Proc. Estonian Acad. Sci. Humanities and Social Sciences, 1992, 41, 3, 175—183
https://doi.org/10.3176/hum.soc.sci.1992.3.03

*Patrick SALMON**

THE BALTIC STATES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN 1925—1939

Introduction

Now that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have gained their freedom from the Soviet Union and are re-entering the world stage as independent actors, it is natural that their citizens should look for guidance to the period when the three republics last enjoyed an independent existence, between the two world wars. Ostensibly the experience of independence was a discouraging one. The three Baltic states were among the most fragile members of the international system between the wars. It is all too easy to assume that they were doomed from the outset by the predatory instincts of Germany and the Soviet Union and that Baltic leaders could have done nothing to avert their ultimate fate. "Whatever these countries did or failed to do," it has been argued "was ultimately immaterial."[1]

How valid are these assumptions? The international order established at Versailles was inherently unstable. German resentment, the ostracism of the new Soviet state, the creation of new states in central and eastern Europe, and the diminishing resolve of the creators of the post-war system, above all Britain and France, were among the chief causes of instability. It was inevitable that Germany should seek to revise the verdict of Versailles. One means of doing so was through collaboration with the Soviet Union: this was the strategy pursued at Rapallo in April 1922. Another was to reach an accommodation with the West, as expressed in the Locarno treaties of 1925. The Soviet Union for its part sought to protect itself from foreign intervention, to foster socialist revolution abroad, and possibly to recover the territories of the former tsarist empire. Lying between Germany and Russia, the Baltic states were bound to feel the repercussions of German-Soviet rapprochement after Rapallo. Whether the consequences were necessarily disadvantageous for the three small republics is a question which will be examined later. There can be no doubt, however, that the breakdown of the Versailles system under the impact of economic depression, the rise of Hitler, and the consolidation of Stalin's rule in Russia were catastrophic for the Baltic states. For most of the period after 1933 the danger appeared to be that of becoming a battlefield in a German-Soviet war. That fate was to be realised in 1941. But the dangers of German-Soviet collaboration were no less formidable. It was the period following the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in August 1939 which saw the extinction of Baltic independence.

There is a natural tendency to read back from 1939 to 1922 and to characterise the entire history of German-Soviet cooperation as an 'unholy

* University, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE 1 7RU, United Kingdom.

[1] *Dallin, A.* The Baltic States between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. — In: V. S. Vardys and R. J. Misiunas (eds.). The Baltic States in Peace and War 1917—1945. University Park and London, 1978, 107.

alliance' with dire consequences for the small countries squeezed in between the two giants. However, the Ostpolitik of the Weimar Republic was very different from that pursued by Hitler. In the context of the relatively stable international conditions of the late 1920s, the implications of German-Soviet rapprochement were almost wholly positive as far as the three Baltic states were concerned. This is not to suggest that the long-term intentions of either Germany or Russia were necessarily benevolent — the example of Poland shows that they were quite capable of exerting unremitting pressure on a country of whose existence both disapproved. But in the prevailing international conditions both powers had an interest in maintaining Baltic independence. The Baltic states functioned as a buffer between Germany and Russia, but also as channels of communication, both political and economic. If the Locarno system had survived, Germany and Russia would have had no pretext for extinguishing Baltic independence. They would also have had no interest in doing so. It could be argued, more controversially, that even Hitler and Stalin saw the merits of Baltic independence, at least from the military point of view. For the Soviet Union the Baltic states, provided they were adequately defended and remained neutral, offered a means of protecting Leningrad. For Hitler, Baltic independence helped to hem in Poland and obviated the need to divert forces from the main front in any future attack on the Soviet Union. Only the pressing need to localise his war against Poland in 1939 — an attempt in which he was of course unsuccessful — led Hitler to make the far-reaching concessions contained in the secret protocol to the Nazi-Soviet pact. Almost to the end, his negotiators hoped to draw the line of the Soviet sphere of influence at the Daugava River. Only at the last minute did Hitler agree to the inclusion of the whole of Latvia in the Soviet sphere.

