military officers or politicians proposed serious discussions about a closer cooperation, the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs ordered respective negotiations to be stopped. Being afraid of pushing Poland closer to Germany and damaging the perspective of renewing the Rapallo policy, the Soviet government was not at all interested in establishing closer political and military relations with the three Baltic states in reality.

CONCLUSION

The claim of the Soviet historians that the Soviet Union had been the only Great Power willing to sign a mutual assistance pact with the Baltic states proves groundless on the basis of historical materials available. Until the conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet government had decided that military cooperation with the Baltic states would tie the hands of the Soviet Union, and strain relations between the Soviet Union, Germany, and Poland, as well as exclude the conclusion of treaty with Germany in the future. Additionally, it would not take into account the low status of the Baltic states and their vacillating foreign policy, a offer any benefits from the military standpoint. In the second half of the 1930s the Soviet government wished only that the Baltic states would hold position antagonistic to Germany and Poland, i.e. keep themselves away from these countries.

Why did the year 1936 become decisive for the Estonian military leadership in choosing the side they wished to associate themselves with? One should remember that during that year the following important and decisive events took place: in March Hitler discarded the Treaty of Locarno, in July the Civil War of Spain began, in September Hitler, while speaking on the Party Day in Nuremberg, declared a crusade against communism, in October the Berlin-Rome axis was established, and in November Germany and Japan concluded the Anti-Comintern Pact. From 1936 on, Hitler commenced enforcing deliberate anti-Soviet policies. Starting in 1936, Estonia had two branches of foreign policy: an official policy, which preached neutrality, and an unofficial one, which developed secret relations with Hitler's Germany. Among the Estonian military leaders besides the Commander-in-Chief General Laidoner, also the Chief of General Staff General Reek, and Colonels Maasing, Jakobsen, Villem Saarsen and Arnold Sinka were leaning toward Germany. The Estonian military leadership seemed to believe that Germany had chosen Estonia as the primary anti-Soviet bastion and an ally facing East. There were also other circumstances that influenced Estonia's choosing

Germany as an ally and protector. Contrary to the Soviet Union, Germany still honored the principle of private property, Hitler's program of the destruction of nations and races had not as yet been introduced, although Germany by then had established concentration camps, killed masses of people, particularly Jews, and had burnt books in uncounted numbers. But all this was still relatively trivial, especially in comparison with the exposed barbarism and with the reported monstrous number of victims in the East. Of course, there were some politicians and other influential persons in Estonia, who pointed to Germany's cunning, malicious policies and its tendency for breaking concluded agreements. Even the Estonian and Latvian heavily censored press had dealt sufficiently with Germany's aggressive policies and actions. For all these reasons, the Estonian government's foreign policy orientation toward Germany should have been considered unacceptable to Estonian people. But in reality, in order to fend off the Soviet Union and its aspirations, the Estonian leadership chose Germany as its ally and protector against a foreseeable attacker, while ignoring the recent past of the chosen accomplice, who had publicly declared its desire to widen its "Lebensraum" at the expense of the Baltic states, and whose politicians were talking about the colonization and the Germanization of the annexed populations, if they were joined at some later date to the Reich.

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BALTI RIIKIDE SÕJAVÄELASED JA NENDE RIIKIDE VÄLIS- JA KAITSEPOLIITIKA 1933–1938

Magnus ILMJÄRV

Balti riikide kaitsepoliitikat 1930. aastatel ja sõjaväelaste omavahelisi kontakte on raske uurida. Kõigis kolmes riigis on lünklikult säilinud sõjalisi küsimusi puudutav allikmaterjal. Ka eri- või luureteenistuste tegevus on alati olnud välismaailma eest varjatud. Materjal, mis võiks siin valgust heita, on sageli hävitatud või ei saa uurijad seda poliitilistel põhjustel kasutada. Balti riikide luureteenistuste ajaloo uurimist takistab siiski eeskätt asjaolu, et suur osa luurematerjale hävitati juba enne 1939.–1940. aasta sündmusi. Kuid midagi on siiski alles ja ka välisarhiivides leiduv võimaldab heita pilku sõjaväelaste kaitse- ja välispoliitilisele tegevusele. Mõningat informatsiooni pakub sõjalise koostöö osas 1974. aastal ajakirjas *Liteanus* publitseeritud Edgar Andersoni artikkel "Military Policies and Plans of the Baltic States on the Eve of World War II".

