

*John HIDEN*

### FROM WAR TO PEACE: BRITAIN, GERMANY AND THE BALTIC STATES 1918—1921

The AABS 11th Conference on Baltic Studies, held at the University of Maryland in June 1988 was a major event and confirmed how much public and academic interest has grown in the three Baltic Republics, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, who enjoyed brief independence between the two World Wars. The meeting clearly demonstrated how far scholarly research has progressed on the history, politics and economy of the Baltic region as a whole. The overwhelming majority of the contributors deliberately fostered balanced debate on the Baltic states. In a very few isolated incidents, however, a more strident tone was struck.

In important respects, admittedly, it is wholly understandable to find a lingering trace of bitterness about Soviet incorporation of the Baltic states touching any large gathering of Western Baltic specialists; it is also to be expected that a few papers at such conferences will revert to mere reminiscence about life in the independence era. Yet neither of these trends should be allowed to threaten the promising dialogue now slowly developing between Baltic scholars from East and West. Both tendencies referred to would alienate the non-Baltic specialist by making the subject matter seem narrow and unappealing. Conversely, the Baltic expert would lose the opportunity of adding his or her insights into wider European and indeed World developments in this century. That would signify a serious loss to the student of international relations.<sup>1</sup>

This is no mere academic debating point. The international relations field represents a potential growth area of very considerable proportions for Baltic studies. For the astonishing fact remains (and a glance at the index of almost any general textbook on "Eastern Europe" will confirm this proposition) that the literature on the European states system during the interwar years remains relatively silent on the subject of the Baltic region. Important exceptions concern the clusters of studies which have concentrated on 1918/19 and, at the other end of the time-scale, 1939/40. In between, at least in the works of the majority of Western European accounts of this century, it is as if Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania ceased to exist. The omission is conspicuous precisely because of the region's demonstrable, central importance in the two World Wars.

The first of these, after all, involved the new Baltic countries in the critical early point of contact between communist and capitalist systems. This fact alone makes the record of international relations in the Baltic region intrinsically interesting historically. At the same time, the historical experience of the Baltic Republics in the international system has unexpectedly assumed importance for current Western European policy makers. New Soviet initiatives have forced a re-appraisal of political and trade relations between East and West, whilst the prospect of 1992 makes acute the question of East Europe's access to the "Single Market". Geography

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<sup>1</sup> See for example the forthcoming volume edited by J. W. Hiden, A. Loit. *The Baltic in International Relations between the Wars* // *Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia*, 3. Centre for Baltic Studies, University of Stockholm, Stockholm 1988, which is the product of a symposium held between historians from East and West Europe, Scandinavia and the United States.

and the enormous experience of East-West trade accumulated in the Baltic Republics make them central to such issues.

This line of thought cannot be pursued here but it is mentioned to underline the fact that independent Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania offer a neglected vantage point from which to re-examine important aspects of intra-European relations and of the foreign policies of the great powers. The following makes this point in more detail through a brief comparative study of the Baltic policy of Germany and Great Britain during the critical transition from war to peace.

As the two leading industrial powers of Europe, Great Britain and Germany enjoyed dominant positions in the flourishing trade passing through the Baltic provinces of Tsarist Russia. Although steam power had reduced Britain's earlier dependence on Baltic materials for shipbuilding by the late 19th century, the growing German challenge in Europe caused a renewal of Britain's strategic interest in the Baltic. The Admiralty developed plans to exploit the Reich's vulnerability to sudden attacks on its long coastline, thus also reducing the potential of the German navy to strike from the Baltic through to the North Sea. Instead, in August 1911, the Committee of Imperial Defence made it a priority to send a British Expeditionary Force to France. Tacitly acknowledging German-Russian dominance in the Baltic, the defence of Allied interests in that sea in the event of war was left to the revived Russian fleet. The British Navy was made to concentrate on the North Sea.<sup>2</sup>

When war duly arrived, however, bringing with it the rapid decline of Tsarist power, it stimulated a renewed Anglo-German struggle for influence in the Baltic. Germany's military occupation of the area, crowned by the Treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Berlin in 1918, provides a general exception to the rule of neglect mentioned earlier; Brest-Litovsk has long since ceased to be "the forgotten peace". Following Fritz Fischer's pioneering study in the early 1960s of German war aims, came an outpouring of monographs and articles concerning the Kaiser's Baltic policy between 1914 and 1918. The outlines appeared of German plans for an enlarged, united "Baltic State", violating the desires of the native nationalities. It was to be locked into the German political and economic orbit, permanently weakening Russia, sustaining the German Reich in its struggle for world power and also shoring up the threatened and isolated Baltic German caste in Estonia, Livonia and Courland.<sup>3</sup>

Much of this research, however, was too exclusively concerned with the West German debate about war aims and incidentally produced uncritical generalisations about the "continuity" in German policy between the Kaiser and Hitler. It neglected to raise serious questions about the longer-term relationship between Germany and the Baltic.<sup>4</sup> In fact the treaty of Brest-Litovsk must also be seen in the context of an intense policy debate about future relations between Germany and the Baltic countries which had been going on inside the Reich since the first German troops had set foot on Russian soil.<sup>5</sup> The decline in Germany's military

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. the excellent analysis made by *Sweet, D.* *The Baltic in British diplomacy before the First World War* // *Historical J.*, 13, N 3, 1970, 451—90.