The developments outlined above suggest two points that may be worth further consideration. The first concerns the positive implications of German-Soviet collaboration in conditions of international political and economic stability. The other is the suggestion that the Baltic states were not wholly helpless: that they had some means of influencing their own fate. I shall examine each of these points in turn.[2]

Weimar Germany, the Soviet Union, and the Baltic States

In the period up to 1925 many of the more far-reaching hopes for European stabilization remained unrealised. The attempt at rapprochement between the West and the Soviet Union at the Genoa conference in 1922 came to nothing. Although the Soviet Union had won diplomatic recognition from the West by 1924, mutual suspicion remained strong and the termination of the New Economic Policy put an end to hopes of Baltic participation in an upsurge of east-west trade. Little had been achieved in the way of political cooperation either among the three Baltic states or between those states and their nearest neighbours: Finland and Scandinavia to the north and west; Poland to the south. The most far-reaching attempt, the Warsaw Accord signed in March 1922 by Finland,

[2] The discussion which follows is based mainly on *Hiden, J. and Salmon, P.* The Baltic Nations and Europe: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the twentieth century. London, 1991, chs. 4 and 7. For further detail see *Hiden, J.* The Baltic States and Weimar Ostpolitik. Cambridge, 1987; *Rodgers, H. I.* Search for Security: a Study in Baltic Diplomacy 1920—1934. Hamden, Conn. 1975; *Arumäe, H.* At the Crossroads: the Foreign Policy of the Republic of Estonia in 1933—1939. Tallinn, 1983; *Myllyniemi, S.* Die baltische Krise 1938—1941. Stuttgart, 1979.

Poland, Estonia, and Latvia, failed when the Finnish parliament refused to ratify it. The Polish-Lithuanian dispute over Wilno (Vilnius), together with Poland's hegemonical ambitions in the region, not only ruled out cooperation between those two states but also vitiated the efforts of Latvia and Estonia to reach arrangements with either of them. The only concrete expression of Baltic collaboration was the Estonian-Latvian military convention of 1923. The death in a motor accident in 1925 of the Latvian foreign minister Zigfrids Meirovics, the prime mover behind such aspirations, was symbolic of their failure. However, the Baltic states gained some advantage from the German-Soviet collaboration initiated by Rapallo. Although the agreement torpedoed the Genoa conference, one of its professed aims was to foster economic relations between Germany and Russia. To some extent, at least, Rapallo gave the Baltic states an opportunity to resume their historic role as intermediaries in east-west trade. Baltic delegates at Genoa told their German counterparts that they realised it was "more than ever necessary to form a quite open and reliable bridge between Germany and Russia."[3]

Yet Rapallo remained essentially anti-Western in its implications. Not until Locarno in 1925 did Germany reach an accommodation with the West. Even then, the results were still far from reassuring from the Baltic point of view. First, Locarno guaranteed Germany's western frontiers but said nothing about the frontiers in the east. Germany had no intention of easing its revisionist pressure on Poland. Secondly, the Soviet Union feared that Germany would be enlisted in an anti-bolshevik crusade. Its suspicions were not wholly allayed by the German-Soviet Treaty of Berlin in 1926 or by Stresemann's success in persuading the League of Nations to exempt Germany from any League action directed against Russia. For the Baltic states, therefore, Locarno was a frustrating mixture. On the one hand it made Poland and Russia more nervous. On the other hand, Locarno made war less likely and thus contributed to the 'appeasement of Europe'. In conjunction with the financial arrangements made for German reparations under the Dawes Plan (1924), it was also a necessary precondition for integrating the Baltic economies into the western European trading system. After 1925, the notion of a Baltic league directed against either Germany or the Soviet Union was redundant. It was not by chance that the series of regular meetings of Baltic foreign ministers was terminated in 1925.