Käesolevas artiklis on käsitletud Eesti ja Hitleri-Saksamaa sõjalisi suhteid ning Eesti ja Läti sõjalist koostööd. Edasi on selgitatud, miks ei õnnestunud Balti riikide sõjalise liidu loomine. Vaatluse objektiks on ka küsimus, kuidas suhtusid Balti riikide sõjalisel koostöös suurriigid – Nõukogude Liit, Inglismaa ja Saksamaa. Eesti–Soome sõjalist koostööd sõdade vahel on põhjalikult käsitlenud soome ajaloolane Jari Leskinen. Eesti–Poola sõjalisest koostööst annab ülevaate Eesti ajaloolase Raimu Pullati uurimus. Seetõttu ei ole Eesti sõjaväelaste suhteid Soome ja Poolaga artiklis üksikasjalikult käsitletud.

Saksamaa ja Eesti sõjalised suhted

Versailles' leping seadis Saksamaale sõjalised piirangud. Teatud väljapääsu sellest pakkus Rapallo leping, mis pani aluse ka Saksa–Nõukogude Liidu sõjalisele koostööle. See tekitas sügavat umbusku Saksamaa vastu ka Eesti ja Läti sõjaväelastes. Eesti ja Läti 1920. aastate ja 1930. aastate alguse kaitsepoliitika nägi liitlast eelkõige Poolas, keda nii Weimari-Saksamaa kui ka Nõukogude Liit pidasid oma peavaenlaseks.

1935. aasta oli Eesti sõjaväejuhtkonna jaoks suurte kõhkluste aasta. Inglise–Saksa laevastikulepingu sõlmimine sundis kaitsepoliitikat ümber hindama. Ka Saksamaa tundis üha suuremat huvi Läti, Eesti ja Soome sõjaväe vastu. 1935. aasta algul akrediteeris Saksamaa Lätisse, Eestisse ja Soome sõjaväeatašeeks major Horst Rössingu. Rössing hakkas Soome ja Eesti sõjaväeringkondades propageerima mõtet, et ainult tugev Saksamaa, mitte abitu Rahvasteliit, võiks olla suuteline Läänemere väikeriiki idast tuleva ohu tõrjumisel abistama.

Juba 1935. aasta septembris langetati Eesti Sõjavägede Staabis otsus luua sidemed *Abwehr*'iga ja alustada temaga Nõukogude Liidu vastu suunatud luurealast koostööd. 1936. aasta juuni algul saabus "eraviisiliselt" Eestisse *Abwehr*'i ülem admiral Wilhelm Canaris. Saavutati kokkulepe vahetada Nõukogude Liidu kohta käivat sõjalist informatsiooni. Sideagendina Eesti ja Königsbergi *Abwehr* II vahel hakkas juba 1936. aastast peale tegutsema eestisakslasest parun Andrei von Uexküll. Saksa Mereväe Ülemjuhatause (*Oberkommando der Kriegsmarine*) memorandumites märgitakse, et Saksamaa huvides on oma luureorganisatsioon Eestis, kuna võib tekkida olukord, kus Soome ei ole sõjalistel või poliitilistel põhjustel võimeline luureinformatsiooni edastama. Eesti Sõjavägede Staap nõustuski luureorganisatsiooni välja arendama juhul, kui sõjalised kontaktid ei piirdu ainult luurega. Novembris 1936 sõitsid Eesti Sõjavägede Staabi ülem Nikolai Reek ja luureülem Richard Maasing visiidile Saksamaale. Kohtuti kõrgemate Saksa sõjaväejuhtidega. Visiidi ajal anti lubadus, et Eesti takistab Euroopa sõja puhkedes Punaarmee läbimarssi ja on valmis võtma vastu abi Saksamaalt.

Kuni natsionaalsotsialistide võimuletulekuni ei olnud Saksamaalt võimalik moodsat relvastust osta. Uute relvade ostmise tõusis täie teravusega päevakorda 1936. aasta sügisel. Tellimused kavatseti anda Saksa firmadele, kuid ei välistatud ka tellimusi mujalt, juhul kui relvade ja varustuse hind osutub soodsamaks.

Berliinis mõisteti samas, et majanduslik sõltuvus annab Saksamaale võimaluse dikteerida oma tahet. Seda kavatseti ka Eestis saavutada Saksa relvade müügi abil.