<sup>3</sup> *Fischer, F.* *Griff nach der Weltmacht* // *Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland.* Düsseldorf, 1961. Since that book's publication a massive literature has appeared on its main themes.

<sup>4</sup> *Hiden, J. W.* *The Baltic States and Weimar Ostpolitik.* C.U.P. Cambridge, London, N. Y., etc., 1987, 1—35; cf. *Volkmann, H.-E.* *Die deutsche Baltikumpolitik zwischen Brest-Litovsk und Compiègne.* Boehlau, Cologne, Vienna, 1970.

<sup>5</sup> *Jannsen, K.-H.* *Die baltische Okkupationspolitik des deutschen Reiches* // *Von den baltischen Provinzen zu den baltischen Staaten. Beiträge zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Republiken Estland und Lettland, 1917—1918.* Eds. J. von Hehn, H. von Rimscha, H. Weiss, J. G. Herder-Institut, Marburg/Lahn, 1971, 217—254.

fortunes from the summer of 1918 tipped the balance away from the German military and other annexationists, towards more far-sighted elements in the German Foreign Office, in some of the German political parties and in business.<sup>6</sup> These argued more strongly in favour of self-determination for the Baltic countries and for belated collaboration between Berlin and the Baltic governments as the only effective way to secure Germany's long-term political and economic influence in a vital area of East Europe.<sup>7</sup>

An attempt was made to accelerate the policy switch from occupation to collaboration in October 1918, as Germany faced defeat and the prospect of renewed Allied activity in the zone between the Reich and Russia. Such a spectre had already appeared in 1918, with the hesitant Allied intervention against the Bolshevik forces. In relation to this, the British government felt it necessary to encourage the Baltic states by according them at least *de facto* recognition in 1918 (Estonia and Latvia respectively in May and November 1918, Lithuania not until September 1919). The British Charge d'Affaires in Russia had suggested early in 1918 that if the Baltic provinces did leave Russia, they should become independent and form part of a bloc with Scandinavia, Finland and possibly Poland.<sup>8</sup> British politicians were talking of "an old fashioned quarantine guaranteeing against infection."<sup>9</sup> In reality, this was directed as much against Germany as Lenin. In the words of Lloyd George on the subject of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk: "Under one name or another and the name hardly matters, these Russian provinces will henceforth in reality be part of the dominion of Prussia. They will be ruled by the Prussian sword in the interests of the Prussian aristocracy."<sup>10</sup> The irony was not lost in Berlin that the policy of Brest-Litovsk could be neatly turned against Germany itself. As German Foreign Secretary von Hintze had warned late in the summer of 1918: "From liberators, we have become detested conquerors".<sup>11</sup>

The British were only too willing to exploit Germany's Achilles heel for their own ends. If more attention is paid to the anti-German implications of Britain's Baltic policy in 1918/1919, many of the apparent difficulties in explaining London's Russian policy disappear. True, the fact that the Allied powers used the existing German troops in East Europe to help push the Red Army out of the Baltic states confuses matters, but only a little.<sup>12</sup> The important point is that the British, on the whole understandably, preferred to keep the Soviets away from Germany. Yet London was no more willing than Berlin to risk alienating the new Russian leaders entirely. This becomes quite clear if the focus is shifted momentarily to British and German reactions to the coup against the Ulmanis government in Latvia, early in April 1919.

The action was engineered partly by the more desperate members of the former ruling Baltic Germans — one more belated attempt to prolong their power in a rapidly changing world. The installation of the pro-German government of Pastor Niedra offered the German element in Lat-

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<sup>6</sup> Krüger, P. *Die Aussenpolitik der Republik von Weimar* // Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft. Darmstadt, 1985, 17ff.

<sup>7</sup> *Hiden*. *Baltic States and Weimar Ostpolitik*, 11ff.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in *Anderson, E.* *British policy towards the Baltic States* // *J. Central European Affairs*, 19, 1959, 276.

<sup>9</sup> *Hiden*. *Baltic States and Weimar Ostpolitik*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> Public Record Office, London (hereafter PRO), Cabinet Office, WC314/Appendix 4, January 1918.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Volkmann*, *Baltikumpolitik*, 195—6.