Although an 'Eastern Locarno' never materialised, largely due to German and Soviet resistance, many of the conditions which it was expected to bring about were in fact being realised by the late 1920s. Any direct threat from Germany to Baltic independence had long since disappeared: Berlin had put the military adventurism of 1919 firmly behind it. The German foreign minister, Curtius, could say with some justice to his Estonian counterpart in 1931 that Germany had tried "to encourage the independence of the Baltic states, since we were hardly keen to see them becoming dependent on Russia or joining a Polish-led bloc."[4]

It was in Germany's interest to use political persuasion and economic aid to maintain a gap between the Baltic republics and Poland. Admittedly, Germany kept up its pressure on Poland but a much more positive relationship developed with the three Baltic states, especially with Latvia. In part this was because Latvia represented a bridge to an improved relationship with the Soviet Union. This aim survived both the death of Meirovics and the failure of the scheme for a joint German-Soviet guarantee of the Baltic states put forward by Adolf Köster, the German

---

[3] Quoted in *Hiden, J.* The Baltic States and Weimar Ostpolitik, 122.

[4] Quoted in *Hubatsch, W.* Die aussenpolitischen Beziehungen des Deutschen Reiches zu Lettland und Estland. — Deutsche Studien, 1975, 13, 308—309.

minister to Latvia, in 1925. Meirovics' two successors as foreign minister, Albats and Cielens, made it clear that they wished to continue the policy of consolidating relations with Russia and Germany. Although large-scale diplomatic initiatives failed to materialise, positive links were established when the signature of a trade agreement between Germany and Latvia in 1926 was followed by a Soviet-Latvian economic agreement in 1927.

If Latvia was the key to German policy in the Baltic area, Lithuania was the key to the Soviet Union's. Russia played on Lithuania's preoccupation with Wilno to divide it from the other two Baltic states. In exchange for Soviet recognition of its claim to Wilno, Lithuania signed a non-aggression treaty with the Soviet Union in September 1926. Here too, however, there was the possibility of a stabilisation of German-Soviet Baltic relations. A German-Lithuanian trade agreement concluded in May 1926 was of more than merely commercial interest. For Stresemann trade talks were a means of conducting a political dialogue with Lithuania at a time when the Memel (Klaipėda) issue precluded a more overtly political approach. At the same time he encouraged the Lithuanians in their negotiations with Moscow while taking care to keep the Soviets informed of Germany's exchanges with Lithuania. The Baltic states therefore formed channels of communication between Germany and Russia but were also independent actors in the diplomatic process. The more their relations with their two powerful neighbours were fixed in the form of trade agreements, non-aggression treaties or arbitration treaties, the more all parties to those agreements were embedded in the emerging European security system. The longer the status quo continued, the more likely it was to resist change. Far from threatening the Baltic states, the effect of Weimar 'revisionism', as pursued by Stresemann, was therefore to consolidate their international position.

Nor does there appear to have been any significant threat from the Soviet Union. The retreat to 'socialism in one country' which was associated with Stalin's rise to supreme power was under way. Faced with the gigantic if self-imposed task of rapidly industrialising the Soviet Union, Stalin signally failed to take any opportunity for aggression against the Baltic states. There was no repetition of the abortive communist coup in Estonia of December 1924. Soviet policy was exemplified by the non-aggression treaties of the period 1926—1933. These treaties, whilst still aiming to keep the border states divided, nonetheless underpinned the peace treaties of 1920, in which the Soviet Union had acknowledged Baltic independence. Under such conditions it is not surprising that German-Soviet collaboration against the border states simply failed to materialise during the life of the Weimar Republic.

