The Military situation in the Baltic States[1]

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In literature, the Baltic States are usually called "small" although their total area is not that unimportant at all. It is roughly as large as two thirds of Northern Germany or the UK, it comprises about half of Japan or California and it is about one and a half times larger than the area of the BeNeLux states (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg). Regarding transport and commerce, the Baltic States are perfectly situated between Eastern and Western Europe. They are agriculturally self-sufficient. Shale in Estonia and waterpower in Lithuania and especially Latvia create optimal conditions for power generation and the industrial development of these states. After World War II, oil fields even were found in Lithuania and Latvia. The forests in the Baltic States, especially in Latvia, can be regarded as one of their great natural riches. Moreover, the Baltic States are not as poor in mineral resources as commonly assumed. An important factor in the Baltic States was the development of industry based on local materials, but that later turned into a specialization in electrical engineering, precision instruments, chemistry and similar branches. This industry, especially in Latvia, could more easily compete with the great powers on the world market. The long coast of the Baltic Sea with its great ports, especially Riga, Ventspils (Windau), Liepâja (Liebau), Tallinn (Reval) and Klaipeda (Memel), is of considerable economic importance for the Baltic States. Although the Baltic Sea gives access to the Atlantic Ocean, one should pay attention to the fact that it belongs to the so-called border seas, which creates certain military difficulties. The Baltic States are also a natural focal point for international traffic routes in the air, on railroads and roads. The land's surface is mostly very suitable for the building of transport infrastrucure.[2]

However, the military situation of the Baltic States must be regarded as highly dangerous. They are in the northern section of a long and narrow line of smaller states that are an obstacle for access from Russian territory to the Atlantic Ocean, the Baltic Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea. One should always be aware of the fact

that the Russian empire, known today as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), makes up one sixth of the earth's total surface area. The situation of the Baltic States was aggravated by the fact that access to the Baltic Sea was easiest precisely in their territory. This fact poses a serious threat to the independence of the Baltic peoples as long as the Russian empire exists and the non-Russian peoples that are under Russian influence (about one half of the general population) do not gain sovereignty. To the rear of the Baltic people – in the West – is the open sea. The Scandinavian peoples on the other side, remembering their sad experiences in the past, have always tried to stay away from the problems of the European continent and especially of the Baltics and to remain in relative isolation on the Scandinavian Peninsula. However, the Baltic and Finno-Ugrian people have been able to stay on the coasts of the Baltic Sea for more than 4.000 years although they have lost wide areas in Northern and Central Russia.[3]

The German Empire bordered the Baltic States in the Southwest. Just like in the Middle Ages, it has been a serious threat to the independence of the Baltic States in modern times. But centuries-old experience has taught the Germans that the Baltic "horn" – situated far in the Northeast and under German rule – has always been extremely difficult to defend and, thus, constantly endangered in military terms.[4] Therefore, the opinion has developed that support for the bastion of the independent Baltic States and an encouragement of the right of self-determination of the Baltic people against the presumptions and the pressure of the non-Baltic people (especially those of the Russians), would be the best solution for the German interests.[5] Unfortunately, this understanding came to late.

An extremely unfavourable factor is the small Baltic population. Only six million people live in the area, among them an unusually high number of descendants of late immigrants such as Russians, Poles, Germans, Jews, White Russians, Swedish and others. Estonia and Lithuania (except for the areas of Petseri, Vilnius, and Klaipeda) were nationally quite uniform, whereas Latvia's situation in this respect was threatened. In recent years, as much as 25% of Latvia's population has been non-Latvian.[6]

Another negative factor was the centuries-old alienation between the Baltic people and lack of a sense of community. Even while the Baltic States were independent, little was done to remedy this situation. Only when the threatening clouds of World War II started gathering did, the Baltic peoples realize that they shared a common destiny. But then it was too late to combine their powers on a large scale.[7]

In international literature one can find the view that the independence of the Baltic States was just a short incident in world history and that the Baltic people did not play a part in political, economic and military terms in the past. This opinion is completely wrong. In the course of history, the fact went unnoticed that the Baltic and Finno-Ugrian people have been able to stay in their present areas of settlement for 4,000 to 5,000 years, that about 2,000 B.C. the Baltic peoples inhabited

an area that extended from the Urals to the Oder and from Estonia to Central Poland and that from the birth of Christ up to the sixth century the Baltic tribes, had reached a cultural peak that was quite remarkable compared to their neighbours.[8] For several centuries, the Latvian and Estonian tribes not only resisted the simultaneous pressure of the Scandinavian and Slavic tribes, but also started counterattacks into the areas of the Swedes, Danes and Slavs.[9] The Baltic peoples showed unusual persistence and bravery and were militarily successful against enemies that often were technically better equipped during the crusades. The Estonians' fight for freedom against the Swedes, Danes and Germans lasted from 1191 to 1227[10] and the resistance of Latvia against the combined German powers lasted considerably longer – from 1186 to 1290. The Order of the Brothers of the Sword was destroyed and the Livonian Order was severely beaten.[11]

The Lithuanians not only managed to hold their ground against intruders, but also enlarged the area under their control several times until it stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, becoming the largest state in medieval Europe.[12] The combined powers of the Poles and the Lithuanians stopped the advance of the Tartars and the Mongols towards Europe, saved several Russian areas from the Mongolian yoke, slowed down the Germans' drive towards the East by beating the German Order in 1410, and absorbed the Ottomans' advance towards the Holy Roman Empire.[13] Unfortunately, the Lithuanians lost their political and even cultural independence to a considerable extent during the union with Poland, although kings from the Lithuanian Jagellons-Dynasty governed both states for several centuries.[14] The Poles on their part made a historic mistake when they tried to subjugate not only the people of the states they had conquered – White Russians, Ukrainians and Latvians – but also the Lithuanians, who were their allies and much larger in number. The Poles were not interested in a confederation in which these peoples would have had equal rights.[15] This mistake cost the Poles, as well as the unfortunate peoples who were linked to them, dearly.

Although the German conquerors saved the Latvians and Estonians from becoming assimilated by the masses of the Slavs, connected them with Western culture and did not try to Germanise them, they committed a crucial mistake in exploiting these peoples in the interest of German squires and merchants ever more mercilessly. A deep rift opened up between the German immigrants and the native peoples, a rift that weakened the bastion of Livonia and was hard to overcome. Although Latvian and Estonian units fought bravely under their own commanders, together with German troops of the Livonian League against the Russian intruders in several battles, the Livonian League fell apart. The conflict between the leading groups was to blame for this. In the following centuries the leading German social classes mainly tried to defend their own interests and privileges and failed to unite the native peoples against the supremacy of foreign states.[16]

Although the local landowners subjected the majority of Latvians, Estonians, and Lithuanians to serfdom, these peoples did not lose their national and military spirit even under the most severe conditions. The great Estonian revolt of 1343 against Danish and German supremacy, which liberated the whole of Northern Estonia for a short period, proved this.[17] In 1372, the Lithuanians conquered the Kremlin in Moscow.[18] During the Livonian War Latvian and Estonian peasant armies operated.[19] Units of Latvian soldiers were among the troops of Sweden and the Dukedom of Courland. Latvian soldiers fought not only in their native country, but also in Poland, Austria, and the Netherlands and some soldiers and seamen even showed up in the colonies of the Dukedom of Courland, in Africa and America.[20] In 1560, the Estonians even liberated a part of their country again for a short period of time.[21] During the Great Nordic War, twelve Latvian infantry battalions and artillery units fought on the Swedish side.[22] When Latvia and Estonia fell under Russian control, soldiers of these peoples were in Russia's army and fleet, where they held positions at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.[23] During Napoleon's invasion and during the Crimean War, there were purely Latvian navy and army units in the fight against the invaders.[24] When the Lithuanians came under Russian control, the opposite happened. Lithuanian units volunteered for the fight against the Russians in 1812.[25] In the part of Lithuania that had fallen to Prussia, the Prussian army had two Lithuanian cavalry regiments for many years.[26]

The times of the Russian administration were nevertheless the hardest trial for the Baltic peoples. Several revolts, undertaken by Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians against the local authorities of the Russian, German-Baltic and Polish landowners and against the Russian administration, clearly show this. These uprisings reached their peak in the great Polish-Lithuanian revolutions of 1830-1831 and 1863-1865[27], the Estonian Mahtras War of 1858[28], and the bloody revolution of all three Baltic people, but especially of the Latvians and Estonians, in 1905, when these countries were more or less under control by their own people.[29] Lithuanian and, in smaller numbers, also Latvian emigrants also took part in the American Civil War. The first victim of this war was the Latvian Martiòž Buciòž.[30] During the Spanish-American War, Lithuanian emigrants even sent their own military units.[31] All the above shows that the period of oppression that lasted for centuries could not suppress the national consciousness and the instinct for truth, justice and solidarity among the Baltic people. Latvians and Estonians not only had training opportunities in the Russian army and fleet, but were also able to gain experience in the highest commanding positions. The Catholic Lithuanians were not accepted as officers into the Russian armed forces.[32] Instead the political leaders of Lithuania had – due to the long period of proud independence – the clearest and the farthest-reaching political goal: the restoration of Lithuania's independence. The part of the Lithuanian population that was under Russian control was

more strongly oppressed economically and culturally than the other Baltic people. Although the political goals of the Latvians and Estonians were not as far-reaching as those of the Lithuanians, these peoples were able to create a solid economic and cultural foundation for greater self-determination and, eventually, for independence. [33]

The lessons of World War I and the fight for freedom

Since 1795, all the Baltic states, with the exception of a small area in Prussia inhabited by Lithuanians, were under Russian rule. Except for the short period of Napoleon's invasion, the Baltic peoples did not have the slightest hope of getting rid of the Russian control. A pact with Germany would only have meant strengthening of the local German oligarchy. Because of the Polish weakness and lack of understanding, the Lithuanians bitterly regretted their co-operation with them during the revolutions of 1830 and 1863. The Russian Revolution of 1905 gave rise to greater hopes among the Baltic people; the majority of the local leaders, however, even then only hoped for an autonomy of their peoples Only unusually big international changes could help the Baltic peoples to gain the longed-for independence. Extremely favourable conditions were created by World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the collapse of the German Empire, the right of self-determination of the people proclaimed by the Entente and the widespread economic and political preparedness of the Baltic peoples for an independent life.