<sup>12</sup> For general discussion of the Baltic states and Article XII of the Armistice, which provided the basis for German troops to stay on in the East, see *Rauch, G. von*. *The Baltic states. The years of independence, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania 1917—1940*. Hurst, London, 1974, 62ff.

via more political mileage.<sup>13</sup> Yet the coup was also very much a by-product of the success of the German Freikorps under von der Goltz in pushing the Bolshevik forces back towards Petrograd. Indeed, von der Goltz, whilst publicly disowning direct responsibility for the fall of Ulmanis, justified the coup precisely in terms of securing the advance eastwards.<sup>14</sup> After all, that was why the German troops were ostensibly there. Certainly, the German military, not to mention key political figures in Berlin, had hoped to exploit the joint struggle with the Allies against Bolshevism to improve Germany's prospects for the peace treaty.<sup>15</sup>

The British reaction to the April coup made perfectly clear, however, that the immediate priority was not the struggle against Bolshevism but the elimination of the German threat in the Baltic region. From April a veritable flood of Allied agents and missions moved in on the Baltic republics. An Interallied Commission on Baltic Affairs was formed and soon afterwards the British Major Gough was made chief of a military mission. Aid in the form of equipment, money and training began to flow into the Baltic states. Significantly, however, Gough was given specific instructions by British Foreign Minister Curzon not to endanger Britain's relations with Russia's future government but to concentrate on trying "to establish our influence in the countries between Germany and Russia".<sup>16</sup> The implication of this, which emerges much more clearly from economic material in the British files, is that the nature of the regime in Russia was secondary to the prospect of doing business there.

Here, the main preoccupation of British businessmen was to counter Germany. The conclusion of General von Seeckt's intelligence report for July 1919, after further decisive allied intervention against the Baltic German Freikorps, was: "England wants in this way to make the Baltic provinces into an English colony and to destroy at any price the bridge between Germany and Russia".<sup>17</sup> But if the April coup was a turning point for Allied policy it also reinforced the determination of the German government to control von der Goltz and to terminate the German military involvement in the Baltic countries. The military engagement in 1919 had significantly hindered the full implementation of the German policy switch of October 1918. The SPD Chancellor, Müller, once more made the "new" policy a central priority by insisting that everything now be done to avoid incurring the hatred of the Estonians and Latvians.<sup>18</sup>

Although the Germans had therefore resoundingly lost the contest for the political soul of the Baltic states to Britain, the struggle to secure economic influence in the new Republics was really just beginning to warm up in the middle of 1919. Both Britain and Germany shared with

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Hiden*, *Baltic States and Weimar Ostpolitik*, 18—21. For detailed discussion of the Baltic Germans in 1919 see *Grundmann, K.-H.* *Deutschtumspolitik zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik. Eine Studie am Beispiel der deutsch-baltischen Minderheit in Estland und Lettland*. Harro v. Hirschheydt, Hannover-Döhren, 1977.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Goltz, R. von der*. *Meine Sendung in Finnland und im Baltikum*. Koehler, Leipzig, 1920, 181; and *Als politischer General im Osten 1918—1919*. Koehler, Leipzig, 1936, 112.

<sup>15</sup> For a general discussion of this see *Hiden, J. W.* *Germany and Europe 1919—1939*. Longman, London, 1977, 5ff; cf. *Borowsky, P.* *Die bolschewistische Gefahr und die Ostpolitik der Volksbeauftragten in der Revolution // Industrielle Gesellschaft und politisches System*. Neue Gesellschaft, Bonn, 1978, 391—2.

<sup>16</sup> Memoranda on the mission of General Gough, 20. 8. 1919, 3. 9. 1919, PRO, CAB24/88; *Poer Gough, H. de la*. *Soldiering On*. London, 1954, 191.

<sup>17</sup> Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (BAK), Nachlass von Schleicher, Akten betreffend Umdrucke des Grossen Generalstabes, Abteilung Fremde Heere und Fremde Heere Ost.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Foreign Office Microfilm of the German records (hereafter FO), Alte Reichskanzlei, Akten betreffend Kabinett Protokolle, 3 (3438/D742829-30) and 4 (3438/D743012-3); on SPD attitudes in general to the Baltic cf. *W. Ribhegge's* curiously unremarked volume, *August Winnig-eine historische Persönlichkeitsanalyse*. Bonn, 1973, 125, 128.

the other Western powers inflated expectations of the Russian market, whatever the political outcome there. The very uncertainty about that market in 1919/1920 was what encouraged the rush of Western speculators and enterprises to the Baltic countries. The republics were at least under the umbrella of the Allies, if still not fully recognized, and could therefore be used as "springboards" for future trade.<sup>19</sup> Both Britain and Germany hoped to exploit the urgent need of the Baltic countries for capital and industrial machinery to consolidate their respective positions, particularly in Latvia. These activities assumed, of course, that pre-war East-West trading patterns, when the Baltic provinces had been major outlets for Russia's trade, would re-emerge.<sup>20</sup>