It is also evident that German economic dominance of eastern Europe and the Baltic did not necessarily have sinister implications. Weimar governments certainly used trade for political ends and those ends were indeed revisionist. Any improvement in Germany's international position implied revision of the treaty of Versailles because that treaty touched on virtually every aspect of Germany's existence. But such revision was not, of itself, a threat to European peace in general or to the interests of the Baltic states. In addition other European states, notably Great Britain, acted as a counterweight to the influence of Germany and the Soviet Union. The late 1920s saw the development of a fruitful triangular trading relationship whereby Britain bought Baltic agricultural produce, thus providing the revenue which the Baltic states devoted overwhelmingly to the purchase of German manufactured goods. The passage of time and Britain's growing trade with the Baltic states led to a growing acceptance of their economic and political viability in London.

By the end of the 1920s the Baltic republics had convinced the European powers of their right to exist. They had found a place in the international economic order and a niche in the European security system established at Versailles and Locarno. Both of these pillars were fractured by the slump of 1929. Their two leading trading partners, Britain and Germany, sought to overcome the depression by limiting imports and increasing exports, with all too obvious repercussions on Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In particular, they sought to appease domestic farming interests by limiting the imports of agricultural produce which were of vital importance to all three Baltic republics. In Germany, the prolonged economic crisis helped to bring Nazism to power. At very least, the vehement hostility to bolshevism and the expansionist ambitions expressed in *Mein Kampf* promised a sharp deterioration in relations between Germany and the Soviet Union.

The termination of the working relationship between Germany and the Soviet Union after January 1933 removed a vital element of stability in the Baltic region. Baltic fears of a deal being done behind their backs were rekindled. Indeed the Soviet Union's principal response to the new situation was to propose in December 1933 a joint Soviet-Polish guarantee of the integrity of the Baltic states, a step which would have had the advantage of forestalling a Polish-German rapprochement. However, the full import of Hitler's ideological reversal of German policy became apparent in January 1934, when he concluded a non-aggression pact with Poland and turned his back on the Weimar tradition of coexistence with the Soviet Union.

Even then the Soviets did not abandon their attempt at dialogue with Germany. They still sought to establish common ground over the Baltic states. In March 1934 the Soviet commissar for foreign affairs, Litvinov, proposed to the German ambassador in Moscow, Rudolf Nadolny, a German-Soviet guarantee for the Baltic states, which were "previously a part of the former Russian empire."[5] Hitler vetoed the proposed deal. Any such obligation would have unacceptably limited Germany's freedom of manoeuvre in eastern Europe. Thwarted by Hitler, the Soviets turned to the plan for an Eastern Locarno proposed by the French foreign minister, Barthou, in June 1934. This plan aroused the distrust of the three Baltic states since, in providing for 'mutual assistance', it would have allowed Soviet troops to enter their territory.

Their response was a timely reminder that the Baltic countries were not entirely passive in the face of great power concern for their welfare. For the first time since independence all three Baltic states concluded a collective foreign policy agreement. The process began when the Latvian-Estonian defence pact of 1923 was renewed and extended on 17 February 1934, deliberately leaving the door open for other states to join them if they wished. They had Lithuania in mind. Kaunas had clearly grasped that the end of German-Soviet friendship and the conclusion of the German-Polish agreement left them with no defence against Polish ambitions. In April 1934 Lithuania proposed a triple alliance with its fellow Baltic states which was finally signed on 12 September 1934. A Baltic Entente had at last materialised.

How effective was the Baltic Entente? Theoretically, its strength was considerable. On paper the armies of the three states together could muster over 500 000 men. In practice the number that could be armed

---

[5] Nadolny to Auswärtiges Amt, 28 March 1934, Documents on German Foreign Policy (DGFP) series C, vol. 2, 884.