The Baltic region – just like in earlier great wars – became a battleground right at the beginning of World War I, a fact that did harm especially to Lithuania and Latvia. The native soldiers that were mobilized in the Baltic area had to withstand first the advance of the German army, but later also had to undertake the first invasion into East Prussia. Tens of thousands of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian soldiers were put into Russian units, where they fought bravely under the command of incompetent and corrupt Russian generals. Right from the beginning of the war, the soldiers showed excellent bravery, steadfastness, and contempt for death. Observers of the Battle of Augustova compared the 20 Russian Corps, which was almost completely comprised of the Baltic soldiers, to Napoleon's guards. The success of the Baltic soldiers was described as the Russians' success by the press. Roughly 20.000 Latvians, as many Lithuanians, and many Estonians fell in the name of Russia's glory, their people not gaining any advantages by that.[34] In the big rearguard actions, however, two Latvian garrison-battalions were able to draw attention; 70% of the men were wiped out.[35]

Latvian politicians achieved the creation of national Latvian light-infantry units. From 1 August 1915 and onwards, they consisted of some battalions, later of eight combat regiments and one reserve regiment that were combined in two brigades, for a short period in one division.[36] These units, commanded by their own officers, broke through the German front lines several times by using new tac-

tics and rescued Russian units out of hopeless situations. Due to their bravery and successes they were so different from Russian units, that they drew the attention not only of Western military observers, but also of the international press.[37] Unfortunately, these excellent Latvian units were thirsty for glory and wanted to get attention and thus let themselves get manoeuvred into hopeless situations, paying a high toll of lives during the offensive of July 1916 and the heroic offensives of Christmas 1916 and New Year 1917. They all led to negative reactions among the soldiers. The complete national-Latvian units consisted of approximately 45,000 men. About 10,000 Latvian soldiers found their death in these units, e.g. during the defence of Riga in September 1917.[38] All together about 35,000 Latvian soldiers fell in Latvian and Russian units during Word War I.[39] The Latvian soldiers found a way of drawing the attention of the Russians and their allies to their victims, but the Latvian people did not gain any advantages from these victims of World War I. Only after the Revolution of 1917 did two Latvian regions – Vidzeme and Kurzeme – get autonomy; Latgale did not receive it, and the whole area of Latvia was not united into one national territory. After all, the Russian government had to take into account the morale among the Latvian units.[40]

The Estonian political leaders were long in doubt whether it was worthwhile having the Russian government draw up Estonian national units. They were afraid that all Estonian units might be annihilated in one single battle, whereas with a distribution of the soldiers along the whole, long Russian front, there was hope that the basis of the Estonian people would survive.[41] Yet in the end, the opinion prevailed that national units would be necessary for the achievements of their political goals. On 21 April, the first Estonian infantry regiment was formed.[42] Due to the weakness and the retreat of neighbouring Russian units, this regiment suffered a great deal when defending its positions, just as the Latvian regiments did.[43] Only as late as 19 December, did the Estonians get permission to establish an Estonian division, something they had really done already. In contrast to the Latvian brigades, who were pure infantry units, the Estonian division was allowed to raise an artillery brigade, a cavalry regiment and a technical unit.[44] Maybe because the units were formed so late, the commanders of the Estonian division (in contrast to the Latvian commanders) managed to avoid militarily and politically unnecessary bloodshed and to prevent a distribution of the Estonian units across Russia after the breakdown of the front. Some Latvian units broke up; others were transferred to Russia, where, after the Bolshevik Revolution, they were forced to fight as a special division for the Bolsheviks, while their home was being occupied by German troops.[45] Later, an Estonian soviet-division was formed in Russia.[46]

As the representatives of the Lithuanian people abroad had demanded full independence right at the beginning of the war, the commanders of the Russian armed forces tried to prevent the formation of national Lithuanian units. The

first four Lithuanian battalions and two squadrons were created as late as August and September 1917.[47] Many Latvian and Estonian officers were in the Russian army, even in the highest ranks, but there were only few Lithuanian officers. Towards the end of the war, Lithuanians were trained as officers in spite of their religious belief. Now there were some Lithuanian officers among the lower ranks, but there were virtually none in the higher ranks. Those soldiers who remained on the Bolshevik side after the revolution dispersed for the most part.[48]

In February and March 1918, units of the Estonian division – in co-operation with the Germans – helped liberate the later proclaimed *Estonian Republic*, but in March the German military administration disarmed the Estonian units; only badly armed militias remaining.[49]

The Lithuanians did not do any better. In January 1918, a Lithuanian battalion deserted to the Germans in the Rovno area in the Ukraine. Until August, the Germans used this battalion for garrison duties, but then sent it to Lithuania, where it was immediately disbanded.[50] The German authorities did not approve of the formation of Lithuanian self-protection units. As the Latvians were considered to be the most radical, all men fit for service that had been in the Russian army were brought into prison camps.[51]

The Latvian light-infantry units that were distributed across all of Russia were of greatest importance on the front in the Russian Civil War. To a certain degree, this was also true of the Estonian Soviet-units. These units showed extraordinary bravery, discipline, and sense of responsibility in the fulfilment of military tasks under the command of their own officers. They also differed very much from the revolutionary Russian units, that – for the most part – were very undisciplined. [52] Some Latvian and Estonian officers who were cast away in Russia were also appointed to highest position in the armed forces of Soviet Russia. They commanded brigades, divisions, armies and even army groups and fronts.[53] The Latvian Colonel Joachims Vacietis was even in command of the whole armed forces during critical times.[54] Latvian units held the front and won the battles of Kasan'j, Orla, Perekop and others, that decided the outcome of the Civil War.[55] Military observers of the Entente and Germany acknowledged the importance of the Latvian units and tried to win them over. All of them, however, made a crucial mistake because they regarded the Latvians as mercenaries that would fight in the name of anything for money, but they did not promise independence and social justice.[56] Two Latvian regiments and a Lithuanian battalion nonetheless fought for the allies in the Far East, where they sustained heavy losses, while the Estonian legion played a role in Northern Russia.

When the German Empire collapsed, the national governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had the chance to start their work. Although Soviet Russia had given up the Baltics in the Treaties of Berlin and Brest-Litovsk, its government nonetheless tried to re-conquer them after Germany's breakdown.

World War I was over. The right of self-determination for the people had been

declared, and the League of Nations had been founded. But several small states, among them the Baltic States, still had to fight hard to protect their independence. The Baltic States were dragged into the conflict between the communist and anti-communist powers, into the imperialistic contest of several states and into the attempts by the communist and anti-communist Russian governments to get the Baltic States under their control again.[57]

The proclamation of independence by the Baltic States was not sufficient. The Baltic States had to use their own armed forces in order to defend their national interests. The leaders of the Baltic States had to recognize that the Western powers ignored the right of self-determination that they themselves had declared[58] and that they only took advantage of the Baltic States in their own national interest and in order to get support for the anti-communist forces in Russia. Moreover, these leaders did not get any promise of a future independence for the Baltic people.[59] The democratic government of Germany, which approved of Baltic independence in principle, was too weak to influence the huge administrational and military machinery, which for the most part was led or influenced by people who were in favour of imperialism. Some of the German revolutionary forces on their part sympathized with or were against any continuation of the war against Soviet Russia in the interest of the Entente. The latter did not promise any support for Germany's victims nor consider any compensation in the peace treaty.[60] The eigth and tenth German armies were supposed to defend the Baltic region until the Baltic States were able to defend themselves. But war-weary and influenced by Bolshevik propaganda, they retreated to the German borders and dispersed.[61] The voluntary units that took their place came under the influence of politically short-sighted and reactionary people. After some successful battles against the Bolshevik forces that threatened not only the Baltic States but also Germany, these people manoeuvred the voluntary units into the fight against the anti-communist forces in the Baltic States. The best example was the Battle of Cesis (Wenden) in June 1919 against the Estonian and Latvian troops. The German armies could have gained the status of liberators of the Baltic States, as had happened in Finland. But instead they earned the eternal hatred and suspicion of Estonia and Latvia. If the Battle of Cesis had ended with victory for the German troops, this would have been reason enough for an occupation of Germany by the armies of the Entente. We have to emphasize that the attack on the Estonian and Latvian troops was made although the German command had given contrary orders. A disadvantageous outcome of the Battle at Cesis would have exposed the Baltic States to a complete pincer movement by the Bolsheviks. But the national forces won, and the German reputation was severely damaged.[62]

All of the above shows that the Baltic States could not rely on any declarations. They really needed their own armed forces. Similarly, strong co-operation was essential.

When World War I was coming to an end, only Estonia was practically able to

form a small army in a short period of time. The largest part of the forces, including the commanding ranks, had survived, but they were lacking arms and money. German help was very reluctant and small. Support by the British fleet and the Finns was most important, but nevertheless the Estonians had to rely mainly on their own abilities, their resourcefulness and their toughness.[63]

The majority of the Latvian soldiers were in Russia or in German Prisoner of War camps. The Latvian troops that were in Russia were used by the Russian Soviet government to oppose in the name of a Soviet Latvia the Latvian national government. At that time, the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of Soviet Russia was the Latvian Colonel Joachims Vacietis, who was a Latvian patriot, but still was loyal to Russia's Soviet government, hoping to find support for Latvia's independence there.[64] At first, there were no soldiers, no weapons, and no money in Latvia. There was a very radical atmosphere among the population, who had suffered tremendously during the war. This situation was aggravated by the negative attitude of the leaders of the German civilian government and of the majority of the military commanders towards Latvian independence and the creation of the national Latvian forces. These people were still influenced by imperialistic and colonialistic ideas.[65]

In Lithuania, the military units were better preserved, but they did not have any qualified officers, weapons, or money. As Lithuania was right on the Russian-German border and as Germany as well as Lithuania was in conflict with Poland, the German government agreed upon partial support for the state of Lithuania. This support dropped when Lithuania made official claims for the Klaipeda (Memel) region.[66]

All the Baltic States were economically extremely weakened. Furthermore, Latvia and, to a large extent, Lithuania were very much destroyed. Financial and economic support by the Western powers was very small and came under very unfavourable conditions. Weapons and other material delivered was mostly worn out and damaged.[67]

The Baltic States, that were virtually foreign to one another, started some kind of diplomatic co-operation, especially Latvia, Estonia and Finland, whereas Lithuania was only partially involved. But the newly formed military forces operated independently from one another.[68]

Yet, some remarkable examples of co-operation should be mentioned as they always ended with important military or political victories that gave the states involved the same advantages and sense of security. The co-operation between the Estonian and the Latvian Northern Army in the battles at Cesis and Jugla (Jegel) in June and July 1919 should be especially mentioned, although the neutrality of the Latvian Southern Group, which was under German control, was a negative factor.[69] The Estonian army also covered and protected a part of the Latvian border in the East until December 1919. In the summer of 1919, it actively took part in the fights against the Bolshevik forces that were threatening Latvia.[70] The Lithuanian army on its part held its ground against the Bermondt Army without any Estonian or

Latvian support for a long time and finally defeated it. This was in the interest of all the Baltic States.[71] Unfortunately, one has to point out the belated co-operation between the Latvian and Lithuanian armies in November 1919 in this connection. The Lithuanians are not really to blame for their late involvement because they had to fear possible aggression by the Polish troops.[72] Despite the fact that Poland did not recognize an independent Lithuania, but was aiming at a Polish-Lithuanian Union, Poland promised not to take advantage of Lithuania's situation during the threat by Bermondt. Its army even protected the Eastern border of Lithuania, while the largest part of Lithuania's troops was involved in fights with Bermondt.[73] Co-operation between the Latvian and Polish armies during the offensive in January 1920 against the Soviet forces was very successful. We have to stress that Poland was the only big state that did not demand any payment for its help.[74]

To be historically true, we must also emphasize that Germany, whose voluntary units liberated Western Latvia, helped with the formation of new Latvian troops from January until May 1919[75] and supported the Lithuanian army just as long, did not receive any compensation.[76]

The considerable help to Estonia by the Royal Navy from December 1918 until January 1920 has to be mentioned as well as the support by British and French naval units during the fights of the Latvian army against the Bermondt Army in October and November 1919. The presence of the British fleet itself was some kind of guarantee and moral support for the independence fighters in the Baltic States.[77]

The Russian Soviet government, who - at the beginning of the invasion – had tolerated the formation of military forces by the Soviet governments in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia for political reasons, later tolerated their disintegration because of new political considerations and made peace with the national governments of the Baltic States. The real reason for this disintegration of the Baltic Soviet troops was the violent and short sighted politics of the Soviet government and the aversion of the troops themselves to fighting against national forces. Most of the Baltic soldiers mobilized by the Soviets found ways of going over to the national forces in order to continue their fight together with them.[78]

Viewed in its entirety, another negative factor was the insignificant mutual demands by the Baltic States to correct the borderlines that were a disadvantage to the common military and political outline.[79] However, the Baltic States were able to solve their problems rather early, in 1920 and 1921.