In general, Germany's desperate need to increase its exports was related to the reparations it had to make to the Allied powers. In addition the Treaty of Versailles restricted the terms on which the Weimar Republic could make trade treaties between 1919 and 1925. Any concessions secured by Germany in trade agreements with a third power automatically had to be extended to the Allies.<sup>21</sup> In short, Britain exploited not only the political good will it enjoyed in the Baltic states, but its position as a victor power. It was felt in the Foreign Office, for example, about one particular British scheme to secure Baltic flax and timber against capital advances, that it "would give this country a paramount position in the economic and political life of the Baltic provinces". And of that project it was also said that "the introduction of a German element would seem to be the very thing we set out to obviate."<sup>22</sup>

In spite of its great advantages Britain failed, however, to maintain its early lead over Germany in the economic life of the Baltic countries. The reasons are informative. Some are long term. Both Germany and Britain restructured their foreign service after the War to give greater priority to economic and foreign trade factors in the making of foreign policy.<sup>23</sup> Yet the nature of Germany's industrialisation had historically fostered a much closer relationship between government, the economy and banking than existed in Britain. In spite of greater state intervention during the War, in London the belief still held sway that governments ideally should intervene as little as possible in the economy. Of course, the Germans had cheaper currency as a result of the falling mark; it was, for reasons of geography, cheaper to send many goods from Germany to the Baltic area; Germans had long experience of market conditions in East Europe — all of these factors reasserted themselves after 1919, slowly but surely.<sup>24</sup>

In the last resort Britain simply failed to match the sustained efforts made by Germany to inform and coordinate entrepreneurial activities in

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Hiden, J. W.* The significance of Latvia. A forgotten aspect of Weimar Ostpolitik // *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 53, 132, 1975, 389—413. On Britain see the excellent study of *Hinkkanen-Lievonen, M.-L.* British trade and enterprise in the Baltic States 1919—1925. SHS // *Studia Historica* 14, Helsinki, 1984.

<sup>20</sup> *Hiden.* Baltic States and Weimar Ostpolitik, 66—7; *Anderson, E.* The USSR trades with Latvia. The treaty of 1927 // *American Slavic and East European Review*, 21, 1962, 296—321, was among the first to point to the political implications of trade treaties in the region.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Schröder, H.-J.* Zur politischen Bedeutung der deutschen Handelspolitik nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg // *Die deutsche Inflation. Eine Zwischenbilanz.* Eds. G. Feldman et al. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, N. Y., 1982.

<sup>22</sup> Minute by Gregory, 20. 10. 1920, PRO, FO 371/5376, N535/308/59.

<sup>23</sup> An interesting discussion of this is *Schröder, H. G.* Aussenpolitik und Wirtschaftsinteresse. Skandinavien im ausserwirtschaftlichen Kalkül Deutschlands und Grossbritanniens 1918—1939. Peter Lang, Frankfurt/M, Berne, N. Y., 1983, 24ff; cf. *Hiden, J. W.* Germany, home and away // *The Historical J.*, 30, N 2, 1987, 478—9.

<sup>24</sup> *Hinkkanen-Lievonen.* Trade and Enterprise, 269ff; *Hiden.* Baltic States and Weimar Ostpolitik, 179—82.

the Baltic countries. Indeed, Britain's own easy prestige in the Baltic countries at the end of the War could generate an infuriating complacency. Wilton, the British representative in Lithuania, once reported back to London: "Like all little peoples — and some bigger ones — the official element thinks that John Bull's waking thought is 'How is Latvia?' and that he searches for news of Esthonia in his breakfast newspaper and goes to bed dreaming of Lithuania."<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, Wilton was sent specifically to undo the damage done by his predecessor, Colonel Ward, of whom a secret Bolshevik intelligence report noted, "despite his years a devoted follower of the fair sex"; and of the British Consulate that most of the men "prefer sport to work."<sup>26</sup> Undoubtedly, the Lithuanians would have been less than flattered had they heard Wilton's view that Kovno was "a dreadful hole and offers no amenities of life"<sup>27</sup> or that the Lithuanian officials were "a very third rate lot, except the finance minister who is perhaps second rate."<sup>28</sup> In the meantime it had been said of Colonel Tallents, who had been sent specifically to foster Britain's commercial interests in Latvia and Estonia as well as Lithuania, prior to Wilton's appointment, "The members of his mission were unmitigated failures (perhaps it could be put more strongly) to a man."<sup>29</sup>