Miks sai Eesti sõjaväejuhtkonna poole valikul otsustavaks just 1936. aasta? Meenutagem siin, et sama aasta märtsis ütles Hitler lahti Locarno lepingust, juulis algas Hispaania kodusõda, septembris Nürnbergi parteipäeval kõneldes kuulutas Hitler ristsõja kommunismile, oktoobris tekkis Berliini–Rooma telg, novembris kirjutasid Saksamaa ja Jaapan alla Kominterni-vastase pakti. 1936. aastast peale hakkas Hitler ellu viima sihhipäras Nõukogude Liidu vastu suunatud poliitikat. Samast ajast oli Eestil kaks välispoliitikat: ametlik, mis püüdis jutustada neutraalsiteedist, ja mitteametlik, mis arendas salajasi suhteid Hitleri-Saksamaaga. Eesti sõjaväejuhtkonnas kandsid Saksa orientatsiooni sõjavägede ülemjuhtaja Johan Laidoneri kõrval staabiülem Nikolai Reek, kolonelid Richard Maasing, Ludvig Jakobsen, Villem Saarsen ja Arnold Sinka. Eesti sõjaväejuhtkond näis uskuvat, et Saksamaa on Eesti välja valinud kui bolševismivastase bastioni idas. Seda, et valik langes Saksamaale, võib muidugi ehk mõistagi. Erinevalt Nõukogude Liidust oli Saksamaa riik, kes austas eraomandit. Hitleri rahvaste hävituse programm ei olnud veel käivitunud. Saksamaal olid küll koonduslaagrid, oli tapetud juute ja põletatud raamatuid. Kuid kõik see oli esialgu tühine, võrreldes ohvrite arvuga idas ja seal valitseva barbaarsusega. Eestis leidis poliitikuid, kes juhtisid tähelepanu Saksamaa salakavalale poliitikale ja lepingute murdmisele. Saksamaa agressiivsetele kavatsustele idas oli pööratud piisavalt suurt tähelepanu ka Eesti ja Läti ajakirjanduses. Välispoliitilist orientatsiooni Saksamaale võiks seepärast tõepoolest käsitada Eesti valitsuse rahva tõekspidamistele vastuvõetamatu välispoliitikana: abistajaks Nõukogude Liidu vastu valiti riik, kes kavatses laiendada oma eluruumi Balti riikide arvel ja kus leidis poliitikuid, kes rääkisid juba toona avalikult Baltikumi koloniseerimisest ja germaniseerimisest.

Eesti ja Läti sõjaline koostöö

1923. aasta 1. novembril sõlmiti Eesti–Läti kaitseliit. See nägi ette sõjalist abi juhul, kui ühele lepinguosalisele ilma temapoolse väljakutseta kallale tungitakse. Abi pidi antama olenemata sellest, kes on kallaletungija. Võib öelda, et sõlmitud sõjaline liit oli olemas ainult paberil. Põhjused, miks liit ei toiminud, olid ajaloolised, poliitilised, sõjalised ja majanduslikud.

Juba 1920. aastate lõpul leidis Eesti sõjaväejuhtkond, et kaitseliidu leping tuleks annulleerida. Eesti sõjaväejuhtkond lähtus siin nii 1920. kui ka 1930. aastatel järgmistest kaalutlustest: Eesti suudab koostöös Soomega sulgeda Soome lahe ja kaitsta Põhja-Eesti rannikut Paldiskist Narva-Jõesuuni; Läti laevastik asub kaitsma oma maa rannikut ega suuda Eestit abistada; kuna Narva jõgi ja Peipsi järv koos soise maastikuga on tugev looduslik takistus, siis on võimalik oma jõududega kaitsta Peipsi järve ja Soome lahe ning Pihkva järve ja Läti vahele jäävat 165 kilomeetri pikkust piiri; juhul kui vastane kavatseb rünnata Eestit Läti kaudu, jääb hädaohtlikuks rindelõiguks ainult Eesti–Läti piir, kuna Läti 296 kilomeetri

pikkune piir Nõukogude Liiduga on kogu pikkuses avatud ega paku looduslikku kaitset pealetungivate vägede eest.

Eesti ja Läti poliitiline ja sõjaväejuhtkond nägid 1930. aastate keskpaigani maa julgeoleku peamise ohustajana ainult Nõukogude Liitu. Natsionaalsotsialistide võimuletulek Saksamaal tõi ka Läti puhul kaasa muutuse: vaenlaste hulgas tõusis esikohale Saksamaa ja alles seejärel Nõukogude Liit. Eesti sõjaväejuhtkond oli 1930. aastate teisel poolel valmis sõjaliselt vastu hakkama ainult Nõukogude Liidule. Läti sõjaväejuhtkond ei varjanud, et on Saksamaa rünnaku korral valmis võtma vastu abi Nõukogude Liidult.