During the wars of liberation of the Baltic States, only two attempts were made to consolidate the action of the armed forces. The British General Frank. G. March initiated the first one on 26 August 1919. The anti-Bolshevik troops of General Yudenich, Estonian and Latvian troops, the anti-Bolshevik Russian-German troops of Bermondt as well as the Polish and the Lithuanian armies

were supposed to start a common offensive against the Bolshevik troops.[80] The second attempt, initiated by the British General Arthur J. Turner, was made on 6 January 1920 and was supposed to create a military alliance among the Baltic States. Representatives of the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian armies agreed in Valga/Valka (Walk) upon regular meetings and the standardization of war material, but a political agreement or a defensive alliance did not follow this meeting. The political leaders of the Baltic States missed a unique chance to gain greater security and international prestige for their states.[81]

After initial misjudgement of what was happening and apathy in the history of the wars of liberation, one could witness a spontaneous growth and more strength among the national forces. A clear example is the formation of a national army in Latvia.[82] Estonia showed the greatest stability. Latvia showed the same level of stability after it had overcome difficulties that originated from external and internal negative forces. There was less stability in Lithuania. The interference in politics by the army often created dangerous situations that could have ended with a catastrophe.[83] Latvia and partly Estonia, too, were negatively influenced by the service of some of their troops in the Latvian and Estonian Soviet divisions. However, these divisions, which fought at the heart of the Red Army and won crucial victories over anti-Soviet Russian forces that were averse to independence of the Baltic States, indirectly helped to secure the independence of the Baltic States.[84] Yet, one has to keep in mind that the Baltic States had to fear an attack by Soviet Russia through the period of their independence. The Soviet government was only waiting for the right moment to consolidate its power in the Baltic States. Such favourable conditions developed in 1939/1940 and then again in 1944/1945.

Though poorly armed and their actions often impeded by foreign politicians, the armies of all three Baltic States were enormously successful on the battlefield.

At the end of the war, the Estonian national army consisted of 74,500 men and had 39 artillery batteries, 10 armoured trains, 8 armoured cars, 28 aircraft and 10 warships. During the war of liberation, the Estonian army lost 3,588 soldiers (2,236 of them fell at the front) and had 13,775 injured.[85] The Latvian army had – at the end of the war – 76,394 men, 91 pieces of artillery, 707 light and heavy machineguns, 5 armoured trains, 8 armoured cars, 5 tanks and 19 aircraft. It lost 3,046 men and had 4,085 injured.[86] At the time, the Lithuanian army had 60,000 men in four divisions and 3 cavalry regiments, 48 pieces of artillery, 450 heavy machineguns, 4 armoured cars, 1 armoured train, and 18 aircraft. During the war, Lithuania lost 614 men and another 822 died of their injuries. There were 1,175 injured and 154 invalids. [87] In World War I, the Latvians had lost about 35,000 men, the Lithuanians approximately 15,000. The exact number for Estonia is not known. During the Russian civil war, the Latvians lost at least 20,000 men. The Estonian casualties were high

in number, as well. Lithuanians also fought in the British and American units that fought for the Entente in Siberia.

This overview shows the military spirit and the absent fear of death among the Baltic peoples. It also shows that, because of the unfavourable geographic situation and the historical conditions, the Baltics lost a great part of their "national strength" in the battle for the interests of foreign powers, without gaining a real advantage for their own states. Considering the overall political and military situation as well as the conditions that were unfavourable for the independence of the Baltic States, one has to say that the Baltic politicians and their military leaders were very successful and showed extraordinary competence in securing the independence of the Baltic States. Their co-operation could have been more extensive, but we have to admit that the Baltic States were not really able to help one another as they all had to suffer from the collapse of the economy that the World War I and the exploitation by the occupying powers had brought about.

The Situation of the Baltic States after the War of Liberation

In the first decade of independence, the leaders of the Baltic States were somewhat optimistic about their military situation. They had full confidence in the League of Nations and believed that the people of the world seriously wanted peace after the extraordinarily destructive and bloody World War I. They were fully confident also not only about the treaties made, but also about the self-interest of the great powers, which would not allow one state or a bloc of states to gain control over the Baltic States.[88]

The leaders of the Baltic States did everything imaginable to foster peace, overall co-operation and disarmament. They not only signed, but also ratified all international treaties that had these goals.[89] It was not the fault of the Baltic States, but because of the egoistic interests of the great powers that all these treaties remained no more than paper and were not brought fully to life.

In their resistance to the Soviet Union and, later, to Nazi Germany, the Baltic States defended the goals of the League of Nations and remained members up to the last day of their independence.[90]

The political leaders of the Baltic States tried to forget that they had not been accepted into the League of Nations in 1920 only because the other states feared that due to their prominent geographical situation, they might have to help defend the independence of these states.[91] In 1921, at last, the majority of the members of the League of Nations had the courage to accept the Baltic States into their number.[92] The lack of a common spirit and courage was typical of the actions of the League of Nations during its entire existence. It was paralyzed by the exaggerated egoism of its member states and by the lack of intention to seriously co-operate and support peace. The members soon realized that they had to rely on their own moral, economic and military power. Thus, the smaller states always emphasized their complete neutrality in cases of conflicts.

Hopes that the League of Nations would guarantee the Baltic States' independence grew weaker. Yet, the leaders of these states believed the victorious powers of World War I would be able to maintain their leadership position for a long time and that it was in their interest to support the independence of the Baltic States, directly or indirectly.[93]

But the Baltic States were mistaken in this respect, as well. They viewed with concern the disagreement between the UK, France, the USA, Japan and Italy as well as their economic and even military competition and their lack of co-operation. However, the two biggest potential threats to Baltic independence, Germany and the Soviet Union, were weak due to war and revolution, a fact that somewhat lessened these worries. Until 1933, the Baltic States even saw a democratic Germany as a guarantor of independence.[94]

The gigantic neighbour in the East, the Soviet Union, caused the greatest concern. Although the Baltic States did everything to give the Soviet Union convenient access to their ports in order to build economic ties with them, it was clear that the loss of the Baltic coast was very painful, not only because of political prestige, but also for practical reasons. The Gulf of Finland, which also meant the Russian part of the Baltic Sea, was covered with ice for six to seven months of the year. During these months, the navy as well as the merchant fleet of Russia were captives of the ice and they could not be stationed in the ports of the Baltic States. It was very inconvenient for a great power to be dependent upon the small Baltic States for the transport of goods, especially as it really had to fear that these states might soon be under the influence of hostile great powers or power blocs.[95]

Another concern was the aim of world revolution declared by the Soviet Union. A seventh of the Latvian population as well as a large number of Estonians and Lithuanians had remained in the Soviet Union. Among these Balts, the flames of hate against the democratic governments of the Baltic States were fanned and the Communist Information Bureau (KOMINFORM) supported by the Soviet Union as well as Baltic organizations in Russia repeatedly promised the re-introduction of the soviet system in the Baltic States by revolutionary means. [96]

Spies, saboteurs and political agitators were continuously pouring across the borders of the Soviet Union into the Baltic States. This could not lead to good relationships between the Baltic States and the Soviet Union, although the latter had been the first one to recognize the independence of the Baltic States and had waived all claims to their territory.[97]

The Baltic States' fear of the Soviet Union was later somewhat calmed by the fact that the most extreme groups were removed and those in power wanted to avoid wars as long as the social system was not consolidated and the armed forces were not ready for an offensive.[98]

The growing military power of Nazi Germany was a real concern as well as its aggressive ideology and its open efforts to expand which were also aimed at the Baltic States and Eastern Europe in general. From 1933 and onwards, military planners in the Baltic States had to reckon

with an invasion from the West as well as from the East.

At least there was some hope that the neighbouring quarrelling powers would not allow each other to take up position in the Baltic region, but would rather keep it as a kind of a buffer zone between each other, at least as long as they did not intend any open conflict.[99]

The self-destructive policy of the Western powers and the real, ideological, demographical, and military weakness of Poland, the "fifth European great power", created real concern among the leaders of the Baltic States during the last years before World War II. In Latvia and Estonia, they did not fear any military conflict between Lithuania and Poland because of the Vilnius area conflict. Still, the latter was a senseless hindrance to political and military co-operation between all the small states situated between Germany and the Soviet Union and to a concept of some kind of defence system in an obviously hopeless situation.[100]

During the first post-war years, Latvia and Estonia regarded the UK as its strongest ally, whereas Lithuania saw the same in Germany and Poland in France. Towards the end of World War I, the British were without doubt interested to support the efforts undertaken by the Baltic States to reach independence in order to weaken their enemy, Germany. Moreover, they wanted to create possibly long-lasting chaos for their potential competitor Russia, no matter whether it was Bolshevik or anti-Bolshevik.[101] Later, the UK supported the Baltic States only to prevent the Soviet Union from invading Europe through their territory and in order to tie them to itself economically.

From the point of view of the UK, the Baltic States were too far away, geopolitically too endangered and economically too unimportant. British military bases in the Baltic region would have been in constant danger. They would have been right on the border zone of Russia and Germany, far away from the British Isles, and their access would have been very complicated because of the "closed" character of the Baltic Sea. The missing agreement between the Baltic States also prevented the possibility of far-reaching co-operation.[102]

Representatives of the UK admonished the Baltic as well as the Scandinavian States repeatedly during the first post-war years to build closer political and military connections, but all in vain. It did not only seem to be unwise, but also dangerous to make treaties of military support with several small states that did not get along with one another.[103] The British did not want to get involved in the meaningless quarrels among the Baltic States, but they used them, especially Estonia, as a base for spying against the Soviet Union.[104]

After the emergence of the Third Reich of the Nazis, the British were aiming at a confrontation between the latter and the Soviet Union, hoping both totalitarian powers would destroy each other without the UK getting involved.[105] When it became fully clear that German policy was more dangerous for the Western powers than the Soviet Union, the UK reluctantly approached the Soviet Union shortly before the war to induce Germany to come to an agreement with the Western pow-

ers. In this connection, the idea of a guarantee for the Baltic States was initiated by the Soviet Union. This suggestion was dangerous for the Baltic States due to several suspicious conditions. The UK and France were in reality unable to give effective guarantees to the Baltic States as Germany lay between them.[106]

The interest of France in the Baltic States was different from that of the UK. Both powers were political and economic competitors. As long as Germany did not go directly against the UK economically, the latter was interested in a relatively strong Germany as a useful business partner. However, it was France's interest to keep the weakened Germany down as long as possible and to build up a group of new allies under the leadership of an enlarged and strengthened Poland east of Germany replacing Russia, which had been lost as an ally. Moreover, France tried to get back the enormous amounts of money invested in Russia by putting pressure on the state.[107] Should it have been possible to come to a direct agreement with Germany or the Soviet Union, France was prepared to leave Poland and the other East European states to their fate.[108]

Nevertheless, there was some exchange of information between the general staffs of France and the Baltic States. Several Latvian officers were trained at French military academies, and most of the Latvian war ships were built in France.[109] But that was all.

In the first post-war years, Latvia and Estonia refused to enter a military alliance with Poland as long as the latter did not settle the conflict with Lithuania in a way that satisfied both states. Because of that, Latvia and Estonia were not even indirectly integrated into the French system of military alliances.[110]

Latvia and Estonia did not directly cooperate with Germany militarily, but German military literature and German military know-how were used to a large extent.