amounted to no more than 360 000, but this was still far more than the 100 000 to which Germany was restricted by the Treaty of Versailles. They also disposed of 100 tanks, 400 front-line aircraft, and four modern submarines. However, the record of Baltic military cooperation was not encouraging. The Latvian-Estonian defence pact had remained a dead letter: the armed forces of the two countries held joint manoeuvres only once, in 1931, and the experiment was not repeated. In 1934 the proposal by the commander of the Lithuanian army for the formation of a Baltic military alliance was turned down by all three governments for fear that it might antagonise their larger neighbours. The Baltic Entente provided only for regular conferences of the foreign ministers of the three states — thus resuming the practice of the first half of the 1920s.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that: "The Baltic Entente of 1934 had no significance as a security measure."[6] In the last resort, it is true, the Baltic Entente could not actually stop any of the great powers militarily. In 1934, however, National Socialist Germany was still inadequately prepared to confront even Poland, let alone repel the attack from France which Hitler feared. In the same year Kirov's murder set the Soviet Union on the path which was to lead, through the purges, to the decimation of the Red Army's High Command. Seen in this wider context, the Baltic states, with their manpower reserves and armaments and their economic and political links with Scandinavia and Great Britain, could not be dismissed lightly: they presented enough imponderables to give both Hitler and Stalin serious food for thought. This is why both governments devoted so much attention to Baltic diplomacy and why their military advisers pondered the strategic challenges of the region at such length.

The Soviet Union welcomed the formation of the Baltic Entente. The Baltic states were vital to the security of Leningrad. Baltic neutrality would at very least narrow the front on which Hitler could deploy his armies in any possible attack on Soviet territory. Moscow renewed its non-aggression treaties with the three states in 1934 and devoted considerable efforts in 1935 to trying to persuade them to participate in the proposed Eastern Locarno. As the German menace grew with the signature of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement in 1935 and the reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936, the Soviets sought to win the Baltic countries over to their view of the strategic situation. All three chiefs of staff were invited by Marshal Voroshilov to attend the 1936 May Day celebrations in Moscow. During their visit an Estonian officer was taken aside by the Soviet intelligence chief, Uritski, who warned him of Germany's aggressive intentions and indicated that Estonia's only hope lay in a military alliance with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Marshal Yegorov visited the three Baltic capitals in 1937. More ominously, however, the Leningrad Party boss Zhdanov warned the border states in a speech to the eighth Soviet congress in Moscow in November 1936, against acting as agents of the fascist powers: they should beware lest the Soviet Union opened its 'window of Europe' and sent out the Red Army to see what was happening on the other side of the frontier.[7] There were also numerous indications of the build-up of Soviet defences on the borders of Finland, Estonia, and Latvia, as well as a number of frontier incidents and infringements of air space by Soviet military aircraft.

To the extent that Soviet Union gained from Baltic collaboration, Germany sought to undermine it. Its efforts to divide and rule unfortunately

---

[6] *Rodgers, H. I.* Search for Security, 102.

[7] *Rauch, G. von.* The Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania: the Years of Independence 1917—40. London, 1974, 191—192.

found a ready response among the Baltic states themselves. At the first conference of Baltic foreign ministers in Tallinn late in 1934, the Estonian foreign minister Julius Seljamaa declared: "We could achieve nothing by separate action; we must coordinate our forces. ... Our strength lies in union."[8] By the time of the second conference in May 1935, divisions were already appearing as Estonia and Latvia expressed their misgivings about Lithuania's readiness to conclude a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union. They also admitted that the dispute between Lithuania and Germany over Klaipėda precluded any effective military cooperation between the Baltic states. Of the three states, Estonia was much the most responsive to German overtures. Estonian leaders suspected Latvia of trying to dominate the Baltic Entente and hoped unrealistically for a nordic bloc in which Estonia could align itself with Finland and the Scandinavian countries. The military leadership which was coming to dominate the Estonian government by the late 1930s was deeply suspicious of Soviet intentions and forged close links with the German High Command and military intelligence. They worked actively to undermine the Baltic Entente, purging the diplomatic service and armed forces of those deemed to harbour Baltic sympathies.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that the Baltic response to the deteriorating European situation was so ineffective. Estonia and Latvia made no protest against the absorption of the Klaipėda district by Germany in March 1939. The two states went on in June 1939 to sign non-aggression pacts with Germany. These pacts enabled Germany to pose as a supporter of Baltic independence while using Baltic neutrality as a barrier against the Soviets. They also obviated the need for Germany to allocate military resources to holding the Baltic states in check during its attack on Poland. Lithuania, meanwhile, could be relied upon to support any power which offered the prospect of regaining Wilno from Poland.