By contrast, the seriously disadvantaged and disliked Germans made a sustained effort to win over Baltic governments, to draw a line under past occupation, refusing to base Baltic policies on the once powerful Baltic Germans and working continuously to prove German good will. Furthermore, German negotiators showed much greater tolerance than did their British counterparts when confronted by the more infuriating aspects of Baltic financial and economic legislation in the first months of independence. It was precisely because of its past record that Germany took such pains to select personnel, particularly in Riga where no less than Erich Wallroth, later head of the Eastern Department of the German Foreign Office, represented Germany in the critical 1921/1922 period. He was succeeded by Adolf Köster, former foreign minister of Germany and distinguished international man of letters. It is important to stress that such appointments reflected in general the quality of expertise and personnel involved on the German side in the reopening of Baltic markets to the Weimar Republic in the early 1920s.<sup>30</sup>

British businessmen watched with frustration as their German rivals almost effortlessly won orders and undersold British machinery. There is almost a note of alarmed admiration in these reports, at what one British businessman called "the adaptable skill shown by the Germans". By early 1921 one British company director visiting Riga advised British businessmen to change their pounds to marks in Berlin before going on to Latvia, because "so little is bought from England at the moment."<sup>31</sup> By the end of 1921, the British had achieved what would have seemed impossible in 1919: they had lost the Baltic markets largely to Germany. The latter continued to dominate in the import figures of all three Baltic countries. By contrast, Britain was invariably the main recipient of Baltic agri-

<sup>25</sup> Wilton report of 18. 5. 21, PRO, FO 371/6734, N6078/6078/59.

<sup>26</sup> Report of Axelrod of 15. 10. 20, PRO FO 371/5380.

<sup>27</sup> Wilton report of 4. 11. 20, PRO, FO 371/5374.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, Wilton's private letter of 3 November 1920 on arriving in Kovno.

<sup>29</sup> Gregory minute on Board of Trade letter on the subject of Tallents, 26. 11. 1920, PRO, FO 371/5378.

<sup>30</sup> *Hidden, J. W.* The Baltic problem in Weimar's Ostpolitik, 1923—1932 // Germany in the Age of Total War. Essays in Honour of Francis Carsten. Eds. V. R. Berghahn, M. Kitchen. Croom Helm, London, 1981, 154—5.

<sup>31</sup> Report of J. A. Goodwyn of Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies Ltd, an engineering firm based in Ipswich, 7. 7. 21, PRO, FO 371/6731, N3363/3363/59.

cultural exports.<sup>32</sup> In other words, much of the hard-won foreign currency secured by the Baltic countries was gained from Britain and helped to finance the purchase of German goods. This was not quite what the Board of Trade, Foreign Office and Treasury had planned.

Such economic vistas also incidentally confirm that the so-called "small" powers could often exploit great-power rivalry for their favours, particularly prior to the World Economic Conference at Genoa in early 1922, as Western entrepreneurs tried to get a toe hold on the edge of Russia in expectation of the coming Eldorado of East-West trade.<sup>33</sup> The political implications of Anglo-German commercial policies in the Baltic are, however, also highly interesting and instructive.

In the first place, the extent of Anglo-German trade rivalry in the Baltic casts doubt on the all too familiar arguments about British disinterest or lack of commitment in East Europe. Such propositions have always been difficult to reconcile with the startlingly obvious and important point that Britain entered the Second World War over the Polish crisis. The largely anti-Soviet policy pursued by British governments in the 1920s continued, at the very least, to give them a significant interest in the independence of the Baltic countries for as long as Bolshevism held sway in Russia. Britain's continuing strategic interest could also be seen in its rejection of any idea of a "neutral Baltic" and in its continuing concern to stabilise relations between the Baltic states, so that they could coordinate their defence.<sup>34</sup> The latter goal was particularly marked in October 1920, when the British government pushed hard for a federal solution between Poland and Lithuania thereby hoping to solve the dispute between these two powers over Wilno at the same time.<sup>35</sup> Among the Baltic experts in the Foreign office there was talk about "the political expedience of arranging the map of Europe in a permanently anti-pan-Slav and anti-pan-German fashion".<sup>36</sup>

It was notable that in the Foreign Office sympathies were rather with Lithuania than Poland. When, commenting on the Polish-Lithuanian conflict, Gregory speculated: "Presumably the Poles will someday learn sense", Curzon noted typically in the margin: "A bold presumption".<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, there was more common ground than has often been supposed between Britain's policy and that of France, with its more overt support for a "barrier" in East Europe. Cruikshank, at the Foreign Office, noted on the Lithuanian quarrel for instance: "The ascendancy which the French have in Poland and which we have in the Baltic states should give reasonable hopes that an agreed policy could be imposed."<sup>38</sup> Lorraine, the British representative in Warsaw, argued correctly late in 1920: "To hold the economic line . . . from the Russian Baltic ports to Warsaw would give Allied trade a start on German enterprise and would offer undoubted advantages." He continued: «Moreover, such a scheme would by no means be incompatible with the growing British interests in the Baltic States themselves, whose physical independence and economic development Great Britain has done so much to encourage and sustain.»<sup>39</sup>

<sup>32</sup> *Hinkkanen-Lievonen*. Trade and enterprise; for overall trade figures of Britain and the Baltic, 280ff; cf. *Kirby, D.* A great opportunity lost? Aspects of British commercial policy toward the Baltic states 1920—1924 // *J. Baltic Studies*, 5, N 4, 1974, 362—78.