Lithuania had close connections with Germany for some time concerning military supply and the qualification of high-ranking officers.[111] For a long time, Germany and the Soviet Union played Lithuania off politically against Poland. Although Lithuania felt safe from further aggression by Poland because of its co-operation with them, Germany and the Soviet Union did not help Lithuania re-gain the Vilnius region nor did they plan to protect Lithuania from potential further aggression by Poland. Germany's only intention in case of a Polish attack was to take back the Klaipeda (Memel) region that it had lost to Lithuania in the Treaty of Versailles.[112] The aggressiveness of Nazi Germany in the question of re-gaining the Klaipeda (Memel) region put an end to the close military co-operation between Germany and Lithuania.[113] With the Soviet Union, Lithuania did not maintain any military co-operation at all. It only bought a limited number of expensive field guns.[114] As the Western powers were not interested in an obligation to defend the East European states and the League of Nations was not a safeguard for safety and peace, the only option was a regional military bloc. There were two realistic possibilities: a neutral Nordic bloc of the Scandinavian and Baltic States, or a defensive alliance of

all states from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea that had a common border with the Soviet Union.[115]

To the Baltic States, a Scandinavian-Baltic bloc seemed to be the best solution. This bloc would have been situated wholly ti the north of the Central European area of conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union, and the problems concerning territory between Poland and Rumania on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other would not have affected it directly either. But the politicians of the Scandinavian states were of the opinion that the Soviet Union would soon try to take up its position on the Baltic coast again and thus absolutely refused to enter into any kind of connections with the Baltic States. The Scandinavian states felt quite safe in their isolation as a peninsula and in their long-lasting tradition of neutrality.[116] Therefore, Finland and the Baltic States had only one option, to come to an agreement among each other and to find a better solution. Until 1922, the orientation towards the Baltic States was predominant in Finland; then its orientation shifted towards Scandinavia. Finland's politicians regarded the Baltic States as more endangered than their own state. Finland is so far up north that it cannot have the linking function that is so characteristic of the Baltic States. Historically and politically, Russia had already previously considered Finland to be an autonomous entity. Moreover, it would not see the crucial necessity of having bases in Finland if it could have them in the Baltics. In case of a war, the Gulf of Finland, which separates these states from Finland, would have made an alliance with the Baltic States difficult. The united navies of Finland and the Baltic States were also too weak to keep the strong Soviet navy in the Eastern part of the Gulf. But especially, the Finns feared a co-operation with Poland, which they regarded as a danger to their security. That is why Finland wanted to get as close as possible to the neutral Scandinavian bloc and refused to co-operate militarily with the Baltic States.[117] The only element of co-operation was that Finnish military observers took part in general staff meetings of the Baltic States and Poland in the 1920s and the beginning 1930s. The most senior officers of Finland, Estonia and Latvia visited each other several times and observed military manoeuvres. In individual cases, Estonia and Latvia took advantage of the recently created Finnish armaments industry.[118] Except for Lithuania, the Baltic States did not make use of the highly developed Swedish armaments industry. Economic considerations were the reason. Sweden did not need the products of the Baltics; thus, the expensive weapons and ammunition would have had to be paid with cash, which the Baltic States could not afford because of their financial difficulties. The British as well as the French demanded that the Baltic States should buy weapons and ammunition primarily from their states if they wanted to sell their goods in the UK and France. However, it was mainly used and very old weapons that were sold to the Baltic States. In case of a war, there would have been no hope of securing a continuous supply with spare parts and ammunition from these countries. The traffic with Sweden was much less disturbed and safer.[119]

For military protection, the Baltic States either had to join together or they had to seek co-operation with the strongest neighbour of the Soviet Union: Poland, and its ally, Romania. Such co-operation would automatically have dragged the Baltic States into the Polish border disputes with Germany and the Soviet Union, and further into the conflicts in the Balkans and the border disputes of Romania and the Soviet Union. Seen from the outside, Poland was a big and powerful state, but in reality, it was unstable and weak. A large part of the Polish territory was not ethnically Polish, especially along the border with the Soviet Union. Only two thirds of Poland's population were Polish, the rest was composed of Ukrainians, WhiteRussians, Germans, Lithuanians and Jews. Only five percent of Poland's border was common with friendly Romania. With the latter, Poland did not maintain close relations although a military convention had been concluded. Everywhere else Poland bordered hostile states: Germany, the Soviet Union, and Lithuania, with all of which it had border disputes. The border with neutral Latvia was only 106 km long. The latter had been Poland's ally during the wars of liberation. But Poland's action against Lithuania, whose historical capital and wide border areas it had occupied in 1920, as well as the threat posed to Lithuanian independence in general and territorial claims also against Latvia forced it to avoid closer relations with this state.[120]

Theoretically, Lithuania and Poland were even at war, and in 1926 Lithuania was the only one of the Western neighbours of Russia to conclude a non-aggression treaty with the USSR.[121] Poland protected Lithuania against a possible attack by the Soviets with its territory which stretched northwards to the east of Lithuania. But the military leaders of the Baltic States did not have a high opinion of the big Polish army because of its old-fashioned organization. From a strictly practical point of view, Estonia would have been willing to approach Poland, but Latvia as Lithuania's neighbour refused to do so. Because of Latvia's opposition, the project of a military alliance between Estonia, Latvia and Poland failed.[122]

There were only two alternatives left: a military union of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; and the union Estonia-Latvia. For many years, Lithuania demanded that a military union of the Baltic States be armed mainly against Poland. But Latvia and Estonia rejected this demand. Poland might have been the only source of fairly reliable support against an attack by Germany or the Soviet Union. Until 1933, Lithuania was also little interested in a closer union of the Baltic States as it regarded Germany and the Soviet Union as natural allies against Poland, which Lithuania considered to be its main enemy.[123]

A military union of Estonia and Latvia was the only option left. So it was; but this union was not a very important fact, as we will see later.[124] In the long line of neighbours of the USSR, each state considered itself to be less endangered than the others for some reasons. For each state its own, often egoistic, interests were more important than the common ones. The feeling of a common destiny and a common region was still poorly developed.

Latvia's Military Situation

After the overview of the unfriendly general situation, we have to take a closer look at the military conditions in each of the Baltic States. Latvia (65,791.4 km^2) was the largest of the Baltic States and was situated in the middle of this group of states. With regard to population (1939: 2,001,900), it was in second place. The common border (1939) with friendly Estonia was 374.6 km long (19.94%), the one with the hostile Soviet Union 351,3 km (18.66%). The common border with Poland was 105,9 km long (5.64%), and the one with friendly Lithuania 570.4 km (30.3%). The coast was 479 km long (25.46%), one fourth of the overall length.[125] No natural obstacles, disregarding small rivers, lakes, marshland, and small woodlands, protected this state boundary. In case of an invasion by the Soviets, the defence was planned to really start in the middle of the state, along the line Pededze, Lake Lubans and Aiviekste (Ewst), an area with broad marshlands and large wooded areas and further along the Daugava (Düna), which would also have been an important natural hindrance in case of a German invasion.[126]

Concerning food and clothing, Latvia was self-sufficient. But it was completely dependent on foreign states for fuel and heating, disregarding the large supply of wood and the power generation started in the last years of Latvia's independence. Latvia's industry was the most developed of all the Baltic States. The metallurgical industry, the car-parts industry, precision engineering, the manufacture of appliances and instruments (e.g. the world's smallest camera "Minox"), aircraft and ship construction in Riga and Liepaja and the arsenal in Riga have to be mentioned. The latter built guns and machine guns as well as infantry- and artillery-ammunition. Latvia also produced mines and anti-submarine weapons.[127]

75% of Latvia's population were Latvians, the rest was made up of several nationalities who were represented only in small percentages (1938): 10.6% Russians, 4.8% Jews, 3.2% Germans, 2.5% Polish, 1.4% White Russians, further Lithuanians, Estonians and others. The minorities had complete cultural autonomy and in the Latvian army their sense of Latvian citizenship was strengthened.[128] The Latvian army was comprised of 2,200 officers and 23,000 sergeants and other ranks in 1938. The annual draft was about 13,500 men, but it decreased during the last years of independence. The police had only about 3,100 men, the border guard had about 100 officers and 1,100 men. The Voluntary Home Guard reached 35,000 men. According to American information, the trained reserves were about 170,000 men, whereas the untrained reserves were 20,000. In theory, Latvia could deploy an army of 200,000 men, but in reality only 130,000 to 180,000 could be armed. In times of peace, 10 out of 1,000 inhabitants of Latvia were members of the armed forces, the ratio for the Home Guard was 28 out of 1,000 citizens. These figures changed from year to year, of course. Latvia was divided into 15 defence regions. During the last years of independ-

ence, the troops were supposed to be mobilised within three days (i.e. 72 hours).

In times of peace, the armed forces had four infantry divisions, with a total of 12 infantry regiments and one cavalry regiment. Each infantry division had one field artillery regiment. The First, Second and Third Infantry Regiments and the Kurzeme Artillery Regiment belonged to the First Division, whose headquarters was in Liepāja (Liebau). The Second Division consisted of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Infantry Regiments as well as the Vidzeme Artillery Regiment. This division's headquarters was in Riga. The Third Division consisted of the Seventh, Eight and Ninth Infantry Regiments and the Zemgale Artillery Regiment. The Fourth Division had the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Infantry Regiments the Cavalry Regiment and the Latgal Artillery Regiment. Its headquarters was in Daugavpils (Dünaburg). The Technical Division consisted of the Engineer Regiment, the Tank Regiment (later the motorized brigade), the Air Force Regiment, the Intelligence Unit, the Armoured Train Regiment and the Coastal Artillery Regiment. The four field artillery regiments mentioned above, the heavy artillery regiment, the anti-aircraft regiment, the special artillery section, the tank regiment and the coastal artillery regiment were under the control of the Chief of Staff of the Artillery concerning training, weapons and organisation. The Staff Battalion, which corresponded to an elite guard unit in other armies, was independent. All naval forces were united in a squadron under the command of the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet.

In times of peace, an infantry regiment had two battalions – 50 officers, 700 sergeants and men, the reinforced regiments had three battalions – 80 officers, 1,220 sergeants and other ranks. In case of a war, each regiment would have been enlarged up to three battalions. The weapons consisted of English Ross-Enfield M-14 rifles, Lewis-light-machine-guns and Vickers-Bertier heavy machineguns, all with calibre 7.7 mm. The production of light machineguns of the type "Bren" had been started in the state. They were more useful in combat. During the last years, the regiments also received 47 mm Böhler antitank guns and 7 cm Skoda infantry guns. Further, they were equipped with 81 mm Stoks mortars. Each regiment had reconnaissance companies; some also had bicycle and ski companies. The cavalry regiment had five squadrons and one heavy machinegun squadron, the remount squadron, two bicycles squadrons and one battery, all together 1,200 horses and 1,200 men, four cannons, English Lee-Enfield 7.7 carbines, Madsen light machineguns and Vickers heavy machineguns. At an experimental stage, there were also bicycle battalions and motorcycle companies that were planned to join the army.

Each artillery regiment had two units with two gun batteries and one howitzer battery; thus the whole regiment had six batteries with 24 guns and six howitzers. All regiments had English 18 Pounder (8.38 cm) guns and 4.5" (11.43 cm) howitzers. English 13 Pounder (7.62 cm) and Russian 75 mm (M-02) guns were in reserves. For war times, three units (36 guns) and one to two anti-aircraft batteries (four to eight guns), which was 40 to 44 guns

altogether, was intended for each field artillery regiment.

The heavy artillery regiment consisted of three units, including the anti-aircraft batteries that were organized into an independent anti-aircraft battalion. In the heavy artillery regiment, there were at least 30 heavy guns or howitzers of different type and production country. Except for some German howitzers, all these were out-of-date. Out of the four trains of the Armoured Train Regiment, three were in Daugavpils (Dünaburg) and one in Riga. With regards to material, six armoured trains and 6" Canet ship guns were intended for two batteries of railway artillery.

The overall firepower comprised: six 10.5 cm, one 152 mm (6"), 10 77 mm, three 12 pounder howitzers and five 6" Canet Guns, two 38 mm anti-aircraft guns and 36 heavy machineguns. In times of peace, the regiment had 40 officers and 245 sergeants and other ranks.

In the sea coastal fortress Daugavgriva (Dünamünde), the Coastal Artillery Regiment had five batteries (20 guns), one search light battery and one auxiliary ship. As weapons, they had Russian 3", 6" Vickers and 6" Canet Guns and one anti-aircraft battery. In times of peace, the regiment had 500 men. Mobile railroad coastal batteries were in preparation. The anti-aircraft regiment had 15 batteries – Russian 3" (76-mm) and 40 mm Bofors anti-aircraft guns. It had about 1,000 men. Anti-aircraft batteries were also formed for all divisions, except the Third.

The Autotank-Regiment had six armoured cars, two heavy, one medium and six light tanks as well as 18 tankettes (a small tracked reconnaissance vehicle). Altogether six armoured cars and 27 tanks. Moreover, it had 40 trucks and 15 motorcycles. For times of war, each division was supposed to have three tankettes (21 altogether). In 1938, the regiment was restructured into a motorized brigade with five battalions in three motorized groups. Furthermore, motorized anti-tank units were planned.