Teostumatu unistus – Balti riikide sõjaline liit

1920. aastatel pidas Leedu oma vaenlaseks ainult Poolat. Põhjuseks oli Vilniuse kuuluvuse küsimus. Pärast seda, kui Leedu oli 1926. aastal sõlminud Nõukogude Liiduga mittekallaletungilepingu, hakkasid Leedu sõjaväejuhid senisest intensiivsemalt tegema Nõukogude valitsusele ettepanekuid sõlmida sõjaline liit. Nõukogude saatkonna töötajad ja sõjaväeataşee andsid selliste ettepanekute kohta vastukäivaid ütlusi: diplomaadid leidsid, et mittekallaletungilepinguga alanud lähenemist tuleks mingil moel jätkata, ja andsid sõjalise liidu osas lootusi; sõjaväeataşee ei tahtnud midagi lubada. Nõukogude valitsus ei soovinud aga sõjalise liidu sõlmimist Leeduga. Leedu oli ainus riik kolmest Balti riigist, kes tegi sõdadevahelisel ajal luurealast koostööd Nõukogude Liiduga. Leedu püüdis korduvalt osta ka Nõukogude relvastust. Kuid ka selles osas vastas Moskva pidevalt keeldumisega.

1930. aastate keskpaigani olid Leedu sõjaväelaste kontaktid Eesti ja Lätiga vähesed. Siingi oli põhjuseks Leedu sõjaline koostöö Nõukogude Liiduga ning Eesti ja Läti sõjaline koostöö Poolaga. Eesti ja Läti sõjaväejuhtkond oletas, et sõjalise konflikti korral, millesse oleks haaratud Eesti, Läti ja Poola, võitleb Leedu Nõukogude Liidu poolel. Seoses natsionaalsotsialistide võimuletulekuga Saksamaal pingestus olukord Memelis ja ka Saksamaast sai võimalik Leedu vaenlane. Teatud ringkonnad Leedus soovisid pärast seda, kui 1934. aasta septembris oli sõlmitud Balti üksmeele- ja koostööleping, Balti riikide sõjalise liidu moodustamist, kuid Eesti ja Läti ei nõustunud sellega.

Balti koostööleping ei kaotanud Leedu välis- ja kaitsepoliitika orientatsiooni Nõukogude Liidule. Tekkinud olukorras tuli Leedu sõjaväejuhtkond järgmistele järeldustele: kuna Nõukogude Liidul on Poolaga ühine piir, siis saab Nõukogude Liit Leedu–Poola konflikti korral Leedut abistada, Leedu–Saksa konflikti korral saab aga Nõukogude Liidu sõjaline abi tulla ainult Läti ja Eesti kaudu. See oli üks põhjusi, miks Leedu sõjaväejuhtkond tõstatas Balti sõjalise liidu moodustamise. Tõsi, Leedu sõjaväejuhtkond kartis siiski, et Punaarmee võib pärast abi andmist keelduda maalt lahkumast. 1930. aastate keskel peeti seega Leedu vaenlasteks Saksamaad ja Poolat ning oldi valmis sõdima koos Nõukogude Liiduga nende vastu. Balti sõjaline liit pidanuks seega Leedu staabi sõjaliste planeerijate nägemuses tegutsema koos Nõukogude Liiduga Saksamaa vastu.

Nõukogude Liit ja Balti riikide sõjaline koostöö

Oma osa selles, et Leedu poliitiline juhtkond hakkas rääkima Balti sõjalisest liidust, oli Idapakti kaval ja Nõukogude Liidu–Prantsusmaa jätkuval lähenemisel. Nõukogude Liidu kõrgemad sõjaväelased ja diplomaadid esitasid 1930. aastate keskel korduvalt suusõnalisi üleskutseid Balti riikide sõjalise liidu moodustamiseks. Teatati ka, et Balti riikide sõjaline liit peaks orienteeruma Nõukogude Liidule. Välisasjade rahvakomissariaadi arhiivi materjalid aga näitavad, et tegelikult ei soovinud Nõukogude valitsus Balti riikide sõjalise liidu moodustamist ega soostunud toetama Leedut tema territoriaalprobleemides Saksamaa ja Poola vastu. Moskvast leiti, et lubamatu on tekitada Leedu poliitikutes ja sõjaväelastes kujukitelma, et Punaarmee võiks osutada Leedule konflikti korral relvastatud abi.