<sup>33</sup> *Hiden*. Baltic States and Weimar Ostpolitik, 115.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. note by Crowe of 16. 10. 1920, PRO, FO 371/5401, N541/272/55.

<sup>35</sup> But see Gregory's fear that a Baltic combination might draw Lithuania away from Poland, PRO, FO 371/5374, minute of 15. 11. 20, N2199/6/59.

<sup>36</sup> Gregory, minute of 9. 11. 20, PRO, FO 371/5414, N1962/1962/55.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> PRO, FO 371/5374. Memo of 19. 10. 20, N794/5/59.

<sup>39</sup> PRO, FO 371/5414, N2529/1962/55.

What such evidence strongly confirms is that Britain, which enjoyed an extremely good press in the Baltic countries and whose Foreign Office affected an almost paternalistic tolerance of the new Baltic leaders, unashamedly pursued its interests. This must at least be kept firmly in mind in re-considering the Weimar Republic's own determined onslaught to penetrate the Baltic region economically. During the 1920s this activity was far removed from being a mere extension of wartime annexationism in a changed guise. In important respects the Baltic policies of all of the Western European powers during the first postwar years were manifesting an economic "Drang nach Osten". Germany was just better at it.

Of course Berlin's Baltic policy was also designed to counter Poland's influence in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, in keeping with Germany's wider policy of revising the Treaty of Versailles. Nonetheless, Germany's contribution to the economic stability of the region in the 1920s has important implications for our understanding of Weimar foreign policy as a whole.<sup>40</sup> It indicates that Germany came to favour, like Britain, an independent Baltic region from which to conduct business with the Soviets. The Weimar Republic's practical involvement with and support for independent Baltic Republics was undoubtedly linked to the survival of the Baltic Germans in Latvia and Estonia. The well-being and safety of that group remained a central feature of German Ostpolitik.<sup>41</sup> Yet security for the Germans in the Baltic Republics could never be achieved if the German minority acted largely as a fifth column, another familiar idea badly in need of revision.<sup>42</sup> Instead, the Baltic German remainder was expected by Weimar governments to complement German trade policy and to play its part in directing business towards Germany.<sup>43</sup> This becomes all too clear if one examines the provisional trade treaties which Germany tried to negotiate with the Baltic states in 1921.

The pursuit of such treaties with the East European states and the welfare of the German minorities there were interdependent objectives of Weimar governments.<sup>44</sup> They offered potential leverage against the restraints placed on a weakened Germany by the Versailles Treaty. Bilateral and, at that early stage, temporary trade treaties, represented a substantial challenge to both British and French efforts to prevent a resurgence of German influence in the "lands between"<sup>45</sup>. What is interesting is that this strategy did not after all — and this idea runs counter to most of the literature — admit of any effectively concerted action with Russia on Baltic matters during the immediate postwar years.

Such collaboration would have been wholly unacceptable to Britain and France, on whose good will the Germans were forced to rely. It would also have been contrary to Germany's long-term aim of securing its own influence in the Baltic states, an insight which gives a novel perspective on the well-known and much debated Treaty of Rapallo, concluded between Germany and the Soviets in April 1922. The agreement was valuable to German Baltic policy not because it provided chances for an increased German-Soviet threat against Baltic independence, but because it could be and indeed was, deliberately exploited as the model for a series of

<sup>40</sup> *Hiden*. Baltic States and Weimar Ostpolitik, 171ff.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. the opening chapters on *Hehn, J. von*. Die Umsiedlung der baltischen Deutschen — das letzte Kapitel baltisch-deutscher Geschichte. J. G. Herder Institute, Marburg/Lahn, 1982.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Hiden, J. W.* The Weimar Republic and the problem of the Auslandsdeutsche // *J. Contemporary History*, 12, 1977, 273—89.

<sup>43</sup> *Crohn-Wolfgang, H. F.* Lettlands Bedeutung für die östliche Frage. Berlin, Leipzig, 1923, 44—5.

<sup>44</sup> *Hiden*. Baltic States and Weimar Ostpolitik, 171ff.

<sup>45</sup> *Hiden*. The Baltic problem. 151ff.



Weimar-Baltic treaties drawing lines under past disputes from the War. If anything, thereafter, Germany used its relationship with Russia not to undermine Baltic freedom but to secure it.