The engineer regiment consisted of two battalions and 500 men, including the bridge and the pontoon company. The intelligence battalion had four companies.

The air force regiment had three units, 100 to 150 aircraft in three fighter squadrons in Riga, one reconnaissance squadron in Gulbene, one long distance reconnaissance squadron in Krustpils and one naval aviation wing in Liepaja.

The Latvian navy had one minelayer gunboat, two minesweeper-minelayer boats, two submarines, one auxiliary submarine and some motorboats. A minelayer (3,000 tons), four submarines and twelve hydroplanes were planned. There was also a coastal observation service.

The border guard brigade had five battalions and one fast patrol boat. The self-defence organisation was divided into 19 Home Guard regiments and consisted of cavalry and motorcycle-units with a tankette, one railroad Home Guard regiment, one aircraft Home Guard regiment as well as several Home Guard Battalions. It also included 12,000 women. The Air Home Guard had 24 aircraft. In contrast to the other Baltic States, the Home Guard organization in Latvia was not subordinate to the Ministry of War, but to

the Ministry of Social Affairs. Nevertheless, 150 active officers and 100 sergeants provided military training in the organization.[129]

Of all the Baltic States, Latvia had the best traffic network. In 1940, there were 1.880 km of highways, 9.621 km of first-class roads, 7.625 cars, 4.321 motorcycles, 3,466 km of railway tracks, 294 locomotives, 11 motor wagons and 6.684 wagons. Further, there were three large seaports and several small ones. In 1940, the Latvian merchant fleet had 89 steamers, seven motor ships and seven sailing ships, altogether 103 ships with 120.676 register tons. The civilian aviation system had a large number of training and sport planes as well as two middle-sized passenger aircraft.[130]

In times of war, Latvia planned to operate with 130.000 men in seven divisions, two regiments of special cavalry squadron with a strength of two regiments, three motorized brigades, three to four bicycle battalions, three to four special artillery units, and one fleet. A Supply Divison and garrison unit would be kept in reserve.

Should the Soviet Union attack the covering force would consist of one battalion and one company of the Seventh Regiment in Vilaka and Liepna, one battalion and two companies of the Ninth Regiment in Ludza, Zilupe and Karsava, one battalion and one company of the Tenth Regiment in Daugavpils, later in Kârsava and Dagda. Together with three to four battalions of the border guard and a mounted battery these forces would have had to defend a front line of 200 to 260 km from the Estonian border to Piedruja and Semgallen respectively. Thus, real defence was not planned for the first days, just a delaying action.

The Fourth and Third Division with the First Cavalry Regiments, but without the Eight and Twelfth Infantry Regiment were supposed to cover the mobilization of the forces and the occupation of the defence line Malupe – Pededze – Litene – Lubana – Varaklani – Livani – Daugavpils and to withdraw to the line Pededze – Lake Lubana – Krustpils. They were supposed to accomplish that by following the Estonian troops with their left wing and – in their centre - by using the natural defence line in the marshland around the Lake Lubans and the widespread forests in the north. Should the Fourth Division still be able to move east if necessary, the command of the Third Division could easily lose connection to the Seventh and Eight Regiments that were further north. To subordinate these regiments to the Third Division after the arrival of the First and Second Division at the front would have been very problematic. A retreat of the Fourth Division along the left bank of the Daugava into the area of the Aiviekste would have been very difficult, too. The Second Division was supposed to deploy east of Rezekne. The fourth mobilization plan had three prepared alternatives: A, D, and K. Alternative A intended a deployment of armed forces for a defence against an attack by the Soviet Union, whereas option D planned the same if Germany attacked. Alternative K consisted of simultaneous defence against the Soviet Union and Germany.

Option A had been worked out in all details; option D had been prepared rela-

tively thoroughly. Option K was only outlined in rudiments as a co-operation between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union appeared to be hardly imaginable.

According to option A, the main forces should be deployed on the line Skrudaliena-Lielborna-Izvalta-Andrupene-Kaunata-Stocerova-Berzgale-Nautreni-(Rogovka)-Tilza-marshes north of Tilza-Kuprova-Liepna-Pededze River, with other troops covering them. After this deployment, the following was planned: either a defence on this line, an offensive in order to re-gain the third of Latgale lost during the mobilization or a retreat to the line of the Lake Lubana in order to prepare the decisive defence battle. The First Division Group (three divisions) would have operated on the right and the Second Division Group (two divisions) on the left. The border between these two division groups would have been the northern bank of the Lake Lubans-Karsava. The Supreme Commander would have had two divisions in the areas of Madona, Barkava, Lubana and Cesvaine at his disposal. Each division would have received one unit of heavy artillery and a certain number of reconnaissance flight hours. Positions were supposed to be occupied by the fifth day of mobilization, which seems to have been too optimistic.

Option D comprised the defence against Germany. The main idea was to deploy the armies some kilometres north of the southern state border as protection by the Lithuanian army was expected. Engineer plans did exist, but only for limited works. The forces were supposed to operate in two division groups, whereas the cover units should remain at the eastern border.

Option K existed only in outlines. Three divisions were supposed to operate towards the south, four towards the east.

After the ceding of bases to the Soviet Union in 1939, a fifth mobilization and defence plan was worked out, but now a defence of the state was almost impossible. According to options A and D of plan four, a further defence of the Daugava line was provided for. In case of an attack by the Soviet Union, a further retreat to Lithuania and a following internment in Germany was planned.[131] Neither Latvia nor the other Baltic States believed that each or all together would have to fight without any support by one or the other great power. Treaties or even plans, however, for such a co-operation did not exist, not even with neighbouring Poland. Military observers of the great powers classified the Latvian armed forces to be behind the Finnish and Estonian forces regarding the degree of readiness. Soldiers and regular officers were considered to be good to very good. Their endurance and courage were praised, but cruelty that had been supposedly noticed was criticized. The assessment of higher officers was altogether bad, with some remarkable exceptions. Reasons were old age, insufficient training, lacking initiative and bureaucratic mentality. Regarding supply and weapons, Latvia's army was considered to be better than Estonia's, but worse than Lithuania's. In the opinion of the US observers, the divisions that would have had to be established after the beginning of the war could

have moved to the front as late as 30 to 60 days after the proclamation of the mobilization. Active divisions could have reached the front within 24 hours. The morale and composure of the Latvian army were rated high. Thus, success was expected not only in defensive, but also in offensive battles.[132]

The Military Situation in Estonia

Regarding the area (47,549 km^2) and population (1939: 1,133,917), Estonia was the smallest Baltic state, but its borders were the longest. The common border with friendly Latvia was 374.5 km (9.4%) long, the one with the hostile USSR 258 km (6.3%), of which 145 km went across the 84 km long and 31 km broad Lake Peipsi, a further two km across the endangered Mehikoorma Strait and across the Lake Pskov, which was a little more narrow than the Lake Peipsi. The coastal border comprised 1,159 km as the crow flies. Because of the many bays and 818 islands, the coastal border was some 3,449 km long (84.3%).[133]

The section between the Gulf of Finland and Lake Peipsi was relatively easy to protect, the Narva River being a natural obstacle. The area north as well as south of the river is marshy and wooded. Only a seven to eight km broad gap along the West-East railroad and the highway was easily accessible for a potential enemy. The chain of lakes made up by the Lake Peipsi and the Lake Pskov was a great advantage. Regarding defence, the area south of the Lake Pskov was less favourable, but not hopeless. The area is sandy and without any transport routes. In the middle section, there was a deep valley in a north-south direction that could be used for defence. The marshy and wooded area of the Lida and Vruda Rivers extended widely. Should these positions be lost, the Estonian army could retreat to the line Pjusa-Pskov-Pankjavitsa-Laura-Liepna, the 9 km wide middle section between Pskov and Pankjavista being the most endangered. Furthermore, the Estonians could retreat to the line Lake Võrtsjärv-Emajõgi River-Lake Peipsi. A defence of the long coastal border was virtually impossible. The navy and the coastal batteries alone could defend Tallinn, which was also protected by several islands. With the help of the Finnish fleet, Estonia could close off the Gulf of Finland between Tallinn and Porkkala with a mine field.[134]

Concerning food and clothing, Estonia was self-sufficient. Yet, the situation concerning food was not as good as in Lithuania or Latvia. Shale (about 5,500,000 tons [sic]), out of which petrol and machine oil were produced and which was also used as fuel, was an important natural resource.

Regarding the ethnic composition of the population, Estonia was the most homogeneous. 88.2% of the population were Estonians, 8.2% Russians, 1.5% Germans, 0.7% Swedish, and 0.5% Latvians.[135] Usually 0.98% to 1.2% of the population were in the armed forces. The number of those drafted was 12,000 men, but it decreased in the last years. In earlier years, the armed forces consisted of 14,000 to 17,000 men, but in 1938 there were only 11,358 men (1,358 officers). The police had 1,200 men, the border guard 1,200

men, and the Home Guard units 60,000 men. According to the Intelligence Service of the USA, the total number of people organized, including police, border guard and Home Guard unit was 51,000 men, including reserves 121,000 men and including untrained reserves 161,000 men (14.2% of the population). The whole state had three defence districts (corresponding to the number of divisions in times of peace) and eight defence counties (corresponding to the number of brigades in times of war).

In times of peace, the Estonian army had three infantry divisions. The staff of the First Division was in Rakvere and comprised the defence counties Narva and Võru-Järva. The First Infantry Regiment, the Fourth and Fifth Infantry Battalion, the First and Second Artillery Group and two trains of the Armoured Train Regiment in Tapa belonged to this division. The staff of the Second Division was located in Tartu (Dorpat). The defence counties of Tartu, Petseri-Võru and Valga were under its command. The Seventh Infantry Regiment, the Second, Third and Eighth Infantry Battalion, the Partisan Battalion Kuperjanov, the Cavalry Regiment, the Third and Fourth Artillery Group and two tank platoons belonged to this division. The staff of the Third Division was in Tallinn. The defence counties Harju, Pärnu-Viljandi and Lääne-Saare belonged to it. The Sixth, Ninth, and Tenth Infantry Battalion and the Partisan Battalions Kaleva, Scouts and Sakala, the Fifth Artillery Group, the Tank Regiment, the Engineer and Intelligence as well as the Guard Battalion were in this division. At the beginning of 1940, the Fourth Division in Viljandi and Pärnu was created.

The First and Seventh Infantry Regiments were active units. Each regiment had 2.000 men. The recruits were trained in independent battalions that were supposed to be transformed into regiments in case of war. Half of the staff and line officers of these regiments were regular officers. In case of war, there would have been 14 infantry regiments, each one having 3.331 men (107 officers). In each division, two brigades with two infantry regiments each were planned. The normal personnel strength of a division in peacetime was 100 officers, 400 sergeants, and 2,500 men. In peacetime, the regiments had two battalions each; in wartime it would have been three. The weapons of the infantry were obsolete: Russian 7.62-mm-rifles from 1891, Madsen light machinegun, calibre 7,69 mm and Russian Maxim heavy machinegun, calibre 7.62 mm, from 1905 and 1910. There were also English 7.7-mm Lewis light machineguns in reserve. The arsenal of the War Department started to standardize the calibre to 7.69 mm. Towards the end of independence, it was planned to equip the infantry with infantry guns and anti-tank weapons. Experiments with heavy mortars, calibre 81 mm, with anti-tank rifles from Solothurn, with anti-tank cannons from Bofors, calibre 37 mm, and with heavy anti-tank guns from Rheinmetall were undertaken. In Võru and Narva, there was already anti-tank batteries.

The First Cavalry Regiment was in Tartu. It had three sabre, one machinegun, and one skiing and bicycle squadron, one

combat vehicle company (six tanks and six tankettes) as well as a technical unit. The weapons were: English Ross-Enfield-Mid. 14 rifles, calibre 7.7 mm, six heavy machine guns, 16 light machineguns and the weapons of the armoured vehicles. In case of war, the regiment would have had to operate together with Latvian units in the area of Laura between Boberikova and Vöborka. As a quick retreat was planned for the Latvian army at the beginning of the war, the Estonian cavalry might have been able to form a link between the Latvian and the Estonian armies. The First Cavalry Regiment was also the basis for the Second Cavarly Regiment, which would have been raised in Tartu at the beginning of a war.