Following the signature of the Nazi-Soviet pact and the outbreak of war, the Soviet Union showed that it was no less adept at exploiting Baltic differences. Each Baltic state was obliged to sign a treaty of 'mutual assistance' with the Soviet Union in September and October 1939. The treaties were clearly signed under duress. Yet the Baltic states were perhaps weaker and more divided than they need have been even in the face of such overwhelming pressure. There was no consultation between Estonia and Latvia, the two states which had the closest defence and foreign policy relationship. The Estonian foreign minister returned from Moscow on 26 September via Riga but did not take the opportunity to consult the Latvian government. Lithuania was reconciled to its pact with the Soviets by finally regaining control of Wilno.

Would Estonian, Latvian or Lithuanian resistance, against such odds, have made any difference to their ultimate fate? It is significant that a commentator highly sympathetic to the Baltic cause has argued that "probably the best course would have been for the Baltic nations to fight the Soviet troops independently from the outset."[9] Faced with similar pressure, Finland chose this option and may have preserved its independence in consequence. Perhaps token resistance on the part of the Baltic states would have been better than none at all. Yet it was impossible to predict how such a courageous gesture would end. What was true of Päts in Estonia was equally true of the other Baltic leaders: "it was better to face an uncertain future with the Estonian people intact than to resort to

[8] Quoted in *Anderson, E.* The Baltic Entente 1934—1940 — its strengths and weaknesses. — In: *Hiden, J. and Loit, A.* The Baltic in International Relations between the Two World Wars. Stockholm, 1988, 82.

[9] *Vizulis, I. J.* Nations under Duress: the Baltic States. Washington, NY, 1985, 35.

armed resistance that would lead to the certain destruction of a significant minority of the nation." [10] The record of Baltic cooperation in the inter-war period was therefore an unhappy one. It was, however, little worse than that of other European states. The Scandinavian states, better armed and less strategically exposed than the Baltic states, made no progress in military cooperation between the wars. Nor was the record of the great powers any better. Britain and France showed neither solidarity nor resolve in the face of the challenge of Nazi Germany, while Stalin showed himself determined to appease Hitler between 1939 and 1941.

Conclusion

Historical situations do not repeat themselves and the experiences of the inter-war period offer no simple lessons for today's Baltic leaders. The international environment in which they embark on their second period of existence as independent states bears almost no resemblance to that which prevailed between the wars. In most respects the environment is more friendly. Germany has become integrated into Western Europe; Soviet power has collapsed. Eastern and south-eastern Europe remain unstable and are beset with immense tasks of social, political, and economic construction as well as vicious inter-ethnic conflics. So too are the non-Baltic republics of the former Soviet Union. There is little, or no prospect, however, of a general European war. Internally, too, the three republics have been fundamentally altered by the presence of large minorities of non-Baltic origin and the sovietization of their economies.

Yet there are certain parallels between the present-day situation and that of the 1920s and 1930s. The Baltic states faced problems of reconstruction after 1917 which are in many respects comparable with those they face today. The three republics between the wars were already multiethnic societies coping with varying degrees of success with the challenge of integrating majority and minority nationalities. The hopes of Baltic participation in the Russian 'Eldorado' entertained in the early 1920s may be belatedly realised as links are forged with the regenerated economies of the former Soviet Union. The integration of the Baltic economies in the multilateral trading network of the late 1920s foreshadows the kind of arrangements they may now reach with the European Community (EC).