Finally, if one looks ahead very briefly to the disappointment which both Britain and Germany experienced in trying to make the Baltic states stepping stones to Russian trade, an intriguing pattern emerges. It becomes apparent that the two leading European industrial powers reached a position where their respective economic policies in the Baltic were, in practice, mutually complementary. Britain yielded to Germany as a supplier of goods and machinery to the three Baltic Republics but continued to take Baltic exports. This had not been planned but it was only after the 1929 slump had helped to generate more bitter Anglo-German rivalry and when Hitler had arrived in power, that British governments set out more aggressively to usurp Germany's economic domination of the region.<sup>46</sup>

All of these aspects can be seen emerging in the period 1918—1921 and the Baltic area can be used in the most fruitful way to throw fresh light on an often tired debate about interwar Europe. Such insights will be lost, however, if the region is viewed largely in terms of an object of Great Power policies, as implicit for example in the treatment of Anglo-German Baltic relations merely in terms of a "struggle at the periphery". The expression indicates a revealingly West European, not to say Common Market perception of Baltic affairs. A more balanced "Baltic perspective" — and here the detailed input of Baltic specialists with working knowledge of the various languages remains vitally important — will doubtless confirm that Britain was not at all disinterested in far-away places about which it knew nothing and that Germany was capable — for a time at least — of being as much a force for reconstruction in the region as one of destruction. These are insights which need re-stating firmly in the present changing East-West climate.

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Krüger*, *Aussenpolitik*, 320f; cf. *Schroeter*, *Aussenpolitik und Wirtschaftsinteresse*, etc., 171ff.

**SOJAST RAHUNI: SUURBRITANNIA JA SAKSAMAA  
BALTI-POLIITIKA 1918—1921**

Balti Uuringute Edendamise Assotsiatsiooni (AABS) 11. konverents Marylandi osariigi ülikoolis juunis 1988 demonstreeris, kuidas on kasvanud üldine ja akadeemiline huvi kahe maailmasõja vahel iseseisvust nautinud Balti riikide vastu. Paljulubav on Balti küsimust uurivate Ida ja Lääne teadlaste vahel arenev dialoog. Suhteliselt vähe on Balti regiooni puudutatud Euroopa riikide süsteemi sõdadevahelisel ajal käsitlevas kirjanduses, erandiks on aastad 1918—1919 ja 1939—1940. Balti riikide ajalooline kogemus kontaktide loomisel kommunistliku ja kapitalistliku süsteemi vahel kriitilisel algperioodil pakub huvi tänapäeva Lääne poliitikutele Nõukogude uute initsiatiivide ja Ida-Euroopa Ühisturgu lülitumise taustal. Tuleb rõhutada, et iseseisev Läti, Eesti ja Leedu võivad olla lähtepunktid Euroopa-siseste suhete ja suurriikide välispoliitika tähtsate aspektide taasläbivaatamisel. Artiklis on antud lühike kõrvutav käsitlus Saksamaa ja Suurbritannia Balti-poliitikat üleminekul sõjaajast rahuaega.

Esimene maailmasõda, millega kaasnes tsaarivõimu langus, stimuleeris Inglise-Saksa võitlust mõju eest Baltikumis. Sõja ajal oli Saksamaal kavas lülitada Baltikum Saksa riigi orbiiti poliitiliselt ja majanduslikult, nõrgendada Venemaad ja toetada baltisaksa kihti, sealjuures maha surudes põlisrahva püüdlusi. Saksamaa lootis võitjariikide bolševikevastast võitlust ära kasutada oma positsioonide tugevdamiseks rahu-läbirääkimistel. 1918. aastal tunnustas Suurbritannia Eesti ja Läti iseseisvust *de facto*, tahtes sellega elimineerida Saksa mõju ja kehtestada oma ülemvõim neis riikides, mis asusid Saksamaa ja Venemaa vahel.

Lootused pääseda Venemaa turule soodustasid lääneriikide ettevõtjate sissetungi Baltimaadesse 1919. ja 1920. aastal. Saksamaa jäi Balti riikides Inglismaale alla poliitiliselt, kuid majanduse vallas oli Weimari Vabariik Suurbritanniast edukam. Sakslastel olid pikaajalised Ida-Euroopas kauplemise kogemused, nende rahavääringu odavus soodustas ekspordi. 1921. aasta lõpuks oli Suurbritannia kaotanud Saksamaale suurema osa oma eksporditurust Baltimaadel, kuid oli ise Balti põllumajandussaaduste suurim importija.