In the Estonian army, there were five artillery units. The first and the third group were active units. According to the League of Nations and to information from the German Intelligence Service, Estonia had more than 70 field guns and 60 heavy guns besides anti-aircraft guns and infantry guns in 1938. The artillery was divided into 11 field, six heavy and 17 coastal defence batteries. The division-artillery was organized in artillery groups. The First Division had the first artillery-group (four batteries) in Olgino and the second group in Rakvere – heavy artillery and material for another four batteries. The third artillery-group (with four active batteries in Pskov) and the fourth group belonged to the Second Division – two batteries in Tartu and one in Võru. The fifth artillery-group of the Third Division, with material for four new batteries, was under the command of the Fourth Division that was to be created. In its place, a new, sixth group was created in Tallinn (Reval). This group was supposed to have towing vehicles, which did not arrive by the beginning of the war. Thus, old Russian guns had to be used.

Each battery had four guns or howitzers and 90 men (four officers) with 60 horses in peacetime. Most guns were outdated, Russian 76 mm guns from 1902, English 84 mm and French 76 mm cannons, English light howitzers, calibre 114 mm, Russian heavy 102 mm cannons from Schneider (1910), English 102 mm, German 150 mm and Russian 152 mm howitzers (the latter from Schneider, 1909). Horses were used to tow all guns. Towing vehicles were still in an experimental stage.

According to Estonian information, the coastal artillery had 10 batteries: one 30.48 cm (12") battery in Äigna, 20.32 cm (8") batteries in Suuropi and Viimsi, two 152.4 mm batteries in Äigna, two in Naissaare, one in Suuropi and two 13 cm batteries in Viimsi. The anti-aircraft artillery had three batteries with twelve guns, one searchlight and one chemical defence company.

In the last years, the tank regiment had three tank and armoured car companies, one transport company, one training company, and two batteries. One unit had four old heavy English tanks Mark V, twelve old light Renault-17 tanks, six modern Polish TK 3 tankettes, 12 self-made Crossley-Austin armoured cars. In reserve, there were several heavy armoured vehicles of the type Garford. The regiment had about 400 men. In 1924, Estonia still had two armoured trains regiments, later only one with 350 men. The regiment had

one heavy broad-gauge armoured railway-train with one 152 mm, two 119 mm, two 105 mm cannons and four heavy-machine guns, two light broad gauge and one narrow-gauge armoured train, each with two 76 mm guns, eight heavy machineguns and six light machineguns.

The air force consisted of three air divisions, in Rakvere, Tartu, and Tallinn, as well as of the naval aviation division in Tallinn with auxiliary units. Each division had two reconnaissance squadron and one fighter squadron with nine aircraft each, the naval aviation division had one reconnaissance squadron (six aircraft) and one fighter squadron (four aircraft). Altogether, there were 54 reconnaissance and 27 fighter aircraft as well as 10 naval aircraft, a total of 91, but 125 when counting the training aircraft. In 1937, there were 540 men in the air force.

The engineer regiment had three engineer battalions, each having one gas-warfare, railroad, search light, transport, work, training, and reconnaissance company. The reconnaissance battalion had three reconnaissance and one other company.

The base for the Estonian navy was Tallinn. The fleet comprised the Sea and the Peipsi Divisions, the coastal artillery and the garrison administration, altogether 2.100 men (of whom 900 were in the coastal artillery). Initially, the fleet had two large destroyers, one torpedo boat, six gunboats (two on the Lake Peipsi), two minelayers, two mine boats, two patrol boats (one on the Lake Peipsi), four icebreakers, three vessels of the hydrographical service, five tenders and one tug. The largest part of these ships was old and worn-out. The maintenance of this fleet demanded tremendous resources.

In 1933, the Estonian government sold the two large destroyers and agreed upon a programme for the development of a new fleet. Two submarines, eight patrol boats, twelve torpedo boats and ten fast patrol boats were planned. As funds were scarce, the programme was cut down to two U-minelayers, four motortorpedo-boats, and twelve aircraft. During the last years of Estonia's independence, the navy had two submarines, four motortorpedo-boats, four gunboats (two on the Lake Peipsi), two patrol boats (one on the Lake Peipsi), one customs cutter, five icebreakers, four hydrographical ships, five tenders and one tug. Altogether the tonnage was 5.200 tons, not including the icebreakers and those ships that belonged to the sea route Civilian Maritime Administration.[136] The Estonian merchant fleet had 304 ships (143 steamboats, 60 motor ships and motor sailing ships as well as 101 sailing ships) with 214.000 register tons.[137]

In Tallinn, there was a large arsenal with departments for machineguns, artillery, optics, foundry, smithy, handguns, electronics, carpentry, leather goods, and much more. Ammunition for rifles and artillery was produced there, shells and army rifles as well as light and heavy machine-guns were produced for the Home Guard units.[138]

The number of cars in 1940 was 3,618; there were 2,476 trucks, 285 busses and 1,401 motorcycles. Estonia had 195 steam and 22 electric and motor locomotives, 529 passenger and 5,633 goods wagons, three radio stations, six commercial airplanes, eleven ports and twelve airports.

The total length of the railway system was 1,702 km.The total length of first order highways was 2,531 km and second-order highways 8,168 km.[139]

In case of a war, 100,000 men in eight brigades and in the navy were supposed to be mobilized. The amount of uniforms and equipment was sufficient, but the weapons were generally bad and outdated. The Estonians relied on the competence of their intelligence, who would have discovered any movement of Soviet troops towards Estonia early. They also believed in the ability of their defence county officials to mobilize the soldiers within one to 24 hours.

The First Infantry Regiment and the First Artillery Group were in Narva, Narva-Jõesuu, Kuurtna and Vasknarva, two armoured trains were in Tapa, and one air force squadron was in Rakvere. These forces had to reinforce the border guard units, to occupy the line of defence along the Narva River, to close off the river crossings at Narva-Jõesuu, Krivasoo and Vasknarva, and to observe the enemy's movement in the Gulf of Finland and up to the line Mustvee-Oudova, where the area of responsibility of the Second Division began. 50 steel-concrete bunkers were erected at the threatened sector between Riigi and Kulgu. The staff of the army had calculated that the Soviets were able to move three to four divisions to the Narva front within seven days. The active units of the Estonians were able to take their positions on the first day and to counter the attack by the enemy for the next three days. Although the Soviet air force might be able to attack main targets, they would not be able to confuse the decentralized Estonian system of mobilization. The regiments would have gathered by train, by car, and through night marches. They could have been mobilized within three days, and within the next two days they would already have been at the assembly points. On the fifth day, the First, Fourth and Fifth Infantry Regiments, the First and the Second Artillery Group would have reach the front, the Tenth Infantry Regiment would be in Rakvere, the Reserves-Regiment in Tallinn, and the Scouts-Regiment in the area of Haapsalu. However, the US observers assumed that the Estonian army would not be completely ready for war in less than seven to 10 days after the beginning of the war.

The Seventh Regiment, the Third Artillery Group, the First Cavalry Regiment, one anti-tank company, one armoured car and tank company, one armoured train and the Second Air Division were planned to be at the front of Petseri. These forces would have had to defend the line Lake Pskov-Irbosk Valley-Velje Lake, then for five days the line Piussa-Petseri-Pankjavitsa-Laura, then Piussa-Lepssaare-Vastsellina-Misso. They also would have had to watch the movements by the enemy on the Latvian territory. In the south, there were no fortifications. Instead, artillery and field fortifications would have had to do the job. The enemy was expected to need five to seven days to move three to four divisions and tank and artillery units from Pskov to Ostrov. In order to absorb the offensive, the Estonians would have had the Kaleva and the Põlva-Sakala Regiment at their disposal on the sixth day, the Sec-

ond Kuperjanov Regiment from Pskov to Misso, the Seventh, Eighth and Third Infantry Regiment, the First Cavalry Regiment, the Fifth, Fourth and Third Artillery Group, the Sixth Infantry Regiment close to Ape, and the Ninth Infantry Regiment in the area of Pärnu-Mõisaküla. This would be all of Estonia's forces.

As the Soviet Union had only very weak forces on the Lake Peipsi (some landing crafts), the two gunboats of the Estonians and three more sent by the base in Tartu could have defended the shore line reasonably well for two to three days, especially the dangerous strait of Mehikoorma, where the Lake Peipsi and the Lake Pskov meet each other. Local self-protection units would have supported the war ships.

In the Baltic Sea, the Estonian navy could not compete with that of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, it was widely known that the Soviet Navy Command was afraid of the strait between Aegna and Porkkala. Soviet submarines could pass this strait in order to sink Estonian supply vessels, and ships could launch landing crafts. To prevent any provocation of the Russian fleet, the Estonian fleet could only start laying mines after the start of hostilities. The submarine minelayer would protect the area around the island of Suursaar and Tütarsaar and the minelayers on the line Äigna-Porkkala. With support by the Finns, another mine field in the area of Suursaar, Tütarsaar and Lavansaar could have been laid out, while submarines and a large Finnish armoured vessel (with 8" guns) would have offered protection during the operation.

At worst, the Estonians would try to retreat to their capital and to fight a final battle of despair, or to flee to their islands. According to calculations of American observers, the ammunition could last for about two weeks of fighting. But supposedly the army could only defend Estonia one or two weeks if no other states than Latvia supported them.

In case of an attack from the Soviet Union, Estonia intended to co-operate with Latvia, something it did not want to do in case of a German attack. Estonians considered a German attack on Lithuania to be possible; they also thought that Latvia might be endangered. But even shortly before the World War II, they were convinced that for the next ten years Germany was not interested in an occupation of the Estonian islands as a base for their actions against the Soviet Union.[140] Estonia's military planners saw danger only in an attack by the Soviets. Estonia regarded its other neighbours and Poland as its natural allies and hoped for a German intervention, but it did not expect any help from Western European powers. The Estonians were worried because the Finns avoided any relationship with the Baltic States to protect their Eastern borders and sought protection in the Scandinavian bloc. The Scandinavian States publicly proclaimed that they did not wish to get into any kind of relations with the highly endangered Baltic States. Moreover, the Estonians were worried about the unsteady foreign policy of Latvia. Estonia's military planners doubted whether Latvia really intended to resist any ultimatum or an open invasion. Estonians were especially worried by missing fortifications on

Latvia's eastern border and by the Latvians' plan to retreat to the line Pededze-Lake Lubans, which opened the whole southern front of Estonia and virtually destroyed its defence system. There were also problems with direct co-operation under common command. Until the abrupt change in the Latvian military command in 1940, Estonia's military command did not rely upon Latvia's preparedness and ability to command the armed forces under modern combat conditions. The Estonians believed that in case of co-operation, the Latvian Supreme Command would try to use the Estonian army not to defend its own country, but Latvia.[141]

Western observers all agreed that the Estonian army was the best one of all Baltic States although it was most poorly armed and had the shortest training for soldiers. The Estonian officers were believed to be highly qualified, the Estonian soldiers were said to be tenacious, brave, intelligent and patriotic. In co-operation with the armed forces of the great powers, the Estonian army was regarded to be a potential force not only for defensive, but also for offensive actions.[142]

The Military Situation in Lithuania

With a population of 2,575,300, Lithuania was the largest Baltic state. Its area (55,670 km^2) was the second largest. The length of the border was 1,367 km. Lithuania did not have a common border with the Soviet Union, but 525 km (37.7%) bordered hostile Poland, 272 km (20.5%) the dangerous German Reich, and only 570.4 km (41.8%) bordered friendly Latvia. The border regions were in the main completely open, except for a small section from Zarasai to Giedraiciai in the northeast, where a group of lakes was situated, and another section in the Southwest, where the Nemunas River formed the natural border to Germany. In the coastal area, the Lithuanian part of the Kurzeme Spit was separated from the rest of Lithuania by the German part and the Kurzeme Lagoon. Furthermore, Lithuania had only limited sovereignty in the Klaipeda (Memel) region (2,848 km^2). Germany did everything possible to keep the idea of separatism alive in this region. Because of the lost, nationally mixed Vilnius region (3,244 m^2), Lithuania was technically at war with her second largest neighbour, Poland.[143]

Concerning food supply, Lithuania was not only self-sufficient but even exported food. In contrast to Latvia and Estonia, however, its industry was not very developed.