Nõukogude Liit ja Saksamaa vaatasid 1930. aastatel Balti riike kui kokkuleppeobjekti Euroopa üldpoliitiliste küsimuste lahendamisel. On tõsi, et Nõukogude Liidu esindajad esinesid 1930. aastatel aeg-ajalt suusõnaliste avaldustega, just nagu sooviks Nõukogude valitsus sõlmida Balti riikidega vastastikuse abistamise lepingut või sõjalist lepingut. Kuni Molotovi–Ribbentropi lepingu sõlmimiseni tuleks sarnaseid avaldusi vaadelda kui poliitilist manöövrit, mis oli mõeldud teadmiseks Berliinile, et Rapallo poliitikal on olemas alternatiiv. Kui keegi Leedu või Läti sõjaväelastest või poliitikutest tegi ettepaneku koostööküsimuse tõsiseks aruteluks, järgnes välisasjade rahvakomissariaadist korraldus jutuajamised sellel teemal lõpetada. Kartes lükata Poolat veelgi lähemale Saksamaale ja rikkuda Rapallo poliitika elustamise perspektiivi, ei soovinud Nõukogude valitsus tegelikult luua mingeid lähemaid poliitilisi ega sõjalis-poliitilisi suhteid kolme Balti riigiga.

Järeldused

Leedu territoriaalprobleemid – Vilnius ja Memel – määrasid Leedu välispoliitilise orientatsiooni, mis avaldas suurt mõju ka teiste Balti riikide välispoliitikale. Kuni 1934. aastani oli Leedu välispoliitiliselt orienteerunud Poola vaenlastele – Nõukogude Liidule ja Saksamaale. Olukorra teravnemine Memelis, Saksa–Poola mittekallaletungideklaratsioon ja Nõukogude valitsuse lahtiütlemine Tšitšerini noodist (sellega oli Vilnius 1926. aastal tunnistatud okupeeritud piirkonnaks) tõi 1934. aastal kaasa teatud muutuse Leedu välispoliitikas. Saksamaa ja Leedu suhted pingestusid. 1938. aasta sügiseni oli Leedu välispoliitika orienteeritud Nõukogude Liidule ja Prantsusmaale ning toetas Rahvasteliidu kollektiivse julgeoleku poliitikat. 1934. aastal sai alguse ka Leedu piiratud välispoliitiline koostöö Eesti ja Läti. Leedu sõjaväelased taotlesid seejuures Nõukogude egiidi all oleva Balti sõjalise liidu moodustamist.

Iseseisvuse saavutamisest kuni 1930. aastate keskpaigani nägid Eesti ja Läti ohtu ainult Nõukogude Liidust. Eesti ja Läti olid välispoliitiliselt orienteerunud Poolale ja Inglismaale ning taotlesid tagajärjetult Poolast, Lätist, Eestist ja Soomest

koosneva liidu loomist. Natsionaalsotsialistide võimuletulek Saksamaal ja Saksa-
 maa kui märkimisväärse sõjalise jõu esilekerkimine 1930. aastate keskpaigas
 tõid kaasa muutuse ka Läti ja Eesti välispoliitikas. 1930. aastate teisel poolel
 pidasid Läti sõjaväejuhtkond ja rahvas maa vaenlaseks eelkõige Saksamaad ja
 avaldasid valmisolekut sõida koos Nõukogude Liiduga Saksamaa vastu. Läti
 poliitiline juhtkond aga nägi maa vaenlasena eeskätt Nõukogude Liitu. Kuni
 1938. aasta sügiseni leidsid Läti välispoliitika teostajad, et iseseisvuse tagatiseks
 saavad olla Rahvasteliit ja kollektiivne julgeolek. Pärast Müncheni lepingut aga
 hakkas Läti välispoliitiline juhtkond rääkima tingimusteta neutraliteedist, mis
 sisuliselt tähendas välispoliitilist orientatsiooni Saksamaale. Eesti sõjaväejuhtkond
 ja välispoliitiline juhtkond pidasid 1935.–1936. aastast peale iseseisvuse ohustajaks
 ainult Nõukogude Liitu, rahvas aga eeskätt Saksamaad.