Baltic leaders have already shown themselves determined to avoid repeating the failures of Baltic cooperation in the 1930s. On 12 May 1990 the presidents of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, meeting in Tallinn for the first of such summits for fifty years, signed a joint declaration renewing the Baltic Entente of 1934. At the same time the Council of Baltic States was restored, whereby the presidents and top officials of the republics could consult on a regular basis. There remained problems of communication between the three republics, undoubtedly due in part to the Soviet government's continued 'divide and rule' policies. With independence the artificial obstacles to cooperation have been removed. It is now up to the Baltic states to make it work. In this connection it is appropriate to quote the distinguished British political commentator Neal Ascherson. Discussing the recent resurgence of European nationalism, he warns against the assumption, common in the West, that nationalism is a wholly negative phenomenon, "a prelude to xenophobia, racism and fascism".[11] Ascherson argues that for those peoples who have been

[10] *Raun, T.* Estonia and the Estonians. Stanford, Calif., 1987, 142.

[11] *Ascherson, N.* Why the future waves a flag. — Independent on Sunday, 8 September 1991, p. 21.

deprived of control over their own destiny it is, on the contrary, a necessary condition for asserting control and rediscovering their own identities. But "the new nationalism is not as exclusive as the older nationalism. The absolute nation-state is passing out of history." Modern nationalists are prepared to pool sovereignty, above all in the economic field, and to submit to supra-national organisations such as the EC provided they can negotiate their own terms. "It is a paradox, but nationalism is becoming the chosen path to internationalism."

Presented by R. Helme

Received
Oct. 10, 1991

Patrick SALMON

BALTI RIIGID RAHVUSVAHELISTES SUHETES 1925—1939

On uuritud Eesti, Läti ja Leedu Vabariigi välispoliitikat ning kontrollitud kahte oletust: 1) koostöö Saksamaa ja NSV Liidu vahel ohustas paratamatult Balti riike ja 2) kolm Balti riiki poleks suutnud NSV Liidule vastu seista ka omavahelise suurema poliitilise koostöö korral.

Locarno lepingute süsteemiga tagatud suhteliselt stabiilne rahvusvaheline olukord ja Balti riikide majanduse integreerumine maailmamajandusse 1920. aastate lõpuks võimaldasid Balti riikidel, eriti Eestil ja Leedul funktsioneerida ühenduskanalitena Saksamaa ja NSV Liidu vahel nii poliitilises kui ka majanduslikus mõttes. Nimetatud suurriikidel ei olnud vahendeid Balti riikide iseseisvuse õõnestamiseks ja neil puudus ka huvi seda teha.

Balti riikide antant loodi 1934. aastal ainult vastuseks rahvusvahelise olukorra halvenemisele, mida põhjustas natside võimuletulek Saksamaal. Hoolimata sellest, et kolme Balti riigi ühendatud armee oleks kujutanud suhteliselt suurt sõjalist jõudu, ei teinud need riigid katset koopereeruda.

Патрик САЛМОН

МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ СТРАН ПРИБАЛТИКИ В 1925—1939 ГОДЫ

В статье рассмотрена внешняя политика Эстонии, Латвии и Литвы в целях проверки двух предположений: 1) в сотрудничестве Германии и Советского Союза изначально таилась угроза странам Прибалтики; 2) эти страны не могли бы противостоять Советскому Союзу даже в случае их более согласованного взаимодействия.

Система локарнских договоров, обеспечившая относительно стабильную международную обстановку, и экономическая интеграция Балтийских стран в мировую экономику к концу 1920-х годов позволили этим странам, особенно Эстонии и Литве, взять на себя функции соединительного моста между Германией и Советским Союзом как в политическом, так и в экономическом плане. Обе крупные державы не располагали средствами для подрыва независимости Балтийских стран, да и не были заинтересованы в этом.

Антанта Прибалтийских государств была создана в 1934 г. лишь в ответ на ухудшение международной обстановки в связи с приходом к власти фашистов в Германии. И хотя объединенная армия трех государств Прибалтики могла бы стать относительно значительной военной силой, эти государства и не предприняли никаких попыток в этом направлении.