The population was more uniform than in Latvia. 80.6% were Lithuanian, 7.15% Jewish, 4.1% German, 3.04% Polish, 2.3% Russian, 0.7% Latvian, 0.2% White Russian, etc. 80% of the population were Catholic, in contrast to Lithuania's northern neighbours, who were mainly Lutheran.[144]

In 1939, the army of Lithuania consisted of 24,000 men (1,100 officers, 500 war administrators, 1,400 sergeants). On average, 1.25% of the population were in the armed forces; 13,000 to 17,000 men were drafted each year. The police had 4,000 men, the border guard 3,500 men, and in the Home Guard units there were

55.000 men. In theory, Lithuania could have mobilized up to 250,000 men. Out of technical and financial considerations, only 120,000 to 135,000 men were supposed to be mobilized.

The Lithuanian army consisted of three infantry divisions; a fourth division was being formed. The First, Third and Fourth Infantry Regiment as well as the First and Second Artillery Regiment belonged to the First Division in Panevezys. In the Second Division, whose headquarters were in Kaunas, were the Second, Fifth and Ninth Infantry Regiment and the Third Artillery Regiment. The Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Infantry Regiment and the Fourth Artillery Regiment were in the Third Division, whose headquarters were in Siauliai. Towards the end of independence, only one artillery unit had been formed in the Fourth Division, which was being established in Kedainiai.

Most of the infantry weapons were obsolete, but modernization did take place. The army had 7.9 mm Mauser-Mod. 24 rifles, Praga light machineguns and Maxim M. 08 heavy machineguns. There were experiments with Stokes-Brandt trench mortars, infantry guns and anti-tank guns. One infantry regiment had 2,279 men.

The cavalry brigade with headquarters in Kaunas had three regiments: The Husar Regiment in Kaunas, the Ulan Regiment in Alytus, later in Taurage, and the Dragoon Regiment in Taurage, later in Vilnius. There was also a unit of mounted artillery, three bicycle companies and one armoured car company. Each cavalry regiment had about 1,000 men.

The field artillery had about 120 guns in 10 units. These guns were mostly out-dated: French 75 mm Schneider M. 97 and Russian Putilov M. 02 75 mm cannons. The heavy artillery had 48 pieces in six units. The weapons were 155 mm and 105 mm howitzers made in Germany. In reserve, there were also English 127 mm and French Schneider guns, calibre 155 mm. The anti-aircraft unit had 150 modern Swiss Oerlikon 20 mm and 12 old English 75 mm cannons from Vickers, modern sound detectors and searchlights. During the last years of independence, there was no fortress artillery and no armoured trains anymore, as they were considered to be impractical.

In Kaunas there was a tank battalion with twelve light French Renault M 26/27 tanks and 51 Swedish tankettes made by Skoda as well as one armoured car company with twelve armoured vehicles made by Renault and Landskrona.

Each of the three divisions had one engineer battalion. A reconnaissance battalion was also planned for each division, but up to the end of the independence there were only two such battalions.

The Lithuanian army had the strongest air force of all the Baltic States. Some of the reconnaissance, training and fighter aircraft (of the type "Anbo") were produced in Lithuania. The air force had eight air stations and four landing strips at its disposal. It was divided into reconnaissance (three squadrons), fighter (four squadrons), bomber (one squadron) and training groups (two squadrons) and had schools, workshops and supply units. Some of the aircraft were out-dated, but in their place modern machines were arriving. In 1937, 795 men served in the air force. In 1939

the air force had 110 air craft, 80 in the units and 30 in reserve.

The fleet had only one patrol vessel with mine laying capability and six armoured customs boat. Six submarines, several fast patrol boats, minelayers and coastal batteries were planned. But the loss of Klaipeda destroyed these plans for armament.

The weapon factory Radviliskis had produced rifle, machinegun and artillery ammunition since 1938. It also repaired rifles and completed orders of the air force.

In contrast to Latvia, the Home Guard organization in Estonia and Lithuania was subordinate to the War Ministry. Lithuania's Home Guard unit was divided into 12 infantry regiments and one dragoon regiment. There were also engineer, reconnaissance, air and Naval Home Guard Units that were partly motorized. Plans that included the training of Home Guard members for partisan war were not realized.[145]

Concerning traffic routes and means of transportation, Lithuania was the weakest of the Baltic States. In 1939, Lithuania had only 1,526 km of railroad and 1,481 km of solid roads. It had 205 locomotives, 313 passenger and 4,351 goods wagons, 1,765 cars, 298 trucks, 298 buses and 619 special cars. The merchant fleet consisted of only 11 ships with 10,299 register tons. Moreover, Lithuania had only two ports, i.e. in Klaipeda (Memel) and Sventoji. In the whole state, there were only two radio stations, in the last year just one.[146]

In contrast to Latvia and Estonia, Lithuania really had only one friendly neighbour: Latvia. It had to reckon with a direct attack by Germany or Poland and with an indirect attack by the Soviet Union through Latvia or Poland. In case of a war, Lithuania could only operate with five infantry divisions and two cavalry brigades. Active units were the First Regiment in Ukmerge, the Seventh in Taurage and Zemaiciu Naumiestis and the Ninth in Marijampole and Vilkaviskis. Their stock was enlarged and they were reinforced by artillery. Until 1939, the Sixth Regiment in Klaipeda and Plunge was also an active unit; then it was transferred to Telsiai.

Until 1935, the mobilization plans consisted of mobilizing the units within one week after the beginning of the war (12 days according to the US information). Stasys Rastikis achieved a decentralization of the mobilization and thus shortened the time span to 24-72 hours. Weapons and clothing were divided among the mobilization points. A quick modernization of the equipment now also took place.

Although Lithuania sought to reclaim the Vilnius region from Poland, its plans for war against Poland were of completely defensive nature. Just as defensive were the plans for a resistance to potential attacks by Germany or the Soviet Union. The Lithuanian army hoped for a support by Latvia in these two cases or even for an active involvement of the Western powers. The defence plans against Poland and Germany had priority, those against the Soviet Union were of second importance. The Lithuanian Army Command hoped to be able to fight for two weeks without foreign support.

In case of an invasion by Polish or Soviet troops, a retreat to the line Kaunas-Nevezis was planned, later to the Dubysa River. With its high banks, this river was almost the only natural obstacle in the inner part of the country. A defence line with bunkers also existed there. In case of a German attack, a retreat to the Dubysa was planned, as well. The retreat to the Dubysa after an attack from the East would have meant the giving up of the largest part of the state and a simultaneous opening of the southeast front of Latvia. In case of a Polish or Russian attack, a retreat towards Germany after the loss of the Dubysa-line was intended. During a German attack, the Lithuanians wanted to retreat into the Latvian territory after the loss of the Dubysa-line.

During the last two years of their independence, Lithuanians started the enlargement of the peace time strength of the armed forces. The Third Infantry Regiment was intended to be the basis for a fourth division in the region Kedainiai-Raseiniai-Seredzius. When the Vilnius region was regained in 1939, the Lithuanian army command transferred the First Infantry Regiment and the Third Dragoon Regiment to that place.[147]

Western observers did not judge the Lithuanian army in friendly terms. They regretted the unusual influence of politics and chauvinism in the Lithuanian officer corps. According to their judgement, many high-ranking officers of Lithuania were political creatures who were incompetent to fulfil their tasks and were not interested in their completion. Positive changes in the command of the Lithuanian army could only be noticed in the very last years of independence. In contrast to the other armies of the Baltic States, the Lithuanian soldiers' quality was judged to be only satisfactory, the main reasons being the low general education and insufficient training. Nevertheless, the soldiers were regarded to be tenacious, physically strong, modest and especially suitable for the partisan war. Although everyone acknowledged that the equipment of the Lithuanian army was more modern than that of the other Baltic States, they still assumed that this army could not be used in offensive actions. However, there was no doubt that it was suitable for a defensive war. The opinion that the Lithuanians would be more fit for a partisan war than the other Baltic peoples is interesting. Observers viewed the extraordinarily frequent change of the War Minister, the Supreme Commanders and the Chiefs of Staff as well as the intrigues in the army undertaken by various political groups negatively. All of this not only influenced the officers' morale, but also the morale among the soldiers in an unfavourable way.[148]

As a gap in the defence system along the border with the Soviet Union had developed due to the politically independent line of Lithuania, it can be assumed that western military observers regarded this aspect as highly important. Nobody, however, blamed Poland.

The Military Co-operation of the Baltic States

Latvia and Estonia were the only states in Northeast Europe that had concluded a military alliance. This alliance was based

on traditions from the war of liberation. The basis of this alliance was the treaty of 7 July 1921, which was extended in the treaties of 1 November 1923, and 17 February 1934. The alliance was of a defensive character. The Estonian-Latvian defence treaty of 1934 gave similarly interested states the opportunity to join.[149] On 12 September 1934, all three Baltic States – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – came together in the Baltic Entente, but the treaty only consisted of a general co-operation among the states and regular conferences of the Foreign Ministers, but not of military co-operation.[150] Estonia and Latvia categorically refused to conclude a military treaty with Lithuania before the latter had solved its conflicts with Poland and Germany. However a military treaty was not concluded when Lithuania was forced in March of 1938 to re-establish diplomatic relations with Poland and when it lost the Klaipeda (Memel) region to Germany in March of 1939.

Despite the existing military treaty, military co-operation between Estonia and Latvia was really very meagre. There was – to a small extent – an exchange of officers to learn about the military training of the other state, to establish connections, and to learn the language of the neighbour. In 1930 and especially in 1931, large, common army and navy manoeuvres of both states took place, but were not repeated in the following years. In individual cases, the three Baltic States exchanged weapons or sold them to one another. To a small extent, the arsenals of all three states also co-operated.

During the whole period of their independence, the Baltic States were not able to agree upon common defence plans in case of a threat. The self-interests of each state seemed to be more important than the common interests. Each Baltic state hoped - for little convincing reasons - that it would be able to prevent the loss of its independence, even if one or both of the others had already lost it. Western observers pointed out the extraordinary fear that showed in all foreign policy actions of the Baltic States. Each Baltic state had the strong wish to avoid any provocation of the Soviet Union. A military union of the Baltic States was considered to be possible reason for an attack by the Soviet Union. Yet, there are indications that at the time of the creation of the Baltic Entente in 1934, it was in the interest of the Soviet Union to have a Baltic military bloc between itself and emerging Nazi Germany. This view changed later, of course. From 1933 on, the Baltic States also avoided provoking Nazi Germany, which did not want to see a Baltic military bloc come into existence. The German diplomatic representatives repeatedly pointed out the hostile relationship with Lithuania because of the Klaipeda (Memel) region to Latvia and Estonia, and tried to use the disagreement between Latvia and Estonia by showing itself as the understanding and benevolent great power to the latter. Poland too repeatedly pointed out to Latvia and Estonia that it did not want any military agreement of the Baltic States with Lithuania. Therefore, all three Baltic States tried to remain absolutely neutral and even weakened their conditions to the League of Nations (refusal of the obligations of the

members of the League of Nations mentioned in Article 16).