Briti valitsuse Nõukogude-vastane poliitika tingis strateegilise huvi Balti riikide iseseisvuse ja Balti regioonis stabiilsuse kindlustamise vastu (eriti Poola-Leedu konflikti lahendamine). Lähtudes Versailles' rahulepingu revideerimise poliitikast tegutses Saksamaa vastu Poola mõju tugevnemisele Balti riikides. Suheldes Balti riikidega pidas Weimari Vabariik silmas baltisakslaste heaolu ja julgeolekut. 1922. aastal Rapallos sõlmitud Nõukogude-Saksa leping oli eeskujuks lepinguteseeriale, mis sõlmiti Saksamaa ja Balti riikide vahel. Suhteid Nõukogude Liiduga ei kasutanud Saksamaa Balti riikide õõnestamiseks.

Nii Suurbritannia kui ka Saksamaa pettusid lootuses teha Balti riikidest hüppelaud kaubanduses Venemaaga. Tegelikult täiendavad mõlemad Euroopa juhtivad tööstusriigid teineteist oma majanduslikus tegevuses Baltikumis.

Balti ala ajaloo uurimine võib anda uue suuna debatidele sõdadevahelise Euroopa üle. Kuid Baltikumit ei saa vaadelda üksnes kui suurriikide poliitika objekti ja nende riikide tegevust seoses Baltimaadega kui võitlust mõju eest perifeerias.

Bradfordi Olikool

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Джон ХАЙДЕН

**ОТ ВОЙНЫ К МИРУ: ПОЛИТИКА ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНИИ И ГЕРМАНИИ  
В ОТНОШЕНИИ ПРИБАЛТИКИ В 1918—1921 ГОДЫ**

XI конференция Ассоциации по развитию исследований Прибалтики, состоявшаяся в университете штата Мэриленд в июне 1988 г., продемонстрировала, насколько возрос общий и академический интерес к Балтийским странам в период их независимости, которой они жили между двумя мировыми войнами. От развивающегося диалога ученых Востока и Запада, занимающихся исследованием балтийского вопроса, можно ждать многого. Тем более что в литературе по странам Европы в межвоенный период Балтийский регион обойден вниманием. Исключение составляют 1918—1919 и 1939—1940 годы.

На фоне новых советских инициатив и включения Восточной Европы в общеевропейский рынок исторический опыт Балтийских государств по налаживанию контактов между коммунистической и капиталистической системами в начальный критический период представляет для сегодняшних политиков Запада несомненный интерес. Следует

подчеркнуть, что независимые Латвия, Эстония и Литва могут стать отправным пунктом к пересмотру внутривосточных отношений и важных аспектов внешней политики крупных держав. В статье в сопоставительном плане кратко рассматривается политика Германии и Великобритании по отношению к Прибалтике в переходный период от войны к миру.

После первой мировой войны и падения царской власти обострилась борьба между Англией и Германией за Прибалтику как сферу влияния. Во время войны в планы Германии входило подчинить себе Прибалтику политически и экономически, ослабить Россию, а также оказать всестороннюю поддержку прибалтийским немцам, подавляя при этом устремления коренного населения. На мирных переговорах Германия намеревалась использовать борьбу стран-победительниц против большевизма для укрепления своих позиций. Великобритания же в 1918 г. признала независимость Эстонии, Латвии и Литвы де-факто, желая тем самым распространить свою власть на регион, расположенный между Германией и Россией.

В 1919—1920 гг. в Прибалтику хлынул поток западных предпринимателей в надежде завоевать российский рынок. В Балтийских государствах Веймарская республика уступала Великобритании в политическом влиянии, но в экономическом плане заметно превосходила ее. Немцы накопили большой опыт торговли с Восточной Европой, их дешевая валюта способствовала развитию экспорта. К концу 1921 г. Великобритания проиграла Германии большую часть своего экспортного рынка в Прибалтике, но осталась крупным импортером сельскохозяйственной продукции из региона.

Антисоветская политика британского правительства вызвала стратегический интерес к независимым Балтийским странам и укреплению стабильности в этом регионе (что особенно наглядно проявилось при разрешении Польско-Литовского конфликта).

Исходя из Версальского мирного договора 1919 г., Германия выступала противницей укрепления польского влияния в Балтийском регионе. В своей политике она всегда держала в поле зрения интересы прибалтийских немцев, их благополучие и безопасность. Подписанный в 1922 г. в Рапалло советско-германский договор послужил толчком к серии соглашений между Германией и Балтийскими государствами. Свои отношения с Советским Союзом Германия не использовала для подрывной работы против Балтийских государств:

Надежды Великобритании и Германии сделать Балтийские страны трамплином для торговли с Россией не увенчались успехом. В Прибалтике их экономическая деятельность взаимодополняла одна другую.

Изучение истории Балтийского региона может дать новое направление дебатам о Европе межвоенного периода. Однако Прибалтику нельзя рассматривать лишь как объект политики великих держав и связывать их деятельность с этим регионом только как борьбу за влияние на периферии.

*Брадфордский университет*

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