A Baltic bloc could have mobilized an army of 550,000 men, which would have been a notable force even on an international scale. One has to remember that neither the Soviet Union nor Germany or Poland, because of the constant threat to their borders, would have been able to turn their entire forces or a substantial part of them against the Baltic States under any conditions. The Vilnius and the Klaipeda (Memel) problems were tricky and dangerous, but a military union of the Baltic States could have been formed because of the international situation without being influenced by threats of certain states, threats that were not serious anyway. Among the international community, self-confidence, unity, and power is rated higher than the splitting up of forces and the idea of neutrality. Western observers have made many ironic remarks about the extreme individualism of the Baltic politicians, about the exaggerated emphasis on solely nationalist interests, and about the inability to co-operate in the common interest and for the protection of security. The great powers took care not to reach any military agreements with the individualistic, small Baltic States, which were not connected to one another.

Of course, the question arises how much the Baltic States could have co-operated militarily and what they could have done to foster such a co-operation even before a treaty had been concluded. The answer is: A lot!

It is a sad fact that the Baltic States – during the whole period of their independence – felt very foreign to one another and that they really did not know each other. It often happened that the Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians treated each other not only with benevolent humour, but even with sarcasm. Unfortunately, the latter happened a lot on an international level, during talks between representatives of these peoples and those of the great powers. Measures that supported mutual learning of history, culture, and economy of the neighbours started late and remained small. There was almost no understanding of the common fate and the common goal, and very little was done to foster mutual respect and friendship as well as the development of a co-operation. Such efforts came too late, were too small and too "official" to reach larger parts of the population. Much more could have been done!

Each Baltic state had a different national language. There was no common *lingua franca*. Older generations were partly able to communicate in Russian, to a small extent also in German, but in Lithuania in Polish. It would have been perfect if the citizens of the Baltic States would have understood the language of the other two states, but this was virtually impossible. Because of the geographic situation, it was important for the population of the Baltic States to learn international languages, making it even more difficult to learn the languages of the neighbouring states in addition. Sure, there were people that spoke these languages, but they were only a few. After the war, the Baltic States stressed their independence from Russia and Germany and their attachment to Western Europe. Thus, Russian or German were rejected as

the first foreign language. However, they could not decide which of the western languages, English or French, should be chosen as the first foreign language. So, English and French were taught at the same time, German being the second foreign language. School graduates, however, had only acquired a basic knowledge of these languages and did not normally use them in everyday life. The majority of the high-ranking officers could also communicate in Russian, but the younger ones hardly understood the language. On the other hand, the majority of the older officers – with few exceptions – spoke neither English nor French, and a large part did not speak German, either. An agreement on a common foreign language that could have been used for mutual communication in the Baltic States would have been highly necessary. Scandinavians understand without difficulty all their languages; nevertheless they can all also communicate in English and mostly in German.

During the whole period of independence, the Baltic States did not develop an economic union. The small states even competed with each other economically and were unfit for broader economic co-operation. Estonian shale could have partly solved the fuel problem, but the quarrying started too late and was too little. Regarding fuel, the Baltic States were dependent upon Poland and even more so upon the western powers, which on their part were far away from sources of raw material. Latvian water power also remained unused for common economic measures.

Without any effort, a standardization of the organization of the armed forces could have been implemented, as well as a unifying of ranks, badges, etc., but nothing happened.

Each of the Baltic States spent about one fifth of its budget on weapons and the daily needs of the armed forces. These amounts were tiny compared to the purpose aimed at, but they were tremendous for the small states that had suffered a lot and had to do it without any international help, especially when compared to the larger and luckier countries. Thus, the resources had to be used wisely. The supply of the armed forces with uniforms, towing machines and food posed no problems. But weapons were a very great problem. They had been acquired during the struggle for liberation in insufficient amounts. They consisted of different systems, were for the most part out-dated, and partly even defective and without spare parts.

The weaponry had to be standardized and modernized. If the three states had acted together, it would have been easier, more convenient, and also cheaper. Because of political and economic combinations, the governments of the Baltic States and their troops did not co-operate, though. The weapons of the armed forces of the Baltic States were, thus, varied and made up of very different systems, which also limited the possibilities of a co-operation extremely. Not even an agreement on the standardization of ammunition was reached. The Estonians used Russian ammunition; the Lithuanians used German, and the Latvians English ammunition. In case of a war, ammunition supply would have been very limited and in Estonia's and Latvia's case even impossible. If the three states had been able

to agree on common ammunition for light weapons, they would have become independent from foreign states at least in this respect and would have saved a lot of money by producing the material needed in their own state. In addition, they could have helped each other out. Finland produced light artillery and mortars herself. The Baltic States, with nearly double the population, could have accomplished that even more easily. During all years of its independence, Lithuania built fairly good training and fighting aircraft. Latvia did so as well during the last years of independence. But the Baltic States did not co-operate in this respect either, but wasted resources in mutual competition.

The supply of heavy weapons had to be concentrated on states that were accessible most conveniently in terms of traffic and from which spare parts could also be received in wartime. Sweden would have been the best choice. Due to economic considerations, the Baltic States ordered nearly no weapons in Sweden. The latter had few economic relations to the Baltic States, whose products it did not need. Moreover, Sweden demanded payment in cash. The UK and France, on the other hand, threatened not to take products from the Baltic States if weapons were not bought from them. Usually, the Baltic States received only out-dated weapons for a price that was at least twice as high as for the English and French forces. Lithuania also bought a few weapons from the Soviet Union, but their guns were also out-dated and very expensive. The Baltic States also feared to have relations to a state whose political leaders supported elements that were aiming at their eventual incorporation into the Soviet Union. The weapons became more and more complicated and more and more expensive, making a close co-operation between the Baltic States essential. In 1939, a modern English destroyer already cost a fortieth of the whole Latvian defence budget. Today twice the annual budget of 1939 would be needed to buy one single supersonic aircraft, to say nothing of missiles.

The question of a supreme command in wartime was also important. It seems as if the Baltic States hoped to co-operate with some great powers, which would have taken over command then, of course. There were no treaties between the Baltic States and the western powers nor any plans for potential co-operation in wartime. There were arrangements between Latvia and Estonia for a potential common supreme command in wartime. But questions of prestige and about military qualification as well as political considerations and memories from the war of liberation were brought up. Estonia regarded its supreme command as more competent, which western military observers confirmed in their evaluations. The Latvian forces, on the other hand, would have been nearly twice as strong. The Estonians had a low opinion of the long-time Latvian War Minister, who had not supported them in the Battle of Cesis (Wenden) and in times of peace had not cared about the completion of his military knowledge, but - according to several observers – wanted to become supreme commander. The Estonians also remembered how they were forced during the war of liberation to hold a consider-

able part of the Latvian front although their forces were urgently needed somewhere else. The fact that the Latvians were in an extraordinarily unpleasant situation had been forgotten. The Latvians on their part had the suspicion that the Estonian supreme commander would try to use the Latvian forces mainly for the defence of Estonia, whereas the Estonians thought the Latvian supreme commander would use the Estonian forces mainly for the defence of Latvia. The defence plans of both states were diametrically opposite. Nevertheless, the plans provided for co-operation between the Latvian Eighth Daugavpils Infantry with its Fourth Battalion and the Estonian First Cavalry Regiment at the beginning of a war.

Shortly before World War II, the Lithuanians did not raise any objections that a Latvian general would command the combined forces of the Baltic States, but the Latvian government did not want to be politically connected with Lithuania. Thus, the question of a common supreme command remained unsolved. Western observers pointed out that the supreme command only started to put really highly qualified and gifted officers into leading positions during the last year before the catastrophe. They would have been able to command troops under modern combat conditions. Names shall not be mentioned in this article.

The Baltic States shared a common fate. A militarily advantageous situation would have come up for them in connection with a democratic and liberal Russia behind them, as many Western observers pointed out. But such a situation did not exist. If the Soviet Union threatened Europe, only a common resistance of all European states would evoke hopes for deliverance. In the opinion of Russian and Western observers, the individual Baltic States were militarily without value, but joined together they would have been a significant enemy. Much could have been done to consolidate this defence power over 20 years, but almost nothing happened. External factors are partly responsible for this, but to a large extent the leaders of the Baltic States have to take responsibility, too. The Baltic States were not the only ones, the "regional guilty". The Scandinavian States as well as the states in the Balkans had to learn the hard way during World War II. At any rate, the armies of the Baltic States had a great moral importance for the strengthening of national self-confidence of the Baltic people and could have posed a considerable threat to a potential attacker.

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[2] For a general overview, the following sources can be referred to: Royal Institute of International Affairs (London), *The Baltic States* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938); Louis Tissot, *La Baltique* (Paris: Payot, 1940); Max Friederichsen, *Die Zentraleuropäischen Randstaaten mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Baltischen Dreibund-Problems Lettland, Estland und Litauen* (Rifa: Selbstverlag, 1921).

[3] United States of America National Archives, Record Group 165 – Military Intelligence Division (Hence: *USA, N.A., R.G. 165*) – General Analysis.

[4] Already during World War I did Theobald von Berthmann-Hollweg, Chancellor of the German *Reich*, comment on General Ludendorff's project of the annexation of the Baltic territory, pointing out the difficulties such an incorporation would implicate.

[5] Such views were already met with response in German *Reichstag*-discussions from 1916-1918. See

ed. Andersons, *Latvijas vçsture 1914-1920*, Stockholm: DAUGAVA, 1967), pp. 165-166, 216, 272-273, 286-287.

[6] Royal Institute, pp. 30-38.

[7] Edgars Andersons, "Toward the Baltic Entente – The Initial Phase", *Pro Baltica, Mélanges dédiés à Kaarel R. Pusta* (Stockholm: Publication du Comité des amis de K. R. Pusta, 1965), pp. 41-42, 50. *Hence*: Andersons, *Toward the Baltic Entente - The Initial Phase*.

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[9] *Ibid*., pp. 153-158; Alfred Bilmanis, *A History of Latvia* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1951), pp. 33, 35; Ewald Uustalu, *The History of Estonian People* (London: Boreas Publishing Co., 1952), pp. 31-32.

[10] Uustalu, pp. 32-48.

[11] A. Bîlmanis, pp. 53-83.

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[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 146-160.

[14] *Ibid*., pp. 161-163, 229-250.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 265-352.

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[17] Uustalu, pp. 54-56.

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[21] Dunsdorfs, *1500-1600*, pp. 127, 129.

22 Edgars Dunsdorfs, *Latvijas vôsture 1600-1710* (Stockholm: Daugava, 1962), pp. 50, 100-102, 159-165.

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[26] Dr. Albert N. Tarulis, letter from December 20, 1963.

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[28] Uustalu, pp. 109-110.

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[30] Dr. Constantine R. Jurgela, personal interview on November 21, 1968.

[31] Dr. Albert N. Tarulis, letter from December 20, 1963.

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[36] *Ibid.*, pp. 78-85, 92-93.

[37] *Ibid*., pp. 90-92, 96-97.

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[40] *Ibid*., 186-189.

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[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 226-226.

[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 257-260, 301-309.

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[145] *USA, Nat. Arch.*, RG 165, 2587-55/1; 2587-53/6, 7, 11; 2724-DD-21/9; 10641-342/3; Gen Stasys Rastikis, letter from April 12, 1959, and January 4, 1963; interview on June 12, 1959; Gen. Mikas Reklaitis, letter from February 3 and 14, 1964; Col.-Lieut. Kazys Alikćauskas, "Lietuvos kariuomene" (ms., 1958)

[146] Royal Institute, pp. 191-194.

[147] *USA, Nat. Arch.*, RG 165, 2587-52/7; 10641-342/3; Gen. Stasys Rastikis, letter from April 12, 1959, and January 4, 1963; interview on June 12, 1959.

[148] *USA, Nat. Arch.*, RG 165, 2621-74/1; 2587-52/6; 2584-67; 10641-342/2.

[149] *Ibid*., 2584-67/2; Sîpols, *Dzimtenes nodevîba* (Betrayal of the Fatherland), pp. 140-141.

[150] *USA, Nat. Arch.*, RG 165, 2584-67/1, 2731-10/1; RG 84, 760. M. 605/48 Bangerskis, II, p. 93.